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Nurturing Faith Within the Catholic Home: A Perspective from Catholic Parents
who do not Access Catholic Schools

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Chapter Four

The Findings: Developing the Analytical Metaphors

Faith is the foundational core of a person, the fundamental disposition that colors and shapes everything that comes after it. Thus it is the primary focus, the basic disposition or orientation to being in the world by which the person makes, maintains or transforms human meaning. Arising from one's "structural core," faith is the primary orientation of a person's existence.

(Fowler 1986, p.67)

The findings presented in this study are the thoughts and expressions of a group of parents who in their own words describe how they nurture the faith of their children. These words reflect, at a grassroots level, the lived reality of a group of parents who value the gift of faith and acknowledge the importance of nurturing it in their children.

Chapter Four is the first of three Chapters that present the findings of the research. This Chapter will present the findings on the concept of faith held by those who participated in the study and the desires these participants have for their children in relation to faith. Chapter Five will present the findings on how faith is nurtured within the context of the home and Chapter Six describes the challenges faced by parents in their task of nurturing the faith of their children. Chapter Four is divided into two main parts. In the first part of the Chapter, the aim of the interview is made explicit. In the second part, three archetypal understandings of faith which emerged from the data are defined and discussed.

The Aim of the Interview

The aim of the interviews was to listen to how parents nurture the faith of their children within the home. The first part of the interview centred on questions such as: What is faith? Why is faith important within family life? What do you desire for your children in relation to faith? The second part of the interview focussed on how faith is put into practise within the context of the home. The final part of the interview explored the concerns and hindrances parents experience in nurturing the faith of their children and the types of resources they identified as useful to assist them in their role[Appendix 8].

Chapters Five and Six present the findings from the second and last sections of the interview schedule.

In trying to determine how parents nurture the faith of their children within the context of the home, it was necessary first of all to come to an understanding of the faith of the participants. This Chapter will communicate the connection between the personal understandings of faith of the participants and how these understandings impinge on the way faith is nurtured within their home. This connection will be discussed further in Chapters Five and Six.

This study was mindful of the view that the faith of a person is constantly growing and maturing and is not static but rather constitutes a process (Stokes 1989, pp.2–4). All participants were volunteers who before the interview knew the general topic and area of research. The participants were not informed of the questions beforehand, nor previewed the interview schedule. Their conversations about faith in the interviews are understood to reflect their own perceptions, beliefs, and understandings. Direct quotations in these Chapters were used in order to preserve the voice of the participant; the punctuation was intended to clarify the meaning expressed by intonation, rhythm, and context of the conversation of the participants.

All participants acknowledged their faith belief to be based on Christian principles. Participants identified themselves as Catholic including those who were involved in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) with the view of being fully initiated into the Catholic Church in the near future. Thus, Christian faith is at the core of their understanding of life and an integral part of family life. These participants are not theologians in the sense of having formal studies in theology; indeed, most have not been formally schooled in faith. However, they attempted to construct their lives around and through their faith experiences. In other words, they were committed believers; parents of primary aged children.

Participants indicated that initially they felt uneasy during the interview when they were confronted with questions about their personal faith understanding. For many this interview was the first time they had articulated their faith understanding. Most participants commented that they felt inadequate when trying to describe their personal

understanding of faith. By the end of the interview, however, it was common to hear comments that the experience had been beneficial to them. These sentiments echo Fowler's observation of the people he interviewed for his study:

In the course of the interview, people became involved in the important work of bringing their faith to words, something that many of them were doing for the first time ... Articulation means bringing experiences and commitment to word and action.
(Fowler 1986, p.39)

As with the experience of Fowler, participants in this study repeated that the process had helped them work through the meaning of faith in their lives at a deeper level than they had ever shared before. Some participants even questioned why they had not been given such an opportunity earlier in their life. They found that the experience enabled them to become conscious of what they truly believed faith to be.

The Concept of Faith

This section deals with the concept of faith held by those who participated in the interviews. From the conversations with the participants it became apparent that for most of them faith was an integral part of who they are as humans, living in the world. Faith, for most, was not an isolated cognitive concept detached from life; rather it had to do with the making, maintenance, and the transformation of human meaning. "It is a mode of knowing and being" (Fowler 1986, p.15). Most participants indicated that, "Faith is more than doctrine, belief, religious laws or creed" (Stokes 1989, p.5). It is a lived reality. (Groome 1980, pp.58–66). The faith understanding of most participants does not appear to be isolated from life; rather it is an integral part of what it is to be in relationship with one another and with God. Said in another way, it is an acceptance that faith is fundamentally a belief in God.

During the course of the interviews the impact that faith had on daily life of participants became increasingly evident. It could say that faith, to varying degrees, is at the foundation or core of daily life. In discussing why faith was important to their lives, most participants went beyond the practices of faith to sharing the lived experience of their faith. Participants declared these as essential to what it meant for them to be Christian, and in this case Catholic. It was from these understandings of faith that they constructed meaning for their faith and lives.

Three Archetypal Understandings of Faith

Upon examining the concept of faith held by the participants three distinctive understandings of faith emerged. The metaphor of 'voices' has been used as an analytical tool to describe how each archetype speaks of a specific perception of faith. The concepts of faith held by the participants fell into three interpretive voices. The researcher named these:

1. The voice of orthodoxy; speaking of a faith that is grounded in traditions with an emphasis on the literal interpretations of creeds, doctrines and Church traditions.
2. The voice of faith as a lived experience; speaking of a faith that has been constructed by the experiences of both faith and life.
3. The voice of faith as an active struggle, speaking of a faith that does not have a clear focus in their lives.

The names of the voices are not meant to be pejorative, critical, or negative. The names chosen are trying to reflect the sense and tone of the conversations and the concerns of participants. The participants in the voice of orthodoxy might even like to be so labelled as they see orthodox to be a sincere compliment of their position in matters of faith. The conversations of participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience likewise always speak of their interaction of the Gospel values with day to day life and therefore the label reflects this conviction. Those labelled with the voice of faith as an active struggle might also like to be labelled so as their conversations highlight the inadequacies and struggles they experience in sharing faith with their children.

Table 4.1 illustrates the number of participants in each of the interpretive voices. As shown, the majority of participants reported having an understanding of faith that was characteristic of the interpretive voice of faith as a lived experience. This group represents 80% of the total population. The group identified as having an understanding of faith that was orthodox represents 14% of the total population; those identified as struggling with an understanding of faith was 6% of the total sample.

Table 4.1 Voices of the Participants

Voice of Participants	Number of Participants
Voice of Orthodoxy	5 (14%)
Faith as a Lived Experience	29 (80%)
Faith as an Active Struggle	2 (6%)
Total number of participants	36 (100%)

Each of these voices speaks of faith through a different perspective. The three voices (the voice of orthodoxy, the voice of faith as a lived experience and the voice of faith as an active struggle) are by no means exhaustive but they are representative of most of the participants' views. This is not to say that all participants fit exclusively into one voice, nor is it claimed that any one participant could be completely described in one or other voices, but it was felt that the archetypes that were these three voices fairly indicate the diversity among participants.

Table 4.2 illustrates the number of times that participants across the three voices were quoted in this Chapter. While the contribution of everyone across the three voices shaped the data for this analysis, only those expressions that best presented the thoughts of a particular voice were chosen. It is argued that the quotations used are indicative of the view of each voice in terms of the analysis of their contributions.

Table 4.2 Chapter 4: Distribution of Quotations by Participant Voice (n=36)

Name of Pseudonym	Gender	Voice	No. of times quoted in Ch 4
Kerry	F	Orthodoxy	1
Maria	F	Orthodoxy	3
Mary	F	Orthodoxy	1
Terry	M	Orthodoxy	2
Tina	F	Orthodoxy	4
Alice	F	Lived	3

Name of Pseudonym	Gender	Voice	No. of times quoted in Ch 4
		Experience	
Andrea	F	Lived Experience	0
Carmel	F	Lived Experience	0
Carole	F	Lived Experience	1
Cora	F	Lived Experience	3
Doreen	F	Lived Experience	3
Elizabeth	F	Lived Experience	4
Heidi	F	Lived Experience	4
Helen	F	Lived Experience	2
Ian	M	Lived Experience	1
Jack	M	Lived Experience	2
Jacquie	F	Lived Experience	3
Jane	F	Lived Experience	0
Janet	F	Lived Experience	1
Jill	F	Lived Experience	1
Judy	F	Lived Experience	2
Julie	F	Lived Experience	2
Karen	F	Lived Experience	2
Kylie	F	Lived Experience	2
Lisa	F	Lived Experience	0
Lyn	F	Lived Experience	2
Marian	F	Lived Experience	1
Nancy	F	Lived Experience	0

Name of Pseudonym	Gender	Voice	No. of times quoted in Ch 4
Pat	M	Lived Experience	1
Phillip	M	Lived Experience	0
Stephie	F	Lived Experience	1
Susan	F	Lived Experience	1
Trish	F	Lived Experience	3
Vigi	F	Lived Experience	0
Anne	F	Active Struggle	4
Chris	F	Active Struggle	3

It was predicted that participants who became characterised as the voice of faith of lived experience were most likely to come forward for this study. Therefore, it was not surprising that the majority of participants belonged to this group. In some ways it was expected also that a number of participants who are here characterised as the orthodox group would participate in the study but it was unexpected that those in the voice of faith as an active struggle would come forward. In the following sections these three distinctive voices will be discussed in greater detail.

