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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 Five

The Findings: Nurturing Faith

Faith cannot be taught by any method of instruction ... we can only expand in faith, act in faith, live in faith. Faith can be inspired within a community of faith, but it cannot be given to one person by another. Faith is expressed, transformed, and made meaningful by persons sharing their faith in an historical, tradition-bearing community of faith.

(Westerhoff 1976, p.23)

The aim of the interviews was to listen to how parents nurture the faith of their children within the home. The findings presented in this Chapter describe how the faith understandings of the participants, presented in Chapter Four, are put into practise within their homes. This Chapter firstly explores the strategies employed by participants to nurture faith and secondly, it identifies the nurturing style of each voice. The challenges that parents face in their tasks of nurturing faith will be described in the following Chapter Six.

Nurturing Faith Within the Home

This group of participants volunteered to participate in a study exploring faith nurturing issues. It was evident that nurturing the faith of children within the context of the home was a priority for all who participated in this study. All participants had a strong desire to share their faith with their children and this was reflected in the variety of nurturing strategies used. The metaphor of voices established in Chapter Four continued to be useful. These voices were clear, distinct interpretations of the way faith was understood within the home. The researcher recognised that the practical processes of parenting undergo change; therefore it was not surprising that the data revealed, in some few cases, a mixture of nurturing styles which can not be uniquely depicted by one or other voices. It was noted that even though all participants named similar nurturing strategies, each voice had a different approach in the way that the strategies were used and the intent of their use. This difference in approach is characterised as the nurturing style. The nurturing style of each voice will be discussed in the second part of this Chapter.

Nurturing Strategies Identified in the Study

The study sought to explore how faith is nurtured within the context of the home. One way of revealing this was to investigate the strategies used to nurture faith within the homes of the participants. The data revealed that no participant named only one way of nurturing faith within the home. Each participant shared a number of strategies which were used to nurture the faith of their children. These strategies included; prayer, Mass attendance; reading the Bible; conversations and discussions; witness and example; and attending the Perth Archdiocesan Parish Religious Education Program (PREP). Such nurturing strategies are in harmony with the documents of the Catholic Church which deal with catechesis within the home. As described in Chapter Two (cf. pp.36–38) in the Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio* (1981), John Paul II names four tasks for the Christian family, through which parents can carry out the mission of nurturing faith of the young. These tasks are: 1) forming a community of persons, 2) serving life, 3) participating in the development of society and 4) sharing in the life and mission of the Church. Through these four tasks the family is called to build up the reign of God in a way that is unique to the mission of the family (*Familiaris Consortio* 1981, #17). The strategies through which families are called to nurture faith and promote the growth of faith within the family include: celebrating faith through rituals, telling the Catholic faith story, enriching family relationships, praying together as a family, performing acts of justice and service and relating as a family to the wider community (Roberto 1992, p.3).

Praying Within the Home

Prayer was central to the nurturing of faith for most participants in the study and a strategy that each participant named. The data revealed that although most participants named prayer as a nurturing strategy within the home the approach to prayer reflected the particular understanding of faith of each participant.

Approach to Prayer by the Voice of Orthodoxy

As discussed in the previous Chapter (cf. pp.95–102), the understanding of faith for those who speak with the voice of orthodoxy is based on knowledge, expectation, and efficacy. The approach to prayer by those in the voice of orthodoxy was, in the main, strongly focused on the knowing of the formal prayers of the Church and teaching their

children to recite them by rote. The data seemed to indicate that the main emphasis by participants in this group was to teach their children the formal prayers of the Church so that they would be able to keep the observances of the faith.

Praying the Rosary was an important part of the daily prayer life of participants in the voice of orthodoxy. All participants in Table 5.1 (p.173) spoke of the Rosary as part of their daily ritual.

We try to make the Rosary an everyday affair. We encourage the children to pray it with us. It is a very important part of the faith the Rosary.
(Terry)

Praying the Rosary was central to the daily routine those in this voice because for this group this prayer is an important part of living the Catholic tradition. Praying the Rosary was a strong part of their prayer life experienced in their childhood. The sentiments expressed by Maria were common to most participants in this voice.

The Rosary is important. We pray the Rosary because that is how Catholics pray. I remember we prayed the Rosary at home every night with my family. We never missed. My father would lead it. I want my children to pray the Rosary too so I lead it every night except Sundays. I tell my children this is the most beautiful prayer we have as Catholics.
(Maria)

Those in the voice of orthodoxy named teaching of the formal prayers as an important part of this nurturing strategy as such prayers were necessary to pray the Rosary. Terry and Tina suggested that praying the Rosary gave rise to teaching children the basic prayers of the faith tradition. Terry, in his conversation about the Rosary, pointed out quite emphatically that 'of course' his daughter knew the basic prayers of the Church.

My daughter of course knows the 'Our Father', she knows the 'I Believe', she knows some basic prayers that are necessary for the Rosary.
(Terry)

Tina commented also that teaching her children the formal prayers of the Church has led them to praying the Rosary with her every night.

They learnt the basic prayers and now I say the Rosary every night. I started once, like they share a bedroom and I started that when I put them to bed. We'd say a prayer and say our night prayers. I had the Rosary in my hand and they asked, 'what's that.' I just said it was a Rosary and I explained what it was about. Then I started to explain the mysteries and then I said I'm going to

say it now, and they said, 'Can you say it with us' and now it's become a routine and they want me to lay between them and say the Rosary. Then they'll say to me 'which day is it.' Now they will say, 'what mystery are you saying?' I taught them the mysteries. They know all the three mysteries and which days they are supposed to say it. So like last night I said to Harrison, which mystery am I saying and he worked it out. (Tina)

The learning of prayers for those in the voice of orthodoxy was primarily focused on knowing the formal prayers.

Setting a Prayer Schedule

One of the things that became apparent in the data was that participants in this orthodoxy group shared that they had established prayer time in their family schedule. Three participants shared that their scheduled prayer time was in the car on the way to school.

On the way to school we say that prayer that the Archbishop sent out to all families, you know, the family prayer. ... The kids know it off by heart. Then there is an intention and then we all say we ask this in Jesus' name. So we do that every morning Monday to Friday. (Kerry)

Others, such as Terry, spoke of setting a time in the week when they would visit the Church with their children. Other prayer times included praying in the morning, at meal time, and at night time before going to bed. Most participants in the voice of orthodoxy expressed that each day they would come together with their children for prayer. It was an essential part of their family's life.

Participants shared various structures which they had in place for family prayer. Maria, for example, has a strong expectation of efficacy of prayer. She shared that she would spend a significant amount of time in prayer each night with her children, up to an hour. This time is structured.

We pray the Rosary, then we do a meditation every night and then the kids can do a free prayer [spontaneous prayer] and then we go to bed. Sometimes, a lot of people have realised that our faith is quite strong so they ask for special prayers and different opportunities and so as soon as those calls come we gather together, we come together independent of the time and we get together to pray as a team. (Maria)

The data revealed that similar structures were common in many of the homes of participants who speak with the voice of orthodoxy.

Maria was the only participant in the voice of orthodoxy who named spontaneous prayer as part of their family prayer time. Most other participants only mentioned the teaching and the praying of formal prayers within the home.

In summary, the approach to prayer by those who speak in the voice of orthodoxy was centred on 'knowing' the formal prayers of the Church. The purpose of prayer, as stated by most participants in this voice, was to know the basic prayers so that they could recite them as part of the rituals of the worshipping community.

Approach to Prayer by the Voice of Faith as Lived Experience

As already mentioned (cf. p.132), the study does not claim that all participants necessarily fit the characteristic of one voice only. In some cases a two nurturing styles emerged within one voice. Two groups were identified within this voice; one that leaned towards orthodoxy which was concerned more about knowledge and the second group, growing into faith, was more focussed on developing within the child an understanding of the relationship between themselves and God. This was most evident in the discussions on Mass attendance and prayer.

Approach to Prayer: Subgroup Leaning Towards Orthodoxy

As with the voice of orthodoxy, for most in the subgroup leaning towards orthodoxy the prayer life within the home was centred on formal prayer. The teaching of formal prayers was a key nurturing strategy. The main difference between the voice of orthodoxy and the participants in this subgroup was that those in the subgroup leaning towards orthodoxy, had a different approach to the way they pray with their children. The findings identified that the Rosary was the main form of prayer for this subgroup of participants. What set this group apart from the participants in the voice of orthodoxy was the approach to teaching the children to pray the Rosary. Those who speak in the voice of orthodoxy were keen for their children to pray the five decades of Rosary at a time. In contrast, the participants in the subgroup leaning towards orthodoxy preferred to pray a decade of the Rosary each night to allow their children to concentrate on what

they are praying. They indicated that to pray the five decades of the Rosary each evening was less than a prayerful experience for their children.

