The Baptismal Catechumenate as a Source for Youth Ministry in a Secular Age

by

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Abstract

Both practitioners and other ecclesial leaders have increasingly framed Australian Catholic youth ministry as an exercise in evangelisation since the 1980s. This understanding of youth ministry has largely been driven by the decline in belief and practice among adolescents. Despite this evangelical goal, however, youth ministry praxis has suffered from an inadequate engagement with the theology of evangelisation that has developed since the Second Vatican Council, and from a poor understanding of the phenomenon of ‘secularism’.

As a practical theological project, this thesis seeks to remedy this situation by firstly exploring the relationship between evangelisation and the concept of secularism in Australian youth ministry to date. The thesis then investigates the present sociocultural context for youth ministry by examining several sociological studies of young Australians’ belief and practice through the lens of Charles Taylor’s depiction of secularity, or the conditions of belief which shape young people’s decisions concerning their faith commitments. The thesis then identifies a process of evangelisation that was first articulated at Vatican II and then reiterated in subsequent magisterial statements. This process is expressed paradigmatically in the baptismal catechumenate, or the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), and is proposed as a principal theological resource for youth ministry. The thesis concludes by developing a model for youth ministry praxis that takes its inspiration from the baptismal catechumenate.

The results of this examination of the baptismal catechumenate’s import for youth ministry are greater clarity concerning youth ministry’s evangelical goal, a more accurate
articulation of how this may be achieved via a process modelled upon the RCIA, and the recognition that the realization of this evangelical goal is also dependent upon a richer understanding of the sociocultural context that Taylor captures in his account of our secular age.
Declaration of Originality

I hereby certify that this thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the reward of any other degree or diploma in any university or academic institution. I affirm that to the best of my knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except that which is appropriately referenced in the text and footnotes of the thesis.

Christopher Paul Ryan MGL

Candidate

26 October 2018

Publications During Candidature

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Note

I have used Australian English spelling throughout the thesis, except where an original quotation follows American spelling.

In keeping with the University of Divinity policy, the notes, references and bibliography in this thesis follow the modified Chicago Style commonly known as Turabian as it is set out in the 9th edition of *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 
“Our principal need is for a reconstruction of the existential context of catechumenal training in the faith as the source of a common experience of the Spirit.”

Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*.

“The creation ... of a true *pastoral* theology will quickly discover that its central concern has to do with reflecting anew on conversion as the genesis of the Church.”

Aidan Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism*

“But we, little fishes, after the example of our ΙΧΘΥΣ Jesus Christ, are born in water, nor have we safety in any other way than by permanently abiding in water.”

Tertullian, *On Baptism*
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List of Abbreviations

ACTS Australian Catholic Truth Society
AG Vatican Council II, Ad Gentes (Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity)
ANDYMC Australian Network of Diocesan Youth Ministry Coordinators
ANSCA Australian National Secretariat for Catholic Action
AS Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Anointed and Sent (National Vision Statement for Australian Catholic Youth Ministry)
ASA A Secular Age by Charles Taylor
CARA Centre for Applied Research in the Apostolate
CCC Catechism of the Catholic Church
CCD Confraternity of Christian Doctrine
CELAM Conferencia Episcopal de Latin America (Episcopal Conference of Latin American and Caribbean bishops
ChrL Pope John Paul II, Christifideles Laici (apostolic exhortation)
CT Pope John Paul II, Catechesi Tradendae (apostolic exhortation)
CWSG Catholic Women’s Social Guild
CWS Closed World Structure (Charles Taylor)
DV Vatican Council II, Dei Verbum (Constitution on Divine Revelation)
EG Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium (apostolic exhortation)
EN Pope Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi (apostolic exhortation)
EV Pope John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae (encyclical letter)
GDC Congregation for the Clergy, General Directory for Catechesis
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GS</th>
<th>Vatican Council II, <em>Gaudium et Spes</em> (<em>Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World</em>)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HSTP</td>
<td>High School Theology Programs</td>
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<td>JOC</td>
<td>Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne (Young Christian Workers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LG</td>
<td>Vatican Council II, <em>Lumen Gentium</em> (<em>Dogmatic Constitution on the Church</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MTD</td>
<td>Moralistic Therapeutic Deism</td>
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<td>NAB</td>
<td>Pope Pius XI, <em>Non Abbiamo Bisogno</em> (encyclical letter)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCGM</td>
<td>National Catholic Girls Movement</td>
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<td>NFCYM</td>
<td>National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry</td>
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<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>New Testament</td>
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<td>OT</td>
<td>Old Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>QA</td>
<td>Pope Pius XI, <em>Quadragesimo Anno</em> (encyclical)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RM</td>
<td>Pope John Paul II, <em>Redemptoris Missio</em> (encyclical letter)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RCIA</td>
<td>Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCa</td>
<td>Pope Benedict XVI, <em>Sacramentum Caritatis</em> (apostolic exhortation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Vatican Council II, <em>Sacrosanctum Concilium</em> (<em>Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>WYD</td>
<td>World Youth Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>WYD08</td>
<td>World Youth Day 2008 (held in Sydney, Australia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>YCS</td>
<td>Young Christian Students</td>
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<td>YCW</td>
<td>Young Christian Workers</td>
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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Research Questions

1.1.1 "We Need to do Something for the Youth": The Challenge of Youth Evangelisation

Every time a Catholic parish council in Australia enunciates its priorities for the future, someone inevitably expresses that ‘we need to do something for the youth’. This is born from the knowledge that the overwhelming majority of the children and grandchildren of those present at Mass each week do not attend Sunday Eucharist. Sadness that these young people do not practise their faith appears to be an important driver for faith communities to do more to engage young people today. This is often coupled with an anxiety for the Church’s future: the present experience of numerical decline in belief and practice amongst the young seems likely to continue, and this trend is believed to adversely affect the Church and its influence within Australian society. The discussion at such council meetings frequently flounders, however, when the conversation moves to examine what should be done. While this is partly attributable to the inability (and at times unwillingness) to commit significant resources to any youth initiative, it is also due to a lack of consensus about what young people’s faith development requires.

Neither the motivations of sadness and anxiety about young people’s non-practice of faith, nor the desire that solutions be found to address this are new. The Church in Australia’s commitment to Catholic education, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD), and early age-specific ministries such as the Young Christian Workers (YCW) emerged as a response to the ‘problem’ of young people’s non-attendance at Church and the moral laxity that was perceived to accompany this. These were the dominant expressions of the
Church’s ‘youth apostolate’ prior to the Second Vatican Council. In 1981 Antioch, the first program in Australia to be called a ‘youth ministry’, was imported from the United States. Antioch responded to the phenomenon of disaffected or non-practising young Catholics and it intentionally conceived of its approach to young people as an exercise in evangelisation. From Antioch’s inception onwards, both practitioners and other Church leaders have increasingly conceived youth ministry in evangelical terms. New ecclesial communities have typically described their ministry with young people in this manner, while Australia’s participation in the international World Youth Days (especially the 2008 World Youth Day held in Sydney) has also been framed as a large-scale attempt to evangelise young people. This evangelical conception of youth ministry has most recently found official approbation in Anointed and Sent, the “national vision statement” for Australian Catholic youth ministry promulgated by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. Anointed’s introduction states that youth ministry is “increasingly focused upon the ‘new evangelisation’ of those young people who are disconnected from the life of the Church, and upon ongoing formation and mission for those who are or may become more connected.”¹ A broad consensus has emerged that conceives of youth ministry in Australia principally as an exercise in evangelisation, rather than the previous understanding that ministry to youth was predominantly an instance of catechesis, which was popularly understood to be Catholic children’s education in faith.

This consensus concerning youth ministry’s evangelical nature has remained largely at a rhetorical level. Little academic research has been conducted concerning Catholic youth ministry in Australia. A large body of research has originated from the domain of Catholic

education, and while some of this is pertinent to the theology and practice of youth ministry, its focus remains the mission of Catholic schools. For example, Therese and Jim D’Orsa have examined religious education and leadership through the lens of a theology of mission, but the arena of practice they are thinking of remains the school rather than the parish or other faith communities. Similarly, Richard Rymarz has examined Pope John Paul II’s concept of the new evangelisation, but his primary concern is its relevance for Catholic schools. The chief limitation of this focus is that it locates faith formation in the Catholic school, rather than within the faith community.

The other principal focus for Australian research concerning Catholic youth ministry to date has been young people’s participation in the international World Youth Days (WYD). This research will be discussed further in Chapter Two, but at this point it is sufficient to note that this research has been predominantly sociological rather than theological in nature, and so while the research has examined the WYDs’ capacity to evangelise young people, it has not extensively engaged with theologies of evangelisation.

American scholars first began talking about youth ministry as an exercise in evangelisation in the wake of Pope Paul VI’s 1975 document, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN). In 1977 Michael Warren wrote an influential essay entitled “Evangelisation of Youth”. Basing his essay on EN and the work of Alfonso Nebreda, a proponent of the kerygmatic approach to catechesis championed by Joseph Jungmann and Johannes Hofinger, Warren distinguished between evangelisation and catechesis, arguing that the former must precede

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the latter, and that both were dependent upon a faith community’s communal witness. A year prior to Warren’s article, the US Catholic Bishops Conference released a national statement entitled *A Vision of Youth Ministry*. This document also distinguished between evangelisation and catechesis, but it retained a much heavier emphasis upon catechesis. This reflected the perception that young American Catholics had received the faith from their families, and so needed their faith to be formed rather than hear the initial proclamation of the Gospel. In 1990, the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM) sought to address this imbalance with the publication of *Called to be Witnesses and Storytellers: The Challenge of Catholic Youth Evangelisation*. The NFCYM published a new vision statement called *Renewing the Vision* in 1997. While *Renewing* examined evangelisation more extensively than *A Vision* had done, it did not substantially engage with *Redemptoris Missio*, John Paul II’s 1990 encyclical on mission.

So despite youth ministry’s increasingly evangelical orientation, it has not sufficiently benefitted from an extensive interaction with the theology of evangelisation that has developed since the Second Vatican Council. As a consequence, the evangelisation of young people has at times been driven by pragmatic concerns (such as identifying strategies to retain young people in the Church), been without a strong theological foundation (evidenced by a piecemeal engagement with the Church’s understanding of evangelisation), and been undertaken with minimal resources. While the decline in belief and practice among young Catholics since the 1960s is due to causes other than ineffective ministerial

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practice alone, a more robust engagement with the church’s theology of evangelisation is one response lying within the Church’s ambit that could inform the practice of youth ministry and so contribute to better outcomes such as young people’s commitment to Christ and their participation in the Church’s life and mission. In the light of this, the principal issue this thesis attempts to address is: How might Australian youth ministry be configured, both theologically and in practice, to more effectively evangelise young people?

To answer this question, this thesis seeks to understand better the nature and task of evangelisation for youth ministry by closely examining the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA). This might seem surprising. The liturgical process by which non-baptised adults enter the Catholic Church may appear to possess little relevance to youth ministry, given that youth ministry has largely been focused upon baptised adolescents to date, and perhaps also because young people often express an aversion to liturgy as they frequently experience it. However, a process of evangelisation is embedded within the RCIA that may be applied fruitfully to ministry with other groups of people and, as I shall argue, particularly with youth. As a consequence, this thesis contends that the theology and practice of youth ministry should be grounded in the missiological vision of the Second Vatican Council as it finds concrete expression in the RCIA. This is because the RCIA encapsulates a process of evangelisation, catechesis and sacramental initiation that is indispensable for inculcating Christian faith, and thus possesses ongoing significance for the life of discipleship.

Therefore, the first research question this thesis addresses is:

1) *Why* should the RCIA be considered a source for the theology and practice of youth ministry?

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7 I will use the English edition of the RCIA in this thesis: The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (International Committee on English in the Liturgy, 1985).
To answer this question, this thesis will examine the RCIA within the context of the Second Vatican Council’s teaching on missionary activity. It will also examine the major papal statements on mission since the council, as these documents provide the rationale for applying the RCIA to people other than unbaptised adults, thus securing the RCIA’s relevance for youth ministry.

1.1.2 The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults as Source and Resource for Youth Ministry

The nature and content of the RCIA will be greatly elaborated upon in the thesis, but at this point an introduction to its principal features will be helpful. The Second Vatican Council called for the restoration of the baptismal catechumenate for adults, which the council fathers understood to be part of the practice of the early church but which had fallen into disuse as infant baptism replaced adult initiation in Christendom. After a period of development and experimentation, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults was promulgated in 1972.

The RCIA intends that those who embark upon it will undergo a process that culminates in the participants’ full acceptance of the Catholic faith. To achieve this outcome, the RCIA is structured as a gradated series of stages or “periods” that correspond to intensifying levels of commitment, and which culminate in sacramental initiation. Three ritual steps mark the transition from one period to another. The RCIA thus consists of:

1) the Period of Evangelisation and Pre-catechumenate;
   
   Step 1: Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens;

2) the Period of the Catechumenate;
   
   Step 2: Election or Enrolment of Names;
3) the Period of Purification and Enlightenment;

Step 3: Celebration of Sacraments of Initiation; and

4) the Period of Post-baptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy (RCIA 6-7).

The first period is called the pre-catechumenate, which consists of “inquiry” on the part of the candidates and of “evangelisation” by the Church. The expectation is that over the course of the pre-catechumenate someone moves from no or minimal interest in the Christian faith to the point where they have heard the Gospel and experienced an initial conversion to Christ (RCIA 36-38).

The rite of acceptance into the catechumenate is the first ritual step in the journey and consists of a formal “acceptance of the Gospel” and the candidates’ admission as catechumens (RCIA 41).

The rite of acceptance marks the beginning of the RCIA’s second stage or “period”. This is the catechumenate proper. The catechumens are expected to participate in the communal life, liturgical prayer and mission of the faith community. In addition to this they receive catechetical instruction and undergo various minor rites such as exorcisms, blessings, and anointing with the oil of catechumens. This period is of “indeterminate length” and its overarching purpose is to deepen the catechumens’ initial conversion (RCIA 75-80).

The transition from the catechumenate to the final period of preparation prior to baptism is marked by a second ritual step, which is called the Rite of Election or Enrolment of Names. Through this ritual the candidates become the “elect”, chosen by God and the Church for baptism (RCIA 105).

The third stage in the RCIA is the period of purification and enlightenment which usually coincides with Lent. It is a final phase of intense spiritual preparation prior to baptism. As its
name indicates, it is intended to be a time of repentance or purification and a time of enlightenment leading to a deeper knowledge of Christ the Saviour (RCIA 126).

The final liturgical step is the celebration of the sacraments of initiation during the Easter vigil. The principal rites are the celebration of baptism, the sacrament of confirmation, and the neophytes’ participation in the liturgy of the Eucharist at which they receive Holy Communion for the first time (RCIA 198).

The period of post-baptismal catechesis coincides with the Easter season and its focus is upon the neophytes’ deeper appropriation of the sacraments they have received and their integration into the broader faith community. Figure 1 presents the primary features of the RCIA’s four periods and three ritual steps:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-catechumenate Or Evangelisation</th>
<th>Catechumenate</th>
<th>Purification and Enlightenment</th>
<th>Mystagogical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inquirer</td>
<td>Catechumen</td>
<td>Rite of Election</td>
<td>Neophytes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Witness, - Dialogue, - Presence in charity</td>
<td>- Training or apprenticeship in Christian life</td>
<td>- Intense spiritual preparation for initiation - prayer</td>
<td>- Unpacking ‘mysteries’ (sacraments just received)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Initial proclamation of the Gospel</td>
<td>Share in community’s - communal life, - prayer and - mission</td>
<td>- Deeper knowledge of Christ the Saviour</td>
<td>- Full integration into faith community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Response of faith and conversion</td>
<td>- Catechesis</td>
<td>Rites: Celebrations of Word, minor exorcisms, blessings</td>
<td>- Live life of discipleship, communion and mission</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: The RCIA

1.1.3 The Present Sociocultural Context: Towards a Richer Depiction of Secularity

The proposal that youth ministry be configured in the light of the RCIA needs to be examined in relation to the sociocultural context in which such ministry takes place. Thus the second question this thesis addresses is:
2) *What* are the pertinent features of the sociocultural context in which youth ministry takes place in a late modern society such as Australia?

Most youth ministry scholarship would typically have recourse to sociological research for this, and this thesis draws upon several sociological studies of young Australians’ belief and practice to answer this question. I have also sought to understand better the sociocultural context through recourse to Charles Taylor’s depiction of secularity in *A Secular Age (ASA)*. An important reason for this is methodological: a Catholic practical theology will draw upon philosophical sources that correct the ostensive neutrality claimed by the social sciences, but which cannot actually be substantiated (especially in relation to religion, as we shall see). This will be discussed at greater length in the methodology section below. Moreover, Taylor’s analysis of secularity provides a more penetrating insight into the cultural forces that shape and underpin young Australians’ decisions concerning what they do or do not believe than sociological accounts or popular understandings of secularism within the Church. Taylor makes a threefold distinction between the ways in which the term ‘secular’ or its cognates are commonly employed today:

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9 The significance of Taylor’s analysis is evident from a large and ever-expanding body of secondary literature that engages with Taylor’s work. While specific elements of a work of such scope have understandably been challenged, there has not been a successful critique of ASA as a whole. Eminent sociologists have endorsed the book, such as Craig Calhoun, who wrote that *A Secular Age* is the “single most important resource for trying to develop a better understanding of secularisation.” Craig J. Calhoun, “Review of *A Secular Age*,” *European Journal of Sociology* 69, no. 3 (2008): 455. Jose Casanova stated that it “offers the best analytical, phenomenological and genealogical account of our modern secular condition”. Jose Casanova, "A Secular Age: Dawn or Twilight?,” in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, ed. Michael Warner et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 265.


The most prominent youth ministry theologian to engage with Taylor to date is Andrew Root, who tells his students that *A Secular Age* is the first philosophical book written in this century that will be read in the
1) As the removal of religion from the public sphere;

2) As the decline in Christian belief and practice in Western societies from the nineteenth century to the present, and

3) As the shift in the conditions of belief that has taken place over the past five hundred years or so.

Concerning this third sense, Taylor writes, “The shift to secularity in this sense consists, among other things, of a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace.” It is secularity in this third sense which forms the major focus of ASA, and which will greatly inform this examination of the sociocultural context in which Australian youth ministry takes place.

It is not possible in the present work to examine every element of Taylor’s argument in ASA, or even all of its major threads. This limitation presents several difficulties, for Taylor insists that a fuller narrative of secularisation must be given than the “subtraction stories” that have predominated to date. While he acknowledges that conveying a truly comprehensive story is impossible, he maintains that a “diachronic account is [still] next. His first substantial engagement with ASA is Faith Formation in a Secular Age: Responding to the Church’s Obsession with Youthfulness (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017). For other theological engagements with Taylor by youth ministry scholars, see Jason Lief, Poetic Youth Ministry: Learning to Love People by Letting Them Go (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015); Robert Joustra and Alissa Wilkinson, How to Survive the Zombie Apocalypse: Zombies, Cylons, Faith and Politics at the End of the World (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016).

Australian theologian James McEvoy has noted that one of Taylor’s great strengths is his sympathetic appraisal of both contemporary belief and unbelief. See James McEvoy, Leaving Christendom for Good: Church-World Dialogue in a Secular Age (Lanham: Lexington, 2014), 4. In addition to the pervasive acuity of Taylor’s analysis, it is this aspect of Taylor’s approach that most commends it to my purpose of trying to understand better the positions young Australians can and do take regarding faith and spirituality in the twenty-first century.

For a full bibliography of Taylor and the secondary literature see the website formerly maintained by Ruth Abbey and now by Brad Thames of the University of Notre Dame: https://www3.nd.edu/~rabbey1/ (accessed June 6, 2018).

Finally, a further marker of the significance of ASA is that Taylor has been the recipient of the Templeton Prize and the inaugural Berggruen Prize.

indispensable.” Notwithstanding this, for the purposes of this thesis I have chosen to focus upon parts IV and V of ASA. Part IV gathers the principal threads of the historical narrative Taylor has developed in Parts I-III in order for Taylor to challenge “mainstream secularisation theory”, which he finds less than satisfactory. Taylor then shows how religion has been displaced rather than eliminated from late modern societies such as Australia. He demonstrates that institutional expressions of faith are not simply giving way to “exclusive humanism” (Taylor’s term for a stance that rejects any form of transcendence), but now sit alongside manifestations of spirituality that seemingly do not need an institutional structure to sustain them. For Taylor, the principal driver of this change in the location of religion has been a powerful, society-wide, but frequently unarticulated moral value that he calls the ideal of authenticity. This ideal is indebted to expressive individualism, which asserts that every individual has his or her own way in which to fully realize his or her humanity. Taylor argues that expressive individualism became a mass phenomenon in the 1960s and 70s, and so describes the period since then as the Age of Authenticity. The ideal of authenticity possesses significant ramifications in relation to an individual’s religious commitments. It firstly militates against institutional expressions of religion, as they appear to be imposing belief in a way that runs counter to the ideal of authenticity’s commitment to the individual’s right to autonomously pursue what it means to be truly human for him or herself. Secondly, as religious or spiritual practice must both be discovered for oneself and personally speak to one, the fundamental shape of spirituality in the Age of Authenticity becomes that of a personal quest.

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11 Taylor, ASA, 29.
12 Taylor, ASA, 435ff.
13 Taylor, ASA, 475.
14 Taylor, ASA, 508.
Taylor argues that the ideal of authenticity does not completely nullify institutional expressions of religious faith, because some people’s personal quest will lead them to such a faith commitment. Through his concept of “the immanent frame”, Taylor also shows that although we now all possess a worldview that does not have recourse to the transcendent to explain the origin and nature of the world, this does not exclude the possibility of faith in God per se. Taylor does, however, contend that several powerful forces within our culture skew people towards a “closed take” on the immanent frame. That is, these factors push people towards a stance that rules out the possibility of transcendence. Taylor refers to these as “Closed World Structures (CWS)”, which chiefly consist of the premises of “modern epistemology”, and several “death of God” narratives that equate religious belief with superstition. These CWS’s assert that modernity’s confidence in scientific explanations of human origins and the universe’s beginning have superseded religious faith. It is these CWS’s, and not the existence of the immanent frame itself that push people away from traditional Christian belief, although their destination is not necessarily a resolute atheism.

The thesis will have recourse to these and other central themes of Taylor’s in order to arrive at a more accurate understanding of the secular milieu in which young people express their faith, sense of spirituality and moral commitments, in the belief that a better understanding of this context will shape the nature and practice of youth ministry in decisive ways.

1.1.4 Youth Ministry in a Secular Age

For the evangelisation of young people through the application of the RCIA to youth ministry within the sociocultural context articulated by Taylor to be fruitful, the results of

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15 Taylor, ASA, 540.
16 Taylor, ASA, 475.
the first two research questions need to be brought into dialogue with each other. This will be done by firstly transposing the principles, structure and process of the RCIA into the key of ministry with young people, and then by exploring what this ministry might look like in the Age of Authenticity and against the backdrop of the immanent frame. As a consequence, the thesis’ final research question is:

3) What ought the theology and practice of a youth ministry in contemporary Australia (and by extension other late modern societies) that is informed by the RCIA look like?

This question will be answered in the final three chapters of the thesis, which will examine the theological foundations of youth ministry and a stage-based approach to youth ministry that takes into consideration the way in which the Age of Authenticity and the immanent frame affect the evangelisation and faith formation of young people today.

1.2 Youth Ministry Scholarship’s Engagement with the Baptismal Catechumenate

To date, few youth ministry scholars have explored the potential significance of the RCIA for youth ministry. An initial engagement with the RCIA took place in 1980, when the Youth Section of the US Catholic Bishops’ Conference sponsored a national symposium called Hope for the Decade. Two of the symposium’s research papers examined the newly promulgated RCIA. Fr James Dunning addressed the topic of significant trends and issues in ministry by referring extensively to the RCIA, which he believed possessed “immense implications” for the renewal of parishes and the formation of parishioners for ministry. However, he did not explicitly apply the RCIA’s structure and processes to youth ministry, although

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participants were asked to consider the implications of the RCIA for youth ministry after Dunning’s presentation.¹⁸

In the second paper John Roberto proposed a “developmental model of youth catechesis” that was explicitly based upon the RCIA. Roberto articulated a four-stage process that corresponded to the RCIA’s four periods. These stages were: 1) Evangelisation; 2) Catechesis; 3) Spiritual development, and 4) Ministry/service. Roberto overlaid these four stages with three of John Westerhoff’s “styles of faith” and the developmental-stage theories of Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, Erik Erikson and James Fowler.¹⁹

Roberto also referred to the “youth ministry process chart” developed by Don Kimball.²⁰ In this chart, Kimball depicted a young person’s progression through different stages of youth ministry. Roberto believed that Kimball had relied upon the RCIA as the basis of his model, explaining that his own model was inspired by Kimball’s application of the RCIA to youth ministry.²¹ Kimball’s process resembles the graded stages of the RCIA in many respects, but his key elements do not exactly align with the RCIA’s four periods. It seems more likely that Kimball’s process owed more to the methodology of Young Life, the Protestant parachurch youth organisation founded by Jim Rayburn in 1940, than to the RCIA.²²

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¹⁸ Dunning, “’Ministries’,” 68. The participants’ answers are not recorded.
²⁰ See Roberto, "Direction," 87.
²¹ Roberto, "Direction," 91.
²² Kimball had experienced Young Life’s ministerial method, which proved influential in Catholic circles. See Jeffrey Johnson’s examination of the relevance of Young Life’s approach for Catholic youth ministers: "Young Life Ministry: Room for Catholic Lay Ministers " in Readings and Resources in Youth Ministry (Winona, MN: St Mary’s Press, 1987), 180-91.
Kimball’s process came to be known as the “wedge model”, because the diagram he used to describe it resembled a wedge. Thomas Zanzig modified Kimball’s process at around the same time. Zanzig’s version of the wedge model possessed five stages:

1) “Relational ministry”, incorporating a “ministry of welcome”;
2) An evangelisation stage focused upon an experience of community and the proclamation of the Gospel;
3) A “moment of recognition”, Zanzig’s preferred term for an experience of conversion;
4) A period of “systematic catechesis”, in which the Gospel was explained;
5) Engagement in “service” or action for social justice;
6) The formation of a core group of young people who engage in peer ministry to others and become active members of the wider faith community.

The Zanzig version of the wedge bears a closer resemblance to the RCIA than Kimball’s, although Zanzig did not initially attribute his model to the RCIA either. What was significant about both Kimball and Zanzig’s versions of the wedge model was that it recognised the need for young baptised Catholics to undergo a process of evangelisation and catechesis that is akin to the RCIA’s first two periods, even though those young people had already received the sacraments as infants and children.

Zanzig subsequently developed Sharing, a program designed for parish-based religious education of high school students. In the Sharing manual Zanzig stated that “the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is the principal model [of catechesis]; to be pursued in many contexts - parish, adult groups, family, young adults, youth ministry, Catholic schools, public

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school children, the handicapped.” Zanzig reproduced his wedge model in the manual, but then discussed Roberto’s paper from *Hope for the Decade* in order to develop a framework for “adolescent religious education”. He associated the significance of the RCIA with confirmation, and thus with youth “catechesis” and the CCD framework, rather than with the emerging expressions of “youth ministry”. The wedge model was aligned with these new initiatives instead.

A fresh opportunity for the RCIA’s import for youth ministry to be considered came with the promulgation of the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) in 1997. The pertinent principle from the GDC was that all catechesis should be modelled upon the baptismal catechumenate (GDC 90). The GDC was published only months after *Renewing the Vision* was released, and so the GDC’s insights into the process of evangelisation and catechesis, including the significance of the RCIA, were not incorporated into the new charter document for Catholic youth ministry in the USA. Subsequent youth ministry scholarship has been reliant upon *Renewing*, which has meant that the potential of the RCIA to contribute to youth ministry’s self-understanding and practice has gone largely unrecognised.

In 2002, Marilyn Ellert devoted a short chapter to youth ministry in a book that explored the implications of paragraph 90 of the GDC for different expressions of catechesis. Ellert rejected the idea that “youth programs should take on the exact image of a baptismal

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27 Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (Strathfield, NSW: St Pauls, 1997).
28 For US youth ministry’s dependence upon *Renewing*, see Robert Rice, “Revising the Vision” (PhD diss, Liverpool Hope University, 2016).
catechumenal model.” As a consequence, her reflections are only loosely connected to the RCIA’s structure and content. Although the GDC rejects the idea of “slavish adherence” to the baptismal catechumenate, Ellert did not substantively engage with the GDC’s statement that the baptismal catechumenate should serve as the “model” for all catechesis (GDC 90).

In 2005, Arthur Canales wrote two articles on a “liturgical-initiation model” for youth ministry. He offered three reasons for engaging with the RCIA as a model for youth ministry. First, the RCIA is a “living witness” to Vatican II’s sacramental vision of the Church that initiates people into Christ, the primordial sacrament of God. Second, Canales considered the RCIA to be the “quintessential method for Christian evangelisation, conversion, and catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church.” Third, Canales invoked the same rationale as GDC 90 does without actually quoting it: the RCIA fosters a liturgical and sacramental encounter with God that can serve as a model for people requiring evangelisation and catechesis other than adult catechumens.

Canales suggested that the RCIA’s four-part structure could be applied to the practice of youth ministry. Following the RCIA, Canales called the first phase of his youth ministry model “evangelisation” and suggested that its focus should be upon the awakening of faith. He called the second phase “Christian formation”, which corresponded to the RCIA’s second period. This stage was concerned with catechesis, which Canales described as pastoral formation and moral guidance that ideally results in “total transformation”. Canales correlated the Lenten period of purification and enlightenment in the RCIA with a phase of “spiritual experience”, or a time to “foster an atmosphere that allows an adolescent to fall

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30 Ellert, "Inspiration," 59.
deeper in love with God.”

Canales posited that a final stage of youth ministry corresponding to the RCIA’s period of post-baptismal catechesis should fully integrate young people into the broader parish community. Canales’ second article concluded with a series of practical suggestions for youth ministry arising from the RCIA. These included basing the role of adult mentors in youth ministry upon the RCIA’s sponsors, and the adaptation of the RCIA’s rites to a youth ministry setting.

With the exception of Ellert, each of these authors focused upon the fundamental insight of the RCIA for youth ministry, which is that a staged-based process is required to lead young people through the initial stages of coming to faith and into the path of mature discipleship. However, each of these authors also made decisions that are hard to justify in the light of the RCIA’s actual content and structure. In Zanzig and Kimball’s cases this is understandable as neither version of the wedge model explicitly draws upon the RCIA. Both Roberto and Canales’ first two stages follow the RCIA quite closely: both called their first stage “evangelisation”, while the analogue to the catechumenate is called “catechesis” by Roberto and “Christian formation” by Canales. However, they depict the Lenten phase as “spiritual development” and “spiritual experience” respectively, which could appear to confine the encounter with God and spiritual growth to this phase alone. Roberto’s final stage is called ministry and service, while Canales’ final stage focuses upon integration into the broader community. The implication of Roberto’s stage is that young people’s ministry to others only occurs at this point and not earlier in the process, while Canales rightly addresses the significance of mystagogy for youth ministry.

Of the authors only Roberto

34 Canales, “RCIA 2,” 19.
35 Canales, “RCIA 2,” 24-33.
36 Canales, “RCIA 2,” 18-23. The wedge models also relegated service to later stages of the process than an approach that draws more stringently upon the RCIA would. See Zanzig, “Reflections,” 44 and Kimball, 1987 #2438.
considered the significance of rituals in youth ministry that correspond to the RCIA’s three ritual steps. As we shall see, omitting these analogous ritual elements deprive youth ministry of their capacity to foster young people’s integral conversion.

While Protestant youth ministry scholarship has understandably not engaged with the RCIA, several theologians have briefly referred to the ancient catechumenate that the contemporary RCIA is derived from as a resource for contemporary youth ministry. Kenda Creasy Dean has frequently written about the role of catechesis in her discussion of youth ministry practices. In Practicing Passion, she provides a diagram that invokes didache, koinonia, kerygma, leitourgia, marturia and diakonia as a “classical constellation” of Christian practices. These ancient elements of the Christian life are all present within the RCIA, but unlike the RCIA, Dean presents them as discrete practices with little indication of their relationship to each other.

In Almost Christian Dean argues that “spiritual apprenticeships” (or mentoring) and “faith immersions” are ancient Christian practices that were first practiced by the Church in the catechumenate. She returns to this observation in a discussion of the Lilly Endowment’s High School Theology Programs (HSTPs), which she likens to the early catechumenate because the HSTPs’ wide range of spiritual practices, encounters with “people living lives of radical discipleship” and reflection processes with mentors all resemble critical features of the catechumenate.

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37 Canales examined the significance of the RCIA’s ritual steps, but in isolation from their role in separating the different periods. See Canales, "RCIA 2," 27ff.
38 Kenda Creasy Dean, Practising Passion: Youth and the Quest for a Passionate Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 153-4.
39 Kenda Creasy Dean, Almost Christian: What the Faith of our Teenagers is Telling the American Church (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 149.
40 Kenda Creasy Dean and Christy Lang Hearlson, "Calling as Creative Process: Wicked Questions for Theological Education," in How Youth Ministry can Change Theological Education - If We Let It (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 23.
Dean has frequent recourse to the concept of liminality in her writings, which many liturgical theologians, following anthropologist Victor Turner’s work on initiation rites, understand to be central to both the RCIA and its ancient counterpart. Dean considers practices such as hospitality and outreach to be liminal activities that “detach”, “de-center”, and “dehabituate” young people from their experience of the status quo in order for God to effect a transformation of their identity.41

In Book, Bath, Table and Time Fred Edie focuses upon the Church’s “ordo” of baptism, Eucharist, the bible and the liturgical year in relation to youth ministry.42 Edie’s study is based upon his experience with the High School Theology Program at Duke University, at which high school students enter into an experience of temporary Christian community that revolves around these liturgical practices, a process of reflection upon them that is akin to mystagogia, and a catechetics that concentrates upon a theology of baptism. Edie argues that the combination of catechesis and ritual in the ancient catechumenate established baptism as “an enduring communal way of life”, rather than as a discrete experience at a particular moment.43 He writes, “all the energy of the congregation [in the early church] was directed toward manifesting [this] baptismal life for the world.”44 Edie contends that the HSTP at Duke is consciously shaped by these convictions concerning the ancient catechumenal structure and presents the Duke program as a contemporary articulation of it.45

41 See Dean, Almost Christian, 160. For liminal experiences in HSTP’s see Dean and Hearlson, “Calling as Creative,” 50-2. Dean discusses identity in Practising, passim.
42 Fred P. Edie, Book, Bath, Table and Time: Christian Worship as Source and Resource for Youth Ministry (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2007), 9 and passim.
43 Edie, Book, 7.
44 Edie, Book, 140.
45 Edie, Book, 27-32.
Edie offers an illuminating account of how the insights of the ancient catechumenate can actually inform the practice of youth ministry. However, his focus is entirely upon the highly engaged young people who attend the HSTP during their summer break. As a consequence he does not consider how young people become interested enough in the life of faith to want to enter into the HSTP process of faith formation in the first place. In the RCIA’s terminology, Edie’s approach commences with the RCIA’s second period, whereas the RCIA’s structure would indicate that youth ministry also requires a prior stage that is analogous to the RCIA’s period of evangelisation. While Edie is right to be critical of shallow approaches to youth ministry that only focus upon grabbing young people’s attention (such as those employing a reviveralist methodology or worship practices that are closely modelled upon a music concert), he does not provide an alternative account of how the Church should engage with those young people who possess little connection to the Church.

Youth ministry scholarship’s engagement with the baptismal catechumenate to date suggests that there has been some recognition of the catechumenate’s potential as a model for forming young people in Christian faith. However, even the most thorough analyses, namely those offered by Canales and Edie, indicate that a more extensive analysis of the baptismal catechumenate’s significance for youth ministry would be highly beneficial. This thesis is intended to address this lacuna, in the hope that an investigation of the RCIA as a source for youth ministry’s configuration and practice might better serve the Church’s praxis with young people.

1.3 Methodology

I have situated this thesis as a work of practical theology and as a consequence have employed a methodology from that discipline in order to examine how the RCIA might be
utilised as a source for youth ministry. The principal reason for this is that Protestant theologians have increasingly positioned the academic study of youth ministry as a sub-discipline of practical theology, and so it follows that a methodology from that discipline is most appropriate for the present research.\textsuperscript{46} Kenda Creasy Dean argues that youth ministry was identified as a gap in Protestant seminaries and colleges’ curricula in the early twentieth century, which led to an emerging group of professional theologians nominating youth ministry as the principal focus of their research. With this development has come considerable growth in both academic programs and in research dedicated to the theology and practice of youth ministry.\textsuperscript{47}

Dean does not explicitly mention it, but the doctoral program in youth ministry at Princeton Theological Seminary (of which she is a graduate) has played an important role in locating youth ministry within practical theology. Princeton graduates such as Dean, Andrew Root and others were influenced by the work of Richard Osmer, their doctoral supervisor. Osmer’s understanding of practical theology proved congenial to these new youth ministry scholars because his methodology is grounded in reflection upon praxis, or people’s present experience and the Church’s current ministerial practice. Osmer’s methodology engages with both the social sciences and with theological sources before indicating directions for future praxis. His methodology was appealing to the emerging cadre of youth ministry scholars because they wanted their theological engagement with ministry to young people to arise from and return to praxis, and while they had recourse to the social sciences, they


\textsuperscript{47} Dean \textit{et al}, \textit{OMG}, 121-3.
were particularly concerned to engage as theologians (and not primarily as sociologists or educationalists) with young people and youth ministry.\textsuperscript{48}

Osmer contends that his methodology is expressive of a common “paradigm of reflective practice” that underpins the practical theological enterprise, even though different practical theologians emphasise certain elements over others.\textsuperscript{49} For Osmer, this common paradigm addresses four hermeneutical tasks, which he calls the descriptive-empirical, the interpretive, the normative, and the pragmatic.

1) The descriptive-empirical task asks what is going on concerning a particular practice, or in a particular set of circumstances.

2) The interpretive task asks why is this going on, and engages with the social sciences to analyse why these practices or acts are taking place.

3) The normative task asks what ought to be going on through recourse to theology and/or ethics.

4) Finally, the pragmatic task asks how we might respond by suggesting new or modified practices to the original circumstances in the light of insights gleaned from the interpretive and normative moments.\textsuperscript{50}

The thesis chapters broadly follow Osmer’s methodology. In order to try and understand the nature of present youth ministry practice Chapter Two undertakes an historical examination of the principal developments in the Catholic Church’s pastoral activity with young Australians. The chapter therefore addresses the descriptive task by asking how we have arrived at the present moment in Australian Catholic youth ministry. The third chapter

\textsuperscript{48} This is one of the meanings of the “theological turn” in youth ministry, although Root intends the term to refer primarily to divine action: see Andrew Root and Kenda Creasy Dean, The Theological Turn in Youth Ministry (Downers Grove, Il: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 37-47.


\textsuperscript{50} Richard Osmer, Practical Theology: An Introduction (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 4,11.
examines several recent sociological studies of young Australians’ attitudes to faith and spirituality against the backdrop of Charles Taylor’s account of our secular age. In so doing the chapter engages in the interpretive task as it seeks to understand the various stances young people take in relation to faith and the Church today. Chapter Four attends to the normative task by examining the magisterial statements dedicated to mission since Vatican II. Chapter Five also engages in the normative task as it evaluates the RCIA as a theological resource for the theology and practice of youth ministry. The final three chapters of the thesis address the pragmatic task by proposing a theological foundation (Chapter Six) and a suggested course of action (Chapters Seven and Eight) for youth ministry in the light of the baptismal catechumenate.

1.4 Practical Theology in a “Catholic Voice”

Given Osmer’s claim that his methodology articulates a widely held paradigm of reflective practice, his methodology unsurprisingly shares much in common with various methods from the domain of Catholic pastoral theology. Praxis methods such as the see-judge-act process popularised by Joseph Cardijn and which was utilised in Vatican II’s Gaudium et Spes and then in subsequent statements of the Latin American bishops conference have long-standing roots in Thomas Aquinas’ appropriation of Aristotelian epistemology. The same hermeneutical process can be seen in Peter Henriot SJ and Joe Holland’s “pastoral circle”. The methods of theological reflection formulated by Evelyn and James Whitehead, Patricia Killen and Robert Kinast, as well as Thomas Groome’s shared praxis model of religious education all follow a similar process to that articulated by

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Osmer. In other words, notwithstanding particular emphases and a different understanding of normative sources, Protestant practical and Catholic pastoral theological methods share much in common and overlap in crucial respects.

I have, however, chosen to frame this thesis as a work of practical theology, even though the term pastoral theology is more familiar to Catholics. Although there is a recognisable pastoral method discernible in the Catholic authors cited above, and while the term ‘pastoral’ has become part of a widespread discourse in ecclesial circles since the Second Vatican Council, Catholic pastoral theology has not developed beyond a curricular area into a distinct discipline. This is partly because courses on pastoral topics often remained within seminary formation programs after the Council and did not migrate to the university as systematic theology and biblical studies did. This meant that pastoral theology has often been relegated to a secondary role, or understood to be ‘applied theology’, rather than as a truly constructive discipline.

Pastoral theology is also more likely to be found in its parts, such as liturgy, pastoral care, homiletics and religious education, than as a coherent discipline that unites these different arenas of practice. For our purposes it is noteworthy that youth ministry is missing from this list, whereas I contend that youth ministry should be considered a sub-

discipline that is distinct from both religious education and pastoral care. This omission reflects the lack of education and research that youth ministry has attracted to date. It should be noted that while ecclesial discourse since the council has extended the scope of the term ‘pastoral’, its etymology is oriented to the pastor, and thus to the training of clergy for ministry. Given that few youth ministers today are members of the clergy, conceptualising youth ministry as a ‘pastoral’ activity seems problematic for this reason too.

For these reasons and in a bid to contribute to and extend the dialogue concerning youth ministry taking place in the academy among (predominantly) Protestant theologians, it makes sense to position this as a work of practical theology, albeit with a distinctively ‘Catholic voice’.

Henri-Jerome Gagey offers a four-step process for practical theology that possesses similarities with Osmer’s four tasks, but its differences helpfully identify several distinctive features of a Catholic ‘take’ on practical theology. First, Gagey argues that practical theology critically analyses the Church’s practices, “to reveal what is at stake in them, and to readjust them in their basic principles.” There is thus an ecclesiological emphasis in Catholic practical theology that is not always evident in Protestant practical theologies. This ecclesial emphasis will prove important in this thesis, as the RCIA stresses that sacramental initiation not only inserts people into the mystery of God but at the same time incorporates them into the Church. This will, in turn, possess significant import for the theology and practice of youth ministry.

Second, like Osmer, Gagey asserts that the social sciences ought to play an important role in practical theology because its object is “social action” (and not a theological text).

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56 Cahalan, “Pastoral or Practical,” 101-4.
57 The expression ‘Catholic voice’ within practical theology comes from the title of Cahalan and Froehle’s article cited above.
58 Gagey, “Project,” 87.
Third and unlike Osmer, Gagey argues that philosophy is needed to mediate practical theology’s engagement with the social sciences because the latter are not neutral in their assumptions concerning the role faith plays in people’s lives.\textsuperscript{59} The importance of this will be evident in Chapter Three of this thesis, where the philosopher Charles Taylor’s critique of conventional secularisation theory provides an important corrective to the Spirit of Generation Y project’s examination of young Australians’ attitudes to faith and spirituality, as this project is dependent upon the work of secularisation theorist Steve Bruce. The Australian sociologists’ research is skewed by their adherence to Bruce’s understanding of secularisation.

Gagey’s fourth step is recourse to the insights of systematic theology. A Catholic contribution to practical theology will be attentive to the rich web of practices that emerge from a sacramental ontology and its emphasis upon the embodied nature of our encounter with God.\textsuperscript{60} The contribution a Catholic sacramental worldview makes to practical theology will be particularly evident in the present work, given its focus upon sacramental initiation and its attendant ritual practices.

Finally, it is important to clarify the sense in which Chapters Four and Five employ normative sources in a work of Catholic practical theology. Osmer uses the term normative to refer to any theological text that a practical theologian engages with to evaluate present praxis and provide prescriptions for future praxis. The statements of the papal and conciliar magisterium in Chapter Four and the RCIA in Chapter Five are thus normative in Osmer’s sense of the term. However, the statements of the conciliar and papal magisterium referred

\textsuperscript{59} Gagey, “Project,” 87. See also John Milbank, \textit{Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason} (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).
\textsuperscript{60} Gagey, “Project,” 87.
to in Chapter Four are normative for Catholic theology in another sense, because they are authoritative expressions of the Catholic Church’s teaching.

The sense in which the RCIA is normative requires further nuance. In Chapter Four I argue that the magisterial statements on mission since Vatican II provide a theological rationale for the RCIA to serve as a paradigmatic model for other forms of catechesis in the Church, and thus for youth ministry. To be clear though, as the Catholic Church’s official liturgical text for the initiation of adults, the RCIA outlines the normative process for the incorporation of unbaptised adults into the Catholic Church. It is not normative for the practice of youth ministry, except where the initiation of unbaptised children of catechetical age is concerned. It is not the contention of this thesis then that either the RCIA or the magisterial statements authoritatively teach that the baptismal catechumenate is to be understood as the Catholic Church’s officially mandated foundation or source for the theology of youth ministry or as the basis for its practice. One might sum this up by saying that this thesis argues that the magisterial teaching on mission since Vatican II indicates that the RCIA ought to inform the theology and practice of Catholic youth ministry, but it does not claim that the Catholic Church has explicitly taught this in any authoritative statement.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The practical theological method employed in this thesis creates a helpful basic structure. Chapter Two establishes the context for present youth ministry praxis by providing a genealogical account of the Church’s pastoral activity with young Australians, beginning with the emergence of adolescence as a life-stage in the late nineteenth century through to the publication of the revised edition of Anointed and Sent in 2014. The chapter demonstrates that age-specific ministry to young people originated as, and has continued to

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be, a response to the phenomenon of non-practising Catholic adolescents. Following official Catholic teaching, this phenomenon has frequently been referred to by practitioners as an important and worrying instance of secularism or secularisation. In practice, the terms secularism and secularisation have been used more or less interchangeably, and with little discernible meaning other than as a shorthand reference to the decline of belief and practice among baptised Catholics. While the term evangelisation was only used in relation to youth ministry after Pope Paul VI employed the term in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, the retention of practising and the reclamation of non-practising Catholic youth has always been a central motivation for youth ministry. The chapter demonstrates that both the phenomenon of non-practising young people and the nature of evangelisation have not been sufficiently understood, which has inhibited the Church’s ministry to young people.

Chapter Three identifies an inadequate understanding of the nature of the secular culture in which youth ministry has emerged. Chapter Three attempts to arrive at a better understanding of this socio-cultural context. The chapter firstly examines the most recent sociological data concerning young Australians’ attitudes to belief and spirituality today, paying particular attention to the Spirit of Generation Y project, which is the most recent representative sociological study of Australian adolescents’ belief, attitudes and practices concerning religion and spirituality. This sociological data is then evaluated in the light of Charles Taylor’s depiction of secularity as a change in the conditions of belief. The chapter contends that Taylor’s account of our secular age better positions youth ministers to attain a more accurate understanding of the complex nature of young people’s belief and religious or spiritual identity in contemporary Australia, as it moves them beyond the simplistic dichotomy of Christian faith/atheism, or even the trichotomy of Christian/secular/New Age belief proposed by the Spirit of Generation Y researchers.
Having established the sociocultural context in which ministry takes place in Chapter Three, Chapter Four addresses the deficiency identified in Chapter Two concerning the popular understanding of evangelisation prevalent among youth ministers. The chapter examines the magisterial statements on mission, beginning with *Ad Gentes*, the decree on missionary activity from Vatican II. The chapter explains the way in which *Ad Gentes* initiated a shift to a post-Christendom model of mission, which defined the nature of mission in relation to persons and not to geographical demarcations between Christian countries and mission territories. Despite this shift, Chapter Two of *Ad Gentes* outlines a process of evangelisation that partly reflected the older ‘mission field’ context of a location in which the gospel had not yet been proclaimed. This process consisted of witness, dialogue and presence in charity (AG 11-12), the proclamation of the Gospel and the call to conversion (13), the catechumenate and sacramental initiation (14) and the development of Christian communities (15-18). The shift to a post-Christendom model of mission meant that this process could, in principle, be transferred to any context in which there were people who had not been sufficiently evangelised, catechised and sacramentally initiated. This process of evangelisation is presumed and referred to by subsequent statements of the papal magisterium: *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Paul VI), *Redemptoris Missio* (John Paul II), and *Evangelii Gaudium* (Francis). In different ways, each of these statements indicates that this process can be applied to those who have been baptised but who have not been converted to Christ and his gospel and who do not live the life of discipleship that ensues from baptism.

The process of evangelisation outlined in Chapter Two of AG corresponds precisely to the fourfold structure of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Chapter Five therefore extends the discussion begun in Chapter Four by closely examining the RCIA. The chapter
considers the RCIA’s theology of conversion and examines how that conversion is effected through the RCIA process. It then explores the content of the ritual text by examining each of the RCIA’s four periods and three ritual steps, and concludes with an examination of the theology of initiation embedded within the Ordo.

Chapters Six, Seven and Eight turn to youth ministry praxis once more. These three chapters construct a theology and practice of youth ministry in the light of the RCIA and by taking into consideration the secular socio-cultural context identified in Chapter Three. Chapter Six first identifies theological principles for youth ministry that are formulated from the preceding discussion of both the magisterial teaching on mission and the RCIA. The chapter then outlines the basic structure of a youth ministry that is grounded in the RCIA’s evangelical, catechetical and initiatory wisdom, and addresses potential objections to such an approach.

Chapters Seven and Eight unpack the basic structure outlined in Chapter Six in greater depth. Chapter Seven is dedicated to the topic of young people’s initial evangelisation and conversion. Basing its content upon the RCIA’s pre-catechumenate, the chapter addresses the nature of the community’s witness and the initial proclamation of the gospel to young people in the light of Charles Taylor’s discussion of the seekers who are created by the changed location of religion and spirituality in a late modern society such as Australia.

Chapter Eight considers the nature of young people’s faith formation beyond the initial stages of evangelisation. Drawing upon the RCIA’s directives concerning the catechumenate, the chapter argues that such faith formation firstly consists of participation in the life, communal prayer and mission of the Church as it is instantiated in the specific faith community that they are part of. Age-specific ministry to young people is dependent upon this first aspect of faith formation and flows out of it. The catechesis and ritual employed in
this phase of youth ministry need to challenge the “Closed World Structures” of modern epistemology and the ‘death of God narrative’ that Taylor refers to and which push young people to perceive the world in solely immanent terms. The chapter concludes by considering the importance of the Triune God’s gift of a new identity in sacramental initiation given the relentless need for young people to construct their own identity in late modernity.

1.6 Positionality

My debt to Catholic youth ministry is a deeply personal one because a great deal of my personal and spiritual growth from the ages of fifteen to nineteen took place through my participation in a youth ministry. Youth ministry is also central to the charism of the Missionaries of God’s Love, the group of priests and brothers to whom I have belonged since 1994. Since my ordination in 2002 much of my priestly ministry has been spent engaged in youth ministry and more recently, in preparing others for ministry with young people too.

My involvement in youth ministry pertains directly to aspects of this thesis’ subject matter. This involvement has been varied and broad, and includes several of the youth ministries discussed in Chapter Two. As a teenager I benefitted greatly from my participation in the youth ministry conducted by the Disciples of Jesus Community, one of the new ecclesial movements. I have also participated in several international World Youth Days. My involvement in WYD included the coordination of the journey of the WYD Cross and Icon in 2007-2008 prior to the WYD held in Sydney in July 2008 (WYD08). As part of this role, I travelled to every diocese in Australia with the Cross and Icon to support youth ministry initiatives in preparation for WYD08. Finally, as a member of the Australian Catholic
Youth Council, I was a member of the editorial committee that revised *Anointed and Sent* in 2014.

It was precisely these diverse experiences of youth ministry that prompted me to pursue academic research in this field, for in my experience all of them have suffered from a lack of substantial theological reflection. So while I do acknowledge the potential bias that may ensue from my involvement in these ministries, I believe that the breadth of my participation significantly mitigates this issue. More significantly, as the discussion in Chapter Two indicates, I hold that these initiatives possess two shortcomings in common; namely an inadequate understanding of both evangelisation and secularisation. As a consequence, Chapter Two contains critiques of each of these expressions of youth ministry.

**1.7 Contribution to Knowledge**

This study contributes to knowledge in three ways. First, it provides the most extensive theological *rationale* for developing Catholic youth ministry in the light of the baptismal catechumenate. Second, the thesis *constructs* a theology and practice of Catholic youth ministry that draws upon the theology and processes of the RCIA as its principal resource. Third, while the history of Australian Catholic youth ministry in chapter one is necessarily brief and only provides a schematic outline tracing the principal developments in that history, it is the first substantial historical overview of Catholic youth ministry in Australia to date.
Chapter 2 Australian Catholic Youth Ministry in Historical Perspective

2.1 Introduction

It is readily apparent to anyone ministering to Australian adolescents in the early twenty-first century that their efforts take place against the backdrop of a general decline in belief and practice among Catholics, and among young Catholics in particular. For example, an obvious measure of practice is attendance at Sunday Mass. It is estimated that perhaps two-thirds, or even as many as three-quarters, of Australian Catholics attended Mass every Sunday in the 1950s.61 This has steadily declined to the point that approximately 12.2% attended on a typical Sunday in 2011.62 A further indication of the decline in belief is the rate of dis-identification that is occurring: Robert Dixon and Stephen Reid estimate that approximately 200,000 Catholics ceased to identify as Catholics between 2001 and 2011. The rate of dis-identification is accelerating, and over half of those who dis-identified were aged between 20 and 29.63 The Spirit of Generation Y project found that dis-identification is not confined to young Catholics, although the Catholic (and Anglican) churches have been ‘hardest hit’: nearly one in five young Australians ceased to belong to a Christian church by the age of 25.64 In youth ministry and in the Church more generally, this decline is quickly categorised as an important manifestation of secularism’s corrosive effects upon Christian faith. Rather than simply join the chorus of lament at the decline of young people’s belief

62 Dixon and Powell, "Data-Based Analysis," 1.
and participation in the life of the Church, this chapter seeks to understand better the present ‘face’ or ‘faces’ of youth ministry by considering the historical relationship between secularity and the Church’s pastoral activity with young Australians.

A complete history of Australian Catholic youth ministry has not been written and is beyond the scope of the chapter. Instead, the chapter traces its principal developments in order to better understand the current landscape. There are three key phases in this genealogy: an educational/devotional phase that took place in the first forty or so years of the twentieth century; the phase of the lay apostolate epitomised by the Young Christian Worker movement, which was most significant between the Second World War and the Second Vatican Council; and an evangelical phase, which began in the 1980s and continues still. What this overview will show is that as adolescence emerged as a discrete life-stage, the most powerful influences upon these young people quickly came to lie outside the traditional site of faith transmission, which was the nexus of family and parish/village life within a Christian nation state. This means that the commonly presented portrait of youth ministry occurring against a backdrop of deepening decline in belief and practice is not a recent phenomenon: the Church’s engagement with youth as a discrete group has always been driven by adolescent non-belief and their non-participation in the Church.

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2.2 Situating Australian Catholic Youth Ministry within Charles Taylor’s Typology of the Location of Religion in Modernity

Charles Taylor’s account of secularity in ASA provides a helpful hermeneutic for understanding Australian youth ministry’s historical development. As part of his complex argument in ASA, Taylor offers a tripartite typology to explain the changing location of religion, from its place in pre-eighteenth century societies, when atheism remained the province of an elite few, to the mass secularisation of the early twenty-first century. He calls these three types “Ancien Regime”, “Age of Mobilisation”, and “Age of Authenticity” societies.

The Ancien Regime pre-dates Britain’s colonisation of Australia. In this type, belonging to the Church in Europe was all but synonymous with belonging to one’s family, local village/parish, and to a national community. This embedding between faith and familial, social and national identity was grounded in the belief that the societal order was divinely determined. All people, whether king, noble, peasant or clergy, knew their place within this order, and understood it to be God’s will for them as individuals and for the society as a whole. In this strongly collective context, people lived in an “enchanted” world in which spiritual forces impinged directly upon their lives. Unbelief was virtually impossible, because departure from communally held beliefs possessed spiritual consequences, not only for an individual, but also for the fate of the local community. As a consequence the religious life of the people was centered upon communal rituals, which included both the Church’s official liturgy and more popular rituals designed to protect the community against evil spiritual forces that were believed to be arrayed against them.67

67 For his discussion of the Ancien Regime, see Taylor, ASA, 438-40. Taylor’s brief description here presumes the preceding discussion in Part I of ASA.
As the modern period developed, the *Ancien Regime* was “disrupted” over time by the elite strata of society, who believed that society or religion (or both) needed to be reformed, sometimes in the name of greater fidelity to God’s plan for humanity (as in the Reformation), but sometimes in defiance of a Christian civilisational order (as in the case of the French Revolution). Society was no longer perceived to be divinely determined, nor was it conceived of as a cohesive, organic whole. Instead, the elite, middle and working classes were increasingly perceived to be at odds with each other. During these class conflicts, and most obviously (although by no means exclusively) in post-revolutionary France, the Church’s hierarchy largely identified with the elite elements of society rather than with the workers. This occurred in conjunction with industrialisation and urbanisation, which removed workers from the traditional village/parish context as they found work in the industrial cities of Europe. Faced with this situation, deprived of the traditional communal identity the *Ancien Regime* had provided, and increasingly experiencing themselves as living within a “disenchanted world”, many workers found themselves to be members of new urban communities within the nation state. By the late nineteenth century, these communities could still be animated by Christian faith, but they were increasingly influenced by a range of “exclusive humanist” (that is, non-theistic) ideals.