The Voice of Orthodoxy

The first voice identifies a concept of faith that can be best described as orthodox. This metaphor fits this voice as it speaks of a faith which is closely associated with an approach which might appear to be formulistic and ritualistic in nature. While Groome (2002, p.178) states that to reflect the wholeness of Christian faith it needs to encompass three aspects: cognitive, affective and behavioural, the understanding of faith by participants who speak with the voice of orthodoxy reflects most strongly a dimension of faith that is intellectual and cognitive. The understanding by participants in the voice of orthodox is grounded in tradition and refers to faith as specifically Catholic. Those within this voice work hard to preserve the Catholicity of the faith within the home. Table 4.2 (pp.93–95) lists the five participants identified in this voice.

The understanding of faith described by those in the voice of orthodoxy stems predominantly from an understanding of faith that is entrenched in the memory of participants. The memory is what they had been taught during their childhood. Participants speak of an understanding of faith that is static and does not change as one grows and matures; an understanding of faith that is ritualistic in nature and centred on the observances of faith; and an understanding of faith which, on the whole, is knowledge based. These characteristics will be discussed in the next section.

Acceptance of a Faith Learnt in their Childhood

Stoke (1989, p.7) identifies a group of people who throughout their faith development accept the creed and dogma of the Church without questioning. The data of the current study showed that this is also true of the participants who speak in the voice of orthodoxy. One of the strongest themes which emerged among those in this voice was the acceptance of a faith they learnt as a child. They have a sense of loyalty; thus deviation from what they have been taught in their childhood in matters of faith gives them a sense that they are not being faithful to the Church.

Many participants in this voice indicated that they did not question faith. Heidi was one such participant. She was brought up in South Africa in a household where her mother was the Catholic. She was educated in a Catholic school for girls and then had little faith formation after she left school. Heidi considers that for one to be 'Christian' one must have faith, a faith that requires no proof and no questioning. For Heidi, the term 'Christian' is not distinctive from 'Catholic'. She believes that the faith in which you have been brought up is not to be questioned. She tends to see the idea of people questioning their faith as being a disturbance to her understanding of faith. The interview with Heidi was conducted the week after Easter and she shared how she became rather anxious over the Easter period for the people she encountered who questioned the whole Easter event.

I think every Christian has to have faith to believe things that we obviously haven't a definite proof of and I think sometimes that the hardest thing with it today everyone is questioning this or (pause). We just had Easter and people are questioning if He rose again and that if He actually was crucified and I think just some things you have to have faith in that what you have been brought up with and that's what you believe. So I guess faith is what I believe and what I have been brought up believing.
(Heidi)

Comments made by Heidi are akin to most participants in the voice of orthodoxy. Of the five participants in this voice, four spoke strongly of what they were taught about faith during their childhood. The acceptance of a faith taught and experienced in childhood by those in this voice lay at the foundation of how they constructed their understanding of faith. The concern by those in the voice of orthodoxy was that the Catholic faith was being diminished by those questioning their faith.

Faith is Static

Stoke (1989 p.6) claims that faith is a process that is ever changing with life experience. This understanding of faith was not reflected by those in the voice of orthodoxy. Those in the voice of orthodoxy tend to hold definite views on the teachings of the Church, views based on their childhood perceptions. The view of faith expressed by this voice was seen to be static. This understanding was demonstrated by Kerry.

We have very traditional beliefs. You know the Catholic faith is pulled apart in all sorts of directions now, but I believe in Adam and Eve, I believe in the creation story whereas some Catholics believe it is symbolic, but I believe that what is in the Bible is what is in the Bible and that is all we need to believe.
(Kerry)

Kerry acknowledges that her concept of faith is traditional giving an indication that she recognises that others express their faith in other ways. For her, like others in the voice of orthodoxy, there is no room for interpretation of matters on faith other than a literal one.

Faith is Being Loyal to the Rules

A further understanding of faith that emerged by those in the voice of orthodoxy was that to be truly Catholic one needs to be loyal to the rules of the Church. It was clear that this understanding was one that has also been embedded in an understanding of faith learnt in their childhood. The acceptance of rules and regulations give participants in this voice a set of guidelines by which they can safely live out their faith. As illustrated by the comments from both Heidi and Kerry, participants in this voice find the idea of questioning faith somewhat a dilemma. They felt strongly that the Catholic Church is being threatened by those who question its teachings. Most participants in

this voice were happy to accept what they have been taught as true and were loyal to them.

Faith as Observance

Another perception common to those in the voice of orthodoxy is a fervent commitment to practices of the faith tradition. The rituals and practices of the faith are at the core of their faith life. Observances of the faith become for these participants the expression through which they witness the faith. They relate to rituals and practices that were part of their faith upbringing. Participants in this voice are secure in the structure that these observances provide. Tina reflected this view. For her, as with others in this voice, to be truly Catholic one needs to adhere to the practices of the faith traditions.

I guess it's ... (long pause) my understanding of faith. Well it's my belief in God, in Jesus and the way he lived his life and the how I can emulate that. Through his teachings how I lead my life as a Catholic. Practising the Catholic faith, actually practising it.

(Tina)

The view of emulating the faith held by Tina does not refer to following a life based on the life of Jesus but rather on the practices of the faith. This became apparent when she described how she practised her faith.

I practise my faith, you know like I'll say the Rosary, I'll go to Church and they [children] actually see me say the Rosary and I pray with them.

(Tina)

Observance of the faith is one of the central activities for those in the voice of orthodoxy. It is the means through which they express what they believe it is to be Catholic rather than Christian. The impacts of a formulistic and ritualistic expression of faith on the home will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Being in Relationship With God is About Doing What is Right

An understanding that faith is about being in relationship with God is common to those in the voice of orthodoxy. For most in the voice of orthodoxy being in relationship with God means to be on God's good side by doing the right thing according to the practice of the faith. The relationship with God from the understanding of those in this voice can be interpreted as being contractual. Maria illustrates this point in her discussion.

Faith is not just one thing. It has been a combination of things. But most important it is about relationship with God. God loves us very much and we are called to love him in the same way. I think the only way you can show this is by doing the right thing.

(Maria)

When asked what the right thing was Maria responded:

Like saying your prayers every day, going to Mass, saying the Rosary and doing the Novena. You know all the things we are asked to do. Through these ways we show God that we care and love him.

(Maria)

Other participants concur with this understanding of what it means to be in relationship with God. Those in this voice did not speak of an unconditional understanding of relationship but of one that is duty bound.

Faith is Believing Without Proof

Another theme that emerged within the voice of orthodoxy is that faith does not rely necessarily on logical and rational reasoning: rather, faith is a belief that comes from within. For participants in the voice of orthodoxy the understanding of faith comes from an acceptance that faith is unchangeable. Those in this voice proclaim that one does not need proof that there is a God because God is an innate part of who we are as humans. Those in the voice of orthodoxy did not have a difficulty in accepting a God that could not be explained. They understood this as part of the mystery of faith.

Mary and Heidi (cf. p.96) express their thoughts about believing without proof. For them faith is a mystery and they are comfortable in accepting this. Mary's justification for believing without proof come from her understanding that faith is not to be questioned; it is duty bound.

Faith is one of those things. I think it's what we call a mystery. But for me it is not so much a mystery than just believing. I don't need proof. God is God. What more do we need to know. We must just accept this. We shouldn't worry about questioning this; we are called as Catholics to believe and this is what I do.

(Mary)

Faith is Knowledge Based

Groome (2002, p.194) suggests that one aspect of Christian faith which engages the head is to cherish the faith traditions. He explains that Jesus cherished his own Jewish faith and in his ministry drew on from the treasure of the tradition both the new and the

old. “Christians should hand on their faith traditions in vital and life-giving ways” (Groome 2002, p.194). In other words to reduce the understanding of faith to intellectual assent based solely on officially stated doctrines reduces the fullness of the understanding of Christian faith. Many participants in the voice of orthodoxy identify with a faith understanding that is predominantly based on rational assent to official doctrines. One way in which such participants memorise such doctrines is through the rote learning of such texts as the catechism. This was a consistent characteristic of the understanding of faith proposed by those in this voice. Terry’s view is a useful illustration. In discussing his understanding of faith, the comment Terry made is close to the old ‘Penny Catechism’ learnt by rote. On sharing his understanding of faith he did not hesitate, but rather launched into what seemed a well rehearsed statement.

Faith is belief in Jesus Christ our saviour who came into this world with the sole purpose of saving us from our sins and eternal damnation. And I think we believe basically that we will rise again with him when we die because we believed in him during our life. Not so much of what we do but just what we believe in. (Terry)

One could argue that Terry certainly ‘knows’ his faith in an intellectual sense. He articulated his beliefs, his profession of faith, in a definite and somewhat confident manner. The comment that faith is “not so much of what we do but just what we believe in” demonstrates the fundamental understanding of this voice – believing is enough. In fact, Terry used the word ‘just’ quite strongly in the conversation to highlight his faith conviction. For those in the voice of orthodoxy relating faith with daily life is not as strong as is the intellectual acknowledgement of the faith.