Before bed, we say one decade of the Rosary then we say our night prayers and then it's bedtime. We try to do that because otherwise the Rosary gets too long and the children are quite tired by the end of the day, all of us are. (Alice)

Like Alice, Andrea also did not see the benefit of praying five mysteries of the Rosary in one day. Andrea commented that in her view, the Rosary does not become a prayer if it is recited by rote, not paying attention to its meaning. Speaking of her son Andrea comments:

I am proud to say he [her son] will always say his prayers and he also says a decade of the Rosary which I am really glad he has learnt. In the beginning he wanted me to say the whole Rosary with him which maybe I should have done. But he says it on his own now; a decade a day. I feel that is a better way to pray for a little boy. I find it hard to say it all in one go. I get tired. I think it is better to do less and think about what is being said. (Andrea)

Even though the participants in the voice of lived experience within the subgroup leaning towards orthodoxy confer with the voice of orthodoxy on the teaching of formal prayers as the main strategy to nurturing faith within the home, the approach varies. Those who lean towards orthodoxy are aware that for prayer to be an effective tool to nurturing faith then the children need to be introduced to prayer at a level that is appropriate.

Approach to Prayer: Subgroup Growing into Faith

For participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience, growing into faith, spontaneous prayer was the main form of prayer within the home. Prayer was often related to the experience or the events of family life and to the happenings in the community and the world. This group spoke strongly of how spontaneous prayer was not only a strategy that encouraged the family to pray together but also that this form of prayer helped develop stronger family relationships.

Kylie and Cora spoke of how prayer helped develop stronger relationships within the family.

At night when I tuck them into bed we say the Our Father together and then we would pray about different things that may be an issue

at the time, personal things at school, friendship dynamics. It might also be about what's happening on the earth, such as the wars etc. We do that every night as part of the going to bed ritual. It's really important to the children because that's their time with me and in that form of prayer I get to know what they're feeling and where they're at as well.
(Kylie)

Cora commented on how she guides her children through what might be considered an examination of conscience at the end of each day. This examination of conscience allows her to work through with her children ways of living in a way that promotes the values of the Gospel. By spending time in prayer with each child, Cora was able to give each child special one-to-one time and like Kylie, she can enter into the lives of her children and is able to support them not only physically and emotionally but spiritually as well.

At night I say prayers with the children, with each of them individually. I bring them through what they've done through the day and what they should be thankful for and the things they didn't do well. We talk about how they can do them better and to pray for help to do what ever it is better next time ... Prayer is more like I ask them to say the usual, you know God bless the family and friend, you know the normal kinds of things and then I say well what do we have to be thankful for today, you know and they sometimes say, oh nothing. Then I say do you remember you said you had that and that your friend did this for you. Maybe we should say thank you to God for your friend or whatever. Then they might say well I fought with so and so and I say well you need to think about what you did to allow that to happen and ask God to help you say, not to shout back to that person ... I help them to see how to better themselves through using or rather being with God ... I think it helps them. It is also sometimes an opportunity for them to talk through the worries they have. It is a good way for me just to be a parent to them. It gives me the opportunity to talk to them and because I talk to them regularly and they tell me the things that have happened that I might not be aware of myself.
(Cora)

Cora guides her children to pray about the different aspects of their lives giving them a format to follow as they develop their own style of prayer. Cora directs her children to be mindful of the wonderful aspects of life as well as the aspects of their lives which may need attention when they pray. It could be said that Cora is schooling her children in ways to pray.

Ian also encourages spontaneous prayer as a way of opening the eyes of his children to the world and for them to become aware of those who may need special support.

As we say our prayers on the way to school we might say "help us to be kind and loving to those around us." We'll ask God to bless the school, bless the families and perhaps if there is a child having a difficulty occasionally, we even put a little prayer in for a particular child. I suppose through prayer their eyes are open to caring for others. (Ian)

For these participants prayer was a time for encouraging their children to reflect on the things that affected them during the day, and to offer these to God in thanksgiving. In the same manner, prayer time also allowed the parents to develop a closer relationship with their children as they come to understand their feelings and views of their children about different issues in life.

As with the voice of orthodoxy and participants in the sub group leaning towards orthodoxy, this group spoke of a variety of prayer opportunities which they practised within the home. These opportunities included: praying in the morning, at meal times, and at night time before going to bed.

Understanding the Meaning of Prayers

The data highlighted that for participants in both subgroups within the voice of faith as a lived experience teaching children the meaning of prayers was essential. This was one reason why those in the subgroup growing into faith of participants were more comfortable with spontaneous prayer. Those in this subgroup viewed the praying of formal prayers more as a formula and a series of words that have little meaning for children if such prayers were not explained.

When I was a kid we just said stuff. It wasn't a prayer really because I didn't understand what I was saying. Remember the prayer Hail Holy Queen? What was that all about? In fact I still don't know....I want my kids to understand what they are saying and if it is important that they need to know the Our Father or the Hail Mary then they should know what they mean. Someone needs to teach me that first. (Ian)

The comment made by Ian was representative of 18 of the 23 participants in this subgroup. The understanding promoted by those who speak in this subgroup was that

for prayer to be an effective nurturing strategy it needs to be more than a string of meaningless words, it must be related to life.

Jack has teenage children and he discussed his view that children today are more questioning of what is presented to them. He believes that if he was going to instil in his children the importance of prayer then he should enable his children to question what prayer is about just as they would question most things in life. At the same time he wants them to understand what they are praying rather than forcing them to recite words which are meaningless to them, as may be the case with formal prayers.

Kids are asking questions now days because they want to understand. Not like us; we just accepted. They ask why do we need to do things? It must have meaning for them because if it does not have meaning for them, then they will just classify it as useless. So I think you have to teach them the whole meaning behind all you do especially when it comes to prayer, so they can understand how it affects their life and not just a string of empty words that they recite.
(Jack)

As has been established, the approach to prayer by those in the voice of faith as a lived experience, especially those in the subgroup growing into faith, differs greatly from the understanding of those in the voice of orthodoxy. For those in the voice of orthodoxy formal prayer is crucial to the experience of the faith tradition. Prayers are learnt, usually by rote, for the purpose of being able to participate in the rituals and formalities of the Church. This view of orthodoxy which values rote memory of prayers was also true of participants within the voice of faith as a lived experience that have been identified as leaning towards orthodoxy. For those in subgroup growing into faith, it was crucial that children understand the meaning of prayer with the hope that such an approach would enable them to develop a personal relationship with God.

Praying as a Family can be a Struggle

The subgroup growing into faith recognised that praying as a family can be a struggle. One comment which surfaced frequently within this subgroup was the admission of 'slipping up' when it came to praying. This was in direct contrast to those who speak with the voice of orthodoxy and those who lean toward orthodoxy who scheduled prayer time into the family's daily routine.

On an everyday basis we try to make our child say good night prayers. And we slip up on our grace before meals. Occasionally we do remember to say it. (Elizabeth)

The data revealed that for 15 of the 23 participants in this subgroup shared that praying as a family was a struggle. They admitted that even though a desire to pray together as a family was present, sometimes the other pressures of life took hold, praying as a family was not always as frequent as they would hope.

I try to say prayers with the kids at the end of every day. We always say family grace and we include personal pray around the table for any thing that we are thankful for or asking for. We occasionally get our Rosary beads out and pray the Rosary although that's not something that we do that often. It slips away. We have this desire to do it and it just it slips away. (Karen)

The struggle experienced with praying as a family in this subgroup was in contrast to the approach to prayer stated by most in the voice of orthodoxy and those who lean towards orthodoxy. As has been already established (cf. pp.135–136), most participants in the voice of orthodoxy claimed that they have structured prayer time within their home. The data showed that participants who speak within this subgroup of the voice of faith as a lived experience were not as concerned about setting a specific time for prayer even though many did mention bedtime as their preferred time for praying with their children. Furthermore, of the 15 who admitted that praying as a family was a struggle, five participants confided that prayer was not a regular part of family life. The remark made by Lisa was typical of the response of these participants.

I must admit we don't say grace or anything like that on a regular basis. We pray sometimes but I usually pray by myself. We don't really pray as a family. I don't know why, thinking about it. (Lisa)

Others participants, such as Trish, spoke of prayer as not being a routine part of their family life, not because prayer was not important in their lives; but rather because she had a different approach to prayer. Trish explained that she does not see the value of the type of prayer life that was part of her childhood. She found the approach to prayer which her mother advocated was routine and duty filled rather than prayerful and relational. Trish argued that she wanted her children to develop their own prayer life so that they could understand the power of prayer through their own experience of life. With guidance, Trish believes that children will develop a prayer life that has a greater impact on their faith than does learning prayers by rote.

We don't always pray together. It is not a routine part of the day like my mum did with us every morning, half an hour before we were ready to go to school on your knees. I want my children to think it is not something that is forced upon them. It is something that they can come to, with us guiding them but part of their own decisions as well and I think that is working well because they do. When something happens they say mum I'm going to pray about this, so I can see it working although it is not the formal thing.
(Trish)

For those in the subgroup growing into faith the approach to prayer is less formal and structured compared to those in the orthodox groups. The main priority for the participants in the subgroup growing into faith was to use prayer as a nurturing strategy that would help their children develop a personal prayer life which had meaning for their lives.

In summary the emphasis on prayer for those in the voice of lived experience subgroup growing into faith was on the meaning of prayer. This was in sharp contrast with those in the orthodox groups where the main emphasis was the teaching of formal prayers. Another difference in the approach to prayer between the subgroups was in the subgroup, leaning towards orthodoxy, the main aim is to learn the prayers for the purpose of praying, whereas the subgroup growing into faith, prayer has more of an emphasis on relationship.

