

Spirituality in the Pub: Finding voice in a monological church

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Declaration

I, Heather Suzanne Skousgaard, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of Archaeology and Anthropology, College of Arts and Social Sciences, the Australian National University, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. This thesis has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

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They say that writing a thesis is a lonely business. Yet for me, this thesis has brought many new friends into my life and enabled me to discover untold treasures in both the people around me and indeed in myself. For this, the word 'thanks' can never be enough.

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Abstract

In July 1994, a handful of devoted but disillusioned Roman Catholics gathered in Sydney, Australia, to explore how they might spark renewal in a Church that simultaneously frustrated their minds and lives yet captivated their hearts and souls. As loyal Catholics, they were determined to avoid being branded rebels, but nonetheless they felt an urgent need for a safe space, beyond church walls, in which they could voice their fears and hopes for the Church they loved. And so, 'Spirituality in the Pub' was born – a lay-driven space in which priests, nuns and bishops were welcome, but in which the voices of all participants were to be valued equally, independent of their religious credentials.

This thesis explores the outcomes of my ethnographic participation in the 'Spirituality in the Pub' (SIP) movement. It introduces a fieldsite that is paradoxically defined by devotion and anger, loyalty and dissent, in which participants (or 'Sippers') seek to become 'honest brokers of conversation' in a Church that remains bound by a monological imagination – one in which church leaders hold the only voices of authority. Situated within the broader setting of what sociologists have termed the 'spiritual revolution' and 'emerging church' movements of the late twentieth century, this thesis paints a portrait of one group's response to the growing crisis of authority they observed in the Catholic Church since the watershed revolution of the 1960s, known as the 'Second Vatican Council', or 'Vatican II'.

Choosing not to become paralysed by anger over what they see as the refusal of key church leaders to fully embrace the empowered lay spirituality of Vatican II, Sippers instead attempt to channel this aggrieved passion into a productive energy that maintains their commitment to the spiritual foundations of the Church. Fortifying themselves with the emancipatory resources of the Catholic faith tradition, Sippers draw on the emotional, social and symbolic riches of their religious identity as they strive to remain loyal to the Church, despite the many hurts and frustrations it brings them. Seeking to live 'imaginatively and creatively' within the structures of the Church, Sippers form parallel lines in their lives by attending both SIP and Mass; separate but mutually supportive arenas that help them to live within the creative tension of both loyalty *and* dissent as they work to renew their Church from within.

This research project advances the body of empirical knowledge regarding the newly developing constructs of 'loyal dissent' and 'religious agency'. At the heart of Sippers' religious agency lies a conversational methodology that seeks Church renewal by emphasising mutuality and understanding over confrontation and conflict. By fostering a 'theology of conversation', Sippers have come to develop their own unique strategies of audibility in an effort to feel heard against the monologic forces of the Catholic Church. In this way, the SIP movement seeks to fulfil its promise to remain faithful to the Church while also fostering a vital spirituality of hope that energises Sippers' ongoing expressions of loyal dissent.

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Introduction

Introducing 'Spirituality in the Pub'

13 September, 2011.

There was a palpable air of anticipation and expectation in the inner-city pub¹ that evening.

Hopes and fears, of course, abound when planning any public meeting. Organisers fret about whether the guest speakers will be insightful and engaging enough to capture the group's attention. We worry about whether the speakers will manage to find their way to the pub in the dark, and most importantly, whether they actually remember to come at all ('Heaven forbid we have a re-run of last month's no-show!'). Much discussion is had on whether we think there will be a good crowd this evening ('With a name like hers we're guaranteed a good showing'), or hoping that at least enough people will come so that the speakers feel appreciated ('Why on earth our meetings always have to fall on a State of Origin² night, I have no idea'). Anticipation and nerves mount during the usual last-minute run around to rearrange the seating, place pamphlets on the chairs, lay out the book display, set up the welcome music, test the microphone and dash out to the bar to check whether the speakers have arrived yet... all the while hoping that everyone will have a good time this evening, and more importantly, perhaps even be inspired to live life more fully in the coming weeks.

But on this particular September night in 2011, amongst all the usual anticipation and more, there was also expectation of a different type in the air. For this was to be no regular night at 'Spirituality in the Pub' (SIP). Tonight, the rallying cry would be called. Tonight, enough was enough. Tonight, we stood together. Tonight, we *must* be heard.

As per our usual pattern, that evening I joined the organisers in the bistro for dinner prior to the meeting. Looking at us, we appeared to be like any of the other diners in

¹ The term 'pub' refers to a public house – an establishment licensed to serve alcohol to the public. It is an element of British culture that Australia has strongly embraced.

² The 'State of Origin' is a three-part series of Australian Rugby League matches held annually between New South Wales and Queensland. It is one of Australia's most popular sporting events.

the room. I remembered how, when I first entered that room one year earlier, I had scanned the crowd trying to figure out who ‘my people’ were, uncertain which of the tables of silver-haired diners would be ‘mine’. By that stage I had already attended around forty meetings like this in other pubs in other Australian suburbs. In fact, life was starting to feel like a perennial pub-crawl. I was attending SIP meetings in over a dozen pubs and clubs around greater Sydney and Melbourne, flying back and forth between the two cities every fortnight to try and catch as many of the meetings as possible. So, while on that first night I walked into this new Melbourne pub ‘cold’, having not yet met any of the organisers or attendees, I was soon able to distinguish which table I should approach and before long I was warmly welcomed and beckoned to ‘please, join us’.

However, tonight there was none of the usual chatter about mutual friends, holiday plans, news, politics or weather. With little conversation, we quickly finished our meals and collectively moved down the corridor to the meeting room. I knew I needed to get in there promptly to secure my usual seat at the back of the room, offering a good view of the audience. And I had a feeling that numbers would be up somewhat tonight, given the topic. But before I had even opened the door I could hear that the numbers, indeed, were well and truly ‘up’. In fact, the room was already packed. While usually we would find a handful of early arrivals gathered to have a cuppa³ and a quiet chat before the meeting, tonight the room buzzed with anticipation and urgency. Energetic conversation filled the large room, huddles of people vigorously talking in earnest discussion, feeling compelled to share the fears, worries and frustrations that had brought them there tonight.

‘Something has to be done about it.’

‘When are they going to wake up to themselves?’

‘But if we leave, who’s going to be left?’

And the fliers made clear the reason for the clamour:

The People Speak, But Who Listens?
One local parish’s attempt to be heard.

³ Australian slang for ‘cup of tea’

A Catalyst for Renewal

Some seventeen years earlier, on a cool Sunday afternoon in early July 1994, a small handful of devoted but disillusioned Catholics⁴ gathered in Sydney to discuss much the same issues with much the same urgency and passion. Being loyal Catholics, they wanted to explore how they might band together to spark renewal in a Church⁵ that simultaneously frustrated their minds and lives yet captivated their hearts and souls.

Their list of frustrations was in many ways no different from those shared by many Catholics today. Church attendance figures were falling, church leaders seemed increasingly out of touch with the lived realities of contemporary Catholic life, and few young people were entering religious vocations. Most importantly however, the exciting changes heralded by the Second Vatican Council – or ‘Vatican II’ – seemed to have fallen flat. True, the Mass⁶ was now in the vernacular of the people, the priest faced the congregation, and confession seemed more accessible through the use of the three rites of reconciliation.⁷ But the empowered and empowering lay⁸ spirituality that the Second Vatican Council had promised in the 1960s still seemed largely out of reach. Roles for lay ministry remained limited in most parishes. If three decades of waiting, hoping and trusting had not proved successful, then what was a loyal Catholic to do?

As the group would later go on to formally state, ‘something decisive and original happened at that meeting. The group took on a life of its own’. I asked Hillary, one of the group’s founders, to recall her feelings during those early days in 1994:

It was *very* exciting, to go to that first meeting and to realise there were a whole lot of people who were similarly energised...⁹ And, um, to start

⁴ This thesis will use the term ‘Catholic’ to refer to the Roman Catholic Church and its members. The use of this term is not intended to ignore the shared origins of the Eastern Catholic Churches (or Oriental Catholic Church) and their full communion with the Latin Church.

⁵ In this thesis, the word church will be capitalised when referring to the institution of the Church (specifically, the Roman Catholic Church). When the word is used simply as a noun it will not be capitalised, as for example ‘church grounds’.

⁶ The term ‘Mass’ represents the principal liturgical ritual, or church service, of the Catholic Church.

⁷ See Chapter Five, footnote 4 for a description of the three rites of Catholic reconciliation.

⁸ The term ‘lay’ or ‘laity’ represents members of the Catholic Church who are not ordained. It is used to demarcate difference from the clergy, i.e. those who have taken clerical vows, such as priests (Boudinhon, 1910).

⁹ In this thesis, an ellipsis of three dots (...) will be used where I have omitted words in the interest of clarity or brevity. An em-dash (—) will be used to represent places where an interview participant leaves a sentence incomplete.

imagining things. Even so, it stumbled forward. I don't want you to get the impression that it was grand and— I mean, we did the full thing, we had butcher's paper,¹⁰ we'd go to meetings where we'd all divide into groups and do the mission statements, and what are the key things that are going to define us, and all that stuff.

What we were very big on was keeping a focus on spiritual growth. So, we were very concerned about ending up just becoming a lobby group, or some form of perpetual complainants, or somebody who wrote 'Dear Bishop... Yours sincerely, and in anger, parishioner X'. [laughs]¹¹ We just weren't interested! We were interested in constructively getting on with renewing the joy of the tradition for a whole lot of people...

Determined to avoid being branded a rebel group, they soon agreed it was critically important that their efforts be non-confrontational in manner. The group took seriously Pope Paul VI's (1964) call to engage in a 'sincere and friendly dialogue' with 'all [people] of good will', based on a hopeful spirituality which stresses 'what we all have in common rather than what divides us' (nn. 93, 109, 112).¹² As such, rather than barracking against the hierarchy¹³ of the Church, the group sought instead to produce a 'catalyst for renewal' *within* the Catholic Church. And what was to be the key to this non-confrontational project of renewal? In their own words:

We began to focus quite explicitly on 'conversation' as the way of being a 'catalyst'. We did not see ourselves forming a group or movement that was parallel to or in any way antagonistic towards the institutional Church. Rather, we wanted to become honest brokers of conversation, with the expectation that good conversation could be an effective catalyst for renewal within the Church. Thus, at the end of 1994, we decided to call ourselves Catalyst for Renewal, and we stated our mission in the following way:

We are believers who are attempting to establish a forum for conversation within the Catholic Church of Australia. Our aim is to prompt open exchanges among the community of believers, mindful of the diversity of expressions of faith in contemporary Australia. This springs explicitly from

¹⁰ 'Butcher's paper' is a form of sturdy craft paper often used to make posters by hand.

¹¹ In this thesis, square brackets will be used to indicate words that I have inserted into quotes for the purpose of clarity or confidentiality. They are also used to indicate expressions of laughter, other non-verbal utterances and body language.

¹² Catholic Church documents are often structured according to sections or paragraphs rather than pages. As such, these quotes are referenced by the abbreviations 'n.' and 'nn.' to indicate a section or sections.

¹³ In this thesis, I will adopt the language of my participants by using terms like 'church hierarchy', 'church leaders' or 'the Vatican' to refer to the organisational leadership of the Roman Catholic Church. My intent is not to reify bureaucratic church structures but rather to faithfully represent the subjective distinctions held by my participants between the laity and 'church leadership'. This is a challenging distinction to hold, given that priests and bishops at times are considered to be 'of the people' yet at other times are seen to represent 'the hierarchy'. However, as Dillon (1999) argues, the hierarchical nature of the Church's organisational structure remains an empirical fact, and the use of these terms will simplify communication for the purpose of this thesis.

the spirit of Pope John XXIII and Vatican II: 'Let there be unity in what is necessary, freedom in what is unsettled, and charity in any case' (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 92) (Catalyst for Renewal, n.d.).

In 1996, Catalyst for Renewal – or simply 'Catalyst' – established a monthly journal entitled *The Mix*. Its title was a pun on the slang name for a Catholic person, 'Mick', but also expressed the hope that the journal would come to represent a 'mix' of opinions from across the full spectrum of the Australian Catholic community. *The Mix* was not to be simply a platform for anti-institutional gripes. Rather, the Editors hoped to create a space for meaningful conversation between voices that they felt too often spoke in parallel monologues. As such, the Editors determined that they would seek to represent both the voices of the institutional Church as well as those who were not often heard in official church discourse. While church leaders may speak with the authority of the institution, lay voices were to be recognised for the authority of their faith.

In time, *The Mix* spread to a readership of at least two and a half thousand people, including bishops, priests, lay people, nuns and brothers. On the front page of their first edition, the Editors proudly affirmed that 'our desire is to work with and in the institutional Church, freely, honestly and compassionately', being 'mindful of the temptations of perfectionism, of expecting more of the Church and her human representatives and structures than is realistic'. They went on to stress the need to partner *with* rather than *oppose* the structures of the Church:

We share Pope Paul VI's perception that 'we live in the Church at a privileged moment of the Spirit' (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 75). We want to listen intelligently to the signs of the times and respond generously to the call of the Spirit... accepting both the rights and responsibilities that come with our baptism... so that the Church can be a sign of hope in a world that cries out for such a sign... We all must... join with the Church in her struggle to find new expressions of the Gospel at this time (Whelan et al., 1996, pp. 1–2).

Where then should this group of loyal Catholics attempt their task of creating 'new expressions of the Gospel'? What better place than that icon of Australian urban sociality, that haven of egalitarian convergence: the local pub. And so, in May 1995, Catalyst convened its first meeting of 'Spirituality in the Pub' (SIP). While Catalyst would also go on to regularly convene a variety of other meetings, including theologically-oriented 'reflection mornings' and occasional dinners, SIP came to

represent the complex blend of faithful loyalty and forthright dissent that Catalyst would soon become known for.

Keen to stress an identity of non-religiosity, Catalyst for Renewal selected a pub as one their key meeting places so as to make it clear that while their conversations would aim to support the spiritual life of the Church, these were not to become religious events. While priests, nuns and members of the church hierarchy would be welcome participants at these meetings, this was not to be *their* forum. Seeking to counter centuries of hierarchical submission and indoctrinated demands for obedience, SIP was to be an independent space for questioning, critique and personal reflexivity, where the voices of all participants were to be valued equally and shared symmetrically, independent of their religious credentials.

Nonetheless, as a testament to their loyalty to the Church, Catalyst encouraged SIP organisers¹⁴ to ensure that at least ‘some of the speakers represent explicitly the Catholic Church’s teaching’, particularly when discussing a politically-sensitive topic. Not only did this approach ensure the Church’s voice was properly represented in SIP discourse, Catalyst suggested ‘it is also enlivening to discover the spiritual and moral riches of the Tradition in these conversations’ (Whelan, n.d., p. 6). Indeed, a large part of the work of the Catalyst Executive Committee was spent in developing and delivering ‘reflection’ materials that would reacquaint Catalyst members and SIP participants with the richness of the Catholic tradition and its doctrine. They were careful to avoid presenting these as training or teaching materials, as this might bring them into conflict with the teaching role of the magisterium.¹⁵ But as Hillary described it:

[W]e moved heaven and earth, as it were, to ennoble the tradition. The capital ‘T’ tradition. And to really skill ourselves... So, we really tried hard. And [we] would put out once a month these fabulous pink sheets of suggestions, quite deep suggestions about spiritual growth, suggestions for group work. I mean, we felt that we absolutely kept faith with the spirit of the church, and service to the church, and Vatican II.

¹⁴ SIP is an initiative of Catalyst for Renewal, however the need for SIP organisers soon outstripped Catalyst membership as the SIP concept grew in popularity and became a nation-wide enterprise. As such, many SIP organisers are not members of Catalyst for Renewal. While Catalyst seeks to maintain a mentoring role with new SIP groups, Catalyst membership is not required in order to establish a new SIP.

¹⁵ The word ‘magisterium’ literally means the authority of a master or teacher. In the Catholic Church the term has come to represent the teaching authority of the Pope and bishops of the Church (Gaillardetz, 1997).

Yet despite their deep loyalty to the Catholic Church, Catalyst's decision to situate their conversations beyond the walls of the church was also a strategic one. Recognising the limits that come with the use of church facilities, Catalyst for Renewal hoped to provide a safe space for reflection on issues that would not be permitted discussion within church grounds. In the words of a SIP newcomer, here was a space where one might 'whisper one's heresies'. Contraception, euthanasia, suicide, homosexuality, divorce, and the role of women – all these and more were welcome topics in a process of learning (as they themselves describe it) to 'live imaginatively and creatively within our institutions', on a journey of becoming 'more truly human'.

Loyalty and Dissent

This thesis explores the outcomes of my ethnographic participation in the 'Spirituality in the Pub' movement. It introduces a fieldsite that is paradoxically defined by devotion and anger, loyalty and dissent, in which participants – or 'Sippers'¹⁶ – seek to become 'honest brokers of conversation' in a Church that remains bound by a monological imagination – one in which church leaders hold the only voices of authority.

Having been raised in a small Protestant sect that was marked by almost constant schism, I was deeply conscious of the tendency for independent faith-based groups to dissolve into power plays and internal conflicts. Yet what fascinated me about SIP was that it had somehow managed to not only survive but also continue to thrive many years after its inception. I could not help but wonder how they had managed to accomplish the seemingly impossible, asking myself: 'What is it that holds this group together? How does this group sustain its momentum?'

I soon discovered that there was no romantic vision of a utopian near future holding the group together. Sippers are painfully aware of the shortcomings they see in their Church, and the many decades of disciplined effort that would be required before their vision of a dialogical church might be realised, one in which all voices are valued equally. As each wave of scandal and crisis hit the Catholic Church, Sippers found themselves often asking if now was the time to finally pack their bags and leave the Church behind. For many Catholics, these seemingly endless crises proved too much to

¹⁶ People who regularly attend SIP tend to call themselves 'Sippers'.

bear; the intransigent and even secretive response of church leaders causing them to lose faith in the Church of their childhood. Yet despite the countless reasons to let disillusionment win, Sippers continued to seek ways to remain in the Church, to live 'imaginatively and creatively' within its structures. Refusing to allow the flames of anger to consume their faith, Sippers instead attempt to channel this aggrieved passion into a productive energy that maintains their commitment to the spiritual foundations of the Church. By choosing to attend both SIP and Mass, they form parallel lines in their lives; separate but mutually supportive arenas that help them to live within the creative tension of both loyalty *and* dissent as they seek to renew their Church from within. At the heart of this renewal project lies a methodology centred on conversation, one that emphasises mutuality and understanding over confrontation and conflict. It is to this conversational methodology that we now turn.

Conversation as a methodology of renewal

Conversation has been described in anthropological texts as 'the fundamental ground on which social life rests', and a major concern of anthropological investigation (Rapport and Overing, 2014, p. 90). As perhaps one of the ultimate cultural achievements, the 'conversation of humankind' (cf. Oakeshott, 1962) is understood as a fundamental building block for the establishment of a civil society that is based on an appreciation for the diversity of human awareness and expression and a recognition of the many 'different ways of being human' (Rapport, 2012, p. 113).

It was to this task of creatively finding different ways of 'being human' within the Catholic Church that Catalyst for Renewal set its mind when it identified conversation as the defining metaphor of the group. Arguing that the Church, and indeed society as a whole, failed to offer good models for conversation, the group's founders decided that, 'We have to invent them. We have to be pioneers of conversation' (Whelan et al., 2006a, p. 1). Catalyst was deeply conscious however of the need to avoid the 'empty talk' that Pope Paul VI warned was already causing 'fatigue' in society when, in 1975, he released his apostolic exhortation¹⁷ on evangelisation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Whelan et al., 1999). Rather, Catalyst leaders set their minds to the task of developing forums for 'good

¹⁷ An apostolic exhortation is a written communication from the Pope that encourages members of the Church to undertake a particular activity. It does not define church doctrine, but encourages obedience.

conversation' which would be 'life-giving' and directly contribute to the renewal of the Church.

To this end, Catalyst drew its blueprint for its 'theology of conversation' from the Second Vatican Council – a series of meetings across 1962-65 in which all the Catholic bishops of the world gathered to establish the priorities of the Church in the modern era. Catalyst emphasised the bishops' focus on collegiality and 'respectful listening' as being at the core of the Council's unexpected success (Whelan et al., 2001). Indeed, most of the three thousand bishops attending the Council arrived with skepticism, expecting a short-lived 'rubber stamp council' (Wilde, 2007, p. 14). Many bishops felt the Church was in need of renewal, but 'had become so accustomed to the highly centralized doctrinal and jurisdictional operation of the Church' that they were pessimistic about the likelihood of the Council generating any real progress (McGrath, in Wilde, 2007, p. 14). However, through a careful emphasis on the collegial and dialogical *process* of the Council, over the course of the Council's three years the bishops of the world were able to produce radically new doctrine that would fundamentally change the direction of the Church.

Taking up this emphasis on process, Catalyst argues that a respect for the 'primacy of relationships' lies at the heart of 'good conversation'. It describes such conversation as 'a particular way of engaging with people' and 'being present to others' which recognises that 'good process' will enable each conversation partner to learn from and thus be transformed by the other (Whelan et al., 2005a, p. 1):

This is why we focus on the process of conversation rather than any particular agenda. Apart from the general agenda of renewal, Catalyst has no agenda. What we promote is a process: conversation. A group can maintain a lively sense of unity amidst a lively sense of diversity of opinions and preferred agendas, if the spirit of conversation is maintained. This process is far more important than any particular agenda you or I might wish to promote (Whelan, Doogue and Hammond, 2003, p. 1).

At the heart of Catalyst for Renewal's understanding of conversation is a recognition of the shared etymological roots of the words 'conversation' and 'conversion'. With conversion (in Latin, *conversio*) meaning 'turning together with', and conversation (Latin, *conversari*) meaning 'to turn about with', Catalyst thus suggests that a spirit of

‘turning *with*’ – rather than *against* – underpins good conversation.¹⁸ This necessarily involves a willingness to put self-interests aside and seek transformation in the shared ground of conversation. As one of Catalyst’s founders stated it in the first edition of *The Mix*:

One of the most precious things in life is human conversation. Good conversation is a sign of maturity, a sign that people have grown beyond mere egotism and self-preoccupation. It requires self-transcendence... [and] an ability to relinquish control and submit to a bigger reality present in and through the subject under discussion (Whelan, 1996a, p. 4).

In this way, Catalyst suggests that good conversation is not about mere ‘talking’ or ‘telling’, but rather it is about the mutual task of seeking new insights and greater wisdom together. Catalyst proposes that good conversation thus requires three essential components. Firstly, good conversation is focused not on competitive problem-solving but rather on the call of the question itself:

[G]ood conversation... can only happen when the question is the focus of attention. The question at hand has a life of its own that must be respected... If the focus shifts from the question to, for example, scoring a point or defending an ideology, good conversation ceases (Whelan, Thyer, Doogue, Kelly, et al., 1997, p. 1).

Secondly, good conversation must be pursued with a ‘disposition of detachment’, ensuring that personal agendas and interests are subsumed to the collective search for shared wisdom:

Good conversation is, in the end, an experience of grace. It is not achieved by conquest but by facilitation and intelligent submission to the call of the Truth. We remain open to the possibility of discovery, ever available to learn. No room here for egotism, for ‘win-lose’ arguments or self-defensiveness. Detachment is essential (Whelan, Thyer, Doogue, Kelly, et al., 1997, p. 1).

Thirdly, good conversation is characterised by a stance of ‘active mutuality’ and shared vulnerability. It requires an ability to mutually submit to the ‘life’ of the question:

An ability to flow with the to-and-fro of the conversation, to listen and hear, to respond with words and manner that pick up and foster the call of the question. No room here for hidden agenda or pushing ideologies. Good conversation emerges in self-forgetfulness. It is as if the parties to the conversation meet on neutral territory. Such territory spells vulnerability (Whelan, Thyer, Doogue, Kelly, et al., 1997, p. 1).

¹⁸ See Lee and Cowan (2003, pp. 11–12) and Peace (2009, p. 127) for further detail on these etymological roots.

With these three principles in mind, Catalyst leaders agreed that the ‘Spirit of Catalyst’ would emphasise conversation over confrontation. Yet they recognised that this was to be no simple task. As the conversational project of Spirituality in the Pub spread across dozens of pubs and clubs around Australia, practical questions abounded about how these meetings should be run. In time, SIP meetings came to follow a relatively standard pattern that provided a consistency to the SIP experience while also allowing the unique flavor of each local SIP to flourish.

An Evening at Spirituality in the Pub

It sounds like the beginning of a corny joke: ‘A priest, a rabbi and a bishop walk into a bar...’. In the case of SIP, it is probably more representative to say ‘a mother, an ex-priest, and a teacher walk into a bar’, yet amongst all these characters one would also include imams, rabbis, nuns, ministers, lawyers, gay rights advocates, environmentalists, students, politicians, psychologists, lobbyists, journalists, doctors, academics, and radio commentators, as well as the occasional plumber, cleaner, nurse and child care worker.

In 2010, this unique group of spiritual seekers celebrated their fifteenth anniversary in fine style. They had several keynote speakers leading the conversation, including ABC¹⁹ commentator Geraldine Doogue, media personality Julie McCrossin, and former Justice of the Australian High Court, the Hon Michael Kirby. While clearly this is an impressive panel, it is not unexpected given the history of eminent speakers that SIP has secured over the past twenty-three years. A small selection is included in Table 1 on the following page.

Yet what is perhaps more surprising than the line-up of speakers is the location. Hearing the names Michael Kirby or Geraldine Doogue, most Australians picture them on a stage in a large hall addressing a crowd of hundreds. But instead, on a mid-week evening each month it is well-known speakers like these, along with Mum-and-Dad speakers we have never heard of, that shuffle into the back rooms and side bars of pubs and clubs around Australia to talk about their passions with an audience of similarly questing believers.

¹⁹ Australian Broadcasting Corporation – Australia’s leading public broadcaster

Table 1: Selection of previous speakers at ‘Spirituality in the Pub’²⁰

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geraldine Doogue AO, Journalist and ABC presenter • Hugh Mackay AO, Social analyst and author • The Honourable Michael Kirby AC CMG • Caroline Jones AO, ABC’s ‘Australian Story’ host and spirituality author • Dr Simon Longstaff, Executive Director, St James Ethics Centre • Father Frank Brennan SJ AO, Human rights lawyer and academic • Rachael Kohn, ABC Radio presenter and author on spirituality and religion • Nick Greiner AC, former Premier of New South Wales²¹ • Dorothy McRae-McMahon, former Uniting Church minister • Major Frank Wilson, senior clergy in the Salvation Army church • Robert Mayze, Jungian therapist and Islamic convert • Dr Ruth Powell, Researcher for Australia’s interdenominational National Church Life survey • Bishop Geoffrey Robinson, retired Catholic Bishop and advocate against clerical abuse • Joy Murphy Wandin, senior elder of the indigenous Wurundjeri people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sir William Deane AC KBE KC*SG QC, former Governor-General of Australia • Kim Beazley AC, former leader of the Australian Labour Party²² • Father Chris Riley AM, CEO of the charity Youth Off the Streets • Imam Afroz Ali (President and Founder of the Al-Ghazzali Centre for Islamic Sciences & Human Development) • Pat O’Shane AM, magistrate and Aboriginal activist • Reverend Tim Costello AO, Chief Executive Officer World Vision Australia • Ruth Cracknell AM, actress and author • Professor David Tacey, scholar and author in spirituality and psychology • Rabbi Raymond Apple AO, former Senior Rabbi of the Great Synagogue of Sydney • Associate Professor Ian Johnston, Physicist, University of Sydney • Swami Dayasagar, yoga teacher • Sean McArdle, Schizophrenia sufferer • Father Tom Rouse, former chaplain to Villawood Immigration Detention Centre • Stephanie Dowrick, Interfaith minister and author on spirituality
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By the time I finished my fieldwork in 2012 there were twenty-five groups operating under the name ‘Spirituality in the Pub’ around Australia, attracting anywhere from a dozen or so attendees to crowds of a hundred or more. While most of these SIPs were

²⁰ Many of SIP’s most prominent speakers hold honorary and organisational post-nominals. In Table 1, post-nominals represent: AC (Companion of the Order of Australia), AM (Member of the Order of Australia), AO (Officer of the Order of Australia), CMG (Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George), KBE (Knight of the Order of the British Empire), KC*SG (Knight Commander with Star of the Papal Order of St Gregory), QC (Queen’s Counsel), SJ (Society of Jesus).

²¹ New South Wales (NSW) is a state on the east coast of Australia. The title ‘Premier’ is reserved for the elected head of state government.

²² The Australian Labour Party is one of Australia’s main federal political parties.

organised by groups of ‘cradle Catholics’,²³ the focus of the SIP movement is on promoting conversation across the community of all believers and as such they generally seek to create an ecumenical climate at SIP nights. While the majority of SIP participants claim a Christian affiliation, one will also regularly find Islamic, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, ‘New Age’ and indigenous faith traditions represented, while some even reject any religious affiliation, preferring to describe themselves as ‘no-name believers’, agnostics or even atheists.

In the words of one of the founders of SIP, Esther:

Those who attend are thoughtful people, interested in their own spiritual development, as well as being keen to discuss issues that go to the heart of what ‘really matters’ in our individual lives, in religious places of worship and in our broader society. They come from a wide range of backgrounds – those who see themselves on the fringe of conventional religious experience; those from within the mainstream Catholic Church and those from other faith traditions; and some with no particular religious affiliations at all. Some do not believe in God. All are welcome... We believe that we all have much to learn from each other.

Located in a quiet room away from the main bar, each evening of conversation is generally sparked by two speakers who have been asked to speak briefly on a topic nominated by the group’s organising committee, although some SIP committees prefer to invite just one speaker. Broad topical themes are often selected well in advance by the committee, sometimes up to a year ahead of time, yet speakers are encouraged to interpret specified themes within the set of life experiences that are relevant to them, telling the story, as it were, of their own spiritual journey. Table 2 outlines just a few of the many topics that have been covered by SIP over the course of the past two decades.

Table 2: Selection of previous topics at ‘Spirituality in the Pub’

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The getting of wisdom: Contemporary spiritual paths in Australia • Who is God? • Aboriginal reconciliation: Our need for each other • The spirituality of Islam • The truth and consequences of war: God on whose side? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contemplation in a noisy world • IVF technologies: The challenge of science • Women: Created equal, running second • Euthanasia: What does it mean to play God? • Conscience: A modern context
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²³ A slang term used in the Roman Catholic Church to describe people born and raised in the Catholic faith.

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keening and dreaming: Ancient spiritualities• Church leadership: What's it like to be in the hot seat?• Does humanity need religion?• Our pilgrim church: Balancing the claims of the old and the new• The Church: Why stay?• Your life may be the only Gospel some people will ever read• Does God have a sense of humour? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wealth creation: Why we don't talk about it• Spirituality and mysticism• Jesus behind the headlines• Holocaust: Making sense of death and suffering• Prayer: What is it?• Healing symbols: A search for an Australian identity• Who gets saved and by whom? The salvation dilemma |
|---|---|

SIP evenings almost always occur according to a strict schedule, with the meeting starting at 7.30pm and finishing at '9pm sharp', as Esther would often tell me, ensuring that people can attend knowing they will be able to return on time to their busy lives. In some cases, Sippers gather for a meal before the meeting, buying their own meals and drinks as per any other night at the pub. No payment is required for entry to the SIP meeting itself. Indeed, the publican generally offers the use of the room for free to SIP organisers, who choose a quiet mid-week evening in order to appeal to the business interests of the publican. Yet organisers generally 'pass the plate' at some point in the evening, encouraging a gold coin or small note donation 'to defray costs'. Such donations help to support the minor administrative costs of printing fliers, handouts and signs as well as compensating speakers for the cost of their travel. Occasionally, donations even stretch to cover the cost of a small gift of wine or chocolates as a token of thanks to SIP speakers, who otherwise give their time for free.

Once the meeting begins, SIP organisers generally open with a nod to the 'spirit of conversation' that inspired the SIP movement, reminding attendees that this is an opportunity not simply to listen, but also to participate and learn from each other in an atmosphere of support and mutuality. Each invited speaker then talks for about fifteen minutes (or half an hour if a single speaker is preferred), before a short break shifts the group into gear – not only giving Sippers a chance to buy another drink at the bar but also creating an intentional break from the dynamics of presentational monologue to a tone of 'conversation' or dialogue. Here, speakers and audience switch roles, with the floor being opened for about forty minutes of comments, questions and reflections from the audience. This dialogue often takes a 'Q&A' style that is moderated by the

evening's appointed MC. Yet conversations also occasionally spring loose from this moderated format, evolving into a relatively free-flowing discussion between audience members quite independently of the moderator and invited speakers. Here we see then an ideal example of what SIP set out to achieve: creating a space of freedom for spiritual conversation.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a four-pillar research methodology, entailing a combination of ethnographic participation, in-depth interviewing, survey and documentary analysis.

I first began attending SIP evenings as a research student in 2006. Having searched the web for the terms 'spirituality' and 'Sydney' (being my home town at that stage),²⁴ I hoped to find an interesting field site for the study of contemporary expressions of religiously informed spirituality in urban Australia. After attending a few meetings and disclosing my identity as a researcher, I expressed an interest in how the group organised itself. Happily, I was immediately invited to become part of their organising committee. As such I was given a chance to enter the backstage 'management zone' of SIP and was soon given the roles of 'official photographer' and 'publicity manager' along with the more mundane tasks of stuffing envelopes, setting up chairs and greeting new arrivals. But, while being an active participant, I still sought to take a relatively quiet role – even managing on several occasions to politely avoid accepting requests to be one of the invited speakers. This dual role of quiet yet active participation enabled me to gain identification as a 'regular' member of the group without interfering with the group's dynamics unduly.

In addition to SIP nights and SIP planning meetings, I also attended other events related to SIP and Catalyst for Renewal events. This included informal social gatherings, occasional SIP dinners – where the SIP format is modelled for a wider audience – Catalyst dinners, Catalyst 'reflection mornings', and annual conferences or 'live-in' weekends where Catalyst and SIP representatives from around Australia gather to reflect on the purpose of SIP and the means by which it should best continue. These 'model SIPs' and conferences offered incredibly fertile arenas for observing the

²⁴ Capital city of New South Wales, Australia.

explicit articulation and negotiation of SIP's shared values and 'ideal' practices – what Lesch (1994) would call the meta-communicative dynamics of the group.