In summary, the interpretative voice identified as the voice of orthodoxy subscribes to an understanding of faith that is entrenched in the acceptance of a faith learnt in their childhood. This understanding is carried and practised in much the same way into adulthood. What is characteristic about the understanding of faith of this voice is that faith is static; it is governed by the rules and regulations and thus formalistic and ritualistic in nature; the relational understanding is centred on doing the right thing by God, and calls for a unified belief.

Voice of Orthodoxy's Desire for the Faith of Their Children

Participants in the voice of orthodoxy described two main desires which they held for the faith of their children. The desires were first, that their children keep the practice of the faith; and second a small group also desired that their children be open to the call to religious life or life as a missionary. These desires were in keeping with their understanding of faith.

The Desire to Keep the Practice of the Faith

The practice of the faith was one desire which was strong amongst the five participants in the voice of orthodoxy. The focus for those in this voice was on the hope or even expectation that their children would continue to practise the faith in much the same way they do. Tina's view was demonstrative of this sentiment.

Well I would want them to practise it [the faith] regularly and make it a bigger part of their lives as it is in mine so that it affects almost every decision they make.
(Tina)

She again reiterated what she meant by practice of the faith.

I mean practice the faith as I said before as in prayer and the ritual, the going to Church, the Rosary and all the facets of the Catholic religion. So practise and incorporate it as part of their lives.
(Tina)

The aim of those in the voice of orthodoxy was to saturate their children in the rituals of the faith so that they would be able to keep the observances of faith. Keeping the faith for those in this voice was centred on preserving the Catholicity of the faith.

The Desire to Dedicate a Life to God

Two participants who speak with the voice of orthodoxy also alluded to an inner desire for their children to become a missionary or a religious within the Church. This desire was exclusive to participants in this voice. Terry comments:

If tomorrow she says 'I want to go and join the mission, I want to become a nun' or 'I want to become a missionary' or something, it's fine with me. I mean it's her calling, her intention, her life, let her do what she feels fit.
(Terry)

Maria spoke also of her desire for her children becoming missionaries and to "consecrating their life to God". She spoke of her thirteen year old:

My thirteen year old girl is beautiful really. She wants to be a Focolarina. A Focolarina, I don't know if you are aware, they are consecrated in the world. They live in communities and they give their lives to people like missionaries that travel around. She is very bright. She got a scholarship to [a private non Catholic school] and she is doing very well in her studies. First she wants to become a brain surgeon, that's what she says and then she wants to become a Focolarina and travel, give her life to God.

(Maria)

The researcher sensed that for these participants having a child enter into a life that is dedicated to God means that they as parents have been successful in nurturing the faith of that child.

In summary, the desires named by most in the voice of orthodoxy for the faith of their children also centred on keeping the practice of the faith. Participants spoke of the desire for their children to have a faith that was Catholic by nature, a faith that would be demonstrated by keeping to the rituals and traditions which are specifically Catholic and to do this in much the same way they do as parents.

The Voice of Faith as a Lived Experience

The second voice that was heard in the data, the voice of faith as a lived experience, was one that speaks of an understanding that faith is grounded in the experiences of life. The understanding of faith by those in this voice is entrenched in the living of a faith life that is markedly diverse from the formalism of the orthodox approach. Faith for these participants centres on personal construction. It demands a lived response. That is, 'I believe, therefore I am called to act.' This understanding of faith supports what Groome (1980) refers to as 'faith as doing' or 'a way of the hands (Groome 2002) Groome (1980) claims this dimension of faith is at the core of the matter of what it means to be Christian. He proposes that "the faith is in the response, and without the response there is no Christian faith" (Groome 1980, p.63).

For this group of participants faith is more than religion; it is the essence that makes sense of life. The guiding principles for those in the voice of faith as a lived experience are not so much the rules and regulations such as for the voice of orthodoxy, but rather living a life that is in accordance with the values proclaimed in the Gospels. The characteristics that set the voice of faith as a lived experience apart from the

understanding of faith professed by the voice of orthodoxy will be discussed in the following section.

Faith Is Based on Personal Construction

Discovering a personal understanding of faith was a strong characteristic among those in the voice of faith as a lived experience. This discovery was not exclusive to converts to the Catholic faith. Some participants who were 'cradle Catholics' shared that at some stage in their lives, usually in adulthood, they had to come to their own understanding of faith which at times conflicted with the faith expressions of their parents. The participants shared how they found themselves, at times, challenging the established traditions that they were taught in their childhood in order to make sense of faith for their life. The comment offered by Karen summarises succinctly the view shared by many in the voice of faith as a lived experience.

My faith is something I received as a child and I've made it more meaningful as I have grown up and become an adult. I have made faith my own. (Karen)

The example given by Ian is indicative of the faith journey travelled by many in this voice in order to come to a personal construction of faith.

So I guess faith is what I believe and what I have been brought up believing. I guess it started with, my childhood. ... At home you just believed and that is just your basic belief. What I have come to accept as an adult is different to that of my childhood. I mean I still believe in the faith but I express my beliefs in a different way. It is not as rigid. It is more liveable. (Ian)

Westerhoff speaks of people like those in the voice of faith as a lived experience as "persons who discovered a dimension of faith expression that is truly their own" (1980, p.27). The voice of lived experience speaks of a faith that has been constructed by questioning what they have been taught in their childhood and then coming to a personal decision of how they will express their faith within the faith tradition. Westerhoff (1980 p.26) calls this 'owned faith' and Fowler (1986) calls it 'conjunctive faith.' It is the time when people draw on various influences on their lives and come to an understanding of faith which is uniquely theirs. Stokes (1989) explains this idea further by adding:

It draws together several strands of the individual's faith journey – family upbringing, previous religious affiliation (if any), and the influences of education, social context and lifestyle upon them. Put simply, a ... person builds on his or her previous faith journey ... [and] comes in the fact that now one's faith expression is no longer that of parents, Church, or tradition, but is now clearly one's own. 'Our faith' becomes 'my faith'. It is an owned faith.
(Stokes 1989, pp.20–21)

Representatives of the voice of orthodoxy could become frustrated with those who focus on the lived experience of faith as they may feel that these participants do not follow the faith in the true sense. This is not to say that those who speak with the voice of orthodoxy have not come to a personal commitment of faith. They construct their faith understanding from a different perspective.

Faith is a Process

A further understanding that emerged in the voice of faith as a lived experience supports Stoke's (1989) thought that faith is not static but rather a process that is ever changing with life experience. Most participants in this voice are open to the idea that the understanding of faith evolves and changes with new life experiences.

Judy is one of the participants who became a Catholic in recent years. Her understanding of faith was challenged as she went through the initial process of coming to an understanding of faith within a new faith tradition. For her, if one is to grow in faith, one must recognise that it is an ongoing process.

Faith is a part of our lives and faith is a nurturing process. People have a preconceived idea that everyone is on the same path of faith or at the same level. It is not. It must be nurtured and will be nurtured until the day you die. That's faith.
(Judy)

Doreen has challenged her childhood understanding of faith. Doreen is Terry's spouse and chose to be interviewed with her husband for the study. In this part of the conversation Doreen states how her understanding of faith differs from that of her husband. As discovered earlier in this Chapter, Terry speaks in the voice of orthodoxy (Table 4.2, pp.93–95). His understanding of faith centres on what Doreen calls "black and white" type of faith. She does not resonate with the faith understanding which she experienced and practised in her childhood; a faith that she describes as being focused on saving oneself from eternal damnation.

The background from which we come [Anglo-Indian]... God is portrayed as a revengeful God, and that is something from the beginning I thought was the wrong image. That was being portrayed to us kids as the fear factor and it's not like that ... if you don't do this, if you don't say your Rosary, if you don't say the Angelus it's eternal hell and damnation, and I don't agree with that part. He [Terry, her husband] is still in the fear factor thing I reckon. I have come to understand that each person's understanding [of faith] grows and becomes more relevant as one grows older and experiences different things. Well that is how it is for me.
(Doreen)

She articulates what many participants in this voice alluded to regarding the nature of faith. Many participants revealed a sense that they could not sustain their faith with an image of God which was not life giving. For many, it was the experience of having to care for and love their children and spouse that revealed to them an image of God which enabled them to grow in their faith understanding.

Participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience are not bound solely by the literal explanations of the creeds, doctrines and traditions of the faith as is the case with participants in the voice of orthodoxy. One of the characteristics that has shaped the understanding of faith of those in the voice of faith as a lived experience is the awareness that faith is a process. As a result, those in the voice of faith as a lived experience may have a much broader sense through which they interpret the traditions of the faith.

Faith is Integrated With Life Experience

An understanding that faith is integrated with life is foundational to the faith understanding of participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience. For the participants in this voice, the lived reality of this understanding of faith goes further than living a faith that is steeped solely in being faithful to the rules and ritual practices as is proclaimed by those in the voice of orthodoxy. For those in this voice of faith as a lived experience, faith centres on the experience of God within the ordinariness of daily life.

