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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Re-imagining the Catholic secondary school in Wales in the twenty-first century : the voice of the students

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Award date:
2005

Awarding institution:
Bangor University

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Re-imagining the Catholic Secondary
School in Wales in the
Twenty-first Century:
the voice of the students.

by
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of the University of Wales, Bangor

A dissertation submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the
University of Wales



Summary

The thesis underpinning this study is that Catholic schools in Wales may need fundamentally to re-imagine their vision and praxis in the light of significant changes to the staff and student populations of Catholic schools during the last decades of the twentieth century.

The first part of the study reflects upon some of those changes. Building on an analysis of the expectations of Catholic schools circumscribed in Vatican and national documents, there is an exploration of some of the social, educational and ecclesiological changes of recent years. A proposal is suggested that Catholic schools in Wales may need to explore and respond to these changes if they are to fulfil the mandate established for them.

The second part of the study examines the attitudes and experiences of Catholic school students in Wales regarding their schooling. The premise is that the voices of the students are important and that they can inform the reflections that Catholic school educators must undertake if Catholic education in Wales needs renewal. The analysis of student attitudes and experiences of Catholic schools in Wales is built upon a Likert-style questionnaire completed by students of Year 11 in most of the Catholic secondary schools in Wales.

The conclusion explores some of the issues highlighted by the research and suggests a possible re-imagined vision for Catholic schools in Wales as they cross the threshold of the third millennium.

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Acknowledgments

This study would not have been possible without the willingness and co-operation of the schools and students who completed the questionnaires. I am indebted to them. I know how hectic the day-to-day life of the Catholic secondary school is and I very much appreciate the time and effort, particularly from within the religious education departments, that went into ensuring the questionnaire was properly administered.

Awards from St Gabriel's Trust and St Luke's College Foundation, for which I am very grateful, financed the research.

The study would also not have been possible without the support and assistance of the supervisor, The Revd. Professor Leslie J Francis, and of Dr Mandy Robbins, of the Welsh National Centre for Religious Education. I am very grateful to them, particularly for their patience and understanding as the thesis gradually took shape.

Finally, the study would also not have been possible without the support of my wife, Anne, and of my children. Thank you.

Introduction

Catholic schooling in the twenty-first century is under the microscope. Questions are being asked both from within and from outside the Catholic Church about the appropriateness and effectiveness of a faith based education system. There is a wealth of research and conference papers exploring the role of Catholic schools in contemporary society. Some of it is highly critical.

From outside the Church, Catholic schools are criticised for being divisive and for failing to reflect adequately the multicultural and multifaith nature of the community (Little, 1998). Furthermore, for writers such as Hirst (1974, 1976, 1994) the whole idea of a faith-based education is a contradiction in terms. He argues that schooling, to be effective, must be free from the imposition of a faith ideology.

Just as intelligent Christians have come to recognise that justifiable scientific claims are autonomous and do not, and logically cannot, rest on religious beliefs, so also, it seems to me, justifiable educational principles are autonomous. That is to say, that any attempt to justify educational principles by an appeal to religious claims is invalid (1976, p.155).

From a 'secular perspective, religious ideas cannot be accepted as a revelation of truth' (Grace, 2002, p. 248) but are rather an ideology in the service of a religious interest group. The search for knowledge and understanding, claims Hirst, cannot be based upon the unverifiable propositions of the Christian faith or of any faith.

White (1995) regards the move away from a religious basis of education as a sign of intellectual and personal maturity. For him, the realisation of humanity's personal autonomy begins with humanity's independence from God. Authentic education, he argues, must have a 'non-religious cosmic framework' as the source of personal well-being (p.19).

At the same time, from within the Catholic Church, Catholic schools are criticised for failing to produce the desired results, which appear to be a return to some sort of 'good old days' when all young people attended church and everyone knew their place. Arthur (1995), for example, believes that the Catholicity of Catholic schools was much stronger in the past than it is now. He argues that Catholic schools in England and Wales were originally founded on a 'holistic' model, 'concerned with the transmission . . . of Catholic faith – its beliefs, values, character and norms of conduct' (p. 233). However, in recent decades, he believes, they have developed educational cultures that are 'dualistic' and 'pluralistic'. For Arthur, the 'dualistic' Catholic school separates the secular and religious elements of education, regarding the Catholic ethos of the school as something additional to its secular academic programme. He believes that the rich spiritual heritage of the Church has been removed from Catholic education as Catholic schools have focused instead on success in the market place of contemporary education. His analysis suggests that the original vision of Catholic education is giving ground to a secular view of religion and life that constitutes part of the ebbing tide of Catholicity.

Some commentators (for example, Grace, 1998) have drawn attention to the suggestion that the decline in the sacramental life of Catholic schools, which was traditionally such a central feature of them, may be a cause of the decline in adult Mass attendance and active parish participation that has been witnessed in recent decades. Similarly, there are others (for example, Haldane, 1999; McCleod, 2004), who, like Arthur, believe that there has been a general ‘dumbing-down’ of Catholic teaching and spirituality. The absence of clear and unequivocal Catholic teaching and practice has, they believe, seriously jeopardised the Catholic schools’ claims to be distinctive and true to the purposes set out for them by Vatican documents

And the statistics might be considered alarming. Heald (1999) has provided research conducted by the *Opinion Research Business*, which presents the following figures for Mass attendance in England and Wales:

1964	2 114 219
1974	1 752 219
1984	1 512 533
1998	1 086 268

This represents a decline of 51% in thirty-four years. However, the Catholic population has remained largely stable during this period (Heald, p. 390):

1964	3 827 000
1974	4 162 942
1984	4 220 262
1998	4 134 000

So, the percentage of Catholics practising regularly has declined as follows (Heald, p. 390):

1964	55%
1974	42%
1984	36%
1998	26%

At the same time, the number of Catholic schools has held steady (Heald, p. 390):

1964	2 888
1974	3 094
1984	2 790
1996	2 493

Thus, there has been a dramatic decrease in the numbers of Catholics attending church on a Sunday, whilst the number of Catholic schools has held steady. It is in this context of growing apathy in religious commitment that Catholic schools are operating. To respond to the challenges these statistics raise is part of the task of re-imagining Catholic education in twenty-first century Wales.

However, although the percentage of regularly practising Catholics has fallen, this may not be the crisis that some have proclaimed. It may be that the attachment to the Church has not declined, only the once fear-induced weekly Mass attendance.

The desire among parents for the Catholic education system to be maintained

possibly indicates some awareness of the importance of a spiritual dimension to their own and their children's lives.

Arthur, however, argues that Catholic schools have sold out in recent decades to the reforms of successive governments and are now virtually indistinguishable from their state school counterparts. Arthur's thesis is questionable, however, for the following reasons.

There has been a succession of CES, NBRIA and National Project documentation and conferences exploring the nature and purpose of Catholic schools, which have inevitably forced schools to reflect upon their nature and ethos. A whole host of discussion papers have emerged (for example, Grace, 1995; McLaughlin et al, 1996; Conroy, 2000; Hayes and Gearon, 2002) celebrating the distinctiveness and value of Catholic schools.

Furthermore, it might be argued that there is a growing recognition that traditional forms of Catholicism may no longer be appropriate for the twenty-first century. Rev. O'Leary (1999), for example, believes that the 'crisis' in Catholicism is caused by the Church itself, which has created a 'dualism' that denies the beauty of God's creation and sets intolerable burdens on people. He claims that the Church will only begin to flower again when it recognises that God can speak to people in a myriad of ways; when all people, male and female, are allowed to fulfil the vocation God has for them and when those who have made choices, for example with divorce, that

currently leave them feeling outcast, are instead helped to feel welcome. It must be, he claims, a Church 'without walls' (p. 199f). He calls upon schools to leave behind 'old tunes on the shabby hymn sheets' and to 'gently but confidently' propose the 'powerful song of the world church of the third millennium' (p. 216).

Thus, the debate is a complex one. Those who argue that there is a 'crisis' in Catholicism believe that the problem is a loss of the traditional rock-like fortress of truth in the Church and that Catholic schools are part of the problem. What is needed in Catholic schools, they claim, is a return to the religious and spiritual riches of Catholicism; then there will be a renaissance.

Some, however, believe that if there is a 'crisis', it is a good thing. An outdated and sterile Catholicism, they claim, might one day be replaced by a new and vibrant spirituality, one that is in harmony with the radical nature of Jesus, who crossed boundaries and thought the impossible. The Catholic school, with its variegated pupil and family home background, could be in the vanguard of a fundamental reform of Catholic life, one that can combine the richness of the past with a modern vision of inclusivity and wholeness; only then, they claim, will there be a renaissance.

The task for Catholic schools, which the Church continues to maintain at considerable cost, is to reflect upon how faith and spirituality can be established, then enhanced or enlivened in young people, despite the tensions evidenced in this

debate. For many Catholics, the parish structure may not be a primary point of contact. It could be argued that the Catholic school, therefore, has an extraordinary opportunity to be the catalyst for the evangelisation of an unchurched Catholic people.

For those students who are not members of the Catholic Church, Catholic schools may also be able to be a catalyst for change by offering, without coercion, marginalisation or imposition, an alternative world-view to the one prevalent in twenty-first century Wales. In this way Catholic schools will be able to fulfil their evangelistic mission on behalf of the Church.

For those Catholic students who are committed to their faith, Catholic schools might be able to offer opportunities to nurture that faith and to explore how it can be translated into Christian praxis. As a mechanism of support for committed Catholic families, the Catholic school might be able to assist such students to reflect upon the direction the Catholic Church could take in the light of the tensions that exist between its members.

The thesis begins by examining the expectations of the Catholic Church, both internationally and nationally, of its Catholic schools and suggests a vision of Catholic education for the twenty-first century that might go some way to fulfilling them. An exploration of previous research in the field of students' experiences in England and Wales provides the empirical basis for the study.

The rationale behind the research underpinning the thesis is then presented. The purpose of the research is to gather as much information as possible about the attitudes and experiences of students of Catholic schools in Wales regarding their schooling. Armed with these insights, Catholic school educators will be assisted in the task of re-imagining the future development of Catholic schools in Wales.

The research instrument is designed to explore key aspects of the life of the Catholic school identified in Church publications and previous research: the provision of a separate Catholic education system, prayer and worship in Catholic schools, moral development, the staff and student populations of the school, rules and punishments, school-parish links and religious education. Students' responses to these areas are then examined and analysed in order to suggest possible avenues of strategic development that Catholic school educators might pursue in order for Catholic schools to try to both fulfil the mandate envisioned for them and to meet the spiritual and moral needs of every Catholic school student in twenty-first century Wales.

Chapter One

The principles of Catholic schooling

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to set out the expectations of the Catholic Church regarding its schools. Since the foundation of the catechetical schools in Alexandria and Antioch in the second century, the Catholic Church has been involved in education and schooling, seeing its processes as one of the main ways of revealing the life of Jesus Christ and of proclaiming what it sees as the message of salvation.

However, significant changes in the Church and in society during the twentieth century have engendered the need to re-examine and re-define the fundamental purpose of Catholic schools and their relationship to the stated mission of the Church. When Catholic schools were established in England and Wales in the decades following the restoration of the Hierarchy in 1847, their make up and purpose were clear. They were to be staffed by Catholic teachers, teaching only Catholic children, the faith of the Catholic Church, which was unchanging and eternal.

Profound changes in both society and the Church have inevitably led to the need to radically reappraise the role and contribution of the Catholic education system to the Church and to society as a whole. This chapter explores some of those changes and

examines recent pronouncements from the Catholic Church, both internationally and nationally, as it grapples with the consequences of those changes for Catholic schools.

i) Changes in modern western society

First, there has been a profound change away from a society dominated by the religious tradition of Christianity to one that is pluralistic in its patterns of belief and way of life. Spurred on by the media, by the Web and by the growth of Asian, Middle Eastern and Caribbean communities, there is a widespread awareness of alternative belief and value systems. It is much less likely that young people will grow up feeling that all the beliefs they have been taught at home and school are universally and eternally valid. As Cook (1983), Baelz (1977) and Haring (1978) have shown, there is bound to be comparison, challenge, criticism and a conviction that all is relative and nothing absolute.

Second, there has been a growing secularisation of society. Religion has largely disappeared as the context for national life. As growing numbers of people become disenchanted with established church forms so alternative lifestyles, particularly the so called 'new-age' movements, have become ascendant

Third, scientific and technological advances have also had an impact. Stephen Hawking (2001), for example, is attempting to show that the universe does not need an answer outside of itself as to why it exists and developments in genetics especially have suggested that humanity has the same level of control and manipulation once ascribed to God.

Fourth, modern society is characterised by its more metropolitan nature. People's lives are no longer shaped, as they once were, by the parish church, local community, or even extended family. The main influence now is more likely to be the economic and industrial organisation of towns and cities. There is a growing sense of alienation (Nichols, 1978) especially when life, work and relationships become fragmented and there is a sense that what one does or even who one is no longer matters. This social fragmentation and alienation has been exacerbated by the increased mobility of people, both in terms of daily living and of life patterns. Early in the twentieth century most people lived their whole lives in the place where they were born, often entering the same employment as their parents and remaining in the same social class. At the start of the twenty-first century, many people move away from the place where they were born and aspire to different jobs and social status from those of their parents. Among the results of all of these changes are the loss of influence once exerted by a closely-knit community and a greater sense of isolation.

Laurent Daloz (1996), for example, whilst exploring the loss of the 'common' in the centre of American community's living space, found that for most, the common gathering places are increasingly:

restaurants, where our association is primarily one of anonymity; the video arcade, where the young are mesmerised into single syllable conversation by neon violence; the mall, where consumer thirst and adolescent drift are the primary agenda; the high rise office building, where we meet briefly in elevators; the TV screen, where we feel both engaged and removed; and the internet, where we meet fleetingly and often anonymously in cyberspace.'

(pp. 2-3)

This culture of anonymity and depersonalisation leads to what Purpel (1989) called 'ethical anomie', a societal 'rudderlessness' with respect to values and a lack of clarity in society about what constitutes the ethical 'common ground' (p. 23).

Such pluralistic, secular, technological and urban changes have weakened the traditional forms of inculturation and the transmission of religious practice and morality from one generation to the next. As the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy (1971) has noted, they have led to the turning of 'people's minds away from the divine' (para. 5). For many, 'God is perceived to be less present, less necessary, less capable of providing a valid explanation of personal and social life' (para. 5).

ii) Changes in the Catholic Church

Of probably even greater significance is the nature of the profound changes that have swept through the Catholic Church itself in the transition from one millennium to the next. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) initiated significant reforms in the understanding and practice of the Church at the global and parochial levels. Reflecting changes that were taking place in all areas of human knowledge, understanding and living, the Council sought a reform and renewal of Catholic faith and practice setting them in an overarching spirit of hope constantly emphasising the goodness of God and the dignity of humanity.

Therefore, the chosen People of God is one: 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism' (Ephesians 4:5). As members they share a common dignity from their rebirth in Christ. They have the same filial grace and the same vocation to perfection. (Vatican 11, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* (1964), para. 32)

This emphasis on the dignity of each person and on freedom and conscience recognised the growing demands of an educated, mobile and critical laity. Catholic laity had been no less immune to the changes affecting society than the rest of humanity and change was inevitable. At the start of the last century, for example, the local Catholic parish church was very much the centre of Church life. The priest, through his theological education and status, was able to exert great pressure towards moral conformity and the upholding of conventional standards. The growth of an educated laity and the loss of the moral high ground, caused not least by the

crippling effects of clergy and religious sexual abuse, has led to a shift in the focus of power away from Hierarchy towards the individual's own conscience.

It is of interest here to explore the changes in the way the Hierarchy has presented the Church to the world. The prevailing model of the Church, following the Council of Trent (1545-1563), was that of 'rock', without 'shadow of change or alteration', uniform in character as reflected in its liturgical rites and church discipline – the same in every part of the world. The emphasis of the First Vatican Council (1869-1870) was on the Church's infallibility and supreme authority in all matters. The model that emerged from the Second Vatican Council, however, was that of a 'Pilgrim People', which was 'in constant need of renewal' (Vatican 11, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* (1964), para. 48). It would receive its 'perfection only in the glory of heaven, when will come the time of the renewal of all things'. The laity, not the Hierarchy, were to be the primary means of proclaiming the Church's mission

For the laity, the shift from 'rock' to 'people' was made concrete in the introduction of the vernacular in the liturgy, the removal of the rail separating priest from people and the repositioning of the altar to the front of the sanctuary area. Of greater significance, though not as dramatic, were the Council's acceptance of modern biblical exegesis, of the need for a new and radical relationship with other religious traditions and of the primacy of conscience.

The Second Vatican Council gave to the Catholic Church a renewed sense of its mission and purpose in the world. There was not to be a withdrawal from the world but a mission to 'proclaim and establish among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God' (*Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, (1965), para. 2). In the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (1965), the Council recognised that it must find new ways of presenting the Good News of Jesus Christ that met the changing needs of the contemporary world.

iii) The Vatican vision for Catholic schools

In its *Declaration on Christian Education* (1965), the Second Vatican Council recognised that one of the primary tools for the proclamation was education. As already indicated, the Church has been involved in education and schooling since the second century, recognising them as one of the main ways of revealing the life of Christ and of proclaiming the message of salvation. The Council reaffirmed that the Church, 'in order to fulfil the mandate she received from her divine founder to announce the mystery of salvation to all people and to renew all things in Christ', is under an obligation to 'play a part in the development and extension of education' ('Preface').

The *Declaration* examined the purpose of Catholic schools in the context of the profound changes, circumscribed in other Council documents, which had taken

place in all aspects of human knowledge and life. It declared that while the Catholic School must 'pursue cultural goals and the natural development of youth to the same degree as any other school', it must go one step further and attempt to 'generate a community climate that is permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and love' (para. 8). Everything that happens in the Catholic school, claims the Council, must witness to this spirit so that personality development goes hand in hand with the development of the 'new creation one has become through baptism'. The Catholic school can achieve this end by 'relating all of human culture to the good news of salvation so that the light of faith will illumine everything that the students will gradually come to learn about the world, about life and about the human person' (para. 8).

Schools are an integral part of the Church's mission because the whole process of growth into physical, moral and cognitive maturity can be underpinned by an awareness that all that happens is the gift of, and for the greater glory of, the Creator. The Council recognised that this can also be the case where a number of students are not members of the Catholic Church. Schools must respect the religious freedom and the personal conscience of individual students and their families (para. 9). This respect is 'unconditional'. However, the Church also recognises that it can never relinquish its freedom to proclaim the Gospel by offering a formation 'based on the values of Jesus Christ' (para. 8).

Building on the fundamental principles established by the Second Vatican Council, the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education explored the nature and purpose of Catholic schools in subsequent post-conciliar documents. In *Catholic Schools* (1977), for example, the Sacred Congregation reaffirmed the idea that the Catholic school can be a centre in which a 'specific concept of the world and of humanity can be developed' (para. 8). This specific concept is the 'person of Jesus Christ' who 'must be the foundation of the whole educational enterprise' (para. 34). It is his revelation that gives 'new meaning to life' and whose grace directs 'human thoughts, actions and will to God'. By nurturing this principle, the Catholic school can 'form those virtues which enable the pupil to live a new life in Christ ... enabling him/her to play his/her part in building up the Kingdom of God'. In this age of 'cultural pluralism' (cf paras. 10-15), the Catholic school is able to offer a 'sound criterion of judgement in the midst of conflicting concepts and behaviours' because 'reference to Jesus Christ teaches one to differentiate between the values which ennoble and those which degrade'. The Catholic school thus plays its part in preparing responsible citizens: the student is to be trained to 'take an active part in the construction of a community through which the building up of society is promoted'. By doing this the Catholic school can answer the needs of a society characterised by 'depersonalisation and a mass production mentality which so easily results from scientific technological developments' (para. 13). Through Christian education, young people can be given the opportunity to grow in 'the awareness of God' (para. 44), an awareness that can be found in all that is around them discerning in the 'sound of the universe the Creator whom it reveals'. In so doing, Catholic

schools will be able to develop persons who are 'inner-directed', capable of choosing freely 'in conformity with their own conscience' (para. 31).

In response to the criticism that Catholic schools make use of human institutions for 'religious and confessional purposes' (para. 19), the Sacred Congregation dismissed the claim as a 'misunderstanding of the nature and methods of Christian education' because complete education 'necessarily includes a religious dimension'. In order to integrate the process of educating the whole person, it is essential to deal also with the spiritual dimension of humanity. The task of the school is one of synthesis – synthesis of culture and faith, of faith and life. The first is reached 'by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught in the light of the Gospel; the second in the growth of virtues, (which) transform a person of virtue into a person of Christ' (paras. 37 and 47).

In three subsequent documents: *Lay Catholics in Schools: witnesses to faith* (1982), *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (1988) and *The Catholic School in the Third Millennium* (1999), the Sacred Congregation dealt with the role of the teacher in the school, with the specifically religious content of the curriculum in a Catholic school and with the evangelistic and catechetical nature of Catholic schools for the contemporary world.

The documents recognise that the Catholic school must be about freeing the young person so that he or she is not slave to the fickleness of contemporary society.

Grimmitt (1987), for example, argued that during adolescence many young people are highly vulnerable in terms of their identity and self worth; they crave acceptance. They can become, as a result, captives to materialism and instant gratification. Their greatest fear is to be 'uncool' or 'sad'. Coupled with this is the growth of individualism as revealed in the European survey of the values of youth (Barker et al, 1992). The focus on the self to the detriment of the other leads to what Duminuco (1999) calls a 'lack of coherence' (p. 145). Extreme independence leads to isolationism with all its attendant social problems. The Church stresses the crucial role of the Catholic school in a world 'devoid of human relationships' (*The Religious Dimension*, para. 11) and plagued by the threat of nuclear warfare, mass unemployment, divorce, poverty, pornography, drugs and a 'prevailing sense of religious indifference' (paras. 12-16).

In response to these threats upon the integrity of young people, the Sacred Congregation calls Catholic schools, 'through mutual love', to aim for the 'fullest development of all that is human' in order to help form men and women 'who will make the civilisation of love a reality' (*Lay Catholics*, para. 19). By doing this Catholic schools may help to establish an alternative to the indifference and isolationism plaguing modern society, aiming to make it more 'peaceful, fraternal and communitarian'.

In *The Religious Dimension of Education in the Catholic school* (1988), the Sacred Congregation explored the importance of ensuring that 'religious education' was not

confined to the specific curriculum religious education lesson. All aspects of school life should reflect belief in God who is the source and sustainer of all life. For example:

those teaching [science and technology] must not ignore the religious dimension. They should help their students to understand that positive science, and the technology allied to it, is a part of the universe created by God. . . Teachers should guide the students' work in such a way that they would be able to discover a religious dimension in the world of human history. Literary and artistic works depict the struggles of societies, of families, and individuals. . . The Christian perspective goes beyond the merely human, and offers more penetrating criteria for understanding the human struggle and mysteries of the human spirit (paras. 60-61).

The intention of the Sacred Congregation here is that in Catholic schools there must be a vision and delivery of curriculum areas that is very different from those in state schools. It is beholden on governing bodies to ensure that there is, as far as possible, no division between the sacred and the secular in Catholic education.

Furthermore, in its most recent document, the Sacred Congregation reminds the Church that the Catholic school must have 'an ecclesial identity and role' which is not a 'mere adjunct, but is a proper and specific attribute, a distinctive characteristic which permeates and informs every moment of its educational activity, is a fundamental part of its very identity and the focus of its mission' (1999, para. 11).

The fostering of the 'ecclesial dimension' must be the 'aim of all those who make

up the educating community'. Thus the responsibility for ensuring that the religious dimension of human existence pervades the whole of school life rests with the entire community.

All documents focus especially on the role of the teacher in helping the Catholic school to fulfil its distinctive mission. They 'must be men and women endowed with many gifts both natural and supernatural', who are also capable of 'giving witness to these gifts'; 'they must have a thorough cultural, professional and pedagogical training and they must be capable of genuine dialogue' (*The Religious Dimension* para. 96).

Most of all, students should be able to recognise authentic human qualities in their teachers, who, like Christ, are called to strive for what it means to be fully human and fully alive. To do this a teacher must possess 'affection, tact, understanding, serenity of spirit, a balanced judgement, patience in listening to others and prudence in the way they respond' (para. 96).

The teacher is called upon to have at all times a clear vision of what can be achieved and must be prepared to be a living witness to the example and practice of Jesus.

Only then will he or she be able to help young people 'develop a similar vision and give them the inspiration to put it into practice' (para. 96). There is a great richness in this call for Catholic school educators. In proclaiming the message of Jesus, Catholic school educators must become like Jesus.

Thus, for example, Jesus kept his message simple. He used rhyming couplets (The Beatitudes), simple stories of everyday life (The Parables) and dialogue ending on a question. Such teaching techniques recognise the integrity of the other and the dialogical nature of the teacher pupil relationship. Furthermore, parables and parabolic images, such as the 'Widow's mite', work because they appeal to the imagination. As William J Bausch (1984) and John Navone (1977) have shown, it is through the imagination that growth in faith takes place. It does not require high intellectual powers. All people are able to assimilate a message at their own level because it is the imagination that is being engaged. It is through the imagination that the 'cognitive and affective aspects of human understanding' (Carr, 1999, p. 176) are brought together.

Further, Jesus was a man of prayer. His followers remembered that he prayed often and especially at difficult times. They also remembered that he taught about prayer and that on at least one occasion taught what clearly became a significant prayer for his followers. Prayer – the route way for an evolving relationship with God – was a central feature of Jesus' teaching ministry.

Finally, Jesus' actions mirrored his apparent belief in the integrity of each person. No one was excluded. His followers remembered that he ate with both the socially elite and with those considered outcast. His witness of forgiveness, and his constant call for it, seems to have made a deep and lasting impression on his followers. Their memories, paraphrased in the Gospels, reflect a man who wrapped his entire

ministry up in an active concern for the unlovely, the unloving and the unlovable and who called his disciples (the word means ‘pupil’) to do the same.

The implications for Catholic schools and the teacher ‘in locus Christi’ are unequivocal: all aspects of school life – what is taught, how it is taught, the quality of relationships and so on – must reflect the fact that each person is a child of God and a brother or sister in Christ. As Pope Paul VI (1976), in his encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, recognised, it is the quality and coherence of the witness that will attract attention, especially of the young.

Today young people do not listen seriously to teachers, but to witnesses, and if they do listen to teachers it is because they are witnesses. (para. 41)

The *General Directory for Catechesis*, prepared by the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy (1997), reaffirmed the Church’s vision for Catholic schools. Their special function is to:

- develop in the school community an atmosphere animated by a spirit of liberty and charity;
- enable young people, while developing their own personalities, to grow at the same time in the new life (of baptism);
- orientate the whole of human culture to the message of salvation (para. 259).

It recognised that the Catholic school is, for these reasons, a ‘most important locus for human and Christian formation’. They are capable, not only of proclaiming the Kingdom of God, but also of ‘harmoniously building up the whole family of God

for the purpose of establishing worldwide peace and justice' (*The Religious Dimension*, para. 45).

While the Second Vatican Council and post-conciliar documents defined the current understanding of Catholic schools in the world at large, it is necessary for the purposes of this piece of work to examine the situation in England and Wales.

iv) The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales' vision for Catholic schools

Since the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, the Church in England and Wales has placed education at the head of its priorities. In the first Synod of Westminster in 1852, the Bishops stated that the 'first necessity is a sufficient provision of education, adequate for the needs of the poor . . .we should prefer the establishment of good schools to every other work' (Guy, 1886). In a succession of Education Acts, culminating in that of 1944, the provision and funding of Catholic schools has been enshrined and protected as part of the English and Welsh education system.

There was little need for the English and Welsh Churches to pronounce on the principles of Catholic schooling prior to the 1970s. Up to this decade the schools tended to serve a closely-knit Catholic community and their purpose was well understood. However, the significant changes, described earlier, were beginning to

impact on Catholic society during this decade and these triggered a realisation that maintenance of the current situation was not an option. These changes, as has been described, included the shift in theology and ecclesiology heralded by the Second Vatican Council and the changes in community and family structures engendered by greater mobility, the growth in the youth culture and the impact of scientific and technological advances. The Bishops established a working group in 1978 to examine the educative task of the Church in the light of this growing pluralism, secularisation and urbanisation of society. Its report, *Signposts and Homecomings* (1981), set the agenda for Catholic schools in England and Wales well into the twenty-first century. It contended that Catholic schools were more important now than at any time in their 150-year history. This was because, ‘in an age like ours, in which secularism and materialism have robbed us of any sense of ultimate meaning in life’, there was a ‘fundamental point in the Church’s teaching, which corresponds to a crying need of our age’ (p. 88). This ‘fundamental point’ is the ‘person of Jesus Christ’, who ‘gives hope where there is division and despair and who is communicated through the Church’s educative mission’.

The report recognised that the Catholic school is in an unparalleled position because it is able to bring together education for life and education into faith in a unique conjunction. In other words, whilst developing academic excellence the school is able to provide the right environment for growth in spirituality and faith. What is ultimately distinctive about a Catholic school, it claimed, is that its life is ‘based on a vision of Christ’ in which ‘all learning, growing, service, freedom and

relationships are seen as part of a growth in the knowledge, love and experience of God' (p. 99).

It was this report that led eventually to the review and re-establishment of the national body, which oversees Catholic education in these countries – the now named Catholic Education Service. It also paved the way for what was to become the extremely important National Project for Catechesis and Education, which was established in 1982 and which has been responsible for developing the wide range of teaching resources now used in parishes and schools.

Since that time there has been a wealth of publications on the nature and purpose of Catholic schools from the Church's advisory bodies in England and Wales. The National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisors has, for example, produced guidance on attainment levels and on assessment, recording and reporting in religious education.

The Bishops of England and Wales have issued pastoral letters and statements outlining their vision for Catholic schools in this country. One of the most important was their 1996 *Principles, Practices and Concerns: A Statement from the Bishops of England and Wales*. It stated that Catholic schools and colleges are established to support Catholic parents in their responsibility for the academic, physical, spiritual, moral and religious education of their children in accordance with the teachings of

the Church. It explored five ways in which Catholic schools must witness to their distinctiveness.

First, there must be a 'search for excellence'. The search for excellence is seen as an integral part of the spiritual quest. Christians are called to seek perfection in all aspects of their lives. In Catholic education, students and students must, therefore, be given every opportunity to develop their talents to the full.

Second, each individual is regarded as 'unique'. Within Catholic schools and colleges, each individual is seen as made in God's image and loved by Him. All students must, therefore, be valued and respected as individuals so that they may be helped to fulfil their unique role in creation.

Third, Catholic schools should educate 'the whole person'. This aim is based on the belief that the human and the divine are inseparable. In Catholic schools and colleges, management, organisation, academic and pastoral work, prayer and worship, should all aim to prepare young people for their life of Christians in the community.

Fourth, Catholic schools should aim to include all members of the community. The Church's belief in the value of each individual leads Catholic schools and colleges to have the duty to care for the poor and to educate those who are socially, academically, physically or emotionally disadvantaged.

Finally, Catholic education must aim to offer young people the experience of life in a community founded on Gospel values. In religious education in particular, the Church aims to transmit to them the Catholic faith. Both through religious education and in the general life of the school, young people should be prepared to serve as witnesses to moral and spiritual values in the wider world.

In their Low Week 2000 Statement, *Religious education in Catholic Schools*, the Bishops reiterated the importance of the relationship between the home, school and parish. The family, *The Declaration on Christian Education* (Vatican 11, 1965) reminded educators, is the ‘domestic church’ where children are first loved and introduced to the beliefs and practices of the Church (para. 3). Parents are the first and primary educators of their children. The school’s task is to support them, and the parish, by promoting ‘the well-being and freedom of every person, made in the image and likeness of God and finding fulfilment in God alone’ (para. 3). Through the pattern of daily prayer, the celebration of the Sacraments, works of charity and a striving for justice in all it does, a Catholic school can be a ‘catechetical community in which the content and the life of faith is shared’.

The Catholic Education Service has also produced documentation for Catholic schools: on spiritual and moral education, differentiation in a Catholic school, the *Religious education Curriculum Directory* (1996) and a host of advisory documents for teachers and governors, including the important school self-review programme, *Evaluating the Distinctive Nature of a Catholic School* (revised 1999). The

introductory section on 'Vision and Mission' draws heavily on the Bishops' 1996 *Statement*. It reminds teachers that education is an integral part of the Church's mission to proclaim God as the Creator, Christ as the Redeemer and the Holy Spirit as inspirer of all that is good in human living.

Everything connected with human living, and the means by which we understand and come to terms with it, is part of the process of God's self-revelation to humanity....Therefore the process of education is holy, and since the world in which we live belongs to God, all teaching and learning are related to God in some way. (p. A-1)

The materials go on to explore aspects of school life, for example, the curriculum, the pastoral care support systems and the relationships in the school and with all those connected with it. The assumption is that students learn 'from the values and principles (of the curriculum), from other activities offered by the school and from the quality of the relationships they experience' (p. 8).

The materials explain that the Catholic school as a whole, and every part of it, is religious, 'since everything ultimately relates to God: All aspects of the curriculum and its delivery must reflect the fact that Christ is the foundation of the educational enterprise in a Catholic school (p. 8). Indeed, Christ's example of love and service 'should characterise the life and work of the Catholic educational community, both in itself and in its relationships with the wider society. Mutual respect and support should clearly witness to belief in the uniqueness and dignity of the individual,

made in God's image and loved by God; and the education offered should enable all to develop their talents to the full and to fulfil their unique role in creation' (p 9).

Of great importance, given the increasing variety in the religious background of contemporary Catholic school students, is the attitude to people of other faiths. In 1997 the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales produced a consultation paper, *Catholic schools and other Faiths*. This provided guidance for schools so that the spiritual and moral development of children of other faith backgrounds could be furthered in Catholic schools and so that Catholic children could begin to develop the skills of interfaith dialogue. There is a recognition here that children in Catholic schools must be taught, as O'Leary (1999) puts it, 'to sing the powerful song and have the skills of listening to the powerful songs of other faiths' (p. 217).

Conclusion

The individual Catholic school's Vision and Mission Statements are the places where the fundamental principles enunciated in Church documents are concretised. As Bryk et al (1993) recognised, a particular strength of the Catholic school is the emphasis, found in the schools' aims and objectives, on 'the primacy of the spiritual and moral life as realised in the Catholic culture' (p. 301). Similarly, in a survey of twenty-five Mission Statements of Catholic secondary schools in England, Gerald Grace (1998) also found ample evidence of attempts by Catholic schools to localise

the Church' vision in their specific situation: 'We aim to develop a love for and commitment to Jesus Christ, the Catholic Church and the Gospel message of love, peace, truth and justice'. Statements such as these reflect the importance the Church places on moral and spiritual education, the dignity of the person, the importance of community and the notion of service, and, as surveys of OFSTED reports have shown, the deliberate and distinctive ethos of a Christ centred education is a major strength of Catholic schools (Catholic Education Service, 1994 and 1995). The fact that a Labour government of the twenty-first century, despite the hostile reception of the idea from within its own ranks, is calling for an increase in faith school provision is an indication of the perceived value of such schools for contemporary English and Welsh society.

The vision of a Catholic school centred on the person of Jesus Christ has been carefully explored in both international and national Catholic Church writings. Leaving aside for a moment the secular objection to Confessional schooling, the claims about what should be distinctive about a Catholic school seem reasonable. Catholic schools clearly cannot *not* transmit the Catholic tradition of faith and life and educate within it. Similarly, their vision and mission cannot be the same as publicly maintained schools. There may be questions about the nature of that faith and life or how it is possible to 'educate' and 'transmit' at the same time (T. McLaughlin, 1999), but the central focus of the Catholic school – the person of Jesus Christ – is well established.

Before examining the research previously undertaken in England and Wales regarding students' understanding and experiences of Catholic schools, the thesis explores more deeply the implications of this vision for Catholic school educators and asks how Catholic schools might be re-imagined for the twenty-first century in order to meet the spiritual and moral needs of the next generation of Catholic school students in Wales.

Chapter Two

Re-imagining the Catholic school in the third millennium

Introduction

The Catholic Church and Catholic school educators have come to realise, that the ecclesial and social context of Catholic schools in Wales, as in the rest of the UK, is very different from the ecclesial and social context of the schools when they were first established. The task for Catholic school educators is to begin the process of re-imagining the vision and mission of Catholic schools in order to ensure that they are better equipped to meet the specific needs of young people in twenty-first century Wales as well as the needs of the Church and of society as a whole.

Re-imagined, Catholic school educators claim that they can continue to assist the parish and wider Church in the catechetical task of nurturing Catholic families and young people in the faith. Furthermore, they claim that they can also assist the parish and wider Church in the evangelistic and catechetical task of accompanying an unchurched Catholic population along the journey of re-awakening. Finally, they also claim that they can assist the Church in its evangelistic task of proclaiming what it regards as the Good News of Jesus Christ to those who may never have heard it. Importantly, they must do all this without building walls of exclusivity that could hinder the religious and spiritual development of any student.

In the midst of all the pressures and challenges facing them many Catholic school educators believe that Catholic schools are in an irreplaceable position to offer all students, including those who appear to feel marginalized in the Catholic educational enterprise, an alternative. It is, they claim, an alternative that proclaims the joy, hope and love of following Jesus, that calls for people to love one another and be concerned for all, that demands they care for the world God has made, that provides opportunities for prayer and worship so that the love of Jesus is deepened, and that calls people to be critical of all the pressures upon them and to say there is a better way – the way of Jesus.

Catholic school educators are called to recognise, and take confidence from the fact, that Catholic schools might still fulfil the aim set down in 1852 by the First General Synod of Westminster, but in a different way that responds to the vastly changed cultural and religious situation outlined in chapter one.

The message of the Catholic school is one of amazing human worth and dignity. It is good news and a challenging message. It is our happy task to tell people that the Kingdom of God is within them. Ours is the joy of attempting to speak the Gospel in a new language. Ours may the joy of seeing the light of the Gospel shining in people's eyes afresh (Prendergast, 2002, p. 17).

i) Models of Catholic education

To assist in the task of re-imagining Catholic schools in the twenty-first century, Joseph McCann (2003, p. 165) has provided Catholic school educators with a helpful outline of the main philosophical and ecclesiological positions that underpin Catholic schools in western society today. They are based on H. Richard Niebuhr's (1951) exploration of five possible relationships between Christianity and culture: 'Christ against culture', 'Christ transforming culture', 'Christ in paradox with culture', 'Christ above culture' and 'Christ with culture'. These models can be set out in tabulated form (table 2:1)

Table 2:1 The different kinds of Christian school ethos

	1. Christ against culture	2. Christ in paradox with culture	4. Christ above culture	2. Christ transforming culture	5. Christ with culture
Typical action	Ignoring culture	Confronting culture	Relating to culture	Humanity culture	Assimilating culture
Christian mission	—	Kerygma <i>announcing</i>	Leitourgia <i>liturgy</i>	Diakonia <i>ministry</i>	Koinonia <i>community</i>
Religious presence	Sectarian	Evangelical	Sanctuary	Social	Civic
Kind of school	Fundamentalist school	Proclaiming school	Worshipping school	Serving school	Celebrating school

Many Catholic schools probably have elements of all five of these models in their make-up, but there are some models that may be better able to meet the needs of every member of the staff and student population of the school, and which may form the basis of the attempt to re-imagine them in the twenty-first century.

The first model of Christian education – Christ against culture – is a 'sectarian response of defensive isolation' (McCann, 2003, p. 165). It has a 'fundamentalist'

philosophy, regarding the rest of society as intrinsically evil, which leads to the creation of barriers to try and isolate children from that society. Because it is a contradiction of Christ's own ministry and subsequent commission to the Church, it is not a model that many Catholic school educators will feel at ease with.

The second model of Christian education is that of 'Christ in paradox with culture'. Its ethos is that of 'confrontation' with culture as a consequence of the theology and mission of proclaiming the Word of God to the world. This kind of school's main emphasis is, therefore, on Kerygma, that is the announcing of the Good News about Jesus Christ to a population whose values need that challenge. It is an evangelistic model of Christian education and one that some Catholic school educators may feel appropriate in their own particular setting.

The third model, 'Christ above culture' recognises that culture is important but that the ultimate 'end' of human living is eternal life with God. The focus here is on liturgy and prayer. It is a worshipping model of Christian education and one that some Catholic school educators may feel should be an integral aspect of Catholic school life.

The fourth model is 'Christ transforming culture'. In this model the Catholic school aims to transform culture by the Christian Gospel. There is an engagement with contemporary culture in this model but the focus is on change, particularly change in terms of fairness and justice in society. It is a serving model of Christian

education and one that many Catholic school educators should feel some resonance with in terms of Christ's own preferential option for the poor.

The final model of Catholic education is 'Christ with culture'. Here the world is not regarded as something that is in conflict with Christianity. Catholic schools in this model are celebratory, assimilating the culture and creating a supportive community that is at one with the wider ethos. The focus of such schools is on 'community', of which the school is an integral member. Where the local community espouses values that are in harmony with those of Christ, Catholic school educators might support such a model of Catholic school life.

As indicated in chapter one, Welsh society has become increasingly secular towards the end of the twentieth century (Brierley 2000, CYTUN, 2001). The prevalent social context of many of the young people in Catholic schools in Wales is the same as that for the rest of western society: individualistic, secular and materialistic. The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education in its statement on Catholic schools for the third millennium (1998) argues that Catholic schools 'in a spirit of love' must offer, in opposition to this, an education 'of human and Christian formation' (para. 15). The models provided by McCann suggest patterns of educational practice that can assist Catholic schools in their analysis of what will make a successful Catholic school in the twenty-first century. Different emphases may be necessary depending upon the particular situation of each school and the particular make-up of the staff and student population. However, at the very heart of the Catholic school's

educational mission is a belief in the God-given dignity of each and every person and in the significance, value and worth of all human life. It is God-given because every human being is considered to be created in the image of God. For Catholics, each person is created in love by God and is destined to share in the eternal life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the foundation on which Catholic school educators need to build the re-imagined Catholic school of the twenty-first century.

What differentiates Catholic schools from a secular based schooling is this belief that Christ is at the heart of the student, the teacher and the school as a whole. But how can this be accomplished in practice?

ii) Establishing the heart of Catholic education

Jim Gallagher (2001 and 2004) sets out four dimensions that might inform the process of re-imagining the twenty-first century Catholic school in Wales and its relationship to the prevalent culture. First, he writes, Catholic school educators must encourage a sense of belonging. This is the spirit of welcome and community that every member of the school should experience. To accomplish this there is a need to develop the shared vision that is inspired, motivated and challenged by the belief in Creation and God as Trinity that the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education calls for. It refers to the common shared vision and to the healthy and warm

relationships that should exist among members of staff, students and their parents or guardians. (Gallagher, 2001, p. 178)

Second, there must be a sense of 'ultimate meaning'. This refers to the many opportunities a Catholic school can provide to explore and reflect upon the important questions of life. All teachers of a Catholic school can help students consider their questions in 'the light of Christ' (J. Gallagher, 2001, p. 178). When this occurs, knowledge becomes 'wisdom and a life vision' (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education. 1999, para. 10). Thus, all aspects of education 'do not present only knowledge to be attained but also values to be argued and truths to be discovered' (para. 14).

Education is about opening minds to the life-long search for a wisdom that is deeper than information, for an understanding of life that goes beyond knowledge, for an appreciation of the dignity of the other that is respectful of difference (Lane, 2003, p. 59).

The third dimension is 'listening'. This involves listening to the students' own stories, their own journeys of faith, 'without judgement or criticism' (J Gallagher, 2001, p. 179). It is about accompanying them on that journey 'Listening', though, is also about providing opportunities for the students to listen to each other and to listen within. The opportunities for retreats, reflection and prayer that Catholic schools can provide allow students to reflect upon their own individual needs,

experiences and desires. This means making room also for the sacramental dimensions of the Christian life.

For Christians, the universe is charged with the grandeur of God and a sacramental presence. [Furthermore] within the sacramental order of existence, the Eucharist is understood as the location where memory and imagination interact most creatively (Lane, 2003, p. 60).

The fourth dimension is 'doing'. This refers to the moral and social development of students. It is about the encouragement of service, both within the school and in the community beyond the school. Individual, local and global issues can be explored, discussed and tackled. Students can be empowered to participate with such agencies as CAFOD and the SVP. When this is done, not only do the students serve the needs of others, but also they themselves are enriched in many ways. In this way Catholic schools become a 'prophetic voice' (Lane, 2003, p. 59) on behalf of the poor within society, promoting a faith that 'performs justice in the name of the coming reign of God'.

If the school sets out to enable students to experience their dignity as persons, something of God's love will touch their lives and enhance their self-worth. If we create such a setting in which our students can grow as persons then they may be more ready and able to come to an understanding of the dignity and worth of each person as expressed in our Christian faith and belief (Gallagher, 2001, p. 278).

This profound respect for persons is at the heart of an educational philosophy that has the sense of belonging to a community at its heart. Catholic schooling is, to use a line from Parker Palmer, the ‘pursuit of truth in the company of friends’ (Palmer, 1998, p 90). It is a respect that should ensure that every member of the community is included in its work and that recognises the fundamental interdependence of all. It is where ‘everyone is welcome, everyone is told, everyone is asked, everyone is heard, everyone is included, everyone is involved, and everyone, ultimately, is happy’ (Prendergast, 2003, p 108).

Community is an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace, the flowing of personal identity and integrity into the world of relationships (Palmer, 1998, p. 90).

In a similar vein, Rainer Marie Rilke, describes the educational community as a ‘community of trust’ held together by the ‘grace of great things’ (1986, p. 4). When education works best the ‘grace of great things’ evokes and welcomes such virtues as a welcoming of diversity, honesty, humility, creativity and freedom.

For Dermot Lane (2003), the Catholic school is a ‘community of memory’ (p. 58), that is, a community dedicated to keeping the ‘prophetic memory’ of Jesus alive.

This remembering (Lane uses the Greek word ‘anamnesis’) reactivates and reactualises the past in the present in a way that transforms lives now. Teachers in a Catholic school are called to be ‘bearers of the memory of Jesus’. When they do this

they can be agents of hope in a world that, as we have seen, has become aimless, apathetic and empty.

The Catholic school loses its purpose without constant reference to the Gospel. It derives its necessary energy for all its educational work from Christ. It thus creates in the school community an atmosphere permeated with the Gospel spirit of freedom and love. In this setting students will experience their dignity as persons before they know its definition. In this way the school is faithful to the claims of the person and of God; it makes its own contribution to human liberation' (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977), para. 55).

This atmosphere of the 'Gospel spirit of freedom and love' is generated by a spirit of welcome, by a strong pastoral care system, by supportive and healthy relationships, by a balanced system of discipline, rewards and sanctions, by the possibility of starting anew with guidance and support and by the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum that addresses the needs and capabilities of each and every student.

