New evangelization, conversion and Catholic education

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New Evangelization and Conversion in NSW Catholic High Schools

Introduction

The Second Vatican Council and subsequent Popes have identified a change in the spiritual climate in the previously evangelized (mainly western) world. They have described a humanistic/secularized atmosphere that has tended to erode the faith and practice of many Christians/Catholics. This atmosphere is often hostile to and resists the Good News of the Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ as it has come to be presented by the Church. In response to these challenges, the Fathers of The Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI, Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and the newly elected Pope Francis have exhorted the Church to a “New Evangelization”. This New Evangelization, as it has developed in the Church’s teaching is designed to confront these challenges and draw people back into relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church.

This study will examine the development of the concept of the New Evangelization in Magisterial teaching from the time of the Second Vatican Council, identifying the major features of the New Evangelization outlined in that teaching. Various Magisterial sources will be cited in describing this development. There will be a focus however on the teaching as it is present in three major sources, Ad Gentes.\footnote{Second Vatican Council. English Translation: Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church. Ad Gentes. 1965 www.vatican.va/.../hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html - 118k - 2007-09-04 -Cached (accessed15/4/13) (hereafter AG)}
(from the Second Vatican Council), *Evangelii Nuntiandi*² (by Pope Paul VI in 1975), and *Redemptoris Missio*³ (by Pope John Paul II in 1990). In these sources, there is a development and elaboration of the teaching as the reality of the need for the New Evangelization became better understood over the years since the Second Vatican Council. The appreciation of what was required to meet the challenges identified and take advantages of the opportunities presented also developed across the three documents. The major themes that have been outlined and developed in the teaching on the New Evangelization are.

1. The identification of the need for a New Evangelization in the previously evangelized (mainly western) world and the development of this understanding up to the present.

2. The essential role of the laity in this enterprise. Magisterial teaching has changed the emphasis and understanding of missiology from pre-conciliar thinking. The Mission of the church was previously seen primarily as establishing the institution of the Church in “mission lands” through the various missionary orders under the oversight of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in Rome. This has changed to a realization that there is a potential need to evangelize in particular demographic/ethnographic contexts and not in a solely geographic conceptualization. The New Evangelization itself is a part of this new understanding. In this

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understanding, preachers of the Gospel have to be located wherever the need to evangelize exists. The Laity then become essential agents of this new understanding and the clergy become those who need, “to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” (Eph 4:12)

3. The need for conversion to Jesus Christ through a living encounter with Him. The main goal of the proclamation of the Gospel in the New Evangelization is to facilitate an encounter with Jesus Christ. After this real encounter has occurred, the new believer is joined to the Church through Baptism (or rejoined to the Church if they have already been Baptized) and becomes an agent of the New Evangelization themselves.

4. The essential role of the Holy Spirit in the New Evangelization. Just as the goal of the proclamation of the Gospel in the New Evangelization is genuine relationship with Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is identified as the only one who can make this type of encounter possible and successful. Programmes and planning for mission can be worthwhile but it is the actual leading of the Holy Spirit himself that will make these efforts fruitful.

5. The urgency of the call to the New Evangelization. Magisterial teaching since Vatican II has been insistent that the call to this mission is urgent. It has mainly focused on the duty the faithful have to obey the command of Jesus to proclaim the gospel to all nations out of love. Only in relationship with Jesus and joined to the Church will the lives of human beings be completed and fulfilled.
Another reason identified in tradition and scripture for the urgency to evangelize is the possibility of eternal separation from God without the benefit of relationship to Jesus Christ. Without salvation in Jesus Christ and membership of His Church human beings in reality have the tendency to choose to persist in sin. In these circumstances there is a real possibility of eternal separation from God.

An additional source of urgency highlighted in Magisterial teaching is the catastrophic decline in faith and practice in the Church (particularly among young adults and adolescents.) Statistics from sociological research around the western world show that the situation regarding the status of the faith and practice of Catholics in the western, previously evangelized world, (particularly among young adults and adolescents) is still deteriorating. This decline has implications for the possible disappearance of life and vitality of the Church itself. This thesis will focus on the decline as it manifests itself among adolescents and young adults in Australia. The emptiness and meaninglessness of the secularized/hedonistic life outside of relationship with Jesus has implications for the mental health and well being of young adults and adolescents themselves (as well as the rest of society).

After establishing these areas as the major themes of the New Evangelization there will be an exploration of how the New Evangelization has been responded to in the context of Catholic High School education in NSW and the ACT. Catholic Schools have unique opportunities in the context of the New Evangelization. Catholic Schools educate the sons and daughters of the de-christianised/nominal Catholics

identified as needing to be re-evangelized⁵. They educate children and young people who would say they have no faith at all and are from families who would consider themselves atheist or agnostic. They also now educate students who are from other religions altogether. Catholic Schools are a microcosm then of the world the New Evangelization desires to engage with.

Bishops have recognized these characteristics of Catholic schools and have exhorted leaders in the Catholic schools to make their schools “centers” of the New Evangelization. In particular (for the purposes of this study), the Bishops of NSW and the ACT in 2007 have produced a document titled “Catholic Schools at a Crossroad.”⁶ This document outlines their thoughts on the New Evangelization and states that they believe this project should be a priority in Catholic school’s educational and religious education activities.

In the case of this study, curricula and text books in Catholic High Schools in NSW and the ACT will be examined to evaluate how significant the response to the New Evangelization has been up to the present (considering the stated aim of the Bishops of NSW and ACT in 2007, that Catholic Schools will be centres of the New Evangelization.) This study in particular will reflect on the extent to which Catholic High School Religious Education curriculums and text books in N.S.W. and the A.C.T. explicitly teach about and create a space where encounter with Jesus Christ and conversion to Him could take place.

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⁵ RM 33
⁶ The Bishops of NSW and the ACT. Catholic Schools at a Crossroads. Catholic Education Office Sydney PN2266 (NEALS 2007)
As a work of specifically Catholic theology, this study will be treating Magisterial teaching as the direction Catholic Schools (and other institutions) should be taking rather than as a set of propositions to be somehow “debated”. As a work of Catholic theology this thesis will, “strive to deepen reflection on the truth proclaimed by the Church’s magisterium, and seek its implications for the Christian life and for the service of the truth”\(^7\). Part of this dissertation’s goal will be

> ‘With the help of the Holy Spirit…to listen to and distinguish the many voices of our times and to interpret them in the light of the divine Word, in order that the revealed truth may be more deeply penetrated, better understood, and more suitably presented’\(^8\)

### Chapter 1. Identifying the need for the New Evangelization

#### 1.1 How the Need for the New Evangelization Developed

An important aspect of this study is outlining the development of Magisterial teaching as it began to identify the need for the New Evangelization. Before exploring the development of this realization in the Church’s understanding it will be worthwhile to reflect on some of the reasons behind this change in people’s relationship with Catholicism.

Richard Rymarz gives an outline of some of the factors he perceives have lead to a collapse of faith and practice among Catholics.\(^9\) (Richard Rymarz is an Australian academic who has reflected extensively and perceptivey on the New Evangelization in general and its implications for Catholic education in particular. His work will be

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cited extensively in this study.) There are of course a range of views as to the reasons for the stark differences between the position the Church was in prior to Vatican II and the sharp decline afterwards.\textsuperscript{10} This study however will concentrate on Rymarz’s description as his view of the situation is presented from a predominantly Australian perspective. It also discusses the way Catholic Education historically may have contributed to, and been affected by, the post conciliar decline in faith and practice.

Rymarz describes the situation prior to Vatican II as a time where the Church sensed that it was, “in a position of strength, and the strong allegiance of many Catholics in countries such as Australia would endure and be passed on to future generations in a relatively unchallenged way.” From this perceived “position of strength” the Church would be able to interact fruitfully with modern culture. As a result of this interaction there would be a “harmonious convergence” between the two. He notes “this synthesis in the post-conciliar era has not yet been realized, certainly not in Europe and in countries such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand.”\textsuperscript{11}

Rymarz goes on to reflect on the religious socialization of, “Generation X” or those born in the “first world” between 1960 and 1975 and how it differed from the generations of those that preceded them, “For pre-conciliar generations of Catholics in Australia and elsewhere, the transition from childhood to adult modes of religious affiliation was marked by a number of structural processes that ensured that the

\textsuperscript{10} Komonchak, Joseph. A. “Theology and Culture at Mid-Century: The Example of Henri De Lubac.” Theological Studies 51, 1990 p 579-602. In this article, Komonchak discusses the deficiencies in Catholic theology during the 150 years prior to the Second Vatican Council, that “la nouvelle theologie” sought to correct. He discusses how De Lubac (amongst others) had identified the weaknesses this type of theology produced in the reality of Christian faith, “During the War, de Lubac would describe a twofold failure on the part of Catholics: their contentment with a purely habitual, traditional, conservative faith, which had lost a capacity for life and innovation and even had hypocritically made Christianity a socially useful “religion for the people,” and their restriction of the power of Christianity to the merely private sphere, "as if Christianity were deprived of principles to direct either the life of states or business."

\textsuperscript{11} Rymarz, Richard M 2012 Op Cit p 49
transition was well supported.” He quotes Maloney’s reminiscence on the differences in religious socialization between the pre and post-conciliar eras.

I had been brought up a practicing Catholic and the social and cultural setting of my life was as steady as a rock. There was no need for the Bible, as I had the Pope, The Bishop, The Priest and weekly mass. My belief system came from the family and a Catholic schooling, reinforced by the weekly sermon, the Sacraments of the Catholic Church, and various devotions.

This quote indicates the predominantly “external” nature of Catholicism in the pre-conciliar era. There were certainly many practicing members of the Church in this era and an appearance of strength. When societal pressures challenged the validity of the Church’s paradigm however, the external “glue” of an agreed religious/social culture was not sufficient to perpetuate faith and practice. The absence of individuals with a deep “internalized” relationship through an experience of conversion to Jesus Christ was exposed.

At the time of the Council and afterwards there was a sense of uncertainty amongst the faithful at large as to what constituted the essentials of Catholicism. Rymarz describes this sense of uncertainty.

…correct or incorrect, (Generation X Catholics felt) that much of what Catholics had believed had changed, or would change in the future. As a result of this, many Catholic beliefs, practices and teachings were challenged in a way that was unimaginable before the Council. In such an atmosphere, it was understandable that many were reluctant to strongly proclaim a distinctive Catholic position on a range of issues.

In the absence of an established “structure” of religious socialization with its passive acceptance of the teaching of, “monopolistic Catholicism where the choices and

12 Ibid p62
14 Rymarz, Richard M 2012 op cit p67
options available to Catholics were heavily prescribed”\textsuperscript{15}, Generation X Catholics were exposed to the socializing forces of contemporary culture. In this culture, “socialization is a far more asymmetrical and contentious phenomena.\textsuperscript{16} Socialization processes compete; and if religious socialization is not strong enough, then individuals will be formed and socialized into other worlds.”\textsuperscript{17}

Rymarz discusses the way that the family as a primary socializing agent no longer supported Catholic socialization of “Generation X” children. The socializing pressures of contemporary culture mentioned above placed, “the family under various pressures, such as how time is utilized and what choices are made from a wide array of competing priorities, and this makes the task of religious socialization much harder.”\textsuperscript{18} Under these pressures family practices, which tended to prioritize integration with the life of the Church (such as family prayer, attending mass as a family, Easter services like the Stations of the Cross etc.), were replaced by television, leisure, sport or other social options.

One Catholic socialization reality remained important for Generation X however, the Catholic School. Rymarz reports that Catholic schooling for the Generation X person was, “an overall positive experience. Generation X Catholics do not generally report negative or hostile feelings about their time in Catholic secondary schools”.\textsuperscript{19} This positive overall appraisal Generation X had for their High School Catholic education did not translate into a totally positive impact on their formation as Catholics.

\begin{itemize}
\item[15] Ibid p 63
\item[17] Rymarz, Richard M 2012 op cit p64
\item[18] Ibid p65
\item[19] Rymarz, Richard M. ‘Lost Generation: The Cultures of Generation X Catholics’ \textit{Australian Catholic Record}. April (81) 2004 p 149-151
\end{itemize}
Rymarz states that this is because the religious education they sat under “lacked educational focus.”

Generation X Catholics have a relatively poor understanding of the content of Catholicism, and most Generation X Catholics were never presented with a strong and coherent Catholic worldview, either at home or in educational settings. When many Generation X Catholics speak about their lives and aspirations they frequently use spiritual or non-religious language to describe themselves and their lives. They see questions about God, prayer, and spiritual flourishing under the rubric of personal autonomy.

The style of religious education the Generation X Catholic underwent, “placed a greater emphasis on the learner and his or her experience of the world. This can be contrasted with the traditional style of religious education, which relied more on didactic instruction and authoritative texts.”

Rymarz notes that a response to this weakness in some contemporary contexts has not been to revert to a “pre-conciliar” style of education but to, “apply some rigour and system to teaching, while remaining faithful to an experiential approach to religious education.” As noted above, the style of religious socialization/instruction prior to the Council did not produce large numbers of Catholics with a faith strong enough and “internalized” enough to cope with the changing cultural landscape. In terms of the New Evangelization, calls to return to solely “pre-conciliar” patterns would have simply recreated some of conditions which caused the problem in the first place.

Rymarz summarizes the situation of religious/educational outlook of Generation X and the reasons why this has lead to the need for the New Evangelization.

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20 Rymarz, Richard M 2012 op cit p70
21 Ibid p70
22 Ibid p72
23 Ibid p72
In summary, the expression of Catholicism, in which many Generation X Catholics grew to maturity, can be described as communitarian. It is characterized by weak religious socialization. Individuals see themselves as part of a wider group, but this expression is not part of their core identity and, as a result, does not have a strong impact on the way they live. Being Catholic brings with it advantages such as being able to maintain links with key institutions such as schools and with family of origin. In terms of the New Evangelization, many Generation X Catholics are comfortable with this level of commitment and are averse to being seen as stridently religious.

Rymarz’s analysis of the religious/social development of “Generation X” and the way this created the necessity for a New Evangelization is convincing. What it also points out is that the faith of “pre-conciliar” generations was maintained largely by an agreed set of religious/social/cultural practices and values. The need for an “internal” experience of conversion to Jesus Christ was not high on the Church’s pastoral agenda.

The crucial place that conversion to Jesus Christ has in the Magisterial teaching about the New Evangelization since Vatican II will be discussed in Chapters 3 below. Given the importance Magisterial teaching gives to this reality, it has to be acknowledged that lack of priority given to it in the times when Church was thought to be in a “place of strength” was in fact a significant weakness. Rymarz describes above a style of teaching in Religious Education that remains “faithful to an experiential approach to religious education” while including some of the “rigor and system” missing from the educational experience of Generation X. It will be important for the New Evangelization as it manifests itself in religious education in Catholic High Schools to have conversion to Jesus Christ as the main component of

25 Rymarz, Richard M 2012 op cit p74
26 Ibid p72
any “experiential approach”. If it does not, the same basic weakness of the “pre-
conciliar” and Generation X religious education/socialization experience will remain
undealt with.

The “asymmetrical and contentious phenomena”\textsuperscript{27} that is the contemporary climate
of socialization is arguably an even more intense influence on Catholic High School
students today (in the year 2013) than that experienced during the upbringing of
Generation X. The impact of this on the Catholic faith and practice of the present
generation, “Generation Y”, will be discussed below in Chapter 5.

\textbf{1.2 \textit{Vatican II: Ad Gentes}}

In tracing the way Magisterial teaching identified the need for a New Evangelization
and developed the understanding of the concept it is important to first look at the
teaching of the Second Vatican Council, particularly the Decree on the Mission
Activity of the Church \textit{Ad Gentes}\textsuperscript{28}. This document presented a new vision for
mission in the Church. It achieved this by emphasizing the “sacramentality of the
Church and for insisting that the Church is Missionary by its very nature.”\textsuperscript{29} In
describing the flow of life and mission within the Blessed Trinity itself, it taught that
the Church experiences that life within itself through the participation of all those
baptized. As the Son is sent by the Father to bring salvation to mankind by the power
of the Holy Spirit the Church as the Body of Christ continues to offer salvation to
mankind by the power of the Holy Spirit. An essential point in \textit{Ad Gentes} on this
subject is, “The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the

\textsuperscript{27} Berger, Peter L. 1967 Op Cit p 138.
\textsuperscript{28} AG 1
\textsuperscript{29} ibid 2
mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father.\textsuperscript{30}

\textit{Ad Gentes} re-affirmed the validity of evangelization to mission lands and the activity of the clergy in missionary societies. Out of the understanding of the Church as missionary by its nature it identified the whole church as responsible for its missionary activity and not just those in religious orders.

Throughout all ages, the Holy Spirit makes the entire Church "one in communion and in ministering; He equips her with various gifts of a hierarchical and charismatic nature," a giving life, soul-like, to ecclesiastical institutions and instilling into the hearts of the faithful the same mission spirit which impelled Christ Himself. Sometimes He even visibly anticipates the Apostles' acting, just as He unceasingly accompanies and directs it in different ways.\textsuperscript{31}

If every member of the Church is to be involved in proclaiming the Good News it implies that there is a potential for evangelization in every place the faithful find themselves. Each member of the Church then should live their life with a knowledge of their responsibility and with a readiness to witness. Stephen Bevans sums up the implications of this thrust in \textit{Ad Gentes} as follows

This is that mission has now been defined not as a territorial concept, but as a basic attitude of the church where ever it is…..Crossing boundaries, moving beyond itself is at the center of the church’s identity. Mission, then, is not about going places, but serving people–down the street or across oceans, in other cultures or one’s own.\textsuperscript{32}

Although it never explicitly defined the need to preach the Gospel anew to the previously evangelized church there was an inkling that situations could change and it might be required.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid 2
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid 4
Moreover, the groups among which the Church dwells are often radically changed, for one reason or other, so that an entirely new set of circumstances may arise. Then the Church must deliberate whether these conditions might again call for her missionary activity.

The “new set of circumstances” requiring a call for the Church’s “missionary activity” have occurred and were evident during the time of the Council (though at a less obvious level).

*Ad Gentes* did not then focus specifically on a need for a “re-evangelization” of the previously evangelized areas not classified as “mission lands” (although there was an allusion to this possibility). What it did do with regard to the New Evangelization was establish that mission flows out of the life of every believer as they experience the life of the Trinity within them. The laity is to be vitally involved in the work of mission and the need for mission by implication is wherever there are people who do not have a living relationship with Jesus of Nazareth.

**1.3 Evangelii Nuntiandi**

The next major influence on the development of the concept of the New Evangelization is the encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi* promulgated in 1975 by Pope Paul VI. When *Evangelii Nuntiandi* was composed, the very idea of a need for the Church to be involved in mission had become a point of debate. While the overall direction of Vatican II and *Ad Gentes* opened up and revitalized the conceptual understanding of mission within the Church, the questions raised were not always answered in ways that inspired proclamation of the gospel among the nations. Bevan describes the questions raised after the Council as follows.

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33 AG 6
34 EN
If, as the document on the church had taught, women and men could be saved outside the church and without any explicit faith in Christ (see *Lumen Gentium* (LG16), and if every church does mission in the context in which it exists, why should missionaries be sent abroad to convert people to Christ? If cultures are already good and holy, why should missionaries disturb them with western ideas and western religious forms?\textsuperscript{15}

(The question of how *Lumen Gentium* 16 should be understood in terms of its impact on the New Evangelization will be dealt in Chapter 5.2). As a result of this style of question, Paul VI instituted the 1974 Synod of Bishops with “Evangelization in the Modern World” as the subject the Synod was to consider. It was this set of deliberations that formed the basis for the encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.

In *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Paul VI emphasized the need for the Church to continually evangelize. In doing so, he saw himself as carrying on the teaching of Vatican II. He went as far as to sum up the teaching of the Council as follows

> on this tenth anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council, the objectives of which are definitively summed up in this single one: to make the Church of the twentieth century ever better fitted for proclaiming the Gospel to the people of the twentieth century\textsuperscript{36}

In this encyclical, Paul VI started to describe the decline in faith and practice occurring in the parts of the world which had a significant Christian history and social/cultural/historical heritage.

In *Evangelii Nuntiandi* Pope Paul described the impact “dechristianization” was having in the spiritual lives of people in these historically Christian cultures,

> innumerable people who have been baptized….. live quite outside Christian life, for simple people who have a certain faith but an imperfect knowledge of the foundations of that faith, for intellectuals who feel the need to know

\textsuperscript{35} Bevans, Stephen. 2007 Op cit. p 5.  
\textsuperscript{36} EN 2
Jesus Christ in a light different from the instruction they received as children, and for many others.\textsuperscript{37}

He also outlined the contemporary reality of

a faith that is nearly always today exposed to secularism, even to militant atheism. It is a faith exposed to trials and threats, and even more, a faith besieged and actively opposed. It runs the risk of perishing from suffocation or starvation if it is not fed and sustained each day. To evangelize must therefore very often be to give this necessary food and sustenance to the faith of believers, especially through a catechesis full of Gospel vitality and in a language suited to people and circumstances.\textsuperscript{38}

In addition to those practicing the faith who need a form of spiritual resuscitation in the midst of modern culture he identified a style of atheism that flows from modern secularism where God is seen as “superfluous and an encumbrance”\textsuperscript{39}. These people have no connection to faith at all.

New forms of atheism seem to flow from it: a man centered atheism, no longer abstract and metaphysical but pragmatic, systematic and militant. Hand in hand with this atheistic secularism, we are daily faced, under the most diverse forms, with a consumer society, the pursuit of pleasure set up as the supreme value, a desire for power and domination, and discrimination of every kind: the inhuman tendencies of this "humanism."\textsuperscript{40}

He describes two basic groups of people in the previously Christianized world requiring this “re-evangelization”. He identifies “atheist and unbelievers” on the one hand and “those who do not practice on the other”.\textsuperscript{41} He perceptively describes the types of resistance each of these groups will manifest. It is difficult to engage with the first group because they can’t be addressed on the basis of an understanding that there is “a divine absolute”.\textsuperscript{42} The resistance in the second group takes the form of a
“hostile attitude” where they will “claim to know it all and to have tried it all and no longer believe it.”

Paul VI makes it clear the Church should not passively accept this situation or find itself paralyzed by these types of resistance to the Gospel. He states,

> The Church's evangelizing action cannot ignore these two worlds, nor must it come to a standstill when faced with them; it must constantly seek the proper means and language for presenting, or representing, to them God's revelation and faith in Jesus Christ.

In *Evangelii Nuntiandi* then Pope Paul VI re-asserted the need for the Church to be involved in the proclamation of the Gospel “ad gentes”. He additionally identified and described the serious problems which had come to be apparent in the faith and practice of western Church. He recognized the need for a renewed proclamation of the Gospel in these circumstances. His analysis of the different mind sets of those requiring “re-evangelization” points out the extra barriers to the Gospel that might be present among people who think that have already tried Christianity and found it inadequate as a fulfilling religious option. The discussion outlined by Paul VI is intensified and elaborated by John Paul II when calls it the “New Evangelization” in *Redemptoris Missio*.

### 1.4 Redemptoris Missio

In *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul II develops the discussion on the subject of evangelization in general and the identification of those in the previously evangelized, mainly western world, who require a “re-evangelization.” This “re-evangelization” began to be identified in *Ad Gentes*, was elaborated upon in

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43 Ibid 56
44 Ibid 56
Evangelii Nuntiandi\textsuperscript{45} and in Redemptoris Missio it was specifically dubbed the “New Evangelization”.

There is an argument that the genesis of the term New Evangelization itself occurred during John Paul II’s attendance at the Third General Conference of Latin American Episcopate (conducted in Puebla, Mexico, in early 1979)\textsuperscript{46}. In the documents which proceeded from this assembly, there is discussion of “new situations that call for a new evangelization.”\textsuperscript{47} Even here, it is suggested the work of the Latin American Bishops in 1979 was influenced by a Bishop Roger Aubry, the Vicar Apostolic of Reyes in Bolivia’s Amazon area, north of La Paz, and President of the Mission Department of CELAM (the Latin American Council of Catholic Bishops) from late 1974 to early 1979.\textsuperscript{48} In a talk given to Latin America’s National Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies in Sao Paulo in January, 1976 he drew attention to the section of Ad Gentes\textsuperscript{49} (paragraph 6 mentioned above) and pointed out that within particular cultures there were “new missionary situations” that were not limited to territorial criteria.\textsuperscript{50} John Gorski states that the work of Bishop Aubry lead to

the substance of Puebla Nº 366 (a section of the document of the proceedings of Third General Conference), which affirmed that new missionary situations called for a “new evangelization”. I believe that this is the text that gave John Paul II the language with which to speak of the need for a specifically original evangelization of those affected by changing socio-cultural situations.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{45} The New Evangelization was a recurring theme during Pope John Paul II’s pontificate. In addition to Redemptoris Missio, the New Evangelization was a major subject of other Magisterial documents, Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Inuente 2000, Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in America. 1999, Apostolic Letter Tertio Millennio Adveniente 1994, Apostolic Exhortation Christifideles Laici 1988.


\textsuperscript{48} Ibid p8

\textsuperscript{49} AG 6

\textsuperscript{50} Gorski, John Op Cit p8

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid p9
The focus of *Redemptoris Missio* has been described as “Christocentric” in nature. Cardinal Tomko, then the Prefect of the Congregation of the Evangelization of Peoples, declared that one of the main aims of *Redemptoris Missio* was to proclaim the centrality of Christ within God’s economy of salvation in opposition to streams of theology which had suggested there were in fact “parallel” modes of salvation in the world.\(^{52}\)

For John Paul II, Jesus Christ came to proclaim the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom of God is not however to be construed as some idealized order of existence independent of Christ and the Church. The Kingdom of God is a person, Jesus Christ Himself and the Church is His body. Bevans encapsulates this theme as follows.

> In summary: mission is about proclaiming the person and work of Christ, not helping people recognize God’s mysterious presence as Logos, or in “Kingdom values,” or in the pervasive presence of the Spirit…. The Pope insists that the Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus, and not some vague, general form of God’s presence.\(^{53}\)

Pope John Paul II presents a detailed discussion of the concept of the “New Evangelization” in the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*. He identifies three major groups of people who would be the focus of the Church’s missionary activity. The first group is those who have never heard the gospel before or those indigenous communities and unreached people groups traditionally viewed as the recipients of the Church’s missionary effort.\(^{54}\) The second group are those who have deeply encountered the Lord Jesus in a personal conversion\(^{55}\) and are seeking to grow in that

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\(^{53}\) Bevans, Stephen. 2010 Op Cit p8

\(^{54}\) RM 33.2

\(^{55}\) ibid 33.2
conversion in order to become “the image of His (God’s) Son.” The final group John Paul II identifies are those in need of a “re-evangelization” or a “new” evangelization. He describes them as follows

Particularly in countries with ancient Christian roots, and occasionally in the younger Churches as well, where entire groups of the baptized have lost a sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his gospel. In this case what is needed is a “new evangelization” or a “re-evangelization”.

In *Novo Millennio Inuuenta*, John Paul II describes again why a New Evangelization is required. In this document he elaborates on the characteristics of those requiring this New Evangelization as he describes the ways in which globalization with its “mingling” of people and cultures has made the task more “demanding”.

Even in countries evangelized many centuries ago, the reality of a "Christian society" which, amid all the frailties which have always marked human life, measured itself explicitly on Gospel values, is now gone. Today we must courageously face a situation which is becoming increasingly diversified and demanding, in the context of "globalization" and of the consequent new and uncertain mingling of peoples and cultures. Over the years, I have often repeated the summons to the *new evangelization*. I do so again now.

Pope Paul VI suggested that the different styles of resistance in the de-Christianized western culture should not stifle the proclamation of the Gospel. In his mind it should spur Christians on to a search for methods and pathways that will be successful (as discussed above by Pope Paul VI). John Paul II echoes Paul VI’s call to action but he also reflects on the situation from a somewhat different angle. He sees in these challenges opportunities and an expression of needs that only Christianity can effectively meet.

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56 Romans 8:28-30
57 RM 33.3
John Paul II saw that while people were rejecting God and the transcendent dimension of life, there was a deepening slavery to materialism and despair. The uniformly negative statistics around mental health in the western world are a confirmation of his observation. Some figures from a summary of recent research from the European Region by the World Health Organization estimates that 27% of the adult population or approximately 83 million of the adult population had experienced one of a series of mental disorders in the past year. (Mental health statistics as they apply to Australian young people are no better and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.3.3.)

John Paul II additionally observed that there was a search for meaning, a genuine relationship with God and an experience of the supernatural in western culture to try to somehow offset the “dehumanization” present in an increasingly materialistic society. The rise of New Age/neo-pagan spiritualities in the western world confirms this second observation. (This spiritual search of modern culture is discussed in detail in a document released by the Pontifical Council’s for Culture and Interreligious Dialogue in the year 2003, Jesus the Bearer of the Water of Life.)

John Paul II sees in these trends opportunities for the Church which he declared has, “an immense spiritual patrimony to offer mankind, a heritage in Christ, who called himself ‘the way, the truth, and the life’” it is the Christian path to meeting God, to

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59 RM 38.
62 John 14:6
prayer, to asceticism, and to the search for life's meaning." Here he is referring to a lived experience of meaning and transcendent encounter with the living God in Jesus Christ that exceeds any manifestation of the supernatural available in other religious systems.

John Paul II then makes a definitive identification and description of the need for a “re-evangelization” in the previously evangelized world that he came to consistently call a “New Evangelization”. Like Paul VI he stated that there must be a missionary response to the challenge of those who would call themselves atheists, and non-practicing Christians. He additionally identified the challenge of globalization (and the consequent “mixing” of cultures), and the spiritual vacuum left by secularism/atheism which lead to an exploration of spiritualities other than Christianity. John Paul II’s analysis of the circumstances surrounding the people who require a New Evangelization outlines even more problems than Paul VI’s. He goes on however to identify opportunities and some directions for mission that the Church is uniquely equipped to take advantage of. In relationship with Jesus Himself and there is a fulfillment of supernatural experience no religious system or philosophy can match. In union with Christ and in fellowship with His people there is stability and meaning that deals with the alienation and emptiness of a purely secular existence.

1.5 Pope Benedict XVI

Pope Benedict XVI has confirmed the need for the “New Evangelization” as identified by his predecessors. This was made concrete through the creation in 2010
of a new pontifical council with a particular aim of promoting the New Evangelization. This new pontifical council has the aim of promoting a renewed evangelization in countries where the first proclamation of the faith already resounded, and where Churches are present of ancient foundation, but which are going through a progressive secularization of society and a sort of "eclipse of the sense of God," which constitutes a challenge to find the appropriate means to propose again the perennial truth of the Gospel of Christ.64

In his first address to the new Pontifical Council for Promoting the new Evangelization he called for “a renewed manner of proclamation” in traditionally Christian countries where “secularization has had a heavy impact”.

It is precisely these changes which have created unexpected conditions for believers and require special attention in proclaiming the Gospel, for giving an account of our faith in situations which are different from the past. The current crisis brings with it traces of the exclusion of God from people’s lives, from a generalized indifference towards the Christian faith to an attempt to marginalize it from public life.”65

He went further during the same address to describe the style of evangelization necessary to deal with the adverse contemporary spiritual climate. In common with his predecessors he identified the need to deal with the separation between spirituality/faith and day to day life manifested among would be evangelizers. The Christian witness of the individual Catholic and in particular their family life is expected to be the foundation of their witness to the secularized culture they inhabit.66

“Throughout the centuries, the Church has never ceased to proclaim the salvific mystery of the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, but today that same message needs renewed vigour to convince contemporary man, who is often distracted and insensitive. For this reason, the new evangelization

66 Benedict XVI *Pope’s Homily at Vespers for St Peter and St Paul* 2010 Op cit
must try to find ways of making the proclamation of salvation more effective; a proclamation without which personal existence remains contradictory and deprived of what is essential. Even for those who remain tied to their Christian roots, but who live the difficult relationship with modernity, it is important to realize that being Christian is not a type of clothing to wear in private or on special occasions, but is something living and all-encompassing, able to contain all that is good in modern life.”

It is interesting to note that Benedict XVI was not optimistic that the New Evangelization would have an immediate impact in evangelizing persons and cultures in the dechristianized west.

Yet another temptation lies hidden beneath this—the temptation of impatience, the temptation of immediately finding the great success, in finding large numbers. But this is not God's way. For the Kingdom of God as well as for evangelization, the instrument and vehicle of the Kingdom of God, the parable of the grain of mustard seed is always valid (see Mark 4:31-32).

His comments here are a wise pastoral exhortation to perseverance in the face of what he saw as the likelihood of minimal initial success. Without doubt there will be seasons in the work of evangelization where there seems to be little to show for the effort expended and persistence in the face of rejection is a necessary attribute. There are times (and have been times in history which the then Cardinal Ratzinger did not mention such as the contemporary explosion of Christianity in the developing world) however when the spiritual atmosphere is completely different and multitudes come quickly into the Church. Jesus Himself said “Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest?’ I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.” Despite his comments, Pope Benedict would no doubt welcome these times of success.

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67 Benedict XVI Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization 2011 Op Cit
69 John 4:35
Like John Paul II he noted that the rejection of the life of faith in the previously Christianized world leaves open doors which only life in Jesus Christ can address. He comments, “Human beings of the third millennium want an authentic, full life; they need truth, profound freedom, love freely given. Even in the deserts of the secularized world, man's soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” The rejection of God only unveils a thirst that only can God in Jesus Christ can satisfy.

Magisterial teaching then has identified and defined the characteristics of the “mission field” requiring a New Evangelization. The teaching has been realistic in identifying the various different types of “hardness” toward the Gospel that will be present in the recipients. It has also pointed out the significant weaknesses in the materialistic/secularized/hedonistic mindsets. It has pointed out that the spiritual riches of the life of faith in Jesus Christ are the only realities which can touch the deep needs unmet by a purely materialistic/naturalistic worldview.

The comments made in Magisterial teaching have given some general ideas and recommendations of a pattern of Christian witness in the modern/post-modern western world but have not been specific. Perhaps this is as it should be so that each context can fit itself to the requirements of the human landscape they are presented with. There are however some major themes of the teaching that need to be understood and incorporated into any enterprise which wants to call itself a manifestation of the New Evangelization. These are set out in the next chapter.

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70 Benedict XVI *Homily at Vespers for St Peter and St Paul* 2010 Op Cit.
1.6 The Major Themes of the New Evangelization.