The main perception for those who speak in the voice of faith as a lived experience is an understanding that faith is integrated with life, not parallel with life as can be the case with those who speak in the voice of orthodoxy. The voice of faith as lived experience is grounded in the personal constructions of faith that come from a lived

reality. As with the voice of orthodoxy, God is at the centre of the faith and for those in the voice of faith as a lived experience faith is also at the centre of their daily life.

Faith is belief in God. Faith is what you do everyday. Yes, that's right. And faith is not just going to Church on Sunday that's just part of it that sort of the overt practise of it. It's, you know, all these other things that we do everyday. (Helen)

Elizabeth comment was representative of strong emphasis of those in this voice on how their understanding of faith allowed them to relate with God in the ordinariness of daily life.

For me faith is something that I live everyday. Something that I take from everyday. I argue with God about the things that happen to us, I thank him for the things that are happening to us and I draw comfort. This is what faith is for me. (Elizabeth)

Pat articulates another sentiment which supports the understanding of most participants in this voice. It was revealed in his exchange that his understanding of faith is primarily not solely knowledge based. For Pat, it is first and foremost through personal experiences that one comes to more fully understand the meaning that faith has for his life.

Faith is the reason for existence. That's how I look at my faith. Faith is something that you live everyday. Very much so. If not, then you would think that faith has become something like only knowledge. I mean that is what the Pharisees thought in the days of old. That's how they thought they were that just because they were more knowledgeable that they were the people who were closer to God. That should never be the case. Christ came to change all that ... Faith should never be the domain or the monopoly of people who think they have total knowledge of that particular thing or people who think that they are more trained for that purpose. We go through all kinds of experience, so when I say this is my faith all these experiences come into play. (Pat)

The main focus for those in the voice of faith as a lived experience is that life is guided by the practices of the faith, not ruled by them. The practices of the faith give them a tool through which to live out their faith in their everyday lives. Those in the voice of orthodoxy do not share similar understandings of the integration of faith with life: that is, they do not speak of a faith that is integrated with the ordinariness of daily life.

Faith is Based on Living the Gospel Values

Participants who speak with the voice of faith as a lived experience speak of faith as a way of life centred on values which are proclaimed in the Gospels. Participants in this voice believe that the foundational guiding principles for living a faith-filled life are found in the Gospels.

Alice is a representative of the understanding of those in the voice of faith as a lived experience. She has constructed her faith around an understanding that calls people to acknowledge Gospel values.

Faith? Faith is being a good Christian. Living a good Christian life in the sense that may not be too religious but what I would say is being a good person in your heart, helping others, sharing, being kind and generous, respect, respecting your elders. Those are the values we were brought up with and which I believe I should instil in my children. (Alice)

When asked from where do these values come, Alice replied:

Oh, they come from what we hear and read in the Bible, and the Gospel on Sunday. We know this because that is how Jesus lived his life and we are asked to do the same. This is why I believe I should instil these values in my children. (Alice)

Doreen establishes that she does not have a name for her understanding of faith; rather, it is grounded in her understanding of conscience. This conscience is formed by Gospel values.

To me faith is ... just I don't have a name for it. For me it's my conscience. For me to do right or wrong and, it so happens, it's all described by Christianity. I have been born in the Catholic faith. But I don't believe everything is all about black and white, right and wrong thing. I don't know about eternal damnation, all that kind of stuff. For me, it's just doing right and wrong. I know this by following what Jesus tells us in the Gospels. ... I feel that is you have no faith, you have no conscience. I believe faith is my conscience based on the teachings of the Gospels. (Doreen)

For Doreen, faith is about living life in a way that is guided by conscience. If one does what is right according to what Jesus taught, then one is doing good. For some this may seem that Doreen has a humanistic approach to faith, but as the discussion went

on she revealed that her main issue was that the name for God, the religion, or faith was not as important to her as the way one lives life.

For Julie, as with many of the participants in the study, the question to describe her understanding of faith was quite daunting at first. It took some time for her to engage in conversation. Finally, in a succinct remark she articulated an understanding of faith that relies on a connection between belief and action. Her response was to 'basically' try to live according to the will of God. She used the commandments as her yardstick on which to assess that what she needed to do in order to live according to God's will.

Oh gee, ... (long pause) first of all believing that there is a God and basically trying to live in accordance to what the commandments are. I think that is probably it. Simplistic but that's it. (Julie)

To be a Christian for those in the voice of faith as a lived experience means to do the will of God while engaging in the world; that is, God's will is based on the values proclaimed in the Gospels. The priority for those in this voice is to live these values within daily life rather than expressing faith through a pool of knowledge, as is more commonly associated with those in the voice of orthodoxy.

Faith is Relational

The voice of faith as a lived experience supports the notion that humans, by nature, are not created to be alone. Humans are communal beings and therefore relationships are important to how people function. This is in contrast to the understanding expressed by those in the voice of orthodoxy where a relationship with God is duty bound. The voice of faith as a lived experience speaks of a faith that is centred on an image of God who loves unconditionally. The focal point here is that God is always with them.

Elizabeth expresses the belief of many in the voice of faith as a lived experience. She declares that if one has faith, one never need feel lonely. Communicating with God develops a relationship that is meaningful and fruitful in all areas of life.

It is like I say to my husband, at times if you're really happy and if you have nobody around you to thank for it. No friends, nobody and you say thank you God. You're sharing it with somebody which is such a wonderful thing. You're not alone. Or if you're sad and again lonely and there is no other human being that you can have around but if you have this religion where you can say thank you Lord, you are never alone. You're getting something out of

your religion. You're getting something good for yourself. You can blame someone. You can blame God as well, you know. You don't need to find... because in our lives we always want to be with people, we want to be social creatures. It never always happens and there is despair if you cannot fall back onto God that is always there. It would be nice if you... if maybe you could speak to him and he answered back it would be another human relationship.
(Elizabeth)

Lyn shares a similar understanding. For her, there is nothing more important than to be in relationship with God. Her relationship with God stems from her belief that God is an intimate part of her life.

For me it's a relation with a God that is intimately involved in my life, you know, and to me it's everything, I mean for me personally. Like I lived fifteen years as a single person full time, divine providence, value and income and I've seen God provide and I've seen you know ... I know he's so real and he's so intimately involved in our lives; I've seen him, I've seen him move in my life, I've, I know him. I love Jesus he is the most, you know, so to me it's there's nothing more important.
(Lyn)

For those in the voice of faith as a lived experience faith is about being in relationship with a God who is present in all aspects of life. The relationship with God is not conditional upon living by the practices of the faith as claimed by those in the voice of orthodoxy but rather it is a call to strive to develop an intimate relationship.

Faith is Believing Without Proof

Another theme that is shared by the voice of faith as a lived experience and the voice of orthodoxy is that faith is a call to believe without proof. Both voices believe that faith does not rely necessarily on rational thinking; rather, it is a gift and the believer does not require empirical proof. For participants in the voice of orthodoxy the understanding of faith comes from an acceptance that faith is a mystery. Those in the orthodox voice proclaim that one does not need proof that there is a God. The data revealed that the understanding held by participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience was that God is an innate part of who people are as humans and thus an integral part of daily living. Proof for those in the voice of faith as a lived experience does not mean to passively accept faith in a non-questioning way; however, proof is not important because, even though this voice may question aspects of their faith tradition, they do not question if there is a God.

An illustration of the perception which is common to those in the voice of faith as a lived experience is the exchange by Jill. She explains that, for her, proof is not so much in the rational reasoning of faith as it is in the experience of God. For her, faith has an element of mystery.

What I understand and what I try to impart is a belief in God and in a greater being. It's believing without being able to explain it properly to the kids. ... It's not something that you can explain or concretely say or prove. So that's faith, believing without proof.
(Jill)

Jacque expresses a similar idea to Jill. For her, belief in God is the most important element of faith. It is the belief that has the greater impact on life and helps to make sense of who she is as a Christian.

Faith to me is actually believing in a particular concept or belief without necessarily having proof as in something you can hold, or something you can read or something you've seen, touched, smell or tasted, so that for me is faith.
(Jacque)

When discussing the issue of proof of God, a large number of participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience spoke of their belief in God as something that is innate in the nature of a person. Carole illustrates this point.

Faith is something that is inside. It's just a true belief and it comes from inside. It is just something that you know you can connect with.
(Carole)

Trish reiterated that proof is not an essential element of faith because her sense of faith is mainly dependant on what is within her. Faith is a fundamental part of the person. For her faith is innate.

Faith is separate from having to have things proven to you. It's something right inside. It's very important to me and it is very important to get that over to my children as well.
(Trish)

When asked to further explain why this was important to her, Trish went on to explain how science and faith need not be in conflict with each other. Having a science background, she could see how science actually enhanced her understanding of faith.

I think science and faith go hand in hand because science is involved with proofs and things, but faith is deeper than that, you don't need to prove but that develop along the same way. You

believe the faith, you believe the science but science because you can see, faith because you know. (Trish)

In the last line of her quote Trish stresses again her understanding of the nature of faith. She concludes that whereas science is believable because it can be seen, faith is believable because one knows. It is a knowing that comes from within. Janet also believes that faith is innate and for her proof is secondary to the trust she has in the knowledge that God will provide all that is needed. She does not question but completely puts her trust in God.