What differentiates Catholic schooling from a secular based schooling is the belief that God created each and every human being and that the person of Jesus Christ is at the heart of the student, the teacher, the school and the entire educational endeavour. This belief formed the basis for the Second Vatican Council's (1965) declaration that the Catholic school is essentially a community whose ethos is

‘enlivened by the Gospel spirit’ (*Declaration on Christian Education*, para. 6). This vision is founded also on the concept of God as Trinity. God is a God of loving inter-relationship prior to Creation. Hence each human being develops fully as a person within a community of persons within an inter-relationship of love and respect as a member of a community of persons.

When Catholic education nurtures them [staff and students] in respect, reverence and responsibility . . . when it encourages people to grow in ‘right relationship’ with God, self, others and creation ,when it fosters the full development of their talents and gifts, when it nurtures them in values and virtues that are life-giving for self and others – in sum, when it educates for life for all – then it is truly ‘saving souls’ (Groome, 2002, p. 40).

iii) The role of the teacher

A fundamental factor that must be addressed by Catholic school educators in re-imagining catholic schools for the twenty-first century, and one that is crucial in the schools’ attempts to fulfil the vision enunciated by Vatican documents, is the insight, identity and integrity of the individual teacher.

Teaching has an extraordinary moral depth and is one of the most excellent and creative human activities, for the teacher does not write on inanimate material, but on the very spirit of human beings (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998, para. 19)

In Catholic secondary schools in the Archdiocese of Cardiff (Catholic Education Service data, 2004), 53% of teachers are non-Catholic and 47% are Catholic. However, on taking up their posts all teachers become members of an educating community whose inspiration and motivation is Jesus Christ. Such diversity amongst staff is an opportunity not a challenge but, in the light of my research, Catholic education managers will need to explore how they can ensure that as many staff as possible are making the vision a reality in the daily life of the school.

The teacher is not simply a professional person who systematically transmits a body of knowledge in the context of a school: 'teacher' is to be understood as 'educator' – one who helps to form human persons (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1992, para. 16).

Teachers in Catholic schools are not expected to simply deal with the intellectual dimension of the person. They are also involved at different times and in different ways in their cultural, emotional, spiritual and religious dimensions.

The purpose of instruction at school is education: the development of persons from within, freeing them from the conditioning that prevents them from becoming fully integrated human beings (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1972, para. 29).

This is what makes all Catholic education evangelistic. Pope Paul VI (1975) linked evangelisation with the struggle for human advancement, that is, with the struggle to overcome everything that diminishes people. This happens when a teacher within

the school recognises that ‘ the heart of education is the heart of the educator’

(Groome, 2003, p. 35).

St Augustine (354-430), in an exploration of the ‘teacher within each person’, wrote that we learn something not from the teacher on the outside, ‘but from the teacher on the inside’ (Groome, 2003, p. 41). The ‘teacher within’ is the divine presence at the core of the person. Augustine believed that the teacher must recognise this divine capacity of students to be active learners and so deliberately craft the teaching/learning dynamic to engage their souls. Teachers should not treat students as passive learners in a context of what Freire (1970) called ‘banking education’ (p. 53) but should help students to learn to think for themselves, or as Palmer (1998) put it, ‘the teacher within the teacher’ must ‘awaken the teacher within the students’ (p.54). In this way education can honour the divine spark within each individual.

Films about effective teachers such as *Ahead of the Class*, *Dead Poet’s Society*, *Mr Holland’s Opus*, *Blackboard Jungle* and *To Sir with Love*, all, in one way or another, portray an educator who refused to accept mediocrity and negativity but who demanded the highest expectations. The students in those films became the best people they could be because they had experienced affirmation and support. Their teachers were determined to resist a social fatalism in the students. They helped them to rise above negative influences and alter their own destiny. They engaged the students, and the ‘teacher within them’, so that they became active participants in their own learning with the skills to be life-long learners. The teachers created a

respectful and challenging environment, refusing to engage in discrimination or bias of any sort. There was never any diminishment of personhood but always an atmosphere of welcome, inclusivity, appreciation and affirmation. Such teachers brought life to their students, building up their self-esteem. These attitudes will find a great resonance amongst Catholic school educators steeped in a theology which proclaims that no one is ever determined, by personal disposition, cultural influences or social circumstances. Such powerful influences notwithstanding, these attitudes help to ensure that both teachers and students remain agents in their own becoming, enhancing their ability to choose for life. As Irenaeus (c. 175) taught, ‘the glory of God is a human person fully alive’.

Catholic school managers would do well to remind all teachers that, as Parker Palmer (1998, p. 2) concludes, teaching, like all human activities, ‘emerges from one’s inwardness’. As one teaches, one projects the ‘condition of [one’s] soul’ onto one’s students (p. 2). Thus, the manner of one’s teaching reflects one’s innermost self. This insight is one that, as we have seen, pervades Catholic documents on education. What is taught is often less important than how it is taught. Students remember a teacher because of their goodness, sincerity and example long after they have forgotten what they actually said and taught.

This is why Catholic school managers must encourage teachers in Catholic schools to ask, to reflect upon, and to find answers to, the question, ‘Who is the self who teaches?’ Palmer calls upon all teachers to recognise that teaching holds a mirror to

the soul and that one must be willing to look in that mirror in acknowledging that the quality of one's selfhood can form, or deform, the way one relates to students, the subject and the entire educational enterprise. By exploring their own inner life, by going on their own inner journey, by becoming familiar with their own inner terrain, their more sure-footed their teaching will become. 'We teach who we are' writes Palmer (1998, p. 54) and, whether one likes it or not, a teacher takes into the classroom their own lives and spirituality.

For teachers to believe in the students and to encourage their discovery of hidden talents, indeed their sense of self, teachers need to believe in their own selves, to value and treasure their own abilities and gifts (Palmer, 1998, p. 54).

Good teaching, claims Palmer, cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the 'identity and the integrity of the teacher'. (p. 10). A teacher's 'authority', therefore, comes from his or her 'inner life'. The root of the word 'authority' is 'author' which can provide an insight into how the successful teacher's 'authority' is exercised. When the teacher 'authors' his or her own words and actions, rather than playing a scripted role at great remove from his or her own heart; students appreciate the sincerity and integrity of the teacher. When teachers depend on coercive power, they in fact have no authority at all. When teachers are authentic witnesses, they facilitate, to borrow a phrase from Erikson (1964), 'generativity'. On the one hand, this term suggests creativity, the 'ongoing possibility that teachers can help co-create the world' (Parker, p. 49). On the other

hand, it suggests the endless emergence of the generations, where ‘elders look back towards the young to help them find a future that the elders cannot be part of’ (p. 49). Thus, generativity in teaching is ‘creativity in the service of the young’.

The teacher’s task is to create the space in which a relational way of knowing can be established. The Catholic Church, as we have seen, recognises that it cannot place unreasonable expectations upon the shoulders of its schools or staff. All the teacher can do is to teach from his or her own authentic integrity and identity. When it is grounded in a sense of the sacred, even by staff who do not share a Catholic vision of what that means, the teaching and learning environment becomes sacred soil.

Conclusion

If this is a re-imagined vision for Catholic education on the threshold of the third millennium, the question remains, what is the reality behind the rhetoric? Is such a vision of Catholic education being realised in Catholic secondary schools in Wales? Are the carefully enunciated principles of Catholic schooling in England and Wales being met in practice?

This study concentrates on the experiences and attitudes of Catholic secondary school students regarding their schools. The premise is that their insights can help to inform the debate and analysis about what is happening, and what should happen, in

Catholic schools in practice. However, before reflecting upon the findings of the research underpinning this thesis, there is a need to examine previous research into the experiences of Catholic school students in England and Wales.

Chapter Three

Research into the experiences of Catholic school students in England and Wales

Introduction

Although there is a wealth of material exploring the nature of Catholic schools in England and Wales in principle, there has been relatively little research on what is actually happening in practice. This chapter places the thesis in its research context by examining the ways in which the effectiveness of the Catholic education system in England and Wales has been monitored and evaluated in recent years.

i) Research prior to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)

Early studies of Catholic schools tended to focus on student attainment rather than on their educational experiences. One of the earliest, for example, was a study of Middlesbrough schools conducted by Floud, Halsey and Martin (1956). They found that Catholic working class students gained an unusually large number of grammar school places compared to their county school colleagues, though there was no attempt to discover if this was because of the expectations of the home or because of the standards of education offered by Catholic primary schools. Similarly, in an ILEA (1968) survey of the literacy skills of 1,600 eight year olds, students in

Catholic schools attained higher reading scores than those from other types of schools, but again there was no attempt to analyse why this was the case.

Before the Second Vatican Council had made its impact on Catholic life, J B Mays (1962, 1964 and 1965), in studies of Catholic schools in inner city Liverpool, found that the Catholic community, supervised by powerful patriarchal priests, provided cohesion for its schools. The partnership between the school and the parish was strengthened by the fact that many of the teachers were taught and then trained to teach in the same area. His criticism of Catholic schools was that they tended to 'place emphasis on indoctrination and conformity to authority and dogma rather than on wide cultural areas and the attainment of a balanced, liberal view of human life' (1964, p. 67).

Also in Liverpool, Joan Brothers (1964) in what was probably the first major empirical research on Catholic schools in Britain, examined the expansion of grammar schools and how these affected the students and the community in general. Her study was based on intensive interviews with priests and teachers but also, for the first time on such a large scale, the students themselves. The most significant finding was the discovery of the changing status and role of the parish in the lives of the grammar school students involved in the research. Compared to the situation only ten years earlier, many saw the parish as having little or no significance in their lives. Education had become more significant than religion. Their education had

given them an insight into new ways of behaving and new attitudes that were different from those held by earlier generations.

On the other hand, Lawlor (1965), in an analysis of Catholic schools in London, discovered evidence of a significant religious commitment in the students. She was critical, however, of the tendency of Catholic schools to be insular, inward looking and too focused on the heavenly rewards to come. They lacked what would now be called elements of outreach and mission in their ethos.

In research that was also undertaken before the Second Vatican Council, Spencer (1971) found that 75% of those who had some Catholic schooling were weekly church attenders. This was virtually the same as the 74% who did not attend a Catholic school but had received some form of parish Catechism lessons. In 1968 he researched the attitudes of 7,722 adult Catholics. Of those who had not attended Catholic schools, 25% practised their faith. Of those who had attended Catholic schools, 40% continued to practise their faith. However, Spencer was very critical of Catholic schools. In his 1971 publication, he described them as 'divisive', a hindrance to the ecumenical movement and a denial of the missionary nature of the Church. He felt that Catholic schools demanded docility rather than enquiry and conformity rather than creativity. The preoccupation with religious education, he claimed, led to a neglect of moral education and its goals were archaic, sustaining a ghetto mentality. It was not sufficient, he wrote, to continue Catholic schools simply out of respect for those who had founded and developed them. He called for

extensive research into Catholic education so that their effectiveness could be assessed properly. As the decade progressed this need began to be addressed.

ii) Research into Catholic schools after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)

In the first serious study of school religious influence following the Second Vatican Council, Taylor (1970) found that the students' family socio-economic group had a correlation with religious practice. In general, the lower the economic grouping, the less frequent the practice. However, this was not the case with Catholic families.

Students at Catholic schools showed much higher levels of belief than those of other schools, regardless of their socio-economic grouping. They ascribed their greater interest to school influence but Taylor believed that the evidence suggested that the greatest influence came from the home.

Also in 1970, but in a much smaller study, Lindsay compared one Catholic and one state school in Glasgow trying to discover the role of the school in the community. She found that the Catholic school tended to give a higher priority to 'good behaviour' than did the state comprehensive. There was a lower delinquency rate in the Catholic school but a higher academic achievement level in the state school. As in the May study, Lindsay found that the priest had a very important supervisory and supportive role. However, when asked about the purpose of schooling, both

Catholic and state school students agreed that the main function of schools was to help them to get a good job.

The first major series of research projects on Catholic schools, called for by Spencer, occurred at the University of Surrey under the supervision of Hornsby-Smith (1978). Thomas (1972) compared two independent girl's schools with the two boy's schools surveyed by Lambert (1968, 1970). One was a Catholic convent school and one a Church of England school. The questionnaires, which were based on Lambert's, were completed by 139 senior girls in the summer of 1972. Extended interviews with a selection of the girls were also undertaken. Thomas compared their perceptions of school goals, their adaptation to the school regime and their general social and moral attitudes. The six attitude scales constructed dealt with Christian morality, anti-intellectualism in general and the acceptance of woman's traditional role. She found that the convent school was a powerful institution for religious and moral socialisation. The students in the Catholic school were far more likely than their Anglican counterparts to strive for academic and sporting achievement and at the same time were more concerned about family life and were more negative towards modern art, modern drama and television.

Margaret Petit (1975) applied Thomas's work to senior students in three Catholic comprehensive schools in the south of England and one LEA secondary modern school. A total of 578 'fifth formers' completed questionnaires along with the two schools used by Thomas. The students in the state sector schools were given a list of

eight possible goals and were asked to indicate what they considered the schools 'were trying to do', what they 'should do' and what they were 'succeeding in doing' for each goal. The findings show that while the three Catholic schools differ only slightly from each other, the difference between them and the LEA school was more marked. The three Catholic schools put more emphasis on the teaching of doctrine: 69.3% compared to 44% in the LEA school. The practice of Christian values was also rated more highly in the Catholic schools: 78.3% compared to 59%. On moral values and the ability to recognise right from wrong, it was 69.3% compared to 60%. The Catholic schools, however, were less successful in developing the student's individual talents: 25.6% compared to the LEA school's 44%.

Of interest is the comparison between what the students say the school tried to achieve and their assessment of that achievement. In each case there was a wide margin between the students' perceptions of what the schools were trying to do and the students' perceptions of what they achieved. For example, while 78% of students of the Catholic schools stated that the school tries to put into practice Christian values, only 40% thought that the school actually achieved this goal. On the question of morality, 64% thought the schools tried to enable students to recognise right from wrong, only 34% said they succeeded. On developing student's individual talents, the figures are 42% and 23%.

There were also some interesting findings on the nature of students' adaptation to the school system and the goals pursued. On a five-mode reaction scale, students

were asked which of the following reactions they would have if they were in a position of authority: conformity, retreatism, ritualism, innovation or rebellion. Little evidence of rebellion or retreatism emerged from the findings. Conformity was the dominant mode chosen by between 40% and 60% of the all students. The widest variation between schools was the ritualism mode, that is, the rejection of the school goals whilst going through the motion of pursuing those goals. This suggested to Petit that the authoritarian methods of socialisation in Catholic schools were particularly likely to result in this mode of adaptation by young Catholics who went through the motions of religious adherence without internalising the religious values.

The students were also asked about religious and moral beliefs and attitudes. Sixteen controversial statements were listed. Questions on belief in God and Jesus Christ were based on the studies of Glock and Stark (1965) in the United States. Only 20% of students in the Catholic schools selected the statement 'I know God really exists and I have no doubts about it', while 40% chose 'While I have some doubts, I feel I do believe in God'. However, there was even less certainty in the LEA school. The statement 'I don't believe in God' was accepted by 1.3% of students in the Catholic schools, compared to 8% in the LEA school. 'Jesus is the divine Son of God and I have no doubts about it' was selected by 20.3% of Catholic school students, compared to 11% in the LEA school. 'I'm not entirely sure there was such a person as Jesus' scored 8% in the Catholic school, but 31% in the LEA school.

On the morality and religion questions there was little difference between the two sets of students. Many appeared to consider that religion had little relevance to their lives or the forming of their moral values. For example, 'Schools should encourage children to make up their own minds on controversial matters' scored 98% in both sectors. 'Students ought to obey their teachers without question' scored 25% in Catholic schools and 28% in the LEA school. 'Families today should be limited to two or three children' scored 54% and 52%, and 'It is wrong to have sexual relations before marriage' scored 14% and 17% in Catholic schools and LEA schools respectively.

So, although Catholic schools appeared to have some success in stabilising belief in God, there was less success in inculcating moral attitudes in harmony with those of the Church. Petit's study was relatively small scale and in fact there were wide variations between the Catholic schools so the figures need to be treated with caution. Significantly, the influence of family values and practice appeared to be of more importance in terms of the effects on religious behaviour and belief than those of the schools.

Johanna Fitzpatrick (1974) used similar research to respond to the findings of a survey undertaken by the Southwark Diocese Education and Youth Commissions. The survey was carried out in all Catholic secondary and middle schools in the Diocese, involving 10,921 boys and 11,032 girls. The survey was based on attendance at Mass and aimed to obtain reliable information on, for example, the

age ranges most liable to lapsation. The survey found that although 86% of boys and 85% of girls attended Church when they were eleven, by the time they were fifteen, the figures were 54% of boys and 60% of girls.

Fitzpatrick used focused interviews with 48 students in their 'fourth year'. She measured seven outcomes to assess the stages of religious disaffection: response to RE lessons, belief in God, belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ, Mass attendance, voluntary prayer, reception of communion and attendance at confession. Data was also collected on school, sex, academic ability, social class, ethnic origin, family position, family mass attendance, parental religion and parental practice.

In his analysis of these data, Hornsby-Smith (1978) found that there was a close relationship between the changing practices of the students and the home environment. He found three common themes in the students' process of religious socialisation.

First, there were signs of rebellion against the school and church authorities as the young people struggle for the personal autonomy of adulthood. In the search for identity, the peer group for many was more important than religion.

Second, many students found the Church as an institution incomprehensible. Mass and RE lessons were 'boring' or irrelevant and a more individualistic form of religion was sought. The nature of the reaction of young people to tradition and authority was illustrated by such statements as:

‘No one really wants RE – only the teachers and the priests’,
‘It doesn’t matter what the Church thinks; it’s what I think’,
‘I’d say I’m a Christian, not a Catholic because they believe in the Pope and everything attached to grandeur. I believe in worshipping God and nothing else’,
‘All these bishops and things think that their religion is the only one; I don’t like that’.

Third, part of the young person’s rejection of Catholicism came from a lack of development or growth in the religious socialisation process. This resulted in an impoverished conceptualisation of God and religion and a fear of being identified with childish things whilst struggling for adult status and autonomy.

Lee and Hornsby-Smith (1979) used data from 1,023 adult Catholics to assess their opinion on Catholic schooling. These took into account the person’s age, sex, amount of education, occupation, and the parent’s and spouse’s religious commitment. They found that the effect of Catholic education is a positive one in terms of the level of religious practice, mass attendance, communion reception, frequency of confession, private prayer, doctrinal orthodoxy and church involvement. Only in the case of sexual orthodoxy and attitude to new organisational forms does attendance at Catholic school show no difference from attendance at other types of school. At the same time, there was no evidence to suggest that Catholic schools disadvantage their students, for example in terms of their school leaving age or eventual occupation.

Leslie Francis (1979, 1984b, 1986) and colleagues have developed another major series of research now based at the Welsh National Centre for Religious Education. During the 1970s Francis surveyed thirty primary schools from comparable geographical and social areas in southeast England. Five were Catholic, ten Anglican and fifteen state maintained. In total 2,772 children in 1974 and 2,389 children in 1978 were involved. The aim was to explore the influence of the primary school on pupil attitudes. He developed a 24-item Likert scale to collect data on the child's attitudes towards God, Jesus, the Bible, prayer, the Church and religion in school. He explored the differences between the three types of school by means of one way analysis of variance in the first instance, while the multivariate relationships were explored by means of linear multiple regression.

The students of Catholic schools recorded a significantly higher mean average score of attitude towards religion than those in the Anglican and LEA schools in both the 1974 and 1978 samples. The data indicated a more positive religious atmosphere among students in Catholic schools compared to the students in the other schools. In order to test the actual influence of the school on pupil attitudes, Francis used a multivariate technique of data analysis known as blockwise linear multiple regression. Taking into account students of the same sex and age, with similar levels of religious behaviour, parental religious support, IQ, reading ages, and socio-economic backgrounds, he found that students in Catholic schools scored about five points higher in the attitude scale than LEA school students, with students in the Anglican schools scoring about four points lower. In other words, students attending

Catholic schools had a more positive attitude to Christianity than those attending the other types of schools in the survey.

However, using the same research methods, Francis and Carter (1980), in another analysis of students attending the three types of school at the secondary school level, found neither a positive nor negative influence from Catholic secondary schools on the students' attitudes to Christianity.

Joseph Rhymer (1983) used a 24 Likert item scale to compare the religious attitudes of Catholics at Catholic schools with those of Catholics at LEA schools in Strathclyde. A total of 1,113 students responded; 882 in Catholic schools, 231 in LEA schools. He found that there was little difference in the religious attitudes of students whichever type of school they attended. As regards religious education, when the analysis was refined to identify any significant differences between Catholic students in LEA schools who received specifically Catholic religious education and students in Catholic schools, he found that the students in the LEA schools had a slightly more positive attitude towards religion than the students in the Catholic schools. Those in Catholic schools disliked their religious education lessons more than those in other schools.

A more detailed analysis of the effects of Catholic schooling on pupil attitudes occurred in the 1980s with the work of Josephine Egan (1985, 1988) and Francis and Egan (1986). Egan developed a set of 76 Likert items with 18 on partnership, 17

on school goals, 12 on religious education, 11 on school climate and 8 on school policy. A total of 1,642 students out of 2,860 in the cohort from Catholic schools in Wales, 91% of whom were Catholic, were involved in the survey. She asked them to respond to statements about their expectations of Catholic schools and then about their actual experiences of Catholic schooling. Her aim was to assess whether the students' experiences in the Catholic school matched the expectations of Catholic schooling enunciated in Church documents.

On 'partnership', 47.9% of students believed that the Church should continue to provide separate schools for Catholic students with 31% against the statement.

However, 50.1% of students thought that the state should provide all the funding for the education system and 56.5% thought Catholic parents should consider it their duty to send their children to Catholic schools. Just over two-thirds of respondents agreed that their parents made the correct decision in sending them to a Catholic school. Just under two-thirds said they were happy at school and 59.1% said they would choose to attend a Catholic school if they had the choice.

Over 66% of students believed that there should be close links between the school and parish, but 29.1% said it did not happen in practice. In the 'Religious education' section, 49.2% of students agreed that the lessons should help students to take an active part in parish life. However, there was no corresponding item in the section on 'My school' to assess whether this happened in practice.

Just under 22% of students believed that only Catholic teachers should be employed at a Catholic school and only 29.5% agreed that they should share similar moral and religious beliefs and practices. Although 74.4% believed that teachers in Catholic schools should be more concerned about educating children than earning money, only 31.5% said it happened in practice with 37.1% being uncertain.

On 'school goals', a significant majority of students made it clear that the Church has little relevance in their moral decision-making. Whilst 65.4% said that the school should help students to be guided by their own conscience, only 44.1% said that the school should help students to be guided by the Church and 78.1% said that the school should help students to think for themselves even if that meant questioning Catholic beliefs and practices. In terms of what happens in practice, only 35.7% of students agreed that their school helped them to act according to their own conscience and 31.8% agreed that the school helped them to think for themselves even when that meant questioning Catholic beliefs. Unfortunately, Egan did not include an item on whether the students felt they had been encouraged in their own schools to follow the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions.

There were a number of items included in the section on the students' experiences of the 'school goals', which do not have a corresponding item in the section on expectations. For example, 48.1% of students agreed that the school gave them an awareness of the need of God's forgiveness and the readiness to forgive other

people; 43% agreed that the school had taught them that there was more to a Christian life than making money, pursuing pleasure and acquiring power; 43.3% agreed that attendance at a Catholic school had helped them to understand the real meaning of life; and, 31% agreed that they intend to base their lives on the teaching and example of Jesus Christ.

On 'Religious education', only 22.6% agreed that religious education should be the most important subject in the school. Unfortunately, the corresponding item in the section on 'My school' did not ask whether religious education was considered to be the most important subject in the school but whether it was the most important subject to the pupil concerned. Only 3.2% said that religious education was 'more important to me than any other subject that I study in school' though 36.9% said they would attend religious education lessons if they were voluntary.

Just over 58% of students agreed that religious education should teach students 'to have a deep personal relationship with Christ' but only 42.6% of students were able to say that their lessons had helped them to know Christ more deeply.

Although 40.9% of students believed that the Catholic school should provide opportunities to study other religions, only 16% said it happened in practice.

However, in an item in 'School goals', 56.6% of students said that their school had helped them to accept as equals people of other races and religions.

Well over two-thirds of students agreed that religious education should only be taught by Catholic teachers who practise their faith but there was no corresponding item in 'My school' to assess whether the students felt that this was happening in practice.

On 'School Climate', there were four items examining the students' perceptions of what a Catholic school should be like. Unsurprisingly, 71.5% agreed that teachers in Catholic school should set a good example of what it means to be a 'practising Christian', 86.1% believed that all students should be treated with fairness, 70.6% believed that Catholic schools should be noted for their caring ethos and 68.6% believed that the enforcement of rules should be based on explanation rather than enforcement. However, on what was happening in practice, only 30.3% of students said that teachers set a good example of what it means to be a practising Christian, 40% said that the teachers evidence a caring attitude by always being ready to assist where necessary, 43.6% said that their school treats everyone with fairness and 23.6% said that rules in their school were enforced by explanation.

Two other items were included in the section 'My school', which did not have corresponding items in the section on expectations. Only 27.2% agreed that there was a happy atmosphere in their school, though 63.1% thought that there was a friendly atmosphere between the teachers and students.

Finally, in the section 'School Policy', 58.7% were against the statement that Catholic schools should only admit Catholic students, though there was no corresponding item in the section 'My school' to assess what the students believed happened in practice. On school worship, 53.9% of students believed that all teachers in a Catholic school should attend school worship but, again, there was no corresponding item to assess whether this was happening in practice. In terms of the Mass, 57.5% of students believed that the Catholic school should place importance on Mass, receiving the Sacraments and prayer and 67.3% agreed that this happened in practice. Although, 80.6% of students believed that a Catholic school should be involved in projects to help the disadvantaged, only 22.1% agreed that there were such opportunities, though the corresponding item used the phrase 'projects for justice and peace' which may have been misinterpreted by some students. Finally, 80.7% of students agreed that 'Catholic schools should prepare students to cope with their leisure time by presenting them with experiences of various interests such as sport, hobbies, clubs and community service', but only 38.5% said that this happened in practice.

Francis (1986) studied 2,895 students aged 11 to 16 in five Catholic comprehensive schools in the Midlands. He found that the intake of students who were not baptised Catholics rose from 6.5% in the 'fifth year' to 16.9% in the 'first year'. Using stepwise linear multiple regression and path analysis, he demonstrated that non-Catholic students in the schools were recording less favourable attitudes towards Christianity than Catholic students. He concludes that, if one of the aims of the

Catholic Church in maintaining Catholic schools is to provide an educational environment in which students display a favourable attitude towards Christianity, then a 'caveat' must be placed 'against the policy of compensating for falling rolls by recruiting into Catholic schools a higher proportion of non-Catholic students, even from churchgoing backgrounds' (p. 161). Francis suggests that, although the schools in the study were recruiting a greater proportion of non-Catholic students as rolls continued to fall, there was no evidence that the schools were responding to the religious and spiritual needs of the non-Catholic students.

Curran and Francis (1996) developed a twelve-item scale to measure Catholic identity and employed it among 11-12 year olds attending Catholic secondary schools. Although focused on a much younger age group and not concerned with the students expectations and experiences of Catholic schooling, the responses indicated a basically positive view of being Catholic. 50% of the students reported that they found going to Mass very helpful and nearly 63% reported that they found going to confession helpful. Over 68% sometimes pray to Mary. As Francis (2001) concludes, the correlation with other indices of religiosity indicate the importance of a Catholic background, home and church involvement in promoting a Catholic identity.

In a series of studies examining the academic performance of Catholic schools, Morris (1997, 1998) drew attention to the apparent success of Catholic schools in engendering a positive attitude toward learning among their students. He reports a

possible causal relationship between successful religious socialisation using the traditional holistic approach in Catholic education and the recognisable academic success of Catholic schools.

Francis (2002), using a database of over thirty thousand 13-15 year olds, presented a profile of the religious and moral values of students attending Catholic secondary schools in England and Wales in comparison to those in LEA maintained schools. Although not concerned with the students' perceptions of their schooling, the data revealed that overall there was a higher level of commitment to moral values in the students from the Catholic sector. For Francis, this provides some assurance for Catholic parents that Catholic schools do provide a higher level of education and experience in Christian moral and religious values than appears to be the case in non-denominational schools.

Of interest for the Catholic sector are the differences to be found when the faith background of the students is taken into account. In terms of moral values, the data demonstrated that 'practising' Catholic students attending Catholic schools recorded higher scores than students in LEA schools, whilst sliding (attend church infrequently) Catholics recorded scores that are close to those of students in the LEA schools. Lapsed Catholics however, recorded lower scores than students in the LEA schools. The data revealed similar results on the students' religious values. Based on his findings, Francis issues a warning to Catholic schools that the biggest

threat to the community of higher moral and religious values in Catholic schools might come not from the non-Catholic, but from the lapsed Catholic, students.

Francis makes the case that his research and that of Egan has shown that it is the students themselves who contribute much to shaping the distinctive ethos and identity of the school. Clearly, many other factors have an impact on the establishment and development of the Catholic school ethos: the dedication of the staff, parents, governors and clergy, the quality of the religious education and prayer life of the school and the quality of leadership. Nevertheless, if Catholic schools are to maintain their distinctiveness, consideration must be made of the pupil intake. As Bishop Konstant (1996) warned:

A Catholic school must in some way be a community of faith in which worship is appropriate, possible and wholly acceptable. If it were not, catechesis and evangelisation would be impossible. This has implications for admissions and forces us to think very carefully about who should and should not be admitted to our schools (p. 29).

Francis' most recent studies and those of Morris tend to support the claim that, on the whole, Catholic schools are going some way to meeting the expectations put on them by the Church. As Hyde (1990), following his review of studies into Catholic schooling in the USA and Australia as well as Britain, concluded:

The cumulative effect of these studies . . . shows that, while parents have the strongest influence on their children's religiousness, the school also has an

independent influence which arises from the school climate. It is not the result of formal education but is due to the attitudes that are fostered and the effectiveness of pastoral care (p. 333).

OFSTED reports (CES, 1995, Morris, 1998) have consistently highlighted the significance of the distinctive ethos of the Catholic school as a contributory factor towards their success. Parents continue to demand places in, at least in some parts of England and Wales, heavily over-subscribed Catholic schools. Studies of the religious and moral attitudes of Catholic school students have shown that the Catholic school can have a beneficial impact upon them. However, apart from the Egan study there has been little research into the actual experiences of students in Catholic schools in Wales in order to ascertain whether they are in fact fulfilling the Church's expectations of them.

iv) Asking the students

There is a growing recognition amongst educational researchers that there is some value in involving students in studies of this kind. As Silberman (1971) concluded:

If schooling is going to make sense to children . . . (then) . . . First, we should carefully examine the experiences that students undergo. . . . Second, we must make a conscious decision to alter conditions that create undesirable experiences. Third, we must communicate clearly to students the goals and

expectations we believe make sense. And, fourth, we should affirm the right of students to negotiate our purposes and demands so that the activities we undertake with them have the greatest possible meaning to all (p 364).

Even though it was written over 30 years ago, Silberman's article sets the agenda for the research I wish to undertake. What students say about teaching, learning and schooling can provide one of the most important tools for evaluating the effectiveness of schools.

Studies by Schostak and Logan (1984), Lang (1985), Soo Hoo (1993) and Nieto (1994) have concluded, as Nieto puts it, that 'students' experiences should be heard and should be taken seriously in debates about secondary schools' (p. 398). Phelan (1992, 1994) pointed out that taking into account students' views about schools gives educationalists the chance to change those aspects of school life over which they could have some control. They can become 'co-conspirators in creating optimal learning situations' (1992, p. 704).

It might be argued that students do not have the capacity to make constructive judgements about their schools. Some might argue that they are not competent to judge such matters. However, as Rudduck (1991) notes, often students are far more perceptive than they are given credit for.

Young people are observant, are often capable of analytical and constructive comment (p 8).

Furthermore, the intensification of quality assurance procedures and data-checking during recent decades has helped to assure researchers and commentators that what students say is honest and worthy.

Of greater significance though is the idea that dialogue is one of the most effective forms of teaching and learning. It recognises the integrity of both partners in the educational process and value of each other's experiences.

If it is in speaking their word that people, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human beings. . . Dialogue . . . requires an intense faith in humankind, faith in their power to make and remake, to create and recreate, faith in their vocation to be more fully human. Authentic education is not carried out by 'A' *for* 'B' or by 'A' *about* 'B' but rather by 'A *with* 'B' (Friere, 1970 p 69,70).

Conclusion

The research instrument for this thesis has been designed to be able to explore students' experiences of Catholic schools in Wales in order to assess whether what is happening within them reflects the vision circumscribed in chapters two and three. Asking students of Catholic schools on the threshold of the third millennium about their experiences provides a unique insight into how effective the schools are in fulfilling that vision: Are these carefully enunciated principles of Catholic

schooling being met in practice? Are Catholic schools led by men and women inspired by the Church's vision? Is teaching and learning offered in such a way as to indicate that the children are loved for what they are and what they can become? Is there a 'Catholic pedagogy' in which the worldview of Christ and Gospel values are incarnated in the teaching/learning process? Does the curriculum offer breadth and balance so that the gifts of all might be released as God intends as a service to others? Does the school welcome all and celebrate, encourage and praise genuine effort? Are acts of service central to the life of the school? Does the quality of forgiveness pervade the life of the school? Is the relationship between the home, school and parish recognised and nurtured? Are opportunities taken to ensure that the religious dimension of humanity is explored in all aspects of school life? Are the spiritual needs of **all** students, Catholic and non-Catholic, being met? What are the actual experiences of the students in a Catholic school?

The key premise of this thesis is that the voice of the students may prove to be an invaluable tool for informing the development of Catholic schools in Wales as they enter the twenty-first century.

Chapter Four

Establishing the survey

i) The research instrument

An analysis of both Vatican and national statements on Catholic schooling identifies a number of key areas that the Catholic Church believes contribute to the distinctive ethos of a Catholic school. They include the claims that:

- the Catholic Church should provide its own education system;
- the central aim of a Catholic school should focus on Christian beliefs and values;
- as far as possible the school should employ Catholic teachers who are prepared to witness to Catholic beliefs;
- the spiritual and religious background of every pupil should be respected and developed;
- opportunities for prayer and worship should pervade school life;
- action for the poor and marginalized should be the hallmark of the school;
- pastoral care and the management of behaviour should be carried out in the spirit of Jesus Christ;
- religious education should be central to the life of the school and in accord with Church expectations;
- opportunities to explore the religious dimension of life should be taken in all curriculum areas;

- the school should be closely linked to local parishes.

These key areas formed the basis of the present empirical research in order to measure the extent to which Year 11 Catholic school students both value, and have experienced, these fundamental attributes of a Catholic school.

As the review of previous empirical research has shown, the most appropriate research instrument for this type of study is the Likert questionnaire. It is a valuable research tool because it can provide a far larger amount of data than, say, a series of interviews, simply because of the time involved in such interviews. It might also be argued that a questionnaire can elicit a more truthful answer to these questions than an interview, during which the interviewee might prefer to give the expected answer rather than a personal and honest one. Furthermore, it is not a time-consuming form of research, particularly for busy year 11 students and their staff.

The Likert scale format requires respondents to rate their level of agreement or disagreement on a five-point continuum from ‘Agree strongly’ to ‘Disagree strongly’ (fig.1)

My school is noted for
being a caring Christian community

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Not certain	Agree	Agree strongly
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fig. 1

The questionnaire begins with 9 items in a section entitled ‘Information about yourself and your family’. This provides information allowing the researcher to

compare and contrast students from a variety of domestic and religious backgrounds.

The first main section is entitled 'What a Catholic School should be like'. There are 19 items on 'Catholic schools', 6 items on 'Religious education', 5 items on 'Teachers' and 3 items on 'Parents/parish'. Their purpose is to assess whether the students' perceptions of Catholic education matched those of the Church as enunciated in the documents and pronouncements explored in chapter one.

The second main section is entitled 'What my Catholic school is like'. There are 21 items on 'My school', 9 items on 'Religious education', 5 items on 'Teachers' and 3 items on 'Parents/parish'. These items were designed to assess how far the students' actual experiences of Catholic schooling reflected the Church's expectations of its schools.

Finally, there are 3 items, with 3 subsections each, exploring the respondent's own beliefs. This can be used to assess the relationship between the students' home and school experiences with their religious commitment.

To test validity, the items were assessed to explore whether they actually measured what they were designed to measure. In terms of the 'face' and 'content' validity tests described by Kline (2000), the research items can be considered transparent, pertinent and relevant to their purpose. Their purpose of assessing students'

knowledge and experience of Catholic schools is clear and their content is rooted in principles of Catholic education enunciated by Church documents. It is, therefore, possible to conclude that the research items are valid for their purpose.

As described earlier, Josephine Egan, in 1983, had researched the experiences of 1,642 'fifth form' students, 91% of whom were Catholic, from 15 of the 16 Catholic comprehensive schools in Wales, representing 57.4% of the total 'fifth form' population of 2,860 students at that time (CES data).

However, in the light of the recent significant changes to Catholic schools, the Church and the wider society, circumscribed in earlier chapters, a new database of empirical research was required. Its purpose is to provide a unique insight into the attitudes and experiences of Catholic school students on the threshold of the third millennium in order to meet the challenges identified.

The research instrument was also designed to avoid two particular shortcomings of Egan's earlier survey. One, noted already in chapter two, was the occasional absence of a corresponding statement from one of the two sections in her study: the 'Ideal school' and 'My school'. The second was the use of statements containing several parts that either made the statement difficult for some students to decode or contained within them statements that led the students in a particular direction.

Examples include:

- ‘Religious education should be the most important subject in the school since a Catholic school exists to teach and provide a living experience of the faith’;
- Catholic schools should have rules in order to function, and students should be helped to comply with them by seeing their necessity, rather than by being forced, without reason, to obey them;
- ‘My school teaches me to act according to my conscience by giving me sufficient freedom to make decisions and allowing me the responsibility to accept the consequences’.

Several sections of Egan’s study required some expansion or development. For example, in order to get a more complete picture of the life of a Catholic school, extra statements on religious services and retreats, school rules and relationships with local clergy were included. Furthermore, in order to be able to assess the relevance of the home background, statements on the status of the respondent’s parents and parental attitudes to schooling were also included. Finally, in order to have some idea of the faith position of the respondents, a final section on the students’ own personal beliefs was included.

ii) The sample

When Egan researched the experiences of Catholic school students in 1983, there was a total ‘fifth form’ (as it was known then) population of c. 2,860 students (CES

data). She was able to analyse the responses of 1,642 (57% of the year group) of those students from 16 of the 17 Catholic comprehensive schools of that time. Since then, those 17 schools had become 16. Egan has already provided a brief history of these schools (1988, p. 45-61) but there have been several changes since 1983.

There are now three, not two, Dioceses – Cardiff, Swansea and Wrexham – in the Province of Wales. Wrexham is responsible for the schools in Rhyl, Wrexham and Flint, Swansea for the schools in Llanelli, Swansea and Port Talbot and Cardiff for four schools in Cardiff and schools in Bridgend, Pontypool, Pontypridd, Merthyr Tydfil, Newport and Hereford. Furthermore, two schools in Cardiff have since closed and a Catholic sixth-form college has been created.

In the academic year 1997/1998, there were 1,978 Year 11 students in the Catholic secondary schools of Wales – a fall of nearly a thousand students on the 1983 total. Of these 1,584, or 80% of the year group, were Catholic – an increase of about 10% on the 1983 ratio. To remain viable, governing bodies of Catholic schools have had to consider the possibility of opening their doors to a broader cross section of society.

The diocesan school commissioners and RE advisors of the three diocese were approached and their permission to carry out the research was obtained. All heads of religious education were introduced to the research during an Archdiocesan training day and asked for their co-operation. Guidelines were provided to ensure that the questionnaires were completed as uniformly as possible.

The questionnaires were administered, as were Egan's, to students in their final year of compulsory schooling – Year 11 – during a religious education lesson. Two schools decided eventually not to co-operate with the research because they felt that an impersonal, anonymous questionnaire might not properly reflect the hard work and dedication of the priests, governors and staff. One school, for reasons outside of its control, was only able to administer the questionnaire to one of the RE teaching groups in the allotted time. Nevertheless, 1,151 students were able to complete the questionnaire, which at nearly 59% of the total cohort is similar to Egan's and can be considered statistically valid.

Of the 1,151 respondents, 534 or 46.4% were male and 617 or 53.6% were female. These correspond to the figures of 969 boys – 48.9% - and 1,009 girls – 51.1% - for the cohort as a whole. As described in chapter two, there appears to be clear and unambiguous evidence that women are more religious than men. In Britain, studies by Brierley (1980, 1983, 1991), Francis (1984, 1985), the British Council of Churches (1986), Davies, Watkins and Winter (1991) and Field (1993), for example, have all shown that a higher proportion of women attend church than is the case among men throughout the age range. Francis (1982a, 1982b) and Francis and Kay (1995) have shown that women are more likely than men to express belief in God and Greeley (1992) has shown that women are more likely to pray and more likely to report feeling close to God. Relevant to this research, a number of studies have shown that women have a more positive attitude to religious education than men throughout the age groups (for example, Greer, 1989 and Francis and Lewis,

1996). It may well be that female students will indicate more positive response to their schooling than their male counterparts. Thus, the data is analysed by gender so that Catholic school educators may reflect on ways in which both male and female students can be engaged in the Catholic educational enterprise.

Of the 1,151 respondents in the research, 896 or 77.8% were Catholic and 255 or 22.2% were non-Catholic. This corresponds to the cohort as a whole, which has a 80% Catholic population. Within the total, there were 420 male Catholic students, 114 male non-Catholic students, 476 female Catholic students and 141 female non-Catholic students. The total non-Catholic population is a 10% increase on the total in Egan's research. An analysis of the experiences of the non-Catholic pupil population may indicate some areas of concern for Catholic educationalists. Francis (1986), in a study of 2,895 Catholic secondary school students, found that non-Catholic students were recording less favourable attitudes towards Christianity than Catholic students. He suggests that, although the schools in the survey were recruiting a greater proportion of non-Catholics as rolls continued to fall, there was no evidence that the schools were responding to the religious and spiritual needs of the non-Catholic students. It may be that members of the schools who are not Catholic record significantly levels of agreement compared to their Catholic colleagues. Once again, if this is the case, Catholic school educators may need to reflect upon how the spiritual and religious needs of the *whole* school can best be met.

In terms of attending a church service on a Sunday, 20% of respondents attend church on a weekly basis with 24% never attending church. The weekly church attendance of mothers was slightly better at 24%, though 34% of mothers never attend church. On the other hand, the weekly church attendance of fathers was only 12%, with 55% never attending. The practising rate of c. 20% matches the national trend (Brierley and Evans, 1983 and CYTUN, 1998). Of the male Catholic respondents, 99 or 23.6% of the total attend Church every week, 241 or 57.3% attend Church sometimes and 80 or 19.1% never attend Church. Of the female Catholic respondents, 114 or 23.9% of the total attend Church every week, 288 or 60.5% attend Church sometimes and 74 or 15.6% never attend Church. Francis (2001) has shown that lapsed Catholic students of Catholic schools have lower moral and religious values than practising Catholics and than those of students attending LEA schools. An analysis of the data according to levels of commitment to the Catholic Church by Catholic students, based on their Mass attendance, may provide some support to Francis' findings. If this proves to be the case, Catholic school educators may need to reflect upon how all Catholic students, including those distant from the Church, can be accompanied on their individual journeys of faith.

The Catholic Bishops of England and Wales (1996) have stated that the function of Catholic schools is to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to every member of the school giving due regard to their integrity as unique individuals each with their own unique spiritual and religious background and experience.

It believes that Catholic schools are absolutely crucial as the primary means of assisting Catholic families in the nurturing of their children's faith. Catholic schools provide an alternative worldview to the one – secular, materialistic, individualistic – that is so prevalent today. They should provide a vision that is life affirming and other-regarding. They should offer a holistic approach to education that can integrate all areas of human endeavour into an awareness that the whole of creation is holy. They should provide opportunities for spiritual formation that may be lacking in other educational contexts. Without Catholic schools, the Church claims, these catechetical and evangelistic opportunities simply would not exist

However, as described in the Introduction, Catholic schools on the threshold of the third millennium face many challenges that may undermine their efforts to be evangelistic and catechetical instruments of the Church.

From outside the Church, young people in England and Wales are subject to many more pressures than was the case when Catholic schools were first established.

There has been a shift away from a religious worldview to one that is largely secular. Young people are often not nurtured in a religious milieu and the attitudes pervading the very influential mass media organs – magazines, television, films and so on – are usually the very antithesis of Christian values.

In addition, England and Wales are increasingly multi-cultural and multi-faith societies. This is a great enrichment to British society, and many of the alternatives,

especially the new age movements, are very attractive to young people. However, traditional forms of English and Welsh religion are perceived as simply one alternative amongst many. Young people thus approach religious claims, including the claims of the Catholic Church, with some scepticism.

Such influences have had a bearing on Government policy, which is becoming increasingly secular. The Welsh Assembly Minister for Education, Jane Davidson, is on record as stating that faith schools should have no part to play in education provision in Wales. Recent initiatives, including the proposals for 14-19 education and the new Foundation Phase for 3-7 year olds make no reference to religion or spiritual values in their frameworks. This picture is mirrored in Scotland where a group of Scottish Labour MP's have attacked Catholic schools in articles in the Scottish Parliament's in-house journal. They believe they are divisive and potential breeding grounds for sectarianism. 'Religion,' writes MP Lewis Moonie, 'has nothing to do with education . . . Why should we pay for the Roman Catholic Church to indoctrinate our children?' (Little, 1998, p. 246).

From within the Catholic Church, as discussed in the Introduction, Catholic schools are challenged because some members of the Church believe they are failing in their duty to teach the Catholic faith in the kind of clear and unambiguous way it once was taught. They believe that the answer to the challenge the influence of secularism brings is to return to a pedagogy that is propositional (that is based on a set of doctrines and formulas) rather than non-propositional (that is, based on the

primacy of relationship and experience before doctrine). (See below chapter twelve). There are some, for example, the members of 'Pro Ecclesia et Pontifica', who believe Catholic schools should be closed in England and Wales because they are not the schools they once were.

Catholic schools also face challenges from within their own current make-up. Over 50% of the staff and 20% of the students of Catholic secondary schools are not members of the Catholic Church (CES 2003). This is not necessarily a weakness but it inevitably means that Catholic schools have to reflect deeply and carefully on their mission and how best to meet the religious and spiritual needs of all those who work within them.

Catholic schools also have to meet the challenge of dwindling clergy numbers. Historically, the Bishops of Wales were able to allocate a priest to each secondary school, where they were able to fulfil the chaplaincy roles of pastor, prophet and priest. Now this is no longer the case and Catholic schools have had to explore alternative ways of providing such ministries with local priests assisting as often as possible.