Over time I widened my attendance to include other inner city, suburban and country SIPs in NSW and Victoria²⁵ in order to capture the unique social histories that had shaped the Catholic subcultures in each of these regions. In addition to social contact with SIP participants, I attended over one hundred and fifty hours of SIP meetings, seventy-five hours of organising committee meetings, sixty-six hours of Catalyst meetings, and seventy-five hours of SIP conferences and special events. Most of these meetings and events occurred over the period of March 2010 to September 2011. In total, I produced almost two thousand pages of field notes during this time.

In addition to ongoing involvement in these events, I undertook in-depth interviews with thirty-five participants from around NSW and Victoria, each of whom are represented by pseudonyms in this thesis. I adopted a purposive sampling strategy, seeking to interview both regular participants and organisers, including several who were involved in the establishment of SIP and Catalyst, as well as some individuals who stood on the periphery of SIP – newcomers, previous attendees, and part-timers who would not necessarily consider themselves to be 'Sippers' but rather simply 'came to watch'.

These interviews took a semi-structured format, which started by seeking an overall narrative about the individual's spiritual or religious life-history before moving on to the question of how they came to be involved in SIP. From there conversation would move towards identifying the goals of SIP, and what it is that keeps Sippers coming back, if indeed my interviewee was still a regular participant. Alternatively, I sought to understand what it was that disenchanting them, if they were no longer regulars. Such conversations inevitably centred on the distinction between religion and spirituality, and the many strengths and weaknesses of the traditional church. Finally, I would ask participants to reflect on their hopes and fears for the future of SIP. No payment was offered for these interviews.

Being semi-structured in nature, interview length depended on the enthusiasm and availability of the participant. Some interviews were as short as half an hour, squeezed

²⁵ Victoria is a southern state on the east coast of Australia.

into the margins of SIP meetings. Others were as long as four hours, although most interviews were around one and a half to two hours in length. Most interviews were conducted in the individual's home; however, some occurred in coffee shops, pubs, and even shopping mall food courts – in short, wherever the participant felt most comfortable. Some interviews spread over several meetings, in cases where follow-up questions were required.

These conversations resulted in over fifty-five hours of interviewing time and produced transcripts cumulating in over one hundred and sixty thousand words, which I later analysed using Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software. Most importantly, these interviews provided an opportunity for me to understand the various life histories, motivations and needs that participants brought to their experience of SIP.

The third pillar of my research methodology came from a survey I conducted as a gesture of thanks to the SIP community. Having attended a broad range of SIP locations over several years, it soon became apparent to me that I had unique access into understanding the needs and interests of the SIP population writ large – something that SIP's Sydney headquarters recognised they needed better insight into. As such I offered to conduct a simple survey when attending my regular locations around NSW and Victoria.

After co-ordinating the survey design with SIP organisers, in 2011 I distributed the printed surveys in person at SIP nights. I received over four hundred completed surveys over the period of about three months. I chose a sample of nine SIP locations from the twenty or more that were active at the time, selectively seeking to represent a broad spectrum of the differences I had discovered between the various locations over the five years in which I had been attending these meetings. I included inner city, city fringe and suburban SIPs in Sydney and Melbourne as well as rural SIPs in country Victoria. Several of the selected SIPs were organised purely by lay Catholics, while some included priests or nuns in their organising committee. One SIP was led by a Uniting Church pastor, and a couple had one or more members of other faith traditions on their committee.

Finally, textual analysis formed the fourth pillar of this study's research methodology. SIP has a large collection of articles, pamphlets, reflection pages, newsletters and meeting summaries that its members have written over the years, as well as a sporadically updated website. Over the period April 1996 to July 2007, Catalyst for Renewal also published their monthly journal, *The Mix*. Producing one hundred and fourteen issues across these eleven years, *The Mix* offers over nine hundred pages of formal enunciation of Catalyst mission and theology, as well as Catholic news highlights, Letters to the Editors of *The Mix*, scriptural and doctrinal excerpts, book reviews, and personal narratives. Analysis of this rich collection of texts provided another level of data for exploring how the group has formally enunciated its values, purpose and structure over the years as well as giving personal insight into the lived experience of being Catholic.

Quotes from these published materials are not represented with pseudonyms in this thesis, as the authorship of these texts is already evident in the public domain. Indeed, two voices were present with particular regularity in the pages of *The Mix* and other Catalyst publications. The first, Father Michael Whelan SM,²⁶ is an Australian Marist priest who has lectured and written on spirituality for over three decades, having gained his PhD in 'formative spirituality' in 1984.²⁷ The second is Geraldine Doogue, an Australian journalist and broadcaster who is known for her insightful commentary on Australian life. Having hosted religious programming on Australian TV and radio since 1998, Geraldine is widely recognised as a leading voice on the role of religion in Australian society. Together, Michael and Geraldine offer a constant thread through the pages of *The Mix*. Of course, countless other voices are included in the conversation, including the many mothers, husbands, teachers, nuns, and priests who feature in the journal's articles, letters and personal stories. However, as the only enduring members of the Editorial team over *The Mix's* eleven years, Michael and Geraldine embody the founding spirit of the journal. By weaving together the institutional authority that priesthood affords with the secularised personal authority of a prominent lay voice, Michael and Geraldine personify the spirit of conversation on which Spirituality in the Pub was formed.

²⁶ The post-nominal SM indicates a person is a member of the religious order called the 'Society of Mary', or 'Marist Fathers'.

²⁷ In the Catholic context, the term 'formation' represents the maturing of one's relationship with God. 'Formative spirituality' is a model of spiritual formation proposed by Adrian van Kaam, a Dutch Roman Catholic priest and psychologist, under whom Michael Whelan studied.

Reflections on identity – navigating both ‘other’ and ‘us’ in the field

[T]he inevitable starting point for my interpretation of another’s selfhood is my own self.

(Cohen, 2002, p. 3)

The fact is, labels matter. The words we use to describe ourselves carry a wealth of meanings for the people around us, and hence, for how we see ourselves. Daughter, sister, female, Christian – each of these were labels I was born with and grew into. Each shaped how I came to see myself, as well as how I saw others – those whom I was connected to, and importantly, those from whom I was different.

Ironically, a key social group I learnt to recognise as ‘others’ were those who called themselves ‘Catholic’. In fact, whether it was official church teaching or not, I came to understand that the Catholic Church represented the ‘Antichrist’,²⁸ and thus that all things ‘Catholic’ were best avoided. As such, I managed to pass my entire childhood without having knowingly befriended a single Catholic person, despite having developed warm schoolyard friendships with children from Hindu, Buddhist, Christadelphian, Baptist and atheist families. It was some years after leaving my childhood church that I came across ‘Spirituality in the Pub’, and upon discovering that it was a Catholic initiative I decided it was time to rid myself of this last vestigial taboo.

I attended my first Mass at St Francis in Melbourne in 2007. I happily managed to escape without being proselytised by the overzealous doorkeeper who featured in my imagination, nor was I struck by lightning by the still-watching God of my childhood. What I did leave with, however, was a marked sense of how deep this thing called ‘Catholicity’ was. Not only was I amazed by how on earth anyone knew which passage of which book they should be reading aloud (I spent most of my time shuffling between the multiple books I found in the pew, trying to find the right section!), but how also they knew when to stand, sit, sing, or approach the altar, given no obvious instructions seemed forthcoming in this regard either. Clearly, being Catholic was the kind of skill that takes a lifetime to perfect.

²⁸ ‘Antichrist’ is a term used in Christian eschatology to describe the greatest of all false Messiahs. He is understood to be a figure of absolute evil, against whom Jesus Christ will successfully battle in the ‘Second Coming’, or final days of this world.

After finally giving up on trying to understand the unfamiliar rituals of this truly foreign subculture, I paused to absorb the ambience of the place. It was only then that I noticed the sense of warmth between parishioners, the beauty of the rituals, the simple splendour of the architecture. As someone who had only ever attended church services in council buildings and school halls, I was awed by the intricacies of the art that adorned the room and windows. I had not yet discovered the discipline of anthropology²⁹ and its unique perspectives on understanding the other, but even then it was clear to me – there was something different, and truly remarkable, about the experience of being Catholic.

As my fieldwork progressed and I came to identify my field participants as friends, we would laugh over my stories of that first visit to St Francis and the discomfort I had felt at being adrift in a foreign sea of Catholicism. My SIP friends would occasionally comment on how remarkable it was that I was even interested in studying SIP given my childhood education in the evils of the Catholic Antichrist. In fact, many Sippers seemed surprised to discover that I was not Catholic because, after all, who would be interested in SIP other than Catholics, and how might I, an outsider, possibly have come across SIP to begin with?

Yet, at the same time as being an outsider to Catholicism, I was also soon considered ‘one of us’ by my fellow Sippers. A large part of this insider status was due to my willingness to openly identify as Christian, albeit non-Catholic. While I do not actively embrace any particular denominational affiliation and rarely attend any religious services, I continue to hold a belief in the existence of a divine force, and given my socialisation in the Christian tradition, I feel comfortable loosely describing my belief system as ‘Christian’.

As a field researcher in a Christian community, such a statement afforded me entry into the shared status of being ‘one of us’. However, as an anthropologist, I was conscious that a statement of belief such as this is rarely heard in the halls of academia. As Glazier and Flowerday note:

²⁹ At this stage I was enrolled in a PhD program in the School of Marketing at the University of Sydney – I am one of the lucky few whose fieldsite led me to anthropology!

Coming to terms with the problem of belief and religious experience perhaps represents the last frontier for anthropology of religion and one of the greatest barriers to dialog between anthropologists and religious studies specialists. Whereas religious studies scholarship presupposes a belief in, or at least tacit acknowledgement of, the possibility of supernatural beings, anthropological discourse on religion seldom is grounded in belief statements (2003, p. 1).

While religious experience and belief have long been a focus of scholarly enquiry in the fields of psychology, religious studies and even sociology, anthropology has been marked by what Edith Turner terms a 'fear of religious emotion, perhaps meaning a shyness, an embarrassment with what one has been taught is a phony God.' She describes this feeling as 'almost sexually unpleasant, related to the dread of fundamentalism, in which one is snatched up and locked into a strict belief and morality system that one has, through Durkheim and Foucault, learned to hate' (Turner, 2003, pp. 109–110).

To openly affirm a religious identity, however loosely held, seems to represent what may be regarded as one of the last taboos of anthropological scholarship. While Max Weber may have opined his lack of religious 'musicality' as a serious detriment to his life's work (Glazier and Flowerday, 2003, p. 2), contemporary anthropologists typically hesitate when met with the lived reality of religious experience.³⁰ This hesitation can present real obstacles for creating trust and rapport with field participants (eg. Baer, 2003; Erez, 2013). Clearly, adopting the guise of a seeker would also eventually disrupt field relationships when the falsehood is discovered, let alone provoke internal crises of personal integrity and professionalism. Yet for those of us fortunate enough to be legitimately accepted as 'one of us' in our field sites, there comes an obligation to recognise the value of the ethnographer's personal experience in constituting a form of research data.

³⁰ Rodney Needham's *Belief, Language, and Experience* (1972) represents a rare early exception to this trend in anthropology. Inspired by his fieldwork observations of the Penan in Borneo, Needham came to question the type and value of ethnographic evidence used by anthropologists to identify and analyse belief statements. Borrowing from linguistic anthropology, Needham argued against the assumption that 'belief' is a universal category of experience. His call to abandon the term has been echoed by many, however subsequent efforts have still typically focussed on epistemological concerns rather than seeking to understand lived experience. The Spring 2008 special issue of 'Social Analysis' represents an encouraging step towards addressing the complexities of the problem of belief in cultural studies (cf. Lindquist and Coleman, 2008).

As Turner (2003) argues, it is neither 'good etiquette' nor 'good methodology' to ignore the data offered by one's own personal experiences of religious phenomena in the field. As such, while I had neither the desire nor ability to adopt the Catholic habitus³¹ for the purpose of research, my personal commitment to a Christian identity afforded me entry into conversations and confidences that might otherwise have been closed to a sceptical anthropologist, no matter how empathetic she might seem.³² This thesis thus represents an attempt to ensure that etic explanations of the theoretical causes and implications of Sipper identity are 'integrated with perspectives in which the voices of adherents register as strongly as the voices of researchers' (Glazier and Flowerday, 2003, p. 5).

Outline of Thesis Structure

This thesis is organised around the central themes of identity, voice and loyal dissent, which are the specific foci of Chapters Four, Five and Six respectively. However, in order to understand the salience of these three concepts in the lives of Sippers I must first place Spirituality in the Pub in its broader historic and social context. It is to that task that the first half of the thesis attends.

Chapter One situates the Catalyst for Renewal movement within the broader setting of what sociologists and religious scholars have termed the 'spiritual revolution' of the late twentieth century. This literature paints a picture of an increased thirst for experimental and autonomous spirituality whereby believers pursue a 'spirituality of seeking' over the 'spirituality of dwelling' advocated by mainstream religions (Wuthnow, 1998a). Choosing to 'believe without belonging', these seekers develop a personal bricolage of beliefs which reflect their unique circumstances, values and experiences (Davie, 1994). Set within the context of a post-secular religious landscape, in which theorists of secularisation have failed to convincingly argue for the pending demise of religion, SIP and Catalyst thus represent an attempt to balance the dialogic tensions of these spiritualities of 'dwelling' and 'seeking', within a pluralistic social milieu in which 'belief' is increasingly 'fragilised' by a multiplicity of viable positions on the spectrum between belief and unbelief (cf. Taylor, 2007).

³¹ The notion of habitus is explored in Chapter Four, pp. 124-126.

³² Gordon (1987) proposes that non-believers should adopt a posture of 'empathetic disagreement' when seeking to build rapport with proselytising groups.

Chapter Two moves the discussion to the Catholic Church, and reviews the ‘fortress mentality’ that characterised the Church up until the mid-twentieth century, and the model of sovereign authority from which this fortress mentality sprang. Based on a notion that the Church represented a perfect and complete society, church leaders had adopted a defensive stance of Armageddon-like proportions against the contagion of the modern world. Within the walls of the Catholic fortress sprang up an all-embracing ‘total institution’ which encompassed all parts of a Catholic person’s daily life from cradle to grave, providing a confident rhythm to life and all its questions. But in the 1960s the walls of the fortress started to show cracks, as the Church’s sense of supreme self-confidence gave way to increased lay questioning and even outright rejection of church doctrine. The remainder of this chapter offers four key examples of the experience of dissent and discontent that drove Catalyst’s founders to form an organised response to the crisis of authority they observed in the Church. These examples centre on the Church’s teaching on contraception, the role of women in the Church, Rome’s harsh 1998 assessment of the state of the Australian Church (known as the *Statement of Conclusions*), and the dramatic revelations of clerical sexual abuse and cover-ups which rocked the Catholic world in the early years of the twenty-first century. For Sippers, these four issues represent a clerical culture of systemic control, silencing and secrecy to which they can no longer meekly submit.

But Catholics are not alone in their disillusionment with church authority. Chapter Three introduces the concept of the ‘emerging church’ to explore the increasingly common practice of believers seeking religiosity beyond church walls. Blending a ‘spirituality of seeking’ *with*, rather than *against*, a ‘spirituality of dwelling’, the emerging church phenomenon represents the kind of lay-driven, experimental religiosity that Sippers also practice, albeit without reference to the ‘emerging church’ trend. The remainder of Chapter Three then explores in detail the various elements that work together to create the ‘radically religious’ experience of Spirituality in the Pub, and presents the findings of the national SIP survey that I conducted as part of my fieldwork.

Chapter Four approaches the SIP experience from the perspective of identity, and explores the meaning that Catholic identity holds for Sippers. After providing a

theoretical framework for understanding the religious identity construct, the chapter offers a brief review of the key historical features that have shaped the Australian Catholic habitus in which Sippers have developed their sense of religious identity. The chapter centres around the case studies of four Sippers who collectively represent the range of religious identities found within the SIP population. A key feature I observed across these four case studies was an intriguing paradox between Sippers' increasing sense of frustration with and alienation from the Church and their deep devotion and loyalty to the Catholic faith. To understand how these two seemingly opposing forces can be comfortably reconciled I present three key features of the Catholic identity framework that explain Sippers' willingness to hold tightly to their Catholic faith despite the seemingly endless crises of authority that have gripped the Catholic Church in recent decades.

Chapter Five takes up the concept of voice, which is the predominant metaphor through which Sippers understand their religious agency in the Church. Although the call for 'dialogue' has been a central motif in papal rhetoric since the 1960s, this chapter offers a case study from my fieldwork which shows that the vision of a dialogic church has yet to be fully embraced by many leaders in the Catholic Church. Instead, these leaders continue to employ disciplinary techniques of silencing, surveillance and exclusion in an effort to bolster the failing sovereignty of the fortress church. At the heart of these disciplinary strategies lies the performance of a monological script in which church leaders imagine that the voices of their followers are muted in docile submission to the authority of the Church. Yet Sippers are no longer willing to 'be seen but not heard'. To this end, I review the five key strategies of audibility that Sippers have developed in an effort to feel heard within the 'dialogue of the deaf' that still characterises much of Catholic church culture today.

Chapter Six takes this concept of voice and dialogue to the next level when it explores the banner of 'loyal dissent' under which Catalyst for Renewal was formed. While disillusionment and even anger did feature in the discourse of Sippers during my fieldwork, to focus on their expressions of dissent to the exclusion of their affirmations of loyalty and love would be to do a great injustice to their desire to renew the Catholic Church from within. To this end, the chapter offers a review of the key theological constructs that inform the concepts of assent and dissent in the Catholic Church, and places this discussion within the broader context of the management of patterns of

voice and exit within loyalty-based organisations. The chapter then concludes with an analysis of 'loyal dissent' across the religious studies literature, and identifies three key strategies that loyal dissenters employ when seeking to exercise their religious agency within mainstream religious institutions.

The concluding chapter offers a review of the 'theology of conversation' which lies at the heart of the church renewal project of SIP and Catalyst. It explores the role of this theology in not only forging a tightknit network of support within the SIP community but indeed also enabling Sippers' ongoing loyalty to the Catholic Church. Through this conversational theology, SIP and Catalyst seek to fulfil their promise to remain faithful to the Church while also fostering a vital hope for the future that energises Sippers' continuing support for the Church. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the fundamental importance of this spirituality of hope for the future of the Catholic Church, and the role that the millennial generation are already playing in shaping this future in line with their own spiritual and religious goals.

Chapter 1: Spirituality in a Post-Secular Society

1.1 The 'spirituality revolution': The rise of the spiritual seeker

In the first years of the new millennium, sociologists and scholars proclaimed that the Western world was witnessing the dawn of a 'spiritual revolution' (eg. Heelas and Woodhead, 2005; Tacey, 2000, 2003). Having observed decades of the increasing privatisation, pluralisation and personalisation of religion and its meanings, they concluded that while overall church attendance figures were declining, there was an increased trend towards a new form of religious identity, one that was 'spiritual, but not religious' (Fuller, 2001). While the faithful continued to seek transcendent experiences or relationship with the divine, they were increasingly seen to prefer what Grace Davie (1994) termed 'believing without belonging': forging their own personal 'bricolage' of spirituality from the 'pick and mix' aisle of what was becoming known as the 'spiritual supermarket' of modern faith (Bellah, 1985; Cimino and Lattin, 1999; Hervieu-Léger, 2005; Rindfleisch, 2005; Roof, 1999).

As such, Western sociologists argued that a 'spirituality of dwelling', or the emphasis on inhabiting sacred spaces, was slowly being overshadowed by a 'spirituality of seeking' or 'quest spirituality' that embraces fluidity, adaptability and exploration (Roof, 1999; Wuthnow, 1998b). Such a spiritual journey is highly personalised, as perhaps best captured in Robert Bellah's (1985) description of a young American woman who described her faith simply as 'Sheilaism': 'I believe in God', she explained. 'I'm not a religious fanatic. I can't remember the last time I went to church. My faith has carried me a long way. It's Sheilaism. Just my own little voice' (p. 221).

Despite numerous predictions of the pending 'death' of God, large-scale national and international surveys continue to show that religious identities and spiritual practices remain important to many (eg. Black et al., 1998; Hughes et al., 2004; Inglehart and Baker, 2000; Norris and Inglehart, 2004). Each year the Gallup World Poll surveys nationally representative samples from over one hundred and sixty countries, representing ninety-nine per cent of the world's adult population, to understand their religious beliefs and practices (Gallup, 2015). In 2014, eighty-one per cent of respondents claimed to belong to an organised religious group and seventy-four per

cent stated that religion was an important part of their daily life (Stark, 2014). Similarly, the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life estimated that eighty-four per cent of the global population in 2010 was religiously affiliated (Pew Research Center, 2012). Furthermore, only eleven per cent of the world's population claim to be atheists, according to the WIN-Gallup International 'Religiosity and Atheism Index' (Gallup International, 2015). As a percentage of the global population, the religiously unaffiliated are forecast to decrease by the year 2050 (Lipka, 2015).

In terms of spiritual beliefs and practices, detailed studies have largely focused on Western nations. For example, nine out of ten Americans said they believe in 'God or a universal spirit' and three-quarters claim to pray regularly (Pew Research Center, 2015a, 2015b). In Canada, these figures are somewhat lower – around two-thirds and one-half respectively – yet still over seventy per cent of Canadians reported that spirituality was important to them (Bibby, 2011, 2012; Boswell, 2012; Clark and Schellenberg, 2006). Over half of the seventeen hundred Canadians sampled in one national study reported believing in angels, psychic powers, and extra-sensory perception, while around seven in ten said they believe in miraculous healing, life after death, and near-death experiences (Bibby, 2011). And the trends are growing: In America the number of adults reporting that they regularly experience deep feelings of spiritual peace and wellbeing grew from fifty-two per cent in 2007 to fifty-nine per cent in 2014. Even amongst those who list no religious affiliation, forty per cent still reported frequent feelings of spiritual peace (Masci and Lipka, 2016).

Spiritual interests also remain strong in Britain and Australia (eg. Davis and Yip, 2004; Hughes et al., 2004; Jones, 2005; Phillips and Aarons, 2005; Possamai, 2005a, 2005b, Tacey, 2000, 2003; Worth, 2006). Although one in five people marked 'no religion' on the 2011 Australian census (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013), this means that four in five people reported holding a religious affiliation at some level (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). Regarding belief, a 2009 AC Nielsen poll found that seven in ten Australians believe in God, while six in ten believe in miracles. Around half of those surveyed believed in angels, psychic powers or life after death (Marr, 2009). Similarly, almost half of those surveyed by the Australian National University in the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes agreed that 'there is something beyond this life that makes sense of it all' (NCLS Research, 2010). And even amongst those who report having no religious affiliation, a recent Australian study found that thirty per cent of such

non-affiliates still say they believe in the afterlife, and twelve per cent even pray occasionally (Singleton, 2015). Clearly, the notion of a 'secular Australia' requires nuancing.

However, while spiritual values are being embraced in Australia and abroad, a vast diversity exists in the types of spirituality being sought. Simply put, spirituality is not homogenous. Some individuals seek a structured approach to their spiritual walk, preferring concrete beliefs and tangible methods for engaging with the divine that come with an already established community of fellow believers.¹ Others prefer a more flexible approach to their spirituality, fashioning their own set of beliefs into a pluralistic 'flexidoxy' (Brooks, 2000) or pastiche of values borrowed from diverse spiritual traditions to forge a unique spirituality that is entirely their own (eg. Bellah 1985; Gould and Stinerock 1992; Heelas 1994; Rindfleisch 2005).

Even those who profess to seek the same spiritual goals may do so in very different ways. For example, individuals seeking a sense of freedom or transcendence have been found to take a wide variety of paths towards this goal – some of which may appear less 'spiritual' than others to the unsympathetic observer. Many believers find spiritual transcendence in prayer, or attendance at religious services in churches, mosques and temples. But a careful read of the consumer behaviour literature shows a remarkable plethora of seemingly 'secular' activities that participants also describe as spiritually transcendent.

Some choose to come together with their fellow seekers at counter-cultural festivals (Belk and Costa, 1998; Kates, 2003; Kozinets, 2002) or find transcendence while dancing at rave parties (Goulding et al., 2002). Some seek the divine in the pages of science fiction novels (Kozinets, 1997, 2001) while others find their nirvana on the back of a Harley Davidson motorbike (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). Some choose to express their spirituality by adopting voluntary simplicity (Huneke, 2005) or protesting against logging (Worth, 2006) while others find the epitome of spiritual perfection in relaxing at a day spa (Tsui, 2001) or watching Oprah Winfrey (Nelson,

¹ For a uniquely American example of a tangible experience of religious community, see O'Guinn and Belk's (1989) exploration of 'Heritage Village': Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker's religious theme park, which was dedicated to sacred celebration through shopping, community and play. While the park is now closed, at its peak in the late 1980s it was the third most visited amusement park in the United States.

2005). Clearly, no single model can be identified as encompassing the 'truly spiritual' in the contemporary Western consumer society.

1.2 Defining spirituality

Although spirituality is a term that has been said to define our era (Sheldrake, 2013), no single definition has yet found favour in the religious studies literature as encompassing all the factors needed to describe spirituality, nor its distinction from, and interrelatedness with, religion (for exceptionally thorough reviews of the definitional landscape, see Emmons and Paloutzian, 2003; Hill et al., 2000; Paloutzian and Park, 2014; Zinnbauer et al., 1997, 1999). Recognising the absence of an agreed definition, let alone one that I found personally convincing, in the early stages of this research project I undertook a meta-analysis of over one hundred and twenty papers that seek to define spirituality, including those most commonly cited in the field of religious studies. The product of this meta-analysis is a substantive definition of spirituality that incorporates the three most consistent themes found in the literature, while keeping separate the 'consequences' of spirituality which many functionalist definitions seek to include (eg. spirituality as creating a sense of meaning or purpose in life). Thus, in this thesis, I offer a substantive definition of spirituality as *a search for connection with the divine*.

I draw from several key religious scholars to define spirituality in this way, centering around the concepts of connection, search, and the divine. Firstly, numerous scholars have argued that the definition of spirituality must centre on a desire to experience a sense of *connection*, relationship or a dynamic personal encounter with an 'other' (eg. Brown, 1997; Burkhart, 2001; Dyson et al., 1997; Gall et al., 2005; George et al., 2000; Golberg, 1998; Ingersoll, 1994; Pargament, 1997; Rose, 2001; Stoll, 1989; Walton, 2002). Yet this desire for connection is seldom conceived of as a single discrete event. Rather spirituality is often phrased in terms of an intensely personal *search*, journey or quest that evolves over time (eg. Bellah, 1985; Bridger, 2001; Brown, 1997; Demerath, 2000; Emmons, 1999; Greer and Roof, 1992; Heelas and Woodhead, 2005; Pargament et al., 2005; Possamai, 2005a; Roof, 1999; Wuthnow, 2005). As such, spirituality comes to include the set of feelings, tastes, practices, objects, values, knowledge, beliefs, and experiences that become associated with this search for connection.

Finally, it is the *divine* that forms the focus of this search for connection (James, 1902; Otto, 1923; Rose, 2001). While numerous scholars have proposed that spirituality is oriented towards the sacred (eg. George et al., 2000; Hill et al., 2000; Pargament, 1997; Pargament et al., 2005; Zinnbauer et al., 1999), I believe the term 'sacred' is insufficient to adequately describe the focus of spirituality. From its Durkheimian roots, the sacred is thought to be that which is 'set apart' from the ordinary and thus worthy of awe and reverence. The sacred gains its distinguishing characteristic from its opposition to the 'profane': the secular world of everyday utilitarian activities (Durkheim, [1912] 1965).² Yet, as this thesis will show, 'sacred' and 'profane' are increasingly being recognised as interrelated and inseparable in today's post-secular landscape. Furthermore, as Durkheim's logic exemplifies, the concept of sacredness need not be contingent on a divine or godlike reference point. Through the human ability to sanctify objects, almost anything can come to be considered sacred, including objects, people, times, spaces, events, roles, practices and even personal characteristics (Zinnbauer et al., 1999).

Herein lies the flaw in using the term 'sacred' to represent the focus of spirituality. If spirituality should be considered a search for the sacred, and sacredness can rest in material *things*, then one could conceivably spend a lifetime searching for the things which one's society has designated as sacred without ever seeking connection with an otherworldly or divine reference point. Rather, if sacredness is constructed only by collective social agreement regarding that which is 'not profane', a search for the 'creator' of sacred objects or the genesis of sacredness would lead the individual back to society, and society alone. This is of course what Durkheim ([1912] 1965) was intending to communicate in his definition of the sacred, as he viewed the concept of 'God' as a deification of society. Thus, in worshipping the collective representation called 'God', society in fact worships itself. Following this Durkheimian logic, spirituality becomes defined as a search for connection with society – a concept that I describe instead as a search for fellowship or belonging.

Several scholars of religion have attempted to overcome this challenge by defining the sacred more specifically as referring to 'a divine being, divine object, Ultimate Reality, or Ultimate Truth as perceived by the individual' (Hill et al., 2000, p. 66). Others go

² When citing reprints of historical texts in this thesis, I use square brackets to indicate the date of original publication.

further, specifying that '[f]or something to be sacred, it must be divine in its character or relationship to the divine' (George et al., 2000, p. 104). In combination, such viewpoints resemble the definition of spirituality I proposed above. However, I argue that if the sacred is to be considered solely as that which is divine in character or relationship, the use of the term 'sacred' operates only as a reference to another construct and thus is redundant.

As such, I seek to avoid this redundancy by defining spirituality simply as a search for connection with the divine. Following William James, I define the 'divine' as 'denoting any object that is *godlike*, whether it be a concrete deity or not' (James, 1902, p. 34).³ While the concept of the divine has traditionally centred on notions of perfection, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, and eternity (Pargament, 1997), I join with others by acknowledging that such theistic notions of divinity are not always characteristic of spiritual belief (eg. Durkheim, [1899] 2011; Geisler and Feinberg, 1980; Maslow, 1964; Netland, 2001; Rose, 2001). Accordingly, in this thesis the divine is understood as a 'Higher Other', a transcendent or supernatural power that may take the form of:

- a deity or spiritual being such as a god, goddess, angel, ghost, or spirit guide (eg. James, 1902; Otto, 1923; Tylor, [1871] 2002; Weber, [1920] 1965)
- a non-personified supernatural power, force or energy such as 'the universe', 'the spirit', or 'the life force' (eg. Eliade, 1959; Hamilton, 1995; James, 1902; Weber, [1920] 1965), or
- an ultimate principle, truth, or law that acts as the wellspring of life, such as Taoism's 'the way', or Buddhism's 'path to enlightenment' (eg. Hamilton, 1995; James, 1902; Rose, 2001; Seybold and Hill, 2001; Weber, [1920] 1965).

Thus, the divine can be considered as a dimension to life that is perceived as being beyond the natural and material. It can be regarded as a self-transcendent and awe-inspiring reality that is greater than the ordinary physical, mental, emotional and social capacities of human life; or a dimension that is literally *super*-natural, ie. above or

³ This is not to suggest that the divine exists only in material, object-like form, but rather that, in believing something to exist it takes on the form of an object in our consciousness, eliciting as real a response in our actions and thoughts as any material or concrete object could do (James, 1902).

beyond the natural sphere (Fontana, 2003; Fuller, 2001; Otto, 1923; Spiro, 1987; Stark and Bainbridge, 1987; Van Krieken et al., 2000; Weber, [1920] 1965).⁴

Finally, by keeping the concept of the divine at the centre of the construct, spirituality can thus be seen to include both religious and non-religious searches for connection with the divine. Following Roof (1999) and Zinnbauer et al (1997), I take the view that spirituality overlaps with, but extends well beyond, the concept of religion. Building on the structure provided by Hill et al (2000, p. 66), I define religion as including:⁵

- A. a search for connection with the divine (as per the definition of spirituality above)

AND/OR:

- B. 'a search for non-sacred goals (such as identity, belongingness, meaning, health or wellness) in a context that has as its primary goal the facilitation of A.'

AND:

- C. 'The means and methods (e.g. rituals or prescribed behaviors) of the search that receive validation and support from within an identifiable group of people.'

Given that as many as eight in ten Australians choose to describe their connection with the divine within a religious framework (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012; Healey, 2004), religion clearly remains important to the study of spirituality in Australia. But while religious communities continue to serve as important vehicles for the expression of spirituality, they are just *one* of the many means by which individuals may seek to experience the divine in their lives. Religion offers a cultural, social and organisational framework within which individuals may anchor their spiritual search, yet this search may also occur outside of a religious framework (Burkhart, 2001; Dyson et al., 1997;

⁴ I recognise that this definition risks being accused of adopting an oversimplified Cartesian view of a dualistic universe. However, like all scholars, I am shaped by the language-games through which I have been socialised. Given that the notions of 'religion' and 'spirituality' are Western constructs in themselves, such a typically 'Western' view of the distinction between nature and the supernatural need not be contentious, as long as it is recognised for what it is – an attempt to grasp the worldview and language of those whom I have studied. For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see Winzeler (2012, pp. 6–9).

⁵ A full review of the literature concerning the definition of religion is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, the following resources provide excellent reviews of the definitional landscape. For the difference between religion and spirituality, see Fontana (2003), Hill et al. (2000), Paloutzian and Park (2014), Pargament (1999), and Zinnbauer et al (1997, 1999). For an anthropological approach see Bowie (2006), Donovan (2003a), Guthrie (1996), Lambek (2002), Saler (1993) and Winzeler (2012). For a sociological perspective see Cipriani (2015), Davie (2013), or Heelas and Woodhead (2005). For a psychological review see Emmons and Paloutzian (2003), George et al (2000), and Pargament (1997, 1999).

Maslow, 1964; Rose, 2001; Stoll, 1989). Thus, the term spirituality includes both the most intrinsic or personal aspects of religiosity as well as those expressions and experiences of divine connection and search that occur outside of any religious culture, group, or tradition.