Faith is something that I don't think you can see or touch. It is something how you feel. It is so different for every one. I suppose faith is a strong belief in hope and is so intangible. I mean there are lots of things I cannot explain but I know that I should not be worrying because I know that I will be alright in the end. Don't know how but I'll be alright because someone is looking after me and that's my faith. (Janet)

For participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience and to some degree for those in the voice of orthodoxy, a belief without proof is not a concern in trying to construct an understanding of faith. The perception that was emphasised by both the voice of orthodoxy (cf. p.99) and the voice of faith as a lived experience was that faith is innate and thus the believer does not depend on empirical proof. It is one of the themes that surfaced strongly in both voices.

Faith has Little Distinction Between a Faith that is Christian and a Catholic Faith

A distinctive understanding of faith that is unique to the voice of faith as a lived experience is the belief that there is little substantive difference between faith that is Christian and a Catholic faith. Those who speak in the voice of faith as a lived experience have a much broader view of faith than is accepted by the voice of orthodoxy. First the data reveal that the distinction between being Christian and being Catholic in this voice, the voice of faith as a lived experience, is in contrast to that of the voice of orthodoxy. For participants in the voice of orthodoxy, faith is synonymous with being Catholic; for those in the voice of faith as a lived experience, the understanding of faith does not depend on whether one is Catholic or not. Faith, for this group, is values-centred.

Jacquie is one participant who does not distinguish between being Christian and being Catholic. She exposes her children to two faith traditions, both Christian, because she wants her children to experience a broader view of Christianity than that offered by the Catholic Church. When asked why she made this decision she explained that she wanted her children to be part of the Catholic Church because of the sacramental aspects the Church offers. She believes that the sacraments are important for life as they deepen the spiritual dimension of the faith. However, she believes that the Catholic Church is 'not child friendly'. She considers that it is better to send the children to a place where they enjoy learning about God than it is for them to be turned off on the concept of religion at a very early age. Her husband's family belong to the Uniting Church so the children attend Sunday school at the Uniting Church.

I believe in Christianity. I am a Catholic myself, my husband is not. He was brought up Uniting, he doesn't particularly have any religion per se but he believes in morality and Christianity. Oh no I can't say he believes in Christianity because he doesn't believe that there is the one Christ per se but um for myself I believe there was a Christ. I hate to be honest (sic) here but sometimes I believe the Catholic faith – yes it may be the one that came from the very beginning and all the others are branches of it – but sometimes I believe it is very, very not old fashion, behind the times and so I am very much into Christianity as in being good, love everybody you know, just look after your own behaviour and um that's what we have been trying to instil in our children. ... From the time they were three years old they've been going to Uniting Church Sunday School because Joel's sister, my husband's sister, is a Sunday School teacher. They come and pick them up, take them, bring home that's on a Sunday that's why we usually attend Church on a Saturday. So I don't, I hate to say this (sic) but I don't believe the Catholic faith at this point of time is the be all and end all of Christianity and that's why I'm trying to expose them [her children] to all sorts of, the perception of Christian faith rather than [just] the Catholic faith.

(Jacquie)

When asked what is at the centre of her faith Jacquie replied;

Christ the person. Be Christ-like. Whereas being Catholic is more. There are a lot of traditional practices, more than I can understand to be Christian practices. That's it in my little mind, anyway.

(Jacquie)

Belief in Jesus is not the issue for Jacquie. She has a deep sense of her call to live as Jesus taught. The issue for her, as for many in the voice of faith as a lived experience, is that many of the traditions of the Catholic Church just do not seem to make sense to

her. The traditions are viewed as being too formulistic and the meaning of the rituals have been lost on them so they do not see the relevance of them for life.

Susan and Jacquie share similar views. Susan has chosen to send her children to an independent alternative school because she does not differentiate between being Christian and being Catholic. For Susan, the name of the religion is not important. Her main priority is to find a parish or Church of any Christian denomination in which her family feels comfortable worshipping, and a school that promotes Christian values in an explicit manner. It just so happened that the local Catholic Church was to her liking and so she attends this Church regularly with her family.

What's my understanding of faith? That's a good question isn't it? (long pause) To me it is just one thing that we will always do together as a family. That to me is the critical thing, whether it is Catholic or Protestant or something else is really secondary to me. Particularly that Church [local parish] seems very new age or that they think in a modern form rather than in a very old fashioned form. It seems very children oriented. (Susan)

It was important for Susan that her place of worship catered for the children and that the children were included or welcomed in the liturgy.

For most participants in this voice, having a faith was much more significant than the faith tradition that they associated with. They were open to the idea that whether one is Christian or Catholic, the call to live faith is based on their perception of how to live the Gospel values. Participants in the voice of orthodoxy, on the other hand, hold the view that the Catholic faith has a religious conviction of its own and must be preserved.

Faith Includes Being Tolerant of Other Beliefs

One of the characteristics evident in the data which sets this group aside from the participants in the voice of orthodoxy, was that participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience are also more open-minded to the beliefs of different religions whether the religions are Christian or not. This is consistent with the broader view of Christianity held by this voice. The voice of orthodoxy alludes to the only way to salvation is through the one true faith – the Catholic faith.

Some of the interview data were collected relatively soon after the New York City disaster of September 11, 2001; thus, it is possible that this event had some bearing on the way people viewed other faiths. Another factor that may have had an influence on a tolerance for other religious beliefs by some participants was that some grew up in an environment surrounded by faiths that were not Christian. Elizabeth was one such participant. She expressed a belief that all religious traditions request their followers to lead a good life.

*Religion for me whether it be Catholic or Muslim or whatever:
religion is being a good human being. Not doing something that
would upset you or hurt you and getting something good.*
(Elizabeth)

As illustrated by Elizabeth, faith for participants in this voice has more to do with how one responds to God through the way one leads life, rather than adherence to one particular faith code. The guiding principles are based on the values promoted in the Gospels. The participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience have an understanding that all who have a faith belief are called to live in ways that promote similar values. These values promote acceptance of all.

As already discussed, the understanding of faith professed by participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience is centred on living Gospel-centred values. The difference between the understanding of faith between the voice of faith as a lived experience and the voice of orthodoxy is that participants in the voice of lived experience challenge the established traditions and practices of their faith taught during their childhood and have constructed an understanding of faith that is integrated with daily life. In contrast to the voice of faith as a lived experience who profess a tolerance for other faith traditions, the voice of orthodoxy strongly distinguishes between being Christian and Catholic. The voice of faith as a lived experience also does not have the same zeal as those in the voice of orthodoxy who aim to preserve the Catholicity of the faith tradition within the home.

The Voice of Faith as a Lived Experience Desire for the Faith of Their Children

A number of ideas were expressed by participants who speak in the voice of faith as a lived experience when they were asked what desires they held for the faith of their

children. Even though some of the desires were akin to those named by those in the voice of orthodoxy the intention behind the desires come from a different perspective.

Experience of Faith Desired for Children

When asked what they desired for the faith of the children as they grew into adulthood, the data revealed two contrasting views. One group of participants desired that their children have a faith experience which was similar to a faith experience they have developed for themselves. This group of participants, 10 in total, shared that they desired that their children felt that they belonged to a community which was able to support them, especially in times of need, an experience which was of value to the participants. Sentiments of this desire were expressed by Cora and Karen. One desire named by Cora was the sense of wanting her children to experience what she has in her faith which stems from her experience of a faith community in which she felt she belonged.

I suppose I just want them to experience what I have experienced and to get out of it what I have received from being part of the Church. To get the support I have had. I think it is a really really good thing to be part of a Church, to have in times when things might not be going well in their life and that they have their religion to turn to as opposed to other things that children sometimes turn to.
(Cora)

Karen also believes strongly in the support of the faith community.

I hope they have the same love for the faith as I do. I hope they have a faith that they'll nurture, a faith that will sustain them in the experiences of life that come along for all of us. I would hope that they have a sense of belonging to a parish community. That they have the opportunity to build up God's world in a meaningful way, to contribute, to be builders of the of the way in which Jesus gives you a vision of what the world could be like. I hope that they are part of that in a positive way. And I hope that they are on the journey of their faith development all their lives. I really hope that they continue that as I have experienced it for myself and continue to wish also for myself.
(Karen)

A second group of participants, 19 in total, within the voice of faith as a lived experience desired that their children do not have similar experiences of the faith tradition that they encountered in their own childhood. This group of participants desired that their children develop an understanding that God is an approachable God. Most who named

this desire were educated overseas in 'convent' schools. Heidi and Doreen were two such people.

A desire for the faith of her children identified by Heidi was that they continue to develop an understanding of God who is merciful and compassionate rather than the God of fear she had to endure in her childhood. For her this could only be achieved by questioning, a luxury she did not have in her formative years.