Knowing the impact of these challenges upon student attitudes to their schooling is an important first step for Catholic school educators to begin examining how Catholic schools can best serve their religious and spiritual needs. The research underpinning this thesis aims to discover whether significant constituencies of the

Catholic school population in Wales feel marginalized or outside the Catholic school enterprise. If this proves to be the case, then Catholic school educators in Wales will need to re-examine and re-imagine every aspect of the Catholic school's mission and ministry.

iii) The analysis

The analysis begins by exploring key principles underpinning Catholic education provision (chapter five) and asks students: should the Catholic Church provide separate schools for Catholic children; should the county provide free transport for students to attend Catholic schools; should the main aim of a Catholic schools be to help students lead a good Christian life or should the main aim be to help students pass exams; should religious education be taught in the parish community not in the school; and, should Catholic parents send their children to Catholic schools? The chapter continues by examining whether students' attitudes to their Catholic schooling reflects the expectations the Catholic Church has of it: do they feel valued in school; if they had the choice would they still want to attend a Catholic school; would they want to send their own children to a Catholic school; has attending a Catholic school helped them to understand the real meaning of life; are they happy to be a student in their school; and, did their parents make the correct decision in sending them to a Catholic school? The purpose of the chapter is to explore to what extent students agree with the provision of Catholic schools in principle and

whether there is a significant difference in the levels of agreement between male and female, Catholic and non-Catholic, practising and non-practising Catholic students.

The analysis continues by exploring the students' levels of agreement with the provision of prayer and worship in Catholic schools (chapter six): should importance be placed on celebrating the Mass, the Sacraments and prayer in Catholic schools; should Catholic schools provide regular opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation; should Catholic schools provide at least one retreat a year for students; and, should Mass be celebrated at least once a week in Catholic schools? It goes on to explore the students' levels of agreement with what happens in practice in terms of prayer and worship: is importance placed upon celebrating the Mass, the Sacraments and prayer in their schools; are regular opportunities provided to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation; is one retreat a year provided for every student; is Mass celebrated at least once a week in their schools? The purpose of the chapter is to explore to what extent students agree with the provision of prayer and worship opportunities in Catholic schools and whether there are any significant differences in the levels of agreement depending on the gender, religious affiliation or commitment to the Catholic Church of the student.

Chapter seven explores the role of the Catholic school in students' moral development and in providing opportunities to show care and concern for others. Students are asked whether Catholic schools should spend a lot of time and effort on

charity work and whether they should be noted for being caring Christian communities; whether the main aim of a Catholic school should be to help students lead a good Christian life; whether they should help students develop decision-making skills for moral issues; and, whether Catholic schools should help students to be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions.

Following the same pattern as other chapters, the analysis continues by examining what the students perceive to be happening in practice in Catholic schools: is a lot of time and effort spent on charity work in their school; is their school noted for being a caring Christian community; are students helped to lead a good Christian life; are they helped to develop decision-making for moral issues; and, are they taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions? The purpose of the chapter is to examine to what extent students agree with the commitment of Catholic schools to care for others and to be guided by the Church in moral matters and whether gender, religious affiliation or commitment to the Catholic Church makes a significant difference to their levels of agreement.

Chapter eight explores key issues surrounding the school population. In terms of the student population, students are asked whether Catholic schools should only admit Catholic students and whether all students in Catholic schools should share Catholic moral and religious values. They are then asked if most of the students in their schools are Catholic in reality and whether they share Catholic moral and religious values. On the staff population, students are asked: should only Catholic teachers be employed in Catholic schools; should teachers in Catholic schools set a good

example of what it means to be a Christian; should they have a sense of mission to help children; should all teachers in Catholic school attend school Masses; and, should all teachers support Catholic values and beliefs? The analysis then turns to an exploration of the students' actual experiences of the staff population: are only Catholic teachers employed in their schools; do the teachers set a good example of what it means to be a Christian; are they keen to help the students; do all teachers attend school Masses; and, do the teachers support Catholic beliefs and values. The purpose of the chapter is to explore whether the students of Catholic schools support a principle of homogeneity, or of pluriformity, and whether their experiences of the student and staff population of the school match the Church's hopes that students diversity is respected and valued and that staff of the school play their part in witnessing to the teaching and example of Jesus Christ. Significant differences between students' levels of agreement based on their gender, religious affiliation and commitment to the Catholic Church will also be examined.

Chapter nine turns to rules and punishments and the extent to which students of Catholic schools in Wales agree with some of the fundamental principles that should underpin discipline in a Catholic school: should rules be based on the command of Jesus to love others; should they be fair and, if you have done wrong but are sorry, should you be forgiven? The analysis then explores the students' perceptions of what happens in practice: are rules based on the command of Jesus to love others; do most students keep to the rules; are punishments fair; and, if you have done wrong, but are sorry, are you forgiven? The impact of differences in

gender, religious affiliation and commitment to the Catholic Church on the levels of agreement will also be examined.

The research next turns to an exploration of the links that should exist between the schools and the parish (chapter ten). Students are asked: should local priests visit Catholic schools as often as possible; should Catholic schools be closely linked to local parishes; and, should Catholic schools help prepare students to take an active part in parish life? The analysis continues by examining what students perceive to be happening in practice. They are asked: do local priests visit regularly; are schools closely linked to the local parishes; and, are students helped to take an active part in parish life? The purpose of the chapter is to assess how far Catholic schools are meeting the Church's expectations of close links between the schools and parish communities. Once again, significant differences in the levels of agreement depending upon gender, religious affiliation and commitment to the Catholic Church are also examined.

Chapters eleven and twelve explore key aspects of the religious education programmes of Catholic schools. Chapter eleven is concerned with the status and function of religious education in Catholic schools in Wales. Students are asked: should religious education be taught in the parish community, not in the school; should it be the most important subject in a Catholic school: should only the Catholic faith be taught in Catholic schools or should religious education include the study of other religions; and, should every subject in Catholic schools provide

some religious education? The chapter then turns to the students' experiences of these principles in their own schools and asks whether religious education is the most important subject in their schools; whether the Catholic faith is mainly taught or whether opportunities are provided to study other religions; and, whether Religious education is taught in other subjects.

Chapter twelve examines some key elements that should underpin the teaching of religious education in Catholic schools: should the main aim of religious education in Catholic schools be to help students develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ; should Catholic schools help students to be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions; and should Catholic schools help children think for themselves even if this means questioning Catholic beliefs?

Turning to the students' actual experiences of religious education, the research asks students whether religious education has helped them to develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ; whether they are helped to think for themselves even if that means questioning Catholic beliefs; whether they are taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions; whether they enjoy religious education; whether it is more important to them than any other subject in school; and, whether they would still want to attend religious education lessons if they were voluntary.

The purposes of both of these chapters are to examine whether students agree with some of the fundamental principles that the Catholic Church believes should underpin religious education teaching in Catholic schools and whether their actual

experiences of religious education match the Church's expectations of it. The gender, religious affiliation and commitment of the student to the Catholic Church will be taken into account to assess whether these make a significant difference to their levels of agreement.

Each chapter provides an insight into the attitudes and experiences of students of Catholic schools in Wales to their Catholic schooling. Previous research has identified the importance of refining data so that key constituents of the student body can be examined separately. The data is explored in terms of the gender of the students, their religious affiliation, that is whether they are Catholic or non-Catholic students and, for those who are Catholic, their level of commitment to the Church, that is, whether they are practising and non-practising.

Conclusion

Gender, religious affiliation and/or commitment to the Catholic Church may have an impact upon the students' levels of agreement to these key aspects of Catholic schools life. If this is the case, then Catholic school educators will need to reflect carefully on the impact of such differences upon the distinctive Catholic ethos and mission of the Catholic school, and more importantly, on the religious and spiritual development of every member of it. If such differences emerge, the challenge facing Catholic school educators in Catholic schools in Wales in the twenty-first century

may be how best to accomplish the mission of the catholic school whilst, at the same time recognising that significant elements of the Catholic school population do not share their vision.

Chapter Five

The separate provision of Catholic schools

Introduction

The Church sees education as an integral part of its mission to proclaim God as the Creator, Christ as redeemer and the Holy Spirit as inspirer of all that is good in human living (CES, 1999, p. 7)

Before and after each of the major Education Acts of 1870, 1902, 1944 and 1988, the Catholic Church in England and Wales has set out its vision for education. Two principal claims are made: that parents have an inalienable right to decide whether or not their children should be brought up and educated in accordance with their religious beliefs; and that political and social equity demand that the State recognise this parental right and materially assist it with the provision of denominational schools. Even now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, it still appears quite remarkable that the Bishops of England and Wales were able to wrestle this agreement from successive twentieth century governments.

However, as described in the Introduction, there are those from within the Catholic Church who believe that the Church should not be involved in the provision of education within the state maintained system. The arguments for this come from a number of directions but they can be summarised as follows: first, that general

schooling can and should be separated from religious formation; second, that Catholic schools are relics of a siege mentality; third, that Catholic schools are divisive in a pluralistic society; fourth, that Catholic schools contradict the spirit of ecumenism; and fifth, that Catholic schools consume time, effort and money that might be better spent elsewhere (Arthur, 1995).

At the same time, there are voices of criticism from outside the Church about the separate provision of Catholic schools. Judge (2001), for example, in a conclusion to the opening article of an edition of the *Oxford Review of Education* devoted to 'The State, schools and religion' asks:

If Catholic schools are exclusively for Catholic children and for preserving the historic faith of the Church, why in a modern society should they be publicly funded? If they are not distinctively Catholic, why should they be supported differently from, and be subject to rules differently from, those applying to all publicly funded schools? (p. 468).

Similarly, as described in chapter one, Hirst (1974, 1976, 1996) believes that the whole idea of a Christian education (or any faith-based education) is not defensible in the modern world. Hirst claims that the search for knowledge and understanding, which is what education is about, cannot be based upon the unverifiable propositions of religious faith.

According to Bernstein (1996) this rejection of faith-based education has been accompanied during the twentieth century by a major transformation from a faith-based conception of knowledge and pedagogy to one that is secular and market based. In the words of Grace (2002, p. 46), there has been a 'secularisation, commodification and marketisation' of knowledge. This has led to a 'virtually secular pedagogic discourse' (Bernstein, 1996, p. 80) where pupil consciousness, sense of identity and personal worth are grounded in their utilitarian value rather than, as the Catholic Church would see it, in their intrinsic personal value as children of God. Although Catholic education may claim to exist as an attempt to know God and God's purpose in the world, it has also had to contend with a 'secular market curriculum, a performance-based pedagogic regime and a system of accountability and evaluation where measurable and visible outcomes are dominant' (Grace, 2002, p. 46).

It is precisely because the Catholic vision of education offers a radical re-appraisal of contemporary society, that the Bishops of the Church are as determined as ever to provide a schooling system that situates the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ in an educational locus. As Cardinal Hume (1997) affirmed:

The Church's aim has always been to provide a place at a Catholic school for every Catholic child. Great strides have been taken towards achieving that goal. Today, Catholic schools are increasingly popular, not only because of the good academic results they often achieve, but also because many parents sense that a Catholic school might help their children to develop the self-

discipline, moral resilience and spiritual maturity so necessary in surviving exposure as young adults to the winds of secularism and materialism in our society (pp. 25-26).

This support for Catholic schooling is founded upon the principle that 'educational diversity' is a 'human right' and a 'desirable goal' (Catholic Education Service (CES), 2003, p. 3). In this 2003 *Position Paper*, the CES argued that it is difficult to defend the concept of a uniform model education without violating the general principle that children should be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents. The right to a religious education, the CES points out, has been enshrined in the UN Declaration of Human Rights (1948, Article 15), the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959, Principle 2) and subsequently incorporated into the British Human Rights Act of 1998 (Article 14; 1st Protocol, Article 2). Central to all legislation is the concept that parents are the first and foremost educators of their children and that the State should ensure that any education it provides for children is in conformity with the parent's 'religious and philosophical convictions in so far as it is practical to do so' (p. 4). Therefore, the Catholic Church seeks to support parents by 'providing schools and sixth form colleges which aim to educate the whole child and help them play a proper part in promoting the common good through the acquisition of values, skills and knowledge appropriate to civic society and the ability and desire to search for truth' (p. 4).

In an evaluation of what a Catholic school ought to be, Arthur (1995) describes such a Catholic school as 'holistic', that is, one in which a 'critical synthesis' occurs

between culture and the Catholic religious vision (p. 231). In this model the Catholic school does not merely provide that which other schools fail to provide, nor is its purpose to be a shelter from the world. Rather, the Catholic school seeks to establish a partnership with parents in being 'the seed ground for the apostolic mission of the Church.' (p. 231)

The Catholic Church demands that the pedagogy of its schools should clearly witness to the Christian value and dignity of every student regardless of achievement or utilitarian value. Every child is, as the Bishops of England and Wales (1996) proclaimed, 'made in God's image and loved by him'. Thus, all students must be valued and respected as individuals, not for their utilitarian value, but so that they may be helped to fulfil their unique role in creation.'

This section of the research is designed to explore to what extent students' expectations and experiences of Catholic schools in Wales match the expectations of the Catholic Church. Statements relevant to this part of the study concern the questions of whether the Catholic Church should provide separate schools for Catholic children, whether the county should provide free transport for students to go to Catholic schools, whether the Catholic school's main aim should be to help students lead a good Christian life, whether the main aim should be to help students pass exams, whether religious education should be taught in the parish, not in the school, and whether Catholic parents should send their children to Catholic schools.

On the students' actual experiences of their schooling, relevant statements include the questions of whether they feel valued in school, whether they would still want to attend a Catholic school if they had the choice, whether they would send their own children to a Catholic school, whether attending a Catholic school has helped them to understand the real meaning of life, whether they are happy to be a student in the school and whether their parents made the correct decision in sending them to a Catholic school.

Following the overview, the data is analysed by key constituent elements: gender, religious affiliation and, for Catholic students, commitment to the Church.

i) Overview

The responses of the students to the questions of whether the Catholic Church should provide a separate education system and what those schools' main aims should be, as recorded in table 5:1, appear to send out conflicting signals.

Only 27% of the respondents believe that the Catholic Church should provide separate schools for Catholic children with 43% disagreeing. However, 43% of the respondents agree that Catholic parents should send their children to Catholic schools with less than one third (32%) disagreeing. Furthermore, on the question of

school transport, 71% of students agree that the County should provide free transport for students to go to Catholic schools, with only 14% disagreeing.

Table 5:1 Catholic schools – in principle

	Agree %	Not Certain %	Disagree %
The Catholic Church should provide separate schools for Catholic children	27	30	43
The county should provide free transport for students to go to Catholic schools	71	15	14
The Catholic school's main aim should be to help students lead a good Christian life	47	23	30
The Catholic school's main aim should be to help students pass exams	86	10	4
Religious education should be taught in the parish community not in the school	24	23	53
Catholic parents should send their Children to Catholic schools	43	25	32

The Church envisages an educational system that balances an education in Gospel values with academic progress. On the question of whether the main aim of a Catholic school should be to help students lead a good Christian life, less than half (47%) of the respondents agree. However, less than one third of students (30%) disagree with this statement and the figures indicate some appreciation amongst the student population of the principle that Catholic education has more to it than simply academic progress. Having said that, 86% of students agree with the statement that the main aim of the Catholic school should be to help students to pass examinations, with only 4% disagreeing.

The question of whether religious education should take place in the parish, rather than the school, was designed to examine which context students feel is the most appropriate for the delivery of religious education. The students' response to this issue may call into question the whole principle of a separate provision of Catholic schools. Only 24% of the respondents agree with the statement that religious education should take place in the parish rather than the school. However, given that over half of the respondents (53%) believe that religious education should be taught in the Catholic school, this would seem to endorse the Church's decision to provide a separate education system, even though, at the start of the survey, only 27% of the respondents felt able to agree with that decision.

Table 5:2 examines the students' actual experiences of Catholic schools. The responses the students make to statements regarding their experience of Catholic schools appear to show greater consistency than their responses to the provision of Catholic schools in principle (table 5:1).

The statements examining whether students would choose to attend a Catholic school if the choice was left to them, and of whether their parents made the correct decision in sending them to a Catholic school were designed to explore the students' reactions to the idea of a separate Catholic school provision. Over half the students (53%) agree that they would attend a Catholic school if the choice were left to them, with only one in five students (20%) disagreeing. On the question of whether their parents made the correct decision in sending them to a Catholic school, nearly two-

thirds of students (60%) agree and only 16% disagree. A similar percentage (69%) feel they are happy in their school, with only 16% disagreeing. Similarly, only one in five students (20%) would not send their own children to a Catholic school with half of the students (50%) agreeing that they definitely would.

Table 5:2 Catholic schools - the students' experiences

	Agree %	Not Certain %	Disagree %
In my school I feel I am valued	35	32	33
If I had the choice I would still want to attend a Catholic school	53	27	20
I would want to send my own children to a Catholic school	50	30	20
My Catholic school has helped me to understand the real meaning of life	39	28	33
I am happy to be a student of my school	69	15	16
My parents made the correct decision in sending me to a Catholic school	60	24	16

Given that 69% of the students feel that they are happy in school, it is somewhat surprising to discover that only 35% of students feel that they are valued in their school, with 32% being uncertain and 33% stating that they do not feel valued in their school. These are similar percentages to those recorded for the question of whether students feel that their Catholic schooling has helped them to understand the real meaning of life: 39% of students agree, 28% are uncertain and 33% disagree.

However, there are some positive signs for Catholic school educators in this initial overview of the data. For example, four out of ten students (39%) believe that their Catholic school has helped them to understand the real meaning of life, seven out of ten students (69%) are happy in their school and six out of ten students (60%) believe that their parents made the correct decision in sending them to a Catholic school.

The question now arises as to whether there are key variables in this data that can help us to understand better the types of responses that various sectors of the Catholic school population have to their Catholic education. Refining the data in terms of gender, religious affiliation and, for Catholic students, commitment to the Catholic Church, may help to compile a more complete picture of Catholic school life.

ii) Does gender make a difference?

Research such as that of Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi (1975), Greeley (1992) and Francis (1997) has shown that gender is a key variable in the analysis of social attitudes, and in terms of religion it indicates that on all criteria women are more religious than men. This section of the chapter (table 5:3) sets out to establish whether female and male students have the same or different attitudes to the provision of Catholic schools.

Three items record significant differences in the levels of agreement between male and female students. On the question of whether the Catholic Church should provide a separate Catholic education system, 32% of male students agree but only 24% of female students do so.

Table 5:3 Catholic Schools in principle – in agreement by gender

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
The Catholic Church should provide separate schools for Catholic children	32	24	9.6	·01
The county should provide free transport for students to go to Catholic schools	77	66	18.4	·001
The Catholic school's main aim should be to help students lead a good Christian life	46	48	0.2	NS
The Catholic school's main aim should be to help students pass exams	87	85	0.9	NS
Religious education should be taught in the parish community not in the school	31	18	27.6	·001
Catholic parents should send their children to Catholic schools	32	31	0.2	NS

Similarly, 77% of male students agree that the County should provide free transport for Catholic schools but this drops to 66% for female students. Finally, 31% of male students agree that Religious education should be taught in the parish, not the school, dropping to 18% for female students.

Male and female students are broadly in agreement on other principles underpinning Catholic education and no statistically significant difference is recorded between

them. Thus, on the question of whether Catholic parents should send their children to Catholic schools: 32% of male and 31% of female students agree. Furthermore, on the question of whether the main aim of a Catholic school should be to help students lead a good Christian life, 46% of male students and 48% of female students agree. Similarly, 87% of male students and 85% of female students agree that the main aim of a Catholic school should be to help students pass exams.

Calling to mind the research that has indicated that females tend to be more positive towards religious commitment than males, it is surprising to discover that, on the surface, the data from table 5:3 does not bear this out.

However, when we turn to an analysis of their actual experiences of Catholic schools (table 5:4) we find a different picture emerging. Thus, 56% of female students agree that they would still want to attend a Catholic school if they had a choice, whilst less than half of male students (49%) agree. Similarly, on the question of whether they would send their own children to a Catholic school, 53% of female students agree that they would, compared to, once again, less than half of male students (47%).

Furthermore, 71% of female students agree that they are happy in their school compared to 66% of male students and, on the question of whether their parents made the correct decision in sending them to a Catholic school, 64% of female students agree compared to 55% of male students.

Table 5:4 Catholic Schools in practice – in agreement by gender

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
In my school I feel I am valued	38	33	3.2	NS
If I had the choice I would still want to attend a Catholic school	49	56	6.5	.05
I would want to send my own children to a Catholic school	47	53	4.4	.05
My Catholic school has helped me to understand the real meaning of life	40	37	1.3	NS
I am happy to be a student of my school	66	71	3.2	NS
My parents made the correct decision in sending me to a Catholic school	55	64	9.5	.01

On the question of whether students feel valued in their schools, there is no statistically significant difference recorded between male and female students: 33% of female students agree, compared to 38% of male students. Similarly, 40% of male students and 37% of female students agree that their school has helped them to understand the real meaning of life.

There is then this contradiction in the data recorded so far. On the one hand, female students tend to be less supportive than male students regarding the principle of providing a separate Catholic education system. On the other hand, however, female students tend to record a more positive response than male students towards their actual experiences of Catholic schools.

Because there is a significant difference between male and female students on some key principles of Catholic school provision, the subsequent sections of this, and following, chapters (on religious affiliation and, for Catholic students, commitment to the Catholic Church) will be analysed by gender. As shall be seen, this phenomenon of lower levels of agreement for female students on the provision of Catholic education in principle but higher levels of agreement on their actual experiences of Catholic schools, is repeated for the identified sub-groups of students.

This is, therefore, an aspect of Catholic school life that Catholic school educators may wish to investigate further: why is it that female students tend to be less supportive of Catholic schools in principle but more positive than their male colleagues regarding their actual experiences of Catholic schools? It may be that female students are less supportive of the principle of separate Catholic school provision because they are not as comfortable as male students with what they may regard as a separatist system of education. On the other hand they may record more favourable responses to their actual experiences of school because they are more comfortable than male students with an education that is centred on a religious value and belief system.

Catholic school educators may find that female students' generally lower levels of support for Catholic schools in principle has more to do with their concern for friends or acquaintances who are excluded from their school than with the concept

of a separate Catholic school provision. The higher levels of agreement compared to male students regarding the experiences of Catholic schools may reflect a greater acceptance amongst female students of religious activities in practice.

The main concern, therefore, for Catholic school educators is how best to meet the religious and spiritual needs of male students. It may be that the religious and spiritual development of male students requires a different approach to that which suits female students.

iii) Does religious affiliation make a difference?

A fundamental aim of the Catholic school is to ensure that each and every student achieves his or her potential and is given the opportunity to grow and develop religiously and spiritually. The Catholic educator would hope that there is little difference between Catholic and other students regarding their appreciation and experiences of Catholic schools (CES, 2003 cf, O'Keefe and Zipfel, 2003, p. 5).

However, the research for this thesis shows that statistically significant differences do emerge between Catholic students and other students on the idea of Catholic schooling in principle and on their actual experiences of Catholic schools.

Table 5:5 records the responses of Catholic male and other male students to key areas of Catholic schools in principle.

Table 5:5 Catholic Schools in principle: in agreement by religious affiliation – male students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
The Catholic Church should provide separate schools for Catholic children	35	19	10.2	·01
The county should provide free transport for students to go to Catholic schools	79	69	5.1	·05
The Catholic school's main aim should be to help students lead a good Christian life	48	40	1.9	NS
The Catholic school's main aim should be to help students pass exams	86	89	0.5	NS
Religious education should be taught in the parish community not in the school	29	40	4.5	·05
Catholic parents should send their Children to Catholic schools	36	18	14.6	·001

Three key items record statistically significant differences in levels of agreement between Catholic male students and other male students. Thus, on the question of whether the Catholic Church should provide separate schools for Catholic students, 35% of Catholic male students agree that it should, compared to only 19% of other male students. A similar differential is recorded on the question of whether the local council should provide free transport for students to go to Catholic schools: 79% of Catholic male students agree, compared to 69% of other male students. Similarly, whilst 36% of Catholic male students agree that Catholic parents should send their children to Catholic schools, only 18% of other male students agree. Finally, on the question of whether religious education should be taught in the parish community

and not in the school: only 29% of Catholic male students agree, but this rises to 40% for other male students.

In terms of what, in principle, should be the main aim of a Catholic school, there is no statistically significant difference between Catholic male students and other male students. On the question of whether the main aim of a Catholic school should be to help students lead a good Christian life, 48% of Catholic male students agree, compared to 40% of other male students. In terms of whether the main aim of a Catholic school should be to help students pass examinations, 86% of Catholic male students and 89% of other male students agree.

There appears to be, therefore, some indication from the data recorded in table 5:5 that male students who are not members of the Catholic Church report statistically significant lower levels of agreement with the principle of providing a separate Catholic school system compared to their Catholic counterparts. If this is the case, it may be that the religious and spiritual needs of such students are not being met or that they feel alienated by the current provision. Catholic school educators may need to consider whether strategies should be put in place that are inclusive not exclusive and that can go some way to meeting their needs.

An analysis of the data in terms of female students, as recorded in table 5:6, reveals broadly similar responses to those for male students though the amount and depth of

statistically significant difference between Catholic female students and other female students is less.

Table 5:6 Catholic Schools in principle: in agreement by religious affiliation – female students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
The Catholic Church should provide separate schools for Catholic children	25	17	4.3	.05
The county should provide free transport for students to go to Catholic schools	66	65	0.1	NS
The Catholic school's main aim should be to help students lead a good Christian life	47	48	0.0	NS
The Catholic school's main aim should be to help students pass exams	84	87	0.9	NS
Religious education should be taught in the parish community not in the school	18	18	0.0	NS
Catholic parents should send their Children to Catholic schools	36	17	17.3	.001

Only two items record differences in levels of agreement between Catholic and other female students that are statistically significant. On the question of whether the Catholic Church should provide separate schools for Catholic children, 25% of Catholic female students agree but this drops to 17% for other female students. As already indicated, this percentage of 25% for Catholic female students is lower than that recorded for Catholic male students (35%).

The question of whether Catholic parents should send their children to Catholic schools elicited similar levels of agreement to those of male students: 36% of Catholic female students agree (which matches the 36% recorded for Catholic male students) but this drops to 17% for other female students (which matches the other male student percentage of 18%).

On other principles of Catholic schooling, there are no statistically significant differences recorded between Catholic female students and other female students.

Thus, on the question of whether the local authority should provide free transport for students to go to Catholic schools, 66% of Catholic female students and 65% of other female students agree. However, at 79%, Catholic male students recorded a higher level of agreement to this principle compared to Catholic female students, though other male students also recorded a higher level of agreement (69%) compared to other female students (65%).

In terms of whether religious education should be taught in the parish community and not in the school, Catholic and other female students record identical levels of agreement: 18% in both cases. This is significantly lower than the levels recorded for male students: 29% of Catholics and 40% of other male students.

On what should be the main aim of a Catholic school, 47% of Catholic female students and 48% of other female students agree that it should be to help students lead a good Christian life (compared to 48% of Catholic male students and 40% of

other male students). On whether it should be to help students pass exams, 84% of Catholic female students and 87% of other female students agree (compared to 86% of Catholic male students and 87% of other male students).

Catholic students of both sexes tend to report more favourable responses to the principle of Catholic schooling compared to other students. For example, 35% of Catholic male students and 25% of Catholic female students agree that the Catholic Church should provide separate schools for Catholic students compared to 19% of other male students and 17% of other female students. Similarly, 36% of Catholic male and female students agree that Catholic parents should send their children to Catholic schools compared to 18% of other male students and 17% of other female students.

However, it is clear that on some key principles of Catholic school provision, students who are not members of the Catholic Church record significantly lower levels of agreement than their Catholic student counterparts. This picture comes into even sharper focus when we turn to the data recording the responses of Catholic and other students to their actual experiences of Catholic schools. Table 5:7 tabulates the responses of male students.

For all but one of the statements in this section, male students who are not members of the Catholic Church record statistically significant lower levels of agreement than their male colleagues. For four of the statements the statistical difference is high at a

P< level of .001. Thus, on the question of whether they would still want to attend a Catholic school if they had the choice, 53% of Catholic male students agree, but this drops to 33% for other male students. Similarly, only 22% of other male students would want to send their own children to a Catholic school compared to 53% of Catholic male students, and only 41% of other male students believe their parents made the correct decision in sending them to a Catholic school compared to 59% of Catholic male students.

Table 5:7 Catholic Schools in practice: in agreement by religious affiliation – male students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
In my school I feel I am valued	38	37	0.0	NS
If I had the choice I would still want to attend a Catholic school	53	33	13.6	.001
I would want to send my own children to a Catholic school	53	22	35.5	.001
My Catholic school has helped me to understand the real meaning of life	43	31	5.3	.05
I am happy to be a student of my school	69	53	11.0	.001
My parents made the correct decision in sending me to a Catholic school	59	41	11.5	.001

On the question of whether their Catholic school has helped them to understand the real meaning of life, 43% of Catholic male students agree compared to only 31% of other male students. Finally, although both Catholic and other male students record similar levels on the question of whether they feel valued in school (38% of

Catholics and 37% of other male students), a far higher percentage of Catholic male students agree that they are happy in school compared to other male students: 69% and 53% respectively.

Female students report similar differences between Catholic and other students, recorded in table 5:8, though the differential is not as marked as it is for male students in most of the categories.

On a positive note, the levels of agreement for the questions on whether female students feel valued and happy in their Catholic schools are very similar for both Catholics and other females. For example, 32% of Catholic female students and 34% of other female students feel valued in school (though, these are lower figures than those recorded for male students: 38% of Catholic students and 37% of other students).

Furthermore, on the question of whether they are happy to be a student in their school, 71% of Catholic female students and 69% of other female students agree. It appears from this data that whilst the same percentage of Catholic male and female students are happy in school (69% of Catholic male students and 71% of Catholic female students), far fewer other male students are happy compared to other female students: 53% of other male students compared to 69% of other female students.

Table 5:8 Catholic Schools in practice: in agreement by religious affiliation – female students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
In my school I feel I am valued	32	34	0.2	NS
If I had the choice I would still want to attend a Catholic school	58	49	4.0	.05
I would want to send my own children to a Catholic school	58	36	22.1	.001
My Catholic school has helped me to understand the real meaning of life	39	30	3.9	.05
I am happy to be a student of my school	71	69	0.3	NS
My parents made the correct decision in sending me to a Catholic school	67	55	7.3	.01

However, although Catholic female and other female students are in agreement on the questions of whether they feel valued and happy in school, statistically significant differences are recorded for other statements in this section. Thus, 58% of Catholic female students would still want to attend a Catholic school if they had the choice compared to less than half (49%) of other female students. The figures are lower but with a similar differential among male students: 53% of Catholic male students and 33% of other male students.

Similarly, 58% of Catholic female students would want to send their own children to a Catholic school compared to only 36% of other female students. Again, the

differential is similar for male students: 53% of Catholic male students and 22% of other male students.

In terms of whether their parents made the correct decision in sending them to a Catholic school, 67% of Catholic female students agree compared to 55% of other female students. Male students recorded a similar differential (59% of Catholic male students agree compared to 41% of other male students) though, once again, other male students are less in agreement than other female students: 41% of other male students compared to 55% of other female students.

On the question of whether being in a Catholic school has taught them the real meaning of life, female students record a similar level of statistically significant difference to male students: 39% of Catholic female students agree that it has, compared to 30% of other female students. Male students recorded 43% of Catholic male students and 31% of other male students in agreement.

These statistics indicate that, overall, both male and female Catholic students have a more positive response to Catholic schooling compared to other students. Perhaps this shouldn't be surprising. However, as described in chapter one, the Catholic Church has called upon its schools to be inclusive and welcoming of children from all types of religious backgrounds, including those with no religious background. No child should feel marginalised or disenfranchised because he or she does not

share the religious belief of the foundation of the school. If nothing else, such disenchantment may have a negative impact on the student's academic progress.

Of more significance for Catholic school educators, however, is the hope of the Church that its schools may be evangelistic as well as catechetical institutions. In other words, as well as providing a context for a journey of faith for the baptised Catholic, the Catholic school should also be a means whereby students and parents from other, or no, religious backgrounds may be introduced to the principles, beliefs, and practices of the Catholic Christian faith. Clearly, this is going to be difficult to accomplish if significantly fewer children from other, or no, religious backgrounds, record lower levels of satisfaction with their Catholic school experiences.

This is an area, then, that Catholic school educators will want to investigate further: what is it about the experiences students who are not Catholic have of Catholic schools that leads them to express significantly lower levels of approval of Catholic schools compared to Catholic students? It may be that Catholic schools will need to reappraise the way they welcome and include the entire spectrum of students. They may need to explore what kinds of 'signals' are sent out in the 'hidden' curriculum of religious assumptions and expectations. They may need to review the teaching and learning of curriculum religious education in order to ensure that the spiritual and religious needs of all students are being met.

iv) For Catholic students, does commitment to the Church make a difference?

This section of the data analysis focuses specifically on those students who profess to be Catholic. Having explored the differences between male and female and between Catholic and non-Catholic students, the analysis now turns to an examination of three categories of Catholic students to see if this impacts upon attitudes towards the separate provision of Catholic schools.

As detailed in chapter two, Francis (2002) has drawn attention to the disparity between practising Catholics, sliding Catholics and lapsed Catholics, regarding their attitudes to religious and moral values. Those Catholic students who had lapsed completely record lower levels of positive attitudes to religious and moral values than students who are not Catholic. Francis warns Catholic school educators that the constituency most likely to undermine the distinctive ethos of the Catholic school is not the students who are not Catholic but Catholic students who have lapsed. My research appears to support Francis' thesis and raises some very serious areas of concern for Catholic school educators.

The level of commitment to the Church by Catholic students is grouped according to their Mass attendance pattern: those who never attend Mass, those who sometimes attend and those who attend weekly. Because of the differences already

highlighted between male and female students the responses of Catholic students are analysed by gender as well as by commitment to the Church.

Table 5:9 Catholic Schools in principle: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – male students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
The Catholic Church should provide separate schools for Catholic children	36	32	40	2.1	NS
The county should provide free transport for students to go to Catholic schools	79	82	73	3.8	NS
The Catholic school's main aim should be to help students lead a good Christian life	45	44	58	5.2	NS
The Catholic school's main aim should be to help students pass exams	86	88	83	1.3	NS
Religious education should be taught in the parish community not in the school	34	32	19	6.2	.05
Catholic parents should send their Children to Catholic schools	29	34	49	8.9	.05

In terms of the principle of separate Catholic school provision, Catholic male students report levels of agreement that are not significantly affected by their level of religious commitment. Thus, 36% of Catholic male students who never go to Church, 32% of those who sometimes got to Church and 40% of those who go to Church once a week agree that the Catholic Church should provide separate schools for Catholic children. Similarly, 79% of male Catholic students who never attend Mass, 82% of those who sometimes attend and 73% of those who attend Mass once

a week, agree that the county should provide free transport for students to go to Catholic schools.

On the questions concerning what should be the main aim of a Catholic school, again, there are no statistically significant differences between Catholic male students in terms of their commitment to the Catholic Church. Thus, 45% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, 44% of those who sometimes attend and 58% of those who attend once a week agree that the main aim of the Catholic schools should be to help students lead a good Christian life. Similarly, 86% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, 88% of those who sometimes attend and 83% of those who attend every week agree that the main aim of a Catholic school should be to help students to pass exams.

However, the final two items in this section elicit statistically significant differences between Catholic male students when religious commitment is taken into account.

On the question of whether Religious education should take place in the parish rather than in the school, whilst 34% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass and 32% of those who sometimes attend Mass agree that it should, this drops to 19% for those who attend Mass weekly. Similarly, only 29% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass and 34% of those who sometimes attend Mass agree Catholic parents should send their children to Catholic schools, but this rises to 49% for those who attend Mass weekly.

These figures are the first indicators that there may be less support for the idea of Catholic schooling amongst Catholic students who are sliding or lapsed compared to those who exhibit a higher level of commitment to the Church. Those who are committed to the Catholic Church are more likely to appreciate that the Catholic school is a suitable context for Religious education, recognising that this is its specific mission. Those who are no longer committed to the Catholic Church are perhaps more likely to regard Religious education in a Catholic school as an imposition, reinforcing their antipathy to Catholicism.

This suggestion is supported by the data revealing that Catholic male students who never go to Church, or only sometimes go to Church, are less likely to agree that Catholic parents should send their children to Catholic schools compared to those who attend weekly. Catholic school educators may need to be aware that such attitudes amongst sliding and lapsed Catholics could possibly undermine attempts to develop a shared vision of Catholic schooling among the student population.

When we turn to the responses of Catholic female students, as reported in table 5:10, we find the differential based on levels of commitment to the Catholic Church even more pronounced. Three of the items do not record a statistically significant difference between Catholic female students based on their level of commitment to the Catholic Church measured by Mass attendance and they elicit similar levels of response to those generated by Catholic male students. Thus, 61% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass, 65% of those who do sometimes and 73%

of those who do weekly agree that the local council should provide free transport for students to attend Catholic schools.

Table 5:10 Catholic Schools in principle: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – female students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
The Catholic Church should provide separate schools for Catholic children	11	24	38	17.6	.001
The county should provide free transport for students to go to Catholic schools	61	65	73	3.5	NS
The Catholic school's main aim should be to help students lead a good Christian life	37	47	54	5.8	NS
The Catholic school's main aim should be to help students pass exams	81	84	85	0.6	NS
Religious education should be taught in the parish community not in the school	35	16	11	18.6	.001
Catholic parents should send their children to Catholic schools	18	32	56	33.2	.001

In terms of what the basic aim of a Catholic school should be, there is no difference in the levels of response between Catholic female students based on commitment to the Catholic Church: 37% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, 47% of those who sometimes attend and 54% of those who attend weekly agree that it should be to help students lead a good Christian life. Similarly, there is no statistically significant difference between Catholic students for the statement that the main aim of the Catholic school should be to help students pass exams: 81% of

Catholic female students who never attend Mass, 84% of those who do sometimes and 85% of those who attend weekly agree.

However, a statistically significant difference emerge for three of the six items. On the question of whether the Catholic Church should provide separate schools for Catholic children, only 11% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass, and 24% of those who sometimes attend, agree that it should. However, this rises to 38% for Catholic female students who attend Mass weekly. This figure is similar to the percentage recorded for Catholic male students who attend Mass weekly (40%) though here the difference was not statistically significant.

In figures that mirror those for Catholic male students, 35% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass agree that Religious education should take place in the school rather than in the parish. This drops to 16% for those who sometimes attend and 11% for those who attend weekly. At a P< factor of .001 this is a greater differential than that recorded for Catholic male students (.05). However, as with Catholic male students, Catholic female students who have a commitment to the Catholic Church indicate a greater appreciation of the purpose of Catholic schools than their counterparts with less commitment.

Similarly, only 18% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass agree that Catholic parents should send their children to Catholic schools but this rises to 32% of Catholic female students who attend Mass sometimes and 56% of those who

attend Mass regularly. As with Catholic male students, who record figures of 29%, 34% and 49% respectively, it appears that committed Catholic female students are more likely to support the principle of providing a separate Catholic education system than those who are sliding or who are lapsed.

Before discussing these figures further, it might be helpful to examine the responses of Catholic students to their actual experiences of Catholic schooling, given that the differences recorded are even more pronounced than those recorded for Catholic schooling in principle. The data is presented by gender as well as by commitment to the Catholic Church. Table 5:11 records the responses of Catholic male students.

Table 5:11 Catholic Schools in practice: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – male students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
In my school I feel I am valued	31	37	47	4.8	NS
If I had the choice I would still want to attend a Catholic school	38	49	76	30.2	.001
I would want to send my own children to a Catholic school	40	50	73	21.9	.001
My Catholic school has helped me to understand the real meaning of life	40	40	52	4.2	NS
I am happy to be a student of my school	60	64	89	23.9	.001
My parents made the correct decision in sending me to a Catholic school	44	55	81	28.6	.001

Despite relatively large differentials between Catholics who attend Mass once a week and those who do not, the responses of Catholic male students to two items in this section indicate that commitment to the Church is not a factor influencing their response. The questions of whether they feel valued in school and of whether their school has helped them to understand the real meaning of life do not elicit statistically significant differences between the sub-groups. However, the percentages do follow the pattern of increasing in amount, relative to the level of commitment of the students. For example, whilst only 31% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass agree that they feel valued in school, this rises to 37% of those who attend Mass sometimes and 47% of those who attend Mass weekly. On the question of whether their school has helped them to understand the real meaning of life, 40% of Catholic male students who do not attend Mass or who attend Mass sometimes agree, but this rises to 52% for those who attend Mass weekly.

However, other items in this section indicate a marked increase in levels of agreement dependent on religious commitment. On the question of whether they would still want to attend a Catholic school if they had the choice, 38% of Catholic male students who do not attend Mass, and 49% of those who do attend Mass sometimes, agree that they would, but this rises to 76% for those who attend weekly. Similarly, whilst only 40% of Catholic male students who do not attend Mass, and 50% of those who attend Mass sometimes, agree that they would send their own children to Catholic schools, this rises to 73% for those who attend Mass

once a week. For the statement, 'I am happy to be a student of my school', 60% of Catholic male students who do not attend Mass, and 64% of those who sometimes attend, agree but 89% of those who attend Mass weekly do so. Finally, 44% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, and 55% of those who attend Mass sometimes, agree that their parents made the correct decision in sending them to a Catholic school, but this rises to 81% of those who attend Mass once a week.

The data appears to confirm the findings of earlier research. Committed Catholic male students are much happier with their Catholic education than Catholic students who are sliding or lapsed. Such negativity from a sizeable percentage of the school male population, particularly if they are nominally Catholic, will inevitably impact upon the distinctive ethos of the Catholic school.

But, what of the Catholic female student population? Table 5:12 demonstrates that the influence of religious commitment on the responses of female students is even more marked than that for male students. The increase in the percentage level of agreement between Catholic female students who never attend Mass, those who do sometimes, and those who attend once a week is clear for all items in this section. Thus, whilst only 15% of Catholic female students who do not attend Mass, and 29% of those who attend Mass sometimes, agree that they feel valued in their schools, this rises to 51% for those who attend Mass weekly. Similarly, only 34% of Catholic female students who never go to Mass, and 56% of those who go to Mass

sometimes, agree that they would still want to attend a Catholic school if they had the choice, but this rises to 80% for those who go to Mass weekly.

Table 5:12 Catholic Schools in practice: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – female students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
In my school I feel I am valued	15	29	51	29.6	.001
If I had the choice I would still want to attend a Catholic school	34	56	80	40.5	.001
I would want to send my own children to a Catholic school	32	57	78	38.9	.001
My Catholic school has helped me to understand the real meaning of life	27	37	52	12.8	.01
I am happy to be a student of my school	51	70	87	28.0	.001
My parents made the correct decision in sending me to a Catholic school	43	67	83	31.2	.001

On the question of whether they would send their own children to a Catholic school, 32% of Catholic female students who do not attend Mass agree, compared to 57% of Catholic female students who attend Mass sometimes and 80% of Catholic female students who attend Mass regularly.

At a slightly lower level of statistical significance compared to other items in this section, 27% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass agree that their Catholic school has helped them to understand the real meaning of life, rising to 37% of those who sometimes attend and 53% of those who attend Mass weekly.

Significantly, 87% of Catholic female students who attend Mass weekly agree that they are happy in school, but this drops to 70% for those who attend Mass sometimes and only 51% for those who never attend Mass.

Finally, only 43% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass feel able to agree that their parents made the correct decision in sending them to a Catholic school, compared to 67% of Catholic female students who attend Mass sometimes and 83% of those who attend Mass once a week.

Conclusion

It appears from this data that the warnings sounded by Francis regarding the potentially negative attitude of Catholic students who are no longer committed to the Church towards Catholic schooling, are justified. There is a very clear decrease in levels of agreement for the three sub-groups of Catholic students identified, in virtually every item of this section. Catholic students, whether male or female, who are no longer committed to their faith, express much lower levels of agreement or approval regarding Catholic education and their experience of it, compared to their committed Catholic counterparts.

The statistically significant differences in the levels of agreement recorded for the sub-groups indicate that female students are less supportive of the principle of a

separate Catholic education system but more likely to agree that it is a positive experience than their male counterparts.

Non-Catholic students, both male and female, are also less likely to support the provision of a separate Catholic education system as well as reporting lower levels of satisfaction with their actual experiences of Catholic schools.

Similarly, but even more pronounced, lapsed Catholic students are less likely to support the provision of a separate Catholic education and are less likely to record positive responses to their actual experiences of Catholic schools than their practising Catholic counterparts.

To some Catholic school educators, who may have anecdotal evidence to support such a conclusion, this may not be surprising. However, this research provides the evidence that there may be significant sub-cultures of the Catholic school population that do not support the vision of Catholic education espoused by the Church.

Not only does such negativity indicate that a significant number of students feel disenfranchised from the Catholic education system, but it may also have a negative impact upon the rest of the school. Bryk (1996) and others have shown that successful Catholic schools are ones where the majority of students share in the

school's vision of its endeavours. Attempts to develop and enhance the distinctive nature of the Catholic school may be seriously undermined by such negativity.

This must be a matter of serious concern for Catholic school educators. A key factor in the Catholic school's ability to fulfil the vision decreed for it by the Church is the extent to which every member of the community shares in, and contributes towards, its common endeavour. This analysis indicates that as the level of commitment to the Catholic Church decreases, it is accompanied by an attendant decrease of support for Catholic schooling.

Catholic school educators may need to explore and address the antipathy and issues expressed by sliding and lapsed Catholics in order to try and help them journey along their own particular pilgrimages of faith. By doing so, they might be able to begin to address the spiritual needs of every member of the school, committed or not, whilst at the same time attempting to ensure that the school itself is better able to witness to others the Good News it was established to proclaim and celebrate.

Chapter Six

Prayer and Worship

Introduction

Since Catholic schools set out to guide and encourage people to explore God's creation, and so to discover something of the Creator, worship, an essential element in religious experience, should be offered as an integral part of school life (CES 1999, D-19).

Grace (2002) defines spirituality as 'an awareness of a transcendent God, whose teachings and example generate a larger sense of purpose and meaning to the prosaic events of daily life' (p. 205). Spirituality, he writes, shapes identity and gives a 'transcendent meaning to the purposes of life and to encounters with suffering and death'.

The foundation stones of spirituality are, in the words of Cardinal Hume (1997) prayer and reflection. To 'pray is to try to make ourselves aware of God and in that awareness, respond to Him. It is an attempt to raise our hearts and minds to God' (p. 176).

Thus, if the Catholic school is determined to help students develop authentic spiritual lives, prayer, worship and reflection must be focal points of its life.

The nurture of Catholic spirituality in schools has traditionally been accomplished through religious education, collective worship, regular celebration of the Sacraments, the prayer life of the school, and the creation of sacred space for reflection. More specifically, what makes the Catholic school distinctive in faith-based education is, as Groome (1996) noted, its sacramental life and sacramental consciousness; an awareness of God as mediated by the sacraments and especially the celebration of Mass.

However, there are some influential Catholic writers who believe that these distinctive elements in Catholic culture and school life have been weakened in recent decades. Hitchcock (1995), for example, believes that post-Second Vatican Council Catholicism has lost a sense of the sacred with the pursuit of 'modernity, relevance and rational explicitness' (p. 23).