Accordingly, spirituality is defined in this thesis via the identification of the following characteristics:

- belief in the existence of a divine order – ie. a dimension to life that is beyond the natural and material; a self-transcendent dimension that is greater than the ordinary physical, mental, and emotional capacities of human life; a dimension that is *super*-natural (Fuller, 2001; Geertz, 1973; Stark and Bainbridge, 1987; Van Krieken et al., 2000; Weber, [1920] 1965)
- belief that this divine order holds unique and valuable power (Stark and Bainbridge 1987; Van Krieken et al. 2000; Weber [1920] 1965), and associated feelings of respect and reverence for this power (Fromm, 1950; James, 1902; Otto, 1923)
- a desire to experience connection with the divine (Burkhart 2001; Dyson et al. 1997; Fuller 2001; Rose 2001; Walton 2002; Zinnbauer et al. 1997), and
- the feelings, practices, objects, values, beliefs, and experiences associated with the search for connection with the divine (adapted from Fuller, 2001).

1.3 Secularism and the post-secular church

At the heart of this thesis, we find a thoughtful group of believers who come together in pubs and clubs around Australia to talk about the challenges of navigating their search for connection with the divine. But for many observers, what is particularly remarkable about groups such as SIP is that they stubbornly persist in spite of what is argued to be the increasing secularisation of Western society.

Theorists of secularisation take a variety of approaches in attempting to explain away the 'spirituality revolution'. Some argue that the occasional spiritual seeker should be understood simply in terms of a marginalised and remnant few who are feebly attempting to rebuff the inevitable tide of encroaching secularism (eg. Wallis and Bruce, 1992). If the prevalence of spiritual practice was indeed dropping to insignificance such an argument could perhaps make sense, but my brief review of the

literature above quickly dispels this myth. It might be equally plausible if the contemporary spiritual search could be understood as falling simply within the 'spiritual but not religious' framework (Fuller, 2001), marked by a Durkheimian social effervescence in celebration of itself but without any real reference to a divine being or God. The transnational popularity of mass consumer events like the 'Mind, Body Spirit Festival' (Redden, 2011) might be seen to support an argument that our secular society has indeed turned from religion to find transcendence within itself. But where would our 'Sippers' and the countless other spiritually motivated religious adherents fit into this supposedly secular landscape?

In this chapter, I argue that SIP sits within a post-secular, pluralistic consciousness: a social reality that is marked by a multiplicity of positions on the faith spectrum between belief and unbelief. The omnipresent sense that others think differently is perhaps one of the most salient features of this post-secular landscape – calling the engaged mind to reach out and grapple with the potentially fragilising effect of other beliefs on one's own value system.

1.3.1 Defining Secularism

To understand the post-secular era, however, one must first grapple with the term 'secularism'. As Talal Asad notes, it is precisely because the secular is so much a part of our modern life that the concept remains difficult to grasp (Asad, 2003, p. 16). However, a careful read of the literature reveals three broad means by which secularism tends to be defined.

One approach to the problem constitutes secularism in terms of declining religious belief and practice. On this count the argument for the secularist age initially appears most convincing. For example, in Australia frequent church attendance has dropped from forty-four per cent in 1950 to seventeen per cent in 2007, according to the National Church Life Survey (Powell, 2010).⁶ More recently in the UK, the number of people attending weekly Church of England services in early 2016 fell to below two per cent of the population, according to the Church's own statistics (Sherwood, 2016).

⁶ Actual attendance figures are arguably lower than this, given the impact of social desirability biases on self-reported survey data.

However, the 'religious decline' thesis of secularisation hinges critically on how one defines secularity's antonym. Commonly understood as 'religiosity', such an antonym typically centres on church attendance, regularity of prayer, denominational self-affiliation, and declared belief in God – or some other such survey-worthy series of questions. Undeniably, '[i]f the strength of religion is measured by orthodoxy of belief, regularity of attendance, and the ability of traditional religious institutions to enforce their norms, much of the world is very secular indeed' (Ammerman, 2007, p. 4). But as Taylor (2007) notes, if our view of religion were broadened to include a wide range of spiritual and semi-spiritual beliefs and practices – such as those described earlier in this chapter – then one may convincingly make the case that 'religion is as present as ever' (p. 427).

Grace Davie presents a related argument against the religious decline thesis. While accepting the reality of falling church attendance and increasing alienation from traditional church structures in the United Kingdom, she argues that this shift has taken the form of Christian *nominalism* rather than secularism. For Davie, committed secularism in the UK 'remains the creed of a relatively small minority... In terms of belief, nominalism rather than secularism is the residual category' (1994, pp. 69–70). In fact, the ongoing relevance of religious symbols and rituals to Western society – for example, as evidenced in occasions of mass grief such as that following the US tragedies of September 11, 2001 – suggests that the spiritual identity of many people remains fundamentally defined by those religious frameworks from which they normally seek to distance themselves. As such, religious sentiments are held in what Davie (2000, 2010) would term a 'vicarious' sense (perhaps better understood as ambivalence): marked by a desire to separate oneself from religion while still cherishing it as a collective source of nostalgic warmth and occasional comfort – a symbolic reserve, shall we say, to be drawn upon in times of need.⁷ As such, whether phrased in institutional religious terms or simply reflecting a yearning for that which is beyond the immanent, 'religious longing... remains a strong independent source of motivation in modernity' (Taylor, 2007, p. 530).

⁷ Enthusiastic Weberians or Marxists might identify here themes of a 'theodicy of suffering' (Weber, [1905] 1976) or an 'opium of the people' (Marx, [1843] 1970). However, I believe that Davie's treatment of the symbolic value of vicarious religiosity offers a much more sympathetic perspective on the complex relationship between nominal Christians and their church than that which may be offered by a Weberian or Marxist frame.

A second approach defines secularism in terms of public space, pointing towards an imagined public sphere that has been emancipated from or purged of any reference to God or a supernatural reality – what Neuhaus (1986) calls a ‘naked public square’. Such secularism is what others might term ‘programmatically secularism’: an ‘exclusive public orthodoxy’ where any personal loyalty to a particular faith is deemed a private consideration that must always be subordinate to one’s loyalty to the state and ‘the supposedly neutral public order of rational persons’ (Williams, 2012, p. 3). Such an approach rests on the assumption that every interaction in the public realm can and should be determined by factors that bear no reference to issues or agencies beyond the tangible or immanent – for example, supply and demand in the economy, or the ‘greater good’ in the political sphere. In such a context, representations of citizenship redefine and transcend those ‘particular and differentiating practices of the self that are articulated through class, gender and religion’, seeking to replace conflicting perspectives by the unifying experience of shared citizenship in a modern democratic state (Asad, 2003, p. 5).

Yet if this secularist protocol were to take its purest form, many people and groups would be excluded from public discourse in purportedly democratic societies, or required to hide their religiously motivated goals under the borrowed cloak of the rational actor. Clearly, even a casual browse of today’s news headlines dismisses a secularisation hypothesis defined in this way. Indeed, the ongoing ‘deprivatisation’ of religion appears alive and well, over twenty years since José Casanova first coined the term. In his words, ‘religious traditions are refusing to accept the marginal and privatized role which theories of modernity as well as theories of secularisation had reserved for them’ (Casanova, 1994, p. 5). As we will see later in this chapter, religion – even in its most traditional or fundamentalist form – continues to define a very large swathe of public discourse today, either through the voices of clerics, ideologues, believers and moralists or through those who oppose them.

Thus far we have identified and largely discounted two approaches to defining secularism – one that concerns itself with falling levels of religious belief and practice, and a second focused on a purging of religion from the public sphere. However, as Taylor (2007) notes, both approaches rest on a subtraction thesis, arguing that secularisation simply requires the removal of medieval layers of enchantment and

religiosity made redundant by the modern rational worldview and the progress of scientific knowledge. Max Weber's 1919 speech on the 'disenchantment of the world' offers a seminal example of such a subtraction thesis. He paints the rise of instrumental rationality over belief as a near irresistible force, and speaks derisively of the intellectual sacrifice required by the stubborn few who cling childishly to belief:

To the person who cannot bear the fate of the times like a man, one must say: may he return silently... simply and plainly. The arms of the old churches are open widely and compassionately for him. After all, they do not make it hard for him. One way or another he has to bring his 'intellectual sacrifice' – that is inevitable (Weber, in Gerth and Mills, 1948, p. 155).

In other words, the secular mindset is seen here as an achievement to be celebrated. Having freed oneself from captivity in an enchanted world, the modern (read: secular) self becomes invulnerable to the unreasonable fears and anxieties of the medieval believer.

But such arguments, while compelling in their simplicity, give too much weight to changes in belief without examining the shifts in consciousness that were required to allow these changes to occur. Plainly, substantial changes *have* occurred to shape the nature of belief and unbelief in the modern world. However, to define the secular era simply as the negation of what preceded it is to assume that the secular worldview was in a sense *already there*, waiting to be discovered. It suggests that we moderns believe and behave as we do because this is the natural state that remains when superstitious beliefs are stripped away. But secularist alternatives were not simply waiting inertly behind an enchanted veneer. Rather than requiring the subtraction of distractions, the new horizons and possibilities of secularism needed to be imagined and constructed in a positive sense.

Thus, I join with Charles Taylor (2007) in embracing a third approach to defining secularism – one that centres on this change in the 'conditions of belief', or more specifically, in the social and symbolic context within which an individual makes his or her decision toward or against religious belief. It is this change in the conditions of belief in Western society to which Taylor dedicates the majority of his 874-page volume, *A Secular Age*. Highlighting what Pierre Bourdieu (1984) would describe as the

doxic⁸ features of each era since the ‘Dark Ages’, Taylor presents a meticulous philosophical history⁹ of social, cosmological, technological, political, and moral trends to explore how it was possible to move from a period in which belief in God or the supernatural was essentially the *only* option, to an age of secularist plurality in which faith is but one of countless alternative ontologies – and, frequently, an embattled or at best problematic option.

Facing sometimes-strident opposition, some believers in the secular age hold more dearly to their beliefs while others feel compelled to abandon their faith – perhaps seeing it as a redundant pacifier they should have now outgrown. For many others, faith never seems an eligible possibility in the first place. But no matter which standpoint we adopt, all members of a secular society must learn to navigate between these two ends of the belief spectrum. Ignoring the spectrum or being naïve of its existence is no longer a possibility for those in the secular age. In Taylor’s words:

We live in a condition where we cannot help but be aware that there are a number of different construals, views which intelligent, reasonably undeluded people, of good will, can and do disagree on. We cannot help looking over our shoulder from time to time, looking sideways, living our faith also in a condition of doubt and uncertainty... Naïveté is now unavailable to anyone, believer or unbeliever alike (2007, pp. 11–21).

For Taylor then, an age or society can be defined as secular or not ‘in virtue of the conditions of experience of and search for the spiritual’ (2007, p. 3). As such, even if statistics were to show that church attendance in the US equalled that of mosque attendance in Pakistan, it would be impossible to describe them both as equally non-secular, as there remain ‘big differences between these societies in *what it is to believe*’ (2007, p. 3, original emphasis).

⁸ Bourdieu’s concept of ‘doxa’ centres on the act of applying (and thus accepting) the classificatory schema of the habitus by misrecognising its arbitrary nature and instead seeing it as necessary and self-evident. In this misrecognition, Bourdieu says, we see ‘the most absolute recognition of the social order’ (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471). See pages 124–126 of Chapter Four in this thesis for a definition of the habitus.

⁹ It is worth noting that Taylor’s history of secularisation is deeply influenced by his unabashedly Catholic standpoint (Gordon, 2008). While this history speaks directly to the confessional frame within which the post-secular project of SIP sits, Taylor’s work has been criticised by notable theorists of secularisation such as Talal Asad, who argues against Taylor’s unambiguous treatment of the concept of belief (Asad, 2011).

1.3.2 Fragilised belief

According to Taylor, we now see an immense multiplication of viable positions on the spectrum between belief and unbelief. The modern Western subject no longer lives in a society where faith in God is considered central to an ordered social world. Yet ongoing opposition between the poles of orthodoxy and unbelief has created multiple cross-pressures in society, generating an urgent search for ontological and moral alternatives. Thanks to modern media and globalisation, we now have unparalleled access to a multitude of alternative belief structures. Previously distant variants of religious belief are now available at the click of a button, enabling a syncretic or 'pick-and-mix' approach to the consumption of spirituality that thus becomes yet another marker of the self-fashioning aesthetic consumer (eg. Brooks, 2000; Browns, 1993; Gould and Stinerock, 1992; Heelas, 1994; Holbrook, 2001; Kale, 2004; Rindfleisch, 2005; Verter, 2003).

In this way, the 'secular' world is fundamentally a pluralist and fragmented one, where 'many forms of belief and unbelief jostle, and hence fragilize each other' (Taylor, 2007, p. 531). Furthermore, having inherited the religious disconnections of their parents, many of today's spiritual seekers find themselves disadvantaged by having lost touch with the religious languages of their predecessors (Davie, 1994, pp. 123–124). Lacking this sacred vocabulary, they struggle to identify and name the concepts they yearn after – often feeling adrift as foreigners in the spiritual cultures they seek to embrace.

Some might suppose that this estrangement from the traditional languages of faith foretells a more deeply secular future. Yet I argue that the very intensity with which modern seekers pursue their relationship with the divine suggests otherwise. Indeed, with the loss of inherited vocabularies comes both the need for and the freedom to develop new means for articulating the sacred. As my brief discussion of the consumer behaviour literature showed in section 1.1 of this chapter, modern believers are clearly enthusiastically embracing this opportunity to redefine and reorient spiritual practice. As such, some scholars have argued that the term 'post-secular' better represents the conditions of fragilised belief in which we now live.

1.3.3 A post-secular age?

Secularisation theorists had been predicting the imminent and inescapable demise of religion long before Frederick Nietzsche famously proclaimed that 'God is dead' (Nietzsche, [1882] 2001). As early as 1710, the English theologian Thomas Woolston declared that religion would disappear by 1900; Voltaire less generously gave it until around 1810 (Stark, 2011). Over the following centuries, equally pessimistic predictions were championed by a wealth of sociology's most famous voices, including Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, E.B. Tylor, James Frazer, Thomas Jefferson, Ferdinand Toennies, George Simmel, Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, Émile Durkheim, Max Weber and Sigmund Freud, amongst many others (cf. Casanova, 1994; Stark, 1999). Such was the weight of collective conviction that by 1966 the distinguished anthropologist Anthony F.C. Wallace taught tens of thousands of American undergraduates that 'the evolutionary future of religion is extinction' (Wallace, 1966, p. 265). Two years later, the eminent sociologist Peter Berger told the *New York Times* that the end was nigh: by 'the 21st century, religious believers are likely to be found only in small sects, huddled together to resist a worldwide secular culture' (*The New York Times*, 1968).

In retrospect, the secularisation thesis seems peculiarly unique in the stridency with which it was held despite a lack of supportive evidence; indeed 'perhaps no other social scientific prediction enjoyed such universal acceptance for so long' (Stark and Finke, 2000, p. 29). Alexis de Tocqueville stood virtually alone in his rejection of the secularisation hypothesis when he noted that 'unfortunately the facts by no means accord with their theory' (Tocqueville, 1840, p. 568). Over a century later, David Martin was the first contemporary sociologist to take the brave step of resisting the prevailing wisdom of secularisation. In fact, he called for the removal of the entire concept from social scientific discourse, arguing it was being used to serve ideological rather than theoretical ends (Martin, 1969). In the name of progress and modernity, '[s]ecularization was made part of a powerful social and historical narrative of what had once been and now was ceasing to be' (Martin, 2005, p. 18). So strong was the consensus that careful examination of statistical data and concrete historical analysis were considered superfluous, and 'exceptions' such as that of the deeply religious but highly modernised America were explained away as illusions and veneers, or a result of

intellectual backwardness, rather than being recognised as counterevidence (cf. Casanova, 1994; Martin, 1969; Stark, 2011).

Intriguingly, Peter Berger – formerly an ardent advocate of the secularisation thesis – is now one of the most active proponents of the argument that we live in a post-secular age. In 1997 he candidly stated:

I think that what I and most other sociologists of religion wrote in the 1960s about secularization was a mistake. Our underlying argument was that secularization and modernity go hand in hand. With more modernization comes more secularization. It wasn't a crazy theory... But I think it's basically wrong. Most of the world today is certainly not secular. It's very religious (*The Christian Century*, 1997, p. 974).

By the 1970s, both sociologists and the public were captivated by a broad range of new religious phenomena, including 'new age' spirituality, astrology, televangelism and an occasional but paroxysmic fascination with cults as they detonated across newspaper headlines (eg. Glock and Bellah, 1976). But what surprised sociologists in the 1980s was not religious experimentation, as commonplace as it was, but rather the revitalisation of traditional religions as they increasingly assumed central roles in the public sphere. As Jose Casanova wrote: '[r]eligions throughout the world are entering the public sphere and the arena of political contestation not only to defend their traditional turf, as they have done in the past, but also to participate in the very struggles to define and set the modern boundar[ies]' of social life, at an individual, familial, community and global level (Casanova, 1994, p. 6). As Mary Douglas succinctly described it, 'no one credited the traditional religions with enough vitality to inspire large-scale political revolt' (Douglas, 1982, p. 1).

Indeed, the world today is still as 'furiously religious' as ever (Berger, 1999, p. 2). When taking into account the rise in religiosity in previously state-prescribed secular nations such as China and Russia, as well as the vigorous rise in orthodox branches of Islam, Hinduism, Judaism and Buddhism and a resurgence of conservative Catholicism largely led by developing countries under the papacy of John Paul II, religion remains alive and well across the globe (Berger, 1999; Stark, 2011; Tu, 1999).

But what is perhaps more intriguing is the fact that, on the whole, we are also becoming more conservative or orthodox in our religious beliefs. Paradoxically, it seems that religious organisations that have resisted adaptation to the forces of

secularisation seem to flourish, while those that have tried to adapt to the secular world are on the decline. In an age of uncertainty, conservative groups who claim to offer certainty have great appeal, while experiments with secularised religion have largely failed (Berger, 1999; Casanova, 1994; Davie, 1999).

One sticking point remains, however, in advancing any thesis on the 'return of religion': Europe. Sociologists have cited Western Europe's very low levels of church attendance as indicating a fall from pre-modern times (Stark, 2011), drawing on polls which show, for example, seventy-eight per cent of Swedes reporting they are either not religious or are convinced atheists (Gallup International, 2015). But, as Rodney Stark and his colleagues point out, the idea that Europe once enjoyed an 'age of faith' is pure nostalgia (Stark, 1999). Not only has there been 'no demonstrable long-term decline in European religious participation' (Stark and Finke, 2000, p. 62), but church attendance was always very low in Northern and Western Europe, many centuries before the arrival of modernisation (Stark, 2011). In fact, '[t]here could be no de-Christianization of Europe... because there never was any Christianization in the first place. Christian Europe never existed.' (Greeley, 1997, p. 63).

Several reasons could be proposed as to the causes of the 'European exception'. Jose Casanova highlights the role of absolutist states and a caesaropapist¹⁰ state church, suggesting that 'it was the very attempt to preserve and prolong Christendom in every nation-state and thus to resist modern functional differentiation that nearly destroyed the churches in Europe' (1994, p. 29). Stark (2011) echoes this argument, suggesting also that the existence of a state church reduces the requirement for individuals to personally invest in their religious community, seeing religion instead as a type of 'public utility' which stands independent of individual efforts and initiative.

And yet, recent polls again highlight the mythical nature of the supposedly 'secular' Europe. In fact, across Western Europe the number of people who think of themselves as religious is still higher than those who do not, with forty-three per cent affirming and thirty-seven per cent rejecting a religious identity (Gallup International, 2015). As such, Western Europe might better be understood as 'unchurched', rather than secular.

¹⁰ Caesaropapism is the practice of combining the secular and religious leadership of a state in one figure – so that one person is both 'Caesar' and 'Pope'.

Many Europeans remain grateful to the churches – vicariously benefiting from the tasks they perform on behalf of society – and continue to hold religious beliefs in concepts such as God, sin, heaven and the ongoing nature of the soul after death (Davie, 1999). As Stark and Finke rightly point out, ‘to classify a nation as highly secularized when the large majority of its inhabitants believe in God is absurd’ (2000, p. 62). Thus, it seems more appropriate to suggest that what we are witnessing in Western Europe is a shift in the institutional *location* of religion, rather than secularisation per se (Berger, 1999).

So what then can we make of the secularisation thesis today? Was secularisation simply a myth, urged on an unsuspecting public by overzealous sociologists? Or does it continue to have utility for the study of religion as we seek to understand its value in the modern world? To answer such questions, I believe it is necessary to separate process from consequence. If secularisation is to be understood as a process whereby the secular and religious spheres become increasingly differentiated or functionally separate, then such a trend appears to be historic fact (Casanova, 1994). But such an observation need not also imply that the end result of this process spells the increasing marginalisation of religion from the public sphere and the eventual extinction of religion altogether. Many secularisation theories have tended to not only assume but also *prescribe* a privatised role for religion in modern society. But I believe that part of the ongoing popularity of religion lies in its ability to speak insightfully to critical social issues, stimulating moral discourse on normative questions such as responsibility, solidarity, forgiveness, sacrifice and generosity – topics that self-sufficient secularist reasoning is often unable to fully account for (Ungureanu, 2014). As vocal ‘communities of interpretation’, religious organisations thus play a key role in shaping the public arena of secular societies (Habermas, 2008).

Looking at the process rather than the consequences has enabled Stark and Bainbridge (1985) to identify that secularisation is indeed a core feature of religious economies, but that it is part of a much larger structure comprised of two other fundamentally interrelated and countervailing processes: (1) *religious innovation* – or the formation of new religious traditions; and (2) *revival* – whereby secularising religious organisations give birth to splinter groups who protest the increasing worldliness of the parent group. As such, Stark and Bainbridge argue that secularisation is inherently

self-limiting; while the sources of religion shift constantly in society, the amount of religion remains relatively constant. Thus, they suggest that:

Social scientists have misread the future of religion... [by failing] to recognize the dynamic character of religious economies... Having erroneously equated religion with a particular set of religious organisations, Western intellectuals have misread the secularization of these groups as the doom of religion in general. But it is foolish to look only at sunsets and never observe the dawn: the history of religion is not only a pattern of decline; it is equally a portrait of birth and growth (1985, pp. 2–3).

As such, sociologists today largely agree¹¹ that religion is here to stay, in one form or another. What's more, 'despite all the structural forces, the legitimate pressures, and the many valid reasons pushing religion in the modern secular world into the private sphere, religion continues to have and will likely continue to have a public dimension' (Casanova, 1994, p. 66).

Nonetheless, secularisation *has* fundamentally changed our way of thinking about faith. Recalling Taylor, no longer can either belief or unbelief be held as axiomatic. Rather, we are witnessing 'a radical change in intellectual climate' (Casanova, 1994, p. 11) whereby 'the hegemony of the mainstream master narrative of secularisation will be more and more challenged' (Taylor, 2007, p. 534).

But a 'post-secular age' is not simply an era that follows its secular predecessor; nor should it be understood as being necessarily opposed to the secular. Rather, it should be understood as emerging from 'a dissatisfaction with the influential tradition of militant atheism and rationalist secularism built upon the Manichean opposition between reason and faith' (Ungureanu, 2014, pp. 23–24). Post-secularism thus designates a complex centre between the voices of secularism and atheism on the one hand, and renewed religious imagination, and indeed conservatism, on the other.

As such, the current state is perhaps best described not simply as post-secular, but as pluralist – whereby the proliferation of metaphysical and moral ideas, practices and identities has transformed both the religious *and* the secular domains, 'equalizing the respective conditions of commitment and increasing their level of interaction' (Monti,

¹¹ With the exception of a few determined 'neo-secularists' such as Mark Chaves and Karel Dobbeleare (cf. Roberts and Yamane, 2015)

2014, p. 120). In such a state, both believers and unbelievers alike are called to enter into what Habermas identifies as ‘complementary learning processes’ (eg. Ratzinger and Habermas, 2006) in which the work of ‘determining the boundary between the secular and the religious should be a cooperative task undertaken by both sides’ (Habermas 2005, in Harrington, 2007, p. 544). In this way, the post-secular can be understood less as an era and more as a new stage of social and historical awareness (Monti, 2014), requiring of its citizens a self-critical reflexivity, openness to difference and willingness to cooperate with those whose values appear contrary to their own. Thus, as William Connolly argues in *Why I am not a secularist*:

[T]he need today... is to rewrite secularism to pursue an ethos of engagement in public life among a plurality of controversial *metaphysical* perspectives, including, for starters, Christian and other monotheistic perspectives, secular thought, and asecular, nontheistic perspectives... Here, pluralism... would be grounded in an ethos of engagement between multiple constituencies honoring a variety of moral sources and metaphysical orientations. Such an ethos *between* interdependent partisans provides an existential basis for democratic politics if and when partisans affirm without deep resentment the contestable character of the fundamental faith they honor most (1999, p. 39, original emphasis).

1.4 Post-secularism and SIP

It is precisely this ‘ethos of engagement’ between contrary yet interdependent parties that Spirituality in the Pub seeks to foster. By opening themselves to honest conversation with those with whom they sometimes fundamentally disagree, Sippers strive to embody the self-critical reflexivity that lies at the heart of the post-secular enterprise.

Yet what is perhaps most remarkable about this goal is that it is pursued by a group of believers who largely belong to the generation who deserted the Church in droves in the 1970s and 1980s. As we will see in the next chapter, the crisis of authority that shook the foundations of the Catholic Church in these decades caused unprecedented desertion of the pews in Australia and across the western world.

But despite the very real anguish experienced by many of their generation, rather than turn their backs on the source of so much pain Sippers continued to seek ways to feel heard and at home within the Catholic Church. Despite belonging to perhaps the most

'secular'¹² generation Australian history has ever seen, Sippers chose to adopt a reflexive post-secular consciousness that sought to creatively leverage the tensions of their now fragilised belief systems.

In order to understand the strategies they employed towards this goal, however, we must first turn our attention to the crisis of authority which underpinned this fragilisation in the Catholic Church.

¹² In the sense of secularism as the diminishment of religious practice and withdrawal from public space.

Chapter 2: The Crumbling Fortress of Catholicism

It is no secret that the Catholic church is in crisis, not only over the notable issues of sex and authority, but also over the very issue of credibility... The church today is badly hemorrhaging.

(Bausch, 1999, p. 2)

Over the course of the last two millennium, the Roman Catholic Church has grown from its origins as a humble Judaic movement to a global institution with more than one billion members across every continent on earth. Without question, the story of the Catholic Church is one of extraordinary success: 'the Catholic Church is the oldest, numerically the strongest, and probably also the most powerful representative of Christianity' (Küng, 2002, p. 4). As the longest-enduring religious organisation in the world, the Church has been '*the* decisive spiritual force in the history of Western civilization' (Dowling and Scarlett, 2005, p. 65, emphasis added). As a testament to its influence, it is the only religious body to be given a permanent observer role at the United Nations General Assembly, in recognition of the Holy See's status as a sovereign state and its long-standing role in the international political order (Stensvold, 2017).

Yet in early 2002 the Catholic Church in the United States was rocked by revelations of a clerical sexual abuse crisis of a scale beyond which anyone could have previously imagined. Although sex scandals and allegations of abuse at the hands of priests, bishops and religious¹ were not new to the Catholic Church, the case of Boston's Father Geoghan and the extensive web of silence, privilege and negligence which allowed him to sexually abuse more than one hundred children over the course of his thirty years as a priest acted as a flashpoint for devout Catholics around the world. Long-simmering tensions between the Catholic laity and those who were supposed to protect and lead them ignited into an inferno of anger, betrayal, hurt and disillusionment the likes of which the Catholic Church had never before seen. The laity who had appeared so content and docile in the 1950s and 1960s were replaced by men and women who were no longer willing to be silenced. The 'fortress church' of certainty and protection

¹ In its noun form, the word 'religious' represents a person such as a nun or a monk, who has taken religious vows to join a religious order.

that Catholicism had offered its members no longer appeared comforting in its timelessness. Rather, its very foundations were crumbling. In the words of a best-selling Catholic priest at the time:

Added to the repressed anger large numbers of Catholics have been nursing since the publication of Pope Paul VI's anti-birth control encyclical² in 1968 and the unrealized promise of the Second Vatican Council, the current rage is galvanising the laity into a force to be reckoned with... Underneath the mushrooming scandals and the painful polarization shaking the confidence of the faithful, a church stands at the brink of destabilization...

It is clear now that the tensions of the post-conciliar³ generation were but symptoms of a mounting anger in the hearts and souls of numerous Catholics. The scale and intensity of the anger – directed primarily at bishops and the church's culture of secrecy and control – suggests that the church will never be quite the same. We are, many believe, at the edge of a new epoch, an epoch cradled in both opportunity and danger (Cozzens, 2002, pp. 6, 158).

At the heart of these tensions lay a complex web of questions around the legitimacy and credibility of church leaders, and in turn, the very nature of power and authority in the Catholic Church. This chapter lays the historical foundation required for understanding some of the key moral and doctrinal concerns that drove Catalyst's founders to form an organised response to the crisis of authority they observed in the Catholic Church. While not offering an exhaustive list of the many grievances that featured in the critical discourse of the post-Vatican II laity, this chapter examines four of the central themes of dissent and discontent that I regularly observed in the SIP fieldsite.

For Sippers and Catalyst members, these four issues – contraception, the role of women, Rome's 1998 *'Statement'* on the state of the Australian Church, and the hierarchy's handling of the sexual abuse crisis – represented a Church that had failed to keep up with the cultural changes of the modern world, and a hierarchy that was still seeking to stifle the much needed 'fresh air' promised by the Second Vatican Council. The robust fortress of the early twentieth century was crumbling away to a desolate city (Muggeridge, 1986). But before we can understand the effect that Catholicism's decaying armoury has had on the Church and its followers, we must first seek to

² A papal encyclical is a letter sent by the Pope to the Church, usually addressed to the leaders of the Church, or the leaders in a specific region of the Church (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, n.d.).

³ 'Post-conciliar' means post-council, and is generally used to refer to the Second Vatican Council. In this context, it refers to the generation of Catholics who grew up in the wake of the Second Vatican Council.

understand the origins of the fortress mentality that the Church so successfully maintained until the middle of the twentieth century.

2.1 A Fortress Church

On August 4 1903, Guiseppe Sarto was elected the two-hundred and fifty-seventh pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church – against his wishes. After just four days in papal conclave, the College of Cardinals had reached agreement that he should lead them into the twentieth century.⁴ But rather than be pleased by the affirmation of his peers, Cardinal Sarto found the news deeply distressing (Forbes, [1923] 1987). With trembling voice and tears he begged the Cardinals to forget him, saying he was unworthy of the role: ‘Please – I beg of you – do not consider me... I could not accept... have mercy on me and forget me’ (Diethelm, 1994, pp. 86–7).

While some may argue that Cardinal Sarto was simply displaying the self-effacing humility appropriate to the role of a papal candidate, his early words and actions as Pope Pius X suggest he held a clear foreboding of the task that lay ahead of him. In his first encyclical, just two months into his papacy, Pius X made clear the reason for his reluctance:

We⁵ were terrified beyond all else by the disastrous state of human society today. For who can fail to see that society is at the present time, more than in any past age, suffering from a terrible and deep-rooted malady which, developing every day and eating into its inmost being, is dragging it to destruction? ...[T]here is good reason to fear lest this great perversity may be as it were a foretaste, and perhaps the beginning of those evils which are reserved for the last days (Pius X, 1903).

Cast in the context of a battle of Armageddon-like proportions, Pius X thus set himself the task of defending his church against the perils of the world. More specifically, following the model set for him by Pope Pius IX before him, he sought to do battle against the dangers of modernism. As the longest serving pope in history, Pope Pius IX had laid a clear path for his successors when in 1864 he published his now infamous

⁴ A papal conclave is a meeting in which all the Church’s cardinals who are under the age of eighty (known as the College of Cardinals) gather to elect a new pope. The Cardinals gather at the Sistine Chapel in Rome, segregated from the world, and vote twice daily until a majority of two-thirds of the vote has been achieved. This process can take several weeks.

⁵ In using the plural pronoun to refer to himself, Pope Pius X reflects the Catholic belief that the Pope is Christ’s representative on earth, and thus speaks with Christ’s voice.

Syllabus of Errors, issuing a 'general declaration of war on modernity' (Küng, 2002, p. 172). His list of modern errors was substantial – totalling eighty in number – and far-reaching; including everything from communism, socialism, pantheism, naturalism, rationalism, indifferentism and latitudinarianism. Pius IX condemned clerical associations and bible societies, as well as modern notions such as human rights, freedom of religion, freedom of conscience, freedom of the press and civil marriage (Haag, 1912).⁶

Such extraordinary rejection of modern values was not new to the papacy. After surviving the scarring experience of the French Revolution and Napoleonic rule⁷ – and the subsequent imprisonment of Pius VI and abolition of the Papal States in 1798 – ideas of liberty, equality, democracy, and free speech were viewed as dangerous subversion by successive papal governments: 'When the clerics were returned to power in 1815 they were determined that these revolutionary ideas were to have no place in the Papal States, nor in the wider Church. This was to be a disastrous policy' (Collins, 1997, p. 35).

Thus began a century of increasing alienation of the papacy from the modern world. Across the nineteenth century, the Papal States were invaded, occupied, annexed and abolished multiple times. In return, popes excommunicated their conquerors and turned their backs on the modern state and its trappings. Nineteenth century popes spoke out against gas lighting and suspension bridges, and Pope Gregory XVI even refused to allow railways to be built in the Papal States (Chadwick, 2003; Küng, 2002).

However, Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors* represented the sense of extreme alienation he felt from the modern world. Ironically, Pius IX began his papacy as a liberal. He had been critical of the conservatism of his predecessor, Pope Gregory XVI, and Catholics

⁶ In actuality, most of the errors focussed on specific theses which Pius IX took issue with, rather than general concepts, and each statement could only be understood in the context of the particular document or book which the *Statement of Errors* referenced (Haag, 1912). However, the effect of the *Syllabus of Errors* was such that it was seen to be an attack on modern thought itself.