The Church’s initial response to these changes in countries like France was to attempt to restore the *Ancien Regime*. Even as it resisted this shift, however, the Church also began to adapt to these changed circumstances as it sought to re-engage the masses through various forms of affective piety (typified by the devotion to the Sacred Heart), and by the mass deployment of lay people into new organisations for them (hence Taylor’s name for this period, the Age of Mobilisation). These ecclesial developments (albeit in unintentional and

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68 Taylor, ASA, 423-72.
initially unnoticed ways) admitted that the Ancien Regime’s societal configuration had been surpassed by a new configuration (or “imaginary” in Taylor’s terminology), in which the societal order was no longer understood to be divinely ordained, but was now believed to be comprised of individuals who came together for their mutual benefit. In this new environment, various institutions or movements (such as the churches and political parties with their respective ideologies, as well as other forms of voluntary associations) competed for individuals’ allegiance. While the Catholic Church’s hierarchy continued to insist upon a collective identity and communal worship for its members, it simultaneously placed greater weight upon personal piety and required individuals to express that piety within some form of lay association. As we shall see, the first phase of an identifiable ministry to Australian Catholic youth began within an ultramontane Church attempting to adapt to these broader changes in the modern social imaginary. The YCW, which is the principal expression of Australian Catholic youth ministry’s second phase, is completely intelligible as an Age of Mobilisation venture.

Taylor’s third type is the Age of Authenticity. The shift from the Age of Mobilisation to this new type took place during the seismic cultural changes of the 1960s and 1970s. Taylor characterises this shift as an “individuating revolution”, in which Romantic expressive individualism expanded from an elite few to become a common ideal shared by virtually everyone. For Taylor, the heart of expressive individualism is that “each of us has his or her own way of realising our humanity”, and that each person’s pursuit of that way needs to be determined without reference to external authorities’ pre-determined configurations of that ideal, be they “society, or the previous generation, or religious or political authority.”

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69 Taylor, ASA, 473-504.
70 Taylor, ASA, 475.
Expressive individualism is also married to mass consumer capitalism: we express our unique manner of being human through mutually displaying what we have purchased.

The shift to the Age of Authenticity has made older forms of religious life and practice much harder to sustain. Taylor does not simplistically attribute this to the rise of consumerism. Nor does he suggest that this is sufficiently explained by the exponential growth of exclusive humanism per se, because persistence of large numbers of nominal Christians and the relatively small percentage of self-declared atheists indicates that the situation is more complex than the simple abandonment of Christian faith. Rather, he explains the acceleration in the decline of religious belief and practice from the 1960s to the present by considering the impact of the (often obscured) ideal of authenticity upon religious faith. Taylor argues that in the Age of Authenticity, “the religious life or practice that I become part of must not only be my choice, but it must speak to me, it must make sense in terms of my spiritual development as I understand this.”

In the face of this ideal, expressions of faith which emphasise a communal, biblical, creedal basis or other strong notions of authority will appear at odds with personal expressions of one’s own “spiritual path”, as is evidenced by the recent explosion of “spirituality” that is typically contrasted with traditional institutional expressions of religious faith. The third phase of Australian youth ministry began and continues in the Age of Authenticity. Australian youth ministry’s principal developments will now be considered in relation to Taylor’s typology.

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71 Taylor, ASA, 486.
2.3 19th Century Antecedents: Catholic Schools and the Proto-Australian Adolescent

2.3.1 The Australian Church’s Primary Strategy for the Faith Formation of Children and Youth: The Catholic School

Before moving to the first phase of age-specific ministry to youth, it is important to note its antecedents in the colonial period and especially the way in which the Church’s ministry to and with Australian youth has been decisively shaped by Catholic education which began in this era.\textsuperscript{72} The Church’s commitment to education began with primary schools. By the time young Catholics in the colony had reached approximately twelve years of age, they were deemed adults and thus expected to work. Younger children were needed to help around the home, in the fields, or to labour for neighbouring wealthier settlers.\textsuperscript{73} The children of Irish Catholic convicts were not an especially devout or highly moral group. Church leaders lamented their non-attendance at Mass, and civil and ecclesiastical authorities alike noted their delinquency. It was believed that young people’s ignorance of the faith and their immoral behaviour were linked, and that the provision of a Catholic education was the double remedy required.\textsuperscript{74}

Many Irish Catholic parents could not see the value of an Establishment-run education for their children. With the extension of state aid to Catholic schools in 1833 and the arrival of teachers in the form of the Sisters of Charity and the Irish Christian brothers, the availability of a Catholic primary education expanded significantly.

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\textsuperscript{72} For an overview of the history of Australian Catholic education, see Maurice Ryan, \textit{A Common Search: The History and Forms of Religious Education in Catholic Schools}, Revised ed. (Hamilton, Qld: Lumino Press, 2013).
\textsuperscript{73} Jan Kociumbas, \textit{Australian Childhood: A History} (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1997), 46.
\textsuperscript{74} Edmund Campion, \textit{Australian Catholics} (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1988), 8.
\end{flushleft}
During the 1860s the Church’s hierarchy endorsed proposed legislation to make education compulsory and free, but resisted calls that it be secular, prompting a bitter sectarian debate concerning the funding of religious schools.\textsuperscript{75} With the cessation of state aid to Catholic schools in the 1870s the hierarchy sought to develop a distinctive system of Catholic education in the belief that a comprehensive Catholic education was necessary to inculcate a Catholic way of life among the children. Without state funding, the Church looked to the religious orders to provide teachers as their vow of poverty lowered the financial commitment necessary to run a school.\textsuperscript{76} The most notable of these orders was the homegrown congregation of the Sisters of St Joseph, founded in 1866 by Mary Mackillop and Julian Tenison Woods. Alongside the Josephites and the Australian Sisters of the Good Samaritan (founded by Archbishop Polding), religious sisters, brothers and priests from overseas congregations came to Australia to staff Catholic schools. As a consequence, more and more Catholic children received a primary education.\textsuperscript{77}

Catholic high schools were established by these religious orders from the 1850s onwards.\textsuperscript{78} Their principal objective was to provide ongoing religious instruction, but the brothers who ran the all-male schools also sought to send their graduates to university so they could enter the public (civil) service. For the girls, secondary school focused upon religious instruction and preparations to make a suitable marriage.

The Church’s commitment to Catholic education in the colonial period is epitomised in Archbishop Roger Vaughan’s exchange with the local clergy upon his arrival in the colony in 1873. The clergy expressed their hope that the “education of the rising generation would be


\textsuperscript{77} Campion, \textit{“Australian Catholics”}, 37-58.

\textsuperscript{78} Campion, \textit{“Australian Catholics”}, 37-44.
protected from the blighting influence of anti-Catholic secularism” under Vaughan’s leadership. Vaughan responded by stating that the construction of St Mary’s Cathedral in Sydney and “Christian education” were the two weapons necessary to “attack ... earth worship.”

### 2.3.2 The Australian Proto-Adolescent

As the hierarchy began to invest in education for building the Catholic faith in Australia, the earliest signs of what would come to be called adolescence began to emerge. From 1851 to 1861, the white population in NSW grew from 200,000 to 360,000, while Victoria grew from 97,000 to 540,000, due principally to assisted migration programs and the discovery of gold. The creation of factories and working class housing led to a clustering of young people in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane’s new suburbs, as they formed part of the unskilled labour force required for the burgeoning industrial economy. According to historian Melissa Bellanta, this led to a “yawning gap ... across the city between the older generations, many of whom had been born in the United Kingdom, and the gaggles of colonial-born youngsters who sought each other’s company in the consciousness of being a new breed.”

Some of these urban working-class males began to call themselves “larrikins”. They congregated on the streets, engaged in petty theft, fighting, obscene language and “flash” or “lairy” forms of dress that distinguished them from both their working-class peers and from wealthier members of society. Girls who accompanied these boys and who engaged in similar behaviour called themselves larrikinesses. Both larrikins and larrikinesses flouted the sexual mores of the Victorian era. While the larrikin was synonymous with delinquency in

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the popular press, Bellanta suggests that such delinquency was a part of a wider aspiration for an independent lifestyle. She writes,

... what we find in the late-colonial larrikins is a group of disadvantaged youth trying to adapt to rapid change. Coming of age during the last decades of the century, these youngsters experienced aggressive demographic growth, the increasing commercialisation of leisure, the early stages of industrialisation, and an economy reliant on flexible employment and frequent fluctuations in supply and demand ... Amid all of these developments, larrikin youth worked hard to create their own identities, their own styles and customs.81

In the final decades of the nineteenth century, however, larrikinism became more closely identified with gangs (or “pushes”) and violent crimes such as rape.82

Not every juvenile in the latter decades of the nineteenth century was a larrikin. It was an urban, working class phenomenon, and only a small percentage of that class would have identified as larrikins. Nevertheless, it was an early sign of a “hobbledehoy or transition state” between childhood and adulthood that would be called adolescence in the first decade of the twentieth century.83

**2.3.3 The Church’s Response to Larrikinism**

For the most part, larrikin-style behaviour was simply considered to be the irreligious, immoral and antisocial behaviour of a minority of young (but still adult) working men and women. For the most part, larrikins were largely beyond the purview of the priests. Larrikins could be well known to the local clergy, though, if they belonged to a church-going family.84

There was no specific ministry to the larrikins as a specific group then; any pastoral concern for them was subsumed into the priest’s visitation of Catholic families.

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81 Bellanta, Larrikins, 28.
82 Bellanta, Larrikins, 102.
83 Bellanta, Larrikins, 139.
84 Bellanta recounts that several of those charged with gang rape in the most infamous account of larrikin violence had been at Mass not long before the crime. Bellanta, Larrikins, 90.
Two developments in the colonial era did anticipate an age-specific response from the Church to these proto-adolescents. From the 1870s a sodality called the Children of Mary organised for girls aged between thirteen and eighteen to attend Mass together in their parishes once a month. In Victoria, the Catholic Young Men’s Society developed debating societies and sporting competitions to provide young men (from fourteen and up) with a Catholic environment for their leisure activities. As the names of both these groups indicate though, neither organisation was specifically focused upon “youth”: young females were considered “children”, while young males of the same age were deemed to be “men”.

2.4 Phase One: The Emergence of Adolescence and of Age-Specific Ministry to Youth

2.4.1 The Emergence of the Adolescent in Australia

In 1904, the American psychologist G. Stanley Hall applied Freudian psychology to the period of life between the onset of puberty and the entry into adulthood that he deemed “adolescence” in his two-volume work of that name. Hall designated this period as a discrete life-stage between childhood and adulthood, which he also depicted as a time of “storm and stress” in young people’s lives. Hall considered the source of these conflicts

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87 As John Santrock explains, “The storm-and-stress view is Hall’s concept that adolescence is a turbulent time charged with conflict and mood swings. In his view, adolescents’ thoughts, feelings, and actions oscillate between conceit and humility, good intentions and temptation, happiness and sadness. An adolescent might be nasty to a peer one moment and kind the next moment; in need of privacy one moment but seconds later want companionship.” See John W. Santrock, Adolescence, 15 ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2014), 4. Hall’s view has been challenged many times, including recently by Smith and Denton, who conclude on the basis of their research: “The traditional ‘storm and stress’ model of adolescence accurately depicts only a minority of teens... and, in our view, is a counterproductive lens through which adults view youth. That lens unnecessarily and unhelpfully creates distances when what is greatly needed is connection.” See Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 264.
and confusions to be emergent sexual desires.\textsuperscript{88} As a consequence, it came to be understood that adolescence entailed particular developmental tasks that needed to be successfully negotiated if a young person was to mature into a healthy adult.

In his groundbreaking work, Hall named an emerging phenomenon and also helped to construct it by providing it with a putatively scientific basis. Hall’s influential account found a willing audience among Australian educationalists. The psychological conception of youth promulgated by Hall was allied with social Darwinism, which equated the adolescent life-stage with an earlier, more violent epoch in the historical progression of humanity.\textsuperscript{89} Neither Hall nor those who adopted his theories recognised that adolescence was largely the outcome of social forces emanating from the industrial revolution. Legislation was enacted to prevent first children under twelve (and subsequently children under fourteen), from taking jobs from adult males. Parallel legislation raised the age of mandatory schooling to prevent adolescents from entering into the adult workforce by keeping them in high school.

These theories of youth highlighted elements, such as an ebullient sexuality and violence that had been associated in the previous century with larrikinism, leading to an idealised perception of the adolescent male that included a rebellious attitude to conventional society, a sanctioning of some displays of sexuality, and a violent edge. The ideal adolescent female was a young woman who negotiated her emergent sexual desires chastely so as to enter safely into married motherhood in due course. Over time, these contrasting idealisations of adolescence produced a sexual double standard that would prove especially

\textsuperscript{88} Referring to Hall’s work Kociumbas writes: “female adolescence had no sooner been constructed than it was eroticised”. Kociumbas, “Australian Childhood”, 137.
\textsuperscript{89} Kociumbas, “Australian Childhood”, 137-9.
troublesome for young women to negotiate, even though it initially sparked a greater degree of segregation of the sexes.

2.4.2 The Church’s Ministry to Adolescents (1901-1914)

The sectarianism that had marred the education debate in the late nineteenth century was exacerbated by the conscription debate during the First World War. Archbishop Mannix led the Catholic hierarchy’s opposition to conscription, which appeared unpatriotic and even treasonous to some. In the midst of this volatile climate, the hierarchy continued to rely upon Catholic education as the principal instrument of inculcating the Christian faith among the young. In 1916 Archbishop Kelly of Sydney expressed this when he stated that “sin and filth are the result of one cause; and that cause is everyday Godlessness such as our public schools are largely responsible for. This system is responsible for a want of vital Christianity.”

Doctrinal instruction was provided by the catechism, but this was firmly embedded within a strong religious culture within the schools: crucifixes adorned every room, along with statues and pictures of saints. Devotions such as the rosary, Angelus, and prayers to the Sacred Heart were recited daily, and a distinctively garbed religious sister, brother or priest led every class. The whole Catholic educational enterprise, and not simply religious education, was intended to form young Catholics’ faith.

The extensive system of Catholic schooling did not incorporate every Catholic child. Although it was not until 1955 that the hierarchy formally permitted Catholic children to attend state schools, as many as one in three Catholic children had been educated in state schools.

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93 Campion, “Australian Catholics”, 142.
schools since the 1930s. Providing religious instruction to these children had been the principal apostolate of groups such as the Theresians and the Legion of Mary since that period. In 1938, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) was officially established in Sydney to coordinate these programs.\textsuperscript{94} The CCD often struggled to provide religious education beyond the primary school years.\textsuperscript{95}

2.4.3 The Interwar Period

A principal feature of the Church’s self-segregation from much of Australian society in the inter-war years was the development of different groups and movements for different sectors of the Catholic community. These included professional guilds for the growing numbers of Catholic doctors and lawyers, women’s organisations such as the Catholic Women’s League and Catholic Women’s Social Guild (CWSG), sodalities that encouraged prayer and especially devotion to the Mass, and Catholic social clubs and sporting leagues. This was intended to create a virtually all-encompassing Catholic sub-culture within Australian society, which was entirely in keeping with the Church’s anti-modern stance that had been epitomised by the papacy of Pius IX in the previous century.

Among the proliferation of different Catholic groups were several organisations that were specifically intended for youth. The majority of these groups were oriented towards personal piety: many girls continued to belong to the Children of Mary, as their 6000-strong participation in the Sydney Eucharistic Congress of 1928 attested, while others were adolescent versions of adult sodalities such as the Junior Holy Name Society and the Junior Catholic Sodality of Our Lady.\textsuperscript{96} The sodalities’ devotions were highly affective practices

\textsuperscript{95} Whenman, “CCD,” 104-5.
\textsuperscript{96} Campion, \textit{Australian Catholics}, 93.
intended to counter sceptical rationalism and, because they sat entirely within the sphere of private life, were quite consonant with the isolationist tendencies of the Church at this time. Other Catholic youth organisations such as the Catholic Boys Legion, the Catholic Young Men’s Society and the Catholic Girls Movement focused upon wholesome activities to occupy young people’s growing leisure time by providing opportunities for drama, hiking, games and organized sport.97

As Australia became embroiled in the Great Depression, Archbishop Mannix and other religious leaders warned that capitalism’s failures were fuelling the growth of Communism. The Manly Union of Australian born and trained clergy felt that their Irish confreres had been so preoccupied with sectarian issues that they failed to realise that Australia was increasingly a “pagan country”, as a result of both Communism and “liberal” unbelief. Prominent Australian clergy called for priests to go beyond their flocks to regain the fallen away and even the non-Catholic.98

The Manly solution to increasing secularism was a priest-driven one, which was in keeping with the clerically dominated ecclesiology of the period. However, not every response to these cultural developments was instigated or led by the clergy. Among various lay initiatives were several youth organisations that sought to respond to the secularising forces at work by integrating a deep faith commitment, social activities and an apostolic focus amongst the young. An early example of this was the Theresian club, which was founded in Sydney in 1918 as an association for young women who worked in city shops and offices.99 Another was the Dutch Grail movement, which came to Australia in 1936.100

97 Campion, "Australian Catholics", 60.
99 Massam, Sacred Threads, 109.
100 Geraldine Crane, Ordinary Young Women Doing Extraordinary Things: The Brisbane NCGM/YCW (Girls) Story 1945-70 (Sandgate, Qld: YCW Past Members Association, 1999).
Grail spirituality encouraged a missionary role for lay women that was not tied exclusively to religious life or to motherhood, and their spirituality was more liturgically oriented than devotional. The Grail Ladies established junior Grail groups for 13 to 18-year-old girls in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. A final group, while not precisely for adolescents, that would nonetheless be influential in initiating the next phase of ministry to youth, was the Campion Society, which was founded by eight university students in 1931.101 The Campion society believed Catholicism possessed the intellectual and spiritual resources to address economic and social issues in Australian society.

The twentieth century thus began with the Church’s continued confidence in Catholic schools as the principal means for inculcating faith in Catholic young people. The school formed part of a virtually all-encompassing Catholic sub-culture that provided a sense of community that was centred upon the parish. As with adults, the sodalities and guilds fostered a highly affective and largely devotional spirituality. The combined effect was to provide a matrix of family, school, parish and related social and spiritual groups that sought to safeguard young Catholics from the forces of Protestantism, liberalism, socialism and consumerism, all of which were considered inimical to young people’s Catholic faith and moral conduct.

If elements of this appear to represent a nostalgic desire to reinstate an Ancien Régime context in which family, parish/local community, nation state and religious identity were all embedded within each other, it needs to be recognised that Australia had never known such a configuration of Church and state, and the denominationalism present in Australian society (if not the sectarianism that had characterised much of its history to this point) had

been accepted as a given almost from the nation’s colonial beginnings. The goal, however, was to embed everything but the nation: Catholic faith, family, parish and sub-culture were to be nested within each other. To achieve this required the mass mobilisation of all Catholics, including the newly emerging category of ‘Catholic youth’.

What distinguishes the Grail movement and the Campion society’s work with youth from that of the sodalities is that the former sought to engage young people in the transformation of society. Katharine Massam describes this as a shift from an expressive to an instrumental spirituality, as these new movements considered the Catholic faith (and especially its emerging body of social teaching) to be a tool for societal transformation. Amongst Australian Catholic youth, this apostolic spirituality came to be predominantly identified with the Young Christian Worker movement, which began in Australia in the early years of the Second World War.

2.5 Phase Two: The Young Christian Workers/Students

2.5.1 The YCW/YCS in Australia

The Australian chapter of the Young Christian Worker movement began through the correspondence between Kevin T. Kelly, a member of the Campion Society, with Canon Joseph Cardijn’s assistant, Fr Robert Kothen, concerning the movement that Cardijn had begun a dozen years before. From 1924, that movement had been known as the Jeunesse Ouvriere Chretienne (JOC). In 1939, Kelly produced an Australian Catholic Truth Society (ACTS) pamphlet entitled JOC - Young Christian Workers (YCW), which sought to make the Jocist or YCW movement known to an Australian audience. After various experiments by

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102 “Lay Catholic spirituality in the forty years before the Second Vatican Council was characterised on the one hand by a passive and highly emotive piety centred on personal holiness for the next world, and, on the other hand, by an active apostolic spirit which called for an analytical understanding of the world in order that it might be transformed.” Massam, Sacred Threads, 3.
Kelly and others, the first “official” YCW group began in Melbourne in 1941 under the direction of Fr Frank Lombard.  

Cardijn had secured Pope Pius XI’s endorsement of the JOC in 1925. In the much told story of their meeting, Pius XI declared that the “greatest scandal of the nineteenth century was the loss of the working class by the Church”, and expressed his delight that Cardijn had come to speak to him about this issue. In subsequent addresses, and most notably in Quadragesimo Anno Pius XI would point to the JOC as a realisation of his vision for Catholic Action declaring, in a phrase Cardijn that frequently repeated, that “the first and immediate apostles to the workers ought to be the workers” (QA 141).

The Australian hierarchy sought to implement the pope’s vision for Catholic Action: it was the theme of the 1934 Melbourne Eucharistic Congress, and in 1937 the fourth Plenary Council created an Australian National Secretariat for Catholic Action (ANSCA), appointing Campion Society members F. K. Maher and B. A. Santamaria as its first directors. However, different members of the Australian hierarchy interpreted the pope’s clarion call variously. In Sydney and its suffragan sees, Catholic Action was predominantly clerical in its leadership and devotional in its orientation. Fearing a diminution of his episcopal authority, Archbishop Gilroy chose not to support ANSCA in Sydney. As a consequence, ministry to

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103 For Kelly’s role in the establishment of the YCW in Australia, see David Kehoe, “Kevin Thomas Kelly, Prophet of the Australian YCW,” Cardijn Studies 1 (2017): 1-11. Earlier that same year, Adelaide layman Paul McGuire and the English priest John Fitzsimons wrote Restoring all Things: A Guide to Catholic Action, which was the first work to explain Jocism in English.


youth in Sydney would continue to be predominantly devotional, social in orientation, and under significant clerical oversight for years to come.106

Archbishop Mannix threw his support behind the YCW, and so Melbourne quickly became its national base. Lombard was appointed national chaplain to the movement and Justin Simonds, Mannix’s coadjutor, was appointed its episcopal chairman. After this, the YCW grew quickly. The female counterpart to the YCW was the National Catholic Girls Movement (NCGM), which was intended to be the national mass movement of Catholic Action for young women. A third Jocist movement, the Young Christian Students (YCS), followed a slightly modified version of Cardijn’s methods for high school students.107

2.5.2 Cardijn’s Vision

Cardijn’s vision for young workers originated from his own experience. As a young seminarian he had witnessed his working-class friends’ abandonment of the faith because they believed the Church had identified with the bourgeoisie in the class struggle generated by the industrial revolution.108 Cardijn’s peers likely did not understand the deeper forces behind that class struggle which included the mass displacement of young people as they left their families in search of work in the new factories of Europe. This dislodged them from the Ancien Regime nexus of family, parish/local community and national identity. As the Church sought to reinstate the previous status quo, it shared the restorationist aspirations of the nobility, which alienated the young workers. Drawing upon the French Catholic tradition of social reform exemplified in men such as Frederic Ozanam, the Belgian Cardijn

106 The predominant youth organisation in Sydney became the Catholic Youth Organisation (CYO), which was aimed at young people in their first years in the workforce (and so often in their mid to late teens). See Kevin Coen, Monsignor John Leonard and the Catholic Youth Organisation (Strathfield, NSW: St Pauls, 2000).


made it his life’s work to re-unite the Church, not simply with the worker’s cause but with the young workers themselves.  

109 The way this would be achieved was by a “re-christianisation”, which would restore the connection between faith and young workers’ lives through the transformation of their “environment”.

The YCW was also a response to the new phenomenon of adolescence. As we have seen, from the 1870s, but especially in the 1920s and 30s, various Australian ventures had attempted to develop the faith of young Catholics aged roughly between fourteen and their early twenties. However, these responses reflected the ambiguous nature of adolescence at this stage: youth were often perceived either as children (whose faith formation would be addressed by Catholic education) or as near-adults (in which case adult devotional practices were transposed to the younger age group). In talks and in accompanying literature, the YCW leaders acknowledged youth as a new stage between childhood and the onset of adulthood (even if these young people were already engaged in full-time work). Remarks by Fr Robert Kothen reflect this. In the original ACTS pamphlet, Kelly quoted from a speech of Kothen’s: “the YCW intends to be the school of the young workers. It is evident that the years of youth are of the highest importance for physical, intellectual and moral formation. No one has ever dared suggest that this formation ends at 14 ... and yet it is a fact that working-class youth is abandoned to itself at 14 years of age.”  

110 Here Kothen presumes that the “years of youth” form a discrete stage and a formative role within the life cycle.

Cardijn’s movement was also a response to “secularism”. In the same ACTS pamphlet, Kelly reproduced a speech of Cardijn’s on the topic of the “new paganism”, in which Cardijn


warned against a complacent approach to “atheism” that understood it to be confined to totalitarian countries and failed to recognise the inroads that non-belief was making in well-populated European parishes.\(^{111}\) For Cardijn, the real issue was not so much a straightforward decline of belief and practice among the faithful, but rather “a new civilisation [was developing] without God, but with new idols, which give rise to a new code of morals, a new code of law entirely pagan, materialistic, atheistic”. This was a “new outlook on everything - a new way of understanding, of explaining, of organising life, society, morality, justice ... work, health, free time, the nation, the national authority, work, health, free time, love and pleasure ... a way which excludes all idea of God.” Cardijn argued that the new paganism “is the last and most extreme stage of secularism, which, following upon Protestantism, has developed in the contemporary world, and which ends in a violent spasm of the most absolute atheism and most brutal paganism.”\(^{112}\)

Cardijn’s assessment of modern culture did not greatly differ from the general position taken by most within the ultramontane Church of the time. Members of the sodalities would have agreed with much, perhaps all of his description of modern society. While the sodalities offered a retreat into the apparent security of the parish and the consolations of a privatised spirituality, Cardijn instead called his young workers to apostolic action. Where Cardijn’s vision significantly differed was that he did not insulate young people from the deleterious effects of the culture, but engaged them as the principal protagonists in its transformation. This altered response to culture is the primary difference between the sodalities’ insular, devotional stance and the YCW’s apostolic method.

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\(^{111}\) See Kelly, JOC.

\(^{112}\) Kelly, JOC. Note that Cardijn uses ‘secular’ as the counterpart to the ‘sacred’ role of the priest, which he also distinguishes from ‘secularism’, which he understands to be an atheistic exclusion of God from the different spheres of society.
2.5.3 YCW Methodology and Structure

Cardijn called his program for action the see-judge-act method. In Australia as elsewhere, the method was frequently grounded in Thomas Aquinas’ discussion of the virtue of prudence, which meant that it was considered a “natural process” for arriving at a course of action. The method consisted of seeing or examining a particular set of circumstances, forming a judgment about those facts through recourse to Christian principles, and then acting to address the problem. Rather than beginning with theories that would hopefully then move the workers to action, the method began with a reflection upon the workers’ lived experience, then engaging with theoretical principles, which would in turn suggest a new course of action.

The primary application of the see-judge-act method was the “social enquiry”. A particular topic, often provided by the YCW’s national headquarters but sometimes arising from a Jocist’s experience, would be examined through the see-judge-act methodology. Cardijn intended that the re-christianisation of the worker and his or her milieu would take place through this process, or as his Australian interpreters Mayne and Mitchell put it: the worker “sees that the religious truths he has learned in an abstract way have to do with life - where he has given a notional assent before, he gives a real one now. Gradually, the divorce between religion and life is overcome, for life is taken apart piece by piece to be reassembled in the light of the teaching of Christ.”

Cardijn also wanted the Jocists to enquire into the specific circumstances of their personal lives and into the Gospels through the same see-judge-act process. Although he did not use the term evangelisation, Cardijn believed that young people would return to the

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practice of their faith through actions that altered their lived situation. This can be seen in Cardijn’s own description of his practice:

During the sixty years I have lived with young workers, I have never met any who are immediately concerned with spirituality and moved by supernatural ends, nor are they concerned with the doctrinal fundamentals of the apostolate. This only comes after a long period of moving forward together. But from the beginning I was interested in their work and their lives. I got them to speak. I asked what they were thinking, what they thought about their work, their housing, their recreation and all the various aspects of their lives. I thanked them for their responses and their frankness. We were strangers no more and we started to become friends. They told me their secrets. We searched together how to improve their behaviour, how to help others. We met together as militants to make these findings, to do this review of life. Together we made recollections and retreats where we implored the help of Christ, Mary, and all the saints in heaven. Little by little they began to understand the need for the sacraments, the mass and communion to unite themselves with Christ, to live with Him, by Him.116

The precise configurations of the overall JOC structure changed over time, but the basic unit was always the leaders’ group (or the militants’ group as it was originally known). The YCW/YCS structure also included “services” run by the movement. In Australia these different services included activities such as retreats and communion breakfasts, courses for engaged couples, and debating, drama and public speaking groups, short-term accommodation, vocational guidance and the establishment of co-operatives. The largest services were the men’s and women’s sporting competitions. The final element of the YCW structure was “campaigns”. These could be of a local, regional or national nature, in which a social enquiry was conducted with a view to an action in the public sphere to achieve social change on behalf of young workers. The most successful example of this in Australia was a national road safety campaign, which led to legislation requiring the use of seat-belts and alcohol limits for drivers.117

2.6 The Period of Transition: the 1960s and 70s.

As the YCW began in Australia, the term “teenager” was coined in the United States.\textsuperscript{118} By 1945 the term was in popular usage. As Thomas Hine writes, “What was new about the idea of the teenager ... was the assumption that all young people, regardless of their class, location, or ethnicity, should have essentially the same experience, spent with people exactly their age, in an environment defined by high school and pop[ular] culture.”\textsuperscript{119} In the years after the war, Australia would increasingly look to the United States, not only as a political ally, but also as a cultural pacesetter. Australia not only adopted the term teenager, but also many features of the new youth sub-culture. In Australia, the first generation for whom Hine’s definition of the teenager truly applied were the children of returned military personnel, or the Baby Boomers, as they came to be known.

Popular culture was driven by postwar affluence, in which previously considered luxuries were made available to larger and larger segments of society as military technology was adapted to serve commercial production methods. According to Charles Taylor, this led to a diminution of working class communities, as increased financial security within the family resulted in reduced interdependence within a broader neighbourhood, and even upon the extended family. The importance of the nuclear family engendered a new emphasis upon the family home, as people increasingly furnished their homes in a manner that was expressive of their unique family.\textsuperscript{120}

More and more teenagers remained in high school from this point on, partly because the age of compulsory education had been raised to fifteen, partly because they were no longer needed to supplement the family income, and because parents saw education as the

\textsuperscript{119} Thomas Hine, \textit{The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager} (New York: Perennial, 2006), 11.
\textsuperscript{120} Taylor, ASA, 474.
pathway to material progress. As older teenagers completed high school and entered the workforce, and increasingly as younger teenagers acquired part-time jobs while still at school, a commercial market specifically directed at these young people opened up. Youth culture was wedded to consumerism from its inception.

While Australian youth increasingly stayed in school, not everyone possessed equal access to the higher years of education, and especially university. Drawing upon the images of American youth that they saw in movies, some of these economically disenfranchised young people adopted unconventional hairstyles, tight trousers or gabardine skirts and bobby sox, and called themselves bodgies (for males) or widgies (for females). They preferred motorbikes to cars and, like their larrikin forbears, bodgies and widgies were associated with sexual precocity, petty crime and violence. They embraced rock and roll and the new dances associated with it. Bodgies and widgies had enough purchasing power to distinctly define themselves through their alternative clothes and musical preferences, but they were largely unable to experience the social advancement a university qualification provided. Their self-chosen identity was a form of protest against their social and material exclusion. More disturbingly for the older generations was the enthusiasm with which teenagers from middle-class and even wealthier backgrounds adopted these same activities. As these features came to characterise teenagers generally, the bodgies and widgies’ original element of political protest concerning their material exclusion gave way to a more general sense of liberation, especially sexually, from the values of the previous generation.

During the 1950s the Church continued to try to insulate young people from these (and other) societal developments. Initiatives to strengthen familial expressions of faith (such as

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the Rosary crusade of 1954), Catholic education (which scrambled to accommodate the influx of Catholic Baby Boomers entering high school), and Catholic sporting teams and social clubs were marshalled together to safeguard young people’s faith against the perceived communist threat and the atheistic impulses within Australian culture.\textsuperscript{122}

In both schooling and sexuality, teenagers were increasingly caught in a no-man’s land that was not of their making. As high school became an important staging zone for pursuing a chosen career, young people were provided with the critical tools to challenge their teachers’ intellectual positions and authority, and yet were unable to enter into adult roles themselves. The double standard concerning sexual expression between teenage boys and girls was stretched to breaking point as girls were placed in the untenable position of fulfilling a (or more than one) boy’s sexual desires lest they be labelled ‘frigid’, while at the same time not appearing too ‘easy’, and without getting pregnant (which was entirely the girl’s responsibility).\textsuperscript{123} All too often, these adolescent tensions were compounded by parental bewilderment at the values and decisions of their children. The sexual revolution took place in the face of strident objections from the churches. To young people, the churches’ denunciation of sexual liberation located Christian faith on their church-going parents’ side of the generation gap. Resistance to attending church became an important aspect of teenage rebellion, and the decline in participation in church intensified among the Baby Boomers as they entered their teenage years.

\textbf{2.6.1 The Decline of the YCW}

The YCS/YCW peaked in the early 1960s. In Australia, the direct reasons for the subsequent decline were the reduced appeal of its sporting and social activities as new

\textsuperscript{122} See Massam, \textit{Sacred Threads}, 79.
\textsuperscript{123} Kociumbas, “\textit{Australian Childhood}”, 223.
forms of entertainment became more widespread, and the social mobility of young Catholics who had completed both secondary (and often tertiary) education, and so did not identify as workers. The YCW’s decline was part of the broader pattern of decline in participation and the manifold challenges to ecclesial life that occurred in the wake of the Second Vatican Council (exemplified by the exodus of YCW chaplains from the priesthood).

A further reason was that the YCW’s goal to evangelise young people was overwhelmed by its other goal to transform the culture through young workers’ actions. This was exacerbated by the tumultuous changes that took place after the Council, when the validity of proclaiming the Gospel was widely challenged. In Australia the YCW’s spirituality of mission initially called into apostolic action those young people who had been reared on popular piety and a strong Eucharistic practice. In the post-conciliar era those spiritual foundations could no longer be presumed, which led to a reduction in the YCW’s ecclesial commitments. Cardijn’s evangelical goal was lost from view.

The decline of the Jocist movements coincides with the shift from the Age of Mobilisation to the Age of Authenticity. Cardijn’s movement was the quintessential expression of an Age of Mobilisation organisation. It was highly structured, possessed significant hierarchical support, and was strongly focused upon the recruitment of more members to effect social change. As expressive individualism became a mass phenomenon, and spirituality accordingly became a very personal choice, the highly structured Jocist movements appeared out of place with the new temper of the times.

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124 Val Noone writes: “The YCW had a conflicting and ambiguous view of itself: partly it was an official Catholic organisation with a mission to bring workers to church, partly it was an organisation of young workers struggling to do away with the injustices facing them. The YCW set out to both bring about justice for the working class and also to convert the working class to Jesus Christ”. Val Noone, “A New Youth for a New Australia,” Footprints: Journal of the Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission 2, no. 2 (1995): 39.


126 Taylor, ASA, 445.
2.7 Phase Three: From Antioch to Anointed and Sent

2.7.1 The Antioch Movement

While the YCW declined during the seventies and eighties, its legacy was evident as many in the Australian Church embarked upon the “justice road”, as Edmund Campion described Catholics’ engagement with issues such as the Vietnam War, Aboriginal reconciliation, and poverty in developing nations. In addition to the formation provided by the YCW, the justice journey was inspired by the Council, especially in Gaudium et Spes, and then as people learned of Latin American liberation theology and Paul VI’s qualified endorsement of it in Evangelii Nuntiandi.

In the United States, Evangelii Nuntiandi also provided fresh terminology and direction for those engaged in ministry with young people. The 1976 national statement entitled A Vision for Youth Ministry referred to the different “elements” of evangelization identified in EN 24. In so doing the document recognised that young baptised Catholics needed to be evangelised and not simply catechised, although Vision placed much more emphasis upon the latter. The document’s title reflected a shift in the Church’s activities with youth: it was no longer to be called the youth apostolate, but youth ministry. This change in name represented a change in method because Catholic education, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine and the Catholic Youth Organisation were no longer engaging young people in the USA as they once had. The new emphasis upon evangelisation was therefore reflective of the fact that fewer young people were responding positively to the Church’s pre-existing patterns of ministry.

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127 Campion, "Australian Catholics", 238-46.
129 Michael Warren, Youth and the Future of the Church: Ministry with Youth and Young Adults (New York: Seabury Press, 1982), 8-9.
It was in this new moment that Michael Warren spoke approvingly of the development of weekend retreats that sought to explain the basics of the Christian faith to young people through an experience of Christian community.\textsuperscript{130} One of these groups was Antioch, which began at the University of Notre Dame in 1968.\textsuperscript{131} After it was adapted for high school students, Antioch came to Australia after three members of the Pirola family attended an Antioch weekend in 1981 in New York. The Pirolas coordinated the first Australian Antioch weekend later that same year. Antioch grew rapidly for the following ten years. By 1988, 31,500 young people had attended an Antioch weekend, and a weekend had been held in one in five Australian parishes. At its peak, there were 194 “communities” or Antioch groups around Australia, and approximately 4,200 young people attended those groups each week.\textsuperscript{132}

At a time when the term ‘evangelisation’ was new to Australian Catholics and held in suspicion by many, Antioch unapologetically declared its evangelistic orientation. Drawing upon Paul VI’s famous declaration that the Church exists to evangelise (EN 14), the movement defined evangelisation more narrowly, stating that evangelisation meant “letting others know the good news of Jesus Christ - that we are saved through his death and resurrection - that we can come through him to the Father.”\textsuperscript{133}

The “basic outreach” or programmatic tool at the service of the Spirit’s evangelising activity was the Antioch weekend. Like the Cursillo weekend it was based upon and the charismatic renewal’s Life in the Spirit Seminar, the Antioch weekend is best understood as

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\textsuperscript{132} Pirola, "Insights," 294.
\textsuperscript{133} Ron Pirola and Mavis Pirola, Antioch: The Australian Experience (Sydney: Antioch, 1990), 1.12. This folder is referred to as the Antioch Manual and its pagination is by chapter and page number.
\end{flushright}
a “kerygmatic evangelisation course”, which was “designed to allow a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.” The tightly structured program was divided into three sections: the first six talks were grouped under the heading of the “personal call to holiness”, the second block of talks unpacked the concept of the Church as the Body of Christ, and the final concept the weekend introduced was the missionary vocation of the baptised. Antioch groups were strongly encouraged to run two weekends per year, but a survey in 1988 suggested few groups possessed the resources to run more than one annually.

The Antioch manual presented the teenage years as the “first major decision time” concerning faith, and that “this [was] where Antioch comes in.” The weekend’s immediate goal was to engender a “conversion experience” in the participants’ lives. The question was posed in the manual: “why don’t young people go to Mass?” The answer given was that it was because they had not experienced a conversion to Christ. It went on to define conversion as a “change of mind and heart so as to bring about a change in lifestyle.” The manual recognised that such a conversion could happen over time through involvement in the movement, the experience of serving others or an experience of suffering, but the emphasis was clearly upon the weekend: “the dynamics of the [weekend’s] program offered what can only be termed 'a conversion experience'. The Antioch Weekend clearly had the capacity to dramatically awaken faith and change lives in the space of 48 hours.”

The young people themselves gave most of the Antioch weekend talks. Antioch thus repeated Cardijn’s principle of “youth to youth” ministry, which had also been re-stated by

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135 Pirola and Pirola, Antioch Manual, 1.3.  
136 The manual states, “The first thing to note about the Antioch weekend is that it is a conversion experience”. Pirola and Pirola, Antioch Manual, 1.12.  
Paul VI, when he declared that well-trained young people were needed to be the apostles of youth (EN 72). As a sample letter in the manual to parents attested, the weekend consisted of “teenagers and young adults expressing Christianity in the language of youth.” The guidelines for the weekend repeatedly encouraged young people to “share” their personal experience of the topic under discussion rather than give a “sermon” or “lecture”. More than providing “positive peer pressure”, it was the combination of young people giving the talks and the eschewal of a didactic tone in favour of a personal sharing of their own attitude to faith and experience that aligned the Antioch methodology with the Age of Authenticity’s sensibilities. Rather than being told what to believe by an authority figure, the weekend’s participants listened to their peers speak about what they had found personally meaningful for their own journey of faith. It was this testimony to their own search and discovery of spiritual meaning within a broadly traditional articulation of Catholic faith that ‘spoke’ to the young people listening. Without necessarily realizing it, the speakers were appealing to the regnant (though predominantly implicit) ideal of authenticity within the broader culture to make their own adherence to the Catholic faith both simultaneously plausible to themselves and attractive to their audience.

The Pirolas sought to balance the “youth to youth” principle by stressing that a “parent couple” was needed for each Antioch group. They envisaged this role to be far more than a supervisory presence at Antioch events. Rather the couple were to bear witness to married life, and through their sacramental union extend God’s hospitality to the “Antiochers”.

While the Pirolas maintained that Antioch should be integrated within the broader parish, this did not always eventuate in practice, partly because parishioners did not always

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139 Pirola and Pirola, Antioch Manual, 3.4.
140 This vision reflected the Pirolas’ own experience: see Pirola, “Insights ” 296-301.
welcome the Antiochers preference for more contemporary forms of music, their dress or displays of behaviour deemed irreverent or inappropriate. The rhetoric concerning Antioch could also foster a certain distance from the rest of parish life. In the effort to engage uninvolved teenagers, the movement deliberately positioned itself as a slightly rebellious and alternative expression of Catholic faith that contrasted with the more traditional and typical experience of Sunday Mass.\(^\text{141}\) It was considered important that the movement not appear too closely aligned with more established expressions of faith if it was to attract the youthful generation. At times this created tensions between the Antiochers and the parishioners, and it could also make a young person’s transition from Antioch into mainstream parish life problematic, as parish life could appear almost culturally alien to post-Antioch young adults.

This issue was not confined to parish liturgies. Like the sodalities of the early twentieth century and the CYO in Sydney, Antioch’s spirituality was deeply affective in nature. Antioch employed new affective symbols such as a rock and rose but retained a direct focus upon Jesus, who could be encountered through the Gospels and within a loving, Christ-centered (Antioch) community. For older Catholics who had embarked upon the justice road, Antioch’s spirituality fostered emotionalism and an insufficient interest in larger social concerns. To others, the language of a personal relationship with Jesus seemed to be borrowed from evangelical Protestantism, even though the expression had been employed in Ad Gentes, the Second Vatican Council’s document on the Church’s missionary activity.\(^\text{142}\)

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\(^{142}\) “This conversion must be taken as an initial one, yet sufficient to make a man realize that he has been snatched away from sin and led into the mystery of God’s love, who called him to enter into a personal relationship with Him in Christ” (AG 13).
The Antioch movement also continues in a reduced form today. In keeping with her focus upon Antioch’s “familial model”, Teresa Pirola attributes the decline of the movement predominantly to the changes to the family that have taken place in Australian society since Antioch’s inception. The most significant reason is that the cultural context in which Antioch’s ministry took place had significantly shifted by the 1990s. The majority of Antiochers were the children of practising parents, even if some of these young people had ceased to attend Mass themselves at an earlier point in their lives. Antioch complemented the faith foundation that young people had received from their families and from the Catholic school by offering an expression of Catholic faith that young people found attractive. In this context, the “conversion” the Antioch weekend facilitated was a young person’s personal appropriation of the familial faith that he or she had been raised in. As the Baby Boomers became parents of teenagers their reduced and decreasing participation in their faith created a flow-on effect, reducing the number of teenagers who attended Mass regularly or had done so as children. The decline of Antioch is most attributable to this development.

2.7.2 The Contribution of New Movements and Communities

A number of new ecclesial movements and communities began to make a contribution to youth ministry from the 1980s onwards. Several, such as the Emmanuel Community (originating in France), another Emmanuel Community (which began in Brisbane) and the Disciples of Jesus Community (Sydney) were expressions of the Catholic charismatic renewal, which had begun in 1967 in Pittsburgh, USA. All of these communities were inter-generational, but all engaged in some form of youth ministry. The communities

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143 Mason et al, SGY, 315-6.
possessed different emphases and characteristics, they were united by a common
conviction that people needed to appropriate the graces of their baptism and confirmation
through a personal act of faith. This “baptism in the Spirit” was a catalyst for living a full
Christian life, and someone knew they had received this grace when they began to
experience a personal relationship with Jesus, an awareness of the Father’s personal love
for them, and a new sense of the Holy Spirit at work in their lives. This was characterised as
a “conversion experience”, and further evidence of this change could be seen in a new love
for the Eucharist, prayer, a change in moral behaviour, a desire to be formed in one’s faith,
and a personal awareness of sharing in the mission of the Church. The principal instrument
for communicating this experience was the Life in the Spirit Seminars, a seven-week
kerygmatic course designed to communicate the basic message of Christian faith, and
culminating in an experience of prayer for baptism in the Spirit.\textsuperscript{145} In addition to papal
approbation of the charismatic renewal, these new communities looked to Jesus’ command
to make disciples, and then to EN and RM as justification for their commitment to
evangelisation.

The youth ministries of these movements usually provided some adapted form of the
Life in the Spirit Seminars for their youthful audience. In virtually all other respects, their
ministries adopted features from Antioch and similar youth ministries, such as the meetings’
format (which usually included activities such as games or ice-breakers, singing, communal
prayer, a talk and small discussion groups). While the new communities may have softened
their tone when ministering among young people, practices such as speaking in tongues, the
gift of prophecy and praying for physical healing were commonly part of these youth

\textsuperscript{145} Collins, \textit{Basic}, 221-3.
As was the case with the charismatic renewal more generally, Catholics used to more traditional expressions of faith reacted variously to these communities, but they often proved attractive to young people. Their non-parochial status at times also made for tensions with parish-based forms of youth ministry, while other parishes drew upon some of the new communities’ ministries in order to supplement their own ministry with youth.

Like Antioch, however, these communities tended to draw young people who were already active in ‘ordinary practice’ by offering a new personal experience of faith. As a consequence, the general decline in participation has affected these groups too.

2.7.3 The World Youth Days

The first group of Australians to attend a World Youth Day (WYD) were from Antioch who sent a group to the 12th WYD held in Paris in 1997. Over two thousand Australians attended the international WYD held in Rome in 2000. Some bishops travelled with pilgrims from their dioceses and witnessed firsthand the impact that the WYD celebrations had upon them. Similar sized contingents were then sent to the Toronto WYD in 2002 and to Cologne in 2005. These numbers were bolstered by the presence of young school students.

Many bishops and diocesan youth ministry coordinators dedicated significant time and resources to preparing pilgrimage groups to attend the Rome, Toronto and Cologne WYDs, in the belief that the high costs involved in participating in these overseas experiences were justified by the spiritual impact that they had on the young people who went.

These levels of commitment were greatly intensified in the three-year preparation for the 23rd WYD (WYD08), which was held in Sydney from July 25-30, 2008. 113,000

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146 For an account of youth ministry in one of these communities, see Shayne Bennett, “Youth Ministry in a New Community: The Experience of the Emmanuel Community,” in Australian Catholic Youth Ministry: Theological and Pastoral Foundations for Faithful Ministry, ed. Christian Fini and Christopher Ryan (Mulgrave, Vic.: Garratt, 2014), 309-30. The Neo-Catechumenal Way has also evangelised many young Australian individuals, but this movement has had minimal impact upon youth ministry in the broader Church.
Australians and 110,000 overseas pilgrims registered for the weeklong event, swelling to 500,000 people for the final Mass with Pope Benedict XVI at Randwick Racecourse. Bishop Anthony Fisher, one of the auxiliary bishops of Sydney at the time, was appointed coordinator of the event. Just after the event, Fisher stated that “the goals we set - to which we regularly recalled ourselves - were: to provide the pilgrims with *a moving and sanctifying pilgrimage in faith* so that their faith and idealism might be strengthened; to offer opportunities to *experience the power of the Holy Spirit*; to assist them to (re-)*connect with the Church* and (re-)*discover the centrality of the Word and Sacrament*; and to enable them, with the graces of WYD08, to *be witnesses to Christ* in the decades ahead.” These goals were inspired by Acts 1:8, the scriptural text that Benedict XVI had set as the theme for WYD08.

The evangelical hopes of the bishops for young people’s participation in earlier WYDs and the goals set for WYD08 were in keeping with John Paul II’s own evangelical vision for the World Youth Days. Perhaps the clearest statement of the pope’s own intention for WYD came in 1996, when John Paul II stated that their “principal objective ... is to make the person of Jesus the centre of the faith and life of every young person so he may be their constant point of reference and also the inspiration of every initiative and commitment for the education of new generations.”

The initial inspiration for WYD arose from a gathering of youth in Rome on Palm Sunday, 1984. Over 300,000 young people attended the Palm Sunday Eucharist at St Peter’s, as well

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as attending sessions with bishops, Mother Teresa, and Br Roger of Taize. They joined with the pope for the Stations of the Cross at the Colosseum and were accommodated in Romans’ homes. In the following week John Paul II presented the large wooden cross that had been placed in St Peter’s for the duration of the Holy Year to the youth of the world. These events and experiences would become the principal features of the World Youth Day experience.

Drawing upon these paschal origins, Selina Hasham has made a plausible case that the World Youth Day events are loosely based upon the Church’s celebration of Holy Week. She likens the arrival of the pope to the Palm Sunday celebration, the Stations of the Cross on the Friday of the World Youth Day week parallel the remembrance of the passion, and the Saturday evening vigil and Mass the following morning mirror the Easter vigil and Mass.150 The French sociologist Daniele Hervieu-Leger has instead suggested that the overall program of the World Youth Days is derived from the youth summer programs of the ecumenical Taize Community.151 Hervieu-Leger’s contention complements rather than invalidates Hasham’s contention, as much of the Taize program, including their Friday evening prayer service around a large wooden cross and the service of light celebrated on Saturday nights are also inspired by the Easter liturgies.

Hasham’s inter-linked paschal and baptismal interpretation of WYD has not been as apparent to others. In large part, this is because the research concerning WYD has largely consisted of sociological analyses of WYD’s impact upon young Australian attendees, or “pilgrims” as they are popularly known. Over several studies Richard Rymarz has found that school-age Australian pilgrims to overseas WYDs tend to be “active” Catholics. That is, they

typically possessed higher levels of belief and practice in comparison to other young Catholics prior to their participation in the WYD.152 A significant proportion of these pilgrims reported that their participation in WYD initiated a change in their faith, which they described “in terms of a greater personal commitment to their religion, whereas in the past it was something that they associated with at a more external level, often as an aspect of the family culture that they had grown up in.”153 Rymarz calls this moving from an “active to a committed” model of religious affiliation. Conversely, WYD made little impact upon the pilgrims who were not “active” Catholics prior to their attendance at the WYD. While they enjoyed the WYD they were neither more active nor committed upon their return.154

Proceeding from these findings, Rymarz argues that WYD serves as a plausibility structure in young people’s lives, making their own belief and practice credible to themselves because they experienced the support of peers and mentors who shared their faith.155 While these pilgrims typically experienced themselves as isolated amongst their peers at home in relation to their faith, for the duration of the WYD pilgrimage, they were part of a supportive group possessing a common faith. This experience within the pilgrimage group is amplified by participating in the major events of WYD, where the same experience is multiplied exponentially as they find themselves in the sea of pilgrims. While the participants know that “back home” they are in the minority, through the WYD experience

they come to understand themselves as part of a “plausible counterculture, which has critical mass.”

Charles Taylor argues that pilgrimages are congenial to young people today who are in search of faith and meaning. Taylor makes this point in reference to Taize, arguing that a significant dimension of Taize’s attraction to young people is that they are “received as searchers”, which sits well with the Age of Authenticity’s tenet that one’s spiritual commitment should be personally chosen and speak personally. Taylor suggests that WYD provides a similar experience of pilgrimage that is aligned to young people’s spiritual instincts in the Age of Authenticity.

2.7.4 Anointed and Sent

The picture of Australian youth ministry that emerges after the decline of Antioch in the early nineties is a montage of earlier initiatives. Catholic high schools continued to provide religious education to the Catholic and (increasing) numbers of non-Catholic students who attended these schools. As the number of male and female religious in the schools continued to decline, congregations such as the Marist and De la Salle brothers created new groups for both current and ex-students to share in their charism and spirituality. The YCW/YCS was re-organised nationally in the seventies and from the nineties were a modest presence in many capital cities. Antioch communities continued in various parishes, with much smaller numbers and in fewer locations. The new communities continued to attract young people, again in smaller numbers though than in the eighties. Local, parish-based initiatives had developed in various locations, but many parishes were unable to sustain any form of youth ministry.

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156 Rymarz, "Type A Pilgrims," 10-1.
157 Taylor, ASA, 517.
This placed an increasing pressure upon diocesan youth ministry structures which, in the absence of parish-based youth ministry, sought to run retreats and camps for youth across the diocese. By the end of the nineties, lay leaders had replaced priests or religious as diocesan coordinators. These new lay leaders often came from a YCW/YCS, Antioch or (less frequently) a new community background.\footnote{Hart, "Evolving Landscape," 5.} They drew on the formation they had received from those movements, but over the course of the nineties diocesan leaders began to utilise resources produced by the American National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM). The NFCYM had been advocating for a comprehensive approach to youth ministry since the 1990s. They sought to integrate the ministry with young people provided by Catholic education, parish-based catechetical programs for adolescents (CCD), and the newer approaches to engaging young people that typically employed retreat weekends and regular youth groups.\footnote{John Roberto, "History of Catholic Youth Ministry," in Leadership for Catholic Youth Ministry, ed. Thomas East (New London, CT: Twenty-Third 2013), 30-1.} This comprehensive vision found a definitive expression in Renewing the Vision, the new charter for youth ministry in the United States (1997).\footnote{United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, "Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry", USCCB, accessed June 13 2018, http://www.usccb.org/about/laity-marriage-family-life-and-youth/young-adults/renewing-the-vision.cfm.} Renewing’s comprehensive approach was attractive to Australian diocesan youth ministry leaders. It appeared to provide an overarching framework for the diverse approaches to youth ministry present in the Australian Church.\footnote{For example, see Nick Ryan, ADABLE youth Ministry Formation Program (Brisbane, Qld: Faith Education Services, Archdiocese of Brisbane, 1994).} Soon after its formation in 1999 members of the Australian Network of Diocesan Youth Ministry Coordinators (ANDYMC) began to work on an Australian version of Renewing.\footnote{Personal communication from Michael Hart, one of the ANDYMC members at that time.} Drawing upon the momentum provided by the World Youth Day held in Sydney in 2008, Anointed and Sent, the Australian
national vision statement for Catholic Youth Ministry in Australia, was published in 2009, and revised in 2014.

The introduction to *Anointed* specifies that youth ministry is “increasingly focused upon ‘the new evangelisation’ of those young people who are disconnected from the life of the Church, and upon ongoing formation and mission for those who are or may become more connected.”\(^{163}\) Like *Renewing*, one of *Anointed*’s eight components or ‘focus areas’ is evangelisation, which it characterises as a call to young people to a personal and life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ through the Church. It encourages them to hear the Gospel and deepen their understanding of the teachings of the Church, to apply that wisdom to lives of Christian witness, and in turn to evangelise those around them and the culture in which they live.\(^{164}\)

Unlike *Renewing*, which lists the eight components in alphabetical order, *Anointed* addresses evangelisation second, after prayer and worship. Positioning evangelisation reflects *Anointed*’s overall framing of youth ministry as an exercise in evangelisation. *Anointed* does not, however, provide a rationale for the focus areas’ order.

In a section entitled “Ministry in the Australian Context”, *Anointed* briefly names the significance of indigenous spirituality and culture, the impact of immigration, and the difference between rural and urban locations, before stating that, “Alongside a predominantly Christian population there are now growing numbers from other faith traditions and powerful tendencies to secularisation. Many young people are missing or alienated from institutions such as the Church.”\(^{165}\) Further on, the document contends that one of the obstacles to young people’s spiritual growth includes “the increasingly secular worldview promoted by the media and popular culture, and the values of a disposable and

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\(^{163}\) *Anointed*, 5.
\(^{164}\) *Anointed*, 19.
\(^{165}\) *Anointed*, 7.
consumption-oriented society.” These are the only two references to secularisation or the secular in the document. Taking both statements in their immediate contexts, Anointed first equates secularisation with the decline of belief and practice among young people, and then links a secular worldview with the impact of media, popular culture and consumerism. In the latter reference, secular serves as shorthand for non-religious belief. Like much of the prior developments in youth ministry then, Anointed provides only the most minimal, and pejorative, understanding of secularisation.