Arthur (1995) argued that Catholic secondary schools in England have moved from the 'holistic model' (concerned with the classic transmission of Catholic religious and liturgical culture), described in chapter five above, to new 'dualistic' and 'pluralistic' models of schooling. He believes that this separates the secular and religious elements of education, so that the Catholic ethos of the school becomes something additional to its secular academic programme rather than something that infuses the entire life of the school. What this amounts to, he claims, is an 'ebbing tide', an overall weakening of the distinctive culture of Catholicity in the Church's

secondary school system and in particular of the sacramental life of the schools and of the consciousness that goes with it.

In a similar vein, McClelland (1992) wrote:

The crucifix should not be discarded from classrooms as a gesture to religious pluralism. Neither should representations of the saints be rejected.....Nor should pious religious practices be abandoned on the altar of individual freedom. All these things are daily reminders of that communion of saints which lies at the heart of the theology of the Catholic school (pp. 6-7).

For these writers, protecting the Catholic ethos of the school means maintaining a visible Catholic symbolic culture and an active sacramental life and liturgical practice.

However, there are others who reject these claims and who have welcomed the changes. For them, the concentration on symbolic gestures, art and actions leads to a narrow and mechanical view of Catholicism, a 'prisoner of a cultural ghetto' (Grace, 2002, p. 205). Catholic schools, they claim, must now be open to contemporary faith pluralism and should be of real service to those who are far from faith.

Hastings (1996), for example, argued that much of the Catholicity of English schooling in the past was oppressive in its culture and immature in its religious and spiritual outcomes. For Hastings, the future of a mature and international Catholicity

will be found in Catholic schools which practice spiritual and value openness and which generate cultures where intellectual challenge is the norm.

Similarly, O’Keeffe (1992) believes that the future for Catholic schools in England must be in the direction of greater openness, which is already a feature on many inner city schools where substantial ‘other-faith’ populations exist in the schools. For O’Keeffe, this should now become a principled development for the future, where an emphasis on faith development rather than denominational adherence would achieve the ‘integration of differences into a fruitful and collaborative whole’ (p. 47).

There is this balance to be struck then: on the one hand, the Catholic Church expects its schools to provide sacred space, time and rituals.

It is in this context that the liturgical life of the school assumes its richest significance, where opportunities for prayer and reflection enable students to strengthen, in a very special way, their life in Christ. The opportunities provided by a Catholic school bring the spiritual life of the school to its most explicit expression (CES, 1995, para. 16).

On the other hand, it expects its schools to be places of welcome for those who are far from the faith.

A Catholic school in itself is far from being divisive or overbearing. It does not exacerbate differences, but rather aids co-operation and contact with

others. It opens itself to others and respects their way of thinking and of living (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 57).

This section of the research is designed to explore the students' expectations and experiences of prayer and worship in Catholic schools in Wales to assess whether they match the Church's expectations. Statements relevant here include the questions of whether Catholic schools should place importance on celebrating the Mass, the Sacraments and prayer, whether they should provide regular opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, whether they should provide at least one retreat a year for students and whether Mass should be celebrated in Catholic schools at least once a week.

On the students' actual experiences of prayer and worship, relevant statements include the questions of whether in their schools they are helped to lead a good Christian life, whether regular opportunities are provided to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, whether at least one retreat a year is provided for every student and whether Mass is celebrated at least once a week.

Such activities should be, according to the Catholic Church, at the very heart of the life of the school. For those who are committed members of the Catholic Church, this might be a reasonable expectation but the data will also be analysed according to gender, religious affiliation and, for Catholic students, commitment to the Church, to examine whether these sub-groups of Catholic school students record

statistically significant differences in their levels of agreement for these fundamental aspects of Catholic school's life.

i) Overview

In general, according to table 6:1, the students involved in this survey record favourable attitudes to the question of whether prayer and worship should be a feature of Catholic school life in Wales.

Table 6:1 Prayer and worship in principle

	Agree %	Not Certain %	Disagree %
Catholic schools should place importance on celebrating the Mass, the Sacraments and prayer	57	30	12
Catholic schools should provide regular opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of reconciliation	66	26	8
Catholic schools should provide at least one retreat a year for students	61	27	12
Mass should be celebrated in Catholic schools at least once a week	46	24	30

Over half the students (57%) feel that the Catholic school should place importance upon the celebration of the Sacraments, the Mass and prayer, although less than half of the students (46%) agree that Mass should be celebrated at least once a week in Catholic schools.

Two thirds of students (66%) agree that the Catholic school should provide regular opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of reconciliation and a similar figure (61%) of students agree that Catholic schools should provide at least one retreat a year for all students.

Of further encouragement to Catholic school educators in this area of school life are the figures for those students who disagree with the provision for prayer and worship. Only 13% of the respondents disagree that the Catholic school should place importance upon celebrating Mass, the Sacraments and prayer, even though 30% feel that there should not be Mass at least once a week in a Catholic school. Similarly, only 12% disagree with providing at least one retreat a year to students and less than one in ten students (8%) disagree that the Catholic school should provide regular opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Taken as a whole, these figures indicate a broad level of agreement amongst students in Catholic schools about the importance of prayer and worship in principle. However, when students were asked about the provision of prayer and worship opportunities in their own schools, as recorded in table 6:2, there appears to be some inconsistency across Wales.

On a positive note, nearly two thirds of students agree that in their school they are helped to lead a good Christian life (61%) and that Mass is celebrated at least once a week (58%). Furthermore, nearly half of the respondents agree that regular

opportunities are provided to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation (44%) and that at least one retreat a year is provided for students (41%).

Table 6:2 Prayer and worship, the students' experiences

	Agree %	Not Certain %	Disagree %
In my school I am helped to lead a good Christian life	61	20	19
Regular opportunities are provided in my school to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation	44	22	34
My school provides at least one retreat a year for every student	41	25	34
Mass is celebrated in my school at least once a week	58	7	34

However, Catholic school educators will be concerned about the significant percentages reporting a disagreement with these statements. Around one third of students report that regular opportunities are not provided to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation (34%), that Mass is not celebrated at least once a week in their school (35%) and that the school does not provide at least one retreat a year for all students (34%). In addition, one in five students (19%) disagree that their school has helped them to lead a good Christian life.

In the provision of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the Mass and Retreats, nearly one quarter of respondents (22%) claimed to be uncertain about what was offered by

their schools, which may require Catholic school educators to reflect upon how well whatever the school provides is prepared and organised.

ii) Does gender make a difference?

The questions dealing with the importance of prayer and worship in Catholic schools, as reported in table 6:3, tend to elicit broadly similar levels of response amongst both male and female students. Three of the items record levels of agreement between the genders that are not statistically significant, indicating that on these items, male and female students are just as likely to agree as not to agree.

Table 6:3 Prayer and worship in principle – in agreement by gender

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
Catholic schools should place importance on celebrating the Mass, the Sacraments and prayer	59	57	0.4	NS
Catholic schools should provide regular opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation	63	70	6.8	.01
Catholic schools should provide at least one retreat a year for students	59	64	2.9	NS
Mass should be celebrated in Catholic schools at least once a week	46	47	0.4	NS

On the question of whether the Catholic school should place importance on celebrating the Mass, the Sacraments and prayer, 59% of male students agree whilst 57% of female students agree. Similarly, 46% of male students agree that Mass

should be celebrated in a Catholic school at least once a week, with 47% of female students in agreement.

The differential is greater on the questions concerning the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the provision of retreats. These areas of school life have more support from the female population of schools in Wales compared to the male student responses. Thus, only 63% of male students agree that regular opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation should be provided in Catholic schools compared to 70% of female students. Similarly, although not statistically significant, 59% of male students agree that a Catholic school should provide at least one retreat a year for its students, whilst nearly two thirds of female students (64%) are in agreement.

The responses of male and female students on the actual provision of prayer and worship opportunities in Catholic schools in Wales, as reported in table 6:4, record no statistically significant differences between them. Thus, nearly two thirds of both male and female students agree that attending their Catholic schools has helped them to lead a good Christian life: 60% of male students and 62% of female students. Similarly, 57% of male students and 59% of female students agree that Mass is celebrated at least once a week in their schools. Disappointingly for Catholic school educators, it appears that less than half of the students are aware of the opportunities for prayer and worship that should be provided by their schools. On the question of whether regular opportunities are provided to celebrate the

Sacrament of Reconciliation, 43% of male students and 45% of female students agree. Similarly, 41% of male students and 43% of female students agree that their schools provide at least one retreat a year for all students.

Table 6:4 Prayer and worship in practice – in agreement by gender

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
In my school I am helped to lead a good Christian life	60	62	0.6	NS
Regular opportunities are provided in my school to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation	43	45	0.3	NS
My school provides at least one retreat a year for every student	41	43	0.3	NS
Mass is celebrated in my school at least once a week	57	59	0.8	NS

In general, there are no statistically significant differences between male and female students regarding their actual experiences of prayer and worship in Catholic schools. Schools' administrators and advisors may want to investigate the levels of provision of such opportunities in schools, given that it appears patchy to say the least. However, the provision of prayer and worship activities in Catholic schools in Wales does not appear to be an issue related to gender.

iii) Does religious affiliation make a difference?

The provision of opportunities for prayer and worship is a sensitive area of school life in terms of students who are not members of the Catholic Church. As shown in chapter five, students who are not Catholic tend to record significantly lower levels of satisfaction with their experiences of Catholic schooling compared to their Catholic counterparts. Given that prayer and worship are expressions of belief and commitment of the creature to the Creator, participation presumes some sort of religious commitment. For those without it, prayer and worship may be more a hindrance than a help to integration and inclusivity. This section of the chapter examines whether there is a marked difference in the expectations and experiences of Catholic and other students regarding prayer and worship in a Catholic school. As with chapter five, it is separated by gender in order to explore the impact gender has on the levels of agreement.

Table 6:5 Prayer and worship in principle: in agreement by religious affiliation – male students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
Catholic schools should place importance on celebrating the Mass, the Sacraments and prayer	61	51	3.9	.05
Catholic schools should provide regular opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation	64	60	0.6	NS
Catholic schools should provide at least one retreat a year for students	59	60	0.0	NS
Mass should be celebrated in Catholic schools at least once a week	47	48	0.1	NS

There is a statistically significant difference between Catholic and other male students on the question of whether Catholics schools should place importance on celebrating the Mass, Sacraments and prayer: 61% of Catholic male students believe that it should compared to only 51% of other male students, which would appear to indicate some disenfranchisement from this aspect of Catholic school life.

However, there are no statistically significant differences between Catholic male students and other male students on other statements in this section. On the question of whether there should be regular opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, 64% of Catholic male students and 60% of other male students agree. Similarly, 59% of Catholic male students and 60% of other male students agree that Catholic schools should provide at least one retreat a year for all students. Finally, 47% of Catholic male students and 43% of other male students agree that Mass should be celebrated at least once a week in Catholic schools.

Thus, although fewer male students who are not Catholic believe that importance should be placed on prayer and worship compared to Catholic students, overall there appears to be little difference between Catholic male students and other male students regarding the principle that prayer and worship should take place in Catholic schools. It will be of some encouragement to Catholic school educators to discover that a majority of students of both constituents (61% of Catholics and 51% of other male students) agree that prayer and worship opportunities should feature in Catholic school life.

A broadly similar picture emerges in an analysis of the data, recorded in table 6:6, regarding female students' responses to these aspects of school life. The only statistically significant difference between Catholic female students and other female students in this section is on the question of whether regular opportunities should be provided to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation: 73% of Catholic female students agree compared to only 59% of other female students. Although a greater percentage of Catholic female students agree with the provision of the Sacrament of Reconciliation compared to Catholic male students (73% to 64%), the percentages for other students of either gender are virtually the same: 60% of other male students and 59% of other female students.

Table 6:6 Prayer and worship in principle: in agreement by religious affiliation – female students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
Catholic schools should place importance on celebrating the Mass, the Sacraments and prayer	58	55	0.2	NS
Catholic schools should provide regular opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation	73	59	10.8	.001
Catholic schools should provide at least one retreat a year for students	63	67	0.7	NS
Mass should be celebrated in Catholic schools at least once a week	46	50	0.9	NS

There is a greater level of agreement on other areas. Thus, on the question of whether importance should be placed on the celebration of the Mass, the Sacraments and prayer, 58% of Catholic female students and 55% of other female students

agree, which is broadly similar to the results recorded for male students: 61% of Catholic and 51% of other students. Similarly, 63% of Catholic female students and 67% of other female students agree that the Catholic school should provide at least one retreat a year for all students. This is slightly higher than those recorded for male students: 59% of Catholic and 60% of other students. Finally, 46% of Catholic female students and 50% of other female students agree that in a Catholic school Mass should be celebrated at least once a week. Once again, these percentages match those of the male students: 47% of Catholics and 43% of others.

Apart from the difference recorded for male students on the provision of prayer and worship opportunities in principle, Catholic school educators may find these results somewhat encouraging. In nearly all categories well over half of all students, both male and female, Catholic and other, recognise that prayer and worship should be an integral part of school life.

When we turn to the students' actual experiences of prayer and worship in Catholic schools, we find similar levels of agreement between Catholic and other students for both genders.

Table 6:7 records the responses of male students to their experience of prayer and worship. Though not considered significant there is a 10% difference recorded between Catholic and other male students on the question of whether attending a Catholic school has helped them to lead a good Christian life: 62% of Catholic and

52% of other male students. Although there is a difference between Catholic and other male students on this question, Catholic school educators may take some encouragement from the indicator that over half of students (52%) who are not Catholic and nearly two thirds of Catholic male students (62%) agree that attending their school has helped them to lead a good Christian life.

Table 6:7 Prayer and worship in practice: in agreement by religious affiliation – male students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
In my school I am helped to lead a good Christian life	62	52	3.8	NS
Regular opportunities are provided in my school to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation	43	43	0.0	NS
My school provides at least one retreat a year for every student	40	45	0.9	NS
Mass is celebrated in my school at least once a week	55	61	1.4	NS

In terms of what they believe is actually provided by their schools, there are no statistically significant differences recorded between Catholic male students and other male students. Thus, 43% of both constituents agree that their schools provide regular opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. On the question of whether their schools provide at least one retreat a year, 40% of Catholic male students and 45% of other male students agree. Similarly, 55% of Catholic male students and 61% of other male students agree that their schools celebrate Mass at least once a week.

These figures are broadly similar to those for female students, recorded in table 6:8.

Table 6:8 Prayer and worship in practice: in agreement by religious affiliation – female students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
In my school I am helped to lead a good Christian life	63	57	2.0	NS
Regular opportunities are provided in my school to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation	44	49	0.9	NS
My school provides at least one retreat a year for every student	42	43	0.0	NS
Mass is celebrated in my school at least once a week	56	70	9.2	.01

Though not as pronounced, on the question of whether attending their school has helped them to lead a good Christian life there is a similar differential between Catholic female students and other female students as there is for male students: 63% of Catholic female students agree compared to 57% of other female students (Male students recorded 62% of Catholics and 52% of others). The difference is not regarded as statistically significant, but Catholic school educators may want to investigate why fewer students who are not Catholic appear to be less positive about their experiences compared to their Catholic counterparts. However, as mentioned earlier, it will be a source of some encouragement to Catholic school educators to discover such a high percentage of both genders and both constituents recording such positive responses to their spiritual formation.

In terms of what they believe is actually provided by their schools, 44% of catholic female students and 49% of other female students agree that regular opportunities are provided to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This is at a similar level to that recorded for male students: 43% for both constituents.

On the question of whether the school provides at least one retreat a year, 44% of Catholic female students and 43% of other female students agree. This, once again, is at a similar level to that recorded for male students: 40% for Catholic and 45% for others.

Finally, there is a statistically significant difference indicated for the question of whether Mass is celebrated at least once a week in school. Whilst only 56% of Catholic female students agree, 70% of other female students do so. This mirrors the balance recorded for male students: 55% for Catholic students and 61% for others. Just over half of both male and female Catholic students (55% and 56% respectively) agree that Mass is celebrated at least once a week. However, the figures rise to 61% for other male students and 70% for other female students.

Perhaps the awareness of the frequency of the celebration of Mass is greater for those who may feel excluded from it. If that is the case the lack of awareness among Catholic students will be a cause of concern to Catholic school educators. Whatever the reason, Catholic school educators may want to investigate this apparent discrepancy between Catholic and other students on the question of how regularly

Mass is celebrated in Catholic schools. However, this data indicates that affiliation to the Catholic Church is not a significant factor affecting students' levels of agreement on the provision of prayer and worship opportunities in Catholic schools in Wales.

iv) For Catholic students, does commitment to the Church make a difference?

The analysis of the attitudes of Catholic students in chapter five concerning the provision of Catholic schools in principle indicated that the level of commitment to their Catholicity has a significant impact upon those attitudes. For the purposes of comparison, Catholic students have been subdivided according to the frequency of Mass attendance, assuming this to be an indicator of religious commitment: 'Never', 'Sometimes' and 'Weekly'. Because gender also has an impact upon levels of agreement, the data is further separated by the categories of male and female.

Table 6:9 tabulates the responses of Catholic male students. Two of the items in this section elicit responses indicating that the level of commitment to Catholicity is not a factor in Catholic male students' attitudes to certain elements of the prayer life of the school. On the question of whether Catholic schools should provide at least one retreat a year for students, 51% of Catholic students who never attend Mass, 59% of those who sometimes attend and 65% of those who attend weekly, agree that they

should. Similarly, 41% of Catholic students who never attend Mass, 45% of those who sometimes attend and 58% of those who attend weekly agree that Mass should be celebrated in Catholic schools at least once a week. The pattern of increasing levels of agreement depending on commitment to the Church is repeated in these items but it is not revealed as statistically significant.

Table 6:9 Prayer and worship in principle: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – male students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
Catholic schools should place importance on celebrating the Mass, the Sacraments and prayer	48	58	80	21.7	.001
Catholic schools should provide regular opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation	55	58	84	23.2	.001
Catholic schools should provide at least one retreat a year for students	51	59	65	3.3	NS
Mass should be celebrated in Catholic schools at least once a week	41	45	58	6.0	NS

However, two of the items elicit responses indicating that the level of commitment to their Catholicity is a significant factor in students' support for key elements in the religious and spiritual life of the school. Thus, on the question of whether a Catholic school should place importance on celebrating the Mass, the Sacraments and prayer, only 48% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass and 58% of those who attend Mass sometimes agree, but this rises to 80% for those who attend weekly. Similarly, 55% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass and 58% of those who sometimes attend, agree that Catholic schools should provide regular

opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, but this rises to 84% for those Catholic male students who attend Mass once a week.

The data exploring Catholic female students' attitudes to the provision of prayer and worship opportunities in Catholic schools, as recorded in table 6:10, follow the same pattern as the data for Catholic male students.

Table 6:10 Prayer and worship in principle: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – female students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
Catholic schools should place importance on celebrating the Mass, the Sacraments and prayer	42	58	66	10.7	.01
Catholic schools should provide regular opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of reconciliation	60	74	81	10.5	.01
Catholic schools should provide at least one retreat a year for students	43	66	67	14.4	.001
Mass should be celebrated in Catholic schools at least once a week	35	48	47	4.1	NS

As for Catholic male students, the statement, 'Mass should be celebrated in Catholic schools at least once a week' elicits responses from Catholic female students which indicate that the level of commitment to their Catholic faith is not a factor in their attitude to this aspect of prayer and worship in Catholic schools: 35% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass, 48% of those who sometimes attend and

47% of those who attend weekly agree that Catholic schools should celebrate Mass at least once a week.

However, the responses to other items in this section appear to indicate that commitment to Catholicity is an important factor in Catholic female students' levels of agreement towards some key aspects of the prayer life of a Catholic school.

Thus, whilst only 42% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass, and 58% of those who sometimes attend, agree that the Catholic school should place importance on celebrating the Mass, the Sacrament and prayer, this rises to 66% for Catholic female students who attend Mass once a week. Similarly, 81% of Catholic female students who attend Mass weekly agree that Catholic schools should provide regular opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation but this drops to 74% for those who attend Mass sometimes and 60% for those who never attend Mass. Finally, whilst only 43% of Catholic female students agree that a Catholic school should provide at least one retreat a year for students, this rises to 66% and 67% for those who attend Mass sometimes and weekly.

The data reflecting the students' experiences of what happens in their schools in practice, is not as relevant to an examination of whether the needs of every member of the school are being met, compared to their responses regarding the provision of prayer and worship opportunities in principle.

However, the first item in the following two tables concerned with their actual experiences is relevant. Table 6:11 tabulates the responses of Catholic male students.

Table 6:11 Prayer and worship in practice: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – male students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
In my school I am helped to lead a good Christian life	53	59	77	13.2	.01
Regular opportunities are provided in my school to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation	35	49	37	6.4	.05
My school provides at least one retreat a year for every student	34	40	43	1.8	NS
Mass is celebrated in my school at least once a week	50	55	61	2.0	NS

The first item states, ‘In my school I am helped to lead a good Christian life’. The difference in the levels of agreement recorded for Catholic male students is statistically significant, indicating that commitment to the Catholic Church is a factor in students’ attitudes and response to their Catholic schooling. Whilst 77% of Catholic male students, who attend Mass weekly, agree that in their school they are helped to lead a good Christian life, this drops to 59% for those who sometimes attend and 53% for those who never attend. As we shall see in table 6:12 this significant decrease in levels of agreement is matched by the response of Catholic female students.

Other items in this section record the students' perceptions of what prayer and worship activities are taking place in school. On the question of whether regular opportunities are provided to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, 35% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, 49% of those who sometimes attend, and 37% of those who attend weekly, agree that they are.

In levels of agreement that are also less than 50% of the cohort regardless of their commitment to Catholicism, 34% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, 40% of those who do sometimes, and 43% of those who attend weekly, agree that their schools provide at least one retreat a year for students. Finally, 50% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, 55% of those who sometimes attend and 61% of those who attend weekly, agree that Mass is celebrated in their schools at least once a week.

Before commenting on these figures there is a need to examine the responses of Catholic female students to the same statements. As we shall see from table 6:12, they largely mirror the experiences of Catholic male students. For example, whilst 69% of Catholic female students who attend Mass weekly agree that in their school they are helped to lead a good Christian life, this drops to 65% for those who sometimes attend, and 50% for those who never attend, a decrease that is statistically significant. In other words, the level of commitment to the Catholic Church is a significant factor in Catholic female students' experiences of their Catholic schooling. As with male Catholic students, the less committed a student is,

the less likely is he or she to report positive attitudes to prayer and worship in Catholic schools.

Table 6:12 Prayer and worship in practice: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – female students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
In my school I am helped to lead a good Christian life	50	65	69	7.6	.05
Regular opportunities are provided in my school to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation	50	42	44	1.5	NS
My school provides at least one retreat a year for every student	42	45	37	2.1	NS
Mass is celebrated in my school at least once a week	46	59	54	4.6	NS

Other items exploring the provision of prayer and worship opportunities do not reveal a statistically significant difference between the sub-groups of Catholic students demarcated according to level of commitment. Thus, 50% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass, 42% of those who do sometimes, and 44% of those who attend weekly, agree that regular opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation are provided in their schools. Similarly, 42% of those who never attend Mass, 45% of those who sometimes attend, and 37% of those who attend weekly agree that in their schools at least one retreat a year is provided for students. Finally, 46% of those who never attend Mass, 59% of those who do sometimes, and 54% of those who attend weekly, agree that Mass is celebrated at least once a week in their schools.

The last three items in tables 6:11 and 6:12 do not reveal a great deal about the impact of levels of commitment to the Catholic Church on students' attitudes to prayer and worship provision in practice, but Catholic school educators may want to explore why so many students do not believe that opportunities are provided to celebrate the Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly. These are, after all, hallmarks of the distinctiveness of a Catholic school and one might expect the levels of agreement for their provision to be much higher.

The central message of the data for this section, though, surrounds the question of whether Catholic schools are serving the religious and spiritual needs of every member of the school community. As with the parallel section of chapter five, there is evidence here that Catholic schools are benefiting 'practising' (according to Mass attendance) Catholics, but not sliding or lapsed Catholics. These sub-groups of the Catholic population of Catholic schools tend to record significantly lower levels of agreement than their practising Catholic counterparts regarding the principle of providing prayer and worship opportunities in Catholic schools and whether being in a Catholic school has helped them to lead a good Christian life.

Conclusion

The gender of the students surveyed in this research does not appear to be a factor affecting the levels of agreement recorded regarding the provision of prayer and

worship activities in Catholic schools in Wales. However, students who are not Catholic, and Catholic students who are distant from the Church, tend to report statistically significant lower levels of agreement regarding these activities compared to their practising Catholic colleagues. Thus, the data indicates that in those aspects of Catholic school life at which the school is often at its most distinctive, namely, when engaged in prayer and worship, a significant proportion of the students appear to be disengaged.

As described in chapter two, the Catholic Church, both nationally and internationally, has explored the function of Catholic schools for those students and families who are not members of the Church or who are at some distance from it. The Church calls upon its schools to be sensitive to the needs of every member of the school community, whatever their faith stance. It appears from this research that this sensitivity is not always apparent to the students themselves.

The religious and spiritual needs of ‘practising’ Catholics, lapsed Catholics, students of other Christian traditions, of other faith traditions and of no faith tradition whatsoever, need to be met in order for the school to fulfil the vision established for it by the Church. Failure to do so may result in a significant percentage of the Catholic school population feeling marginalized, disenfranchised and disaffected by the very elements of Catholic school life that make it distinctive. The negative impact of such disaffection upon the life of the school, undermining all that the school stands for, could be significant. More importantly, though, unless

it is dealt with, Catholic schools will have failed in their stated mission of proclaiming the 'Good News of Jesus Christ' to a significant number of young people.

Chapter Seven

Catholic Schools and the Common Good

Introduction

The Catholic school ... has a responsibility to enable students to understand the need to contribute to society and the importance of commitment to the Common Good . . . the exploration of the expectations of society in the light of Gospel values is particularly challenging. As well as confronting this challenge through the taught curriculum, the school should be a community which is an expression of, and witness to, Christ's presence in today's society (CES, 1999, P-43).

Spurred on by the Second Vatican Council's return to a more clearly communal understanding of the nature and mission of the Church, recent teaching has emphasised that the Church must be a 'community of deep love, of total inclusion and of 'right relationships' – the biblical description of justice' (Groome, 1996, p. 115). As the Second General Synod of Catholic Bishops (1971) stated,

For its mission to the world, the Church is to be a community of effective action and witness - a Sacrament of God's reign and justice to the world, a catalyst for the 'common good' (para. 4)

The Catholic school, proclaims the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1988), is a crucial agent in this communal mission to be Church and Sacrament to

the world: 'The Catholic school finds its true justification in the mission of the Church.' (para. 34). The Catholic school must continually witness to Christ's values, particularly the option for the poor, if it is to be an authentic witness to Christ and a means of growing moral awareness in the students. In the words of Grace (2002), 'the authentic love of God (the manifestation of the spiritual)' will be witnessed to in the Catholic school by helping students to know what it means to 'live a good life (the manifestation of the moral)' and to 'loving and helping one's neighbour (the manifestation of social concern)' (p. 205).

However, the nurturing of a moral and spiritual awareness is becoming increasingly difficult in the contemporary conditions of school and society. As Michael Paul Gallagher (1997) has noted, there has been a growing secular marginalisation in society, which is permeating the culture of faith-based schools.

An obvious battleground here involves the relation between the official faith vision of the school and the unofficial cultural agenda lived in the daily praxis of both school and society. In practice, it can be seen as a zone of ambiguity, where the Christian ideals of the institution are subtly undermined by the pressures of competition, or from the alternative curriculum of liberal relativism and self-fulfilment that is so easily absorbed from the wider culture (p. 28-29).

This self-centred and hedonistic ethos, permeating twenty-first century western society clearly will have an impact on the school's attempts to instil a moral

maturity among those who work there. There is a conflict between a materialistic ethic that sets great value on individualism and consumerism and the Gospel ethic, which proclaims that the first should be last and the last first.

In this conflict, Catholic schools are called upon to bring about a distinctive moral formation in their population; what Pope John Paul II (1979) referred to as ‘an education of the believing conscience’ (para. 16). As the Second Vatican Council declared, Catholic education ‘aims to create for the school community an atmosphere enlivened by the Gospel spirit of freedom and love’ (*Gravissimum Educationis*, para. 8). For the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977), the Catholic school must be ‘a genuine community bent on imparting, over and above an academic education, all the help it can to its members to adopt a Christian way of life . . . a policy of working for the common good is undertaken seriously as working for the building up of the Kingdom of God’. (para. 60)

Catholic schools can do this in a number of ways. They must continually emphasise the dignity and worth of each person, made in the image of God, and they must help every member of the school community strive for justice and peace both inside and outside the school. The task of the Catholic school is to educate all its members in social responsibility informing and forming them to contribute to the ‘common good’. When they do this they can be, in the words of Groome (1996), ‘counter-cultural to the mores of rugged individualism, self-sufficiency and social indifference that permeate western society’ (p. 116). They can socialise the students

to 'care about and contribute to the common good' through their own ethos of social consciousness', through their 'operative values of peace and justice' and by 'credible concern for the marginalized and suffering of society' (p. 116).

This is accomplished not only by what is taught but also by how it is taught.

Teaching styles that reflect domination, passivity, monologue and competition may inevitably lead to an ethos that is the very antithesis of what is sought in a Catholic school. Formation in a social consciousness calls for a pedagogy that is grounded in dialogue and is marked by participation, cooperation and mutual respect.

This section of the study is designed to explore how far Gospel values permeate the life of the Catholic school and to what extent students feel that the school encourages an attitude of outreach to others. Relevant statements from the research instrument include the questions of whether Catholic schools should spend a lot of time and effort on charity work, whether they should be noted for being caring Christian communities, whether their main aim should be to help students lead a good Christian life, whether they should help students develop decision-making skills for moral issues and whether Catholic schools should help students to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions.

In terms of the students' actual experiences, relevant statements include the questions of whether a lot of time and effort is spent in their school on charity work, whether their school is noted for being a caring Christian community, whether they

are helped to lead a good Christian life in their school, whether they are helped to develop decision-making skills for moral issues, and whether they are taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions.

If the student feels that his/her contribution as a member of the community is valued, this may tell us something about the extent to which the sense of the common good extends to the school's quality of relationships as well as being reflected in the external features of social action. The data is analysed, once again, by gender, religious affiliation and, for Catholic students, commitment to the Catholic Church, to examine whether there are any significant differences in the attitudes of these sub-groups of students to this aspect of Catholic school life.

i) Overview

In general, as table 7:1 indicates, students in Catholic schools in Wales, report a favourable response to the question of whether Catholic schools, in principle, should be involved in activities that show a care for others.

Although less than half of the respondents (46%) agree that Catholic schools should spend a lot of time and effort on charity work, over two thirds (69%) believe that Catholic schools should be noted for being caring Christian communities. Relatively few students disagree with these two statements. Only 8% of students believe that

Catholic schools should not be noted for being caring Christian communities, and less than a quarter (23%) believe that Catholic schools should not spend a lot of time and effort on charity work.

Table 7:1 Catholic schools and the common good - in principle

	Agree %	Not Certain %	Disagree %
Catholic schools should spend a lot of time and effort on charity work	46	31	23
Catholic schools should be noted for being caring Christian communities	69	23	8
The Catholic school's main aim should be to help students lead a good Christian life	47	23	30
Catholic schools should help students develop decision-making skills for moral issues	70	24	6
Catholic schools should help students be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions	40	41	19

However, less than half of the respondents agree, firstly, that the Catholic school's main aim should be to help students lead a good Christian life (47%) and, secondly, that Catholic schools should help students to be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions (40%). Nearly one third of students (30%) disagree with the statement that the main aim of the Catholic school should be to help students lead a good Christian life and one in five students (19%) believe that Catholic schools should not help students be guided by the Church when making moral decisions. Having said that, 70% of students agree that Catholic schools

should help students develop decision-making skills for moral issues, with only 6% disagreeing.

Finally, the high levels of uncertainty recorded in table 7:1 may raise a note of warning for Catholic school educators. Nearly one third of students (31%) are not certain whether Catholic schools should spend a lot of time and effort on charity work. Just under a quarter of the students are uncertain about the statements that Catholic schools should be noted for being caring Christian communities (23%), that the Catholic school's main aim should be to help students lead a good Christian life (23%) and that Catholic schools should help students develop decision-making skills for moral issues (24%). Finally, 41% of students are uncertain about whether Catholic schools should help students to be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions.

Table 7:2 indicates that in terms of their actual experiences of caring for others in Catholic schools, the students involved in this survey report generally favourable responses. Nearly two thirds of the students surveyed agree that their schools are noted for being a caring Christian community (60%) and that in their schools they are helped to lead a good Christian life (61%). However, less than half of the students (49%) feel able to agree that a lot of time and effort is spent in their schools on charity work.

Although 53% of students agree that in their schools they are helped to develop decision-making skills for moral issues, less than half (44%) believe that they are taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions. As with the data provided by table 7:1, there is a high level of uncertainty in these areas of school life, for example, 27% of students are uncertain about whether they are helped to develop decision-making skills for moral issues, and 38% are uncertain about whether they are taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions. The uncertainty expressed over other areas of this aspect of school life was less: 21% on whether a lot of time and effort is spent on charity work, 24% on whether the school is noted for being a caring Christian community, and 20% on whether they are helped to lead a good Christian life.

Table 7:2 Catholic schools and the common good, the students' experiences

	Agree %	Not Certain %	Disagree %
A lot of time and effort is spent in my school on charity work	49	21	30
My school is noted for being a caring Christian community	60	24	16
In my school I am helped to lead a good Christian life	61	20	19
In my school I am helped to develop decision-making skills for moral issues	53	27	20
In my school I am taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions	44	38	18

There is less disagreement with these statements compared to table 7:1. One third of students (30%) disagree that a lot of time and effort is spent on charity work in their schools. However, less than one in five disagree with the statements that their school is noted for being a caring Christian community (16%), that in their school they are helped to lead a good Christian life (19%), that they are helped to develop decision-making skills for moral issues (20%) and that they are taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions (18%).

Although the results of this aspect of the research convey positive messages for Catholic school educators, there may be some concern over what place Catholic Church teaching has in the formation of moral values in Catholic schools in Wales. Table 7:1 indicated that only 40% of the students feel that students should be helped to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions and table 7:2 shows that only 44% of students believe that they are helped to be guided by the teaching of the Church in this area.

ii) Does gender make a difference?

It appears from the data that there is little difference in attitudes between male and female students in Catholic schools in Wales regarding the principle of whether Catholic schools should be involved in activities that contribute to the 'common good' (see table 7:3). Thus, on the question of whether Catholic schools should

spend a lot of time and effort on charity work, less than half of both genders - 45% of male students and 47% of female students - agree that they should. Similarly, 46% of male students and 48% of female students agree that Catholic schools should help students to lead a good Christian life. There is a similar level of agreement, though higher, between male and female students on the question of whether Catholic schools should be noted for being caring Christian communities: 68% of male students and 70% of female students.

Table 7:3 Catholic schools and the common good in principle – in agreement by gender

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
Catholic schools should spend a lot of time and effort on charity work	45	47	0.7	NS
Catholic schools should be noted for being caring Christian communities	68	70	0.5	NS
The Catholic school's main aim should be to help students lead a good Christian life	46	48	0.2	NS
Catholic schools should help students develop decision-making skills for moral issues	70	70	0.0	NS
Catholic schools should help students be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions	40	39	0.1	NS

In terms of moral education, over two thirds of both male and female students agree that Catholic schools should help students develop decision-making skills for moral issues: 70% for both genders. There is a similar, though lower, level of agreement on the question of whether Catholic schools should help students to be guided by

the teachings of the Church when making moral decisions: 40% of male students and 39% of female students agree.

So, there are mixed messages here for Catholic educationalists. There are no significant differences between male and female students on these aspects of school life but less than half of both male and female believe that Catholic schools should be heavily involved in charity work or helping students to lead a good Christian life. It would appear that there is some work to be done here on helping both male and female students to appreciate the function of the Catholic community as a catalyst for good. Having said that, over two thirds of both male and female students agree that Catholic schools should be noted for being caring Christian communities and that they should help students develop decision-making skills for moral issues.

As reported in table 7:4, there are no statistically significant differences between the genders on what actually happens in practice in Catholic schools in Wales. Around half of both male and female students (48% of male students and 50% of female students) agree that a lot of time and effort is spent on charity work in their schools. Similarly, though at a higher level of agreement, 62% of male students and 58% of female students agree that their schools are noted for being caring Christian communities, and 60% of male students and 62% of female students agree that in their school they are helped to lead a good Christian life.

Table 7:4 Catholic schools and the common good in practice – in agreement by gender

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
A lot of time and effort is spent in my school on charity work	48	50	0.5	NS
My school is noted for being a caring Christian community	62	58	1.8	NS
In my school I am helped to lead a good Christian life	60	62	0.6	NS
In my school I am helped to develop decision-making skills for moral issues	54	53	0.1	NS
In my school I am taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions	44	44	0.0	NS

Furthermore, 53% of female students agree that they are helped to develop decision-making skills for moral issues compared to 54% of male students. On the question of whether the students feel that they are helped to be guided by the teachings of the Church when making moral decisions, the level of agreement is 44% for both genders.

There are, therefore, no significant differences based on gender in terms of the students' responses to their experiences in schools regarding the 'common good'. However, once again, Catholic school educators may want to examine why both male and female students report such low levels of agreement on such crucial aspects of school life as charity work and the teaching of the Church. It may be that schools will need to re-examine how effectively they are putting into practice the

Church's vision of the Catholic school as a prophetic witness to Christ's message and example.

iii) Does religious affiliation make a difference?

Though not indicated as statistically significant, Catholic students, both male and female, tend to record more favourable responses to these aspects of school life compared to their counterparts who are not Catholic.

Table 7:5 compares the responses of Catholic male students to other male students regarding the belief that Catholic schools should be about developing a moral awareness in students.

On the question of whether Catholics schools should spend a lot of time and effort on charity work, 46% of Catholic male students agree that they should, compared to only 37% of other male students. Similarly, 48% of Catholic male students believe that the Catholic school's main aim should be to help students lead a good Christian life compared to only 40% of other male students. Quite understandably, there is a similar level of difference recorded for the question of whether Catholic schools should help students to be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions: 42% of Catholic male students compared to 33% of other male students.

Table 7:5 Catholic schools and the common good in principle: in agreement by religious affiliation – male students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
Catholic schools should spend a lot of time and effort on charity work	46	37	2.2	NS
Catholic schools should be noted for being caring Christian communities	68	69	0.1	NS
The Catholic school's main aim should be to help students lead a good Christian life	48	40	1.9	NS
Catholic schools should help students develop decision-making skills for moral issues	71	69	0.1	NS
Catholic schools should help students be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions	42	33	2.7	NS

There is less differential recorded for other principles of Catholic education. On the question of whether Catholic schools should be noted for being caring Christian communities, 68% of Catholic male students and 69% of other male students agree. Similarly, 71% of Catholic male students and 69% of other male students agree that the Catholic school should help students develop decision-making skills for moral issues.

None of these comparative figures are considered statistically significant and the same is true of those recorded for female students as detailed in Table 7:6. Thus, 47% of Catholic female students and 48% of other female students agree that Catholic schools should spend a lot of time and effort on charity work. This is not

that dissimilar to the figures recorded for male students: 46% for Catholic male students and 37% for other male students. Similarly, 69% of Catholic female students and 75% of other female students agree that the Catholic schools should be noted for being a caring Christian community. In the case of male students it is 68% and 69% respectively.

Table 7:6 Catholic schools and the common good in principle: in agreement by religious affiliation – female students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
Catholic schools should spend a lot of time and effort on charity work	47	48	0.0	NS
Catholic schools should be noted for being caring Christian communities	69	75	1.7	NS
The Catholic school's main aim should be to help students lead a good Christian life	47	48	0.0	NS
Catholic schools should help students develop decision-making skills for moral issues	69	73	1.0	NS
Catholic schools should help students be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions	40	38	0.1	NS

On the question of whether the Catholic schools main aim should be to help students lead a good Christian life, 47% of Catholic female students and 48% of other female students agree. Again, this is similar to the figures recorded for male students: 48% for Catholics and 40% for others.

Catholic and other female students also agree on the question of whether Catholic schools should help develop decision-making skills for moral issues: 69% of Catholic female students and 73% of other female students agree. These figures match those recorded for male students: 71% of Catholics and 69% of other students.

Finally, 40% of Catholic female students and 38% of other female students agree that in a Catholic school students should be taught to be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions. The figures for male students are 42% of Catholics and 33% of others in agreement.

Overall then, there does not appear to be a significant difference of opinion between Catholic and other students of either gender regarding the principle that Catholic schools should be focused on the common good. Disappointingly for Catholic school educators, it appears that less than half of all students, Catholic and other, male and female, believe that Catholic schools should be involved in charity work, or that they should aim to help students lead a good Christian life, or that students should be taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions.

Having said that, over two thirds of students, Catholic and other, male and female, believe that Catholic schools should be noted for being caring Christian communities and that they should help students develop decision-making skills for moral issues. It appears that, on the one hand, most students, regardless of their

religious affiliation, do not believe that issues concerning the needs of others should dominate the Catholic school, but, on the other hand, they believe that Catholic schools should witness to Gospel values in some way. Perhaps this apparent contradiction reflects the conflict students in Year 11 face: a deep concern for the needs of others whilst managing the pressure of examination success. If this is the case, it is a conflict that Catholic school educators must be sensitive to, and be ready to help resolve, should the need arise.

When we turn to the data on what the students believe happens in practice in Catholic schools regarding issues concerned with the common good, we find once again that Catholic and other students are broadly in agreement.

Table 7:7 Catholic schools and the common good in practice: in agreement by religious affiliation – male students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
A lot of time and effort is spent in my school on charity work	48	47	0.0	NS
My school is noted for being a caring Christian community	61	64	0.3	NS
In my school I am helped to lead a good Christian life	62	52	8.8	.05
In my school I am helped to develop decision-making skills for moral issues	54	54	0.0	NS
In my school I am taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions	46	37	3.3	NS

Table 7:7 tabulates the responses of male students to this aspect of the Catholic school's life. In terms of the schools' activities, Catholic male students and other male students record almost identical levels of agreement.

For example, on the question of whether their schools spend a lot of time and effort on charity work, 48% of Catholic and 47% of other male students agree. Similarly, 61% of Catholic male students and 64% of other male students agree that their schools are noted for being caring Christian communities.

In terms of the impact of the school on the students' own attitudes and beliefs, there is some difference of opinion reported between Catholic and other male students.

Whilst 62% of Catholic male students agree that attending their school has helped them to lead a good Christian life, only 52% of other male students felt able to agree. Similarly, though not statistically significant, 46% of Catholic male students agree that they are taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions compared to only 37% of other male students. On the question of whether they are taught decision-making skills for moral issues, Catholic and other male students report identical levels of agreement: 54% in both cases.

Table 7:8 records the responses of Catholic and other female students to the same statements. In terms of the schools' activities, there is no statistically significant difference between Catholic female students and other female students regarding the amount for time and effort spent on charity work, though other female students

record a higher level of agreement compared to Catholic female students: 48% for Catholics (identical to the male Catholic figure) and 55% for others.

Table 7:8 Catholic schools and the common good in practice: in agreement by religious affiliation – female students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
A lot of time and effort is spent in my school on charity work	48	55	1.7	NS
My school is noted for being a caring Christian community	55	67	5.8	.05
In my school I am helped to lead a good Christian life	63	57	2.1	NS
In my school I am helped to develop decision-making skills for moral issues	54	49	1.2	NS
In my school I am taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions	46	38	2.5	NS

However, on the question of whether their schools are noted for being caring Christian communities, there is a statistically significant difference and, once again, a higher percentage of other female students agree compared to Catholic female students: 55% of Catholics compared to 67% of other female students. Male students recorded similar levels of agreement on this statement: 61% of Catholics compared to 64% of others. It is of interest that the perception that the school is thought of as a caring Christian community is higher for both genders among those students who are not Catholic compared to those who are. This may reflect the idea that some parents who are not Catholic choose Catholic schools because they are

perceived to be more caring. If so, this may be a source of some encouragement to Catholic school educators.

In terms of the impact of the school on female students' own attitudes and beliefs, there are no statistically significant differences reported between Catholic and other students. Thus, 63% of Catholic female students agree that their school has helped them to lead a good Christian life compared to 57% of other female students. The figure for Catholic male students is at a similar level for this statement (62%) though lower for other male students at 52%.

On the question of whether their school has helped them to develop decision-making skills for moral issues, 54% of Catholic female students agree compared to 49% of other female students. Once again the figures for male students are broadly similar: 54% for Catholics and 54% for others.

A similar picture emerges for the statement on whether their Catholic school has helped them to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions: 46% of Catholic and 38% of other female students agree. This is mirrored in the percentages recorded for male students: 46% for Catholics and 37% for others.

Taken as a whole, the data suggest that there is little difference in the perceptions and experiences of Catholic and other students regarding the role of the Catholic school in promoting the common good. It may be regarded as a source of

encouragement to Catholic school educators to discover that, in most categories, nearly two thirds of both Catholic and other students, of either gender, believe that they are helped to lead a good Christian life and that their schools are noted for being caring Christian communities. These may be indicators of the ‘positive signs’ the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education discerns in the Church’s education endeavour.

iv) For Catholic students, does commitment to the Church make a difference?

However, when we turn to the data examining the attitudes of Catholic students, sub-divided according to their level of commitment to the Catholic Church (based on the frequency of Mass attendance), as with previous chapters, we find a significant difference between ‘practising’ Catholics and those we might refer to as sliding or lapsed.

Because a difference between the genders has already been identified, the data for Catholic male and Catholic female students is presented separately.

Table 7:9 tabulates the responses of male students. The pattern of increasing levels of agreement depending on Church commitment, identified in earlier chapters, is matched by this data. Thus, whilst only 35% of Catholic male students who never

attend Mass agree that Catholic schools should spend a lot of time and effort on charity work, this rises to rises to 43% for those who sometimes attend and 65% for those who attend weekly. Similarly, only 58% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass and 66% of those who sometimes attend agree that Catholic schools should be noted for being caring Christian communities, but this rises to 82% for those who attend Mass once a week.

Table 7:9 Catholic schools and the common good in principle: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – male students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
Catholic schools should spend a lot of time and effort on charity work	35	43	65	18.7	.001
Catholic schools should be noted for being caring Christian communities	58	66	82	13.4	.01
The Catholic school's main aim should be to help students lead a good Christian life	45	44	58	5.2	NS
Catholic schools should help students develop decision-making skills for moral issues	63	68	84	11.9	.01
Catholic schools should help students be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions	34	38	58	13.5	.01

The statement, 'The Catholic school's main aim should be to help students lead a good Christian life' does not appear to elicit statistically significant different levels of agreement according to Church commitment, despite a 14% difference between committed Catholics and the other two sub-groups: 45% of Catholic students who

never attend Mass and 44% of those who sometimes attend, compared to the 58% of committed Catholic male students who agree with the statement.