⁷ The French Revolution - also known as the 'reign of terror' among Catholics – represented an attempt to refound all the institutions of France on secular reason alone. The Catholic Church was made a department of the State, freedom of religion and religious tolerance were guaranteed at law, and priests were required to take an oath of fidelity to the Civil Constitution. Those that refused left the country or were imprisoned and executed, with two hundred and twenty-five priests killed in the 1792 September Massacres alone. A new pagan calendar was established and a revolutionary cult, known as the 'Cult of Reason', was introduced. When French troops under the command of Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Italy in 1796 and Pius VI was taken to France as a prisoner and subsequently died, many presumed that the papacy had come to an end (Collins, 1997).

enthusiastically celebrated his election as pope in 1846. But he soon found he was unable to match the pace of his reforms to the revolutionary wave that was spreading throughout Western Europe in 1848. Forced by rebels to flee from Rome, Pius IX returned three years later in a different mood: 'The moderately progressive pope had become a reactionary' (Collins, 1997, p. 42).

In lieu of liberalism, Pius IX fostered a deeply paternalistic ultramontanist – or papal veneration⁸ – drawing on his charismatic public persona and improvements in transportation and communication to enhance the influence of the papacy in the Church. This ultramontanist only blossomed further when, in 1870, Pius IX was imprisoned by Italian unification forces. Catholics worldwide rallied to support their 'prisoner in the Vatican'.⁹ This potent symbolism was maintained by subsequent popes, who refused to leave the walls of the Vatican for the next fifty-nine years, thus physically embodying the 'fortress church' mentality (Aspden, 2002) that would characterise the Catholic Church until the mid-twentieth century:

[T]he medieval Counter-Reformation Catholic fortress was now built up against modernity with all available powers. The chill of religious indifference, hostility to the church and a lack of faith might prevail outside in the modern world. But within, papalism and Marianism¹⁰ disseminated the warmth of home: emotional security through popular piety of every kind... [B]ound up in a closed confessional milieu with its own view of the world... [the Catholic Church] was an ideologically closed system which legitimated, on the one hand, a distance from the modern world and, on the other, the claim to have a monopoly of ultimate interpretations of the world (Küng, 2002, pp. 170–1).

Within this closed system sprang up an all-encompassing community akin to what Goffman (1961) and Foucault (1977) would term a 'total institution': an organisation that separates itself from society, enmeshing its participants in a tightly ordained set of communal practices and beliefs designed to direct participant's activities towards the

⁸ The term 'ultramontane' originated in the Middle Ages: when a non-Italian was elected pope he was named *papa ultramontano*, or pope from beyond the mountains (referring to the Alps). After the Protestant Reformation in France, the term ultramontane came to refer to people who supported papal authority in French politics, with the papacy regarded as a foreign power. By the nineteenth century however, ultramontanist took on new form under Pope Pius IX, who fostered a deeply emotional and sentimental veneration of the Holy Father 'over the mountains' (Benigni, 1912; Küng, 2002).

⁹ Although Pope Pius IX was popularly known as a 'prisoner of the Vatican', he was in fact free to leave the Vatican. He refused, however, as a sign of his contempt for the Italian government's *Law of Guarantees*, which gave the Italian king the right to rule over what had formerly been the Papal States. This practice of papal self-imprisonment continued until the issue was resolved in 1929 with the formation of the Vatican City (Kertzer, 2006).

¹⁰ Marianism refers to Catholic devotion to the figure of Mary, mother of Christ.

goals of the institution. For Catholics, this ‘Total Church’ was ‘an all-enveloping cocoon of institutions, beliefs, and practices’ which provided a confident rhythm to life and all its questions:

There existed, in short, a glorious Catholic ghetto, a vast interlocking network of what it meant to be, to act, to live and believe as a Catholic. The whole overarching, cradle-to-the-grave system was reassuring, comforting and secure. We knew that we had the true faith, with the sacraments available at every critical step of our lives. We could spend our entire lives, from the cradle to the grave, in the cocoon of Catholic institutions, a cocoon which presented a coherent worldview and clarity about life’s goal and meaning... You knew who you were. The church was indeed ‘Mother’ church – all caring, all embracing, all certain about what was good for you (Bausch, 1999, pp. 159–161).

But the fortress church could survive only when there was consensus, shared values and a common goal: ‘It could only survive in an ethnic ghetto and with static isolation, in the village where it was the majority, where it had the “true religion” and everyone else was in error’ (Bausch, 1999, p. 184). But like many European leaders of the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Church’s popes – who had thus far seen themselves as immutable sovereigns – were no longer simply bivouacked against external threats; they now faced increased dissent from within their own flock. Once cracks began appearing in the fortress walls, thanks to the increasing education levels of the Catholic laity and a series of poorly considered actions and edicts from church leaders in the mid-twentieth century, the Church found its cocoon of certainty breaking up.

How then did this absolute monarchy respond to evidence that the foundations of its sovereign rule were crumbling? How did its leaders handle the burgeoning crises of dissent that followed their decisions to ban contraception, outlaw women’s ordination, condemn the state of the Australian Church, and ignore the widespread clerical abuse that was so harming its moral legitimacy amongst the laity? Behind the walls of the Catholic citadel, it seems the answer was simple: ‘When besieged, bunker down’. In so doing, Church leaders drew on a model of sovereign authority that had served them well since the nineteenth century but would offer little assurance in the crises to come. As the next section will show, the theoretical contributions of Carl Schmitt, Giorgio Agamben and Michel Foucault offer useful frameworks within which to understand the Church’s response to its crumbling authority.

2.1.1 Sovereignty, exception and disciplinary power

The exception is more interesting than the rule. The rule proves nothing; the exception proves everything...

(Schmitt, 1985, p. 15).

Carl Schmitt was a jurist and political theorist who was raised in a devoted Catholic family in late nineteenth century Germany. He wrote extensively about the effective wielding of political power, arguing that true political power lies not simply in the ability to establish a rule of law for one's subjects to obey, but also in identifying occasions and persons for which the rule of law does *not* apply, such as during 'states of emergency' or national crises. For Schmitt, the principal task of the sovereign is to forge a community's political identity through the definition of normality, and in turn, through 'the forcible suppression of those whose conception of normality differs from the sovereign's' (Vinx, 2016). As such, those who are 'excepted' or excluded are not simply placed outside the political arena, but rather they are 'brought into a more fundamental political relation' with the existing political order (Neal, 2007, p. 4). It is thus in the gap between the norm and the exception that true political power becomes apparent, and it is during times of revolution or the overthrow of an old order that the power of these exceptions becomes most revealing.

Decades later, the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben built on Schmitt's definition of sovereignty as 'he who decides on the exception' (Schmitt, [1922] 1985, p. 5) to argue that the 'state of exception' has become near ubiquitous as 'the dominant paradigm of government in contemporary politics' (Agamben, 2008, p. 2). But for Agamben, the state of exception is not a juridical state as per Schmitt, but rather 'a space devoid of law' – a 'zone of anomie' in which the sovereign acts as a 'living law' to determine who resides within the law and who has stepped beyond it (Agamben, 2008, pp. 50, 69). By embodying the law, the sovereign is able to decide who belongs and who does not – an action which in turn reinforces the validity and efficacy of his or her own sovereignty:

[W]hat is at issue in the sovereign exception is not so much the control or neutralization of an excess as the creation and definition of the very space in which the juridico-political order can have validity (Agamben, 1998, p. 19).

Agamben brings the full power of the sovereign strategy of exclusion into focus by recalling the archaic Roman figure of *homo sacer* – the ‘accursed man’ or the ‘sacred man’. Here the term sacred refers not to holiness but rather to the status of being ‘set apart’ from common society, as per Durkheim’s ([1912] 1965) conception. In ancient Roman times, a person who committed certain crimes could be declared *homo sacer* by the sovereign, and their rights as a citizen revoked. Taken outside the realm of both natural and divine law and stripped of every political status, *homo sacer* was thus abandoned by society and cursed to live in a liminal space, or ‘limit condition’ between this world and the next:

He who has been banned is not, in fact, simply set outside the law and made indifferent to it but rather abandoned by it, that is, exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable (Agamben, 1998, p. 28).

These concepts of *homo sacer* and the sovereign as ‘living law’ are particularly apt in the context of the Catholic Church. As head of the church, the Pope truly embodies the ‘living law’ of Catholicism. He is considered to hold ‘full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered’ (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1993, n. 882). It is within this power that he establishes direction for the Church through the pronouncement of divinely-revealed truths, and it is ultimately he who decides which of these truths are to be ‘definitely held’ by the faithful as infallible dogma and which directions are merely pastoral in nature, as will be explored further in Chapter Six. Finally, he is also ultimately responsible for determining the membership of the Church. By possessing the power to excommunicate, he defines *homo sacer* for the Catholic Church, being able to exclude individuals from the sacraments on which their spiritual salvation is dependent and isolating them from the community upon which their spiritual identity is based.

However, as the following case studies will show, the Pope’s authority to determine ‘normality’ for the Catholic Church has increasingly come under question in recent decades, and his attempts to demonstrate his sovereignty via acts of exclusion – whether excluding individuals or topics of discussion – have been the focus of increased lay dissent. If the sovereign is responsible for determining which practices and persons are within the law and which must be excluded, how does such a sovereign respond when his subjects start to loudly and critically question his assessment of these boundaries?

Michel Foucault offers a useful lens for understanding this situation when he argues that modern leaders cannot rule by sovereign power alone. He conceives of sovereign power as 'a right of seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself' (Foucault, 1978, p. 136). While pre-modern kings may have enjoyed the power to 'seize' the loyalties and lives of their followers, Foucault argues that during the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century this centralised power was replaced by a new economy of 'disciplinary power'. Under this model of power, rather than relying on the overt violence of sovereign control, leaders transformed industrialised subjects into 'docile bodies' through the exercise of the 'subtle coercion' of disciplinary methods (Foucault, 1977, p. 137). Drawing on techniques that reconstructed the spatial and temporal dimensions within which people functioned, disciplinary power enclosed, partitioned and distributed bodies within a 'protected space of disciplinary monotony' so that the actions of individuals could be monitored and a 'collective and obligatory rhythm' maintained (Foucault, 1977, pp. 141, 151-2).

At the heart of this 'obligatory rhythm' lay practices of surveillance and self-governance. Here, Foucault draws upon Jeremy Bentham's (1791) conceptualisation of the panopticon – an architectural space in which all the inhabitants can be observed by a centralised but unseen authority – to argue that modern society has itself become panoptic. The 'faceless gaze' of the invisible panoptic authority has been transformed into an interiorised and individualised gaze which suffuses the whole social body: 'thousands of eyes posted everywhere, mobile attentions ever on the alert' (Foucault, 1977, p. 214). By conscripting each individual to the task of surveillance, the observed become their own observers, monitoring and adjusting their own behaviour through 'technologies of the self' so as to maximise the potential for rewards and avoid the penalties of transgression (Foucault, 1988). In this way, the exigencies of real and imagined surveillance encourage techniques of self-governance and thus replace the need for politically costly acts of overt sovereign control. Panopticism thus brings a 'new physics of power' into the social order, which reaches maximum intensity not in the body of a sovereign ruler and his or her public actions of overt control but in the 'micro-practices of everyday life' and the subtle systems of disciplinary coercion that maintain these practices (Foucault, 1977, p. 208; MacCannell and MacCannell, 1993, p. 211).

As we will see in the case studies that follow, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church has embraced Foucault's disciplinary technologies with enthusiasm, in an effort to return to the 'collective and obligatory rhythm' of lay docility which characterised the pre-Vatican II church. Rather than recognising lay dissent as an opportunity for dialogue and a means to better understand the changing needs of their followers, several generations of Catholic sovereigns have instead sought to fortify their waning sovereignty through employing strategies of silencing, surveillance, and exclusion.

The first crack in the fortress Church was hewn in 1968 by the disastrous *Humanae Vitae*, in which Pope Paul VI responded to the modern question of birth control. By attempting to make the topic of contraception – and thus anyone who dared speak of it – the Church's own *homo sacer*, Paul VI and his successors drew on a model of sovereignty that no longer held authority in the eyes of the laity of the 1960s.

2.2 Contraception

On this [the Church] had asked for tremendous sacrifices in the lives of everyday believers. If the Pope was wrong on it, he might have no claim left to supervise the most intimate lives of his followers.

(Wills, 2000, p. 75).

The Catholic hierarchy has long been obsessed with sex. Or so it would seem from the insistent focus that the papacy and curia¹¹ have placed on human sexuality and the church's moral mandate to control it. In the thirteenth century, the Church drew on Thomas Aquinas'¹² theory of natural law¹³ to argue that the purpose of human beings is

¹¹ The curia is the bureaucratic arm of the Roman Catholic Church, which assists the pope in administering his pastoral role in the Catholic Church. The curia includes secretariats, dicasteries, congregations (such as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which promotes and safeguards the doctrines of the Church), tribunals, administrative offices, and pontifical councils and commissions (O'Gorman and Faulkner, 2000).

¹² Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225 – 1274) was a Dominican friar and Catholic priest who wrote over sixty philosophical, theological and juridical works. He is regarded as a model teacher for Catholic seminarians studying for the priesthood, and his works were described by Pope Innocent VI as surpassing all other writings, with the exception of canonical texts, in 'accuracy of expression and truth of statement' (Kennedy, 1912).

¹³ Theories of natural law argue that the moral standards of human behaviour are objectively derived from nature – specifically, the inherent nature of the material universe and the nature of human beings (Himma, n.d.). For Catholics, natural law is considered to be 'the rule of conduct which is prescribed to us by the Creator in the constitution of the nature with which He has endowed us' (Fox, 1910).

to flourish, and that, as such, artificial interference in sexual intercourse is immoral (Salzman and Lawler, 2008). As early as the ninth century, penitential manuals – designed to help priests identify the appropriate penance for their parishioner’s sins – treated birth control as if it were equivalent to homicide. Ten years of fasting on bread and water were required to absolve the sins of contraception by herbal potion or *coitus interruptus* – both of which, even within marriage, were considered more egregious sins than rape, incest and adultery, for these at least preserved the ‘natural order’ of the reproductive potential of the sexual act (Faulkner, 2002; Jütte, 2008).

By the early twentieth century, the Church’s stance on marital sexuality and contraception was so well accepted as to be without question. In fact, modern Catholic families had become triumphantly proud of their size, seeing their burgeoning numbers as “‘a sign of contradiction” to the secularised, anti-Catholic society into which they had moved, by conspicuous fidelity to the Church’s teaching’ (Muggeridge, 1986, p. 76). While Protestants may have been waylaid by the Anglican Church’s decision to approve artificial birth control in July 1930, just five months later, Pope Pius XI’s encyclical *Casti Connubii* reiterated the Catholic Church’s teaching and reassured his followers that the Church’s stance on the topic remained steadfast: ‘If the Vatican was sure on any one thing in the moral sphere, it was this’ (Wills, 2000, p. 75).

Three decades later, in 1968 Pope Paul VI issued a similarly steadfast encyclical letter on contraception, *Humanae Vitae*. But by this stage, the world had changed irrevocably – science understood more about the female reproductive system and the oral contraceptive pill had become widely available. Instead of receiving the doxic acceptance of the 1930s, *Humanae Vitae* would become known as ‘the most disastrous papal document of this century’ – being considered the equivalent ‘for sheer wreckage achieved’ of Pius IX’s *Syllabus of Errors* (Wills, 2000, p. 73).

The ‘wreckage’ started with a well-intentioned move by the same pope who called the Second Vatican Council. Having already expressed concern for the growing world population, in 1962 Pope John XXIII established an advisory committee, comprised of six male non-theologians from around Europe, to study the issue of birth control. Although he died before the group could meet, his successor Pope Paul VI continued the project, adding more members to it over the following years so that by 1966 the

committee represented five continents and included scientists, priests, doctors, professors, sociologists, theologians, cardinals, nuns and bishops. Remarkably, even lay married couples and single men and women were invited to participate in what became known as the 'Pontifical Commission on Birth Control'. In the end, the six-man advisory committee swelled to a total of sixty-eight participants, both male and female, all of whom were chosen as much for their expertise as for their loyalty to the Church.

Initially, the existence of this committee was a secret. Participants were told to keep all knowledge of the committee strictly confidential, and all reports and minutes were to be given to the Pope, to be used or suppressed at his discretion (Wills, 2000). Even when news of the commission leaked out, the Pope remained mysterious on the composition and function of the group. Bolstered by the thought that the commission would likely provide new arguments in support of the Church's stance against contraception, Pope Paul VI was stunned when, on April 23rd 1966, the commission rejected the position of *Casti Connubii* and voted sixty-four to four in favour of removing the ban on artificial contraception (Muggeridge, 1986; Yallop, 2012a).

In the end, the committee issued two documents. One report was considered by most participants to be the official report and has subsequently become known as the 'majority report'. Informed by the wealth of medical, psychological, historical and sociological evidence presented to them, as well as the compelling personal evidence of Pat and Patty Crowley – who tabled the results of a survey asking devout Catholic couples to reflect on their experience of the 'rhythm method' of contraception¹⁴ – the majority of the commission found themselves shocked to realise how flimsy the natural law reasoning was that they had so comfortably accepted thus far: 'To their shared surprise they found they were not only willing to entertain the idea of the church's changing, but felt that it *had* to change on this matter, that the truth, once seen, could no longer be denied' (Wills, 2000, p. 91).

¹⁴ Pat and Patty Crowley were the founders of the international Christian Family Movement (CFM) – a lay initiative to reinforce Catholic family values. They had surveyed 278 members of the CFM regarding whether they felt the rhythm method of contraception – in which couples abstain from sex during the woman's fertile period each month – had helped or hindered their marriage (Fehring and McGraw, 2002). Survey respondents indicated they found this 'natural' method of contraception far from natural, causing unnecessary strain on the marriage. As one husband reported: 'Rhythm destroys the meaning of the sex act; it turns it from a spontaneous expression of spiritual and physical love into a mere bodily sexual relief... Rhythm seems to be immoral and deeply unnatural. It seems to me diabolical' (in Wills, 2000, p. 90).

On hearing news of this change of heart, the Vatican shrank the numbers of the Commission back down to just twenty bishops and cardinals, who were tasked with issuing the final report while the remainder of the participants were demoted to 'advisers'. Not to be ignored, the Crowleys presented another survey report, this time of three thousand Catholics, showing that sixty-three per cent said the rhythm method had harmed their marriage. Even the theologians who were tasked with presenting their findings to the bishops agreed fifteen to four that contraception is not intrinsically evil. Ultimately, in mid-1966, the final vote of the commission – by the twenty prelates authorised by the pope to finally determine the matter – resulted in eight bishops voting to change the church's position on contraception, six voting against, and six abstaining (Yallop, 2012a).

Gary Wills sums up this remarkable awakening with perfect clarity:

As soon as people began to think independently about the matter, the whole structure of deceit crumbled at a touch. The past position could not be sustained, even among these people picked by the Vatican itself... These people were all educated, even expert. They were Catholics in good standing (they had been chosen on those grounds). They had been conditioned all their lives to accept the church's teaching – in fact they *had* accepted it in the past. They of all people would entertain the official case with open minds. They had no malice against church authorities – most of them had devoted much (if not all) of their lives to working with them. Most had entered the project either agreeing with the papal position or thinking that it was unlikely to change. Now they found themselves agreeing that change was not only necessary but inevitable. They had trouble imagining how they had ever thought otherwise (Wills, 2000, pp. 92–3).

However, the majority report was not the only document to be issued by the Commission. The four theologians who had argued for the status quo when presenting their findings to the bishops unofficially tendered another 'minority report' to Pope Paul VI. They maintained that the Church could not have erred in its previous teachings and should not change its long-standing position. Rather, they argued that any suggestion that the Church could have erred in this matter would compromise the trust of the faithful (Faulkner, 2002). As the minority report itself stated:

If it should be declared that contraception is not evil in itself, then we should have to concede frankly that the Holy Spirit had been on the side of the Protestant churches... It should likewise have to be admitted that for a half a century the Spirit failed to protect Pius XI, Pius XII, and a large part of the Catholic hierarchy from a very serious error. This would mean that the leaders of the Church, acting with extreme imprudence, had condemned

thousands of innocent human acts, forbidding, under pain of eternal damnation, a practice which would now be sanctioned (in Mumford, 1994, p. 126).

In other words, 'the Vatican found that it had dug itself into a hole and decided the only way out was to keep on digging' (Castle, 2013). It seems that Pope Paul VI agreed, as he took advantage of the minority report to argue that he could not accept the commission's findings because there was disagreement amongst its members. Instead, in 1968, the Pope issued his first and only encyclical to his followers, *Humanae Vitae*. In this letter he reaffirmed the Church's traditional view of marital relations and maintained papal condemnation of artificial birth control: 'The Church... teaches that each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life' (Paul VI, 1968, para. 11).¹⁵

Catholics around the world greeted the encyclical with shock and disbelief. Both the majority and minority reports had been leaked to the press, and Catholics, including the commission members themselves, had been convinced that the Pope would not be able to sustain a teaching that had been so thoroughly discredited. In response to the news, 'Catholics responded with an unparalleled refusal to submit' (Wills, 2000, p. 95). Polls around the world registered almost instantaneous lay non-compliance with the encyclical, and a resistance to the encyclical amongst priests as well (Greeley, 2004a). Estimates suggest up to one-third of Catholics left the church, never to practice again (Faulkner, 2002). 'Others, bereft of sensible advice, limped along for years denying themselves communion' (Collins, 1997, p. 74). Mass attendance fell dramatically, particularly among those in their fertile years, while young people in general simply ignored the papacy, seeing it as 'irrelevant to their needs and aspirations' (Collins, 1997, p. 74). In Australia in 1970, just two years after the encyclical was released, only twenty-nine per cent of Catholics surveyed by *The Australian* newspaper accepted the papal teaching, while fifty-eight per cent were opposed to it (O'Farrell, 1992). As one commentator aptly summarised it: '[t]he citadel had been betrayed, the dogma was dead, and open season had been declared on every Catholic moral and doctrinal proposition' (Muggeridge, 1986, p. 103). As for Pope Paul IV, he never wrote another encyclical after *Humanae Vitae*, and it is alleged that he seriously considered resigning

¹⁵ The Church uses this same logic to decry homosexuality, arguing that 'every genital act must be within the framework of marriage' and open to the 'procreation of human life'. As such, homosexual acts are seen to be 'objectively disordered' and 'condemned as a serious depravity' (Paul VI, 1968; *Persona Humana*, 1975)

in the aftermath of the debacle (Greeley, 2004a). Four years after the encyclical, while delivering a sermon at St Peter's basilica, looking nervous and alarmed he offered his only explanation of the source of the unexpected defiance: 'Through some crack in the temple of God, the smoke of Satan has entered' (Riccards, 2012, p. 512).

The real issue, of course, was not sex and contraception, but power and authority. The controversy surrounding *Humanae Vitae* demonstrated that papal authority alone could no longer guarantee acceptance of Church teachings. In fact, by 1972 forty-two per cent of US priests considered *Humanae Vitae* an abuse of the Pope's authority, and eighteen per cent thought it was an inappropriate use of that authority (Greeley, 1972). Instead of recognising papal authority, Catholic laity started to identify an alternate source of moral authority: that of their own conscience. In turn, their bishops issued statements that 'while showing respect for the encyclical, told believers they could act apart from it if they felt bound by conscience to do so' (Wills, 2000, pp. 95–6). Firmly locking the bedroom door on the pope, it was this discovery of the principle of conscience and the widespread dissent that followed it which shattered the authority structure of the church: 'Nearly everything the Church had been teaching about human sexuality and authority for the previous 20 centuries came into question in just a few years' (Faulkner, 2002, pp. 155–6). This would have widespread repercussions for the fortress church.

2.3 The role of women

This is not a legitimate issue... It is divine law, it cannot be changed or even reviewed.

(Cardinal Müller, in Granados, 2017, p. 93)

The next chink in the armoury of fortress Catholicism came about a decade later, in 1979. On the final day of a week-long tour around America, in which Pope John Paul II was met with celebrity-like adulation on almost every turn, he came to address a group of five-thousand women, mostly nuns, at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington DC.

He was to be introduced by the quietly spoken Sister Theresa Kane, the superior of the Sisters of Mercy and the elected President of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) in the USA.¹⁶ Dressed in a modest brown suit and speaking to a televised audience, she began her speech with a pledge of love and loyalty: 'Our hearts leap as we welcome you'. But it was her next words that struck a chill into the heart of the watching pope:

As women we have heard the powerful message of our Church addressing the dignity and reverence for all persons. As women we have pondered these words. Our contemplation leads us to state that the Church in its struggle to be faithful to its call for reverence and dignity for all persons must respond by providing the possibility of women as persons being included in all ministries of our Church. I urge you, Your Holiness, to be open to and respond to the voices coming from the women of this country who are desirous of serving in and through the Church as fully participating members (Kane, in Daigler, 2012, pp. 65–66; and Yallop, 2012b).

Her words sparked thunderous applause from her audience and quickly provoked a national debate on women's ordination in America. 'Never in the modern era had anyone publicly and formally addressed a pope to his face in opposition to his stance on a controversial issue' (Daigler, 2012, p. 66). In her loyal but firm expression of dissent, Sister Theresa Kane highlighted the incongruities of a pope who would, in the same US tour, speak at length to the United Nations General Assembly on the topic of human rights (John Paul II, 1979), yet answer her request for 'full participation' with a blithe suggestion that the nuns present should seek to model the Virgin Mary, who herself was not a priest.

In so doing, John Paul II reiterated the stance of *Inter Insigniores*, issued three years earlier under his predecessor Paul VI, which stated that 'the Church, in fidelity to the example of the Lord, does not consider herself¹⁷ authorised to admit women to priestly ordination' (*Inter Insigniores*, 1976). Recognising that this statement 'will perhaps cause pain', Paul VI had encouraged women not to become fixated on a goal that the Church could not allow itself to grant, but rather to 'become more fully aware of the greatness of their mission'. Arguing that 'the Church is a differentiated body, in which each individual has his or her role', Paul VI suggested that women should not get

¹⁶ The Sisters of Mercy is a Catholic religious order founded in Dublin in 1831 by Catherine McAuley. LCWR is the association of the leaders of congregations of Catholic women religious in the USA.

¹⁷ The Catholic Church refers to itself using the female pronoun, as it sees itself as the bride of Jesus Christ (Joyce, 1908).

caught up in 'jealousy' over which roles in the Church are superior, but rather they should 'meditate more deeply on the nature of the real equality of the baptized' and on the 'capital importance' of their role in the 'renewal and humanization of society' (*Inter Insigniores*, 1976).

This confirmation of women's 'capital importance' failed to abate the discussion of women's ordination. Catholic theologians continued to debate the topic, and, in April 1976, even the Vatican's own Pontifical Biblical Commission concluded that the New Testament did not provide a conclusive scriptural basis for preventing the ordination of women (Helmick, 2014). But John Paul II was not going to be easily put off. In 1988, he issued an apostolic letter on the dignity of women, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, in which he reiterated the Church's stance on admitting women to the priesthood, and argued that in so doing the Church was 'defending the dignity of women and their vocation'. In this way, he suggested that the Church shows 'honor and gratitude' to those women who, by embracing their 'femininity', have 'shared... in the apostolic mission' of the Church by being 'holy martyrs, virgins and mothers of families, who bravely bore witness to their faith and passed on the Church's faith and tradition by bringing up their children in the spirit of the Gospel' (John Paul II, 1988, n. 27).

Yet Catholic women remained unwilling to accept that their future in the Church was limited to the roles of mother, virgin and martyr. By the 1990s, Pope John Paul II had had enough of the ongoing debate and, perhaps conscious of his failing health, he sought to ensure that, 'even from the grave', he would be the one controlling the discussion on women's ordination (Amadi-Azuogu, 2007, p. 249). In 1994, he enacted his boldest possible move to conclude the discussion by issuing *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*. In this apostolic letter, he stated:

Although the teaching that priestly ordination is to be reserved to men alone has been preserved by the constant and universal Tradition of the Church and firmly taught by the Magisterium in its more recent documents, at the present time in some places it is nonetheless considered still open to debate, or the Church's judgment that women are not to be admitted to ordination is considered to have a merely disciplinary force. Wherefore, in order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance... I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful (John Paul II, 1994).

With those final words, Pope John Paul II sought to nail permanently shut the door on the Church's ordination debate. By stating that 'this judgement is to be definitely held by all the Church's faithful', he confirmed that this edict was to be considered church dogma¹⁸ – or divine law – and thus could not be challenged or even reviewed by any of the Church's faithful (Granados, 2017, pp. 93–4). To erase any uncertainty, the head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith,¹⁹ Cardinal Ratzinger (who would later become Pope Benedict XVI), then issued a clarification confirming that the teaching was 'set forth infallibly'²⁰ and thus it was irrevocable: 'this teaching requires definitive assent... [it] is to be held always, everywhere, and by all, as belonging to the deposit of faith' (Ratzinger, 1995). He went on to later confirm that anyone who denied this dogma was considered to be denying a core 'truth' of the Catholic faith and thus could be excommunicated from the Church under canon law (Ratzinger, 2002a). Cardinal Ratzinger followed up this warning by excommunicating seven women who had claimed that they had been 'ordained' by an Argentinian Catholic bishop, who himself had already been excommunicated (Ratzinger, 2002b).

Arguing that authority to ordain an individual comes from God alone, and 'cannot become the goal of social advancement', the Church thus suggested that its hands were tied by the example set by Jesus Christ, the Apostles and the Church Fathers who followed them (*Inter Insigniores*, 1976). Remarkably, even Pope Francis seems to consider himself bound by the silencing order of *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*. Despite his appearances of liberalism, when asked about the prospect of women being ordained in the Catholic Church, he has on several occasions confirmed that 'the church has spoken and says no ... That door is closed... Pope John Paul [II] said so with a formula that was definite. That door is closed' (McClory, 2013; Püllella, 2016). The silencing effect of this edict cannot be underestimated. Belgian bishops described the pronouncement as 'a

¹⁸ In the Catholic Church, a dogma is considered to be a divinely revealed authoritative teaching: 'a truth appertaining to faith or morals, revealed by God, transmitted from the Apostles in the Scriptures or by tradition, and proposed by the Church for the acceptance of the faithful' (Coghlan, 1909).

¹⁹ The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is the department of the Catholic Church responsible for promulgating and defending the doctrine of the Catholic Church. It is the oldest of the nine congregations or departments of the Roman curia, and was established to defend the Church against heresy.

²⁰ It should be noted that the infallibility of this dogma is widely questioned by Catholic theologians and scholars, some of whom argue that *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* was not issued as an *ex cathedra* statement of the extraordinary papal magisterium – in other words, when solemnly defining a moral or doctrinal teaching which must be held by the Church and speaking as the universal pastor of the church. According to this argument, only two instances of *ex cathedra* statements exist – the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and the dogma of the Assumption of Mary. See Joy (2013) for a thorough review of this complex argument.

prohibition to think or speak, or as an effort to impose silence' (Catholics International, in Coco, 2014, p. 12). Others were even more pessimistic:

In effect, mouths have been gagged. A ban on further discussion on the matter has been permanently imposed... The woman must now be only an 'amen-saying' member of the church, as long as this ban is still in force (Amadi-Azuogu, 2007, pp. 256–258).

The Church's stance against women's ordination rests on two key arguments. Firstly, it is argued that women cannot be made priests because Jesus did not ordain women priests nor was he female himself. Secondly, and more insidiously, Catholic tradition suggests that women's inferiority and ritual impurity excludes them from the altar and thus makes them unworthy to hold the dignity of priestly office.

The first argument relies on a uniquely Catholic imaginary of what life was like in the early Church. The logic goes something like this: 'Given that the twelve apostles²¹ were male, all priests must be male. If Jesus Christ had wanted to have women priests, he would have ordained women as priests himself. And so, given He did not – we cannot'. This seems like a compelling logic at first glance, until one considers the other characteristics of the first apostles. The twelve apostles were men, yes, but they were also married, Jewish, Aramaic-speakers. Does that mean that Catholic priests must be married – a prospect that the Catholic Church continues to reject? Should priests also be converted Jews, fluent in Aramaic? What's more, how do we reconcile the fact that the first evangelist of the message of Christ's resurrection was a woman – Jesus is said to have appeared to Mary Magdalene after she discovered his empty tomb, charging her to go and tell the good news to the other disciples (John 20:1-18). Most compelling of all, perhaps, is the fact that nowhere in the Gospels is Jesus Christ referenced as having ordained any priests at all. In fact, he rebuked the priests of his day for their pride, hypocrisy and corruption. As Wills (2000) argues, the Christian leadership that Jesus espoused was non-hierarchical and dynamic – not limited to roles and titles but

²¹ The 'twelve apostles' are considered the primary disciples of Jesus Christ and the primary teachers of his gospel message in the early Christian church. They are famously depicted in 'The Last Supper', a mural by Leonardo da Vinci, eating together on the eve of Christ's crucifixion.

rather led by need and charism (pp. 112-5).²² Even John, ‘the disciple whom he loved’ (John 19:26)²³ was not ordained a priest.

As if recognising the frailty of this logic, *Inter Insigniores* goes on to supplement the Church’s argument with a new suggestion: that women cannot be priests because they do not *look* like Christ:

[T]he priest is a sign... a sign that must be perceptible and which the faithful must be able to recognise with ease... [W]hen Christ's role in the Eucharist is to be expressed sacramentally, there would not be this “natural resemblance” which must exist between Christ and his minister if the role of Christ were not taken by a man: in such a case it would be difficult to see in the minister the image of Christ. For Christ himself was and remains a man (*Inter Insigniores*, 1976, n. 5).

Little can be said to explain or justify such logic without adopting a mindset of doxic Catholic devotion. ‘How could the Vatican offer such weak reasons for retaining its male-only rule?’, asks Garry Wills. Perhaps they were all that the hierarchy could turn to when the original arguments behind their stance had become ‘too disreputable for Rome to continue voicing them’ (Wills, 2000, p. 107); that is, that women’s natural inferiority and ritual impurity make them unsuitable for priestly office.