2.8 Conclusion: Making the Evangelical Turn

Avery Dulles argues that both Paul VI and John Paul II’s “ecclesial vision”, which was grounded in the kerygmatic theology of the pre-conciliar era and in their interpretation of Vatican II, constituted an “evangelical turn” for the Catholic Church. Dulles judged this turn to be the most surprising and important development in post-conciliar Catholicism. He went on to describe the evangelical turn as “the birth of a new Catholicism which, without the loss of its institutional, sacramental and social dimensions, is authentically evangelical.” In this chapter we have seen the way in which different expressions of Australian Catholic youth ministry took their cue from the two popes’ respective magisterial statements on mission, and in so doing made the evangelical turn begun by the two popes. YCW/YCS was an important precursor for this shift, but a clear evangelical goal for youth ministry was first clearly enunciated by Antioch and the youth ministries associated with the new ecclesial movements. Australian Catholic youth ministry completed the evangelical turn by hosting the 2008 World Youth Day and publishing Anointed and Sent, as both the largest exercise in

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166 Anointed, 11.
Australian youth ministry and the national charter document unequivocally characterise youth ministry in terms of evangelisation.

To date, different expressions of youth ministry have emphasised different elements of evangelisation, such as Antioch’s relational emphasis, the new movements’ focus upon the renewal of baptism, and WYD’s focus upon the paschal mystery. It is important to note that none of these expressions have strongly retained the YCW emphasis upon young people’s capacity, nor their baptismal vocation, to be agents in the transformation of society. If in practice the YCW could not sustain the commitment to a personal faith that was necessary for the Age of Authenticity, the subsequent evangelical movements have not sufficiently retained the Jocist commitment to justice and the evangelisation of culture in their practice either. The focus upon justice and service championed by the YCW has been left to Catholic education. Anointed and Sent fortunately articulates the importance of justice and service in youth ministry alongside the focus upon evangelisation. In so doing, the national vision statement holds together (at least in principle) two critical elements of the church’s mission to and with young people that have often proved difficult to realize together in practice.

In many respects, youth ministry pioneered Australian Catholics’ embrace of the evangelical turn, as youth ministers recognised the need to evangelise young people and sought to do so before others in the Church adopted that language or engaged in evangelisation. It is important, however, to recognise that youth ministry’s adoption of evangelisation as a guiding motif was not simply driven by the popes’ vision, but also by youth ministers’ firsthand experience of young people’s disinterest and rejection of the Church from the 1980s onwards. Taking their cue from the papal documents, youth ministers (along with the rest of the Church) called this development secularisation or secularism, which they equated with the phenomenon of declining levels of belief and
participation among young Australians. As a consequence, it is not over-stretching to say that anxiety about the widespread non-participation and disinterest of young people in the Catholic faith has significantly contributed to the embrace of a self-consciously evangelical vision for youth ministry.\footnote{In a similar vein, Mark Yaconelli argues that anxiety about young people’s moral future drives much of American youth ministry. See Mark Yaconelli, \textit{Contemplative Youth Ministry: Practicing the Presence of Jesus} (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 29-46.} The attendant risk of such anxiety is that youth evangelisation is conceived as a retention strategy, rather than as an invitation to a life of communion with the Triune God. This suggests that the way forward is twofold: to firstly arrive at a better understanding of the secular that goes beyond the popular ecclesial understanding, and then to provide a richer account of evangelisation than is common in many youth ministry environs. The first step is the subject of Chapter Three, while the second is the subject of Chapters Four and Five.
Chapter 3 Reading the ‘Signs of the Times’: Secularity and the
Voices of Young People

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter Two we saw that each of the various expressions of youth ministry has developed, *inter alia*, as a response to the phenomenon of non-practising Catholic adolescents. As the rate of belief and practice amongst young people has sharply declined these different expressions of youth ministry have become more explicitly evangelical in nature. Importantly, the publication of *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, *Redemptoris Missio* and John Paul II’s teaching on the new evangelisation provided the impetus for movements like Antioch, charismatic communities and diocesan offices to conceive of youth ministry in evangelical terms. This culminated in the publication of *Anointed and Sent*, the national framework for Catholic youth ministry in Australia. To date though, the focus upon discovering effective methods for evangelization has largely overridden the need to understand better the underlying causes of the decline of belief and participation among young Australian Catholics. As we have seen, both phase two and phase three of youth ministry’s evolution invoked the terms ‘secularism’ and ‘secularisation’ with minimal explanation, as if their meaning were self-evident.

The magisterial statements that youth ministry leaders turned to for inspiration provided only minimal definitions of the term ‘secular’ and its cognates. For example, Paul VI defined secularism as “a concept of the world according to which the latter is self-explanatory, without any necessary recourse to God, who thus becomes superfluous and an encumbrance” (EN 55). The pope held that this engendered new and more militant forms of atheism, as well as consumerism, hedonism and a desire for power, but he distinguished it
from secularisation, which he defined as “the effort, in itself just and legitimate and in no way incompatible with faith or religion, to discover in creation, in each thing or each happening in the universe, the laws which regulate them with a certain autonomy, but with the inner conviction that the Creator has placed these laws there” (EN 55). John Paul II’s only reference to the ‘secular’ in Redemptoris Missio was in relation to the laity’s vocation in the world, and in contrast to the clerical vocation (RM 71). Late in his pontificate, however, John Paul II summed up his perception of secularism when he wrote, “the eclipse of the sense of God and of man inevitably leads to a practical materialism, which breeds individualism, utilitarianism and hedonism” (EV 23).¹⁶⁹ For both popes then, secularism referred to God’s excision from modern societies, which was the principal cause of prevalent moral failures.

Many people in the churches today believe the causality works in the opposite direction. They hold that the individualism, moral relativism and hedonism present in a culture that is beholden to mass consumer capitalism have led to the eclipse of the sense of God in late modernity. Moreover, these values are often believed to be widely held by the young, which then explains their non-belief and non-attendance at church. According to this perspective, many young people are too selfish and beholden to consumerist forces within the culture to recognize the presence of God in the world and live according to God’s moral precepts. Repeated failures in this regard mount up to the point of rejecting God, or so the argument goes. The conclusion to this popular perspective is that young people today are classified as

¹⁶⁹ This is not to suggest that secularism was not a central preoccupation of John Paul II’s pontificate. The absence of references to secularism in RM are likely due to the perception that secularism was not a major issue in countries that had received little to no evangelising activity. John Paul II had a great deal to say about secularism when he addressed western nations, prompting one commentator to conceive of the new evangelisation primarily as a response to secularism: see Rino Fisichella, The New Evangelization: Responding to the Challenge of Indifference (Leominster, UK; Balwyn, Vic.: Gracewing; Freedom, 2012).
either (a small number of) believers or (a much larger contingent of) non-believers: as ‘committed Catholics’ or as ‘secular kids’.

However, the circularity of these arguments ought to prompt the question as to whether either tells us much about the decline in belief and practice in contemporary society, and especially among the young. I contend that an inadequate understanding of the place of spirituality and religion in contemporary Australian culture drives both sets of arguments, which in turn stunts efforts to evangelise young people. With that in mind, this chapter seeks to ground the task of youth evangelisation in a reading of “the signs of the times.”170 That is, it seeks to penetrate a little deeper into the location and principal features of religion in late modernity, primarily by listening closely to the voices of young Australians themselves. To do this, I will draw upon several sociological studies of young Australians’ attitudes to spirituality and faith. The chapter argues that the accounts of secularism provided by the magisterial statements and by the popular narrative outlined above do not provide an adequate description of young people’s attitudes to religion and spirituality today. The chapter then goes on to reposition some of the sociological data in the light of Charles Taylor’s account of our secular age, suggesting that Taylor’s complex analysis provides a more insightful portrayal of “secularisation”, “secularism”, and “secularity”, and because of that, a more accurate picture of the actual sociocultural context in which the evangelisation of young Australians takes place.

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170 This expression is of course taken from Gaudium et Spes 4. For a helpful discussion concerning reading the signs of the times as both a “gospel injunction” and an “ecclesial duty”, see Michael Kirwan, “Reading the Signs of the Times,” in Keeping Faith in Practice: Aspects of Catholic Pastoral Theology, ed. James Sweeney et al. (London: SCM, 2010), 49-63.
3.2 The Decline of Belief and Practice among Young Australians in Sociological Perspective

The Spirit of Generation Y (SGY) project is the most significant sociological study of young Australians’ attitudes to spirituality and religion since the beginning of the third millennium.\textsuperscript{171} The project found considerable evidence of a decline in Christian belief and practice amongst young people. While just under half of the young people surveyed identified themselves as Christians, the researchers concluded that “there is a strong drift away from Christianity” amongst this cohort, which they arrived at by combining the markers of less regular attendance, the number of young people who indicated they no longer believed in God, and the discovery that nearly one in five young people who do identify with a denomination are ex-members by the age of twenty-five.\textsuperscript{172} Most of the young people who no longer identified as Christians were from marginal or nominal Anglican or Catholic backgrounds.

According to the researchers very few of these young people abandoned Christian belief for a different world religion or alternative spirituality. The overwhelming majority had adopted a predominantly “secular worldview” instead.\textsuperscript{173} The researchers found that this was part of a broader and continuing pattern of decline in belief and practice amongst the two previous generations (the so-called “Baby Boomers” and “Generation X”).\textsuperscript{174} Many of

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\textsuperscript{171} For the SGY project’s methodology, see Mason et al, SGY, 62-8. Philip Hughes, one of the principal researchers, chose to publish his interpretation of the SGY data separately as Putting Life Together: Findings From Australian Youth Spirituality Research (Fairfield, Vic.: Fairfield Press, 2007). Hughes’ reasons for doing so are significant and will be discussed below.
\textsuperscript{172} Mason et al, SGY, 302.
\textsuperscript{173} Mason et al, SGY, 306.
\textsuperscript{174} Following the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the SGY study defined the Baby Boomers as those born between 1945-1965, Generation X as those born between 1966 and 1981, and Generation Y as those born between 1981 and 1995: Mason et al, SGY, 12. As will become clearer below, while I think there are some significant differences between these three cohorts (such as the ways in which they are being affected by the digital revolution), I hold that all three generations’ attitudes to religion and spirituality have been more decisively affected by cultural rather than generational developments. As a consequence, I have largely
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the Baby Boomer generation abandoned Christian belief and practice when they were adolescents, and as this group entered adulthood they have continued to leave the churches and/or ceased to identify as Christians up to the present. This pattern has continued in subsequent generations, including the children of the Baby Boomers who were surveyed in the SGY study.

Those surveyed were assigned to one of three ideal types according to their responses. These types were “Traditional” believers (or Christians), “New Age” believers (or adherents of alternative spiritualities originating from Eastern religions or the occult), and “Secular” young people (or those who identified as non-religious, ex-religious or undecided about religious belief). However, the researchers found a generally low level of salience concerning these different beliefs and practices in most young people’s lives. Their beliefs had minimal to low impact upon their thoughts and choices. The researchers concluded that the majority of those under the age of twenty-five have little interest in the spiritual trajectory of their lives. Only a minority (about 41%) of Generation Y are seriously involved in one of the three major types of spirituality: about 17% of Generation Y in Christianity, 6% in another traditional world-religion, 4% in a New Age spirituality, and 14% in a Secular worldview. The remaining 59%, while generally oriented in one of these directions as a result of early childhood socialisation within the family, have only a low level of commitment to their inherited worldview, and only marginal or nominal involvement in groups or organisations which embody it. They usually do not engage in any associated practices. Their interests lie elsewhere.

On the basis of this typology, the researchers decided that Robert Wuthnow’s contention that young people’s spirituality was more of a continual journey or quest rather avoided the cohort nomenclature employed by the SGY researchers. For a critique of the cohort paradigm in the study of religion, see Gordon Lynch, “‘Generation X’ Religion: A Critical Evaluation,” in Religion and Youth, ed. Sylvia Collins-Mayo and Pink Dandelion (Ashgate: Farnham, 2010), 33-8.

175 These findings concerning disaffiliation and dis-identification are corroborated by Dixon and Reid’s analysis of the Australian census data between 2001 and 2011. Dixon and Reid, "A View from the 2011 Census," 144-6.
176 According to the research 46% were Traditional believers, 17% were New Age adherents and 28% were Secular. Mason et al, SGY, 69.
177 Mason et al, SGY, 70.
than the pursuit of a permanent spiritual home was only partially correct in relation to
Australian youth: notwithstanding the evidence that a small percentage of young people
changed Christian denominations, and discounting those engaged in “New Age” spirituality
which was deemed to be “experimental almost by definition”, the predominant journey
Mason and his colleagues observed was along the “wide, short road leading to secular
spirituality, and the traffic on it is nearly all one way.”\textsuperscript{178} The researchers considered the
desire of a small number to reconcile faith with science, to challenge the dominant secular
milieu or the “fun lifestyle urged on them by their peers” to be possible evidence of a young
person’s “quest”, but they found “few” such spiritual “seekers”.\textsuperscript{179}

The SGY project found that young Australians have not taken up alternative spiritualities
in large numbers.\textsuperscript{180} This finding appears to challenge Wade Clark Roof’s assertion that a
“spiritual marketplace” consisting of eclectic spiritualities loosely based upon Eastern
religions would overtake traditional Christian expressions of faith amongst the young.\textsuperscript{181} The
SGY researchers professed themselves surprised, however, to find quite high instances of
eclectic beliefs amongst those who also professed some allegiance to traditional (Christian)
faith. Some of these young people selected some Christian beliefs they were personally
amenable to (and rejected others), while other youth incorporated non-Christian beliefs
such as elements of a doctrine of reincarnation within a basic framework of Christian
faith.\textsuperscript{182} Notwithstanding this growth in eclecticism, or the growth of both non-Christian
religions and the Pentecostal churches, all of which could point to a change in the nature of
religion and spirituality, Mason and his colleagues concluded that these small shifts did not

\textsuperscript{178} Mason \textit{et al}, \textit{SGY}, 307.
\textsuperscript{179} Mason \textit{et al}, \textit{SGY}, 306.
\textsuperscript{180} Mason \textit{et al}, \textit{SGY}, 302-3.
\textsuperscript{181} Wade Clark Roof, \textit{Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion} (Princeton,
\textsuperscript{182} Mason \textit{et al}, \textit{SGY}, 307.
constitute a substantial challenge to their principal narrative of Australian society’s ongoing secularisation and departure from traditional Christian faith.\textsuperscript{183}

When they sought to examine the possible causes for the decline in belief and practice amongst young Australians the SGY researchers considered the churches’ inability to successfully compete on Sunday with other family, leisure and work activities, as well as the way in which the churches no longer provide an important place for addressing people’s social needs.\textsuperscript{184} They pointed to the changing labour market, which has not only disrupted the traditional working week to the detriment of attendance at church, but to the way in which work has become a sort of spiritual substitute for some people. Smaller families and the high incidence of divorce can affect the capacity to effect an initial religious socialisation, giving greater capacity to peers to effect a secondary socialisation that may be at odds with the religious convictions of one’s family of origin. The sociologists suggested that the “triumph of consumerism” across virtually all aspects of life has led to the commodification of spirituality and contributed to the belief that religious affiliation is now no longer an obligation or duty, but is instead a personal choice.\textsuperscript{185}

Mason and his colleagues argued, however, that a “more potent factor” in the decline in belief and practice was “individualisation”, or the new relationship between the individual and society that has emerged in late modern cultures.\textsuperscript{186} They distinguished individualisation from individualism, defining the latter in sociological terms as the failure of the process of socialisation into a cohesive society, whereas individualisation is a defining

\textsuperscript{183} Mason \textit{et al}, \textit{SGY}, 204. Australian sociologist Gary Bouma argues that religion’s place in Australian society has changed rather than simply declined. Bouma’s argument anticipates Taylor’s, without providing anything like Taylor’s genealogical explanation of why this has come to pass. See Gary Bouma, \textit{Australian Soul: Religion and Spirituality in the Twenty-First Century} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 96-9, 101-3.
\textsuperscript{184} Mason \textit{et al}, \textit{SGY}, 312.
\textsuperscript{185} Mason \textit{et al}, \textit{SGY}, 232-4.
\textsuperscript{186} Mason \textit{et al}, \textit{SGY}, 312.
feature of a post-traditional society which consists of individuals making meaning in their lives from a range of personally chosen sources rather than receiving it through the mediation of traditional institutions.  

In this new context, young people valorise personal autonomy above all else. This has resulted in the “radical isolation of the individual”, which requires young people to forge their own path and in so doing construct their own sense of self. Mason and his colleagues argue that this perpetual self-construction takes so much time and energy that it leaves young people little room to care for others beyond their familial and friendship circles. As a consequence, few young people join groups of any description, religious or otherwise, and few evince strong signs of civic engagement and social concern. While they were hesitant to ascribe moral culpability to young people for such a stance because of the cultural forces that have created this situation, the sociologists concluded that because an element of personal decision was involved, the decisions young people made in relation to care for others still possessed a moral weight. Accordingly, the Australian researchers favourably quoted Sara Savage’s study of British youth, which asserted that individualism is responsible for a self-centred worldview that is inimical to the Christian faith.

Mason and his colleagues argued that this new configuration of the individual’s relationship to society was a common thread in many sociological analyses of the role of religion and spirituality in young people’s lives today. While these theories evaluated

188 Mason et al, SGY, 320.
189 Mason et al, SGY, 239.
190 Mason et al, SGY, 329.
191 Mason et al, SGY, 255. For the British study, see Sara B. Savage, Sylvia Collins-Mayo, Bob Mayo, and Graham Cray, Making Sense of Generation Y: The Worldview of 15 to 25 Year-Olds (London: Church House, 2006). In a study of Australian teenage boys’ spirituality, Kathleen Engebretson contends that Australia’s prosperous society fosters an individualism that decisively forms boys’ values. She argues that individualism dangerously isolates teenage boys. See Kathleen Engebretson, Connecting: Teenage Boys, Spirituality and Religious Education (Strathfield, NSW: St. Pauls, 2007), 111-6.
individualisation variously, the researchers considered its significance to be inescapable. In a succinct evaluation of these analyses, Mason and his colleagues discussed the contributions of various sociologists to the “secularisation debate” before indicating that they believed Peter Berger and Steve Bruce’s “moderate” secularisation theories to be “essentially correct” in their account of religion’s decline in modern societies.192

Bruce attributes secularisation to the process of modernisation. He argues that the phenomenon of institutional differentiation arising from the modernisation of industry and the organisation of autonomous economic and political structures led to the emergence of institutions lying beyond the churches’ purview. The emergence of these institutions led to a “secularisation of consciousness” in which different spheres of knowledge, such as that belonging to the sciences, philosophy and the arts were differentiated from religious belief and became independent domains of thought that were increasingly seen as essentially non-religious, or “secular”. The secularisation of consciousness in turn initiated a decline in the influence of the churches as religion was relegated to the private sphere. The result was a substantial and continuing decline in the numbers of people professing to be Christian.193

The Australian sociologists’ research was also informed by the work of Thomas Luckmann, who formulated an early account of secularisation in The Invisible Religion.194 Luckmann argued that as religious faith became a private matter, the corresponding absence of a unified worldview led individuals to determine for themselves what provides ultimate meaning and significance in life. This personal re-conceptualisation took place in

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193 Steve Bruce, Religion in Modern Britain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). For Mason and his colleagues’ use of Bruce, see SGY, 57.
the midst of alternative and non-religious accounts of meaning. According to Luckmann, this resulted in a new “invisible religion” focused upon “personal autonomy, self-development and self-realisation.”\textsuperscript{195} Luckmann’s argument is reflected in Mason and his colleagues’ conclusion that individualism and relativism have so shaped all three generations (with the exception of the most committed Christians and adherents of other world religions) that it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that there is a new spirituality among Boomers, X and Y: many of those who are still apparently Christian are not actually Christian in the religious sense (either sociologically or theologically). That is, they do not accept any church’s creed or moral code or form of worship or acknowledge any religious community as having claims on them. What makes them appear Christian is that they have adopted some Christian themes within an eclectic spirituality focussed on self-development.\textsuperscript{196}

Christian Smith and Melinda Denton come to a similar conclusion concerning American teenagers, arguing that the major form of religious or spiritual identity among them can be described as a moralistic, therapeutic form of deism (or MTD). In terms strongly reminiscent of Luckmann’s concept of invisible religion, Smith and Denton argue that the US National Survey of Youth and Religion demonstrates that MTD has colonised and supplanted traditional expressions of Christian faith in favour of a worldview in which God benignly assists young people’s individual pursuit of happiness through a program of self-realisation.\textsuperscript{197} In his own analysis of the SGY research, Philip Hughes suggests that many of the young Australians who do believe in God could be described as moralistic therapeutic deists too.\textsuperscript{198}

Mason and his colleagues acknowledge that the secularisation theories proposed by Bruce and Luckmann have been challenged by the assertion that religion appears to be

\textsuperscript{195} Mason et al, \textit{SGY}, 60.
\textsuperscript{196} Mason et al, \textit{SGY}, 325.
\textsuperscript{197} Smith and Denton, \textit{Soul Searching}, Chapter 4, and especially 166.
\textsuperscript{198} Hughes, \textit{Putting}, 160.
thriving in modernised societies outside Europe. Rather than adopt more historical approaches to the secularisation debate, which many consider to have discredited such structural or conventional accounts of secularisation, the Australian researchers chose to interpret individualisation and its relation to the decline in belief and practice principally through the lens of Bruce and Luckmann’s theories. They conceded that the thesis that secularisation is the product of modernisation needs to be complemented by other accounts in order to provide a more complex account of religion’s fortunes in Europe. However, through a comparison of their Australian research with similar studies in the United States and Canada, Mason and his colleagues argue that all of these English-speaking modern societies are undergoing a similar process of decline in belief and practice. They conclude that while the US may have appeared to delay the forces of secularisation for a time, it should not be regarded as exempt from the decline of belief and practice produced by secularisation.  

The upshot of this is that Mason and his colleagues interpret the decline of participation, belief and identification with the Christian faith against the backdrop of conventional secularisation theory, stating that their research provides “empirical support for the theory that a ‘cultural revolution’ took place in Australia in the 1960s and 70s, a rapid and major advance in the ‘secularisation of consciousness’, and secondly that the secularisation process is continuing.”

_The Spirit of Generation Y_ provides a deeply insightful window into the lives of young people, and a penetrating account of their religious and spiritual beliefs and practices. At

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199 More recently, the Pew Research Center has reported on the “growing minority” of “nones” (especially from the “millennial” generation or young adults) in the USA who do not identify with an organised faith. See Pew Research Center, “U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious”, accessed 1 October 2018, http://www.pewforum.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2015/05/RLS-08-26-full-report.pdf.

200 Mason et al, _SGY_, 315.
the same time, the researchers made several decisions concerning their methodology and
their theoretical framework that affected their analysis at critical junctures. First, the young
people surveyed were categorised upon the basis of the researchers’ definition of
spirituality as a “conscious way of life based on a transcendent referent.”\textsuperscript{201} It is not just that
the reference to transcendence in the definition renders the researchers’ designation of
‘Secular’ as a spirituality somewhat problematic.\textsuperscript{202} It is that the definition excludes in
advance expressions of spirituality that fall short of a discrete, “conscious way of life”.\textsuperscript{203}
This aspect of their definition does not reflect the understanding of spirituality held by the
young people surveyed. Philip Hughes recounts that some of the young people equated
spirituality with belief in God, others saw it as the presence of an inner self, some defined it
as synonymous with religion and still others considered it to be the antithesis of institutional
and traditional forms of religion.\textsuperscript{204} These responses indicate that young people did not
believe they needed to structure their lives around whatever they understood “spiritual” to
mean in order for them to possess a spiritual dimension or have spiritual experiences. This
means young Australians’ understanding of “spirituality” is not exhausted by the SGY
researchers’ categorisation of young people into the Traditional, New Age and Secular
types. This has implications for Mason and his colleagues’ rejection of the quest, their
conclusion that few young people can genuinely be called seekers, and whether their partial
endorsement of Roof’s spiritual marketplace really tells the whole story concerning the new

\textsuperscript{201} Mason et al, SGY, 38.
\textsuperscript{202} The researchers themselves acknowledged that “while it stretches the term [Secular] to its limit, and would
be rejected by some of those to whom it is applied, there is an element of transcendence in their outlook.”
Mason et al, SGY, 40.
\textsuperscript{203} Philip Hughes disagreed with this definition, leading him to publish his own version of the SGY project
research. Hughes wrote, “I have had difficulty with this definition because I have often felt that the young
people I have interviewed have not had a conscious way of life’ and, even more rarely have they adopted a
way of life based on a transcendent referent. Yet I think I have glimpsed something with many of their lives
that they or I might want to refer to as spiritual.” Hughes, Putting, 25.
\textsuperscript{204} Hughes, Putting, 25.
expressions of spirituality today. Finally, as we shall see, while Luckmann’s concept of invisible religion (or Christian Smith’s notion of moralistic, therapeutic deism) captures critical elements of a prevalent non-Christian spirituality among those who formally identify as Christian, there remains more to be said about this phenomenon than the negative judgment offered by Smith and the Australian researchers.

The second issue with the SGY research is the adequacy of mainstream secularisation theory to explain the decline of belief and practice in traditional institutional expressions of Christian faith. While the Australian sociologists allowed for the validity of other analyses, their argument rehearses mainstream secularisation narrative’s principal steps. Like other critics of mainstream secularisation theory, Charles Taylor does not dispute the basic phenomenon of a decline in belief and practice. However, he argues that one’s prior (even “unthought”) convictions about religion’s nature, validity and significance affect the way in which one considers both secularisation’s causes and evaluates its future trajectory.205 For Taylor, because theorists such as Bruce consider religion to be an epiphenomenon in human life that at best serves societal and personal ends rather than an ostensive religious function, mainstream secularisation theory amounts to the argument that modernisation sloughs religion off once other spheres of human life possess sufficient autonomy from religion to address those societal and personal goods instead. While there is no doubt that churches now struggle to provide the sense of belonging they once did in a society in which such belonging and religious belief were embedded together, the contention that this or similar purposes were or remain the only good that churches provide is grounded in a prior conviction about religion’s value and purpose within a society. The net effect of both these issues is that the SGY research emphasises Australian society’s increasing secularisation and

205 Taylor, ASA, 427.
young people’s disaffiliation from the Christian churches without sufficiently articulating the contours of youthful spirituality lying beyond the churches.

While the SGY account is not identical to the magisterial or the popular narratives discussed above, it resembles both in important respects. First, although it demurs from specifically invoking individualism or narcissism the SGY strongly approaches the popular narrative’s contention that young people are self-centred and captive to the forces of consumerism and its exaltation of choice which results in a moral relativism that sanctions whatever makes one feel happy. Second, the finding that there is a correlation between traditional believers and higher levels of civic participation lends support to the magisterial version of the narrative that the failure to believe in God leads to inwardly turned selves.206 Third, in both versions unbelief leads to personal and societal moral decay. In fact, the interpretation of the data offered by the sociologists does not significantly challenge either the magisterial or popular narratives at any point but rather buttresses their central thrust.

The substantive nature of the issues concerning the SGY researchers’ definition of spirituality and the widely held difficulties with mainstream secularisation theory invite the addition of a complementary narrative to fill out, and at times challenge, the SGY narrative’s principal elements. Charles Taylor has provided such an account, and what follows seeks to provide a more adequate description of young people’s religious or spiritual convictions in the light of Taylor’s work.

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206 Mason et al, SGY, 296-300.
3.3 The Ideal of Authenticity

In *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Charles Taylor argues that the emergence of individualism in modernity is not simply the harbinger of significant challenges but also represents an important achievement. On the one hand, people’s capacity to shape their lives according to their own lights rather than in deference to a pre-ordained social order is an important advance which was accomplished through an increased appreciation for individual autonomy. This displaced the social order’s conferral of identity and meaning to both people and things according to their pre-configured identity. This creates what many feel to be individualism’s shadow side: “a centring on the self, which both flattens and narrows our lives, makes them poorer in meaning, and less concerned with others in society.”207 Taylor suggests that this critique of modernity’s valorisation of autonomy goes back as far as Kierkegaard, de Tocqueville and most significantly to Nietzsche, but he finds the same issue expressed more recently by those concerned with the “permissive society” and the “narcissism” of the “me generation”; that is, of successive generations of young people since the 1960s.

There are strong echoes of the magisterial, popular and SGY narratives concerning the culture’s supposedly spiralling moral trajectory. While Taylor does not believe that these concerns are without foundation, he contends that an important, but largely unarticulated and thus frequently obscured moral ideal is at work beneath these developments.

Taylor calls this moral value the ideal of authenticity. He explains that while individualism predates the twentieth century, it took a new turn during the 1960s and 70s as the Romantic ideal of “expressive individualism”, which had previously been the province only of an artistic coterie, became a mass phenomenon. Expressive individualism’s diffusion

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has resulted in the belief that each one of us “has an original way of being human” that we all have to discover in order to be ourselves.\textsuperscript{208} The ideal’s Romantic origins are discernible in Taylor’s emphasis upon the self-creative power of self-expression: he stresses that to be true to one’s own originality “is something only I can articulate and discover. In articulating it I am also defining myself.”\textsuperscript{209} As Taylor points out, this raises the stakes significantly in the task of generating one’s sense of self. It bestows a “new importance to being true to myself. If I am not, I miss the point of my life. I miss what being human is for me.”\textsuperscript{210}

A critical implication of this is that depictions of what it means to be human cannot be imposed from sources external to oneself, whether they be societal norms, religious or political institutions, or even from one’s family. As we shall see, while extreme articulations of this underestimate the influence these authorities may still wield in young people’s lives, it is nonetheless axiomatic today that young people have to find their own path in life, so as to realize their unique expression of what it is to be human.

This means that the ideal of authenticity is a principal driver of de-traditionalisation, which obviously presents a challenge for the Church to communicate the Gospel in this context, as it is perceived to originate from just such an external authority. This sheds light upon common comments young people make, such as these from a fifteen-year-old girl attending a Protestant school:

[Religion at school] confuses me. We’re told to believe in things sometimes. Like at our last assembly last year our principal pretty much told us we had to believe in God and the Church. Kind of annoying, because we all feel that we want to believe in what we

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{208} Taylor, \textit{Ethics of Authenticity}, 28.
\item \textsuperscript{209} Taylor, \textit{Ethics of Authenticity}, 29.
\item \textsuperscript{210} Taylor, \textit{Ethics of Authenticity}, 29, emphasis in original. Robert Joustra and Alissa Wilkinson perceptively (and humorously) suggest that to best understand the ideal of authenticity’s ubiquity, look no further than any Disney hero for the last thirty years. See Joustra and Wilkinson, \textit{Zombie Apocalypse}, 6.
\end{itemize}
want to. I was kind of confused. I just kind of thought we don’t have to do that because you tell us to.\footnote{Hughes, \textit{Putting}, 127-8. See also the summation in \textit{SGY}: “a vigorous rejection of the authority of religious institutions, of their right to impose or urge their teachings on their adherents or on society more generally” Mason \textit{et al}, \textit{SGY}, 118.}

Similar responses from young people are often interpreted as manifestations of teenage rebellion or, more benignly as belonging to the developmental task of individuation. However, while it cannot be conclusively established, it is possible that there was more going on than the young woman was able to articulate at the time. When viewed through the prism of authenticity, perhaps her objection to the principal’s remarks was that she considered them to be an obstacle to the task of being true to herself, and thus posed a threat to her capacity to construct her own sense of self.

The young woman’s possible inarticulacy here is emblematic of a broader inarticulacy concerning authenticity that masks its true influence within contemporary culture. While he concedes that trivialised or debased presentations of this ideal are prevalent in widespread notions of self-realisation or self-development, Taylor resists the allegation that the affirmation of each person’s right to pursue his or her own form of life on the basis of what he or she values most inescapably leads to the espousal of relativism. Furthermore, to label this drive intrinsically narcissistic or hedonistic is to miss authenticity’s moral force because enshrined within the ideal are “inescapable horizons of significance”, or certain values external to the individual that do place criteria on what actually constitutes an authentic life.\footnote{Taylor, \textit{Ethics of Authenticity}, 32ff.} For example, a young person’s decision that to be true to herself she needs to spend hours playing computer games would not go unremarked upon by others in her life; realizing one’s humanity requires one to opt for self-defining features that are “higher” than the trivial or merely pleasurable. Nevertheless, it remains difficult to articulate the moral weight of authenticity because the relativist position that every choice is equally valid, while
untenable, remains insufficiently challenged. For Taylor, this does not alter the fact that even modernity’s strongest critics live by less debased versions of the ideal, as no one would seriously wish to return to a time where one’s form of life was completely regulated by one’s nationality, social location, or family of origin. In this sense, Taylor goes so far as to suggest that the ideal of authenticity is actually “unrepudiable”: we all live by it, which is not to say that it is a consciously held moral value in many people’s minds.213

Of the Australian sociologists, Hughes comes closest to articulating the ideal of authenticity young people aspire to when he writes that young people see themselves as constructing their lives through their choices. They do not believe that their identity is determined by social class, political affiliation, or by religious communities. They are aware that they inherit certain characteristics from their parents and to, some extent, are shaped by the society into which they have been born. But by and large they see themselves as building their identity through the choices they make. They see themselves as constructing their own personal stories.214

In her study of teenage boys’ spirituality, Kathleen Engebretson posed the question, “What kind of man do you want to be?” She found that the majority of the boys’ responses could be grouped into three principal categories that she termed “personal integrity and relationship values”, “success oriented values”, and “personality and physical values”. She found that every interviewee placed the integrity and relationship values well above the other categories. The boys’ responses were studded with comments like “can be myself”, “has integrity”, “is genuine”, and “possesses inner strength”.215 It seems probable that these are expressions of the ideal of authenticity, and their prominence in every boy’s response signifies the high level of importance it plays in their lives.

It is therefore possible that young people’s statements that sound like unproblematic affirmations of hedonism or narcissism need to be re-interpreted in the light of this moral

213 Taylor, Ethics of Authenticity, 23. See also Taylor, ASA, 480.
214 Hughes, Putting, 41.
215 Engebretson, Connecting, 71.
ideal. In the SGY project, 93% of the young people surveyed agreed that “the thing is to enjoy life and make the best of it here and now.” While agreeing with this statement could be an expression of hedonism, it might reflect more or other than this. Perhaps this becomes clearer when it is connected with the response that “excitement” was only surpassed by “friends” when young people were asked about what they valued most in the survey. One young person expanded upon this, stating, “exciting is ... doing what you wanna do and not doing what other people want you to do.” This might reflect a narcissistic view of the world, but it may equally (and perhaps not mutually exclusively) constitute an implicit appeal to the ideal of authenticity for the right to choose freely one’s own form of life.

Significantly, the desire for excitement was often expressed as an adventure in the SGY research. Eighteen-year-old Steven chose a picture of railway tracks in his interview, which he explained by saying: “The tracks ... show possibilities. I’d just think of endless possibilities you know, I guess that’s my life, I plan on doing 1000 things. And so there is all these tracks going off everywhere you know all these great possibilities. Just because it looks like a real adventure.” Similarly, 19 year old Zoe picked a photo of a girl on a cliff because it looked to her “like that girl is going for an adventure and I feel that my life is one big adventure ... you really have to take one thing at a time, as it comes and that’s why I picked that one, because it’s most about me, because that’s the sort of person I am.” Again, when these comments are viewed through the lens of authenticity, they invite the reflection that these

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216 Hughes, Putting, 45.
217 Hughes, Putting, 46.
218 Hughes, Putting, 48.
219 Mason et al, SGY, 236.
220 Mason et al, SGY, 236.
may not so much be expressions of a selfish pursuit of a good time, but rather indicate young people’s sense of adventure at the prospect of being and becoming themselves.

3.4 Constructing Identity

As Zoe’s comment above and the foregoing discussion indicate, the ideal of authenticity is central to someone’s sense of self, or what is commonly called one’s identity. Prior to the 1960s (and in many non-Western cultures still), identity was largely conferred upon someone, and upon young people in particular, through the complex interaction between family, local community and culture that sociologists call socialisation. Socialisation, however, underwent a critical shift in the Age of Authenticity, as identity became something to be personally achieved. As we have seen, to many people today it seems that this necessarily involves the rejection of authorities, be they familial, social, religious or political, that would seek to dictate the terms of who I am and who I am creating myself to be. However, while identity formation as Taylor understands it necessarily involves a turning to one’s self, perhaps to discover something of who I am by looking deep within, he contends that to understand this as a solitary exercise ignores the fact that my identity is inescapably formed in and through my interaction, sometimes overtly and sometimes internally, with others.221 James McEvoy sums up Taylor’s dialogical understanding of identity when he writes, “human agency is inherently dialogical. Every person both comes to a sense of self and exists in dialogue. So, rather than dialogue describing one human activity among others, it better describes the fundamental dynamism through which people discover and form their identity.”222

221 Taylor, Ethics of Authenticity, 33.
It is too simplistic, therefore, to suggest that where identity was once received, it is now personally chosen. Rather, human beings have always come to understand themselves through personal expression, by communicating who they are in dialogue with others. In a very real sense we, therefore, need someone (indeed multiple “someones”) to talk to, because we work out our identity with, and sometimes over and against the key relationships in our lives. In earlier times, some of young people’s loudest dialogue partners were the tradition-mediated institutions in their lives, such as family, church and national identity, particularly as it was expressed in the local community. In the Age of Authenticity though, these institutions have lost much of their identity-conferring power, with the exception of familial relationships in many (but not all) instances. However, even familial relationships have been relativised in relation to romantic relationships and friendships. The power of these latter two sorts of relationship resides in the fact that they are self-chosen, meaning that the very selection of a group of friends or a romantic partner are identity-constituting decisions. As a consequence, we have an unparalleled need for recognition by others who are personally significant to us because our identities are formed through this. It is unparalleled because the recognition was once built into societal structures such as belonging to a particular class, fulfilling certain occupations or roles based upon one’s gender. Now, as Taylor puts it, the “thing about inwardly derived, personal, original identity is that it doesn’t enjoy this recognition a priori. It has to win it through exchange, and it can fail.”

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223 This is why parental religiosity is the most significant indicator of a young person’s faith commitment. See Mason et al, _SGY_, 150-3.
224 Taylor, _Ethics of Authenticity_, 48. This sheds fresh light upon Christian Smith’s observation that youthful breakups can be devastating. It is not simply the grief and pain of a lost relationship; one’s identity is affected. See Christian Smith, Kari Christoffersen, Hilary Davidson, and Patricia Snell Herzog, _Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood_ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 61.
While the young people surveyed clearly and overwhelmingly value friendships as a good in itself, some of their responses implicitly reference the role these relationships play in the construction of identity. Perhaps this was most evident in Engebretson’s observation that the young men she interviewed universally rejected the “hegemonic view” of masculinity in which one would not share deeply with one’s “mates” by strongly endorsing the importance of “talking with male friends, sharing problems and emotions with them and being able to confide in them.” The role family, friendships and romantic partners play in the construction of identity today re-frames Mason and his colleagues’ assertion that these relationships are a bulwark against the loneliness of the radically isolated self in late modern society. While this is undoubtedly true, Taylor’s analysis suggests that something constructive is also going on in and through these intimate relationships.

### 3.5 The Value of Ordinary Life

In addition to the ideal of authenticity and the task of identity construction, another theme of Taylor’s that better explains some of the young people’s responses is the “affirmation of ordinary life”. This concept originated in the Reformers’ abandonment of the distinction between the sacred and the profane and their concomitant rejection of the “higher” monastic vocation. The Reformers emphasised the goodness of “ordinary life”, centred upon family life and honest work. At the heart of the affirmation of ordinary life was a “practical agape” that sought to enshrine justice and benevolence in people’s daily dealings with their neighbour. During the Enlightenment, this affirmation of ordinary life was shorn of its theological foundation and then turned back upon itself to critique the

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225 Engebretson, Connecting, 86, emphasis mine.
226 Mason et al, SGY, 332.
Christian faith. In this critique, Christian faith is held to negate the goodness of ordinary life because it is overly focused upon eternal life. The comments of eighteen-year-old Olivia indicate that this critique is still with us. When asked about what might happen after death she replied, “I don’t think it is a good outlook to have on life, to be awaiting this final thing, because you take too much for granted what happens now.” In the wake of this critique ordinary life’s value is no longer animated by a Christian ideal of holiness but by a sense of daily life’s intrinsic goodness. When the young people surveyed overwhelmingly agreed with the statement that “the thing is to enjoy life and make the best of it here and now”, at least some of them may have been affirming the value of ordinary life, consisting primarily of exciting times with family and friends and meaningful work. Similarly, the centrality of career, marriage and family to the boys’ hopes in Engebretson’s study points to the ongoing value of ordinary life for many young Australians.

A second current running through the affirmation of ordinary life is the commitment to justice and benevolence as the Reformers’ vision of practical agape was transposed in the Enlightenment into a secular humanist key. Taylor calls this the “colossal extension of a Gospel ethic to a universal solidarity”, shorn of its Christian origins.

The commitment to universal altruism contained within the affirmation of ordinary life explains something of the sociologists’ findings concerning young people’s attitudes to social justice and civic concern. As we saw, Mason and his colleagues were concerned about young people’s lack of practical action for others beyond their immediate circle. While the research uncovered a small group of very committed young “secular humanists” who were extensively involved in activities for the sake of others, those belonging to the Secular type

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228 Mason et al, SGY, 211.
229 Engebretson, Connecting, 41-2.
230 Taylor, ASA, 371, 695.
were found to be largely uninvolved and uncommitted to civic engagement or social concern. Religious young people were more likely to be involved in volunteering and other forms of social service. Engebretson found that boys she interviewed were “aware of and concerned about social and human disadvantage”, but this did not translate into significant concrete action.

Rather than simply conclude that a non-religious commitment to altruism is running out of steam amongst young people, the gap between young people’s attitudes and behaviour here may be due to a certain paralysis concerning action when faced with the scale of human need and the possibility of only a piecemeal response to that need. Furthermore, the first pole of ordinary life, which is to be committed to family, friends and meaningful work constricts young people’s capacity for altruistic behaviour beyond their immediate circle. Rather than conclude that such inaction is a symptom of narcissism or hedonism, the reality is thus more complex than the popular and magisterial narratives suggest.

3.6 Religion and Spirituality in the Age of Authenticity

The preceding discussion of ordinary life helps to explain why the magisterial and popular accounts provide an insufficient analysis of secularism or, as Taylor prefers, secularity. If, beginning largely in the nineteenth century, people increasingly began to abandon Christian faith, it was not simply because such beliefs became untenable for them. They also needed to be drawn to an attractive alternative ideal. The agape-excised vision of ordinary life that emerged in the Enlightenment provided such an ideal, in both its celebration of the value of familial relationships and work, and in its strong altruistic ethic.

231 Mason et al, SGY, 223-7. For the larger discussion around civic engagement, see Mason et al, SGY, Chapter 11.
232 Engebretson, Connecting, 118.
233 Taylor, ASA, 387.
By way of contrast, the popular ecclesial and magisterial versions of secularism present the principal attraction of unbelief to be sinful pride and selfishness, or the structural sin inherent in mass consumer capitalism. These aspects cannot be completely dismissed, but they do not adequately describe the conditions in which young people both believe and increasingly do not believe today. In other words, young people are not necessarily rejecting or abandoning the Christian faith in large numbers solely because of their commitment to unbridled materialism or because they are unwittingly mired in mass-consumer capitalism, but because they have subscribed to an alternative vision of what it means to be human that they find more compelling.

To be more accurate, however, is to recognise that young’s people’s choice of a more compelling vision often does not amount to a deliberate rejection of religious faith after a period of rigorous reflection upon the implications of such a decision, nor to a deliberate, self-conscious embrace of an alternative construal of what constitutes a good human life. When Taylor speaks of the conditions of belief that are part of our secular age, a crucial aspect of his argument is that these conditions largely belong within the realm of the pre-articulate, thematic understanding that underpins explicit cognitive logic and which in fact is the condition of possibility for these concepts. Building upon the work of Benedict Anderson, Taylor calls these conditions the social and cosmic imaginaries. The former refers to the way in which people “imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations which are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images which underlie these expectations.” Taylor distinguishes social imaginary from social theory, because he understands this to be a less cognitive process, and has more to do with the way in which...
ordinary people “imagine” their social world. The cosmic imaginary is an analogous term which refers to the way in which a culture imagines humanity’s relation to the world and to the transcendent.\(^{235}\) Therefore, when young people make conscious decisions regarding faith or spirituality today, they do so against the backdrop of a social and a cosmic imaginary that presents significant challenges to the profession of Christian faith.

However, the shift in imaginary indicated by the onset of the Age of Authenticity does not dispel the capacity for Christian faith or, as conventional secularisation theory would have it, make the end of religion inevitable. What has actually happened is that the ideal of authenticity has altered the place of religion within western societies. An institutional expression of religion has been (probably decisively) severed from a national or political identity, and the Judaeo-Christian ethic has been dismantled from its previously privileged location as the foundation of civic order.\(^{236}\)

Against the backdrop of the Age of Authenticity’s expressivist imaginary, many find religious conformity on the basis of national or political identity, or to safeguard the moral basis of society absurd. The impact of the ideal of authenticity upon religion and spirituality is that all persons are to decide for themselves what religious commitments and spiritual practices (or none) are personally meaningful and therefore contribute to the task of truly being oneself. Amongst young people today, this appears completely self-evident, as Philip Hughes’ comments reflect: “There was an assumption that if people did not own their own spirituality it was not really theirs”, and, “Almost all young people feel that it is their own responsibility to develop their own faith.”\(^{237}\) As Taylor’s genealogy shows, this is a recent development. While the selection of a Christian denomination reflected some level of

\(^{235}\) Taylor, ASA, 323.
\(^{236}\) Taylor, ASA, 486-7.
\(^{237}\) Hughes, Putting, 126.
personal choice in the Age of Mobilisation, the criterion that what I believe and how I practise must be an authentic expression of ‘who I am’ has only become the determining factor of one’s religious identity since the 1960s.

As we have already seen, the ideal of authenticity’s allergy to impositions by external authorities upon an individual’s personal search for the realisation of their humanity creates a significant challenge for the church’s evangelising task. As one twenty year old who had attended a Catholic school put it, “I don’t like the way that the church tries to run us, and the way they try to tell you to believe things - the rules and so on.”238 When sixteen-year-old Clarissa was asked if she believed in God, she replied,

right now, probably not. I’m at that stage because I went to a religious primary school and that was sort of ‘God this and God that’. And now that I’m getting sort of different ideas from everyone, having everyone’s life experiences and things, what they believe in thrown at me, so now I’m finding out what I believe in too … I am actually baptised Lutheran, because I’ve been baptised and been confirmed and done all the steps at church. But that’s in my family, religion, like you are born into that … when you are sort of old enough to actually start saying ‘hang on, what about this, what about that, I don’t believe this or that’. So I’m sort of finding my way.239 As Clarissa’s response indicates, for many young people today even their parents’ influence can be perceived to violate the principle of self-determination on the basis of personal resonance.

In the face of this, expressions of faith that emphasise a communal, biblical, and/or creedal foundation will frequently appear at odds with personal expressions of one’s own spiritual path. This development is manifest in the recent explosion of “spirituality”, which is now commonly contrasted with organised institutional forms of religion in the popular lexicon.240 For Taylor, the way in which the ideal of authenticity requires spirituality to speak to an individual’s personal experience necessarily involves searching for such resonant

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238 Mason et al., SGY, 112.
239 Mason et al., SGY, 216-7.
240 Bouma, Australian Soul, 62.
experiences, leading him to assert (following Wade Clark Roof) that the “basic mode of spiritual life [in the Age of Authenticity] is thus the quest.” As Taylor defines it, the quest is an inescapably personal journey to realize one’s humanity by adverting (whether maximally as determining the whole of life, or minimally as a dimension of human existence among others) to whatever one personally understands to be the spiritual dimension of life.

Taylor calls those who have embarked upon such a quest “seekers.” Earlier in the chapter, we saw that Mason and his colleagues found little evidence of such a quest and few such seekers among the young Australians surveyed. However, Clarissa’s response above suggests that the Australian sociologists may have been looking for something different to Taylor (and Roof) looking for signs of quest among young people today. For the SGY researchers, Clarissa’s journey represents a straightforward example of the “short journey” to the “hut” of Secular spirituality. By their lights, she is not really a seeker. This contrasts with Taylor’s understanding of the quest, which is a less deliberate search to wholeheartedly adopt a discrete spirituality. In Sources of the Self Taylor describes a seeker as someone who only tentatively identifies with the particular “framework” that they live by, and he contrasts the provisional nature of that allegiance with someone who has firmly embraced a particular framework over and against alternative frameworks. The particular framework seekers align themselves with “seems to come close to formulating what they believe, or to saying what for them seems to be the spiritual source they can connect their

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241 Taylor, ASA, 507-8. See also Chapter One of Roof, Marketplace.
242 Taylor is following Wuthnow in After Heaven.
243 Mason et al, SGY, 386. The SGY researchers were looking for substantial evidence of widespread seeking. But that seems elusive almost by its very nature, as the quest is intrinsically personal. For this reason, the sociologists pass over various instances of seeking that appear worthy of comment. For example, see Stephanie’s story from the SGY research below.
lives with; but they are always aware of their uncertainties, of how far they are from being able to recognise a definitive formulation with ultimate confidence."244

Stephanie’s story from the SGY research aptly demonstrates that the ethic of authenticity drives the seeker phenomenon. Stephanie was raised a Catholic, but became a Pentecostal in her mid-teens through the influence of her mother. At nineteen, Stephanie became a Mormon. When the interviewer prompted her to elaborate upon her “disagreements” with the Pentecostals that led her to leave, she responded,

Oh just ‘cos I’m a really deep person, a really deep thinker and I just couldn’t get my questions answered and I found contradictions and I didn’t understand some of the things that the pastor taught. I didn’t think that they were right and feel they were right and I’m not one to just say, ‘Oh I believe you because you tell me it’s true’, like I need to know - it needs to make sense to my heart and to my head.245

If those who designate themselves to be “spiritual” typically distinguish themselves from being “religious”, Taylor argues that many from within the churches dismiss the quest as “intrinsically trivial” or “privatised” on the basis of its subjectivism, the accent it places upon feeling, and its focus upon the therapeutic.246 Like the narrative that simplistically reduces the Age of Authenticity’s ethical commitments to individualistic, consumer-driven hedonism, Taylor argues that to confine new forms of spirituality to an individualistic pursuit of self-development is to observe only its most trivialised expressions. In the case of the SGY research, it would appear that the sociologists’ desire to exclude such superficial manifestations of spirituality by insisting that it be a consciously reflected upon way of life screened out more amorphous expressions of spirituality that are essentially more tentative and which fall short of demanding full-blown allegiance. This means that Taylor’s portrayal

245 Mason et al, SGY, 177.
246 Taylor, ASA, 508.
of the seekers possesses important affinities with Luckmann’s concept of invisible religion and Smith’s depiction of moralistic, therapeutic deism. In each account, people minimally identify with Christianity, but in fact have adopted more debased forms of the quest focused upon self-fulfilment.

In contrast to the seekers, Taylor, again drawing upon Wuthnow, refers to those who are largely content to ‘dwell’, or to look to some form of religious authority as determinative of their faith.247 Such dwellers might look to multiple sources of authority operating at different levels, such as the bible, a church’s official teachings, or a religious leader. It was Hughes’ nine non-Anglo-Celtic recent immigrants who most dramatically illustrated something of the ‘dweller’ sensibility in the interviews. These young Papua New Guineans, Sudanese, Indians, Filipinos, Malaysians and Samoans all referred positively to the way in which Christian faith taught them to be good and provided “rules for life”. “There was an assumption [among them] that they were judged by religion rather than they could judge or evaluate religious faith themselves.”248 Most of them believed it was wrong to question their faith or doubt God. Hughes states that “they had been taught to accept authority, and not to question what teachers, priests or ministers, or, for that matter parents, told them.”249 This corroborates Taylor’s argument that seekers are very much a product of the cultural shifts within western culture.

However, this is not to suggest that there are no young “dwellers” of European heritage in Australia. Taylor suggests that if someone experiences a religious conversion through which they experience freedom from a “deep disorder” in their lives, then it is “surely very understandable that these should often be felt as a surrender to an external authority which

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247 Taylor, ASA, 512.
248 Hughes, Putting, 132.
249 Hughes, Putting, 132. Significantly, the SGY’s example of a traditional believer in the SGY is an Eastern rite Catholic, who likely possessed a strong ethnic identity. See Mason et al, SGY, 20-4.
overcomes the self-destructive drives in oneself.”250 Taylor’s examples of this are taken from accounts of dramatic conversions of people being freed from addictions in countries such as Brazil and Africa. It is probable that this phenomenon or something like it may be found in a small number of young Australians too.

Less dramatically, the SGY researchers’ observation that early socialisation has been able to successfully transmit a ‘strong’ religious identity for a small of young Australians suggests that some adult dwellers have been able to pass on a significant level of adherence to religious authority (and hence ‘dwelling’) to their children.251 Taylor’s analysis would suggest, however, that the ethic of authenticity’s ubiquity demands that even these young people needed to personally appropriate the faith they received from their parents and their faith community. Their faith needs to “speak to them” in order for them to personally own it or re-choose it for themselves, even though their socialisation and on-going strong faith context predisposes them to make such a re-affirmation of the faith of their childhood. Taylor describes adults (such as himself) who have returned in adulthood to the practice of their childhood Christian faith as those who “believe again”, and contrasts them with believers who “believe still”, suggesting that the former have still been on a quest. Although the quest has resulted in the profession and practice of religious faith, these people believe differently on account of having engaged in the quest.252 This would indicate that if the child of practising Catholic parents personally appropriates the faith of their family of origin, then something analogous to the phenomenon of “believing again” is likely to have taken place, even if the actual period of “non-believing” appears negligible to others.

250 Taylor, ASA, 512.
251 Mason et al, SGY, 302.
Although institutional forms of religious identity are under significant pressure from the expressivist dynamic, it does not necessarily mean that some seekers will not end up in a traditional religious community. While the fundamental spiritual intuition of our age is that all must pursue their own spiritual journey, this does not mean that the content of spirituality or faith may not assume a communal and institutional expression. “Many people will find themselves joining extremely powerful religious communities [such as the Catholic Church]. Because that’s where many people’s sense of the spiritual will lead them.”

3.7 Understanding the Nova Effect

The emergence of the seekers in the Age of Authenticity is the latest manifestation of an ever-expanding range of spiritual options that began in the nineteenth century as people opted for alternatives to both outright atheism and traditional Christian belief. Taylor contends that the seekers take us “beyond the gamut of traditionally available frameworks. Not only do they embrace these traditions tentatively but they often develop their own versions of them, or idiosyncratic combinations or of borrowings from or semi-inventions within them.” The ‘tentative embrace’ of traditional frameworks amongst young Australians is reflected in the SGY researchers’ conclusion that only a minority of young people is really invested in the Christian faith, an alternative spirituality or a resolutely secular worldview. According to their findings, nearly two-thirds of the young people surveyed possessed a low level of belief and commitment to the respective worldview into which they had been socialised.

In ASA Taylor traces the origins of this expansion of spiritual options from a context in which belief in the God of Christian faith was virtually the sole possible framework of belief.

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253 Taylor, ASA, S16.
254 Taylor, Sources, 17.
255 Mason et al, SGY, 70.
to the development of exclusive humanism via providential deism. By the nineteenth century, the interplay of critiques these three stances made of each other rendered straightforward adherence to the most strident expression of atheism or to a strong confessional version of Christianity equally problematic to many people, which over time generated the alternative perspectives that lie between these two poles. Taylor calls this phenomenon the nova effect. 256 Mass expressive individualism has sent this expansion into hyper-drive, as someone can now reformulate any religious or spiritual stance in a highly individualised way in the name of being authentic. Taylor describes the impact of expressive individualism upon the nova effect as a “spiritual super-nova, a kind of galloping pluralism on the spiritual plane.” 257

The supernova provides a more accurate description of the present spiritual context than tripartite typology of Traditional, New Age and Secular ‘believers’ in the SGY. As the array of sub-types in the SGY research themselves suggest but do not fully reflect, young Australians’ beliefs fall across a wide and complex spectrum. This is evident by the amalgam of Christian and non-Christian beliefs held by those designated as marginal or nominal Christians, but it is also indicated by the numbers of young people assigned to the Secular type who professed belief in either an impersonal God, a higher being or an indifferent power in the universe. 258

The SGY typology is also largely insensitive to non-transcendent options and experiences which some people might still characterise as spiritual. Others would eschew the term spiritual to describe these same experiences, but still consider them important sites of encounter with (purely immanent by their reckoning) ‘mystery’ or ‘meaning’. These latter

256 Taylor, ASA, 299.
257 Taylor, ASA, 300.
258 Mason et al, SGY, 82-9.
terms might describe moments where they feel deeply in touch with their humanity, and perhaps express an experience of unity with others. Taylor suggests that “festive moments”, such as a rock concert, or even Princess Di’s funeral can provide such an experience, but he argues that similar experiences can be found in the experience of the arts and the natural environment. Whether people characterise experiences of the arts and the natural environment in purely immanent terms or by some gesture towards the spiritual as they understand it, these locations are important sites for expressions of the spiritual that lie in between traditional Christian belief and a thorough-going materialism. They therefore form part of the supernova of possible options concerning belief available to young people today. The SGY data provides some indications that young Australians do experience art (especially music) and the natural environment in this way.

An important consequence of the supernova is the way in which the plurality of options makes one’s own stance fragile: Taylor describes the present context as a “field of increasingly multi-form contestation, in which every position is rendered uneasy and questionable because it can be challenged from many angles.” This goes towards an explanation of, or is at least a contributing factor to the finding that a third of the young people surveyed were unsure about whether they believed in God. It seems probable that faced with the bewildering array of possibilities many young people have opted for a tentative level of belief that asks for little commitment from them.