However, the final two items in this section do show a statistically significant difference between the three groupings of Catholics. Thus, whilst 63% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass and 68% of those who sometimes attend agree that Catholic schools should help students develop decision-making skills for moral issues, this rises to 84% for those who attend Mass once a week. Similarly, 34% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, and 38% of those who sometimes attend, agree that Catholic schools should help student be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions. However, the percentage for Catholic male students who attend Mass weekly is 58%.

The levels of agreement for Catholic female students, as recorded in table 7: 10, follow a similar pattern to those for Catholic male students.

Two items reveal responses that are not statistically significant when comparing Catholic female students by levels of commitment, though they follow the pattern of increasing in relation to the levels. On the question of whether Catholic schools should spend a lot of time and effort on charity work, the levels of agreement are 35% for Catholic female students who never attend Mass, 43% for those who sometimes attend and 52% for those who attend weekly. For the statement, 'The Catholic schools' main aim should be to help students lead a good Christian life, the

levels of agreement are 37% for Catholic female students who never attend Mass, 47% for those who sometimes attend and 54% for those who attend once a week.

Table 7:10 Catholic schools and the common good in principle: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – female students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
Catholic schools should spend a lot of time and effort on charity work	37	48	52	4.4	NS
Catholic schools should be noted for being caring Christian communities	53	69	79	14.4	.001
The Catholic school's main aim should be to help students lead a good Christian life	37	47	54	5.8	NS
Catholic schools should help students develop decision-making skills for moral issues	54	69	80	14.0	.001
Catholic schools should help students be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions	24	40	47	10.2	.01

However, the three remaining items reveal the pattern already identified. Thus, whilst 53% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass, and 69% of those who sometimes attend, agree that Catholic schools should be noted for being caring Christian communities, this rises to 79% for those who attend Mass once a week. Similarly, 80% of Catholic female students who attend Mass weekly agree that Catholic schools should help students develop decision-making skills for moral issues, this drops to 69% for those who attend Mass sometimes and 54% for those who never attend Mass. Finally, 24% of those who never attend Mass, and 40% of those who sometimes attend, agree that Catholic schools should help students be

guided by the teachings of the Church when making moral decisions, rising to 47% for those who attend weekly.

Involvement in social justice issues is an integral part of the Catholic school's mission. However, in several key areas, this data indicate that Catholic students, male and female, who are no longer committed to their faith, are also less likely to support the principle of Catholic schools being involved in social action activities. Furthermore, such students are also less likely than committed Catholic students to agree that Catholic schools should be helping them to develop decision-making skills for moral issues and to be guided by the teaching of the Church when making those decisions.

As has already been noted in chapters five and six, Catholic school educators may need to be aware that lapsed Catholic students, who no longer support the principle of Catholic schooling and who no longer feel involved in its enterprise, may be having a negative and undermining affect on its ability to fulfil its mission.

This conclusion is supported by an analysis of the data exploring the students' experiences of what happens in practice in Catholic schools in terms of moral development and social action.

Table 7:11 tabulates the responses of male students. On the question, for example, of whether a lot of time and effort is spent on charity work in their schools, 38% of

Catholic male students who never attend Mass agree that a lot of time and effort is spent in their schools on charity work but this rises to 48% for those who attend Mass sometimes and 52% for those who attend weekly. Similarly, 77% of Catholic male students who attend Mass once a week agree that their schools are noted for being caring Christian communities but this drops to 59% for those who sometimes attend and 53% for those who never attend.

Table 7:11 Catholic schools and the common good in practice: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – male students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
A lot of time and effort is spent in my school on charity work	38	47	59	8.1	.05
My school is noted for being a caring Christian community	55	60	69	3.7	NS
In my school I am helped to lead a good Christian life	53	59	77	13.2	.01
In my school I am helped to develop decision-making skills for moral issues	51	55	53	0.5	NS
In my school I am taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions	35	44	63	15.4	.001

Although not statistically significant the pattern of increasing percentages according to levels of commitment continues for the statement, ‘In my schools I am helped to lead a good Christian life’: 55% of those who never attend Mass, 60% of those who sometimes do, and 69% of those who attend once a week, agree.

The levels of agreement for the statement, 'In my school I am helped to develop decision-making skills for moral issues' are broadly similar for the three sub-groups of Catholic male students: 51% of those who never attend Mass, 55% of those who do sometimes, and 53% of those who do weekly, agree. However, on the question of whether they are taught to be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions, whilst only 35% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass agree, this rises to 44% for those who attend Mass sometimes and 63% for those who attend weekly.

It appears, then, that sliding and lapsed Catholic male students are less likely to agree that they are helped to be involved in charity work or to leading a good Christian life compared to those who are still committed to their faith. According to the response of the committed Catholic male students, these activities occur, so presumably those who are no longer committed to the Church are more likely to not be engaged with the social action endeavours of the school than those who are committed.

Similarly, Catholic male students who are no longer committed to the Church are less likely to agree that they are taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions than those who are committed. Once again, presumably, such guidance occurs, if committed Catholic male students are reporting that it does, but those who are not committed to the Church appear to be more likely to ignore it

when it does occur, compared to those Catholic male students who are committed to the Church.

Before examining the implications of these conclusions further, we need to explore the responses of Catholic female students, recorded in table 7:12.

Table 7:12 Catholic schools and the common good in practice: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – female students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
A lot of time and effort is spent in my school on charity work	46	44	60	7.8	.05
My school is noted for being a caring Christian community	42	57	61	6.8	.05
In my school I am helped to lead a good Christian life	50	65	69	7.6	.05
In my school I am helped to develop decision-making skills for moral issues	42	55	60	6.0	.05
In my school I am taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions	32	49	47	6.4	.05

As with Catholic male students, the data reveal that commitment to the Catholic Church is a significant factor in the levels of agreement recorded by the three sub-groups of Catholic female students. Thus, whilst only 46% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass, and 44% of those who attend Mass sometimes, agree that their schools spend a lot of time and effort on charity work, this rises to 60% for those who attend once a week. Similarly, 61% of committed Catholic female students agree that their schools are noted for being caring Christian

communities, but this drops to 57% for those who attend Mass sometimes and 42% for those who never attend Mass. On the question of whether their schools have helped them to lead a good Christian life, 50% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass agree that it does, but this rises to 65% for those who sometimes attend and 69% for those who attend once a week.

Thus, in these three key aspects of Catholic school life, Catholic female students who have remained committed to the Church are more likely than those who have not to agree that their school has helped them to witness to the Christian vocation of care for others.

Turning to the items concerned with guidance on moral issues, on the question of whether their school has helped them to develop decision-making skills for moral issues, 42% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass agree that they have, but this rises to 55% for those who attend Mass sometimes and 60% for those who attend weekly. Finally, only 32% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass agree that they are taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions, but this rises to 49% for those who sometimes attend and 47% for those who attend weekly.

One of the primary purposes of Catholic education is to develop in young people the capacity to care for others and to make responsible and other-centred moral choices.

According to this research, the majority of Catholic students, whether male or female, agree that their Catholic schools help them to be involved in charity work

and to be guided by the Church when facing moral issues. However, for those who are no longer committed to the Church, this does not appear to be the case.

Commitment to the Church appears to make a significant difference to the levels of engagement Catholic students make with the Catholic educational enterprise.

Catholic school educators may need to explore two related questions: why is it that Catholic students who are no longer committed to the Church tend to be less supportive of the school's social action enterprises and what impact does such disengagement have on the ethos and mission of the school?

Conclusion

To some Catholic school educators it may not come as a surprise that most members of the Catholic school population in Wales believe that Catholic schools should be involved in moral development and social action to care for those in need. The human value of caring for others is not, of course, restricted to Catholic schools but it is one of the 'positive signs' the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1988) looked for in Catholic schools. In addition, factors such as the gender of the students and their religious affiliation do not appear to make a significant difference to students' attitudes to these activities.

However, as has been the case in previous chapters of analysis, an important sector of the Catholic school population in Wales, that is Catholic students who have

lapsed or are at a distance from the Church to which they claim to belong, record significantly lower levels of agreement regarding social action and moral education in school than their committed Catholic counterparts.

The implication of this finding is that this particular sub-group of students is disengaged from the Catholic education enterprise. Such a rejection of an aspect of school life as fundamental as caring for others is a significant indicator of dissatisfaction. If nothing else, such dissatisfaction could have a negative impact on the efforts to include those who might otherwise have shown an active concern for others from doing so.

The Catholic Church calls upon its schools to ensure that every member of the school, including those who are at a distance from the Church, feel valued and incorporated into the life of the school. Catholic school educators will need to explore carefully the causes and consequences of this dissatisfaction. As indicated in chapter two, there may be a need to reflect upon the concept of 'pre-evangelisation' here. This would include an attempt to prepare such students to be open to the possibility of cultivating a spirit of openness, respect and tolerance towards others. Building on this foundation, it may be possible for Catholic schools to provide opportunities for students to be engaged in projects that, at the very least, suggest a unity with the needs, sufferings, hopes and aspirations of other human beings. If this occurs, Catholic schools may be able to legitimately claim that they are fulfilling the demands of Jesus Christ and the vision for them established by the

Church. The evidence from the data underpinning this study is that this is not yet the case.

Chapter Eight

The School Population

Introduction

It is obvious that in such a demanding educational policy all participants must be committed to it freely . . .(in) order to bring it into being and to maintain it, the school must be able to count on the unity of purpose and conviction of all its members (SCCE, 1977, para. 59).

There was a time when the expectation underpinning Catholic schools was that Catholic teachers, teaching the Catholic faith to a fully committed Catholic student population, would staff them. As we have seen earlier, this is simply not now the case. However, the Catholic Church continues to believe that its schools have a duty to assist Catholic parents:

in their responsibility for the academic, physical, spiritual, moral and religious education of their children in accordance with the teachings of the Church (Bishops of England and Wales, 1996, p. 3).

The question that arises is how far the distinctive ethos of the Catholic school is affected, or even diluted, by an increase in both the non-practising Catholic population and the non-Catholic population of staff and students.

At the peak of admissions in 1974, there was a total of 944,536 children in all maintained Catholic schools in England and Wales of whom 14,000 – less than 2% of the total – were non-Catholic (Catholic Education Council, 1975, p. 21). By 2002, the situation had changed with the population standing at 824,861 of which 164,177 were non-Catholic, 20% of the total (CES data, 2003). Facing falling rolls, redundancies and even closure, Catholic schools, particularly in the secondary sector, have had to admit more and more non-Catholics. Thus, from the mid-1970s onwards, Catholic schools were no longer the homogenous communities they were once established to be. There is now, in most Catholic schools, a diversity of religious backgrounds and a pluralism of intent and commitment to the Catholic faith. It is inevitable that this also means that there is less coherence than there once was between the home, school and parish for a significant number of Catholic school students.

As noted in chapter three, Francis' (1986) study of Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Birmingham had shown that, in general, students from non-practising and non-Catholic home backgrounds had displayed less favourable attitudes towards their Catholic schools than those who had come from practising Catholic homes:

This study places a caveat against the policy of compensating for falling roles by recruiting into Catholic schools a higher proportion of non-Catholic students even from Church-going non-Catholic backgrounds (p. 170).

Francis' empirical data on Catholic schools suggested that the admission of non-Catholic students may have a negative influence on the effectiveness of Catholic education and dilute the religious ethos of the school.

Nearly one quarter of the Year 11 students in this study did not have a Catholic background and of those that did, only 30% regularly attended a Church service. The cohesiveness of the school community, which appears to be a hallmark of successful Catholic schools, cannot therefore always be assumed, at least amongst the student population. The sense of unity and shared purpose, which Bryk (1993), and many others, have highlighted as a strength of Catholic schooling, leading to their success in all areas of education, may actually be a myth in Catholic schools in Wales.

Part of the research, therefore, is designed to explore the student's sense of unity of purpose in their school. Relevant statements for this section include the questions of whether Catholic schools should only admit Catholic students and whether all students in a Catholic school should share Catholic moral and religious values. In terms of the students' actual experiences, relevant questions are whether most students in their schools are Catholic and whether they share Catholic moral and religious values.

However, that is only one part of the picture. Cardinal Hume (1988) described teachers working in Catholic schools as being 'at the heart of all good education -

and absolutely crucial to the process'. In this he was reflecting the words of the Second Vatican Council (1965).

Let teachers realise that to the greatest possible extent they determine whether the Catholic school can bring its undertaking to fruition . . . Above all let them exercise their function as partners of the parents (para. 8).

Hume went on to say in this speech that 'no teacher should be appointed who is unable to support the Catholic school's aims and identity'. This is because, for the Catholic Church, the teacher working in a Catholic school shares fundamentally in the parent's role of heralding the Gospel to their children.

Within the Catholic Church, teaching is a vocation. The principal and model teacher is Christ himself, who shares his vocation with all who teach and invites all to appreciate their relationship with him in this mission. The more fully they respond to his invitation, the richer their teaching will become and the more opportunities will be provided for students to develop as full human beings. In this ministry of service, teachers share in the work of the Church (CES, 1999, Z-73).

Bryk (1993), Grace (2002), and others, have shown that a teacher's attitudes and expectations can have a significant impact upon the ethos of a school. Arthur (1996) believes that the only authentic Catholic school is one which is 'inspired by a unifying vision of Christ . . . integrally bound up with the work of the Church' (p. 231). This 'special character' resides in the possibility of teachers, students and

parents uniting around a Catholic conception of school life inspired by the Gospel and the Church.

The Catholicity of the school depends on there being a body of people whose lives are deeply imbued by the Catholic faith, and who are therefore able to bring the light of Christ into every aspect of school life (p. 231).

In a small-scale analysis, reported in the *British Journal of Educational Studies*, of why some Catholic schools appear to be underachieving in OFSTED inspections, Morris (1997) has suggested that it may be related to differences in the Catholic make-up of the population. His theory is that the internal culture of 'pluralistic' Catholic schools, is 'weakened' by the presence of students and teachers from non-Catholic backgrounds. The reduction in the schools' social capital and shared values has an impact upon the ethos of the school and, in the longer term, upon both its religious and academic achievements. He suggests that the traditional 'holistic' model of a Catholic school, as defined by Arthur, has the greater potential for achieving the academic, religious and social goals of the Church.

The clear, agreed and focused mission of the traditional model would seem to help facilitate high levels of academic effectiveness precisely because it provides the social cement which holds [the community] together, makes the notion of a distinctive ethos real rather than rhetorical and gives an emotional security to students in which they thrive religiously, socially and intellectually (p. 390).

Morris believes that the Catholic school, which, in response to the perceived needs of a pluralistic community, 'waters down' its catholicity is less likely to provide the kind of supportive environment needed to enable children to become effectively functioning members of any religious or cultural group.

Without a sense of belonging to a specific group or community in which they feel secure, children are less likely to be open to others (and) to develop the necessary skills to seek the truth of what they are taught (p. 390).

In 1978, the percentage of non-Catholic teachers in maintained Catholic Secondary schools in England and Wales was 34% of the total. By 2002 (CES data, 2003), it had risen to 50%. The Church has recognised that there are many non-Catholic teachers who are a tremendous support to the distinctive ethos of the Catholic school and Morris (1997) drew attention to the numbers of non-Catholic staff who are received into the Church partly as a result of the influence of the Catholic school. Nevertheless, there may be occasions when clashes will occur between a teacher's own beliefs and attitudes and those of the school. Furthermore, if Bryk, Arthur, Morris and others are right, the increased employment of non-Catholic teachers, caused by the shortage of suitably qualified Catholic teachers, will inevitably lead to a diminishment in the specifically Catholic nature of the school, with the attendant impact on the school's ability to fulfil the mandate given it by the Church.

This part of the research is designed to explore the extent to which students of Catholic schools in Wales feel that Catholic schools should only admit Catholic

students and that they should only be staffed by Catholic teachers. Relevant statements from the research instrument include the questions of whether only Catholic teachers should be employed in Catholic schools, whether teachers in Catholic schools should set a good example of what it means to be a Christian, whether teachers in Catholic schools should have a sense of mission to help children, whether all teachers in a Catholic school should attend school Masses and whether they should support Catholic values and beliefs.

In terms of the students' experiences of their schooling, relevant statements include the question of whether only Catholic teachers teach in their schools, whether they set a good example of what it means to be a Christian, whether they are keen to help students, whether they attend school Masses and whether they support Catholic values and beliefs.

An awareness of communal identity and a sense of shared experience are important for the maintenance of a distinctive ethos. The research asks whether there is a sense of shared vision in Catholic schools and whether the students' gender, religious affiliation and, for Catholics, commitment to the Catholic Church, have a significant impact on the students' levels of agreement with these areas of Catholic school life.

i) Overview

As might be expected, the traditional image of a Catholic school only populated by Catholic students is not one shared by the students involved in this survey (table 8:1).

Table 8.1 The School student population – in principle

	Agree %	Not Certain %	Disagree %
As far as possible, Catholic schools should only admit Catholic students	20	12	68
All students in a Catholic school should share Catholic moral and religious values	42	29	29

Only 20% of students feel that Catholic schools should admit Catholic students alone, with over two thirds of students (68%) disagreeing with such a policy.

Similarly, less than half of the students (42%) feel that all the students in a Catholic school should share Catholic religious and moral values, with 29% disagreeing.

This data is paralleled by the responses students have made to statements exploring their experience of Catholic schools (table 8:2).

Table 8:2 The school student population - the students' experiences

	Agree %	Not Certain %	Disagree %
Most of the students in my school are Catholic	70	19	11
In my school the students share Catholic religious and moral values	30	35	35

There is a disparity between some secondary schools in Wales in terms of the numbers of Catholic students in the school population. One school, for example, has a Catholic population of 99.5%; another has a Catholic population of 35%. Thus, the data on the number of Catholic students perceived to belong to Catholic schools in Wales have to be understood in that context. In general though, 70% of the students agree that most of the students in their schools are Catholic, with 11% disagreeing.

Of more concern to the Catholic educator is the response of students to the statement 'In my school the students share Catholic religious and moral values'. Only 30% of students feel able to agree with this, with 35% disagreeing. The data throws up the spectre of the possibility of an undercurrent of negativity towards Catholic religious and moral values that educators will want to explore very carefully. Later we will explore the extent to which religious affiliation affects the response of students on this issue.

The student element is only one half of the exploration of the kinds of attitudes that pervade Catholic schools in Wales. As we have seen, the attitude of staff towards the Catholic ethos of the school can have a significant impact upon it. Tables 8:3 and 8:4 explore the beliefs of students about the make up of the staff population of Catholic schools in Wales.

Table 8:3 The school staff population - in principle

	Agree %	Not Certain %	Disagree %
As far as possible only Catholic teachers should be employed in Catholic schools	13	13	74
Teachers in Catholic schools should set a good example of what it means to be a Christian	67	21	12
Teachers in Catholic schools should have a sense of mission to help children	70	23	7
All teachers in a Catholic school should attend school Masses	53	19	28
All teachers in a Catholic school should support Catholic values and beliefs	52	24	24

It appears from this data that the majority of students do not share the Church's vision of the need for a unified and united Catholic school staff population. Nearly three quarters of the respondents (74%) disagree that as far as possible only Catholic teachers should be employed in Catholic schools. Only 13% of students agree with this principle. In a similar vein only half of the students agree that all teachers in a Catholic school should attend school Masses (53%) and that all teachers in a catholic school should support Catholic values and beliefs (52%). Around a quarter of the respondents disagree that all teachers should attend school Masses (28%) and that they all should support Catholic values and beliefs (24%).

However, over two thirds of students agree that teachers in Catholic schools should set a good example of what it means to be a Christian (67%) and that they should have a sense of mission to help children (70%). Those disagreeing with these two statements are 12% and 7% respectively. So, although three quarters of the students believe that the Catholic school should not solely appoint Catholic staff and only half of the students believe that teachers in a Catholic school should support its values, two thirds of the students believe that teachers should set an example of what it means to be a Christian. Further data refinements will shed some light on this apparent contradiction.

Table 8:4 The school staff population - the students' experiences

	Agree %	Not Certain %	Disagree %
As far as possible only Catholic teachers teach in my school	17	38	45
The teachers in my school set a good example of what it means to be a Christian	44	29	27
The teachers in my school are keen to help me	70	16	14
All teachers in my school attend school Masses	29	31	40
The teachers in my school support Catholic values and beliefs	44	38	18

The data exploring the students' perceptions of their experiences of staff in Catholic schools in Wales, reported in table 8:4, also highlights a possible area of concern for Catholic school educators.

Less than half of the respondents (44%) agree that the teachers in their school set a good example of what it means to be a Christian, with over a quarter (27%) definitely disagreeing. The same percentage (44%) is given for those students who agree that the teachers in their schools support Catholic beliefs and values, though only 18% of students disagree. Similarly, 40% of students disagree with the statement that all teachers in their schools attend school Mass. It must be of some concern to Catholic school educators that less than half of the students in Catholic schools in Wales are able to report that teachers in their schools witness to Christian values. More encouragingly, 70% of the students agree that teachers in their schools are keen to help them, with only 14% of students disagreeing.

Thus, an initial overview of the data appears to support the arguments of Arthur, Morris and others that Catholic schools need to encourage all staff to reflect deeply upon their role in sharing in, and witnessing to, the beliefs and values of the Catholic Church that should underpin the Catholic educational enterprise.

In general, a high percentage of students in Catholic schools agree rather than disagree that the staff and student population of the school should share a common set of values and beliefs. However, when we examine the data according to gender, religious affiliation and, for Catholic students, commitment to the Church, a more complex picture emerges.

ii) Does gender make a difference?

As reported in tables 8:5 and 8:6, male and female students record similar levels of agreement on questions concerning the student make-up of Catholic schools in Wales.

Table 8:5 The school student population in principle – in agreement by gender

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
As far as possible, Catholic schools should only admit Catholic students	23	17	7.3	.01
All students in a Catholic school should share Catholic moral and religious values	42	42	0.0	NS

Table 8:6 The school student population in practice – in agreement by gender

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
Most of the students in my school are Catholic	69	70	0.3	NS
In my school the students share Catholic religious and moral values	32	28	2.2	NS

Though the difference between the genders is statistically significant, both male and female students indicate relatively low levels of agreement on the question of whether Catholic schools should only admit Catholic students: only 23% of male students and 17% of female students agree with this principle. In terms of what happens in practice, there is no statistically significant difference between male and female students. Two thirds of both male and female students report that their

schools tend to only admit Catholic students: 69% of male students and 70% of female students agree with this statement.

Compared to the idea that Catholic schools should only admit Catholic students, a higher percentage of agreement is reported regarding the question of whether most students share Catholic religious and moral values, and again, there are no appreciable differences between male and female levels of agreement: 42% for both genders. Similarly, 32% of male students and 28% of female students agree that, in practice, students in their schools share Catholic religious and moral values.

Thus, in terms of students' expectations and experiences regarding the student make-up of Catholic schools, there are no appreciable differences recorded between the genders. However, an area of concern for Catholic school educators may be the recognition, reported by the students, that relatively few students share a Catholic vision of life. We have seen how important a common sense of shared purpose and identity is for an organisation to be successful. These figures indicate that Catholic school educators may need to investigate further what elements of school life need to be addressed to ensure that the nature and purpose of the Catholic school is not being jeopardised by factors alien to it.

On the whole, although the difference between them is statistically significant, both male and female students, as reported in table 8:7, support the principles enunciated

by the Catholic Church regarding the role staff have in nurturing the distinctive ethos of the Catholic school.

Table 8:7 The school staff population in principle – in agreement by gender

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
As far as possible only Catholic teachers should be employed in Catholic schools	20	8	40.2	.001
Teachers in Catholic schools should set a good example of what it means to be a Christian	64	70	4.4	.05
Teachers in Catholic schools should have a sense of mission to help children	66	75	11.1	.001
All teachers in a Catholic school should attend school Masses	54	53	0.1	NS
All teachers in a Catholic school should support Catholic values and beliefs	52	52	0.0	NS

On the question of whether only Catholic teachers should be employed in Catholic schools, both genders record relatively low levels of agreement for this item.

However, far fewer female students support the idea than their male counterparts:

8% compared to 20% of male students.

A difference that is statistically significant is recorded for the item regarding whether teachers in Catholic schools should set a good example of what it means to be a Christian. Approximately two thirds of both genders are in agreement with this principle but there is a higher level of agreement by female students compared to male students: 70% of female students agree but only 64% of male students.

A similar level of significant difference is recorded for the question of whether teachers in Catholic schools should have a sense of mission to help children: 66% of male students agree with this principle, but amongst female students the level of agreement is 75%.

There are, however, similar levels of agreement regarding the extent to which Catholic teachers should witness to Catholic practices. On the question of whether all teachers in a Catholic school should attend school Masses, 54% of male students and 53% of female students agree. There is also no gender difference on the question of whether teachers in a Catholic school should support Catholic beliefs and values: 52% of both male and female students are in agreement here.

Fundamentally for Catholic school educators, over half of the students, regardless of their gender, recognise the importance of the teacher as a witness to Gospel values. However, on the two key statements regarding the witness of staff in Catholic schools, female students record statistically significant higher levels of agreement than their male colleagues.

Turning to the students' actual experiences of staff in Catholic schools in Wales, table 8:8 explores to what extent students feel they this expected witness is carried out in practice.

Table 8:8 The school staff population in practice – in agreement by gender

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
As far as possible only Catholic teachers teach in my school	22	13	14.3	.001
The teachers in my school set a good example of what it means to be a Christian	42	47	2.8	NS
The teachers in my school are keen to help me	65	73	8.8	.01
All teachers in my school attend school Masses	30	28	0.3	NS
The teachers in my school support Catholic values and beliefs	45	43	0.2	NS

Both male and female students report similar levels of agreement on the perception of what happens in practice in their schools in terms of staff support for distinctive elements of Catholic school life, though there are two items that record statistically significant variations between them.

Thus, significantly more female students than male students agree that the teachers in their schools are keen to help them: 65% of male students and 73% of female students and on the question of whether only Catholic teachers teach in their schools, whilst 22% of male students agree only 13% of female students do so.

It appears from this data that male students tend to have a less positive experience than female students regarding the level of care given to them in Catholic schools

and a significantly smaller percentage of female students compared to male students believe that only Catholic teachers work in their schools.

There are no statistically significant differences between male and female students on other items in this section, though worryingly for Catholic school educators, less than half of both genders agree that teachers in their schools set a good example of what it means to be a Christian: 42% of male students and 47% of female students.

A similar percentage is recorded for both genders on the question of whether the teachers in their schools support Catholic beliefs and values: 45% of male students and 43% of female students. There is also little gender difference on the question of whether teachers attend school Masses: 30% of male students and 28% of female students are in agreement with this statement.

There are then some statements that engender statistically significant differences between male and female students regarding the example provided by staff in Catholic schools in Wales, however, overall, both genders have a similar perception of the example and witness provided by staff. Given that the staff of the school play such a fundamental role in nurturing its distinctive ethos and given that a relatively low percentage of both male and female students agree that staff witness to Gospel values, Catholic school educators may feel that they ought to explore further what is going on here. The attitudes of the staff are crucial to the school's success and this does appear to be an area of school life that warrants further investigation by the

Diocesan authorities, the Governors and management of the school and the teachers themselves.

iii) Does religious affiliation make a difference?

It is perhaps of little surprise to discover that there are statistically significant differences between Catholic and non-Catholic students of Catholic schools in Wales regarding the make-up of the staff and student population.

Table 8: 9 tabulates the responses of male students.

Table 8:9 The school student population in principle: in agreement by religious affiliation – male students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
As far as possible, Catholic schools should only admit Catholic students	26	16	4.7	.05
All students in a Catholic school should share Catholic moral and religious values	44	33	5.2	.05

Thus, on the question of whether Catholic schools should only admit Catholic students, 26% of Catholic male students agree but only 16% of other male students do so. Similarly, on the question of whether all students in a Catholic school should share Catholic moral and religious values, 44% of Catholic male students agree compared to only 33% of other male students.

Female students, as recorded in table 8:10, report similar levels of difference to male students

Table 8:10 The school student population in principle: in agreement by religious affiliation – female students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
As far as possible, Catholic schools should only admit Catholic students	21	5	18.8	.001
All students in a Catholic school should share Catholic moral and religious values	43	40	0.4	NS

On the question of whether Catholic schools should only admit Catholic students, 21% of Catholic female students agree compared to only 5% of other female students. The differential is less on the question of whether all students in a Catholic school should share Catholic moral and religious values: 43% for Catholic female students and 40% of other female students.

Around one quarter (26% of males and 21% of females) of Catholic students believe that Catholic schools should only admit Catholic students. Understandably, far fewer non-Catholic students of either gender agree: 16% of males and 5% of females.

It may be a cause of concern to Catholic school educators that such a relatively high percentage of Catholic students exhibit an attitude of exclusivity towards other students. The Church has called for inclusivity and tolerance towards those students

who do not share the Catholic faith. It may be that such attitudes stem from negative interrelationship experiences. It may be, for example, that Catholic students have been the victims of religious intolerance or mockery. Whatever the cause, the data indicate that Catholic school educators need to be aware of the potential for negative anti-religious peer pressure affecting Catholic student attitudes or for possible conflicts between Catholic and other students.

Turning to the students' perceptions of their experiences of their own schools, male and female students report similar levels of differences between Catholic and other students. On the key question of whether, in their schools, students share Catholic religious and moral values, there are no statistically significant differences between them.

Table 8:11 records the experiences of male students.

Table 8:11 The school student population in practice: in agreement by religious affiliation – male students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
Most of the students in my school are Catholic	73	53	17.9	.001
In my school the students share Catholic religious and moral values	32	32	0.0	NS

Nearly three quarters of Catholic male students (73%) agree that most of the students in their schools are Catholic compared to 53% of other male students, a

difference that is considered statistically significant. However, on the question of whether students in their school share Catholic religious and moral values, 32% of both Catholic and other male students agree.

Female students, recorded in table 8: 12, generate similar levels of response to male students.

Table 8:12 The school student population in practice: in agreement by religious affiliation – female students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
Most of the students in my school are Catholic	73	62	6.5	.05
In my school the students share Catholic religious and moral values	27	31	0.5	NS

Thus, with a difference in levels of agreement that is statistically significant, 73% of Catholic female students agree that most of the students in their schools are Catholic compared to 62% of other female students. However, on a similar level to male students, 27% of Catholic female students agree that, in their schools, students share Catholic religious and moral values compared to 31% of other female students.

It appears from the data that a significantly lower percentage of students who are not Catholic, of both genders, believe that most students in their schools are Catholic, compared to male and female Catholic students, who report identical levels of agreement (73%) on this statement. Similarly, those students who are not

Catholic report identical, though significantly lower, levels of agreement. The data indicate that Catholic students, whatever the gender, experience a greater sense of belonging to, and ownership of, the Catholic educational enterprise compared to their colleagues who are not members of the Catholic Church and who report lower levels of agreement on the question of whether most students in their schools are Catholic. On the other hand, it may simply reflect the fact that because they are not Catholic, they assume there must be a number of other students who are also not Catholic.

Perhaps of more importance are the responses of students to the statement that most students in their schools share Catholic religious and moral values. Catholic and other male students record virtually identical levels of agreement to this statement: 32%. Female students record some difference but it is not significant: 27% of Catholic female students agree and 31% of other female students. Taken as a whole this data indicate that only about one third of students, male and female, Catholic and other, agree that students in their schools share Catholic religious and moral values.

For Catholic school educators the concern must be that a significant number of students in Catholic schools appear to be operating in ways that are at odds with the ethos and mission of the school. Some may want to ask whether the Catholic school itself is failing to foster attitudes and behaviours that are consistent with the Catholic ethic. They may believe that the Catholic school should be doing more to

counter the prevailing individualistic and materialistic attitudes of current western societies. There may be some, from one extreme of the spectrum, who believe that there needs to be a tightening of admissions so that Catholic schools are only populated by practising Christian students who support the school's aims and objectives. Whatever the reason, Catholic school educators must be aware of the need to explore why so few students believe that students in their schools share Catholic religious and moral values. As a measure of their success as vehicles of evangelisation, the data indicate that Catholic schools still have some way to go in fulfilling that aim.

Turning now to the second part of the population of the school, the staff, there are fewer statistically significant differences recorded between Catholic and other students.

Table 8:13 reports the responses on male students. On the question of whether only Catholic teachers should be employed in Catholic schools, 23% of Catholic male students agree compared to only 11% of other male students. A similar differential is recorded for the question of whether all teachers in a Catholic school should support Catholic values and beliefs: 55% of Catholic male students compared to 40% of other male students. Not surprisingly then, the data indicate that there is less support amongst male students who are not Catholic for the principle that, as far as possible, only Catholic teachers, who support the mission of the school, should be employed in Catholic schools. A higher proportion of Catholic male students

believe that they should, which may indicate, once again, some disengagement amongst students who are not Catholic with the purpose and ethos of Catholic schooling.

Table 8:13 The school staff population in principle: in agreement by religious affiliation – male students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
As far as possible only Catholic teachers should be employed in Catholic schools	23	11	7.0	.01
Teachers in Catholic schools should set a good example of what it means to be a Christian	65	61	0.7	NS
Teachers in Catholic schools should have a sense of mission to help children	66	65	0.0	NS
All teachers in a Catholic school should attend school Masses	56	47	3.4	NS
All teachers in a Catholic school should support Catholic values and beliefs	55	40	7.2	.01

However, there are no statistically significant differences between Catholic and other male students regarding other statements in this section. On the question of whether teachers in Catholic schools should set a good example of what it means to be a Christian, 65% of Catholic male students and 61% of other male students agree. Similarly, 66% of Catholic male students and 65% of other male students agree that teachers in Catholic schools should have a sense of mission to help children.

There is a greater differential reported for the statement concerning whether all teachers at a Catholic school should attend school Masses, though it is not recorded as statistically significant: 56% of Catholic male students agree compared to 47% of other male students.

As tabulated in table 8:14, there is greater unanimity amongst female students regarding the role of staff in principle.

Table 8:14 The school staff population in principle: in agreement by religious affiliation – female students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
As far as possible only Catholic teachers should be employed in Catholic schools	8	6	0.3	NS
Teachers in Catholic schools should set a good example of what it means to be a Christian	70	70	0.0	NS
Teachers in Catholic schools should have a sense of mission to help children	73	79	1.7	NS
All teachers in a Catholic school should attend school Masses	55	49	1.4	NS
All teachers in a Catholic school should support Catholic values and beliefs	54	43	5.2	.05

On the question of whether only Catholic teachers should be employed in Catholic schools, 8% of Catholic female students and 6% of other female students agree.

Similar levels of agreement between Catholic and other female students are reported for other statements. On whether teachers in a Catholic school should set a good

example of what it means to be a Christian, 70% of both Catholic and other female students agree. On whether teachers should have sense of mission to help children, 73% of Catholic female and 79% of other female students agree and on whether all teachers should attend school Masses, 55% of Catholic female and 49% of other female students agree.

The only statement that elicits a significant differential between Catholic and other female students is whether all teachers in a Catholic school support Catholic beliefs and values: 54% of Catholic female students agree but this drops to 43% for other female students.

On the whole, Catholic and other students tend to agree on the example and witness that teachers should bring to their work. Around two thirds of all students, whether male or female, Catholic or other, agree that teachers should set a good example of what it means to be a Christian, have a sense of mission to help children and attend school Masses. A greater differential between Catholic and other students exists on whether only Catholic teachers should be employed in Catholic schools and whether they should support Catholic beliefs and values. Catholic students indicate higher levels of agreement on these principles compared to other students. Although this may be regarded as unsurprising, it, nevertheless, may indicate that an element in the Catholic secondary school student body do not support key principles of Catholic schooling. If nothing else, it is a factor that Catholic school educators may

wish, at least, to be aware of in terms of encouraging a policy of inclusivity in the ethos of the school.

Turning to the students' actual experiences of teachers in their schools, we find little significant difference between Catholics and others.

Table 8:15 reports the responses of male students.

Table 8:15 The school staff population in practice: in agreement by religious affiliation – male students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
As far as possible only Catholic teachers teach in my school	24	14	4.8	.05
The teachers in my school set a good example of what it means to be a Christian	43	35	2.5	NS
The teachers in my school are keen to help me	66	61	1.0	NS
All teachers in my school attend school Masses	28	36	2.7	NS
The teachers in my school support Catholic values and beliefs	44	47	0.5	NS

Nearly one quarter of Catholic male students (24%) believe that only Catholic teachers are employed in their schools compared to only 14% of other male students, a difference that is, nevertheless, statistically significant.

Having said that, although not statistically significant, a higher percentage of male students who are not Catholic compared to Catholic male students, believe that the teachers in their schools support Catholic values and beliefs: 44% of Catholic male students compared to 47% of other male students.

Other statements in this section elicit responses that are not significantly different.

On the question of whether teachers set a good example of what it means to be a Christian, 43% of Catholic male and 35% of other male students agree. A similar differential is reported for the question of whether teachers in their schools are keen to help them: 66% of Catholic male and 61% of other male students. Fewer Catholic male students agree that all the teachers attend school Masses in their schools compared to male students who are not Catholic: 28% of Catholics and 36% of others.

There are conflicting signals sent out by this data. On the one hand, Catholic male students appear to have more positive experiences of the example teachers set and their keenness to help students compared to students who are not Catholic. On the other hand, students who are not Catholic record higher levels of agreement on whether all teachers attend school Masses and on the teachers support for Catholic beliefs and values.

Interestingly, the differences between Catholic and other female students regarding their experiences of the staff population, as recorded in table 8:16, follow the pattern of male students.

Thus, 15% of Catholic female students agree with the statement that only Catholic teachers are employed in their schools compared to 6% of other female students, a difference that, as with the male students, is statistically significant.

Table 8:16 The school staff population in practice: in agreement by religious affiliation – female students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
As far as possible only Catholic teachers teach in my school	15	6	7.3	.01
The teachers in my school set a good example of what it means to be a Christian	48	43	0.8	NS
The teachers in my school are keen to help me	73	73	0.0	NS
All teachers in my school attend school Masses	28	29	0.7	NS
The teachers in my school support Catholic values and beliefs	43	45	0.1	NS

Similar to the responses of the male students, other statements in this section elicit no statistically significant differences between Catholic and other students. On the question of whether teachers in their schools set a good example of what it means to be a Christian, 48% of Catholic female students agree compared to 43% of other

female students. On whether teachers are keen to help them, 73% of both Catholic and other female students agree, a figure that is higher than that for male students of both constituencies.

As with the male students, the difference between Catholic and other female students swings in the other direction for the statements concerning whether all teachers in their schools attend school Masses: 28% of Catholic female students compared to 29% of other female students, and whether the teachers in their schools support Catholic values and beliefs: 43% of Catholic female students compared to 45% of other female students.

It is of interest that female students, whether Catholic or other, tend to report more positive experiences of the teachers compared to the male students. For example, 73% of both Catholic and other female students agree that their teachers are keen to help them compared to 66% of Catholic and 61% of other male students, and 48% of Catholic female and 43% of other female students agree that their teachers set a good example of what it means to be a Christian compared to 43% of Catholic male and 35% of other male students.

However, taking the data from this section as a whole, the religious affiliation of the student does not appear to be a statistically significant factor affecting the levels of agreement regarding the witness of the staff and student populations of Catholic schools in Wales.

iv) For Catholic students, does commitment to the Church make a difference?

The corresponding sections of chapters five, six and seven indicate that the level of commitment Catholic students have towards the Catholic Church has a significant impact upon their attitudes to the principle of Catholic school provision and their experiences of it. The evidence is that the less committed a Catholic student is to the Catholic Church, whether male or female, the less supportive he or she is towards Catholic education.

The frequency of Mass attendance is taken as a measure of the level of commitment a Catholic student has towards his or her faith and students have been grouped into three categories: those who 'never' attend Mass, those who attend 'sometimes' and those who attend 'weekly'. Because gender has been identified as a factor influencing student attitudes and responses, the data is also presented separately for male and female students.

As shall be made clear, commitment to the Catholic Church continues to be a significant factor in Catholic students' attitudes to many of the questions concerning the student and staff population of the school.

Table 8:17 tabulates the responses of Catholic male students to statements concerning the student make-up of the school population and table 8:18 those of Catholic female students.

Table 8:17 The school student population in principle: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – male students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
As far as possible, Catholic schools should only admit Catholic students	26	26	23	0.3	NS
All students in a Catholic school should share Catholic moral and religious values	30	44	57	12.7	.01

Table 8:18 The school student population in principle: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – female students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
As far as possible, Catholic schools should only admit Catholic students	12	20	28	7.2	.05
All students in a Catholic school should share Catholic moral and religious values	23	42	57	21.4	.001

Commitment to the Catholic Church is not a significant factor for Catholic male students for the question of whether Catholic schools should only admit Catholic students: 26% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass and who sometimes attend, and 23% of those who attend weekly, agree that they should.

However, for Catholic female students commitment to the Church does have an impact upon the levels of agreement: whilst only 12% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass agree that Catholic schools should only admit Catholic students, this rises to 20% for those who sometimes attend and 28% for those who attend once a week.

Commitment to the Church has a significant impact for both genders regarding the question of whether all students in a Catholic school should share Catholic moral and religious values. For Catholic male students, 57% of those who attend Mass weekly agree that they should but this drops to 44% for those who attend Mass sometimes and 30% for those who never attend Mass. Similarly, 57% of Catholic female students agree that they should but again this drops to 42% for those who attend Mass sometimes and 23% for those who never attend Mass.

Table 8:19 The school student population in practice – in agreement by Catholic student commitment – male students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
Most of the students in my school are Catholic	76	72	74	0.5	NS
In my school the students share Catholic religious and moral values	36	28	38	4.1	NS

In terms of their actual experiences, as reported in table 8:19, Catholic male students record no statistically significant differences based on their commitment to the Church. Thus, 76% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, 72% of those who sometimes attend and 74% of those who attend weekly agree that most of the

students in their schools are Catholic. On the question of whether in their schools the students share religious and moral values, 36% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, 38% of those who sometimes attend and 38% of those who attend weekly agree that they do. Both sets of data indicate that levels of commitment to the Church have no significant impact on the responses of Catholic male students to these items.

However, there are statistically significant differences recorded for Catholic female students as reported in table 8:20.

Table 8:20 The school student population in practice – in agreement by Catholic student commitment – female students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
Most of the students in my school are Catholic	68	77	66	6.5	.05
In my school the students share Catholic religious and moral values	12	29	34	11.5	.01

Although recorded as statistically significant, the question of whether most students in their schools are Catholic elicit results that contradict the trend identified in other sections of the research. Catholic female students who never attend Mass and those who attend weekly record similar levels of agreement on this item: 68% and 66% respectively. Those who attend Mass sometimes record a 77% level of agreement on this item.

However, on the question of whether students in their schools share Catholic religious and moral values, the pattern of increasing levels of support depending on commitment to the Church returns. Only 12% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass agree, but this rises to 29% of those who sometimes attend and 34% of those who attend weekly. This is another indicator that those who have lapsed from a commitment to the Church have a less positive experience of Catholic schooling compared to those who retain some sort of commitment.

Table 8:21 The school staff population in principle – in agreement by Catholic student commitment – male students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
As far as possible only Catholic teachers should be employed in Catholic schools	30	21	20	3.1	NS
Teachers in Catholic schools should set a good example of what it means to be a Christian	65	59	80	13.9	.001
Teachers in Catholic schools should have a sense of mission to help children	66	61	77	7.8	.05
All teachers in a Catholic school should attend school Masses	51	55	63	2.6	NS
All teachers in a Catholic school should support Catholic values and beliefs	50	54	61	2.2	NS

The pattern is repeated for many of the items exploring the students' perceptions of the staff population of the schools. Table 8:21 tabulates the responses of Catholic male students to items exploring their attitudes to some of the principles the Church believes should underpin the staffing of Catholic schools.

The question of whether only Catholic teachers should be employed in Catholic schools does not generate a statistically significant difference between the sub-groups of Catholic male students. However, the item 'Teachers in Catholic schools should set a good example of what it means to be a Christian' does. Only 65% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass and 59% of those who sometimes attend agree but this rises to 80% for those who attend weekly.

Similarly, whilst only 66% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass and 61% of those who sometimes attend agree that teachers in Catholic schools should have a sense of mission to help others, this rises to 77% for those who attend Mass weekly. These two items are a further indicator of the significance of being committed to the Church as a context for a student's acceptance of the purpose of Catholic education.

The final two items in this section indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between the sub-groups of Catholic male students, though the trend of rising levels of agreement depending on commitment continues: 51% of those who never attend Mass, 55% of those who sometimes attend and 63% of those who attend weekly agree that all teachers in a Catholic school should attend school Masses. Similarly, 50% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, 54% of those who sometimes attend and 61% of those who attend weekly agree that all teachers in a Catholic school should support Catholic beliefs and values.

Table 8:22 tabulates the responses of Catholic female students to the same items. As with other tables in this section, Catholic female students tend to record higher levels of significant differences across the sub-groups compared to Catholic male students.

Table 8:22 The school staff population in principle – in agreement by Catholic student commitment – female students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
As far as possible only Catholic teachers should be employed in Catholic schools	4	6	15	10.9	.01
Teachers in Catholic schools should set a good example of what it means to be a Christian	49	70	83	25.6	.001
Teachers in Catholic schools should have a sense of mission to help children	62	76	73	6.1	.05
All teachers in a Catholic school should attend school Masses	47	52	66	8.1	.05
All teachers in a Catholic school should support Catholic values and beliefs	45	54	61	5.2	NS

Although all at relatively low levels of agreement, there is a statistically significant difference between the sub-groups of Catholic female students on the question of whether only Catholic teachers should be employed in Catholic schools: 4% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass and 6% of those who sometimes attend agree but this rises to 15% for those who attend weekly.

An even greater differential is reported for the question of whether teachers in Catholic schools should set a good example of what it means to be a Christian: only 49% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass agree but this rises to 70% for those who sometimes attend and 83% for those who attend weekly.

Similarly, whilst 62% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass agree that teachers in a Catholic school should have a sense of mission to help children, this rises to 76% of those who attend Mass sometimes and 73% of those who attend weekly. Furthermore, only 47% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass agree that all teachers in a Catholic school should attend school Masses, this rises to 52% of those who sometimes attend and 66% of those who attend weekly.

Finally, though not recorded as statistically significant, 45% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass agree that all teachers in a Catholic school should support Catholic beliefs and values, rising to 54% of those who sometimes attend and 61% for those who attend weekly.

As with the equivalent section of previous chapters, the overall impression provided by this data is that practising Catholic students, whether male or female, tend to record significantly higher levels of agreement on items concerning the principles that should underpin Catholic schools compared to those who are no longer committed to Church practice.

Before discussing the implications of this data further, we need to examine the responses of Catholic male and female students to items concerning their actual experiences of teachers in Catholic schools.