The object of the New Evangelization then is to obey the call of Jesus to “make disciples of all nations.”\(^7\) Magisterial teaching has attempted to refocus the faithful and give them both a theological and practical impetus to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ wherever they find themselves, particularly in the de-Christianised west. This section will examine the main themes of the New Evangelization and describe what engaging in the New Evangelization should “look like” in terms of its practical expression.

It is possible for all sorts of activities to be called manifestations of the New Evangelization. From the perspective of the Magisterial teaching however, there are some indispensable characteristics of this enterprise.

There are four major areas which constitute activity that can be called a manifestation of the New Evangelization. The first one of these factors is an awareness of the urgency of the call of God for the faithful to evangelize. Secondly there is the emphasis on the involvement of the whole Church and in particular the laity in the work of evangelization. Thirdly there is the very specific definition of the concept of conversion as a radical connection and relationship with Jesus Christ Himself. Fourthly there is the essential role of the Holy Spirit as the primary agent of all evangelization.

These elements will possibly not be present in every activity of the Church as it obeys the call to evangelize. If however none of these aspects are present or are

\(^7\) Matthew 28:19.
present only in a superficial way then it is reasonable to say that such an activity is not a manifestation of the New Evangelization. If there is in any validity in the Magisterial teaching it will not be surprising if there is little by way of conversion and growth in the Church from such efforts. Even by the standard discussed by Benedict XVI above of gradual change one would expect genuine manifestations of the New Evangelization to at least have some discernible impact.

In discussing Catholic High Schools in N.S.W. as centers for the New Evangelization it is important to establish these criteria. The content of curricula and textbooks will be examined to detect the extent to which the four factors mentioned above are present. Given that this call has been present in an increasing measure for the last 48 years and the N.S.W/A.C.T Bishop’s call for schools to respond (to be discussed below\(^{72}\)) has been current for at least six years then it will be reasonable to expect these factors to be present at a more than superficial level. The absence of them can possibly be interpreted as a manifestation of the “babysitting Church” (where a passive, unevangelizing laity is “babysat” by a unevangelizing clergy) deplored by Pope Francis in a homily delivered in the early days of his pontificate.\(^{73}\)

\(^{72}\) Bishops of NSW and the ACT. Op Cit.

Chapter 2. Involvement of the Laity

The vision of “mission” in the Catholic Church prior to Vatican II consisted of the various missionary orders/societies and their ministry into non-Christian lands. Historically, (and sadly in a lot of places unfortunately) the spread of the Church occurred alongside the practice of conquest and colonization where, as Gorski comments:

The religious mission was normally combined with the secular enterprise of “civilizing” these peoples, in other words, transplanting Western cultural models. Thus the term “mission” came to mean the complex of activities by which the western ecclesiastical system was extended all over the world. ¹

The term mission was associated with geographical areas under the authority of the “Congregation of Propaganda Fide” in Rome. The possibility of conversion to Jesus Christ and making disciples was not excluded from the understanding of mission prior to Vatican II but it was not at the forefront of the Church’s thinking around the content and activity of mission as Fr John Gorski describes:

Conversion was often seen as the change of religion rather than an encounter with the living Christ and discipleship. The overt objective was really “Christianization” rather than evangelization: the incorporation of more and more peoples into a socio-political and religious entity called “Christendom”. ²

The focus of the Church’s ministry in the already Christianized world was pastoral care and the day to day life of the Catholic Community. This involved the teaching of doctrine and administering the sacraments to those already members of the Church. Both “mission” and pastoral activity were the role of clergy and religious. The role of the laity was for them to contribute financially and partake in the sacramental life of the Church. They were the passive receivers of ministry rather

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² Ibid p 3
than active contributors to life of the people of God. Insofar as they were active in apostolic activity it was considered a concession on the part of the hierarchy rather than something the laity could initiate and pursue in their own right.

Shaw’s reflections on the “Catholic Action” movement which started in the 1920’s and 1930’s in Europe is a good example of the way the laity’s involvement in ministry was constructed before Vatican II.

Catholic Action in its day marked a giant step forward in the Church’s thinking about the laity. Giving lay men and women meaningful roles in the mission of the Church was something new back then. But Catholic Action also had a serious built-in limitation—its own official definition of lay apostolate.

Time again, you found something like this in the literature of Catholic Action: “The apostolate of the laity is a participation in the apostolate of the hierarchy.” Which is to say that the right and duty to share in the mission of the Church is a concession to the laity on the hierarchy’s part—something that comes to them on loan, so to speak—and in the end what lay people do by way of apostolate naturally is decided by the clergy.\(^3\)

This understanding was to fundamentally change with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council in general and the document *Ad Gentes* in particular.

### 2.1 *Ad Gentes*

The Church’s Decree on Missionary Activity “*Ad Gentes*” from the second Vatican council moved away from a solely geographic understanding of the expansion of the Church in new territories to an emphasis on missionary activities that the Church undertakes out of its very nature, wherever the people of God are situated. It also moved away from a hierarchical/clerical understanding of the mission of the church.

where the laity were included as some form of privilege or concession. In Ad Gentes, missionary activity was distinguished from the pastoral activity of nurturing the ongoing conversion of those who were already baptized. It declared that the laity had their own right and duty to engage in the Church’s mission to preach the Gospel to all nations.  

This change of language and description was not simply cosmetic. The original documents on the subject presented to the council were apparently not well received by many of the Cardinals. This was because they restated the geographical/organizational/hierarchical understanding of mission which many of the Council Fathers felt was an inadequate. Stephan Bevans gives a sense of the vigor of the discussion about the original drafts about the Churches mission,

> It was a casualty of the virtual revolt of many bishops at the council against, in the famous words of Bishop Emil de Smedt of Bruges, Belgium, the “hierarchical, clerical and juridical” tone of the drafts that had been presented at the first session. 

In the end, a document (written by among others Yves Congar, Joseph Ratzinger and Karl Rahner) acceptable to the Council was produced.

Ad Gentes, the final result of these deliberations, proclaims that mission takes place in the Church as a participation in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit as they are sent by the Father. As every believer is Baptized, they enter into the very life of the Trinity. This makes them and the whole Church “missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she

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4 Bevans, Stephen. Op Cit. p 6
5 Ibid p 1
draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father."\(^6\) The clear implication is that the laity are to be as involved in evangelization along with the clergy, or as Bevan puts it

To be a Christian, in other words, is to be caught up in the very life of God, which is a life of reaching out and saving presence in the world. The entire church is missionary. Mission is not just something that specialists—missionaries—do. This theology, ultimately written by Congar and quite strongly fought over by the drafting commission, moves mission away from something just directed by the Roman Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, and places it squarely in the daily life of the church as such.\(^7\)

In *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI explicitly refers to the teaching of *Ad Gentes* that the whole church has the obligation to evangelize

But who then has the mission of evangelizing? The Second Vatican Council gave a clear reply to this question: it is upon the Church that "there rests, by divine mandate, the duty of going out into the whole world and preaching the gospel to every creature."\(^8\) And in another text: "...the whole Church is missionary, and the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the People of God."\(^9\)

All the faithful then are responsible to preach the Good News wherever they find themselves and to be “competent as ministers of the New Covenant, not of letter which kills but of the Spirit which brings life” (2 Cor 3:6). This is particularly pertinent with regard to the New Evangelization in Catholic High Schools. In NSW there are now very few priests or religious teaching in Catholic Schools. It is the “lay” teachers then who are charged with the responsibility of seeing that the New Evangelization is effectively implemented.

### 2.2 Evangelii Nuntiandi

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\(^6\) AG 2  
\(^7\) Bevans, Stephen. Op Cit p2.  
\(^8\) AG 1  
\(^9\) ibid 35
In addition to his references to *Ad Gentes* (above), Pope Paul VI went on to discuss some of the ways he saw the laity expressing themselves as evangelizers. It is interesting to note that he distinguishes the role the laity are primarily to perform from that of their pastors. The role of their pastors is to “establish and develop the ecclesial community.”\(^{10}\) The laity are to put to use every Christian and evangelical possibility latent but already present and active in the affairs of the world. Their own field of evangelizing activity is the vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics, but also the world of culture, of the sciences and the arts, of international life, of the mass media. It also includes other realities which are open to evangelization, such as human love, the family, the education of children and adolescents, professional work, suffering. The more Gospel-inspired lay people there are engaged in these realities, clearly involved in them, competent to promote them and conscious that they must exercise to the full their Christian powers which are often buried and suffocated, the more these realities will be at the service of the kingdom of God and therefore of salvation in Jesus Christ, without in any way losing or sacrificing their human content but rather pointing to a transcendent dimension which is often disregarded.\(^{11}\)

Paul VI addresses here the divide between life and the Gospel (which John Paul II discusses more explicitly in *Christifideles Laici* below) which Magisterial teaching identifies as a major blockage to the laity performing their role effectively. By implication, there is no real divide between work “in the World” that the laity perform and the “development of the ecclesial community” that their pastors undertake. They are different roles within the one task of bringing the salvation of Jesus Christ to the whole world and in building up and establishing the Kingdom of God.

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\(^{10}\) EN 70

\(^{11}\) ibid 70
Ralph Martin makes the point that many pastors, out of a desire to “include” the laity in the work of the Church and break down the wrong sense of separation between pastors and the flock in the mission of the Church, give them roles and activities within the ecclesial community. He points out however that it would be preferable for pastors to prepare and train their congregations in very specific ways to preach the Gospel.

There has been a tendency, however, in Post-Vatican II Catholicism to drift into an understanding of this call to lay mission that diverges significantly from what the documents actually say. On the one hand, there has been a tendency to interpret the call to apostolate as a call to “power sharing” and assign roles to lay-people within the Church that aren’t really evangelistic. A lot of the focus has been, and continues to be, on lay-people becoming “active” within the church, i.e. doing readings at Mass, becoming “extraordinary” ministers of the Eucharist, and giving Communion, joining parish councils, serving on committees, etc. In reaction to this there has been a more recent corrective in an attempt to keep the roles of priests and laity distinct that points out that the specific nature of the lay apostolate (“apostolate” is a term normally used in these documents in a sense equivalent to “mission”) is “secular” and should focus on the influence on culture and politics through promoting Christian values. This emphasis on the secular quality of lay mission is usually silent about the responsibility to directly speak to people about Christ, with a view towards conversion.12

Russell Shaw is in agreement with Martin on this point where he talks about the tendency to “clericalize” the laity rather than to equip them for the ministry of evangelization in the world.

(By) putting so much emphasis on activities within the structures and institutions of the Church—lay ministry, that is—that apostolate in and to the secular world gets short shrift and is virtually ignored.

Several sources support this unhealthy tendency. One of them, ideological in nature, is an updated version of clericalism. Clericalism fosters the idea that the advancement of the laity comes from admitting them to “ministries” and allowing them to do things (read at Mass, distribute Communion, etc.) that only clerics formerly could do. It’s like taking children to a fire station and letting them wear the fire fighters’ hats. The more lay people resemble

the clergy in what they do (and even in the way they dress), so it’s supposed, the more elevated their status will be.\footnote{Shaw, Russell “What Should the Laity be Doing?” \textit{Holy Spirit Interactive}. \textit{Holy Spirit Interactive}. http://www.holyspiritinteractive.net/columns/guests/russellshaw/laity.asp 2013 (accessed 4/5/13.)}

In contrast to this “clericalizing” approach to lay ministry, Pope Paul VI in \textit{Evangelii Nuntiandi} describes how the laity are to be committed to mission. He states that a family “which is conscious of its mission”\footnote{EN 71} evangelizes its own members and goes on to become “the evangelizer of many other families and of the neighbourhood.”\footnote{ibid 71} In discussing the situation of the young he anticipates that youth “who are well trained in faith and prayer must become more and more the apostles of youth”.\footnote{Ibid 72}

In sections 21 and 22 of \textit{Evangelii Nuntiandi} Pope Paul VI outlines the process of evangelization he sees the whole church participating in. He first discusses the way that Christian’s can be a “wordless witness.”\footnote{Ibid 21} When Christians, in the midst of their communities and work, live in solidarity with those around them and show that they have a, “faith in values that go beyond current values” they, “stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live.”\footnote{Ibid 21} He calls this process the “initial act of evangelization”\footnote{Ibid 21} but he is careful to point out that the work of evangelization does not stop here.

Pope Paul VI points out that this type of silent witness that evokes questions must be accompanied by “a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the Lord Jesus.”\footnote{Ibid 22} He states forcefully that any witness will in the long run prove “ineffective” unless the impressive characteristics noted by the surrounding community are “explained,
justified”. It is the lay Christians giving this “wordless witness” who are responsible to “proclaim the mystery of Jesus” to their community.\textsuperscript{21}

### 2.3 Redemptoris Missio

In the encyclical \textit{Redemptoris Missio}, the apostolic exhortation \textit{Christifideles Laici} and the apostolic letter \textit{Nово Millenio Ineunte}, Pope John Paul II further develops the discussion of the role the laity should adopt in the proclamation of the Gospel. John Paul II makes increasing reference to the fact that only the laity can evangelize effectively in some circumstances “This obligation is all the more insistent in circumstances in which only through them are people able to hear the Gospel and to know Christ.”\textsuperscript{22}

Not only are lay people the only ones who can witness in certain circumstances, movements initiated by lay people may best equipped to communicate the reality of the Gospel to the world. In commenting on the various “ecclesial movements” of lay people which have what he calls a “missionary dynamism”\textsuperscript{23} he says

> I therefore recommend that they be spread, and that they be used to give fresh energy, especially among young people, to the Christian life and to evangelization, within a pluralistic view of the ways in which Christians can associate and express themselves.\textsuperscript{24}

In acknowledging the contribution of “ecclesial movements” and other types of “lay missionary associations” John Paul II is reinforcing a vision of the Church where there is “a pluralistic view of the ways in which Christians can associate and express themselves.”\textsuperscript{25} These organizations may not be under the direct supervision/leadership of the local parish or Diocese but insofar as they are in co-

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid 22
\textsuperscript{22} RM 71
\textsuperscript{23} ibid72
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid 72
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid72
operation with the local church and involved in the mission of the New Evangelization they are an “undeniable element in the plantatio Ecclesiae.”

John Paul II wants to foster a “mature and responsible” laity as “an essential and undeniable element” of the church’s mission. Rymarz comments on *Redemptoris Missio* and its focus on the laity as essential to the new evangelization.

The new evangelization is based on the conviction that mission is the responsibility of all members of the Church. Moreover, it is not now a matter of sending out missionaries to other lands, but of awakening to the need for Christians in secularized cultures to evangelize their fellow citizens when, despite the evangelization that occurred in the past, society is no longer animated by the Gospel.

The laity are not only free and responsible to evangelize wherever they find themselves as *Ad Gentes* and Paul VI in *Evangellii Nuntiandi* point out. They are free to organize their own organizations/initiatives/movements independent of structures present in their Parish or Diocese and are encouraged to do so. There is a sense in which the laity are being freed to respond to Holy Spirit in whatever way they are led.

### 2.4 Christifideles Laici

In *Christifideles Laici* John Paul II reaffirms the responsibility, duty and the freedom the laity have as they are engaged in the mission proper to them (as discussed above in *Redemptoris Missio*). John Paul II goes on to outline the laity’s role in taking advantage of a particular window of opportunity the contemporary alienation...
from faith presents.\textsuperscript{30} In situations where there is an “indifference to religion” and people live “as if God did not exist”,\textsuperscript{31} people are left without real answers to many of life’s deep questions. It is the role of the laity in the Pope’s mind to testify how the Christian faith constitutes the only fully valid response—consciously perceived and stated by all in varying degrees—to the problems and hopes that life poses to every person and society.\textsuperscript{32}

In order to have any effectiveness as they seek to take advantage of these opportunities, he points out (as we saw above in Pope Paul VI’s comments in \textit{Evangelii Nuntiandi}) that the laity need to have dealt with the tendency in western Christianity to compartmentalize faith away from “secular” life. Only when the lay faithful have overcome this tendency within themselves and experienced the Gospel as the “only truly valid response” to the issues and challenges of life will they be able to complete their mission effectively. As he puts it

This will be possible if the lay faithful will know how to overcome in themselves the separation of the Gospel from life, to again take up in their daily activities in family, work and society, an integrated approach to life that is fully brought about by the inspiration and strength of the Gospel.\textellipsis This vital synthesis will be achieved when the lay faithful know how to put the gospel and their daily duties of life into a most shining and convincing testimony, where, not fear but the loving pursuit of Christ and adherence to him will be the factors determining how a person is to live and grow, and these will lead to new ways of living more in conformity with human dignity.\textsuperscript{33}

\textbf{2.5 Novo Millenio Ineunte}

In \textit{Novo Millenio Ineunte} John Paul II reaffirms the need for the whole people of God to be involved in the proclamation of the gospel.

\begin{flushright}
30 ibid 34 \\
31 Ibid 34 \\
32 Ibid 34 \\
33 Ibid 34
\end{flushright}
This passion will not fail to stir in the Church a new sense of mission, which cannot be left to a group of "specialists" but must involve the responsibility of all the members of the People of God. Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves, they must proclaim him. In Pope John Paul II’s thinking then, the major burden of the actual work of evangelization does not lie with the clergy/hierarchy. He lays the responsibility and freedom to evangelize squarely on the shoulders of a spiritually mature, zealous laity who will preach the Gospel in deed and word wherever they are. This spiritual maturity will include an integration of the life of Jesus Christ into the fabric of the everyday life and work of the believer. The laity are free to respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit and create movements and ecclesial communities to complement and enhance the work of the Church in proclaiming the Good News.

### 2.6 Benedict XVI

Pope Benedict XVI emphatically confirms the role the laity will need to adopt as they play their part in implementing the New Evangelization stated by his predecessors. His comments below focus on the crucial role he sees that the family plays in evangelization,

> The new evangelization depends largely on the Domestic Church. In our time, as in times past, the eclipse of God, the spread of ideologies contrary to the family and the degradation of sexual ethics are connected. And just as the eclipse of God and the crisis of the family are linked, so the new evangelization is inseparable from the Christian family. The family is indeed the way of the Church because it is the “human space” of our encounter with Christ. Spouses, “not only receive the love of Christ and become a saved community, but they are also called upon to communicate Christ's love to their brethren, thus becoming a saving community.”

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34 NMI 40
family founded on the Sacrament of Marriage is a particular realization of the Church, saved and saving, evangelized and evangelizing community.”

Pope Benedict echoes the emphasis of John Paul II discussed above when he points out the need for an integration of the Gospel into the life of the believers as an indispensible facet of effective evangelization. The “dramatic conditions” that accompany the loss of faith and practice that constitute the need for the New Evangelization mean “that the lifestyle of believers needs to be genuinely credible and all the more convincing for the dramatic conditions in which those who need to hear it live”. Perhaps the reason for Benedict XVI’s reticence about immediate results for a New Evangelization is an awareness that this type of integrated/mature believer is not as common among contemporary Catholics as he would like.

2.7 Pope Francis

In March 2013 Cardinal Bergoglio of Argentina was elected Pope after the resignation of Benedict XVI. His views are included in this section because they are focused on the role the laity are to take in the mission of the Church.

Many of Pope Francis’ initial statements have echoed the emphasis on evangelization of his predecessors. If anything, his tone has been more strident in urging the whole Church to evangelize. In a homily on April 17th 2013 at a mass celebrated for the Vatican’s Institute of Works, Pope Francis urged clergy and laity not to live in a situation where nothing by way of evangelization occurs. He shared that when Christians evangelize

36 Benedict XVI Address of His Holiness to participants at the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Family 2011 Op cit.
37 ibid
the Church becomes a mother church that produces children (and more) children, because we, the children of the Church, we carry that. But when we do not, the Church is not the mother, but the babysitter, that takes care of the baby – to put the baby to sleep. It is a Church dormant.38

Pope Francis set the bar of comparison high when he used the example of the first believers in the Book of Acts as a yardstick for evangelization (Benedict XVI similarly sets a high bar for Christian witness amongst the laity in a different way above). He made the point that the early believers were “simple faithful” who had only been baptized for a year when they went out with “Apostolic courage in the strength of the Spirit”. He pointed out the inadequacy of a situation where Christians “hope that the bishop might speak or the priest might speak” and that their view of the life of faith was “‘I was baptized, I made Confirmation, First Communion ... I have my identity card, alright.’” And implying some complicity in the problem on the part of the clergy “‘and now, go to sleep quietly, you are a Christian.’” He pointed out that this model of Church life “leads to a routine spirituality and convoluted clericalism.”39

While his predecessors accurately outlined the need for the whole Church to evangelize and exhorted the clergy and the faithful to action, Pope Francis accurately (and even uncomfortably) exposes the futility and dysfunction of the un-evangelizing Church. In a way this a development in the teaching on the New Evangelization in that it moves from the conceptual and the theoretical to a practical consideration of what genuine Christianity has to be “on the ground” to be optimally effective.

Magisterial teaching since Vatican II has unequivocally confirmed the laity’s place in the evangelizing mission of the Church. This emphasis has only increased as the

38 Uebbing, David Op cit
39 Ibid
identification and discussion of the New Evangelization has taken place. Connected with this has been the identification of the need for lay people to move away from a vision of the clergy and religious as the “professionals” who do all the “spiritual” work in the Church and the laity as passive “consumers” or “spectators”.

The teaching presents a need for a well formed, responsible laity who have integrated the Gospel into their everyday life. These people are a witness to the character and nature of Jesus everywhere they work and live. Every aspect of their lives emits the “aroma of Christ” (2Cor 2:15) to the degree that those around them are prompted to ask questions. When they get the opportunity they specifically and accurately proclaim that Gospel and bring new believers into the Church.

These considerations are vital when thinking about Catholic High Schools as centres of the New Evangelization. Catholic Education/School Office staff, School Principals/Deputy Principals and teachers of Catholic Schools within the whole of a particular diocese need to be examples of the type of person outlined in magisterial teaching. This teaching is emphatic that it is only the evangelized who can effectively evangelize.
Chapter 3. Defining Conversion

A pivotal consideration in the New Evangelization is the concept of conversion. Missionary work anywhere in the world can focus on works of charity, social justice, political liberation and promoting the “Kingdom value” of good will toward all men. Many within the Church would identify these types of activities as the only appropriate ways for Catholics to be involved in any type of “mission” work. The proclamation of Jesus as “savior” and any style of “proselytizing” would be considered “arrogant” and “disrespectful” of the cultures and people it is directed to.

John Paul II describes this point of view in *Redemptoris Missio*.

> it is claimed that it is enough to help people to become more human or more faithful to their own religion, that it is enough to build communities capable of working for justice, freedom, peace and solidarity.

Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* likewise identified this tendency,

> We must not ignore the fact that many, even generous Christians who are sensitive to the dramatic questions involved in the problem of liberation, in their wish to commit the Church to the liberation effort are frequently tempted to reduce her mission to the dimensions of a simply temporal project. They would reduce her aims to a man-centered goal; the salvation of which she is the messenger would be reduced to material well-being. Her activity, forgetful of all spiritual and religious preoccupation, would become initiatives of the political or social order.

Even in the context of the New Evangelization in the developed world it might be possible to make these imperatives a focus of the missionary impulse.

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1 McGregor, Peter John. “The Universal Work of the Holy Spirit in the Missiology of Pope John Paul II.” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 77(1) 2012, 83-98. This article gives an overview of the attitude toward mission where the proclamation of the gospel is not considered to be an appropriate part of missionary work. It also explains how the missiology of John Paul II sees the Holy Spirit at work in other, non-Christian religions and the way some use his teaching to justify their stance of not preaching the gospel and concentrating on development and social justice. McGregor goes on to explain that the work of the Holy Spirit in other religions in John Paul II’s view is focused on leading people to Christ and not on creating, “parallel” pathways of salvation in other religions independent of Jesus Christ. In John Paul II’s view, the proclamation of the gospel is an essential aspect of communication with other cultures and religions.

2 RM 46

3 EN 32
Magisterial teaching has been careful to make the distinction between these kinds of admirable “good works” and a presentation of the Gospel which is specifically aimed at facilitating conversion among its hearers. Paul VI puts this consideration as follows in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*:

> There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed. The history of the Church, from the discourse of Peter on the morning of Pentecost onwards, has been intermingled and identified with the history of this proclamation.\(^4\)

And John Paul II comments in *Redemptoris Missio*:

> In the complex reality of mission, initial proclamation has a central and irreplaceable role, since it introduces man "into the mystery of the love of God, who invites him to enter into a personal relationship with himself in Christ" and opens the way to conversion.\(^5\)

The goal of this proclamation about the reality of the incarnation, life, teaching, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit “on all flesh”(Acts 2) is to bring people who are not yet Christians to conversion to Christ and Baptize them into active membership of the Church.

The concept of conversion has a number of spiritual, social, linguistic and psychological considerations connected to it. These will be discussed later in this chapter. Magisterial teaching on conversion will be considered first. This teaching gives some detail as to what the experience of conversion to Jesus Christ will “look like” as it outworked in human experience.

**3.1 Ad Gentes**

\(^4\) ibid 22
\(^5\) RM 44
The world of evangelical protestantism and pentecostalism is familiar with the concept of “bringing people to Christ”, “getting people saved”, “getting them born again” etc. By these terms (and a few others) they mean the process of bringing people who are not presently Christians (or those who have not had a definitive experience of coming into relationship with Jesus) into a lived experience of relationship and communication with Jesus Christ. The use of this type of language around the concept of salvation/conversion is not quite so familiar to the majority of Catholics in the western world. These terms are more connected in the Catholic sensibility with a sense of suspicion and discomfort as they evoke the excesses and inconsistencies of television evangelists and the like.

Magisterial teaching however is not shy of using this style of terminology to define the desired result of the proclamation of the Gospel. In *Ad Gentes*, the initial conversion experience is described

Wherever God opens a door of speech for proclaiming the mystery of Christ (Col. 4:3), there is announced to all men (Mark 16:15; 1 Cor. 9:15; Rom. 10:14) with confidence and constancy (Acts 4:13, 29, 31; 9:27, 28; 13:46; 14:3; 19:8; 26:26; 28:31; 1 Thess. 2:2; 2 Cor. 3:12; 7:4; Phil. 1:20; Eph. 3:12; 6:19, 20) the living God, and He Whom He has sent for the salvation of all, Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 1:9-10; 1 Cor. 1:18-21; Gal. 1:31; Acts 14:15-17, 17:22-31), in order that non - Christians, when the Holy Spirit opens their heart (Acts 16:14), may believe and be freely converted to the Lord, that they may cleave sincerely to Him Who, being the "way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), fulfills all their spiritual expectations, and even infinitely surpasses them.

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6 Willard, Dallas. “Discipleship.” In McDermott, Gerald ed. *Oxford Handbook of Evangelical Theology*. (Oxford University Press NY 2010) p 236-245. An emphasis on the experience of God and conversion is a strength of some evangelical/Pentecostal/charismatic expressions of Christianity. There is discussion however that the reality of discipleship/catechesis/ongoing conversion subsequent to these initial experiences is often not addressed effectively. Dallas Willard’s essay is an evangelical Protestant’s reflection on this deficiency. The case could be made that having an intense experience of Jesus Christ in conversion and falling away from it through lack of discipleship/catechesis/integration into a Church Community may intensify the phenomenon Pope Paul VI identified where people feel they have, “tried” Christianity and feel that “it didn’t work” for them.
This conversion must be taken as an initial one, yet sufficient to make a man realize that he has been snatched away from sin and led into the mystery of God's love, who called him to enter into a personal relationship with Him in Christ. For, by the workings of divine grace, the new convert sets out on a spiritual journey, by means of which, already sharing through faith in the mystery of Christ's Death and Resurrection, he passes from the old man to the new one, perfected in Christ (cf. Col. 3:5-10; Eph. 4:20-24).  

This passage appeals to a sense of psychological “epiphany” when it talks of conversion needing to be able to make a person “realize” they have been “converted to the Lord”. The language used also alludes to an affective/experiential component of conversion when it speaks of people being “snatched away from sin” and cleaving to the Lord.

In Catholic tradition there are many examples of the experience of conversion to Jesus Christ being lived with an overwhelming affective/psychological component. While not mandating that conversion needs to be a dramatic, emotional experience, the passage from Ad Gentes is making clear that conversion must be a significant event that is accompanied by a change of life and direction as the reality of relationship with Jesus of Nazareth is lived out.

3.2 Evangelii Nuntiandi

Pope Paul VI in Evangelii Nuntiandi describes this conversion as “a total interior renewal which the Gospel calls metanoia; it is a radical conversion, a profound change of mind and heart” and a “true encounter with God in Jesus Christ.”

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7 AG 13
8 Pridmore, John & Watts, Greg. From Gangland to Promised Land. (Transform Management GB. 2007) John Pridmore’s testimony of conversion to Jesus Christ out of a life of violence, addiction and promiscuity is one of any number of testimonies to the reality and overwhelming power of the Holy Spirit as He moves to bring people into an experience of salvation in Jesus Christ.
9 EN 10
10 ibid 48
Evangelii Nuntiandi outlines the types of changes conversion brings about in the life of the new believer

In fact the proclamation only reaches full development when it is listened to, accepted and assimilated, and when it arouses a genuine adherence in the one who has thus received it. An adherence to the truths which the Lord in His mercy has revealed; still more, an adherence to a program of life - a life henceforth transformed - which He proposes. In a word, adherence to the kingdom, that is to say, to the "new world," to the new state of things, to the new manner of being, of living, of living in community, which the Gospel inaugurates. Such an adherence, which cannot remain abstract and unincarnated, reveals itself concretely by a visible entry into a community of believers.\textsuperscript{11}

The emphasis here is on the “newness’ of the converted life and an introduction into the whole “new world” of the Kingdom of God and coming into fellowship with the people of God. The experience of conversion and an “encounter” with Jesus Christ “transforms” the convert’s whole lifestyle.

One of the most significant signs of this new lifestyle is that the convert is so convinced and activated by his or her salvation that they can’t help but go on to evangelize others.

Finally, the person who has been evangelized goes on to evangelize others. Here lies the test of truth, the touchstone of evangelization: it is unthinkable that a person should accept the Word and give himself to the kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in his turn.\textsuperscript{12}

The emphasis in Evangelii Nuntiandi is on the way conversion transforms and reorients the new believer into a completely new way of thinking and living. This change is not only the result of the new believer deciding to live in a new way but the fact of an internal change done by the work of the Holy Spirit. In talking about the “newness” of this experience, Paul VI is referring to a subjective experience of

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid 10
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid 24
wonder and awe in coming into relationship with Jesus Christ. The wonder of this experience and the joy of the renewed life lead the new believer to proclaim the Good News to others.

3.3 Redemptoris Missio

Conversion is an indispensable initial goal of the work of mission. Pope John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio* states “The proclamation of the Word of God has *Christian conversion* as its aim: a complete and sincere adherence to Christ and his Gospel through faith.”

*Redemptoris Missio* uses dramatic language to describe conversion to Jesus Christ and the change that ensues in a person’s life.

From the outset, conversion is expressed in faith which is total and radical, and which neither limits nor hinders God's gift. At the same time, it gives rise to a dynamic and lifelong process which demands a continual turning away from "life according to the flesh" to "life according to the Spirit" (cf. Rom 8:3-13). Conversion means accepting, by a personal decision, the saving sovereignty of Christ and becoming his disciple.

John Paul II expects that this conversion (and the Baptism which follows it if the convert is not already Baptized) creates a new type of person that injects life and enthusiasm into the Church.

especially in the case of adults-such converts bring with them a kind of new energy, an enthusiasm for the faith, and a desire to see the Gospel lived out in the Church. They would be greatly disappointed if, having entered the ecclesial community, they were to find a life lacking fervor and without signs of renewal!

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13 RM 46  
14 ibid 46  
15 Ibid 47
Here again there is the description of a life that has been impacted and transformed psychologically and emotionally through its conversion to Jesus Christ. The style of evangelization necessary to create and maintain Christian conversion is also alluded to here. The enthusiastic “saved” person needs to be incorporated into a fervent/renewed ecclesial community. This observation has implications for the Church in general and the situation in Catholic High Schools in particular.

3.4 Pope Benedict XVI

Pope Benedict XVI (when he was Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger) discussed the New Evangelization and described conversion as one of the “essential contents” of this work. He commented further that conversion was much more than a change to new and improved moral framework but a new reality of relationship with God Himself,

“All this does not imply moralism; reducing Christianity to morality loses sight of the essence of Christ’s message: the gift of a new friendship, the gift of communion with Jesus and thereby with God. Whoever converts to Christ does not mean to create his own moral autarchy for himself, does not intend to build his own goodness through his own strengths”

Here he emphasises that conversion means coming into an experience of communion and relationship with a real living person, Jesus of Nazareth. In the first encyclical he wrote as he entered into his pontificate, Pope Benedict XVI described conversion.

*We have come to believe in God's love:* in these words the Christian can express the fundamental decision of his life. Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction. Saint John's Gospel describes that event in these words: “God so loved the world that he gave

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17 ibid
his only Son, that whoever believes in him should ... have eternal life” (3:16).18

In the quote above, he points out that the relationship with Jesus is essentially an encounter of love that irrevocably changes the direction of our lives. His explanation of conversion uses the same experiential language as the magisterial documents reviewed earlier. If anything, he refers to a more intimate, personal experience of being loved and the change this brings rather than the enthusiasm, activity producing impact discussed in the other documents. This emphasis is not in conflict with the other descriptions of conversion but it brings out a different yet significant dimension of the experience.

3.5 2012 Synod of Bishops

In October 2012 an Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops met to discuss the topic “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith”. The Instrumentum Laboris or the text written in preparation for the Synod’s discussions (formed from the Bishops’ responses to a long set of questions on the subject prior to the Synod) makes the following remarks about what the proclamation of the word is and the results that are desired,

In referring to the Gospel, we must not think of it only as a book or a set of teachings. The Gospel is much more; it is a living and efficacious Word, which accomplishes what it says. It is not so much a system of articles of faith and moral precepts, much less a political programme, but a person: Jesus Christ, the definitive Word of God, who became man. The Gospel is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. However, not only does the Gospel have Jesus Christ as its content; but even more, through the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ is also the promoter and the centre of its proclamation and transmission. Consequently, the goal of the transmission of the faith is the realization of a

personal encounter with Jesus Christ, in the Spirit, thereby leading to an experiencing of his Father and our Father.¹⁹

This document equates conversion with an encounter with the living God in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. One initial goal of the New Evangelization is then to transmit the faith by creating “in every place and time the conditions for this personal encounter of individuals with Jesus Christ.”²⁰ The result of this personal encounter “allows individuals to share in the Son's relationship with his Father and to experience the power of the Holy Spirit. The aim of transmitting the faith and the goal of evangelization is to bring us "through him [Christ] in one Spirit to the Father" (Eph 2:18).”²¹

An emphasis in the Lineamenta is to reflect on the “conditions” whereby this encounter with Jesus can take place. The most significant “condition” in facilitating encounter with Christ is the role the Holy Spirit has in bringing a person to an experience of conversion. Whatever activity or style of proclamation is chosen, effectiveness in making converts is determined by the presence and action of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit alone who is able to make the experiential impact on the human person that becomes the experience of conversion. This aspect of the New Evangelization will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4 as Magisterial teaching insists that the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of the New Evangelization.