However, Taylor’s argument goes further than this, arguing that even firmly held positions are subject to “cross-pressures” arising from the presence of multiple alternative

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259 Taylor, ASA, 337ff, and 456ff.
260 Hughes, Putting, 50.
262 Mason et al, SGY, 83.
perspectives. That is, even those committed to a particular worldview experience some doubt and contestation from alternative claims. For Taylor, it is this dimension of religious and spiritual pluralism rather than the presence of other world religions through migration that most challenges traditional Christian faith. He argues that an alternative belief is not especially challenging to one’s own faith as long as the person holding that belief appears significantly different to oneself. It is only when I experience the other to be like me in virtually every respect except faith that my own belief is rendered fragile.\textsuperscript{263} These crosspressures are evident in eighteen-year-old Fiona’s interview. As part of the interview she selected two photos that spoke to her. Commenting on the first, an office scene, she said, “Like that one, the commerce one is probably what my life is on one level and what it might seem, because money matters a lot and just having that kind of success and probably being a perfectionist”. Then, looking at the second photo of a stained glass window from a church, she went on,

It’s funny actually, that one, I’m not religious in any way at all, I’m really atheistic but I don’t know, just how it is beautiful. I don’t understand it, I mean that kind of thing like trying to figure out why I’m not religious or what I do believe in is a big part of my life because I have got so many people telling me that they are not religious or they believe this and they believe that. So much of the international stuff, it’s conflict over religion, and I just don’t understand how people can believe certain things. So maybe like a culmination of the two [photos], that’s probably what it is, the bare bones and then trying to figure out what that means.\textsuperscript{264}

Traditional believers’ responses also showed signs of fragilisation: for example, Christine did not think she had “ever turned [her] back on God”, but she went on to say, “I mean, I think there’s definitely been times, little times, where, maybe it all doesn’t add up. I mean

\textsuperscript{263} Taylor, ASA, 304.
\textsuperscript{264} Mason \textit{et al}, SGY, 125.
really, because I’m a very scientific type of person. There would be little times where it doesn’t add up or something, but I don’t think majorly.”265

An important conclusion to be drawn from this is that the secular/believer dichotomy within the popular ecclesial narrative is misleading. While “reductive materialism” (or an extreme non-religious stance) and “transcendental religion” (an unblinking affirmation of traditional Christian faith) remain the “crucial reference points”, the way in which people have positioned themselves in relation to both these poles has generated a multitude of possible stances in between.266 Although the recognition that a minority of young people are committed to an alternative spirituality adds something to this picture, these three base categories do not adequately reflect the spectrum of possibilities that is better captured by Taylor’s metaphor of the supernova.

3.8 The Immanent Frame

I have been arguing that the phenomenon of young seekers can go undetected because their quest may be subtler than is commonly understood, due to the tentative way in which that search is expressed. In particular, the quest may be missed by members of religious institutions, firstly because many young people have ruled out the churches as a possible avenue to pursue the quest, and then because many in the churches have rejected such extra-ecclesial quests as trivial (which they sometimes may but need not necessarily be). However, neither realising that more young seekers exist than is immediately apparent, nor the existence of cross-pressures do not alter the fact that most young people (like the

265 Mason et al, SGY, 143-4.
266 Taylor, ASA, 598.
broader population) are “ensconced in a relatively untroubled way” in one stance or a
another concerning faith and spirituality.267

For Taylor, the reason for this untroubled stance is largely due to the “immanent frame”,
or the configuration of the social, moral and cosmic orders in late modernity as entirely self-
contained. That is, these orders are understood to be intelligible in and of themselves, and
do not require reference to the transcendent to explain them. Importantly, the way in which
we have come to understand these orders takes the shape of an historical narrative, which
begins with the pre-modern belief that the social order was divinely configured, and then to
the modern conception that society exists for everyone’s material benefit. Similarly, the
nature and origins of the universe and human beings are intelligible without reference to a
creator. In late modernity, this has been entirely shorn of its connection to the
transcendent.

While this narrative can sound very much like an account of human progress that
jettisons belief in God in favour of an entirely immanent explanation of our social
relationships, ethical ideals and understanding of the universe, Taylor stresses that the
immanent frame need not be opposed to the existence of the transcendent in and of itself.
Our understanding of who we are in relation to each other, what drives us and the origin
and nature of the universe can be explained without reference to God. For a theist, though,
God may have created and may still sustain such an immanent frame.268 In keeping with the
concepts of the social and cosmic imaginaries, these structures are not usually expressed as
explicit ideas, but are instead present as an “unchallenged framework”, or as the pre-
theoretical understanding of the world that people inhabit.

267 Taylor, ASA, 598.
268 Taylor, ASA, Chapter Fifteen.
Taylor argues, however, that certain “structures” or elements within the culture today do push people towards a “closed take”, or the perception that there is nothing beyond the immanent order of things. Taylor calls these elements “Closed World Structures” (CWS).

Taylor calls the first of these structures that drive people in this direction “modern epistemology”. By this he means the model of disengaged reason that distances the knower from both the object to be known and the communal horizon of meaning that makes what is known intelligible. Within this framework God lies as the problematic end of a “chain of inferences”, a chain which prioritises ostensibly neutral facts over data laden with value and personal significance. According to modern epistemology these empirically verifiable facts are more trustworthy than realities that cannot be discovered by empirical methods. This perspective appears so ingrained that it seems to be the only description of how human beings come to know and convincingly outlines the parameters of that knowledge. For Taylor, the principal issue here is that modern epistemology has been decisively discredited. Taylor contends that Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty have convincingly demonstrated that we do not first come to knowledge as disengaged reasoners in the manner of the Cartesian subject, but rather are knowers in and through our bodily, social and cultural insertion into the world. We come to know something because it presents itself to us as already infused with value, meaning and significance. Modern epistemology is thus a Closed World Structure because it screens out true knowledge of the transcendent upon the basis of what knowledge consists in.\footnote{Taylor, ASA, 556-60.}

Philip Hughes’ research indicated that many young people are beholden to modern epistemology (unsurprisingly, given its status as a pre-theoretical framework within the

\footnote{Taylor, ASA, 557. Taylor has railed against modern epistemology for much of his career. For example, see Charles Taylor, “Overcoming Modern Epistemology,” in \textit{Faithful Reading: New Essays in Honour of Fergus Kerr, OP}, ed. Simon Oliver et al. (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 43-60.}
Many of the young people interviewed held that their understanding of what can be known places “common and agreed” knowledge over personal beliefs that are unable to be scientifically established. According to Hughes, young people place the natural sciences and history (especially history grounded in archaeological evidence) in the former category, while the existence of God belongs within a “grey zone” of un-provable beliefs.271

The second set of structures that militate against an “open” construal of the immanent frame is the “constellation” of narratives that Taylor calls the “Death of God” CWS. The first of these narratives posits that scientific developments have established materialism as the only plausible position to hold, and that it unmasks religious belief as illusory.272 Eighteen-year-old Fiona represents this view when she says,

I do believe that there are things that aren’t explained at the moment by science, but I believe that doesn’t mean there isn’t a scientific explanation - the idea that it’s just genes or chemical reactions that make us who we are. I don’t really think like there is this other thing like a soul in me, like I’m pretty sure it is all coming from me and how I’ve been brought up and just that’s who I am and that it is all physical and explained by science ... I just don’t think organised religion is really beneficial and I don’t really believe anything but science.273

Similarly, the SGY researchers quote an eighteen-year-old male, who states that, “having learned some things about science and evolution I can see that people were not made to be in God’s image and that leads me to realise that I don’t believe.”274

The second strand within the Death of God CWS is a version of humanity’s progress that sees religious belief as the childish relic of a bygone age, and which has been shucked by most people as they have courageously embraced the reality of the universe as vast and indifferent to humanity’s progress or retreat. Unbelief appears in this narrative as the mature, adult decision in contrast with childish adherence to religious faith, and a personal

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271 Hughes, Putting, 124-5. The “grey zone” is both a direct reference to the graphic used in the book and a metaphor for the nature of beliefs in young people’s minds.
272 Taylor, ASA, 561ff.
273 Mason et al, SGY, 226.
274 Mason et al, SGY, 222.
dismissal of religious belief is thus in step with the larger vision of human progress that relegates religious belief to the level of superstition. Olivia’s comments are illustrative of this when she says, “I see [the Christian view of life after death] as a way people, especially in the Dark Ages when there was so little to look forward to in life and there were so many people living on that lower standard of living, it was just another comfort to have that even if life is all that bad we have got something to look forward to in the end.” The implication is that with the advent of the modern world, those ‘Dark Ages’ superstitions have been left behind. Other young people also stated that they had jettisoned religion as part of the process of leaving childhood behind, such as: “when I was little I went to religion classes and was young so I just absorbed it” (from a sixteen year-old female) and “I was raised Catholic and as I grew up I realised there is no God or higher being” (from a twenty-four year-old male).

In the light of this CWS it is instructive to note that the SGY project found that the transition from primary to high school was a key point for ceasing to attend church or profess non-belief. This suggests that the rhetoric of growing up imparted to young people as they commence high school may play into the “closed take” on the world that relegates belief to childhood. In a related manner, perhaps it is significant that when asked what they thought about God, some typical responses from the adolescents included “a big daddy”, the “kindest person”, an “old person in the sky, very pure and very good”, “like Santa, he watches over us.” The childishness of these responses suggests some young

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275 Taylor, ASA, 561ff.
276 Mason et al, SGY, 211.
277 Mason et al, SGY, 223.
278 Mason et al, SGY, 311.
279 Hughes, Putting, 142-4.
people’s image of God neatly dovetails with the CWS that portrays maturity as including the abandonment of belief in God along with other childish things.

The third narrative in the death of God constellation pits values such as equality and non-discrimination against hierarchical social configurations and moral positions that appear to be intrinsic to the churches and their desired configuration of society. The central thrust of this is that Christian faith is opposed to human rights and all people’s right to self-determined and authentic flourishing. A variant of this is that an (overly strong) insistence upon the eschatological dimensions of Christian faith threatens human flourishing here and now, as it calls the modern moral order’s focus upon mutual benefit through material prosperity into question. This world and ordinary human life appear devalued, as Olivia remarks: “I don’t think [an afterlife] is a good outlook to have on life, to be awaiting this final thing, because you take too much for granted what happens now.” In this last strand of the CWS, Christianity is not a benign position that some people may adhere to if they wish, but constitutes an actual threat to true human flourishing.

3.9 Conclusion

Taylor’s account offers a richer, and more accurate, portrayal of our secular age and its impact upon young people than popular ecclesial conceptions and the magisterial teaching do. While the argument that the sociological data concerning young Australians’ attitudes towards religion and spirituality is better explained through recourse to Taylor will not convince everyone, it seems that much of Taylor’s argument is supported by my re-reading of the sociological data, especially in the responses of the young people themselves. As a consequence, this chapter has argued that young Australians have been profoundly shaped

280 Taylor, ASA, 569ff.
281 Mason et al, SGY, 211.
by the Age of Authenticity’s expressive individualism. This requires the personal communication of their sense of self with intimate others in order to realise their identity. As part of this task, some young people seek to express who they are in and through their religious or spiritual commitments, self-selecting what that looks like on the basis of what speaks to them personally. While a small minority may be characterised as dwellers who straightforwardly accept a traditional profession of Christian faith, and a similar small minority have been galvanised into a resolute acceptance of atheistic materialism, many other young people show signs that they are, albeit uncertainly and tentatively, opting for expressions of faith, spirituality or non-transcendent sites of meaning from an ever-expanding spectrum of possibilities that lie between these two poles. Several features of our culture do skew it, and thus many young people, towards exclusive humanism. These features include the illegitimate privileging of disengaged reason, and the CWS that portrays science as having displaced religion and installed materialism as the true explanation of reality. This narrative contends that because religion has been relegated to the realm of superstition, humanity has now come of age. Individuals personally assent to that narrative by abandoning a childish allegiance to religion.

Having undertaken this closer analysis of the way in which secularity affects young people’s capacity to believe, the following two chapters turn to the Church’s magisterial teaching on evangelisation and its expression in the RCIA in order to better inform the theology and practice of youth ministry.
Chapter 4 The Process of Evangelisation and Initiation at Vatican II

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter Two, we saw that youth ministry’s first two phases developed while the Church adopted a largely adversarial stance to the modern world. While the shift from the Age of Mobilisation to the Age of Authenticity was decisive for the transition from phase two to phase three, the other decisive shift that took place during the ‘point of transition’ was the new relationship between the Church and the world established at Vatican II. This occurred partly through the event of Vatican II itself, but it was particularly in Gaudium et Spes (GS), the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, that the Church abandoned its adversarial posture and adopted dialogue as the mode of relationship between the Church and the world. According to James McEvoy, this transition may be understood as the Church’s break with a Christendom worldview, because the Church relinquished its commitment to the Ancien Regime’s melding of Church and state.

This shift required the reconceptualisation of evangelisation. While Vatican II was a “missionary council” in the entirety of its teaching, the document that re-frames the Church’s understanding of mission is Ad Gentes (AG), the Decree on Missionary Activity. This reconceptualisation has been described as a shift from a territorial concept of mission that delineated certain geographical regions as ‘missions’, to an anthropological

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283 McEvoy, Leaving Christendom, Chapter Three.
284 McEvoy, Leaving Christendom, 170.
understanding of mission, which defines mission in relation to persons.\textsuperscript{286} This shift may be characterised as the transition from a Christendom to a post-Christendom model of mission. This chapter describes that shift and the process of evangelisation that flows from this reconfiguration, before examining the implications of that process for those who have already been baptised, as it is these developments that made the third phase of youth ministry possible.

4.2 Vatican II and a Post-Christendom Church: A New Paradigm for Mission

The shift from a Christendom to a post-Christendom model of mission can be understood by examining the drafting process that resulted in the promulgation of \textit{Ad Gentes} (AG). Rather than retrace every historical step in AG’s protracted genesis, I will show the critical steps the decree went through to inaugurate this new understanding of mission.\textsuperscript{287}

4.2.1 Preparatory Schemata

At John XXIII’s request, the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith established a study group in late 1959 to respond to the suggestions for the council’s agenda pertaining to the church’s mission that had been sent in from bishops around the world. The study group produced twenty-three juridical propositions that addressed canonical issues concerning ‘mission territories’. The subsequent preparatory commission on mission continued the legal focus by developing a schema that addressed the missions’ governance and the juridical implications the missions posed for the formation of the clergy, the role of


\textsuperscript{287} This step in my argument in this chapter takes its cue from James McEvoy’s examination of the drafts of GS in relation to Vatican II’s re-conceptualisation of the Church as dialogue. See Chapter Three of \textit{Leaving Christendom for Good}. 
religious, the sacraments and liturgy, the formation of the Christian people and seminary studies. A final section addressed missionary co-operation.  

Concerned about the duplication of content with other schemata, the council’s Central Preparatory Commission suggested that aspects such as the liturgy, seminary formation and the role of religious pertaining to mission be addressed in the schemata dedicated to those topics. All that remained from the original schema on mission were the sections concerning the governance of the missions and missionary cooperation. The result was a truncated schema consisting of a preface and a chapter on each of these remaining two topics.

These initial drafts assumed a division between Christian countries and non-Christian nations in which the Gospel had not yet been proclaimed, or the ‘missions’. Missionaries from the countries of Christendom were sent to the missions to convert individuals and plant the local church. The mission territories were administered by the Roman Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, because they did not possess the hierarchical structure that constituted a local diocesan church.

As Stephen Bevans put it, “Like other schemas at this stage of preparation for the council, the proposed document on mission was a product of curial thinking”, and as the other drafts were rejected during the council’s first session, it became clear that the schema on the missions would suffer a similar fate and for the same reasons, and so it was not debated on the council floor.

290 Australia lay in a curious position in relation to this designation. On the one hand, as an ex-British colony, Australia was regarded as a Christian nation that sent missionaries to other countries. On the other hand, some parts of Australia were still deemed mission territories under the jurisdiction of Propaganda Fide.
291 Bevans and Gros, Evangelization, 13.
4.2.2 The Schema of Propositions

A subsequent draft did not, however, significantly develop the original schema and was rejected by the council’s Coordinating Commission. During the second session of the council (from September to December 1963), the council’s Commission on Mission attempted a thorough revision of the document. The new draft included chapters on doctrinal principles, reasons for the church’s missionary apostolate, missionary formation and missionary cooperation. However, in an effort to speed up the council’s deliberations, the Coordinating Commission made the decision that schemas that had not yet been discussed on the council floor were to be reduced to a set of propositions that would then be voted upon.292

Accordingly, the commission converted the schema into a set of thirteen (ultimately fourteen) propositional statements, and the document’s name was changed to “On Missionary Activity”. This reflected the commission’s understanding that the decree pertained only to the work of the missions and did not address the church’s mission more broadly, and as it would come to be reflected in LG.293

This draft included a modest reform of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith through the creation of a ‘central council of evangelisation’. This council would give missionary bishops a greater voice in the governance of their own dioceses.294 While this was a compromise solution (some of the missionary bishops had called for the complete dismantling of the congregation), it was significant because it provided important, albeit limited recognition that these mission territories were quickly becoming independent “young” local churches. The proposal reflected the awareness that the division of the world

into Christian countries and mission territories was problematic, but it was strongly resisted by Cardinal Agaganian, the prefect of the congregation, and other members of Propaganda Fide.

The schema was rejected by many of the council fathers, who, despite Pope Paul VI’s endorsement of the schema, wanted the council to offer more than a set of propositions on the critical topic of mission. In particular, they wanted an understanding of mission that was consonant with the council’s ecclesiological foundations.

4.2.3 The Nemi Draft

A new editorial committee was established under the leadership of Fr Johannes Schutte, the superior general of the Divine Word (SVD) missionaries, and which included Xavier Seumois, Josef Neuner, Domenico Grasso, Joseph Ratzinger and, against Agaghanian’s wishes, Yves Congar, as periti. Meeting together in Paris and Strasbourg, Congar was entrusted with composing a chapter on doctrinal principles, while Xavier Seumois was given the task of developing the pastoral sections of the decree.

The editorial committee composed a new draft over two weeks in January 1965. The first chapter of the new schema did not narrowly define missionary activity, but instead “presented missionary activity not only in a juridical or territorial perspective but defined the Church’s mission anthropologically or sociologically according to the different groups of people to whom the Gospel is proclaimed.”

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295 For the pope’s surprising intervention concerning the decree on missionary activity, see Norman Tanner, "The Church in the World (Ecclesia ad Extra)," in History of Vatican II: The Church as Communion. Third Period and Intersession (September 1964 - Sept 1965), ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak (Maryknoll/Leuven: Orbis/Peeters, 2003), 333.
297 Bevans and Gros, Evangelization, 22.
Congar, who drafted the chapter, also ensured that the decree’s ecclesiology was consonant with LG’s depiction of the Church. This schema marks the transition from the Christendom model of mission. It eschews the demarcation of the world into ‘Christian nations’ and ‘mission territories’ in favour of a new “anthropological model” of mission, which recognises that mission characterises all of the church’s activity and is directed towards people.

The Nemi schema faced significant opposition from other members of Commission on mission concerning its departure from a territorial definition of mission. Inspired by a suggestion from Josef Neuner, Congar argued that the narrower concept of missionary activity be incorporated as a particular dimension of the single mission of the Church. Congar’s solution was adopted, and the schema was sent to the council fathers on June 12, 1965.

4.2.4 Ad Gentes

The schema was discussed on the council floor on 7-8 and 11-13 October, 1965. After expressing a basic acceptance of the document, the council fathers returned the draft to the commission on mission for a final revision. After a week of revisions undertaken in five different subcommittees that sought to incorporate suggestions made on the council floor, the schema was approved by the council on December 7, 1965.

The final text contains six chapters that are bookended by a preface and conclusion (AG 1 and 42). The first chapter is devoted to doctrinal principles (AG 2-9). The second chapter is entitled “Mission Work itself” (AG 10-18), and consists of three articles devoted to Christian

299 Anderson, Genesis 206.
300 While the import of Chapter 3 was not consistently applied throughout the document, it remains an important aspect of Ad Gentes’ departure from a Christendom model of mission. See Peter Hunerman, “The Final Weeks of the Council,” in History of Vatican II, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak (Maryknoll, NY/Leuven: Orbis/Peeters, 2006), 437.
301 It was approved with 2,394 votes in favour and 5 against, the highest of the council. It was also the last document approved. See Bevans and Gros, Evangelization, 28.
Witness (AG 11-12), Preaching the Gospel and Gathering the People of God (AG 13-14), and Forming a Christian Community (AG 15-18). Chapter Three is dedicated to particular churches (AG 19-22), while chapters Four, Five and Six address the topics of missionaries (AG 23-27), planning missionary activity (AG 28-34) and cooperation in missionary activity (AG 35-41).

Rather than provide a complete overview of the decree, I wish to focus briefly upon Chapter One for its articulation of the post-Christendom model of mission, and upon Chapter Two for its depiction of what will come to be called the process of evangelisation.  

4.2.5 Theological Principles

Chapter one of Ad Gentes grounds the church’s mission in the mystery of the Trinity:

“The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with God the Father” (AG 2). In a manner reminiscent of Karl Barth, AG reclaims mission as a trinitarian term, and only secondarily, as referring to the activity of the Church. Before the Church possesses a mission, the Son and the Spirit do. They are sent by God the Father as an outpouring of God’s “fountain-like” love into the world (AG 2). Commenting on this, David Bosch writes, “To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love.” The Church, therefore, does not possess a mission of her own, but rather participates in the conjoint missions of the Son and

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302 It is called the process of evangelisation in paragraph 47 of the General Directory for Catechesis.
the Spirit. The mission the Church receives from the Son and the Spirit is constitutive of the Church’s very identity.\textsuperscript{304}

Congar noted in his diary that he drew from the Latin theology of the Trinitarian processions, exemplified in Augustine, Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas in the theology of mission articulated in AG 2. Congar also acknowledged the influence of twentieth century Protestant missiologist Lesslie Newbigin who had developed Barth’s depiction of God undertaking mission to the world. Barth’s position was subsequently described by Karl Hartenstein as the \textit{missio Dei}, which has since become a common term for grounding the Church’s identity and mission in the Father’s sending of the Son and the Spirit.\textsuperscript{305}

The third paragraph of AG begins by affirming the value of humanity’s attempts to find God, but also states that God’s salvific plan is fully realised in the self-communication of God in Christ. Humanity’s religious striving may serve as a preparation for the reception of the Gospel. The paragraph goes on to describe Christ’s saving action. “In order to establish peace or the communion of sinful beings with himself” and to establish the community of the Church, the Father sent his Son who assumed our humanity to reconcile the world to himself (AG 3). Christ’s mission is then portrayed in Irenaean terms: as the second Adam Christ recapitulates humanity in himself so that we might become sharers in the divine

\textsuperscript{304} Thus the Council’s Trinitarian ecclesiology is at the same time a missionary ecclesiology. See Anne Hunt, “The Trinitarian Depths of Vatican II,” \textit{Theological Studies} 74 no. (2013): 6.

\textsuperscript{305} See Stephen B. Bevans and Roger Schroeder, \textit{Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today} (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 290. The \textit{missio Dei} has become an important foundation for Protestant missiology, and especially for the “missional church” movement, which in turn has influenced Protestant youth ministry scholarship. For a theological overview of the \textit{missio Dei} in the missional church literature, see Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile, \textit{The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation} (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011).
nature. This “wonderful exchange” of our human nature with the Son of God’s divine nature is accomplished through Christ’s self-gift upon the Cross.306

The following paragraph declares that the Spirit is sent to “carry [Christ’s mission] on inwardly”; that is, to realize Christ’s salvation in people’s hearts and to lead the Church’s growth. The Church’s mission is always animated by the Spirit who equips the Church and the faithful with Christ’s own “mission spirit” and with gifts (AG 4). Jesus sends the Church, as the sacrament of salvation, into the world as the Father had sent him.307

AG 6 reflects Josef Neuner’s suggestion that the one mission of the church assumes different forms based upon the different “circumstances” in which mission takes place. The paragraph then describes missionary activity in that narrower sense as “particular undertakings by which the heralds of the Gospel, sent out by the Church and going forth into the whole world, carry out the task of preaching the Gospel and planting the Church among peoples or groups who do not yet believe in Christ” (AG 6). As we have seen, this definition of the missions does not make geographical locations the object of mission, but rather people instead. Bevans rightly states that this represented only a partial victory for the advocates of a non-territorial definition of mission as the territorial concept of mission becomes more prominent in the latter chapters of Ad Gentes.308 Nevertheless, the anthropological definition of missionary activity signifies the shift to a post-Christendom model of mission.

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306 The patristic depiction of salvation history in AG 3 possesses parallels in the four conciliar constitutions. See SC 5-6, LG 2-4, DV 2 and GS 2. The concept of salvation history possesses important links to the patristic origins of the RCIA, as we shall see in Chapter 5.
308 Bevans and Gros, Evangelization, 35. Hunerman contends that it is from Chapter 4 onwards that AG returns to a Eurocentric vision, because it identifies missionaries as those who venture beyond Christendom to proclaim the Gospel. See Hunerman, “Final Weeks,” 450.
Missionary activity is distinguished in AG 6 from pastoral care (and ecumenical ventures), though local churches require pastoral care even as missionary activity also takes place. As many council fathers had noted, however, the reality was each stage of planting, growing, and establishing a local church may occur more or less concurrently.\textsuperscript{309}

AG 6 also envisages that “an entirely new set of circumstances” may arise, as a cultural group experiences radical changes that affect the peoples’ Christian faith. This is a reference to the phenomenon of “dechristianisation”, or contexts where the church has experienced a significant loss of adherents or been reduced to largely nominal allegiance. AG states that this context requires the resumption of missionary activity, which subtly broadens the concept of mission beyond traditional “mission territories” to include these dechristianised contexts.\textsuperscript{310}

4.2.6 The Process of Evangelisation in \textit{Ad Gentes}

Suso Brechter found a sharp disjunction between the theological principles outlined in chapter one and the rest of the decree, whereas Peter Hunerman wrote that “it can justly be said that in this second chapter the theological vision presented in the first chapter is translated into practical steps.”\textsuperscript{311} At times, AG reflects the compromise between territorial and anthropological concepts of mission necessary for its ultimate approval, but a fault-line does not exist between Chapter One and Chapter Two of the decree. As we have seen, Chapter Two reflects Congar’s proposal that missionary activity in the narrower sense be considered a dimension of the church’s broader mission (the focus of Chapter One). Chapter

\textsuperscript{309} Hunerman, “Final Weeks,” 440.
\textsuperscript{311} Hunerman, “Final Weeks,” 449. Brechter had written that “Chapter 1 is typically self-contained; it resembles a theological treatise in character and does not fit harmoniously into the missionary decree as a whole.” Brechter, “Decree,” 113.
Two therefore builds upon the definition of missions contained in paragraph 6. This means that although the new paradigm expands the concept of mission it does not nullify the need for missionary activity. Instead, the post-Christendom model of mission refuses to limit the church’s mission to those activities alone, nor limit missionary activity to specific geographical locations.

Chapter Two of AG describes the nature of missionary work. By specifying the recipients of such missionary activity as adherents to other world religions, those who live in complete religious ignorance, or atheists, the decree stipulates that missionary activity is for those people who have not yet heard the proclamation of the Gospel (AG 10).

Chapter Two is broken into three articles entitled “Christian witness”, “Preaching the Gospel and Gathering together the People of God”, and “Forming a Christian Community”. The content of these articles syntheses the insights of the two most important schools of missiology in the years prior to the council, in which Joseph Schmidlin of Munster emphasised the role of conversion and sacramental initiation, while Pierre Charles of Louvain stressed the communal nature of salvation and the church’s mediation.

AG emphasises that the power of Christ’s witnesses lies in identification with their broader community and culture, and with their presence in love, dialogue, and charity to all but especially to those who are suffering from poverty, violence and disease. Their witness is animated by the Spirit of Christ. Witness thus consists of a profound identification with others, born of a common cultural identity in some instances, but always by virtue of the incarnation in which the Spirit-anointed Son identified with our human nature, and which his members in turn emulate.

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312 See Bevans and Gros, Evangelization, 39-43.
The article on preaching the Gospel and gathering the people of God begins by stating that when God makes it possible, there is to be an initial proclamation of God, and of Jesus the Saviour (AG 13). The rest of the article focuses more upon the response to such preaching rather than its content. Those who respond to the Gospel come to faith in Christ, and are converted to him. This is only an initial conversion, which includes “being snatched away from sin and led into the mystery of God’s love, who called [the person] to enter into a personal relationship with [God] in Christ” (AG 13).

After such an initial conversion one enters into the catechumenate, which the Council fathers had decided to restore (in SC 64). In AG the catechumenate is situated within the broader process of evangelisation. It is described as a “training period in the whole Christian life” (AG 14). The catechumenate should include instruction in the “mystery of salvation”, moral formation, liturgical participation, and apostolic or missionary engagement. The catechumenate culminates in the reception of the sacraments of initiation (AG ).

When sufficient new converts have been initiated and a local church has been born, congregations of the faithful are to be “built up” into Christian communities (AG 15). The chapter’s final article describes the principal characteristics of such local churches.

By including an article on the formation of a local church at this point AG is vulnerable to Bevans’ critique that the decree “has in its imagination the white “First World” missionary working in exotic lands and cultures.”314 Thus the process of evangelisation in Chapter Two of AG 2 appears to pertain only to locations in which a local church had not yet been established.

4.3 Restoration of the Catechumenate

As we have just seen, the process outlined in chapter two of AG included the restored catechumenate. The paragraphs in SC and AG concerning the catechumenate’s restoration were accepted on the floor of the council with little comment.\textsuperscript{315} In one sense, this was unsurprising, as experiments with catechumenal processes and requests to Rome to reinstate the adult catechumenate had originated in various missionary contexts since the sixteenth century. As part of the reforms initiated by the Council of Trent, Cardinal Giulio Santori (1532-1602) was commissioned to revise the Roman Ritual. Inspired by his study of patristic liturgical texts, Santori intended the revised ritual to include rites for a catechumenate and adult initiation. Aspects of Santori’s rites were disseminated in the “new world” through a treatise written by Thomas de Jesus SJ (1564-1627).\textsuperscript{316}

In the nineteenth century two French ‘missionary bishops’ attempted to reinstate a catechumenate in China and Africa. Louis-Simon Faurie’s efforts in China proved unsuccessful because the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith forbade his use of preparatory baptismal rites as a rite of entry into the catechumenate. In Africa, Charles Lavigerie’s four-year two stage model met with Roman approval because he did not alter the baptismal ritual in the Roman missal.\textsuperscript{317}

In 1959, Joseph Blomjous, the Dutch bishop of Mwanga (in modern Tanzania) successfully petitioned for the restoration of the rites of the catechumenate. Blomjous proposed a seven-step structure based upon the Roman ritual that was accepted, with


\textsuperscript{317} Turner, Hallelujah Highway, 139-59.
minor modifications, as an “Order of Baptism of Adults Arranged as a Catechumenate in Steps”, in a revised Order of Baptism published in April 1962, only months before the council’s first session.318

Further calls for the catechumenate’s restoration emerged during the council’s preparatory phase. A number of missionary bishops from Africa wanted a true catechumenal process because they believed that powerful Christian initiation rites were necessary to ensure African men and women were genuinely converted to Christianity, and to counter potent indigenous initiation rites.319

The influence of these missionary bishops likely explains why the paragraphs in SC concerning the catechumenate’s restoration were passed on the council floor with little comment: adult catechesis and initiation in the mission territories of Africa and Asian sat quite comfortably within the Christendom model of mission.320

However, the missionary bishops’ call for the catechumenate’s restoration was echoed by French and Dutch bishops, who thought the catechumenate should form part of the response to the dechristianisation of Europe. Their support arose from their experience of experiments with the catechumenate in France.321

Thus, for much of the four hundred years between the Council of Trent and Vatican II the calls to restore the catechumenate arose because of the need for a catechetical process in the so-called mission fields of Africa and Asia. In so far as these missionary contexts were territories outside Europe, these calls to restore the catechumenate remained entirely

318 Turner, Hallelujah Highway, 130-4.
within the paradigm of Christendom. The Christendom model of mission only needed an adult catechumenate in so-called non-Christian countries, as the Church in Christendom countries baptized all of their inhabitants in infancy, thereby eliminating the need for an adult process of coming to faith in Christ. The call to restore the catechumenate from the Dutch and French bishops was a recognition that the transmission of faith from one generation to the next was breaking down in these European countries.

While infant baptism might have predominated in countries that were formerly and formally part of Christendom, the restoration of adult catechesis and initiation indicated that baptism could not be reduced to a cultural rite of passage, as the practice of marking the birth of a child through a religious ceremony. Rather, the restoration of the catechumenate heralded the rediscovery of baptism as the outcome of a process of conversion, facilitated by a period of instruction and ritual, and as the result of a freely chosen response of faith. In a Christendom model of mission, it was believed that only mission territories need such a process, but in a post-Christendom world where everyone needs to be evangelised then initiation, and its re-appropriation by those baptized as infants, becomes crucially important.

4.4 The RCIA and the Process of Evangelisation

The process of evangelisation outlined in Chapter Two of *Ad Gentes* (AG 10-18) is intrinsic to the structure of the RCIA. As we have already seen, the catechumenate itself is for those who have been attracted by Christians’ witness, listened to the initial proclamation of the Gospel and responded with initial faith and conversion (AG 13). This means that witness and initial proclamation belong to the RCIA’s first period, the pre-catechumenate. The second period of the RCIA is the catechumenate proper, as referred to
in AG 14. The third period of purification and enlightenment that normally coincides with Lent is for those catechumens who wish to enter into the stage of final preparation for baptism. The final period of the RCIA, or mystagogy, occurs after sacramental initiation and is intended to consolidate the catechumens’ sense of belonging to the Christian community and living of the Christian life.

The unity between the structure of the RCIA and the process of evangelisation in Chapter Two of Ad Gentes is due to their concurrent development. Their coordination was assured by Xavier Seumois, the missiologist primarily responsible for the final draft of what would become Chapter Two of Ad Gentes, and who was also a member of Coetus XXII, the study group responsible for the preparation of the RCIA.322

Since the RCIA and AG describe the same process, the process of evangelisation in Chapter Two of Ad Gentes and the RCIA complement and mutually interpret each other. As a liturgical text, the RCIA highlights that evangelisation is essentially liturgical in nature. It contains, however, only brief (but illuminating) notes about the non-liturgical aspects of the process of evangelisation and catechesis leading to initiation. AG provides crucial insights into the nature of witness, the initial proclamation of the Gospel and the response of faith and conversion, which inform the sparse directives concerning the pre-catechumenate’s content in the RCIA.

4.5 The Process in Subsequent Magisterial Statements

4.5.1 Evangelii Nuntiandi

The process of evangelisation has been presumed, taken up and expanded in each of the papal documents on mission since the council. In Evangelii Nuntiandi (EN) Paul VI provided

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322 McGrail, Christian Initiation, 121.
an expansive vision of evangelisation that did not exclusively focus upon preaching, 
catechesis, and baptism, but also called for the evangelisation of institutions and cultures, 
including the promotion of liberation, justice and peace (see EN 17, 18-20, 24). Like Chapter 
One of AG Paul VI defined evangelisation broadly, as “bringing the Good News into all the 
strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and 
making it new” (EN 18). He went on to state, however, that humanity’s transformation still 
requires the proclamation of the Gospel, its acceptance through faith and baptism and lives 
of discipleship:

there is no new humanity if there are not first of all new persons renewed by baptism 
and by lives lived according to the Gospel. The purpose of evangelisation is therefore 
precisely this interior change, and if it had to be expressed in one sentence the best way 
of stating it would be to say that the Church evangelises when she seeks to convert, 
solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and 
collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage and the lives and 
concrete milieu which are theirs (EN 18).

While the ultimate goal of the Church’s mission is thus a transformed humanity (all 
human beings living under the reign of God), the principal path to this goal is people’s 
integral conversion to Christ, who then become agents of the world’s transformation. EN 
therefore affirms the post-Christendom model of mission and locates the narrower 
understanding of missionary activity within that larger definition of mission. EN lacks a 
certain clarity, however, because the term evangelisation refers to both mission and to 
missionary activity in the exhortation, which has sometimes contributed to the reduction of 
the entirety of the church’s mission to witness, proclamation and catechesis culminating in 
sacramental initiation. This is the very truncation of the concept of evangelisation that Paul 
VI himself warned against in EN 17. We saw an example of this in the Antioch manual, which 
equated the pope’s statement that the Church exists to evangelise (a statement about the 
entirety of the Church’s mission), with the process of evangelisation (missionary activity or
the narrow definition of mission). When this happens, other dimensions of the Church’s mission are rendered subsidiary to the process of evangelization, or excluded altogether.

Paul VI went on to expand the process of evangelisation in Chapter Two of AG by including other dimensions of mission. The pope initially comments upon witness, proclamation and faith, conversion, the adoption of a way of life and entry into the church through participation in the sacraments (EN 21-23), and then defines evangelisation as a “complex process made up of varied elements: the renewal of humanity, witness, explicit proclamation, inner adherence, entry into the community, acceptance of signs, apostolic initiative” (EN 24). The “acceptance of signs” is Paul’s designation for sacramental initiation and ongoing participation in the sacraments. EN thus contains the core elements from Chapter Two of AG, but adds the “renewal of humanity” (which refers to the evangelisation of culture, liberation and human development) and “apostolic initiative”, which is Paul’s shorthand expression for his litmus test of evangelisation, that someone who has been evangelised will in turn evangelise others (EN 24).

EN 24 omits any reference to the formation of a local church. In so doing, the process of evangelisation is removed from its original mission field. With this step, the process of evangelisation is removed from the older “mission field” context, and is now applicable to every local church, whatever its stage of development.

**4.5.2 Catechesi Tradendae and Redemptoris Missio**

One of John Paul II’s aims in *Catechesi Tradendae* (CT) was to ensure that catechesis was recognised as a discrete “stage” in the same process of evangelisation (CT 18). Catechesis is defined in CT as “an education of children, young people and adults in the faith, which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an
organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life” (CT 18). CT cites EN 17-24 to locate that catechesis as one of the elements within the “whole process of evangelisation” (CT 18).

In Redemptoris Missio (RM) John Paul II reiterated the process of evangelisation first outlined in Chapter Two of AG, discussing witness, the initial proclamation of Christ the Saviour, conversion and baptism, and the formation of local churches (RM 42-49). The reference to the formation of local churches rather than entry into the church (as in EN) reflects John Paul II’s focus in RM upon the permanent validity of the mission ad gentes, or to those peoples who have never heard the Gospel. In those contexts, the local church needs to be established for the first time.

Like Paul VI in EN, who had added the “renewal of humanity” to encompass other dimensions of the Church’s evangelising activity, John Paul II discussed the process first enunciated in Chapter Two of AG in conjunction with other aspects of mission. These included paragraphs devoted to “base communities”, inculturation, inter-religious dialogue, the promotion of human development and the criterion of charity for all forms of mission (RM 50-60). In both EN and RM, these additions were intended to ensure that the Church’s evangelising activity was not confined to witness, proclamation and the establishment of the Church alone. By referring to the elements of mission such as inter-religious dialogue and human development as “paths” within the “single but complex” reality of mission, RM affirmed that these expressions of mission possessed intrinsic value and significance (RM 41).

Missiologist Marcello Zago argued that by including these new forms of mission RM does not follow the “path from missionary presence to young church”. The expansion in the Church’s understanding of mission signified by these additions does not constitute a negation of the process described in Chapter Two of AG either. It should be noted, however, that Chapter Five of RM possesses the same essential structure as Chapter Two of AG, examining witness, initial proclamation of Christ the Saviour, and then conversion, baptism and the formation of local churches, before adding additional paragraphs on the other forms of mission mentioned above (RM 42-49). Furthermore, John Paul II’s discussion of the paths of mission in RM begins with a reference to Chapter Two of AG, and then cites paragraphs 11-15 of AG a further five times in the chapter. The intention of both EN and RM is not that the process outlined in Chapter Two of AG be rejected or neglected, but that it be embedded within the more expansive understanding of mission first articulated in Chapter One of AG, and further developed through both EN and RM themselves.

4.5.3 The General Directory for Catechesis

The 1997 General Directory for Catechesis (GDC) was released under the auspices of the Holy See’s Congregation for the Clergy. Although not part of the papal magisterium, the GDC grounded the church’s catechetical activity within the theology of evangelisation that had developed through the papal teaching on mission since the council. As part of this, the GDC called the content of Chapter Two of Ad Gentes “the process of evangelisation”, and expressed the ongoing significance of this process when it stated that:

The conciliar decree Ad Gentes clarifies well the dynamic of the process of evangelisation: Christian witness, dialogue and presence in charity (11–12), the proclamation of the Gospel and the call to conversion (13), the catechumenate and

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324 Zago, "Commentary on RM," 74.
325 See RM footnote no. 68: AG II, 10-18; footnote no. 70: AG 11-12; footnote, no. 73: AG 13, 74. AG 13-14; and footnote no. 80: AG 15.
Christian Initiation (14), the formation of the Christian communities through and by means of the sacraments and their ministers (15-18). This is the dynamic for establishing and building up the church” (GDC 47).

The GDC relied upon John Paul II’s threefold division between the mission *ad gentes*, pastoral activity and the new evangelisation in RM (GDC 58). John Paul II had stated at the outset of RM that he was concerned about the decline in missionary activity that had taken place in countries in which little to no evangelisation had previously taken place, especially in Asia, Africa, and Oceania. The desire to foster the “mission *ad gentes*” in these locations led John Paul II to reassert the distinction between geographical territories where the church had not yet been established and other countries where the church was well established and flourishing. John Paul also adverted to dechristianisation, speaking of “countries with ancient Christian roots, and occasionally in the younger churches as well” in which significant numbers or groups of the baptised had “lost a living sense of the faith” or who had stopped identifying with the Church. John Paul II said that this “intermediate” situation between the mission *ad gentes* and pastoral care in an established church called for a “new evangelisation” or re-evangelisation (RM 33). While RM speaks of mission being directed towards people and groups, the encyclical does define these different settings geographically, or in territorial terms.

This step in the papal magisterium thus represented a re-invocation of a Christendom model of mission to some extent, as mission territories were once again distinguished from Christian countries. This likely reflected John Paul II’s own experience of deeply Catholic Poland and his visits to Asian and African nations which had received little to no missionary activity. As his own analysis in RM makes clear though, even by 1990 the world could no longer be neatly divided into Christian and non-Christian countries (RM 37).
Notwithstanding the difficulties of maintaining these geographical distinctions, John Paul II nonetheless insisted that,

it does not seem justified to regard as identical the situation of a people which has never known Jesus Christ and that of a people which has known him, accepted him and then rejected him, while continuing to live in a culture which in large part has absorbed Gospel principles and values. These are two basically different situations with regard to the faith” (RM 37).

The GDC affirmed John Paul II’s analysis while recognising that all three situations could co-exist in the same location, especially in the “great cities of the world” (GDC 59). However, and again relying upon John Paul II’s threefold division, the GDC contended that because the mission ad gentes is the “missionary responsibility most specifically entrusted to the church by Jesus” it is “thus the exemplary model for all her missionary activity” (GDC 59). This means that although the process of evangelisation is proper to the mission ad gentes, it is paradigmatic for the pastoral care of the faithful and for the new evangelisation. Therefore, both post-baptismal catechesis and the efforts to evangelise the nominally baptised ought to be animated by the process of evangelisation too.

The GDC goes on to state that if the process of evangelisation is paradigmatic for all missionary activity, then the “model for all catechesis is the baptismal catechumenate” (GDC 59). This principle is reiterated twice in the GDC, underscoring its importance.326 This principle had originally been articulated in the message of the Synod fathers from the 1977 general synod on catechesis: “The model for all catechesis is the baptismal catechumenate when, by specific formation, an adult converted to belief is brought to explicit profession of

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326 See GDC 68: “This inherent richness in the Catechumenate of non-baptised adults should serve to inspire other forms of catechesis,” and GDC 90: “Given that the missio ad gentes is the paradigm of all the Church’s missionary activity, the baptismal catechumenate, which is joined to it, is the model of its catechizing activity.”
baptismal faith during the Paschal Vigil.” However, Catechesi Tradendae, John Paul II’s post-synodal exhortation arising from that synod did not repeat this principle.

In Christifideles Laici (ChrL), however, John Paul II referred to a post-baptismal catechumenate, stating that “The Synod Fathers have said that a post-baptismal catechesis in the form of a catechumenate can also be helpful by presenting again some elements from the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults with the purpose of allowing a person to grasp and live the immense, extraordinary richness and responsibility received at Baptism” (ChrL 61). The same idea was included in a footnote in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1990). The reference in the catechism provides an interesting rationale for a post-baptismal catechumenate: pre-baptismal catechesis prior to infant baptism is of course attenuated, and this needs to be addressed:

Where infant Baptism has become the form in which this sacrament is usually celebrated, it has become a single act encapsulating the preparatory stages of Christian initiation in a very abridged way. By its very nature infant Baptism requires a post-baptismal catechumenate. Not only is there a need for instruction after Baptism, but also for the necessary flowering of baptismal grace in personal growth. The catechism has its proper place here (CCC 1231).

So, rather than positioning the adult catechumenate as merely a model for other forms of catechesis (as the GDC had done), Christifideles Laici and the Catechism hold that an actual post-baptismal catechumenate is required. This rationale parallels Joseph Ratzinger’s argument that the catechumenate is not merely a preparatory course of instruction prior to baptism, but is actually intrinsic to the sacraments of initiation. Ratzinger makes this case on the basis of the profession of faith that an adult makes immediately prior to baptism. To be able to make this profession of faith, the person needs to know what it means to believe and live out the content of the faith contained in the credal formula that is used, which in

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328 n73, emphasis mine.
turn presupposes a period of instruction and formation in faith. Ratzinger argues that because the profession of faith is necessary for baptism the catechumenate is actually part of the sacrament. The omission of the catechumenate therefore renders the sacrament incomplete.\textsuperscript{329} For those baptised in infancy then, the sacrament needs to be completed by a post-baptismal catechumenate that enables them to make their own profession of faith, which ratifies the decision made by their parents and godparents on their behalf.

When it comes to considering the significance of the catechumenate for youth ministry, it is not simply that a catechumenate is necessary for unbaptised youth, those who have received only some of the sacraments of initiation, or even for those baptised young Catholics who, by their non-participation in the life of the Church, do not live out the full significance of their baptism. The Catechism’s rationale and Ratzinger’s argument would suggest that the children of practising parents need to undergo a process akin to the catechumenate in order to fully realize the sacrament of baptism in their lives.

The references to a post-baptismal \textit{catechumenate} in the Synod statement, \textit{Christifideles Laici} and the Catechism were very brief. With the publication of the GDC, however, the \textit{principle} that the baptismal catechumenate ought to serve as the \textit{model} for all catechesis was stated more clearly, and then discussed at some length (GDC 90-91).\textsuperscript{330} Importantly, the GDC stated that there was a “fundamental difference” between catechumens and those being catechised after their baptism, and thus made an important distinction between pre- and post-baptismal catechesis. It went on to examine the various elements of the catechumenate that could nevertheless serve to inspire post-baptismal catechesis. By stressing this distinction the GDC protected the unique significance (and

\textsuperscript{330} These two paragraphs possess the heading: “The Baptismal Catechumenate: Inspiration for Catechesis in the Church".
unrepeatability) of baptism and its effects in people’s lives, while maintaining that catechesis was required for those effects to take root.

The GDC specifically stated that the baptismal catechumenate ought to inform ministry with young people. The directory suggested that the “formative resources of the journey of initiation” needed to be marshalled to address the phenomenon of pre-adolescents who received the sacrament of confirmation and then abandoned the practice of the faith (GDC 181). Then, after suggesting that distinctions between adolescence and young adulthood were not easy to make, the GDC stated that catechesis to these groups needed to be “profoundly revised and revitalised” (GDC 181). Given the paradigmatic role the GDC ascribes to the baptismal catechumenate, it is logical to conclude that the GDC intended the baptismal catechumenate to be the basis of this revision.

4.6 *Evangelii Gaudium* and the End of the Christendom Model of Mission

As we have seen, the GDC relied upon John Paul II’s geographical demarcation between the mission *ad gentes*, the new evangelisation and pastoral activity. While this is partly dependent upon increasingly outdated designations between mission territories and Christian countries, it does not mean that the paradigmatic nature of the process of evangelisation is invalidated. Pope Francis addressed this in *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG). Given that EG was intended to draw together the fruits of the 2012 general synod on the new evangelisation, it is noteworthy that Francis rarely uses the term “new evangelisation”, and when he does so it is to subtly re-define its meaning. As was the case in both AG and EN, Francis speaks of evangelisation in relation to people rather than in relation to territorial or

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331 Emphasis in original.
Rather than repeat John Paul II’s three-fold division between Christian, non-Christian and post-Christian regions, Francis re-frames these three categories as relating to persons: they are now defined as 1) “preaching the Gospel to those who do not know Jesus Christ or who have always rejected him”, 2) “ordinary pastoral ministry”, and 3) ministry to “the baptized whose lives do not reflect the demands of Baptism” (EG 15). Rather than designating the third of these categories as the new evangelisation as John Paul II had done, Francis redefined the new evangelisation as referring to all three settings (EG 14). His redefinition sits better with AG’s description of the Church as missionary by its very nature, as it means that the pastoral care of the faithful is considered to be an intrinsic dimension of the church’s mission and not a subsequent activity that follows on from ‘real’ or ‘true’ missionary activity.

Even as he redefined the new evangelisation in this way, Francis quickly went on to repeat John Paul II’s declaration in Redemptoris Missio that traditional missionary activity (or the process of evangelisation as I, following the GDC, have been calling it) is paradigmatic for the other two settings (EG 15). Francis thus reaffirms the paradigmatic nature of the process of evangelisation (and within that process, the baptismal catechumenate as the model for catechesis), but without retaining the limitations of the territorial definition of mission.

Unlike his predecessors, Francis does not directly engage with the process of evangelisation in EG. Nevertheless, he presumes it, especially in his discussion of the

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333 Emphasis in original.
kerygma (initial proclamation), and by referring to kerygmatic and mystagogical catechesis.

To appreciate Francis’ approach, it is important to realise that the *Aparecida* document of the combined Latin American and Caribbean bishops conferences (CELAM) underpins many aspects of EG. Francis was one of the principal drafters of the *Aparecida* document while he was still archbishop of Buenos Aires. Composed for the Church in Latin America, *Aparecida* does not refer directly to the process of evangelisation, because the vast majority of Latin Americans are baptised. Instead, *Aparecida* outlines a “process of formation of missionary disciples” (Ap 276), which is described as a “formative itinerary” for all of the baptised, “regardless of the role they play in the Church” (Ap 276). The statement identifies five aspects of this process: 1) The encounter with Jesus Christ; 2) Conversion; 3) Discipleship; 4) Communion, and 5) Mission (Ap 278).

After outlining this “formative itinerary” *Aparecida* sets out several proposals concerning Christian initiation (Ap 290). The first proposal states that:

> We feel the urgency of developing in our communities a process of initiation into Christian life starting with the kerygma, guided by the Word of God, leading to an ever greater personal encounter with Jesus Christ, perfect God and perfect man, experienced as fullness of humanity, which leads to conversion, to following in an ecclesial community, and to a maturing of faith in the practice of the sacraments, service, and mission” (Ap 289).

Note that this proposal mirrors the process of evangelisation, but omits initiation because it is presumed that Latin Americans have been baptised in infancy.

*Aparecida*’s second proposal refers to the catechumenate in the early church as a “formative itinerary” too, and then quotes from Benedict VI’s post-synodal exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (SCa), which states that the ancient catechumenate “always had an experiential character. While not neglecting a systematic understanding of the content of

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the faith, it centered on a vital and convincing encounter with Christ, proclaimed by
authentic witnesses” (Ap 290). In SCa, Benedict XVI had continued: “It is first and
foremost the witness who introduces others to the mysteries. Naturally, this initial
encounter gains depth through catechesis and finds its source and summit in the
celebration of the Eucharist. This basic structure of the Christian experience calls for a
process of mystagogy...” (SCa 64). Following Benedict XVI, Aparecida calls this latter activity
“mystagogical catechesis” (Ap 290). While Benedict bases his reflections upon the ancient
catechumenate, he is referring to the same basic process as it is enunciated in Chapter Two
of Ad Gentes. Aparecida’s formative itinerary, therefore, is clearly based upon the process of
evangelisation first enunciated in AG (which as we shall see is rooted in the ancient
catechumenate). Aparecida transposes the process from its original “ad gentes” context (in
AG 10-18) to the contemporary Latin American situation and thus to a largely baptised
population. As a consequence, the itinerary extends beyond initiation and into the life of
ongoing discipleship, which is to be lived in communion and expressed in mission. Francis’
reflections upon kerygmatic and mystagogical catechesis in EG are grounded in Aparecida’s
formative itinerary which was in turn modelled upon the process of evangelisation initially
articulated in Chapter Two of AG.

4.7 Conclusion: The Initiatory Dynamic

At the Second Vatican Council the Church abandoned its commitment to creating
Christian societies by intertwining political governance with the Church. The council also
rejected the adversarial stance the Church subsequently adopted as a reaction to the
fragmentation of Christendom by successive western nations. In so doing, the church

335 SCa 64.
entered into a post-Christendom context. This required an understanding of mission that was directed towards persons, rather than the maintenance of an older, territorial understanding of mission proper to Christendom. This new paradigm for mission was inaugurated through the drafting of AG.

Chapter Two of AG provided a description of missionary activity that the GDC would come to call “the process of evangelisation”. This process was both presumed in and expanded upon in both EN and RM, and came to include new dimensions of mission such as the promotion of liberation and inter-religious dialogue that developed in the new post-Christendom context. AG’s process of evangelisation is mirrored in and illuminated by the content of the RCIA. In keeping with its original formulation in Ad Gentes as pertaining to a context where the Gospel had not yet been proclaimed, the GDC held that the process of evangelisation should serve as the model for missionary activity in both “new evangelisation” contexts and in locations where “mature” churches were established. The GDC also asserted that the baptismal catechumenate is to be considered the model for all catechesis.

EG may be construed as the final step in the break with the Christendom model of mission begun at Vatican II, as EG does not conceive of mission in relation to geographical location. In so doing Francis re-positions the new evangelisation as incorporating the proclamation of the Gospel to those who do not know Christ, ordinary pastoral ministry, and the evangelisation of the nominally baptised. Finally, we saw that the Aparecida document sets out a formative itinerary for the catechesis of the baptised that is kerygmatic, catechetical and mystagogical, as it is predicated upon the same process of evangelisation articulated in AG, EN, and RM.
I want to call this process the “initiatory dynamic”: “initiatory” because the entire process is ordered towards full sacramental initiation into Christ and the Church, and a “dynamic” because it not only refers to a singular and unrepeatable process of adult evangelisation, catechesis and initiation into the Church, but because it is actually constitutive of the Christian life, of the Church’s very identity and is thus a principal source for the Church’s renewal. A Christian becomes more deeply a Christian and the Church becomes more fully the Church through more deeply appropriating the reality of sacramental initiation and its preceding evangelical and catechetical processes.  

The initiatory dynamic incorporates each aspect of the process of evangelisation. A faith community that is seeking to live out the initiatory dynamic will be conscious of the communal witness and the witness its members are called to give to Christ, and it will provide opportunities for those attracted by that witness to hear the initial proclamation of the Gospel. The community will also provide a process of catechumenal formation that seeks to deepen people’s initial faith and conversion, leading to their reception of the sacraments of initiation. This will be deepened by a period of post-baptismal reflection upon the experience of the sacraments. In short, the RCIA will be central to a faith community that embraces the initiatory dynamic.

A truly initiating community will also recognise that adult initiation is not their only responsibility in this regard. The faith community will implement processes analogous to the RCIA for those adults yet to complete their sacramental initiation, whether this is because they have not received the sacraments of Confirmation or Eucharist, or because they have not been fully evangelised and catechised. It will also be attentive to the initiatory dynamic.

in the course of its pastoral ministry, as it recognises its importance for people’s renewal in faith. In particular, as the season for the renewal of one’s conversion through repentance and prayer, Lent is especially important for the deeper inculcation of the initiatory dynamic among the faithful.

The initiatory dynamic also possesses implications for a faith community’s youth ministry. First, there is no reason why the initiatory dynamics ought not pertain to adolescents. Second, it means that although Australian youth ministry has typically focused upon the children of practising parents and sought to engage nominally baptised youth, it has largely neglected the evangelisation of non-baptised youth. The recognition of our post-Christendom context means that ministry to youth needs to include all three groups of young people. To employ the language of the magisterial statements surveyed in this chapter, this requires the deployment of the process of evangelisation for the third group of young people, and the implementation of a formative itinerary for the first two groups. Or, as I have chosen to articulate it: youth ministry ought to embrace the initiatory dynamic as the foundational process for its ministry with young people.

Having established the rationale for re-configuring youth ministry in the light of the baptismal catechumenate, the next chapter examines the initiatory dynamic in greater depth through a close analysis of the RCIA.
Chapter 5 Unpacking the RCIA’s Initiatory Dynamic

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter identified and examined the process of evangelisation contained in each of the successive magisterial statements on mission from AG through to EG. We also saw the assertion, first made by John Paul II and reiterated by Pope Francis, that this process is paradigmatic for pastoral ministry to the faithful and to those who are not fully living out their baptismal vocation. Furthermore, as a product of the Council, the RCIA is structured around the same process too. I have called this process the initiatory dynamic, consisting of proclamation, catechesis and ritual, culminating in sacramental initiation. This chapter investigates the initiatory dynamic contained in the RCIA, so that its insights may be utilised as a resource for youth ministry.