Approach to Prayer by the Voice of Faith as an Active Struggle

Participants in the voice of faith as an active struggle did not make specific reference to prayer within their homes. Anne's reference to prayer was of her childhood memories of the Rosary. She recalled that in her childhood the Rosary was not an optional part of being a Catholic. They prayed the Rosary every day without question. She was quite distressed at the realisation that they did not pray the Rosary within her home today.

My upbringing was always very, very strict. I remember we had to say the Rosary and things like that. So I am probably a little bit more paranoid about that since we don't say the Rosary. I feel that something is wrong because we don't pray the Rosary in our house. In fact we don't pray as a family.
(Anne)

On the other hand, Chris was the only participant in the study who made no mention of praying with her children in her conversation. She was more focussed on introducing her children to the faith through attending Mass.

Mass Attendance

For Catholics, the Mass is at the centre and summit of their worshipping community. Regular Mass attendance is recognised as one of the main expressions of faith for Catholics, therefore it was not surprising that Mass attendance was the second strategy named by participants across the three voices as important for nurturing faith. As was the case with prayer, what set the three voices apart were the different approaches to the Mass as a nurturing strategy. Each voice emphasised a different aspect of why Mass attendance was important to the nurturing of faith within the home.

Approach to Mass Attendance by the Voice of Orthodoxy

The five participants who speak with the voice of orthodoxy placed significant importance on Mass attendance as a nurturing strategy established within their home. The data revealed that the approach to the Mass by this group was driven by the understanding of faith which is attributed to them in Chapter Four (cf. pp.95–102). Participants in the voice of orthodoxy spoke strongly about Mass attendance as obligation. This was in keeping with the orthodox understanding that faith is ritualistic in nature and centred on the observances of faith (cf. p.98). All participants in this voice viewed Mass attendance as a sense of duty. Mass attendance is seen as one of the obligations of a Catholic. Maria's comment on Mass attendance highlighted this attitude.

As a Catholic we are expected to go the Mass. It is one of the commandments that we need to obey. We go to Mass every Sunday and I tell the children that we have to go because we are Catholics and that is what being a Catholic is all about. (Maria)

The sense of duty as described by Maria was common to the ideas expressed by participants in this voice. Mass attendance was one of the central strategies used by participants in this voice to instil in their children that to be truly Catholic one needs to adhere to the practices of the faith tradition and thus preserve the Catholic faith.

A second purpose that emerged in the data when speaking about the Mass attendance as a nurturing strategy used within the home was the focus on the ritualistic behaviours of the faith tradition, behaviours that participants in this voice were taught in their childhood.

I guide her to look at the things that I had been taught as a kid about the Mass. Things like: do not to talk in the Church; pay attention in the Mass; to pray the prayers of the Mass. Other things like when we must stand and sit and kneel. These are important to the ways Catholics celebrate the Mass and I believe that children need to learn them so that they can be respectful in Mass.
(Terry)

For many in this voice Mass attendance is much more than Sunday worship; many spoke of it as a daily ritual. Kerry is one who reported attending Mass daily. She commented that attending Mass is important to her faith life, and at the same time she believes that she is giving witness to her children of her faith commitment.

I started going to weekday Mass years ago. The kids have actually grown up with the concept that mum goes to 8.00 Mass every morning. Just recently they've questioned it. "Mum is it a sin not to go to Mass Monday to Friday". And I say "No". So that's part of my experience that they have all of a sudden sat back and noticed.
(Kerry)

Approach to Mass Attendance by the Voice of Faith as a Lived Experience

As with the voice of orthodox, Mass attendance was an important part of faith life of participants in voice of faith as a lived experience. All participants in this voice acknowledged Mass attendance as one of the strategies in which the faith of their children was nurtured. As with prayer, the discussion on Mass attendance as a strategy for nurturing faith within the home exposed that the two subgroups within the voice of faith as a lived experience, leaning towards orthodoxy and growing into faith had different approaches to this strategy.

Leaning Towards Orthodoxy

The subgroup leaning towards orthodoxy reflected strongly the approach to Mass attendance held by participants in the voice of orthodoxy. The data indicated that for participants in this subgroup Mass attendance was driven by a sense of duty. This sense of duty reflected the tone of the orthodox group. As with those in the voice of orthodoxy the sense of duty was attributed to their childhood faith experience.

Sunday Mass is important first because it was part of our growing up. Sunday was a day of obligation and we had to go to Mass and we have never missed. In my home we always go to Mass without fail.
(Alice)

Growing into Faith

The approach to Mass attendance described by those in the subgroup growing into faith was significantly different to those in the orthodox groups. For participants in the subgroup growing into faith Mass attendance was one strategy used for developing the faith of their children. Many participants in the subgroup growing into faith stated that even though it is a desire that their children attend Mass, they did not force them to attend because it was an obligation, a rule of the Church. The data revealed that participants in this subgroup did not necessarily have less regard for the Mass than those in the orthodoxy groups. Those in the subgroup growing into faith expressed a desire for their children to develop their own yearning for attending Mass. This yearning was cultivated by the participants by exposing their children to Mass at a young age.

The view of Doreen on Mass attendance is characteristic of those who speak in this subgroup. She remarked that even though she agrees that attending Mass is an important part of the Catholic tradition, she does not have the same viewpoint on the matter as was mentioned by her husband Terry (cf. p.144). Doreen stated that she has rejected her childhood rigidity of having to attend Mass because it was considered compulsory. She is not convinced that one must go to Mass for the reasons which were presented to her in her childhood. However, she felt the need to introduce her children to the experience of the Mass as she understands that the Mass is part of the faith tradition. Her emphasis on Mass attendance is not so much as to comply with the rules of the Church as it is to give her children the opportunity to experience the Mass so that they can come to their own decision about attending when they are older.

When I was a child I had to go [to Mass]. It had to be done and we went. I don't strongly believe that you have to go, but at the same time I tell my child it is necessary. You can't enjoy something if you are not there ... So on the basis of that I wish that my daughter should go to Church and because I want it [the Mass] to become important for her. (Doreen)

Elizabeth held a similar view to Doreen about Mass attendance. As with Doreen, Elizabeth understands that the Mass is an important part of the faith tradition and most of the time she has little problem with attending Mass. In fact she enjoys the hour away from her routine to sit and meditate without distractions. However, she too does not believe that the Mass is the only way to be in touch with God.

A lot of times I say it's Sunday and we need to go [to Mass]. It's not because it's the service that we have to attend. It's because I feel that it is one hour when I am doing something different from what I would be doing otherwise. If I said I'd give that one hour in prayer at home it wouldn't be the same because there would be so many distraction. But I go to Church and that is one hour when I can meditate, my mind can go to other things, but it is still that one hour where I'm doing ... I believe that times when you have not been able to Church for what ever reason I say to them let's go to the beach for that hour and make that our blessing. We don't have to attend a service but we need to go where we can be in touch with our Being. (Elizabeth)

Jack and Jane expressed that they would like their children to understand that the Mass is an important part of what it means to be a Catholic. They are mindful of the fact that their children are entering into a stage of life where it is not 'cool' to go to Church.

We try to instil in them [children] that it is very important that they go to Church regularly to maintain that contact because if that breaks then they will go astray sooner or later. We try to enforce, not enforce, but try to stress upon them the importance of going to Church regularly and to try to maintain their faith, to become stronger in their faith. (Jack)

Jane reinforced the comments made by her husband by adding:

Yes. We don't force, we try never to force them and say we have to go to Church. We try gently to reach them all the time. We never like to leave them say with the older one as they say they can stay home. We just encourage them and say that it is something that we do as a family. We impress on them all the time that while we have to go to Church, we need to go to Church because that is the only way we can nurture our faith. (Jane)

The approach to Mass attendance of Jack and Jane is representative of the majority (15 of 23) of the participants in this voice of growing into faith.

Participants in this subgroup desired that their children attend Mass but did not want to force them in the fear that the children would turn away from the faith completely. Turning children away from the faith was a fear that many participants spoke about. Heidi shared a story which resounds with many in this group. She spoke of her struggle with her son to attend Mass. She desires that he attend Mass but knows the reality with which she is faced. Together with 14 of 23 participants in this subgroup of growing into

faith with a similar dilemma, she has given up trying to force him to attend Mass as it only causes more stress on the family.

I am having a really hard time with my son right now. I've decided, it's not worth getting into too many fights about it. He will come and when he is eighteen, I guess he will have to make his own decision about whether he wants to go to Church. It's not worth me stressing too much about that. He will make his own mind up and you can't force them to something that they don't want to do. Hopefully if you have instilled that background of going to Church and how you should behave towards other people maybe later on they may come back to the Church or whatever. I'm not sure about that.
(Heidi)

As was stated by participants in the orthodox groups attending Mass is a compulsory family affair. This sentiment was resonant of the view of a group of participants in the subgroup growing into faith. However, even though the participants in the subgroup growing into faith have a similar desire to attend Mass as a family, the approach was one of encouragement and witness rather than compulsion.

Judy explained that she has taken her children to Mass since they were babies. She believes that attending Mass as a family is important as it strengthens faith. She is aware that the liturgy is beyond the capability of small children so she devised ways of helping her children experience the Mass as a positive experience from a young age.