3.6 Pope Francis

²⁰ Ibid 11
²¹ Ibid 11.
Pope Francis’ comments on the role of the laity in the New Evangelization (discussed above) indicate an agreement with previous Magisterial teaching. While he has not said anything specifically about Christian conversion and its characteristics up to the present, it is likely that his views will follow on from the teaching of his predecessors.

The Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean met in 2007 for their Fifth General Conference. The final document of the Conference was focused extensively on the mission of evangelization. Cardinal Bergoglio (at that time Archbishop of Buenos Aires) was a delegate at this conference took part in the writing of the final document. It is reasonable to be confident that the present Pope would agree with its reflections on the reality of Christian conversion. The document highlights 5 steps involved in the process of becoming a “missionary disciple.” The first two steps refer to the Christian conversion.

a) The Encounter with Jesus Christ: Those who will be his disciples are already seeking him (cf. Jn 1:38), but it is the Lord who calls them: “Follow me” (Mk 1:14; Mt 9:9). The deeper meaning of the search must be discovered, and the encounter with Christ that leads to Christian initiation must be fostered. This encounter must be constantly renewed by personal testimony, proclamation of the *kerygma*, and the missionary action of the community. The *kerygma* is not simply a stage, but the leitmotiv of a process that culminates in the maturity of the disciple of Jesus Christ. Without the *kerygma*, the other aspects of this process are condemned to sterility, with hearts not truly converted to the Lord. Only out of the *kerygma* does the possibility of a true Christian initiation occur. Hence, the Church should have it present in all its actions.

b) Conversion: It is the initial response of those who have listened to the Lord in wonder, who believe in Him through the action of the Spirit, and who decide to be His friend and go with him, changing how they think and live, accepting the cross of Christ, conscious that dying to sin is attaining life. In Baptism and the sacrament of Reconciliation Christ’s Redemption is actualized for us.²²

The focus is again an encounter with Jesus Christ that includes a transformation of mind, heart, and behavior. It includes the affective dimension where there is the relationship with Jesus as a “friend” and the expectation that Baptism will be an event where redemption through Christ will be “actualized”.

It is interesting to note in this document discussion of the way some Catholics in Latin America and the Caribbean have left the Church to be involved in other Christian denominations. Their analysis is interesting in that the Bishop’s did not situate the reasons for these changes in wrong motivations or practices of “non-Catholic” groups necessarily but in deficiencies of practice in the Catholic milieu.

In our pastoral experience, often sincere people who leave our church do not do so because of what “non-Catholic” groups believe, but fundamentally for what they live; not for doctrinal but for vivential reasons; not for strictly dogmatic, but for pastoral reasons; not due to theological problems, but to methodological problems of our Church. They hope to find answers to their concerns. They are seeking, albeit with serious dangers, answers to some aspirations that perhaps they have found in the Church, as ought to be the case.23

The understanding of Christian conversion offered by Magisterial teaching since Vatican II then describes an experience where the living God is encountered in the person of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. This encounter is expected to have an impact that moves the whole person in an experience of God’s love. This experience is accompanied both by a complete transformation in the person’s life and behavior and a desire to become a part of God’s people and take part themselves in the mission of the Church in their turn. The life of ongoing conversion and discipleship is to be lived in a vibrant, renewed community of enthusiastic believers.

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23 Ibid 225.
If they have not been baptized previously, the experience of Baptism is expected to be a dramatic and transformative event. If this description was a reality in contemporary Catholic Church life, the reasons for leaving discussed by the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops would be almost non-existent.

### 3.7 Creating the Conditions for Conversion

Magisterial teaching then has unequivocally defined what Christian conversion is. At different places in the teaching it is stated that the aim of evangelization is to create a set of circumstances that will facilitate this experience of encounter with Jesus Christ that transforms the whole person and changes his/her direction forever. What then are the anthropological, psychological, sociological and theological factors that need to be understood so that efforts toward evangelization will be effective?

The human reality of conversion is not only a Christian reality. Human beings have always had times where significant changes in attitudes or beliefs have lead to complete change in the direction of their life for various reasons. Different disciplines have reflected on the internal and external conditions that accompany these types of significant change. Some have identified what they see as consistent patterns in all forms of conversion.

This study will examine the some of the most well known thinking on the subject of conversion in order to identify elements that might assist in creating conditions that will “facilitate the encounter with Jesus Christ”. The theological framework one holds around how conversion to Christ takes place in the human soul will also have an impact on how the work of evangelization is approached. These approaches will
be evaluated to identify which ones most accurately connect with the understanding of conversion proposed by Magisterial teaching.

3.8 Conversion in General: William James

Since conversion is such a pivotal concept in the New Evangelization it is important to understand it comprehensively. Conversion in human beings in general, (including Christian conversion) has been the subject of much empirical research. While it will not be possible to review all the literature in the context of this study it will be possible to get an overview of how conversion has come to be understood and the implications this understanding may have in terms of the New Evangelization. Having an awareness of the most up to date psychological/sociological/anthropological thinking around conversion may give some understanding as to the conditions under which conversion (particularly Christian conversion) takes place. For this overview, William James’ conception of conversion will be examined as it was one the first attempts to apply a structured, psychological frame of reference to understanding conversion. Lewis R Rambo’s approach will be summarized to get an up to date psychological/sociological perspective on conversion. Finally the work of Joseph Campbell will be accessed to see how an anthropological understanding may fit in with the reality of Christian conversion.

William James, known as the father of American psychology, is the first well known modern voice to talk about conversion. In “The Varieties of Religious Experience” he shared the testimonies of some intense experiences of Christian religious conversion. He talks about the reality of conversion and states how one “may find
one unsuspected depth below another, as if the possibilities of character lay disposed in a series of layers or shells, of whose existence we have no premonitory knowledge”. In the “Varieties of Religious Experience”, he focused his reflections on the movement he saw in American Protestantism at the time (at the turn of the 20th century) from “sinfulness” to what he called “the conviction of sin”.

Conversion was for him a movement of attention from one collection of ideas to where another set of ideas becomes a new “habitual centre of personal energy”. Ideas that were previously on the periphery of a person’s thought life (around personal holiness, depth of relationship with God etc.) suddenly come to the center of their attention as the other set of thoughts become insignificant. This movement could be caused by explosive emotions (some of which he saw as accompanying the normal emotional and developmental phenomena associated with adolescence), which emanate from the accumulation of subconscious experiences and religious material stored there during childhood. He distinguished between volitional conversion (conscious, voluntary and gradual) and self-surrender conversion (unconscious and involuntary). He felt that this second type of more instantaneous conversion was the result usually of an “acute crisis of self-despair and surrender, followed by relief.”

James’ explanation of conversion was a largely psychological one. Conversion is brought about by the emergence of affections already in place in the person’s subconscious. Interestingly however, he saw the reality of conversion to deeper

25 ibid p 196
26 ibid p 199
27 ibid p 210
28 ibid p 227
experience and commitment as an aspect of the normal development of the life of faith when it is functioning correctly. He felt that not growing deeper in faith was a sign of resistance or deficiency in the “religious sensibility” of a person.\(^{29}\) In a sense, he saw conversion and spiritual growth as a development primarily of human nature.

James himself does not mention divine action or the move of the Holy Spirit in his explanations of conversion although there is explicit discussion of divine action contained in the testimonies of conversion experience (the sudden, involuntary type). James himself does not outline how God’s grace is involved in the process. This is not surprising as James himself was an adherent of “Theosophy”. This belief system is basically a manifestation of enlightenment Gnosticism. It is a helpful frame of reference in that it welcomes and values spiritual experience but it is limited in that it rejects anything that could be classed as religious dogma and hence any mention of the work of God’s grace.\(^{30}\)

3.9 Lewis R Rambo

The most well known contemporary approach to conversion is proposed by Lewis R Rambo, Research Professor of Psychology and Religion at San Francisco Theological Seminary. Rambo uses a multidisciplinary approach to the subject that he describes as

> Drawing on insights from psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, theology, and missiology, as well as on interviews with converts from disparate backgrounds.\(^ {31}\)

\(^{29}\) ibid p 204


Rambo’s construction of conversion is a synthesis of the current thinking and scientific research on the concept in all the disciplines mentioned above. John Lofland, in a review of Rambo’s book “Understanding Religious Conversion” describes the approach.

(Lewis Rambo) began to believe that the published material...resembled a metropolitan train yard crowded with separate tracks that ran parallel to each other, where each individual train had its own assigned track and never crossed over to another....Only a few scholars of conversion were aware that the subject was traversed by more than one track, and that there could even be more than one train on each track. His goal has therefore been to describe the entire train yard to us--and to do so in a way that affirms the "perspective of the 'other'"32

While examining the scientific evidence with relation to conversion he does not restrict himself to a strictly reductionist model. He comments, “Scientific understanding of conversion is merely a human attempt to comprehend a phenomenon that is an encounter between a mysterious God and an individual of vast potential, perversity and extraordinary complexity”33

His model has seven stages. These are thought to basically (but not strictly) occur separately and in a particular order. His stages are context, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment and consequences.

The first stage or the “Context” stage includes the “total social, cultural, religious, and personal environment”34 surrounding the converting person. In his discussion of the first stage (context) Rambo draws on the work of John Lofland and Norman

33 Rambo, Lewis. Understanding Religious Conversion (Yale University Press 1993), p 17
Skonovd\textsuperscript{35}. In their overview of the field they felt that in each instance of religious conversion there are consistent “motifs” that will be present. These six “motifs” are intellectual, mystical, experimental, affectional, revivalism, and coercive. The intellectual motif, “commences with individual, private investigation of possible ‘new grounds of being,’ … by reading books, watching television, attending lectures, and other impersonal or ‘disembodied’ ways”\textsuperscript{36} of connecting with new ways of life.

The mystical motif refers to conversions such as St Paul’s on the road to Damascus\textsuperscript{37}. This motif refers to the intense, often brief encounter with the supernatural that permanently alters the person’s life. The experimental motif involves a person “trying out” a particular new religion or way of life of their own volition. Over a period of time they come to be convinced that this new way of life is something they should embrace. In the affectional motif, the person comes into relationship with people who are adherents of a particular group. The sense of support and acceptance they experience from the members of the group draw them in to become members themselves. In the revalist motif a person is converted among a group of people in an intense and emotionally charge atmosphere. Finally, in the coercive motif there is the whole area of “brainwashing”, “programming”, and “mind control”. From the perspective of the New Evangelization (particularly with High School students) all these “motifs” (except of course the coercive motif) would be worth considering in developing “contexts” where the encounter with the Lord Jesus can take place.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid p 376
\textsuperscript{37} Acts 9
\textsuperscript{38} Rambo, Lewis R. & Bauman, Steven C. “Psychology of Conversion and Spiritual Transformation.” \textit{Pastoral Psychology} Vol 61 2012, p 882
Crisis is the second stage in Rambo’s theory. In this stage the person’s life is not functioning as effectively as it has done previously. There is awareness for the individual in this stage that his or her socio/religious culture is no longer effective and change has become necessary.\textsuperscript{39}

Quest is the third stage. This stage is “a process in which people seek to maximize meaning and purpose in life”\textsuperscript{40}. Often in response to the sense of crisis in stage one,\textsuperscript{41} the person moves outside of themselves and their environment by choice or as a result of circumstances to solve their problem or find an answer to their questions.

The encounter stage (stage 4) involves the potential convert coming into contact with someone who can tell or show them about this new center of living they might connect with. In the case of Christian conversion, the missionary (in the context of the New Evangelization, that is potentially any Catholic person) is the person who will fulfill this role.\textsuperscript{42} Ultimately, the proclamation by the missionary, whoever they are has the potential to lead to an encounter with Jesus Christ Himself through the Holy Spirit.

Interaction is the fifth stage. In this stage the converting person might become more interested and involved in the ideas, practices and people involved in this new way of life. A good example of this for Catholics is the Rite for the Catholic Initiation of Adults.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid p 883
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid p 884
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid p 884
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid p 885
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid p 887
Commitment is stage six. In this stage, the convert publicly owns and confesses his or her connection and affiliation with new religious option. Baptism is the definitive Christian manifestation of this stage.\(^\text{44}\) Publicly giving “testimony” of the “new” relationship with Jesus Christ would be another example of this commitment common in evangelical Protestant and Pentecostal Christian denominations.

In the final stage, the convert lives out the consequences of their new commitment. There will usually be an initial set of consequences of a person’s conversion. This would particularly be so in the Christian context as commitment to Christ could lead to rejection from family or culture or even some form of physical danger in some places in the world. Conversion is an ongoing process as well as an initial encounter. These successive conversions will include further changes that have their own set of consequences.\(^\text{45}\)

Rambo’s “stage” model of conversion does not say all there is to be said in terms of describing Christian conversion. It can give Religious Educators some ideas around creating the conditions that might facilitate conversion. Students might come to be able to see that the circumstances of their life might be a manifestation of the Holy Spirit leading them to a place where they are “not far from the Kingdom of God”\(^\text{46}\) rather than a collection of simply random events.

\textit{3.10 The Heroes Journey and the New Evangelization}

\(^{44}\) Ibid p 888  
\(^{45}\) Ibid p 889  
\(^{46}\) Mark 12:34
As one considers Rambo’s stage model there is an echo of the work of Joseph Campbell. In his work, he drew out what he considered to be the archetypical elements present in the narratives of all the significant religions, stories, fables, and fantasies that have become important in human history.\(^47\) He felt he had identified the aspects of a “heroes journey” that each individual needed to respond to in their own life.\(^48\)

Magisterial teaching describes conversion as a powerful, life changing event that introduces us to a life of adventure (and possibly danger). It opens people to a relationship with the most important people in the universe, Jesus Christ Himself, the Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit. Conceiving conversion in terms of an adventure, a hero’s journey, might be the most accurate way to present it.

\(^47\) Campbell, Joseph. The Hero With A Thousand Faces Third Edition. (New World Library CA. 2008)
\(^48\) Vogler, Christopher Summary of the Hero’s Journey http://christophervogler.com/ Personal Website. Summary of The Hero’s Journey from http://www.thewritersjourney.com/hero’s_journey.htm2010 (accessed 10/6/13). In the late 1970’s a screenwriter, Christopher Vogler, condensed Campbell’s thinking on the characteristics of the hero’s journey into 12 steps. These are I. Separation from the Ordinary World In the first stage of the story, the hero leaves his ordinary life in order to go on a journey or gain some sort of experience. Ordinary World: When the story begins, the hero is immature or inexperienced, simply going about his daily business. Call to Adventure: Somehow the hero receives a call to action or adventure—he is called to take up a quest or accomplish a task. Refusal of the Call: The hero is more interested in self-preservation, and initially refuses to go on the journey. Meeting the Mentor: The hero receives counsel from a mentor who encourages the hero to be willing to live for a higher cause—and accept the call to action. II. Descent into the Special World: In this stage, the hero is confronted with tests and battles that try his courage and perseverance. Crossing the Threshold: The hero makes the decision to attempt the journey. He is changing his values and growing in virtue. Tests, Allies, and Enemies: On the journey, the hero faces trials, and he or she meets friends and enemies. Approach to the Inmost Cave: The hero approaches an isolated place where danger is most intense. At this point, the hero must be willing to suffer great loss—even death—for a cause that is greater than himself. The Ordeal: In this dangerous place, the hero is confronted with his or her greatest fear. Reward: The hero survives the ordeal and gains some sort of reward. At this point, the story shows that self-sacrificing virtue will be rewarded. III. Return to the Ordinary World: In this stage, the hero returns to a normal existence once again, having gained something positive from his experience. Road Back: The hero plans to complete the journey home. Resurrection: The hero faces a final life-and-death ordeal, and amazingly survives. This is often a miraculous escape from death. Once again, the hero demonstrates self-sacrifice for a higher cause, and is rewarded for that courage. Return with Elixir: Having been transformed into someone who is virtuous, courageous, and self-sacrificing, the hero returns to the ordinary world with something that brings benefit to his community. It may be an object, or it may simply be the example of his life.
Including Joseph Campbell in this discussion is problematic of course due to his repudiation of Christianity (particularly his roots in an Irish Catholic upbringing) and its claims to be a unique, historical manifestation of God becoming incarnate in Jesus Christ. He numbered Christianity as just one of the many significant myths in human history and Jesus of Nazareth as one of the many “faces” of God. There is also the difficulty that he construed the “hero’s” passage as an essentially individualistic one, a journey of self-discovery alone. Conversion of course has an intensely personal aspect. An individual’s conversion to Jesus Christ, however personal and supernatural, has to flow in some way or other out of isolation and draw the convert into life within the community of God’s people.

Even without a detailed knowledge of the work of Campbell, it is possible to easily identify characteristics of the hero’s journey in film and stories that society in general and youth in particular consume at the start of the third millennium. In these works one could make the case that there might be some form of “displacement” of the audience’s yearning for change and adventure into the hero on the screen or in the book. In video games, the hero can attempt to overcome enemies and dragons etc. without any personal risk or commitment. This could be an explanation for the obsession some young people have to playing these types of games. The pattern Campbell outlines is a journey of conversion for the hero.

In terms of the New Evangelization in general and the evangelization of high school students and youth in particular, the different aspects of the hero’s journey have the potential to genuinely connect with the realities of encounter with Christ. Magisterial
teaching has described the work of the New Evangelization as an “adventure”\(^49\) and the experience of conversion (as discussed above) as something that impacts and radically changes the whole person. It is a journey from the ordinary and mundane to an interaction with the supernatural, a realization of a significant personal destiny and a role to use their new supernatural powers for the benefit of others. This change (which takes place uniquely in encounter and union with Christ in Christian conversion) in turn calls them to be a part of a new adventure. Their story features themselves as the hero, striking out into a hostile world to transform it by the power of the Gospel as they are filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

It is also significant to note the prevalence of the fantastic, supernatural, magical and paranormal in films, T.V. series novels etc. Is it also possible that in a materialistic, hedonistic society that rejects existence of the “unseen real” has an unconscious, “knowing” that there is another set of realities outside of what can perceive with their senses? Is the extraordinary presence of the specially gifted and superhuman in films and stories an unconscious recognition that human beings might actually possess supernatural capabilities and that in a powerful world of unseen beings there are helpers (angels) and those opposed to them (demons)?

In the western situation, is there a need for a sort of “reverse inculturation” to somehow, “re-mythologise” or, “re-enchant” the worldview of post-modern human (adolescents and young adults in particular) beings so that evangelization can take

place in the context of a fully biblical cosmology? In the cultures of the “majority” or, “developing” world, this “enchanted” worldview is taken for granted. In these cultures, the Gospel is being preached with great effectiveness.

A possible direction for religious education in Catholic High Schools through the consideration of the “hero’s journey” is to spend some percentage of religious education time presenting conversion to Christ and life in Him as an heroic narrative (which in part it actually is) rather than a series of intellectual propositions (no matter how beautiful, true and important). It is also not just presenting encounter with Jesus Christ as part of an heroic narrative, but offering a genuine participation and continuation of His ministry.

3.11 Donald L Gelpi SJ

Contemporary, secular scholarship has shown a significant interest in the subject of conversion as discussed above. There have been insights from psychology, sociology, anthropology and the sociology and psychology of religion. Fr Donald L Gelpi is one the most significant modern scholars considering conversion from a normative, Christian, theological perspective.

Dr Amos Yong, a theologian and Professor at Regent University in the United States has commented on Fr Gelpi’s contribution to the theology of conversion. He suggests that a thorough discussion of conversion requires a “dynamic pneumatological soteriology” and a “theology of conversion commensurate with the human encounter

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with God”.\textsuperscript{51} He states that “Fortunately, the Catholic charismatic theologian Donald L Gelpi, SJ, has developed just what the doctor ordered”.\textsuperscript{52} He goes on to state that Gelpi’s theory is able to; “account for the holistic nature Christian conversion”, “articulate the complex processes of repentance experienced by the early Christian catechumens”, and describe “every conversion experience in any domain as a divinely gracious prompt for deeper conversion in other domains”.\textsuperscript{53}

Fr Tom Ryan in his article “The Psychic Conversion of St Therese of Lisieux” describes Bernard Lonergan’s model of ongoing conversion as part of the “theological and spiritual currency within the Catholic tradition”.\textsuperscript{54} He includes Fr Gelpi’s work as a part of this “spiritual currency”\textsuperscript{55} as Gelpi’s theology of conversion is based on elaborates Lonergan’s understanding.\textsuperscript{56} In “The Psychic Conversion of St Therese of Lisieux”, Fr Ryan identifies Gelpi’s understanding of affective conversion\textsuperscript{57} as an important development of Lonergan’s work. In “Moral Conversion, Liturgy and The Preface to Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation for Reconciliation II” Fr Ryan goes on to identify Gelpi’s understanding of personal moral conversion and socio-political conversion as valid additions Lonergan’s thought by Fr Gelpi.\textsuperscript{58}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item ibid p 106
  \item ibid p 106
  \item Ryan, Tom. Psychic Conversion and St Therese of Lisieux \textit{The Australasian Catholic Record}, The, Vol. 82, No. 1, Jan 2005: 3-18 p12
  \item Conn, Walter \textit{Christian Conversion: A Developmental Interpretation of Autonomy and Surrender} (Paulist Press NY 1986)
  \item Ryan, Tom. Op cit p12.
  \item Ibid p 6 See footnote 15 for specific mention of Fr Gelpi’s “Two Spiritual Paths” article used in this study.
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In his article “Goodbye to Gadamer? Classical Pragmatist Resources for the Philosophy of Religious Education in a Pluralist Age”, John P Falcone of Boston College critiques what he sees as the prevailing philosophy of religious education in North America (exemplified for him by the work of Hans Georg Gadamer, Donald Browning, and Thomas Groome). He recommends Fr Gelpi’s “pragmatic” philosophical and theological framework as an alternative. He summarises the advantages of Gelpi’s approach,

Gelpi strives to root his theology in the Bible and the early Church Fathers. His model is thoroughly Trinitarian and pneumatological; it seeks to avoid the “Christo-monism” of excessive reliance on external scriptural or ecclesial authorities. For Gelpi, it is the workings of God’s Holy Spirit that keep us true to Jesus’ vision of the Kingdom, and to the Father’s plan for the healing of creation. The Father is source of all creativity, the Son is God’s definitive saving action in the world, and the Spirit of the Son and the Father is God’s forward-looking vision and force. She is not simply a dimension of intra-divine or universal connection; Her effects are real and concrete. She is the interpretive Wisdom of God, nudging us forward into continuing and cumulative forms of conversion. For Gelpi, conversion means becoming responsible; it means holding oneself to account in light of the norms – intellectual, social, spiritual, and so on – that we as a community have uncovered over time.

In his book “Affirming the Touch of God: A Psychological and Philosophical Exploration of Christian Discernment”, Evan B Howard discusses the reality of Christian discernment. He devotes two chapters in his book to the work of Fr Gelpi as he considers his approach essential to a realistic and experiential understanding of discernment, conversion, and the spiritual life. Howard gives a comprehensive

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60 ibid p 7
61 Howard, Evan B. Affirming the Touch of God: A Psychological and Philosophical Exploration of Christian Discernment. (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2000.)
62 ibid p 240
account of Gelpi’s theology of conversion and describes the concept of “transmutational grace”.

This transmutation of experience is seen in a variety of different ways. In general, the Gracious work of the Holy Breath functions to bring docility, or yieldedness to God, often fostering a sense of repentance or a sense of openness/appreciation with relationship to God. The Holy Breath actively transforms all aspects of human experience; every moment of the evaluative continuum is subject to the touch of the Holy Breath.63

Fr Gelpi has written in detail about the theology and experience of conversion in “The Conversion Experience: A Reflective Process for RCIA Participants and Others”, “Charism and Sacrament: A Theology of Christian Conversion”.64 He has also entered into the discussion of the interaction in Christian experience between nature and grace in the book, “The Gracing of Human Experience”.65 From the whole body of his work, this study has focused on the articles “Two Spiritual Paths. Parts I and II” by Fr Gelpi.66 These articles were selected as they bring together Fr Gelpi’s theology of conversion, his thinking on the nature and grace discussion, and the way these might impact on the effectiveness of evangelization. In these two articles, he comments on the way certain influential theologies of the relationship of nature and grace (particularly the transcendental Thomism of Rahner and others) conceive of conversion taking place. His conclusion that these theological positions may actually hinder the preaching of the gospel and calling people to repentance and faith in Christ make his views important to consider in this study as it seeks to

63 ibid p 248
identify a theology of conversion that most closely resembles the description of conversion in magisterial teaching. A detailed discussion of his thinking commences below.

Fr Gelpi’s discussion of modern theological influences in the Church and their impact on evangelization is as follows. He begins by explaining Marechal’s response to Emmanuel Kant’s contention that the idea of God was empty, and unverifiable. To Marechal’s mind, Kant’s thoughts on this matter had already been dealt with by St Thomas Aquinas.

Maréchal argued that a Thomistic theory of knowledge anticipates the problems raised by Kant and demonstrates the invalidity of the Kantian attempt to reduce the idea of God to an empty, unverifiable philosophical concept. In the process, Maréchal urged, Kant had overlooked a more fundamental a priori structure of consciousness, a structure which a Thomistic theory of knowledge supplies. For Aquinas had penetrated to the reason why we apply abstract, conceptual labels to the things we see, hear, taste, touch, and smell. We do so in order to form judgments about them. And our judgments grasp reality, being, truth. To the reflective mind, Maréchal believed, the alleged human ability to ask endless questions about things and to make endless judgments about them teaches us that the human intellect of its very nature thirsts inexhaustibly after truth, after reality, after being itself.67

Gelpi goes on to point out how Marechal found in this Thomistic understanding of the functions of the human intellect an intrinsic search for God in every human being.

The understanding of this person or that event leaves the human mind unsatisfied, he argued. It spontaneously seeks more knowledge, other insights, other truths. And this alleged fact teaches us that when the intellect thirsts for being, it really thirsts for Absolute Being, for Infinite Truth, for God. It yearns, moreover, not for some empty idea of God but for the living actuality itself. That longing is conditioned in the sense that nature of itself lacks the means to fulfill it, but it nevertheless springs from human nature. As a consequence, Maréchal did not hesitate (with the blessing of

Aquinas) to discover in every human psyche a natural longing for the beatific vision. And, he noted, natural appetites demand fulfillment, even when that fulfillment is effected through an act of divine grace.  

Gelpi goes on to summarise the ways Marechal’s thinking influenced Henri De Lubac and Karl Rahner in their understanding of the individuals interaction with, and experience of God. De Lubac, in Gelpi’s view, went further in the discussion of the natural human desire for the beatific vision.

We live, de Lubac argued, in a world transformed by grace. Theologians need not, therefore, construct hypotheses about the way things might have been arranged had the order of grace never existed. Rather, they must give an account of the world as it actually exists in its concrete graced condition. Moreover, he rejected any attempt to conceive the order of grace as merely reproducing at a supernatural level powers and operations already present in human nature. Rather, the spiritual dimension of human nature must be so conceived that by its very existence it opens onto the divine. He insisted on the continuity between the natural and the supernatural orders: "grace prefects nature." He believed that the gratuity of divine grace was sufficiently preserved if one holds that God, in creating each individual, assigns it a supernatural end. In impressing a supernatural destiny upon the human spirit (however that might occur), God elevates it to a purpose and a fulfillment that exceeds its natural powers.

The fulfillment of the desire for divine union however must come from revelation. Without this revelation, human beings will tend not to respond to their inbuilt longing for God. In the end it is only the person of faith that understands "the offer of

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68 Ibid par 7  
69 De Lubac, Henri, Surnaturel: Etudes Historiques 1946 (Paris: Aubier 1965) in Gelpi Op cit. par 9. The relationship of nature and grace has been a significant debate in Church history and was a major concern for De Lubac. O’Sullivan, Neal. “Henri De Lubac’s Surnaturel: An Emerging Christology.” 2007 Irish Theological Quarterly 72 p 3-31 In this article, Noel O’Sullivan describes the negative social/political/theological consequences De Lubac felt flowed from neo-scholastic conceptions of the separation between nature and Grace. In De Lubac’s analysis, the location of grace outside of the person and the contention that human nature can become perfect independently (theoretically) was a cause of many negative developments in late modern history. These range from the rise of atheistic humanism (including Marxism) to the anti-semitism and legalism of some French Bishops and Clergy who supported the Vichy collaboration with Nazi occupation of France in WWII. (original citation only?)  
70 Gelpi op cit par 9
grace expresses in the realm of moral liberty the same act of divine origin which the
summons to the supernatural expresses in the ontological realm.”

Gelpi goes on to explain how Karl Rahner in his turn built upon and extended
Marechal’s position. Rahner said that not only did human beings have an innate,
spontaneous desire for the beatific vision which revelation would complete but that
“This spontaneous orientation expresses the essence of spirit and endows it with a
"transcendental" horizon which includes the world-transcending reality of God.”

The implications of this position are that

> every human being will hear the word of God spoken in Jesus either as the
explicitation of its spontaneous longing for a triune, incarnate God, or as a
silence. Moreover, because this graced expansion of the formal object of the
spiritual faculties of intellect and will is built (somehow) a priori into the
psyche, a direct experience of pure human nature no longer lies within the
realm of human possibility. Humans can know themselves consciously only
as graced.

As a result of this way of thinking, everyone is oriented toward the Christian mystery
and possesses an unexplicated connection with this transcendent reality. When
individuals follow “the spontaneous graced dynamisms of spirit” they are in effect,
“anonymous Christians.”

When they convert to Christianity they discover the
categories they need to understand the quest they have already been pursuing without
explicitly realizing it. This is Gelpi’s summary of what he calls the “thematic”
understanding of the individual’s relationship with God. Conversion in this way of

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Grace vs. Transmuting Grace (Part 1).” Op cit par 11 (original citation only?)
72 ibid par 12
Boniface Kruger, OFM (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1967), 87-88. This is one place where Rahner discusses
some characteristics of this “spontaneous orientation” and how it may manifest itself. This concept is also
discussed in volumes I, V, VI, VII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIV, XV, XVIII, XX, and XXI of *Theological Investigations.*
74 ibid par 12
75 Ibid par 20
thinking is simply people obtaining a correct explanation of what has been going on in their souls all along.

Gelpi objects to the “thematic” way of construing conversion on philosophical, psychological, and pastoral grounds. His philosophical objections are based on the fact that the thematic understanding of grace is based on the adequacy of Kant’s transcendental method. Gelpi’s position on the validity of Kant’s method draws on the critique of Kant’s logic by American philosopher Charles S Peirce.

Kant was of the opinion that in the human intellect, the only kinds of inference or argument that took place were deductive in nature. Peirce believed that there were in fact three kinds of inference or argument that take place in the human intellect, abductive (or hypothetical), deductive (or predictive), and inductive (or the verification or falsification of a deductively clarified hypothesis). Gelpi summarizes Peirce’s thinking as follows

In other words, if the human mind is to explain any reality, it must, on the basis of limited data, formulate a fallible hypothetical account of why the reality in question behaves the way it does. It must then understand the predictable consequences of the explanation it proposes. Finally, it must show that its predictions obtain in reality. 76

The consequences of this understanding means for Gelpi that

one cannot deduce a priori the universal structure of the human mind by the simple expedient of reflecting on one’s own thought processes. One can only formulate a hypothesis about the way the human mind may be expected to work, an hypothesis based on extremely limited data, an hypothesis that may or may not be true. 77

In addition to this dependence on Kant’s understanding of the way human intellect works, the thematic view of conversion relies on the validity of St Thomas Aquinas’

77 Gelpi, Donald L Op Cit par 23
presentation of faculty psychology. Gelpi feels that there is a weakness in the Thomistic understanding of the way the “agent intellect” enables “sensory phantasms” to produce an effect on the spiritual reality of the “passive intellect” and consequently create intellectual/rational knowledge in people. His summary of the weaknesses of this understanding is as follows:

He (Aquinas) postulated the presence in the human spirit of an "agent intellect." This intellect, being spiritual, uses the sensible phantasm to produce a spiritual effect, an impression on the so-called passive intellect, which is what we usually understand by intellect and which forms abstract concepts -- just as the human mind enables a pencil to make intelligible marks on paper. This analogy between the pencil and the image in the imagination limps, of course, for a pencil writes on another material reality, like paper, whereas the sensible image is supposed to produce a purely spiritual effect on a purely spiritual reality, namely, the passive intellect. So Thomistic faculty psychology makes it impossible to explain the derivation of intellectual from sensory knowledge.78

Gelpi’s main aim in discussing this flaw in Thomistic faculty psychology (as he sees it) is to point out that there are significant problems in the foundational constructs underlying the “thematic” understanding of conversion.

Following on from this, Gelpi puts it that one does not simply have to accept that the human spirit is spontaneously open to the infinite “a priori”. In line with Charles Peirce’s understanding of the different kinds of inference and, the claims of a theology of thematic grace offer only “unverified hypotheses” that require validation at the level of metaphysical and cognitive human psychology before they can be accepted.79

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78 Ibid par 25
79 Ibid par 27
In discussing the psychological data that might bear upon this question, Fr Gelpi summarizes the overall psychological picture of the actual tendencies of the human intellect. “Psychological testing discovers in the human psyche not an insatiable appetite for being and for truth, but a spontaneous and initially innocent egocentrism that is transformed through habit and through fear into an ego inertia that resists challenge and transformation.”

The evidence produced by developmental psychology, should be particularly illuminating. One would expect developing children to manifest consistently this “a priori” orientation to the “horizon of absolute being”. Gelpi discusses the work of well known developmental psychologists Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg. He notes Piaget’s comment “philosophers of knowledge can never agree because they never take the time to test their hypotheses against the way human beings actually think” and goes on to outline some of their findings.

the human mind advances in its thinking from one limited frame of reference to another. Until the age of approximately eighteen months, children live at a sensory-motor level. They cannot even imagine a world. Until the age of eleven they cannot think abstractly. Once the capacity to think abstractly emerges, the mind joins similar propositions together to form identifiable frames of reference: common sense, mathematics, positive science, philosophy, theology. But all these frames of reference open a limited window on the world. In other words, the "horizon" of the human mind from birth to death remains irreducibly finite. When healthy the human intellect seeks to expand its horizon on the world. But such expansion may or may not occur.