I would like them to get to know God possibly better than we did growing up, more as a loving God. When we were educated at school he was one of those Gods to be feared and you lived in, yes, fear of the wrath that was going to come down on you and if you did something wrong and if you missed Church on Sunday, that sort of thing. But today's way of teaching is so very different, to what we were brought up, which is good. And I think they need to question other religions. They need to be taught about other religions as a background where once again we weren't allowed to question that too much.
(Heidi)

As already revealed by Doreen (cf. pp.107–108) she holds a similar experience of the portrayal of God presented in her childhood. The image of God presented to her in her childhood was a God of revenge. This God was always watching, waiting to catch one out if one did not hold fast to the practices of the faith. When asked what image of God she would like her children to develop, Doreen remarked that she wanted her children to discover a God who was not concerned with the rules and formalities that faith traditions tended to impose on believers. This was in contrast to the understanding of God proposed by participants in the voice of orthodoxy. Doreen, other the other hand, desired that her children come to develop a relationship with God who is ever present to them, a desire which was named by most in the voice of faith as a lived experience.

I would just like to them to know that if they knock, the door shall be open. He's [God] there. You go to him and he'll speak to you. You have a problem, you go to him, but don't go to him only when you need things. He should be an approachable God. You should be able to talk to him like whenever you want whether you go to Church. Accordingly you don't need all these ceremonies, you know these different things. It should be just something you have to love to do and that is what I want for all my children, for them to want to have faith because they love God, not the Catholic faith.
(Doreen)

Desire for Children to Have a Faith

The first desire for all participants in this voice was for their children to have faith. In professing this, many participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience did not specify that their children needed to be bound by the traditions of the Catholic faith but rather that they have a relationship with God.

I believe I would like my children to believe so I would like to foster it [faith] as much as possible and give them every opportunity to experience their religion and to experience God and to know about it all. Hopefully they will follow it in the way they live their life, with God in their life ... I also hope that they too will feel a faith inside themselves. That they'll have a tool or a skill whereby wherever they are in the world, they can walk into a Church and they can connect with somebody and it's a whole wider community. I think it is not a perfect world, it never will be, therefore they have to have something extra from the material or the physical things that are around them every day. They need to have a connection with something else and it would be the greatest thing if you actually pass on a simple faith like my own that just levels you, makes you believe that there is something else that you can believe in. So that is the hope.
(Cora)

Julie revealed that she desired that her children have faith which has a Christian outlook. She felt that this is all she can hope for especially in the rural experience. She understands that her children will be educated in a non Catholic school and wants them to have an experience of what is specifically Catholic but at the same time desires that her children will have a faith that respects Christian values.

I want my children basically to have a Christian faith. To believe there is a God. My husband went to [private boys school] as did his father and grandfather and I have agreed that they will go there basically once at thirteen. As far as the Catholic faith, I would like them to make sure they have done their Reconciliation, First Communion before then. As for Confirmation I am unsure about that, whether to leave it for them to make the decision or be sure that that's been performed or been looked at by year seven. But while they are at boarding school, I want them to join into the religious aspects of there school life and embrace the Christian values promoted by the school.
(Julie)

The desire by participants in this voice for their children to have faith was not imbued with the same intention proposed by those in the voice of orthodoxy. Those in the voice of orthodoxy desired that their children have similar faith practice to their parents with the underlying purpose of preserving the faith traditions. Those in the voice of faith as

lived experience wanted their children to have faith, a faith that promotes the values of the Gospels.

The Desire for Children to Know God as Loving

The desire common with most participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience was that their children develop a personal relationship with God. Participants in this group professed that faith become a tool through which their children develop their own understanding of faith and come to love God.

Very simply just to love God. Know that God is there and know that God loves them. It is as simple as that really, to have a relationship with God, which is alive. (Stephie)

Kylie also remarked that she desired that her children develop the understanding that God does not expect them to be perfect because God will love them regardless.

Making them [children] feel that it's okay to be themselves because that is the way God made them. They don't have to be a certain way for God to love them or for me to love them. God will not judge them if they are not right all the time. I hope they understand that they have the freedom to express themselves and that God understands however they are feeling and however they want to express it. (Kylie)

Lyn, on the other hand, has a preschool child and has not given much thought to the faith desire of her child in adulthood. She answered from her own experience of faith. Her first desire was that her child has faith. Her understanding of faith centres on the call to love. What she desires for her child, is that coming to his own faith conviction that he will always understand that he is loved by God.

I'm passionate about giving my child an opportunity to meet him [Jesus] as well. Ultimately he's got to make his own choice. I don't know what Darcy is going to decide, but I am passionate about giving him every chance to come know Jesus in his own heart, and to know that Jesus will always love him. What more can we do. For me that faith dimension is really important. (Lyn)

Desire For a Personal Faith Commitment

Another desire which was held by those who speak with the voice of faith as a lived experience was that their children see faith as something that is important for life, not just as a requirement but rather because of what faith can offer them for life. An overwhelming 25 participants (of 29) commented that what they desired for their

children was for them to come to own their faith understanding. Most participants were realistic in that they had an understanding that the expectations that they have for their children are not always what their children will wish for themselves.

Marian summarises the fears of many of the participants in this voice. The inner desire for Marian is that her child continues to attend Mass but she showed caution in her statement as did many of the participants. Participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience realised that even though this is a desire for them as parents, ultimately they have no control over this.

I just hope that he realises how valuable it is to have faith, and that it will be a part of his life, and that he will always continue to do so. I hope he will always continue to attend Mass, that would be great. Really just so long as he realises that it [faith] is just as important in his life as any other factors in his life. That it is always an important aspect of his life. (Marian)

The desire that resonated with many in this voice was the desire named by Kylie. She desired that her children have faith; a faith which is constructed from their own experiences and thus personal to them, and not a faith that was imposed by her experiences.

As they grow older and into adulthood I hope that they find their own way to understand faith. If that means that they are pulling away for a little time and they experience what that's like to be without God completely then so be it. That's the journey, to learn. As a mother you want them to learn the easy way and you don't want them to have to face the hard lessons in life but that's how we learn from what we experience, I think. I see that the ultimate act of love is to allow them to learn and let them come to their own understanding and ultimately a faith choice. (Kylie)

Helen's children are entering the teenage years. She desires that her children come to their own faith commitment as they grow into adulthood. She does not desire for her children to take on her faith blindly. Her deep desire is that her children continue the practice of the faith but only if it has meaning for them.

Just because I was raised in a way that we accepted faith Chapter and verse and that was it, I don't want my kids to. I mean I still want my kids to practice as Catholics and to grow up as Catholics and get married in the Catholic Church but because they want to, not because I think they should. It has to be special to them or something that they treasure or honour or value. That's the challenge for the Catholic Church I suppose, to be able to put it

[faith] over to kids in a way that will draw them in so that they do carry it on or even if they lose it in their adolescence to go back to it in their adult life. At some stage they [the kids] have to become responsible for their faith. (Helen)

A point which was raised in many conversations with participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience was the desire that their children do not view faith as something that is imposed upon them. The desire for their children to develop their own faith commitment was strong. A significant number of participants, the majority (25 of the 29) within this voice, spoke of a desire for their children not to view faith as a duty but rather as something that is meaningful to their lives. Jack and his wife Jane share similar views on not forcing their children to take on a faith understanding that is not their own.

I want my children to see faith not as a duty kind of thing. That way they will feel that we must go to Church every Sunday because it is something that we are used to doing. I want them to want to do it. It mustn't be duty like it's Sunday today so we must go to Church, but it means nothing to them. I would rather have them going to Church once a month but understand the full meaning of why they are going every week other than duty sake. ... To be able to go to Church on their own and to maintain their faith on their own rather than be coerced or forced. (Jack)

Jacquie articulates a similar view. She also believes that forcing children into practising faith in the same way as the parents is not beneficial because children are not given the opportunity to come to their own understanding of the impact of faith on their lives.

I would like to instil in my children that they feel they want to go to Church not that they're being dragged there. Um yeah, so faith-wise I want them to be good decent people, religion-wise I would like for them to want to go to Church and to practice the faith rather than feel that it is being forced upon them. (Jacquie)

A significant number of participants within this voice had an acceptance that their children may choose to practise in a faith that is not necessarily specifically Catholic in practice. In this case participants expressed that they desired that their children have a Christian outlook on life, in other words, a life that is centred on promoting the Gospel values.

What I hope for my children basically is that they are good people. That they are good and kind to other people. That they can help other people or see when there's the need for that. That they can stand up for people if they see they are being wronged in any way

that they have the guts to do that or say don't do that, that's not good. And I would like them still, obviously to be good Catholics but I don't see that as the major thing, as long as they're better Christians, then I'm happy with that. (Heidi)

Alice had a desire that was similar to the one Heidi expressed. She desires that her children become responsible adults. When speaking of responsible adults Alice is speaking of an adult with good Christian values.

Well I hope and I pray in a very special way that they grow to be good, young responsible adults. Responsible for their own behaviour, because I always tell them about an action and a consequence, whatever action there is always a consequence to it. I always speak to them about a conscience about right and wrong and always when you are doing something you are taking a decision about it, there will always be a feeling of whether you are doing a right thing or a wrong thing. I hope that they live good Christian lives. That is important to me. (Alice)

Participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience recognised that their children are individuals and therefore need to develop their own individual relationship with God. They prefer to encourage their children to come to their own understanding of the importance of faith for themselves. This is not to say that they do not desire that their children do not attend Mass or do not develop a prayer life; quite to the contrary. The focus for participants in this voice was to allow their children to develop their own sense of faith through the faith tradition. Participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience were conscious of the decisions their children will need to make if they are to make a personal faith commitment. Those in this voice are aware that such a choice might not necessarily be through the Catholic faith. This view is one that those in the voice of orthodoxy would find problematical and hard to accept. This view is quite different from the view promoted by those in the voice of orthodoxy. Participants in the voice of orthodoxy were more determined that their children develop a faith that is similar in practise and understanding to their own.