This second argument draws on misogynistic beliefs that stem from the days of Aristotle, who argued that the female’s inherent nature makes her less capable of reason, virtue and discipline than the male, being ‘more mischievous... more impulsive... more jealous, more querulous, more apt to scold and to strike... more void of shame, more false of speech [and] more deceptive’ than the male (Arist. *HA IX.1*, 608b1-15). This argument was quickly picked up by early Church Fathers. In the second century AD, Bishop Clement of Alexandria said of women: ‘the consciousness of their own nature must evoke feelings of shame’ (in Goff, 2015, p. 65). Around the same time the prolific Christian author Tertullian – considered one of the fathers of the church (Lucas, 2010) – echoed the imagery of Eve as the temptress of mankind, saying to his female readers: ‘Do you not know that you are [each] an Eve?... You are the devil’s gateway’ (Tertullian, n.d., 1.1). Epiphanius, the late fourth-century bishop of Cyprus, wrote: ‘Women are easily seduced, weak and lacking in reason. The devil

²² The term ‘charism’ is used in Christianity to refer to a spiritual gift or divine capacity endowed by the Holy Spirit (Wilhelm, 1908a).

²³ All biblical quotes in this thesis will be taken from the New International Version, unless otherwise indicated.

works to spew his chaos out through them' (in Swenson, 2009, p. 145). St Jerome added: 'Woman is the gate of the devil, the way of wickedness, the sting of the serpent, in a word a dangerous thing' (in Parsons, 2011, p. 84).

These doctrines had long-lasting influence in the Catholic Church. By the thirteenth century, St Thomas Aquinas, widely considered one of the Church's greatest theologians and philosophers, stated unequivocally that the nature of women is 'defective and misbegotten'. He drew on Aristotle to propose that, biologically speaking, females are failed males, having been deformed by a defect in the suitability of the mother or father, or from external interference such as a damp 'south wind' (Aquinas, [1485] 2013, p. 466). The influence of the feminine 'deformity' was thought to be so potent that sacred rituals required special protection, such as the following ninth century edict by Bishop Haito of Basle:

Everyone should take care that women do not approach the altar; even women consecrated to God may not intrude into any kind of altar service. If altar linens must be washed they should be removed by clerics, given over at the altar rails, and also be taken back that way. And likewise, offertory gifts, if they are brought by these women, are received by priests there and brought to the altar (Haito, in Wills, 2000, pp. 111-2).

As recently as 1917, Catholic canon law mandated that 'female persons may in no case come up to the altar, and may give responses only from afar' (Canon 813.1 in Prophet, 2005, p. 62). Since women were not allowed behind the sanctuary, which held the choir space in medieval cathedrals, they were also excluded from singing and thus the all-male choir, featuring castrati,²⁴ became the norm: 'Males, even when mutilated, were less unclean than women' (Wills, 2000, p. 112).

Such a position stands in perplexing contrast to the approach adopted by Jesus Christ himself, who is recorded in the Gospels as having welcomed contact with women, even 'unclean' women, prostitutes and outcasts. This disparity between the gospel message and current lived experience was a key theme uncovered in a major research project on the Australian experience of women's participation in the Catholic Church, which was commissioned by the Australian Catholic Bishop's Conference in 1996. Over the course of two-and-a-half years, the eight-person research committee gathered

²⁴ Castrati are males who have undergone castration prior to puberty, in order to retain the soprano vocal range of prepubescent youth.

extensive data through public hearings, written submissions, focus groups and a church-wide survey, seeking to record the experiences of a wide range of individuals and groups, including men and women, young and old, nuns and priests, as well as both current and lapsed or non-practicing Catholics. The project attracted an overwhelming response²⁵ – in written submissions alone they received two thousand and fifty-five responses. These responses provide an intimate insight into the pain and alienation felt by many women in the Australian Catholic Church. While a thorough review of the extensive report is beyond the scope of this chapter, a few select quotes give a telling insight into the sense of injustice and resentment carried by many Australian lay Catholics regarding the role of women in the Church:

Being a woman in the Roman Catholic Church is for many of us a most painful and distressing experience. It is in the Church that we experience the greatest exclusion on the basis of our gender, and we are given frequent reminders in Church practice that, despite various rhetoric, we are not considered to be created equally in the Image of God as are males (Macdonald et al., 1999, p. 84).

Patriarchal and hierarchical church systems and a male-dominated church culture were among the most regularly cited concerns:

We feel that the biggest barrier to women's participation in the Catholic Church is the 2000-year patriarchal tradition of the Church and its deep-rooted mistrust of women (Macdonald et al., 1999, p. 80).

Continued patriarchal reading of the Scriptures also alienates us. There is an astounding lack of recognition of the excellent biblical scholarship which finds nothing in Scripture that is contrary to the full participation of women in every area of Church life. Women are insulted at being expected to listen to sermons from male clergy who make no effort to deepen their understanding in this regard and who often show a complete ignorance of historical perspectives (Macdonald et al., 1999, p. 81).

As a woman with a strong Catholic background, I feel alienated by the maleness of the Church, and excluded by the language used in the liturgy²⁶ (Macdonald et al., 1999, p. 93).

Lack of participation in decision-making also featured prominently in the submissions:

One of the main barriers to women's participation in the Church is the obvious one: they have no part in the decision-making process. For

²⁵ Thirty-two days of hearings were held, in which almost five hundred people gave presentations across urban, rural and remote Australia. Approximately fifty focus groups were also convened, and a church-wide survey received responses from over one-hundred thousand Catholics across two hundred and eighty-one parishes.

²⁶ The term 'liturgy' represents a religious ritual held in public. In Catholic tradition, it is used to refer to the principle Catholic ritual, or Eucharistic ritual, commonly called the Mass (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, n.d.).

example, the encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, determines the directions of women's lives: their control of their own fertility; their working life; their socio-economic status; their dependence on the goodwill of men. Rules such as this were made without consultation, without the significant voice of women who have to deal with the practicalities of sexuality and fertility. While women are excluded from such arbitrary decisions there can be no true "discipleship of equals". While women are not part of the decision which controls their lives, there can be no justice (Macdonald et al., 1999, p. 87).

And while the project team were careful to avoid raising the topic of women's ordination, seeking to remain 'true to the Pope' and his guidance on the topic (Macdonald et al., 1999, p. 5), this theme also featured heavily in responses. For example:

Excluding ordination from women symbolically teaches the world that the official Church considers women in some way less human than men – less able to bear the burden of acting in Christ's place. It images and legitimates the idea that women are worth less than men. The misuse of theology and scripture, and fundamentalist understandings of tradition, are used to keep women in second place (Macdonald et al., 1999, p. 89).

Remarking on the shrinking number of priests in Australia, another respondent added:

It is clear the current Church hierarchy would rather see the faithful without the celebration of the Eucharist than admit the possibility that Jesus the Christ was the symbol of all humanity and not only one part of it. Silencing discussion, prohibiting dialogue, are not worthy of the Spirit of Christ— they are the hallmarks of a deep fear. I would even suggest that they are stances of those who know, deep in their subconscious, that the evolution of spiritual consciousness is against them, but who are incapable of the inner freedom which would allow such profound trust (Macdonald et al., 1999, p. 96).

These brief narratives of female exclusion and subordination highlight the pivotal role that 'voice' has played in the experiences of Australian Catholic laity as they navigate the impact of the crumbling Catholic fortress in their lives. As one group of respondents stated: 'We believe there are few forums within the official Church for women's voices to be heard' (Macdonald et al., 1999, p. 86). It is this theme of 'voice' that Sippers have so actively embraced, as will be explored in more detail in Chapter Five.

2.4 The 'Statement of Conclusions'

Attacking the political values and social instincts of a democratic nation is a curious tactic. It will not recall people to the practice of their faith, and might even persuade some that they can practise it better without the help of Roman hecklers.

(Grace, 2003, p. 56)

In November 1998, the bishops of Oceania were invited to attend a synod²⁷ in Rome to discuss the challenges facing their diocese²⁸ and what might be done to meet these challenges as the Church prepared for the new millennium. It was the final chapter in a series of continental assemblies that Pope John Paul II had called, having already met with the bishops of Europe, the Americas, Asia and Africa. Thirty-eight bishops from Australia attended the synod, along with bishops from New Zealand and the Pacific, and each was asked to prepare an eight-minute address to the Pope and their ecclesiastical²⁹ contemporaries. In anticipation of this extraordinary opportunity, the bishops of Australia reported feeling 'very liberated' and excited (Milligan, 2017).

The bishops' presentations touched on a wide range of topics which concerned their local churches, including the issues of clerical celibacy and sexual abuse, the church's stance on homosexuality and divorce, Vatican II's call for increased collegiality and dialogue in the church, and a need for gender inclusive language and broader roles for women in the church. Indeed, in the four years following the 1994 release of *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, Australian Catholics had been stridently seeking to make their voices heard on the topic of women's ordination.

The synod presentations delighted many Catholics who were watching events unfold from Australia, confirming that the bishops had indeed heard their call. As one observer, a religious sister, stated: 'I was thrilled with that – [I] thought, "this is wonderful, that the bishops are saying a lot of the things a lot of us are saying, they obviously are concerned"' (Milligan, 2017). In this way, the synod raised 'an expectation that after years of inaction, indifference and at times open hostility to

²⁷ A synod is a council or governing body of a church.

²⁸ A diocese is a territorial division of the church that is administered by a bishop who resides in the area (Stravinskis, 2002).

²⁹ The term ecclesiastical relates to the Christian Church or its clergy.

change, a momentum was building in the hierarchy for fundamental and genuine Church renewal' (McGillion, 2003, p. 4). This hopeful expectation was however soon dashed.

Unbeknown to Australian lay observers, another meeting had also been held in the days leading up to the synod, in which a select thirteen of the Australian bishop delegates were asked to meet separately with the curia. Three weeks after the well-publicised Synod of Oceania was complete, a summary of the deliberations of this earlier secret dialogue was circulated amongst the handful of Australian bishops who still remained in Rome. They were asked to hurriedly give their assent to the document before a meeting with Pope John Paul II, and on 14 December the '*Statement of Conclusions*' was made public, summarising the outcomes of the secret meeting and presenting them as the Catholic Church's official view on the state of the Church in Australia. The difference between the synod reporting and the *Statement* could not have been more stark.

The *Statement* commenced on a positive note: three paragraphs recognised the strengths of the Australian Catholic Church, including its numeric size, contribution to society, spirit of racial tolerance, and 'search for authenticity and spirituality'. Yet the following one hundred and ten paragraphs went on to detail the key weaknesses of the Australian Catholic Church, and the requirement for bishops, priests, and religious to urgently deal with these weaknesses. Chief amongst these was a 'crisis of faith' which was said to be founded on the laity's declining 'sense of sin' and their inability to recognise 'the truth' as represented in Catholic doctrine (*Statement of Conclusions*, 1998, n. 4). This was argued to have led to a 'crisis in Christology'³⁰ – or a misunderstanding of the nature and teachings of Jesus – as well as multiple 'moral problems', such as abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality and violence, and 'problems in ecclesiology'³¹ such as the suggestion that truth should be based on 'the shifting sands of majority and consensus' rather than 'in a Revelation already given'; in other words, the assertions of the magisterium (nn. 5, 7-8). The *Statement* even declared, in a surprising twist, that 'challenges to Christian anthropology' also lie at the heart of the

³⁰ Christology is the theological study of the person of Jesus, his nature and his work. It includes issues such as his incarnation, resurrection, and human and divine natures (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2016).

³¹ Ecclesiology is, defined generally, the study of churches; however in the Christian context it is generally used to refer to the theological study of the nature and structure of the Christian Church.

flaws of the Australian Church, with 'extreme individualism' and feminism bringing about a 'paradigmatic change in anthropology that is opposed to classical anthropology' (n. 6). The inclusion of such unfamiliar terminology, which seemed bizarre to many Australian laity, seemed to only reinforce to the laity that the authors of the *Statement* resided in a world starkly different from their own.

In turn, the bishops were exhorted to urgently address the aforementioned weaknesses in the Australian Church, being mindful that the faithful look to them 'for guidance and leadership now more than ever in these confusing and increasingly secularised times' (n. 10). The bishops were told that the laity 'have a right to receive authentic and clear Catholic teaching' from their leaders, and that accordingly the bishops must exercise 'continual vigilance' to 'safeguard the integrity of the Faith' and 'preserve the faithful from error' (nn. 11, 15). As 'guardians of the sacraments', they were told to defend against the introduction of 'spurious elements' in the liturgy, 'not tolerate error' in matters of doctrine, morals or church discipline, and remember that 'true unity must never be at the expense of truth' (*Statement of Conclusions*, 1998, nn. 11-12).

Priests were also chastened in the *Statement*. They were cautioned to remember the need for a clear distinction between the priesthood and laity, a distinction that had been 'blurred' by priests entrusting ministerial tasks to their lay members. 'Clarity in this area is essential for... good order within the Church', the *Statement* declared. Furthermore, priests who 'while perhaps well-intentioned', had introduced 'foreign' and 'unauthorized' practices into the Roman Rite of liturgy were labelled as 'seriously misguided'. They were called to 'return to a real sense of the Church and of liturgy' by 'overcoming obstinacy in personal tastes' and remembering that priests are to be 'ministers and servants, rather than masters of the sacred Rites' (*Statement of Conclusions*, 1998, n. 42).

Religious orders were not exempt from interrogation either. The *Statement* noted the decline in vocations within the Australian Church, and suggested that the post-Vatican II integration of nuns and brothers into local communities (thus leaving behind the closed doors of monastic life) 'fragments the life and witness' of these orders. Bishops were asked to 'dialogue' with the heads of each of the major orders in Australia, seeking to promote vocations and 'deepening... the assent' of their members to church

teachings, particularly regarding the non-ordination of women (*Statement of Conclusions*, 1998, nn. 29, 36). In short, it was time for bishops to bring their church back into line.

Finally, both priests and religious were called to offer a 'more evident fidelity' to the magisterium and its authority. They were advised that concepts such as 'loyal opposition' or 'faithful subversion' were anathema to the Catholic faith. And they were reminded of their duty to ensure that any institution offering teaching to the laity 'serve, in union with the Church, to deepen the understanding of Faith' rather than 'oppose or subvert it' (*Statement of Conclusions*, 1998, n. 33).

Back in Australia, the Catholic Church was in uproar. Priests and religious were dismayed by the *Statement's* harsh assessment of their ministry. Seventy-five priests and religious signed a letter to the Australian bishops indicating their distress over the Vatican's 'overwhelmingly negative estimation of Australian Catholicism' (McGillion, 1999). They said that the *Statement* glossed over the complex issues facing Catholic families in Australia, painted a picture of a church that revolves around priests and religious rather than laity, and completely ignored the very serious issue of clerical sexual abuse and its impact on the Australian Church.

In turn, lay Catholics were confused, divided and anxious about what they read and its implications for the church life they had hitherto enjoyed. Not only was the language of the *Statement* alienating to the average parishioner, but it raised many practical questions as well. What would this mean for their weekly Mass? What changes would this bring to their children's schooling? And would this mean they might lose the slightly unorthodox parish priest they so adored?

Many of the bishops were also said to be 'furious and frustrated' by the publication of the *Statement*; even some of those who had been a part of the pre-synodal secret meeting felt it was a 'totally twisted and distorted view of the church in Australia, [which] was simply forced on them at the end of the Synod' (Collins, 2008). But the bishops were caught between opposing loyalties – on the one hand, to the laity they had sought to faithfully represent at the Synod, and on the other hand, to the Pope to

whom they had sworn allegiance.³² This oath created a complex catch-twenty-two, as one Australian bishop explains:

So why don't the bishops rebel and speak out?... Before his ordination every bishop is required to take an oath of fidelity to the pope, so rebellion is breaking an oath made to God. Bishops take this oath seriously, and they are quickly reminded of it if they step out of line on even a trivial matter, as I know well from experience (Robinson, 2008, pp. 125–6).

Yet some Bishops did speak out, albeit carefully. Bishop Brian Heenan, who attended the pre-synodal meeting and signed the *Statement*, was asked by Catalyst for Renewal to share his thoughts with readers of Catalyst's journal, *The Mix*. Entitled 'Why did I sign?', his response shows a bishop seeking to remain loyal to his leader while also remaining true to his followers:

The Conclusion Document has much to recommend it. At the same time it does not present the overall picture of the strength of the Australian Church. It has sections that show lack of appreciation of the Local Church living out the Gospel in our culture. It does not reflect sufficiently the positive contribution the Australian bishops made to the dialogue... If it does no more than provide a stimulus for discussion, for recognising our strengths and weaknesses, then it can make a worthwhile contribution to our journey towards an even stronger life in this Australian Church (Heenan, 1999, p. 4).

Even the cardinal of Sydney, Cardinal Edward Clancy, who was president of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, agreed that the *Statement* he had willingly signed presented 'a "more jaundiced view" of the Australian Church than was deserved' (McGillion, 2003, p. 13). Ten years after the *Statement*, a survey of five-hundred and fifty Australian priests found that less than one in five priests felt that the *Statement* accurately represented the state of the Catholic Church in Australia. Comments about the *Statement* were almost comprehensively negative, including: 'I was unimpressed with the Roman approach to in effect virtually say there is nothing left to discuss, don't talk about it'; 'That's just patently ridiculous'; and simply, 'Stuff that' (McGillion and O'Carroll, 2011, p. 90).

How could such a stark contrast exist between the views represented in the Synod for Oceania and those summarised in the *Statement of Conclusions*? In the words of one

³² Bishops are required to swear an 'oath of fidelity' to the Pope upon their investiture (canon 380), rather than taking an oath of loyalty to God or Jesus Christ, as the Pope is seen to represent Jesus as his 'vicar' on earth. Bishops are also required to report personally to the Pope every five years 'concerning the state of the diocese committed to him' (canon 399). 'Because of their accountability to the pope and not to their people, bishops are very unlikely to publicly disagree with papal decisions and wishes' (Hegy, 2012, p. 47).

attending bishop, 'the Australian bishops were ambushed' (Morris, 2014, p. 18). What few realised at the time was that Rome was not relying solely on the advice of its bishops when seeking to understand the climate of the Australian Church. In fact, the Vatican had been receiving secret reporting for several years from disaffected orthodox Catholics who were unhappy with the 'liberal' trends they observed in the post-Vatican II Australian Church.

In what would become known as a systematic program of 'temple spies' or 'temple police', disgruntled laity were visiting parishes around Australia, taking detailed notes and completing five-page 'witness observation forms' about how the service was run (Allen Jr, 2001). Any observation of liturgical abuse would be reported – often in the form of legal affidavits, under the leadership of an orthodox Sydney barrister³³ – and the compiled dossiers would be submitted to church authorities. In some cases, the findings were reported to the bishop, but as the *Statement* made clear, concerns were often sent directly to the Vatican without the local bishop's awareness. These anonymous enforcers of Catholic orthodoxy operated both individually and in groups, sometimes gathering in crowds of up to fifty on the front steps of rebel parishes in order to interrogate worshippers after Mass (e.g. McKenny, 2011).

In response, many parishes took affront at this intrusion on their communities. Some priests objected from the pulpit to the presence of 'temple police' at their Mass, even scuffling with alleged 'witnesses' who refused to surrender their 'observation forms' or identify themselves. One priest publicly burned copies of the form during a church service, along with a letter asking him to report on his fellow priests – this ritual act was met with 'whoops of applause' from his congregation. As the priest said to reporters: 'They were as angry at these bastards as I was. Australians just can't stand spies and dobbers' (Allen Jr, 1999).³⁴

Other priests were more sanguine, even joking about the presence of these 'spies'. As one parishioner recounts:

I remember... being horrified when our parish priest announced from the pulpit, in his artfully disingenuous way, that he didn't really mind if certain

³³ Peter Brazier founded the now defunct Australian Catholic Advocacy Centre and claimed he had hundreds of 'consultants' visiting parishes around Australia (Chislett, 1999).

³⁴ 'Dobber' is a vernacular Australian term for someone who secretly reports wrongdoers to authorities.

people were sitting quietly in our church taking notes on the canonical propriety of his Mass-saying, and the doctrinal orthodoxy of his sermons, as long as they disturbed no-one. Of course, we all minded. We minded profoundly. Such sneaking was a betrayal of the trust that brought us to this Church in the first place. It was not Australian Catholicism (Fraser, 2003, p. 76).

2.5 Sexual abuse crisis

Father Geoghan's exposure as a sexual predator in 2002, thanks to the investigative efforts of the *Boston Globe*, might have sparked the outrage of millions of Catholics around the world, but it was, unfortunately, already old news. The practice of sexual abuse by priests and religious had long been a source of concern for the Catholic Church. As early as the first century AD, the developing Christian church documented its ban on men having sex with young boys (Milavec, 2016). By AD309 the first council of Catholic bishops enacted canon laws stating that 'bishops, presbyters and deacons committing a sexual sin' and 'those who sexually abuse boys' would be denied communion even on their deathbeds, 'because of the scandal and the heinousness of the crime' (Canons 18 & 71, in Tapsell, 2014, p. 1). By the early second millennium, clerical offenders were to be handed over to secular authorities and suffered increasingly severe punishments depending on the nature of the sexual crime, including fines, laicisation,³⁵ castration, exile, excommunication, and even death (Doyle, 2003). But by the 1970s and 1980s the Church's approach to managing clerical sexual abuse had shifted focus, from punishing the 'heinousness of the crime' to covering up the scandal for the Church. The success of this strategy depended on a culture of systemic secrecy and clerical privilege, underpinned by a canon law process in which victims were silenced by hush money and violating priests were quietly shuffled on to their next assignment. Geoffrey Robertson QC aptly summarises the situation:

The fact is that tens of thousands of children throughout the world have been sexually abused by priests who have mostly been secretly dealt with by an ecclesiastical law that provides no real punishment and gives them ample opportunity to re-offend... In effect, the church has in many countries been running a parallel system of criminal justice, unbeknownst to and deliberately hidden from the public, police and parliaments, in which the guilty went unpunished and the lips of their victims were sealed – by forced oaths and confidential legal settlements (Robertson, 2010, p. vii-2).

³⁵ The term laicisation represents the removal of a cleric from the clerical state – ie. being made a lay member of the church again. A colloquial synonym for this concept is to 'be defrocked'.

Boston's 2002 scandal was in many ways simply a repeat of a similar case which had also unfolded in a media storm almost two decades earlier. In 1984, the diocese of Lafayette in Louisiana secretly paid US\$4.2 million to six families whose nine sons were sexually abused by Rev. Gilbert Gauthé. The Church had known about the abuse since the early 1970s but had moved him on to parish after parish describing his behaviour as 'a case of misguided affection' (Yallop, 2010, p. 18). But when one family refused to be silenced by the hush money and approached the press with their story, the deeply pious Louisiana community awoke to the horror of what Gauthé had been doing to their children. The family subsequently sued the diocese for failing to protect their son, despite repeated warnings about Gauthé's behaviour, and the case made headlines around the country as the cover-up was revealed.

American bishops became anxious as they saw a growing willingness by parishioners to speak up against their accusers in court. Seeking to support the bishops as they considered the best path forward, a trio of psychiatric, legal and canon law experts drafted a confidential ninety-two-page report which concluded that sexual abuse in the US Catholic Church was so widespread that lawsuits and settlements could cost the Church \$1 billion over the next decade, an estimate which would later prove to be conservative. The trio hoped to table the report at a National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB)³⁶ meeting in 1985, and sent a summary to every bishop in the US. The report unequivocally stated: "The priest must clearly be seen as one suffering from a psychiatric disorder that is beyond his ability to control... A suspension of the cleric, especially if he is a priest, should happen in all cases... (Doyle et al., 1985, p. 52). The guidelines which accompanied the report were even more strident in their warning:

The recidivism rate for pedophilia is second only to exhibitionism, particularly for homosexual pedophilia... [Pedophilia and exhibitionism] are lifelong diseases for which there is... NO HOPE AT THIS POINT IN TIME for "cure" (Peterson, 1985, original emphasis).

The warnings were clear, yet the bishops declined to formally accept the report, suggesting that they would form a committee to study the issue internally. No such study ensued, and the report lay gathering dust on US bishops' shelves waiting for the Boston crisis to reinvigorate the issue two decades later. The cost of ecclesial inaction during this time is incalculable. From 1987-2002, an estimated fifteen hundred priests

³⁶ The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (known in America as the NCCB) is the episcopal conference of the Catholic Church in the US – an official assembly of all Catholic Church bishops in the US.

in the US faced allegations of sexual abuse. From 1992-2002, the Boston archdiocese alone quietly settled child molestation claims against at least seventy of its priests, again exchanging money for a promise of silence (Globe Newspaper Co, 2002). As at 2010, the global cost of clerical sexual abuse since Father Gilbert Gauthé was first arrested in 1983 was estimated to stand at over \$8 billion (Yallop, 2010).

In 2004 a US criminal justice report into the crisis was published. It was completed by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice and was commissioned by the NCCB itself in an attempt to better understand the nature and scope of the sexual abuse crisis in the US. This report estimated that over ten thousand individuals made allegations of childhood sexual abuse against more than four thousand US clergy between 1950 and 2002. This figure represented four percent of US priests in active ministry over the fifty-year period – although in 1970 this proportion peaked at ten percent. Amongst the cohort of accused clergy, one-hundred and forty-nine of the most predatory priests were allegedly responsible for abusing almost three thousand victims. Around half of the victims were between the ages of eleven and fourteen, and eighty-one percent were male. Only twenty-four percent of the allegations had been forwarded to police by the date of the report (*The Nature and Scope*, 2004).

Unfortunately, America was not alone in this crisis. Ireland, Canada, Britain, Europe, Latin America, Africa and Australia were each battling their own demons.³⁷ By 2013 the reality of sexual abuse had become so widely acknowledged in Australia that a Royal Commission was established to investigate the issue of child sexual abuse within Australian institutions, including religious, educational, residential, custodial, and recreational institutions. The four-year Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse found that in the Australian Catholic Church over four thousand claimants had reported incidents of child sexual abuse to church authorities between January 1980 and February 2015. These claims were made against more than two thousand alleged perpetrators, including priests, religious, and lay people holding positions within a Catholic Church institution. Over a thousand Australian Catholic Church institutions were caught up in the scandal, with one in five members of the Christian Brothers and Marist Brothers orders being accused of child sexual abuse during the period. In the St John of God order, this figure reached a peak, with a

³⁷ See Esomba (2012, pp. 188–196) for a lengthy but incomplete list of Roman Catholic clerical sexual abuse cases worldwide.

staggering four in ten members being accused of child sexual abuse (Royal Commission, 2017a).³⁸

The Australian profile of the average victim also reflected that of the US. Seventy-eight per cent of alleged victims were male, and the average child was under twelve years of age when the alleged incidents began. As testament to the length of the effect this abuse had on the children, it was, on average, more than thirty years later that they brought their claim to Church authorities. In response, claimants received an average of AUD91,000 compensation, bringing the total cost to the Australian Catholic Church in compensation, treatment, legal and other costs between January 1980 and February 2015 to AUD268 million (Royal Commission, 2017a).

Most disturbingly, the Australian Catholic Church's strategy for managing the allegations also reflected that of the US church. As Gail Furness SC, Senior Counsel assisting the Royal Commission, stated in her opening address:

The accounts were depressingly similar. Children were ignored or worse, punished. Allegations were not investigated. Priests and religious were moved. The parishes or communities to which they were moved knew nothing of their past. Documents were not kept or they were destroyed. Secrecy prevailed as did cover ups. Priests and religious were not properly dealt with and outcomes were often not representative of their crimes (Royal Commission, 2017b, pp. 15–6).

So, what was the response of the Pope and his curia to this unfolding crisis? Rather than moving quickly to acknowledge the sins of Catholic priests and the immense hurt caused by their actions, a cruel logic of denial, helplessness and secrecy characterised the Vatican's response. In the words of Father Tom Doyle, a priest and canon lawyer who has led a ceaseless campaign against clerical sexual abuse in the US:

For much of church history, the default response to a report of child, adolescent or adult sexual abuse was first to deny it and, when denial failed, to enshroud it in an impenetrable blanket of secrecy. The perpetrator was shifted to another assignment. The victim was intimidated into silence. The media knew nothing and if law enforcement or civil

³⁸ These figures are based on the commission's voluntary survey of Catholic Church authorities in Australia. The commission sought data relating to all claims of child sexual abuse against Catholic Church personnel that were received by a Church authority between 1 January 1980 and 28 February 2015, whether or not these claims were found to be substantiated by church officials. No limits were placed on the date of the alleged incidents of abuse. It was not required that alleged perpetrators be members of the Catholic Church, but for cases to be included in the survey the alleged perpetrator must have held a Church position at the time of the alleged incident/s. Two hundred and one Church officials voluntarily completed the survey. Of these, ninety-two indicated they had received at least one claim of child sexual abuse during the period (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017a).

officials were involved, they deferred to the bishop 'for the good of the church' (Doyle, 2015, pp. 7, 10).

When a strategy of denial could no longer be effectively maintained, Church officials instead suggested that, while clerical sexual abuse did occur on occasion, it was very rare. As recently as 2002, Vatican officials were arguing that the problem was 'statistically minor', drawing on a decade-old exploratory study to argue that only 0.3 percent of US priests were paedophiles (Allen Jr, 2002). Furthermore, they suggested that patterns of abuse in the Catholic Church were no different to those occurring in other religious institutions and secular schools, and that 'it is wrong to "stereotype" the Roman Catholic priesthood' (Robertson, 2010, p. 3). These arguments are patently flawed by an examination of the facts, as Geoffrey Robertson (2010) goes on to show in detail. Finally, church officials denied the scale of the issue by suggesting it was only a localised issue, describing the situation as 'a curious American hysteria that would soon wither and die away' (Yallop, 2010, p. 57).³⁹ And yet, time has proven that geographic boundaries are irrelevant to this saga: 'This highly toxic dimension of the institutional church and its clerical subculture has been exposed in country after country on every continent' (Doyle, 2015). As David Yallop argues:

Targeting a single country... ignores the blinding reality. This scandal is global. Its roots do not reside in specific malfunctioning bishops working in a particular country... When studied, the pattern reveals identical characteristics in country after country... It seems that wherever one turns, no matter which country one considers, there is significant evidence of clerical sexual abuse (Yallop, 2010, pp. 189, 201).

The next key strategy in the Vatican's arsenal was a mixture of learned helplessness and blame-shifting. This typically began with a suggestion that Church officials were taken by surprise by the extent of the sexual abuse crisis. Having viewed acts of abuse as a moral lapse – a matter of personal sin and human frailty rather than criminality – they had felt this was best managed through penance, contrition and pastoral care. According to this logic, it was only due to recent advances in scientific knowledge that the Church – indeed society as a whole – came to realise the seriousness of the issue. The Archbishop of Cincinnati and President of the NCCB, Daniel Pilarczyk, offered a

³⁹ In due course, the 'American problem' was reframed as also an 'Irish problem' when the scandal spread to Ireland. While America's litigious society, 'gay culture', hyper-sexuality and irresponsible permissiveness were blamed for the sexual abuse crisis in the US, in Ireland it was blamed on 'rapid secularization', 'neglect of – daily prayers, frequent confessions and... retreats' and the tendency of priests 'to adopt ways of thinking in secular realities without reference to the gospel' (Robertson, 2010, pp. 24 & 37-8).

clear example of this logic when he suggested that ignorance may have led to past inaction:

Pastoral experience, illuminated by increasing medical and sociological knowledge about the roots of this disordered behaviour, has helped us see areas in which the action of the church and its leadership can improve . . . Until recently, few in society and the church understood the problem well (Pilarczyk, in Franklin, 1992a).

The Archbishop of Birmingham, Vincent Nichols, echoed these thoughts in a BBC interview:

I think 20 years ago it was just a puzzle, it was such a shock and such a surprise. It was very much a hidden phenomenon and a hidden crime. But I think nowadays these things are much more understood. We obviously have been on a steep learning curve along with the rest of society (*News24*, 2001).

But suggestions that the Church was caught unaware by the sexual abuse crisis can hardly stand up to investigation. The history of church law that was briefly introduced above shows a long-standing awareness of the heinous nature of sexual abuse. The spate of insurance contracts sought by bishops in the light of mounting scandal quickly puts to rest the idea that church officials were unaware of the scale of the problem (Keenan, 2013).⁴⁰ Furthermore, the multiple investigations, commissions and reports made by victims, medical specialists and experts in criminal justice and law, dating back as early as 1952, reveal the wealth of information that was available to any interested bishop.⁴¹ Indeed, as David Yallop passionately argues:

Any adult male – be he a bishop or a man in any other walk of life – who did not know long before this scandal became public knowledge that

⁴⁰ In 2000, the Irish government established a Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (CICA) to investigate the extent and effects of child sexual abuse from 1936 onwards. The Commission found that Irish Catholic Church leaders were fully conscious of the unfolding crisis as early as 1987, when they took out insurance policies to cover the costs of likely compensation claims. The commission thus concluded that such actions were inconsistent with later claims that the archdiocese was on a ‘learning curve’ regarding the phenomenon of child sexual abuse (Murphy, 2009).

⁴¹ Across the 1950s and 1960s, Rev. Gerald Fitzgerald sent multiple personally delivered messages to Pope Paul VI and church officials warning of the rise in sexual abuse he was seeing in the course of his duties as founder of the Servants of the Paraclete in the US – a Catholic religious order seeking to minister to priests and brothers facing personal issues. He warned that the sexual abuse crisis was going to become ‘devastating to the standing of the priesthood’, recommended that abusers should be immediately laicised and even exiled to a monastery or remote island, and warned that ‘leaving them [paedophile priests] on duty or wandering from diocese to diocese’ would ensure ‘the proximate danger of scandal’ (Fitzgerald, in Goodstein, 2009 - attached correspondence file). Rev. Fitzgerald’s warnings were echoed later by Doyle, Peterson, and Mouton (1985), who sent their guidelines for responding to clerical sexual abuse to every bishop in the US. Both sets of warnings were unheeded by the Church, yet their existence puts to rest the suggestion that the Church was unaware of the extent of the crisis.

grown men having sex with children is wrong and insidiously harmful to children is either an idiot or a liar or both (Yallop, 2010, p. 147).