Gelpi then goes on to discuss that only a subset of human beings have a tendency to contemplate their own cognitive structures in the way Rahner postulates. Evidence from the accumulation of personality scales (particularly the Myers Briggs scale) has

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80 Ibid par 28
81 Ibid par 28
83 Gelpi Op cit par 28
shown that only those that come to be categorized as introverts actually have a tendency to think this way. Gelpi observes that because of the “spontaneous egotism that characterizes the finite human intellect, those who ply transcendental method tend to assume (incorrectly) that everyone thinks exactly as they do.”

Rahner’s account of how human beings interact with and apprehend mystery brings the limitations of the Thomistic understanding of faculty psychology into Gelpi’s discussion. It is obvious that human beings encounter mystery in their lives. He explains that Rahner places the human ability to interact with mystery in the powers of the spirit, “especially in the intellectual pre-apprehension of being as such.” Gelpi feels that this account of the human capacity to interact with mystery is in some ways the opposite of what occurs in the reality of human experience. Rational reflection, rather than enhance the experience of mystery, has a tendency “to dissipate the human sense of mystery.” He goes on to say

The more rational explanations the human mind possesses, the more diminished its sense of the mysterious. In point of fact, we discover mystery at the precise moment when our rational explanations break down, when we come to an end of what our finite intellect can account for. Then we are thrown back on vaguer feeling, on myth, intuition, imagination, and ritual in order to deal with ourselves and our world. But both rational experiences of intelligible explanation and mythic and ritual explorations into mystery transpire within finite, human frames of reference.

As a final theological/philosophical reason to not support the theology of thematic grace is an argument connected with the attempt to identify God with “the supposedly infinite horizon of the human intellect.” Here, Gelpi summarizes the similarities and differences between Paul Tillich’s and Karl Rahner’s thinking. Both

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84 Ibid par 29
85 Ibid par 34
86 Ibid par 38
87 Ibid par 38
88 Ibid par 39
believe that the human spirit has an orientation toward infinite being and that infinite being is God. Tillich points out that if God is the horizon of the intellect oriented toward infinite being then He subsists in a realm far beyond and infinitely removed from any created being or reality.\textsuperscript{89} Rahner and Tillich configured the implications of this way of thinking differently as Gelpi states.

Finite, created religious symbols can then only point toward the infinite, transcendent, divine horizon of the human spirit, much as an individual can stand on the Pacific shore and point toward the western horizon. But the horizon itself is never seen, never grasped as such. Only things within the horizon are. As a consequence, Tillich found the incarnation of a divine person unthinkable. And having denied the divinity of Jesus, Tillich also found no theological justification for belief in a triune God. Rahner defends both the incarnation and trinitarian belief. But he has never explained satisfactorily how his identification of God with the horizon of the human spirit avoids the logic of Tillich's argument.\textsuperscript{90}

Gelpi’s final objections are in the realm of religious experience. An understanding of thematic grace proposes that human beings will have a set of spiritual realities around relationship to God and Christ already present in their psyche. Conversion in this understanding “is the conscious explication of an implicit orientation to God and to Christ present within the psyche prior to conversion”.\textsuperscript{91} Converts Gelpi has dealt with (and those dealt with by the author of this study as well) do not communicate the testimony of their conversion experience in anything like the terms one would expect if the Rahnerian/Marechalxian understanding were correct. Converts actually tend to speak in terms reminiscent of the writings of Jonathan Edwards where there are reports of “a new and wholly different sense of God, of themselves, of the world. They testify to a new taste for spiritual things. They speak of transformation in the

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid par 39
\textsuperscript{90} Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology. (Chicago University Press,1967.)
\textsuperscript{91} Gelpi Op cit par 40.
Spirit, of a new creation which conversion effects, of its revolutionary and transforming consequences”.

Gelpi goes on to discuss the way that religious experiences in general do not conform to the thematic understanding of the way God’s grace interacts with human beings. In Rahner’s view, every time one raises their thinking above “categorical thinking and raises to thematic consciousness the transcendental "horizon" of the intellect, one will discover there a longing not only for God but for Christ.”

This however is not what uniformly occurs. In every spiritual quest there is not a connection with God and Christ. Gelpi makes the point that some forms of oriental mysticism are “entirely compatible with an atheistic worldview” and that there are in fact a wide variety of religious experiences available in the world. To have the expectation that all religious experience will conform to the pattern predicted by an understanding of thematic grace leads to difficulties in ecumenical interactions and inter-faith dialogue. Gelpi outlines what he sees as the problems caused by applying the understanding of thematic grace in these forums.

(A theology of thematic grace) fallaciously assumes that all people relate to God in essentially the same way. As a consequence, a theology of thematic grace fails to credit sufficiently the incredible variety of human and religious experience. And it betrays well-meaning Christians into projecting into the unconverted, attitudes which result only from converted faith in God. Belief in the supernatural existential also leads the same well-intentioned Christians to project into the religious experience of non-Christians elements that derive specifically from a Christian conversion experience. In other words, in ecumenical exchanges a theology of thematic grace all but ensures mutual misunderstanding. Here I in no way wish to deny analogies among the religious experiences of Christians and non-Christians. But I resist facile generalizations about their essential likeness as

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93 Gelpi Op cit par 42

94 Ibid par 42.
methodologically unjustified. I would insist that similarities be validated case by case.\textsuperscript{95}

Most importantly in terms of its relationship to a discussion the New Evangelization is the effect the understanding of thematic grace has on the way the Gospel is preached. (Some hindrances to preaching the gospel effectively will be considered in Chapter 5 of this study.)

Finally, I have found that a theology of thematic grace tends to mute the kerygmatic voice of the church. One cannot help but wonder if both Jesus in his ministry and Peter on Pentecost would have preached as effectively as they did had they summoned their respective audiences, not to repent and believe the good news, but to thematize the a priori orientation to God and to Christ built into their agent intellects. Moreover, I have found that those who espouse a theology of thematic grace often feel less need to proclaim the gospel at all. They frequently prefer to trust in the good will of the unconverted and in the implicitly graced character of their choices.\textsuperscript{96}

On Fr Gelpi’s explanation of thematic grace, the preaching of the Gospel is an introduction of human beings to a person they have (figuratively speaking) already been living and working with their whole life. Preaching the Gospel then becomes the introduction of a “luxury” to people rather than a necessity. The thematic position states the primacy and importance of salvation in Jesus Christ but it also says people have this faith all the time as a gift and when they follow workings of this grace inside them they are already doing any necessary good works. In practical terms (even though Rahner’s approach is theologically different) it has the same effect as the pluralistic approach put by theologians such as Paul Knitter and John Hick. They would say that faith in Jesus Christ is not the unique pathway to salvation and that there are in fact “parallel” paths to salvation in non-Christian religious systems.\textsuperscript{97}

\textsuperscript{95} Ibid par 43
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid par 44
\textsuperscript{97} Hick, John & Knitter, Paul F. \textit{The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a pluralistic theology of religions.} (Maryknoll, N.Y. Orbis Books 1987). Hick would not acknowledge the universal lordship of Jesus in the way Rahner does. Knitter would only acknowledge the primacy of Christ as, “normative for Christian experience”,
3.12 Transmuting Grace

Having dealt with the drawbacks of a thematic approach to an understanding of the way God’s grace works to bring about relationship with human beings, Fr Gelpi goes on to describe an understanding of conversion he calls “transmuting” grace. This understanding of conversion proceeds from an understanding of the theological method of Bernard Lonergan but departs from it in significant ways.

Gelpi describes Lonergan’s method as seeking to elaborate “a strictly normative theory of conversion.” In this understanding, there is a need to measure the responsibility or irresponsibility of a person’s reactions and behaviour against the actual positions and beliefs they hold. The areas where this will be measured are the affective, intellectual, moral, and religious realms. A person’s beliefs and their adherence to them is to measured against “a systematic account of healthy emotional development, of intellectual development based on sound psychological, logical, and methodological principles, of moral development that conforms to sound ethical rules and ideals, and of authentic religious growth.”

Gelpi then discusses Lonergan’s classification of the “functional theological specialties”. He describes how information from research, interpretation, history, and dialectic theology about particular religious communities and experiences are brought together and assessed through what he calls “foundational theology”.

exclusively and not the followers of other religions. The impact, however, of Rahner’s universalism and the pluralism of Hick and Knitter on motivation to preach the Gospel would tend to be the same.

99 ibid par 5.
100 ibid par 6
Gelpi describes how the first four “theological specialties” work together to enable a “foundational theology” assessment of conversion experiences.

For any sound theology of conversion must take into account the history of the religious community in which it occurs, the conflicting attitudes, beliefs, and commitments that divide that community, and the meaning of its sacred texts and artifacts. Divisions in any community of faith always betray the presence of religious inauthenticity and the absence of conversion at some level. A strictly normative theory of conversion attempts to identify troublesome inauthenticities and to overcome them.  

So using the methods proposed by Lonergan, Gelpi desires to interact with conversion experiences and, “assess the validity or invalidity, the adequacy or the inadequacy of the motives that give it shape.” Gelpi is in disagreement with Lonergan however in his use of the “transcendental method” as the starting point of interacting with human speculation (his objections to this approach are described above). In its place, the theology of grace as “radically transmutational” proposes to measure any proposition concerning reality in general and human nature in particular systematically against the behavior of both. By the same token, a theology of grace as radical transmutation demands that foundational theory itself advance by testing the truth or falsity of religious propositions and the adequacy or inadequacy of religious frames of reference against religiously significant events.

So rather than having an “infinite horizon” and a “dynamic appetite” to search for and connect with God, Gelpi concludes that human beings are only the accumulation of what they have acquired, learned and remembered from the set of experiences and the resultant memories they have had as they have grown and developed. He calls this understanding the “experiential construct of human nature.” As a result of this understanding of human nature, conversion and the human interaction with God’s grace functions quite differently. In this view, human nature is actually inclined to

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102 Gelpi II op cit par 8
103 Ibid par 9
104 Ibid par 15
stay stuck where it is unless it is acted upon by some new event or situation presented to it. Gelpi describes in particular how grace operates to cause a person to be oriented toward God in this understanding.

each self must acquire such an orientation, either by fixing its personal beliefs on purely rational motives concerning the reality and nature of God, or by responding positively and graciously in faith to some event of divine self-revelation. That revelatory event, however, does more than supply the categories that allow the mind to thematize a longing for the divine it already possesses of its very essence. Rather, the revelatory event, together with the faith it inspires, transmutes the psyche by building into it a wholly new habitual orientation toward a self-revealing God. We call such a dynamic reorientation of the self "the infusion of supernatural grace." It transmutes experience by endowing it with a new capacity to relate to God both correlative to God's free act of self disclosure and impossible apart from that self-revelation.105

Gelpi suggests that in the thematic understanding of grace, human nature is “reduced to a conceptual residue”106 as the action of the supernatural grace permeates the individual’s desires to search for the reality of God. In the transmutational understanding, people actually experience and make decisions out of their own, limited human nature. When one “consults experience instead of arguing a prior the way it must be structured”107 one finds that people can (and do) act from it (their own limited human nature) all the time independently of grace. When religious conversion occurs in a person’s life, faith “divides natural from gracious responses” and “Faith-motivated decisions build graced tendencies. Sinful decisions build sinful tendencies.”108

Gelpi summarizes the way grace acts on the human person from a transmutational understanding. When the grace of God truly enters into a life everything changes.

105 Ibid par 16
106 Ibid par 17.
107 Ibid par 18
108 Ibid par 18
It transmutes and transvalues sinful tendencies through repentance. It transmutes and transvalues natural tendencies by enhancing them and ordering them to a satisfaction they could never achieve in and of themselves, namely, loving union with a God who has entered human history and reveals himself in faith to those he chooses. In other words, grace perfects nature. But it does so by transmuting it and endowing it with entirely new ways of relating to God. We call the transmutation of human experience in faith "created grace." And the fact that created grace transcends anything we can do or experience naturally explains the discontinuity which converts experience in coming to faith. Hope graces the repentant heart by healing it of disordered affections and binding it to a faithful God. Faith graces the human mind by teaching it to acknowledge the saving significance of religious events. Love graces human decisions by ensuring that they are informed by gospel values. Gifts of sanctification (dona Spiritus Sancti) ensure ongoing docility to the Holy Spirit in putting on the mind of Jesus. Charisms of service (gratiae gratis datae) bind Christians to one another in a community of faith, of worship, and mutual service. All these different forms of created grace transmute the natural elements that structure human experience.

Human nature can and does make changes and experiences “conversion” in a broader sense for reasons that have nothing to do with God. This broader sense of conversion is where there is a “decision to assume personal responsibility for one's own subsequent growth and development in some area of human experience.” These types of conversion can take place at the affective, intellectual, or the moral level. Gelpi describes how these types of conversion may take place.

I can attain all three forms of conversion for reasons that have nothing to do with God. My neuroses can reduce me to a pitch of misery that forces an affective conversion. The deceit of others may lead me to personal responsibility in intellectual or moral matters. Or the natural human desire to live lovingly and responsibly in my dealings with my fellow humans may draw me positively to all three forms of natural conversion. God's historical self-revelation in Jesus and the Spirit need have nothing to do with any of these decisions. Not that the natural convert denies divine revelation. He or she simply fails to take it into consideration in making a choice for responsible living. When one makes such a choice, one experiences a natural conversion with regard to feeling, thought, and/or decision.

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109 Ibid par 19.
110 Ibid par 20
111 Ibid par 21
Religious conversion in contrast cannot take place naturally because it is totally dependent on some historical act of God’s self revelation. The person then has to “respond responsibly in faith”\(^\text{112}\) to that revelation in order for the transmutational nature of Divine grace to become active in their life.

The natural ability that a person may have to make responsible decisions that result in natural conversion “builds into the human person an ability to respond responsibly in the face of a gracious act of divine self-disclosure and self-communication.”\(^\text{113}\) From this perspective, building the capacity to make increasingly responsible decisions is a valuable activity because it can open a person to make a response of obedience when God’s self revelation comes into contact with their life in time and space. A possible example from the scriptures in the Book of Acts is where the Roman Centurion Cornelius, who was well known for his “prayer and gifts to the poor” (a manifestation of natural conversion), was able to readily respond to God’s self revelation first through the angel and then the Apostle Peter’s proclamation of Jesus as the Christ.\(^\text{114}\)

Reflecting on the reality of “natural conversion” is important when one discusses the outworking of the New Evangelization in Catholic High Schools. The emphasis on “social justice” and “shared Praxis” present in their curricula seeks to bring students to a moral conversion with regard to care for and focus on the poor. It even cites teaching from the Gospel and the social teaching of the Church. If students were to take on and live sincerely what they are taught it would undoubtedly be a good thing. It would also be reasonable to assume that this would be pleasing to God. It needs to

\(^{112}\) Ibid par 21
\(^{113}\) Ibid par 22
\(^{114}\) Acts 10:1-32
be recognized however that this teaching, if it is responded to and assimilated into the life of the student, does not constitute a conversion to Christ in and of itself. It might be considered as something that might dispose a student to respond “obedientially” to God’s self revelation when it occurs but it falls far short of religious conversion.

For the teaching on “social justice” to become an occasion for encounter with Jesus Christ, students will have to specifically taught to recognize the presence of Jesus in the “distressing disguise” of the poor. Mother Theresa of Calcutta makes the point that good works alone do not guarantee a connection with the Lord Jesus in the poor. In her acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 she said “I believe that we are not real social workers. We may be doing social work in the eyes of the people, but we are really contemplatives in the heart of the world. For we are touching the Body of Christ 24 hours.”115 In the absence of this contemplative aspect, works of mercy can become social work rather an encounter with Jesus in the poor.

These “natural” conversions, while valuable, become “transvalued” as Gelpi puts it, when the reality of religious conversion flows into a person’s life.116 When religious conversion to God the Father in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit occurs

the transformation in God it effects can be legitimately described as radical. For it demands that all merely natural realities, including natural conversion, be reevaluated in the light of the ultimate realities which religious conversion grasps, and is grasped by, and be transmuted by them.

116 Gelpi II p cit par 23
Humans do not naturally and spontaneously desire to die for any reason, though they may learn through love the meaning of such self-sacrifice. But religious conversion demands in addition the willingness to live and die for world-transcending realities. The paradox of dying naturally in order to live supernaturally suffuses authentic religious conversion with an unavoidable element of discontinuity. The newness of life which religious conversion brings does not emerge with easy spontaneity from natural hopes and aspirations. Radical transmutation rather than mere organic continuity names the religious game.\textsuperscript{117}

In the final analysis for Gelpi, the decision to live and communicate out of an understanding of grace as thematic or transmutational has four main consequences for the spirituality one lives. In terms of the New Evangelization with its emphasis on ongoing conversion and the convert becoming an evangelizer these final reflections are significant.

The first consequence for Gelpi is connected with the practical living of a life of faith; “In the practical living of a life of faith, a theology of thematic grace tends to inspire a certain complacency about one's essential orientation to God, a complacency which a theology of transmuting grace challenges.”\textsuperscript{118} From the thematic perspective, there is a “belief in the implicitly graced character of all morally sincere acts. As a consequence, the sincerity of a choice, the fact that it does not grow from sinful motives, can begin to be prized as a sign that it expresses at least implicitly a graced longing for divine union”\textsuperscript{119}

The transmutational understanding in contrast would propose that sincerity alone is not a sufficient criteria to decide whether an act is a result of grace or not. Gelpi points out

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid par 30.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid par 32
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid par 33
Humans can act sincerely when they respond to created goods while simultaneously ignoring God's historical self-revelation in Jesus and the Spirit. Mere natural sincerity, no matter how intense, always falls short of supernatural faith. And faith marks the dividing line between nature and grace. Not that natural sincerity displeases God who takes pleasure in all natural goodness. But if natural moral sincerity is to be graced, it needs to be transvalued in faith. And that transvaluation changes it radically by suffusing it with gospel values and with a new dependence on the prompting and illumination of the Holy Spirit of Jesus, a dependence it previously lacked.  

In the transmutational approach, acts have to be prayerfully considered as flowing from conversion in all four areas, affective, moral, intellectual and religious to be considered as manifestations of the grace of God in person’s life.

Secondly for Gelpi “A theology of thematic grace looks upon the a priori structure of the individual psyche as the most fundamental source of personal orientation to God; a theology of grace as radically transmuting finds the fundamental source of personal orientation to God in interaction with religious events and with religious communities.” An understanding of grace as thematic, then locates a person’s experience of God “in the a priori structure of individual consciousness, rather than religious events themselves.” As we have seen above, the transmutational understanding in contrast sees the functions of individual consciousness as, “fallible and finite. It looks on the a priorities of any human cognitive act as historically acquired, and on the adequacy of the relation of any given mind to being, or reality, as varying from individual to individual.”

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120 Ibid par 34
121 Ibid par 35
122 Ibid par 35.
123 Ibid par 36
The thematic experience of grace encounters God primarily in the subjective experience of the individual human spirit as it interiorly explores the infinite horizons already present within itself. It can then be conceived of as something that can be arrived at individualistically. The transmutational understanding of grace on the other hand takes place in and is partially judged by the experience and activity lived within a community of believers and the wider community. Even revelations of God that happen in a dream state or when a person is in solitary contemplation need to be processed in relationship to other believers and outworked in concrete social behaviors or as Gelpi puts it

In such a theological frame of reference, transformation in hope, faith, and love cannot be viewed primarily as the relationship of an individual to God. Rather, they must be viewed as the very social process by which God reveals and communicates himself to communities and through them to the individuals who comprise them.124

An interesting confirmation of this point is the apparently wide spread phenomena of individuals encountering Jesus Christ or being directed to Him through dreams and visions in nations where it is prohibited and or dangerous to preach the Gospel and convert to Jesus Christ. Missionaries in these lands report that it is not the dreams or spiritual experiences alone that lead to conversion to Jesus Christ but the Christians/Missionaries they come into contact with or are directed to subsequent to these experiences.125

The third difference Gelpi outlines is that “While a theology of thematic grace locates religious consciousness primarily in the intellect and will, a theology of grace as radical transmutation ambitions the transvaluation and transformation in faith of

124 Ibid par 37
both the rational and irrational ways in which humans relate practically to God.”

The Thomistic thinking endorsed by the theology of thematic grace and other Christian philosophers states that it is the will and the intellect which provides the human being’s conscious connection to God. This understanding tends not to take into account the range of other ways human beings legitimately connect with God.

The transmuting conception of the action of grace on the other hand grounds the experience of mystery, not in the finite intellect, but in an appreciative grasp of the real. It demands that appreciative consciousness grow responsibly out of affective conversion. And it also insists that rational consciousness should express intellectual conversion. It demands, in other words, not only that the convert recognize the validity of both rational and irrational perceptions of the real, but also that rational interpretations of reality be coordinated with mythopoetic insight and vice versa. As a consequence, a theology of transmuting grace displays a more nuanced sensitivity to the variety and complexity of human and religious forms of knowing than does a theology of thematic grace.

The final area of implications for spiritual life described by Gelpi is “A theology of thematic grace celebrates the continuity of religious experience; a theology of transmuting grace anticipates both continuity and discontinuity within an experience of integral conversion.” The thematic understanding of the relationship of nature and grace grew out of dissatisfaction with the distinction as it had come to be presented in scholastic thinking. In attempting to reconnect and understand the continuity between nature and grace they found an appetite for God built into the human psyche. This method of understanding the action of grace doesn’t account for the significant experiences of discontinuity involved in the conversion of the

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126 Gelpi, II op cit par 39
127 Ibid par 43
128 Ibid par 44
129 Ibid par 45.
130 Ibid par 46
human person where there is “the sense of being not only turned around but transformed into a radically different kind of person.”

Proceeding from this expectation of continuity in spiritual growth in the thematic understanding of the work of grace, Gelpi suggests there will be a tendency to “value continuity within religious growth and to undervalue discontinuity. It will urge individuals to become consciously what they already implicitly are, rather than demand that they become a radically different kind of person.” In terms of evangelization and spiritual direction this type of thinking will not lead to discussions of encounter with Christ and repentance to make that relationship ever more authentic. It will instead lead to the encouragement of a person to “expect grace to fulfill their spontaneous spiritual longings.”

The transmutational understanding of conversion takes account of both the continuous and discontinuous aspects of conversion. In the understanding of natural conversion there is the expectation that there will be a sense of more incremental, continuous development or as Gelpi describes it “New habits, tendencies, ways of responding need to be integrated organically with those already acquired.” In addition to these types of change there is the expectation there will also be religious conversion which ”reorients human aspiration toward a God who confronts us in purification and judgment as a consuming fire and whose relentless love challenges

131 Ibid par 46
132 Ibid par 47
133 Ibid par 47
134 Ibid par 48
the finitude, the spontaneous self-preoccupation, the inertia, and the self-righteousness of every human ego.”

Fr Gelpi’s view of the way God’s grace operates in bringing people to conversion and causing them to persevere in ongoing conversion to Jesus Christ is important in discussing the New Evangelization in Catholic High Schools. The goal of the New Evangelization on the basis of Magisterial teaching is conversion to Jesus Christ and an ongoing life of conversion as a member of God’s people. Not every theological position on the action of God’s grace in conversion is compatible with this Magisterial teaching. It is clear that Fr Gelpi’s description of conversion as an experience of transmutational grace most adequately connects with this definition. The following quote from Fr Gelpi best summarize how this approach will facilitate the New Evangelization.

a theology of transmuting grace will value both continuity and discontinuity in religious growth. It will counsel converts to seek personal integration and satisfaction but to anticipate religious breakthroughs that effect more than the thematization of tendencies already present within human nature. Such a spirituality will seek to restore an evangelizing rhetoric of repentance and recommitment to Christian pulpits. Such a spirituality will, with all the Gospels, warn believers that a love relation with the Christian God demands as much the discontinuity of dying as it does the joy of continuous human development. Instead of counseling non-Christians to look upon themselves as anonymous Christians, it will warn them, as Jesus did his contemporaries, that Christian discipleship demands radical sacrifice and the willingness to undergo purifying transformation in God. For we must die to everything that is not Christ if we are to live with and in him.

Gelpi’s description of “transmuting grace” most thoroughly connects with the Church’s description of conversion as an experiential encounter with the risen Christ (described above). Any activity of evangelization in a Catholic high school which

135 Ibid par 49
136 Ibid par 50.
flows from the more “thematic” understanding of conversion one suggests would not be as effective in creating the circumstances sufficient for an encounter with God’s divine self-revelation as would one based on a “transmutational” understanding of conversion.
Chapter 4. The Essential Involvement of the Holy Spirit.

Another crucial emphasis in Magisterial teaching is the role of the Holy Spirit in the New Evangelization. In identifying conversion as the initial goal of evangelization\(^1\) and defining conversion as an experience of friendship/communion with Jesus Christ that has a transforming impact on the whole person, this teaching requires that God move by the Holy Spirit in an act of, for it to occur.

As discussed in the previous chapter, this encounter enters into the person and radically transforms their whole experience and direction in life. The Holy Spirit continues the salvific work of Jesus Christ by causing the encounter and even being the encounter with Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit enables the experience of relationship with Jesus and effects the change of life direction that takes place in men and women as the one experiencing the encounter with Jesus Christ responds and co-operates.

*Ad Gentes* states that the missionary nature of the Church flows from the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit in accordance with the decree of God the Father.\(^2\) It goes on to point out how the Holy Spirit was the active agent in Jesus’ own mission while he was on earth “Christ was impelled to the work of His ministry by the same Holy Spirit descending upon Him while He prayed.”\(^3\)

*Ad Gentes* goes on to describe the way the Holy Spirit moves to bring about salvation through God’s people.

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1 EN 32, RM 44  
2 AG 2  
Now, the Lord Jesus, before freely giving His life for the world, did so arrange the Apostles' ministry and promise to send the Holy Spirit that both they and the Spirit might be associated in effecting the work of salvation always and everywhere. Throughout all ages, the Holy Spirit makes the entire Church "one in communion and in ministering; He equips her with various gifts of a hierarchical and charismatic nature," a giving life, soul-like, to ecclesiastical institutions and instilling into the hearts of the faithful the same mission spirit which impelled Christ Himself. Sometimes He even visibly anticipates the Apostles' acting, just as He unceasingly accompanies and directs it in different ways.  

So Ad Gentes identifies the role of the Holy Spirit as the one who gives the Church "hierarchical and charismatic" gifts "impels" the faithful to mission in the same way he did with Jesus Christ, and He "anticipates", "accompanies", and "directs" the Church as it moves in proclaiming the Gospel.

In Evangelii Nuntiandi, Pope Paul VI devotes the whole of section 75 to the work of the Holy Spirit in evangelization. He states "Evangelization will never be possible without the action of the Holy Spirit." He goes on to point out (In more detail than in Ad Gentes) Jesus’ total dependence on the Holy Spirit in His life and ministry.

The Spirit descends on Jesus of Nazareth at the moment of His baptism when the voice of the Father- "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased"- manifests in an external way the election of Jesus and His mission. Jesus is "led by the Spirit" to experience in the desert the decisive combat and the supreme test before beginning this mission. It is "in the power of the Spirit" that He returns to Galilee and begins His preaching at Nazareth, applying to Himself the passage of Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." And He proclaims: "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled." To the disciples whom He was about to send forth He says, breathing on them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

It is important to note that Jesus’ ministry did not flow from His divine privilege as the eternal Logos but from the power of the Holy Spirit in Him and upon Him. In this way He was able to be a model of walking in the power of the Holy Spirit to His

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4 AG 4  
5 EN 75.  
6 ibid 75.
disciples and apostles. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* describes the Holy Spirit’s action in the first believers on the day of Pentecost, in the ministry of Peter, the martyrdom of Stephen, the ministry of Paul, the ministry of the “Twelve” and other disciples of Jesus “on those who heard the word subsequently.”

*Evangelii Nuntiandi* goes on to describe the way the Holy Spirit is at work today in every member of the Church in the work of evangelization.

It is the Holy Spirit who, today just as at the beginning of the Church, acts in every evangelizer who allows himself to be possessed and led by Him. The Holy Spirit places on his lips the words which he could not find by himself, and at the same time the Holy Spirit predisposes the soul of the hearer to be open and receptive to the Good News and to the kingdom being proclaimed.

Human thinking, planning and preparation are important in the work of evangelization. Part of the goal of this study is to think about activities and strategies that will be more effective in creating situations where an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ can take place. Without the action of the Holy Spirit however, they will prove to be ineffective no matter how carefully devised.

Techniques of evangelization are good, but even the most advanced ones could not replace the gentle action of the Spirit. The most perfect preparation of the evangelizer has no effect without the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit the most convincing dialectic has no power over the heart of man. Without Him the most highly developed schemas resting on a sociological or psychological basis are quickly seen to be quite valueless.

In so far as the Holy Spirit has a “preeminent place in the life of the Church”10, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* states that it is in the work of evangelization that he is most active. The Holy Spirit is both the “principal agent” of evangelization (for the

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7 Ibid 75
8 Ibid 75
9 Ibid 75
10 Ibid 75
reasons outlined by Paul VI above) and the “goal” of evangelization.\textsuperscript{11} The Holy Spirit is the goal because he makes present the salvation of Jesus Christ and animates and orders the renewed community of believers as they live out their vocation of being the Kingdom of God.\textsuperscript{12}

Finally \textit{Evangelii Nuntiandi} exhorts pastors, theologians and all the faithful to “study more thoroughly the nature and manner of the Holy Spirit’s action in evangelization today” and to pray unceasingly to the Holy Spirit with “faith and fervor” to be “guided by Him as the decisive inspirer of their plans, their initiatives and their evangelizing activity.”\textsuperscript{13}

John Paul II goes even further in \textit{Redemptoris Missio} where the whole of Chapter III, “The Holy Spirit: The Principal Agent of Mission” of the encyclical is devoted to the work of the Holy Spirit in evangelization. Chapter III starts with a summary of the mandate and call to mission as it is presented in the four Gospels. Following this, there is reflection on the way the work of the Holy Spirit in evangelization is outworked in the early church as presented by Luke in the Book of Acts.

On the day of Pentecost ”The coming of the Holy Spirit makes them witnesses and prophets (cf. Acts 1:8; 2:17-18).” From the Spirit they receive “serene courage” and “boldness” to bear witness to Christ.\textsuperscript{14} The Holy Spirit becomes a “guide” helping

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid 75
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid 75
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid 75
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid 24
them to choose both those to whom they are to go and the places to which their missionary journey is to take them.”

The content of the various missionary discourses in the book of Acts is discussed as the Gospel spreads out from Jerusalem to the Gentiles regions. The Holy Spirit also helped the early church to be faithful to the Good News while they were seeking at the same time to take “into account people’s hopes and expectations, their anguish and sufferings, as well as their culture, in order to proclaim to them salvation in Christ.” A significant moment in the Holy Spirit’s influence is the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 where the “Church opens her doors and becomes the house which all may enter, and in which all can feel at home, while keeping their own culture and traditions, provided that these are not contrary to the Gospel.” As the Gospel spreads to specifically pagan cultures, the Holy Spirit inspires the Apostles to preach message “which offer an example of the inculturation of the Gospel.”

*Redemptoris Missio* goes on to summarize the way the Holy Spirit as the “goal” (mentioned in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* above) of evangelization operates to order and give life to the community of believers. This is done by the Holy Spirit in a way that makes their life attractive to those around them to the extent where they become a “witness” and reveal a “way of life that shines out to others”.

In finishing its summary of the Holy Spirit’s action in the Book of Acts, *Redemptoris Missio* describes the way the Christian community at Antioch through prayer and

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15 RM 24  
16 Ibid 24  
17 Ibid 24  
18 Ibid 25  
19 Ibid 26
fasting was directed to lay hands on Paul and Barnabas and send them out to preach
the Gospel in areas as yet unreached.20

John Paul II then goes on to discuss the universal work of the Holy Spirit as he is
active in mankind and history “through the "seeds of the Word" to be found in
human initiatives-including religious ones - and in mankind's efforts to attain truth,
goodness and God himself.”21 The matters reflected on here are important because
the theological discussion of other religions as being equally salvific or “parallel” to
work of Jesus Christ is dealt with.

The contention of theologians who hold this view is that the Holy Spirit is working
through other religions and historical religious figures to bring salvation just as he is
through Jesus Christ. Peter McGregor succinctly outlines this position in reference to
the thinking of Laurenti Masega.22

Magesa’s position seems to be that the work of the Spirit is universal,
whereas the work of Christ is not. He does not deny that Christ is a Spirit-
inspired saviour figure, only that he need not be the only one. However, he
does attempt to retain some kind of ‘uniqueness’ for Christ and Christianity
by appealing to Paul Knitter’s idea of a Christ who has a ‘relational
uniqueness’ to other ‘saviour figures.’23

This way of thinking will of course have the tendency to negatively impact on
motivation to preach the Gospel. Rather than being a loving service provided to all
human beings, the preaching of the uniqueness of Christ becomes an arrogant
assertion of superiority over other religions and religious figures. This is undoubtedly

20 Ibid 27, Acts 13:1-4
21 AG 3,11,15.
 York: Orbis, 1994) 173–82, at 179
23 McGregor op cit p 84
one of the factors influencing the “negative tendency” Redemptoris Missio was
designed to address.

Nevertheless, in this "new springtime" of Christianity there is an undeniable
negative tendency, and the present document is meant to help overcome it.
Missionary activity specifically directed "to the nations" (ad gentes) appears
to be waning, and this tendency is certainly not in line with the directives of
the Council and of subsequent statements of the Magisterium. Difficulties
both internal and external have weakened the Church's missionary thrust
toward non-Christians, a fact that must arouse concern among all who
believe in Christ. For in the Church's history, missionary drive has always
been a sign of vitality, just as its lessening is a sign of a crisis of faith.\(^\text{24}\)

John Paul II, states clearly that the Holy Spirit is at work not only in “individuals but
also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions. Indeed, the Spirit is at the
origin of the noble ideals and undertakings which benefit humanity on its journey
through history.”\(^\text{25}\) He goes on to talk about the Holy Spirit prompting "through his
mysterious presence in every human heart” every “authentic prayer”.\(^\text{26}\)

These activities however are never accomplished by the Holy Spirit apart from an
objective to lead all men and women to the Lord Jesus. The motivation of the Holy
Spirit is to bring all people into relationship with Him.