The chapter is divided into four main sections. The first addresses a potentially critical issue with the RCIA itself: namely, whether the 1972 ritual text is based upon an attempt in the fourth century to create a catechumenal process to address the problem of people entering the Church without their being sufficiently evangelised or converted. If this critique of the RCIA’s foundations is accurate, then to base the Church’s efforts to evangelise adults in the current era rests upon a problematic foundation, and it therefore would be most unwise for youth ministry to adopt a process based upon the RCIA. The chapter shows that although this argument may serve as a corrective to the naive perception that the RCIA is a straightforward retrieval of an unchanging patristic practice, it misunderstands the way in which those charged with developing the RCIA drew upon patristic sources to construct the catechumenate.
The second section examines the way in which the ritual text depicts conversion. To further illuminate the nature of conversion in the catechumenal process, I draw upon Donald Gelpi’s theology of conversion, consider the way in which the catechumenate as a ritual process effects conversion, and find consonances between the RCIA process and Lewis Rambo’s model of conversion.

The chapter’s third section examines the RCIA in greater depth. The principal features of the four periods and the three ritual steps are discussed in chronological order. The chapter concludes with an examination of the theology of initiation embedded within the RCIA.

5.2 The RCIA: An Exercise in Ressourcement

Paragraph 64 of SC refers to the “restoration” of the adult catechumenate, which indicates that the council fathers understood themselves to be calling for the reinstitution of an earlier ecclesial practice that had fallen into disuse. The members of Coetus XXII, the commission entrusted with the creation of the RCIA, understood their task in the same manner. Balthasar Fischer of Trier, the chair of the commission, was to later characterise the commission’s work as the “restoration of the ancient pattern [of catechesis and initiation] as it was first set out in the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus in the first decades of the third century.”337 Fischer’s remarks reflect the work of Alois Stenzel, one of the other members of the commission who argued in his 1957 study of baptism that chapters 15-21 of the Apostolic Tradition were the first full articulation of the “Classical Catechumenate” which he understood to be a universal pattern of catechesis and initiation that continued with only minor variations across different locations until the decline of the adult

catechumenate in the seventh century, as infant baptism overtook adult initiation. As a consequence, the *Apostolic Tradition* decisively shaped the basic structure and ritual steps of the RCIA.

The *Apostolic Tradition*’s section on the catechumenate began with someone’s request to become a Christian and an accompanying scrutiny to ascertain whether the candidate’s motives were true. This inaugurated a three-year period of instruction, during which those being instructed were called ‘catechumens’. A second scrutiny to determine the catechumens’ readiness for baptism led into a final period of preparation that included daily exorcisms before culminating in a ceremony that began with the renunciation of Satan, an anointing with the ‘oil of exorcism’, and then baptism by triple immersion and interspersed with a threefold interrogation that asked if they believed in the Father, Son and Spirit. They were then anointed with the ‘oil of thanksgiving’, and admitted to the celebration of Eucharist for the first time.

While this process formed the basis for the RCIA’s structure and ritual steps, several important aspects of the RCIA are not derived from the *Apostolic Tradition*. These include the celebration of initiation at Easter (and therefore the period of final preparation occurring during Lent), the three Lenten scrutinies, the presentations of the Creed and Our Father, and the period of mystagogy.

The Coetus found those other elements in other patristic documents. Tertullian stated a preference for Easter baptism, as did Cyril, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia,


340 *Apostolic Tradition*, 20.7 specifies baptism after a Saturday evening vigil, but the text does not state that it was at Easter. See Bradshaw et al, *Ap Trad*, 106-7.
Ambrose and Augustine in the fourth and fifth centuries. The fourth century sources also attested to a period of preparation prior to Easter that developed in conjunction with the season of Lent. The exceptions to this are the three Lenten scrutinies, which are first described in the Canons to the Gauls, a Roman document dated to ca. 400. As a consequence of the classical catechumenate thesis, the Coetus harmonised elements from the fourth and fifth century catechumenates with the Apostolic Tradition.

It has become increasingly clear since the RCIA’s promulgation in 1972 that the classical catechumenate thesis is untenable. The Apostolic Tradition is no longer believed to provide a depiction of catechesis and initiation in early third century Rome. The text’s attribution to Hippolytus has been disputed and, as Paul Bradshaw, Maxwell Johnson and L. Edward Phillips have demonstrated, an early third century date for the document appears unlikely.

Some of the Apostolic Tradition’s elements, such as a three-year catechumenate and a daily exorcism only possess parallels in fourth century documents, although Bradshaw, Johnson and Phillips make a case for the core rite of chapters 15 to 20 to date to the late second century. Whether their precise reconstruction is accurate in every respect or not, Bradshaw convincingly argues that these difficulties reflect the Apostolic Tradition’s genre: as a ‘church order’ it is best understood as a piece of “living literature” that evolved over time, and as such is a “composite work, a collection of community rules from quite disparate traditions”, with elements that could date from as early as the second century to

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341 Tertullian, On Baptism, 19; Egeria, Pilgrimage, 45.
342 See Maxwell E. Johnson, The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation, Rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 161. It might have pre-dated this, but we cannot know for certain.
the middle of the fourth century. It thus likely reflects an amalgam of different traditions from diverse geographical regions, and so ought not be considered to describe the practice of the church in early third century Rome.

It is now widely recognised that a single pattern of catechesis and initiation did not exist in the early church. Instead, it is now typical for the sources to be divided between East and West Syrian, Egyptian, North African and Roman traditions, acknowledging that changes took place within those locations, and that even specific locales within those regions could possess different practices and theological interpretations of the rites to other places within the same region.

In light of these developments, Paul Bradshaw describes the rites of Christian initiation in the early church as a “study in diversity”, and argues that “to emphasise what is common and to ignore what is distinctive of individual churches - or worse still, to force that evidence to fit some preconceived notion of a normative pattern - is to seriously distort our understanding of the variety of primitive Christian practice, and to lay a false foundation for the modern revision of initiation rites.” Bradshaw’s remarks form part of a plea for legitimate diversity for contemporary initiation rites, and thus possess an ecumenical import, but they also imply a substantial objection to the RCIA, as the Coetus’ presumption of a timeless pattern of catechesis and initiation in the early church has been fatally undermined by recent research. Instead of reflecting a uniform ancient pattern, the RCIA’s structure and rites would appear to most closely mirror the catechumenates of the fourth and fifth century mystagogues, and incorporate features from even later Roman sources.

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For Bradshaw then, the classical catechumenate thesis misdiagnoses an important reality: rather than attesting to a uniform process that spanned from the third to seventh centuries, the sources actually indicate that the catechumenate was homogenised in the wake of Constantine’s approbation of the church and the Council of Nicaea. Bradshaw suggests that this was a response to the challenge of increased numbers presenting themselves for baptism, because it had become socially or politically advantageous to be a Christian. Bradshaw concluded that the pre-Constantinian church had undertaken a more informal, but rigorous process of mentoring the catechumens. This made baptism the ritual celebration of a prior conversion. From the fourth century the initiation rites were now needed to effect conversion through a more formal, secretive and highly ritualised process, because the church had lowered its expectations concerning the catechumens’ motives for becoming Christians. In the fourth century the rites assumed a more dramatic character through the appropriation of features from pagan mystery rites.\(^\text{347}\) According to Bradshaw, the importation of these foreign elements into the catechumenate was “signs the process was no longer working properly and needed shoring up.”\(^\text{348}\) They were “symptoms of a Church that was already losing the battle for the hearts and minds of its followers and was desperately trying to remedy the situation by whatever means lay to hand.”\(^\text{349}\)

Alan Kreider makes a similar argument, contending that from Constantine’s “conversion” onwards, the church ceased to require a change in people’s behaviour prior to their baptism. Then, beginning with Augustine, the Church began to defend conversion by

\(^{347}\) Edward Yarnold was a prominent advocate for the influence of the mystery cults upon the rites of initiation, see Edward Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: The Origins of the RCIA*, 2nd ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994), 55ff, especially 66. Yarnold argued that Constantine was responsible for this influence; see Edward Yarnold, *Cyril of Jerusalem* (London: Routledge, 2000), 50ff.

\(^{348}\) Bradshaw, *Search*, 219.

\(^{349}\) See Bradshaw, *Search*, 218. Harmless rightly notes that this argument assumes that it was only in the fourth century that the church appropriated pagan practices, when in fact pre-dates this. William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, Rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: Pueblo/Liturgical Press, 2014), 66, n.101.
coercion, abandoning its patient trust in God’s power to draw people to Christ through the attractive witness provided by the church’s distinctive way of life and practice.\textsuperscript{350}

Given that the RCIA most closely resembles the fourth and fifth century catechumenates, the question Bradshaw and Kreider’s arguments pose is whether the RCIA is modelled upon a faulty fourth century process that did not ensure genuine conversions to Christ. Both Bradshaw and Kreider’s arguments are not without their problems. The catechumenate’s formalisation need not be seen as the church’s capitulation to large numbers of people who wished to enter the church for suspect motives. Rather, as Maxwell Johnson argues, it could be understood to be a pastoral strategy “designed to ensure that the church’s sacramental/baptismal life would have some kind of integrity when authentic conversion and properly motivated desire to enter the Christian community could no longer be assumed.”\textsuperscript{351}

Bradshaw and Kreider’s arguments tend towards an idealisation of the third-century catechumenate, leading to an overestimation of its rate of success. While the third century produced its martyrs many also lapsed, at least into non-practice if not into unbelief, in the face of persecution. Others did not necessarily display too many signs of devotion, as Origen testifies in his remarks concerning women who were more interested in chatting than praying, and who evaded the liturgy by removing themselves to other rooms within the domus or house church.\textsuperscript{352} His lament that people wanted to be leaders in the church for the “sake of a little prestige” also indicates that the third-century catechumenate was far

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\textsuperscript{350} Alan Kreider, \textit{The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire} (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 41.
\textsuperscript{351} See Johnson’s discussion in \textit{Rites of Initiation}, 90-1. For Thomas Finn, the catechumenate offered a “threshold status without opening up the floodgates” to indiscriminate baptism of those who had not been sufficiently converted. Thomas M. Finn, \textit{From Death to Rebirth: Ritual and Conversion in Antiquity} (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1997), 193.
\end{flushright}
from uniformly successful in instilling a new Christian way of life. All of this led Origen to wistfully recall the era in which his own father was martyred, because then the catechumens “were catechised in the midst of martyrdoms” and the faithful of that period were “really faithful”, a comment that disparages those he was ministering to at that latter date.\textsuperscript{353} Tertullian bears witness that the delaying of baptism was a pre- as well as post-Nicene issue, because people wanted to avoid onerous public post-baptismal penances. Tertullian also mentions that some catechumens had not desisted from immoral behaviour prior to baptism, when they should have been “learning not to sin.”\textsuperscript{354} We may conclude that the admission of nominal converts to baptism does not appear to have arisen only in the fourth century.\textsuperscript{355}

Similarly, Cyprian of Carthage’s third century account of his own baptism challenges the assertion that it was only from the fourth century onwards that the baptismal rites were expected to effect conversion. He explained that prior to baptism he had struggled to believe what divine mercy promised for my salvation, namely that someone could be born again and to a new life by being immersed in the healing water of baptism. It was difficult to believe that though I would remain the same man in bodily form, my heart and mind would be transformed. How was it possible, I thought, that change could be great enough to strip away in a single moment the innate hardness of our nature? ... How could the habits acquired over the course of man years disappear, since these are so deeply rooted within us?... But after the life-giving water of baptism came to my rescue and took away the stain of my former years and poured into my cleansed and purified heart the light which comes from above, and after I had drunk in the Heavenly Spirit and was made a new man by a second birth, then amazingly what I had doubted became clear to me.\textsuperscript{356}

\textsuperscript{353} See Frend, \textit{Rise}, 289.
\textsuperscript{354} Tertullian, \textit{On Penance}, 6.9.
\textsuperscript{355} See Frend, \textit{Rise}, 322.
Cyprian’s understood the rites of initiation to be part of the process of conversion, and not simply as the ritual affirmation of a prior conversion. His testimony underscores the way in which catechesis and ritual during the patristic period were intended to work in concert.

None of this is to suggest that the catechumenates of the fourth century achieved universal success in effecting conversion. It is clear from the sources that they did not. It is to say that the catechumenates of the third century were not uniformly successful, and that the mystagogues’ catechumenates were not failed ventures. In both centuries, catechesis, ritual and mentoring, while often configured differently, provided means for people to genuinely embrace the Christian faith and the way of life it entailed.\(^{357}\)

The process of ‘Christianisation’ in subsequent centuries came to include coercive measures that forced imperial subjects to become Christians and ultimately overtook the catechumenate, and by the seventh century the catechumenate’s terminology and rituals were applied to the truncated process of infant baptism. The need for adult initiation had seemingly dwindled as Christendom developed. As Johnson notes then, the catechumenate’s formalisation from the fourth century “represents both the rise and fall of the catechumenal process itself.”\(^{358}\) This means that when given a mandate to restore the baptismal catechumenate, and notwithstanding their misapprehension concerning the catechumenate’s timeless pattern in the patristic period, the ritual text the Coetus produced was always going to reflect the fourth and fifth century catechumenates.

At the time of the RCIA’s promulgation, the Coetus was criticised for engaging in “archaeologism”, or the claim that the mere antiquity of these ancient historical sources

\(^{357}\) Harmless, *Augustine*, 61.
\(^{358}\) Johnson, *Rites of Initiation*, 119.
made them intrinsically significant for the task of adult initiation today. Bradshaw’s critique in effect extends that initial criticism by stating that such archaeologism was based upon faulty scholarship. More recently, Peter McGrail has made the diametrically opposite claim, contending that the RCIA possesses only a “veneer of patristic terminology” and is best understood as a “radically new” initiative arising from the need in both Europe and traditional mission countries for an initiation process for adults.

Both critiques fail to appreciate that the RCIA is neither the straightforward restoration of an ancient method or a brand-new pattern for initiation. Instead, the RCIA needs to be understood as an exercise in ressourcement, an animating principle of the broader project of Vatican II. Coined by Charles Peguy (1873-1914), the term ressourcement was taken up by Yves Congar (1904-1995), Henri de Lubac (1896-1991), Jean Danielou (1905-1974) and others to describe a return to the biblical, liturgical and patristic sources of theology in order to overcome the narrow neo-scholasticism that had come to dominate Catholic theology in the modern period. These theologians did not advocate a return to the Fathers because they regarded the patristic period to be authoritative over subsequent periods in history, but because the period possessed multiple voices that could, in the words of A.N. Williams, “provoke the theological imagination to new insight.” Their engagement with the Fathers stemmed from a conviction that patristic insights could inform both theology and ministry’s needs in the present. When Congar, de Lubac and Danielou were appointed periti at Vatican II, they ensured that the council’s re-envisioning of the Church and its engagement with

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359 See Fischer, "Rediscovery," 102. Duggan states, “one cannot escape the impression that there was a degree of idealization of the past at work”. Robert Duggan, "Conversion in the 'Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum'," Ephemeredes 97, no. (1983): 216.
modern world would be a profound exercise in *ressourcement*. Although the members of Coetus XXII understood that the catechumenate they were to restore originated in the patristic period, it was not a case of returning to an ancient practice for its own sake, or merely in the name of being more faithful to the tradition. It was to serve the Church’s new engagement with the modern world. For this reason, the use of the term ‘restoration’ in relation to the catechumenate needs to be carefully understood: the Coetus returned to the patristic sources to shape a new process for the initiation of adults in a post-Christendom context in the belief that those ancient sources contained valuable insights concerning the way in which the Christian faith could truly take root in people’s lives today. As Fischer himself put it concerning the Coetus’ task: “It was not our intention to keep ancient texts merely because they were old or for nostalgic reasons, but because these texts, while they linked us with the past, still answered contemporary needs. The ancient texts treated Christian initiation as what it really is, a process, and [they] related that process to human nature.”

5.3 Conversion in the RCIA

Another way of framing Fischer’s statement is that underneath the patristic period’s diverse catechetical and initiatory practices lies the common conviction that human beings can change, not simply at the level of outward behaviour but at the integrating and organising level of one’s religious identity which in turn shapes the thoughts and behaviours of every aspect of one’s life. This kind of religious change has traditionally been called conversion, and it is integral to the patristic catechumenates, and so also to the RCIA. As the first paragraph of the RCIA indicates, the catechumenate is “*designed*” for those who wish

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to respond to the proclamation of the “mystery of Christ” by embarking upon the “way of faith and conversion” (RCIA 1).\textsuperscript{364} This raises questions about the nature of conversion and how it takes place. In particular, it raises questions about the understanding of conversion contained within the RCIA.

How then does the RCIA portray conversion? The RCIA’s structure is predicated upon an initial conversion that ought to take place during the pre-catechumenate. The candidates’ initial conversion is characterised as their “intention to change their lives and to enter into a relationship with God in Christ” (RCIA 42). The Ordo then enumerates criteria that indicate such a conversion has taken place: the candidates have begun a spiritual life (especially through beginning to pray), the “fundamentals of Christian teaching have taken root”, there are initial signs of repentance, a “sense of the Church” and “some experience” of the faith community (RCIA 42). It is only on the basis of an initial conversion that someone should be admitted to the catechumenate.

The candidates’ initial conversion is to mature over the course of the catechumenate. A conversion of mind and action, a sufficient acquaintance with Christian teaching and a spirit of faith and charity are the criteria for admittance to the rite of election (RCIA 107). The culmination of this conversion takes place in the sacraments of initiation, through which the elect are united to Christ, a union that is simultaneously incorporation into Christ’s Body, the Church. ‘Conversion’ is therefore not merely one’s formal entry into the Church, but also includes one’s subjective experience of belonging to the faith community.

An Evangelical Protestant understanding of conversion has influenced some expressions of Catholic faith and ministry, including some of the youth ministries belonging to the new movements mentioned in chapter two. Evangelical Protestants have typically depicted

\textsuperscript{364} Emphasis mine.
conversion as an essential discrete experience, consisting of repentance of sin and the acceptance of Jesus as one’s personal Lord and Saviour. Several Evangelical theologians have expressed difficulty with this construct of conversion, citing its episodic nature and its individualism as principal issues.\(^{365}\) The RCIA helpfully extends this perspective on conversion by portraying conversion as: 1) a process rather than a singular event, 2) a work of the Triune God rather than confining it to a relationship with Christ, 3) including a more nuanced understanding of the human person’s graced role in conversion which corrects an understanding in which God’s agency all but overwhelms the part of the person in conversion, and 4) transformative of the whole person rather than restricting it to a change in moral behaviour (through repentance).

To take each of these in turn:

1) the RCIA does not confine conversion to a particular historical event. No single moment is described as the location of a “conversion experience”. Instead, the RCIA stresses that conversion is a “journey” and indicates that conversion takes place during every stage of the catechumenate. The ritual text implies that conversion continues beyond the period of mystagogy and into the daily life of Christian discipleship.\(^{366}\) The RCIA’s theology of conversion can thus find room for significant and even dramatic experiences of God that occur within a larger journey without making these normative for the life of faith.


\(^{366}\) While the RCIA does not explicitly refer to conversion continuing beyond baptism, Robert Duggan maintains that “the whole of the Christian life is understood [in the RCIA] as an ongoing journey of conversion.” Duggan, “Conversion,” 217. Similarly, Aidan Kavanagh writes “catechesis [in the RCIA] is understood to be concerned with conversion in Christ and with how to live continuously in such a manner not only prior to, but after initiation as well.” Aidan Kavanagh, “Christian Initiation of Adults: The Rites,” in Made, Not Born: New Perspectives on Christian Initiation and the Catechumenate (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 119-20.
2) The RCIA shares a certain christocentrism with typical Evangelical theologies of conversion. By placing Easter baptism as the culmination of the process, the RCIA makes Christ’s death and resurrection the central metaphor for the candidates’ conversion. In conjunction with faith, conversion is presented as the appropriate response to the proclamation of “the living God ... and Jesus Christ whom he has sent for the salvation of all” (RCIA 36). Initial conversion is described as the candidates’ “intention to change their lives and to enter into a relationship with God in Christ” (RCIA 42). In his study of conversion in the RCIA Robert Duggan traces the way this relationship with Christ is described in progressively stronger terms until it is framed in the three Lenten scrutinies as union with Christ. The imagery of union culminates in the rites of Baptism, Confirmation and first Eucharist during the Easter vigil, where the neophytes’ initiation fully realizes their union with God in Christ and through the action of the indwelling Spirit.

Alongside this Christocentric focus, however, the RCIA also refers to the gift of the Spirit as the principal outcome of the candidates’ conversion. For example, the minor exorcisms speak of the candidates as incipient temples and dwelling places for the Spirit. The blessings of the catechumens include a prayer for rebirth in “in the Holy Spirit”, and the exorcisms speak of salvation “in the Holy Spirit” (RCIA 141). The elect’s request for baptism is depicted as the desire for “the three sacraments of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit” (RCIA 111). The gift of the indwelling Spirit is thus understood to be baptism’s principal outcome.

The RCIA also portrays the Spirit as the principal agent of conversion. The Spirit opens people’s hearts to hear the mystery of Christ and inspires them to embark upon the journey

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367 Duggan in fact equates union with conversion as it is portrayed in the ritual text: “union with Christ is the ultimate meaning, goal, rationale, and foundation for all of the candidates’ experience that can collectively be included in the term “conversion””. Duggan, “Conversion,” 201.

368 Elio Capra disagrees and argues that the role given to the Spirit is uneven in the RCIA after its initial reference in paragraph 1 doesn’t get a mention until the scrutinies. Elio Capra, “The Scrutinies as Models and
of conversion (RCIA 1, 36). During the minor exorcisms the Spirit is invoked to protect and
give power to the candidates. In the scrutinies, the intercessions invoke the Spirit’s
assistance to overcome weakness and banish fear as well as to teach, transform, enlighten
and give life (RCIA 140, 154, 161).

If the outcome of conversion is both a radical union with Christ that is accomplished
through the Spirit’s guidance and ultimately indwelling presence in the sacraments of
initiation, then conversion also results in being joined to the Father as adopted sons and
daughters (RCIA 205). Conversion’s goal is thus communion with the Triune God. This is
most fully expressed in the words of baptism, as the candidates are immersed in the name
of the Father, Son and Spirit. We may sum this up by stating that conversion takes place at
the instigation of the Father, which is accomplished through the Son and in the Holy Spirit.

3) The RCIA seeks to avoid the extremes of portraying conversion as a purely human
response to God, which so over-emphasises God’s initiative that the person is reduced to a
passive recipient. While the Spirit opens people’s hearts so that they can come to the
knowledge of God revealed in Christ (RCIA 1), the candidates are to cooperate with God’s
grace so that their conversion is authentic and fruitful (RCIA 4).

4) Conversion possesses a moral dimension. It involves “turning” from sin to a life of
virtue, and this is reflected in the RCIA. Candidates are “called away from sin”, to search
their conscience, repent and do penance (RCIA 37). They are to be instructed in the
principles of “New Testament morality”, and so to love of neighbour, forgiveness of others
and a life consonant with the way of Christ (RCIA 82). In so doing, the RCIA frames the moral

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Pattern of Conversion in the Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum (OICA)” (PhD diss., Melbourne College of
Divinity, 2002), 299-301.
dimension of conversion as the adoption of a new ethic that includes but is not confined to the mere avoidance of sinful behaviour.

The RCIA does not restrict the transformative nature of conversion to one’s moral conduct alone. There is an intellectual dimension to conversion which includes the candidates’ achieving an “appropriate acquaintance with dogmas and precepts”, but also consists of a “profound sense of the mystery of salvation in which they desire to participate” (RCIA 75.1). Similarly, the stated purpose of the period of purification and enlightenment is to “enlighten the minds and hearts of the elect with a deeper knowledge of Christ the Saviour” (RCIA 126). Furthermore, the catechumens are not expected simply to think differently about God or themselves, but also to see the world differently, as they experience a “progressive change of outlook” (RCIA 75.2). While conversion includes the understanding and acceptance of new beliefs, the RCIA understands that the “knowledge” of God necessary for conversion is not confined to a purely cognitive understanding alone.

Although the RCIA does not characterise conversion in overly emotional terms, Robert Duggan rightly notes that the RCIA does use affective language to describe conversion. As we have already seen, people “feel” called away from sin and “drawn” into the mystery of God’s “love” (RCIA 37). The rite speaks of the candidates feeling sad in relation to their sins, freedom from fear, and joy at their new relationship with Christ (RCIA 6, 141, 153). Duggan stresses that part of the affective dimension of conversion is that the candidates are supposed to practically or even existentially grow in building and sustaining loving relationships with others as well.370

369 Emphasis mine.
Although the RCIA does not provide an explicit definition of conversion, it structures the candidates’ progression through its four periods upon the basis of an initial conversion and its ongoing maturation. The RCIA provides a multifaceted account of conversion, portraying it as a process that may but need not necessarily include dramatic experiences. It is both deeply Christocentric and Trinitarian and allows for both divine initiative and the human person’s graced and free response to the Spirit’s invitation. Its expansive vision portrays conversion not only as a religious event with moral and ecclesial consequences, but also as possessing affective and intellectual dimensions. In this way, the RCIA characterises conversion as a deeply human process that encompasses the entirety of human existence. It conceives of conversion as integral to becoming fully human. While it is not cited in the ritual text, the RCIA’s portrayal of conversion is thus in accordance with the insight enshrined in paragraph 22 of Gaudium et Spes: for if “Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear”, then it is through conversion to Christ that we experience this revelation of our true humanity.

5.3.1 Developments in the Theology of Conversion

The American Jesuit Donald Gelpi developed a theology of conversion that is consonant with the RCIA, but which helpfully explicates and extends the RCIA’s depiction of conversion. Following Bernard Lonergan, Gelpi argues that in addition to religious conversion, in which human transformation occurs in explicit reference to God and usually

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within a religious context, there are experiences of transformation within the affective, intellectual and moral dimensions of human experience that can also be called conversions in their own right.\textsuperscript{372}

Lonergan had argued in \textit{Method and Theology} that a change from an unreflective mindset to a self-aware and critical intellectual stance constituted the adoption of a new frame of reference that was analogous to but distinct from a religious conversion. Lonergan also recognised that a similar shift occurred when someone eschewed a moral framework based upon the brute satisfaction of desires by personally appropriating a set of values. He distinguished these two conversions, which he called “intellectual” and “moral” conversion, from a “religious” conversion, which he described as an “other-worldly falling in love”. Lonergan conceived of Christian conversion as a particular form of religious conversion which he characterised as “God’s love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us.”\textsuperscript{373}

In order to underline what he considered to be conversion’s essentially social dimension, Gelpi chose to define conversion as the assumption of responsibility in a particular realm of human experience because responsibility implies our mutual dependence upon one another. Gelpi then drew upon Lonergan to define \textit{intellectual conversion} as the assumption of responsibility for one’s personal beliefs and understanding and the concomitant repudiation of an uncritical stance of untested assumptions. \textit{Moral conversion} is the turning from irresponsible selfishness to the adoption of personal responsibility for one’s decisions against a personally chosen set of ethical norms. For Gelpi, \textit{Christian conversion} is the

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decision to move from ignorance and opposition to God to a decision for faith in the God revealed in Jesus Christ and through the Spirit.\textsuperscript{374}

Gelpi argued that Lonergan concentrated upon the faculties of intellect and will, but because of his neo-Thomistic commitments underestimated the affective dimension of human experience. As a consequence Lonergan omitted the capacity of human beings to convert affectively.\textsuperscript{375} Gelpi defined \textit{affective conversion} as the assumption of responsibility for one’s emotional, imaginative and aesthetic development. He also distinguished \textit{sociopolitical conversion} from personal moral conversion because he came to recognise that people could assume personal responsibility for their moral behaviour in their interpersonal relationships without this responsibility extending to a commitment to address economic, societal or political injustice. Someone who has been socio-politically converted seeks the common good and pursues justice in societal systems and global structures.\textsuperscript{376}

Gelpi therefore argued for five different kinds of conversion: religious, affective, intellectual, moral and socio-political.\textsuperscript{377} He also differentiated between initial and ongoing conversion in all five types of conversion. Initial conversion is the initial movement from irresponsibility to responsibility in one of those five realms of human experience, whereas ongoing conversion is the continuing process of living out the consequences of that initial decision.\textsuperscript{378}

Gelpi’s theology of conversion adds three elements to the RCIA’s theology of conversion. First, Gelpi’s construct of multiple forms of conversion more firmly grounds Duggan’s

\textsuperscript{374} Gelpi, \textit{Committed Worship}, 17.
\textsuperscript{375} Donald Gelpi, \textit{Peirce and Theology: Essays in the Authentication of Doctrine} (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2001), 4-5.
\textsuperscript{377} Gelpi, \textit{Committed Worship}, 17-8.
assertion that the RCIA understands conversion to be integral to realizing one’s humanity. While each kind of conversion belongs within the process of human maturation, a true conversion is required because human beings do not simply achieve maturity in all the realms of human experience through a straightforward process of human development, but rather must repudiate a previously held position of irresponsibility and immaturity in order to become responsible in each of these different dimensions of human experience.

Second, by distinguishing religious conversion from the four forms of “natural” conversion, Gelpi recognises that people may attain affective, intellectual, moral or sociopolitical responsibility without this necessarily occurring from a religious motivation or within a religious context. For example, some may convert affectively by addressing their emotional dysfunction in therapy, while others may convert socio-politically when they dedicate time and energy into remedying a particular social injustice.

Third, distinguishing between the five forms of conversion is a helpful way of explaining the presence and absence of different forms of conversion in one person’s life and the effect that this may have. For example, one may convert religiously, but if an intellectual conversion has not occurred then that religious conversion may assume a fundamentalist

379 Gelpi argues that these “natural conversions” occur in “complete abstraction” from the action of God’s historical self-revelation. Gelpi, Committed Worship, 11. In Peirce and Theology, Gelpi writes, “In my judgment a conversion begins to have a graced character when its motives invoke supernaturally revealed truths, realities, and values. Otherwise it occurs naturally”. Gelpi, Peirce, 20. Gelpi thus sharply distinguishes between grace and nature, arguing that affective, intellectual, moral and sociopolitical conversions are “natural” conversions that prescind from God’s gracious activity. Gelpi is aware that this places him at odds with the majority of contemporary Catholic theologians who, largely following either Rahner’s or Henri de Lubac’s resolution of the relationship between nature and grace, contend that grace has always-already begun to transform human nature. Gelpi’s approach is unable to account for the Spirit’s action in the world beyond the historical mission of the Son and within the Church (ironically, given the considerable attention Gelpi pays to the Spirit in his work). Notwithstanding this deficiency, I do not think it does violence to the principal contours of Gelpi’s argument to affirm that his so-called “natural conversions” are indeed graced by God, even if the grace at work in these natural conversions can and ought to be distinguished from the indwelling presence of the Spirit or the Spirit’s action in bringing someone to an explicit conversion to Christ. For further on this see David Coffey’s Rahnerian refutation of Gelpi’s position in David Coffey, “Vive le Difference - A Response to Donald Gelpi,” Pneuma 29, no. (2007): 113-30.

380 Gelpi, Committed Worship, 12-4.
posture. If a socio-political conversion has not taken place then a religiously converted person might display high levels of commitment to personal moral conduct but evince little interest in alleviating poverty, institutional corruption or environmental degradation. A final example would be the religiously converted person who has not experienced an affective conversion: such a person may display signs of religious neurosis or rigidity. Gelpi’s construct can thus serve as a helpful heuristic tool for understanding what dimensions of conversion are present or absent in someone’s life.

When Gelpi brings his theology of conversion to bear upon the RCIA he argues that the catechumenal process should not only be concerned with the candidates’ religious conversion: conversion does include the repudiation of sin and turning towards God, and membership of the Church, but it ought to foster substantive affective, intellectual, moral and socio-political conversions too. An important advantage of such an approach over a more conventional understanding of religious conversion is that it provides a safeguard against narrowly focussing upon religious markers such as a stated belief in Christ or increased church attendance and participation, while leaving the affective, intellectual, moral and socio-political dimensions of becoming truly human en Christoi unaddressed.

5.3.2 Conversion through the RCIA’s Ritual Process

If the RCIA’s structure is predicated upon a rich and multifaceted understanding of conversion, and which is further elaborated upon by Gelpi’s theology, then the question this prompts is: can the process embedded in the RCIA engender such a conversion in its participants? And if so, how? The RCIA rightly insists that conversion is a work of the Holy Spirit in people’s lives, but the Spirit’s action occurs in and through the human processes of the catechumenate’s structures and dynamics.

Studies of both the catechumenate in the patristic period and of the contemporary RCIA have frequently emphasised the *ritual process* for effecting conversion. As Bruce Morrill puts it, by restoring the catechumenate, Vatican II “mandated a ritual-shaped process of initiation.”[^382] Such studies have often portrayed the catechumenate as a rite of passage, which in its classical form marked a change in people’s identity in relation to their community (which was usually a traditional society). Rites of passage, therefore, occur at moments such as birth when one becomes an adult member of the tribe, in marriage and at death. Arnold Van Gennep described such rites as consisting of a three-part ritual process which firstly involved a period of separation from the community, which was followed by a “liminal” period, in which the initiate no longer retains his or her previous identity or status within the group but has not received his or her new identity either. The third part of the process consisted of rites of incorporation, which fully initiated the person into his or her new identity. The initiate is now a full, adult member of the community or has been initiated into a new role within the community. In many such rites of passage “death”, “birth” and “rebirth” are central metaphors for the loss of a previous identity and the creation of a new one.

Victor Turner built upon van Gennep’s work, arguing that rites of passage were not only a series of progressive steps, but rather comprised a generative process “for the invention of new cosmological and other cultural categories within which original constructs of persons and relations might be created.”[^383] In other words, Turner argued that these rituals did not


simply mark a new phase in someone’s life, but rather effected a new identity or status (especially through the liminal stages’ rituals) for the initiate in relation to the community. As this relationship between the individual and society was embedded within a transcendent cosmological framework in a traditional society these rites also effected a changed relationship to the divine.

Van Gennep and Turner’s work provided theologians with a way in which to interpret both the patristic catechumenates and the RCIA. The entry into the catechumenate is understood to be a rite of separation. The catechumenate and Lenten periods correspond to the liminal phase, while the rites of initiation and ensuing mystagogy are understood to be rites of incorporation into the church. Like rites of passage in many societies, the metaphors of rebirth, death and resurrection are, of course, central to Christian initiation.\(^{384}\)

The catechumenate does not correspond in every respect to traditional rites of passage. Traditional rites of passage usually change an existing community member’s status but do not make someone external to the community a member, as Christian initiation rites do.\(^{385}\) Furthermore, rites of passage in traditional societies are socially mandated processes that come into effect at certain stage-of-life moments. Unlike entry into the catechumenate, the initiates in these rites of passage do not freely enter into the process themselves, but are expected to participate as a matter of course when they reach a certain age or stand on the threshold of a life change such as marriage. This difference means that anthropological studies of the ritual process are unable to inform our understanding of what motivates someone to enter into the process of Christian initiation in the first place.

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\(^{384}\) See, for example John 3:5 and Rom 6.

\(^{385}\) Johnson, *Rites of Initiation*, xix.
Ritual studies scholars have critiqued both Van Gennep and Turner’s work as insufficiently attentive to the particular experience of each ritual subject, and some have questioned whether these subjects truly experience the change of identity that the rite intends. While some such as Victor Crapanzano speak of the “illusion” that ritual creates, arguing that the ritual subject simply does not experience a passage from one status to another, Catherine Bell has examined how ritual subjects reinterpret rituals in ways that are not intended by the authorising group or society.\(^{386}\) David Yamane’s sociological study of the RCIA provides an example of this. Yamane found that several interviewees framed their experience of the RCIA as primarily effecting a greater unity within their family through being able to fully participate (that is partake of holy communion) in the Eucharist together, which then shaped their self-perception that they were now a better husband or wife and parent as a consequence.\(^{387}\) Yamane found that this interpretation was more prevalent than experiences of the RCIA’s normative outcomes, such as a new relationship with God, or other aspects of conversion.

This misalignment, as Yamane recounts it, needs to be balanced by his discussion of the scrutinies’ impact which deeply affected some of the participants. Although clearly moved, some were unable to fully articulate the significance of their experience, while others were able to explicitly connect their experience with the Gospel of that particular Sunday (which is alluded to in the scrutiny’s prayer of exorcism). In these cases, the rituals were efficacious in ways that corresponded much more closely with their stated purpose to purify and enlighten the candidates’ lives prior to baptism. Yamane found that these experiences were significantly enhanced if the participants were given the opportunity to reflect upon and


\(^{387}\) Yamane, *Becoming Catholic*, 158-60.
share their experiences with others. This suggests that in the case of the RCIA the ritual subjects do not necessarily always misinterpret the significance of a ritual. If the first example from Yamane’s study points to the insufficiency of ritual alone for effecting conversion, the second example indicates the potential the RCIA’s rituals possess when they are married with an accompanying catechetical process as the RCIA intends.

5.3.3 Rambo’s Model of Conversion and its Implications for the RCIA

Lewis Rambo’s model of conversion addresses the dynamics of the pre-catechumenate in ways that Turner’s understanding of ritual cannot, because Rambo studied convert’s motives to join a new religious group. Rambo’s model also adds to our understanding of the RCIA’s subsequent periods. Rambo sought to integrate anthropological, psychological and missiological studies of conversion into a single “heuristic stage model.” He considers it heuristic because it does not aspire to complete precision but to practical utility, and he proposes it as an intellectual construct that attempts to organise the “vast” literature on conversion.

Rambo’s stages of conversion are: 1) the social and cultural context, as well as the individual’s micro-context, which includes one’s family, ethnicity, religious identity and local neighbourhood; 2) an experience of crisis, or significant interior dissonance concerning one’s life that may be produced by factors internal to or beyond the individual; 3) a quest, or the

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390 Rambo briefly engages explicitly with the RCIA. He writes, “The Roman Catholic Church has instituted a process called the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, a one year progression of classes, retreats, liturgies, spiritual direction, and community life designed to introduce potential converts to the Roman Catholic Church and to teach them theology, liturgy, organisation, way of life of the church. Most Roman Catholics do not, however, actively go out into the community seeking people to participate in the RCIA. It is more a program for those who, on their own initiative, come to the church seeking information and desiring conversion.” Rambo, *Conversion*, 102-3.
intentional search for a new religious identity; 4) encounters with a new religious group, which occur through one or more of the new groups’ “advocates”; 5) Further interaction with the new religious group through the forging of new relationships, participation in some or all of the group’s core rituals, exposure to the group’s rhetoric, and the adoption of a role that the group specifies for the would-be convert; 6) a decisive commitment consisting of the repudiation of past beliefs and the full embrace of the group’s beliefs and new way of life; and 7) the ongoing consequences of the conversion in which the new converts seek to live out the implications of their conversion in each aspect of their lives.

The RCIA maps well onto Rambo’s stages and illuminates critical features of the RCIA’s process of conversion that the rites of passage does not address. Rambo identifies the impact of socio-cultural and familial/local contexts in conversion, even though these features frequently sit in the background of people’s lives, and may be only minimally understood or alluded to in a convert’s own account of religious change. Of course, the macro- and micro-contexts exert an ongoing influence throughout the other stages, and are better understood to undergird each of the other stages rather than constitute a separate stage.

The crisis, quest and encounter stages shed light upon the principal dynamics of the pre-catechumenate, in which some come to inquire about Christian faith through responding to the witness of others, and experience some level of interior dissatisfaction with their lives and their present religious identification.

The catechumenate broadly corresponds to Rambo’s interaction stage. The candidates expand their relationships with other members of the Christian community, participate in the community’s rituals (with the exception of the liturgy of the Eucharist), and are the

391 Rambo’s understanding of “quest” has more in common with Mason’s usage than with Taylor’s.
recipients of rituals specific to their status as a catechumen. They begin to learn what a member of the faithful is called to do by participating in apostolic and charitable ministries themselves. At the same time, they are taught about what the faith community believes through catechesis.

The profession of faith prior to baptism, which entails the repudiation of one’s previous way of life and wholehearted surrender to God is a powerful example of the commitment and surrender that is characteristic of Rambo’s commitment stage. Rambo’s last stage includes and extends beyond the period of mystagogy in the RCIA as the converts learn to fully live out the consequences of their commitment in their daily lives.

5.4 The Ritual Text

Having established conversion as a crucial goal of the RCIA, explored the RCIA’s theology of conversion, and considered how conversion takes place through anthropological accounts of rites of passage, Gelpi’s theology and Rambo’s model, this section contains an exploration of the ritual text’s principal elements. As we saw in chapter four, AG’s process of evangelisation and the subsequent magisterial statements on mission complement the RCIA, and so these documents will also be adverted to in order to understand better the dynamics of the RCIA.

5.4.1 Period of Evangelisation and Pre-catechumenate

5.4.1.1 Witness

The RCIA contains only a minimal explanation of the pre-catechumenate’s principal characteristics. The praenotanda presume that someone is already “inquiring” about the Christian faith and is “sympathetic” to it (RCIA 39). The text gives little direct indication about what might have led a person to this point in the first place. However, central to the
“reception” of those “inquirers” in the pre-catechumenate is the presence of “friends” who informally introduce the interested person to the priest and the broader community (RCIA 39.2-3). This indicates that the first dynamic of the pre-catechumenate is the witness provided by members of the faith community that arouses the curiosity and interest of someone who does not yet believe in Christ (see AG 10).

While *Ad Gentes* and the subsequent magisterial teaching all affirm the importance of the element of witness in evangelisation they say little about its animating principles. What precisely is it about the interplay between a faith community’s witness and someone’s experience of that witness that prompts an interested response in the non-Christian? Rambo’s first four stages helpfully illuminate this phase of a convert’s journey. Rambo suggests that individuals are likely to embark upon the first steps of the conversion journey when they experience some level of *crisis* concerning the macro or micro context of their lives. It may be some level of dissatisfaction concerning one’s place within or his or her understanding of the sociocultural world that one inhabits (the macro-context) or with his or her sense of identity within one’s family, ethnic, religious or local neighbourhood (the micro context). By describing this as a crisis, Rambo is stressing the influence of an external factor or factors that has precipitated a level of dissonance with previously held beliefs, perspectives, social location or role in one’s life. This crisis may prompt a *quest* or the intentional search for a resolution to the crisis that may possibly result in a conversion or change in religious identity. However, this is highly unlikely without an *encounter* between the potential convert and a faith community’s “advocate(s)”, a person(s) whose words and actions indicate that he or she lives by a different system of beliefs to that of the convert.

392 See AG 11-12, and the section on *Ad Gentes* in Chapter Four of this thesis. Both EN and RM also engage with the concept of witness as part of the process of evangelisation. See EN 21 (and *passim*), RM 42 and also EG, in which Francis refers to ‘witness’ 18 times.

393 Over half of *Understanding Religious Conversion* is dedicated to these four stages.
Rambo suggests that a level of congruence in things like age, sex, or education between the advocate and the potential convert is important for establishing a bond between them. This is important for the potential convert to be able to consider that the advocate is “just like me” in many respects, and yet possesses a different set of faith commitments, practices and behaviours.394

If Rambo’s stages are interpreted as occurring sequentially, then it could appear that an advocate is only likely to meet with a favourable hearing if the potential convert is already in the throes of significant dissonance when they meet. However, Rambo contends that the stages do not progress linearly, but mutually interact with each other. This invites the possibility that the witness of an advocate’s life may precipitate the kind of crisis that may result in the commencement of a quest for new understandings and meaning in their life. It may be the attractiveness of an advocate’s lifestyle and beliefs that prompts a period of self-examination and searching in someone that produces a sympathetic response and even an interest in the Christian faith.

Lying behind the advocate is the faith community to which he or she belongs. The RCIA suggests that even in this initial stage of the journey, “opportunities should be provided for [the inquirers] to meet families and other groups of Christians” (RCIA 38). Through this encounter with members of the community the would-be converts begin to experience themselves as belonging to the group, even though they will not formally belong until they become catechumens, and will not be full members of the Church until they receive the sacraments of initiation. Yamane calls this latter, formal form of belonging as objective incorporation and helpfully distinguishes it from subjective incorporation, or an existential

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394 Rambo, Conversion, 37-8.
sense of belonging. It is crucial that the candidates begin to experience themselves as subjectively incorporated in the pre-catechumenate and then especially in the catechumenate. Perhaps counter-intuitively, subjective incorporation needs to precede objective incorporation for someone to persevere in the path of discipleship. It is too late to wait until the period of mystagogy for this subjective sense of belonging to occur. Aidan Kavanagh makes the same point theologically when he states that a “certain incipient but real communion” is established.

It is significant that the candidates are called “inquirers” at this point, because it implies that as the encounter with the advocate(s) and broader faith community develops, the candidates are to take the initiative in the ensuing dialogue (RCIA 39). Their questions, spiritual interests and issues ought to drive the conversation, rather than proceeding with a pre-established format or curriculum. Rather than anticipating questions that they have not yet asked, the evangelisers ought to respond to the inquirers’ questions.

James Dunning extends the concept of inquiry and the provision for inquirers to meet members of the faith community to argue that the RCIA “should more clearly say that this is also a time for hearing the personal story of the inquirer.” He grounds this lacuna in the claim that listening to the inquirers’ stories meets them as persons, presents the church as a community of persons gathered around a communal story, and because it invites them to consider themselves as participants in a story in which the Lord Jesus is the protagonist.

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395 Yamane, Becoming Catholic, 151-64.
396 Kavanagh, "Perspectives," 121.
Thomas Morris argues that allowing the inquirers to tell their story ensures they are known by the community. Such opportunities appears critical to the pre-catechumenate.

5.4.1.2 Kerygma

Morris goes on to argue that “the stories of inquirers need to be met with the stories of our tradition - stories from the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, as well as stories from the community of believers over the ages” for evangelisation and conversion to take place. Morris argues for stories that draw upon the themes of promise, trust, seeking and finding because these themes are present in the scriptural readings for the rite of acceptance. The praenotanda states, however, that the crucial story for this period is a “suitable explanation of the Gospel” (RCIA 38).

The RCIA does not explicitly state what the content of the Gospel is, and so the question of what precisely should be proclaimed remains. Matthew Levering provides a succinct account of Thomas Aquinas’ understanding of the term ‘gospel’ as in Thomas’ commentary on Romans. Taking as his starting point the meaning of ‘gospel’ as ‘good news’, Thomas contends that the Gospel is good because it accomplishes the ultimate good that human beings were created for. Thomas states that the Gospel “announces the news of man’s union with God, which is man’s good: ‘it is good for me to cleave to God’ (Ps 73:28).” As Levering comments, what the Gospel communicates or reveals “is nothing less than the union of humans with God, the good for which God created humans.” For Thomas, union with God

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401 See also the language of the rite itself, which refers to the first acceptance of the Gospel (RCIA 52).
403 Levering, *Engaging Revelation*, 121.
possesses three dimensions. The first dimension is that the union between God and the human being takes place primordially in Jesus Christ. “In a primary sense, therefore, the gospel or good news is the incarnation.”

The second dimension of the term is that human beings’ union with God occurs through adoptive sonship, which God effects by Jesus’ mission in the world. That mission is at the same time the fulfilment of Israel’s scriptures, which Thomas finds encapsulated in the reference in Paul’s comment that Jesus descended from David “according to the flesh” (Rom 1:3). Thomas then explains that our adoptive sonship is eschatologically fulfilled in eternal life, which Thomas equates with “the full accomplishment of God’s reign.” Levering sums up Thomas’ understanding of the Gospel when he writes, “The Gospel proclaims the union of God and man in Jesus Christ, and it proclaims that in Jesus Christ we receive the forgiveness of sins and adoption as sons of God through the Holy Spirit, with the goal of attaining to eternal life in God.”

Thomas’ theological account of the gospel is therefore predicated upon an interpretation of scripture that understands the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament as forming a single narrative of the Triune God’s action in the world. Referring to the exposition of this narrative as it was understood in the patristic period, Carol Harrison explains that it took the form of a historical, chronological story of God’s interaction with humanity: “it represented the relation between God and his creation in a form which resembled less a list of doctrines or ideas, and more a story or a performance, in which the faith came memorably and engagingly to life through particular characters, events and speeches which all harmonised with the Word of God.”

404 Levering, Engaging Revelation, 122.
405 Levering, Engaging Revelation, 123.
406 Levering, Engaging Revelation, 130.
Since the Spirit’s deifying action continues beyond the period of the NT down to the present day, the Fathers understood salvation history to include the history of the Church to the present. As the ultimate denouement of the story is the eschaton, the Gospel’s conclusion therefore lies in the future with the restoration of all things in Christ. When the RCIA refers to the proclamation of the Gospel in the pre-catechumenate, then, it refers to this single narrative of the Triune God’s action in the world, from creation to eschaton, which centers upon the union of God with humanity in the person of Christ and through him all people in the Spirit. Rather than choosing between passages as Morris suggests, then at this point in their journey the candidates need to hear the Gospel, and their inclusion in that story.

5.4.1.3 Initial Conversion

The RCIA stipulates that before someone ought to be accepted into the catechumenate, there must be “evidence of the first faith that was conceived during the period of evangelisation … and of an initial conversion and intention to change their lives and to enter into a relationship with God in Christ” (RCIA 42). The principal features of this initial conversion are enumerated in the RCIA as the first signs of repentance, the beginnings of prayer, a “sense of the church” and some experience of the Christian community (RCIA 42).

Donald Gelpi’s theology of conversion offers further insights as to how conversion takes place. Gelpi firstly argues that because each of the four forms of natural conversion may be understood to create a greater capacity for free acts within the human person, conversion in one dimension of life increases our capacity to convert in another dimension of life.408 For example, if someone converts affectively, his/her increased freedom from destructive emotions and greater appreciation of beauty in the world may increase his/her capacity to

convert morally as he/she resists neurotic behaviours. Similarly because an affective conversion may address apathy or discouragement, it may lead to an intellectual conversion as persons invest time and energy in their education. Gelpi goes on to argue that converting affectively, intellectually and morally increases our capacity to respond to the offer of God’s grace. Practices which encourage affective, intellectual, moral and sociopolitical conversion thus possess an intrinsic value in themselves as they advance someone’s realization of his/her humanity, and are a valuable propaedeutic for an individual’s conversion. Conversely, Christian conversion ought to facilitate conversion in the other dimensions of human experience as it invests each of the so-called natural conversions with new meaning and significance.

For Gelpi, an initial Christian conversion is a preliminary commitment to Christ in faith, which brings the affective and moral conversions into a new relationship with each other. He draws upon Jonathan Edwards’ understanding of the role of the affections in faith to argue that the closest natural analogue for the process of coming to believe in God in Christ is an act of aesthetic appreciation. Gelpi contends that by addressing the negative affects of guilt, shame and anger and their sinful consequences through the moral response of repentance, the principal obstacles to perceiving the beauty of Christ are removed. This act of perception takes place primarily in the imagination, and only subsequently in the intellect. While Gelpi draws upon Edwards to make his point, the parallels with Hans Urs von Balthasar’s theological aesthetics are readily apparent. When one is able to “see the form” of Christ, which consists of the beauty manifest in his life, public ministry and strangely but especially in his crucifixion, the beauty of absolute and kenotic Love captivates one: Love incarnate and

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crucified. As one may be transfixed by a work of art, faith is a captivation, a global assent of one’s person to the image of incarnate Beauty before one.\textsuperscript{410}

According to Gelpi, moral and affective conversions also interact in Christian conversion through the way an affective response of faith issues forth the call to a new way of life grounded in Jesus’ ethical teaching. Conversion to Christ commits someone to living in accordance with Jesus’ Reign. The principles, values or code of moral conduct that operate in personal moral conversion are “transvalued”, given a new meaning and potential significance as they are re-configured in the light of Christ’s kingdom to become the gospel ethic of agapeic love of neighbour and not just the love of family and friend.\textsuperscript{411}

The RCIA also specifies that “a sponsor accompanies any candidate seeking admission as a catechumen” (RCIA 10). The sponsor testifies to the faith, intention and moral character of the inquirer seeking admission to the catechumenate. His/her role is to confirm that an initial conversion has indeed taken place. Contrary to the popular practice in which a sponsor from the RCIA team is assigned to each candidate, it follows that the sponsor is someone well known to the inquirer and who has accompanied the inquirer along his or her journey to this point.\textsuperscript{412}


\textsuperscript{411} “One transvalues an actuality, a reality or a value when, having understood it in one frame of reference, one perceives it in the light of another frame of reference which endows the actuality, reality or value in question with new meaning and potential significance.” Gelpi, \textit{Human Experience}, 327. In this new frame of reference, the sensations, feelings, images, concepts and inferences retain some of their old meaning, but they also assume new meanings that originate from the new frame of reference. See also Gelpi, \textit{Committed Worship}, 52.

\textsuperscript{412} Morris offers a word of caution regarding the role of sponsors, saying that while theoretically everyone can be a sponsor, careful decisions need to be made as to who can accompany the catechumens. Morris, \textit{Transforming}, 75-8. With respect for Morris’ pastoral prudence, I think this fails to reflect the role of the sponsor as envisaged in the rite. I read the rite in the light of the ancient concept of the sponsor, who can testify to the candidate’s readiness to enter the catechumenate based upon their prior relationship with the candidate. Sponsor is less a formal role than a reference to one who has played an important role in the candidate’s journey of faith to the point of entry into the catechumenate.
5.4.2 Period of the Catechumenate

5.4.2.1 Rite of Acceptance

Maxwell Johnson suggests that the rite of acceptance into the catechumenate is a rite of separation that begins the process of dis-identifying the candidates from their old ways of living, previously held beliefs and sense of self. However, the RCIA’s first ritual step is also a preliminary act of incorporation. A vivid indication of this is that the rite begins outside the church. After the candidates have formally first “accepted the Gospel”, had this decision affirmed by their sponsors and been signed with the cross, they process into the church to hear the Word of God (RCIA 48-60). The rite’s symbolism communicates that the candidates have formally begun their process of entry into the Church, rather than emphasising what they leave behind. It is in the prayer over the catechumens at the end of the rite that a note of dis-identification is sounded, as the journey involves the catechumens’ being “renewed” and “refashioned” in the likeness of Christ (RCIA 66).

With this step, the inquirers become catechumens (RCIA 60). Rambo’s understanding of role is relevant here, which he defines as the “behaviour expected of the occupant of a given position or status, and it implies (but does not always require) internal beliefs and values congruent with that role.” Rambo suggests that adopting a role requires an initial conformity of behaviour by the convert, and that this then may lead to interior change. Through their identification with the assigned role, the persons come to see themselves differently and progressively assimilate the new identity the group bestows upon them.

413 Johnson, Rites of Initiation, xviii.
414 Gen 12:1-4; Ps 32; Jn 1:35-42.
415 Rambo, Conversion, 121.
5.4.2.2 Bringing Initial Conversion to Maturity

Initial conversion is intended to be “brought to maturity” through the catechumenate (RCIA 75). The catechumens are to deepen in their religious conversion to the Triune God by growing in repentance and forgiveness, and by deepening in one’s response of faith and love to God’s love revealed in Christ through the Spirit.

Gelpi argues that this period is also intended to foster the catechumens’ affective conversion, which is transvalued by their religious conversion into the virtue of hope. The catechumens grow in hope as they receive healing from false and illusory hopes, and learn to hope instead in Christ, whose resurrection from the dead ensures that such hope is not in vain.

The catechumens’ intellectual conversion is transvalued into the virtue of faith. By this virtue, young people come to the knowledge of God. Gelpi argues that this first occurs at an intuitive level, as the catechumens experience God through metaphor, narrative, poetry, ritual and art. The catechumens also grow in faith through inferential presentations of belief such as theological formulations and reflection.

When moral conversion is transvalued by religious conversion it becomes the virtue of love, which is enacted by the catechumens’ loving acts for others, in the midst of the faith community, and for their neighbour. Scripturally, this may be expressed as incarnating the reign of God by living the Beatitudes, but the theological tradition also characterises it as the rejection of vice and the embrace of virtue. Finally, a catechumen’s socio-political conversion is transvalued into a Christian commitment to justice. This is understood to be extending one’s commitment to the reign of God beyond one’s personal relationships to addressing systemic social injustice in the world.
5.4.2.3 Participation in the Community’s Way of Life and Mission

The rite indicates that a mature conversion is achieved through four principal means: by 1) catechesis, 2) participation in the faith community’s way of life, 3) liturgical rites such as the celebrations of the Word, the minor exorcisms, and participation in the liturgy of the Word at Sunday Eucharist, and 4) participation in the community’s apostolic outreach (RCIA 75). While it might initially seem easy to assert that intellectual conversion occurs through catechesis and socio-political conversion occurs through participation in apostolic outreach (understood here to include the full range of activities that constitute the mission of the Church), in reality the different facets of a mature conversion are not so easily assigned.

The order of these four elements in paragraph 75 is somewhat surprising and should not be construed to convey an order of importance. Elsewhere the RCIA states that the catechumens’ participation in the community’s life is of foundational significance, which would indicate that the other three elements flow out of participation in the community (RCIA 4).\(^{416}\) Similarly, the ancient metaphors for the catechumenate as an “apprenticeship” or “training” in the Christian life helpfully orient the four activities in paragraph 75 in relation to one another, as they, too, indicate that participation in the life and mission of the community to be the basis for the catechumens’ participation in the liturgical rites and their reception of catechesis.\(^{417}\) Lawrence Mick captures this when he says that we ought to think of the catechumenate as associating catechumens with the faith community for long enough so that they “catch the faith.”\(^{418}\)

\(^{416}\) RCIA 4: “The initiation of catechumen is a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful”.

\(^{417}\) RCIA 75 refers to training, but both metaphors originate with patristic authors such as Clement of Alexandria and Origen. See Kreider, *Ferment*, 152-3.