One thing I do is ... actually I did this when they were younger not so much now, but still with my nine and half year old. I ask them to come back with one question or no one thing that they learnt from Mass every week. Now when my little one was four or five he would say there were nine lights in the Church and you know that's a learning thing. Now it's more that you know that they listen to in the homily, the Gospel, and things like that. That is something that really worked, actually extremely well, because then they go 'oh I remember such and such oh yes'. So it wasn't just a one thing. They ended up talking about everything.
(Judy)

Pat shared his experience of the Church in Malaysia. From Pat's experience celebrating the Mass is not just a family affair but a community affair also. From his experience, the nurturing of faith belonged to the whole community. The community does not gather to celebrate Mass as a group of individuals. In his experience Sunday is a day for 'fellowship' where people gather for Mass, prayer and Bible study. It is a day that the family comes together and shares all aspects of faith with the wider

worshipping community. Pat commented that such a community experience was not fully representative of the more common Australian experience.

As a family what we do is try to pray together as often as possible. We believe that the family that prays together stays together. It helps keep the family very closely knitted. So what we do every Sunday, of course there is the Sunday morning Mass, then the Sunday school. They [children] attend the Sunday school because in Malaysia they attend a non Catholic school. There are no more mission schools in Malaysia so this is how they dispense by the Church the instruction by a facilitator who have committed their time. Then in the afternoon, after lunch say from 2 o'clock to 6 o'clock the family attends some kind of family worship with about say 50 or 60 people. Parents together with their children come for praise and worship, for intercessory prayers, for healing, and also for some Bible studies. This is what we do usually. (Pat)

When asked how often they would experience this type of fellowship afternoon Pat replied:

Every Sunday except for maybe the Christmas break. (Pat)

The community sense of worship described by Pat is in contrast to the orthodox understanding of worship. Elizabeth (cf. p.146), for example, described attending Mass as an individualistic activity; a time when she can remove herself from the distractions of others and have a one to one relationship with God.

On the other hand, for a small group of participants in the subgroup growing into faith the same compulsion of attending Mass as a family was not as strong. Carmel is typical of participants in this voice who shared that she did not take her children to Mass until she thought the children were ready to understand and participate in the celebration. Carmel explained:

My two older ones do come with me. That's something I didn't start with the children until they did start RE classes because I feel when they were really little they had no appreciation for it. I just found that it didn't work you know. It just didn't. I used to come to Church and get more agitated if anything. You know they wouldn't keep still. So the two older ones do and I find that my oldest boy is like me, like he'll sing and you know respond, whereas the second one doesn't as much and I say come on join in. Sometimes my boys don't want to go the Church. Sometimes they do come under protest but they come... for now! (Carmel)

Mass attendance for most participants in the subgroup growing into faith is about coming to an appreciation of the meaning of the celebration. Even though the majority of participants desired that their children attend Mass weekly, the focus was on allowing the children to experience and take in what is developmentally acceptable. This group of participants wanted to nurture an understanding within their children that attending Mass is not so much about duty, but rather a means through which they can deepen their relationship with God.

Approach to Mass Attendance by the Voice of Faith as an Active Struggle

As with the voice of orthodoxy and the voice of faith as a lived experience the Mass was a key strategy for nurturing faith within the home of those in the voice of faith as an active struggle. For the participants in the voice of faith as an active struggle the Mass was a concrete way of introducing faith to their children. It was one of the strategies with which the participants were familiar from their childhood experience and therefore comfortable with sharing in it with their children.

In nurturing the faith of her children, Chris reverted to the things that she remembered in her childhood that were associated with faith. As already mentioned in Chapter Four (cf. p.126), Chris was not raised in a practising Catholic home and thus has to rely on the things she remembers from her limited religious education which she received in a State school. Chris remembers the importance placed on the Mass and thus used Mass attendance as the first strategy to introduce her children to the faith. In her conversation Chris repetitively used words such as 'I suppose' and 'I think' indicating to the researcher the struggle or uncertainty she has about nurturing faith.

I suppose we go to Church because I want the children to understand the faith when they are adults or old enough to make decisions they can choose whether they want to follow the faith. But we go to Church, I think, because at Church is a lot of valuable lessons and it sort of brings the family together and provides us some kind of unity and something each week like a message. I think that's what I have got out of the Church ... In terms of doing things that nurture the faith I suppose this is a start from then on I suppose taking one step at a time. (Chris)

The need for Chris to introduce her children to the faith comes out of her own need to develop her faith understanding. She spoke many times throughout her conversation about what she got out of the Mass for herself and what she hoped attending Mass

would do for her children. Her main dilemma however, was the sense of not knowing what else she could do to develop her faith and the faith of her children.

Anne had a different struggle. She was trying to fit her orthodox understanding of faith into a culture with which she struggles. Anne speaks of her struggle with nurturing the faith of her children.

Back in India we went to Mass everyday and it wasn't even thought of, we just went to Mass. Whereas here, I don't know it just became a struggle and even more so now, now that I am married. It is more of a struggle. I want my kids to experience what I experienced because it made an impact on my life. Basically I am saying I want to give them the foundations of the faith as I can and then as they grow up they have the foundations and Mass is one of the foundational things about our faith. After that they can do whatever they want. After that you loose control. You are out of their control (sic) after they leave the home and I don't know whatever happens. I do struggle with this. To me my husband is a perfect being. He doesn't do anything wrong but when it comes to Mass, it is quite easily forgotten, you know. I think why haven't you got them ready and that is when I get angry you know, and that annoys me, not that he doesn't know how I feel about the Mass. I think if I married a practicing Indian or whatever then Sunday Mass would be alright ... Well Connor [husband] doesn't think about going to Mass as much as what I do, so to I try to do all these little things that I feel is trying to show the kids that we some how practice.
(Anne)

For Anne, trying to hold on to her traditions of the faith that she recalls from her childhood is a major struggle for her, especially because she feels that her husband does not have the same fervour. It seems from the conversation with Anne that the reasons for her family to attend Mass reflect strongly on the voice of orthodoxy. For Anne attending Mass is bound in the sense of duty. Although Mass attendance plays different roles in the faith life of these two participants, both rely on it as a nurturing strategy for introducing their children to the faith tradition.

Promoting an Understanding that Faith is Integrated with Life

As already documented in Chapter Four, an understanding of faith that emerged strongly from the data was the awareness that faith is integrated with life experiences (cf. pp.105–106). In investigating the nurturing strategies employed by participants to nurture the faith of their children within the context of the home, it became evident from

the data that participants, especially those in the voice of faith as a lived experience, use a number of strategies in which to promote an understanding of faith that is integrated with life experience. This section analyses the different ways the three voices understood the integration of faith and life experiences. This understanding was strongest among participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience.

Integration of Faith with Life Experience – Voice of Orthodox

In developing an understanding that faith is integrated with life, the data showed that Tina and Kerry were the only two participants in the voice of orthodoxy who revealed that they attempted to share with their children the idea that faith has some impact on life through conversations with their children about every day events within their lives.

That's another thing we do. When things happen like the bullying thing, when things come up in the kids lives and they come home from school and we have afternoon tea, and everybody is talking about this thing that happened we talk about from a spiritual point of view. Mainly because that is how I live with my issues so that's how I deal with theirs therefore I think that they are starting to put a spiritual slant on things that happen to them. You can ask them, if you want to get a feel for how they draw on their faith that is something that they would be happy to do. (Kerry)

The data revealed that most participants in the voice of orthodoxy integrate faith with life through teaching their children the formalities of the faith tradition. They demonstrate a faith that firstly engages what Groome (2002) describes as the head, and then the heart and hands.

Integrating Faith with Life – The Voice of Faith as a Lived Experience

Promoting an understanding that faith is integrated with life was at the core of the understanding of faith for participants within the voice of faith as a lived experience. They demonstrate a faith which engages faith first through the hands and heart, and then the head. The main aim for participants who speak in this voice was to encourage this understanding within their children. As described in Chapter Four (cf. pp.105–106), the guiding principles for this voice were not so much observing the rituals and observances of faith; but rather living a life which is in accordance with the values proclaimed in the Gospels. Participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience spoke of nurturing strategies which arose in the natural happenings of family life. By using the opportunities which arose from their daily experience they were able to illustrate to their

children particular faith concepts in a concrete way. These nurturing opportunities were more often spontaneous faith teaching moments even though there were planned moments as well.

Seizing the Teachable Faith Moments

Seizing the moments within the events of family life as tools for nurturing faith was at the heart of those who speak with the voice of faith as a lived experience. Participants referred to the everyday moments which arose naturally as moments to raise the family's awareness that such values as love, respect, and forgiveness are an integral part of daily life.

We would tend to teach, you know, that part of being a good Christian is having nice manners, and treating people respectfully, and not lying, and not be jealous of what other people have, but being happy with what you have, and looking for the happy, the joy in the simple things. ... They're the types of things that we teach. We just teach them things what we consider good values and morals based from our experiences. (Vigi)

When Cora was asked how she put her understanding of faith into practise in her home she explained that in her family life is based on the values of love and respect for one another. It is through the interactions within family life that Cora leads her children to an understanding of faith as a lived experience. One example that Cora shared was how she spends time with her children every night reflecting how they have shown love and respect to others throughout the day.