Whatever the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of
peoples, in cultures and religions serves as a preparation for the Gospel and
can only be understood in reference to Christ, the Word who took flesh by
the power of the Spirit" so that as perfectly human he would save all human
beings and sum up all things."\(^\text{27}\)

The Holy Spirit is not separate from the Church either. While other cultures and
religious groups may have aspects and realities that are compatible with Christianity,
there are aspects that are not. As we have seen above, just as the Holy Spirit is

\(^{24}\) RM 2
\(^{25}\) ibid 28
\(^{26}\) Ibid 29
\(^{27}\) Ibid 29
present in the church as the agent of evangelization he is also the goal. The Holy Spirit lives within the Church and it is he who guides the Church as it discerns what is from God and what isn’t in other cultures/religions, “Every form of the Spirit's presence is to be welcomed with respect and gratitude, but the discernment of this presence is the responsibility of the Church, to which Christ gave his Spirit in order to guide her into all the truth (cf. Jn 16:13).”

As John Paul II concludes this chapter he calls for a “resurgence of the Church’s missionary activity” and “to an apostolic courage based on trust in the Spirit”. In contrast to the Benedict XVI’s expectation that response to evangelization is always most likely be slow and gradual, John Paul II recalls the historical missionary success in “Rus, amongst the Slavs, in the Americas, in Africa, Asia, and Oceania.”

His final thought is to exhort the Church to “courage that inspired the missionaries of the past, and the same readiness to listen to the voice of the Spirit.”

Pope Benedict XVI mentioned the role of the Holy Spirit in evangelization in his letter establishing the Pontifical Council to Promote the New Evangelization “I consider it opportune to offer appropriate responses so that the entire Church, allowing herself to be regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit, may present herself to the contemporary world with a missionary impulse in order to promote the new evangelization.” In addition to this role of regeneration/motivation he also talks about the guiding role of the Holy Spirit in evangelization.

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28 Ibid 29
29 Ibid 30
30 Ibid 30
31 Ibid 30
Indeed we cannot forget that the first task will always be to make ourselves docile to the freely given action of the Spirit of the Risen One who accompanies all who are heralds of the Gospel and opens the hearts of those who listen. To proclaim fruitfully the Word of the Gospel one is first asked to have a profound experience of God.\textsuperscript{33}

Benedict XVI makes an interesting observation about the manner in which the Holy Spirit operates as missionary activities are taking place. He quotes St Augustine’s comments on the proposition that the “grace of evangelization” given to the Church in the Book of Acts would not flow again in world history.

Proclaiming Jesus Christ the only Saviour of the World today is more complex than in the past; but our task remains identical to that at the dawn of our history. The mission has not changed, just as the enthusiasm and courage that moved the Apostles and first disciples must not change. The Holy Spirit which prompted them to open the doors and made evangelizers of them (Acts 2: 1-4) is the same Spirit which today moves the Church to a renewed proclamation of hope for the people of our time. St Augustine affirms that we must not think that the grace of evangelization was extended only to the Apostles and with them that fount of grace was exhausted, but “this fount is revealed when it flows, not when it ceases to pour out. And it was in this way that the grace, through the Apostles, reached others too, who were invited to proclaim the Gospel… in deed, it has continued to be a call right up to these days for the entire body of his Only Begotten Son, that is, his Church spread throughout the earth” (cf. \textit{Sermon}, 239, 1).\textsuperscript{34}

The clear implication of this is that the grace “flows” while a person or a group of people are in the activity of evangelization. It is the Holy Spirit who provides the boldness to step out and get involved in proclaiming Jesus Christ and it is the Holy Spirit who will move in any way possible to bring the hearers of the word to conversion.

Pope Francis in his early pontificate has been keen to promote the New Evangelization. One place where he specifically commented on the Holy Spirit’s role

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid
\textsuperscript{34} Benedict XVI. \textit{Plenary assembly of the pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization}. 2011 Op cit.
in the New Evangelization was an address he made to College of Cardinals in March 2013. In his remarks he discusses the Holy Spirit’s action in the early Church and his ability to do the same today, echoing the comments of Pope Benedict XVI above.

As Pope Benedict XVI reminded us so many times in his teachings, and at the end by his courageous and humble gesture, it is Christ who leads the Church through his Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church through his life-giving and unifying force: out of many, he makes one single body, the Mystical Body of Christ. Let us never yield to pessimism, to that bitterness that the devil offers us every day; let us not yield to pessimism or discouragement: let us be quite certain that the Holy Spirit bestows upon the Church, with his powerful breath, the courage to persevere and also to seek new methods of evangelization, so as to bring to Gospel to the uttermost ends of the earth (cf. Acts 1:8). Christian truth is attractive and persuasive because it responds to the profound need of human life, proclaiming convincingly that Christ is the one Saviour of the whole man and of all men. This proclamation remains as valid today as it was at the origin of Christianity, when the first great missionary expansion of the Gospel took place.

In these comments Pope Francis points to the Holy Spirit’s activities in giving power, courage, unity and perseverance to the ministry of the whole Church as she evangelizes. The Holy Spirit guides the Church into new methods of evangelization that pin points the areas of human need on an individual and corporate level that only the experience of relationship with Jesus Christ can fulfil.

4.1 Conclusions on the Role of the Holy Spirit

Magisterial teaching then puts enormous emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in the New Evangelization. What however does this mean in a practical sense? As outlined by the teaching, the practitioner of the New Evangelization needs to pray fervently for the Holy Spirit’s intervention to bring conversion to souls and for guidance in the work of mission. Additionally, evangelizers can expect to be given

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35 Pope Francis. *Audience With the College of Cardinals. Clementine Hall*. 2013 Op Cit
36 EN 75
courage, boldness, \(^{37}\) perseverance and even to feel “impelled” by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel.

How will these types of assistance be experienced and acted upon by someone proclaiming the Gospel? The preacher of the Gospel will have to become aware of the way the Holy Spirit moves upon their soul. Out of this awareness they will come to know and learn how they should act upon these sensations and thoughts.\(^ {38}\) The teaching has not explicitly made the connection here but this type of process is discussed in the Bible in 1 Corinthians 12 where the gifts of the Holy Spirit are outlined. The giving of courage, boldness, the feeling of being “impelled” to preach can be identified as a manifestation of the spiritual gift of faith.\(^ {39}\) If one experiences being “impelled” to speak to a particular person and it turns out to be very fruitful it is possible that the feeling of “impulsion” may be a manifestation of gift of knowledge (that this person was ready to hear and respond to the Gospel).\(^ {40}\) Actually noticing these physical/psychological experiences may be a manifestations of the gift of discernment of spirits.\(^ {41}\)

In terms of guidance, something even more specific is required. If it is not possible to reliably get input from the Holy Spirit, then evangelizers have no alternative but to put their own thoughts/programmes into effect, pray, and hope goods things will happen. This is not a modus operandi that will be successful as Pope Paul VI pointed out in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* quoted above.\(^ {42}\) Things that might be experienced as new,

\(^{37}\) RM 24

\(^{38}\) Loyola, St Ignatius *The Spiritual Exercises* (Tan Books. Ill. 1999.) p 412 In The Spiritual Exercises St Ignatius deals with the ways Christians can discern the leading of the Holy Spirit and avoid the deception of evil spirits through becoming aware of the way the work of the Holy Spirit manifests in their thoughts and bodily sensations.

\(^{39}\) 1 Corinthians 12: 9

\(^{40}\) 1 Corinthians 12 :8

\(^{41}\) 1 Corinthians 12: 10

\(^{42}\) EN 75
or novel ideas that turn out to be successful might be described as manifestations of the gift of prophecy, the word of knowledge and or the word of wisdom.\textsuperscript{43}

Magisterial teaching has pointed out that in reality, the position we inhabit today is the same as the early Church experienced. The Holy Spirit is the same today, Jesus is the same today. From a Catholic perspective there is no genuine reason from scripture or tradition to suggest that the heavenly Father is not “still working”\textsuperscript{44} as Jesus put it.

Evangelical protestant theology has had a “cessationist” view of the work of the Holy Spirit where the need for miracles, signs and wonders, supernatural guidance, the gift of prophecy etc. was dispensed with when the “canon” of scripture was finally established. This teaching flowed out of a protestant/reformation agenda which felt it needed to discount miracles which still occurred in the Catholic Church. A prominent evangelical theologian (and former cessationist), Jack Deere summarises the position.

No one ever just picked up the Bible, started reading, and then came to the conclusion that God was not doing signs and wonders anymore and that the gifts of the Holy Spirit had passed away. The doctrine of cessationism did not originate from a careful study of the Scriptures. The doctrine of cessationism originated in experience. The failure to see miracles in one’s own experience and to locate them in past history required an explanation. How do you explain an absence of miracles in your experience when the New Testament is filled with miracles? There are essentially three possibilities. First, there is something wrong with your experience. Second, God has withdrawn miracles because He only intended them to serve temporary purposes. Third, the answer is locked in divine mystery, like the mystery of election or predestination. The first answer would lead you to expect the miraculous when your experience was corrected. The second answer wouldn’t lead you to expect the miraculous at all. The third answer leaves the question open……..

Thus the Reformers were confronted with a choice: was their lack of experience of the miraculous due to a defect in their experience or to a

\textsuperscript{43} 1 Corinthians 12: 8  
\textsuperscript{44} John 5: 17
divinely planned obsolescence of miracles? They chose to believe the latter. They now had the monumental task before them of explaining why God would be so liberal in giving miracles to the first-century church and so stingy with miracles in the centuries that followed. The trick was to prove that miracles were meant only to serve temporary purposes in the first century. But how could they prove that? Yet here they faced not only a formidable obstacle but an insurmountable obstacle, for they could not produce one specific text of Scripture that taught that miracles or the spiritual gifts were confined to the New Testament period. Nor has anyone else since then been able to do that.

Having been deprived of the most powerful weapon in their arsenal, specific statements of Scripture, the Reformers were forced to appeal to theological deductions. But how were they ever going to deduce that miracles were intended to be temporary from a book that begins with miracles, persists in miracles, and ends with miracles? Yet they faced not only a formidable obstacle but an insurmountable obstacle, for they could not produce one specific text of Scripture that taught that miracles or the spiritual gifts were confined to the New Testament period. Nor has anyone else since then been able to do that.

This is not a position the Catholic Church has ever taken regarding the work of the Holy Spirit in terms of the miraculous. Scripture and the tradition of the Catholic Church are filled with reports of the manifestation of the miraculous. Why would the Holy Spirit not testify to the “resurrection of the Lord in power” today as He did at other times in history?

The mission has not changed. Benedict XVI may not have been going this far in the comments quoted above but it is reasonable, to take the argument the whole way. That is to say that signs, wonders, miracles, healings should accompany the proclamation of the gospel “with great perseverance” as St Paul put it, in exactly the same way that they did in the early Church. Evangelizers should expect to be guided by dreams, visions, locutions, angelic visitations in the same way the first disciples (and disciples throughout history) have been guided in the task of evangelization.

46 Benedict XVI Plenary assembly of the pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization 2011 Op cit
47 2 Corinthians 2:12
There is also a case to be made that the contemporary Church should expect to move even more readily in the power of the Holy Spirit than the first disciples. All the basic doctrinal issues have been resolved. There is a developed set of traditions, and liturgical practice that our ancestors did not possess. We have large, established institutions and financial resources in the Church to facilitate mission. This of course is not what is happening in the Western Church.

These thoughts lead again to wondering whether a “re-enchantment” or “re-mythologization” might be necessary in western Church in general, not just among young people (as suggested above)? Catholics acknowledge the miraculous in the lives of the saints, proceeding from the intercession of the saints, or at Lourdes or other Marian shrines but not as a possible part of their day to day Christian experience. Catholicism has never embraced a “cessationist” viewpoint regarding the miraculous but there have been other factors that have inhibited the manifestation God’s power. (A book written Francis McNutt has outlined a view as to why gifts of healing are not richly present in the Western Catholic Church today.)

Chapter 5. The Urgency of the proclamation

The final major theme in Magisterial teaching on the New Evangelization is the urgency of the task. From the teaching itself, there are two main factors in the urgency to preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ. The first is the duty to preach in obedience to the commands of the Lord Jesus out of love and solidarity for the human beings on planet earth. This could be termed the “positive” motivation for preaching the Good News. This motivation is the one most intensely advocated by Magisterial teaching since Vatican II for reasons which will be discussed below.

The second factor is the radical possibility of being excluded for all eternity from fellowship with God. This could be termed the “negative” motivation for preaching the Gospel. Preaching the Gospel and offering human beings salvation in Jesus Christ is in this case a service that offers the most effective way for human beings to avoid this fate. This motivation for sharing the Gospel is not as strongly present in Magisterial teaching since Vatican II as the “positive” motivation mentioned above. It is however strongly present in scripture and the Tradition of the Church.

“Positive” magisterial teaching on the urgency to evangelize never contradicts the testimony of scripture and tradition as to the “negative” motivation for the New Evangelization. It simply doesn’t focus on it as a motivation to mission. There is discussion however that this change in emphasis and the teaching of some prominent modern theological voices in the Church has had negative impact on motivation of the faithful to be involved in the mission “ad gentes”.

In the chapter on conversion above, Gelpi’s appraisal of the way a “thematic” understanding of the way Divine Grace operates in human beings and what it leads to in terms of motivation for evangelization was presented. He concluded that the “thematic” understanding of grace and Karl Rahner’s contention connected with that understanding that people were in fact already “anonymous Christians” would make a person’s actual reception of Christ and incorporation in the Church a luxury rather than a necessity (although to be fair to him, Rahner would not have put it this way).\(^1\) Gelpi described the way this understanding would tend to “mute the kerygmatic voice” of the Church in evangelization.\(^2\)

Ralph Martin has written a book outlining the impact he perceives this view and other views on salvation (particularly the understanding of Hans Urs Von Balthasar around salvation) have had on evangelization in the Church and on motivation for the New Evangelization.\(^3\) His views will be discussed in detail below in this chapter.

A third reason is the objective reality of the decay of faith and practice of Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular. This study will focus on statistical information from Australia (particularly concerning youth/adolescents as Catholic High Schools are a focus) which indicate the seriousness of the decline. At what point will this decline lead to a future Church that is largely empty of participants?

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1. Walsh, David. “The Charge Against Rahner (Part 2): Anonymous Christians?” Ipsum Esse. 2007. p 108 In this article, David Walsh discusses what he calls Rahner’s basically “orthodox intentions”. He feels that Rahner was attempting to work “within a Christian dogmatic framework” even if his thought ended up as somewhat problematic for orthodox theology.
2. Gelpi 1 Op Cit par 44
5.1 Duty: The Church is Missionary by Nature.

The Vatican II document *Ad Gentes* is clear in its description of the mission to evangelize as an urgent duty for the Church. Since the Church is “a universal sacrament of salvation” she is “driven by an inner necessity” to obey the “mandate of her founder.”⁴ This mandate is found in the book of Mark 16:16 in Jesus’ post resurrection appearance to the Eleven where he says “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”⁵ It states that it is “duty” of the successors of the first Apostles to proclaim and establish the Kingdom of God by bringing people into the Church through Baptism.⁶

It is interesting to note the scripture selected by the Father’s at Vatican II. In this scripture Jesus mentions that there is a possibility that men may be condemned if they choose not to believe the Gospel. The Fathers qualified this statement of Jesus by putting forward the possibility that “inculpable ignorance” of a person regarding the Gospel will have a part to play in God’s assessment of their life after they have passed away. Though the emphasis of *Ad Gentes* is on the “positive” motivation for evangelization there is a warning here of the consequences of rejecting the gospel and the consequences of such a decision.

*Ad Gentes* continues by stating that since the Church is “the salt of the earth and the light of the world”⁷ she is “more urgently called upon to save and renew every creature, that all things may be restored in Christ and all men may constitute one family in Him and one people of God.”⁸

⁴ AG 1  
⁵ Mark 16:16 The Holy Bible.  
⁶ AG 1  
⁷ Matt 5:13-14  
⁸ AG 1
When *Ad Gentes* outlines the necessity of the Church for salvation it proclaims that there lies a “necessity” and a “sacred duty” to preach the Gospel. The motivation behind the “necessity” and “sacred duty” is above all the motivation of love. This love for all human beings “impels” the members of the Church to share the Gospel,

The members of the Church are impelled to carry on such missionary activity by reason of the love with which they love God and by which they desire to share with all men the spiritual goods of both its life and the life to come.

Another Vatican II document, *Lumen Gentium*, reflects on the motivation believers should have for spreading the Good News of the Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ. It talks about the Church receiving a “solemn mandate” from Christ to “proclaim the saving truth” to the “ends of the Earth.” Church members are “compelled“ by the Holy Spirit to preach and take to heart the words of St Paul, “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel.” Like *Ad Gentes*, *Lumen Gentium* promotes the more “positive” motivations to evangelize of duty to obey the direct instructions of Jesus, and an obedient response to the inner “impulsion” of the Holy Spirit to evangelize.

In *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, a decree from Vatican II on the apostolate of the Laity, the evangelizer’s motivation for being involved in mission is again discussed. The laity are involved in the apostolate out a sense of “right and duty” and are “assigned to the apostolate by the Lord Himself.” It goes on to emphasize that it is through the command to charity that “all the faithful are impelled to promote the glory of God through the coming of His kingdom and to obtain eternal life for all

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9 ibid 7
10 Ibid 7
11 LG 17
12 Ibid 17
13 Ibid 17
14 Vatican II *Apostolicam Actuositatem* Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity
15 Ibid 3
men—that they may know the only true God and Him whom He sent, Jesus Christ (cf. John 17:3)”\(^{16}\) The spreading of the message of salvation is also described as a “preeminent responsibility” of the faithful.\(^{17}\)

*Apostolicam Actuositatem* then is a good example of Vatican II documents exhorting the people of God to mission through the “positive” motives of a sense of duty and obedience to God, and an experience of being “impelled” by love for people to preach the Gospel. There is a sense where the faithful need to have a cognitive understanding of their “preeminent responsibility” to spread the Gospel.

Pope Paul VI continued to emphasize the “positive” reasons for teaching the urgency of the task of evangelization. The main theme and the overriding tone of the Encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi* is to state the urgency of the task of mission and to exhort the faithful to a renewed fervour.

In *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Paul VI states the priority of the work of mission in his thinking by calling it

> a fundamental commitment of our Pontificate – (it) seems to us all the more noble and necessary when it is a matter of encouraging our brethren in their mission as evangelizers, in order that, in this time of uncertainty and confusion, they may accomplish this task with ever increasing love, zeal and joy.\(^{18}\)

He describes his own sense of personal urgency by pointing out to the reader that he has, “stressed the importance of the theme of evangelization on many occasions” before the Synod of Bishops that preceded the writing of *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.\(^{19}\) Paul

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\(^{16}\) Ibid 3  
\(^{17}\) Ibid 3  
\(^{18}\) EN 1  
\(^{19}\) Ibid 3
VI outlines some searching questions as to the efficacy of the preaching of the Gospel which he feels need to be answered.

- In our day, what has happened to that hidden energy of the Good News, which is able to have a powerful effect on man's conscience?

- To what extent and in what way is that evangelical force capable of really transforming the people of this century?

- What methods should be followed in order that the power of the Gospel may have its effect?  

The very nature of these questions should, he feels, create a sense of, “urgency of giving a loyal, humble and courageous answer to this question, and of, acting accordingly.”

_Evangelii Nuntiandi_ states there is a “duty incumbent” on the Church by the command of the Lord Jesus to evangelize and that it is a “question of people’s salvation”. This proclamation is so important that the apostle should “consecrate to it all his time and all his energies, and to sacrifice for it, if necessary, his own life.”

It goes on to talk about some of the “negative“ reasons for an urgency to preach when it describes the way the Gospel provides “liberation from everything that oppresses man but which is above all liberation from sin and the Evil One” but stops short of a discussion of hell and eternal separation of God.

There is discussion of the hope of the blessed life with God after death and offering the unbeliever the option of living a life with this hope in the future. The possibility of exclusion from God’s presence for eternity is again not included.
Consequently evangelization cannot but include the prophetic proclamation of a hereafter, man's profound and definitive calling, in both continuity and discontinuity with the present situation: beyond time and history, beyond the transient reality of this world, and beyond the things of this world, of which a hidden dimension will one day be revealed - beyond man himself, whose true destiny is not restricted to his temporal aspect but will be revealed in the future life.\(^{25}\)

Paul VI outlines at length the way the Church must evangelize as a manifestation of the “essential mission of the Church”\(^{26}\) and “her most intimate being”.\(^{27}\) Love is again proclaimed as a motivator and the example of the Apostle Paul is cited as model.

The work of evangelization presupposes in the evangelizer an ever increasing love for those whom he is evangelizing. That model evangelizer, the Apostle Paul, wrote these words to the Thessalonians, and they are a program for us all: "With such yearning love we chose to impart to you not only the gospel of God but our very selves, so dear had you become to us."\(^{28}\)

In dealing with some theological reasons for a lack of urgency in preaching the Gospel (particularly those purported to have come from the teaching of Vatican II), Paul VI states something of the “negative” motivation to urgency for preaching the Gospel. Interestingly, it is applied to the reticent evangelizer rather than the person who may reject the Gospel.

It would be useful if every Christian and every evangelizer were to pray about the following thought: men can gain salvation also in other ways, by God's mercy, even though we do not preach the Gospel to them; but as for us, can we gain salvation if through negligence or fear or shame- what St. Paul called "blushing for the Gospel" - or as a result of false ideas we fail to preach it? For that would be to betray the call of God, who wishes the seed to bear fruit through the voice of the ministers of the Gospel; and it will depend on us whether this grows into trees and produces its full fruit.\(^{29}\)

\(^{25}\) Ibid 28  
\(^{26}\) Ibid 14  
\(^{27}\) Ibid 15  
\(^{28}\) Ibid 79, 1 Thessalonians 2:8  
\(^{29}\) Ibid 80
The urgency to preach for Paul VI comes from a deep sense of duty and personal accountability to God to preach the Gospel. It also flows from a “yearning” love for people, a desire that they live their lives with an awareness of the blessed possibility of eternal union with God in the afterlife and a pathway of liberation from the oppression and bondage of sin and the devil in this life.

In *Redemptoris Missio* Pope John Paul II continues to communicate the sense of urgency that should accompany the work of proclaiming the Gospel. He starts by calling the Church to “commit wholeheartedly” to the mission of proclaiming the Good News.\(^{30}\) He states that he senses an “urgent duty to repeat this cry of St Paul” “For necessity is laid on me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel”.\(^{31}\) In referring to his many travels around the world, he stated that his “direct contact with peoples who do not know Christ has convinced me even more of the *urgency of missionary activity*.\(^{32}\)

The proclamation of the Gospel is the Church’s most important service to the world and what moved John Paul II to “even more strongly to proclaim the urgency of missionary evangelization” to the people of God. It is a “supreme duty” that “no institution of the Church can avoid”.\(^{33}\) Mission derives not only from “the Lord’s mandate” but “the profound demands of God’s life within us.”\(^{34}\)

\(^{30}\) RM 1
\(^{31}\) Ibid 1, 1 Cor 9:16
\(^{32}\) Ibid 1
\(^{33}\) Ibid 3
\(^{34}\) Ibid 11
John Paul II outlines some of the factors that might lead to a decrease of enthusiasm for mission within the Church in a similar way to Paul VI’s discussion in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. His summary of the thinking that hinders mission is as follows.

Nevertheless, also as a result of the changes which have taken place in modern times and the spread of new theological ideas, some people wonder: *Is missionary work among non-Christians still relevant? Has it not been replaced by inter-religious dialogue? Is not human development an adequate goal of the Church's mission? Does not respect for conscience and for freedom exclude all efforts at conversion? Is it not possible to attain salvation in any religion? Why then should there be missionary activity?*  

In response to these considerations John Paul II states the “positive” case for Christians to be urgently involved in proclaiming the Gospel.

This “positive” motivation for the urgency of preaching the Gospel is a significant theme in *Redemptoris Missio*. The intense benefits of living in relationship with Jesus Christ are presented as a reason for fervent proclamation of the Gospel.

The urgency of missionary activity derives from the *radical newness of life* brought by Christ and lived by his followers. This new life is a gift from God, and people are asked to accept and develop it, if they wish to realize the fullness of their vocation in conformity to Christ. The whole New Testament is a hymn to the new life of those who believe in Christ and live in his Church. Salvation in Christ, as witnessed to and proclaimed by the Church, is God's self-communication: "It is love which not only creates the good, but also grants participation in the very life of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For he who loves desires to give himself."  

It is pointed out that there is the possibility of rejecting this gift of relationship with God but the possible eternal consequences aren’t described. 

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35 EN 32  
36 RM 4  
38 Ibid 7
The human search for God and meaning in life is fulfilled in Jesus alone in whom is found a “universality of salvation” which is “available to all”. Human beings have the right to be presented with the ultimate truth of their existence.

Multitudes have the right to know the riches of the mystery of Christ-riches in which we believe that the whole of humanity can find, in unsuspected fullness, everything that it is gropingly searching for concerning God, man and his destiny, life and death, and truth.... This is why the Church keeps her missionary spirit alive, and even wishes to intensify it in the moment of history in which we are living.

Other reasons given for continued zealous involvement in mission are that “true liberation” is found in “opening oneself to the love of Christ” and experiencing in Him freedom from “alienation and doubt, from slavery to the power of sin and death”. Because Jesus offers an “integral salvation, one which embraces the whole person and all mankind, and opens up the wondrous of divine filiation” the church ”may not keep hidden or monopolize this newness and richness which has been received from God's bounty in order to be communicated to all mankind.”

Love again is a significant motivation for mission in Redemptoris Missio. In commenting on the place of charity in the work of preaching the Gospel John Paul II describes it as the “driving force” of mission and “the sole criterion for what is to be done and not done, changed or not changed” in missionary activity. The missionary must be a person who, “urged on by, ‘zeal for souls’, a zeal inspired by Christ’s own charity, which takes the form of concern, tenderness, compassion, openness, availability and an interest in people’s problems.”

39 Ibid 9
40 Ibid 8
41 Ibid 11
42 Ibid 11
43 Ibid 60
44 Ibid 89
Urgency to preach the Good News is presented primarily in “positive” terms by Magisterial Teaching since Vatican II. Believers are obliged to communicate the benefits of fulfilment and relationship with Jesus and participation in eternal union with God in the “hereafter” to all people. The motivations suggested for preaching the Gospel are (in summary) love for all humans, a sense of duty to obey the commands of Jesus, and a drive from within one’s nature as a Christian and a member of the Church from the Holy Spirit to be involved in mission.

The, “negative” possibility of eternal separation from God is not specifically discounted even though it is not discussed explicitly as a reason for urgency of proclamation of the Gospel. It is pointed out that people can reject the Good News and experience bondage and oppression through sin and the activity of the devil in this life. The word, “salvation” is frequently discussed. If it is accepted, great blessings are described. The question of what happens if it is not accepted is left open.

5.2 Eternal Consequences.

While Magisterial teaching since Vatican II has been focussed on the positive motivations for preaching the Gospel, it didn’t contradict or repudiate the testimony of scripture or tradition of the Church around the “negative” motivations for proclaiming the Good News. In practice however, there is a significant stream in theological thought in the late modern/post modern period which would hold to a “universalist” position around salvation. John Sachs gives a description of this position for which he claims there is a “theological consensus”.

45 Ibid 8
46 Ibid 14
47 Ibid 14
We have seen that there is a clear consensus among Catholic theologians today in their treatment of the notion of apocatastasis and the problem of hell. Christian faith proclaims the reality of the universal salvation revealed and accomplished by God in the death and resurrection of Christ. The real possibility of hell is understood by most to be an expression of the Christian belief in the ultimate seriousness and responsibility of the freedom with which God has endowed humanity. God's offer must be freely accepted; no one can be saved against his or her will.

A properly Christian universalism emphasizes that God wills salvation for all men and women and somehow effectively offers it to them, even where there is no explicit knowledge of Christ or belief in God. It may not be said that only a preordained number will be saved, and certainly not that some are preordained to be damned. Likewise, it may not be said that even one person is already or will in fact be damned. All that may and must be believed is that the salvation of the world is a reality already begun and established in Christ. Such a faith expresses itself most consistently in the hope that because of the gracious love of God, whose power far surpasses human sin, all men and women will in fact freely and finally surrender to God in love and be saved.

When Balthasar speaks of the duty to hope for the salvation of all, he is articulating the broad consensus of current theologians and the best of the Catholic tradition. Like other theologians, notably Rahner, he intentionally pushes his position to the limit, insisting that such a hope is not merely possible but well founded. There is a fundamental "asymmetry" between God's grace and human sin, between a human "yes" to God and a possible "no" to God. While completely convinced that God's gracious self-offer must be accepted in freedom if saving grace is to be efficacious, and that human freedom is indeed capable of such a response, I have tried to show that the presumption that human freedom entails a capacity to reject God definitively and eternally seems questionable. And, although this presumption enjoys the weight of the authority of Scripture and tradition, it would seem incorrect to consider this possibility as an object of faith in the same sense that the ability of human freedom in grace to choose God is an object of faith.48

Sachs feels the “universalist” or “apocatastasis” position needs to be affirmed in opposition to a movement toward “fundamentalism, sectarianism, and integralism”49 that he perceived rising in the Christian milieu in the early nineteen nineties when his comments were published.

*Lumen Gentium* 16 (mentioned above), *Ad Gentes* 7, and *Gaudium et Spes* 22 from the Second Vatican Council have often been cited by those putting the “universalist”

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49 ibid p227
case as an indication that the Church also has come to lean toward their position.

Martin summarises Karl Rahner’s synthesis of the teaching from Vatican II.

Rahner speaks of “this theological optimism of the Council regarding salvation” and declares that “this optimism concerning salvation appears to me one of the most noteworthy results of the Second Vatican Council.” And in speaking of the LG 16, AG 7, and GS 22, he notes that “the authentic content of salvation, acknowledged in a spirit of vast optimism must be found in the [non-Christian] religions themselves.” He also comments that “this optimism with regard to salvation remains one of the most astonishing phenomena in the development of the Church’s conscious awareness of her faith in this development as it applies to the secular and non-Christian world, the awareness of the difference between saving history as a whole and the history of explicit Christianity and the Church.” He again rejects Augustine’s teaching, assuming, “what may be called this radically optimistic view (contrary to an Augustinian conception of history).”

Martin notes, the influence of Karl Rahner, Hans Urs von Balthasar and other theologians who have built on their thinking in this area has lead to a “shift in both theological and popular sentiment regarding the possibility of eternal loss. In my contacts it seems that many even of the most orthodox and spiritual people seem to have imperceptibly drifted”

The “optimism” found in Conciliar teaching that Rahner cites above “that all shall be saved” is somewhat more equivocal than he presents. The following statements, also in Lumen Gentium 16, significantly qualify the notion that it is an exclusively “universalist” statement.

But often men, deceived by the Evil One, have become vain in their reasonings and have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, serving the creature rather than the Creator. Or some there are who, living and dying in this world without God, are exposed to final despair.

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51 Ibid p 131
52 LG 16
In *Ad Gentes* 7, the hope that all men will be saved is qualified by stating that “those men cannot be saved, who though aware that God, through Jesus Christ founded the Church as something necessary, still do not wish to enter into it, or to persevere in it.”\(^{53}\) With regard to the statement in *Gaudium et Spes* 22 which has a “flavour” of universalism in it, Martin notes that it is specifically meant to be read in conjunction with all of *Lumen Gentium* 16 in mind.\(^{54}\) (footnote 31 which has been left in the quote below refers to *Lumen Gentium* 16)

All this holds true not only for Christians, but for all men of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way.\(^{(31)}\) For, since Christ died for all men, and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery.\(^{55}\)

An important area for discussion is of course the scripture itself. Romans 1 and Mark 16:14-16 are specifically cited and Romans 2 alluded to as the scriptural basis for *Lumen Gentium* 16. Martin in his book reflects on these scriptures in detail and comes up with the following four conclusions.

1. Paul and the commentators on Paul we have consulted strongly suggest that before we can appreciate the gift of salvation, we need to be aware of our condition apart from Christ....

2. *LG* 16 states that “very often” people who are not Christian (and the same can be applied to many who are Catholic in name only) are not sincerely seeking God and living according to the light of their consciences....The clarity that Romans gives us, not only about the reality of sin and the wrath of God and the darkness and rebellion of the human heart, but also about the pervasiveness of this participation in darkness, is essential knowledge in the shaping of our message and is an important motivation for the urgency of the mission....

3. Romans shows us that something really is at stake: eternal salvation or damnation. The gospel is a chance to “escape the wrath to come....”

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\(^{53}\) AG 7  
\(^{54}\) Martin, Ralph 2012 op cit p10  
\(^{55}\) GS 22
4. There are those who choose the way that leads to life and others who choose the way that leads to death, those who choose the blessing and those who choose the curse (Duet 30:15-20).  

In addition to the teaching of scripture, the traditional teaching on the dangers of eternal separation from God and the need to preach the Gospel to combat these dangers were presented in the three 20th century Papal Encyclicals on the mission of the Church prior to the Second Vatican Council. In the year 1919, Pope Benedict XV stated in the encyclical *Maximum Illud* that there still remain in the world immense multitudes of people who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death...You have been called to carry light to men who lie in the shadow of death and to open the way to heaven for souls that are hurtling to destruction...Now what class of men is more in need of fraternal help than unbelievers, who live in ignorance of God, and consequently, bound by the chains of their blind and violent desires, are enslaved in the most hideous forms of slavery, the service of Satan?  

Pope Pius XI in 1926 commented in the encyclical *Rerum ecclesiae* that we determined to leave nothing undone which might, by means of apostolic preachers, extend farther and farther the light of the Gospel and make easy for heathen nations the way unto salvation... and encourage likewise others to pray, that the gift of faith be bestowed upon the almost limitless number of pagans  

Pope Pius XII in 1951 in the Encyclical *Evangelii praecones* also outlines the “negative” reasons for an urgency to preach the Gospel.