An alternative to the strategy of episcopal⁴² ignorance was to plead helplessness. Church officials argued that money-hungry lawyers and a ruthless media were distorting the facts and amplifying the scandal. As one American Cardinal told the *Washington Post*: there are 'elements in our society who are very opposed to the Church's stand on life... family... [and] education, and they see this as an opportunity to destroy the credibility of the Church' (Cooperman and Murphy, 2002, p. A.01). This perception that the church was being subject to unjust persecution was apparent in Boston as early as 1992, when Boston's Cardinal Law responded to reports of a priest who had attacked more than one hundred children by invoking the wrath of God on the 'relentless' media who were hounding 'the good and dedicated people who serve the church': 'By all means,' he said, 'we call down God's power on the media, particularly the Globe' (Franklin, 1992b, p. 24).

A chilling example of the combined logic of denial, helplessness and blame-shifting was offered in 2002 by Cardinal Ratzinger, who was then the head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) – the Catholic institution responsible for investigating cases of clerical sexual misconduct. The man who would soon be Pope Benedict XVI explained the source of the scandal as he saw it:

In the Church, priests also are sinners... But I am personally convinced that the constant presence in the press of the sins of Catholic priests, especially in the United States, is a planned campaign, as the percentage of these offenses among priests is not higher than in other categories, and perhaps it is even lower... less than one percent of priests are guilty of acts of this type... Therefore, one comes to the conclusion that it is intentional, manipulated, that there is a desire to discredit the Church (Ratzinger, in Allen Jr, 2005, pp. 221–2).

The artifice of helplessness is further reinforced when canon law is applied to the issue. Although clerics having sex with minors is identified as an ecclesiastical crime in the present code of canon law (canon 1395, instituted in 1983), the archaic structure and time-consuming practicalities of canon law proceedings make effective disciplinary measures almost impossible. For example, under canon law, when a priest expresses sorrow it derails the disciplinary process, enabling his diocese to 'give him absolution

⁴² The word episcopal is used to describe things or concepts that relate to a bishop or bishops.

and say, “sin no more”, in the words of one Vatican official. Being unable to simply laicise the priest, ‘we keep struggling to find a better way’ (Maida, 1990, p. 33).

Furthermore, under canon law, a bishop should only seek to remove a priest or impose other penalties once he has confirmed that there are no other means, such as ‘fraternal correction’ or ‘pastoral solitude’ available to ‘sufficiently repair the scandal, restore justice, [or] reform the offender’ (canon 1341, in *The Application of Penalties*, 1983). As Geoffrey Robertson aptly puts it, such an approach ‘exhibits a breathtaking disregard for the seriousness of the offence and the danger of re-offending... Requiring a paedophile to say more ‘hail marys’ will not stop him re-offending: it may save his soul, but it will not save his future victims’ (Robertson, 2010, p. 46). Perhaps most disturbingly of all however is the canon law requirement that demands mental illness and impulse control disorders be considered appropriate defence against charges of abuse:

Under canons 1395 and 1321, no one can be punished for an offense unless it is ‘gravely imputable by reason of malice or culpability’. Since paedophiles are subject to urges and impulses that are difficult to control... proof of paedophilia could be a complete defence to a charge of sexually abusing or raping children (Robertson, 2010, p. 47).

In this way, canon law provides an almost unsurpassable barrier to complainants seeking to have clerical perpetrators brought to justice in the Church. Furthermore, those clergy who are found guilty of sexual abuse are subject to ecclesial punishments which are almost derisory in nature, ranging from warnings, ‘salutary penance’, ‘spiritual exercises’, temporary suspension from celebrating Mass or hearing confessions, and – for ‘those in danger of relapsing’ there is to be ‘special supervision’ of an unspecified nature (*Crimen Solicitationis*, 1962, paras 61-4). The most ‘extreme penalty’ available under canon law is the laicisation of a priest, which is to be submitted to the Pope for his authorisation, and pursued only:

...when, all things considered, it appears evident that the Defendant, in the depth of his malice, has, in his abuse of the sacred ministry, with grave scandal to the faithful and harm to souls, attained such a degree of temerity and habitude, that there seems to be no hope, humanly speaking, or almost no hope, of his amendment (*Crimen Solicitationis*, 1962, n. 63).

Yet even those priests who are found guilty of such grave ‘harm to souls’ are protected from criminal reporting under canon law, due to canon law’s dependence on absolute secrecy. All parties to the proceedings, including complainants, the accused and their

witnesses, are sworn to 'utmost confidentiality' and 'permanent silence... under pain of incurring automatic excommunication' under 'the secret of the Holy Office' (*Crimen Solicitationis*, 1962, n. 11). As Robertson (2010) argues:

[This] almost obsessional concern for secrecy... seems plainly intended to exclude any communication to an outside agency once an accusation has been made and to back up that prohibition with the direst of threats of spiritual punishment – threats of a kind that child victims would be incapable of withstanding because they are generally brought up in Catholic families, where excommunication would involve unendurable shame and hellfire is taken literally (pp. 52-3).

Indeed, the curia's obsession with confidentiality casts a shroud of secrecy over the entire clerical world, where the greatest sin is not the abuse of children but rather the violation of the group's ethos of secrecy. This ethos permeates not just confessional relationships⁴³ but also the selection of prospective bishops – who are vetted by a secret questionnaire to assess their orthodoxy – and the investiture of cardinals, who are required to take an 'oath of fidelity' promising not to disclose anything that could 'bring damage or dishonour to the Holy Church' ("Ordinary public consistory", 2014). As Father Tom Doyle explains, a fear of exposure drives this secrecy and demands that even the most minor of mistakes are to be covered up:

Hand in glove with the secrecy is a pervasive fear that any imperfections in the system or in its office holders will become publicly known. Honest mistakes, incompetence, negligence and intentional wrongdoing are all abhorrent to the higher leadership. All are denied, covered up and rationalized with equal zeal. The clerical world truly believes that it has been established by God and that its members are singled out and favored by the Almighty. There is no room for mistakes... Secrecy provides a layer of insulation between the one in authority and anyone who might be tempted to question its exercise (Doyle, 2003, p. 221).

Loyalty to the clerical system of secrecy, privilege and exemption has until recently been rewarded at the most senior levels. In 2001, a Vatican Cardinal wrote with the personal approval of Pope John Paul II to congratulate a French bishop for refusing to inform police about a paedophile priest and for continuing to employ him in parish work despite the priest having admitted to paedophile acts during a private conversation with the bishop.⁴⁴ The cardinal congratulated the bishop 'as a model of a

⁴³ Under canon law, confessions made to a priest are made confidential by the seal of the confessional, which is considered 'inviolable': 'therefore it is absolutely forbidden for a confessor to betray in any way a penitent' (*The Minister*, 1983, canon 983 §1). This prohibits priests from reporting criminal confessions to state authorities if the admissions were made during the sacrament of penance.

⁴⁴ Being a private conversation, this admission was not covered by the seal of the confessional, and thus could have been reported to police without breaking canon law.

father who does not hand over his sons', confirmed that the Pope had authorised this commendation, and then sent a copy of the letter to all bishops to encourage them to model such behaviour also (Heneghan, 2010).

Just three years earlier the same Pope had chastened Austrian bishops for publicly discussing their country's unfolding sexual abuse crisis, suggesting that, 'like every house that has special rooms that are not open to all guests', the church too needed 'rooms for talks that require privacy' (John Paul II, in Staunton, 1998, p. 12).

The paradox in this behaviour is astonishing. Before John Paul II, no pope in centuries had acknowledged as long a list of instances where the church had erred. Across his papacy he publicly took responsibility for the church's treatment of Galileo, Jews, Muslims and indigenous peoples, as well as repenting for the Church's role in fostering religious wars, schism, slavery, racism and discrimination (Accattoli, 1998). But the 'pope who championed freedom from political dictatorships turned a cold shoulder to human rights within the church' (Berry and Renner, 2004, p. 300). As the pope left Austria at the conclusion of his 1998 visit, one priest remarked: 'The pope is visiting a burning house, but instead of talking about the fire, he speaks about the lovely flowers in front' (Allen Jr, 1998, p. 14).

More recently, Pope Francis has begun to take a firmer stance against clerical abusers, repeatedly promising a 'zero tolerance' approach (eg. Francis, 2016b). He has instituted new laws for the removal of bishops who negligently respond to abuse allegations, forced the resignation of three US bishops who failed to handle sexual abuse cases appropriately, laicised a bishop and archbishop who were found guilty of sexual abuse, and established a committee to investigate how to reduce the huge backlog of clergy abuse cases awaiting Vatican ruling (Doyle, 2015; McElwee, 2016). He has also privately met with victims of clerical abuse to humbly ask forgiveness both for the abuse itself and the 'omissions' of church leaders who failed to adequately respond to reports of abuse (Willey, 2017). But Francis' 2014 decision to commute the laicisation penalty to a 'lifetime of prayer and penance' for two paedophile priests who appealed for clemency shows that his vision of a 'merciful church' complicates his rhetoric of 'zero tolerance' (Joshi, 2017). Such paradoxes are going to be further tested when the sexual abuse case against Australian Cardinal George Pell, the third most

senior official in the Vatican, is completed. Pell is the highest-ranking Vatican official to be accused of sexual abuse crimes, and critics question why Pell was appointed to the Vatican role of Secretariat for the Economy when he was also facing allegations of mismanagement of child sexual abuse claims in Australia (Verghis, 2017).

Whatever the outcome of the Pell trial, decades of denial, blame-shifting, learned helplessness and secrecy have carved a defensive posture that Pope Francis will struggle to overcome. Amidst all the allegations and counter-allegations remain a laity who are partially paralysed by the uncertainties of who to trust, and a priesthood of largely devout and honourable men who find themselves at a loss regarding how best to minister in a climate where the church's moral credibility is in tatters (eg. McGillion and O'Carroll, 2011). As the *Boston Globe* investigators aptly concluded:

Not since the heady days of the early 1960s... has the future of Catholicism been more uncertain. The crisis that began with the story of a pedophile priest opened a Pandora's box of grievances nursed by Catholics for decades: Homosexuality. The role of women. The nature of authority. Debates that had long taken place only at the margins of Church life suddenly seized center stage... For many, the clergy sexual abuse was the final straw in their relationship with the Church hierarchy (Globe Newspaper Co, 2002, pp. 184, 186).

Many Catholics believe that by failing to act, church leaders have abdicated their right to speak with authority on issues of morality and faith, thus sparking a crisis of confidence that has fundamentally shaken the foundations of the fortress church. In the wake of the sexual abuse scandal, hundreds of thousands of Catholics worldwide left the church, unwilling to be associated with a hierarchy whose ethics they abhorred. Some moved to new denominations while others found themselves adrift in spiritual exile, unable to feel emotionally connected to any church that was not Catholic, yet unwilling to return to the church of their youth. Still others found what Homi Bhaba (1994) would call a 'third space' – a place between 'church' and 'not church', or 'sacred' and 'secular', that offered access to spiritual practice and community without the constraints of traditional church walls. Known collectively as the 'emerging church', these independent spiritual groups offered an attractive alternative to many disenfranchised believers, including the Sippers who form the focus of this thesis.

Chapter 3: Finding God beyond church walls

3.1 The 'emerging church'

Representing more a philosophy *about* church than a formalised movement or organisation, the terms 'emerging church' or 'emerging church movement' represent a grassroots, bottom-up attempt to respond to the challenges faced by many churches in the post-secular, postmodern age. Originally centred on an attempt to include fresh expressions of worship within a traditional church context – often with a focus on the youth – the 'emerging church' soon sprang free of church walls to explore new ways of conceptualising 'church' itself: seeing it as a '24/7' relational and transformational experience rather than a static, place-bound entity (Borg, 2004; Ward, 2001). Such a church is thus 'emerging' in that it springs from genuine engagement with the socio-cultural realities within which it operates – an evolutionary process informed both by the church and its community context (Mobsby, 2007, p. 20).

Although the term was first coined by Larson and Osborne in 1970, it was not until the 1980s that emerging church projects began in earnest in the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, followed in the late 1980s and early 1990s by the United States (Gibbs and Bolger, 2005; Ward, 2009). At first, these largely Protestant initiatives were generational in focus, presenting 'alternative worship' formats pitched to appeal to the various youth subcultures of the time, including youth gangs, goths, punks, clubbers and ravers. As such, the term 'emerging church' initially came to be popularly understood as referring to 'high-profile, youth-oriented congregations that have gained attention on account of their rapid numerical growth; their ability to attract (or retain) twentysomethings; their contemporary worship, which draws from popular music styles; and their ability to promote themselves to the Christian subculture through websites and by word of mouth' (Gibbs and Bolger, 2005, p. 41).

However, by the late 1990s, a new generation of leaders in the emerging church scene began to realise that the youth-church movement was preservationist and short-sighted. It came to be seen as a glossy attempt to retain young people within the mother church through the leveraging of pop-cultural motifs without recognising that these young people represented the first generation of an 'enormous epistemological

shift' taking place in society as a whole: what would come to be known as the dawn of the 'postmodern' (Gibbs and Bolger, 2005, p. 33).¹ In this context, it was thought, the baby-boomer model of modern Christendom could no longer hold a monopoly over the postmodern religious imagination. 'In other words', it was argued, 'theologies given birth within modernity will not transfer to postmodern cultures' (Gibbs and Bolger, 2005, p. 34).

At the outset, few of these early emerging church groups had a sense of being part of a larger movement or changing religious consciousness. However, over time several shared characteristics of 'emerging churches' became apparent. These included understanding emerging church projects as a) lay-driven religious experiments that are b) praxis-oriented, c) post-evangelical, and d) conversational.

As lay-driven initiatives, emerging churches typically arise spontaneously, as a result of the efforts of loosely connected believers who want to experiment with new ways of meeting their spiritual needs (Murray, 2004). As such, they generally arise with little institutional coordination or central planning by established denominations and are carried by the enthusiasm of lay individuals rather than salaried religious professionals. However, this need not mean that emerging churches arise in opposition to established or 'inherited' churches (Gibbs and Bolger, 2005, pp. 28–9; Murray, 2004), despite our tendency to assume sectarian divisions lie at the heart of all 'church splits'. Rather, emerging churches often treasure the traditions and identities of the established churches, while also recognising that the post-secular, post-Christendom Western era requires equally post-modern ways of exploring important issues of ecclesiology and mission. When seeking to coexist in what Rowan Williams (2011) has called a 'mixed economy of church', the experimental and the traditional can thus offer each other much needed complementarity and accountability.

This includes moving the focus of the emerging church from the 'sacred centre' to the messy margins of everyday life, where praxis-oriented, missional living is key. One

¹ An entire thesis could be written on the emerging church as a postmodern phenomenon. In fact, Paul Teusner's (2010) thesis tackles essentially this task, exploring the role of bloggers in the Australian emerging church scene. He references the rejection of grand narratives and encyclopedic truth claims as lying at the heart of postmodern Christianity, along with a penchant for fluidity and bricolage, the valuing of marginal voices, and a post-structuralist awareness that all knowledge claims are bound by structures of power. Despite sharing Paul Heelas' (1998) ambivalence about the periodisation of cultural history, it is in this commonly accepted sense that I use the term 'postmodern' above – as it is used by emerging church practitioners themselves.

example of this emphasis is found in the increasing popularity of faith-based community gardening amongst the emerging church (Smith, 2012). Asking their members to literally get their hands dirty in the act of missional living, faith-based gardens are places not only to grow food but also to build community and a sense of connection to the earth and its creator. Rather than getting caught up in contentious issues of doctrine, emerging churches typically emphasise the importance of orthopraxy over orthodoxy, or 'right practice' over 'right belief'. As such, they focus on social issues in the 'here and now', offering a 'spirituality of belonging' *in* and *with* the world, rather than emphasising separation and a 'spirituality of alienation' (Tomlinson, 2008, pp. 85–93).

An 'emerging church' project is thus framed as one that:

...goes well beyond the salvation of just individuals, and extends also into the local economic, social and environmental contexts of each particular church community... The goal of such communities is not numerical or economical success but rather the incarnation of the gospel... For Emergents, church is not a means through which the souls of individuals might ultimately escape this God-forsaken world, but rather is the way through which the body of Christ puts hands and feet on Christ's gospel and thus embodies the reality of God's love *for* the world (Moritz, 2008, p. 31).

In this way, the emerging church typically describes itself as 'post-evangelical'. While 'emergents'² are not afraid to share their experiences of God, they offer a protest against evangelicalism as it is traditionally practiced. They shun ideas of who is 'in' or 'out', 'saved' or 'unsaved' (Hunt, 2008; McKnight, 2007) and reject the mainstream drive to seek 'bigger', 'better' and 'more powerful' mega-churches through 'personality jostling, political manoeuvrings and empire-building' (Tomlinson, 1995, pp. 144–5). For emerging churches, evangelism is a way of life rather than a monologic event – one that requires the exercise of humility and respect, recognising that theirs is but one voice amongst many in society. Emphasising the importance of authenticity and relationality, emergents thus centre their religious identity around the cultivation of committed, communal relationships (Bielo, 2012).

² Considerable debate exists over the distinction between the term emergent and emerging in regards to new church movements. In this thesis I use the two terms interchangeably, following Moritz (2008). As such, my use of the term 'emergent' refers to the wider ecclesial movement rather than simply the Emergent Village and its related organisations.

One particularly vibrant example of such a post-evangelical missionality is found in 'The Eden Network' in England (cf. Wilson, 2005, 2012). Taking seriously the Bible's call to bring the good news to the poor, the Eden Network began in 1997 with a small group of lay friends who chose to pack up their lives and move to Manchester's notorious Wythenshaw housing estate. Seeing a need for a committed and active Christian presence amongst the crime and crisis that marked the estate, these young people packed up their middle-class lives and moved into a suburb full of empty houses in which no one wanted to live. Today, the Eden Network has small teams located in over twenty impoverished neighbourhoods across Britain. Following an 'incarnational lifestyle' summarised by the motto 'move in and live deep', team members are asked to commit a minimum of five years to living in and with their new community as they demonstrate their faith through everyday living. As Paul Chilvers, one of the original participants in the project, explains: 'Preaching a message isn't enough. People need to see the message lived out' (Cummings, 1998).

Part of this post-evangelical mindset also involves the rejection of modernity's dichotomisation of sacred and secular. Embracing a logic of 'both-and', emerging church projects seek to transform secular spaces and practices, emphasising a holistic, 24-7, omnipresent spirituality rather than one limited to church walls (Larson and Osborne, 1970; Mobsby, 2008; Moritz, 2008). For some, this includes using secular music in worship or finding touches of sacred within pop culture (Beaudoin, 1998; Gibbs and Bolger, 2005). For others, like the Eden Network above, it means bringing sacred experience to secular spaces, such as cafes, pubs, clubs, workplaces and shopping malls (Murray, 2004; Spinks, 2011). Even skate parks have become sites of preaching and worship services that stretch the boundaries of the traditional concept of 'church' – bringing 'church to the people instead of trying to drag people into church' (Barrett, 2004, p. 34).

One early icon of the emerging church scene began in 1989 in a South London pub, where a group of thoughtful minds began to congregate after growing out of the basement in which they initially met. It bears a striking resemblance to our own 'Spirituality in the Pub':

Holy Joes was, for many, a last-chance saloon, a final throw of the dice before walking away from the Church – and possibly from Christianity too... What Holy Joes offered was a 'no holds barred' opportunity to discuss, debate and argue about whatever it was with the church and

Christianity that got their goat. No one passed judgement on what was heard or seen. There were no 'right' answers imposed at the end of the evening. For some, it really did prove to be a last stopping off point before leaving the Church (for the time being, at any rate), but for lots of others it turned out to be the much-needed incentive to keep on journeying, and even a stepping-stone back into church life (Tomlinson, 2008).

This example illustrates how communities of conversation lay at the heart of the emergent church movement (Gibbs and Bolger, 2005). For emergents, church is seen first and foremost as a conversational practice, pursued within an egalitarian fellowship where all voices are welcomed and held as equally valuable – free from the hierarchical privileging and judgement seen to be characteristic of the traditional church. As such, emerging churches typically recognise a plurality of belief structures and scriptural interpretations and offer a conversation about meaning rather than a sermon on doctrine. Recognising the need for interfaith dialogue that is genuinely interested in what the other has to say, emerging churches tend to emphasise God's message as a 'storied narrative' rather than a systematic theology (McKnight, 2007; Mobsby, 2008). In this way, church becomes a safe space for conversations about truths rather than for monologic edicts of 'Truth':

In this sense, the emerging movement is radically Reformed. It turns its chastened epistemology against itself, saying, "This is what I believe, but I could be wrong. What do you think? Let's talk" (McKnight, 2007).

3.2 Spirituality in the Pub: A 'radically religious' event

It was within these new expressions of church that Spirituality in the Pub emerged. While SIP's founders might not have been aware of the emerging church movement, their lay-driven conversational project of 'radically religious' community renewal sits squarely within the praxis-oriented experimental frame of emerging church theology expounded above. But rather than simply describe the SIP experience from an etic perspective, let us first hear from Sippers themselves. The below discussion is structured around the core founding narratives of the Spirituality in the Pub movement. It adopts a heavily emic perspective to describe how, in an ordinary Aussie pub – beyond church walls – Sippers tell me they have found a free and ecumenical space of belonging and conversation about what '*really* matters' – the radical core of their beliefs: their spirituality.

3.2.1 In an ordinary pub

For many, the pub location acts as a novelty at first, a marketing tool that encourages newcomers to come along out of curiosity, as if just to see how such a unique idea could possibly work. Stephen – a quiet, thoughtful man in his forties who is now one of SIP’s most loyal attendees – described his introduction to SIP in this light:

It was at church in St Francis. There must have been a leaflet, advertising the Paddington SIP. I think one of [the speakers] might have been Geraldine Doogue too. So I thought I'd just go in there and see what goes on there. I thought, you know, talking about these matters in a pub! It's just amused me. So I thought I'd go along, and I've been going ever since...

Similarly, Tracey (a Catholic school teacher and mother of young children), and Ray and Lil (a retired couple who are leaders in one of SIP’s country locations) enjoyed the uniqueness of the pub setting and valued its relaxed atmosphere:

Tracey: I like that it's in a pub. I think that's really that Australian flavour. And no one gets pissed.³ You know, they might have one or two drinks, [but] that makes it convivial and relaxed... it's not so intense perhaps, that you have to talk to people. Because I like that with SIP. That you can be totally passive. You don't have to say anything. You can just sit there and listen. It's pretty non-confrontational.

Lil: Because it is a safe place when you think about it.

Ray: No-one takes any notice about you. No one's going to criticise you. It's quite ad hoc, free, come if you like. There's no record taken of who's there. It's quite open, and I think that's the value of something like that, in a pub... People feel reasonably comfortable there... There's a sense of conviviality and hospitality in the pub that you don't have to create.

In fact, it is this organic sense of freedom and conviviality that inspired SIP founders to select a pub as the location for their nascent conversational project. Father Xavier, one of the founders of the group, described their intention in this way:

We quite deliberately got it off church property, and I think that was significant. I have said, we got it out of the church so that we got it out of the pew-ey environment, and into a poo-ey environment! [Laughs] In a poo-ey environment everybody, or nobody, is an expert. You know, pubs stink! You have brawls in pubs. But there's a sense in which there is a freedom there. There's a sense in which you can have a conversation without somebody jumping on you. I think in some ways, they are little churches.

³ British/Australian slang term meaning drunk or intoxicated.

Father Kevin, a country priest and semi-regular SIP attendee, agreed:

There is just an independence about it. And I suppose, once you put something in the pub, I think you've opened it up to a variety of people and people's experience in sharing with others. I think at one stage someone was saying the Bishop, our previous Bishop, was trying to stop someone speaking. And I said, 'well, he's got no right and no jurisdiction'. And he's a good man. He was a good friend and all that. But there was something he took an exception to, or someone I think. And I said, 'oh, it's nothing to do with him. It's in the pub. It's not in his jurisdiction! [laughs] So that's his problem, not ours'. [laughs]

Ultimately however, it is the everyday ordinariness of chatting and drinking with friends and strangers in a pub that speaks to a familiar Australian experience and thus lies at the heart of SIP's success. As Father Xavier described it:

[It's] the sheer everyday-ness of this sort of a setting, the mundaneness of it, the humanity of it, the unchurched-ness of it, the ordinariness of it... I'm sitting there, thinking to myself, 'you know, there's something very unspectacular and very ordinary, but very profound, happening here'... I don't think it's any great shakes quite frankly. I think it's a marvellous thing, but I think it's a very ordinary thing.

Set well beyond the hallowed halls where God and religion have been traditionally cloistered, Spirituality in the Pub thus calls its participants to take their faith beyond the margins of conventional 'sacred space':

You know, generally pubs are a disreputable place in society. You know, generally in society. And yet here they are... [There's] that passage in the Gospel where they all thought Christ was going mad because he was eating and drinking with sinners. You know, sinners, and tax collectors, and prostitutes. All the ordinary people, and not his own, you know, select little group. So now, that's what SIP is actually facilitating...

And I said to [Esther] once, 'if the meek are to inherit the Earth, maybe it will start at the pub'... You know, it's what happens at the marketplace – that's our faith, out there with people. In the marketplace. That's where it all happens. That's where life is. (Stephen)

For some people, the prospect of taking God to the pub seems a step too far. Tracey recounted a chat she had with her neighbour after she returned home from SIP one night. She described him as a 'mystic' who is 'on a definite spiritual quest', but when she mentioned SIP meets in a pub, 'he said for him he finds it difficult to associate drinking and faith. He was like, "Oh! In a pub? Oh..."'. And I'd never even thought about that. So for him, he found that a barrier perhaps'.

And yet it is precisely this tendency to segregate the sacred from the secular that SIP organisers seek to dismantle. When talking with Ray and Lil, I commented that some people feel that God does not belong in pubs:

Lil: Oh! I hadn't thought about him. I thought he's always been there.

Ray: I would think God is in the pub the same as God is right here now.

Heather: Some people would say that God belongs in churches and cemeteries, and in noble places, not in a pub.

Ray: See, that's what you really want to help people broaden their understanding of...

Lil: ...break down those barriers perhaps.

Ray: Oh, yeah. Where two or three are gathered... my goodness gracious! It doesn't matter where you are. *Places* don't matter.

3.2.2 A place to belong

It is through this 'real world' focus that Spirituality in the Pub offers its participants a place not simply to watch, but also to belong. For some such as Tracey, SIP fits within a spiritual journey which has learned to find belonging in the 'cracks and gaps and silences' within and beyond the frame of the Catholic Church in which she was raised. As such, SIP offers a liminal space 'betwixt and between' the Catholic and secular spheres with which she is familiar (cf. Turner, 1967). For others, SIP came along at a time when they were grappling with important questions of belonging and purpose. Father Reuben, a Catholic priest in his early forties, recalled:

The question that I was seeking to answer was 'where do I fit?'. Where do I fit in the world, where do I fit in the church, what is the set that I belong to, where can I express who I am? And I sort of knew who I wasn't, but I didn't know who I was. So I was sort of looking. I'm not saying that I necessarily found that in SIP. It's actually been a bit of a love-hate relationship with them...I suppose really I came into formation, studying for the priesthood, at a time when the progressive element of the church was perhaps losing impetus, and the more traditional aspects of the church were gaining impetus. And I didn't know where did I fit.

In this way, SIP gave Father Reuben a space in which to explore possibilities for belonging within and across his two worlds of priesthood and secularity.

One of Catalyst for Renewal's founders – Hillary, an erudite and passionate woman in her mid-sixties – described her original intention in this way:

I think that my instinct was that we all had to *meet* each other more. And meet each other outside church. And that was the whole idea of a pub... There was this sense of people opting out of their lounge rooms, outside, in what was really an act of social capital, which I was sort of [thinking about] completely at the time... And so we... we had to think about this idea of what might we achieve. And it was very amorphous, actually, very amorphous...

See for me... the absolute joy of these SIPs... [was] actually friendship and hanging in there. Stepping outside one's own, as I keep saying, that notion of one's own comfort zone, on which there is much more in Australia, much more, across the board than there [used to be]. So that I felt the church had to keep up, actually, when I really wrestle with it, with the sociability and the engagement and the stepping outside your comfort zone that I detected in big strands of Australian life.

3.2.3 Led by laity

More novel than the pub setting, however, was who was leading the conversation. For while priests and sisters often form part of SIP organising committees, and one of Catalyst's most charismatic founders is a Marist priest, Spirituality in the Pub is viewed by many of its attendees as being a lay-driven initiative. It sprang, back in 1994, from a series of conversations being held in homes, cafes, and backyards, between lay (ie. non-ordained) members of the Catholic Church and a handful of creative clergy and religious. With increasing urgency, there grew a sense of needing to recognise and celebrate the laity as the heart and soul of the Church. But what form should such recognition take?

The original plan I think was to set up a big festival of Catholicism... And we, out of those conversations, which were quite thrilling actually, I think we all decided that a festival was possibly a bridge too far, and that we needed a... more of a process of growth, rather than a single big bang event. (Hillary)

In this way, Hillary and the other founders saw SIP as being in the tradition of Vatican II, recognising that 'we are a pilgrim people. We're not a democracy, no, but the notion of the hierarchy of bishops, priests, and people was really, in my view, flattened' (Hillary). As such, SIP and Catalyst not only 'acknowledged that others have something

to offer besides the priests' (Fr Reuben⁴), they also created a space for lay people to develop confidence in their own voice, as Chapter Five will further explore. From Hillary's perspective:

What I now think it did, funnily enough, was boost a lot of confidence of those of us involved, even though it was fundamentally [founded by]... a man of the cloth. But I think that, bit by bit by bit, what Catalyst for Renewal has done is actually give a whole bunch of lay people a sense of confidence... So I do think that Catalyst was almost like this proving ground for a whole lot of people who were lay, and who didn't think of themselves in this role, but actually it's helped us come through.

3.2.4 An ecumenical space

Despite being established by Catholics, at the heart of SIP's welcoming spirit is a desire to reach out not just to other Christians but also across the full spectrum of religious and non-religious belief. Esther, one of the founders of SIP, takes pains to introduce every meeting she hosts with an ecumenical welcome:

Those of you who have been to SIP before know that you don't have to be a card-carrying member of a faith tradition to be welcome here. Everyone, even people who have no religious affiliation, no traditions, are welcome to participate in what are becoming these very thought-provoking conversations.

In the audience is Kathy, who tells me that this interfaith mission lies at the heart of what draws her to SIP:

One of the things that I love about [SIP] is the diversity of religion, and the openness to other points of view... These are people who join together with like-minded people in a convivial location to actively engage in open-minded discussion. So they're happy to meet Jews, they're happy to meet Muslims, they're happy to meet atheists.

In fact, SIP's ecumenical intention has been so successful that some attendees, myself included, took a while to realise that SIP was founded by Catholics. As Lil, herself a Catholic, said to me:

I just thought it was kind of an interfaith group... without the emphasis on a particular faith... Everybody is welcome... I didn't know that SIP had a Catholic background, probably because I wanted something ecumenical. I wouldn't dream of thinking that would be an issue if I [met] a Uniting Church person or whatever... Nothing! I don't even want to know their church!

⁴ 'Fr.' is an abbreviation for the title 'Father', commonly used in the Catholic Church.

Such interfaith encounters not only introduce attendees to the values and beliefs of other fellow travellers, at times they spring free of the SIP evening to build connections and realisations beyond SIP itself. Levi and Ray recalled how their interfaith experiences at SIP have helped to broaden their understanding of religious 'truth':

Levi: The first people that we had here from Islam to speak to us actually invited all the people there to come back to the mosque and have a look at it afterwards. And there were quite a number who went.

I haven't met anybody in any of those faiths yet where I haven't felt... You know... anyone who's being true and genuine and wanting to share their faith, they're on the same path as we are. They're just all different paths for the one place...

I mean, I have a deep commitment to my own faith, but I don't have any commitment to the absolute truth of it. In fact, absolute truth is about defining God, and how dare you? It's beyond us. And if this little mind wants to say who God is and what he is and tell other people who he is and what he is— No!

Ray: I would add to that by just saying that whether people would say they are conservative Catholic, progressive Catholic, whatever Catholic. Everyone's got an element of the truth... And none of them has the whole truth. And that goes for the variations of Christianity, and Buddhism and Hinduism and Confucianism and nothing. We've all got the truth... As human beings, because we're all human beings, we've all got bits of the truth.

Or as Thelma, a grandmother and founder of an inner-city SIP, described it: 'It's not about having truths but about being true.' After all, 'we have more in common than that which divides us... When people come together as human beings, these differences fall away, no matter where they come from' (Sam).

3.2.5 Beyond church walls

Relativistic language such as this is rarely heard within traditional church walls. As Wilfred and Noelene noted, SIP offers a unique space for topics seldom discussed elsewhere in mainstream churches:

Wilfred: [People] wouldn't hear it in the Sunday sermon for example, which is probably the only specifically 'religious' talk that they'd get. That's if they go to church.

And what that does, it enables people to see that they're not alone. They hear these ideas, they hear someone else talk and they think 'oh, that's how I think too'. And so they begin to think

that these ideas that have been floating around in their heads are not just unique to them. That other people have these ideas. And so that gives people who are like that a sense of being able to believe in their own instincts... And I think that's a good thing.

Noelene: One of the reasons why SIP has been so successful is that it fills a vacuum in people's lives, in this growing secular movement. People are trying different things from the spiritual market. They try them and then move on. Mainstream churches haven't come to grips with that, or don't know about it perhaps. SIP's success lies in allowing people to talk.

Indeed, not only were these conversations largely absent within traditional church walls, they were also thought to be rare across society as a whole. Dr Kris, who led an inner-city SIP for several years, felt that this was 'a kind of conversation that wasn't happening anywhere else. It wasn't happening in churches and it wasn't happening outside of churches either. So we saw ourselves as unique'.

Beyond church walls, participants could engage in a space that was free from the control of church hierarchy. As Hillary described it, 'we were completely outside the Bishop's reach. We didn't need the imprimatur of the Bishop, we weren't on any church property, all that sort of stuff'. More importantly however, for many, was the freedom that SIP offered from a sense of obligation or duty. Free from the guilt that would come if you missed the occasional Mass, SIP offers a space 'where you can just come' (Stephen) – where 'you went because you wanted to go. You didn't have to go or anything else like that' (Robert).