Table 8:23 tabulates the responses of Catholic male students.

Table 8:23 The school staff population in practice – in agreement by Catholic student commitment – male students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
As far as possible only Catholic teachers teach in my school	31	20	26	4.8	NS
The teachers in my school set a good example of what it means to be a Christian	46	37	56	9.8	.01
The teachers in my school are keen to help me	55	67	74	7.0	.05
All teachers in my school attend school Masses	34	26	29	2.0	NS
The teachers in my school support Catholic values and beliefs	45	38	57	9.7	.01

Two items record no statistically significant difference between the three sub-groups of Catholic male students. Thus, on the question of whether only Catholic teachers are employed in their schools, the levels of agreement are 31% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, 20% of those who sometimes attend and 26% of those who attend weekly. Similarly, 34% of Catholic male students who never

attend Mass, 26% of those who sometimes attend and 29% of those who attend weekly, agree that all teachers in their schools attend school Masses.

However, other items in this section follow the pattern identified in other chapters of increasing levels of agreement depending on levels of commitment. Thus, 56% of Catholic male students who attend Mass weekly agree that the teachers in their schools set a good example of what it means to be a Christian but this drops to 46% of those who never attend Mass and 37% of those who sometimes attend. Similarly, 74% of Catholic male students who attend Mass weekly agree that teachers in their schools are keen to help them but this drops to 67% for those who attend Mass sometimes and only 55% for those who never attend Mass. Finally, 57% of Catholic male students who attend Mass weekly agree that teachers in their schools support Catholic beliefs and values, but this drops to 45% for those who never attend Mass and 38% for those who sometimes attend.

The responses of Catholic female students, as reported in Table 8:24, are broadly similar to those recorded for Catholic male students. Two of the items record response differences that are not statistically significant between the three sub-groups. Thus, 19% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass, 28% of those who sometimes attend and 33% of those who attend weekly agree that all teachers in their schools attend school Masses. Similarly, 32% of those who never attend Mass, 46% of those who sometimes attend and 43% of those who attend weekly agree that teachers in their schools support Catholic beliefs and values.

Table 8:24 The school staff population in practice – in agreement by Catholic student commitment – female students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
As far as possible only Catholic teachers teach in my school	7	15	22	8.2	.05
The teachers in my school set a good example of what it means to be a Christian	35	46	59	10.5	.01
The teachers in my school are keen to help me	61	75	77	7.2	.05
All teachers in my school attend school Masses	19	28	33	4.6	NS
The teachers in my school support Catholic values and beliefs	32	46	43	4.1	NS

However, other items continue to follow the pattern of increasing levels of agreement dependent on levels of commitment. On the question of whether only Catholic teachers are employed in their schools, 7% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass agree but this rises to 15% for those who sometimes attend and 22% for those who attend weekly.

At a higher level of agreement but following the same pattern, 35% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass agree that in their schools teachers set a good example of what it means to be a Christian, rising to 46% for those who sometimes attend and 59% for those who attend weekly. Similarly, whilst 61% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass agree that in their schools teachers

are keen to help them, 75% of those who sometimes attend and 77% of those who attend weekly agree that this is so.

As with the data explored in previous chapters, the conclusion appears inescapable that practising Catholic students appreciate their Catholic schooling and the efforts made to help them. However, those students who no longer have a commitment to the Catholic Church appear to be less enthusiastic in their support for Catholic education. In significant aspects of school population analysis such as whether students and staff share Catholic beliefs and values or whether staff set a good example of Christian life or are keen to help the students, practising Catholic students record significantly higher levels of agreement than their counterparts who have lapsed.

Conclusion

The data indicate that gender and religious affiliation are not significant factors in students' levels of agreement regarding the staff and student populations of Catholic schools in Wales. However, a statistically significant difference emerges, once again, for Catholic students who are at a distance from the Church to which they claim to belong.

The data show a clear level of disagreement amongst such students regarding the population of Catholic schools in Wales. The perception of lapsed Catholic students, of both genders, regarding the staff and student make-up of the school population, appears to be that cohesion and unity of purpose is lacking. These students also indicate a lower level of agreement regarding their actual experiences of staff and students' values and actions compared to their practising Catholic counterparts.

Catholic school educators may need to explore carefully the impact of such students upon the ethos and culture of the Catholic school. It may be that the negative witness of students who are nominally Catholic and who have lapsed will have a significant impact upon the schools' ability to authentically proclaim the Gospel through its members.

It may be that such students need particular kinds of nurturing to assist them in recognising what is of value in religious faith and commitment. Tolerance, dignity and respect for others are necessary pre-requisites for moral and spiritual growth and the path of 'pre-evangelisation', as shall be discussed in the concluding remarks, may be an important tool for Catholic school educators to assist such students develop these qualities.

The Catholic Church calls upon its schools to be inclusive and out-reaching to all. If the Catholic school fails to address the issues and concerns raised by these students, it will not only find its work amongst other students undermined but it will also fail

to reach out to those who appear to be reflecting feelings of being marginalized and irrelevant within the Catholic secondary school enterprise.

Chapter Nine

Rules and Punishments

Introduction

The system of pastoral care will include the discipline structure within which sanctions and rewards will reflect the justice and forgiveness emanating from a commitment to Christ and his teaching (CES, 1999, R-53).

In her research on students' attitudes to and experiences of schools, Jean Ruddick (1996) found that pastoral care, discipline and staff/student relationships had a very significant impact on the quality of learning and on the students' attitudes as a whole to their schooling. Students expressed a desire for good order and quality relationships and spoke negatively about those teachers who focused on petty rules and whose inability to form quality relationships with students hindered effective communication (p 35). As Hogan (2003) concluded in an article published in the *Journal of Philosophy of Education*:

The question of ['what'], ['how'] and ['why'] in education converge naturally when teaching and learning are understood not as discrete actions but as a relationship entered into by teachers and students (p. 219).

Reflecting upon the Second Vatican Council's vision of the wholeness of the Body of Christ (*Lumen Gentium*, para. 32), Brick (1999) explores how Catholic school educators fulfil their role when they see through and beyond the physical and

sociological characteristics of the students. A relationship built on respect, dialogue and trust is essential for the Catholic school to mirror the example of Christ, who came 'not to be served but to serve' (Matthew 20:28). Such a relationship recognises that both teachers and students are joined in 'the need for healing and the longing to be one with God' (Brick, 1999, p. 94)

Similarly, Robert Starratt (1996) describes the distinctive feature of Catholic schooling as 'schooling based on an ethic of care' (p. 163). In this model, the 'human persons-in-relationships', that is all those who belong to the school, should 'occupy a position for each other of absolute value; neither can be used as a means to an end; each enjoys an intrinsic dignity and worth and, given the chance, will reveal genuine loveable qualities' (p. 163).

Robert Fischer (1985) has drawn attention to the characteristics of what he calls 'high-cohesion' schools. 'High-cohesion' exists when there is a sense of a shared purpose – a sense of ownership – within the school. It is built upon trust and support. Such schools are successful because all the 'stake-holders' have been involved in formulating, and accept, the schools expectations on such factors as relationships and behaviour. This 'ownership' is a feature of the guidelines produced by the Catholic Education Service (1995, 1999) to help schools develop their Mission and Vision Statements. These statements usually make some reference to the school's expectations regarding behaviour and are always linked to the message and witness of Jesus Christ (Grace, 2002, p. 124f). Students tend to be

happy to accept rules if they are fair and sensible, if sanctions are clear and universally applied and if forgiveness and moving on are features of school life.

Young people are sensitive to double standards. If a school says it lives by the Gospel but does not appear to manage rules and punishments that are fair and consistently applied, or to operate a policy of forgiveness and inclusion, particularly for challenging students, then its stated aim of promoting justice and moral responsibility will be undermined.

Statements relevant to this section of the study include the questions of whether in Catholic schools rules should be based on the command of Jesus to love others, whether rules should be fair and whether if you have done wrong, but are sorry, you should be forgiven.

In terms of the students' experiences of their schooling, relevant statements include the questions of whether in their schools rules are based on the command of Jesus to love others, whether most students keep to the rules, whether punishments are fair and whether if you have done wrong, but are sorry, you are forgiven.

They are designed to explore whether students' perceptions and experiences of discipline and pastoral care in their school match the Church's expectations of its schools, particularly, given that, as Bryk (1993) and others have shown, the quality

of relationships is such a fundamental element in the Catholic school's ability to fulfil the mandate given it by the Church.

i) Overview

As revealed in table 8:4, three quarters of the students in this survey reported that staff in their schools were keen to help them. However, the data on the execution of rules and punishments in Catholic schools in Wales does not appear to be so positive. Table 9:1 explores the students' beliefs about what rules and regulations in a Catholic school should be like in principle.

Table 9:1 Rules and punishments in principle

	Agree %	Not Certain %	Disagree %
In Catholic schools rules should be based on the command of Jesus to love others	39	32	29
In Catholic schools punishments should be fair	83	10	7
In Catholic schools, if you have done wrong but are sorry, you should be forgiven	72	16	12

Perhaps not surprisingly, 83% of the students feel that in Catholic schools punishments should be fair and 72% of students believe you should be forgiven if you are sorry. The only surprising element is that 7% and 12% respectively disagree with these statements.

Of more interest are the figures dealing with the statement that, in Catholic schools, rules should be based on the commands of Jesus. Only 39% of students agree with this principle, with 29% disagreeing. As indicated in table 4:1, there is some evidence here that a significant majority of students in Catholic schools in Wales do not share the Church's vision of Jesus Christ being the foundation stone of the entire Catholic educational enterprise.

Further cause for concern is prompted by the data, depicted in table 9:2, which records the students' experiences of the execution of rules and punishments in Catholic schools in Wales.

Table 9:2 Rules and punishments - the students' experiences

	Agree %	Not Certain %	Disagree %
In my school rules are based on the command of Jesus to love others	38	30	32
In my school most students keep to the rules	33	19	48
In my school punishments are fair	35	20	45
In my school if you have done wrong you are forgiven if you are sorry	22	22	56

Only 38% of students agree with the statement that in their school rules are based on the command of Jesus to love others. One third of the students surveyed (32%) disagree. Similarly, nearly half of the students (45%) believe that punishments in their school are unfair, though one in three students (35%) agree that they are fair.

Less than a quarter of those surveyed (22%) agree that if you have done wrong but are sorry you are forgiven. Well over half of the students (56%) believe that this is not the case. Given the emphasis Jesus placed upon the importance of forgiveness and a fresh start, these responses will have to be carefully considered by Catholic school educators.

Having said that, the students admit that only one third of students (33%) keep to the rules and that nearly half of the students in their schools (48%) do not. The data recorded in table 9:2 is similar to those recorded for the statement 'In my school I feel I am valued' (35% agreed) reported in table 5:1. It would appear from this data that only about one third of students are content with the way rules and punishments are administered in Catholic schools in Wales, which will be a cause for concern for Catholic school educators.

ii) Does gender make a difference?

From the evidence supplied in table 9:3, there does not appear to be significant levels of disagreement between male and female students on the principles that should underpin the use of rules and punishments in a Catholic school.

Unsurprisingly, both male and female students record high levels of agreement on the question of whether in a Catholic schools punishments should be fair: 82% of male students and 85% of female students are in agreement with this principle.

Similarly, 70% of male students and 72% of female students agree that in a Catholic school, if you have done wrong but are sorry you should be forgiven.

Table 9:3 Rules and punishment in principle – in agreement by gender

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
In Catholic schools rules should be based on the command of Jesus to love others	42	36	3.8	NS
In Catholic schools punishments should be fair	82	85	1.8	NS
In Catholic schools, if you have done wrong but are sorry, you should be forgiven	70	72	0.7	NS

For Catholic school educators there is a disappointingly low level of agreement for the principle that in Catholic schools rules should be based on the command of Jesus to love others. Only 42% of male students and 36% of female students agree with this principle. The difference between male and female students is not significant but it is surprising to find female students, who one would expect to be more sympathetic with a religious statement, disagreeing at a lower level than their male counterparts. It may be that an analysis of the data by religious affiliation may throw some light on these responses.

On what actually happens in practice in Catholic schools, there is no statistical significance in the differences between male and female students but the levels of agreement, recorded in table 9:4, are, once again, surprisingly low.

Table 9:4 Rules and punishment in practice – in agreement by gender

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
In my school rules are based on the command of Jesus to love others	41	37	1.8	NS
In my school most students keep to the rules	34	33	0.1	NS
In my school punishments are fair	32	37	3.0	NS
In my school if you have done wrong you are forgiven if you are sorry	24	21	1.7	NS

The data indicate that male and female students have similar experiences of school rules and their application. On the question of whether school rules are based on the command of Jesus to love others, 41% of male students and 37% of female students agree. Similarly, only 32% of male students and 37% of female students could agree that in their schools rules are fair. Less than a quarter of both genders – 24% of male students and 21% of female students – agree that in their schools if you have done wrong and are sorry you are forgiven and only one third – 32% of male students and 33% of female students agree that in their schools most students keep to the rules.

Although gender is not a statistically significant factor in students' experiences of rules and punishments in Catholic schools, these responses should raise some serious questions for Catholic school educators. We know that school rules and their execution are one of the most significant elements of a student's life. From the Catholic perspective, behaviour expectations and the permeation of Gospel values

through all aspects of school life are important indicators of the religious health of the school. Diocesan authorities, school governors, senior management and all staff may need to reflect carefully on what message the administration of rules and punishments is sending to students of Catholic schools in Wales.

iii) Does religious affiliation make a difference?

As with the data on gender, there does not appear to be any significant statistical difference between Catholic and other students regarding the principles of rules and punishments in Catholic schools. Table 9:5 records the responses of male students.

Table 9:5 Rules and punishment in principle: in agreement by religious affiliation – male students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
In Catholic schools rules should be based on the command of Jesus to love others	44	36	2.1	NS
In Catholic schools punishments should be fair	82	85	0.7	NS
In Catholic schools, if you have done wrong but are sorry, you should be forgiven	72	65	2.0	NS

On the question of whether in Catholic schools, rules should be based on the command of Jesus to love others, 44% of Catholic and 36% of other male students agree. The differential, though it is not significant, swings in the opposite direction for the question of whether in Catholic schools punishments should be fair: 82% of

Catholic male students agree compared to 85% of other male students. Finally, 72% of Catholic male students agree that in Catholic schools, if you have done wrong you should be forgiven, compared to the slightly lower 65% of other male students.

The responses of female students, as reported in table 9:6, follow a similar pattern.

Table 9:6 Rules and punishment in principle: in agreement by religious affiliation – female students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
In Catholic schools rules should be based on the command of Jesus to love others	38	32	1.5	NS
In Catholic schools punishments should be Fair	84	87	0.4	NS
In Catholic schools, if you have done wrong but are sorry, you should be forgiven	73	71	0.2	NS

Thus, 38% of Catholic female students agree that in Catholic schools rules should be based on the command of Jesus to love others, compared to 32% of other female students. Male students recorded slightly higher levels of agreement: 44% of Catholic students and 36% of others. So, for either gender, Catholic students have recorded slightly higher levels of agreement to this principle compared to other students.

On the question of whether in a Catholic school punishments should be fair, 84% of Catholic female students and 87% of other female students agree. This balance of

agreement towards students who are not Catholic matches that of the male students, of whom 82% of Catholic are in agreement compared to 85% of others.

Finally, on the question of whether in Catholic schools if you have done wrong but are sorry you should be forgiven, 73% of Catholic female students and 71% of other female students agree. Again this is similar to the levels recorded for male students: 72% of Catholics and 65% of others.

Overall therefore, religious affiliation does not appear to play a significant part in students' attitudes to the principles that should underpin the Catholic school's use of rules and punishments.

Table 9:7 Rules and punishment in practice: in agreement by religious affiliation – male students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
In my school rules are based on the command of Jesus to love others	41	39	0.3	NS
In my school most students keep to the rules	35	30	1.1	NS
In my school punishments are fair	31	38	1.9	NS
In my school if you have done wrong you are forgiven if you are sorry	23	27	0.9	NS

Turning to the students' actual experiences of rules and punishments in Catholic schools, as with the data on rules and punishments in principle, there are no statistically significant differences reported between Catholic and other students.

Table 9.7 tabulates the responses of male students. Here, 41% of Catholic male students and 39% of other male students agree that in their schools rules are based on the command of Jesus to love others. Similarly, 35% of Catholic male students and 30% of other male students agree that in their schools most students keep to the rules. On the question of whether on their schools, punishments are fair, there is the largest differential recorded in this section, though it is not regarded as statistically significant: 31% of Catholic male students and 38% of other male students agree. Finally, 23% of Catholic male students and 27% of other male students agree that in their schools, if they have done wrong but are sorry they are forgiven.

The responses of female students, as recorded in table 9:8, follow a similar pattern to those for male students. In other words, there are no statistically significant differences recorded between Catholic and other female students on their experiences of rules and punishments in Catholic schools.

On the question of whether in their schools, rules are based on the command of Jesus to love others, 37% of both Catholic female and other female students agree. At a similar level to male students, around one third of Catholic female students (33%) and of other female students (36%) agree that in their schools, most students

keep to the rules. On the question of whether in their schools punishments are fair, as with male students, a higher proportion of other female students agree compared to male students: 36% of Catholics and 43% of others. Finally, on the question of whether in their schools, if you have done wrong but are sorry you are forgiven, 20% of Catholic female students and 22% of other female students agree.

Table 9:8 Rules and punishment in practice: in agreement by religious affiliation – female students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
In my school rules are based on the command of Jesus to love others	37	37	0.0	NS
In my school most students keep to the rules	33	36	0.4	NS
In my school punishments are fair	36	43	2.8	NS
In my school if you have done wrong you are forgiven if you are sorry	20	22	0.2	NS

One surprising finding in terms of religious affiliation is the responses reported for the statement that in their schools, punishments are fair. Although not statistically significant, the data indicate that more students who are not Catholic believe that punishments are fair, compared to those who are Catholic. There are other indicators throughout this research to show that students who are not Catholic may feel a lower sense of ownership of the Catholic school's enterprise compared to Catholic students. However, here students who are not Catholic report more favourable experiences regarding punishments.

Overall then, religious affiliation does not appear to be a significant factor in students' levels of agreement regarding the administration of rules and punishments in Catholic schools in Wales. However, as has already been noted, the concern for Catholic school educators must be the relatively low levels of agreement recorded for all the indicators of student attitudes towards rules and punishments. Catholic schools pride themselves on being centres of pastoral care rooted in the teaching and example of Jesus Christ. This data indicate that many students, regardless of their religious affiliation do not believe that rules and punishments in their schools match the expectations Catholic school educators have for them. If nothing else, it is a finding that they may want to explore further.

iv) For Catholic students, does commitment to the Church make a difference?

The pattern, identified in earlier chapters, of percentage levels of agreement increasing in tandem with levels of commitment, is continued in relation to Catholic students' perceptions and experiences of school rules. However, the differences are generally insufficient to be statistically significant. Having said that, in two crucial areas – the principle that Catholic school rules should be based on the command of Jesus to love others and the students' experiences of the fairness of rules – practising Catholic students, both male and female, record significantly higher levels of agreement than Catholic students who are no longer committed to the

Church. Once again, for this section, Catholic students have been sub-grouped according to Mass attendance: 'Never', 'Sometimes' and 'Weekly'.

Table 9:9 tabulates the responses of Catholic male students.

Table 9:9 Rules and punishment in principle: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – male students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
In Catholic schools rules should be based on the command of Jesus to love others	38	40	57	9.1	.05
In Catholic schools punishments should be fair	68	85	85	13.2	.01
In Catholic schools, if you have done wrong but are sorry, you should be forgiven	74	71	73	0.4	NS

Thus, whilst only 38% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass and 40% of those who sometimes attend agree that in Catholic schools rules should be based on the command of Jesus to love others, this rises to 57% for those who attend Mass weekly. Similarly, 85% of Catholic male students who attend Mass sometimes and weekly agree that in Catholic schools punishments should be fair but this drops to 68% for those who never attend Mass.

The final item – 'In Catholic schools if you have done wrong, but are sorry, you should be forgiven' – elicits almost identical responses from the sub-groups: 74% of those who never attend Mass, 71% of those who sometimes attend and 73% of those who attend weekly, agree.

The responses of Catholic female students, as reported in Table 9:10, follow a similar pattern to those of Catholic male students.

Table 9:10 Rules and punishment in principle: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – female students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
In Catholic schools rules should be based on the command of Jesus to love others	26	35	51	13.6	.01
In Catholic school rules should be fair	80	83	90	4.7	NS
In Catholic schools, if you have done wrong but are sorry, you should be forgiven	81	71	72	3.0	NS

On the question of whether in Catholic schools rules should be based on the command of Jesus to love others, Catholic female students record a greater differential than their male counterparts: only 26% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass agree rising to 35% for those who sometimes attend and 51% for those who attend weekly. So, although a lower percentage of practising Catholic female students agree with this principle compared to Catholic male students a much lower percentage of Catholic female students who are no longer committed to the Church agree compared to non-practising Catholic male students.

The responses of the three sub-groups of Catholic female students, to other items in this section, record differences that are not statistically significant: 80% of those who never attend Mass, 83% of those who sometimes attend and 90% of those who attend weekly agree that in Catholic schools punishments should be fair. Similarly,

81% of those who never attend Mass, 71% of those who sometimes attend and 72% of those who attend weekly agree that in Catholic schools if you have done wrong, but are sorry, you should be forgiven.

Turning to their actual experiences of the execution of rules in Catholic schools, we find Catholic male and female students reporting similar levels of response.

Table 9:11 tabulates the responses of Catholic male students.

Table 9:11 Rules and punishment in practice: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – male students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
In my school rules are based on the command of Jesus to love others	39	39	48	2.1	NS
In my school most students keep to the rules	29	34	43	4.7	NS
In my school punishments are fair	30	26	43	9.9	.01
In my school if you have done wrong you are forgiven if you are sorry	30	20	24	3.6	NS

Three of the items in this section elicit responses between the sub-groups that are not statistically significant. On the question of whether in their schools rules are based on the command of Jesus to love others, 39% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, 39% of those who sometimes attend and 48% of those who attend weekly agree. Similarly, 29% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, 34% of those who sometimes attend and 43% of those who attend weekly

agree that in their schools most students keep to the rules. Finally, 30% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, 20% of those who sometimes attend and 24% of those who attend weekly agree that in their schools if you have done wrong, but are sorry, you are forgiven.

However, in one critical area there is significant difference recorded between the three sub-groups of Catholic male students. Only 30% of those who never attend Mass and 26% of those who sometimes attend agree that in their schools rules are fair but practising Catholic male students record a much higher level of agreement at 43%.

This is echoed in the responses of Catholic female students, recorded in table 9:12.

Table 9:12 Rules and punishment in practice: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – female students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
In my school rules are based on the command of Jesus to love others	28	36	44	4.8	NS
In my school most students keep to the rules	26	32	39	3.5	NS
In my school punishments are fair	28	32	48	11.0	.01
In my school if you have done wrong you are forgiven if you are sorry	23	18	24	2.0	NS

Thus, three of the items elicit differences in responses that are not statistically significant. On the question of whether rules in their schools are based on the

command of Jesus to love others, 28% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass, 36% of those who sometimes attend and 44% of those who attend weekly agree. Similarly, 26% of those who never attend Mass, 32% of those who sometimes attend and 39% of those who attend weekly agree that in their schools most students keep to the rules. Finally, 23% of those who never attend Mass, 18% of those who sometimes attend and 24% of those who attend weekly agree that in their schools if you have done wrong, but are sorry, you are forgiven.

However, in a differential that mirrors that of the Catholic male students, whilst 28% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass, and 32% of those who sometimes attend, agree that in their schools rules are fair, this rises to 48% for those who attend weekly.

Thus, in two key areas: the principle that in Catholic schools rules should be based on the command of Jesus to love others and the perception that in their school rules are fair, both male and female practising Catholic students record significantly higher levels of agreement than their counterparts who no longer have a commitment to the Church. This data provide further evidence that such students are significantly less supportive of the purpose and practice of Catholic schools than those who are still committed to the Church.

Conclusion

On the use of rules and punishments in Catholic schools in Wales, gender and religious affiliation do not appear to be statistically significant factors in students' levels of agreement regarding their administration.

However, a statistically significant difference emerges in the analysis of the responses of Catholic students. Both male and female non-practising Catholic students reveal significantly lower levels of agreement than the practising Catholic students on the two key questions of whether, in a Catholic school, rules should be based on the command of Jesus to love others and whether, in their schools, punishments are fair. Their responses in this section of the study are another indicator of the significant levels of dissatisfaction experienced by students who are no longer committed to the Church to which they claim to belong.

The Catholic school, claims the Church, exists to serve the needs of all students within its community. Furthermore, for Christians Jesus' injunctions to love and to forgive are commands that must inherently be applied to all. However, this research indicates that a significant constituent of the population of Catholic secondary schools in Wales – the lapsed Catholic – do not believe they have experienced this to the same extent as committed Catholic students. It is possible that this negativity is not so much a reflection of teachers' attitudes towards them but of their underlying antagonism towards the principles on which Catholic schools are founded.

Catholic school educators will need to explore and address the issues raised by this study if Catholic schools are to achieve their stated aims of inclusivity and outreach. For those who feel disengaged from the Catholic educational enterprise, attention must be paid to their experiences and perceptions of the pastoral care systems of Catholic schools in Wales. Clear codes of behaviour, built on Gospel values of self-giving, love and trust, administered with justice, respect and fairness, should be integral to the life of a Catholic school.

However, it is more likely that the dissatisfaction expressed by these students is a symptom of their own negativity towards Catholic education rather than a failing of the schools' pastoral care systems. If this is the case, attempts to include such students in the educational enterprise, and to assist them in their ownership of it, will need to begin within the 'pre-evangelisation' model, which is explored in the concluding remarks. This claims that receptivity to the Gospel requires preparation through exploring such human qualities as openness, fairness and other-centeredness. By providing opportunities for these to flourish and by ensuring that school rules are applied fairly and consistently, Catholic school educators can begin the task of creating a greater sense of cohesion and unity of purpose for every member of the school population.

Chapter Ten

School/parish links

Introduction

Education is a collaborative responsibility shared by home, school and parish. Effective interaction between these partners will encourage the development of the whole person (CES, 1999, F-27).

The General Directory for Catechesis (1997) stated that the parish is 'without doubt, the most important locus in which the Christian community is formed and expressed' (para. 257). The parish is called to be 'a fraternal and welcoming family where Christians become aware of being the people of God' (para. 257).

However, as research indicates, a substantial majority of baptised young adults have little or no connection with the parish church. Even when they do, it appears that, for many, their experience of the parish community is hardly 'fraternal and welcoming'. Grace (2002) has drawn attention to the disparity between the liturgical life of the secondary school, which emphasises creativity, activity and participation and the liturgical culture of the local parish, which in the main involves a 'limited ritual of prescribed responses and limited scope for participation' (p. 220). As one head teacher in his study reported:

It is the parishes who are failing us ... for a child it must be an intensely boring experience (p. 221).

The lack of liturgical formation has been accompanied by the profound changes that have influenced the relationship between the Catholic individual and the parish in recent decades. Historically, the parish was a natural community. It was a given piece of territory and there was much loyalty and identification between the parish and its members. The parish was very much the centre and heart of community life.

However, as described in chapter one, urbanisation and secularisation have removed the parish from its traditional place in community and individual life. Other centres of identity – the town, the shopping arcade and most recently, cyber space, have replaced it. This movement has been compounded by the fact that many adult Catholics live in relationships that they feel are discordant with Church teaching. Some feel excluded from the Church community as a result of their private lives and the epistemological gap between them and the parish widens.

Nevertheless, the Church is determined that the parish should be the spiritual home for the Catholic community. It should be the place where people can celebrate the story of faith and of their own lives. It should be the springboard to inclusivity, outreach and a 'preferential option for the poor'.

The Church calls upon its schools to play their part in helping young people feel they belong to the parish. The parish in its turn is called upon to help young people

feel valued and welcomed in the parish and to ensure that the spiritual needs of all its members can be met.

Relevant statements from the research instrument include the questions of whether local priests should visit Catholic schools as often as possible, whether Catholic schools should be closely linked to local parishes and whether Catholic schools should help prepare students to take an active part in parish life.

In terms of the students' experiences of this aspect of Catholic school life, relevant statements include the questions of whether local priests visit their schools regularly, whether their school is closely linked to local parishes and whether the students are helped to take an active part in parish life.

The statements are designed to explore whether the students of Catholic schools in Wales feel that they are encouraged to share in the life of the parish. Clearly the students' own religious affiliation and commitment to the Church will have an impact upon their levels of agreement in this area of school life.

i) Overview

In general, as recorded in table 10:1, there is a positive response from the students involved in this survey to the idea of stronger links between the school and the parish.

Table 10:1 School/parish links in principle

	Agree %	Not Certain %	Disagree %
Local priests should visit Catholic schools as often as possible	66	23	11
Catholic schools should be closely linked to local parishes	58	28	14
Catholic schools should help prepare students to take an active part in their parish	37	38	25

Two thirds of students (66%) agree that local priests should visit Catholic schools as often as possible, with only 11% of students disagreeing. Similarly, only 14% of students disagree that Catholic schools should be closely linked to local parishes with well over half of the respondents (58%) agreeing.

However, only one third of students (37%) agree that Catholic schools should help prepare students to take an active part in parish life, with a quarter of students (25%) disagreeing.

In terms of the students' actual experiences of school parish links, reported in table 10:2, the figures match those of table 10:1. Over two thirds of students (67%) agree that local priests visit their schools regularly and a similar percentage (59%) agree

that their school is closely linked to the local parishes. Only 14% and 13% of students respectively disagree with these statements.

Table 10:2 School/parish links - the students' experiences

	Agree %	Not Certain %	Disagree %
In my school local priests visit regularly	67	19	14
My school is closely linked to the local parishes	59	28	13
In my school I am helped to take an active part in the local church	24	31	45

As in table 10:1, only a quarter of students (24%) feel helped by their school to take an active part in their local church, with 45% of students disagreeing. However, given that only 28% of students claim to attend church on a regular basis (see table 4:1), this response is hardly surprising.

ii) Does gender make a difference?

As reported in table 10:3, there do not appear to be significant differences between male and female students on the principles underpinning these aspects of school life. On the question of whether local priests should visit Catholic schools as often as possible, 67% of male students and 66% of female students are in agreement. Similarly, 55% of male students and 61% of female students agree that Catholic schools should be closely linked to the local parishes. However, only one third of

the students of both genders (37%) agree that Catholic schools should help prepare students to take an active part in their parish.

Table 10:3 School/parish links in principle – in agreement by gender

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
Local priests should visit Catholic schools as often as possible	67	66	0.0	NS
Catholic schools should be closely linked to local parishes	55	61	3.6	NS
Catholic schools should help prepare students to take an active part in their parish	37	37	0.0	NS

The responses of students by gender to what is actually happening in practice, recorded in table 10:4, match those delineating what they believe should happen in principle.

Table 10:4 School/parish links: the students' experiences – in agreement by gender

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
In my school local priests visit regularly	62	70	7.5	.01
My school is closely linked to the local parishes	57	59	0.4	NS
In my school I am helped to take an active part in the local church	26	22	2.9	NS

There is some statistical significance between the genders on the question of whether local priests visit regularly: under two-thirds of male students (62%) agree

but over two thirds of female students (70%) agree. However, other areas of parish/school links generate no statistically significant differences between the genders: 57% of male students and 59% of female students agree that their school is linked to the local parishes. Furthermore, on the question of whether they are helped to take an active part in the local Church, 26% of male students and 22% of female students agree.

Thus, overall, the gender of the student does not appear to have a statistically significant impact upon the levels of agreement for the principle that Catholic schools should encourage greater links with the parish. However, as one might expect, some statistically significant differences do emerge when we take into account the students' religious affiliation.

iii) Does religious affiliation make a difference?

Table 10:5 compares the levels of agreement between Catholic male students and other male students on the question of whether there should be close links between the schools and the local parishes in principle. On the question of whether local priests should visit Catholic schools as often as possible, 69% of Catholic male students agree compared to only 59% of other male students. Similarly, 57% of Catholic male students agree that Catholic schools should be closely linked to local parishes, whilst only 47% of other male students agree. Finally, 39% of Catholic

male students agree that Catholic schools should help prepare students to take an active part in their parish compared to only 27% of other male students.

Table 10:5 School/parish links in principle: in agreement by religious affiliation – male students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
Local priests should visit Catholic schools as often as possible	69	59	3.9	.05
Catholic schools should be closely linked to local parishes	57	47	3.5	NS
Catholic schools should help prepare students to take an active part in their parish	39	27	5.6	.05

Female students, as reported in table 10:6, elicit lower levels of difference between Catholic and other students compared to their male counterparts.

Table 10:6 School/parish links in principle: in agreement by religious affiliation – female students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
Local priests should visit Catholic schools as often as possible	66	65	0.4	NS
Catholic schools should be closely linked to local parishes	63	53	5.1	.05
Catholic schools should help prepare students to take an active part in their parish	39	32	2.1	NS

For example, on the question of whether local priests should visit Catholic schools as often as possible, 66% of Catholic female students and 65% of other female students agree. Also not recorded as statistically significant, 39% of Catholic female

students and 32% of other female students agree that Catholic schools should help prepare students to take an active part in parish life.

The only item that is statistically significant in terms of levels of agreement concerns the issue of whether Catholic schools should be closely linked to local parishes: 63% of Catholic female students agree compared to 53% of other female students.

Taken as a whole, the data reported in tables 10:5 and 10:6 indicate that students who are not members of the Catholic Church tend to be less supportive of the principle of closer school/parish links compared to their Catholic colleagues.

Perhaps that is not surprising but it is a reminder to Catholic school educators that a significant constituent of the student body may feel isolated from an important element of Catholic school life. It is beholden on educators to ensure that all stakeholders in the educative enterprise share in its life and do not experience a sense of separateness. If nothing else, a sense of belonging is an important element in generating success amongst the student body. Although the Catholic school must make this link with Catholic parish life, it has to be in a way that does not exclude those who are not Catholic.

In terms of the students' actual experiences of links with local parishes and priests, apart from one important item, there are lower levels of disagreement between

Catholic and other students than those reported for whether there should be close school/parish links in principle.

Table 10:7 records the responses of male students. On the question of whether local priests visit their schools regularly, nearly two thirds of both Catholic male students (63%) and other male students (61%) agree. Similarly, with no statistically significant difference, 59% of Catholic male students and 52% of other male students agree that their schools are closely linked to local parishes.

Table 10:7 School/parish links: the students' experiences: in agreement by religious affiliation – male students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
In my school local priests visit regularly	63	61	0.2	NS
My school is closely linked to the local parishes	59	52	1.8	NS
In my school I am helped to take an active part in the local church	30	11	16.1	.001

The one item that generates a statistically significant level of difference is that reported for the statement regarding whether the students feel helped to take an active part in the local Church. Unsurprisingly, 30% of Catholic male student say that they are, but only 11% of other male students are able to agree.

In terms of female students, as recorded in table 10:8, there is a similar level of differential reported for this statement, though it is not regarded as statistically significant: 23% of Catholic students compared to 16% of other students.

There is a reversal of levels of agreement, however, on other items in this section compared to those for male students. For example, whilst 68% of Catholic female students agree that local priests visit their schools regularly, the percentage of agreement is 76% for other female students. Similarly, 61% of other female students agree that their schools are linked to local parishes compared to 59% of Catholic female students.

Table 10:8 School/parish links: the students' experiences: in agreement by religious affiliation – female students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
In my school local priests visit regularly	68	76	3.0	NS
My school is closely linked to the local parishes	59	61	0.3	NS
In my school I am helped to take an active part in the local church	23	16	3.1	NS

Table 10:3 explored the different perceptions of the genders regarding their experiences of links with local parishes and priests. The data indicated that female students tended to be more aware of these links compared to their male counterparts. Here in table 10:8, female students who are not Catholic appear to be more aware of those links compared to Catholic female students as well as to male

students who are not Catholic (see table 10:7). This data may be another indicator that students who are not Catholic are more sensitive to activities they feel excluded from. It is a response that, at the least, needs to be borne in mind by Catholic school educators as they consider ways of ensuring that the spiritual needs of every member of the school are being addressed.

iv) For Catholic students, does commitment to the Church make a difference?

In the light of what has been uncovered in previous chapters, it may come as no surprise to discover that the pattern of increasing levels of agreement of Catholic students, relative to their levels of commitment to the Church, is continued in this section of the research.

As already established, the data are presented for three sets of male and female Catholic students grouped according to their level of commitment to the Church measured by their Mass attendance: 'Never', 'Sometimes' and 'Weekly'.

Table 10:9 tabulates the responses of Catholic male students. Only 60% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass and 66% of those who sometimes attend agree that local priests should visit Catholic schools as often as possible but this rises to 81% for those who attend Mass weekly. Similarly, 49% of Catholic male students

who never attend Mass and 50% of those who sometimes attend agree that Catholic schools should be closely linked to local parishes, rising to 82% for those who attend Mass weekly. Finally, 31% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass and 36% of those who sometimes attend agree that Catholic schools should help prepare students to take an active part in their parish but this rises to 54% for those who attend Mass weekly.

Table 10:9 School/parish links in principle: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – male students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
Local priests should visit Catholic schools as often as possible	60	66	81	10.1	.01
Catholic schools should be closely linked to local parishes	49	50	82	32.2	.001
Catholic schools should help prepare students to take an active part in their parish	31	36	54	11.6	.01

This pattern is echoed in the responses of female students as recorded in table 10:10.

Table 10:10 School/parish links in principle: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – female students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
Local priests should visit Catholic schools as often as possible	54	65	77	11.2	.01
Catholic schools should be closely linked to local parishes	42	62	79	26.7	.001
Catholic schools should help prepare students to take an active part in their parish	22	39	49	14.3	.001

On the question of whether local priests should visit Catholic schools as often as possible, 54% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass, and 65% of those who sometimes attend, agree but this rises to 77% for those who attend Mass weekly. Similarly, 79% of Catholic female students who attend Mass weekly agree that Catholic schools should be closely linked to local parishes, but this drops to 62% for those who sometimes attend Mass and only 42% for those who never attend Mass. Finally, whilst only 22% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass agree that Catholic schools should help prepare students to take an active part in their local parishes, this rises to 39% for those who sometimes attend Mass and 49% for those who attend weekly.

It may be considered unsurprising that committed Catholic students have far more positive attitudes to the principle of closer school/parish links than their colleagues who are no longer committed to the Church. However, once again, the concern for Catholic school educators may be that such students can have a negative impact on the schools' attempts to construct such links. This is particularly so if lapsed Catholics are exerting some peer pressure on their practising counterparts to not show interest in religious matters.

This concern is borne out by an analysis of the students' experiences of parish and school links through which we discover that male students, more susceptible perhaps to the influence of peer pressure, record higher levels of difference between the sub-groups compared to female students.

Table 10:11 tabulates the responses of Catholic male students.

Table 10:11 School/parish links: the students' experiences: in agreement by religious affiliation – male students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
In my school local priests visit regularly	55	61	74	7.5	.05
My school is closely linked to the local parishes	44	58	73	15.5	.001
In my school I am helped to take an active part in the local church	19	30	39	9.0	.05

Thus, on the question of whether local priests visit regularly in their schools, 74% of Catholic male students who attend Mass weekly agree that they do but this drops to 61% for those who sometimes attend and 55% for those who never attend Mass, a difference which is statistically significant. Similarly, 73% of Catholic male students who attend Mass weekly agree that their schools are closely linked to local parishes but this drops to 58% for those who sometimes attend Mass and 44% for those who never attend. Finally, only 19% of Catholic students who never attend Mass and 30% of those who sometimes attend agree that in their schools they are helped to take an active part in the local church, but this rises to 30% for those who sometimes attend Mass and 39% for those who attend weekly.

The differential in this last item, which is statistically significant, is mirrored in the experiences of Catholic female students, as reported in table 10:12. Thus, although 32% of Catholic female students who attend Mass weekly agree that in their schools

they are helped to take an active part in the local church, this drops to 22% for those who sometimes attend Mass and 15% for those who never attend.

Table 10:12 School/parish links: the students' experiences: in agreement by religious affiliation – female students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
In my school local priests visit regularly	58	70	71	4.2	NS
My school is closely linked to the local parishes	51	58	65	3.5	NS
In my school I am helped to take an active part in the local church	15	22	32	7.5	.05

Unlike the responses for Catholic male students, the other two items in this section elicit responses indicating that commitment to the Church is not a factor in Catholic female students' experiences of the links between the schools and parish. On the question of whether local priests visit their schools regularly, 58% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass, 70% of those who sometimes attend and 71% of those who attend Mass weekly, agree. Similarly, 51% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass, 58% of those who sometimes attend and 65% of those who attend Mass weekly agree that their schools are closely linked to the local parishes.

Conclusion

On the whole, it appears that the gender or religious affiliation of students in Catholic schools in Wales has little statistical impact upon their attitudes towards the principle that Catholic schools should encourage students to be actively involved in parish life.

However, once again, this research indicates that, for those students who refer to themselves as Catholic, the level of commitment to the Catholic Church does have a significant impact on their attitudes to such links. Catholic students who are no longer committed to the Church record significantly lower levels of agreement than their practising counterparts. There is a positive response to such links by those students who attend Mass weekly, so Catholic school educators may wish to explore why non-practising Catholic students are less in agreement with them than practising Catholic students and what impact such negativity may be having on the schools' attempts to construct such links.

This is particularly so for Catholic male students whose differences in levels of agreement are statistically significant for all items of this section. Although practising male and female Catholic students record similar levels of agreement for virtually all items, non-practising Catholic male students tend to record lower levels of agreement on items concerning their experiences of school/parish links compared to their non-practising female counterparts. The inference is that Catholic school educators need to target male non-practising Catholics specifically, not only to examine what impact such students may be having on initiatives to forge greater

links between the schools and parishes but also to assist them to be open to the value of community support and encouragement.

It appears from an analysis of the data dealing with the students' responses to the importance of closer links between the schools and parishes in principle that both male and female non-practising Catholic students are less supportive of closer links than those who are practising. Parish communities are, by their very nature, faith-communities. Clearly, if a student does not share that faith they may feel alienated from the community.

This sense of exclusion is at the very heart of the challenge facing Catholic school educators. The answer may lie in the continual enhancement of welcome and inclusivity that should permeate every aspect of the life of a Catholic school. Such activities as liturgical celebrations, in particular, are key moments when an ethos of exclusivity or inclusivity is nurtured. There has to be a common bond of shared partnership for any community to prosper and the Catholic school is no exception. The data underpinning this thesis reveal that this may possibly not be the case in Catholic secondary schools in Wales. An awareness of the antipathy revealed in this research is an important first step Catholic school educators can take to respond to the challenge and thus begin to build a community that includes, involves and nurtures all its members.

Chapter Eleven

Religious education in principle

Introduction

(Students) have the right to learn with truth and certainty the religion to which they belong. This right to know Christ, and the salvific message proclaimed by Him cannot be neglected. The confessional character of religious instruction in schools, in its various focuses, given by the Church in different countries is an indispensable guarantee offered to families and students who choose such education (Pope John Paul II, 1979, para. 35).

Catholic religious education in England and Wales in the twenty-first century has become a battleground between those who reject the changes that have swept through the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council and those who believe those changes have not gone far enough. The publication of *Here I Am* (key stages 1 and 2) and *Icons* (key stage 3) by the Catholic Church's National Project for Catechesis and Education has been accompanied by rival Catholic Truth Society (CTS) publications, *The Way, The Truth and The Life*.

The National Project's publications are rooted in the best pedagogical practices, respect the multifarious nature of the Catholic school's student body and reflect the revelatory process of search, revelation and response. However, according to its

detractors (for example, McCleod, 2003), the National Project has failed to meet the expectations regarding religious education as enunciated by the Holy Father. They claim that programmes like *Icons* do not present the 'truths' of the Catholic Church clearly enough and that far too much is left out. Eric Hester (2002), for example, claims there is too much emphasis on the individual student's own personal journey and not enough on the body of doctrine that must be imparted to students in order for Catholic schools to fulfil their mandate. *The Way, The Truth and The Life*, such critics feel, goes some way towards addressing this deficiency and they reject the Church's own National Project Programme.

In response, many religious educationalists reject the CTS programmes because the 'truth' of the Catholic faith is presented as an imposition rather than an invitation. The National Project's programmes, they argue, recognise that faith is a journey and that staff and students are at many and varied points along that journey.

Prior to the Second Vatican Council, religious education was very much in the model now presented by the CTS programmes. The 'Penny Catechism', and its learning by memory, was a straightforward pedagogical tool and it matched the ecclesiological mood of the times: that the teachings of the Church were eternal, unchanging and the only means to salvation.

The reforms of the Second Vatican Council, a better understanding of the distinctive nature of childhood and changes in general pedagogic practice, brought a revolution

in English and Welsh Catholic religious education during the latter half of the last century. Contemporary models of religious education in these two countries, as developed by the National Project, are inclusive, in that other faith stances are recognised and respected; child-centred, in that the programmes begin with the child's own experiences; developmental, in that they recognise the different cognitive, faith and journey levels that children occupy; and, a process, in that they reflect the revelatory journey of search, revelation and response.

The Catholic Church, both at the Vatican and in England and Wales, has sought a balance between, on the one hand, the necessity of nurturing young people in the faith, and, on the other hand, recognising that faith development is a journey with many stations along the way. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994), for example, recognises that growth in faith is a process.

Faith is humanity's response to God, who reveals Godself and gives Godself to humanity, at the same time, bringing men and women a superabundant light as they search for the ultimate meaning of life (para. 26).

Furthermore, the *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997) recognises that students of Catholic schools will have different levels of educational need and response depending on their religious background and faith commitment. For those students who are believers religious education should help them to 'understand better the Christian message, by relating it to the great existential concerns common to all religions and to every human being, to the various visions of life particularly

evident in culture and to those major moral questions which confront humanity today' (para. 75). For those students who are searching, or who have religious doubts, religious education should give them the opportunity 'to examine their own choices more deeply' (para. 75) and for those students who are non-believers, it can 'assume the character of a missionary proclamation' (para. 75).

The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education's *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (1988), explores in detail the ways in which all aspects of the school curriculum can be 'religious education'.

Teachers dealing with areas such as anthropology, biology, psychology, sociology and philosophy all have the opportunity to present a complete picture of the human person, including the religious dimension (para. 55).

The aim of curriculum religious education, the Congregation advises, is 'to summarise Christology and present it in everyday language' (para. 74).

For teachers of Catholic religious education in England and Wales, the expected aims, objectives and methodology of religious education have been summarised in the Bishops' *Religious education Curriculum Directory* (1997). The Directory draws attention to the interrelationship between religious education, catechesis, and evangelisation, all of which can be occurring at same time in the classroom depending on the faith of the student.