\(^{418}\) Mick, *Assembly*, 64.
Primacy then ought to be given to the community’s way of life and mission. In so doing the catechumens become adept in the practices that constitute a Christian way of life. As Aidan Kavanagh puts it, “one learns how to fast, pray, repent, celebrate, and serve the good of one’s neighbour less by being lectured on these matters than by close association with people who do these things with regular ease and flair”.419

Rambo’s model indicates that the community’s primary role is to inculcate the catechumens’ subjective incorporation into the community. While catechumens commonly experience this sense of belonging within the RCIA ‘group’, the ritual text does not state that this group ought to be their primary experience of the faith community. The RCIA repeatedly underscores that it is the faith community as a whole who are responsible for the catechumens’ initiation, and thus for their incorporation into the community (RCIA 4,9).

The specific catechetical sessions thus remain “subordinate” to the faith community’s life and mission.420 The catechumens’ experience of the “RCIA group” is not a substitute for participation in the parish’s life and mission, and the forging of deep and genuine relationships with members of the faith community.

Notwithstanding this emphasis upon the faith community, Victor Turner’s portrayal of the ritual process would suggest that as the cohort of catechumens do not as yet fully belong and have not received their new identity, they may experience a profound sense of “communitas” with each other as they share in the catechumenate’s liminal journey. This sense of radical solidarity with one another bonds them together in an important nascent experience of communion with one another, which is grounded in their shared encounter with God.

420 Morris, Transforming, 13.
5.4.2.4 Catechesis and Ritual

Catechesis explicates the community’s way of life as a response to God’s self-revelation, as the rite itself states:

The instruction that the catechumens receive during this period should be of a kind that while presenting Catholic teaching in its entirety also enlightens faith, directs the heart towards God, fosters participation in the liturgy, inspires apostolic activity, and nurtures a life completely in accord with the spirit of Christ (RCIA 78).

Catechesis should take place in conjunction with the ritual celebrations of the Word, blessings and minor exorcisms (RCIA 75). The RCIA thus grounds catechesis in the celebration of the liturgy.421 This means that the principal model for catechesis is not the classroom but the church, because catechesis belongs within a robust context of prayer. There is thus a symbiotic relationship between ritual and catechesis; ritual is the locus of catechesis, and catechesis explains the significance of ritual for Christian faith.422

In practice, the content of catechesis has tended to either be based upon the lectionary or upon a doctrinal approach, which attempts a comprehensive presentation of Catholic teaching, and which may typically draw from the Catechism of the Catholic Church.423 Both approaches can be supported from the RCIA’s praenotanda, which states that catechesis should be accommodated to the liturgical year (RCIA 75.1), and also cover Catholic teaching in its entirety (RCIA 75.1, 78). The ritual text says little about how these might be integrated in practice. If the lectionary-based approach runs the risk of leaving gaps in the

421 See RCIA 75.1. Perhaps it is unfortunate that the language of the rite speaks of catechesis being “solidly supported” by Celebrations of the Word, which might appear to give the primacy to catechesis. Similarly, the RCIA says that the minor exorcisms may be attached to catechetical instruction, whereas catechesis in the patristic period always took place in a liturgical context.
422 Aidan Kavanagh, “Unfinished and Unbegun Revisited: The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults,” in Living Water, Sealing Spirit: Readings on Christian Initiation, ed. Maxwell E. Johnson (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 260-1. Speaking of the patristic catechumenate, Thomas Finn writes, “Instruction and ritual were woven inextricably together. The process was cognitive; a new cultural, social and religious world was built. At the same time the process was performative - that new world was embraced and entered.” Finn, Death to Rebirth, 253.
423 Morris, Transforming, 122.
catechumens’ understanding of Christian belief and practice, the doctrinal approach seems vulnerable to a reversion to a classroom model of formation and consequently to an overly cognitive approach to faith.

Gelpi’s examination of intellectual conversion provides a rationale for the indispensability of both approaches. If, as Gelpi argues, faith begins in the imagination, then intuitive forms of thought such as images, metaphors, narrative, poetry and art are the primary media for God’s communication to the human person, and for human beings’ most foundational response to God in return. Gelpi describes this as the “global” assent of faith because it engages the whole person in a basic, even primal manner. Gelpi argues that these intuitive expressions of faith are more foundational than inferential articulations of belief: in the terminology of the RCIA it is these intuitive kinds of “instruction” that “enlighten faith” and “directs the heart towards God” (RCIA 78). However, inferential statements of faith are necessary for organising beliefs in an intelligible manner. As a consequence, logical and systematic expression through creeds, doctrines and theology are important for a catechumen to be able to grasp the intellectual coherence of faith, its rationality and its intellectual depth. For Gelpi the intuitive mode of discourse is necessary for an initial justifying or global faith, while the inferential form is necessary for the theological virtue of faith to flourish in the catechumen.

Gelpi’s argument implies that the scriptural narrative possesses a certain primacy, because narrative operates in a different epistemological register. We have already seen that the proclamation of the Gospel involves a presentation of the biblical narrative of salvation in order to effect the initial response of faith (global faith in Gelpi’s terminology). The catechumenate should build upon this initial proclamation by grounding catechetical

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424 Gelpi, Committed Worship, 52.
instruction in that foundational narrative. Pope Francis makes this same point when he states that “All Christian formation consists of entering more deeply into the kerygma, which is reflected in and constantly illumines, the work of catechesis, thereby enabling us to understand more fully the significance of every subject which the latter treats” (EG 165).

Another mode of catechesis is suggested for this period by the directive for the catechumens to reflect together upon their experience of the rite of acceptance and other rituals that pertain to the period (RCIA 67). This anticipates the mystagogical catechesis proper to the RCIA’s final period, but it is important to note that this mode of catechesis is operative in the catechumenate too. As we saw earlier, David Yamane’s research shows that the experience and significance of ritual is consolidated and deepened if the catechumens are given an opportunity after the ritual to reflect upon their experience and to talk about it with others. Finally, although the rite does not specify it, an analogical mode of catechesis to this would be a process of reflection upon particular experiences of apostolic activity and service too.

Rambo recognises that an important element of catechesis (or as he refers to it: the group’s “rhetoric”) is the opportunity for the converts to become “fluent” in their adoption of the group’s lexicon, which suggests that there needs to be opportunities for the catechumens to develop their familiarity with the vocabulary and terminology of Christian faith by using it themselves. So although the RCIA does not explicitly specify this, it seems important that the catechumens articulate their faith for themselves.

The specific rites of this period are the celebrations of the Word, the minor exorcisms and the blessings (RCIA 81, 90, 95). In keeping with patristic practice, the minor exorcisms were originally intended to be the primary rites for the catechumenate but were eventually

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425 Morris, Transforming, 113.
made subordinate to the celebrations of the Word.\textsuperscript{426} Pitt laments that with the exorcisms’ relegation, the “‘real nature of the Christian life, the struggle between flesh and spirit, the importance of self-denial for reaching the blessedness of God’s kingdom, and the unending need for God’s help (RCIA 90) has been displaced.”\textsuperscript{427} Pitt recounts that some of those entrusted with experimenting with the RCIA prior to its official promulgation were “embarrassed” about the exorcisms, undoubtedly reflecting the modern resistance to talk of the devil and demonic spirits.\textsuperscript{428} Balthasar Fischer nevertheless asserted that the RCIA needed to retain this ancient catechumenal motif, although he clarified that the RCIA’s exorcisms should not be construed as Satan’s expulsion from the catechumens, but rather as the catechumens’ removal from Satan’s dominion.\textsuperscript{429} Pitt argues that the exorcisms should not be omitted, sharing the Coetus’ conviction that evil spirits were “still present and active in the world, even though [they were] named and understood differently.”\textsuperscript{430} James Dunning similarly suggested that contemporary American catechumens need to be exorcised of their enmeshment within the forces of consumerism, militarism, racism and sexism.\textsuperscript{431} In a similar vein, Pitt asks whether “individualism and self-sufficiency [might] be demons in need of exorcism today?”\textsuperscript{432} Echoing Maxwell Johnson’s concern that the Church be particularly concerned with rejecting semi-Pelagian interpretations of initiation, Pitt argues that the

\textsuperscript{426} Pitt, 289.


\textsuperscript{428} McGrail is openly sceptical of the retention of the exorcisms. He considers the references to Satan and evil spirits to be relics from an out-dated worldview, and contends that they contribute to a negative and alien anthropology. In so doing McGrail ignores Fischer’s distinction between demonic possession and freedom from Satan’s dominion. McGrail, Christian Initiation, 42.


\textsuperscript{430} Pitt, “Lex Exorcismi,” 158. This reflects Heinrich Schlier’s Principalities and Powers in the New Testament, which influenced the Coetus’ views concerning the nature of the diabolical.


\textsuperscript{432} Pitt, “Lex Exorcismi,” 171.
exorcisms eloquently demonstrate that the catechumens are not able to save themselves but require God’s saving assistance.\textsuperscript{433}

The blessings provide an important counterpart to the minor exorcisms. They anticipate the catechumens’ incorporation into both Christ and the Church. The juxtaposition of the exorcisms and blessings express the catechumenate’s liminal nature, but the most potent indication of the catechumens’ “betwixt and between” status is their dismissal at the conclusion of the liturgy of the Word (RCIA 75.3). This reflects early Christian practice, but it can seem strange and even possibly offensive today for the catechumens to be dismissed when the usual practice is that anyone can be present for the duration of the liturgy. As a consequence the temptation to omit the dismissal is quite great, but commentators have justified its retention by suggesting that the catechumens minister to the faithful through this action, testifying to the faithful’s need for ongoing conversion.\textsuperscript{434} This is undeniably the case, but it should not obscure the dismissal’s primary purpose in reinforcing the catechumens’ liminal status, for this is critical to their own process of conversion.

The catechumenate’s final rite is the “Celebrations of the Word of God” (RCIA 81-89). The celebrations of the Word include the Liturgy of the Word at Sunday Eucharist, special celebrations for the catechumens, or are to be held in conjunction with catechesis (RCIA 81). A simple model celebration is also provided (RCIA 85-89).

5.4.3 Period of Purification and Enlightenment

5.4.3.1 Rite of Election

The Rite of Election marks the conclusion of the catechumenate and the beginning of the period of purification and enlightenment. As is the case with the rite of acceptance into the

\textsuperscript{433} Kavanagh, \textit{Shape}, 168.
\textsuperscript{434} Kavanagh, \textit{Shape}, 112.
catechumenate, this step is preceded by an act of discernment as to the readiness of each candidate to make this step. While the question concerning the catechumens’ first step focused upon whether they had undergone an initial conversion, their readiness for this second step is focused upon whether that initial conversion has consolidated to the point that they are ready to be baptised (RCIA 107). The rite emphasises the mutual nature of the discernment: the catechumens express their intention to be baptised, both prior to and then within the rite itself, and those entrusted with their formation assent to their readiness (RCIA 108). The interplay between the individual’s personal freedom and the community’s role in ascertaining each catechumen’s readiness are delicately balanced in the rite’s directives.

The emphasis upon mutual discernment must be held in tension with the rite’s focus upon “election”, which not only refers to the Church’s acceptance of the catechumens, but also to God’s election or calling of the candidates to a covenant relationship with God, to each other and to mission (RCIA 106).435

The seriousness of this step is underscored by the bishop’s presidency of the rite, and the elect’s enrolment of their names (RCIA 108, 119). Robert Duggan’s statement that “at certain moments [in the catechumenal process] there is a crystallisation of the conversion experience in ways that demand ritual expression”, is particularly apt for this moment of deeper decision, which takes place just weeks before baptism.436

The rite of election is the first time that godparents exercise a public role. They are to be chosen by the catechumens because of their “example, good qualities, and friendship” (RCIA 11). They have a responsibility to “show the candidates how to practise the Gospel in

436 Parker, ”Purification and Enlightenment,” 214.
personal and social life, to sustain the candidates in moments of hesitancy and anxiety, to bear witness and to guide the candidates’ progress in the baptismal life” (RCIA 11). As a consequence, the godparents’ supportive role extends prior to the Rite of Election and beyond the reception of the sacraments.

5.4.3.2 Lent

This final period prior to initiation is a time of “intense spiritual preparation” that is meant to purify the elects’ minds and hearts so that they might come to a “deeper knowledge of Christ the Saviour” (RCIA 125-126). The RCIA specifies that this time should be dedicated to “interior reflection” rather than to “catechetical instruction”, and so the period’s focus of the period is on the three scrutinies, the presentation of the Creed and the Lord’s prayer (RCIA 126, 128-133, 134-136). These rites are intended to “complete the conversion of the elect” (RCIA 128).

The three scrutinies are drawn from the three Lenten exorcisms that have long belonged to the Roman rite.437 The prayers invoke the Gospel passage for the particular Sunday (from Year A), which are the story of the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:5-42), the man born blind (Jn 9:1-41), and the raising of Lazarus (Jn 11:1-45).

While much of the earlier discussion on the minor exorcisms in the catechumenate is apposite here, it should be noted that references to Satan in the scrutinies are muted. The central focus is upon God’s scrutiny and the elect’s self-scrutiny, which “unmask[s] the deception of evil and sin for what they really are: robbers of true and authentic life” on the one hand, and “raise[s] up those dimensions of life that welcome the loving presence of

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God, thus encouraging full life.” The prayers of exorcism name particular sins, which include unbelief, love of money, the worship of false gods, witchcraft, enmity, quarrelling, greed, lust and pride (see RCIA 139, 153, 160). Morris suggests that a period of liturgical catechesis follow the celebration of the rite, which gives the elect a chance to reflect upon their experience of their rites.

The presentations of the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer during the third and fifth weeks of Lent draw directly from ancient custom too. William Harmless argues that memorisation was not simply to maintain the discipline of secrecy that dated back to Christianity’s status as an outlawed sect in the Roman empire. Nor were they to memorise it simply in order to remember it for future recital; instead, “they were internalising its truth, learning it ‘by heart’ in the true sense of the term.” The elect in the RCIA profess the creed during the preliminary rites on Holy Saturday morning, and pray the Our Father with the faithful for the first time at the Easter Vigil (RCIA 136).

The growth in the intensity of ritual in this third period reflects the Church’s confidence in God’s grace to effect change through the power of ritual.

5.4.4 Initiation

The sacramental initiation of the elect ought to be considered within its preferred location of the Easter Vigil (RCIA 8). The service of light amidst the surrounding darkness symbolises the presence of the risen Jesus and provides a powerful recapitulation of the process of conversion that has preceded this moment. The liturgy of the Word for the vigil

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438 Morris, Transforming, 171.
439 Morris, Transforming, 172.
440 Morris, Transforming, 172.
441 These practices are most visible in the fourth and fifth century catechumenates, although they may have begun earlier. For a perceptive discussion, see Chapter One of Harmless, Augustine.
442 Harmless, Augustine, 325.
443 Harmless, Augustine, 325.
recounts the history of salvation through the lens of baptism: the liturgy intends that the OT readings be interpreted typologically as pre-figuring baptism, while Rom 6:3-11 explains the significance of baptism in relation to the death and resurrection of Christ. As their baptism follows immediately after the liturgy of the Word, the elect become the latest chapter of that salvation history.

The liturgy of baptism begins with the renunciation of sin, the anointing with the oil of catechumens and the profession of faith, which express the decision of the elect and their commitment to Christ. The renunciation is a repudiation not simply of sin, Satan and the power of evil in their lives, but is rather the rejection of an identity that is implicated in those powers. The elect’s subsequent profession of faith is an assent to the new identity en Christoi that is constituted by the Triune God’s salvific action.

The elect are then baptised. The Ordo indicates a preference for immersion, a development that Aidan Kavanagh welcomed, “because it might help restore something of the crucial and extraordinary nature of baptism to the Church’s consciousness, and some of that drastic robustness to baptismal symbolism which for too long has been enfeebled by symbolic minimalism, initiatory privacy, and the anonymity of the baptised.”

After they are clothed with the white baptismal garment and given a candle, the neophytes receive the sacrament of confirmation (RCIA 223-225). They then participate in the liturgy of the Eucharist and communicate for the first time. The initiatory symbolism is vivid, dramatic and deeply embodied: the participants are immersed in water, have their old clothes removed and receive a new white garment, are smeared with oil before eating and drinking of the Body and Blood of Christ.

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444 Kavanagh, Shape, 138. For the preference for immersion see the General Introduction for Christian Initiation, 22.
What do these rich ritual actions signify? For largely historical reasons, the theologies of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist that developed from the Middle Ages onwards tended to try to identify the graces specific to each sacrament. The RCIA restored the ancient unity and order of the sacraments of initiation. By doing so, the ancient underlying theological unity between baptism, confirmation and Eucharist is restored. As Aidan Kavanagh notes, “the full rites of adult initiation presume that all the initiatory rites form one closely articulated whole.” He describes this “whole” as “baptism in its fullness, the making of a Christian, the ongoing birth of the Church of Jesus Christ in his life-giving Spirit.” Further reflection upon the RCIA’s theology of initiation will be taken up in this chapter’s final section.

5.4.5 Mystagogy

The Ordo states that the period of mystagogy is “a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery, and in making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist, and doing the works of charity” (RCIA 234). In the patristic period, mystagogy consisted of unpacking the neophytes’ experience of the sacramental mysteries, as they were given little prior information about the nature of the sacraments before they received them. In the RCIA, something of this is retained, although the content and meaning of the sacraments are no longer secret, but the neophytes are still to be “introduced into a fuller and more effective

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445 “The conjunction of the two celebrations signifies the unity of the paschal mystery, the close link between the mission of the Son and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the connection between the two sacraments through which the Son and the Holy Spirit come with the Father to those who are baptised” (RCIA 208). See Kavanagh, _Shape_, 127. Similarly, Kenan Osborne writes that Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist are “almost constitutively interconnected”. Kenan B. Osborne, _Christian Sacraments in a Postmodern World_ (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1999), 76.
446 Kavanagh, _Shape_, 127.
447 Kavanagh, _Shape_, 115. The implication of this is that ‘baptism’ ought to refer to sacramental initiation in its entirety, and not simply the water bath.
understanding of [the] mysteries” (RCIA 235). Balthasar Fischer gave a pedagogical reason for a mystagogical period, stating, “Certainly the old practice of meticulously explaining what the sacrament means before it is celebrated is not effective. The early Christians knew that it is more appropriate to introduce the initiates to the full meaning of the mysteries (mystagogy) only after they have experienced the mysteries.”448 Similarly Aidan Kavanagh contends that the rationale for mystagogy is the “pedagogical fact that it is next to impossible to discourse effectively about an experience of great moment and intensity with someone who has never really had such an experience.”449 As such, this form of catechesis unpacks the sacraments of initiation in the light of the scriptures and the novel experience that the neophytes have had of them. Mystagogy is thus intended to consolidate the neophytes’ appropriation of their new identity.

Certain references to the catechumens’ conversion being “complete” could appear to indicate that someone’s experience of conversion concludes after he/she has been through the catechumenal process (see RCIA 128). On the basis of Gelpi’s distinction between initial and ongoing conversion we may speak of the RCIA as firstly effecting an initial conversion (in the pre-catechumenate), which then matures and culminates in sacramental initiation. Ongoing conversion does not conclude with initiation, because it is an ongoing, foundational dynamic for Christian life. While Christian identity is both conferred and acquired through the RCIA, ongoing conversion or sanctification is the lifelong realization of the identity that one has received in baptism.

During the masses of the Easter season, the neophytes are to sit in specially designated seats (RCIA 237-8). Their participation in these masses and in the faith community’s

448 Fischer, "Rediscovery," 105.
449 Kavanagh, Shape, 143.
charitable and apostolic activity more fully realize their subjective incorporation into the community. This focus is problematic if it crowds out the experiential learning associated with the practice of mystagogy, and if the neophytes’ assimilation is expected to occur during the Easter season. If their sense of belonging has not occurred prior to this, it is highly unlikely to occur during this period alone. A lack of incorporation jeopardises the likelihood of a neophyte’s ongoing participation and involvement in the worship and mission of the faith community.

5.5 The Paschal Mystery in the RCIA

The catechumens’ initial conversion to Christ culminates through their initiation into the “paschal mystery”. This term is first introduced in the exhortation to the faithful to reflect with catechumens upon the paschal mystery’s value (RCIA 4). The praenotanda states: “the whole initiation must bear a markedly paschal character, since the initiation of Christians is the first sacramental sharing in Christ’s dying and rising” (RCIA 8). The centrality of the paschal mystery to the RCIA is also indicated by the catechumenate’s structure: the period of purification and enlightenment coincides with the Lenten period before the process culminates in sacramental initiation at the Easter vigil, which is then followed by mystagogy in the Easter season.

The RCIA’s emphasis upon the paschal mystery reflects the term’s centrality to Vatican II’s liturgical reforms. The term was first introduced in Sacrosanctum Concilium, which states that Christ achieved his salvific task “principally by the paschal mystery of his blessed passion, resurrection from the dead, and the glorious ascension, whereby ‘dying he destroyed our death and, rising, he restored our life’” (SC 5). The following paragraph links the paschal mystery to the sacraments of initiation:
by baptism men are plunged into the paschal mystery of Christ: they die with Him, are
buried with Him, and rise with Him; they receive the spirit of adoption as sons ‘in which
we cry: Abba, Father’ (Rom 8:15), and thus become true adorers whom the Father seeks.
In like manner, as often as they eat the supper of the Lord they proclaim the death of the
Lord until he comes (SC 6).

Vatican II’s deployment of the term is indebted to Odo Casel, one of the principal figures
of the twentieth century liturgical movement who retrieved the concept of the “paschal
mystery” from the Fathers. Noting that the Latin sacramentum translates the Greek
mysterion, Casel understood Christianity to fundamentally be a “mystery”: “a deed of God’s,
the execution of an everlasting plan of his through an act which proceeds from his eternity,
realised in time and the world, and returning once more to him its goal in eternity.”450

Commenting on its use in SC, Joseph Jungmann explained that the
term paschale mysterium describes ... the expression “mystery of Christ” ... the real
kernel of the Christian order of salvation: the act with which Christ has redeemed us and
which is continued in the saving activity of the Church. Like the pascha of the Old
Testament, it is a remembrance of God’s redeeming acts of salvation, the presence of
salvation, and the promise of the consummating future. It underlines at the same time
the basic triumphant Easter character, which is of the very essence of Christianity, of the
work of the Church, its message and salvation.451

As Jungmann indicates, the paschal mystery refers to human beings’ participation in the
death and resurrection of Christ in order that they may be saved, and as SC 5-6 and
paragraph 8 of the RCIA point out, this takes place sacramentally, first through baptism-
confirmation and pre-eminentely in the Eucharist.452

The paschal mystery does not simply pertain to the Church’s sacramental economy, but
is actually predicated upon a sacramental ontology, or the assertion that all created realities
participate in some way in the divine mystery. According to Henri de Lubac, this patristic
understanding of sacramentality does not separate the intelligible, created sign and the

452 Timothy P. O’Malley, Liturgy and the New Evangelization: Practicing the Art of Self-Giving Love (Collegeville,
mysterious reality of God that the sign signifies, as medieval sacramental theology would do. Rather, ‘mystery’ is present in the mutual interpenetration of sacramental sign and divine reality. As Hans Boersma puts it, “A sacramental ontology insists that not only does the created world point to God as its source and ‘point of reference’, but that it also subsists or participates in God.” The world is constituted as mysterious as part of God’s plan, as the site of the hidden presence of God. It is because the world is sacramentally constituted that baptism, confirmation and Eucharist bear the mysterious presence of God to human beings, and that the experience of human life may be shot through with the presence of God. This is paradigmatically realised in the incarnation, in which Jesus of Nazareth’s human nature acts as the sacrament of God, present in mystery to the world. The Church therefore possesses a sacramental economy because it is the way in which God’s presence is made present in the world.

As Casel and Jungmann’s remarks make clear, while the paschal mystery is centered upon Christ’s passing over from human death to life with the Father and humanity’s concomitant passing over from sin and death to life with God, it is inclusive of other baptismal elements. This is evidenced by the RCIA’s succinct statement concerning the significance of the reception of the sacraments:

Through this final step [of sacramental initiation] the elect, receiving pardon for their sins, are admitted into the people of God. They are graced with adoption as children of God and are led by the Holy Spirit into the promised fulness of time begun in Christ and, as they share in the eucharistic sacrifice and meal, even to a foretaste of the kingdom of God” (RCIA 198).

Notwithstanding this terse summation in the praenotanda, Maxwell Johnson expresses the fear that the rites themselves do not sufficiently reflect the scriptural imagery that

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453 De Lubac traces the dissolution of the patristic view to the polarisation arising from the Berengarian controversy over the Eucharist in Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages: Historical Survey, trans., Gemma Simmonds et al. (London: SCM, 2006).
brings out the themes of regeneration, divine filiation, and incorporation into the Body of Christ.\textsuperscript{455} Instead, the RCIA points to the strong preference for Easter baptism in the RCIA, the reading of Rom 6 at the Easter Vigil, and laments that even parts of the liturgy which have traditionally lent themselves to non-paschal metaphors for baptism such as the blessing of the waters have been given a paschal interpretation in the RCIA.\textsuperscript{456} In response to this, Johnson points out that the baptism of Jesus was the dominant paradigm for baptism in the pre-Nicene era, that Romans 6 was not the dominant image for baptism in the west, and that baptism has been celebrated on occasions other than Easter for the overwhelming majority of the Church's history.\textsuperscript{457}

Johnson also cautions that an overemphasis upon the Romans 6 paradigm obscures the gift of the Spirit in baptism.\textsuperscript{458} He writes eloquently of the role and power of the Spirit in initiation:

\begin{quote}
Without the Holy Spirit, the word isn’t the word, baptism not baptism, confirmation not confirmation, the eucharist not the eucharist. Indeed, it is the Holy Spirit, the very breath of God in us, who conforms us to the dying and rising of Christ in our lives, who brings us to new birth and regenerates us to new life in the living waters and womb of the font, who seals us in down payment for redemption, who gives us special charisms and gifts for the building up of and living within Christ's body, the church, the Spirit of God who directs us in our mission of reconciling love, forgiveness and justice in the world, the Spirit alone who makes it possible for us to say, “We believe” or “I believe” in the first place.\textsuperscript{459}

Sacramental initiation also entails admission into the people of God (RCIA 198). As various prayers in the rite reflect, initiation is incorporation into Christ's body, the Church (RCIA 97). Bryan Spinks comments favourably upon the ecclesial emphasis in the rite, stating that “the rite is less concerned with the individual escaping from original sin through

\textsuperscript{455} Maxwell E. Johnson, \textit{Images of Baptism} (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 2001), vii. See also Morrill, "Paschal Mystery," 75-86.
\textsuperscript{456} Johnson, \textit{Images}, 16.
\textsuperscript{457} Johnson, \textit{Images}, 37-45.
\textsuperscript{458} Johnson, \textit{Images}, 73.
\textsuperscript{459} Johnson, \textit{Images}, 74.
baptism, as with the individual, through baptism, entering a community freed from sin. This can be described as a shift from an Augustinian soteriological rite to a Cyprianic ecclesiological rite.”

While the sacraments of initiation’s unity is crucial to the conferral of the new identity, it is important to note that the Eucharist differs from baptism and confirmation because it is repeatable. The Eucharist is the culmination of initiation because it fully incorporates us into Christ and into his Body, and it renews our identity “en Christoi” and as members of the Church through our ongoing, repeated participation in it.

To sum up, sacramental initiation as the RCIA depicts it is human beings’ immersion into the paschal mystery, which is sustained through ongoing participation in the Eucharist, the repeatable sacrament of initiation. Through their insertion into the paschal mystery, people’s sins are forgiven, and they come to share in the Triune life of God, a life which may be illuminated through reference to the scriptural themes of regeneration, new birth, new (eschatological) life, the presence of the indwelling Spirit, and filial adoption. Through sacramental initiation, people are incorporated into Christ’s Body, the Church, and so share in the mission of God as it is mediated through the Spirit-anointed Church.

5.6 Conclusion

The RCIA ought to be seen as an exercise in ressourcement. The Coetus drew primarily upon patristic sources to construct a catechumenal process that would initiate adults into the mystery of God in Christ. The engine room of this process is the concept of conversion, which shapes the catechumenate’s four-part structure in decisive ways: entry into the catechumenate proceeds upon the basis of an initial conversion to Christ, and a catechumen

461 Spinks, Reformation and Modern Rituals, 21.
is ready to be baptised when that initial conversion has sufficiently matured. Donald Gelpi’s theology of conversion systematises the different dimensions of conversion present in the ritual text by delineating between affective, intellectual, moral, socio-political and religious conversions, while Lewis Rambo’s model of conversion illuminates the psychological and anthropological dimensions of the RCIA process. Victor Turner’s theory of ritual also enhances our understanding of different elements of the RCIA.

The purpose of this chapter’s close reading of the RCIA was to identify the RCIA’s principal elements and dynamics so that they might inform the theology and especially the practice of youth ministry. This is the subject of the remaining chapters of this thesis.
6.1 Introduction

This thesis’ remaining chapters explore the baptismal catechumenate’s import for youth ministry. Before embarking upon this, it will be helpful to recap each step of the argument made thus far. Chapter Two established that Australian Catholic youth ministry’s major expressions were responses to the deepening decline of belief and practice among young people. Youth ministry has accordingly always sought to evangelise young people, even if evangelization’s meaning and secularisation have been poorly understood. Chapter Three sought to address the inadequate understanding of secularism by exploring young people’s attitudes to faith and spirituality through Charles Taylor’s depiction of secularity. Chapter Four formulated the thesis’ central argument, which is that the magisterial teaching on mission at and since Vatican II suggests that a faith community ought to follow a process of evangelisation in its ministry to youth that enables young people’s conversion through the practice of witness, proclamation, catechesis and ritual. This process, which I have called the initiatory dynamic, aims at young people’s sacramental initiation or its appropriation, and an ensuing life of discipleship. Chapter Five examined this dynamic as it is articulated in the RCIA.

The final three chapters of this thesis draw these previous chapters together, as they examine the nature of the initiatory dynamic in relation to youth ministry, and in the context of the secular age in which such ministry takes place. The present chapter establishes foundational elements for this. It firstly identifies theological principles for youth ministry that emerge when one considers the baptismal catechumenate to be the model for youth ministry. The chapter then outlines the basic structure of a youth ministry informed
by the initiatory dynamic, develops the argument that the initiatory dynamic is particularly pertinent to adolescents’ faith development, and addresses potential objections to configuring youth ministry in this manner. Chapter Seven focuses upon the evangelisation of young people in a secular age, while chapter Eight considers the faith formation and sacramental elements of youth ministry’s initiatory dynamic.

6.2 Theological Principles for Youth Ministry

Jeffrey Kaster has argued that a youth ministry’s foundational principles need to be articulated. He argues that this is necessary for the ministry to produce the fruit it hopes for. More importantly, Australian youth ministry’s history would suggest that the greatest danger arising from a failure to formulate an operative theology for youth ministry is that the ministry acts out of expediency. Kaster goes on to identify “Holy Mystery”, “conversion”, “Incarnation” and “Catholic social teaching” as the theological principles that inform his work in the St John’s, Collegeville Youth in Theology and Ministry program. The discussion of AG in Chapter 4 would indicate that just as missionary activity needed to be grounded in the larger theology of mission in Chapter One of AG, youth ministry’s initiatory dynamic needs to be embedded within a larger matrix of theological principles that arise from this same theology of mission.

The principal theological principles undergirding AG’s process of evangelisation are the missio Dei, the paschal mystery and conversion. Accordingly, I think these three principles form the theological foundation for youth ministry. In his discussion of a liturgical-initiation model of youth ministry, Arthur Canales identifies conversion, the role of the faith

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463 Kaster also shares his former student’s theological principles: Craig Gould identifies the Trinity, the incarnation and a sacramental theology as the basis of his youth ministry praxis in the archdiocese of Baltimore. See Kaster, Youth Ministry, loc 1034ff.
community and liturgical catechesis.\textsuperscript{464} I obviously agree with Canales concerning the significance of conversion, and he is right to consider the importance of the faith community and of liturgical catechesis, as I also do below. However, the \textit{missio Dei} and the paschal mystery are more foundational principles, and as a consequence shape the faith community’s role and the nature of liturgical catechesis in decisive ways. Kaster, Gould and Canales’ principles clearly overlap and resonate strongly with the three that I have identified, but I think the rationale for the \textit{missio Dei}, the paschal mystery and conversion are stronger due to their origin within the conciliar and papal magisterial teaching on mission.

\textbf{6.2.1 Youth Ministry and the \textit{Missio Dei}}

As we saw in Chapter Four, AG presented missionary activity within a theology of mission grounded in the \textit{missio Dei} (AG 6). The goal of the divine missions is that humanity, and through humanity, the cosmos, are drawn into the Triune communion. The Nicene Creed’s term for this goal is salvation, which in AG (and in the other conciliar documents) is depicted as originating in the Father’s plan of creation, and then occurring throughout history, so as to effect humanity’s communion with God.\textsuperscript{465} In the incarnation, the Son of God becomes truly human, living our life and dying our death, so that through his resurrection we might come to share in Jesus’ relationship with the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit. Redemption is thus the fulfilment of God’s act of creation, for while salvation history as it is recounted in scripture tells us that the restoration of a fallen world requires humanity’s liberation from sin, evil and death, it also tells us that it was always God’s plan that humanity would share in the Triune life, or be deified.

\textsuperscript{464} Canales, "RCIA 1," 24-31.
\textsuperscript{465} See LG 2-4; DV 2; SC 5-7.
As the sacrament of salvation, the Church is both a sign of and an instrument that effects humanity’s communion in the Triune life (LG 1). The communion of the Church is intended to be both a sign and the anticipation of the unity of humanity accomplished by Christ’s redemption and the unifying action of the Holy Spirit. Salvation thus ends in the eschatological communion of all of creation with the Triune God, but it also occurs in history, amongst people, within cultures and is dependent, even if sometimes in a way known only to God, upon the Church’s mediation (GS 22).

This means that the Church’s mission is a “single, but complex reality” (RM 41): single because the missio Dei is the salvation of the world, and complex because of the magnitude of that salvation. William Gregory expresses this well when he writes:

[The Church’s mission to express] the divine love of the Trinitarian communion embraces every imaginable good, from works of mercy, social justice, and efforts at reconciliation to the promotion of religious liberty, environmental conservation, and common understanding among religious traditions. Wherever the dignity of human life and the sacredness of human existence require promotion or defence; wherever human relationships require nurturing or healing; wherever evil and sin tear at the fabric of life, there the mission of the church lies. Similarly, mission involves every celebration and sign of the Trinitarian life in the lives of the faithful and every attempt to make its meaning and truth known to others, thus embracing the whole contemplative and liturgical life of the Christian community as well as every form of witness, proclamation, catechesis, and inculturation of the gospel among peoples.466

Seen from this perspective, youth ministry encompasses all that communicates and enacts the missio Dei to, with, and amongst young people.467 As such, the ultimate goal of the Church’s ministry with young people is to mediate their participation in the Triune life.

Several other implications flow from this. First, youth ministry cannot be confined to the initiatory dynamic, for just as the baptismal catechumenate does not exhaust the Church’s

467 Anglican theologian Pete Ward first wrote about youth ministry in relation to the missio Dei. Ward focused upon the incarnation and its implications for ministry. He did not sufficiently consider the Trinitarian dimensions of the missio Dei. See Pete Ward, Youthwork and the Mission of God: Frameworks for Relational Outreach (London: SPCK, 1997), 25ff. Kenda Creasy Dean has drawn upon the misional church movement to also frame youth ministry as participating in the mission of God. See Dean et al, OMG, 66-8.
mission, a faith community’s ministry with youth is not confined to a process that is analogous to the RCIA either. The need for other forms of youth ministry arises from young people’s specific circumstances. For example, a faith community may assist immigrant young people with learning English or attempt to alleviate the incidence of youth violence or youth homelessness. These expressions of ministry to youth form part of the Church’s mission to renew humanity (c.f. EN 18). These forms of ministry may or may not lead beyond the initial stages of evangelisation, and they need not necessarily do so either in order to be an important expression of God’s mission to young people. These efforts possess intrinsic value, and are not merely a preamble to the proclamation of the Gospel. At the same time, since the magisterial teaching affirms an intrinsic link between the process of evangelisation and the other paths of mission, a link also exists between these expressions of mission and the evangelisation of young people (EN 31).

Second, the missio Dei principle requires ministers to be profoundly docile to the Holy Spirit’s action, to possess a confidence that the Spirit is the “principal agent of mission”, and so to trust in the Spirit’s action in the concrete and particular circumstances of young people’s lives (RM 21). It is within these circumstances that the drama of sin, forgiveness and communion with God is played out. This trust in the Spirit also eschews manipulative tactics, a disavowal that has not always been honoured in the attempt to engage young people with the Gospel of Jesus and the Church.

Third, because the missio Dei is fundamentally a dialogue between God and the world that is paradigmatically expressed in the incarnation, ministry to young people is always directed towards them as persons. This constitutes dialogue as a “fundamental modality” of

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468 The relationship between these forms of youth ministry and evangelisation has been understood in different ways. For four possible conceptions of this relationship from an Evangelical Protestant perspective, see Fernando Arzola, "Four Paradigms of Youth Ministry in the Urban Context," *The Journal of Youth Ministry* 5, no. 1 (2006): 41-55.
youth ministry. \footnote{Jim and Therese D’Orsa refer to dialogue as a “fundamental modality of mission”, alongside “proclamation by word and witness” that are nevertheless integrally related. I think the incarnation grounds dialogue as the more foundational modality, and that witness and word arise out of this dialogue. See D’Orsa and D’Orsa, Explorers, 151-2.} Characteristics of dialogue such as respect, receptivity, patience, vulnerability and humility are therefore foundational to ministry with young people. As Craig Gould notes, to minister in such an incarnational mode to young people requires being truly present to them and to exhibit sacrificial love. \footnote{Kaster, Youth Ministry, loc1071.} Ministers of Jesus are to express agapeic or self-emptying love for youth.

Fourth, young people are also agents in the missio Dei, and so are called to participate in the mission of the church as the Spirit of God leads them. This includes, but is not exhausted by peer-to-peer ministry. \footnote{Chapter Two showed that each expression of Australian youth ministry has enunciated the principle of peer-to-peer ministry, but other than the YCW most other initiatives have struggled to call young people to other forms of mission.} It means that youth ministry must foster young people’s involvement in the Church’s mission in its manifold forms, be it works of mercy, social justice, reconciliation, interfaith dialogue, witness, proclamation, prayer and worship, or whatever other form that a concrete instantiation of God’s love takes.

Finally, although the initiatory dynamic does not exhaust the Church’s ministry to youth, it is essential. To paraphrase Paul VI, while the Church’s ministry to youth is to bring the good news into all dimensions of humanity’s “youthful strata”, there must first of all be new young people who have been renewed by baptism, and who live lives of discipleship (EN 18).

6.2.2 The Paschal Mystery

The missio Dei’s hinge is Jesus’ salvific death and resurrection, and the realisation of that salvation through the work of the Spirit. As we saw in the previous chapter, this means that the RCIA is focused upon the candidate’s insertion into the paschal mystery, which is
predicated upon a sacramental ontology that construes the world as both participating in
the mystery of God and as revelatory of God’s salvific action. Jean Danielou describes the
paschal mystery in this way:

The Christian faith has only one object, the mystery of Christ dead and risen. But this
unique mystery subsists under different modes: it is prefigured in the Old Testament, it
is accomplished historically in the earthly life of Christ, it is contained in mystery in the
sacraments, it is lived mystically in souls, it is accomplished socially in the church, it is
consummated eschatologically in the heavenly kingdom. Thus the Christian has at his
disposal several registers, a multi-dimensional symbolism, to express this unique reality.
The whole of Christian culture consists in grasping the links that exist between Bible and
liturgy, Gospel and eschatology, mysticism and liturgy. The application of this method to
scripture is called exegesis; applied to liturgy it is called mystagogy. 472

If youth ministry is to be grounded in the paschal mystery, then it must ‘unpack’ this
paschal mystery in the manner Danielou suggests: by communicating to young people the
threelfold typological relationship between the Old Testament, New Testament and the
Church’s sacramental economy. This prevents youth ministers from yielding to the perennial
temptation to prescind from a serious engagement with scripture and/or an appropriate
focus upon liturgy and sacrament. This temptation often arises from the perception that
young people find the scriptures inaccessible and the liturgy archaic. By way of contrast, a
youth ministry that has embraced the paschal mystery will be grounded in both Word and
sacrament, because these are the foundational modes of encounter with the God of Jesus
Christ. As the initiatory dynamic is fundamentally liturgical, youth ministry is necessarily
liturgical too.

As we shall see below, this does not mean that extensive engagement with Word and
sacrament is proper to every stage of the process: in keeping with the RCIA’s periods, the
place for extensive biblical and sacramental catechesis lies after an experience of initial

a Theology of Christian Feast," in Beyond East and West: Problems in Liturgical Understanding (Rome: Edizioni
conversion. A recognition of the paschal mystery’s complementary registers ensures that youth ministry does not remain solely focused upon that initial conversion, but seeks to lead young people deeper into the mystery of Christ crucified and risen.

6.2.3 Conversion

Young people begin to live the paschal mystery when they undergo and undertake an integral conversion to the Triune God. In keeping with the RCIA’s understanding of conversion, this requires young people’s embrace of the paschal dynamic of dying to sin and rising to share in the Triune life. Referring to conversion as something youth both undergo and undertake is intended to suggest that this is a work of the Spirit in young people which also requires their cooperation under grace.

A youth ministry that draws its inspiration from the RCIA will recognise the importance of young people’s initial conversion, but it will also operate from the principle that conversion is an ongoing process that ought to continue beyond adolescence and throughout one’s life. For this reason, conversion needs to be understood as entailing the realization of one’s true and full humanity, incorporating affective, intellectual, moral and socio-political transformation. As we have already seen, an integral conversion necessarily involves young people’s full participation in the life and mission of the Church within a particular faith community.

In Chapter Three we saw that Charles Taylor suggests that social and cosmic imaginaries are “carried” by a society’s stories, images and symbols, rather than by explicit and direct explanation.\(^{473}\) As a consequence, some authors who have drawn upon Taylor have

\(^{473}\) Taylor, ASA, 172.
conceived of Christian faith as an alternative imaginary.\textsuperscript{474} From this perspective, conversion to Christian faith includes the repudiation of the regnant modern social imaginary and the assumption of the minority imaginary of Christian belief. However, this misunderstands the unthematic, implicit nature of an imaginary and the power that it possesses because it does not present in the world as a \textit{possible} construal of people’s societal relations or cosmic location, but presents that these things are actually reality. In this sense, a Christian social and cosmic imaginary was possible in Christendom, but it is not possible in a secular age, where a Christian worldview necessarily needs to be an explicit, consciously held and differentiated conception of human beings’ social configuration and place in the universe. In fact, the distinction between a Christian worldview and the regnant social and cosmic imaginary is not absolute. A Christian worldview need not challenge every aspect of these imaginaries, even as it provides an alternative construal to other elements.\textsuperscript{475} For example, a Christian need not repudiate the origin or the expanse of the universe, even as he or she affirms God’s initial and ongoing action in creating such a world. A Christian would, however, challenge the modern view that society only exists for individuals’ mutual benefit, as his or her faith provides a richer conception of human beings’ interdependence and the need to pursue the common good together. So while conversion to Christ does occur through the communication of the narrative, images and symbols of Christian faith, it cannot be construed as the substitution of an alternative imaginary, as the very act of conversion explicitly calls the regnant imaginary’s depiction of the world and human beings

\textsuperscript{474} James K. A. Smith approaches this when he appropriates Taylor’s concept of the social imaginary to articulate a distinctively Pentecostal worldview in \textit{Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy} (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 29-31.

\textsuperscript{475} For Jason Lief, the modern social imaginary produces its own form of belief and believers (which Taylor calls the quest and seekers, but Lief surprisingly does not), and which Lief considers incompatible with Christian faith. See Lief, \textit{Poetic Youth Ministry}, 12-4. I think this a misreading, or at least a significant disagreement with Taylor as I understand him: Christians cannot escape the modern social and cosmic imaginary entirely, nor do they need to. Lief’s view of modernity is unremittingly pessimistic, a view I do not share. Lief’s book remains, however, an important engagement with Taylor’s thought for youth ministry.
as they are into question, and therefore constitutes a conscious decision to conceive of the world differently.

It is tempting to conceive of conversion to Christianity in post-Christendom as a reversion to a pre-Christendom situation, because the macro-context in late modernity is increasingly antipathetic to Christian faith.\textsuperscript{476} In some respects this is right, for conversion as it appeared in Christendom is over: the time of widespread cultural support for people’s commitment to Christian faith has passed. While the presence of large numbers of nominal Christians in Australia means that the decision to become a Christian or more devoutly pursue the faith one was raised in is not precisely an action that deviates from the societal norm, these acts increasingly appear as the decisions of a minority and may well be denigrated by others. However, to equate this contemporary situation with the realities of belief in pre-Christendom is too simplistic. The place of religious faith and its institutional expression within the Age of Authenticity is markedly different from the situation faced by the early church. The way in which Christian faith has shaped the ethics of late modernity cannot be eliminated. Both the dependence of late modernity’s ethic of altruism upon the Christian ethic of agape and the widespread ignorance of this amongst people generally and by young people in particular constitutes a very different moral backdrop to that of the pre-Christendom period, namely that of the Roman empire in Christianity’s first centuries. The way in which the legacy of Christendom is increasingly negatively perceived does, however, possess implications for young people’s conversion. A decision for a committed expression of Christian faith is unlikely to be welcomed by some peers and family members. Youth ministers need to understand this and be able to prepare young people accordingly.

\textsuperscript{476} For example, see Robert E. Webber, \textit{Ancient-Future Evangelism: Making Your Church a Faith-Forming Community} (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), 126-9.
6.3 The Initiatory Dynamic of *Youth Ministry*

We saw in Chapter Four that *ChrL* and the *CCC* both suggest that there is a need for a *post-baptismal catechumenate* for those baptised in infancy, which raises the question as to the timing of such a catechumenal structure. While part of this thesis’ argument is that the initiatory dynamic possesses an enduring significance for faith throughout the life cycle, adolescence is a critically important stage for an intentional process of evangelisation. This is because late modern cultures bestow personal agency concerning faith upon adolescents, and such agency is necessary to consent to baptism or personally ratify the faith commitment that was made on one’s behalf in infancy.

This assertion initially appears buttressed by older youth ministry scholarship, which typically interpreted the process of adolescent faith development through recourse to developmental theory. For example, John Roberto characterised adolescent engagement with faith as part of the process of individuation, as the establishment of identity, and as the journey towards “owned faith”.\(^\text{477}\) These developmental theories located a young person’s personal appropriation of faith within late adolescence, because a younger adolescent had not attained certain cognitive, moral, psychosocial and faith stages. In particular, Roberto drew upon James Fowler’s stage-theory of faith, in which Fowler argued that the transition from what he called synthetic-conventional faith to individuative-reflective faith (stages three to stage four) could not occur before late adolescence or even early adulthood because a young person did not possess the cognitive capacity to make such a step.\(^\text{478}\) From

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\(^{477}\) Roberto was drawing upon the developmental theories of Kohlberg, Fowler, and John Westerhoff. See Roberto, "Direction," 76-82.

this perspective youth ministry’s role was to firstly nurture adolescents’ synthetic-conventional faith until they were capable of such an adult faith commitment.

Fowler’s theory neatly dovetailed with the phenomenon of young people significantly re-evaluating the faith commitment of their childhood at the point of transition from high school to university. It cannot really account for the phenomenon identified by Mason and his colleagues that a similar departure point now also occurs at the conclusion of primary school.479 This is partially explained by the intensification of the Age of Authenticity since the 1970s and 1980s when these developmental theories were first proposed: whereas personal agency concerning faith was initially equated with adulthood, the ubiquity of expressive individualism by the twenty-first century has led to the attribution of personal agency for faith decisions to be lowered to the onset of adolescence. Faith is now seen to be a highly personal decision that a sixth grader is capable of making. The transition from high school to college remains a point of decision for or against faith because it retains something of its original significance of moving beyond the influence of familial faith commitments.

Charles Taylor’s account of the role of narrative in the construction of the self suggests a different reason for youth ministry to be particularly attentive to the initiatory dynamic. Taylor defines a narrative as a diachronic account of how something came to be, and suggests that the articulation of one’s personal narrative involves the examination of his/her past to make sense of their present situation and the future.480 Taylor states that it is “through my story, I define my identity. And this is central to being a self.”481 It is in adolescence that this capacity for telling a personal narrative emerges. As clinical

479 Mason et al, SGY, 322.
481 Taylor, Language Animal, 317.
psychologist Daniel McAdams puts it, it is in adolescence that “teenagers begin to see their lives in storied, historical terms”, and the “emergence of a historical perspective on the self” commences.\textsuperscript{482} Seen from this perspective, it is teenagers’ newly emerging capacity for self-narration for the construction of their identity that makes adolescence a crucial time for ministry, so that youth may construct their identity in relation to God’s presence and action in their lives.

Young people’s construction of the self through personal narrative does not take place within a neutral cultural location in relation to Christian faith. In Chapter Three we saw that the death of God CWS tilts youth (and not only youth) towards a closed construal of the immanent frame, because the narrative portrays religious belief as a residue of childhood to be abandoned in the name of ‘growing up’. The CWS serves as a schematic outline or narrative arc that young people adopt unawares, but which may decisively shape their personal sense of self. We might consider this to be a sort of unintentional cultural ‘plagiarism’, as young people unknowingly appropriate this cultural narrative for the articulation of their own identity.\textsuperscript{483} If a young person’s self-constructed \textit{bildungsroman} borrows extensively from this dominant cultural narrative, then religious faith will appear as a relic of childhood to be outgrown in the name of personal maturity. It is the threefold conjunction of the development of the capacity for narrative in early adolescence, expressive individualism’s lowering of the capacity for personal agency to the end of primary school, and the death of God narrative that makes the entirety of adolescence, and not just its latter years, critical for the initiatory dynamic’s deployment.

\textsuperscript{482} Dan P. McAdams, \textit{The Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self} (New York: Guilford Press, 1996), 13, 277.
\textsuperscript{483} Another metaphor for this might be to consider young people’s borrowing of the cultural narratives as an instance of fan fiction, where the young person develops their own narrative through recourse to the plot and characters from a popular novel or movie. Of course, this is again an unwitting exercise: the young person does not consciously choose to appropriate the dominant narrative, as much as accept it as a given.
6.4 The Shape of Youth Ministry

We are now in a position to consider what a youth ministry informed by the initiatory dynamic could look like. The GDC states that post-baptismal catechesis should not “slavishly imitate” the structure of the baptismal catechumenate, but because the GDC contends that post-baptismal catechesis ought to emulate the RCIA’s gradual character and its ritual steps, it is difficult to envisage a structure for youth ministry that does not follow the RCIA’s fourfold structure to some extent (GDC 91). The desirability of such a structure is strengthened if we consider that youth ministry in post-Christendom ought to be directed to the non-baptised as well as the nominally baptised and the children of practising parents. As we saw, ministry to non-baptised young people requires attention to be paid to the process of evangelisation, whereas ministry to nominally baptised youth and children of practising parents follows the formative itinerary described in the Aparecida document. In other words, a single structure for youth ministry recognises that the initiatory dynamic applies to all three groups of young people, even though those who have not been initiated will undertake the actual liturgical ritual rites of the RCIA, and not participate in the youth ministry’s analogous rituals (as we shall see below).

The principal contours of a youth ministry that takes its inspiration from the RCIA could consist of four key elements that I will call stages in order to distinguish them from the RCIA’s periods. The stages and steps are:

1) Evangelisation

The principle elements in this stage include: i) the faith community’s witness to young people through its life, prayer and mission, and through specific outreach to youth; ii) opportunities for young people’s exploration of faith through participation in the community’s life, prayer and mission; and iii) sites for both dialogue and for the initial
proclamation of the Gospel. The purpose of this stage is to facilitate young people’s initial conversion to Christ and his Gospel.

A) Rite of Welcome

Markers of an initial conversion are the key criteria for progression into youth ministry’s second stage. Young people enter into this second stage through a ritual of welcome that is analogous to the Rite of Acceptance.

2) Formation

In this second stage young people are formed through their participation in the community’s way of life, prayer and mission, which takes place through their participation in the broader faith community’s life and mission, and then in the activities specific to the youth ministry. This stage’s purpose is to consolidate young people’s initial conversion.

B) Rite of Intention

A rite that is analogous to the rite of election could be incorporated at the conclusion of this stage. Through it baptised young people would signify their intention to personally affirm their faith and to appropriate the grace of their sacramental initiation. It would be appropriate for this ritual to take place in parish communities on the First Sunday of Lent rather than in a youth ministry context, so as to signify the importance of this commitment. However, it cannot replace the liturgical celebration of the Rite of Election in the Cathedral for the unbaptised.

3) Lent

In keeping with the Church’s focus upon final preparation for initiation and the faith community’s renewal of initiation through deeper conversion during Lent, a youth ministry formed by the initiatory dynamic would adopt the same focus. This focus could be achieved
through ritual practices that draw inspiration from the RCIA’s scrutinies and presentations of the Creed and Lord’s Prayer.

C) Sacramental Initiation and Renewal of Initiation

For unbaptised young people the process culminates in sacramental initiation at the Easter vigil. For those who have been baptised, a ritual that provides an opportunity for a public renunciation of sin and profession of faith, and which then recalls and affirms their baptism and confirmation would serve as the culmination of the initiatory dynamic for baptised young people. As John Roberto suggests, this ritual could take place at Pentecost rather than at Easter in order to protect baptism’s singular importance.484

4) Post-initiation stage

In keeping with the underlying principles of mystagogy, there ought to be time set aside for reflecting upon the mysteries of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist, for the consolidation of young people’s place within the faith community, and their ongoing participation in the mission of the Church.

Figure 2 presents the primary features of a youth ministry that is modelled upon the RCIA.

484 Roberto, "Direction," 103.
### Stage-Based Youth Ministry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1) Evangelisation</th>
<th>2) Formation</th>
<th>3) Lent</th>
<th>4) Post Easter/Pentecost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faith Community’s Witness (communal life, prayer and mission)</td>
<td><strong>A) Rite of Welcome</strong>&lt;br&gt;Young people share in community’s - communal life, - prayer and - mission</td>
<td><strong>B) Rite of Intention</strong>&lt;br&gt;Intense spiritual preparation for initiation or its appropriation</td>
<td><strong>C) Sacraments of Initiation and renewal of initiation</strong>&lt;br&gt;Mystagogical catechesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specific outreach to youth</strong></td>
<td><strong>Receive catechesis</strong>&lt;br&gt;Intense spiritual preparation for initiation or its appropriation</td>
<td><strong>Ritual practices based upon the scrutinies and presentations of Creed and Lord’s prayer</strong></td>
<td><strong>Live life of discipleship, communion and mission</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sites for dialogue</strong>&lt;br&gt;- Initial proclamation of the Gospel</td>
<td><strong>Consolidate initial conversion</strong>&lt;br&gt;Consolidate initial conversion</td>
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**Figure 2: Stage-Based Youth Ministry**

Youth ministry has suffered because of confusion between programmatic models and the articulation of a clear process that ought to be considered normative. In the name of not mandating the former, there has not been enough clarity about the latter.\(^{485}\) However, the assertions that the process of evangelisation is paradigmatic for pastoral ministry and that the baptismal catechumenate is the model for all catechesis suggest that such a process is necessary and should be normative (EG 15; GDC 90). In other words, the baptismal catechumenate serves an architectonic purpose, as it provides the foundational structure for other forms of catechesis, including youth ministry. It is important, however, to recognise that such a process will assume different programmatic forms. The way in which evangelisation takes place, how and when catechesis is provided, or indeed how the process in its entirety is put together will necessarily look different within different faiths.

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\(^{485}\) I think the following statement from *Renewing the Vision* has often circumvented further exploration of an evangelical model for youth ministry: “First articulated in *A Vision of Youth Ministry* and developed more fully over the past two decades, the comprehensive approach is a framework for integration rather than a specific model. The comprehensive approach is not a single program or recipe for ministry”. See Bishops, Renewing.
communities. However, the initiatory dynamic ought to be normative in the sense that a faith community should be able to justify their ministerial practice through recourse to the baptismal catechumenate’s principal elements.

In the discussion that follows, I wish to pursue the initiatory dynamic’s logic as far as possible, while not proposing a particular programmatic model. To this end, I will at times go as far as describing particular practices that illuminate important aspects of ministry in that stage, without suggesting that these practices are mandatory. Instead, they serve an exemplary purpose in my argument. Following Andrew Zirschky, I will call such practices “epicletic”, as they are specific examples of a “human activity that functions as a prayer by pointing toward and participating in the very transformation we hope the Spirit to enact in us ... these are practices that prepare congregations to be transformed by the Holy Spirit.”

6.5 The Value of a Stage-Based Approach to Youth Ministry

The proposal that youth ministry adopt a stage-based approach based upon the RCIA represents a significant shift in the way in which Australian youth ministry has been structured. Since Antioch, most youth ministries have operated according to a ‘youth group model’, where all the young people in a particular age group attended a regular event together. In Antioch’s case, youth would join the youth group after participating in an Antioch weekend. The Antioch weekend was intended to achieve the purpose of the evangelisation stage, while the weekly Antioch nights served as stage two of the process. This was initially effective in the 1980s, as strong familial practice of faith and religious education provided the long-term preparation for the kerygmatic Antioch weekend to

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achieve its purpose. The first challenge with this was that most Antioch groups could only run a weekend annually, which limited the crucial first stage of the process to that one weekend. Furthermore, as young people’s faith foundation within their family has been further eroded, fewer young people have been sufficiently prepared by previous experience for the Antioch weekend to achieve its desired goal. Too much was now being asked of a single weekend.