The principles that or the rules within the house are based around not so much don't do that, it's more that we need to show each that we love each other no matter what. That is the part of showing somebody that we love someone to do that, to showing the children that we are all one. So I try and explain that. But it is based around respect and love and within that I suppose again it is spoken about at night time when they go to bed and I sit with them. I don't so much with my older child. I let her make her own personal choices as far as practicing her religion or what she wants to do and at this stage because she is over eighteen now. (Cora)

Trish had a similar outlook to Cora. She too believes that by being a living example to one another is one of the most effective ways in which to lead children to an understanding that faith is a lived reality.

Through example mainly, just through the way we live. We teach them how to be a good Christian, we might not necessarily call it Christian living, but this is how we live it. We do attend Mass regularly and have that side of things going but I think it is very important to just have it [faith] as part of your every day living. ... I think treating every body as though they have Jesus in them and that means everybody no matter where they're from and that they have that basic respect and underlying love for every body .I think this is how I teach my children about real faith. I usually tell my children it's not what other people do, so why should I do it. I say it doesn't matter what other people do. We need to do things because it's the right thing to do. Just treat other people as you want to be treated or live in the way that Jesus wants you to do it.
(Trish)

A total of 23 of the 29 participants within the voice of faith as a lived experience spoke of conversation times as ideal moments in which they could discuss faith matters with their children in a spontaneous manner. Andrea shared a conversation which arose at the death of her father. She was able to use this moment to share with her children a faith perspective on death.

Yes, we have sat down and discussed and spoke about death because we have had one or two deaths in the family. We have talked about heaven, we talked about what happens after you die. It was the right moment to address such a thing. He asked and so I answered. Hopefully it helped in his grieving. I believe as soon as there is an opportunity never let it go by without pointing out to them the values and the traditions of the faith.
(Andrea)

Conversations were very much part of family life in Karen's household. They have an open approach and talk about most things that they encounter daily. Karen commented that it a natural part of family life that they talk about God and other faith issues because this has always been part of their conversations. Karen considers these opportunities as moments when she can come to understand what her children are experiencing in their lives. She believes also that such conversations allow for children to develop faith at their own pace.

We talk a lot. We talk a lot about God. We talk a lot about life, where people go when they die, and things like that. They're the sort of the bedtime conversations we have that I'm sure that lots of families have them. I think my five year old has a very simple trust in faith which is beautiful and my seven year old is starting to ask a lot more questions and my ten year old has still got a very simple trusting faith. So they are all different in their personalities and I think their faiths will be different and the way in which they live their faith will be different. That's kind of exciting too. I am aware that

we all experience our faith in different way. ... They are unique in the way they have their relationship with God and that makes them feel special.
(Karen)

Jacquie also promotes an understanding that faith is a lived reality through the conversations she shares with her children. She uses events from everyday life to raise awareness within her children of how to live their faith.

We are very much into being nice to our neighbours. For example, my daughter had an issue with a girlfriend of hers at school who was being a bit rude and nasty and, you know what girls are like. I said, Hey look she's just got a baby in the family, her mother is going to and from the hospital because the baby is not well. The whole family is stressed. If anything you have to be extra nice to this girl. You find she may be nasty to you but eventually she will understand that you're going to be a friend for her no matter if she's got stress in her life or not. Bit hard for a 10 year old to understand this but, you know, afterwards she came back to me and said she was alright to me today at school, and I said, see you didn't have to make a bit deal about it and being a bit more understanding rather than just, I don't want to be friends with you anymore because you were rude to me. I just try to let them understand things from a Christian point of view, that sort of thing. So it's more the loving, forgiving and the treat of others in everyday situations that I try and teach them how to be good Christians.
(Jacquie)

Not all participants expressed that they find it easy to talk to their children about faith matters. Carmel confided that she does not find speaking to her children about faith issues an easy task because she feels that she does not have the confidence and the knowledge to express matters of faith. She found it quite difficult to express her understanding of faith to her children.

I don't know! Just in open communication, and bringing the faith understandings into everyday life. Just in conversations mention God and Jesus. I can't think in words what I really want to say. It's really hard without talking down to them. We talk about turning the other cheek and sometimes it is difficult... We talk about not get involved in situations because it doesn't get you anywhere. For example, like people get shoved or called names by doing the same back to that person it doesn't achieve anything as such. I hope that the conversations teach them how to be Christ like.
(Carmel)

The sense of inadequacy described by Carmel was not isolated. This issue will be further discussed in the challenges to nurturing faith which will be addressed in the following Chapter.

The Call to Witness

The call to witness was an aspect of faith nurturing that was prevalent with participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience. The notion of witness was unique to this voice. For the voice of faith as a lived experience promoting an understanding that faith is integrated with life through the call to witness was crucial and is at the foundation of this understanding of nurturing faith held by this voice. Many in the voice agreed that in order for their children to understand how faith is integrated with life, they as parents were called firstly to witness faith through the ways they lived their own lives.

Nurturing faith through the witnessing of their own faith to their children was strong, especially with those who are converts to the Catholic faith. Judy is a recent convert to the Catholic faith. She described how during her journey to becoming a Catholic it became evident that her perception of the Catholic faith being a Sunday thing was far from the reality. As she delved deeper into the Catholic faith she came to an understanding and an appreciation that faith was a way of life. Like many in this voice, she recognised that in order to nurture the faith of her children she had to live it first herself.

I believe faith nurturing comes from witnessing of the faith. ... It's not so much about let's sit down and pray about it. I try and nurture their faith by firstly living it myself. (Judy)

Phillip is also a recent convert to the Catholic faith. At the time of the interview Phillip and his wife were journeying through the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) process in their local parish. His hope was that he and his wife would be initiated fully into the Catholic Church the following Easter. When asked what things they do with the girls to nurture their faith like Kylie and Judy, he spoke first of the importance of witnessing to the faith.

Well in many ways we are trying to develop a faith within them by living it out ourselves.... I guess we're talking little things here too which are almost trimmings in terms of grace, prayers and this sort of thing. But in essence teach the girls about how to live the faith by living it out ourselves. (Phillip)

Alice has no family in Australia and she expressed her concern for the faith development of her children. She shared that she does not have the support of the extended family to help her in this task, an experience that she had in her childhood. Alice feels that she is very much the role model for her children in order to lead them to know how to live their faith.

Well we are in a different country and the culture is different. There will be a lot of peer pressure and I can see it happening but at the same time I feel if we model faith ourselves, we serve as a model to our children then they will learn from us. ... I don't think prayer is everything, just saying all the prayers may be meaningless if we do not have values of respect, of kindness, of sharing, of helping others, being good, being useful, like being a good person. That's my opinion. (Alice)

Stephie and Pat promote similar values within their home. They named the call to love as a way in which they witness their faith to their children. Stephie spoke of teaching her children the Gospel value of the call to love through the way she relates with them. In this way she believes that her children can come to an understanding what it means to be loved. Through her example, she trusts that her children will come to an understanding of it means when they are told that God loves them; an understanding which was common the participants in this group.

I believe that parents need to be the first to show their children what faith is really about. For me, I look at it like this. You love because you believe in God's love and you are an example of that love to others and from there it goes on. So through showing love to my children I allow them to come to know that God loves them. (Stephie)

Pat also spoke of the Gospel value of the call to love. He had a similar understanding to Stephie.

I remember someone said a long time ago if you love somebody, or profess to love somebody, you try and go out of the way to do your best for the other person. This is how I teach my children. Because I believe that my faith is important, then I live it in a way that shows my belief. I mean love them, love my wife, respect, be tolerant, then if I profess my faith by living it, my children will learn from this. This is how I look at it. (Pat)

Karen is aware of her call to be a witness to her children. She commented that both she and her husband witness a different aspect of faith. Karen described her way of

witnessing more as reflective whereas her husband's example of integrating faith with life was through the active involvement with parish groups and other groups in the community.

Something I try to do for myself is to get have a retreat every few years. I don't get to them as often as I would like to or used to with the kids. That's like a meditative type of retreat. My husband, on the other hand, is more active in the parish. He finds that he lives his faith in a more active way. He is not contemplative type faith person, he prefers to be active and try to make a difference so he belongs to our local St Vincent De Paul Group. I am different. If I buy birthday cards for friends I try to always make the message a bit more special in the card about the gift of their life and what a celebration their lives are and. You see that's my faith, that's where I'm coming from in my faith experience and that's been my gift. So the kids actually see their parents participating in a volunteer way of witnessing to our Catholic faith. I can only pass on what my experience has been and be an example of this to the kids. And I suppose that's a powerful tool. (Karen)

Participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience view faith as action. In their homes faith is nurtured through not only the formalities of the faith tradition but in also through action. Parents become the primary initiators of the way to reflect the Gospel values through they witness to their faith. This becomes a tangible model for their children to see faith in action. The call to be a witness of faith within family life was one strategy participants in this voice believed was vital in trying to nurture faith within the home. The belief that children do what they see was very much at the heart of this nurturing strategy.