However, the fundamental aim of religious education is the ‘promotion’ of ‘knowledge and understanding of Catholic faith and life, . . . the response of faith to the ultimate questions about human life, its origin and purpose . [and] the skills required to engage in examination of and reflection upon religious belief and practice’ (p. 10). The outcome of curriculum religious education, which must be at the heart of the Catholic school, should be ‘religiously literate young people who have the knowledge, understanding and skills – appropriate to their age and capacity – to think spiritually, ethically and theologically and who are aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life’ (p. 10).

In addition, students must have the skills and attitudes required to meet the challenge of ‘living in a multicultural and multifaith society’. As Pope John Paul II (1979) advised, ‘an objective presentation of historical events, of the different religions and of the various Christian confessions can make a contribution here to better mutual understanding’ (para. 34). To this end, the *Curriculum Directory* draws attention to those opportunities that exist to explore the faith of others in Catholic school religious education.

The next chapter deals with the students’ own experiences of religious education in the classroom. This section of the research concerns their understanding of what Catholic religious education should be about and whether they feel that the religious education offered in their school matches the stated aims of the Catholic Church.

Relevant statements from the research instrument include the questions of whether religious education should be taught in the parish community and not in the school, whether it should be the most important subject in a Catholic school, whether only the Catholic faith should be taught, whether it should include the study of other religions and whether every subject should provide some religious education.

In terms of the students' experiences of religious education in their schools, relevant statements include the questions of whether religious education is the most important subject in their schools, whether they are mainly taught about the Catholic faith, whether other religions are studied and whether other subjects provide some religious education.

As with previous chapters, the data are analysed by gender, religious affiliation and, for Catholic students, their level of commitment to the Church, in order to examine whether these factors have a significant impact upon the students' levels of agreement.

i) Overview

On the whole, according to the responses reported in table 11: 1, students in Catholic schools are rather ambivalent about the status and function of religious education.

Table 11:1 Religious education in principle

	Agree %	Not Certain %	Disagree %
Religious education should be taught in the parish community not in the school	24	23	53
Religious education should be the most important subject in a Catholic school	16	22	62
In a Catholic school only the Catholic faith should be taught in religious education	18	22	60
Religious education lessons in a Catholic school should include the study of other religions	76	16	8
Every subject in a Catholic school should provide some religious education	13	17	70

Over half the respondents (53%) believe that religious education should take place in the school rather than in the parish community. However, a quarter of the students (24%) believe that the parish is the most appropriate context for religious education, a call echoed, as we saw earlier, by a number of Catholic writers and clerics.

As a further indicator of some dissatisfaction in religious education provision, nearly two thirds of the students (62%) do not believe religious education should be the most important subject in a Catholic school, with only 16% agreeing that it should be.

In terms of what should be taught in religious education in a Catholic school, only 18% of the students believe that the Catholic faith alone should be taught, with 60% of the students disagreeing. Similarly, only 8% of students disagree with the statement that other religions should be studied in religious education, with over three quarters of students (76%) agreeing that they should.

Disappointingly for Catholic school educators, and in opposition to the vision for Catholic schools explored in *Evaluating the Distinctive Nature of a Catholic school* (1999), 70% of students do not believe that religious education should feature in any other subject in a Catholic school, with only 13% of students agreeing that it should.

These figures match those, depicted in table 11:2, which explore the students' experiences of the status and provision of religious education in Catholic schools in Wales.

Table 11:2 Religious education in principle - the students' experiences

	Agree %	Not Certain %	Disagree %
Religious education is the most important subject in my school	16	22	62
In religious education we are mainly taught about the Catholic Church	66	15	19
We study other religions in religious education	60	18	22
Religion is taught in subjects other than religious education in my school	14	27	59

Only 16% of the students believe that religious education is the most important subject in their school, with nearly two thirds (62%) disagreeing. Over half of the students (59%) agree that religion is not taught in other areas of the curriculum, though, interestingly, 14% were able to agree that it is.

Two thirds of students (66%) agree that they are mainly taught about the Catholic Church in religious education, whilst a similar percentage (60%) acknowledge that other religions are taught in religious education in their schools. At the same time, nearly one in five students (19%) claim that the Catholic Church is not the main focus of teaching in their schools and 22% of students claim they are not taught about other religions.

Both of these conclusions are contrary to the Church's vision for religious education in Catholic schools. Given that religious education occupies such a fundamental role in the vision of the Catholic school, it may help to examine the data by gender, religious affiliation and, for Catholic students, commitment to the Catholic Church, to assess whether these factors have an impact upon students' attitudes to religious education.

ii) Does gender make a difference?

Though broadly similar, there are some statistically significant differences between male and female students, recorded in table 11:3, regarding the principles that should underpin religious education in Catholic schools.

Table 11:3 Religious education in principle – in agreement by gender

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
Religious education should be taught in the parish community not in the school	31	18	27.6	.001
Religious education should be the most important subject in a Catholic school	16	16	0.0	NS
In a Catholic school only the Catholic faith should be taught in religious education	22	14	11.4	.001
Religious education lessons in a Catholic school should include the study of other religions	70	81	18.3	.001
Every subject in a Catholic school should provide some religious education	13	12	0.9	NS

One would expect female students to record a more favourable attitude to closer links with the parish community given the research evidence of higher levels of religiosity amongst women. However, on the question of whether religious education should be taught in the parish community not the school, male students record a statistically significant higher level of agreement than female students: 31% of male students compared to 18% of female students.

On the other hand, such a response may indicate a greater degree of agreement amongst female students with the provision of religious education in Catholic

schools, compared to male students. This conclusion is borne out, as we shall see, by a comparison of the responses of male and female students to the statements, ‘I enjoy religious education’ and ‘If attendance at religious education lessons was voluntary, I would still want to attend them’ (table 12:11 and 12:12) for which female students score higher levels of agreement than male students.

On the question of whether only the Catholic faith should be taught in religious education in Catholic schools, there is significantly more support for the idea from male students: 22% of male students compared to 14% of female students.

However, as discussed in chapter five, such a response from female students may not be a rejection of religious matters but an indication of greater sensitivity towards those who may feel excluded by such an approach.

Interestingly, the balance of significant difference swings the other way for the question of whether religious education in a Catholic school should include the study of other religions: 81% of female students agree with this principle compared to only 70% of male students.

The two final items record no statistically significant difference between male and female students. On the question of whether religious education should be the most important subject in a Catholic school, it is 16% in both cases. Similarly, very few students of either gender agree with the principle that in a Catholic school every

subject should provide some religious education: only 13% of male students and 12% of female students.

In terms of the responses of the students regarding what is happening in practice in their schools, as recorded in table 11:4, there does not appear to be any statistically significant difference between the genders.

Table 11:4 Religious education in principle: the students' experiences – in agreement by gender

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
Religious education is the most important subject in my school	17	16	0.0	NS
In religious education we are mainly taught about the Catholic Church	70	66	0.1	NS
We study other religions in religious education	59	61	0.5	NS
Religion is taught in subjects other than religious education in my school	15	13	1.0	NS

Thus, although recording a low level of agreement, there is no significant difference between male and female students on the statement that religious education is the most important subject in their school: 17% of male students and 16% of female students agree. On the question of whether in religious education the students are mainly taught about the Catholic faith, again both genders are largely in agreement: 70% of male students agree and 66% of female students. Similarly, 59% of male students and 61% of female students agree that they study other religions in

religious education. In a similar vein to the data revealed in table 11:3, there is no significant gender difference on the question of whether religious education is taught in other subjects in Catholic schools in Wales: 15% of male students and 13% of female students agree.

Several key statements in this section generate statistically significant differences between male and female students on the principles that should underpin religious education in a Catholic school. Levels of agreement for some key areas appear higher for male students than for female students when one might have expected female students to show more sympathy towards religious education provision.

However, as I have already mentioned such a response from female students may in fact be an indication of a greater sensitivity towards the feeling of others, particularly those who may feel marginalized by impositions approaches to Religious education in Catholic schools.

iii) Does religious affiliation make a difference?

Apart from two items, there is little significant difference recorded between Catholic and other students on some of the principles that they believe should underpin religious education programmes in Catholic schools.

Table 11:5 tabulates the responses of male students.

Table 11:5 Religious education in principle: in agreement by religious affiliation – male students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
Religious education should be taught in the parish community not in the school	29	40	4.5	.05
Religious education should be the most important subject in a Catholic school	17	11	2.8	NS
In a Catholic school only the Catholic faith should be taught in religious education	22	21	0.1	NS
Religious education lessons in a Catholic school should include the study of other religions	68	75	2.3	NS
Every subject in a Catholic school should provide some religious education	14	9	2.2	NS

There is a statistically significant difference recorded between Catholic and other male students on the question of whether religious education should be taught in the parish community and not in the school. Whilst 29% of Catholic male students agree, this rises to 40% for other male students.

Other items in this section elicit responses that are not regarded as statistically significant. Thus, only 17% of Catholic male students and 11% of other male students agree that religious education should be the most important subject in a Catholic school. In terms of what should be taught in religious education, 22% of Catholic male students and 21% of other male students believe that only the Catholic faith should be taught in Catholic schools. Similarly, 68% of Catholic male students and 75% of other male students agree that other religions should be taught

in religious education in a Catholic school. Finally, 14% of Catholic male students and 9% of other male students agree that every subject in a Catholic school should provide some religious education.

The responses for female students, as recorded in table 11:6, are broadly similar.

Table 11:6 Religious education in principle: in agreement by religious affiliation – female students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
Religious education should be taught in the parish community not in the school	18	18	0.0	NS
Religious education should be the most important subject in a Catholic school	16	14	0.6	NS
In a Catholic school only the Catholic faith should be taught in religious education	16	11	2.1	NS
Religious education lessons in a Catholic school should include the study of other religions	79	87	5.2	.05
Every subject in a Catholic school should provide some religious education	13	10	1.0	NS

The only item that records a statistically significant difference between Catholic female students and other female students is the question of whether religious education should include the study of other religions: 87% of female students who are not Catholic agree that it should, compared to 79% of Catholic female students. Although approximately 10% higher than the figures recorded for male students (see table 11:5), which were not recorded as statistically significant, they are similar in that for both genders a higher percentage of students who are not Catholic,

compared to Catholic students, believe that Catholic religious education should include the study of other religions: 75% of other male students and 87% of other female students compared to 68% of Catholic male students and 79% of Catholic female students.

Other items in this section do not record statistically significant differences between Catholic and other female students. Thus, 18% of both Catholic and other female students agree that religious education should be taught in the parish rather than in the school. For male students, this item recorded a statistically significant difference between Catholic and other students (29% and 40% respectively), which was, for both Catholic and other students, higher than those recorded for female students

On the question of whether religious education should be the most important subject in a Catholic school, 16% of Catholic female students and 14% of other female students agree. This is similar to the levels recorded for male students (see table 11:5). Similarly, only 13% of Catholic female students and 10% of other female students agree that other subjects in a Catholic school should provide some religious education.

In responses that also echo those of male students, 16% of Catholic female students and 11% of other female students agree that only the Catholic faith should be taught in Catholic school religious education. Thus, the majority of students, whether male or female, Catholic or other, believe that Catholic religious education should not be

focused entirely on the Catholic faith. For Catholic critics of Catholic schooling, these figures may indicate to them the apparent lack of commitment to Catholic doctrine and practice that they regard as hallmarks of the current Catholic educational enterprise. They might ask why so few students of Catholic schools believe that only the Catholic faith should be taught in Catholic schools.

On the other hand, those Catholics who believe that the Catholic Church of the twenty-first century must become far more inclusive and out-reaching than was once perceived to be the case, might be heartened by these figures. Most students of Catholic schools appear to be saying that they do not want a religious education that is narrow and exclusive.

For Catholic school educators, the issue is how to best address the religious and spiritual needs of the student population. This data appear to indicate that Catholic students desire a Catholic education system that is inclusive and open to others. If this is the case, Catholic school educators may conclude that the most productive Catholic religious education programme will be one that mirrors these sentiments.

In terms of the students' actual experiences of the principles that should underpin Catholic religious education, the figures for Catholic and other male and female students are broadly similar.

Table 11:7 tabulates the responses of male students.

Table 11:7 Religious education in principle: the students' experiences: in agreement by religious affiliation – male students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
Religious education is the most important subject in my school	17	17	0.0	NS
In religious education we are mainly taught about the Catholic Church	66	70	0.7	NS
We study other religions in religious education	62	47	7.6	.01
Religion is taught in subjects other than religious education in my school	16	11	2.3	NS

The only item that elicits a statistically significant difference between Catholic and other male students in this section is concerned with the study of other religions in religious education: less than half of male students who are not Catholic (47%) agree that they do study other religions in religious education compared to 62% of Catholic male students.

Elsewhere, there are no statistically significant differences in the levels of agreement between Catholic and other male students. Thus, 17% of both Catholic and other male students agree that religious education is the most important subject in their schools. On the question of whether in religious education, they are mainly taught about the Catholic Church, 66% of Catholic male students and 70% of other male students agree. Finally, 16% of Catholic male students and 11% of other male

students agree that they are taught about religion in other subjects besides religious education.

As reported in table 11: 8 Catholic and other female students record no statistically significant differences of agreement for items in this section.

Table 11:8 Religious education in principle: the students' experiences: in agreement by religious affiliation – female students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
Religious education is the most important subject in my school	15	21	2.6	NS
In religious education we are mainly taught about the Catholic Church	64	72	3.5	NS
We study other religions in religious education	62	55	2.1	NS
Religion is taught in subjects other than religious education in my school	13	14	0.2	NS

On the question of whether religious education is the most important subject in their schools, 15% of Catholic female students and 21% of other female students agree.

This is similar to the levels of agreement recorded for male students: 66% of Catholics and 70% of others. Again, at a similar level of agreement to male students, 64% of Catholic female students and 72% of other female students agree that they are mainly taught about the Catholic Church in their schools. On the question of whether they are taught about other religions in religious education, 62% of Catholic female students and 55% of other female students agree, which is

broadly similar to the levels recorded for male students: 62% of Catholics and 47% of others. Finally, 13% of Catholic female students and 14% of other female students agree that religion is taught in other subjects than just religious education. The figures for male students are 16% (Catholics) and 11% (others).

Taken as a whole, the figures that may cause the most concern for Catholic school educators are those detailing the students' responses to questions concerning the importance of religious education in the Catholic school. There is a remarkable level of agreement between Catholic and other students, male or female, on this aspect of Catholic school life: only 17% of Catholic male students agree that in principle and in practice, religious education should be, and is, the most important subject in a Catholic school. Catholic female students report levels of agreement of 16% for the importance of religious education in principle and 15% in practice. Similarly, 11% of male students and 14% of female students who are not Catholic agree that religious education in principle should be the most important subject in the Catholic school, with 17% of male students and 21% of female students who are not Catholic agreeing that it is in practice.

Given that the Catholic Church argues that religious education in a Catholic school should be the very foundation and cornerstone of the entire educational enterprise, there appears to be much work to be done here. Either the schools themselves are failing to ensure that religious education is given the prominence and role the Church expects of it or the students' experiences of religious education in their

schools is one that leads them to conclude that it is not that important. Either way, Catholic school educators may want to explore this area of school life further. It may be that school managers and staff will need to be reminded that the Catholic school exists primarily to accompany all those involved in the Catholic school on a journey of faith. Fail in that area and the purpose of the entire enterprise may be called into question.

iv) For Catholic students, does commitment to the Church make a difference?

On the whole, it appears from the data reported in this section that levels of commitment to the Church make little statistical difference to the levels of agreement regarding the principles that should underpin the study of Religious education in Catholic schools.

The levels of commitment are measured by Mass attendance: 'Never', 'Sometimes' and 'Weekly'. Because of the differences already identified between male and female students responses, the data are also explored by separate gender.

Table 11:9 tabulates the responses of Catholic male students. Three of the items, despite following the already identified pattern of increasing or decreasing levels of agreement depending on levels of commitment, indicate that commitment to the

Church is not a significant factor in Catholic male students' responses to the principles that should underpin religious education in Catholic schools. For example, on the question of whether religious education should be the most important subject in a Catholic school, 21% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, 18% of those who attend sometimes and 11% of those who attend Mass weekly agree that it should be but response levels are not regarded as statistically significant.

Table 11:9 Religious education in principle: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – male students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
Religious education should be taught in the parish community not in the school	34	32	19	6.2	.05
Religious education should be the most important subject in a Catholic school	21	18	11	3.6	NS
In a Catholic school only the Catholic faith should be taught in religious education	26	26	10	11.2	.01
Religious education lessons in a Catholic school should include the study of other religions	63	66	78	5.9	NS
Every subject in a Catholic school should provide some religious education	19	15	9	3.5	NS

Similarly, 63% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, 66% of those who attend sometimes and 78% of those who attend weekly agree that religious education lessons in a Catholic school should include the study of other religions. Finally, with response differences that are also not regarded as statistically

significant, 19% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, 15% of those who attend sometimes and 9% of those who attend Mass weekly agree that every subject in a Catholic school should provide some religious education.

There are two items that report differences in agreement that are statistically significant, both of which are mirrored in the responses of Catholic female students. On the question of whether religious education should be taught in the parish community not in the school, 34% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass agree, but this drops to 32% for those who attend sometimes and only 19% for those who attend Mass weekly. This may be another indicator of the lack of support among Catholic male students, who are no longer committed to the Church, for the role of Catholic schools in the educative mission of the Church.

The levels of agreement reported for the final item in this section throw up an interesting phenomenon that is also matched by the response of Catholic female students. On the question of whether only the Catholic faith should be taught in religious education in a Catholic school, only 10% of Catholic male students who attend Mass weekly agree, but this rises to 26% for those who attend sometimes and 26% for those who never attend Mass. On the surface this would appear to be a contradiction of all the other indicators that suggest that Catholic students who are no longer committed to the Church are less in agreement with the principle of a specifically separate education system than their colleagues who are still committed to the Church. However, the idea that Catholic religious education should be

inclusive and that it should include the study of other religious traditions is a positive feature of Catholic religious education. The response of Catholic male students to this statement may indicate that this vision is one shared by those who are committed to the Church. It is a positive sign that committed Catholic students are open to what is 'true and holy' (*Declaration on the relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, para. 2) in other faiths.

As already indicated, the response levels of Catholic male students are largely matched by those of Catholic female students, as reported in table 11.10.

Table 11:10 Religious education in principle: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – female students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
Religious education should be taught in the parish community not in the school	35	16	11	18.6	.001
Religious education should be the most important subject in a Catholic school	15	16	17	0.1	NS
In a Catholic school only the Catholic faith should be taught in religious education	28	15	10	12.5	.01
Religious education lessons in a Catholic school should include the study of other religions	80	77	81	0.6	NS
Every subject in a Catholic school should provide some religious education	10	14	13	1.0	NS

Thus, as with Catholic male students, three of the items elicit responses indicating that the level of commitment to the Church is not a significant factor in Catholic

female students' agreement with some of the key principles underpinning Catholic religious education. On the question of whether religious education should be the most important subject in a Catholic school, 15% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass, 16% of those who attend sometimes and 17% of those who attend Mass weekly, agree that it should be. Similarly, 80% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass, 77% of those who attend sometimes and 81% of those who attend Mass weekly agree that religious education in Catholic schools should include the study of other religions. Finally, 10% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass, 14% of those who attend sometimes and 13% of those who attend weekly agree that every subject in a Catholic school should provide some religious education.

As with Catholic male students, Catholic female students show an increasingly lower level of agreement to the statement, 'Religious education should be taught in the parish community rather than in the Catholic school', depending on their level of commitment to the Church. Whilst 35% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass agree that it should, this drops to 16% for those who attend Mass sometimes and 11% for those who attend weekly. Once again, it may be that those who are committed to the Church are more likely to appreciate the educative function of the Catholic school compared to those who are not.

On the question of whether only the Catholic faith should be taught in religious education in Catholic schools, the levels of agreement for Catholic female students,

in a similar vein to Catholic male students, rises from 10% for those who attend Mass weekly, to 15% for those who attend sometimes, and to 28% for those who never attend Mass. Once again, it is of interest that those most committed to the Church are the ones most open to recognising the value of exploring other faiths, which is a fundamental element in Catholic education thinking. Those who no longer have a commitment to the Church, whether male or female, indicate by their levels of agreement the least amount of tolerance towards other faiths, or perhaps, to the exploration of any form of spiritual or religious life. As shall be seen in chapter twelve, this conclusion is borne out by an analysis of the students' responses to the practice of religious education in their schools.

Turning to the data exploring the students' experiences of what in principle should be some of the key features of Catholic religious education, we find that, on the whole, levels of commitment to the Church have little impact on the students' responses.

Table 11:11 tabulates the responses of Catholic male students. None of the items in this section elicit differences in responses that are statistically significant. Thus, on the question of whether religious education is the most important subject in their schools, 20% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, 17% of those who attend sometimes and 14% of those who attend weekly agree that it is. In terms of what is taught in religious education, 61% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, 64% of those who attend sometimes and 74% of those who attend

weekly agree that in their schools they are mainly taught about the Catholic Church. Similarly, 58% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, 61% of those who attend sometimes, and 66% of those who attend weekly, agree that in religious education they study other religions. Finally, 10% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, 14% of those who attend sometimes and 13% of those who attend weekly agree that religious education is taught in other subjects in their schools.

Table 11:11 Religious education in principle: the students' experiences: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – male students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
Religious education is the most important subject in my school	20	17	14	1.1	NS
In religious education we are mainly taught about the Catholic Church	61	64	74	3.7	NS
We study other religions in religious education	58	61	66	1.3	NS
Religion is taught in subjects other than religious education in my school	23	16	12	3.6	NS

The responses of Catholic female students, as reported in table 11:12, follow a similar pattern, except for the item on the place of the Catholic faith in religious education. On the question of whether religious education is the most important subject in their schools, 16% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass, 14% of those who attend sometimes and 16% of those who attend weekly agree that it is. On whether other religions are studied in religious education, 54% of Catholic

female students who never attend Mass, 62% of those who attend sometimes and 68% of those who attend weekly, agree that they are. Finally, 15% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass, 12% of those who attend sometimes and 12% of those who attend weekly agree that religious education is taught in other subjects in their schools.

Table 11:12 Religious education in principle: the students' experiences: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – female students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
Religious education is the most important subject in my school	16	14	16	0.3	NS
In religious education we are mainly taught about the Catholic Church	65	60	74	6.9	.05
We study other religions in religious Education	54	62	68	3.5	NS
Religion is taught in subjects other than religious education in my school	15	12	12	0.4	NS

The one item that elicits a statistically significant difference between the sub-groups of Catholic female students is, 'In religious education we are taught mainly about the Catholic Church': 65% of those who never attend Mass and 60% of those who attend sometimes agree that they are, but this rises to 74% (an identical level of agreement to Catholic male students) for those who attend Mass weekly. The main difference between Catholic male and female students on this item is the level of agreement of those who attend Mass sometimes: 64% for male students and 60% for female students. Given that elsewhere in this item, the levels of agreement between

male and female students are similar, it is probably wise not to read too much into this particular differential.

Conclusion

Taking the data as a whole, Catholic school educators can take some encouragement from the fact that gender, religious affiliation and, for Catholic students, commitment to the Catholic Church, make little statistically significant impact upon students' levels of agreement regarding the principles that should underpin religious education in Catholic schools in Wales.

Such homogeneity may, indeed, be taken as a serious weakness by those Catholic school educators who believe religious education in Catholic schools ought to be about the acquisition of knowledge about the beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church. However, this can also be taken as a positive sign of contemporary Catholic school life. Today's Catholic religious education programmes are built upon a non-propositional understanding of revelation. In other words, growth into faith is recognised as not being about the acquisition of knowledge and the learning of formulas but about the individual's own encounter with believing others. It is a dynamic process of search, revelation and response.

Thus, contemporary Catholic religious education should not be impositonal or coercive. It should respect the personal integrity of the individual and recognise that each person is on his or her own unique journey of faith. The apparent unanimity of attitudes amongst the different sub-groups of students in Catholic schools in Wales may be a sign that such respect is in evidence.

However, from an analysis of the students' actual experiences of religious education in Catholic schools in Wales, a slightly different picture emerges. Gender and religious affiliation continue to generate responses that are broadly similar amongst the students, but, once again, those Catholic students who have grown distant from the Church indicate a lower level of agreement with items concerning religious education than those who are still committed to the Church.

Chapter Twelve

Religious education in practice

Introduction

[Religious education] should help people to be attentive to the meaning of their experiences, illumined by the light of the Gospel, so that they may respond to God more fully (Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (BCEW), 2000, para. 1)

In the Catholic Church's vision for its schools, religious education is far more than an academic study, rigorous though it must be. Religious education in the Catholic school must be a 'journey of formation' (BCEW, 1996, p. 10), involving every member of the school community. It must be at 'the heart of the curriculum', enriching and informing all areas of learning 'with the light of the Gospel', teaching students to seek the truth 'which is of God, in the whole of creation, in themselves and in others' (p. 8). The hope of the Church is that this voyage of discovery will lead young people to a renewed commitment to following Jesus and witnessing Gospel values.

The idea of the Catholic school engendering a 'renewed commitment' is crucial to the Church's mission and, if national data exploring religious commitment are to be

believed, absolutely essential. The *UK Christian Handbook for 1999/2000* indicates that there has been a decline in Mass attendance amongst the Catholic population in mainland Britain of approximately 35%. Two thirds of that drop has taken place in the last ten years and young people, many of whom have attended Catholic schools, make up a large proportion of those who have lapsed.

There may be many reasons behind this lapsation, for example, the increasingly secular and self-centred nature of British society, the fragmentation of family, parish and community life, the attraction of alternative religions and lifestyles. The hope of the Catholic Church is that the Catholic school may be a means of nurturing a spiritual re-awakening in young people, of providing a context for helping students to reflect critically on such pressures and of helping them to become 'religiously literate young people with the knowledge, understanding and skills to think spiritually, ethically and theologically' (BCEW, 1996, p. 10).

A great deal of prayer, energy and money is poured into the Catholic education system by the Church and the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1988) is concerned that this commitment is not always reflected in the attitudes of the young people who have attended them.

For some of today's youth, the years spent in a Catholic school seem to have scarcely any effect. They seem to have a negative attitude toward all the various ways in which a Christian life is expressed – prayer, participation in the Mass or the frequenting of the Sacraments. Some even reject these

experiences outright, especially those associated with an institutional Church (para. 19).

The Sacred Congregation called upon Catholic schools to reflect profoundly on their vision and praxis. The mission of the Church is to ‘evangelise for the interior transformation and renewal of humanity’ (para. 66) and the Catholic school is a means to this end. Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975) explored some of the problems facing the Church in its evangelistic witness. These include the problem of atheism and the pressure put on young people to deny their spiritual natures (para. 55 – 56), the problem of inculturation when this is taken to mean imposition (para. 63) and the problem that occurs when evangelisation is taken to mean merely proclamation (para. 77f). These are all ‘hindrances’ that affect the evangelising function of the Catholic school as well as that of the Church universal.

Hay (2002) offers some useful insights here. He draws upon the work of Yoshikawa’s (1987) theories of communication. Yoshikawa has shown, in a similar vein to Freire (1970), that authentic dialogue (as between those who hold different life stances in Catholic schools) is essential for effective communication to take place across cultural boundaries. Instead of an ‘ethnocentric’ mode of communication, in which one perceives the people one is encountering entirely within one’s own frame of reference, or a ‘control’ mode, in which one scrutinises the other but only so one can manipulate information to control and guide, or a ‘dialectic’ mode in which one attempts a fusion of differences but only at the

expense of a loss of identity, for authentic communication to take place there must be a 'dialogical' mode of encounter. This requires one to recognise the primacy of the quality of the relationship. In the words of Yoshikawa:

The cultural integrity of A and B and the differences and similarities of A and B are recognised and respected. The emphasis is on wholeness, mutuality and dynamic meeting of A and B. Even in their union A and B each maintains a separate identity (Yoshikawa, p. 321, Hay, p. 180f).

There is an important lesson here for religious educators in Catholic schools. It is clear that students and teachers are increasingly looking at each other over an ever-widening religious, social and cultural divide. As Nye and Hay (1995) have shown, the contemporary students' expressions of spirituality may be far removed from the language and cultural modes of orthodox Christianity. What is required is for Catholic religious educators to accept that epistemological distance as well as the authenticity of the spirituality expressed. There may then be a moving together of understanding without the loss of individual integrity or identity.

In a reflection upon the insight that the Christian God is not a 'tribal God', Sobrino (1984) writes:

It has all too often been taken for granted that evangelisers preach a God whom others do not yet know but whom they (the evangelisers) already know. Such a pattern may make sense for a philosophical concept of God, but it does not hold for the Christian God (p. 294).

If Catholic religious educators genuinely believe that the Holy Spirit speaks to everyone, then mutual respect and integrity are safeguarded. Thus, real evangelisation takes place when it is a two way process. The teacher learns from the student just as much as the student learns from the teacher. The dialogical interaction between student and teacher, which after all was Jesus' own preferred method of teaching, works because there is a mutual respect and sense of co-journeying.

An important element in this evangelising process, and one dwelt upon by Pope Paul VI (1975), is the essential requirement for an authentic witness to what is being proclaimed.

In the Church the witness given by a life truly and essentially Christian, which is dedicated to God in an indissoluble union and which is likewise dedicated with the utmost fervour of soul to our neighbour, is the primary organ of evangelisation (para. 41).

This point cannot be emphasised enough. If a Catholic educator aims to nurture faith but creates an environment where a genuine dialogue and relationship are impossible, then faith will not be nurtured. The nurture of faith and commitment can only come about from the totality of the proclamation lived out by the person who proclaims. As Sancho Panza remarked in his famous aside to Don Quixote 'he preaches well that lives well; that's all the divinity I understand', or in the words of Pope Paul VI, referred to in chapter two:

The people of our day are more impressed by witness than by teachers, and if they listen to these it is because they also bear witness (1975, para.41)

This section of the research is designed to explore the students' responses to the religious education they have experienced in Catholic schools in Wales. It rests on the question of whether who they are, and what they have contributed, is valued by the school, assuming this is to be evidence that a dialogical form of education has been pursued. Furthermore, if students feel that their religious education has helped them to develop a deep and personal relationship with Jesus Christ, then this may also be taken as evidence that the school is having some success in nurturing faith.

Relevant statements from the research instrument for this section include the questions of whether only the Catholic faith should be taught in religious education, whether the main aim should be to help students develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ, whether students should be taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions and whether Catholic schools should help students to think for themselves even if this means questioning Catholic beliefs.

In terms of the students' experiences of religious education, relevant statements include the questions of whether they are mainly taught about the Catholic faith, whether they have been helped to develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ, whether it has helped them to deal with important problems in life, whether they are helped to think for themselves even if that means questioning Catholic

beliefs and whether they are taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions.

Finally, the students were asked whether they enjoy religious education, whether it is more important to them than any other subject and whether they would still attend religious education lessons if they were voluntary.

As well as drawing attention to those students who appear to have been unaffected by their Catholic schooling, the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1988) also pointed to 'positive signs that give grounds for encouragement'.

In a Catholic school one can find young people who are outstanding in every way – in religious attitude, moral behaviour and academic achievement.

When we look for the cause we often discover an excellent family background reinforced by both Church and school . . . these positive signs give us reason to hope that a sense of religion can develop in more of today's young people and that it can be more deeply rooted within them (para. 18).

The data underpinning this thesis may find such signs in Catholic secondary schools in Wales although a caveat does need to be introduced here. The sample chosen for this research was from year 11, the final year of compulsory education in England and Wales. It was chosen in order to mirror and extend the research of Josephine Egan. However, Francis and Lewis (1996) have shown that as children get older so their support for religious education decreases. They explored the responses of

16,411 year 9 and 10 students from all types of schools in England and Wales. Overall, only about one in three (35.6%) of the sample felt that religious education should have a place in the school curriculum. Apart from the evidence that variables such as social class, denominational background and church attendance had a considerable influence on the responses given, in year 9, 39.5% of students thought that religious education should be taught in schools, but in year 10 this fell to 31.2% and it is not unreasonable to assume that the downward trend may continue into year 11.

It may be that this decline in support for religious education is a feature of the students' growing sense of autonomy and self-reliance rather than a rejection of religious education for its own sake. Thus, the data from this research will need to be carefully unpacked in order to assess whether the 'positive signs' that the Sacred Congregation detects, are visible in Welsh Catholic secondary schools.

i) Overview

Such 'positive signs' can be discerned in the responses that many of the students make to the practice of religious education in their schools, both in principle (table 12:1) and in terms of their actual experiences (table 12:2).

Table 12:1 Religious education in practice

	Agree %	Not Certain %	Disagree %
In the Catholic school, only the Catholic faith should be taught in religious education	18	22	60
The main aim of religious education in a Catholic school should be to help students develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ	39	36	25
Catholic schools should teach students to be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions	40	41	19
Catholic schools should help students think for themselves even if this means questioning Catholic beliefs	77	16	7

Although less than one in five students (18%) believe that in a Catholic school only the Catholic faith should be taught, over two thirds (39%) agree that the main aim of religious education should be to help students develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Only a quarter of the students (25%) definitely disagree with this statement. These figures indicate some awareness amongst part of the student body that there is more to curriculum religious education than the simple acquisition of knowledge. Many students appear to appreciate the catechetical nature of Catholic religious education, given the support reported here for the idea of developing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Similarly, 40% of students agree that Catholic schools should teach students to be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions, with only 19%

disagreeing, indicating a significant level of support amongst the student body for spiritual development in terms of decision-making skills. However, the students surveyed also appreciate the importance of the development of critical thinking skills: 77% agree that Catholic schools should help students to think for themselves even if this means questioning Catholic beliefs, with only 7% disagreeing. These findings resonate with the aim espoused by the *Curriculum Directory* of a 'religiously literate' young person gaining the knowledge and skills to think 'spiritually, ethically and theologically' (p. 10).

In terms of the students' actual experiences, recorded in table 12:2, there are some encouraging signs here too for Catholic school educators. Two thirds (66%) of students agree that they are mainly taught about the Catholic faith, though Catholic school educators may want to explore in more detail the make-up of the one in five (19%) of the student population who disagree that they are mainly taught about the Catholic faith in Catholic schools. Only a quarter of the students (27%) feel able, first, to agree that their religious education has helped them to develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ and, second, that it has helped them to deal with important problems in life (28%).

Nevertheless, Catholic school educators should take some heart from this. At this stage in their lives (relatively late adolescence), a significant proportion (one quarter) of young people are claiming that their religious education has had a positive and significant impact upon their religious and spiritual journey. Having

said that, 38% of the students disagree that religious education has helped them to develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ and nearly half of the students (46%) do not believe it has helped them to deal with important problems of life.

Table 12:2 Religious education in practice – the students’ experiences

	Agree %	Not Certain %	Disagree %
In religious education we are mainly taught about the Catholic Church	66	15	19
Religious education in my school has helped me to develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ	27	35	38
Religious education has helped me to deal with important problems in life	28	26	46
In my school I am helped to think for myself even when that means questioning Catholic beliefs	55	26	19
In my school I am taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions	44	38	18

The students’ responses to the statements concerning critical thinking and being guided by the Church in moral decision making are broadly similar: 55% of the students agree that they are helped to think for themselves even when that means questioning Catholic beliefs, whilst at the same time, and conversely, 44% of students agree that they are taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions. Only 19% and 18%, respectively, of the students disagree with these statements.

Finally, students were asked several questions in order to gain an overall impression of the attitudes of the students to the religious education they are receiving.

Table 12:3 Religious education in practice, the students' attitudes

	Agree %	Not Certain %	Disagree %
I enjoy religious education	36	23	41
Religious education is more important to me than any other subject I study in school	6	11	83
If attendance at religious education lessons was voluntary I would still want to attend them	28	26	46

Over one third of the students (36%) agree that they enjoy religious education, though a higher percentage (46%) claim they do not. Similarly, 28% of the students agree that they would want to attend religious education lessons if they were voluntary, with 46% claiming they would not. Only 6% of the students claim that religious education is more important to them than any other subject they study in school, with 83% providing an emphatic 'no' to this statement.

Before examining the implications of these results further, the data need to be analysed by the students' gender, religious affiliation, and, for Catholic students their commitment to the Church, in order to assess whether this has a significant impact upon students' levels of agreement.

ii) Does gender make a difference?

Although one item in table 12:4 records a statistically significant difference between male and female students regarding the principles that should underpin the practice of religious education in Catholic schools, in general both genders share a common perception.

Table 12:4 Religious education in practice – in agreement by gender

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
In the Catholic school, only the Catholic faith should be taught in religious education	22	14	11.4	.001
The main aim of religious education in a Catholic school should be to help students develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ	40	38	0.4	NS
Catholic schools should teach students to be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions	40	39	0.1	NS
Catholic schools should help students think for themselves even if this means questioning Catholic beliefs	75	79	3.1	NS

As described earlier, a significantly higher percentage of male students believe that in the Catholic school only the Catholic faith should be taught: 22% of male students compared to 14% of female students, though as already mentioned this may have more to do with female sensitivity towards the needs of others rather than a rejection of Catholic teaching as such.

Catholic school educators may take some encouragement from the responses of both male and female students, whose levels of agreement are not significantly different,

to the idea that religious education should be about developing a relationship with Jesus Christ. There are some 'positive signs' here. For example, on the principle that the main aim of religious education in a Catholic school should be to help students develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ, 40% of male students and 38% of female students agree. Similarly, 40% of male students and 39% of female students agree that Catholic schools should teach students to be guided by the teaching of the Catholic Church when making moral decisions, although 75% of male students and 79% of female students agree that students should also be helped to think for themselves even if this means questioning Catholic beliefs.

Similarly, in terms of their actual experiences of religious education, recorded in table 12:5, there are no statistically significant differences between the gender groups.

Thus, 67% of male students and 66% of female students agree that in religious education they are mainly taught about the Catholic faith. Both gender groups are also in agreement on the question of whether their religious education has helped them to develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ: 28% of male students and 26% of female students feel able to agree with this statement.

Similarly, 26% of male students and 30% of female students agree that religious education has helped them to deal with important problems in life.

Table 12:5 Religious education in practice: the students' experiences – in agreement by gender

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
In religious education we are mainly taught about the Catholic Church	67	66	0.1	NS
Religious education in my school has helped me to develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ	28	26	0.6	NS
Religious education has helped me to deal with important problems in life	26	30	1.6	NS
In my school I am helped to think for myself even when that means questioning Catholic beliefs	53	57	2.2	NS
In my school I am taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions	44	44	0.0	NS

There are also no differences between the gender groups on the question of whether they are helped to think for themselves even if this means questioning Catholic beliefs: 53% of male students and 57% of female students agree. Furthermore, 44% of both male and female students agree that they are taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions.

Although Catholic school educators may want to investigate these responses further, particularly concerning the apparent failure of Catholic religious education to help students develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ, it does not appear to be the gender of the student that lies at the root cause of such dissatisfaction.

However, in terms of their attitudes to religious education, recorded in table 12:6, there does appear to be some significant differences between the genders.

Table 12: 6 Religious education in practice: the students' attitudes – in agreement by gender

	Male %	Female %	X ²	P<
I enjoy religious education	32	40	8.1	.01
Religious education is more important to me than any other subject I study in school	10	4	16.1	.001
If attendance at religious education lessons was voluntary I would still want to attend them	25	29	2.1	NS

Unsurprisingly, given the research comparing the religious attitudes of men and women, significantly more female students agree that they enjoy religious education: 40% of female students compared to 32% of male students. Similarly, though not statistically significant, if attendance at religious education lessons were voluntary, more female students compared to male students would still want to attend them: 29% of female students compared to 25% of male students.

However, this differential is reversed for the question of whether religious education is more important to the individual than any other subject: 10% of male students agree but only 4% of female students agree.

It may be that Catholic school educators will need to investigate the possibility that the way religious education is currently delivered in Catholic schools is failing to

meet, in a particular way, the needs of male students specifically. More importantly though, as shall be explored at the end of this chapter, Catholic school educators may be more concerned about the relatively low levels of agreement for all statements in this section, regardless of the gender of the student.

iii) Does religious affiliation make a difference?

Regarding the principles that should underpin the practice of religious education in Catholic schools, both Catholic and other students share a common perception.

The responses of male students, recorded in table 12:7, elicit no statistically significant difference between Catholic and other students. On the question of whether only the Catholic faith should be taught in Religious education, 22% of Catholic male students and 21% of other male students agree. On the question of whether the main aim of religious education in a Catholic school should be to help students develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ, 42% of Catholic male students and 33% of other male students agree. Identical levels of agreement are recorded for the question of whether Catholic schools should help students to be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions: 42% of Catholics and 33% of others.

Table 12:7 Religious education in practice: in agreement by religious affiliation – male students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
In the Catholic school, only the Catholic faith should be taught in religious education	22	21	0.1	NS
The main aim of religious education in a Catholic school should be to help students develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ	42	33	3.2	NS
Catholic schools should teach students to be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions	42	33	2.7	NS
Catholic schools should help students think for themselves even if this means questioning Catholic beliefs	75	73	0.3	NS

Finally, on the question of whether Catholic schools should help students to think for themselves even if this means questioning Catholic beliefs, 75% of Catholic male students and 73% of other male students agree.

Catholic and other female students, as reported in table 12:8, record similar levels of agreement to male students though there is a statistically significant difference for one item. The statistically significant difference arises for the question of whether the main aim of Religious education in a Catholic school should be to help students develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Whilst 41% of Catholic female students agree, only 28% of other female students do so. The figures for

male students are similar though the differential was not so pronounced: 42% of Catholics and 33% of others

Table 12:8 Religious education in practice: in agreement by religious affiliation – female students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
In the Catholic school, only the Catholic faith should be taught in religious education	16	11	2.1	NS
The main aim of religious education in a Catholic school should be to help students develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ	41	28	8.2	.01
Catholic schools should teach students to be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions	40	38	0.7	NS
Catholic schools should help students think for themselves even if this means questioning Catholic beliefs	81	75	2.4	NS

On the question of whether only the Catholic faith should be taught in religious education, only 16% of Catholic female students and 11% of other female students agree. Male students recorded higher levels of agreement on this statement (22% of Catholics and 21% of others) though neither difference is statistically significant.

On the question of whether Catholic schools should teach students to be guided by the teaching of the Catholic Church, 40% of Catholic female students and 38% of other female students agree. Again, this parallels the responses of male students: 42% of Catholics and 33% of others.

Finally, 81% of Catholic female students and 75% of other female students agree that Catholic schools should help students think for themselves even if this means questioning Catholic beliefs. Once again, these responses match those of male students: 75% of Catholics and 73% of others.

In general, although students who are not Catholic tend to record lower levels of agreement on statements regarding the principles that should underpin the practice of religious education in Catholic schools, they are not, for virtually all items, regarded as statistically significant.

However, an examination of the students' experiences of the practice of religious education in Catholic schools reveals that several important items record significant levels of disagreement between Catholic and other students. Tables 12:9 and 12:10 tabulate the responses of male and female students.

First, the items that record no statistically significant difference between Catholic and other students. On the question of whether in Religious education they are mainly taught about the Catholic faith, 66% of Catholic male students and 64% of Catholic female students agree. The figures for students who are not Catholic are 70% of male students and 72% of female students.

Table 12:9 Religious education in practice: the students' experiences: in agreement by religious affiliation – male students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
In religious education we are mainly taught about the Catholic Church	66	70	0.7	NS
Religious education in my school has helped me to develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ	31	18	8.2	.05
Religious education has helped me to deal with important problems in life	29	18	5.9	.05
In my school I am helped to think for myself even when that means questioning Catholic beliefs	54	48	1.3	NS
In my school I am taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions	46	37	3.3	NS

Similarly, 54% of Catholic male students and 59% of Catholic female students agree that in their schools they are helped to think for themselves even if this means questioning Catholic beliefs. Students who are not Catholic record figures of 48% of males in agreement and 53% of females.

Finally, 46% of both male and female Catholic students agree that in their schools, they are taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions. The figures for students who are not Catholic are 37% of males and 38% of females, neither of which are statistically significant compared to Catholic students.

Table 12:10 Religious education in practice: the students' experiences: in agreement by religious affiliation – female students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
In religious education we are mainly taught about the Catholic Church	64	72	3.5	NS
Religious education in my school has helped me to develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ	30	14	15.4	.001
Religious education has helped me to deal with important problems in life	33	21	7.5	.01
In my school I am helped to think for myself even when that means questioning Catholic beliefs	59	53	1.8	NS
In my school I am taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions	46	38	2.5	NS

However, on the question of whether religious education has helped them to develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ, whilst 31% of Catholic male students and 30% of Catholic female students agree, only 18% of other male students and 14% of other female students do so.

Similarly, on the question of whether religious education has helped them to deal with important problems in life, whilst 29% of Catholic male students and 33% of Catholic female students agree, only 18% of other male students and 21% of other female students do so.

On the one hand, Catholic school educators may find some signs of encouragement here given that around one third of Catholic students, male and female, believe they have been helped to develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ and that they have been helped to deal with important problems in life. For these students, Catholic schools have gone some way to fulfilling the vision established for them by the Church.

However, the levels of agreement for students who are not Catholic are significantly lower. In the light of this, Catholic school educators may want to explore the extent to which current religious education programmes in Catholic schools are able to meet the needs of those students who may regard themselves as outsiders of the Catholic educational enterprise. A Catholic school has a duty of care to all its members but this research indicates that the spiritual needs of those members of the school who are not Catholic are not being engaged with.

This conclusion is borne out to some extent by the data exploring the students' attitudes to religious education, recorded in tables 12:11 and 12:12, although for the statement 'I enjoy religious education', there are no statistically significant differences between Catholic and other students. Thus, 33% of Catholic male students, 40% of Catholic female students, 25% of other male students and 38% of other female students agree that they enjoy religious education. The differences between Catholic and other students are not recorded as statistically significant.

Table 12:11 Religious education in practice: the students' attitudes: in agreement by religious affiliation – male students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
I enjoy religious education	33	25	2.4	NS
Religious education is more important to me than any other subject I study in school	11	6	2.0	NS
If attendance at religious education lessons was voluntary I would still want to attend them	27	18	4.4	.05

Table 12:12 Religious education in practice: the students' attitudes: in agreement by religious affiliation – female students

	Catholic %	Other %	X ²	P<
I enjoy religious education	40	38	0.3	NS
Religious education is more important to me than any other subject I study in school	5	1	4.7	.05
If attendance at religious education lessons was voluntary I would still want to attend them	31	25	1.7	NS

However, on the question of whether they would still want to attend religious education lessons if they were voluntary, a statistically significant difference between Catholic and other male students emerges: 27% of Catholic male students would still want to attend the lessons compared to only 18% of other male students. There is a similar level of difference for female students, though it is not recorded as statistically significant: 31% of Catholic students compared to 25% who are not Catholic.

There is a statistically significant different level of agreement recorded for female students on the question of whether religious education is more important to them than any other subject. However, the percentages of agreement are very low for all categories. Only 11% of Catholic male and 6% of other male students and 5% of Catholic female and 1% of other female students agree that religious education is more important than any other subject they study at school.