The upshot of all of this was that subsequent expressions of youth ministry reduced Antioch’s two-stage model to a single youth group night which now needed to be able to meet the most initial of young seekers, young people who had enthusiastically embraced their faith and were eager to build upon that basic commitment, and young people at different steps in between. In these circumstances, the youth group’s principal focus would often devolve to one end of the spectrum because not all of these needs could be met in a single program. Some youth groups focused upon social activities to engage the minimally connected, whereas others provided “serious formation” for committed young believers. An unintended effect of this was to delineate between these two groups in such a way that a counterproductive in/out dichotomy developed between regular church attenders and those who did not. The demarcation erases the dynamic and complex nature of young peoples’ faith journey, which cannot be so easily categorised in this manner. Sometimes the distinction is determined upon the basis of age rather than upon a young person’s spiritual readiness for a further step. Social activities are typically programmed for the pre-teen and early teen years, followed by more intentionally faith-based content in the upper years of high school.

A stage-based approach can better address the multiple stages of young people’s journeys rather than sharply distinguish between those to be evangelised and those
maturing in their faith. Multiple steps of increasing seriousness attenuate the in/out dynamic, as it does not prematurely require a depth of commitment from young people. At the same time, providing different stages recognises that an initial seeker’s needs differ from a young person who has made subsequent steps of faith.

A potential criticism of a stage-based approach is that it forces young people’s faith trajectories into a clear, linear pattern that bears little resemblance to the messy, ‘two steps forward one step back’ nature of most young people’s faith journey. A deeper objection would be that attempts to assess spiritual maturity generally, and perhaps the spiritual maturity of youth in particular, are misguided. The contention is that the process of evangelisation enforces young people’s conformity to a pre-determined pattern that does not correspond to their actual experience.

The process need not be construed so rigidly, though. In fact, this process immediately appears less linear or extrinsically imposed if the demarcation between different stages is not determined by a young person’s age or by the mere passage of time. If progression to the next stage was based upon the RCIA’s practice of discerning whether someone has experienced an initial conversion (the transition point from the pre-catechumenate to the catechumenate), and then whether that initial conversion has sufficiently matured (the transition from the catechumenate to the period of purification and enlightenment), then this process can be seen to arise more organically from within a young person’s particular journey, as it is based upon his/her spiritual readiness to take a further step.488

487 As Arthur Canales does. See Canales, "RCIA 2," 16. This is surprising, given the RCIA’s insistence that both the pre-catechumenate and catechumenate’s are periods of indeterminate length.

488 Many commentators emphasise the faith community and the ministers’ role in ascertaining someone’s readiness to enter the catechumenate or become one of the elect. While this is undoubtedly true, it is important to remember that the candidate first indicates their belief that they are ready and their willingness to take the next step. For this reason, I think it is a mutual discernment process, and it should be considered as such.
The need for a process of evangelisation is attested to by the existence of similar processes that were developed by youth ministry practitioners. John Roberto claimed that before he studied the RCIA, he developed a process that broadly corresponded to its basic structure. The Young Life methodology, the most influential Evangelical Protestant approach to youth ministry and which likely influenced Don Kimball’s formulation of the wedge model, employs a similar process.\

Finally, in their study of congregations practicing “exemplary youth ministry”, Roland Martinson, Wes Black and John Roberto identified a “common pattern” that strongly correlates to the process of evangelisation enshrined in the RCIA.

A stage-based approach derived from the RCIA is therefore consonant with a commonly identified pattern of youth faith development. Provided the different stages are not applied too rigidly to a young person’s journey, and that progression from one stage to another is not determined by criteria other than spiritual readiness, then the validity of a stage-based approach to youth ministry appears incontestable.

6.6 Addressing Potential Concerns

Notwithstanding the GDC’s declaration that all catechesis is to be modelled upon the baptismal catechumenate, three major concerns are likely to arise when youth ministry is shaped in this manner. The first issue is that such a process ignores the significance of

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489 See Johnson’s description of Young Life’s methodology for a Catholic audience: Johnson, "Young Life Ministry: Room for Catholic Lay Ministers " 186-8. For a critique of aspects of the Young Life approach, see Andrew Root, Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry: From a Strategy of Influence to a Theology of Incarnation (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 51-4 and passim. For another similar process from an Evangelical Protestant, see Chap Clark’s “funnel model”: Chapman Clark, "The Myth of the Perfect Youth Ministry Model," in Starting Right. Thinking Theologically About Youth Ministry, ed. Kenda Creasy Dean et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001). Purpose Driven Youth Ministry, the most popular book on youth ministry to date, employs a variation of the funnel model. See Doug Fields, Purpose-Driven Youth Ministry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998).

baptism and the fundamental difference between pre- and post-baptismal catechesis. This concern gives rise to the second issue which is that the application of the RCIA to people other than unbaptised adults compromises the catechumenate’s integrity as a true process of initiation. The third concern begins with doubts about the RCIA’s effectiveness, which calls into question the wisdom of basing the practice of youth ministry upon a seemingly failed process for adults.

The first two concerns may be addressed together. Aidan Kavanagh raised both in relation to adults in *The Shape of Baptism*. He held that it was important to maintain firm distinctions between unbaptised adults, adults who had been baptised but who had not completed their initiation, and those fully initiated adults (that is, the faithful) who were seeking spiritual growth. Kavanagh wrote that

> it seems necessary to keep clear the distinctions between these different sorts of persons lest the catechumenate lose its essential form and purpose to become a catch-all structure for parish educational needs ... In view of this, the already initiated who seek spiritual growth or renewal in the catechumenate should probably be kept out of it ... The catechumenate should neither lose its distinctive nature or cannibalise other structures.\(^{491}\)

Kavanagh argued that Lent and the sacrament of penance addressed the needs of the faithful seeking renewal, but conceded that those who have not been confirmed or communicated (but who were baptised as Catholics) may “best be treated as catechumens in all things”, except that they were not to be dismissed with the catechumens prior to the liturgy of the Eucharist.\(^{492}\) The RCIA in fact specifies that such adults cannot be considered catechumens (because they are baptised), but goes on to describe a “programme of training” for them that is to be modelled upon the catechumenate (RCIA 376-386).

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\(^{491}\) Kavanagh, *Shape*, 188. Maxwell Johnson raised the same issues in *Rites of Initiation*, 433.

\(^{492}\) Kavanagh, *Shape*, 189-90.
As I indicated at the end of Chapter Four, a parish that has embraced the initiatory dynamic will not provide a process for the evangelisation of unbaptised adults but will also provide analogous processes for adults who have not completed their sacramental initiation, as well as for those who were sacramentally initiated but not sufficiently evangelised or catechised. Both of these latter processes would deviate from the RCIA itself in important respects, especially in the non-conferral of baptism, and they would be distinct from the adult catechumenate itself. There is no reason not to structure youth ministry along similar lines, in a process that is analogous to but distinct from the parish RCIA process, albeit with two exceptions. First, both adult catechumens and youth should participate together in the parish’s communal life, liturgy and missionary activities. Second, unbaptised young people join in with parish celebrations of the Rite of Acceptance, diocesan celebrations of the Rite of Election, and receive the sacraments of initiation at Easter.

To suggest that the children of practising parents do not need to be evangelised and catechised appears dismissive of the post-Christendom environment in which young people make decisions for or against Christian faith today. However, the significance of their baptism and confirmation does need to be respected. They are already full members of the Church by virtue of their sacramental initiation whether they have undergone an initial conversion or are subjectively incorporated into the faith community or not. For this group of young people, “graduation” from the youth ministry does not signify the beginning of their full participation in the life and mission of the Church, because this is already expected of them as baptised Christians. Ministers therefore need to negotiate a balance between respecting the validity and significance of these young people’s baptism and the reality that many of them lack both a personal conversion to Christ and are not subjectively incorporated into the faith community. However, this issue is mitigated by the fact that the
RCIA does not envisage that people fully engage in the life and mission of the community only after their baptism. Rather, the RCIA intends that candidates fully engage in the community, prayer and mission of the community while they are catechumens (RCIA 75).\textsuperscript{493} In other words, the only difference between young catechumens’ and baptised young people’s day to day participation in the life and mission of the Church in stage two of this process is the former’s reception of the Eucharist. In every other respect both groups are to be drawn into the life and ministry of the faith community.

The third concern questions the wisdom of embracing the RCIA as a model for youth ministry given the widespread anecdotal claim that the majority of new Catholics cease to attend Mass within a year or two of completing the RCIA. This cannot be conclusively established, as the Church in Australia does not track ‘retention rates’ for adult converts. Nor does the Church in the United States, however the American Centre for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) estimates that approximately 84% of adults who have been through the RCIA since 1986 still identify as Catholics.\textsuperscript{494} In a study of American mass attenders, CARA found that 62% of adult converts to Catholicism (of whom three-quarters went through the RCIA) attended Mass at least once a month. By comparison, 48% of all other US Catholics attended monthly or more often. Adult converts to Catholicism were more likely to go to confession at least once a year (54% compared to 24%), be “somewhat” or “very involved” in their parish beyond Mass attendance (31% to 14%), agree “somewhat” or “strongly” that they are a practising Catholic (80% to 53%), agree that their faith is either the “most important” or “among the most important” things in their daily life (59% to 40%),

\textsuperscript{493} With the exception of the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
and believe in the Real Presence (81% to 55%).

Sociologist David Yamane’s study of the RCIA’s implementation in the USA provides other insights into the RCIA’s effectiveness. Yamane tracked the participants’ understanding of what it means to be Catholic over the course of the RCIA process. He found that nearly two-thirds showed signs of growth in their understanding of what being Catholic meant to them over that period. Notwithstanding this, Yamane found that many of the neophytes found it difficult to articulate what they now believed, preferring to express their feelings about being Catholic instead. He argued that an emphasis upon the value of the cognitive dimension of faith over the emotional and behavioural aspects of belief could lead to the mistaken conclusion that neophytes who remained quite inarticulate were less fully incorporated into the Catholic Church. Yamane also sought to assess the impact of the RCIA upon people’s religious practices, focusing upon their ecclesial involvement and spiritual practice. Yamane found that it made a difference to the level of ecclesial involvement and spiritual practice if they had participated in a RCIA process which “normatively implemented” the ritual text.

Yamane’s observation that a coherent statement of beliefs may not be a conclusive demonstration of someone’s faith commitment possesses some affinities with the RCIA’s attribution of faith to the intuitive (and not just inferential) dimension of knowledge.

496 Yamane, Becoming Catholic, 175-80.
497 Yamane, Becoming Catholic, 182.
498 Yamane, Becoming Catholic, 191. Yamane’s criteria for normative implementation were whether the pre-catechumenate period was ongoing through the year, if there was more than one Rite of Acceptance, if catechumens were dismissed from the liturgy of the Eucharist throughout the year, and if the period of mystagogy continued from Easter to Pentecost. For further discussion concerning the impact of the RCIA’s implementation upon its effectiveness, see Mary Gautier and Jonathon Holland, Pastoral Practice in Light of the National Statutes on the Catechumenate: A Report for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2014).
Charles Taylor’s philosophical account of language would suggest, however, that the inability to articulate one’s beliefs circumscribes the capacity for those beliefs to be experienced as truly real and thus of decisive significance. As Christian Smith puts it, “religious faith, practice, and commitment can be no more than indistinctly real when people cannot talk much about them. In other words, articulacy fosters reality.” On this basis, the widespread inarticulacy among the neophytes indicates that something may be lacking in their conversion.

Yamane’s study thus indicates that poor implementation of the RCIA has important consequences for its effectiveness. While his understanding of a normative implementation included an ongoing pre-catechumenate, Yamane saw insufficient difference between the pre-catechumenate and catechumenate to warrant a separate consideration of the two periods. Yamane justified this decision by stating there was little difference in the way in which the pre-catechumenate and the catechumenate periods were conducted. He suggested that the catechumenate was merely an intensification of the process that began in the pre-catechumenate. While this is partially true it obscures the pre-catechumenate’s distinctive features. The pre-catechumenate consists of inquiry on the part of the candidates and evangelisation on the part of the Church. It is the period for “hearing the first preaching of the Gospel” (RCIA 7).

Yamane’s mischaracterisation of the pre-catechumenate reflects a widespread issue with the RCIA’s implementation to date which results in at least some, and possibly many,

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500 Yamane combined analyses of the pre-catechumenate and catechumenate in Chapter Three of Becoming Catholic.
501 Yamane, Becoming Catholic, 83. Yamane is quoting RCIA 42.
people entering into the *catechumenate* with their original motives for becoming a Catholic intact. These motives typically include the desire to align one’s religious commitment with a spouse’s, as the expression of an individual’s spiritual quest, or for utilitarian reasons.⁵⁰²

There was little indication in Yamane’s research that these “circumstantial converts” had experienced an initial conversion to Christ before entering the catechumenate as the RCIA expects (RCIA 37, 42). If the RCIA’s criteria for admission to the catechumenate were being followed, one would expect that someone would a change in their motives to one of being drawn into a relationship with God. Yamane presents little to no evidence to suggest that this had occurred in the interviewees. Instead, Yamane’s research would suggest that many were experiencing an initial conversion only at or after their baptism, which is not what the RCIA envisages will have happened by the end of the process.⁵⁰³

The conclusion to be drawn from Yamane’s research is not that the RCIA is a failed process, but that there are frequently issues with its implementation, and in particular the poor implementation of the pre-catechumenate, which leads to a lack of initial conversion prior to people’s acceptance into the order of catechumens. These insights concerning the RCIA’s effectiveness should not negate the application of the baptismal catechumenate to youth ministry, but they do need to be learned from. Youth ministry should be particularly attentive to the period that corresponds to the pre-catechumenate so as to ensure that young people’s faith journey proceeds upon the basis of an initial encounter with and conversion to Christ.

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⁵⁰³ See the story of Craig, who at the end of the process when asked what was different could only articulate that he was now part of the church, and then while hugging his daughter and looking at his wife said to Yamane, “this is what it’s all about, isn’t it?” In terms of the RCIA and its understanding of conversion, one would have to respond by saying that while it is about ‘that’, it also about a lot more, and one would hope that it was possible for someone to articulate more about that more! Yamane, *Becoming Catholic*, 159.
6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has laid the groundwork for a youth ministry that is informed by the baptismal catechumenate’s initiatory dynamic. The first aspect of this was the articulation of the *missio Dei*, the paschal mystery and conversion as three foundational theological principles for youth ministry. Since the *missio Dei* includes, but is more expansive than the proclamation of the Gospel alone, youth ministry must respond to young people in a manner that includes, but is not confined to, the initiatory dynamic. Sharing in God’s mission to young people means cooperating with God’s action with and for young people, in whatever ways the Spirit leads. Recognition of the *missio Dei* ensures ministers acknowledge the Spirit as the principal agent of mission rather than themselves. The climax of the Son and the Spirit’s mission in the world is the paschal mystery, or the salvation accomplished by Christ and universalised by the Spirit. This is mediated through the Church, and especially through the liturgical listening to the scriptures and celebration of the sacraments. This means that youth ministry cannot abdicate from either biblical catechesis or liturgical formation, but instead must find expression liturgically within the broader life and prayer of the faith community. Youth ministry also seeks to facilitate young people’s conversion to the Triune God and facilitates an integral conversion that assists young people to fully realise every dimension of their humanity. In a post-Christendom context, this cannot entail the repudiation of every feature of the modern social and cosmic imaginaries (which would amount to a rejection of modernity), but is rather a conscious embrace of some of modernity’s features and a refutation of other aspects.

The second half of the chapter examined other foundational aspects of youth ministry that emerge in the light of the RCIA’s initiatory dynamic. Youth ministry needs a process of evangelisation, catechesis and ritual because young people in the Age of Authenticity have
been entrusted with the capacity to decide the importance they wish to give to religious faith at the beginning of adolescence.

We also saw that the something like the RCIA’s four periods ought to be transposed to youth ministry. This is advantageous for assisting each young person’s journey along a process, and it recognises that different young people can be at different stages and so require different forms of ministry.

This chapter addressed potential objections to configuring youth ministry in such a manner. The singular importance of baptism (and confirmation) was affirmed, as was the need to not compromise the adult catechumenate with the presence of baptised young people who are not candidates for the RCIA. It addressed the issue that the RCIA does not always appear to achieve all that might be hoped for concerning adults’ conversion, and found that this had much to do with the implementation of the pre-catechumenate phase. When the perceived ineffectiveness of the RCIA is explained in this manner, then it becomes clear that it is not misguided to base youth ministry upon the baptismal catechumenate’s dynamics and process. Accordingly, the following chapter focuses upon the importance of a stage in youth ministry that is analogous to the RCIA’s pre-catechumenate.
Chapter 7 Evangelising Young People

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter set out the rationale and basic structure of a stage-based process of evangelisation and formation for youth ministry. This chapter unpacks the first stage of this process in more detail by examining the way in which youth ministry might approach evangelisation in the light of the RCIA’s pre-catechumenate. The chapter pays particular attention to the way in which the evangelisation stage of youth ministry takes place within the Age of Authenticity, and so examines the impact of expressive individualism and the seeker phenomenon upon this initial stage of the Church’s ministry to youth.

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| **Initial Conversion**         |
| Liminal experiences and Ritual |
| **Catechesis**                 |
| - critical engagement and doubt |
| - articulacy                   |
| **Young people’s participation in the Community, its Worship and Mission** |
| **Ritual practices based upon the scrutinies and presentations of Creed and Lord’s prayer** |
| **Live life of discipleship, communion and mission** |

7.2 Witness

As we saw in Chapter Three, influential elements of Australian society have become at best indifferent, and at times antagonistic, to committed expressions of Christian faith. Given this macro-context, Rambo’s model of conversion would suggest that the micro-
context of family, friends and neighbours becomes crucially important if young people are to experience a conversion to Christ and his Gospel. As we have seen, this micro context has been referred to in the magisterial statements as the witness of the Christian community and its members.

Expressive individualism significantly affects this witness. Its impact begins with the awareness that young people simply presume that each is to pursue one’s own spiritual path, which renders young people allergic to being told what to believe. This means that the Church and her ministers cannot straightforwardly appeal to the Church, the bible or the magisterium as an authority to be believed, as young people will not believe simply because ‘the Church’ or its representatives have told them to. However, while it might appear that the only authority young people immersed in the Age of Authenticity recognise is themselves, they actually remain receptive to people they trust, especially family and friends. This could be described as the authority of relational witness, which is long attested to in the practice of youth ministry. In Antioch’s ‘heyday’, this relational witness extended to any peer with whom a young person could identify. It seems probable that this peer witness has largely shrunk to a young person’s immediate circle because expressive individualism and the soft relativism it often engenders have blunted other peers’ impact, as it is easy to dismiss their faith commitment as an acceptable path for them, without that making any strong claims upon one’s own stance in relation to faith.

It is less easy to dismiss someone’s personal witness when it comes from a family member or a close friend. The ancient catechumenate enshrined the capacity for such personal witness in the role of the sponsor who needed to attest to someone’s readiness to

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504 For example, see Zanzig, "Reflections," 43-5.
505 Pirola, Reluctant, 7.
become a catechumen, but who could not have done so unless they were closely connected to the candidate in the first place. Before someone was a sponsor, they likely played the critical role of “advocate” (to use Rambo’s term) for the Christian faith. It was the candidate’s encounter with the advocate that precipitated the journey of conversion. In time they then attested to the person’s readiness to enter the catechumenate. The RCIA recovered this role and gave it more of the attributes of a spiritual mentor. However, it is important to retain a sense of the sponsor’s evangelising role by recalling that the sponsors are to bear witness to Christ and introduce the newcomer to the Christian community (RCIA 9). The RCIA also refers to an inquirer being “introduced by a friend” to an informal gathering of those wishing to learn more about the Christian faith (RCIA 39.3). The RCIA thus envisages the informal, unstructured witness of friends preceding a program to learn more about faith, and that this informal witness in time leads them to the point where they are “inquiring” and “sympathetic” to the Christian faith (RCIA 39). The conclusion to be drawn is critical: credible witnesses are trusted friends who belong to the faith community, and who reach out informally to people that they already know. Such witnesses provoke curiosity about their faith commitment (see EN 21).

People embark upon a spiritual quest because the witness of others awakens it. The implication for youth ministry is readily apparent: the evangelisation of young people “begins” long before young people are gathered together in a programmatic event; it starts in and through the witness of people they already trust: family members, their peers, teachers, and possibly other members of the faith community. Young people may also respond to the witness of other people who enter their lives, including those who have formal roles within the Church, such as a youth minister or a member of the clergy, but they will do so only on the development of trust between them.
Contemporary youth ministry has largely been built on the foundation of such relationships, relying upon parents’ encouragement, peers’ influence and young adult leaders’ example.\textsuperscript{506} This foundation has sometimes been reduced to a strategy that targeted popular young people who were then exhorted to co-opt their peers. This approach instrumentalises young people’s friendships, as the relationship is no longer valued as a good and an end in itself, but merely as a means to incorporate a young person into the youth group.\textsuperscript{507} It ought to be apparent that this tactic lies at a considerable remove from the concept of Christian witness articulated by the magisterial statements. AG strongly emphasises that Christians’ presence among those who do not believe should be inspired by that charity with which God has loved us, and with which He wills that we should love one another (cf. 1 John 4:11) ... For as God loved us with an unselfish love, so also the faithful should in their charity care for the human person himself, loving him with the same affection with which God sought out man” (AG 12).\textsuperscript{508}

AG stresses that Christian witness is to embody the agapeic love of Christ for the world, which finds tangible expression in a deep solidarity with others. This understanding of witness renders the instrumentalisation of relationships for an evangelical end impermissible. Rather than simply affirm the centrality of relationships for youth ministry then, it is more helpful to state that youth ministry is grounded in \textit{relational witness}, so as to evoke better the magisterial documents’ rich concept of witness.

The ultimate ground for such witness is the belief that it is already a participation in the \textit{missio Dei}. The community and the individual’s prayer thus ought to include asking for the grace to bear faithful witness, and also incorporate intercession for those young people being evangelised.

\textsuperscript{506} We saw this in relation to Antioch in Chapter Two.
\textsuperscript{507} Root, \textit{Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry}, 15.
\textsuperscript{508} Emphasis mine.
The concept of witness requires the reclamation of the Christian community’s distinctive way of life. This does not necessitate the resumption of an adversarial stance to the world. While bellwether issues exist that strongly differentiate the Church’s position from many Australians’ opinions, these are not the launching points for the Christian community’s witness. Instead, the Church’s true distinctiveness needs to be loving presence and service, especially of those most in need. The Church needs to meet young people with agape, because self-emptying love is the church’s deepest vocation.\(^5^0^9\)

The self-giving love of God in Christ constitutes the Church as a communion of loving relationships. By manifesting this communion in the way people treat each other both within and beyond it, the faith community challenges the consumerist ethic that reduces young people to the status of passive consumers or commodities. If, as Taylor suggests, the “repeated, accelerating cycle of desire and fulfilment in consumer culture” can produce feelings of emptiness, prompting some young people to question, “is this all there is”, it is the Christian community’s vocation to bear witness to the ‘something more’ by being a vibrant community that exists only by virtue of its members’ shared faith in God.\(^5^1^0\)

7.2.1 Witness to Those Young People Already Present in the Parish

There are many practical ways for a faith community, collectively and by its individual members, to bear witness to the young people who are already present in their midst. Many (typically the overwhelming majority at present) of the members of a youth ministry are already actively involved in the life of the parish. As they are formed through the initiatory

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\(^5^0^9\) The pattern of “exemplary” youth ministry identified by Martinson and his colleagues in the previous chapter refers to serving young people at their point of need. This could appear to reduce this form of ministry to the level of a step in ‘successfully’ reaching youth. See Martinson et al, Spirit and Culture, 135. This seems to me to be an inherent danger with all stage-based or process articulations of ministry. Only agapeic love can ensure that such ministry does not become a means to an end.

\(^5^1^0\) Taylor, ASA, 309.
dynamic some of these may quickly become witnesses to their friends and family in their own right which recalls Paul VI’s assertion that “young people who are well trained in faith and prayer must become more and more the apostles of youth” (EN 72). As seen, peer-to-peer ministry was crucial to Cardijn’s vision, to the Antioch model, and then in subsequent forms of ministry, and remains so today.

Young people can share their faith with their peers through practical expressions of agape, which may include the way in which they speak of others, a willingness to listen, and a concrete commitment to those who are suffering or hurting in both the local community and further afield. The offer of genuine, embodied and non-instrumental relationship meets a vital need in young people who are hungry for such expressions of communion. The invitation to attend a program or event emerges naturally from within such a relationship, and the decline of such an invitation ought not mean the end of the relationship.

Parents remain the most important influence on the faith life of their children.\textsuperscript{511} They are in this sense their children’s primary and most critical witnesses. In fact, Christian Smith and his colleagues found that highly religious parents are virtually a “necessary condition” for Catholic youth to become “highly religious” themselves, or practise their faith in a meaningful manner beyond adolescence.\textsuperscript{512} This has spurred a great deal of comment about the need for youth ministry to engage with parents, or for inter-generational ministry.\textsuperscript{513} The initiatory dynamic somewhat re-frames this discussion, as it insists that a faith community must be engaged in adult evangelisation, whether that entails their sacramental initiation or its renewal in their lives. An alignment between the parish’s ministry to adults

\textsuperscript{511} Mason et al., SGY, 156-7. This finding replicates the NSYR finding in the US: see Smith and Denton, \textit{Soul Searching}, 57.


and its ministry to adolescents can produce important crossover effects as young people can draw their parents into the faith community’s initiatory process, and because recently evangelised parents can have a similar effect upon their children.

7.2.2 Receiving Young People as Searchers

The realities of the Age of Authenticity challenge the Church to engage in a dialogue with young seekers, those present in parishes and in Catholic schools, as well as those who no longer identify or who have never identified with the Church. If Taylor is right to suggest that ecclesial figures can dismiss the seekers’ quest as intrinsically trivial, it is possible to adopt a pastoral strategy which interprets the quest as largely benign, and so minimise the quest’s fundamentally non-religious orientation. This occurs when ministers and parents gratefully seize hold of the fact that such young seekers have not formally dis-identified with the Church and continue to express a commitment to values and social concern that resemble a residual allegiance to a Catholic moral sensibility and its social teaching (this is often articulated as: “he/she still possesses strong Catholic values”). They retain the hope that such searching will ultimately result in their young people’s renewed participation in the Church’s life from a newfound place of personal commitment and depth. Richard Rymarz has challenged this interpretation of the seeker phenomenon (or what he calls the Spiritual Quest Paradigm), because it fails to recognise the typically non-religious (and possibly even non-transcendent) and non-communal nature of the quest.514

While Rymarz’ rightly recognizes the quest’s typically non-religious trajectory, the pursuit of authenticity can propel some seekers to just such a reconsideration of the Church

and its claims regarding faith. If these young people are to re-embrace the faith of the Church in a deeper manner, though, it will be because their search has led them there, perhaps by a circuitous route, and only because they experience the Church’s life, faith and practice as speaking personally to them. They will “believe again” rather than “believe still” as we saw in Chapter Three. The premise this rests upon is an experience of the Church and the expression of faith that is different from their previous experiences, as it is the perceived irrelevance or dissatisfaction with those earlier experiences that in part prompted their earlier seeking. The Church provides this when young people are received as searchers. Faith communities and their ministers therefore need to be respectful of the integrity of young people’s quest and, rather than lament its less desirable manifestations, provide alternative sites within the Church for young people to pursue that quest.

This should not be construed as a straightforward surrender to the dominant milieu. As Taylor points out, the Church’s saints have long held the quest for God to be basic to the Christian life. Seeking is not foreign to Christian faith but is actually a leitmotif of Christian spirituality through the ages. The RCIA’s reference to the individual journeys that each candidate undergoes reflects this same awareness (RCIA 5). To recover seeking as an intrinsic dimension of Christian faith is grounded in the Church’s long-standing experience of God’s self-revelation, a self-revelation which includes God’s utter alterity and hiddenness, which therefore requires an ongoing search for the face of God.

Young people are best received as searchers if they are given the opportunity to experience the life and faith of witnesses and are able to enter into a dialogue with them.

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515 Taylor, ASA, 516.
516 Taylor, ASA, 517.
Taylor frequently adverts to the Taize community as an example for welcoming young seekers, as the French ecumenical monastic community invites the youth that visit the community to participate in much of the monks’ communal life, including their manual work and prayer, experience periods of communal reflection upon scripture, and opportunities to talk one-on-one with the monks.  

Dialogue is a critical dimension of the community’s witness. AG refers to a genuine mutuality that takes place in dialogue, as missionaries exhibit the willingness to learn about the action of God that has preceded their ministry in the lives and culture of the people they are evangelising. This dialogue also includes conversations about the way in which grace elevates and redeems those cultural “treasures” so that they assume their intended place within the reign of God (AG 11). In the RCIA, the dialogical tenor of the pre-catechumenate is captured by the candidates’ designation as “inquirers” (RCIA 39). By this designation the RCIA places the accent upon the inquirers’ agency, inviting them to take the initiative by posing questions rather than passively listening to input that they have not sought out.

Dialogue is therefore critical to the Church’s response to young seekers. Youth ministry ought to provide opportunities for young people to engage in open-ended dialogue about their lives, their attitude to faith and their questions with people from the faith community (as in the manner of the conversations with the Taize monks). The emphasis at this point is upon truly listening, without prematurely foreclosing upon that dialogue by answering every question or addressing every doubt.

Rather than declaring what a young person should believe, ministers need to adopt a position of patient accompaniment, inviting dialogue and proposing rather than imposing

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faith, as John Paul II memorably put it (RM 39). While this takes account of the impact of expressive individualism upon faith, it also represents the renunciation of any means other than love to persuade young people of the truth of the Gospel. This does not mean that the Gospel is not to be proclaimed, but it does mean that a fruitful reception of that proclamation is necessarily preceded by the Church’s loving presence in young people’s lives.

7.2.3 Fostering Gelpi’s ‘Non-Religious’ Conversions

Donald Gelpi’s theology of conversion indicates that such dialogue can foster young people’s affective, intellectual, moral and socio-political conversions. Initial conversions in these dimensions of human existence may and do occur outside a youth ministry context, and typically do so through young people’s experience of family and school. However, the familial and educational environment may not always successfully achieve this in many instances and, at the very least, a faith community can support the task of facilitating young people’s conversions in these dimensions of their lives.

Practices that can encourage affective conversion include activities that foster an appreciation for beauty.\(^{519}\) This takes place through providing young people with the opportunity to experience works of religious art, perhaps in the local parish church or in other locations, but it could also include other experiences of the arts or the natural world, such as trips into the mountains or to the ocean. These experiences would necessarily include conversations about the experience of beauty, and its significance for human beings.

\(^{519}\) Donald Gelpi, *The Turn to Experience in Contemporary Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1994), 44.
The other dimension of affective conversion Gelpi identifies is the healing of negative affect. Youth ministers attest that such healing can occur when a young person experiences the warmth and acceptance of a genuinely caring and compassionate community. Although some of the sorts of relational wounds young people may experience can require greater assistance such as professional care, the healing that results from the experience of belonging to a caring community should not be underestimated. This is especially the case because young people experience a deep and powerful need for self-chosen relationships, but frequently find the busy and fragmented nature of late modern life, and the impact of new forms of digital communication can inhibit the sustaining of deep relationships.

Faith communities can foster young people’s intellectual conversion by creating environments which model and encourage intellectual curiosity, as well as exhibiting a capacity for dialogue without defensiveness or foreclosing upon certain positions. A faith community can greatly assist young people’s human development by encouraging them to think coherently, consistently and so pursue the truth through the development of both their intuitive and critical faculties. A faith community is most likely to do this in the context of conversations about the nature of faith and belief, but in this initial evangelisation stage the content of such conversations could greatly benefit young people if they centered on what it means to be human. Of course, for a faith community this

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520 Gelpi, Committed Worship, 74.
521 See Sherry Turkle, Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age (New York: Penguin, 2015). The necessary caveat concerning the provision of such important experiences of belonging is that if young people are drawn to the faith community or to its youth ministry because of their need to belong and are not sufficiently challenged to discover Christ as the one who ultimately meets that need, then the community, the youth ministry or particular individuals within either become idolatrous substitutes for Christ. A sense of belonging is an indispensable beginning, but a young person’s journey must proceed beyond this to being genuinely incorporated into Christ. Andrew Zirschky points out that there is a profound paradox at work here, as young people’s dependence upon social media is a product of their desire for connection, and even communion. See Zirschky, Beyond the Screen, 20-1.
522 Gelpi, Committed Worship, 22. See also Gelpi, Peirce, 21.
inevitably and necessarily includes the affirmation that one’s humanity is realized in and through communion with God, but inserting this into a broader conversation about the nature of the human person both engages with young people’s search and encourages young people’s capacity for self-reflection.

A faith community fosters moral conversion in its young people when it helps them to discover the existence and nature of moral norms, and in so doing foster young people’s growth in virtue and rejection of selfish behaviour. This can be a particularly delicate task, as discussion about the moral dimensions of human life can easily play into the dominant cultural schema that reduces Christian faith to a conduit for inculcating appropriate moral behaviour. This can perpetuate Christianity’s transmutation into moralism, rather than portraying the Gospel as an encounter with Christ that possesses moral implications. For this reason, it could seem advantageous to avoid too much conversation about moral behaviour in these initial stages of evangelisation. However, this can fail to recognise that the Christian ethic can appear as good news to young people who have hurt themselves and others, and who have been hurt by unloving behaviour, especially if that behaviour is largely sanctioned by the broader culture. This could include premature sexual experiences, pornography, the misuse of alcohol and drugs, bullying, rejection or the effects of divorce in young people’s lives. Since the soft relativism espoused by many Australians struggles to

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523 “For the majority of teenagers ... religion is a positive good simply because it “gives people morals” and provides “something to believe in””. Smith and Denton, Soul Searching, 127.
524 Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005), 1: “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”. For an analysis of Ratzinger’s treatment of moralism, see Chapter Four of Tracey Rowland, Ratzinger’s Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI (Oxford/ New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).
525 The widespread perception that divorce negatively affects children has been challenged in recent years. For a thorough examination of divorce’s impact, see Andrew Root, The Children of Divorce (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010).
identify these practices as wrong, young people who have been hurt by such experiences can receive the Christian ethic as a message of hope.

At the same time, it is clear that the Church’s stance on various moral questions, including premarital sex and homosexuality, present as significant obstacles to belief for many young people, and a failure to engage with these questions before the next stage of the process may mean that young people never proceed past this first stage. Nevertheless, it seems to me that to overly focus on these issues before young people have had the opportunity to encounter Christ disregards Francis’ counsel in EG to consider the inherent hierarchy of truths in the Church’s moral teaching, which means focusing in the first instance upon Christ’s injunction to love others as we have been loved by him, upon the virtues and the works of love that flow from Christ’s commandment (EG 37). If young people can be helped to experience an initial moral conversion in which they are able to perceive the intrinsic value and beauty of a life lived in love for others and so learn to reject a lifestyle that is preoccupied with one’s self-gratification, then this too is a valuable contribution that a faith community and its youth ministry can provide to support young people’s human development.

Australian Catholic schools have invested a great deal of time and resources in providing opportunities for young people to engage in service of others. This can foster an initial socio-political conversion in young people, as they engage in forms of “responsible

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526 See also EG 34: “If we attempt to put all things in a missionary key, this will also affect the way we communicate the message. In today’s world of instant communication and occasionally biased media coverage, the message we preach runs a greater risk of being distorted or reduced to some of its secondary aspects. In this way certain issues which are part of the Church’s moral teaching are taken out of the context which gives them their meaning. The biggest problem is when the message we preach then seems identified with those secondary aspects which, important as they are, do not in and of themselves convey the heart of Christ’s message. We need to be realistic and not assume that our audience understands the full background to what we are saying, or is capable of relating what we say to the very heart of the Gospel which gives it meaning, beauty and attractiveness.”

527 Engebretson, Catholic Schools, 92-6.
citizenship”, or practical care for the disadvantaged in society.\textsuperscript{528} It is important that young people experience this same commitment to the Church’s social teaching in parish life.

The experience of these four ‘non-religious’ conversions foster young people’s freedom: from the destructive consequences of repressed emotions and the growth in their capacity to appreciate the manifestations of beauty in the world in affective conversion; from an unwillingness to consider and learn from others in the joint pursuit of truth, as well as growth in the capacity to formulate and hold a view in dialogue with others in intellectual conversion; from the hold that particular vices can have upon them, and the freedom that results from the exercise of virtue in moral conversion; and the liberation that results from addressing institutional injustice in socio-political conversion. As pathways into deeper freedom, these conversions possess intrinsic value in themselves as they advance the authentic realisation of young people’s true humanity. As such they clarify the aspiration in \textit{Anointed and Sent} that youth ministry ought to foster the “\textit{total personal and spiritual growth}” of each young person.\textsuperscript{529}

Beyond the intrinsic goods involved in fostering those conversions, they also prepare young people to be able to undergo an initial religious conversion to the Triune God. As we saw in Chapter Five, Gelpi contends that conversion in one sphere of life enhances a young person’s capacity to convert in another sphere. It is because these four conversions enable us to be more truly human through the assumption of responsibility in these dimensions of existence that an “obediential potency” is created which enables young people to also respond to the Spirit’s offer of relationship with God in Christ.\textsuperscript{530} This is not to say that initial

\textsuperscript{528} Gelpi distinguishes between responsible citizenship and participatory activism, arguing that the latter goes beyond practical care to addressing structural causes of injustice. Few school service programs would attain to this, but responsible citizenship can awaken a social conscience. See Gelpi, \textit{Transmuted Experience}, 122.

\textsuperscript{529} \textit{Anointed}, 10, emphasis mine.

\textsuperscript{530} Gelpi, \textit{Human Experience}, 353. See also Gelpi, \textit{Committed Worship}, 29.
conversions in these four domains of life must precede Christian conversion, for it is often precisely in the encounter with Christ that a young person becomes aware of the need for conversion in other aspects of their lives. It nevertheless remains the case that these forms of conversion may and do serve as a propaedeutic for conversion to the Triune God.

7.2.4 The Attraction of Practices

The foregoing discussion concerning the four forms of conversion provides a valuable basis to consider Taylor’s suggestion that people may be drawn to Christian faith through an expression of faith and spirituality that personally speaks to them.531 These practices may be experiences of fellowship, various expressions of prayer, particular charitable actions, or the pursuit of social justice. It is possible to understand these practices as providing a site for an affective, intellectual, moral or socio-political conversion that may over time lead to a religious (that is, explicitly Christian) conversion.532 For some young people, this may be through participating in music ministry, for others it may be engaging in a service project or mission trip, while again for another young person it may be attending a meditative prayer group or a journaling workshop. These sorts of practices may engender a genuine sense of belonging within the parish or the youth ministry that may lead to an initial conversion to Christ in due course.

It is important that young people have the freedom to experience different faith practices in order to find an expression of the faith community’s life and mission that personally speaks to them. It is also necessary that the faith community not prematurely require an extensive commitment from these young people. Rather, the initial and exploratory nature of this stage of young people’s journey needs to be respected. This

531 Taylor, ASA, 515.
532 Taylor, ASA, 516.
requires the recognition that these young people are experimenting and may not commit to
the group or the project for an extensive period of time. It involves accepting that these
young people have not necessarily made a deep faith commitment and that aspects of their
lives may be reflective of this, such as some of their moral decisions or their (ir)regular
attendance at Sunday Eucharist. In a stage-based approach the faith community
understands that such markers of Christian faith ought not be prematurely expected before
young people are ready and able to freely make such commitments.

The pre-catechumenate does not require that inquirers gather together prior to the Rite
of Acceptance, because the pre-catechumenate’s dynamics are often quite informal. It is in
keeping with the RCIA’s provision that an optional gathering take place in the pre-
catechumenate in order to foster the interaction between the candidates and members of
the community (RCIA 39). Analogous gatherings for young people can also provide
opportunities for young people to engage in three further elements of this stage: to share
their own personal stories, to listen to the stories of relational witnesses, and hear the
foundational narrative of Christian faith.

7.3 Three Intersecting Stories

We saw in Chapter Four that contemporary commentators frequently emphasise the
importance of the inquirers’ stories, the team members’ stories and stories from the
scriptures and the saints. However, the impression these commentators give is that multiple
stories from each of these sources need to be told, and more attention is typically given to
addressing which biblical stories ought to be told, than to closely examining the kinds of
stories we want the inquirer and the RCIA team to tell. Charles Taylor’s account of narrative
in The Language Animal provides an important cue for the shape all three forms of stories in
the RCIA ought to take, which in turn possesses important implications for the practice of youth ministry.

7.3.1 Personal Narratives

We have already seen that the capacity to articulate one’s personal story emerges in adolescence, as a young person acquires the capacity to conceive of oneself as a historical self with a past, present and future. According to Taylor, this endows narrative with a particularly important role in making meaning, because narrative enables us to articulate, and thus make sense of insights that come from our personal experience, and these insights that are generative of meaning in our lives. While we may try and formulate an insight as an assertion, insight is best conveyed through narrative, as the story can capture the experience, the insight emerging from that experience, and the preceding or background circumstances of our life that made the experience significant in ways that an assertion cannot. For these experiences to be intelligible they necessarily occur against the background of previous life experiences and the resultant web of interrelated meaning, or the gestalt, that they have produced. A propositional statement about the experience may be possible, but not without the loss of nuance and significance that resides within a narrative account.

For Taylor, the capacity to tell such a story of oneself is foundational to the self-determination of one’s identity. He writes, “we cannot have an understanding of self and life which doesn’t include [a] diachronic reading of the whole through an extended gestalt.” Or as he goes on to say, “It is through the power of making and understanding

stories that I have access to myself as a self. But it is only in this, at first dialogical, but later potentially monological, discourse of storytelling that I become a self.\textsuperscript{535}

The first conclusion to be drawn from this is that while accompaniment involves listening to whatever young people would like to share, they ought to be invited to share a more comprehensive autobiographical account of their lives than simply recount episodes of their life. In such a narrative, young people place significant experiences and episodes within a larger, unified narrative that explains what has brought them to this point. As part of this, young people may be invited to consider the spiritually significant moments within their life-story, however they may understand the term ‘spiritual’ at this point, and perhaps note the evolution of one’s understanding of faith, spirituality or God through those various experiences. This involves a retrospective examination of one’s life that reinterprets earlier experiences to provide a coherent account of how these experiences might be understood in relation to the spiritual or the transcendent. In so doing, young people are undertaking the crucially human task of articulating their sense of self, or personal identity.

Something that Taylor does not advert to is that adolescents can find such narration difficult. In large part, this may well be because they are being invited to construct a single, yet complex, story of who they understand themselves to be for the first time, or at least for the first time in such a comprehensive manner. They are being invited to draw together disparate elements of their sense of self into a coherent whole, which may involve the emphasis of one element over another, or even another element’s rejection.

As we saw in Chapter Three, young people experience these different elements in relation to significant people in their lives, and so it is not unusual for them to speak of feeling like they are one person with one set of friends, and a different one with another

\textsuperscript{535} Taylor, \textit{Language Animal}, 318.
group, and different again with family members, at church or with people at work. While it has sometimes been suggested that the provision of multiple sites of identity-creation in late modernity has meant that young people now live as multiple selves, Taylor’s understanding of identity-construction would indicate that the integration of these multiple storied-selves into a unified narrative is important for the development of a healthy sense of self.\footnote{Susan Harter, Shelly Bresnick, Heather A. Bouchey, and Nancy R. Whitesell, "The Development of Multiple Role-Related Selves During Adolescence," \textit{Development and Psychopathology} 9, no. (1997): 835-53. Taylor’s argument that the sense of self is dialogically constituted needs to be differentiated from the social constructivism of Kenneth Gergen, who contends that the self only exists in relation to the other. See Kenneth Gergen, \textit{Relational Being: Beyond Self and Community} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Brandon McKoy has applied Gergen’s social constructionism to youth ministry. See Brandon McKoy, \textit{From the Outside In: How Relationships and Stories Shape Identity} (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013). I read Taylor as offering a weaker form of constructivism that recognises the dialogical dimension of identity-creation without absolutizing this.} For this reason, if youth ministries can provide opportunities for young people to articulate their own story it provides an important service to young people, even if they do not frame their sense of self in relation to the Christian narrative.

Since young people can find it hard to tell their story baldly in the manner that has been suggested, epicletic practices to assist them are beneficial. One such exercise invites young people to create a “Road of Life”, in which they create their story by drawing their life as occurring along a road that begins at their birth and takes them through different stages such as infancy, primary school, early high school and up to the present moment.\footnote{This was a common retreat session by the Australian Marist brothers’ retreat team from the 1980s onwards. It originated with the Marist brothers’ and De La Salle brothers’ retreat teams in the USA. Greg McDonald FMS supplied this information, in an email message to the author on 6 November 2017.} They are asked to draw different pictures along the road to represent each stage, key people, events and experiences, and then to indicate how they felt about these by using different symbols. For example, they draw a house with lots of windows and doors if they experienced their family as welcoming and hospitable, or conversely to perhaps draw a small house if their family was self-contained. Depicting the weather symbolises whether it
was a happy period (sunshine) or a sad or tumultuous experience (rain or storms). The exercise concludes by inviting young people to look back and ask where in their life journeys they were in touch with the divine as they understand this in those different moments. They are then invited (but not compelled) to share their ‘Roads’ with a small group of peers and leaders.

This exercise should not imply that young people be given only one or two opportunities to tell their personal story, as these opportunities for the telling and retelling of one’s story continue to shape and refine young people’s sense of self.

7.3.2 Testimony

Alongside these initial opportunities for young people to share their personal stories, they will also benefit from listening to other people, especially (but not exclusively) their peers, share their testimony. As young people listen to people they trust express their faith, they receive an exemplary narrative of what a journey into Christian faith looks like. When young people listen to someone else’s testimony, they are being provided with a model of “living one’s self-story within the interpretive landscape of the Christian narrative world.” The important issue is not that they necessarily identify with the person testifying in every respect, but that they receive insight into what Christian faith might look like in their own lives. The invitation given through testimony is for young people to imagine what a life shaped by God would look like for them. In this way the testimony of others provides an example and a lexicon for young people to begin to articulate their own narrative in the light of Christian faith.

Pope Francis refers to testimony when he speaks of the “daily responsibility” of an “informal preaching” that takes place as part of a dialogue with someone (EG 127). For

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Francis, such a dialogue begins by listening to the other person share their “joys, hopes and concerns for loved ones, or so many other heartfelt needs. Only afterwards is it possible to bring up God’s word, perhaps by reading a Bible verse or relating a story” (EG 128). Francis’ description of testimony as an informal and spontaneous ‘preaching’ indicates that testimonies need not always take the format of formal, prepared presentations given by one person to a group of people. Amanda Hontz Drury suggests that testimonies may also be given in formal settings (such as at a liturgy or a youth gathering) but without prior preparation. Youth ministers and pastors will often be far more comfortable with prepared testimonies, but overly prepared, and especially over-workshopped, testimonies run the risk of violating the ideal of authenticity, as they can feel orchestrated and thus inauthentic (or even coercive) to those listening. For the same reason, not only do such testimonies have to be honest and true, they cannot omit the ongoing challenges of life, or the difficulties that arise in following Christ as a young person today.

The words expressed in testimony are an organic expression of a life that is lived in relationship with Christ. As Avery Dulles puts it, “because testimony is intimately connected with the person of the witness, credible testimony is never a mere matter of words … Christianity, then, propagates itself not only by explicit, or verbal testimony, but even more by implicit, or factual, testimony – that is, by the testimony of transformed lives.”  

Rather than stressing testimony’s legal definition, Dulles grounds the meaning of testimony in the disciples’ witness to the appearance of the Risen Lord in their midst. Dulles reminds us that the practice of testimony today is primarily concerned with bearing

540 Avery Dulles, Evangelization for the Third Millennium (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2009), 125.
witness to the Risen Jesus present among his people; and that Jesus continues to change lives as people meet him today through the power of his Spirit. Pope Francis makes the same point when he describes the “fundamental message” as “the personal love of God who became man, who gave himself up for us, who is living and who offers us his salvation and his friendship” (EG 128). Testimony, then, primarily consists of bearing witness to the risen Jesus and is only subsequently an account of the difference that Jesus makes in someone’s life. It is first about God, and then about the impact of God in one’s life.541

If the stories of the martyrs or other saints have a place in the initial communication of the Christian faith to young people it is as a form of testimony. Their life stories can be presented to young people as additional narratives of those who have encountered the presence of the Risen Lord and whose lives were transformed as a result. In this way, the lives of the saints provide important points of continuity between the first witnesses to the resurrection and the contemporary testimonies young people hear. This continuity frames the Church as a community of people united in time and space by a common encounter with the risen Christ, which can help to shift a widely held perception of the Church that first or even solely focuses upon its institutional nature.

7.3.3 Kerygma: The Proclamation of the Gospel

The third intersecting narrative in this stage is the Gospel. If during the RCIA’s pre-catechumenate “the living God” and “Jesus Christ whom he has sent for the salvation of all” is faithfully and constantly proclaimed (RCIA 36), then this should be integral to youth ministry’s evangelisation stage. The proclamation of the Gospel should be faithful and constant, but it should not be premature. That is, the proclamation of the Gospel comes after trust has been established between young seekers and members, both young and old,
from the faith community. The Gospel is prematurely proclaimed if young people are made to listen to it before they have become curious about the Christian faith. This results in young people experiencing the Gospel as an alien imposition by an institutional authority, rather than as a response to an awakened spiritual search. Young people can feel that they are presented with Jesus as the answer to an unasked question.

As we saw in Chapter Five, the RCIA does not explain what it means by “gospel”, which has led to confusion concerning the content of the stories that ought to be told in the precatechumenate. Matthew Levering’s account of Thomas Aquinas’ understanding of Gospel assists our understanding of the kerygma’s content. To briefly recall Thomas’ account, the Gospel is the proclamation of the union of God and humanity (and the whole created order) in the person of Jesus Christ, which individuals share in through their experience of forgiveness and their adoption as the children of God through the deifying action of the Holy Spirit.

Thomas’ lapidary depiction of the Gospel encapsulates a narrative account of God’s action in the world that encompasses the arc of creation, fall, the election of Israel, the coming of Christ, the sending of the Spirit and the eschatological realisation of God’s creative and redemptive plan. In particular, the proclamation of the Gospel must incorporate a vivid portrayal of the person of Jesus that emerges from the gospel accounts and which culminates in his death and resurrection.

Every proclamation of the kerygma possesses soteriological commitments. As we have seen, Thomas’ account of the Gospel envisages the union of the entire human race with God: he does not speak in the first instance of individual recipients of the good news, but of humanity as a whole. Henri de Lubac has shown that this insight originates with the Fathers. De Lubac quotes Irenaeus, who wrote: “God in the beginning of time plants the vine of the
human race; he loved this human race and purposed to pour out his Spirit upon it and to
give to it the adoption of sons.”

Referring to Gregory of Nyssa, de Lubac contends that the fathers understood all of humanity as being made in the one image of God, and so argued that we should not speak of human beings in the plural any more than speaking of three gods. It was therefore the one, whole human nature that fell in Adam, as sin separated and broke up that original unity of the human race. De Lubac goes so far as to call the Fall “an individualisation ... in the depreciatory sense of the word.” Originally one in Adam, the human race has fallen and “filled the whole earth with his pieces.” The result of this is that the Fathers conceive of the redemption as a “work of restoration”: of the recovery of a lost unity between God and us and amongst ourselves. Following Hilary of Poitiers, de Lubac contends that Jesus does not assume a single human nature, but human nature itself, “whole and entire”, in the incarnation. As a consequence in the redemption,

whole and entire [Christ] will bear [human nature] then to Calvary, whole and entire he will raise it from the dead, whole and entire he will save it. Christ the Redeemer does not offer salvation merely to each one; he effects it, he is himself the salvation of the whole, and for each one salvation consists in a personal ratification of his original ‘belonging’ to Christ, so that he be not cast out, cut off from this whole.

De Lubac’s retrieval of this patristic insight offers a valuable corrective to a narrow presentation of the Gospel that too sharply portrays salvation as only pertaining to individuals who assent to Christ by faith, which tends to depict Christ’s action as a rescue mission that removes a chosen few from the wreckage of a sinful world. This distortion of the Gospel, which recounts the Triune God’s act to restore humanity’s union with God and with each other, and ultimately effect the restoration of the entire created order in Christ.

543 de Lubac, Catholicism, 33.
544 de Lubac, Catholicism, 34.
545 de Lubac, Catholicism, 35.
546 de Lubac, Catholicism, 39.
The patristic portrayal of God’s action in the world holds the *missio Dei’s* different facets together. Humanity’s union in Christ and through the Spirit grounds the Church’s ministry to pursue justice, peace, reconciliation, and the stewardship of creation, not as a subsidiary dimension of Christian faith, but as intrinsic to the Gospel. A rendering of the kerygma that is overly focused upon the transcendent dimension fails to do justice to the Gospel’s radical nature, which proclaims the restoration of all things in Christ, and not simply the alteration of some people’s eschatological destiny.

In addition to this soteriological issue, the sociocultural context presents an important challenge for proclamation in youth ministry too. The Age of Authenticity tempts depictions of the Gospel as an exercise in self-fulfilment. It can be heard in slogans like ‘Jesus makes you the best version of you’, or ‘Jesus sets you free to be the best you can be!’ While not entirely untrue, these expressions re-frame the Gospel in therapeutic terms that collude with trivialised expressions of the quest but fail to present the Gospel as a call for young people to realize their humanity through the assumption of the Cross, in their embrace of agapeic love for others. The legitimacy of young people’s search to be truly human is to be affirmed, but so is the declaration that this is realised through a relationship with Christ that is expressed by self-giving, and thus self-denying, love of others.

This can serve as the launching point for an account of Christian faith that presents it as an all-encompassing, but ultimately generous, vision of God’s action in and for the world. This is not to underplay the need for young people to personally ratify their salvation. The initial proclamation of the Gospel in the evangelisation stage is intended to lead to precisely such an initial response of faith, repentance and conversion. In so doing though, on the basis of their encounter with Jesus, young people are invited to believe in the Triune God’s creative and redemptive action in and for the whole world, as well as to affirm their desire
to personally enter into union with Christ. This is evident in Francis’ succinct example of the kerygma: “the first proclamation must ring out over and over: ‘Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you’” (EG 164).

7.3.4 Crisis

As Thomas Morris puts it in relation to the RCIA in the “meeting of stories, there is the potential for awakening, change, renewal, questioning.”\textsuperscript{547} Or to express this in terms of Rambo’s model, through young persons’ encounter with a witness, the story they tell of themselves as well as the story they tell of Christ can intersect with young persons’ sense of self in such a way that they begin to understand their personal narratives as a quest.\textsuperscript{548} Implicit in this is Rambo’s concept of a crisis stage, in which young persons’ interaction within an advocate have been prompted by a pre-existing level of dissatisfaction within the young persons’ life experiences or senses of self.\textsuperscript{549} Equally, this interaction may also generate this dissatisfaction, as the young persons find certain attributes of the witness (which could be their joy, hope in the face of suffering, or other qualities) attractive.

7.3.5 The Intersection

The ultimate goal of the evangelisation stage is that young peoples’ personal narratives, other’s testimony and the Gospel intersect in such a way that a young person begins to insert his or her story into the narrative of salvation, and so starts to interpret his or her life in the light of the story of God. The paradox of this three-way intersection is that young people experience this as the Gospel interpreting them. They start to experience the Gospel

\textsuperscript{547} Morris, Transforming, 86.
\textsuperscript{548} South, “Seekers and Dwellers,” 318.
\textsuperscript{549} Rambo, Conversion, 46-7.
as making sense of the world and their lives, and they begin to re-tell their own story in the light of their encounters with the risen Jesus and the narrative of God that he reveals and enacts through the power of the Spirit.

7.4 Initial conversion

It is important that young people be given the opportunity to respond to the proclamation of the Gospel. This partly involves the provision of opportunities for young people to articulate to themselves and to others their own personal narratives in the light of the Gospel. That is essential, but it is secondary to the opportunity for young people to respond to God, which occurs primarily through prayer. There is, then, a place for silence and simple guided prayer that invites young people to say yes to the offer of God’s love in Christ. As we saw in Chapter Five, this response begins in the affect with the repentant acknowledgment of guilt, anger, fear and shame, and with a faith that is in a sense aesthetic, as it entails a young person’s assent to the divine beauty revealed in the crucified Christ’s love. Prayerful activities that invite young people to make such responses of faith are therefore an important corollary to the proclamation of the Gospel.

Prayerful activities can provide an opportunity for an embodied response to the Gospel. Two examples of this are “passion plays” and “moving statues”. Dramatic re-enactments of the passion have long been part of the church’s proclamation of the Gospel.\(^550\) In this activity the passion is symbolically re-enacted in mime, and young people are invited to participate in the play as they feel moved. Some young people may try to stop the arrest of Jesus, others walk with him as he carries his cross, while others may choose to sit at his feet as he is crucified. The passion play should include a scene of the resurrection appearances.

\(^{550}\) The most famous of these is the Oberammergau passion play, but it is predated by the medieval mystery plays, whose origins lie in even earlier dramatic presentations of scriptural scenes.
to the disciples, so that young people can interact with the character of the Risen Jesus, who may express his welcome, acceptance and love for them.\textsuperscript{551}

A variation on the interactive passion play is an activity in which someone again stands in for Jesus. Each young person is first invited to express in a silent, bodily posture where they stand in relation to Jesus. The person playing Jesus interacts with that gesture by silently responding. They both then ‘freeze-frame’, and then the young persons are invited to express in a bodily posture the relationship they would like to have with Jesus, to which the person playing Jesus responds.\textsuperscript{552}

It is crucial that young people be invited but not compelled to participate in these activities, and that every response (other than physically hurting someone) is acceptable. Sometimes a seemingly negative response in both exercises can be ultimately more fruitful than a more positively disposed stance to the figure of Christ. The critical thing is that young people are invited to be honest in their responses.