The Desire for their Children to Respect their Own Faith and other Faith Traditions

A further desire which was unique to the voice of faith as a lived experience was the desire for children to respect their own faith tradition as well as the faith traditions of others. This desire was in keeping with the understanding held by participants in this voice that an element of faith includes being tolerant of other beliefs (cf. pp.113–114).

In all, 84% of participants in this voice spoke of this desire. This theme was not named overtly by those in the voice of orthodoxy as their main focus, as revealed in the data, was to preserve the traditions of the Catholic Church thus instilling in their children what is explicitly Catholic. Those in the voice of faith as a lived experience have an openness and a yearning for developing in their children a tolerance of all faith traditions, including their own.

The desire Cora has for her children to respect her faith beliefs was one that was very strong among many in this voice.

Another thing I hope is that they will always respect, their religion, I would hope that they have that.
(Cora)

Helen expressed a similar desire.

Well we hope they'll keep up with it, they'll stay with the Church or if they don't stay with the Church at least they stay with the values that the Church represents even if they don't continue to practice you know, on a Sunday that they will sort of still carry, on you know the Christian sort of side of it and the moral sort of side of it as well.
(Helen)

Karen speaks of the desire for her children to be tolerant of other faiths, including those that are non Christian. This sentiment was strong among other participants in this voice. As mentioned earlier in this Chapter (cf. p.114), a heightened awareness of this may have been alerted by the disaster of September 11, 2001 in New York City.

I find that because our children do not go to a Catholic school we share our Catholic faith with other people of different faith backgrounds whether that be like Baptist or we've met some interesting people from the Muslim faith even though that is a very sensitive issue these days. I pray that as my children grow older they will continue to be non judgemental especially to others of different faiths. After all this is what Jesus was on about.
(Karen)

Trish sees that an advantage of attending a State school, is that children need to become tolerant of others in order to survive. Trish desires that her children learn about other faiths so that her children will learn to respect all people by seeing the face of Christ in all people.

If my children learn to treat everybody as though they have Jesus ... and that they have that basic respect and underlying love for everybody, then I can't see them having any problems apart from

people's attitude to them. Perhaps in this day and age it is hard for them to stand up to various pressures around them. This is one reason why we chose not to send them to a Catholic school. I wanted them to learn tolerance and understanding of everybody and or everything so they are in class with people of Hindu faith who are practicing their religion and who have strong faith. They are with people who have no religion or apparent faith in anything. They have people who follow Confucius, who are Buddhists and they see that these people have strong faith so they see that Christianity is a faith but it is not the only faith either. They don't argue with these people about it. They accept and it is more than tolerate, they are also interested. They take an interest in what these children do and hopefully it works the other way as well. In the multi cultural society that we have I think it is very important that we they understand that there are lots of different people of all different races and religions about. Where I grew up there were all white Anglo Saxons at our Catholic school. As far as I knew we were the only people that existed and it did give a blinkered outlook. I hope our children will have an appreciation of what each faith has to offer while at the same time being proud to be a Christian.

(Trish)

Heidi also desires that her children learn about other faiths because she too believes that children will become more tolerant of others. At the same time Heidi desires that her children remain true to their Christian tradition but she does not specify whether that be in the Catholic tradition or another Christian tradition. For her that main desire was that follow the teachings of Jesus in their lives.

I think they need to question other religions. They need to be taught about other religions as a background where once again we weren't allowed to question that too much and I'd like them to be able to do that freely. And I'd encourage them. And I would like them still, obviously to be good Catholics but I don't see that as the major thing, as long as they're better Christians, then I'm happy with that.

(Heidi)

When asked what do you mean by a better Christian? Heidi explains;

Following the teachings of Christ. To be more like him I guess. I think that is more important than whether your Anglican or Catholic or Presbyterian. My husband being Presbyterian he's a nicer man than a lot of, in the things I see him do, than some Catholics who are Catholic in name but not necessarily in action. So that is not very important. It's not important to me. Tolerance and living as Jesus taught are important.

(Heidi)

Living among people of other faith traditions has heightened awareness of the necessity to treat all people with dignity and respect for Elizabeth. She desires that her child learn to have the same tolerance of others.

I do try and tell him about other religions and what that means, because I've grown up with having Hinduism and Buddhism and Muslim religion very predominate around our lives. And we were always thought to accept other religions so I'd like for him to be open about other human beings and their beliefs and what they get out of it. I respect them and I hope he will respect all people regardless of who they are or what they believe. This is very important if we are true Christians. (Elizabeth)

Judy comes from an experience where she has had little contact with people of non Christian beliefs. With the current events in the world, she wants her children to be able to embrace people by respecting their faith traditions. She believes that her children need to become tolerant of all beliefs if harmony is to be restored in the world. Judy hopes that her children feel comfortable in sharing their faith perspective with others so that, in turn, their beliefs will also be respected by others of different faith traditions.

I think the big thing about nurturing faith within the home, particularly with children these days is that it has to be spoken about in regard also to other faiths. I'm not talking necessary...well certainly other Christian faiths but also Muslim, Buddhists. I've spoken to my children about all different faiths and I've said to them that the day that they disrespect other faiths is the day I will be very annoyed. I think if they know about other faiths when other faiths speak to them, they're comfortable speaking about their own faith, because they know the difference. I always say to them to say to other people how wonderful that you have such a good faith and that it is important, even though we don't have the same one, it's just great that you have one and I've got one [faith]. So there is no situation where they're put in that they feel uncomfortable, or that they are going to deny their faith, because kids have times when they think that they have to deny their faith... People have this horrible feeling that if you talk about others faiths they might try to convert you. What a lot of crap. It's not going to happen. So that would be my one area that I think people should do more of when they are teaching their children about faith. (Judy)

The desire for children to respect their own faith as well as other faith traditions was strong among participants in this voice. As has already been recognised, this desire may have been heightened by the actions of terrorism that are in the world at present.

Desire for their Children to Pass on the Faith Traditions

A final desire which surfaced in the data was the desire for their children to pass on their faith traditions. This desire was similar to those in the voice of orthodoxy. This desire was tied to the role of the parent as first educator of the faith of their children. The desire for their children to pass on the faith traditions to the next generation stems from the fear of some participants that future generations will not have faith. This fear was common to participants in both the voice of orthodoxy and the voice of faith as a lived experience.

Later on we want them to be able to do it on their own even if we are not behind them. They must also be able to pass on their faith to their children. If they don't learn it now, or through their lives now, then they will have nothing to pass on to their children. In the end if we do not do it now and they don't learn anything now then the faith stops, it just stops dead there. It is a continuing cycle
(Jack)

The comment made by Jack is typical of the desire of many participants in both voices. Those in the voice of orthodoxy alluded to this desire and the intention of their desire would be to preserve the practices of the faith. Participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience want their children to be able to have a faith that sustains them in their adulthood and, as Jack believes, that the only way this can be achieved is to live faith within their family life so that children will have the desire to pass it on.

In summary, those in the voice of faith as a lived experience held a strong desire that their children develop their own faith understanding shaped by their own life experiences and that children respect their own faith tradition. The participants this voice were also more open to being tolerant of other faiths and encourage their children to become informed of other beliefs because these participants believe that tolerance is itself a sign of lived faith. This was in direct contrast to those in the voice of orthodoxy as their main focus is to preserve the Catholic faith.

The Voice of Faith As An Active Struggle

The third voice that was discerned in the data analysis was that of those who spoke about faith as an active struggle. This group was not large (Table 4.2, pp.93–95) but their voice was clear and distinct. Stoke reminds us that:

[R]eligious history is filled with the faith struggles of many of its greatest leaders ... who dared to doubt ... and question ... and challenge established beliefs and traditions. Because they did, their faith ... was made stronger.

(Stoke 1989, p.27)

Participants in the voice of faith as an active struggle speak of an understanding of faith that is tentative. As with those in the voice of orthodoxy, they revert to their childhood experiences of faith to try to make sense of faith for themselves and their children. The desire for faith is strong among those in this voice. The dilemma for the participants in the voice of faith as an active struggle is the coming to an understanding of faith which makes sense for their life.

Personal Understanding of Faith is not Clear

The participants in the voice of faith as an active struggle indicated that they are at a stage in life where they are searching, trying to make sense of not only faith, but of life. These participants were struggling between being faithful to what they were taught in their childhood and coming to their own personal ownership of faith. Participants in this voice desired faith for themselves and their children but found it difficult to express verbally their understanding of faith and depended strongly on resources outside the home, such as the Parish Religious Education Program (PREP), to be the primary faith nurturer of their children.

One participant of this voice, Chris, reported that she was not raised in a religious family. She did not attend a Catholic school but received religious instruction, as it was known, through the State school system. Chris was away from the practice of the faith for a number of years and has only recently made it a priority for her and the family. She desired faith for herself and her family but was struggling to connect with a faith that made sense for her life.