Venerable Brethren, you are well aware that almost the whole human race is today allowing itself to be driven into two opposing camps, for Christ or against Christ. The human race is involved today in a supreme crisis, which will issue in its salvation by Christ, or in its dire destruction.
In 1957, Pius XII’s encyclical *Fidei donum* expressed concern for the salvation of the unevangelized “where some 85,000,000 people still sit in the darkness of idolatry”.⁶⁰ Pope John XXIII declared a concern for evangelization to ensure the salvation of souls in his encyclical *Princeps pastorum* issued in 1959, “We are everywhere confronted by appeals to Us to ensure the eternal salvation of souls in the best way We can, and a cry seems to reach Our ears: "Help us!"⁶¹

The Catechism of the Catholic Church sums up the overall position of the Church regarding the possibility of eternal loss when it states that “By rejecting grace in this life, one already judges oneself, receives according to one's works, and can even condemn oneself for all eternity by rejecting the Spirit of love.”⁶² In discussing the reality of hell it says.

> Our Lord warns us that we shall be separated from him if we fail to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are his brethren. To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from him for ever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called "hell."⁶³

The Catechism of the Catholic Church goes on to quote some of the teaching of Jesus Himself in scripture and the testimony of Tradition.

The affirmations of Sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Church on the subject of hell are a call to the responsibility incumbent upon man to make use of his freedom in view of his eternal destiny. They are at the same time an urgent call to conversion: "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are

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⁶² Catechism of the Catholic Church 1993, 679 (Hereafter CCC)

⁶³ ibid 1033
many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few.\textsuperscript{64}

Jesus often speaks of "Gehenna" of "the unquenchable fire" reserved for those who to the end of their lives refuse to believe and be converted, where both soul and body can be lost.\textsuperscript{65} Jesus solemnly proclaims that he "will send his angels, and they will gather . . . all evil doers, and throw them into the furnace of fire,"\textsuperscript{66} and that he will pronounce the condemnation: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire.\textsuperscript{67}

In addition to the duty to preach the Gospel out of obedience and the desire to bring people to a fulfilment of all their transcendent needs and aspirations there is the possibility that people will experience eternal separation from God without the benefit of the Good News. Scripture and the tradition of the Church before Vatican II strongly present these "negative" motivations for preaching the gospel. Teaching since Vatican II has not emphasised this need for urgency but it has not contradicted it.

Private revelation of some saints of the Catholic Church attests to the existence of the reality of hell.\textsuperscript{68} Catholics are of course not obliged to believe private revelations. The mystical experience of those the Church has taken the trouble to identify as saints however should carry some weight with any Catholic who includes the, "supernatural" in their Christian world view. It is also noteworthy that some of the most successful evangelizers in Christian history had this "negative" motivation as

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid 1036. Mt 7:13-14
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid 1034. Mt 5:22, 29; 10:28; 13:42, 50; Mk 9:43-48
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid 1034 Mt:13: 41-42
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid 1034
the foundation for their preaching and a significant factor in the intensity and love they demonstrated as they proclaimed the Gospel.⁶⁹

5.3 Scale of the Decline

A final reason for the urgency of the need for a New Evangelization is the scale of the falling away from faith and practice in the western/previously evangelized world. Magisterial teaching alludes frequently to this reality and has outlined some of the influences that have brought it about (discussed above).⁷⁰ To gauge the intensity of urgency required in the New Evangelization it is useful to look at the results of sociological research into this decline. This thesis will focus on some of the findings of relatively recent research done in Australia with adolescents and young people since it is NSW Catholic High Schools which will be examined as to their response to the Magisterial call (and the call of the NSW and ACT Bishops in the document “Catholic Schools at a Crossroads”)⁷¹ to the New Evangelization.

5.3.1 Catholic Schools 2000

The most powerful testimony to the decline in faith and practice among adolescents and youth in the Australian context is the work of Dr Marcellin Flynn and Dr Magdelena Mok. The final report of their findings appeared in a book titled “Catholic Schools 2000”.⁷² Their longitudinal study of year 12 students in Australian Catholic schools is an exceptional piece of research from a statistical perspective. It has a large sample size (17,646 students and 3,506 teachers). It surveys year twelve

⁷⁰ Rymarz, Richard M. 2012 op cit p 45
⁷¹ NSW and ACT Catholic Bishops. 2007 Op Cit 2007
students from many schools all over Australia (170 schools). It had four stages of data collection over 26 years from 1972, 1982, 1990, and 1998.

The time period is also useful for the purposes of reflecting on the New Evangelization as it starts not long after Vatican II finished and covers a quarter of a century where the New Evangelization should have been increasingly in operation (as well as the corrosive socio-cultural events that have precipitated the need for it).

The most relevant findings with regard to the urgency of the New Evangelization are around the decline in attendance of year 12 students at Sunday Mass. (Rymarz has made the case that counts of Sunday Mass attendance are a good indicator of Catholic belief and practice.) In 1972, 69% of year 12 students reported attending Sunday Mass. In 1982, it was 55%, in 1990, down to 38% and finally in 1998 the figure was 23%. This represents a drop in attendance of 46% over the 26 years of the study. Even more striking was amount of students who go to mass “only a few times a year”, “rarely” or “never”. This “non-attendance” figure rose from 15% in 1972 to 54% in 1998, an increase of 39%.

With regard to reconciliation, there was a decrease in practice from students who interacted with the sacrament from “once a month”, 19% in 1972 to 2% in 1998. Again, those who rarely or never went to reconciliation increased from 45% in 1972 to 87% in 1998. Flynn and Mok state that "The vitality of the Church is measured by

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73 Rymarz, Richard M 2012 op Cit 131
74 Flynn and Mok op cit p245
75 Ibid p243.
much more than the indicators discussed above.”76 They acknowledge however that they indicate a disturbing trend.77

If attendance at the sacraments showed a negative trend in terms of student participation there might be a strong “inner” or “personal” religious commitment that wasn’t manifested in a student’s sacramental life. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, this would not be viewed as an adequate expression of conversion to Jesus Christ. It might however indicate that something in terms of relationship with Jesus Christ might be happening with Catholic year 12 students (however deficient it might be). In measuring student’s religious commitment and values Flynn and Mok found that this was not the case.

Where religious commitment touches their lives more personally and challenges them more directly, however, students tend to be much more ambivalent in their responses. Overall, 73% of students see God as a loving Father, 69% consider Him to be a real person in their daily lives and believe that God always forgives them....There is overall a marked decline in students religious commitment. For example, the average religious commitment of students was 62% in 1982, 56% in 1990 and 55% in 1998.78

Magisterial teaching discussed above has proposed a model of Christian conversion. In the model it describes, conversion leads to Baptism and membership of the Church (or a renewed membership of the Church if already Baptised), the community of God’s people. Out of this life, the newly evangelized go on to preach the Gospel to others. It is clear that this dynamic was not happening among year twelve Catholic students between 1972 and 1998.

Flynn and Mok also surveyed Year 12 students about their experience of, and attitude toward, Religious Education classes. Their conclusions were drawn from the

76 Ibid p246
77 Ibid p246
78 Ibid p252
8,310 sample size 1998 survey of year 12 students and compared to the overall survey.

Year 12 students’ attitudes toward Religious Education and School Retreats in Year 12, when faced with the pressures of the HSC examination, continue to be a matter of concern! The average positive response of students in this study to Religious Education was 38% and to retreats was 43%. Less than half of the 8,310 year 12 students in the study of Catholic Schools viewed Religious Education favourably or seriously. A marked decline in students’ perspective of Religious Education and Retreats is also evident over the period 1972-1982-1990-1998.79

Their overall conclusion is that “there has been a marked decline in the level of students’ religious beliefs, values and practice over the last two decades.”80 Thirteen years ago the situation with regard to year twelve Catholic High School students’ attitude toward, and practice of, the Catholic faith was described by Flynn and Mok as “disturbing “ and “a concern”. Has this decline been arrested at all in the years since the “Catholic Schools 2000” was published in 2002?

5.3.2 National Church Life Survey 2006

Even though the Flynn and Mok study concluded in 1998 and no directly comparable research has been done on the population of Catholic High School students since then, there are some other ways to get a sense of what the situation with regard to Mass attendance is like closer to the present (2013) with regard to adolescents and young people.

Every five years a wide ranging survey of church life across Christian denominations is conducted by an organization called National Church Life Survey Research.81 This detailed survey of church life in Australia includes figures on Catholic mass

79 Ibid p287
80 Ibid p321
attendance and was last conducted in 2011. For the purposes of this discussion the mass attendance trends for the 15-19, and the 20-24 age group will be observed in order to get some sense of the situation since Flynn and Mok completed their research. The results of the 2011 survey have not yet been fully processed with regard to mass attendance figures from these age groups so it is not possible to get the most up to date picture.

The figures from the 2006 research have been processed and they indicate that the trends for mass attendance in these age groups have deteriorated even further than the situation at the end of Flynn and Mok’s research. Using their figures, it is possible to analyse the trend in mass attendance over the period of the surveys from 1996, 2001, and 2006.

With regard to the 15-19 age group, 45,000 attended mass weekly in 1996. In 2001 this had decreased to 35,987 and in 2006 the number of mass attendees in this age range was 27,442. The picture is little better in the 20-24 age group. In 1996, 26,000 attended mass. In 2001, 21,551 attended weekly mass and in 2006, 18,003.\textsuperscript{82} These figures represent a decrease of 39% or 17,558 adolescents and a decrease of 30% or 7,997 young adults attending mass from 1996 to 2006.

More adolescents attend mass than young adults in these figures. One possible reason for this is because the adolescents would be more likely to attend with their families.

When figures for the falling away of mass attendance among young people once they begin to make their own decision about whether to go to mass was 42% in 1996, 39% ....

in 2001 and 34% in 2006. On average this was a 39% decrease over the three data collection periods between the 15-19 and the 20-24 age groups.

These figures speak for themselves about the magnitude in the decline of mass attendance among young people. They also tend to indicate that the negative trend identified by Flynn and Mok has continued. How long can this precipitous rate of decline continue before the Catholic Church in Australia essentially an empty shell?

5.3.3 The Spirit of Generation Y

The religious socialization of Generation X has been considered above. Some of the reasons for the existence of the need for the New Evangelization were identified in that discussion from the Australian perspective. What then are the religious characteristics of the Catholic young people of “Generation Y” (born between 1981 and 2001 and are in High School now), the children of Generation X?

In 2005, Christian Smith and Denton Lundquist published “Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers”. This book reported the results of extensive, in-depth phone interviews of American teenagers about their religious and spiritual lives. The research that lead to the publication of “The Spirit of Generation Y” about the spirituality of Australian teenagers was based on the same methods and predominantly the same questions as the American study. This study will be reflecting on the implications of Michael Mason, Andrew Singleton and Ruth Webber’s detailed description of the spirituality of Australian teenagers for the urgency of the New Evangelization.

84 Mason, Michael Christopher; Singleton, Andrew Tintin & Webber, Ruth. The Spirit of Generation Y: Young People’s Spirituality in a Changing Australia. (John Garratt Publishing Vic. 2007)
A summary of the key findings from “The Spirit of Generation Y” are below gives an excellent “snapshot” of where Generation Y are positioned on the spiritual landscape.

1. Just over half of Generation Y said they believed in God (51%); 17% said they did not believe, and 32% were unsure.
2. Almost half of Australian young people between the ages of 13 and 24 do not belong to or identify with any religion or denomination. 46% consider themselves Christian, 17% pursue New Age forms of spirituality, 28% are Secular, 6% belong to Other Traditional world religions, and 3% believe in a God, but do not identify with any religious tradition.
3. There is a generally low level of interest in and involvement with religion or spirituality among Gen Y: only a minority (about 41%) are really engaged with any of the 3 major types of spirituality – only 17% with any form of Christianity.
4. A majority of all denominations agreed that it was ‘okay to pick and choose your religious beliefs …’; and a majority of Gen Y agreed (although less than half of Other Christians and Anglicans) that ‘morals are relative, there are no definite rights and wrongs for everybody’.
5. Australian young people are reluctant to declare that only one religion is true – only 13% of Generation Y make such a claim.
6. There is a strong drift away from Christianity among Generation Y: some previously attended more regularly, but have stopped doing so; others once believed in God but now do not; before they reach the age of 25, about 18% of those who used to belong to a Christian church are already ex-members.
7. While there is a popular appetite for TV shows and movies featuring the paranormal and the occult, these shows seem more a reflection of the interests, tastes and beliefs of many of those who watch, rather than an influence persuading audience members to believe in ghosts, psychics or vampires.
8. Young people indicated that they placed a high value on close relationships with friends and family, and on having an exciting and enjoyable life. They also wanted a peaceful, cooperative, just and secure world. Religious or spiritual concerns were generally not considered important.
9. Most young people said they had purpose in their lives, although some felt that their lives did not fit into any wider scheme, that they did not really belong anywhere or ‘were hurting deep inside’.

Mason et al’s exhaustive study paints a gloomy picture of the spirituality of “Generation Y” with regard to orthodox Christianity of any denomination. In their

85 Ibid p301-304
discussion of the individualism that has come to be a characteristic teenage spirituality in Australia they comment

Half of Gen Y see no need to belong to a religious community, and very few of those who do identify are active participants. In matters of religion, ‘truth’ means what is true for me; what is true for someone else may be quite different, and has its own perfect right to exist independently, without being constrained by any standard external to the individual. The same strong and widespread consensus also applies to values and morals. This principle is seen as a matter of universal agreement, beyond challenge or argument, and in no need of justification....this subjective approach to ultimate truths and fundamental values entails a radical relativism, and considerable scepticism regarding the human capacity to attain ‘objective’ truth....many people, (and not only the young) now regard religious or spiritual beliefs as having nothing to do with the realm of history, fact or ‘hard reality’; but instead as each person’s imaginative construction of their world...a figurative expression of their experience of life, not a description of the universe.  

With regard to the “Christianity” they experienced during their study they had the following observation

Many of those who are still apparently Christian are not actually Christian in the religious sense (either socially or theologically). That is, they do not accept any church’s creed or moral code or form of worship, or acknowledge any religious community as having claims on them. What makes them appear Christian is that they have adopted some Christian themes within an eclectic spirituality focussed on self-development.

When considered alongside the information cited above about Catholic Church attendance by young people and Flynn and Mok’s exploration of the belief and practice of year 12 students in the 26 years prior to 1998, the case for an urgent need to engage in a New Evangelization of Australian youth can hardly be argued against.

**5.4 Conclusion: The Urgency of the New Evangelization**

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86 Ibid p 324-325
87 Ibid p325
From the discussion in the first two sections of this chapter it is clear that Magisterial teaching sees the New Evangelization as a pressing need for the Church that must be undertaken with urgency. One set of motivations for urgent involvement in this call can be called the “positive” motivations. This set of motivations has been the emphasis of Magisterial teaching since Vatican II. These are the commands of Jesus in the Gospels and the Church’s duty to obey these commands out of love for God and love for the people of the world.

The second set of motivations can be described as “negative”. They have not been an emphasis of Magisterial teaching since Vatican II but they have been a part of motivation for mission in the scriptures and in the tradition of the Church. In the discussion above it was pointed out that while Magisterial teaching since Vatican II doesn’t focus on these reasons, it did from time to time allude to them and it never contradicted previous teaching. The “negative” reasons are of course the real danger that human beings can reject God’s offer of salvation in Jesus Christ and membership of His Church and spend eternity separated from God.

The third set of motivations is the cultural/social realities of the modern world and the actual impact they have had on the Catholic faith and practice of people. The discussion above focused particularly on the impact on the spiritual lives of adolescents and young adults in the Australian context. The sociological research outlined above confirms unequivocally the need for the New Evangelization identified by Magisterial teaching since Vatican II. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the studies cited above describe a disastrous collapse of faith and practice amongst young people in Australia.
When all three of these elements for the urgency of the New Evangelization are taken together it is possible to conclude the following. There are large numbers of young people who are living without the benefit of the “newness” and vitality of the life of Christ. They are then left prey to the empty, meaningless priorities of the materialistic culture. Despite feeling comfortable with this set of spiritual circumstances, the overall mental health of young people in Australia is poor. The following describes the situation around mental health among Australian adolescents.

In 2007, around a quarter of all young people aged 16 -24 years had a mental disorder (approximately 26% or 671,000 young people).

Young people were more likely to have Anxiety disorders (15%) and Substance Use disorders (13%) than Affective disorders (6%)

Young women were more likely than young men to have had a mental disorder in the previous year (374,800 or 30% compared with 296,300 or 23% respectively).

Young women were around twice as likely as young men to have an Affective Disorder (8% compared with 4%) or an Anxiety Disorders (22% compared with 9%).

Substance Use disorders were more common in young men (16%) than in young women (10%).

Young people with mental disorders were over 5 times more likely to misuse drugs than those without a mental disorder (36% compared with 7%).

Around 17% of young people with a mental disorder had a severe level of impairment, 35% a moderate level and 48% a mild impairment.

Just under a quarter of young people (23%) with a mental disorder accessed mental health services in the previous year.

On a purely practical level, there is an established link between religion/spirituality (not specifically Catholic but Christian predominantly) and adolescent mental

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88 RM 7
89 EN 55
90 Mason et al. 2007 Op Cit p324,325.
health. Encountering Jesus Christ and conversion to Him gives young people access to a significant relationship that can bring significance and stability to their life.

When one takes into account the statistical realities cited above, it is clear that the Church has been ineffective in arresting the slide of young people into meaninglessness, mental illness and worse still, the possibility of eternal loss. The call to the New Evangelization, commenced in the mid nineteen sixties and gathering in intensity in the Church’s teaching up to the present day has had no discernible impact on the spiritual status of adolescents and young adults in Australia. The questions Pope Paul VI posed to the Synod of Bishops in 1974 before the promulgation of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* in 1975 (and referred to in part above) have yet to be answered in the year 2013.

This fidelity both to a message whose servants we are and to the people to whom we must transmit it living and intact is the central axis of evangelization. It poses three burning questions, which the 1974 Synod kept constantly in mind:

- In our day, what has happened to that hidden energy of the Good News, which is able to have a powerful effect on man's conscience?

- To what extent and in what way is that evangelical force capable of really transforming the people of this century?

- What methods should be followed in order that the power of the Gospel may have its effect?

Basically, these inquiries make explicit the fundamental question that the Church is asking herself today and which may be expressed in the following terms: after the Council and thanks to the Council, which was a time given her by God, at this turning-point of history, does the Church or does she not find herself better equipped to proclaim the Gospel and to put it into people's hearts with conviction, freedom of spirit and effectiveness?

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We can all see the urgency of giving a loyal, humble and courageous answer to this question, and of acting accordingly.\textsuperscript{93}

Before considering what these answers might be it will be instructive to reflect on how the New Evangelization is being implemented in the Catholic High Schools of NSW and the ACT.
Chapter 6. The New Evangelization in NSW and ACT Catholic High Schools

A detailed, statistical evaluation of how the New Evangelization has been implemented in NSW and ACT Catholic High Schools is beyond the scope of this study. It is possible however to get some sense of whether the most important themes of the New Evangelization have been incorporated into Religious Education Curricula and text books. The area which will be focused on in this qualitative examination will be the presence of educational materials which are intended to facilitate an encounter with Jesus Christ. It is reasonable to expect that this type of material should be intensely present if the call to the New Evangelization and the reaffirmation of that call by the NSW and ACT Bishops in “Catholic Schools at a Crossroads”\(^1\) has been understood and taken seriously.

6.1 Catholic Schools at a Crossroads.

“Catholic Schools at a Crossroads” encapsulates the Bishops’ of NSW and ACT vision of the way the New Evangelization should be implemented in Catholic Schools. It contains a definitive call for Catholic schools to be involved in the New Evangelization and goes so far as to suggest that Catholic Schools should be “centres of the New Evangelization”.\(^2\)

In their introduction to the document, the Bishops talk about the “changing educational and cultural context” Catholic schools confront in the 21\(^{st}\) century “the

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\(^1\) The Bishops of NSW and the ACT. 2007 op cit.  
\(^2\) Ibid p13
rising proportion of nominally-Catholic and other-than-Catholic enrolments, and of the under-participation of students from poorer families.”³

They state four broad goals they feel “Catholic educational leaders, staff and parents, as well as the broader Catholic community”⁴ should commit themselves to in light of these changing circumstances. The four goals for Catholic Schools are

- That they are truly Catholic in their identity and life
- That they are centres of ‘the new evangelisation’
- That they enable our students to achieve high levels of ‘Catholic religious literacy’ and practice
- That they are led and staffed by people who will contribute to these goals.⁵

After their introduction, the Bishops go on to give a brief history of Catholic education in NSW and the ACT and a short overview of the changes that have occurred in the educational situation and why they have. They also identify some of the dynamics that may have caused Catholic Schools to not function as well as they could in the face of these challenges.

there are also many challenges today. Not all of our students have been as well served catechetically or pastorally as they might have been. Nor have our schools always been as well supported by families and parishes as they would have wished. As a result the tremendous potential of Catholic education has not always been fully realised. In order to make the most of our opportunities, it will be important for the whole Catholic community, especially those most intimately involved in Catholic education, to re-examine our situation, central goals, and means to those goals.⁶

Their overview of the educational situation includes some more detail on the impact culture and society has had on the contemporary situation. They also outline some of the views around how Australian Catholic Schools should respond to these pressures.

Culture and society affect our schools in more ways than just enrolment patterns. Within the Catholic community fewer people attend Mass; and

³ Ibid p3
⁴ Ibid p3
⁵ Ibid p3
fewer priests and religious are in service than was previously the case. Recent studies suggest that fewer young people now identify themselves with churches or religions. Society-wide trends such as secularisation, consumerism, family dysfunction and values disorientation also impact upon young people. The schools often have to pick up the pieces in the face of competing pressures from many directions.

Some have proposed that we should resist the pressure of demand for Catholic schooling, and downsize our school system to a scale at which we can choose students and staff who readily embrace the mission of the Catholic school. Alternatively, we can reaffirm our commitment to the essential elements of the Catholic school while recognising, and even embracing, changing enrolment patterns as ‘signs of the times’ and of a new mission for Catholic education.

The Bishops of NSW-ACT believe that this second course is the better way forward, and we commit ourselves to it.7

The Bishops don’t explain why they think their approach is “the better way forward”. It clearly embraces however what could be termed the “bolder” option of the approaches suggested and as such would align itself with the “adventure” aspect of the New Evangelization. It is a more difficult option to commit to remaining “big” in the changed climate as there are more nominal/non-believing students needing to be evangelized for schools to remain authentically Catholic. The Bishops’ comments also realistically imply there will be teachers who do not readily embrace “the mission of the Catholic school”.8 There will be a need then to not only evangelize school students but teachers (and school leadership as well) in the process of evangelization.

The Bishops put forward some “essential” characteristics of the Catholic “identity” of Catholic Schools. Three important criteria for the purposes of this thesis are “Leaders and staff understand, and are solidly committed to, the Catholic identity of the school, the Religious Education (RE) curriculum is sound, attractive and

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7 Ibid p8.
8 Ibid p8
professionally taught by teachers with appropriate RE qualifications, other disciplines also consider the Catholic dimension of their subject areas.”

Some of the difficulties in implementing the New Evangelization in Catholic Schools come into play here. If, as the Bishops imply earlier in the document, some teachers themselves will need to be evangelized, putting these essential criteria into practical application will be a challenge. As we have seen in Mason et al’s research on religious belief and practice in Generation Y\textsuperscript{10} and Rymarz’ discussion on the Catholic spirituality of Generation X\textsuperscript{11}, the vision of what might constitute an understanding of “Catholic Identity”, “attractive” RE teaching and a consideration of the Catholic “dimension” in all subjects might be in deep dispute amongst the many Catholic School teachers the Bishops acknowledged will be in the, “unevangelized” category. Many of those teachers who would even class themselves as Catholic will have a relativistic understanding of morality, little or no grasp of the creedal understandings of Catholicism, and little or no attendance at weekly mass if the results of the surveys cited in this thesis above are correct.

In describing the goals of Catholic Schools as they relate directly to the New Evangelization, the Bishops quote John Paul II in his “Apostolic Exhortation on Catechesis” where he explains that the definitive aim of evangelization “is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only He

\textsuperscript{9} Ibic p10
\textsuperscript{10} Mason et al. 2007 op cit p 324,325
\textsuperscript{11} Rymarz 2012 p cit. p 70
can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity.”  

Their definition of the meaning of the word evangelization is “proclaiming the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ. Its goal is bringing people to faith through a personal encounter with Him. It is to be distinguished from catechesis, which involves deepening and instructing that faith already received.” They refer to the urgency of the task when they state “The ‘sense of adventure’ inspired by the new evangelisation is all the more urgent in the context of growing numbers of non-practising Catholics, under-catechised Catholics and other-than-Catholic students in our schools.” As could be expected, the Bishops are faithful to Magisterial teaching in their definition of the term New Evangelization, their identification of conversion as the initial aim of the proclamation, encounter and communion with Jesus Christ as the definition of conversion, and communicating the urgency of the need for this evangelization.

They suggest that Catholic Schools as “centres of the New Evangelization” will have these major characteristics.

If Catholic schools are to be centres of the new evangelisation:
* the life and activity in the school would be the context for a personal encounter with Christ and would promote, and never contradict, the teachings of the Church
* all those involved in our schools would appreciate their roles in receiving and proclaiming the Good News by word and deed, and by the example of their lives

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14 Ibid p12
students would participate in RE classes, liturgies, retreats and prayers which are, as far as possible, tailored to their place in the journey of faith, addressing the core of our faith and inviting a response

* schools would work with their local parish(es) to establish programs for initiating children and young adults into the Church

* every effort would be made to engage our students and young teachers in preparations for, participation in and enrichment after major religious events such as World Youth Day.\(^{15}\)

In addition to the initial encounter with Jesus the NSW and ACT Bishops go on to outline the catechesis or religious instruction required after the seed of faith is, “planted in the soil of the human heart.”\(^{16}\) The faith received as a result of evangelization also needs to be, “supported by the religious culture of the school so that it will be practiced in worship, vocation and action in the world.”\(^{17}\)

The point the Bishops make here is a significant one. Magisterial teaching talks a lot about the need for discipleship, continual nurture, and ongoing conversion that flows from the person’s initial meeting with Jesus.\(^{18}\) Their comments on this subject show an awareness of the types of research cited above that reveal a lack of knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith among young people as they leave Catholic High schools.

It is sometimes observed that many young people emerge from our schools with insufficient knowledge of the Catholic faith or interest in practising it. Of course seeds of faith may have been planted that will only show forth fruit later in their lives. Nor is this solely the responsibility of the school: society, parishes, families and the young themselves also bear the burden of this trend. The Catholic school is well placed, however, to support young people, teachers and families to grow in their knowledge and love for the Catholic tradition. As some teachers have received limited faith formation themselves, they need particular support and professional development. We commit our Catholic Education Offices and parishes to providing this where possible.

\(^{15}\) Ibid p13  
\(^{16}\) Ibid p14  
\(^{17}\) Ibid p14  
\(^{18}\) EN 54
Young people in our schools and their families deserve no less than the fullness of “the faith that comes to us from the apostles”. (Eucharistic Prayer I) Therefore enthusiasm for social justice, ecology, the charism of the founder or some particular school initiative must always be situated within the broader context of Catholic faith and morals. It must never eclipse the building of a relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church. No student should leave our Catholic schools without knowing the essentials of Catholic teaching as found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and its *Compendium*, and all catechetical programs and RE texts should build upon these.19

There is no doubt that it is necessary to teach “the fullness of the faith that comes from the apostles”20 to young people in Catholic schools. There is truth in the thought, “that seeds may be planted that will only show forth fruit later in their lives.”21 In the absence of a personal experience of conversion to Jesus Christ Himself however, there is the danger that as Paul VI pointed out22, people will come to think, “I already tried that Catholicism stuff out and it didn’t work”. Given the state of faith and practice in Australia and the rest of the previously evangelized world, it is possible that this way of thinking is quite prevalent.

The aims the Bishops outline in “Catholic Schools at a Crossroads” around Catechesis and discipleship are

If Catholic schools are to succeed in passing on the Catholic faith to the next generation:
* schools will have as their goal the formation of Christian disciples, with appropriate worldview, character and behavior
* RE curriculum, methodologies, texts and other resources will be chosen to ensure that by the end of their schooling students know the core teachings of our faith, our Scriptures, history and tradition (‘Catholic religious literacy’) and how these are to be lived in the world
* in particular, students will be brought to a knowledge and, as far as possible, love of the person, life and teachings of Christ and of the Trinitarian God of Love

19 Bishops of NSW and ACT. 2007 op Cit p14
20 Ibid p14
21 Ibid p14
22 EN 56
* students will also be brought to a knowledge and love of the People of God, the Church, who join them in their pilgrimage through life and support them through the Word of God and the Sacraments
* students will be prepared for the challenges to their faith that may come while still at school or after they have left school
* RE classes will therefore be given priority with regard to the school curriculum, time and space allocation and the choice and recognition of staff
* there will be demonstrations of Catholic religious literacy through appropriate assessment and religious activities
* our schools will also seek to involve parents and families in the process of evangelising and catechising their children, seeking in the process also to educate those families in the faith.23

All these goals are in line with Magisterial teaching and are all reasonable objectives for Catholic education to aspire to. There are questions however this document poses that the Bishops do not fully address. Can a predominantly unevangelized teaching group evangelize young people into a relationship with Jesus Christ? Can disciples of Jesus Christ be made out of young people (or anyone for that matter) who have never had a living encounter with Him?

Fr James Mallon, a priest who has had success in revitalizing Catholic parishes from the Archdiocese of Halifax in Canada comments “We know by experience that trying to give people catechesis, who have not come to know Christ in a personal way, is like trying to plant seeds in concrete. It doesn’t work…When people come alive in their faith and when they’ve come to know Christ, they become hungry and thirsty for more, so that’s when Catechesis can take place.”24

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23 Bishops of NSW and ACT. 2007 op cit. p14
Catholic Schools of course can’t wait until they are confident all staff and students have had the type of living encounter with Jesus Christ spoken of the teaching on the New Evangelization before they start the process of catechesis. What they can do is identify teachers and students who have had the experience of encounter with Jesus Christ and focus on discipleship/catechesis with them. With the rest, there could be an emphasis on facilitating the initial encounter with Jesus Christ as well as the ongoing process of catechesis.

This type of interaction with students is nowhere near as straightforward as the process of catechesis/discipleship. Catechesis requires the transmitting of facts/information. To facilitate the encounter with Jesus Christ requires sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, belief in the God’s power of “self-revelation” and an understanding of how to welcome this “self-revelation”. (When Curricula and text books are examined it will be this emphasis on facilitating the encounter with Jesus Christ that will be the focus.)

“Catholic Schools at a Crossroads” does recommend, as it specifically looks at the question of staffing of Catholic Schools and its relationship to School effectiveness as Centres of the New Evangelization, that a “critical mass” of Catholic Leaders and staff are to be present within Catholic Schools. They also state “No-one doubts that the faith and practice of the leaders and staff in a Catholic school significantly affect the students and the character of the education offered.”25 The document goes on to outline some goals around the faith status of staff at Catholic Schools.

If Catholic schools are to succeed in the mission articulated above it will be essential that:

25 Bishops of NSW and the ACT.2007 op cit p16
* all those appointed as Principals, Assistant Principals and Religious Education Coordinators (RECs) are faithful Catholics who are ready to embrace the mission of the Catholic school today and to lead and inspire their staff and parents accordingly
* as far as possible only practising and knowledgeable Catholics are charged with the task of teaching RE in our schools
* all teachers are committed to the mission of the school and teach and live in accordance with the teachings of the Church
* while fully supporting existing leaders and staff in our Catholic schools, we identify and form a new generation of leaders and teachers who are deeply committed to the goals of Catholic education
* vocations to the priesthood, religious life and Christian marriage are actively promoted in our schools
* Catholic tertiary institutions and those providing inservice and other support are thoroughly informed of the identity and mission of the Catholic school and effective in providing our leaders and staff with the knowledge and skills they need.26

In summing up this list of goals the Bishops state that the “formation of our Catholic school leaders and teachers is crucial for the achievement of the goals of this Pastoral Letter.”27 They then go on to discuss how best to form the “next generation” of teachers and that they “propose to investigate the range of options for forming Catholic school leaders and teachers for the future and to examine the ‘fit’ between the needs of our schools and the present programs of teacher education, inservicing and professional development.”28

The Bishops finally put forward a list of indicators they feel will show progress is being made toward their vision of Catholic Schools successfully confronting the challenges of the contemporary environment. The document doesn’t state exactly how progress is to be “monitored and measured” but puts forward some markers of progress that “might” be applicable. The goals they outline make it clear that they see

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26 Ibid p16
27 Ibid p16
28 Ibid p16
the faith/practice status of school leadership and teachers as the crucial factors in evangelization of students when three of the first four indicators are aimed at them.

The Catholic purpose of the school is clearly stated in each school’s Mission Statement
All Principals, Assistant Principals and RECs are practising Catholics who understand and profess the Catholic faith, model it in their own lives, and can teach it effectively
Progress towards an increase in the proportion of school staff – and especially of RE teachers – who are practising and knowledgeable Catholics
At application and appointment to a new position, and on other appropriate occasions, leaders and staff are reminded of the Catholic identity and mission of the school and of the expectation that they will commit themselves to that mission²⁹

It interestingly doesn’t directly recommend educational time being specifically devoted to the work of facilitating an encounter with Jesus Christ. The Bishops also don’t say how School leadership and teachers will show that their faith and practice is at the level they desire. Religious literacy is specifically mentioned and testing for it recommended. As mentioned above, this is should be achievable but may or may not have an impact on whether young people have had an encounter with Jesus Christ.

Three indicators that might be interpreted as being specifically aimed at facilitating an encounter with Jesus Christ are the attendance at World Youth Days “co-curricular activities aimed at further evangelising and catechising students and otherwise nourishing their spiritual life (eg retreats, Project Compassion, St Vincent de Paul groups)” and, “the provision, in conjunction with local parish(es) and diocese, of programs for students wishing to join the Catholic Church”³⁰

²⁹ Ibid p18
³⁰ Ibid p18
World Youth Days have had a focus on fostering relationship with Jesus among young people. While being an excellent celebration of Catholic faith and time of encounter with Jesus Christ for many young people it should be noted that World Youth Day in Sydney didn’t have the sort of long term impact hoped for. It is also practically difficult to get large numbers of youth to the various locations around the world where WYD is held. The concept of having an event that takes place thousands of kilometres away (no matter how effective) as a method of evangelization in Diocese in NSW and the ACT could be construed as optimistic.