As Ray observed, SIP offers a space for spiritual reflection to those who may not feel welcome at a traditional church service:

The good thing is that it's open to anybody. So you don't have to belong to anything at all to turn up to SIP. Provided you have seen the ad and you're happy to come, come. And that's the value of it. And I think people feel more comfortable in that than they do [at church], even though in our church if I say you're welcome, people don't feel that. Unless they've been initiated into it and grown into it. Or unless you're an adult and you come along and say you really want to be a part of [the Church], and there are ways to do that, obviously, but... But you can decide on the spur of the moment that you'd like to go to [SIP] and be welcome. So I think that's important.

For some, SIP now serves to replace the church attendance they were brought up with. Jenna, a middle-aged mother, and Evie, her twenty-something daughter, enjoy their occasional visit to SIP but find they no longer feel comfortable at church:

Jenna: You know, those things are not discussed in the current Church. It's like, devoid of allure. It's just like people who put concrete on the floor, and they have their plastic sort of shapes on the wall. It doesn't have the finesse, the emotional side. That's why I don't like to go to church. It doesn't have— It doesn't speak to my heart. It doesn't make my skin tingle. I feel it's a little bit of a cookie cutter kind of factory, where you churn it out... This does not make me [want to] go, this is different from my life. My life in fact is richer when I'm outside of the church than when I'm inside [it].

Evie: Because I don't want to go to something that's un-safe, which I find church is. I don't feel comfortable there. I don't see it as a safe place. I find SIP much safer... perhaps because you can input and you can talk. Or you can check out your ideas a bit. I find church very much me being told what to think, me being told which Bible passage to read, and it might not necessarily fit with where I'm at that week... It's not interactive.

Even Evie's father, Charles, agrees. He describes himself as a deeply loyal 'welded on' Catholic, and yet:

I find my faith community in Catalyst and SIP rather than the parish. Even though I'm in a Jesuit⁵ parish... [and] there are people around us. Our neighbours go to the same church... So I'm very comfortable in my parish, and I really feel discombobulated when I miss the Mass... But the faith community that I identify with is Catalyst... And I guess my spiritual leader in that sense then is [Xavier].

Here, Charles demonstrates the parallel lines that many Catalyst members run between their church attendance and their involvement with SIP – both equally essential to their religious identity. Hillary speaks similarly about the value of SIP and Catalyst as an addition to church rather than a replacement for it:

I was attracted to Catalyst because I was not satisfied with the mere going to Mass in the parish... I realised how absolutely right it was for me at the time because it was a group of fairly committed people who were prepared to run parallel lines in their lives, I suppose— to keep going to Mass basically— I mean, we are all really pretty compliant Catholics, that's the point. We weren't great big reformers. We were *renewers*. We thought there was quite a difference. But people who also wanted another form of commitment, and another form of support, I suppose. So really, Catalyst came along, I think, at a very good moment in my life, in my faith journey I suppose.

⁵ The term 'Jesuit' refers to members of the religious order called the 'Society of Jesus'.

Thus, while attendance at Mass might bring ritualistic pleasure, SIP participants generally agreed that church attendance was insufficient to support their desire to learn and expand their horizons. Some found value in church-run 'Adult Education' programs, but even these had their drawbacks, as Father Kevin notes:

Our Adult Education office is fantastic... It's always offering things... But it tends to be the one type. Spirituality in the Pub is an anything-goes. So it's much broader. And I think that's part of its appeal, that you can do this this month and next month we'll have something different. There's a whole variety of stuff. It's not just one discipline. It leaves people wondering what will be happening next. So there's a richness in that I think, that if you ran a scripture thing you wouldn't have that diversity or depth.

Most common of all, however, was the feeling that attending SIP is, quite simply, fun. Kathy is a middle-aged Protestant journalist who is well known for her social activism and thus is a regular speaker across numerous SIP locations. For her, however, attending SIP is not 'just another' public speaking event, but rather an enlivening celebration of spirit. In her words:

Isn't there a quote in the New Testament that 'when two or three people are gathered together in my name I am there'. You know, in my experience, when people gather together, often in an upper room, in pubs, with a genuine and openhearted desire to listen to each other and to share ideas about faith and hope and how to live a good life, that a spiritual energy is released that all feel and all enjoy.

You know, they're people of good faith, empathically listening to each other and probing the deeper questions of life. It doesn't surprise me that they're smiling! [Laughs]. Of course it's fun! [Laughing] It's a spiritual energy...

Now you could call it the presence of God if you wish. You know, whatever language you like, but you feel the joy. Good-natured joy. Goodhearted joy.... I mean, Sister [Mary] and I greet each other as if we were old friends. We've never met outside of... SIP. But, 'hello! We're here again! Hooray!' [Laughs] It's a celebration!

3.2.6 A place for conversation - about what *really* matters

At the heart of the SIP endeavour, however, was always the sense that the Catholic Church, indeed the world at large, needed more genuine conversations on topics that really matter. Calling people to step away from the ceaseless chatter of the television, the founders of Catalyst for Renewal felt that it was only through thought-provoking and respectful conversation on matters dear to the heart that society, let alone the Catholic Church, could truly grow.

Father Xavier recalled the sense of trepidation he and the group felt at proposing such a novel idea:

We actually sent out personal invitations [to the first SIP] because we hadn't a clue what would happen... I don't think we were very sure that it was a goer⁶.... But we were overwhelmed with the response. This was May 1995. And it just took off from there...

In fact, we've tapped a vein, a rich vein I think, that Catholics aren't the only ones looking for conversation. And it's fascinating how many people, and I'm not saying we caused this, but how many people are using the word conversation. The BBC: 'join the conversation', they say. The *Sydney Morning Herald* advertise themselves, 'join the conversation'. And I think that to me is very, very significant of a culture that has an intuition at least, even if it is unacknowledged, that there is disconnection happening here and we need to address it. That people are moving in[ward].

The public forum is fraught. People are finding their own... private comfort zones and this sort of thing. And it's all very well to talk about it, but I find it quite frightening. If I'm just withdrawing to my private comfort zone... [and you're in yours]... Now, our private comfort zones might overlap, in fact, but we're all sort of [standing] off.

What happens to the public sphere? You get Parliament, where you just have contempt for your politicians and so forth. You get the police, you get all kinds of public groupings, where you have no respect for people. You expect them to do a whole lot of things for you, but when they put a foot wrong... there's a cynicism... And even if we don't say it I think there's a fear associated with this.

Hillary felt that SIP tapped into what was an increasingly popular social consciousness in the 1990s:

Because, in fact... there was stacks of stuff happening. So many people left their television sets. You know, everyone was holding forums, from Politics in the Pub to all manner of organisations. So I thought, well, this conversation, which I really thought was fabulous for Australia, this is not just confined to church. This is something that exploded in the 80s and 90s in Australia... [But for SIP], conversation was seen as, I suppose, the means of sacred growth. That was the idea, that we'd talk through with each other, under the guiding hand of our tradition, always with a view to being loyal to this great tradition.

We were quite adamant, and I was particularly adamant, that it would not become a forum for politics, pure politics, because... before you knew where you were you could end up in a political discussion, not a spiritual discussion... I thought that was a real risk for us. And I saw it as just as much of a risk as the veteran risk of priests spouting politics from the pulpit...

⁶ The term 'goer' is an Australian colloquialism for something that is likely to be successful.

So my hope was that it was a friendly place where people could wrestle with some of the bigger conceptual issues... I mean... everything to do with aspects within the church, aspects of meaning in life, aspects of faith development, contemporary dilemmas, but always with that sense of drawing on the great tradition that we came from.

As such, SIP offers a space for learning and personal development – a space in which to grapple with challenging topics, expand one’s knowledge and reflect on one’s assumptions. As Dr Kris and Naomi described it:

Dr Kris: I think we saw our main mission as... trying to meet the needs of people out there who couldn't find a spiritual home anywhere else. But this included also a sort of intelligent conversation. It wasn't just like we're going to get together and meditate or something. It was meant to be challenging.

Naomi: It's a bit like having adult faith formation [lessons] except it's on a broader level. And it might be not so intense but it's like you're getting snippets of things. And being able to participate with other people of faith in a conversation on things that really matter. It's such a broad thing. When you think of all the different topics we've covered over the years... It's just huge.

I think SIP offers... a way to stop, reflect, and listen, and to talk. And let things mull around a bit before, hopefully, we all rush off out there and we all start doing things... Our society doesn't allow often that chance to just be reflective. We're all geared up to—and I've been part of this too, 'let's go and protest down the street' and 'let's go and attend a rally'... But how well informed are we or how well have we reflected on the issues? And I think that's got to come, somewhere.

At the bedrock of this learning process however lies the discovery of the art of good conversation. For according to SIP’s founding philosophy, it is in the practice of respectful and thoughtful conversation that real learning occurs:

I guess what's important to SIP, what makes a SIP a SIP, is the commitment to respectful conversation. It's a very strong underlying value of respect I think in what Sippers want to do. If you've got a point of view, others are almost duty-bound to listen to it. Agree with it or not, but people aren't going to shout you down. Because, it ain't the federal parliament here. You know, it's church. (Charles)

Kathy similarly values the ‘openness to other points of view’ that she finds amongst SIP attendees. She recalls a particularly remarkable night of conversation between ‘two astonishingly different groups’:

I remember once, I was asked to talk about marriage and divorce. And I'm a gay woman, and I spoke about why I thought the Commonwealth

Marriage Act should be modified to allow same-sex marriage. This is a long time before it became a national issue, I can assure you. It wasn't on the national agenda at all. And the person they put me with was someone... who in a particular diocese was responsible for [deciding] whether a divorce was possible within the legal tradition of the Catholic Church.

So... a very unusual coupling together of people. An obviously very sincere and practising Catholic with this openly gay person. And yet, what characterised that experience, as in all the SIP experiences, was this kind of open-minded listening, really intense listening and exploration, and an openness to different points of view. You know, mutual respect.

As Father Xavier puts it:

I'd like to think that any human being, be they a believer or not, be they a committed religious person or not, is searching... Sees themselves as open to discovery, as engaging in life as a mystery to be lived, not a problem to be solved. And therefore a willing participant in the conversation. And that to me is the context of Spirituality in the Pub.

Ultimately, it seems that such conversations offer a deeply satisfying experience to SIP regulars such as Lil:

Every time I come home I feel as if there is a wonderful something that has happened on that night with somebody. Either I've heard something or I've even been brave enough to say it. Or, you know, just discussed across the table in a reflective way with people. And I've come away feeling very positive.

Of course, enabling such conversations is no simple task. SIP organisers spend many hours over the course of the year planning how best to create the kind of conversations that SIP is known for. In some cases, this means carefully selecting speakers who illustrate two different but interdependent perspectives, each reflecting usefully upon the other so that the principles of dialogue are modelled in the speeches themselves. In other cases, it means rearranging the furniture in the room so that people group around tables instead of sitting in rows. And for the occasional highly-skilled MC, it involves constantly scanning the room to identify Sippers who seem to be responding to something another person is saying. By recognising these cues and encouraging Sippers to speak up, SIP organisers find that genuine, probing conversations are more likely to develop.

But as Sister Diana, one of the few SIP organisers who belongs to a religious order, explained to me, this conversational dynamic can be difficult to build: 'It's hard...

because if someone is invited in who's a bit of an expert in something, people tend to fire questions at them'. I asked her how she went about balancing this tendency:

Whenever I've been chairing two speakers... I've always said, 'we'll just have a little bit of [a] quiet [moment] so that we can take in what our thoughts are about what was just said, and maybe jot down some things'. Because you're going to listen to another speaker now and that will be what is in everyone's mind when the conversation comes up. So, I think there needs to be some tactics from the person chairing to deal with that... And sometimes it might be good to even say, 'talk to the person beside you about what's on your mind at the moment'. And then bring it together.

Yet despite the best efforts of SIP organisers there are occasions when a particularly strident attendee might seek to dominate the conversation. While this only happened a handful of times across the hundreds of SIP hours I attended, it nonetheless remained an omnipresent concern for SIP organisers. To prepare for this possibility, Catalyst for Renewal published a series of practical suggestions in various fliers and manuals. These guidelines highlight the need for 'rules of engagement', such as 'keep the focus of conversation clearly up front', 'limit questions to say 1 minute', and 'watch out for people giving a "sermon" or "commercial" under the guise of asking a question'. But at the same time, Catalyst also stressed that SIP organisers should 'be alert to expressions of pain' and 'know when and how to terminate a conversation':

Do not be put off by aggressive or strident talk or behaviour as this almost certainly is a symptom of great pain... Do your best to hear that person's pain and show them that you care... this may be *the* most difficult situation to handle in a public conversation... it may require a communal response... Even good conversations must be terminated at a certain point [but] leave the way open for further conversation later (Catalyst for Renewal, 1999).

In some cases, this 'communal response' involved quiet murmuring and stage whispers of 'yeah, yeah' as the group sought to quieten the rowdy attendee. But often SIP organisers would stand at the ready to invite the 'troublemaker' out of the room for a beer and a quiet chat. One of SIP's founders, Esther, was particularly well known for her ability to placate an agitated attendee with an offer of a beverage and a listening ear. In this way, she was able to not only minister to the pain of the attendee but also enable the main conversation of the SIP meeting to continue undisturbed. In this way, SIP organisers sought to ensure that their conversations were able to include all voices in their midst, even those that initially appear to be disruptive.

3.2.7 Radically orthodox

In this way, by seeking to build an ecumenical and inclusive conversation, one that is led by laity and positioned beyond church walls, 'Spirituality in the Pub' presents itself as simultaneously radical and different as well as traditional and orthodox.

Charles: I guess, the whole idea of Spirituality in the Pub, it's just a bit of a shocking concept isn't it? I mean, you don't go to a pub to express your spirituality, do you? So, we do. So we're a bit prepared to be offbeat and unconventional. Even though, when you do come along to the pub and join the group you actually find it's quite a conservative group.

Fr Reuben: In its desire to be a progressive voice, people assume that it's not orthodox... [But] if people were to see how prayerful [the organisers] are, [they'd] realise that in actual fact this is something really quite orthodox.

In fact, Esther describes Spirituality in the Pub as '*a radically religious experience*':

It has all the elements of religion at its best... However, that's not something that we really advertise very much. Because a lot of the people who come are sick of 'religion', and they can't stand things that have happened in the name of religion, and continue to happen in the name of religion. But I think what actually draws them to it is this feeling of the need for community... the sense of belonging. And what we always strive to do is to explore what it is to be more truly human. And I mean, that's the essence of all of the great religions. So, I wouldn't rush around saying that what we were doing was providing a religious forum, but that's what I think it is.

In relation to the word radical, I tend to get back to what I regard as the true meaning of radical, and that is back to the roots⁷... Think of a tree with its roots down. And then think of a tree growing up and spreading its branches, and sometimes branches falling off, but getting back to the roots. And so, [SIP is about] getting back to the roots of what it is to be truly human, what it is to follow Jesus' teachings, or the teachings of other great prophets in other... faith traditions. Rather than the more popular description of radical, meaning breakaway, or edgy. [Laughs]

Kathy agrees, telling me the story of one particular attendee who she saw as epitomising the radical religiosity that lies at the heart of SIP:

There's a nun who comes regularly to SIP. I think her name is [Mary], Sister [Mary]... I think she's eighty-four years old. Now she embodies for me absolutely the spirit of SIP. Again, I don't know her well, I only know her through interaction at SIP. But she is outward looking, loves her [religious]

⁷ Here Esther is referring to the Latin etymology of the word radical, which is *radix*, meaning root.

order, loves so much about the church, but happily goes to these pubs and meets all manner of heretic! [Laughs]...

She is outward looking, she is progressive, she's engaged. To me, she's the spirit of a Sydney SIP. And with so much to teach me about the tradition. Like, I'm actually quite interested in the Virgin Mary, because I'm a Protestant. And it's a completely alien concept to me... So my direct intention is to go and have a cup of coffee with Mary and say: 'Can you tell me about the Virgin Mary. What does she mean in your life and in your faith?'

And I don't doubt for a second that I will get a passionate and erudite response. And what could be more authentic than us sitting in a coffee lounge talking about the Virgin Mary? You know, that's why SIP is so fabulous to me.

For several organisers, the SIP endeavour is an attempt to get back to the Church's earliest form – an era thought to be marked by egalitarian Christian communities who gathered to learn from each other, free of institutional control:

Noelene: It was just like the start of the Church. This started as a people movement, people getting together to talk about what's important... We have had several bishops come and speak at SIP but they have not been treated any differently to anyone else. This is just like the early church.

Naomi: If I was to put another sort of label on, I would say I believe in the Vatican II model of church. So I suppose that would be putting me in what would be called the 'liberal' side of things. But I see that as, in some ways, as the traditional model of church.

Because... the Vatican II style of church is actually going back to the grass roots of our earliest tradition, where it was more based around small Christian communities with people sharing responsibilities and household leaders leading liturgy and women leading liturgy. So that's our tradition. And so I'm committed to that sort of tradition.

It is this deep commitment to the traditions of the Catholic Church that marks the members of Catalyst for Renewal. As Thelma explains to me:

One of the first understandings that [Catalyst's founders] came to was that they wished to renew the church, but from inside. You can't renew an organisation from the outside. You must be inside.

So, there is no fundamental that they reject... But there is a great question as to how you express it, how you present it, and how you manage it... Certainly... all the Catalyst group [consider ourselves] very soundly within the core Catholic Church. But we've all come to realise that the irrelevant

stuff is irrelevant. And that we've got to understand what the actual meaning is and obey that.

After all, as Levi succinctly states: 'let's face it, Jesus didn't set up a church. He was trying to improve his own'.

3.3 Meet the Sippers

Having heard the voices of Sippers themselves, let me now offer a sense of the people and profiles behind these voices. As mentioned in my introduction to this thesis, in 2011 I conducted a survey to understand the needs and interests of Sippers across Australia. After hearing Sippers tell me on several occasions that they wished they knew what other SIP locations were like and what other Sippers were thinking, I realised I could offer my nascent statistical skills in support of their endeavour. I developed the survey after consulting with SIP organisers about the themes that they would most like to learn more about. I drafted a basic survey and sent it to SIP organisers around NSW and Victoria for their review and further suggestions before finalising the survey format and questions.

Over the course of about three months, I distributed the three-page printed survey in person at SIP meetings across nine of the SIP locations I was attending. I was able to offer the survey two or three times at some locations, while for SIPs that met less frequently I was only able to offer the survey once. For the most part, I personally delivered and collected the surveys for each SIP.

A SIP organiser would generally introduce the survey at the beginning of the SIP meeting, and often I would also be asked to say a few words about the survey and how it fitted within my broader research project. In such cases I would always stress the confidentiality of the survey, noting that respondents would not be asked for their name and that survey findings would be aggregated at both the 'local SIP' and 'national' level. Both the national report and their own local report would be made available to each group, but reports on individual SIP locations would not be shared with other groups. Finally, I explained that completed surveys could be placed in a specially marked box (although many participants preferred to hand me their survey in person), and that those who wished to complete the survey in their own time could either

return it by post or hand it to me at a later SIP meeting. I received over four hundred completed surveys. On average, most SIP locations returned about forty-five surveys, with a range of between thirty and seventy-eight surveys per SIP location.

While the final survey report was originally intended as a gesture of thanks to a field site that had welcomed me with open arms, it also offers a rich insight into the people and preferences that shaped each SIP location. I offer an overview of these results below, and include the full national report and survey in Appendix 1.

3.3.1 Demographics

Casting one's eye around the room at a SIP meeting, it is apparent that SIP attendees are predominantly older and female. The survey findings confirmed this: of those who answered the gender or age questions, two-thirds were female and almost three quarters were over the age of sixty. Remarkably, there were more respondents over the age of eighty (seven per cent) than there were under the age of forty (six per cent). Only one in five respondents was in their forties or fifties. Broken down by age and gender, the most substantial difference in gender patterns of attendance was seen amongst those aged between forty and sixty-nine, where female representation was more than double that of the males.

Regarding relationship status, over half of the respondents indicated they were married, while four per cent said they were partnered. Widows and widowers made up twelve per cent of the respondents, while another twelve per cent said they were single. Almost one in ten respondents were separated or divorced. Another one in ten people ticked the box for 'religious' under relationship status, indicating they were members of a religious order and thus did not consider themselves either married or single.

3.3.2 Employment and education

Almost half of the respondents were retirees, with less than one in four of the sample indicating they were engaged in work, whether full-time (eighteen per cent), part-time/casual (fourteen per cent), or self-employed (six per cent). Only three per cent

indicated they were engaged in studies of some sort, while two per cent considered themselves unemployed.

About three-quarters of respondents gave more specific details about their job or the industry in which they had previously worked (represented in Table 3 below).

Table 3: Employment background of SIP respondents

Industry	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Teaching & School Administration	59	21.8%
Religious Profession & Pastoral Care - Catholic	44	16.2%
Healthcare & Aged Care	24	8.9%
Administration & Secretarial	19	7.0%
Research & Lecturing	16	5.9%
Accounting & Finance	14	5.2%
Business & Management	10	3.7%
Medicine (Specialist)	9	3.3%
Engineering, Architecture & Town Planning	8	3.0%
Hospitality, Retail & Sales	8	3.0%
Religious Profession - non-Catholic	7	2.6%
Media, Journalism and Librarianship	7	2.6%
Public Service	6	2.2%
Psychology, Counselling & Social Work	6	2.2%
Law	5	1.8%
Volunteer work	5	1.80%
Maintenance Services & Trades	4	1.50%
IT, Electronics & Communications	4	1.50%
Church Administration	3	1.10%
Domestic / Family Care	3	1.10%
Childcare	1	0.40%
Other	9	3.30%

This showed that the majority of respondents were teachers or school administrators (twenty-two per cent), religious professionals or pastoral associates⁸ in the Catholic

⁸ Pastoral associates are lay members of the Catholic Church who work in ministerial or administrative roles to support the work of the parish. The role generally includes a small salary.

Church (sixteen per cent), health care or aged care workers (nine per cent), administrators or secretaries (seven per cent), or researchers and lecturers (six per cent). Seven respondents indicated they were religious professionals from a non-Catholic tradition.

Regarding educational status, eight out of ten respondents had pursued further education after leaving high school. Six out of ten respondents studied at university: forty-one per cent completing a Bachelor degree, with twenty per cent studying Masters or Doctoral degrees. These figures show a marked difference to the average Australian population. According to Australian census statistics in 2011 – the year in which this survey was conducted – only half of Australians aged between fifteen and sixty-four had completed an educational qualification higher than that of school-level (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Only twenty-four per cent of this same age group held a Bachelor or higher degree – a figure which is less than half that of the SIP sample. Furthermore, less than five per cent of Australians aged between fifteen and sixty-four had completed a Masters or Doctoral degree.

3.3.3 SIP attendance patterns

In addition to the socio-demographic data above, I also sought to understand the nature and pattern of participants' attendance at SIP. These questions sought to ascertain how many SIP meetings the respondent had attended, whether they had visited multiple SIP locations and whether they attended alone or with others.

My survey results indicate that the SIP audience reflects a wide variety of attendance patterns. A quarter of respondents were attending SIP for the first or second time, while about another quarter had attended twenty or more SIP meetings over time, indicating a long-standing affiliation with the group.

When asked about their attendance at other SIP locations, around one-third of respondents indicated they had visited another SIP at some point. Of those who specified which other SIP locations they had visited, around two thirds had been to only one other location. Only one person had visited more than five locations.

Regarding the social side of attending SIP, the survey results suggest that SIP attendance is a highly social activity, with eight out of ten respondents indicating they attend SIP with other people rather than alone. Of these, just under a third attend with a spouse or partner and over a third attend with a friend. Around one-sixth of respondents said they attend as part of a group. Almost two-thirds of respondents said they had invited others to join them at SIP at some point.

3.3.4 SIP's appealing features

In an effort to understand what draws people to SIP, I asked respondents to indicate which of a set range of features generally attracts them to SIP nights, allowing them to select as many features as they wished. Almost nine out of ten respondents indicated that the topic was part of what attracts them to SIP nights, while eight out of ten said that the speakers drew them in. Only half the respondents indicated that 'conversation' was a part of what drew them to SIP, while a third indicated social themes such as 'seeing friends' or 'meeting new people' were appealing parts of the SIP experience.

I then asked respondents to nominate which of these features was *most important* to them. Half of the respondents indicated that the topic is of greatest importance to them in deciding whether to attend a given SIP meeting, while twenty-two per cent said that the speakers were most important. Only one-sixth of respondents said that conversation was the most important feature that draws them to SIP, a finding that will be discussed further in the conclusion of this chapter. The remaining thirteen percent of respondents selected 'seeing friends', 'meeting new people', 'the meal', 'the venue, or 'other' as SIP's most appealing feature.

3.3.5 Preferred SIP topics

I also sought to understand what topics appeal to SIP attendees, asking again for overall preferences (with no limits on the number of topics that could be selected), as well as asking which topic was most important to them. In terms of overall preferences, 'social justice issues' and 'the spiritual dimension of current events' were selected by around eight in ten respondents. Around two-thirds of respondents said they wanted topics that help enhance their 'interfaith awareness' while four out of ten wanted to

discuss 'institutional church issues'. In contrast, only about a third of respondents indicated an interest in topics on 'religious practice' or 'theology'.

When asked to nominate which of these topics was *most important* to them, thirty-six per cent of respondents indicated that they would most like to hear about 'social justice issues' at SIP. Another thirty per cent preferred to hear about the 'spiritual dimension of current events'. Less than ten per cent nominated each of the other topic categories as their most preferred topics, including 'religious practice', 'institutional church issues', 'theology', 'spiritual reflection', 'morality', 'interfaith awareness', and 'other'.

3.3.6 Participation in other social groups

I also wanted to get a sense of how SIP fits into attendees' overall engagement with other organised social groups. The survey results show that Sippers are generally highly socially active, with only thirteen per cent failing to nominate at least one other social group that they regularly attend. On average, respondents listed two other groups; however, thirty-one per cent of all respondents indicated that they attend between three and five other groups on a regular basis.

Unsurprisingly, almost three-quarters of SIP respondents were regular attendees at church or religious services. Of those that gave more detail about their religious group, over eight out of ten indicated they attend Roman Catholic services. Six per cent attended the Uniting Church, three per cent were Anglican, and another three per cent Baptist. A total of six per cent of respondents were from a variety of other religious traditions, including interfaith, independent Christian, Ukrainian Catholic, Presbyterian, Jewish, Sai Baba, and Brahma Kumaris. No Muslim or Buddhist respondents were found in this sample.

Beyond religious attendance, thirty-five per cent of respondents said that they attend a community group. The majority of these community groups were centred around their church or parish, but some also included groups for family and marriage support, interfaith sharing, ethnic/heritage discovery, nature care, indigenous reconciliation, and addiction support, as well as business networking clubs such as Rotary and Probus.

Over one-quarter of respondents indicated that they attend a social welfare or justice group. Such groups included: the St Vincent de Paul Society; disability, health or aged care support groups; parish or congregational groups; human rights advocacy and action groups; and groups supporting international aid, justice, and peace.

A quarter of respondents said that they are part of a recreational or hobby group. This included everything from book clubs, historical societies, meditation groups and bridge clubs to fitness, sport, cycling and swimming clubs or music and dancing groups.

One in five respondents attend meetings at a professional association on a regular basis. These respondents typically came from occupations of ministry and pastoral care or education and childcare; however professional groups in the areas of health/disability, engineering, finance and accounting, psychology, sociology and professional supervision were also represented.

3.3.7 Implications of survey findings

Overall, these findings paint a picture of a highly educated, socially active, female and aging SIP population, a profile that is representative of many upper middle-class voluntary communities in Australia. In this regard, however, it is worth noting the selection and reporting biases that may have influenced my findings. Although my own participant observation experiences confirm the age, gender and marital profile of the SIP sample statistics found in the survey, my observation of social class markers at SIP meetings brings me to question the reliability of the survey findings in this regard. I have no hesitation in confirming that SIP organisers were typically highly educated and socially active retirees who came from largely upper-middle class occupations. However it was not uncommon to meet audience members who were labourers, tradesmen and housewives, or individuals who were relying on social service benefits rather than relaxing into a comfortable superannuated retirement. As such, the attractive image painted by the survey of an audience full of upper-middle class scholars requires careful evaluation.

It is possible that respondents who came from more prestigious occupations were more likely to report their industry backgrounds due to social desirability bias, and

thus are overrepresented in the findings (cf. Rossi et al., 2013). We also know that more highly educated individuals are more likely to complete surveys in general, being more familiar with this research technique than their less educated compatriots (Green, 1996; Voigt et al., 2003). However, it is also possible that a) respondents who attended regularly were more likely to complete the survey (given it was made available at several consecutive SIP nights) and, relatedly, that b) regular attendees were more likely to come from the upper-middle classes and be themselves either present or former organising committee members. Either of these aspects of selection and reporting bias may then have skewed the results of this survey, which was never intended to be a statistically reliable reporting instrument.

However, perhaps the most noteworthy and unequivocal characteristic of the survey portrait lies in its highly Catholic nature. While this should not be surprising, given that SIP was established to support lay Catholics, it is worth reflecting on the gap between the ecumenical spirit enthusiastically endorsed by SIP organisers in section 3.2.4 above and the findings of this survey. Not only did the survey show that less than one in five attendees was non-Catholic, only two percent of respondents regularly attended non-Christian or interfaith services. Furthermore, while at least half of the respondents indicated that ‘conversation’ or ‘interfaith awareness’ was *part* of what attracts them to SIP, only fifteen percent of respondents selected conversation as their *most important* feature, while ‘interfaith awareness’ scored only seven percent.

This suggests that the spirit of ecumenical conversation espoused by SIP organisers is failing to resonate in the experience of SIP participants. Perhaps these ecumenical conversations are more a matter of *talking across religious boundaries*, by selectively importing religious ‘others’ into SIP conversations as invited speakers (who are not represented in the survey), rather than building dynamic and lasting relationships *with* religious ‘outsiders’, thus changing the very nature of the conversation itself. There is no doubt that religious ‘others’ are genuinely valued for the stories and insights they bring, but seldom do they stay to become part of the SIP community itself. As such, conversation becomes a vehicle for learning *about* the other rather than truly connecting *with* the other in an effort to redefine the boundaries of ‘us’ and ‘them’.

This boundary-reinforcing dynamic was illustrated to me in my early days of attending SIP, when I soon realised that Sippers were speaking in a vocabulary that was foreign

to me. Having not been inculcated into the Catholic habitus, there were often times when I found myself adrift when trying to understand SIP discourse. Indeed, over the course of my interviews I found that some other non-Catholic Sippers felt the same way. As a Uniting Church Sipper, Rev. Stacey, explained to me:

When we first attended [our nearest SIP] we felt like outsiders. There was a regular group that the speaker was addressing, and there were a few Catholic asides that went right over our heads... [So] we asked [Esther] and [Naomi], 'is this just a Catholic movement or can outsiders be involved?'

In time, Rev. Stacey would come to establish her own explicitly ecumenical SIP, one that was 'mindful of those who aren't regular church goers'. Joining with other Catholic, Anglican and Baptist pastors in her area, she refashioned the boundaries of SIP conversation in order to better realise the transformative potential of the conversational methodology that Catalyst so enthusiastically preaches. In this way, it took a Sipper from outside the Catholic faith tradition to highlight to SIP organisers the effects of their exclusionary language. Before long, the Uniting Church Sipper was a deeply valued part of the National SIP team, albeit still a rarity.

Yet ironically, Rev. Stacey's most poignant demonstration of the exclusionary nature of the SIP language game was illustrated when she was asked to lead the group in a reflection exercise at the 2009 SIP conference – the first SIP conference she had attended. She chose 'conversation' as her theme, and led the group through a silent exercise in which she used only mime to converse with her audience and fellow participants. She began, standing alone in the middle of a circle of seated Sippers, looking a little sad and lost. Seeing no one standing beside her, she bowed her head in silent prayer, then started to walk around the circle of Sippers, looking at each person with a lonely hand outstretched. She then turned to a Sipper friend and grasped his hand, encouraging him to rise and join her in a prayerful stance. One by one she and the growing group reached out and brought the whole audience into their noiseless conversation, until all of us – myself included – were standing together holding hands in a silent, unified circle around the room.

After the exercise, Sippers commented on how moving the experience was. One Sipper recalled feeling anticipation, impatience and then finally regret when he joined the group but realised others were not yet a part of the circle. Rev. Stacey closed the exercise with the observation that the circle represented the circle of God's community,

and that it is through conversation that we bring people into this circle. Yet for me, the most insightful part of Rev. Stacey's exercise was the spotlight it placed upon language as being both a tool for and an obstacle to effective conversation. Should Rev. Stacey not have persevered against the exclusionary language she found when she first attended SIP, she would not have been able to illustrate so poignantly for Sippers the need for reflexivity and indeed even silence when seeking to build a broadly welcoming conversation that embraces the transformation of its boundaries. However, as the findings of this survey show, perhaps the transformative potential of conversation has yet to be fully realised within the SIP community. This concept of conversation as transformation is one which I will explore further in the conclusion of this thesis.

Chapter 4: Being Catholic

4.1 Understanding religious identity

‘There’s so many labels. It’s all labels, isn’t it?’

Tracey

For many people, religious identity only becomes relevant when completing official documents like death certificates or national census forms. Here, religious affiliation becomes a box to tick in order to facilitate movement to the next question – a relatively unconscious act of pragmatic self-identification. But what lived reality does this ticked box actually represent? What does it imply about the individual’s belief system, and the role that these beliefs play in shaping his or her everyday life? As David Voas notes:

While 25 per cent of respondents in some European countries may say that they believe in reincarnation, one is not inclined to feel that they thereby express any basic truths about their own identities... The point is simply that we cannot conclude from the fact that people tell pollsters they believe in God that they give the matter any thought, find it significant, will feel the same next year, or plan to do anything about it (Voas, 2009, p. 161).