These activities are non-verbal articulations of a response to Jesus and to the Gospel. Following Taylor’s account of language, they are intelligible as linguistic activities that are constructive of meaning in young people’s lives. As prayerful activities, they are simple but powerful dialogues with God, and their silent communication can be beneficial at this stage, when the ‘right’ words may appear elusive to a young person. At the same time, each individual’s response is part of a dialogue with others in the room. It can be deeply moving and surprising for young people to watch their peers respond to Jesus in these activities, which in turn can invite further reflection upon their own experiences and response to the kerygma.

\textsuperscript{551} Kelvin Simon from Youth Mission Team Australia developed this activity. Personal communication with the author, 4 November 2017.

\textsuperscript{552} This activity was also developed by Kelvin Simon of Youth Mission Team Australia. Personal communication with the author, 4 November 2017.
Many other activities are possible at this point. What is crucial is that young people be given an opportunity to respond to the Gospel in prayer. In this way, young people are invited into the same experience of “faith and initial conversion that cause a person to feel called away from sin and drawn into the mystery of God’s love” that the RCIA intends for adults in the pre-catechumenate phase (RCIA 37).

Like the Antioch weekend, this kerygmatic phase of the evangelisation stage could take place over a weekend, or as an organised program that takes place over several weeks. What is important to realise is that this kerygmatic phase is the last, rather than the first step in the evangelisation stage. For it to be fruitful, it must be preceded by patient witness and dialogue with young seekers.

7.5 Rite of Initial Commitment

The progression from the evangelisation stage to the formation stage should not be determined by age, nor need this process be mapped onto a calendar year. Instead, stages one and two ought to be periods of indeterminate length, and progression from stage one to two needs to be determined on the basis of an initial conversion.

Whether a young person has experienced an initial conversion or not ought to be mutually discerned by the young person and the youth ministry’s leaders. This takes both young people’s agency and his/her capacity to make an initial commitment to Christ and his Gospel seriously. That it is not a simple fait accompli but requires others’ assessment and underscores that this is a significant step in a young person’s faith journey. The criteria for ascertaining the initial conversion is the same as in the RCIA: the beginnings of prayer, repentance, an awareness of the church and some participation in the faith community (RCIA 42). At this stage it is premature to expect young people to profess belief in every
doctrine, adhere to every aspect of the church’s moral teaching, or suddenly exhibit the emotional maturity associated with affective conversion. Nevertheless, the encounter with Christ initiates a desire to learn more about Christ and to live as his disciple, which in turn spurs young people’s affective, intellectual, moral and socio-political conversion.

In keeping with the RCIA, this moment could be marked by a ritual action, as it acknowledges the steps in faith that a young person has taken (RCIA 48-67). This ritual can help to effect a greater sense of incorporation into the faith community, and a desire to be formed more deeply in faith. A ritual step here constitutes the next stage as a liminal period in a young person’s life. It signifies the intention that this will be a transformative period in a young person’s life, which deepens his/her initial conversion. For non-baptised young people, the rite in question is the rite of acceptance into the catechumenate. For baptised young people, it should be a ritual action that welcomes young people into youth ministry’s formation stage. To eliminate confusion between the two, it would be appropriate if they took place on separate occasions. It does not seem appropriate that the rite of welcome for the baptised into the formation period should begin outside the church building, as they are already baptised, but the presentation of a bible and a signing of the senses would symbolise the significance of the next stage well.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined ways in which the RCIA’s pre-catechumenate may inform the first stage of a youth ministry process in a late modern society such as Australia. The chapter considered how the principal features of witness and the initial proclamation of the Gospel

553 I am not suggesting that this be a formally constituted liturgical rite of the Catholic Church, possessing the same weight as the rite of acceptance. It is instead an epicletic practice for youth ministry that draws its inspiration from the rite of acceptance.

554 These suggestions are, of course, based upon the rite of acceptance into the catechumenate (RCIA 48-74).
might facilitate young people’s initial conversion to Christ, and concluded with the suggestion that a rite for baptised young people be created that is analogous to the rite of acceptance into the catechumenate.

This stage needs to recognise the power of the expressive individualist drive within late modern culture, which in turn requires that the Church learn to receive better these young people as searchers, engaging in a patient dialogue with them while at the same time trying to offer the distinctive witness of a faith community that is constituted by faith in the risen Christ and the agapeic love that he demands of his followers. While this stage of youth ministry requires the proclamation of the Gospel, ministers serve young people when they first foster affective, intellectual, moral and socio-political conversions in young people’s lives. These conversions are good in themselves, and constitute an important dimension of ministry to young people. As young people search and inquire about faith, opportunities for them to experience the community’s faith practices are themselves doorways into the faith community.

Charles Taylor’s portrayal of the role of narrative in forming personal identity indicates that youth ministry ought to provide opportunities for young people to ‘tell their story’, or share their own personal narrative. Listening to other people’s testimony invites young people to consider whether faith could possess a similar significance in their lives, and a narrative approach to the kerygma invites young people to reflect upon the way in which their story might intersect with, and indeed be interpreted by the foundational narrative of Christian faith. A youth ministry that is informed by the catechumenate will utilise these narrative practices, and it will provide prayerful rituals for young people to be able to respond to the kerygma as they begin to integrate its significance into their worldview and into their own sense of self.
This thesis’ final chapter extends the discussion begun in this chapter by examining the way in which the catechumenate, Lent, sacramental initiation and mystagogy may be applied to contemporary youth ministry.
Chapter 8 Young People's Spiritual Formation

8.1 Introduction

The first section of this chapter examines what the second stage of a youth ministry based upon the baptismal catechumenate might look like. Just as the metaphor of apprenticeship is applied to the catechumenate, so, too, can it serve as a controlling image for the formation phase of youth ministry (AG 14). This means that young people will mature in their conversion through “learning by doing”. That is, they are best formed in the Christian life by living it; by participating in the community’s way of life and mission. The RCIA indicates that there are three interrelated dimensions to this: the experience of community; participating in the community’s worship of God, which is expressed most fully (but not exclusively) in the liturgy; and by sharing in the community’s mission, which includes evangelising others and engaging in acts of charitable service and justice (RCIA 75).

In Chapter Five we saw that Rambo’s interaction stage illuminated the catechumenate’s key dynamics. As such, relationships, ritual, rhetoric and role all play important roles in the youth ministry’s formation stage, and will be discussed below in relation to communion, ritual, catechesis, and by engaging in the community’s prayer and mission. The goal of this stage is the maturing of a young person’s initial conversion through these practices of the faith community, which means that the process needs to retain the importance of continuing to be a seeker and also rehabilitate the dweller dynamic within the ambit of faith.

The chapter’s second section explores the place of sacramental initiation and its appropriation in youth ministry. Most importantly, it calls for a mystagogical catechesis that
builds upon and explicates a Catholic sacramental ontology that counters closed takes of the immanent frame that are antipathetic to faith in God.

8.2 Young People’s Faith Formation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faith Formation’s Key Elements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Evangelisation</td>
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| Witness  
- Relational Witness  
- Receiving Searchers  
- Fostering conversions  
- Practices | Consolidating Conversion | Intense spiritual preparation for initiation or its appropriation | Mystagogical catechesis |
| 3 Stories  
- Personal narrative  
- Testimony  
- Kerygma | Young people’s participation in the Community, its Worship and Mission | Ritual practices based upon the scrutinies and presentations of Creed and Lord’s prayer | Live life of discipleship, communion and mission |
| Initial Conversion | Liminal experiences and Ritual |  |  |
| Catechesis  
- critical engagement and doubt  
- articulacy |  |  |  |

![Figure 4: Faith Formation’s Key Elements](image)

8.2.1 Conversion in the Formation Stage

The goal of the formation stage is the maturation of young people’s initial conversion. Gelpi’s theology of conversion would suggest that young people are to deepen in their religious conversion by growing in repentance and forgiveness, and deepening in their response of love to God’s love, which particularly takes place through growing in prayer. Gelpi’s concept of transvaluation is also pertinent here. Young people’s affective conversion is transvalued into the virtue of hope as they receive healing from false and illusory hopes, and learn instead to place their ultimate hope in the reality of the resurrection. Young people need to be intellectually converted, which is transvalued by

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555 Gelpi, Committed Worship, 77.
Christian conversion into the virtue of faith. By this virtue young people come to the knowledge of God. This first occurs at an intuitive level, as young people experience the reality of God through metaphor, narrative, poetry, and art. Young people also grow in faith through inferential engagements with belief, such as reflection upon the creed, doctrine, and theological formulations. Young people grow in the virtue of love (the transvaluation of their moral conversion) as they pursue the good as it is expressed in relation to Christ. Their love for God is enacted by loving acts with and for others, in the midst of the faith community and for the sake of the world. Young people’s embrace of the Christian ethic may be expressed in terms of the rejection of vice and the embrace of virtue, or scripturally as incarnating the reign of God through living the Beatitudes. Finally, young people’s socio-political conversion is transvalued into the Christian commitment to justice.  

**8.2.2 Deepening Young People’s Experience of Community**

The initial sense of belonging forged during the evangelisation stage needs to deepen and expand to others during the formation stage. Charles Taylor argues that a strong relational bond is necessary for language to develop in infants, and then for successful communication between people to take place, which means that it is foundational for the young people’s catechetical formation. It is on the basis of such deep relational bonds that young people can best be formed in the Church’s faith.

The Church’s communion is in part predicated upon, but also develops beyond the bonds forged in human relationships. Young people’s sense of belonging within the faith community is an outworking of the Church’s communion, of the unity of the people.

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557 Taylor, *Language Animal*, 62-8. Taylor goes so far as to call this bond ‘communion’, although he does not mean it in a strictly theological sense.
constituted by the paschal mystery. For the Gospel to be other than mere words, young people need to witness and experience a faith community that practically incarnates this communion through real relationships that are characterised by love, respect, reconciliation and forgiveness. Pope Benedict XVI gave expression to this ideal when he voiced his hope that “the new generations experience the Church as a company of friends who are truly dependable and close in all life’s moments and circumstances, whether joyful and gratifying or arduous and obscure; as a company that will never fail us, not even in death, for it carries within it the promise of eternity.”

A faith community therefore serves young people well when it provides a visible witness of genuine communion that arises from a common faith in Christ. As young people are more deeply included within the community during this stage, they do not simply witness the bonds of communion among others, but come to experience those bonds of communion more deeply themselves. Just as the catechumens’ experience of communion should not be confined to the ‘RCIA group’, the young people’s experience of communion cannot be confined to their experience of a ‘youth group’. The RCIA maintains that the locus of communion is the faith community, and not the group that forms around the catechumens, and so a youth ministry and its ‘parent’ faith community need to look constantly for ways to build and strengthen young people’s communion with the broader faith community.

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560 Such relationships between young people and adult members of the faith community need to take place within the boundaries of child protection safeguards. See Teresa Rhynehart, "Creating a Safe Environment for Young People," in Australian Catholic Youth Ministry: Theological and Pastoral Reflections for Faithful Ministry ed. Christian Fini and Christopher Ryan (Mulgrave, Vic.: Garratt, 2014), 103-22.
8.2.3 Participating in the Community’s Worship and Mission

A further dimension of communion is for young people to participate in the community’s worship and mission during this stage. Young people learn to pray by praying, and they learn to pray liturgically by participating in the community’s liturgical life. For this participation to be fruitful, it requires that young people experience liturgical or mystagogical catechesis which ‘unpacks’ the liturgy through reflection upon young people’s experience of it. This will be discussed further below. For now, it is sufficient to stress that the sacramental nature of the paschal mystery requires youth ministry to foster young people’s full, conscious and active participation in the faith community’s celebration of the Eucharist (SC 14). Young people’s presence at Sunday Eucharist has frequently been used as a measure of their commitment (and often enough of the youth ministry’s ‘success’). This is inadequate, as mere attendance leaves much unsaid about young people’s faith commitment. As the Eucharist is the repeatable sacrament of initiation and thus of deeper incorporation into the Trinitarian communion, however, a youth ministry that does not form young people to regularly participate in the Eucharist fails to communicate that communion is mediated sacramentally.561

It is important that young people be invited to participate in the liturgical ministries. This is not, however, to be equated with full, conscious and active participation in the Eucharist (SC 14). Only some may exercise these ministries and while young people ought to be prominent in these ministries, the roles cannot be exclusively reserved for them. It is thus necessary for young people to fully participate through praying the Mass. Young catechumens (and those baptised young people who may have never regularly attended

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561 Mason and his colleagues refer to the “popular justification” that one “can be just as good a Christian without going to Church”. Mason et al, SGY, 53.
Mass) may need to be more gradually introduced to the liturgy of the Word at Sunday Mass, in keeping with the directives in paragraph 81.2 of the RCIA.\textsuperscript{562}

If young people have genuinely encountered Christ and experienced an initial conversion, then they will be open to sharing their faith with others. As Paul VI suggests, someone’s willingness to evangelise others is the litmus test that they have been evangelised themselves (EN 24). Young people may initially be scared of doing so, especially if their perception of evangelisation involves accosting strangers in the street. It may, however, be as simple as inviting their friends and family to church or to an evangelising activity (proper to the pre-catechumenate). It may include sharing their own experience of faith with others. Young people’s participation in evangelisation is an important part of this stage, and should not be delayed to a later point.\textsuperscript{563}

Young people can join in other expressions of the faith community’s missionary activity. Through this, they see firsthand the community’s commitment to the poor, to merciful action, to addressing injustice and the stewardship of creation. Whether they participate with members of the faith community in a food drive, the visitation of the sick, the support of a homeless shelter, assist refugees with their English and the like, they learn that the Gospel must be expressed in practical care with and for the most vulnerable and the suffering.

As Tony Tamberino points out, developing a service component within youth ministry or engaging young people in works of charity is usually easier than engaging them in action for justice, or what Gelpi calls “participatory activism”.\textsuperscript{564} Tamberino rightly points out that to

\textsuperscript{562} These young catechumens need to be dismissed at the conclusion of the Liturgy of the Word, while the baptised may participate in the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
\textsuperscript{563} As the RCIA indicates, this is proper to the catechumenate, and so belongs in the formation stage of youth ministry. See RCIA 75.4.
\textsuperscript{564} This is not confined to youth ministry; parishes often struggle to engage in true action for social justice too.
confine young people’s involvement to service fails to fully impart the Church’s social teaching. He goes on to suggest that their involvement in service ought to lead to young people’s reflection upon the systemic injustices that have created the situation of marginalisation, poverty or suffering that they have encountered, and then to action to address this injustice. It is also important that the faith community provide experiences of mission rather than through the youth ministry, as young people need to know that it is the entire parish, and not just its younger members who are committed to these expressions of mission.

Through this participation in the life, prayer and mission of the community, young people are taking on the ‘role’ of a member of the faith community, to use Rambo’s terminology. For Rambo, the assumption of this role assists young people’s identification with the faith community, and so fosters their conversion.

8.2.4 Specific Ministry to Youth: The Role of Peer Leaders, Mentors, Youth Ministers and Priests

The principle that the locus of communion is the faith community and not the youth group extends to the dimension of mentoring or pastoral care in this stage. Young people are ‘apprenticed’ by the whole community, and not just by designated youth ministers. Just as unbaptised adults’ specific needs are to be addressed by the sponsors, godparents, catechists and clergy in the RCIA, the young people also require the ministry of certain people from the faith community.

566 Tamberino’s chapter locates the ministry of justice and service within youth ministry, but is inclusive of others, whereas a youth ministry grounded in the baptismal catechumenate locates service and justice within the faith community, and young people (individually or collectively as a youth ministry) participate in the community’s ministries.
567 Rambo, Conversion, 121-3.
In the evangelisation stage, we saw that family and peers play an important role that is analogous to the RCIA’s sponsors, and their influence continues into the formation phase. Youth ministry retains an important place for adult mentors.\textsuperscript{568} Godparents in the RCIA undertake a formal role that is over and above the informal influence and witness of other adult members in the faith community, and there is a similar role for a formally identified adult mentoring role with young people. These mentors are to be models of a Gospel way of life, and to encourage and support young people, especially during moments of difficulty and struggle. As in the RCIA, it can be helpful to distinguish the role that these adult mentors play from the teaching role that youth ministers and clergy may exercise. The mentoring role ought to be seen as primarily pastoral in nature.\textsuperscript{569}

The RCIA’s directive that the candidates choose their godparents is suggestive for youth ministry (RCIA 110). Young people could be encouraged to select a mentor (from a pool of adults involved in the youth ministry) because they identify with and admire the way the mentor expresses his or her faith commitment. As Fred Edie puts it in relation to the student-mentor relationship at the Duke Youth Academy, the students are free to choose their own mentor because they “must be able to see something of themselves in their mentors and therefore something of the hopeful possibility of what their lives may become by the grace of God.”\textsuperscript{570} Christian Smith’s analysis of the NSYR data in relation to Catholic teenagers indicates that this mentoring role is particularly important for the children of non-practising or non-baptised parents, as these young people are unlikely to be able to sustain

\textsuperscript{568} See section 5.4.3 above.

\textsuperscript{569} It may be more attractive for some adults to engage in youth ministry if they know that they do not need to teach about faith as much as live it.

\textsuperscript{570} The DYA has a ratio of 1 adult mentor to 3 students. It is a different context to parochial youth ministry, but it testifies to Edie’s conviction that “the young become Christian and then more deeply Christian through their association with experienced, exemplary Christians.” Edie, Book, 29.
a long-term faith commitment without the presence of non-familial adults from the faith community in their lives.571

A comparison may also be made between the role of the catechist and a youth ministry coordinator. Like the catechist, a youth ministry coordinator is responsible for the overall progress of young people through the process, and provides catechesis. As a parish typically includes multiple catechists in its RCIA team, so, too, adults of differing ages ought to be youth ministers in this sense.

It is not necessary to insist upon an exact correspondence between the RCIA and youth ministry in every instance. What this discussion of roles makes clear is that a team that includes peer youth leaders, adult mentors (of varying ages), teachers and priests is required to successfully pass on faith to young people. In each case, these roles require that individuals be good examples, as their witness is a primary part of their ministry. After this common initial criterion, suitable people should be identified on the basis of their own baptismal charisms, as the team needs to comprise people with gifts in pastoral care, discernment, encouragement, teaching and leadership.572

8.2.5 Experiences of Liminality

Deep and genuine bonds of friendship are created as a result of young people’s shared liminal experiences. When young people undergo the journey of conversion together (always allowing for the unique pace and timing of each person’s itinerary of faith), they have an experience of communitas. This entails more than simply being bonded together by

571 Smith et al, Young Catholic America, 184-5.
572 As Donald Gelpi points out, it is a faith community, exercising its charisms in concert that provides a “matrix of conversion” for those who are undergoing the process of evangelisation. See Gelpi, Committed Worship, 122-3, 204-5.
a shared experience or common interest, which is the foundation of all friendship, because in this case the shared experience is an encounter with the Triune God.

We saw in Chapter Two that youth ministry found a place for liminal experiences through the weekend retreat (of which the Antioch weekend is the paradigmatic example), and more recently through WYD. As Charles Taylor, drawing upon Victor Turner suggests, these are experiences of the “festive”, and they provide important experiences of *communitas* within the horizon of the immanent frame. This means that they are important events for opening young people up to experience of the transcendent, even if it is problematic to reduce youth ministry to such experiences (as limited investment in youth ministry in which it can sometimes result).

### 8.2.6 Reclaiming Catechesis for Youth Ministry

The informal catechesis that takes place through young people’s experience of communion within the faith community and through its worship and mission is explicated and expanded upon through specific modes of instruction. In Rambo’s model, catechesis is the “rhetoric”, or account of faith that the community provides to the would-be convert. The traditional four-fold division of catechesis into teaching concerning the Church’s doctrine, sacramental life, moral teaching and prayer forms a helpful framework for understanding the content of catechesis in youth ministry. This does not, however, simply mean working one’s way through the Catechism, as this is pedagogically unsatisfactory. It can reduce the content of Christian faith to a set of information to be absorbed, rather than give shape and depth to young people’s communion with God and the way of life that issues

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573 Taylor, ASA, 517-20.
575 One of *Anointed and Sent’s* limitations is that it provides only minimal direction concerning the content of catechesis. See *Anointed*, 20.
from that communion. As Danielou’s comments concerning the paschal mystery quoted in Chapter Six suggest, an approach to catechesis that integrates these four traditional elements with biblical catechesis is required for young people to appreciate the one mystery of faith in its manifold expressions.

The baptismal catechumenate suggests several ways such catechesis may proceed. First, catechesis should recover the typological relationship between the Old Testament, the New Testament and the sacramental economy. Closely related to this is the recovery of the relationship between the creed (as a rule of faith) and the scriptural narrative. Third, as Pope Francis argues, catechesis must always be connected back to the kerygma: “All Christian formation consists of entering more deeply into the kerygma, which is reflected in and constantly illumines, the work of catechesis, thereby enabling us to understand more fully the significance of every subject which the latter treats” (EG 165).

On this basis, the sacraments, the creed and the kerygma, catechesis may start with a passage of scripture or with an article of the creed, but then proceed by making doctrinal connections when the starting point is scripture, or by making connections with both the Old Testament and the New Testament when beginning with the creed. The catechesis then should proceed to consider the way in which the scriptural theme or doctrinal element finds concrete expression in the sacramental economy, its implications for the life of discipleship (which more expansively frames the moral dimension of catechesis), and is then expressed in prayer.

An example of this catechesis would be:

1) The catechesis could begin by considering the theme of God’s fatherhood in the Old Testament, and then go on to explore the way in which Israel’s experience of God as

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576 See also EG 35.
Father reaches a qualitatively new moment in the relationship that Jesus possesses with his Abba.

2) The scriptural motifs could lead into Trinitarian theology, as the relationship between the Father and the Son is unpacked in more detail.

3) The link to the sacramental economy may be made by examining Jesus’ baptism as the paradigm for our baptism.

4) This naturally lends itself to prayer, and a reflection upon the extraordinary intimacy of the Lord’s prayer.

5) The application to young people’s lives could be explored in a variety of ways, but one implication is that God’s fatherhood makes all people brothers and sisters. The catechesis could invite them to consider what it look like to treat each person as a brother or sister, and what it might mean if the Church embodied this better.

6) The kerygma needs to be reiterated in relation to this theme. This could be accomplished in different ways, but one avenue is that through Jesus’ death and resurrection we come to share by grace what is his by nature, and so become God’s adopted sons and daughters through the paschal mystery.

There are important pedagogical considerations to be identified. First, each of the movements in the catechesis need not be presented in a single session. Second, the principal mode of communication need not be through a talk or lecture. In particular, both the movement of prayer and the application to daily life lend themselves to other pedagogical strategies. Third, the transferral of the catechesis to prayer is obviously best communicated by teaching young people to pray. In the example above, a prayer exercise might invite young people to imagine that they are being baptised in the Jordan. The prayer might conclude with an Our Father, in which the significance of this prayer is again
underscored. Fourth, when it comes to considering the implications of God’s fatherhood for the daily life of discipleship, the young people can be invited to identify these for themselves with some minimal guidance or direction. Fifth, in addition to these obvious pedagogical alternatives to a straightforward talk, young people can be invited to find key scriptural passages themselves with the aid of a concordance or by examining suggested texts together. Lastly, pedagogical strategies that encourage young people to make the links between the different movements for themselves are to be adopted.

The movement of catechesis can also occur in the opposite direction. The paradigmatic instance of this is mystagogy (or liturgical catechesis), in which the catechesis begins with reflection upon a previous experience of the liturgy, such as Sunday mass, the Easter vigil, or other rituals. The young people are invited to first reflect upon that experience, to share what struck them, their affective response to what was happening, and what insights they may have had during or after the liturgy. The catechesis then proceeds to ‘unpack’ that experience further through recourse to relevant scriptural passages and dogmatic themes, as well as the implications for the life of discipleship.

Experiences of ministry can also be the starting point for catechesis. Young people can be invited to reflect upon their experience of a visit to a nursing home, serving on a food van, or their involvement in a kerygmatic program. They can again be invited to pay attention to what struck them during the experience, their feelings and the insights that emerged from the experience. They can then be assisted to make links between their experience of ministry, the scriptures and the creed. This is particularly important in assisting young people to discover specifically Christian motives for merciful care of the poor and marginalised and the pursuit of justice. Part of the catechesis needs to involve an explanation of the secular ethic of altruism’s indebtedness to the Christian ethic of agape,
so that young people understand that their social concern is inescapably grounded in
Christian faith, even though this is not readily recognised by many in today’s culture.

Through these phases of catechesis, young people are invited to increasingly shape their
outlook upon life and their actions around their faith. Each phase reflects the interplay
between intellectual, affective, moral and socio-political conversion by constantly
referencing their inter-connectedness.

8.2.7 The Role of Ritual for Young People’s Faith Formation

As catechesis works in concert with ritual to effect genuine faith formation in the RCIA,
this ought to be the case in youth ministry too. Many expressions of youth ministry have
often consciously avoided an emphasis upon ritual.577 This has, consciously or otherwise,
been a response to the perceived abandonment of ritual in late modernity generally, and by
young people in particular.578 Many young people reacted to the ritual structure and
repetitive nature of the Mass, reporting that they found it boring and irrelevant to their
lives. In response, many youth ministries emphasised fun, spontaneous, and informal
activities instead. More recently, ritual scholars have argued that the nature of ritual has
changed rather than disappeared in late modernity. Following Ronald Grimes, Nathan
Mitchell has contended that new rituals are emerging that are not dependent upon the
Judaeo-Christian tradition.579 Human beings remain “ritual” or “liturgical animals” in post-
Christendom, but they draw upon sources other than Christian faith for those rites.580 For
Catholic youth ministry and for the Church more generally, this phenomenon does not

577 A notable exception to this is LifeTeen, which structures its programs around the principal movements of
the Eucharistic liturgy.
578 In the last decades of the twentieth century influential authors such as Mary Douglas, Victor Turner, and
Joseph Campbell argued that modernity was a “ritual wasteland.” See Nathan Mitchell, Liturgy and the Social
579 Mitchell, Liturgy and the Social Sciences, 38ff.
580 See Chapter One of James K. A. Smith, Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation
(Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009).
require Christian liturgy be abandoned in favour of new rituals. Instead, the Church’s liturgical practice needs to be reclaimed. A youth ministry grounded in the RCIA’s vision will employ rituals in the process of faith formation. While young people may initially be dismissive of rituals they do not understand, they can be gradually introduced to the liturgical expression of Christian faith, and to specific rites throughout the process.

The reclamation of ritual for young people’s faith formation challenges the claims of modern epistemology. Rituals provide an embodied, richly experiential form of knowledge that operates at a different level to that of disengaged reason. For Charles Taylor, rituals are particular instances of “enactment”, or modes of embodiment that constitute a way of being in the world that precede theoretical discourse (the realm of disengaged reason). Taylor’s account of language would suggest that the rites of initiation confer a knowledge of the paschal mystery that cannot be replaced by a merely verbal account of salvation. In the sacraments, the narrative of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection works in concert with the ritual enactment to communicate an embodied, experiential knowledge of these mysteries that cannot be conveyed through “designative logic”. There is an important place for inferential discourse, or theological reflection with young people (which we shall see below). This must, however, be done in conjunction with ritual practices that convey the Christian faith in an embodied manner. In the first instance, this means that youth ministry can and ought to make the most of the rich ritual gestures of the sacraments of initiation. For the uninitiated, this obviously includes the conferral of the sacraments themselves, and the Eucharist remains central for those who have been initiated. Youth ministry can make important use of the sacramentals that are derived from these sacraments, such as blessing.

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581 This is central to Taylor’s argument in The Language Animal. See Taylor, Language Animal, especially at 224.
582 Taylor, Language Animal, 254ff.
583 This will be discussed further below.
with holy water, the laying on of hands in prayer, and the importance of ritual postures such as kneeling.

As a consequence, the application of the RCIA’s Celebrations of the Word of God, the minor exorcisms and the blessings to youth ministry’s formation stage are epicletic practices that provide a space for the Spirit’s transformative action. The RCIA’s “Celebrations of the Word of God” possesses rich possibilities for youth ministry (RCIA 81-89). Youth ministers could creatively adopt and apply the RCIA’s model for these celebrations, including song, readings from scripture, an explanation of the readings, and a concluding ritual that broadly corresponds to the RCIA’s minor exorcisms or blessings (see below). While such celebrations are biblical catecheses, they are placed within the context of communal prayer and ritual action. They are intended to engage young people affectively and intuitively rather than at a purely cognitive register or, as the RCIA puts it, to “implant in their hearts the teachings they are receiving” (RCIA 81). As such these celebrations reinforce the teaching that young people have been receiving by communicating them again in the context of prayer.

While popular connotations surrounding the term ‘exorcism’ are unfortunate, there is a place in youth ministry for something like the simple prayers over the catechumens that stress the importance of self-denial, asceticism and the repudiation of sin and evil. Young people need to appreciate the significance of this dimension of Christian life too. Most importantly, young people need to experience deliverance from both personal and structural forces that would enslave them. Part of the catechetical dialogue around such prayerful rituals would be to assist young people to identify those forces, and the way they inhibit their receptivity to the love of God and of others. The RCIA’s minor exorcisms suggest

I have not referred to the anointing of catechumens because it pertains to the catechumenate, and the non-sacramental use of oil can perhaps blur the significance of sacramental anointing.
that those personal forces might include contemporary manifestations of idolatry, the love of money, lust, greed, and pride. An extension of that dialogue would be to examine the way in which those personal dynamics assume systemic significance in our society: in consumerism’s worship of goods, in sexism, in boundary-less expressions of sexuality that are removed from the communication of loving commitment, in the drive for personal success and practices such as the compulsive engagement with social media to confirm one’s popularity. The metaphor of addiction can be helpful in explaining the nature that these enslavements can have, and the need to be freed from their control. After preparing young people for this through such a dialogue and asking them to call to mind specific areas where they do not feel free, they can be simply prayed over for their deliverance from these manifestations of the powers.

The RCIA’s blessings are the exorcisms’ counterparts, and thus serve as rites of incorporation. However, these blessings stress that the catechumens are not simply being incorporated into the faith community, but are being incorporated into the blessing of the Triune God (RCIA 95). These prayers stress baptism’s new birth, but they can be adapted to pray for baptised young people to embrace the new life they were given at baptism. If the exorcisms ritually express the ‘turning from’ required in conversion, the blessings emphasise the ‘turning to’ God involved. As such, there ought to be a balance between the celebrations of both of these ritual actions.

A subsequent practice that invites young people to reflect upon their experience of the rituals deepens their impact. This form of reflection follows the dynamics of mystagogical catechesis, and so involves a post-ritual dialogue that both ‘unpacks’ the ritual by

\[\text{585 See RCIA 94.}\]
\[\text{586 See Section 5.4.2.4.}\]
considering its prayers and gestures, and then invites young people to share their experience of the ritual with each other. This can deepen young people’s experience as they search for the right language to express their thoughts and feelings during the ritual and in its aftermath. They can also be encouraged and challenged by listening to their peers share their about their experiences of the ritual.

8.2.8 Finding a Place for Critical Engagement and Doubt in Youth Ministry

The foregoing discussion raises two other important pedagogical issues. First, it could look like the catechetical strategies outlined challenge the axiom that youth ministry must be “developmentally appropriate”, as the example used concerning God’s fatherhood makes little concession to the perspective that such content needs to be modified to young people’s capacity to understand complicated theological themes.587 In response, it is interesting to attend to the American High School Theology Programs’ (HSTPs) practice. The young people attending the HSTPs welcomed the substantive theological engagement these programs provided.588 They appreciated that their questions were being taken seriously. Moreover, teachers such as Old Testament professor Brent Strawn indicated that they did not “dilute” or “dumb down” the material they normally presented to graduate students for the HSTP audience.589 It is true that the HSTP students are usually outliers in relation to their

587 Renewing the Vision states, “Effective ministry with adolescents provides developmentally appropriate experiences, programs, activities, strategies, resources, content, and processes to address the unique developmental and social needs of young and older adolescents both as individuals and as members of families. This approach responds to adolescents’ unique needs, focuses ministry efforts, and establishes realistic expectations for growth during adolescence”. Bishops, Renewing.

588 Dean and Hearlson, "Calling as Creative," 13. As one young person in one of the HSTP’s put it, “whatever you do, please don’t give us the Fisher-Price version of theology,” Quoted in Brent Strawn, ”Teaching in a New Key: The Pedagogical Formation of Theological Faculty,” in How Youth Ministry can Change Theological Education - If We Let It, ed. Kenda Creasy Dean and Christy Lang Hearlson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 263, n.30.

589 Strawn, “Pedagogical Formation,” 250.
faith commitment when compared with the majority of their peers.\textsuperscript{590} However, it needs to be remembered that catechumenal youth ministry’s formation stage addresses those who have made an initial commitment to Christ and wish to be formed more deeply in their faith. Substantive theological engagement with these young people is possible and necessary.

Young people are expected to engage in critical thinking in many other aspects of life, and do not see that faith should be exempt from this. Such critical analysis needs, however, to be balanced with catechesis, as Strawn recognised: “Ideally, catechesis and criticism proceed together in something of a feedback loop or, to shift metaphors, a complex and intricate partner dance.”\textsuperscript{591} Strawn summed up his methodology as “Catechise. Critique. Repeat.”\textsuperscript{592}

In the example of catechesis on the fatherhood of God, critical engagement with the topic might incorporate a feminist critique of the use of masculine language for God. The ensuing conversation may involve discussion of the nature of metaphor and the limitations of all language in relation to God, issues with anthropomorphism, the patriarchal misappropriation of paternal language for God, and the exploration of feminine images of God in the scriptures. In this case, the point of such a critique will not be to dismantle the content of the original catechesis in young people’s minds, but to help them affirm the creedal statement concerning God’s fatherhood while simultaneously recognising the metaphorical and analogical nature of that statement. The desired outcome is that young people develop a more credible and accurate image of God.

\textsuperscript{590} Dean and Hearson, “Calling as Creative,” 6-8.
\textsuperscript{591} Strawn, ”Pedagogical Formation,” 259.
\textsuperscript{592} Strawn, ”Pedagogical Formation,” 262.
There is a temptation to discourage critical thinking among young people in the name of laying a strong catechetical foundation. This fails to realise that young people already bring their emerging critical faculties to bear on faith. When critical engagement within catechesis is intentionally structured, young people receive the message that this mode of intellectual engagement with faith is permissible, and necessary. It is important for leaders to model a balance between questioning, trust in God and the Church’s mediation of faith. This challenges the death of God narrative that relegates religious belief to the level of childish superstition to be jettisoned as one matures. When young people witness and experience robust intellectual engagement by people of faith, they learn that Christian faith is capable of bearing sustained intellectual engagement, and so is a credible position for an adult to adopt.

The other two strands of the death of God CWS also need to be challenged. A helpful way to address young people’s perception that science and religion are in conflict is to problematise that narrative, as the interrelationship between science and faith is far more complex than this narrative allows. Such problematisation can proceed from the vantage point of religion or science. For example, it could involve catechesis on the creation stories in Gen 1-2, and include the explanation that these were not interpreted literally in Christianity’s first centuries. Another avenue is to explore some prominent scientists’ religious beliefs, such as Georges Lemaitre and Francis Collins. A further line would be to examine theologians’ engagement with scientific developments in fields such as cosmology, theoretical physics and quantum theory. All of these arguments call the CWS narrative into question.

593 For example, see Robert Spitzer, New Proofs for the Existence of God: Contributions of Contemporary Physics and Philosophy (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).
The final strand of the Death of God constellation is countered by presenting Christian faith as true humanism. It is Christ who ultimately reveals what it means to be truly human (GS 22). In so doing, youth ministers challenge the perception that Christianity is opposed to human flourishing by making the opposite claim: human flourishing occurs in and through a relationship with God. Ministers can also address the claim that Christianity’s belief in eternal life absolves one from a commitment to other’s welfare now, by pointing to the Church’s extensive commitment to health, education and justice.

There is also a need to find appropriate ways of addressing young people’s doubts. As we saw in Chapter Three, the supernova of available options has fragilized all positions, so that inherent in one’s belief is the possibility that this belief is misplaced. If youth ministers know that the supernova has made such doubt inescapable, then they need not be fearful when such doubts arise in young people. Rather, doubts can be welcomed as inevitable, and normalised as an important spur to a young person’s deeper exploration of faith. Creating safe spaces for such critical engagement gives young people permission to put their doubts into words.

8.2.9 Becoming a Responsible Dweller

Encouraging critical engagement, questions, and the expression of doubts in the formation stage may be understood as the continuation of the seeker dynamic beyond faith’s initial stages. By this point the nature of the quest has changed, as it is now expressed with a specific ‘destination’ in mind: a destination that arises as a result of the initial encounter with Christ and conversion to him. In so doing, the quest becomes a

594 See also Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004), 45.
595 Jeffrey Kaster, “Fuel my Faith: Pedagogies of Theological Reflection in High School Theological Programs,” in *How Youth Ministry Can Change Theological Education - If We Let It* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 171.
pilgrimage, a journey with and to God, and so the seeker dynamic continues in this new stage, albeit in a new key.

This does not mean that young seekers are to be transmuted into uncritical dwellers through the process of deepening in conversion. Rather, an integral part of Christian faith is the continual search for the face of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Faith incorporates the ongoing quest to truly know God, and to see the world and one’s existence in the light of that knowledge. Through the same process young people can also come to appreciate the importance of “dwelling”, as they learn how to legitimately surrender their lives to God.\textsuperscript{596} This involves the recognition, which usually occurs over time, that obedience to God is intrinsic to conversion. Young people can be assisted to recognise that this is not an inappropriate abdication of one’s personal autonomy but is rather its highest realisation. It is especially important that such dwelling is an act of love that responds to God’s prior gift of God’s self in love.

The existential surrender of one’s life to God requires that young people come to appreciate that God’s authority over their lives is mediated through the Church. Young people need to learn that this mediation, expressed in scripture and tradition, is the condition of possibility for their encounter with Jesus. They come to realise the authority that scripture, the Church’s reflection upon scripture in the tradition, and its interpretation by the magisterium are legitimate authorities in their lives, because they derive their authority from the living God. In this way, young people are invited, and challenged, to let the scriptures interpret their lives and live by the Church’s teaching.

\textsuperscript{596} Some of Taylor’s subsequent reflections upon the seekers and the dwellers since ASA do not as strongly reflect the validity of dwelling or its importance in the life of faith. See Taylor, “Shapes of Faith Today,” 276-80.
It might appear that young people’s submission to these authorities displaces the ethic of authenticity. It seems that as young people submit to God’s authority they relinquish the desire to realize their humanity on their own terms. In fact, the ethic of authenticity remains largely intact when a young person surrenders to God, because this act affirms one’s faith that the deepest realisation of their humanity lies in ever-greater conformity to the imago Christi.

This surrender extends to a stance of trust when one’s understanding of a particular belief or moral precept is initially at odds with the Church’s teaching, as it incorporates a willingness to understand that teaching and appropriate it accordingly. This does mean that the ethic of authenticity has been relativised by the young person’s embrace of the dweller dynamic, for the foundational criterion of judgment no longer lies with the self, and ‘what speaks to me’, but with the belief that one’s life stands under God’s authority and judgment.

The interrelationship between the seeker and dweller dynamics means that young people’s surrender to God is not bereft of a critical dimension. Both intellectual and moral conversion requires a young person to critically engage with scripture and the Church’s teaching as they bring it into dialogue with their own beliefs. Youth ministers do not serve young people well if they let the dweller dynamic overwhelm the critical function of the seeker dynamic, just as the seeker dynamic cannot overrule God’s authority and its legitimate mediation through the Church.

While God’s authority over someone’s life is absolute, the mediated authorities cannot be understood to be so because these authorities require interpretation, which admits the possibility of both inaccurate interpretation and the development of doctrine as the Church reflect upon new situations in the light of God’s self-revelation in Christ. It fosters young
people’s faith when they learn that the scriptures need to be interpreted in relation to their original context, the magisterial teaching possesses different weight and therefore different levels of belief and assent, and theological formulations are not identical with the deposit of faith.\textsuperscript{597} It is also important that young people are aware of these authorities’ limits because their mediation occurs through fallible human beings.

Young people need to see that the Church’s legitimate authorities do not provide answers to every question they face, and that the Church’s teaching has been arrived at through a long process of debate, dialogue and difficulty.\textsuperscript{598} Young people learn this best not from catechesis per se, but from mentors who live out the dynamics of seeking and dwelling; that is with intellectual integrity and a confidence that these authorities are God-given. Youth learn from these mentors that Christian faith does not absolve them from the mystery and struggle of being and becoming more fully human, but actually places them more deeply within that mystery. In the process, they come to realise that faith makes it both harder and easier to be truly human: harder for they now possess the challenging task of conforming their own lives to the incomparable vision of Christ’s resplendent humanity, and easier because they have received the Spirit who assists them on that journey.

\textbf{8.2.10 Fostering Articulacy in Young People}

Taylor’s depiction of language tells us that our capacity to enter into and experience a particular facet of reality is conditioned by our capacity to speak about it, to name it. This means that young people need opportunities to put their faith into their own words. This not only helps them integrate the content of catechesis into their lives but also “re-gestalts”


\textsuperscript{598} Taylor challenges the “pat” answers that are often given by many in the Church and the implausibility of faith that this produces for many seekers in “The Church Speaks,” 19.
their identity in terms of their new faith commitment. Articulating one’s personal narrative in the previous stage needs to be reformulated as testimony in this stage, as young people re-narrate their story in the light of their encounter with Christ and the experience of the Spirit. Taylor’s remarks in relation to identity (or what he calls here vocation) explain why this is important:

In accounts of a life ... which recount the discovery of our vocation or true form, the stuff of *bildungsroman*, it is essential that I understand myself, at least retrospectively, as seeking. My earlier experiences are seen as takes on a reality which is now for the first time really grasped ... Large tracts of my earlier life come together as parts or stages in this long-lasting attempt. Without this, the meaning I thought I saw falls apart.

Thus through testimony, the encounter with Christ through the Spirit re-frames earlier experiences and makes sense of them. By articulating one’s story in this manner, a young person constructs his/her identity in the light of the Christian narrative of God. In this respect, while testimony’s focus is God’s loving action in a young person’s life, and while it is expressed for others’ benefit, it crucially fosters the faith of the young person giving it. It deepens one’s sense of self as a believer in the God of Jesus Christ. This means that testimony is not simply a description of past events but serves the formation of one’s present and future sense of self.

The recognition of this dimension of testimony means young people should be given regular opportunities for testimony, both formally and informally, and with and without prior preparation. In other words, testimony is part of a conversational web so that young people learn to speak the language of faith. This is because language underpins our access

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to reality, and so if young people cannot articulate their faith they cannot experience it as truly real in their lives.

This means young people need opportunities to talk about the content of the catechesis too if they are to appropriate it in ways that go beyond the accumulation of information. They are to be given opportunities to articulate the Church’s teaching about a particular topic and articulate its significance to them personally as well. For example, a young person might be encouraged to interpret her life through the Emmaus pericope, by identifying moments when she has ‘walked with’ Jesus without realising it, by communicating what it means for her to recognise Jesus in the breaking of the bread, or by expressing what it might mean for her to ‘return to Jerusalem’ because she has met the Risen Lord (Lk 24:13-35). As she does so not only is the biblical narrative becoming the lens through which she is interpreting her life, the hidden presence of Jesus, the centrality of the Eucharist to her, and her intention to put her faith into action all become more real for her too.

Camps, retreats, mission trips and youth conferences serve this goal of fluency in the language of faith by creating a temporary community that is intentionally “structured to emphasise God’s immediacy and activity.”603 Dean argues that it is easier to work out the contours of Christian faith in a “demarcated zone where young people themselves help construct idealised versions of the world they think God intends.”604 These sorts of experiences sharpen the faith community’s witness. Through these practices young people listen to distinctively Christian voices express their faith, and then get the opportunity to practise the language of faith themselves. The ‘vocabulary’ of the kerygma can be

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603 Dean, Almost Christian, 154.
604 Dean, Almost Christian, 154.
reinforced so that young people can “speak Christian” better when they get home, provided they keep practising in safe contexts and amongst more experienced mentors and peers.\textsuperscript{605}

### 8.3 Initiation and its Appropriation

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<tr>
<td><strong>1) Evangelisation</strong></td>
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<td>Witness - Relational Witness - Receiving Searchers - Fostering conversions - Practices</td>
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<td><strong>2) Formation</strong></td>
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<td>Young people’s participation in the Community, its Worship and Mission</td>
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<td><strong>3) Lent</strong></td>
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<td>Intense spiritual preparation for initiation or its appropriation</td>
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<td>Ritual practices based upon the scrutinies and presentations of Creed and Lord’s prayer</td>
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<td><strong>4) Post Easter/Pentecost</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mystagogical catechesis</td>
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<td>Live life of discipleship, communion and mission</td>
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![Figure 5: Initiation and its Appropriation](image)

The initiatory dynamic requires youth ministry to be oriented towards sacramental initiation. First, this pertains to unbaptised young people’s initiation at the Easter vigil. It will also celebrate baptised young people’s appropriation of their baptism through a profession of faith and a ritual act that recalls, but does not repeat or replace, their prior sacramental initiation. As young people consciously affirm their prior reception of the sacraments through a profession of faith, the grace of their baptism and confirmation becomes more efficacious in their lives.

The mystagogical catechesis that accompanies this ought to draw upon all of the

\textsuperscript{605} Dean, \textit{Almost Christian}, 155.
multivalent symbolism of initiation (outlined in section 5.5 above). Mystagogical catechesis can also form young people in the sacramental ontology that underpins their insertion into the paschal mystery. This ontology is the ultimate challenge to closed ‘takes’ of the immanent frame which either reject the transcendent entirely or at best posit a weak form of deism that renders God extrinsic to the world. Young people need a ‘conversion’ to a sacramental vision of God’s involvement in the world in a manner that makes God more intimate to young people than they are to themselves (while simultaneously existing as transcendent to creation). This ontology provides an alternative metaphysical foundation, and hence an alternative conception of the God-world relation to the immanent frame.

Finally, Taylor has shown that identity is constructed through a dialogical process with the significant voices in young people’s lives. The initiatory dynamic asserts that the ultimate interlocutor in that dialogue is the Triune God who out of love both addressed humanity’s estrangement from God and called all to share in the divine life through the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus and the imparting of the Spirit. As a consequence, the foundational element of young people’s identity is sheer gift from a gracious God: they are constituted, even reborn, as God’s sons and daughters by Jesus’ salvific action and the power of the Spirit, which is mediated through baptism and their ongoing participation in the Eucharist. This is youth ministry’s ultimate goal: that young people would come to know that their deepest identity is that they are the beloved of the Father, and that they would live out the mission that is inherent in their divine filiation. This can relieve the pressure the rhetoric of self-constructed identity causes in young people’s lives without eliminating the need for young people to continue to determine their identity in other dimensions of their lives.
8.4 Conclusion

This chapter positioned young people’s integral conversion as the central purpose of youth ministry’s faith formation stage. Such an integral conversion occurs through a matrix of practices that foster young people’s experience of the faith community’s relationships, prayer and mission. The chapter re-claims a central role for both catechesis and ritual in the service of integral conversion. Young people need to be assisted to develop both a capacity to continue to seek the Triune God and so deepen in one’s faith, as well as learn to “dwell”, or responsibly surrender one’s life to God in a manner that does not result in young people’s abdication from life decisions or critical engagement concerning their faith commitments.

Both this and the previous chapter have sought to demonstrate the centrality of the faith community to youth ministry. It is intended as a practical response to Michael Warren’s critique, when he writes,

Today much of what is called youth ministry does not flow from the life of the local church and the sort of intentionality that I have in mind. Most youth ministry is reduced to a program of a particular church, rather than an organic statement of its inner life. It is not what a church does when it is a mission and when it is a unity of ministries. When a local church’s ministry is organic, flowing from its very life and endemic (literally in the demos or crowd or community, flowing from the very nature of the group), then its ministry to youth is organic and endemic. When youth ministry becomes a gesture of welcome to youth within the church that says, “This is who we are; this is how we live; we invite you to be part of our living discipleship,” then it has an organic and endemic character. It is only when a faith community is living out the initiatory dynamic itself that it can successfully draw others, and especially young people, into that same dynamic for themselves. This means that the greatest challenge to fruitful youth ministry today is not to be found within ministry to youth itself, but with faith communities’ failure to live a

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distinctive way of life that is constituted by genuine relationships, communal prayer and a shared mission.
9 Conclusion The Baptismal Catechumenate as a Source for Youth Ministry in a Secular Age

This study has established and examined the significance of the baptismal catechumenate for the theology and practice of youth ministry in Australia (and by extension in other late modern societies). The rationale for doing so is that the RCIA is a concrete expression of the post-Christendom model of mission initiated by the Second Vatican Council. This model included a process of evangelisation that was applicable in principle to contexts other than the missions that belonged to a Christendom configuration of mission. The restored baptismal catechumenate was critical to this process, and so the RCIA reflects the same process of evangelisation outlined in Chapter Two of AG. This process has remained integral to the subsequent magisterial statements on mission, whether the process was understood to be pertinent for any local church (EN), intended for mission territories but transferable to locations that required a new evangelisation (RM and the GDC), or reformulated in the light of a particular context (such as the Aparecida document’s formative itinerary).

When the process of evangelisation is applied to youth ministry in a post-Christendom world it is clear that unbaptised young people need to be evangelised, catechised and receive the sacraments of initiation. Nominally baptised young people also need to be evangelised and catechised in order that they might more fully appropriate the grace of baptism that they have already received. The children of practising parents need a process analogous to the RCIA and which broadly corresponds to Aparecida’s formative itinerary. This is partly because the process of evangelisation can no longer be presumed to have taken place through the familial and communitarian transmission of faith that existed within
Christendom, but in order to be truly efficacious infant baptism always requires completion through post-baptismal evangelisation and catechesis. Adolescence is an important period for this to occur, because this is the time in which agency concerning matters of faith is first conferred in late modern societies.

I called this process of evangelisation the initiatory dynamic and argued that it is crucial to the Church’s renewal generally and for youth ministry in particular, because Christian faith is no longer straightforwardly passed on through the (now non-existent) nexus of family, local community and parish. While the initiatory dynamic is not exhaustive of all ministry with adolescents it is nonetheless indispensable. Asserting the missio Dei’s significance for youth ministry ensures that youth ministry is not reduced to the initiatory dynamic alone but ensures that young people are both recipients and collaborators in other expressions of the Church’s mission, be it the pursuit of justice, peace, the alleviation of poverty, the integrity of creation, reconciliation, or inter-religious dialogue.

Certain elements from the RCIA were identified as critical features for youth ministry’s initiatory dynamic. First, a youth ministry will construct a stage-based process that recognises and supports the journey that young people undertake in relation to faith. An evangelisation stage that corresponds to the pre-catechumenate, a faith formation stage that corresponds to the catechumenate, and a stage that culminates in sacramental initiation or its appropriation were proposed as phases for youth ministry. As in the RCIA, young people’s initial, and then deepening conversion is central to this process. Rather than basing participation in different stages upon age or upon the calendar year, a youth ministry ought to consider each young person’s spiritual readiness to progress to the next stage.

Second, youth ministry’s initiatory dynamic is oriented towards young people’s immersion into and/or deeper appropriation of the paschal mystery which is conferred
through the sacraments of initiation, and renewed through a personal profession of faith. The centrality of the paschal mystery to the initiatory dynamic ensures youth ministry is intrinsically liturgical, because it is premised upon an ontology that understands God’s salvation to be mediated through the sacramental economy.

Third, the initiatory dynamic locates youth ministry within the faith community, and not as a distinct community that is tangential to the parish’s life and mission. Ministry to and with young people is not confined to age-specific activities with young people but first takes place in and through the communal life, prayer and mission of the parish.

Youth ministry takes place today in a secular age. While the decline of belief and practice has motivated age-specific ministry to youth in Australia since its inception, the nature of this decline has been poorly understood. Charles Taylor’s account of secularity provides a richer depiction of the conditions of belief that shape and often circumscribe young people’s capacity to believe in the Christian gospel. Recourse to several of Taylor’s most significant explanatory categories clarify principal features of this sociocultural context. Young people’s lives today are profoundly shaped by the ideal of authenticity, the affirmation of ordinary life and the way in which they construct their identity. Expressive individualism and the secular ethic of altruism have played an important part in relocating the place of religion within modern society so that it exists in tension with exclusive humanism. Their collision has produced a supernova of spiritual options for young people today. While some young Australians may be characterised as ‘dwellers’, or those who affirm a positive role for traditional religious authorities, the rereading of the sociological data through the lens of Taylor’s account suggests many young people today are ‘seekers’, or understand themselves to be in some sense ‘spiritual’, a term which predominantly refers to something extrinsic to the churches. Finally, modern epistemology’s truncation of
knowledge to that which can be empirically verified, science’s supposed supplanting of faith and the ‘death of God’ as disenchantment’s seemingly inevitable endgame have rendered traditional Christian belief problematic for many.

When the initiatory dynamic is deployed within our secular age, it is crucial that the evangelisation stage be attentive to receiving young people as searchers, and so respect their sense of personal quest. At the same time, the faith community’s dialogue and service engender a form of witness in this stage that leads in time to the Gospel’s proclamation and the invitation to faith and conversion. In the formation stage, young people are invited to continue their quest through their experience of catechesis that is grounded in the kerygma and their initial conversion. They also need to learn how to incorporate “dwelling”, or the acceptance of legitimate religious authorities so as to truly deepen their conversion to the Triune God. A narrative approach to catechesis, and the emphasis upon ritual action and embodied practices play an important role in contesting modern epistemology’s illegitimate privileging of disengaged reason, as they assert that human beings more profoundly come to knowledge, especially of the transcendent (and all that is empirically unverifiable), through these other linguistic modalities. It is critical that catechesis in this stage contest the death of God narrative which relegates belief to the level of childish superstition to be abandoned as one grows up. This can be challenged by the provision of a critically engaged catechesis that problematizes the narrative that science has superseded religious belief by addressing the nuance and complexity of Christian faith. In a time when a veritable supernova of possible beliefs and spiritualities are available to young people, and in which every stance is contested, being able to hold, normalise and engage with young people’s doubts is critically important in this stage.
This exploration of the baptismal catechumenate as a source for the theology and practice of youth ministry in our secular age has addressed the need for the Church’s evangelical ministry to young people to be grounded in an adequate theology of the Church’s mission. Inherent in such a theology is the need for an accurate account of the sociocultural context in which such evangelisation takes place. Accordingly, this thesis has sought to provide an account of that context through a re-reading of the sociological accounts of young Australians’ attitudes to faith and spirituality through recourse to the work of Charles Taylor.

9.1 Suggestions for Further Research

More remains to be said about various dimensions of practice that arise from such a configuration of youth ministry. In particular, a sustained analysis of an appropriate pedagogy for both the proclamation of the gospel to young people and adolescent catechesis would be beneficial. As William Harmless notes, such pedagogical considerations are one of the “silences” of the RCIA, and so further research is needed to address this lacuna in relation to youth ministry too.\textsuperscript{607} To this end, Harmless’ own \textit{ressourcement} project, in which he investigated Augustine’s catechumenate in fifth century Hippo in order to inform the RCIA’s implementation today would suggest that a profitable arena for further research might be a similar exercise in \textit{ressourcement}: that is, a more extensive consideration of the catechumenate in the patristic period and its implications for pedagogy within youth ministry than was possible in the present study.

As a work of practical theology, this thesis has adopted an aspirational tone as it has reflected upon what youth ministry could look like if it drew upon the RCIA as both a source

\textsuperscript{607} Harmless, \textit{Augustine}, 16.
and resource for youth ministry. In other words, it has imagined what might be possible even as it has argued that such practice is likely to be more fruitful because it is more faithful to the Church’s wisdom concerning evangelisation, and because it seeks to understand better the young people of this present age with, to, and in whom this ministry takes place. However, this assertion needs to be tested. While it builds upon the practice, theology and experience of youth ministry to date and the broader understanding of the Church’s evangelical mission, in many respects the thesis remains a hypothetical exercise that proposes what might be, rather than enunciates what is already the case. A pilot study that sought to enact the practical ideas contained in this thesis and then evaluated them by the light of the theological principles identified in the thesis, along with some measures of their effectiveness, would therefore be beneficial.

9.2 A Final Word

At the dawn of Christendom, a deacon from Carthage named Deogratias asked Augustine of Hippo to send him “something in writing” that would be useful for the instruction of beginners in faith. Augustine’s response to Deogratias is “the only work of his, and well-nigh the sole work from Christian antiquity as a whole, that focuses precisely on how to present the Christian faith to newcomers (rudes), that is, to those who were approaching the Church to make their first formal inquiries about becoming Christians.”

Neither Deogratias nor Augustine could have known that the process of making Christians that they knew so well would fall into disuse relatively shortly after their deaths, or that it would be restored in the twentieth century for the post-Christendom era. Fifth century Carthage is removed from twenty-first century Australia in so many respects, and yet

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Augustine’s summation of his advice to Deogratias remains pertinent to those who would answer God’s call to ministry with young people:

Thus, before all else, Christ came so that people might learn how much God loves them, and might learn this so that they would catch fire with love for him who first loved them, and so that they would also love their neighbour as he commanded and showed by his example - he who made himself their neighbour by loving them when they were not close to him but were wandering far from him.\footnote{Augustine, \textit{Instructing Beginners in Faith}, 4, 8.}
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