Integrating Faith with Life – The Voice of Faith as an Active Struggle

Participants in the voice of faith as an active struggle were unsure how to integrate faith with life. The connection between faith and life was not strong in the minds of these two participants. Anne was strong on parents modelling faith to the children, an experience with which she grew up. For Anne modelling faith was about setting an example for her children on how to live life. She shared that the desire to model faith as she experienced from her parents consumes her existence.

I think that modelling your faith so your children will see it. Yes that is what I believe I am trying to do by our morals and things like that, through our value system. I suppose through our behaviour within the home, just through our environment, yes all that sort of stuff. I think it is of a huge importance that children see faith in

their parents and you know children feel how parents behave in their interaction and all that sort of stuff. Again I am very paranoid about it. I just can't relax.
(Anne)

Anne does not connect with the idea of witnessing faith in the same way as those in the voice of faith as a lived experience. As has already been acknowledged (cf. pp.155–157) those in the voice of faith as a lived experience view that for children to understand how faith is integrated with life they as parents are called first to witness faith through the way they lived their own lives. Anne's difficulty with this understanding arose because she has an understanding that to witness faith is to practise the formalities of the faith traditions. This view is more in keeping with the voice of orthodoxy. The faith Anne witnessed from her parents, as mentioned in Chapter Four (cf. pp.127--128), was more about seeing them attending Mass daily and praying the Rosary and such things. As already mentioned Anne is caught between cultural practice and faith understandings. She appears not have an understanding that faith is also witnessed in a very real way in lived experience of family life.

Sharing of the Faith Story

A strategy which was employed by many across the three voices was the sharing of faith through Bible stories. While the approach to this strategy was diverse across the three voices one common element across the three voices was that most participants spoke of sharing Bible stories with their children as part of the bed time routine in the home.

Sharing the Faith Story within the Home of the Voice of Orthodoxy

The data revealed that the orthodox group uses the Bible in a particular way that differs from the other two voices. All participants in this voice mentioned that they had a children's Bible in the home. The Bible is used by participants in this group mainly as a tool to inform or instruct children about the facts of their faith tradition. The example reported by Tina is characteristic of how most participants in the voice of orthodoxy use the Bible to share faith.

I read them Bible stories and they really love it. They love listening to the stories. My older son particular is ... like I went into the Old Testament a little bit and he was just blown away by the stories in there Harrison has a wonderful imagination so he got right into the genealogy of the Old Testament. He was fascinated by it. Then my aunt brought them a gift last Christmas or the Christmas

before of children's stories in the New Testament in a puzzle form. Well, I had to read it over and over and over again. They still want it every now and then. They'll ask 'who's that apostle's name' and we come up with the names and I related the names to people that they know so that they could remember. (Tina)

On the other hand, two participants, Mary and Terry, commented that they used the Bible as a tool for meditation and prayer. Mary uses scripture as part of the family prayer time each night. Slowly she is encouraging the family not only to listen to the readings of the night but to reflect on the impact the readings have on their life. This approach was unique.

Each night we just read a passage [from the Bible], just a short passage. Usually say we do say Chapter 16 and 17 and we don't necessarily read the whole Chapter. We will read a story or a section there. Usually we just leave it at that. Sometimes now that I'm becoming more aware of how we need to do a lot more I will do the thing where we will have a little bit of silence and then anyone who wants to can say what did you get out of this reading. Some of us, you know, one of us, two of us, whatever, will have a little something and it's a lovely richness that comes from that. But often we just might do the reading and leave it at that. (Mary)

The approach described by Terry was a little more direct. Terry believes that his daughter is old enough to reflect on the scriptures for herself.

I have encouraged my kids to read the Bible by buying a children's Bible for my daughter. We sit and tell stories about the Bible. Small stories before she could read from the Bible. It's a big letter Bible so she can read it easily and see the pictures. ... She [oldest daughter] said, "today is Good Friday and what am I to do today." I said go to your room, take your Bible and read the Bible a little bit and spend some time reflecting on the Bible asking the Lord to help you and talk to the Lord, tell him your troubles and see what he says to you. She was there for a long time, I am not sure whether she was actually reading or not but I decided not to disturb her and let her be by herself and she sat in her room for about an hour and then she came out. (Terry)

Apart from Mary and Terry, the main aim, for most in the voice of orthodoxy in regard to sharing the story of the faith, was for their children to know the facts of the Bible stories.

Sharing the Faith Story within the Home of the Voice of Faith as a Lived Experience

Only a small number of participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience specified that they had a Bible within the home. For these participants the Bible was not so much a tool of instruction, but rather, within these homes the reading of Bible stories are used in the same way as other bed time stories.

We have a Bible, a children's Bible on the bookshelf and at night time I ask the children to choose their bedtime story. Sometimes they choose the Bible, especially at Christmas. We read the story together and it becomes a time when I spend with my children.
(Phillip)

Those in the voice of faith as a lived experience did not express that they used the Bible as a particular tool to instruct children in the faith story of their faith tradition.

My mother gave the children a book of Bible stories last Christmas. Read them the Christmas story as part of our bedtime routine ... Every now and then I ask them to choose a story from it for me to read to them but I don't use it as a way of teaching children. I use it as I would any other book. It is just a time to share together.
(Stephie)

Participants claim that they use the Bible as a form of entertainment and an opportunity in which parents bond with their children.

Sharing the Faith Story within the Home of the Voice of Faith as an Active Struggle

Of the small group of participants in the voice of faith as an active struggle Chris was the only one who spoke of using the Bible within the home. Chris spoke of buying a Bible so that she could introduce it to her daughter. Chris appeared to use the Bible as a tool through which her daughter can come to know about her faith.

My daughter is learning to read and she sort of has a Bible so she learns about Jesus and those kinds of messages. In those children's Bibles they have got those kind of little messages about cooperation for example, and forgiveness and people that do wrong, she sort of learns from there. And it is reinforced by going to the Church and when the Parish Priest talks about things like that.
(Chris)

On closer examination it becomes evident that Chris does not read the Bible with her daughter; her daughter reads it slowly by herself.

I know she hasn't read the whole Bible but she can relate to some of it.
(Chris)

Again this quote demonstrated the desire for Chris to introduce her children to the faith but it appears that she does not know how to do it.

Nurturing Faith through Discussions

The use of conversations to initiate discussions on faith issues was a further nurturing strategy which was common to the voice of orthodoxy and the voice of faith as a lived experience. Three participants in the voice of orthodoxy used this strategy in a much more formal way than would be used by those in the voice of faith as a lived experience.

Discussions within the Homes of the Voice of Orthodoxy

Maria shared an example of how she uses the media as a way of initiating discussions on the Church's teachings on morality. She explained how she would initiate conversations based around what they watched on television and through the written media. Maria monitors the television viewing of her children and she introduces Catholic based literature such as the Catholic newspaper *The Record* and other publications by Church agencies as tools for family discussions.

First the way I talk to the kids, the way I choose things for the kids like the TV programs ... Also when I find an interesting article, for example in the newspaper, the Record the Catholic newspaper, or, I work for pregnancy assistance as a volunteer as well, so sometimes I get articles from there regarding abortion or human rights and things like that. I bring it home and I discuss it with them. I put the Catholic perspective, and I put the other perspective and make them discuss about it so that they can understand the whole.
(Maria)

The approach through which Maria uses of the media was indicative among those in the voice who spoke of the use of the media. The aim of such discussions by participants in the voice of orthodoxy was to lead children to an understanding of the Church teachings and not be influenced by the secular views on morality. Participants spoke quite strongly about their duty as parents to inform their children about what the Catholic Church teaches on matters of morality so that their children would behave accordingly.

Discussions within the Homes of the Voice of Faith as lived Experience

Parents in the voice of faith as a lived experience do not plan discussions on matters of faith as is the practise in many homes of the participants in the voice of orthodoxy.

Most participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience discuss matters of faith as they arise within the events of family life.

Participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience named the television as one tool through which they converse with their children about faith issues.

I actually watch TV with my children because I want them to know that everything they watch is not always the behaviour we accept as Christians. We will watch shows like Home and Away and I will say to them "Do you think that was the best decision for that person to make? I will challenge them to think of the consequences and I will say I don't believe that is what our family believes to be right. Sometimes they ask why and I will try to give them the Church's perspective on the situation and try to let them understand the Church's position. I know I might be mad but I find that it is one of the ways in which I can let them know what the Church is saying. (Heidi)

Many participants spoke of using the television or popular music to raise their children's awareness of what is right and what is wrong in accordance with living a good Christian life.

Discussions within the Homes of the Voice of Faith as an Active Struggle

The participants in the voice of faith as an active struggle did not reveal how they speak to their children on matters of faith. The researcher suspects that conversations are limited, due to the perceived lack of religious knowledge.

When my boy needs to know something about the Church or how the Church looks at things I tell him to ask his aunt. We don't have many discussions like that at home. Say if I tell him the wrong thing. My sister or the after school program can teach him that. (Anne)

PREP as a Nurturing Strategy

A nurturing strategy which was named by most participants, especially those in the voice of faith as a lived experience, was Parish Religious Education Program (PREP). Participants named PREP as the means through which they ensure their children come to know the knowledge aspect of the faith tradition.