In mentioning co-curricular activities “Project Compassion” and “St Vincent de Paul” are more what could be called social justice/charity focused than aimed at facilitating an encounter with Jesus Christ. One can’t limit where the Holy Spirit will act of course but this is not what these organizations are primarily designed for. The indicator, “the provision, in conjunction with local parish(es) and diocese, of programs for students wishing to join the Catholic Church” more properly refers to the process that should occur after the encounter with Jesus Christ has taken place. What it implies in terms of their being an RCIA program that specifically connects with young adults who have had an encounter with Jesus might be a useful

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31 Mason, Michael. ”World Youth Day 2008: What Did We Gain? What Did We Learn? “ The Australasian Catholic Record, Vol. 87, No. 3, Sept 2010: 334-348. On the basis of 17,000 pre and post event questionnaires Mason found that Sydney 2008 did not have the kind of evangelistic “reach” expected outside the Sydney Diocese and its immediate vicinity. He also states “The event did not succeed in drawing large numbers of young Catholics whose religious commitment was low, despite vigorous recruitment efforts in most diocese-especially through Catholic Schools.” This was ineffective because “the vast majority of young Australian Catholics, including those attending Catholic schools, are now only nominal church members.” For those who did attend however it was an extremely powerful and faith affirming experience. The numbers who attended were not sufficient however to “constitute a “critical mass” of “renewed” youth” that would impact the communities they returned to.

32 This issue of social justice/ministering to the poor and its connection or otherwise to an encounter with Jesus Christ is addressed in Chapter 3 of this thesis pages 76-77.

33 Bishops of NSW and the ACT. 2007 op cit p18
innovation in developing the faith and drawing young people into membership of the Church.

This section also talks about “progress toward significantly increased attendance at Sunday Mass, and deeper involvement in the life of the local Church by students and ex-students”. This in some ways is a restatement of the problem the New Evangelization is supposed to address and a desire that the problem will be resolved rather than a measure of the effectiveness of specific activities that are hoped to cause the “progress” to occur.

One could fault the Bishops for not recommending that there be a certain percentage of class time given to specifically teaching about and facilitating the reality of relationship by a living encounter with Jesus Christ. They have however focused on school leadership, RE co-ordinators, RE teachers and school teachers in general as areas in need of faith development for the New Evangelization to be effective. Maybe they are simply being realistic that class time devoted to facilitating encounter with Jesus by teachers who themselves have no relationship with Christ might not be that useful. Magisterial teaching suggests that the people making the proclamation are the crucial factor in successful evangelization.

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34 Ibid p18
35 Pope Benedict XVI Message on the Occasion of the Sixth Ordinary Assembly of the International Forum of Catholic Action 2012 http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/pont-messages/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20120810_fiac_en.html 2012 (accessed 7/6/13) In this address, Pope Benedict XVI spoke of the need for, “ecclesial and social co-responsibility” of the laity in the work of the Church. He stated the following about the thought processes and character of effective laity in the Church, “Co-responsibility demands a change in mindset especially concerning the role of lay people in the Church. They should not be regarded as “collaborators” of the clergy, but, rather, as people who are really “co-responsible” for the Church’s being and acting. It is therefore important that a mature and committed laity be consolidated”
In “Catholic Schools at a Crossroads” the NSW and ACT Bishops have presented a faithful summary of Magisterial teaching and a fervent exhortation to Catholic school systems to become centres of the New Evangelization. They recognize that facilitating an encounter with Jesus Christ is the crucial and foundational first step in any enterprise that can be termed the New Evangelization. They identified that catechesis is a separate exercise that builds on and nurtures the relationship established in the encounter with Jesus. The document overall indicates that it is the faith and Catholic commitment of school leadership, RE co-ordinators, RE teachers and teachers in general that will be the critical determining factors in the success or otherwise of any effort toward implementing the New Evangelization in Catholic Schools.

More research and reflection on what this actually means in practice will be very instructive. The Bishop’s focus on school leadership and teachers rather than curricula is most likely the right one. How is intervening in this realm to take place and be measured? How does one measure the faith status of school leadership, RE co-ordinators, RE teachers and teachers in general?\(^3^6\) Granted that one could do that, how does one then insist that they go to retreats or professional development days to, “meet with Jesus” if they haven’t already had an encounter with Him? In our relativistic age, how many will insist that their inadequate faith, practice and morals are “OK for them” and that to want them to have a relationship with Jesus is not necessary as they are already what they define as “Catholic” (Mason’s survey above

suggests that many would respond in this way)?

What if there are officials in the various CEO/CSO offices or School Principals/Assistant Principals already in position who are well liked and who only minimally (if at all) meet the requirements of Catholic belief and practice? What if they have lifestyles or beliefs that are contrary to Catholic teaching and morals? How are these situations to be changed?

All this is before one even starts to enter into the work of evangelization itself and try to ascertain which approaches will be most effective in bringing young people into relationship with Jesus Christ. It likely that to actually implement the New Evangelization and the Bishop’s recommendations in “Catholic Schools at a Crossroads” will involve the same type of difficulty and conflict the ministry of Jesus Himself caused in first century Israel.

Having acknowledged the primary place the teacher will play in an effective evangelization it is next important to consider the material and direction teachers are given in terms of curricula and text books. In the discussion above on Magisterial teaching and “Catholic Schools at a Crossroads” the goal of the initial proclamation has been identified as bringing people into an encounter with Jesus Christ and into communion/relationship with Him. This body of teaching has emphasized that discipleship and catechesis that accompanies it and is designed to facilitate ongoing conversion comes after this initial conversion. The next section will examine the extent to which this initial aspect of facilitating an encounter with Jesus Christ is specifically present in curricula and textbooks currently in use in NSW and the ACT.

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37 Mason et al. 2007 op cit p 324,325
38 O’Shae, Gerard. “Developing a Continuum of Experiences for Faith Formation in the Catholic Tradition”. Studia Elkie 14 2012. p 19-39. In this article, Gerard O’Shae discusses the “Catechesis of the Good Shepard” and the way in which it seeks to invite students “to enter into an ongoing relationship with the mystery of God.” He goes on to discuss how the broad principles used in “The Catechesis of the Good Shepard” (used successfully with primary school pupils) might be applied to the developmental realities of adolescent spiritual growth to facilitate an encounter with Jesus Christ.
It could be argued that if this intention is not present then any idea that a school system or individual school is a “centre” of the New Evangelization has to be brought into question.

6.2 Curricula and Textbooks in NSW/ACT

Throughout the Magisterial teaching and in “Catholic Schools at a Crossroads” the distinction between the initial proclamation which leads to encounter and conversion to Jesus Christ and the ongoing work of catechesis that equates to discipleship in the reality of the New Evangelization has been clarified. The conversion to Jesus Christ in this teaching is the pivotal event that makes the rest of the activities around the New Evangelization possible and effective.

As mentioned above, the Holy Spirit can use any situation to communicate the possibility of relationship and conversion to Jesus Christ to students at Catholic High Schools. The presentation of educational material that discusses the realities of faith and the life of the Church in general (without a specific focus on encounter and conversion to Jesus Christ) in a faithful and attractive way, in line with the best understandings of contemporary pedagogy, may be useful material for the Holy Spirit to move through to draw students into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

It is reasonable to suggest however that the Holy Spirit can most easily use teaching that explicitly proclaims and facilitates relationship with Jesus Christ through an experience of conversion to him. This type of teaching will proclaim that this reality
is not only possible, but also essential in order to participate fully in the life of the Church. There might even be places where it will call young people to identify and repent of sin. It will also recommend students allow the Holy Spirit to radically reorient their lives to follow Jesus of Nazareth.

Curriculum documents and text books are of course not the only materials used by Catholic High School systems to guide Religious Education. They are significant however because they provide the overall understanding for teachers of the direction and objectives of religious education as they guide students through their high school journey.

The following discussion will not be a detailed overview and evaluation of Religious Education curricula and text books as to their overall religious worth or whether they include material that promotes aspects of the whole spectrum of the New Evangelization. What the discussion will focus on is the presence or otherwise of material that is specifically aimed at facilitating a living encounter with Jesus Christ that leads to relationship and conversion to Him. It is important to note that this exploration can only be considered a tentative step in the most general terms to identify what might be a gap in curricula and text books in use at the moment. If any such gaps are identified it is not intended to devalue their overall worth with regard to Religious Education and the New Evangelization in any way.

There are 11 Diocese in NSW and the ACT. Lismore, Sydney, Armidale and Wollongong use the same curriculum developed by the Sydney Archdiocese. Parramatta, Wagga Wagga and Forbes/Wilcannia use the “Sharing Our Story”
Curriculum developed by the Parramatta Diocese. Newcastle/Maitland use a curriculum they have developed, Broken Bay uses its own curriculum, Canberra/Goulburn uses a document they call “Treasures New and Old” and the Bathurst Diocese uses a curriculum titled “The Christ We Proclaim”. Only “Treasures New and Old” from the Canberra/Goulburn Archdiocese was written after “Catholic Schools at a Crossroads” (in 2009).

There is not a uniform availability of Religious Education curriculum, detailed unit outlines etc. across the Diocese and Archdiocese of NSW and the ACT. There is enough available however to give a picture of what curriculum material Religious Education teachers are basing their instruction on in NSW and the ACT. In this dissertation, material from the Sydney Archdiocese (also used in Lismore, Armidale and Wollongong), the Parramatta Diocese (also used Wagga Wagga and Forbes/Wilcannia), Archdiocese of Canberra/Goulburn, and the Diocese of Broken Bay will be reviewed as this material was the most plentiful and easy to access. This is nine out of the eleven Diocese/Archdiocese in NSW and the ACT.

6.2.1 Sydney Archdiocese Religious Education Curriculum: Lismore, Armidale and Wollongong.

Overall, the Sydney Archdiocese Secondary Religious Education Curriculum is a highly impressive and thorough teaching of the whole spectrum of Christian and Catholic truth. It’s presentation of theology, ecclesiology, the sacraments, morality and Australian church history is comprehensive. It’s directions to teachers recommend strategies that present these truths in a contemporary and pedagogically
astute manner. It is an exceptional attempt to address the finding that Catholic School students end up with low levels of religious literacy when they finish high school.\textsuperscript{39}

Despite these significant strengths, there is little by way reference to the need for a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and a radical conversion to following Him in Curriculum documents. In the Year Seven section of the Curriculum document, there is no specific reference to this potential encounter with Christ in the midst of foundational teaching about scripture, the Old Testament, the Church, Liturgy, prayer and the moral life.

The Year 8 curriculum in parts comes close to making this explicit call. In the “Influence of Jesus. Classroom Outcomes” section of the document it is recommended that teachers “discuss (with students) the power of Jesus to influence the lives of those he encountered…(and get students to) describe the way in which the lives of people who met Jesus were changed.”\textsuperscript{40} In the “Spiritual Reflection for Teachers” section of the “Influence of Jesus” unit, teachers are asked to reflect on the way Jesus’ “words and actions had a profound influence on people. He was a person who made a “connection” with others and through this changed their lives. Because of this, he was teacher par excellence.”\textsuperscript{41} Teachers are not however directed to lead students into this “connection” with Jesus or into an “encounter” with Jesus Christ.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid p77
that "changes" their lives to the extent that students are themselves profoundly "influenced" by Him.

The “Links with Student Life Experience” section of the “Influence of Jesus“ unit promisingly states "This module offers a unique opportunity for teachers to help students to encounter Jesus. In coming to know the humanity of Jesus, students will more readily identify with his message."\(^{42}\) This is an explicit identification of an opportunity to encounter the Lord Jesus. What it ends up being however is an exhortation to lead students to intellectually “identify with His message” rather than genuinely meet Jesus Christ and come into the kind of communion with Him described by Magisterial teaching.\(^ {43}\)

Some of what is written in the “Scripture; Background Information” section of the “Influence of Jesus” unit is excellent in its description of the way Jesus impacted those he encountered in first century Israel and lead them to a radical conversion. In commenting on the Book of Mark it states with respect to Mark 1:16-22 that,

Jesus’ mere presence has such an impact on the men that they respond instantly. The act of the men has a wider application. Those who wish to follow Jesus must be prepared to give everything up for him: comfort, home, security, just as these men did. There is a reference here to the call of Elisha (1 Kings 19-20): Elisha first returns home to kiss his parents, before responding. Jesus’ call is even more urgent: it says “Do it now”.\(^ {44}\)

While making this observation about the power of Jesus’ ministry, the urgency of His call to the first disciples and their decisive response, there is no explicit

\(^{42}\) Ibid p78


\(^{44}\) Archdiocese of Sydney. Religious Education Curriculum Year 8 Units A8-3, B8-2, B8-3, C8-1, C8-2, D8 -3, E8-2, E8-3. 2006 op cit p 79
connection with the possibility that Jesus might be making exactly the same call in contemporary Religious Education classrooms in the Sydney Archdiocese.

The year 9 part of the curriculum has nothing that comes close to a call to encounter with Jesus Christ and conversion to him. This is surprising since one of the units of work presents the Sacraments of Healing to students. There should have been ample opportunity in discussing reconciliation and anointing of the sick to present them as events where there is a genuine encounter with the resurrected Jesus that changes and heals individuals.

The same could be said for the year 10 curriculum. In this curriculum, the Eucharist is presented to students in detail. Given the Catholic understanding that the real presence of the Lord Jesus Himself is consumed in the reception of this sacrament there should have been ample opportunity to reflect on having a real encounter with Jesus Christ that results in conversion. It is reasonable to suggest this might have been a missed opportunity.

The year 11 and 12 curriculum has some aspects that come close to identifying the need for an encounter with Jesus Christ. In the “Christology” section, the document states “Students should be encouraged to think, question and discuss the teachings about Jesus, and their own responses to these teachings. All students know about Jesus but not all students know Jesus.” After asking these searching questions it does not suggest how students concretely move from this state of “knowing about” to

“knowing” Jesus. It goes on instead to ask how students should reflect on building the kingdom through good works and considering the implications of Jesus teaching for modern society.

The “Being Catholic” section reflects in the call of Jesus in Luke 14:26-27 to “hate” one’s family and what that might mean practically.

These two verses sound harsh and very uncharacteristic of Jesus who is always asking us to love. Hating one’s family does not sound very Christian. So what does this hard-sounding text mean? It suggests the total commitment asked of us in following Christ. Whether we have mother, father, wife, children, brothers, sisters our commitment is still total. Such totality may of course involve our relationships and commitment to them; that could well be a part of the radical challenge of following Jesus.47

This is an accurate explanation of some of the realities that might accompany a thorough conversion to Christ. Its power to spark encounter and conversion to Christ in isolation from specific teaching about how a student might dispose themselves to have such an encounter would be somewhat limited.

In the “Living with Good and Evil” section of the Curriculum there is an explanation of the Church’s teaching about death and the afterlife. In “Life after Death: Suggested Teaching and Learning Strategies” heaven, hell, purgatory and the general judgement are discussed.48

This section faithfully reflects the Church’s teaching by presenting all the consequences of decisions made around relationship and commitment to Jesus Christ. It stops short of saying however that student’s might consider the position they or others might have in relation to the “general judgment” (particularly that their

47 Ibid p92
48 Ibid p102-103.
situation might not be a desirable position to be in). It could possibly have suggested that a full repentance of sin and conversion to Jesus Christ would be a great help to connecting to eternal life with God.

The section on “Christian Prayer” makes some observations and suggestions which point to the reality of a life lived in encounter with Jesus Christ. In the “Links with student’s life experience” instruction to teachers it says, “There are many questions for students to consider: What is prayer? What is their personal experience of prayer? Do they have a personal relationship with God? What have been the significant steps on their, prayer journey” in life?” In “Essential reading for teachers” it states

> From whatever context and by whatever method, prayer is an expression of what the person believes about God, and it reflects the person’s relationship with God. … Essentially prayer is an expression of a personal relationship, expressed in mind and heart, with the living God.

These reflections are excellent in that they are the essential questions around an encounter with the living Lord Jesus Christ proposed by the New Evangelization.

What is needed to make these suggestions active is a frank assessment that some (or on the evidence cited above, most) students might not have this “personal relationship” and consequently little or no prayer life. To go with this assessment there is the need to teach unequivocally that this relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit is real and possible and to give students concrete pathways to be lead into it.

In summary then, the Sydney Archdiocese CEO Year 7-12 Religious Education Curriculum has many features that correct inadequacies in terms of Catholic

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49 Ibid p141
50 Ibid p143
51 Mason et al. 2007 op cit p 324,325
knowledge and understanding of High School students. As a manifestation of the New Evangelization it presents a broad spectrum of Catholic teaching in a culturally relevant and pedagogically up to date manner. There is however little evidence that the reality of conversion to Jesus Christ has been recognized as pivotal to the New Evangelization and no specific teaching as to how students could come into this relationship.

6.2.2 “Sharing Our Story”: Parramatta, Forbes/Wilcannia, and Wagga Wagga.

The Sharing Our Story Syllabus.

“Sharing Our Story” was introduced in as the Curriculum for Religious Education in Catholic Schools in 1999. It was revised in 2003. The documents available to be examined are the Syllabus, the “Unit Outlines” for all the subjects covered and some of the “Theological and Educational Background” information material.

Stage outcomes and Key Concepts\(^52\)

In the stage 4 “God” section of this document it states that students will “demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of God, revealed in Jesus, as entering into a covenant with humankind and in calling each of us to a personal response through the gift of the Holy Spirit” as an outcome\(^53\). It doesn’t outline what an appropriate “response” to the covenant and calling of Jesus by the Holy Spirit should be or outline how students could be lead into this response.


\(^53\) Ibid p 8
In the Stage 5 “Sacraments” section it is put that “The sacraments celebrate our union with God in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{54} No more explanation or detail on what is possible in terms of experience or encounter with “God in Christ” is discussed.

In the Stage 6 “Jesus” section it is stated that “relationship with Jesus is central in our search for meaning and identity”\textsuperscript{55} but it is not specified how students can enter into this relationship or what the characteristics of this relationship would have. In the stage 6 “Christian Life” part of the document it is stated that “Christian life is a response in faith to God’s truth and merciful love revealed in Christ through the Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{56} There is no accompanying information as to what shape the “response in faith” might be the revelation of God’s “truth and merciful love”.

In stage 6 “Prayer” outcomes it is suggested that students will “demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of prayer as an encounter with Christ, celebrating and interpreting the life and faith experience of the person and community.”\textsuperscript{57} These “outcomes” and “concepts” are hopeful signs with regard to facilitating encounter with Jesus Christ. It is not defined however what this relationship and encounter can be in terms of conversion and radical commitment to Jesus Christ and it is not a major focus of the document by any means.

\textbf{Unit Outlines, Theological and Education Background Material.}

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid p10
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid p12
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid p13
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid p13
These documents are a detailed set of ideas and suggestions for instruction and an outline of the educational/theological rationale behind each unit (there were not Theological and Educational Background documents available for all the units) in the “Sharing Our Story” curriculum. In stage 4 (years 7 and 8) stage 5 (years 9 and 10) there are 16 topics covered and in stage 6 (years 11 and 12) there are 14 topics considered.

In the stage 4 Unit outlines there is no material that could be said to refer to possibility of encounter with and conversion to Jesus Christ other than in “Reconciliation”. It states

The Sacrament of Reconciliation has been called a number of different names at different times, and this is still the case today. The Catechism notes that names given to it are indicative of its various functions: the sacrament of conversion: it is the first step that we take in re-orienting ourselves towards God.\(^{58}\)

No more explanation of what “conversion” might mean in practice is included.

In the Stage 5 material, the “New Testament: Theological and Educational Background”\(^{59}\) document has some promise in facilitating encounter with Jesus Christ. It presents a provocative set of scriptures and questions about Jesus and the Kingdom of God. Unfortunately it does not go on to specifically lead students to make their own response to encounter the person of Jesus Christ powerfully portrayed in the scriptures selected.

\(^{58}\) Parramatta Diocese Catholic Education Office. 4C5B “Reconciliation.” Parramatta CEO staff intranet 2002 (accessed 25/7/13)

\(^{59}\) 5C3 “Theological and Educational background.” ibid (accessed 25/7/13)
In the Unit Outline “Exile and Return” there is an attempt to connect the journey of the people of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land with the student’s own faith journey. It was suggested in the “Conversion” chapter of this thesis (chapter 3 above) that attempts to connect with the “stage” journey to conversion of Rambo and the “Hero’s Journey” might be fruitful in facilitating conversion to Jesus Christ among adolescents and young adults. It states

This unit focuses on the biblical theme of exile and return, with an emphasis on journey and spirituality, and in relation to – a comparison between the student’s own and others’ experiences of adolescence, and available research and literature on the moral and spiritual dimensions of adolescence; key ideas from the history of God’s people in the Bible, based on the theme of exile and return; and a critical evaluation of students’ own and others’ life journeys in relation to themes such as – exile and return, faithfulness, doubt, and the gaining of spiritual wisdom.

This statement outlines some interesting and fruitful directions for connecting student’s adolescent journey with the journeys of the people of God in the Bible. It does not however go further to make a connection with the journey of conversion and encounter with Jesus Christ.

In the stage 6 “Search for Meaning” Unit Outline there are again possibilities for encounter in the excellent scriptural focus on Jesus it presents. It quickly however shifts from this focus to consider

key scriptural texts from one major tradition other than Christianity that relate to the religious search for meaning and happiness e.g. stories found in one of the following (the Koran and various Hindu, Buddhist texts)

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60 5E7B “Exile and Return” Unit Outline. ibid (accessed 25/7/13)
61 Rambo 1993 op cit
62 Campbell 2008 op cit
63 6C1 “Search for Meaning” Unit Outline. Parramatta Diocese Catholic Education Office Staff op cit (accessed 25/7/13)
Encounter/relationship with Jesus Christ is not discussed explicitly as the answer to questions around meaning in life. The example of Jesus teaching is put forward as something that can give meaning to life but the possibility of a lived experience in relationship with Jesus is not.

The “Jesus of History, Christ of Faith”\textsuperscript{64} unit buys directly into a distinction in New Testament scholarship Pope John Paul II had identified as problematic with regard to the New Evangelization.

To introduce any sort of separation between the Word and Jesus Christ is contrary to the Christian faith…. Jesus is the Incarnate Word—a single and indivisible person. One cannot separate Jesus from the Christ or speak of a "Jesus of history" who would differ from the "Christ of faith." Christ is none other than Jesus of Nazareth: he is the Word of God made man for the salvation of all... It is precisely this uniqueness of Christ which gives him an absolute and universal significance, whereby, while belonging to history, he remains history's center and goal. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Rv 22:13).\textsuperscript{65}

The document states their rationale for including this unit as follows

The quest for the historical Jesus gained its impetus from the research of liberal Protestant Scripture scholars in the nineteenth century. Here a distinction was made between the 'Jesus of history' and the 'Christ of faith'. The 'Jesus of history' is the Jesus firmly anchored in his actual historical context of First Century Judaism. The 'Christ of faith', is the living Lord of the present and across the ages, beyond his strict historical context. Underlying this distinction is a recognition that the New Testament, including the four Gospels, are documents that are reflective of post-resurrection Christian faith in Jesus as Messiah, Saviour and Lord.

Ultimately, there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, and there should be no attempt to present these perspectives, 'Jesus of history' and 'Christ of faith', as mutually exclusive. 'From the swaddling clothes of his birth to the vinegar of his Passion and the shroud of his Resurrection, everything in Jesus' life was a sign of his mystery. His deeds, miracles and words all revealed that "in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily."

\textsuperscript{64} 6C2 “Jesus of History, Christ of Faith”. Unit Outline. ibid (accessed 26/7/13)
\textsuperscript{65} RM 6
\textsuperscript{66} RM 6 “Jesus of History, Christ of Faith” ibid. accessed 26/7/13
Simply saying the two views shouldn’t be seen as “mutually exclusive” doesn’t solve the problem by any means. The, “'Jesus of history' (who) is the Jesus firmly anchored in his actual historical context of First Century Judaism” and, the “strict historical context” of Jesus in reality communicate the same things (and much more) that the creedal “Jesus of faith” does.

There is not in reality a scholarly consensus that “the New Testament, including the four Gospels, are documents that are reflective of post-resurrection Christian faith in Jesus as Messiah, Saviour and Lord” as they put it. It is certainly chronologically true that the Gospels and the New Testament are “post-resurrection” texts. “Post-resurrection” however is a rather loaded term when it is connected to the “The quest for the historical Jesus….from the research of liberal Protestant Scripture scholars in the nineteenth century.” Pope Benedict XVI gives his own views on the research of these “liberal Protestant Scripture scholars of the nineteenth century.”

If you read a number of these reconstructions one after another, you see at once that rather than uncovering an icon that has been obscured over time, they are much more like photographs of their authors and the ideals that they hold. Since then there has been growing skepticism about these portrayals of Jesus.

To introduce year 11 and 12 students to what is in fact an area of scholarly debate as if it were Catholic teaching is not promoting the New Evangelization. It is in fact most likely doing the opposite. It also shows a lack of awareness of developments in

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67 Benedict XVI, Pope. Jesus of Nazareth. From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration. (Doubleday. Broadway 2007.) p xii This book is the first volume of Benedict XVI’s reflections on scripture and the person of Jesus. Like John Paul II, he puts the case that the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith are the same person. In the forward to this book he states “I am convinced—and I hope that I can also make the reader aware of this—that this figure is much more logical, and from the historical point of view also more understandable, than the reconstructions we have had to confront in recent decades. I maintain that this very Jesus—the Jesus of the Gospels—is an historically sensible and convincing figure. His crucifixion and the impact that he had can only be explained if something extraordinary happened, if the figure and the words of Jesus radically exceeded the hopes and expectations of his time.”
Jesus scholarship that have taken place in the twenty or so years prior to the revision of “Sharing Our Story” in 2003.68

The Unit Outline on the subject of “Pilgrimages”69 deals with “personal experiences of pilgrimages, quest and transformation”. It has the potential to connect to the stages/journey aspect of conversion and encounter with Jesus Christ but again it doesn’t lead students to concretely reflect that their Journey might be leading them to a personal relationship and conversion to Christ.

Conclusion

“Sharing Our Story” has some significant strengths as a manifestation of the New Evangelization. Its references to, and inclusion of, material from the Catechism of the Catholic Church are comprehensive. Its incorporation of a wide range of developmental/sociological/educational/psychological theory and research in formulating its educational strategies indicates a desire to use new and more effective methods to teach R.E. to high school students.

It shows some potential from time to time to lead young people into relationship and encounter with Jesus Christ. This potential is present only rarely in all the “Sharing Our Story” documents and it is never capitalized on in a way that might specifically lead students to teaching about and a possible experience of conversion to Jesus Christ.

68 Wright, Nicholas T. Jesus and the Victory of God (Christian Origins and the Question of God. Vol 1) (Fortress Press1996) This book is one of many by N.T.Wright who is a leading figure in the “Third Quest” for the, “historical Jesus”. Other prominent authors are Ben F Meyer, Fr John P Meier, Ben Witherington III, E P Sanders, and Dr Craig Keener (amongst others). These authors have moved beyond, “enlightenment” biblical study through looking at the actual history around Jesus and his 1st century Palestinian context. What they find from reviewing the history around Jesus in his 1st century context actually affirms creedal Christianity.

69 6E4A “Pilgrimages.” Unit Outline. Op cit (accessed 26/7/13)
What is distracting throughout the whole curriculum is the reference to other religions, their practice and sacred texts in topic areas where the Catholic/Christian implications of a particular subject have not been thoroughly considered. There is no doubt of course that learning about other religions should have some place in a high school Catholic religious education curriculum. The constant, somewhat tangential, inclusion of this material however, does nothing but dilute teaching on what should be the focus.

6.2.3 “Treasures New and Old”: Archdiocese of Canberra/Goulburn

The Archdiocese of Canberra/Goulburn has its own Religious education curriculum titled “Treasures New and Old” which was revised in 2009. The documents available to examine are the syllabus and unit outlines for the different subjects covered, four for each year from year seven to year 10 and seven units for years 11 and 12.

Supplement to Treasures New and Old.

The “Supplement” to “Treasures New and Old” contains the basic syllabus for K-10 religious education in the Canberra/Goulburn Archdiocese. The syllabus for years 11 and 12 is not contained in this document. In the introduction to the document, the syllabus is presented as a response to “Catholic Schools at a Crossroads” and an effort to move the schools of the Archdiocese toward becoming centres of the New Evangelization. The introduction does not mention any specific priority to include opportunities for students to have an encounter with Jesus Christ.70

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In terms of references to conversion and encounter with Jesus Christ in the “Supplement” there is in the year 7 “Ways of praying” Unit “Prayer as the habit of being in the presence of God and in communion with God.”\(^{71}\) In the year 8 “God of Covenant” unit it states students will be expected to “Identify the way God’s people heard and responded to God’s call in the Hebrew Scriptures” and to “Identify individuals in the Hebrew Scriptures who responded to God’s call.”\(^{72}\)

There is no clear reference to encounter with Jesus Christ and in the year 9 section of the document. In the year 10 “God and God’s Creation” Unit it states students will learn about “God’s life-giving grace received through the gift of the Holy Spirit in life, the Church and the world.” In the “Jesus and Discipleship” Unit students will be asked to “Reflect on Jesus Christ’s message of salvation in the Gospel as one of conversion, hope, liberation and love for all.” These indications in the “Supplement” have the potential to become a communication with students about encounter with Jesus Christ and conversion to relationship with Him.\(^{73}\)

Accompanying the syllabus, there are detailed individual unit outlines which will show whether this potential for encounter and conversion to Jesus Christ mentioned in the previous paragraphs is realized. In addition to the 7-10 unit outlines there are 7 units of detailed outlines for year 11 and 12 Religious Education.

The indications mentioned in the year 7 and 8 syllabus of encounter and conversion to Jesus Christ is not developed in the detailed unit outlines. In the Year 9 sections of the “Supplement” there was no mention of encounter and conversion to Jesus. In the

\(^{71}\) Ibid p 23
\(^{72}\) Ibid p 24
\(^{73}\) Ibid p 26
detailed unit outlines in the “Jesus in Luke” section of the syllabus however, there are some excellent reflections around Jesus ministry and responses that might be made to these reflections.

The Gospels record various responses to Jesus and his message. Some found it too hard and turned away. There are those who actively resisted Jesus and campaigned against him. Self-interest hardened them against hearing his message. Others struggled with both doubt and faith. The cry of the father seeking a cure for his son is poignant: ‘I believe; help my unbelief’ (Mark 9:24). Many, like the disciples, willingly accepted Jesus and his teaching, but lost courage when the test came. Some were moved to sudden and unexpected faith, like the woman at the well and the soldier on Calvary. And there were the faithful few, like the women at the foot of the cross, who never faltered.74

This type of discussion is heading in the right direction but it doesn’t fully lead students into a response of their own to Jesus and His message.

In the Year 11 and 12 detailed unit outlines, the “Jesus of History/Christ of Faith” unit is similar to the one discussed above in “Sharing Our Story” and have some of the same weaknesses. The focus on Jesus in his historical context is not a bad subject for students to think about. The presumption that the result of a purely historical reflection has to come up with a vision different to the “post resurrection” picture of Jesus (in the Gospels and in the New Testament) is problematic.75

In the “Spirituality and Prayer” outline it states

Prayer is about: listening for God’s presence, responding to that presence, encountering God in new ways, developing a relationship of trust with God that brings greater meaning into our lives. The God of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures is a personal God. God knows people and enters into personal relationship with them…

A retreat experience that allows the space and freedom for spirituality to be experienced holistically can contribute to a person's spirituality. It is a way of making time and space for God to speak and to touch the individual in the reality of their life experience and story.76

74 “Jesus in Luke” Year 9 Unit Outline ibid p 2
75 “Jesus of History/Christ of Faith” Year 11 and 12 Unit Outline. ibid
76 “Spirituality and Prayer“ Year 11 and 12 Unit Outline ibid p 2
These thoughts are excellent with regard to facilitating encounter with Jesus Christ. They emphasize personal relationship with God and some thought to a type of situation where students might more readily make contact with God. They realize there will be specific situations “time and space” for God to “touch” individuals (the context of retreats is mentioned here).

In the “Spirituality and Prayer” unit outline the personal nature of God and the possibility of an experiential relationship with Him is again emphasized.

The God of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures is a personal God. God knows people and enters into personal relationship with them. At different times in the development of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, different images of God were experienced as a result of this relationship. This discussion points out promisingly that images of God in the Judeo-Christian tradition came from experiences of “relationship with God”. It doesn’t expand on this by suggesting students can also have this personal contact with God and facilitating this experience with them.

“Treasures New and Old” has many of the same positive characteristics “Sharing Our Story” has as a manifestation of the New Evangelization in terms of content and pedagogy. It rarely however presents the possibility of an experiential encounter with Jesus Christ that leads to a conversion to Him. It speaks even less of how this encounter could be facilitated for students.

6.2.4 Diocese of Broken Bay Religious Education Curriculum

The Broken Bay Diocese Religious Education Curriculum document presents Catholic Discipleship as its major goal. As it discusses discipleship, there is also

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77 Ibid p 4
discussion of the need for encounter and commitment to Jesus Christ as an
inseparable aspect of discipleship.

Such a giving of ourselves is not likely to be a one off event. In everyday
life we find the need for constant renewal of our commitment. Our
relationship with Jesus deepens as our life experience broadens and we
come to know ourselves and Jesus better.

The disciple of Jesus does not merely mimic the words and actions of Jesus,
but becomes one with him. “... it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ
who lives in me.” (Gal 2:20) In being one with our risen Lord we act and
are motived to act by a desire for the realisation of the Kingdom of God.
The call to discipleship is marked by an authenticity and integrity grounded
in the person of Jesus. Such response requires knowledge of Jesus, through
the Scriptures and through the Church guided by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus invites each of us individually and uniquely to respond to his call. Our
response also brings us into communion with all who respond to his call. It
brings us to the community of the disciples of Jesus, the Church.
The disciples of Jesus are indeed human, always in need of repentance,
always in need of renewal 78

These paragraphs are an excellent synthesis of God’s action in the New
Evangelization. It describes the process from an initial union with Jesus Christ, to a
life of ongoing discipleship. It makes the important point that the life of a disciple
does not consist in “mimicking” Jesus Christ but being “one with the risen Lord” to
the point where one can say “it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in
me.” (Gal 2:20). It goes on to describe the way this union with Christ leads to
membership of the Church and a life of continual repentance and renewal.