Although usually not recorded as statistically significant, in all categories students who are not Catholic, whether male or female, report lower levels of agreement compared to Catholic students. Perhaps some Catholic school educators would regard this as unsurprising. However, Catholic schools have a duty of care to all their members. This data indicate that students who are not Catholic may feel disenfranchised in the Catholic educational system. Presuming that Catholic school educators wish to make good Catholic schools even better by ensuring an ethos of inclusivity for all, it is an aspect of Catholic school life that may warrant further investigation.

iv) For Catholic students, does commitment to the Church make a difference?

Given the finding reported in earlier chapters, it is of little surprise to discover that those Catholic students who are no longer committed to the Catholic Church tend to

record significantly lower levels of agreement regarding the principles and practice of religious education compared to their Catholic counterparts who remain committed to the Church. The pattern of significant increasing/decreasing levels of agreement amongst Catholic students depending on their level of commitment to the Church is repeated in this section.

The students are sub-grouped according to their attendance at Mass as an indicator of their commitment to the Catholic Church: 'Never', 'Sometimes' and 'Weekly'. Because gender is identified as an important factor in students' responses to the items, the data is presented separately for male and female students. Table 12:13 tabulates the responses of Catholic male students.

Table 12:13 Religious education in practice: in agreement by Catholic students commitment – male students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
In the Catholic school, only the Catholic faith should be taught in religious education	26	26	10	11.2	.01
The main aim of religious education in a Catholic school should be to help students develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ	38	38	54	7.5	.05
Catholic schools should teach students to be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions	34	38	58	13.5	.01
Catholic schools should help students think for themselves even if this means questioning Catholic beliefs	74	74	80	1.4	NS

Slightly over one quarter of Catholic male students who never attend Mass (26%), or who attend sometimes (26%), agree that only the Catholic faith should be taught in religious education in Catholic schools. However, the percentage of agreement for Catholic male students who attend Mass weekly is significantly lower at 10%, indicating a greater appreciation of the insights that can be gained from a study of other religious traditions.

This conclusion is borne out by an analysis of the next two items. On the question of whether the main aim of religious education in a Catholic school should be to help students develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ, 38% of both Catholic male students who never attend Mass and those who attend sometimes agree that it should. However, this rises to 56% for those who attend Mass weekly. Similarly, 34% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, and 38% of those who attend sometimes, agree that Catholic schools should teach students to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions, but this rises to 58% for those who attend Mass weekly.

The final statement, 'Catholic schools should help students think for themselves even if this means questioning Catholic beliefs', elicits responses that are not significantly different between the three sub-groups: 74% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, or who attend Mass sometimes, and 80% of those who attend weekly agree that they should.

Before examining the implications of this data further, this thesis explores the responses of Catholic female students, as recorded in table 12:14.

Table 12:14 Religious education in practice: in agreement by Catholic students commitment – female students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
In the Catholic school, only the Catholic faith should be taught in religious education	28	15	10	12.5	.01
The main aim of religious education in a Catholic school should be to help students develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ	24	41	53	14.9	.001
Catholic schools should teach students to be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions	24	40	47	10.1	.01
Catholic schools should help students think for themselves even if this means questioning Catholic beliefs	80	83	74	4.9	NS

As with Catholic male students, the first three items engender differences in levels of response that are statistically significant. On the question of whether only the Catholic faith should be taught in religious education, 28% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass agree, which drops to 15% for those who attend sometimes and 10% for those who attend Mass weekly. As suggested in chapter eleven, this may be a positive indicator of the openness of those still committed to their faith to the insights that may be gained from other religious traditions.

As with Catholic male students, this conclusion is supported by an analysis of the responses to the next two items in this table. On the question of whether the main aim of religious education in a Catholic school should be to help students develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ, only 24% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass agree but this rises to 41% for those who attend sometimes and 53% for those who attend Mass weekly. Similarly, 24% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass, and 41% of those who attend sometimes, agree that Catholic schools should teach students to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions, but this rises to 47% for those who attend Mass weekly.

As with Catholic male students, the responses of Catholic female students to the statement, 'Catholic schools should help students think for themselves even if this means questioning Catholic beliefs', elicits differences in responses that are not statistically significant between the three sub-groups: 80% of those who never attend Mass, 83% of those who attend sometimes, and 74% of those who attend weekly, agree that they should.

Putting this last item to one side for the moment, these significant levels of difference between practising and non-practising Catholic students must be a cause of concern to Catholic school educators. The implication of this data, as it has been for each of the previous data analysis chapters, is that Catholic students who are no longer committed to their faith are significantly less supportive of the Catholic school's vision and practices than their still committed counterparts. Such negativity

may undermine the attempts of the Catholic school to be a catalyst for spiritual growth and renewal. Catholic school educators, at the very least, may need to reflect upon, and explore, the attitudes of those students who feel distant from the Church and all it stands for. Initiatives to include such students, and to accompany them on their own spiritual journeys, may help to break down these barriers and so assist the school in fulfilling its mandate to be a catalyst of Good News for all those who come within its compass.

That this is possible is supported, to some extent, by an analysis of the responses Catholic students make to statements concerning their actual experiences of religious education in practice. Here a significant difference emerges between male and female students. Catholic male students tend to record levels of agreement whose differences are not statistically significant whereas Catholic female students continue to follow the pattern of increasing levels of agreement depending on levels of commitment reported in previous sections.

Table 12:15 tabulates the responses of Catholic male students. Four of the items in this section elicit differences in Catholic male students' levels of response that are not statistically significant. On the question of whether in religious education they are mainly taught about the Catholic Church, 61% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, 64% of those who sometimes attend and 74% of those who attend weekly agree that they are. Similarly, 31% of those who never attend Mass, 27% of those who attend sometimes and 40% of those who attend weekly agree that

Religious education has helped them to develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Table 12:15 Religious education in practice: the students' experiences: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – male students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
In religious education we are mainly taught about the Catholic Church	61	64	74	3.7	NS
Religious education in my school has helped me to develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ	31	27	40	5.5	NS
Religious education has helped me to deal with important problems in life	21	30	33	3.3	NS
In my school I am helped to think for myself even when that means questioning Catholic beliefs	58	52	58	1.3	NS
In my school I am taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions	35	44	63	15.4	.001

On the question of whether religious education has helped them to deal with important problems in life, 21% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, 30% of those who attend sometimes and 33% of those who attend weekly agree that it has helped them. Finally, 58% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass, 52% of those who attend sometimes and 58% of those who attend weekly agree that in their schools they are helped to think for themselves even if this means questioning Catholic beliefs.

The only item that records differences in levels of agreement amongst Catholic male students that are statistically significant is the question of whether they feel they are taught to be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions.

Here only 35% of those who never attend Mass and 44% of those who attend weekly agree that they are but this rises to 63% for those who attend weekly.

This last item is of significance because it involves a specific reference to Catholic moral teaching. The data indicate that Catholic male students who are committed to the Church appear to be more supportive of its moral teaching than those who are not, which, once again, raises issues about the possibly negative impact of Catholic male students who are not committed to the Church upon the beliefs and attitudes of those who are. It mirrors the responses reported in table 12:13 regarding the principle that students in Catholic schools should be taught to be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions, which elicited a significantly higher level of agreement amongst practising Catholic male students compared to those who are not.

However, when we examine the responses of Catholic female students, as recorded in table 12:16, a different picture emerges. The only item in the data for Catholic male students that elicited differences in responses that are statistically significant – that in their schools they are taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions – also elicits differences in responses amongst Catholic female students that are statistically significant: 32% of Catholic female students who never attend

Mass, 49% of those who attend sometimes and 47% of those who attend weekly agree that they are.

Table 12:16 Religious education in practice: the students' experiences: in agreement by Catholic student commitment – female students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
In religious education we are mainly taught about the Catholic Church	65	60	74	6.9	.05
Religious education in my school has helped me to develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ	20	30	38	6.6	.05
Religious education has helped me to deal with important problems in life	19	32	42	11.0	.01
In my school I am helped to think for myself even when that means questioning Catholic beliefs	54	59	62	1.3	NS
In my school I am taught to be guided by the Church when making moral decisions	32	49	47	6.3	.05

The only item that elicits responses whose differences are not statistically significant concerns the statement 'In my school I am helped to think for myself even when that means questioning Catholic beliefs': 54% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass, 59% of those who attend sometimes and 62% of those who attend weekly agree that they are. Thus, in terms of supporting Catholic moral teaching, and of questioning Catholic beliefs, the level of commitment of Catholic female students does not appear to have an impact.

However, unlike Catholic male students, the first three items in this section elicited responses that, to some extent, follow the already identified pattern of increasing levels of agreement depending on the level of commitment to the Church. On the question of whether in their schools they are taught mainly about the Catholic Church, 65% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass and 60% of those who attend sometimes agree that they are but this rises to 74% for those who attend weekly.

Similarly, only 20% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass agree that religious education has helped them to develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ, but this rises to 30% for those who attend sometimes and 38% for those who attend weekly. Finally, only 19% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass agree that religious education has helped them to deal with important problems in life but this rises to 32% for those who attend sometimes and 42% for those who attend weekly.

Examining the data from both tables as a whole, it appears that levels of commitment to the Church have a greater impact upon the responses of Catholic female students towards their experiences of Catholic religious education than they do for Catholic male students. The implication for Catholic school educators is that Catholic male students may be more sensitive to the pressure exerted by their non-practicing counterparts to not conform to the expectations of the school regarding the purposes of Catholic religious education. On the other hand, Catholic female

students are more inclined to be willing to be guided by the Church on moral issues compared to their Catholic male colleagues. Either way Catholic school educators need to be aware of differences in need between male and female students implied in the differences between these two sets of data.

This thesis is supported by an analysis of the last two tables in this chapter, which explore students' attitudes to religious education.

Table 12:17 tabulates the responses of Catholic male students.

Table 12:17 Religious education in practice: the students' attitudes: in agreement by religious affiliation – male students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
I enjoy religious education	30	30	42	5.1	NS
Religious education is more important to me than any other subject I study in school	15	11	5	5.0	NS
If attendance at religious education lessons was voluntary I would still want to attend them	24	25	36	5.3	NS

Catholic male students report no statistically significant differences in the levels of agreement regarding these items in terms of the different levels of commitment to the Church. Thus, 30% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass and who attend sometimes agree that they enjoy religious education and although this rises to 42% for those who attend Mass weekly, the difference is insufficient to be statistically significant, Similarly, 15% of Catholic male students who never attend

Mass, 11% of those who attend sometimes and 5% of those who attend weekly agree that religious education is more important to them than any other subject. Finally, 24% of Catholic male students who never attend Mass. 25% of those who attend sometimes and 36% of those who attend weekly agree that if attendance at religious education were voluntary they would still want to attend, which, despite the more than 10% increase in the level of agreement for those who are committed to the Church, is nevertheless insufficient for the difference to be considered statistically significant.

Table 12:18 Religious education in practice: the students' attitudes: in agreement by religious affiliation – female students

	Never %	Sometimes %	Weekly %	X ²	P<
I enjoy religious education	23	41	49	13.0	.01
Religious education is more important to me than any other subject I study in school	3	4	7	2.2	NS
If attendance at religious education lessons was voluntary I would still want to attend them	16	31	40	11.5	.01

When turning to the responses of Catholic female students, recorded in table 12:18, a different picture emerges. Here statistically significant differences between the three sub-groups of Catholic female students dependent on their level of commitment to the Church are recorded. On the question, for example, of whether they enjoy religious education, only 23% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass agree that they do but this rises to 41% for those who attend sometimes and 49% for those who attend weekly. Similarly, only 16% of Catholic female

students who never attend Mass agree that if attendance at religious education were voluntary they would still want to attend but this rises to 31% for those who attend sometimes and 40% for those who attend weekly. The final item regarding whether religious education is more important than any other subject to them elicited responses the differences of which are not statistically significant: 3% of Catholic female students who never attend Mass, 4% for those who do sometimes and 7% of those who attend weekly agree that it is.

As with the data explored from tables 12:15 and 12:16, although the levels of agreement rise for Catholic male students depending on their levels of commitment to the Church, these are insufficient to be statistically significant. Catholic female students, on the other hand, do record statistically significant differences in their levels of agreement regarding their attitudes to religious education. The more committed the Catholic female student, the more likely they are to agree that they enjoy religious education and would continue to study it if they had the choice.

Once again, Catholic school educators may need to be aware of the possibly negative impact of the attitudes of lapsed Catholic students upon the support levels of all students towards the provision of religious education in Catholic schools. Such negativity has to be addressed if the Catholic school is to fulfil its aim of meeting the religious and spiritual needs of all of its students. An awareness of the differences amongst the Catholic student population is a first key step towards achieving that aim.

Conclusion

As has been indicated at various stages of this analysis, there are some 'positive signs' amongst the data regarding the practice of religious education in Catholic Secondary schools in Wales. One is that in the current social climate of secularism, individualism, materialism and hedonism, it appears that the religious education programmes of Catholic secondary schools in Wales are continuing to provide an alternative world-view, based on the teaching and example of Jesus Christ, for about one-third of their students.

However, there is also a good deal to be concerned with if Catholic schools are to re-imagine a new vision for the twenty-first century. The data in this chapter show a consistently low level of agreement regarding the students' experiences of religious education. In general, less than a third of students, whatever the sub-group, appear to be satisfied with those experiences.

It appears that a sizeable majority of students in Catholic schools are untouched by the religious education provided. This is particularly so for Catholic students who have lapsed from the Catholic Church. The data underpinning this thesis reveal a significant level of negativity towards religious education for those students who feel disenfranchised from the Catholic school enterprise. Such disaffection indicates that not only are such students' spiritual needs not being met, but also that their

negativity may be having a detrimental affect on the schools' attempts to serve the religious and spiritual needs of the rest of the school community.

To meet this challenge Catholic school educators need to recall that spiritual and religious growth begins by meeting people where they are and then accompanying them on their own unique journey of faith. In Catholic schools this requires teachers who are sensitive to the worlds young people inhabit and the ability, with gentleness and integrity, to suggest alternative world-views.

The challenge is to draw out of the individual the truth of his or her heart and to help them understand that we can only know the truth in relationship to others. We are made in the image and likeness of God who is relationship and we are called by God in our uniqueness into community. In our diversity our oneness is rich (Bishop Declan Lang, 2004, para. 16).

Engaging students on this journey does not happen if religious education programmes and approaches are impositional and divisive. Catholic religious education is an invitation and, using the model of 'pre-evangelisation', which is explored in the concluding remarks, the invitation is initially one of encouraging openness towards, and respect for, the religious and spiritual dimensions of human life.

As described in chapter two, Catholic religious educators may find a great richness here by reflecting upon the example of Jesus. According to his followers, Jesus

rejected the approach and attitudes of the religious leaders and teachers of his own day.

Alas for you lawyers because you load on people burdens that are unendurable, burdens that you yourselves do not touch with your fingertips! Alas for you lawyers who have taken away the key of knowledge. You have not gone in yourselves and you have prevented others from going in who wanted to (Luke 11:48,52).

Instead of their elitist and judgemental attitudes to people, Jesus offered an alternative world-view that was inclusive and non-judgemental. The example left in the Gospels is of one who meets people on their journey, using events, images and stories of their world, and gently accompanies them to a better understanding, a better vision.

The teacher who walks in the shadow of the temple, among his followers, gives not of his wisdom but rather of his faith and lovingness. If he is indeed wise, he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind (Kahil Gibran, 1980, 'The answer to the Teacher').

If significant sectors of the Catholic school population are not to be alienated by the religious education provided in Catholic schools, religious educators need to mirror the example of Jesus and offer an alternative vision that engenders, at the very least, respect, tolerance and compassion towards others. To fulfil the mandate established

for Catholic religious education, in the social and ecclesiological context of the twenty-first century, this thesis argues that it must be invitational not impositional.

Concluding remarks

Introduction

At the threshold of the third millennium, in the midst of the rapidly changing social and religious fabric of Welsh society, Catholic schools need to be engaged in the task of re-evaluating what is offered to young people, and, if necessary, of re-imagining how they can fulfil the mission entrusted to them.

That this is necessary is irrefutable. As described in chapter two, both the Catholic Church and Welsh society have undergone, and are undergoing, profound changes. Wales, as elsewhere in the western world, has become increasingly secular, individualistic and materialistic. Within the Catholic Church, there is clear evidence of a decline in levels of religious commitment.

Catholic schools are no less affected by these changes than any other part of Welsh society. At the same time, as explored in chapter four, the staff and student populations of Catholic schools in Wales have changed significantly during the last decades of the twentieth century. Catholic schools have admitted increasing numbers of students who are not members of the Catholic Church. Furthermore, at least in the secondary sector, Catholic schools have had to employ a significant number of staff who are not members of the Catholic Church, so that now such teachers are in the majority in Catholic secondary schools. These changes were

inevitable given the national reduction in the birth rate and the tendency of Catholic graduates not to enter the teaching profession. However, whatever the cause, the conclusion cannot be avoided that Catholic schools in Wales are no longer the homogenous communities they once were.

These trends and developments must inform the attempts of Catholic school educators, and their managers and directors, to meet the ever-changing needs of society, the Church, the parents and the students themselves. For this to be effective, Catholic schools need a wealth of empirical data so that there is as complete a picture as possible of the impact of these developments upon them.

This is the function of the research data underpinning this thesis. Without it, Catholic secondary schools in Wales are operating in a research vacuum. By asking the students of Catholic secondary schools in Wales, this study can present the expectations and experiences of the very people for whom the schools exist.

Research into the attitudes of students regarding their schooling can only provide a partial picture of what is happening in Catholic schools in Wales. Students may, for example, be ill-informed about the aims of Catholic education and they may lack the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to evaluate them properly.

Furthermore, they may judge schools harshly and subjectively.

However, by the end of their statutory schooling, students are in a position to reflect upon their school experience and to articulate judgements about it. Such judgements can provide one insight into what the students expect of their schools and into what they believe is happening. The judgments found in this research are one part of the picture that diocesan authorities and individual school communities need in order to effectively evaluate what is being provided in Catholic schools in Wales.

i) Overview of the main findings

Chapters five to twelve of this study have analysed in detail the responses of the students to key questions exploring various aspects of Catholic education: the provision of a separate Catholic education system, prayer and worship, moral development, rules and punishments, the school population, school/parish links and religious education. As the conclusions of these chapters show, a clear picture has emerged of significant differences between the main constituencies of the Welsh Catholic secondary school student body.

In general, the data reveal some 'positive signs' for Catholic school educators to build on. For example, although only a quarter of the students (27%) agree that the Catholic Church should provide separate schools, 50% of the students would send their own children to a Catholic school, 60% agree that their parents made the correct decision in sending them to a Catholic school and 69% claim that they are

happy in their school. Furthermore, 61% of students believe that their school has helped them to lead a good Christian life and 60% of students agree that their school is noted for being a caring Christian community.

Thus, a majority of students express some sort of satisfaction with their experiences of Catholic schooling. However, there is still a sizeable proportion of the student body who appear to be disaffected by their schooling. Refining the data carefully by gender, religious affiliation and, for Catholic students, by levels of commitment to the Church provides a vital insight into who these may be. Armed with this information, diocesan authorities and Catholic school educators can begin the process of ensuring that the needs of every member of the school community are being met.

In terms of gender, the majority of elements elicit no statistically significant differences between male and female students. However, several key statements do indicate some greater disengagement by male students compared to female students. For example, whilst 56% of female students would attend a Catholic school if they had a choice, this drops to 49% for male students. Similarly, 53% of female students would send their own children to Catholic schools compared to 47% of male students. Finally, 40% of female students claim to enjoy religious education but this drops to 32% for male students. These differences are not great and there are not many of them but Catholic school educators may need to be aware that occasionally

male students are less engaged in the Catholic educational enterprise than their female counterparts.

However, when refining the data to a comparison between Catholic students and students who are not members of the Catholic Church, whether male or female, a greater degree of significant differences begins to emerge. For example, 35% of Catholic male students and 25% of Catholic female students agree that the Catholic Church should provide separate schools but this drops to 19% for other male students and 17% for other female students. Similarly, 53% of Catholic male and 58% of Catholic female students would send their own children to a Catholic school compared to 28% of other male students and 36% of other female students. Finally, 59% of Catholic male students and 67% of Catholic female students agree that their parents made the correct decision in sending them to a Catholic school but this drops to 41% of other male students and 55% of other female students. Other examples have been highlighted during the analysis. As will be explored later, Catholic school educators need to be aware of the potential for such members of the school community to be alienated within it and to consider what steps might be taken to overcome this alienation.

Finally, the greatest statistically significant differences emerge in a comparison of Catholic students according to their levels of commitment to the Church. Almost without exception, those Catholic students, both male and female, who are no longer committed to the Church, indicate markedly lower levels of agreement towards key

aspects of Catholic education compared to their committed Catholic counterparts. For example, 73% of committed Catholic male students and 80% of committed Catholic female students would still want to attend a Catholic school if they had the choice but this drops to 38% for Catholic male students and 34% for Catholic female students who never attend Mass. Similarly, 81% of committed Catholic male students and 83% of committed Catholic female students agree that their parents made the correct decision in sending them to a Catholic school but this drops to 44% for lapsed Catholic male students and 43% for lapsed Catholic female students. Finally, 73% of committed Catholic male students and 78% of committed Catholic female students would send their own children to a Catholic school but this drops to 40% for lapsed Catholic male students and 32% for lapsed Catholic female students. As has been detailed in the preceding chapters, the pattern of increasing levels of agreement depending on the students' level of commitment to the Church, is repeated throughout the study. Given that only 20% of the students claim to attend Mass on a weekly basis, the indication is that a significant number of nominally Catholic students in Catholic secondary schools in Wales are, in fact, alienated by their experience.

Armed with these findings, Catholic school educators are in a far better position than they otherwise would have been to begin the task of examining what is happening in Catholic secondary schools in Wales and how they might best fulfil both the expectations of the Catholic Church regarding their schools and the religious and spiritual needs of the students attending them.

ii) The re-imagined Catholic school of the twenty-first century

Many commentators (Gallagher, 2004) have pointed out that church and parish allegiance, loyalty and commitment are less than they once were, often considerably so. In twenty-first century Wales, a significant number of nominally Catholic families do not pass on their religious traditions to their children. There is in the lives of many families a separation between the family and the Church. The Church recognises that where family support for the religious and spiritual development of their children is lacking, the school faces a difficult task in compensating for that deficiency.

However, what the re-imagined, authentic and sincere Catholic school can do is provide at least some opportunities for the Church to touch and influence the lives of such 'un-churched' families and students, whilst, at the same time, challenging and offering alternatives to the values and attitudes that may have caused that severance in the first place. In his Dimpleby lecture, Rowan Williams (2002), the Archbishop of Canterbury, spoke of the mission of church schools as one in which the Christian concept of life can be presented anew to students. This will enable them ultimately to make choices that are fully human and that enrich their lives and the lives of others. He encouraged them to 'give voice' to the Christian story with its inspiration and challenge of making fully human choices.

For those who have made a commitment to Jesus Christ, the task of the Catholic school is to nurture that faith through effective education that is catechesis, through a wide range of prayer and worship experiences and through creating opportunities to put that faith into practice.

For those who are Catholic but ‘un-churched, Catholic schools are in an irreplaceable position to offer such young people an alternative vision of life to the one that pervades the secularism of contemporary Welsh society. They can provide the space and time for students to ‘give voice’ to their challenge and yet meet the challenge of the ‘voice’ of the Christian story. As Pope John Paul II recognised in his exhortation to the Church in Europe (*Ecclesia in Europa*, 2003), Catholic schools are sometimes the sole means for the Church to present the Christian tradition to ‘those who are distant from it’.

I encourage the faithful involved in the field of primary and secondary education to persevere in their mission and to bring the light of Christ the Saviour to bear upon their educational, scientific and academic activities (para. 59).

It might be that some Catholic parents have not been faithful to the commitments they took on at the baptism of their child regarding his or her religious formation. However, although the school is a relatively secondary influence in the religious search of the young, for Catholic school educators the Catholic school must still remain faithful to the commitment the entire community also took on when that

child was baptised. For Catholic school educators, the Good News of Jesus Christ can only be offered as an invitation. The key is to recognise that it is, in the manner of Jesus himself, just that, an invitation, not an imposition.

An encounter with God is always a personal event, an answer that is by its nature, a person's free act in response to the gift of faith.

(SCCE, 2002, para. 51)

This is even more so the case with those students who have had no contact with Christianity. The Catholic Church is at pains to emphasise that Catholic school educators must always respect the particular faith tradition of every member of the school community. Evangelisation can never be coercion (SCCE, 1988, para. 6). On the other hand, a Catholic school cannot relinquish its own freedom to proclaim the Gospel and to offer a formation 'based on the values to be found in a Christian education' (SCCE, 1988, para. 6).

It is this balance that Catholic school educators recognise must be kept at all times. The Catholic school must serve both the Catholic community and the wider community. It must have a concern for all people, especially of course, the marginalized. There must also be a concern for the spiritual and moral development of every member of the school. This means relating spiritually to every student, whether they are Christian or not. They relate to them both from the standpoint of the Catholic faith, which the school must remain true to and from the standpoint of

the responsibility, which every school has, towards each of its students and to the wider world.

In practice, this might mean that the Catholic school has to provide opportunities for religious and spiritual growth that are not necessarily from within the Christian tradition. Such a school will acknowledge, preserve and promote the spiritual riches that characterise the great religious traditions, whilst at the same time, offering the vision proclaimed by Jesus Christ. When this happens the dissatisfaction of non-Catholic students towards their Catholic schooling, expressed through this research, might be addressed and rectified. The point is that some non-Catholic students appear to be alienated by the current provision. This is not only not good enough; it is also a rejection of what the Church itself has called for. Part of the re-imagining task, therefore, is to explore ways in which the right balance can be maintained.

The task of re-imagining the Catholic school for the twenty-first century cannot be the sole responsibility of isolated Catholic schools. Welsh diocesan and provincial authorities need to drive the project by reflecting upon the fundamental role and praxis of Catholic schools in Wales. Renewed diocesan vision statements for Catholic education need to be articulated, which take into account the sweeping social and ecclesiological changes of recent decades. Having established the vision, the task of the diocesan authorities is to ensure that it is being fulfilled in every school. ESTYN and diocesan inspection reports may provide some evidence of schools' attempts to establish a distinctive and inclusive ethos. However, more

regular and rigorous reviews, built upon the schools' own programmes of self-evaluation, are required for a more thorough exploration of the work of their schools. Such levels of diocesan support have financial and personnel implications for the dioceses. However, the contention of this thesis is that such resourcing is vital if Catholic schools in Wales are going to fulfil the vision of a re-imagined twenty-first century Catholic education system that meets the needs of every member of the school community.

iii) Religious education in the re-imagined Catholic school

Turning to the area of religious education, which occupies a significant sector of this study and which has become a battleground between traditionalists and progressives in recent decades within the Catholic Church, the research data indicate that non-practising Catholic students and non-Catholic students tend to record lower levels of satisfaction with curriculum religious education than their committed Catholic counterparts. Thus, not only is there a debate amongst Catholics regarding the provision and processes of religious education in Catholic schools in Wales, but there also appears to be significant levels of dissatisfaction amongst key sectors of the student population regarding that provision.

The debate and the dissatisfaction are probably closely linked. The debate is between those who want a return to a more propositional and knowledge based form

of Catholic religious education and those who believe that religious education should be more non-propositional and experiential. The dissatisfaction expressed by non-practicing Catholic and non-Catholic students may be a reflection of this tension.

From the counter-reformation onwards the predominant form of catechesis of the young was the learning of doctrine by memory. Faith was understood to be the result of the 'submission of the mind to the teaching of the Church' (Dulles, 1971, p 153). This form of catechesis assumed that the students had already made a commitment to following Jesus and that the home and parish, alongside the school, were also providing the prayer, liturgical and charitable activities necessary for growth in faith.

As described earlier, this homogeneity between the home and the parish can no longer be assumed and the student make-up of the Catholic school population is very different from what it once was. Alongside this, many theologians, and indeed Catholic Church documents, have drawn attention to the idea that faith development is far more dynamic and inter-personal than was once thought to be the case. Both of these factors have combined to place upon Catholic schools the responsibility of ensuring that evangelisation and catechesis are relevant and workable in meeting the particular needs of an extremely wide-range of student faith backgrounds. There has to be a 'double-fidelity' (Columb, 1950): fidelity to the Word of God but also fidelity to the people and their situation.

For those students who are committed members of the Catholic Church, a realistic understanding of revelation supports those who believe that Catholic religious education should be an experiential process of search, revelation and response. The advantage of such an approach is that it also fits more easily with the religious and spiritual needs of those students who are not.

The older, more traditional, understanding of catechesis was largely notional and abstract, 'over-essentialist and objective, exclusively of the past and static, impersonal and individualistic' (Amalorpavadass, 1971, p. 339). It was about the handing on of revealed doctrines. The emphasis in the Catholic school classroom was on what was to be communicated rather than on those to whom it was being communicated. The preferred tool for the teacher was the catechism, with its precise statements 'couched in the theological language of a past age, which are somehow considered immune from the normal limitations inherent in all human language expressed as it must be in cultural categories of a given place and time' (p. 339). The implication is that such an approach may have failed to ignite or sustain the flame of faith in young people and that it may have been a contributory factor in the lack of commitment to religious life by those who were taught with such methods.

With advances in theology and psychology, it is widely recognised that revelation is fundamentally about an interpersonal relationship between God and the individual.

The English Language Group of the 1971 International Congress on Catechetics (Warren, 1983, p. 72f) recognised that revelation does not occur when people learn

catechism answers but is the 'self-communication of God as Person to persons' (p. 72). Revelation, as evidenced by the praxis of Jesus, is an 'inter-personal relationship'. Thus, it is more than the 'communication of truths in formulas'. It occurs in the interplay between the searcher and the believing community. Furthermore, the focus is on the person who is being communicated – Christ – rather than on the knowledge of faith. What is revealed is not something, but somebody.

The emphasis then in current thinking regarding religious education in Catholic schools is that it is a process, which seeks to help people respond, freely and personally, to the invitation and challenge given by God. For Christians, this revelation and communication of God is complete in Jesus Christ, who is regarded as the source and purpose of human life. Faith is understood as the response of people to God's self-revelation in Christ. Therefore, religious education programmes in Catholic schools must begin with the questions and searching of people and with the interpretation of human life in the light of the self-revelation of Jesus. There is on the one hand the faith of the Church and on the other hand the unique personal journey of each person to and in faith. There is a delicate balance to be kept between being faithful to God and faithful to the person.

In Catholic schools, teaching of religion must help students to arrive at a personal position in religious matters that is consistent and respectful of the position of others, so contributing to their growth and to a more complete understanding of reality. (SCCE, 2002, para. 54)

It is here that the answer can be found regarding how Catholic religious educators can balance the needs of the Church to proclaim the Good News with the spiritual needs of the individual student, many of whom may not be members of the Catholic Church. When the approach in Catholic religious education was propositional and objectivist, 'truth' tended to be imposed from on high as a set of dogmas to be accepted. In this model of education 'truth' is a set of propositions about objects, education is a system for delivering the propositions to students and an 'educated' person is simply someone who can remember and repeat the propositions. The model is hierarchical and linear.

When the approach in Catholic religious education is subjectivist or person-centred, the emphasis shifts to the individual student's own journey. The focus is on the person not the object of knowledge. In this model there is a complex series of intercommunications, sharing ideas, exploring 'truth' in the 'company of friends'. Far from being linear, static and hierarchical, such an approach is circular, interactive and dynamic.

This has to be the response of Catholic school educators who want to include every member of the school community, including those who are not practising Catholics, in the Catholic school's educational enterprise. It is what will safeguard Catholic schools from the charges of both absolutism and relativism. Truth-telling and truth-knowing cannot be dictatorial nor anarchic. Instead, it is a 'complex and eternal dance of intimacy and distance, of speaking and listening, of knowing and not

knowing, that make collaborators and co-conspirators of the knowers and known' (Palmer, 1998, p. 106).

In this model, there is respect for the identity and integrity of both the teacher and the student. For those students open to hearing the message, the search, and revelation offered in Catholic schools will help them to lead better and more informed Christian lives. For others who may not want to commit themselves to the Christian way of life, they will, at least, be better informed about the way Christians understand the meaning and significance of human life in the light of faith. It might be that some of these will be encouraged to show a greater interest in the Christian faith and look more critically at their own views about life and its meaning.

The re-imagined Catholic school of the twenty-first century must, therefore, have an evangelistic focus rather than a catechetical focus, though catechesis will still take place when the dialogue is between believers. In this model, the evangelist is one 'who does not wait for people to come to him, he goes out to meet them; he moves towards them instead of being a tower of strength to which they have to come' (Cardinal Martini, 1983, p. 11). The challenge for the contemporary religious educator is thus to begin where people experience themselves to be and to walk the journey with them.

P A Liege (Nebreda, 1965, p. 46) coined the term 'pre-evangelisation' to indicate that contemporary educators of faith must begin by making contact with people in

their own social and cultural situations and come to understand their attitudes and questions from their perspective. Liege argued that the Gospel message was falling on deaf ears and he identified two sets of obstacles: first, what he called poor or bad disposition arising from apathy, boredom and prejudice; second, inhuman social and cultural conditions. It was not enough, he believed, simply to plant the seed of God's word. The soil in which it was to be planted had to be cared for and prepared. To do this teachers must begin with the lives of the students. Pre-evangelisation is then about preparing them so that the Kerygma has meaning in that particular milieu. An initial period of acclimatisation and preparation is needed to make sure the soil for the sowing of the seed is ready. The aims of pre-evangelisation are to arouse interest, prepare the ground for dialogue and bridge the gap between Kerygma, hope and a sense of God. It is a summoning to faith not a confirming of faith already held. When dialogue begins, there is a realisation that it may be with people who are 'shut in by cultural prejudices, sociological ties and psychological patterns' (Nebreda, 1965, p. 46). In this dialogue teachers take students where they are and how they are and awaken the possibility of a sense of God.

Thus, rather than imposing the message, there needs to be a meaningful dialogue. Catholic school educators would do well to remember that, no matter how distant students are from religious commitment, there will be some universal values that may be important to them, for example, respect for the dignity of each individual person, the importance of relationships built on freedom, trust and tolerance and a concern for the great issues of the world – the environment, international debt, and

so on. The *General Directory of Catechesis* (1997) refers to such values as ‘modern areopagi’ (para. 211), a reference to St Paul’s preaching on the hill in Athens, the Areopagus, when he looked for positive values in the culture of the Athenians. He eventually found it in the ‘unknown God’ (*Acts* 17:23f) of the Athenians and used that as a means of preparing the ground for the message he had to deliver. The *Directory* urges teachers to follow the example of St Paul by uncovering, purifying and developing the authentic values of young people today. The first task of the Catholic school educator, therefore, is towards a ministry of disposition, an ‘awakening of the hungers to which the truth may eventually be seen as an answer’ (M P Gallagher, 1997, p.112). In imitation of St Paul’s recognition of ‘signs of real hunger’ amongst the Athenians, Catholic school educators must be rooted in a ‘disposition of hope’ (M P Gallagher, 1997, p.112).

This perspective is one that pervades the vision established by the Catholic Church’s Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Its spirit was one of starting from the particular situation of the human race.

The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community of people united in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit in their pilgrimage towards the Father’s Kingdom, bearers of a message of salvation for all humanity. That is why they cherish a feeling of deep solidarity with the human race and its

history (*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, 1965, para. 1)

Thus, the Church and its educators must not stand aloof, apart from the human situation, 'defending Truth and dispensing Grace' (J Gallagher, 1998, p. 89) but must be universal sacraments, signs and instruments of union with God and unity among peoples. They are pilgrims and servants. With this re-imagined mentality towards sharing faith, the negativity indicated by many students involved in this research, regarding their religious education in Catholic schools, might be addressed.

Two images from the life of Jesus that provide illustrations of this approach, and that might be of some value for all those involved in Catholic religious education, are the Parable of the Sower, reported in Mark 4:1-9 (and parallels) and the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35).

In the Emmaus story, Luke describes an occasion when Jesus is said to have appeared to two disciples the day after it had been reported that Jesus had risen from the dead. From the perspective of contemporary religious education, it is significant that in the first part of the 'journey' we are told that Jesus came up to the two disciples, walked by their side, asked them what was worrying them and began to listen to what they had to say. In other words, before he explored the scriptures and provided some of the answers, Jesus the teacher meets and befriends them. He is aware that something is worrying them and seeks to share it with them. The first

thing he does is listen. This is the model then: to listen, accompany and share together along a common journey. When the scriptures are unfolded, Jesus uses them to address their misunderstandings and fears. He is faithful to the Word but also faithful to the people. As he opened up the riches of the scriptures and led them to the breaking and sharing of the bread, he did so as a companion along the road.

Michael Paul Gallagher (1990) summarises this model of catechesis from Emmaus thus. It is to:

- Walk genuinely with those who search;
- Listen with reverence to their stories;
- Be ready to offer a deeper vision through scripture of what they have experienced;
- Respect their freedom either to go further on the road of faith or to wait till they are ready;
- Let the Sacraments be the crown of a careful human journey of searching and honesty of dialogue;
- Fire them with a mission to return to others to share what they have discovered (pp. 63-65).

Contemporary Catholic religious educators in the re-imagined Catholic school of the twenty-first century will need, like Jesus, to walk with people at their own pace. He did not force the issue. He did not rush in with ready-made answers or condemnation. He was a travelling companion. The first answer he received from

the travellers was, in fact, rather curt and sharp, but, instead of reacting with aggression, Jesus calmly waits and then proceeds to explain what has happened by opening up the scriptures to them. Cardinal Martini (1983) finds that in this account Jesus establishes the perfect model for teaching:

[The travellers] do not say: Jesus spoke well, he explained it well, he was a good preacher, he set us on the right path . . . but they said: he kindled our hearts, he revealed himself as the friend who is able to liberate our embittered hearts, embittered because from our point of view, God's plans seemed totally unacceptable (p. 28).

Cardinal Martini also points out that the two disciples, in many ways can also represent those who are followers of Jesus but who may be dispirited, disillusioned and doubtful. They had heard the women's testimony and did not believe it. They had been with Jesus for some time, watching and listening. Yet at that point they are faced with a crisis. They were walking away from Jerusalem and arguing (the Greek word 'syzetein' means more than simply 'discussing'). The fulfilment of God's Kingdom did not proceed as they had expected. It appeared to have been a failure, despite what they had heard.

It is here that the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1-9) might also prove to be a comfort to Catholic school educators faced with the many challenges affecting Catholic schools today. In the Palestine of Jesus' time, the farmers did not plough and then plant seed as they do now; they scattered seed and *then* ploughed the land,

including the paths, the brambles and the rocky ground. What at first may seem like unpromising soil eventually becomes a rich harvest land. Almost certainly Jesus used the image as a means of encouraging his followers not to despair. Their task was to plant the seed; the harvest belongs to God. As Archbishop Oscar Romero (1979) recognised:

We accomplish in our lifetime only a fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us. No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection. No pastoral visit brings wholeness. No programme accomplishes the Church's mission. No set of goals and objectives include everything. This is what we are about: We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realising that. This enables us to do something and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders, ministers not Messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.

Conclusion

It appears from this research that practising Catholic students record significantly higher levels of satisfaction with Catholic education than other subgroups in the Catholic school. However, a re-imagined Catholic school of the twenty-first century is essential if the level of dissatisfaction expressed by the other students involved in this research is to be ameliorated. There has to be recognition, in all quarters of the Catholic Church, that Catholic schools, and the communities they serve, are wholly different to the Catholic schools, and communities, of previous generations. If Catholic schools do not take this re-imaginative leap, they will be in danger of failing to fulfil the very vision for which they were established. Catholic schools need to be pre-evangelistic, evangelistic and catechetical. Catholic school educators cannot impose or coerce faith. What can be offered in the re-imagined Catholic school rooted in the reality of twenty-first century Wales is an invitation; an invitation that is rooted in the reality of people's lives. When a Catholic school is inclusive, not exclusive or elitist; when it celebrates diversity, not uniformity; when it accompanies, rather than leads; when it does all this in the name of Jesus, it will be a truly catechetical and evangelistic community.

Let us therefore preserve our fervour of spirit. Let us preserve the delightful and comforting joy of evangelising, even when it is in tears that we must sow. May it mean for us, as it did for John the Baptist, for Peter and Paul, for the other apostles and for a multitude of splendid evangelisers all through the

Church's history, an interior enthusiasm that nobody and nothing can quench . . . And may the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish. Sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the Good News not from evangelisers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervour, who have first received the joy of Christ, and who are willing to risk their lives so that the kingdom may be proclaimed and the Church established in the midst of the world (Pope Paul VI, 1975, para. 80).

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**PAGE
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6 a) How often do you attend Church?

- Every week □ 5
 At least once a month □ 4
 Sometimes □ 3
 Once or twice a year □ 2
 Never □ 1

b) How often does your mother attend Church?

- Every week □ 5
 At least once a month □ 4
 Sometimes □ 3
 Once or twice a year □ 2
 Never □ 1

c) How often does your father attend Church?

- Every week □ 5
 At least once a month □ 4
 Sometimes □ 3
 Once or twice a year □ 2
 Never □ 1

7. Which type of Primary School did you attend?

- Catholic Primary School □ 1
 Church in Wales Primary School □ 2
 County Primary School □ 3

8. What do you hope to do at the end of Year 11?

- Find a full time job □ 1
 Find a full time job with further training □ 2
 Study a vocational course at a local school or college □ 3
 Study A Levels at a local school or college □ 4

9. How interested are your parents in your progress at school?

- Very much □ 4
 A little bit □ 3
 Not sure □ 2
 Not at all □ 1

Section 2

What a Catholic school should be like

This section refers to the goals which you think Catholic schools should have. They are based on what the Catholic Church believes its schools should be like.

Please tick the box that shows what you believe.

AS means Agree Strongly

A means Agree

NC means Not Certain

D means Disagree

DS means Disagree Strongly

	AS	A	NC	D	DS
<u>Catholic Schools</u>					
1. The Catholic Church should provide separate schools for Catholic children.					
2. As far as possible, Catholic schools should only admit Catholic students.					
3. All students in a Catholic school should share Catholic moral and religious values.					
4. The County Council should provide free transport for students to go to Catholic schools.					
5. Catholic schools should help students develop decision-making skills for moral issues.					
6. Catholic schools should provide regular opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession).					
7. Mass should be celebrated in Catholic schools at least once a week.					
8. Catholic schools should place importance on celebrating the Mass, the sacraments and prayer.					
9. The Catholic school's <u>main</u> aim should be to help students lead a					

good Christian life.					
10. The Catholic school's <u>main</u> aim should be to help students pass exams.					
11. Catholic schools should be noted for being caring Christian communities.					
12. Catholic schools should help students think for themselves, even if this means questioning Catholic beliefs.					
13. Catholic schools should teach students to be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions.					
14. Catholic schools should spend a lot of time and effort on charity work.					
15. Catholic schools should provide at least one retreat a year for every student.					
16. Local priests should visit Catholic schools as often as possible.					
17. In Catholic schools rules should be based on the command of Jesus to love others.					
18. In Catholic schools punishments should be fair.					
19. In Catholic schools, if you have done wrong but are sorry, you should be forgiven.					
Religious Education					
1. Religious Education should be taught in the parish community, not in a school.					
2. In a Catholic school, only the Catholic Faith should be taught in Religious Education.					
3. The main aim of Religious Education in a Catholic school should be to help students develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ.					
4. Religious Education lessons in					

Catholic schools should include the study of other religions.					
5. Religious Education should be the most important subject in a Catholic School.					
6. Every subject in a Catholic school should provide some Religious Education.					
Teachers					
1. As far as possible, only Catholic teachers should be employed in a Catholic school.					
2. Teachers in a Catholic school should set a good example of what it means to be a Christian.					
3. Teachers in Catholic schools should have a sense of mission to help children.					
4. All teachers in a Catholic school should attend school Masses.					
5. All teachers in a Catholic school should support Catholic values and beliefs.					
Parents/Parish					
1. Catholic parents should send their children to Catholic schools.					
2. Catholic schools should be closely linked to local parishes.					
3. Catholic schools should help prepare students to take an active part in their parish community.					

Go to section 3

Section 3

What my Catholic School is like

This section is about what your school is actually like.

Please tick the box that shows what you think.

	AS	A	NC	D	DS
My School					
1. Most of the students in my school are Catholic.					
2. In my school the students share Catholic moral and religious values.					
3. In my school I am helped to develop decision-making skills for moral issues.					
4. Regular opportunities are provided in my school to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession).					
5. Mass is celebrated in my school at least once a week.					
6. I am helped to lead a good Christian life.					
7. My school is noted for being a caring Christian community.					
8. In my school I am helped to think for myself even when that means questioning Catholic beliefs.					
9. In my school I am taught to be guided by the teaching of the Church when making moral decisions.					
10. A lot of time and effort is spent in my school on charity work.					
11. My school provides at least one retreat a year for every student.					
12. In my school local priests visit regularly.					
13. In my school rules are based on the command of Jesus to love others.					
14. In my school most students keep to the rules.					
15. In my school punishments are					

fair.					
16. In my school if you have done wrong but are sorry, you are forgiven.					
17. In my school, I feel I am valued.					
18. If I had the choice I would still want to attend a Catholic school.					
19. I would want to send my own children to a Catholic school.					
20. My Catholic school has helped me to understand the real meaning of life.					
21. I am happy to be a student in my school.					
Religious Education					
1. In Religious Education we are mainly taught about the Catholic Church.					
2. Religious Education in my school has helped me to develop a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ.					
3. We study other religions in Religious Education.					
4. Religious Education is the most important subject in my school.					
5. Religion is taught in subjects other than Religious Education in my school.					
6. I enjoy Religious Education.					
7. Religious Education is more important to me than any other subject I study in school.					
8. Religious Education has helped me to deal with important problems in life.					
9. If attendance at Religious Education lessons was voluntary, I would still want to attend them.					
Teachers					
1. As far as possible, only Catholic teachers teach in my school.					
2. The teachers in my school set a good example of what it means to be					

a Christian.					
3. The teachers in my school are keen to help me.					
4. All teachers in my school attend school Masses.					
5. The teachers in my school support Catholic values and beliefs.					
Parents/Parish					
1. My parents made the correct decision by sending me to a Catholic school.					
2. My school is closely linked to the local parishes.					
3. In my school I am helped to take an active part in the local Church.					

Section 4

1. Read these three sections carefully, then choose **one** and answer the question.

a) I believe in God.

Why? _____

b) I do not believe in God.

Why? _____

c) I am not sure about God.

Why? _____

2. Read these three sections carefully, then choose **one** and answer the question.

a) I have made a definite commitment to following Jesus Christ.

Why? _____

b) I have decided not to follow Jesus Christ.

Why? _____

c) I am not sure about Jesus Christ.

Why? _____

3. Read these two sections carefully, then choose **one** and answer the question.

a) I go to a place of worship on a Sunday.

Why? _____

b) I do not go to a place of worship on a Sunday.

Why? _____