PREP as a Nurturing Strategy for those in the Voice of Orthodoxy

The data revealed that attending PREP was not named by those in the voice of orthodoxy as a nurturing strategy. In fact only one orthodox participant had a child who attended PREP. The faith of the children of participants who speak with the voice of orthodoxy is nurtured largely within the home by the parents. Participants in this voice, such as Tina, commented that they had removed their children from PREP and have taken on the responsibility of the faith development of their children.

I entered Harrison in the religious class and I had nothing but admiration for the teachers. I think they are wonderful. Harrison was getting distressed to go because he found that we just sit there and colour in these sheets and he didn't like the discipline. They did things, he didn't mind that like when they went to the Church and looked at things, but most of the time he found that they were sitting and colouring and things like that. He found this quite frustrating and it was a battle getting him there and I thought it might have an adverse affect on him. The purpose of it was for him to get religious education, but was having an adverse affect on him. I spoke to the coordinator and he agreed. He said fine. I took him out and I thought I'd wait until he is a bit older and I'll see what is being taught but otherwise I have taken it on solely. And will continue to do so.
(Tina)

In summary, those in the voice of orthodoxy did not rely on PREP for one of the strategies to nurturing faith. Those in the voice of orthodoxy chose to educate their own children in faith without the assistance of PREP.

PREP as a Nurturing Strategy for those in the Voice of Faith as a Lived Experience

Participants in both subgroups of the voice of faith as a lived experience also named Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) attendance as one of the nurturing strategies which they promoted within the home. Of the 29 participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience, only six participants do not access PREP with three of the six participants being in rural areas where PREP is not available. The 23 participants who access PREP commented strongly that it was an essential tool for nurturing faith because many have a sense of inadequacy when it comes to sharing the faith traditions and teachings of the Church. PREP is a support structure in which they can further develop the faith of their children. Most participants spoke positively of PREP and of how they have conversations with their children about what they have learnt in their classes.

It [PREP] is a very good support system. Going through the sacramental program at the RE [PREP] is really good. We can talk about what they do in class and it helps us to have a conversation to our children about faith. RE classes are a fantastic support. If we didn't have them it would be extremely hard to help our children know about their faith.
(Trish)

Those in the voice of faith as a lived experience named PREP as an important strategy for nurturing faith. They rely on PREP to assist them in the nurturing of the faith of the children, especially when it comes to religious knowledge.

PREP as a Nurturing Strategy for those in the Voice of Faith as an Active Struggle

Participants in the voice of faith as an active struggle did not name PREP as a strategy through which they nurture the faith of their children. One participant sent her children to PREP classes and spoke of these classes as the means through which her child gains religious knowledge. She did not name it as a nurturing tool but rather as place where her child is educated in the faith. The second participant did not access PREP because she has just joined her parish community and has only recently become aware of PREP.

A Rural Perspective

In discussing nurturing strategies employed by participants across the three voices it is worth noting the rural experience of nurturing the faith of children. The discussion in this section does not relate specifically to the understanding of faith within the voices but rather discusses the issue of Mass attendance which is pertinent to those in rural areas in relation to the nurturing faith.

Mass attendance as a strategy for nurturing faith is one thing that sets rural participants apart from participants in the metropolitan area. In the rural areas attending Mass can be a challenge for many because Mass is not available in each town each week. They need to travel to a different town within their particular region each week in order to celebrate Mass.

We go to Church as often as we're able to which is, we have an irregular Church service here in [town] if that makes sense. We have the first and third Sundays. The first Sunday of the month it is at eight o'clock in the morning, the third and fifth is ten o'clock in the morning and the second and fourth is Saturday night, so it just

*depends where you are and how things fit in and if you're in town.
But we do go to Church as regular as we can. (Jill)*

Julie, one of the participants from a rural community, commented that for this reason attending Mass regularly is not a reality within family life and it becomes a difficulty for her.

Going to Mass not as regularly as it should be I will admit and the children don't always come. We need to travel and that becomes difficult at times. Sometimes we need to leave our farm quite early to get to a town for Mass. It just gets too hard sometimes. (Julie)

For those in rural areas Mass attendance does not have the same impact on their faith life, especially for the children. Because of the travelling time involved the children are not taken as often especially if one of the spouses is a non Catholic. The observation of most husbands being non Catholic is likely to be particular to this sample. Participants in rural areas accept the reality that regular Mass attendance is not a possibility for them. They attend Mass when it is possible and encourage their children to attend whenever possible.

The Nurturing Styles

In ascertaining the strategies used by participants to nurture faith within the home, the data showed that within each of the three analytical voices there emerged a distinct nurturing style which, for most, was in keeping with participants understanding of faith. What surfaced was that the three voices had different intents behind the ways strategies were used. These differences were defined as the nurturing style.

The Nurturing Style of the Voice of Orthodoxy

As established in Chapter Four (cf. pp.95–102), participants in the voice of orthodoxy identified their perception of faith as grounded in the practices and traditions of the Church. When it came to understanding the nurturing style used by participants in this voice, the data revealed that this voice used strategies that centred on the formalities of the faith. Characteristics which were common to the nurturing style of those who speak with the voice of orthodoxy were strategies that would ensure the preservation of the faith. The comment made by Tina highlighted the nurturing style which was characteristic of those who speak in the voice of orthodoxy. When asked how she put her understanding of faith into practise within the home she disclosed:

How do I put it [faith] into practise? I actually, ... because I'm practising I make them aware of the fact I'm practising. (Tina)

When asked what she meant by practising, she remarked:

I mean practise the faith, 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 And with them I've taught them basic prayers, I've taught them about the Rosary and we read Bible stories. I bring them [Bible stories] back from my school and we read them and we talk about Jesus. (Tina)

The nurturing style adopted by those within the voice of orthodoxy focussed on acquiring and employing knowledge and was largely based on their childhood practice of the faith. The nurturing of faith centred on strategies that mainly encouraged observance of the faith. Strategies promoted within the homes of those in the voice of orthodoxy were, in the most, structured. This formalism was most noticeable in the approach by this voice to prayer and the Mass. It was evident that for those in the voice of orthodoxy the knowing of the formal prayers of the Church and the purpose of attending Mass were, in the main, to fulfil a sense of obligation which was specifically Catholic rather than Christian. The goal for sharing faith stories for those in this voice was also knowledge based. Discussions and dialogues on faith issues within the home were planned and structured.

The Nurturing Style of the Voice of Faith as a Lived Experience

As determined in Chapter Four (cf. pp.102–108), the concept of faith held by the participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience comes from an understanding that faith is grounded in the experiences of life. The data revealed that participants in this voice, on the whole, adopted a style that was less formal and structured to those in the voice of orthodoxy. Participants in this voice utilised the natural events of family life which arise in daily living as the tool for nurturing faith. By using the events of everyday life, participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience believe that they nurture the faith of their children in a way that is appropriate to the needs and age of the child. Those in this voice believe that the approach they have adopted, allow their children to develop an understanding that faith is a lived experience and therefore, not isolated from life.

A Blending of Nurturing Styles

At the beginning of this Chapter (cf. p.132) it was declared that the three voices are representative of most of the views of the participants. However, it was not claimed that any one participant can be described exclusively in one or other voices. The study respects the ambivalence that the thoughts of people, in this case, of nurturing, are constantly changing. This ambiguity was evident within this voice. The data revealed two distinct nurturing styles emerged; the first identified as leaning towards orthodoxy and the second as growing into faith.

Nurturing Style – Leaning Towards Orthodoxy

Most in this subgroup were participants who had been educated in Catholic schools overseas. Their nurturing style was based on what they had experienced in their childhood. In other words, they had retained a nurturing style with which they felt comfortable and secure. At the same time they had a sense of what was a more reasonable expectation of what their children could cope within the practice of the faith. This more grounded expectation of their children, together with their personal faith expressions as reported in Chapter Four, constituted the difference of this subgroup to the orthodox participants in the previous section. This was particularly evident on the approaches to prayer and Mass attendance. These two strategies will be discussed in the following sections.

Growing into Faith

A second nurturing style emerged within the voice of faith as a lived experience. For this subgroup, identified as growing into faith, the nurturing style placed greater emphasis on the living out of the faith. The contrast between this subgroup and the subgroup leaning towards orthodoxy was that when it came to the nurturing strategies of prayer and Mass those who lean towards orthodoxy spoke of a faith which was placed on the children by their parents. Participants in this subgroup growing into faith spoke of recognising nurturing opportunities which arise incidentally within family life as well as planned teachable faith moments.

The voice of faith as a lived experience adopted a nurturing style which promotes an understanding that faith is integrated with life. Fundamental strategies central to those

in this voice are ones which recognise and promote moments within everyday life as tools to nurture the faith of their children. They believe that their actions and the way they relate to others become key strategies for nurturing the faith of their children. Such strategies were in contrast with those employed by those in the voice of orthodoxy. The main form of witness which was important to the orthodox group was the witnessing of faith through the practising the formalities of the faith. In contrast, those in the subgroup growing into faith adopted a nurturing style that promoted an understanding that faith engages with the world.