I was brought up in a Catholic family but we weren't like a religious kind of family. When I was married we were married in a Catholic Church but we didn't attend Church. It's only just recently that we have settled down where we are and we evaluate life and I think well we haven't been to Church for a long time and it's time to bring the children in. So we have only just begun to be regularly attending Church.

(Chris)

Chris found it hard to express her understanding of faith. When asked to share her understanding, Chris looked confused at first and questioned, “The Catholic faith or any faith?” before she launched into her understanding.

I suppose it [faith] is all about God, about knowing I suppose where we all came from ... I suppose it is a lot of things, it's not just going to Church and all that. Now that we have a family, it all relates to having a family and how you bring up your family kind of thing. _ (long pause) I don't know the exact words to describe it [faith].
(Chris)

The comment ‘I suppose’ was taken to indicate that she was not sure of her own faith conviction. She seemed unsure of what was asked of her. As she revealed insights of her understanding of faith, she possibly wanted to be affirmed before she moved on to her next thought. She then admitted to her struggle and concluded with “I don’t know the exact words to describe it [faith].”

Chris appears to show the beginnings of constructing her own faith understanding but is still uncertain of the traditions associated with the practice of the faith. She knows that attending Mass is one of the fundamental practices of the Catholic faith and thus uses the Mass as a means through which she can introduce a faith understanding to her children.

Another participant, Anne, on the other hand, was very upfront about her struggle. When she was asked what faith was for her, she took a long while before she gave her response. She was fighting to find the words that would convey her meaning. She struggled and in the end she commented:

O God, I don't think I can answer that. I don't know if I have the faith to answer that question (laughs). What faith means to me? _ (long pause). I think, I don't know just seeing my parents have faith for me that is what I am striving for I guess. I feel sometimes I don't even have the knowledge like if Jordan asks me a question...See my mum and dad's faith I think that's what I need and I look at them and think that is what I need. I would like my children to follow that. As far as I think sometimes I feel believe I just send Jordan for knowledge, just gaining that knowledge and then he can make his decisions and obviously have his faith grow and things like that. So I find it a hard question to answer. I don't think I am that knowledgeable to answer the question in a deeper sense I guess. ... For me it [faith] is a struggle.
(Anne)

When asked to explain what the faith of her parents looked like, she went on to clarify;

Just their belief, you know. Just believing and being good Catholics, Christians. I think it's hard and I think sometimes coming to this country probably it's been a little bit hard for me because we were exposed to different things to the things I was exposed to in India. Our life is different there. We move around with the strict Muslim and the strict Hindu views that here I think I found it probably a little bit harder. Obviously mum and dad struggling with that they had to make sure that we all kept our faith and that we'd go to Mass and things like that. I don't know if I am explaining myself. (Anne)

Participants in the voice of faith as an active struggle were less confident in articulating the understanding of their faith. Their lack of confidence was in contrast to the confidence and enthusiasm which most participants in both the voice of orthodoxy and the voice of faith as a lived experience demonstrated when asked to express their understanding of faith.

A Tentative Faith Conviction

A second characteristic of the voice of faith as an active struggle was that they had not yet come to their own faith conviction. For Anne, her struggle did not come from her doubts about the faith but rather from how to live this faith that had been nurtured by her parents. The difficulty is that until the present time Anne has been trying to live her faith through the faith of her parents. When asked whether she was still searching for an understanding of faith, Anne replied immediately with:

Oh Yes. Oh gosh yes. I mean I know but I just? I mean if you say to me let's go to Mass I wouldn't think twice. To me I really enjoy going to Mass. Again if you say let's pray the Rosary, I wouldn't think twice about it. That I know I want to do. Yes. I may not understand everything or whatever but I definitely want to do it and I want to know more and that sort of stuff. That's why a few years ago I did the Catechist course and it was great you know. To listen to Father I learnt so much from it and you know for me you are always learning. (Anne)

Anne has knowledge of the faith in the sense that she is familiar with the traditions associated with the practice of the faith. Up to this point in her life, Anne has not been able to internalise what faith is for her personally. She views faith as 'having the knowledge', an intellectual cognitive understanding, and believes she does not have sufficient religious knowledge; therefore she does not have adequate faith. Anne

knows how to practise her faith but does not know why she should believe. She finds herself trapped in a faith that is essentially the faith expression of her parents. She has not grasped an understanding of faith that is integrated with her life experiences.

The struggles of coming to a personal faith understanding are indicative of what was articulated by this small group of participants. Participants within the voice of faith as an active struggle are 'living in the gap' trying to make sense of faith in their life. They have a desire and a commitment to the faith but are confused by the many grey areas or contradictions they are experiencing as they try to grasp it for themselves. One fact of which they are convinced is that they want their children to have a faith tradition.

The Voice of Faith as an Active Struggle's Desire for the Faith of their Children

When participants were asked the desire they have for the faith of their children those in the voice of faith as an active struggle were concerned about the faith knowledge of their children. They claimed that this desire comes from the inadequacies they have themselves of religious knowledge. Chris desired for more support in the area of faith development for her children because she felt that she was not skilled to do so herself. Her children do not attend PREP. The only desire named by Chris was that she wanted her children to attend a Catholic school.

I would like them to broaden their knowledge in the faith like in a Catholic school but like I said they don't go to a Catholic school for various reasons I think that is one reason I would like them to do. Going to a school with other children in the faith I suppose it reinforces what they learn as suppose to going to a school with no particular religion whatever, they don't talk about it. It takes them a bit longer to understand the values I suppose. (Chris)

The desire named by Anne was very closely aligned with the desire of those who hold an orthodoxy view. She desired that her children practice the faith in the same way she practised her faith as a child.

Well I would like them to practise. I would definitely like them to practise. A lot of people say that you can just be a good person and we don't need to go to Mass. Yes I suppose that what I want for the kids and expect them to respect what we believe. Never mock or hurt. As I said to Jordan we never know unless we learn. I say mum doesn't really know how to answer your question so I make sure you go to catechism [PREP] to learn from that, learn

*from the Mass and the family like their nanna and their uncles and
aunties. (Anne)*

From the data it is fair to conclude that those in the voice of faith as an active struggle have a genuine desire for their children to share in the faith tradition to which they belong. Participants in this voice acknowledge that they are somewhat inadequate in taking on the task of nurturing faith as they struggle with their own faith understanding.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the data revealed three distinct understandings of faith among participants. These were identified as: the voice of orthodoxy, the voice of faith as a lived experience, and the voice of faith as an active. The findings revealed that for most, regardless of the voice they represent, faith is the means through which they make meaning of life and thus are able to engage with the world with the purpose of doing the will of God. The fundamental element of faith is belief in God, a God who is loyal, trustworthy, and reliable who calls and awaits a response.

The main differences in the understanding of faith occurred between the voice of orthodoxy and the voice of faith as a lived experience. The participants in the voice of orthodoxy have a structured understanding of faith that is guided by the rules and regulations of the faith. Their understanding of faith revolves around the practices of the faith. Those in the voice of faith as a lived experience have a broader understanding of faith. Their understanding is entrenched in a lived faith and is guided by Gospel-centred values. Alternatively the third voice, the voice of faith as an active struggle is at a stage where a clear personal understanding of faith has not yet been reached by the participants.

Furthermore the desires participants held for their children in regards to faith also stemmed from the understanding of faith in keeping with each voice. The desire which was common to the participants across the three voices was that their children have faith. The understanding of what it means to have faith was defined differently across the three voices. The voice of orthodoxy centred on such things as the desire to keep the practice of the faith, the desire for their child to dedicate a life to God and the desire for their children to pass on the faith tradition. The focus of their desire was the hope

that their children would practise the faith in the same way they do. This desire is in keeping with their aim of the preserving the Catholicity of the faith.

Participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience also desire that their children have faith. The difference in the desire between those in this voice and the voice of orthodoxy was the hope that their children would develop their own personal faith commitment rather than merely adopting that of their parents as desired strongly by those in the voice of orthodoxy. Participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience were more open to being tolerant of other faiths and encourage their children to become informed of other beliefs. Participants in this voice demonstrated a belief that tolerance is itself a sign of lived faith. They desired that their children be tolerant of other faiths as well as have a respect for their own faith tradition. The desires named by participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience were in direct contrast to those in the voice of orthodoxy. Those in the voice of orthodoxy ultimately desired that their children practise specifically a faith that is a Catholic.

Those in the voice of faith as an active struggle also ultimately desired faith for their children. They did not name specific desires for the faith of their children; rather they spoke strongly of the desire for their children to attend a Catholic school so that they would come to know their faith because they felt inadequately skilled to nurture their children. This sense of inadequacy was strongest in the desires by this voice. The yearning for Catholic education and the sense of inadequacy due to limited faith knowledge will be discussed in Chapter Six.

Each voice discussed in this Chapter will become the foundation for understanding the main question of the study: how do parents who do not send their children to Catholic schools nurture the faith within the context of the home? Chapters Five and Six will present the findings of how the three understandings of faith, presented in this Chapter, nurture the faith of their children within their homes.