The Church’s mission is to proclaim and spread the Gospel to the whole of
humanity, transforming and renewing humanity. In doing so it seeks to
bring Christ to all people, converts the individual and collective conscience,
brings a fresh perspective to the activities of people, turns them away from
those things that hinder, and towards those that give rise to the actualisation
of the Kingdom of God in daily life. 79

79 Ibid p 13
This “new evangelisation” challenges the baptised of all ages to interiorise the message of Christ as they come to know it. Here the Word of God is often in the stage of “primary proclamation”. (General Directory for Catechesis n61)

This catechesis, is "distinct from the primary proclamation of the Gospel", as it promotes and matures initial conversion, educates the converts in the faith and incorporates them into the Christian community. (General Directory for Catechesis n61)  

Ten points are presented in the document about what they consider would sum up a Catholic worldview. Three of the points connect with the vision of conversion and discipleship outlined above.

The action of the Spirit in the world, inviting and empowering all people to respond to the divine love. Jesus as God's Son, who saved us through his life, death and resurrection, and through whom we enter into the life of God. The meaning and purpose of life as grounded in God's love for us and our response as disciples of Jesus.  

In the “Content: Describes ways God invites people to respond” section of the curriculum there is however very little included that would connect with the description of encounter and conversion made earlier in the document. The only indications of instruction in this part of the curriculum aimed in this direction is “Jesus’ call to his disciples”, “Paul’s conversion”, “Individuals in the Catholic tradition who have responded to God’s call” and “identify the response of individuals to God’s call as their sharing in the realisation of the Kingdom.  

There may be a lot of activities in more detailed unit outlines that focus on the encounter with Jesus Christ and conversion to Him. There is however little in the curriculum document itself after the thorough vision it puts forward in the “Call to Catholic Discipleship” and the “Religious Education and the Catholic School”

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80 Ibid p 15  
81 Ibid p 19  
82 Ibid p 45.
introductory chapters of the Curriculum about encounter with and conversion to Christ.

6.2.5 To Know, Worship and Love.

The “To Know, Worship and Love” series of Religious Education texts are used in all the Catholic Education jurisdictions in NSW and the ACT. There are texts for each year group as well as “Catholic Studies” and ” Catholic Ethical Thinking” texts for years 11 and 12. This study will examine the year 7 to 12 texts in search of teaching that specifically aims to facilitate encounter with Jesus Christ and conversion. Most of these texts were written in 2002 before “Catholic Schools at a Crossroads” was published in 2007. The two year eleven twelve texts “Catholic Studies for Senior Secondary” and “Catholic Ethical Teaching for Senior Secondary Students” were published in 2006 and 2005 respectively.

The Year 7 text book presents a deep and thorough treatment of a range of topics with a focus on explaining aspects of scripture and Catholic Tradition and practice. Although the “Prayer” chapter presents prayer as a personal relationship with God there is no instruction that there is a need to experience a conversion that leads to commitment to Jesus Christ. 83

The Year 8 text, the section on “Good and Evil” challenges young people to make right choices but doesn’t talk about an experiential encounter with Jesus Christ. Chapter 15 is the most promising as it devotes a whole chapter to considering “The Influence of Jesus”. In an activity reflecting on Mark 8:34-38 students are asked to

83 Rymarz, R & Smith, H To Know, Worship and Love. Year 7 (James Goold House Publications. Archdiocese of Melbourne. 2002) p105
summarize the radical conditions Jesus states are necessary to follow Him. It doesn’t however move to directly challenge students to take the step in relationship with Jesus to live out these conditions by the power of the Holy Spirit.84

The text in its year 9 version is again a thorough presentation of Catholic belief and practice. Particularly interesting is its discussion of images of good and evil in films/media and reflections as to how these should be discerned. The chapter dealing with “What Catholics Believe” gives a detailed exposition of the realities Catholics assent to but no discussion of these beliefs as realities that can be experienced in depths of a persons being.85

In the year 10 text there is a whole chapter devoted to the book of Mark. The presentation of this Gospel in the text and the acknowledgement of the “possibility and potential” that miracles can still occur leaves space for experiential encounter with Jesus Christ. After considering this, students are then asked to reflect on their own “ideas and actions” and how Jesus’ death is an “example of how to live.”86

The year 11 and 12 Catholic Studies has the best example in all the series “To Know, Worship and Love” of teaching around the reality of an encounter with Jesus Christ. In Chapter 1 it talks about the possibility of knowing God personally and it discusses a distinction between “knowing about God and knowing God”. Here, it cites the experience Blaise Pascal had on the 23rd of November 1654; “Fire. God of Abraham,

85 Engebretson, K., Ormerod, N. & Mahoney, D. “To Know, Worship and Love Year 9” (James Goold House Publications. Archdiocese of Melbourne. 2002) p 93

There is a reflection on the lyrics Joan Osborne’s song from 1995 “One of Us” and asks students to consider whether they express a desire to “really meet and know “ God. In stating “God is not someone seen from a distance. God is an ever present reality. It is possible to have a personal relationship with God. This is the basis of Christian Spirituality. God is a majestic creator and intimate friend, both at the same time” it is talking about just the type of encounter with Jesus Christ Magisterial teaching describes as an essential aspect of conversion.

Although the next chapter “Jesus the Christ” doesn’t talk about encounter directly, it is an excellent presentation of the creedal/scriptural understanding of Jesus Christ. When considered with the discussion from the previous chapter there is a clear implication that this Jesus Christ is a real person that one can relate to and meet with.

In the “How Should We Live” chapter there is not just a call to action and intellectual reflection in response to evil. There is a call to continual personal conversion as a basis for social action.

To commit to Christian solidarity requires personal conversion...Conversion means turning back to God and the Church, recognizing sinfulness,
rejecting sin, and being filled again with faith and hope that comes from love of Jesus Christ. Conversion is not something that happens once, or once a year, or just at Christmas and Easter: conversion is for every day. With conversion, it is possible to place God first in your life and then to give high place to others, caring for their needs as you do your own.\footnote{Ibid p 93}

The remainder of the text does not have this same emphasis on encountering Jesus Christ but its treatment of scripture, morality and the different aspects Catholic sacramental practice is thorough and insightful. It’s discussion of the history and philosophy of science in the “Science and Religion” section brings depth and understanding to what is usually a shallow and biased (against religion) debate.

The text book ends with a quote from Pope Benedict XVI that speaks of the encounter that is possible in relationship with Christ.

Only when we meet the living God in Christ do we know what life is. We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary. There is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ. There is nothing more beautiful than to know Him and to speak to others of our friendship with Him. The task of the shepherd, the task of the fisher of men, can often seem wearisome. But it is beautiful and wonderful, because it is truly a service to joy, to God’s joy which longs to break into the world.\footnote{Pope Benedict XVI. Mass For the Inauguration of the Pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI. Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2005/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20050424_inizio-pontificato_en.html 2005 (accessed 12/813)}

The “Catholic Ethical Thinking for Senior Secondary Students”\footnote{Engebretson, Kathleen. Duncan, B., Elliot, P., Rule, P. & Rymarz, R. Catholic Ethical Thinking for Senior Secondary Students. (James Goold House Publications 2005)} text is excellent in that it grounds its instruction about ethics in the existence of God, Revelation, Tradition and in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ Himself. It doesn’t discuss the need for students to come into relationship and encounter with Jesus Christ and how this relationship would enhance their capability to behave ethically. It does discuss
the way Christian virtue interacts with morality and ethical behavior/decision making so one could say there is some indirect connection made with concept of encounter with Jesus Christ.94

6.2.6 Conclusion: Religious Education and Text Books in NSW and the ACT

After reviewing RE curricula and texts books used in NSW and the ACT with regard to their inclusion of teaching that facilitates encounter with and conversion to Jesus Christ it is possible to come to the following conclusions. Compared to the whole sweep of a high school student’s Religious Education experience they will rarely come across any reference to this reality from its presence in curricula and text books. Even if they do happen to be exposed to this possibility, they will then be directed to activities that do not provide a space for a direct experience of God’s action by the Holy Spirit to bring them into relationship with Jesus Christ and conversion to Him. The only exceptions to this are the discussion in the year 11 and 12 Catholic Studies text book where Blaise Pascal’s encounter with God is discussed and in the “Spirituality and Prayer” unit outline from the Canberra/Goulburn Archdiocese where facilitating encounter with Jesus is discussed.

The Curricula and text books overall are an exceptionally thorough and in places outstanding effort to present “the whole counsel of God”95 of Catholic teaching and practice to High School students. It is clear that great effort and skill has been expended by committed men and women of God to ensure that the goal of increased Catholic religious literacy identified by the NSW and ACT Bishops in “Catholic Schools at a Crossroads” has been addressed. The goal of leading Catholic High

94 ibid p 29-31
95 Acts 20:27
School students into an encounter with Jesus Christ that results in a life changing conversion (also mentioned in “Catholic Schools at a Crossroads”) however has been almost completely neglected.

Christian discipleship is a frequently addressed topic in the curricula and text books examined above. The question has already been raised in this dissertation as to whether it is possible to genuinely disciple the unconverted. Given the status of faith and practice of the (most likely) unconverted Religious Education teachers (discussed in the previous chapter), can genuine discipleship take place? Is there a danger that the reflection Pope Paul VI made about one category of people requiring the New Evangelization might become true of the contemporary generation of Catholic High School students?\textsuperscript{96} Without an experiential, life changing conversion to Jesus Christ, will they conclude (as Pope Paul VI suggests they may) when they finish year twelve that they’ve “tried” Christianity/Catholicism and it didn’t work?

\textsuperscript{96} EN 56
Conclusion

This study then has reflected on the New Evangelization; its identification as a need, development as a concept and its major themes as they appear in Magisterial teaching. Some of the historical/sociological/anthropological reasons for the decrease in faith and practice amongst Catholics since the Second World War have been outlined from a mainly Australian perspective. Factual evidence of the decline in faith and practice amongst adolescents and young adults has revealed the magnitude of this decline. This evidence also reveals the speed at which young people and adolescents are ceasing to be involved with Catholicism as they leave Catholic High Schools.

The situation in Catholic Schools in NSW and the ACT has been examined to reflect on one area of concrete response to the urgent Magisterial call to be involved in the New Evangelization. “Catholic Schools at a Crossroads” was seen as an insightful and faithful representation of Magisterial teaching and an echo of the call to the New Evangelization by the NSW and ACT Catholic Bishops. It’s focus was on the need for school leadership, Religious Education Co-Ordinators, Religious Education teachers and teachers in general at Catholic Schools to be men and women of faith who can lead students into encounter with Jesus Christ. “Catholic Schools at a Crossroads” also made the same distinction Magisterial teaching made between encounter and conversion to Jesus Christ and ongoing catechesis. “Catholic Schools at a Crossroads” equated this ongoing catechesis with the process of Christian discipleship.
This study evaluated text books and curricula used by NSW and ACT Catholic High Schools as to the presence of teaching about this encounter with Jesus Christ and facilitating this encounter among NSW and ACT Catholic High School students. There was relatively little teaching about the reality of this encounter with Jesus Christ and radical conversion to Him in the text books and curricula of the various diocese and archdiocese in NSW. There was almost no material at all giving suggestions as to how this encounter with Jesus Christ could be facilitated.

One aspect of the New Evangelization has been thoroughly addressed the Curricula and text books reviewed. Nurturing already existing faith and catechesis around the realities of the faith are needs identified by Magisterial teaching of the New Evangelization.¹ Surveys cited above described a lack of content knowledge around Catholicism amongst adolescents and young people as they leave Catholic High Schools.² It is clear that curricula and text books have made diligent and skillful efforts to address this area of deficiency. The latest psychological /developmental understandings have been taken into account and pedagogical methods recommended to teachers in the curriculum documents and text books to teach students about the many facets of Catholicism/Christianity.

In the final analysis however, Catholic Schools which don’t grapple with the reality of encounter with Jesus Christ and facilitate this encounter as a high priority cannot begin to be described as centres for the New Evangelization in the way Magisterial teaching describes it. Realistically, there will be no reversal in the catastrophic

¹ EN 44.
² Rymarz, Richard M. ‘Lost Generation: The Cultures of Generation X Catholics’ Australian Catholic Record. April (81) 2004 p 149-151
decline in faith and practice among Catholic young people unless the reality of encounter with Jesus Christ and conversion to Him takes the place.

Fr Donald Gelpi’s analysis of theology of conversion might be an explanation of some of the theological reasons behind this lack of focus on encounter with Jesus. In the very reasonable attempt to deal with damaging effects of the separation between nature and grace they saw in the theology present in the Church prior to WW II, Marechal, De Lubac, Rahner and (amongst others) others asserted the presence of God in the desire for the Beatific vision present in a connection with a, “transcendental horizon” in the human soul. In this way of envisioning the soul’s interaction with God, conversion is the revelation of an action and yearning that was already occurring within it by God’s grace. In this scheme, being made aware of the explicit content connected with this, “transcendental horizon” through a comprehensive education should be sufficient to “thematize” this reality for people. In the case of the language used by Rahner, they will cease to be “anonymous Christians” and commit themselves to Jesus and to the life of faith in the Church. From this perspective there is no urgency to bring young people into an experiential encounter with Jesus because they are moving toward the “horizon” in the Beatific vision anyway and gradual accumulation of accurate information would enable the “thematization” of their desire for God to take place.

It is possible that either consciously or unconsciously those writing curricula and text books have been influenced by this way of thinking. They (very reasonably) don’t want to go back to “the good old days” which (as discussed above when the spiritual status of the mothers and fathers of Generation X was considered in Chapter 1) were
in reality part of the foundation for the problems the New Evangelization is supposed to address.

Gelpi’s connection of Lonergan’s understanding of natural conversion and the way conversion to Jesus through the Holy Spirit “transmutes” these types of conversions most adequately connects with the Magisterial vision of the need for encounter with Jesus Christ and conversion to Him. It also connects with the psychological realities of human nature. Human beings in fact very rarely, if ever, consciously search for the Beatific vision in their day to day life. Human beings are often egocentric, selfish, and unkind. There can be constructive moves away from these negative tendencies in natural conversions which have no explicit Christian or other spiritual content at all. When there is a genuine encounter with Jesus there is a qualitatively superior reality of conversion which uniquely joins a person to Jesus Christ by the power and intervention of the Holy Spirit and makes ongoing conversion and discipleship possible.

Realities in a person’s life journey definitely move them toward this conversion as the Holy Spirit mysteriously leads them in the circumstances of their lives. The stage model of conversion described by Lewis Rambo can give some understanding of where people might be in the reality of that journey and an understanding of the “Heroes Journey” gives some sense of the drama, adventure and even danger of the journey to conversion.

In the Christian vision however, there is no replacement for the personal encounter with Jesus of Nazareth that brings a union that can change everything about a
person’s life if they respond to it and embrace it. There is no replacement also for the need of a definitive proclamation that this encounter is being offered to them. As it says in Romans 10:14 “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” People can reject this encounter once they have experienced it if they choose. St Paul could have chosen to say “no” to Jesus. The experience itself however is something one can’t honestly deny.³

It is possible that in addition to the conscious or unconscious theological stances of the writers of text books and curricula there may not be an awareness of what the Holy Spirit is capable, and actually routinely will do, if given an explicit opportunity to move. The involvement of the Holy Spirit is a major theme of the New Evangelization in Magisterial teaching identified above.⁴ If one were to declare that the Spirit of God could be expected to move in powerful and miraculous ways, let alone in tangible personal encounter with students however one might run the risk of being classed as a “fundamentalist.”

In religious education curricula and text books “fundamentalism” is discussed as a potential danger that Catholic High School Students must strenuously avoid.⁵ It is reasonable, of course, to be instructed to avoid a “fundamentalist” reading of scripture. The danger of uncritically interacting with scripture and Christianity however on the basis of unexamined influences from an “enlightenment”/rationalist

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³ Acts 9:1-19
⁴ In chapter 4 of this study.
agenda is just as much of a danger (one could argue that it is a greater danger). This possibility is not reflected on in the R.E. curricula and text books to anywhere near the same degree.

In the discussion about conversion as it is described in Magisterial teaching in Chapter 3 (above) the encounter with Jesus is described as a psychological epiphany, an emotional/experiential reality, an enthusiastic experience of salvation accompanied by “outward signs of renewal”, an intimate experience of friendship and being in love with a person. When the Holy Spirit moves to bring encounter with Jesus Christ among adolescents and young adults one should expect to see (what some might consider) uncomfortable displays of emotion, enthusiasm and reports of supernatural experience.

In Africa, Asia (particularly China), and South America the growth in Christian communities of different denominations (including the Catholic Church) is extraordinary. In some of these situations, the evangelization of culture discussed in Magisterial teaching is actually taking place. In these cultures, the western/rationalist/modernist/enlightenment worldview is not the prevailing spiritual/intellectual atmosphere. The Holy Spirit is not limited in terms of demonstrating “the mighty works of God”.

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6 AG 13
7 EN 10
8 RM 47
10 “Christianity in China. Sons of Heaven.” The Economist. http://www.economist.com/node/12342509 2008. (accessed 15/7/13) This article discusses the impact of Christianity on Chinese culture due to increasing number of members. In the end is states one will not be able to understand China in the future without understanding Christianity.
11 Fournier, Deacon Keith. “Miracles in India as the Gospel is Proclaimed and the Catholic Church Grows.” Catholic Online. Catholic Online http://www.catholic.org/international/international_story.php?id=46884 2012 (accessed 5/4/13) In this article, Bishop John Kattrukudiyl of the Itagur Diocese in India reports 40% growth in
In the western world, organizations that have success and are actually growing as Christian Churches focus on facilitating this encounter with Jesus Christ and an openness to the action of the Holy Spirit to perform “the mighty works of God”. Evangelical Protestant, Pentecostal/Charismatic churches are growing as they offer a tangible experience of relationship with God. Catholic contexts that have been open to specifically facilitating this encounter have also grown. Those who are not offering this experience are not growing. The evidence available about Catholic High School students and the approach to Religious Education they sit under indicates that they are firmly in the latter category. Catholic Schools in the NSW and the ACT in 2013 cannot yet be described as Centres for the New Evangelization as it is has been put forward by Magisterial teaching.

Pope Paul VI posed questions in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* as to whether the power of the Gospel is still present sufficiently to transform people and bring them into relationship with Jesus (quoted in full in Chapter 5 of this thesis). Hard facts from all over the world reveal that Jesus Christ is present in the same way He was in His incarnation, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension in first century Israel. He is still present as He was on the day of Pentecost and in the early Church in the Book of Acts and He is doing the same things.

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Father Raniero Cantalamessa, the preacher to the Papal household, gives a succinct description of what is possible and necessary for the New Evangelization to take place.

Our books and discussions are often full of a dead, theological and merely ideological Christ. We need to rediscover this living Christ, whom only the Spirit can stir up in us. We need to have the same burning experience that Paul had on the road to Damascus when he asked, “Who are you Lord?” (Acts 9:5). From that moment on Paul considered everything as dung so that he might gain Christ.\(^\text{14}\)

Is it reasonable for Catholic young people to “die of thirst” as it were when the “rivers of living water”\(^\text{15}\) are left untouched because of lack of awareness caused by theological/historical/social influences they know nothing about?

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\(^{15}\) John 7:38.

A comprehensive treatment of the topic of conversion as it is appears in the New Testament and in the Church fathers would be a subject for a study by itself. The following then is a brief survey of some characteristics of conversion as it appears in these contexts. The discussion of conversion in these sources is linked with, and inseparable from, a discussion of evangelization and how it took place in the various socio-cultural situations the preaching of the gospel impacted. It is also difficult to say when a particular person or group has definitively experienced individual conversion in the scripture. It is not difficult to identify, however, when the ministry of Jesus had a major impact and changed the lives of people.

A simplified description of the ministry of Jesus is as follows. When Jesus walked the earth in first century Palestine, he proclaimed that the “Kingdom of Heaven” was manifesting in, around, and through him. He exhorted the people of Israel to “repent and believe” this “good news”. When people encountered Jesus himself, heard the preaching of the “good news of the Kingdom of God”, saw it demonstrated before their eyes, and followed him, they experienced an initial conversion that lead to a lifetime of continuing conversion. This ongoing life of conversion took place in the community of followers of Jesus as they followed him.

The first conversions were a response to an initial call made by Jesus himself. The immediate response of Simon (Peter) and Andrew may have been on the basis of Jesus’ status as a rabbi and or an initial awareness of the signs accompanying his early ministry and or the possibility

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of Jesus being a significant prophetic figure. In Matthew and Mark they simply leave their nets as Jesus calls them. In the book of Luke, Simon, James and John are astonished by the miraculously large catch of fish. Jesus calls them to leave their nets and become “fishers of men”. In John’s gospel, the testimony of John the Baptist was a factor disposing Andrew, Simon (Peter) and Philip to answer Jesus’ call.

Nathanael was initially skeptical about the significance of Jesus when told about him by Philip. After personally meeting Jesus and being told by Jesus the he “had already seen him under the fig tree”, Nathanael was deeply impressed and followed him. These early responses involved a personal encounter with Jesus himself and or a demonstration of supernatural power by Him.

A second category of conversion is Jesus’ interaction with those who were classed by the prevailing religious culture as “sinners”. The books of Matthew, Mark and Luke present the calling of Levi (Matthew) from his tax collectors booth. In this case, it seems the fact of Jesus’ willingness as a respected religious teacher/prophet to associate with this usually despised person was a significant factor and their response. The synoptic gospels report that Jesus attended a party held by Levi after his call. No conversions are reported from his attendance but Jesus makes it clear that as he is eating and partying with them, he is calling them when he says “It is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick. But go and learn

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19 Luke 5:10
20 John 1:37
21 John 1:43
22 John 1:49
23 Matt: 9:9, Mark: 2:14, Luke 5:27
24 Matt 9:10, Mark 2:15, Luke 5:29
what this means: ‘I desire mercy not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

The calling of Zacchaeus in Luke is similar to the calling of Levi. The fact that a respected religious figure would not only notice his existence but make a point of eating with him, effects a significant conversion in Zacchaeus’ life. His response of giving half his possessions to the poor and recompensing those he stole from leads to an experience of “salvation” that Jesus himself identifies.

Also in the “sinner” category is the conversion of “sinful” women. In the incident reported in the Book of Luke, the woman was not only morally deficient, (being a prostitute) but as her usual clientele would have been the Roman occupiers, she was also a collaborator. The synoptic gospels report a more affective component in the women’s response to Jesus’ call and offer of salvation. In the Book of Luke, the “sinful” woman enters Simon the Pharisee’s house and anoints Jesus’ feet with expensive oil and weeps tears of repentance. Jesus tells Simon the Pharisee that “her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much” and says to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace”. In the Book of John, Jesus encounters a woman caught in the act of adultery. In this case, Jesus literally saves this woman from being killed and extends forgiveness to her.

Jesus ministry to “lost sheep of Israel” (and to some gentiles) involved him preaching the “good news of Kingdom of God” and demonstrating the reality of this proclamation by

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25 Mt 9: 12,13  
26 Lk 19: 1-10  
27 Lk 7: 36-50  
28 Jn 8: 1-11  
29 Mt 15: 24  
30 Mk 1:15
healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out demons, and cleansing lepers. The Gospels report many manifestations of these “wonders of God”. The Gospel of John reports that Jesus “did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book”. The implication is that Jesus ministry included vast numbers of miraculous events of all kinds. These ranged from healing simple fevers, long-term issues of blood, physical deformity, epileptic type disorders, deafness/blindness/muteness, serious psychological disorders, casting out demons, and the raising of the dead. He was able to control the weather, walk on water, and multiply food to feed thousands. He manifested supernatural wisdom and knew by the power of the Holy Spirit information he would have no way of naturally knowing. The Gospels report that these events themselves caused many to be deeply impressed and to follow him. The raising of Lazarus from the dead had a particularly significant impact to the point where the Jewish religious authorities were planning to kill him as well as Jesus.

In summary, conversion as it is presented in the Gospels took place in the vicinity of and in relationship with Jesus himself. His personal love, acceptance and demonstration of the “works of God” in their various forms caused many to “repent and believe the Good News” that the “Kingdom of God” truly was present in him. These converts followed him as part of his movement.

31 Mt 10:8
32 Acts 2:11
33 Jn 20:30
34 Mt 8:14, Lk 8:44, Mark 5:25-31, Lk 3:16, Mk 9:17-28, Matt 11:5, Mk 7:31, Mt 8:28-34, Mk 1:34, Lk 7:11-15,
35 Lk 8:23-25, Mt 14:22-29, Mk 6:45-56, Jn 6:16-21, Mt 14:13, Mt15:29, Mark 6:30, Mark 8:1, Luke 9:10, John 6:1,
37 Luke 5:26
38 Jn 12:9-11
39 Jn 9:3, Acts 2:11
40 Mark 1:15
41 Luke 10:9-11
Jesus’ death on the cross precipitated a dramatic reassessment by the early disciples of who Jesus really was and what had happened. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead demanded another level of conversion from the disciples and opened the way for the ministry of Jesus to continue through them. (The experience of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus is an example of this new level of conversion). On the day of Pentecost, the disciples were filled with “power from on high”. They were able to be his witnesses “in Jerusalem, in Judea and to the ends of the earth”.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, the ministry of the risen Jesus continued. Now, Jesus was present in each disciple. The power present in Jesus was now available to all of them. The Book of Acts describes how the newly Holy Spirit empowered community of Jesus followers continued his work.

When the Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to “speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” people from every nation who were present in Jerusalem at time heard them “declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” and were “amazed and perplexed”. After Peter preached 3000 people became disciples that day. The apostles continued to perform “wonders and miraculous signs” “Everyone was filled with awe” and “the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved”.

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43 Luke 24:49
44 Acts 2:12
45 Acts 2: 4
46 Acts 2: 4
47 Acts 2: 41
48 Acts 2: 43
One constant feature connected with conversion in Acts is the preaching of the Good News that in Jesus’ life, ministry, death and resurrection there is salvation for all who respond to the message with repentance and faith. Accompanying this proclamation were three broad categories of events that lead to people joining the disciples. The first is healing and deliverance, the second is the word itself causing a response in hearers as it is preached, and the third is remarkable miraculous events, visionary experience or the functioning of prophetic gifts.

There are many events reported in Acts that could be placed in the healing category. Peter and John healed a man who had been crippled since birth at the Gate Beautiful of the Temple. This led to his conversion and “wonder and amazement” in the onlookers. The apostles “performed many miraculous signs and wonders” to the point where Peter’s shadow falling on the sick was thought to lead to healing. People came in from the countryside in to Jerusalem to be healed and delivered of evil spirits. This lead to “more and more men and women” believing.

When Philip proclaimed the Christ in Samaria the people “paid close attention to what he said” when they heard his message and “saw the miraculous signs” he performed. Philip’s ministry included evil spirits coming out of people “with shrieks” and the healing of paralytics and cripples. This caused “great joy in that city” and lead to “all the people, both high and low, believing Philip’s message and being baptized.

When Peter went to Lydda and Sharon, Aeneas “a paralytic who had been bed ridden for eight years” was healed and “all those who lived there turned to the Lord”. In Joppa, Peter

50 Acts 3: 1-26
51 Acts 5:12-16
52 Acts 8: 1-17
raised Tabitha from the dead. This event “became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord”.

When Paul and Barnabas went to Iconium, they spoke “boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders”. As a result of this “a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed”. When Paul was in Ephesus “all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord”. Acts goes on to report that even Paul’s handkerchiefs and aprons “were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them”.

In the second category, the preaching (or the reading) of the word itself is the major influence on conversion. In Acts 8, Philip explains Isaiah 53:7,8 to the Ethiopian Eunuch and tells him “the good news about Jesus”. The result is the conversion and baptism of Eunuch by the roadside. Disciples who had been “scattered by the persecution in connected with Stephen”, went to Antioch and “began to speak to the Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus”. As they preached “a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord”.

In Philippi, Paul met a group of women by the river. As Paul shared the gospel with these women, Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth, had her heart “opened” by the Lord. She and all the members of her household were baptized. In Thessalonica Paul “reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. In Berea, the message was received “with great eagerness”. In Athens, Paul reasoned with the

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54 Acts 14: 1-7
55 Acts 19: 11-12
56 Acts 8: 26-39
57 Acts 11:19-21
58 Acts 16: 13-15
God fearing Greeks and Jews in the synagogue, and with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in the Areopagus. Jews, large numbers of prominent Greek women, many Greek men and some members of the Areopagus were converted.\(^59\)

In Corinth, Paul “reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks” and devoted himself exclusively “to preaching and teaching”. Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his whole family “believed in the Lord” and “many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized”.\(^60\)

The final category is remarkable miraculous events, visionary experience or the functioning of prophetic gifts. Saul’s conversion is the most well known in this category. As he travels to Damascus to further persecute followers of Jesus, he experiences a bright light, is knocked off his donkey and struck blind. In a vision of the risen Jesus he is told to go into Damascus. Ananias receives a vision of the Lord and is told where Saul is and how to pray for him. Scales fall from Saul’s eyes, he is baptized, and the most powerful ministry of evangelization in the early church begins.\(^61\)

Cornelius and his associates were introduced to the Gospel through an angelic visitation, Peter falling into a trance and receiving a vision, and the Holy Spirit falling on the hearers (causing them to pray in tongues) as Peter preached to them.\(^62\) The jailer of the Philippian prison and his whole household believe after “a violent earthquake” caused all the prison doors to open and the chains to fall off the wrists of Paul, Silas and the rest of the prisoners.\(^63\)

\(^59\) Acts 17: 1-34  
\(^60\) Acts 18: 1-8  
\(^61\) Acts 9:1-22  
\(^62\) Acts 10: 1-48  
\(^63\) Acts 16: 16-34
In Ephesus, the seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish high priest, found out it was not sufficient to simply say the name of Jesus in order to cast out demons. When this event became well known “they were all seized with fear and the name of Jesus was held in high honour”. Many believers who had continued in the occult repented and “the word of Lord spread widely and grew in power”.\textsuperscript{64}

In discussing evangelization and conversion in the Church Fathers, the period from the start of the New Testament until the edict of Milan in 313 will be considered. William c. Weinrich provides a summary of the characteristics the Patrisitic pattern of evangelization and the conversion that resulted from these activities.\textsuperscript{65} In contrast to the biblical testimony, there is little discussion of the place of “the mighty works of God” as a specific factor in conversion (although there is evidence that miracles occurred in the lives and ministries of the church fathers). The focus is more on preaching and the witness of character and love in the early church.

A major activity connected with conversion was the preaching of the Gospel. Weinrich quotes Eusebius’ description of preaching in the second century.

> These earnest disciples of great men built on the foundations of the churches everywhere laid by the apostles, spreading the message still further and sowing the saving seed of the Kingdom of Heaven far and wide through the entire world. Very many of the disciples of the time, their hearts smitten by the word of God with ardent passion for true philosophy, first fulfilled the Savior's command by distributing their possessions among the needy; then, leaving their homes behind, they carried out the

\textsuperscript{64} Acts 19: 13-20  
work of evangelists, amdtious to preach to those who had never yet heard the message of the faith and to give them the inspired gospels in writing.\textsuperscript{66}

Christian morality and behaviour stood in stark contrast to the behaviour of pagan cultures. Their love, humility and example were major factors influencing people to respond to the gospel. Weinrich reports that “Tatian testified that the purity of life which Christians led was one reason for his becoming a Christian (\textit{Orat.} 29).”\textsuperscript{67} He also quotes Justin martyr’s comments on the “converting thrust of Christian behaviour”.

He [Christ] has not wished us to imitate the wicked, but rather by our patience and meekness to draw all men from shame and evil desires. This we can show in the case of many who were once on your [pagan] side but have turned from the ways of violence and tyranny, overcome by observing the consistent lives of their neighbors, or noting the strange patience of their injured acquaintances, or experiencing the way they did business with them.\textsuperscript{68}

In preaching the resurrection of Jesus, Christians asserted that they had authority over death. Throughout history there have been many opportunities to demonstrate this authority. In the early church, the conduct of the martyrs was a powerful influence in converting people. Weinrich quotes Tertullian in his address to Scapula, Proconsul of Carthage,

For all who witness the noble patience of its martyrs, struck with misgivings, are inflamed with desire to examine into the matter in question; and as soon as they come to know the truth, they straightway enroll themselves its [Christianity's] disciples.\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{67} Tatian Orat. 29 in ibid p 70
\textsuperscript{68} Justin Martyr 1 Apol 16. In ibid p70
\textsuperscript{69} Tertullian ad Acsapulam 5.4 in ibid p 72.
Christianity had an enormous appeal to slaves and the underprivileged. While it did not change the social order as such it asserted the dignity of each human being and their equality before God. Weinrich comments,

Such an ethic of love toward the other had great impact on the heathen world. In the *Acts of the Lyons Martyrs* the slave Blandina suffers tortures along with her mistress; in the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* the slave Felicitas suffers in prison along with her mistress, the high-born Perpetua. This was scandalous for much of the pagan world, but to many it also testified to the unifying power of the Gospel.⁷⁰

Love of course, should be the fundamental characteristic of the life of the Body of Christ. Active charity was an integral part of the Christian community’s practice. These expressions of love both prompted conversion and were contexts where the gospel could be shared. Weinrich quotes Adolf von Harnack’s identification of ten types of charitable activities carried out by the early church.

alms-giving in general, support of teachers and officials, support of widows and orphans, support of the sick, infirm and disabled, care of prisoners and those banished to the mines, the care of the poor needing burial, care of slaves, care of those suffering from calamities, care of the unemployed, and hospitality of the brethren on journeys.⁷¹

Weinrich quotes a comment by the Emperor Julian as he considered the difficulties in trying to revive pagan religions in the face of “the practiced love” of Christians.

Atheism [i.e., Christianity] has been specially advanced through the loving service rendered to strangers, and through their care for the burial of the dead. It is a scandal

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⁷⁰ Ibid p 72
⁷¹ von Harnack, Adolf *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, (Williams and Norgate, 1908) in ibid p72
that there is not a single Jew who is a beggar, and that the godless Galilaeans care not only for their own poor but for ours as well; while those who belong to us look in vain for the help that we should render them.\textsuperscript{72}

The final category of activity connected with conversion discussed in Weinrich’s article is apologetics, argumentations, and dialogue. He describes a situation where teaching in the context of “public dialogue” by Origen became well known mother of the Emperor Alexander Severus. In response to this teaching, Mammæa (the Emperor’s mother) "sent a bodyguard of soldiers to fetch him. He stayed with her for some time, revealing to her many things to the glory of the Lord and of the virtue of the divine message".\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{72} ibid p 73
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