As with those in the voice of orthodoxy, the central practices of the faith such as Mass attendance and prayer were very important to this group. The main difference between the two voices is in the approach. The orthodoxy group are guided by the formalities of the faith, whereas those in the voice of faith as a lived experience have adopted a nurturing style which has at its core Gospel-centred values and family cohesiveness. To accommodate this understanding those who speak in the voice of faith as a lived experience implement a nurturing style that utilises the natural events which arise in daily living as a means for nurturing faith.

One of the most notable differences by those in the voice of orthodoxy and those who speak with the voice of faith as a lived experience was the approach to prayer. In the main, those in the voice of orthodoxy and those in the voice of faith as a lived experience who lean towards orthodoxy concentrate mainly on teaching children the formal prayers of the Church in order to preserve the faith traditions. An expectation by those in the voice of orthodoxy is that children learn the formal prayers of the Church by rote. Participants who speak with the voice of faith as a lived experience in the subgroup growing into faith, had a strong conviction that children need to understand what they pray and thus formal prayers, even though introduced, were on the whole, not learnt by rote as was the expectation of those in the voice of orthodoxy. The main form of prayer adopted by most in the voice of faith as a lived experience in the subgroup growing in faith is spontaneous prayer as it is a means through which they connect the happenings of daily life with their faith life. Another difference between the approaches of the two voices when it came to prayer was that those in the voice of faith as a lived experience, especially in the subgroup growing into faith, admitted to struggling with making prayer, especially formal prayer time, a part of family life. They

spoke of 'slipping up' when it came to setting a routine for prayer time. The orthodox group referred to a structured approach to family prayer with many claiming they have scheduled prayer time as part of their family routine.

A further perception that was raised by participants in both subgroups in the voice of faith as a lived experience was the awareness of the responsibility that they needed first to witness to the children how to integrate faith with life. Those in this voice were aware that it was through the actions of themselves as parents that their children come to their own understanding of faith. This was in contrast to the understanding of witness held by those in the voice of orthodoxy where the main form of witness which was relevant to them in nurturing faith was that they witness to their children the practices of the faith, that is, mainly to attend Mass and to be seen praying.

PREP was considered by the participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience as an important strategy which aided in the nurturing of the faith within the home. Participants were grateful and appreciative of the assistance, especially when it came to religious knowledge. The sense of the importance of PREP was akin with those in the voice of faith as an active struggle. Of the two participants in the voice of faith as an active struggle, one spoke of the reliance on PREP for the nurturing the faith of their children. Those in the voice of orthodoxy, in the main, were quite confident in themselves to educate their children in all aspects of the faith and most participants had chosen not to send their children to PREP.

The Nurturing Style of the Voice of Faith as an Active Struggle

The third voice that was discerned among the sample of participants is the voice of faith as an active struggle. As has already been established in Chapter Four (cf. pp.125–129), this group was small in comparison to the voice of faith as a lived experience. The voice of faith as an active struggle however, was clear and distinct and echoed sentiments of the journey many of the participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience had travelled to come to their understanding of faith and ultimately their nurturing style.

In contrast to the other two voices, those who speak with the voice of faith as an active struggle found the idea of nurturing the faith of their children a concept which did not sit

comfortably with them. Participants in the voice of orthodoxy and participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience had a strong sense of the way they nurtured the faith of their children. The participants in the voice of faith as an active struggle found it extremely difficult to speak about nurturing the faith of their children.

I take them to Church so that they can hear from the readings about how to be a good person. I take them so that they will learn about the faith.
(Chris)

The participants in this voice did not see themselves as nurturers of the faith of their children because they felt that they were not skilled in nurturing faith.

I really don't know how to teach my children about the faith. What can I tell them? As I said before I rely on my sister and others in the family. I just get too up tight because I don't know if I know enough myself.
(Anne)

Chris was keen to have her children attend a Catholic school so that she would be secure in the knowledge that her children would learn about the faith.

I really wish they went to the Catholic school because then I would know that they would be learning about the faith. At the moment they go to the parish classes only once a week. I don't think that is enough.
(Chris)

Both participants did not name themselves as a nurturer of the faith of their children.

What became apparent in the data was that these participants were at a stage on their faith journey where they are searching for their own personal understanding of faith and how to live it. Both participants spoke of sharing a faith with their children employing their remembered childhood experiences. The main strategies named were limited to the Mass attendance and PREP. The participants in this voice did not name prayer as one of the strategies to nurturing faith within the home. This was in contrast to the voice of orthodoxy and the voice of faith as a lived experience where prayer is one of the central nurturing strategies even though the approach to prayer differs. The nurturing strategies of the voice of faith as an active struggle will be discussed in this section together with the desire which this voice holds for their children.

In comparison to the voice of orthodoxy and the voice of faith as a lived experience, participants in this voice spoke very little about the nurturing strategies within their

homes. This third voice seemed resistant to the notion that they nurture the faith of their children. Because the participants themselves do not feel comfortable about their own faith, they feel that they do not have the knowledge or the skills to nurture the faith of their children. Those in the voice of faith as an active struggle had a sense that faith is important and therefore have taken steps to introduce their children to the faith by employing strategies which were familiar to them from their own childhood. Of the strategies mentioned by those in the voice of faith as an active struggle, the nurturing style is more conducive to those who speak with the voice of orthodoxy. The participants in the voice of faith as an active struggle want their children to have knowledge of the faith. They did not speak of nurturing a faith; as promoted by participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience where the central focus is that faith is integrated with life. The main concern for those who speak with the voice of faith as an active struggle was how to share a faith with their children in which they felt so inadequate themselves.

It is possible to summarise the most pertinent characteristics of the three voices' approach to nurturing faith of their children within the home. The nurturing style adopted by those within the voice of orthodoxy was, in the most, structured. The nurturing style of participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience had less rigid manner to nurturing faith within the home. Nurturing faith by those in the voice of faith as a lived experience had more to do with living a faith that was integrated with life experience. The voice of faith as an active struggle does not have a style that sets it apart from the other two voices. Participants in this voice tend to adopt a nurturing style that was influenced by the memories of the faith experiences from their childhood.

Participant Quotation in this Chapter

As indicated in Chapter Four (cf. pp.93–95) the contribution of all participants across the three voices formed the data for this analysis. Those expressions that best presented the view of the group were selected as quotations. It is claimed that the quotations used are indicative of the whole of this group in terms of the analysis of their contributions.

As indicated in Table 5.1, all five participants who speak in the voice of orthodoxy have been quoted on the discussion on how faith is put into practise within the context of the home.

Table 5.1 The Voice of Orthodoxy Participants (n=5)

Name of Pseudonyms	Times quoted in Ch 5
Kerry	3
Maria	4
Mary	1
Terry	4
Tina	5

The data revealed that within the voice of faith as a lived experience a blend of nurturing styles emerged. As Table 5.2 signals that six of the 29 participants who speak in the voice of faith as a lived experience showed inclination of leaning towards the voice of orthodoxy when it came to the approach to nurturing faith within the home. For this reason this subgroup was identified as leaning towards orthodoxy. It is not unexpected that within this larger group not all conversation is quoted.

Table 5.2 The Voice of Faith as Lived Experience – Subgroup: Leaning Towards Orthodoxy (n=6)

Name of Pseudonyms	Times quoted in Ch 5
Alice	3
Andrea	3
Elizabeth	2
Heidi	2
Marian	0
Nancy	0

Table 5.3 indicates that 23 of the 29 participants in the voice of faith as a lived experience adopted a nurturing style which promote an understanding that faith is continually growing. This subgroup was identified as growing into faith.

Table 5.3 The Voice of Faith as Lived Experience – Subgroup: Growing into faith (n=23)

Name of Pseudonyms	Times quoted in Ch 5
Carmel	2
Carole	0
Cora	2
Doreen	1
Helen	0
Ian	2
Jack	2
Jacquie	1
Jane	1
Janet	0
Jill	1
Judy	2
Julie	1
Karen	3
Kylie	1
Lisa	1
Lyn	1
Pat	3
Phillip	2
Stephie	2
Susan	0
Trish	2
Vigi	1

Table 5.4 illustrates the number of times participants in the voice of faith as an active struggle were quoted in this Chapter.

Table 5.4 The Voice of Faith as an Active Struggle Participants (n=2)

Name of Pseudonyms	Times quoted in Ch 5
Chris	5
Anne	5

The tables are offered to give some evidence to the fairness and diversity of the quotation selections. This range of quotations is part of the argument towards validity of the analysis.

Conclusion

Chapter Five was divided into two main parts. The first part discussed the nurturing strategies which emerged from the data. The second part of the Chapter showed the relationship between the understanding of faith held by participants and the nurturing style through which faith is nurtured within the home. For this reason, the three voices established in Chapter Four were a useful lens through which to discuss the differences in the nurturing styles which emerged from the study. The findings in this Chapter showed that even though the strategies for nurturing the faith within the home appeared to be similar across the three voices, it was revealed that the way the strategies were used and the intention behind the strategies differed. These differences were in keeping with their understanding of faith established in Chapter Four.

Chapter Six will present the challenges the participants expressed. These challenges relate to the efforts of the participants to nurture the faith of their children. Chapter Six will continue to use the analogies of the three voices to better focus the differences in the experiences of these participants.