In other words, is pre-reflexive self-identification synonymous with ‘actual’ self-identity, whatever that might be? Does a tick in the ‘Catholic’ box mean that survey respondents believe themselves to ‘be’ Catholic, and if so, what meaning does this entail? Is Catholicity a dichotomous choice – between ‘Catholic’ and ‘not Catholic’ – or is it better understood as a spectrum? Can a person be ‘more Catholic’ or ‘less Catholic’ than another, and if so, what are the criteria by which such a judgement is made? And, most importantly, how does ‘being Catholic’ differ from ‘being Baptist’, ‘being Hindu’, or ‘being atheist’?

While these questions may be rhetorical, they point towards the difficulty of grappling with a topic such as religious identity. Clearly, unequivocal answers to any of the above are beyond the reach of this thesis – indeed the Catholic Church itself shies away from all but perhaps the last question. However, during the course of my fieldwork I soon realised that understanding Sippers’ lived experience of religious identity was going to be key to understanding the success of SIP itself. In time, I discovered that ‘being Catholic’ somehow provides Catholic Sippers with the unique set of symbolic, social

and emotional resources required to enable them to remain loyal to the Church, despite the many hurts and frustrations it brings them. To this end, in this chapter I briefly examine the concept of self-identity before exploring the common historical dynamics that have shaped Sippers' construction of their religious identities in today's highly pluralistic spiritual landscape. I then offer four case studies that collectively highlight the lived experience of 'being Catholic' for Sippers, and explore three dimensions of Catholic identity that enable Sippers to both energise and reconcile their ongoing expressions of loyal dissent in the Church.

4.1.1 Self-identity

As a construct, the term 'identity' has been accused of meaning both too much and too little, and sometimes being treated so ambiguously that it means nothing at all (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000). Commonly understood as the answer to the deceptively simple question 'who am I?', identity has been a focus of philosophical enquiry since Herodotus mused on the nature of the social other and Plato called us to 'know thyself' (Blasko and Januaskiene, 2008, pp. 46–47; Taylor, 1992, pp. 115–126). As a contemporary analytical category, however, identity is a hotly debated cross-disciplinary construct that has been heavily influenced by the traditions of anthropology, psychology and sociology.

4.1.1.1 *A short history of 'identity'*

The notion of identity in anthropological discourse was first influenced by early American anthropology's interest in the relationship between culture and personality. Drawing on the work of Sigmund Freud and Harry S. Sullivan, American anthropologists such as Edward Sapir, Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead and Clyde Kluckhohn built on Franz Boas' (1911) proposition that cultural anthropology should be the study of humankind's 'mental life', to argue that culture and personality are fundamentally intertwined. Personality was thought to be the product of internalisation of one's culture, and culture in turn was seen as the collective projection of individual personality (Harris, 1968).

In the 1960s, Erik Erikson's work in developmental psychology introduced the term 'identity', which soon replaced 'personality' in anthropological discourse; the latter

having been tarnished by resounding anthropological criticism of the basic assumptions of the 'culture and personality' movement (Barnard and Spencer, 1996; Levine, 2001).¹ Erikson coined the phrase 'identity crisis' and did much to popularise the concept of identity in the 1960s.² Inspired by Freud's (1922) psychoanalytic use of the term 'identification' to represent an individual's emotional tie to another, Erikson understood identity formation as a key developmental task in which an individual develops an internal and subjective sense of 'self sameness and continuity' as a result of their participation in society and internalisation of its cultural norms (Erikson, 1968, [1980] 1994). As such, Erikson saw identity as a perception of internal coherence, with well-adjusted personalities exhibiting a fit between how the person conceives of him or herself and how he or she is viewed by others. Conversely, inconsistency of personality, or lack of 'fit', was seen as a form of psychic illness or disorder.

In the discipline of sociology, it was Erving Goffman who expanded the concept of identity by placing it in the frame of symbolic interactionism.³ Goffman (1959, 1963, 1971) argued that identity is not simply developed *through* an individual's social experiences, but that it is actively constituted *by* these experiences. He explained this logic through a dramaturgical framework in which individuals are like actors in a stage play. Adapting their performance to the applause or disapproval of their audience, individuals thus engage in an interactive process of impression management that Goffman called 'self-work':

[T]he individual does not go about merely going about his business. He goes about constrained to sustain a viable image of himself in the eyes of others. Since local circumstances always will reflect upon him, and since these circumstances will vary unexpectedly and constantly, footwork, or rather self-work, will be continuously necessary (Goffman, 1971, p. 185).

¹ These assumptions include: 'that childhood experience determined adult personality; that a single personality type characterized each society; that a particular shared basic or modal personality gave rise to a particular cultural institution; that projective tests developed in the West could be used elsewhere; and that anthropologists were 'objective', free of ethnocentric bias' (Barnard and Spencer, 1996, p. 144).

² Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead were also influential in developing an understanding of the self prior to Erikson's work. Cooley proposed a 'looking glass self' to explore the role of others in shaping one's perceptions of self, while Mead described an internal dialectic occurring between the socialised self ('me') and the subjective self ('I') – who responds to the demands of the socialised self (cf. Mead, 1913, 1925, 1934; Cooley, 1902). However, Erikson represents the first substantial attempt to depict a specific 'theory of identity' and thus takes precedence in the discussion above.

³ It is worth noting that Peter Berger also played a key role in popularising the concept of identity in sociology in the 1960s. In fact, Berger published his *Invitation to Sociology* in the same year as Goffman's *Stigma* (1963). However, while Berger used the term 'identity' liberally in the introductory textbook, he failed to adequately define or develop the construct, assuming it was already familiar to the reader (Weigert et al., 2006, p. 16).

As such, Goffman represented identity as a 'collaborative achievement' that requires 'the cooperation or at least the forbearance of others' (Smith, 2006, p. 99): 'When an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them' (Goffman, 1959, p. 10). Peter Berger later built on this argument, suggesting that identity is not only 'bestowed' by others through acts of social recognition, but that we are in fact *dependent* on others for the sustainment of our identities. As he stated:

One cannot be human all by oneself and, apparently, one cannot hold on to any particular identity all by oneself. The self-image of the officer as an officer can be maintained only in a social context in which others are willing to recognize him in this identity. If this recognition is suddenly withdrawn, it usually does not take very long before the self-image collapses (Berger, 1963, p. 100).

Meanwhile in the discipline of social anthropology, identity had come to be understood almost exclusively in terms of ethnicity, pointing to a shared sense of 'we-ness' within an ethnic group. However, in anthropology's enthusiasm for studies on 'ethnic identity', 'identity' was taken for granted as an unproblematic *a priori* given (Sökefeld, 2001). For example, Fredrick Barths' seminal text on ethnic groups employed the term to define 'ethnic ascription' in terms of a person's 'basic, most general identity', without going on to explain what he meant by identity (Barth, 1969, p. 13). Indeed, twentieth-century anthropologists largely assumed that individuals are first and foremost members of cultures, and thus that each individual holds an identity that is pre-existing and bequeathed by their socio-cultural position (Strathern 1994, in van Meijl, 2008).

While the above psychological, sociological and anthropological approaches to understanding identity have differed in important ways, reflecting the respective foci of their disciplines, they do however share a key point of agreement: that is, sameness. Or more specifically, each approach argued that a sense of sameness, continuity or 'fit' is integral to the concept of identity. For Erikson, identity represented a person's 'accrued confidence' in their 'self sameness and continuity' (Erikson, 1968, [1980] 1994); for Goffman, an identity must be recognised by others as an authentic resemblance of a certain social role; while for anthropologists following in Barths' footsteps, ethnic identity pointed to a sense of sharing certain characteristics with a specific ethnic group. In short, twentieth-century 'identity' was seen to be singular, reflecting the modern metanarrative of the internally homogenous and bounded individual or group that was characteristic of much of the Western intellectual

tradition until the rise of postmodernism (Gleason, 1983; Handler, 1988, pp. 39–47, 1994).

4.1.1.2 *From sameness and unity to difference and plurality*

In recent decades however, the concept of identity has undergone a paradigmatic shift in focus. Just as culture is no longer seen as a bounded, stable and internally homogenous entity, so too has identity been reconfigured. Identity now implies not only a sense of *sameness*, within oneself and with certain others, but also a sense of *difference* and *plurality*. And yet this concept is not new – William James pointed out in 1890 that:

[p]roperly speaking, a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their mind. To wound any of these his images is to wound him. But as the individuals who carry the images fall naturally into classes, we may practically say that he has many different social selves as there are distinct groups of persons about whose opinion he cares (James, 1890, p. 294).

Following this, today's social theorists have recognised that it is no longer appropriate to view identity as a singular, bounded, indivisible and constant entity. Rather, the contemporary self is seen as carrying multiple identities in a fluid and often fragmented or fractured fashion. This 'protean self' (Lifton, 1999) or 'saturated self' (Gergen, 1991) is thought to be the product of a contemporary world marked by restlessness, uncertainty and contradiction. Such an environment obliges the individual to build a resilient self, capable of embracing multiple self-possibilities through a process of constant improvisation across numerous social positions and through multiple discourses and practices, which often intersect in divergent, even antithetical ways. As Gergen (1991) states:

One's identity is continuously emergent, re-formed and redirected as one moves through the sea of ever-changing relationships. In the case of 'Who am I?' it is a teeming world of provisional possibilities (p. 139).

At the heart of this ceaseless journey of self-making lies an awareness of difference. Indeed, any sense of who or what one *is* involves – and is arguably preceded by⁴ – an awareness of who or what one is *not*. As Hall (1996) explains:

⁴ van Meijl focuses on identity construction in a multi-cultural setting, and argues that 'any construction of identity is preceded by a recognition of difference and an awareness of what self is not, but this psychological process is particularly prominent in intercultural situations (e.g., Woodward, 1997). Not

This entails the radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its constitutive outside that the 'positive' meaning of any term – and thus its 'identity' – can be constructed (Derrida, 1981; Laclau, 1990; Butler, 1993). Throughout their careers, identities can function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render 'outside', abjected. Every identity has at its 'margin', an excess, something more. The unity, the internal homogeneity, which the term identity treats as foundational is not a natural, but a constructed form of closure, every identity naming as its necessary, even if silenced and unspoken other, that which it 'lacks' (pp. 4-5).

Pierre Bourdieu succinctly captures this concept in a rare moment of brevity when he states: 'social identity is defined and asserted through difference' (1984, p. 172). For Bourdieu, the heart of identity construction rests in the act of 'distinction', whereby an individual marks himself or herself out as unique from others, drawing on an accrued and largely pre-conscious sense of his or her social universe in the process. Identity can thus be understood as entailing a 'sense of the position one occupies in the social space', or simply – as Bourdieu cites Goffman – a 'sense of one's place' (Bourdieu, 1991a, p. 235).

Bourdieu argues that this sense of place is enmeshed in a set of 'practical taxonomies' or 'ways of seeing' (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 95, 2001, p. 65), which are structured by an awareness of difference – or more accurately, a system of 'differential positions' (1991a, p. 100). Each social position or identity is defined 'by everything which distinguishes it from what it is not and especially from everything it is opposed to' (1984, p. 172). In this way, Bourdieu would argue that understanding an individual's habitus is key to understanding their identity, and that the critical question lies not simply in who one thinks one 'is', but rather in what one recognises as *possible* or *impossible*, for 'people like us' (Bourdieu, 1984). In his own words:

The sense of one's place, as the sense of what one can or cannot 'allow oneself' – implies a tacit acceptance of one's position, a sense of limits ('that's not meant for us') or – what amounts to the same thing – a sense of distances, to be marked and maintained, respected, and expected of others (Bourdieu, 1991a, p. 235).

This practical sense of what is expected of 'people like us', and the deeply complex notion of habitus this phrase represents, lies at the heart of Bourdieu's theory of

until the difference with other individuals with a different cultural background has become apparent will the sameness and uniqueness of the cultural identity of self come to the surface' (van Meijl, 2008, p. 173).

practice.⁵ For Bourdieu, habitus can be understood as the system of dispositions, tastes, skills and ways of classifying the world that one acquires as a result of one's social experiences within a particular cultural context (Bourdieu, 1990a). These patterns of habituation provide a structure for spontaneous action that is both pre-reflexive and physically encoded, such as in posture, comportment and accent. As such, habitus is a 'practical sense' that is often misrecognised as 'natural' rather than culturally constructed (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1990b). Within familiar settings or fields, the habitus offers a 'taken for granted' – or 'doxic' – sense of the world and one's place within it (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 166, 1984, p. 471).

While the habitus can adapt over time as a result of exposure to new social settings, Bourdieu argues that this preconscious 'feel for the game' is fundamentally shaped by the 'material realities' or socio-economic conditions of one's childhood, mapping out one's commonsense possibilities and enabling individuals to act in a socially acceptable manner (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 60, 1990b, p. 9). Yet in unfamiliar settings, these dispositions mark the individual out as different or foreign. In this way, Bourdieu recognises the habitus as being the product of power relations. It is in the habitus that we find an explanation for the durability of inequality, with unequal power relations being 'experienced not as unnatural imposition or challengeable doctrine, but rather as deeply familiar and constitutive of the self and its relationship to the world' (Hearn, 2012, p. 98).

Ernesto Laclau cogently sums this issue up when he states that 'identity... *is* power', or more specifically, that 'the constitution of a social identity is an act of power' (Laclau, 1990, p. 31, original emphasis). For Laclau, an individual or 'objectivity' is only able to affirm itself 'by repressing that which threatens it. To study the conditions of existence of a given social identity, then, is to study the power mechanisms making it possible' (Laclau, 1990, p. 32). Furthermore, if as Derrida argues, 'no identity is ever complete or pure', we can see that every 'identity is contaminated by what it tries to exclude' (Newman, 2007, p. 85). In other words, the meaning of any individual or group identity is actively constituted by that which it sees as foreign or 'other' and thus seeks to repress or keep at bay. As such, the sense of natural unity or 'sameness' which

⁵ It is beyond the scope of this chapter to fully explore Bourdieu's theory of practice and his understanding of the habitus. For a more detailed treatment of these theories, see Jenkins (2014) or Grenfell (2014).

identities seek to proclaim are the result not of natural and inevitable realities but rather of power games and practices of exclusion (Hall and du Gay, 1996, p. 5).

4.1.1.3 *Identity as narrative*

In addition to features of plurality, intersectionality, difference and power, contemporary understandings of identity also recognise its narratological nature. Representing identity as a continuously evolving process rather than a static entity, sociologists such as Anthony Giddens argue that identity construction is a self-reflexive project in which we tell ourselves and others the story of who we are:

A person's identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor - important though this is - in the reactions of others, but in the capacity *to keep a particular narrative going*. The individual's biography, if she is to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world, cannot be wholly fictive. It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing 'story' about the self (Giddens, 1991, p. 54, original emphasis).

Recognising the narratological nature of identity thus places the emphasis on 'becoming' rather than 'being': the focus shifts from 'who I am' to 'who might I become', and what resources – symbolic, material and social – might I draw on to get there? This process is itself bound by the discursive structures of one's cultural, linguistic and historical context. As such, it is:

[p]recisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, [that] we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies. Moreover, they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity - an 'identity' in its traditional meaning... (Hall, 1996, p. 4).

In this way, understanding an individual or group's identity demands understanding not only their habitus but also the structures of power, discourse and representation that have shaped this habitus. As such, the question of how a person or group has been represented over time thus defines the parameters of how they might in turn represent or describe themselves (Hall, 1996, p. 4).

4.1.2 Implications for religious identity

The above discussion has highlighted the dynamism and multiplicity of identity as well as its narratological and politically embedded character. These characteristics carry important implications for understanding Catholic identity within the context of this study.

An exploration of what it means to 'be Catholic' poses several unmistakable challenges. Firstly, no two people interpret a 'shared' identity in the same way. One way of thinking about identities is as a system of interlocking and overlapping building blocks. These identities are not simply prefabricated and laid as they are received but rather require trimming and adapting to suit the identity requirements of the individual (Sökefeld, 1999). For Catholics, the meaning and practice of 'being Catholic' must be shaped to fit within the outline of the multiple other identities that each member of the Catholic Church also carries. Each Catholic must place their religious identity within a mosaic of other identities that are equally, if not more, important and meaningful, each of which overlap and intersect with their religious identity, some even contradicting it at times.

As such, no identity operates in isolation. Rather, identities are structures of signification, whose meaning is constantly being transformed by virtue of their reference to other identities (Sökefeld, 1999, p. 423). In this way, the personal meaning that 'being Catholic' carries for each of my SIP friends is constantly in flux, representing the influence of multiple other competing significations. Just as there is no 'pure Catholic', unaffected by other identities, so too there is no 'pure' way of *being* Catholic.

This carries important implications for understanding how an individual maintains a consistent sense of self amongst the many competing obligations that are typical of the 'saturated self'. Sökefeld (1999) vividly illustrates this challenge in his ethnographic exploration of a Pakistani Shiite business man seeking to maintain relations with his extended Sunni family in a region marked by decades of militant conflict between Sunnis and Shiites.⁶ And while perceptions of difference are a key component of

⁶ Seeking to balance his identity as a loyal family member against that of a devout Shiite, Ali Hassan employed ingenious techniques of identity management and self-representation to ensure that he remained loyal to both contradictory identities. These techniques enabled him to meet the challenge of

understanding identity, mutually exclusive identity constructions such as Sunni/Shiite or Catholic/Protestant are just that – constructions. While twentieth century social scientists typically embraced a dichotomous view of identity, it is in the opaque spaces between competing identities that the twenty-first century ‘protean self’ embraces its multiple, divergent possibilities for self-identification. And it is in this opacity that religious adherents such as Sippers seek to maintain and balance their multiple intersecting identities.

Finally, the above discussion highlights the importance of narrative in understanding religious identity. Sökefeld’s (1999) Shiite business man was able to remain loyal to his conflicting identities by employing ingenious situational and representational techniques to construct a plausible narrative within which his contradictory actions could appear coherent. In other words, rather than be trapped by the dichotomous alternatives of devout Shiite or loyal kin, ambiguity offered a dynamic symbolic resource for construction of his identity narrative.

This narratological ambiguity is also available to Catholics. Such narratives offer insight into the question of how someone who does not attend Catholic services or uphold Catholic doctrine is still able to avow a Catholic identity. Some might argue that such nominal believers are not really ‘religious’, yet surely many of the so-called ‘nominals’ ticking the Catholic box on their census forms would argue their right to affirm this identity, perhaps drawing on memories of occasional childhood church attendance or a confirmation ceremony⁷ to confirm this reality.

David Bell (2016) suggests that narratological attachment to a religious tradition appears to trump everyday practice when reflecting religious identity. In other words, ‘feeling Catholic’ may be more relevant than ‘doing Catholic’ when it comes to religious identity. Bell argues that individuals move through various stages or ‘statuses’ of

attending a family wedding feast, which would have required eating meat with a strict Wahabi – an act that would have alienated his Shiite community.

⁷ ‘Confirmation’ is the second of three initiation rites undertaken by individuals joining the Catholic Church. For those born into a Catholic family, confirmation is typically undertaken as a child or young adolescent. Individuals must first be baptised (generally as a baby), then confirmed, before they can take their first Holy Communion (“The sacraments of Christian initiation”, 1993).

religious identity over time, and proposes a model of religious identity based on these stages,⁸ but concludes that:

[p]ossibly the most interesting aspect of the research has been the growing evidence that religious identity may form the core of religiosity for individuals. Once an attachment or commitment have been made, religious identity seems more fundamental than religious beliefs or religious practices. Individuals can stop going to religious services, stop reading sacred texts, and possibly even stop believing in core tenets of their faith tradition, and yet their religious identity still remains with them across their lifespan (p. 140).

As such, in this study I have explicitly adopted a narratological approach to understanding the religious identity of my participants. Interview participants were asked to share the story of how they came to be involved in SIP. If further prompting was required, I asked them to tell me the story of their childhood faith and how that shaped who they are today. This offered a unique insight into the ‘material realities’ and ‘commonsense possibilities’ that shaped the habitus of their childhood (cf. Bourdieu, 1990b, 1990a). It offered a nuanced understanding of how they saw themselves, and importantly, how they perceived those who were ‘different’.

Furthermore, rather than dissect each person’s experience and aggregate ‘the data’ into neat analytical themes, this chapter continues the narratological approach by presenting four case studies of individuals who represent particularly pertinent experiences shared by many others in the SIP community. In this way, I hope to not only represent these individuals’ life stories accurately and empathetically, but also tease out the ‘specific enunciative strategies’ and ‘specific modalities of power’ that lie behind the discursive practices of Catholic identity construction for Sippers (Hall, 1996, p. 4). However, recognising the historically embedded nature of these strategies and modalities, we must first seek to understand the key historical features that have shaped today’s Australian Catholic habitus.

⁸ These statuses include: *Religious Identity Diffusion* (RID), in which individuals are either disinterested in religion or are extrinsically motivated towards religion; *Religious identity foreclosure* (RIF), where individuals are deeply committed to a religious tradition but exhibit a strong desire for conformity and a lack of flexibility, becoming easily defensive about their faith when questioned; *Religious identity moratorium* (RIM), where individuals are not committed to a particular religious tradition and are open to different religious identities; and *Religious identity integration* (RII), where individuals have chosen to integrate a particular faith system into their self-identity, having critically reflected on the religious belief systems and traditions found within their culture and remaining ‘flexible, even playful, with religious practices and beliefs’ (Bell, 2016, p. 137).

4.2 Understanding Australian Catholics

Anthropological studies of religious identity in the Western world have largely focussed on the more ‘exotic’ sects, cults and new religious movements that pepper the margins of mainstream religious experience. This has left established churches in Western societies surprisingly under-researched in anthropological literature, with sociologists instead leading the way (eg. Davie, 1994; Dillon, 1999; Gill, 1992; Greeley, 1977, 2004b; Lewins, 1978). This thesis seeks to build an anthropological understanding of the Australian Catholic experience by exploring the particular mix of religious histories and experiences shared by members of the SIP community. To this end, one must first turn to the early history of the Australian Catholic church.

4.2.1 A brief history

[T]he Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. Thus, *in language intelligible to each generation*, she can respond to the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other.

(Second Vatican Council, 1965a, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 4, emphasis added)

Australian Catholicism is a product of its unique history, played out on a vast desert island continent far away from the hallowed halls of the Vatican. It has been fundamentally shaped by the ethnic and socio-political histories of those who came to call Australia home in the early years of its colonial period.

4.2.1.1 *Colonial Catholicism*

As Patrick O’Farrell, one of Australia’s leading Catholic historians, tells us, Catholicism arrived on Australian shores with the landing of the First Fleet. About a quarter of the convicts who arrived in Australia from 1788 to 1868 came from Ireland, and thus were considered Catholic by birth, along with a handful of the military garrison’s rank and file. As a marginal group, many of whom spoke Gaelic rather than English, the first Catholics were a troublesome minority: ‘too big to be ignored, too small to induce much

consideration' (O'Farrell, 1992, p. 3). As convicts, their religion was not recognised, and so, along with everyone else, they were required to attend Protestant services under a spirit of enforced ecumenism that sought not to build interfaith relations but rather to control sedition and uprising. In the eyes of the English Protestant establishment, being Irish meant being Catholic, and such an equation spelled trouble.

The Catholic convicts who attended these early Australian church services had arrived in Australia already tarred with the brush of rebellion. Nearly a third of the convicts transported from Ireland in the colony's first fifteen years had been convicted not of violent crimes but of the more politically dangerous acts of riot and sedition. Made landless by the English conquest of Ireland, many Irish convicts arrived in Australia with a heavy sense of grievance and loss, tempered by a desire to start a new life away from the poverty and desperation of Ireland (Campion, 1988). In turn, the colony's authorities viewed the Catholic Irish with trepidation:

The righteous English Protestant (and even more so the Presbyterian Scot) regarded the Catholic Irish with dark suspicion and short contempt. And fear... Popery⁹ and priestcraft, expressed in resistance to English rule, were seen as sinister menaces to that higher order of civilisation which the English so resolutely assumed they represented (O'Farrell, 1992, pp. 3–4).

The first recorded Catholic Mass occurred fifteen years after the colony was born, and was itself only a temporary affair. The Mass was held under strict military surveillance in May 1803 and led by an Irish convict priest, James Dixon – a man transported for alleged complicity in the 1798 rebellion against British rule in Ireland. Upon arrival in Sydney, Dixon's educated, middle-class manners appealed to Governor King, who lived in constant fear of an Irish uprising. King saw in Dixon a possible solution to the perpetual threat of Irish sedition that beleaguered King's government. He granted Dixon conditional emancipation and permission to exercise his priestly duties on the provision that the Catholics showed 'becoming gratitude' for this 'extension of liberal toleration' (O'Farrell, 1992, p. 1). In exchange for a salary of sixty pounds per year, Dixon was tasked with ensuring the Mass was not used as an occasion for 'seditious conversation', and he was ordered to detect and report any signs of disaffection in his congregation (Campion, 1988, p. 11). Unfortunately, this experiment in cautious religious tolerance was short-lived: within the year, three hundred Irish convicts

⁹ Popery is a derogatory term traditionally used to refer to the practices of the Roman Catholic Church. It was codified by Britain's Popery Act of 1698.

rebelled at Castle Hill and Dixon's Mass was accused of having offered a cover for seditious gatherings. Both permission and salary were summarily removed by Governor King, and Dixon returned to Ireland a few years later.

It was not until 1820 that the Catholic community in Australia was to be granted regular access to the sacerdotal ministry¹⁰ on which Catholicism depends.¹¹ By the time the first two authorised priests arrived in Sydney in May 1820, marking the commencement of formal Catholicism in Australia, the colony was already home to six or seven thousand Catholics (Campion, 1988). When the first Australian census was taken in 1828 there were about ten thousand Catholics in NSW, representing about one in four people (O'Farrell, 1992). Furthermore, nearly twenty per cent of these Catholics were born in the colony, including three hundred and seventy four adults – second generation Australians who proudly asserted the Catholic faith of their Irish heritage (Campion, 1988). While regular sacerdotal ministry had only just arrived in Australia, lay Catholicism was already alive and well, having endured its subjugation without the regular aid of priestly succour. While it would be poor history to suggest that these early Australian Catholics were bastions of piety, 'to ignore them is bad history, too' (Campion, 1997, p. 2).

¹⁰ Sacerdotalism is the belief that the intervention of a priest is required in order to reunite sinful humankind with God. By preaching, celebrating Mass, administering the sacraments, remitting sins and ministering to the people, the priest, under the authorisation of the Bishop, mediates between the sinful and divine (Boudinhon, 1911).

¹¹ It is worth noting that this lengthy delay is not purely the fault of an oppressive Protestant colonial regime in Australia. Catholicism was also gravely disorganised in Europe and the British Isles in the early nineteenth century. From 1809 to 1814 the Pope was held Napoleon's prisoner and the centre of Catholic Church authority was in disarray (O'Farrell, 1992, p. 11). At the same time, both the English Catholic Church – which held ecclesiastical authority over British colonies – and the Irish Catholic Church – from which most Australian Catholics had come – were themselves struggling for emancipation from the anti-Catholic strictures imposed by the Protestant British state.

Under penal laws imposed in both countries during the Reformation, Catholics not only lost the right to worship in the Catholic tradition but also suffered numerous impositions on their civil rights, including rights to retain lands and property, travel, hold a mortgage or receive an inheritance. Catholics could not marry Protestants – and any priest facilitating such a marriage was to be put to death – nor could Catholics marry their own kind outside the Protestant church. Catholics were banned from holding office in any public or corporate organisation; practicing as lawyers, physicians, apothecaries, sheriffs or constables; holding a commission in the navy or army; discharging the duties of executor, administrator, juror or guardian; and prosecuting or defending any legal actions in the civil court. In short, '[t]he law presumed every Catholic to be faithless, disloyal, and untruthful, assumed him to exist only to be punished, and the ingenuity of the Legislature was exhausted in discovering new methods of repression' (Burton et al., 1911).

The late eighteenth century saw the slow beginnings of the process of repealing these laws in England and Ireland, but civil unrest still marked the political and religious landscape of both countries. In this context, '[c]ompared with these enormous local problems of survival and religious integrity, the condition of a few thousand Catholics at the other side of the world scarcely rated attention' (O'Farrell, 1992, p. 12).

Inventiveness, devotion and fortitude seem to be the defining characteristics of the first Australian Catholics. When a rogue priest was deported from Sydney in May 1818, having arrived without the authorisation of the British government, he is said to have left the 'Blessed Sacrament'¹² behind in a Catholic home in Kent Street (O'Farrell, 1992). Whether this was by accident or design, he left Sydney Catholics with a lifeline to the faith of their homeland. Soon a men's sodality¹³ sprang up to keep watch over the sacrament. Catholics gathered there on Sundays for prayers and readings from the Mass. And a group of women formed a choir so that vespers and other liturgical music could be sung, establishing a choral tradition in Australia that remains strong today. Eighteen months later, when a French scientific discovery ship briefly put into Sydney Harbour, its chaplain was swamped by colonial Catholics eagerly seeking baptism, marriage and spiritual direction (Campion, 1997). All this before ecclesiastical Catholicism had officially arrived in Australia.

Much of the durability of Catholicism in these early days may perhaps be explained by the conflation that occurred between religious and national identity. To be Irish was to be Catholic, and vice versa. While for many new Australians this religious identity label may have held a nominal meaning back in Ireland, when placed in a landscape of religious intolerance and sometimes outright hostility, the Catholic identity became a symbol of collective pride, hope and determination. In turn, 'many Protestants were gravely disturbed' by the importation of what they saw as the 'dangerous superstition' of popery, having been conditioned since the Reformation to fear Catholic intentions and doubt their loyalty to the Crown (O'Farrell, 1992, pp. 56–7, 86). And so sectarianism swiftly flourished in nineteenth century Australia, fed by the eager hand of 'militantly anti-Catholic' newspapers such as the *Sentinel* and the rise of Orangeism¹⁴ in the 1840s, alongside the belligerently proud Catholic *Freeman's Journal* which painted a picture of an infallible and unified Catholic church pitted against an inhospitable world (O'Farrell, 1992, pp. 58, 94–5). While such a reality existed only in

¹² 'Blessed Sacrament' is a term used in Catholicism for the consecrated sacramental bread and wine that is used to represent the body and blood of Jesus Christ in Eucharist services (Pohle, 1909a).

¹³ A sodality is Roman Catholic term for a spiritual association or society – a group of people pledging to share a common pious cause (Hilgers, 1912).

¹⁴ The Orange Order is a Protestant fraternity born in Ireland in 1795. It was modelled in the style of Freemasonry, with secret rituals and distinctive attire, but its goal was to protect the civil and religious liberties of Protestants. Orangeism first appeared in Australia in the 1830s, and by 1848 had a membership of around five to seven hundred members across nine lodges (MacRaild, 2005; O'Farrell, 1992).

the imagination of *Freeman's* editors, their rhetoric was nonetheless compelling enough to spark anti-Catholic counterattacks which in turn fed the sectarian cycle of conflict between Catholic and Protestant. This cycle was marked each year by two highlights of the sectarian calendar, St Patrick's Day¹⁵ and Orangemen's Day,¹⁶ when Australian Catholics and Protestants would respectively celebrate their collective identities with a mixture of 'religious conviction, ...old world animus and factionalism, together with exuberant local hooliganism' (O'Farrell, 1992, p. 108), much of which may have been fed by a hunger for occupation and entertainment in Australia's nascent frontier society.

The divide between Irish and British was further complicated when Australia's first bishop was appointed – an English Benedictine. In 1835, John Bede Polding was given bishopric authority over Australia's twenty-thousand Catholics, most of whom were Irish, with only eight priests to assist him (Campion, 1988). A missionary at heart, Polding would travel thousands of miles on horseback to minister to newly arrived convicts and rural parishioners. Yet despite his devotion to the laity, within the clergy matters were tense. By the late 1850s, three-quarters of the Australian clergy were Irish – most having come from the lower classes of Irish society, and for whom priesthood offered a step up the social ladder. But Benedictine and Irish clergy 'viewed each other with distaste across the social gulf. To the Benedictines the Irish were crude and uncultured... to the Irish, the Benedictines were pretentious snobs who did not understand the real work of the mission' (O'Farrell, 1992, p. 105). Convinced that the Irish were the natural ministers of Australian Catholicism, the Irish clergy dreamed of building a spiritual empire free from Benedictine control:

They would build, in Australia, a new, free Ireland, a religious realm in which the piety and fervour they knew so well in old Ireland would experience an ennobling, transforming liberation, freed from the bitter weight of a persecuted history and the chains of British rule... Ireland born anew, pious and God-centred, but, this time, free (O'Farrell, 1992, pp. 194–5).

So when Australia's first Irish Cardinal arrived in Sydney in 1884, Patrick Francis Moran found himself enthusiastically welcomed by both laity and clergy, commenting that his reception was 'so loving and devoted as to rival, in his eyes, "the age of

¹⁵ St Patrick's Day is a day of Irish cultural and religious celebration, held on 17 March each year to commemorate the death of Saint Patrick, Ireland's foremost patron saint.

¹⁶ Orangemen's Day is held on the 12 July each year to commemorate the Battle of the Boyne, which marked the beginning of Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland.

medieval piety” (O’Farrell, 1992, p. 195). What quickly surprised Cardinal Moran, however, was how rapidly this lay piety seemed to also disappear:

True, they welcomed the clergy when they encountered them, for the practices of religion called on old habits and sentiments. But when Catholic ministry was not available, they were little perturbed, and did remarkably little about it. In [other] words... the condition of mid-century Catholicism was, by and large, that of astonishing indifference (O’Farrell, 1992, p. 197).

But Moran had Irishism on his side, and soon he and his Irish bishops decided that the most effective way of reviving religiosity in their Australian flock would be to amplify the Irishness¹⁷ of their faith, highlighting its piety, sentimentality and devotion to the Pope. While the papacy was being roundly criticised in the Australian press for its increasingly political pronouncements,¹⁸ the Pope became a living martyr for Australian Catholics. Defending him became an automatic response to sectarian criticism, and despite the calls from Moran for peace, papal pronouncements were ‘adopted, and belligerently asserted, as a virtual warcry’ by many lay Australian Catholics eager to assert their re-discovered religious identity:

The embattled, persecuted papacy, ringed by the forces of secular, Italian nationalism and the enemies of true religion had enormous imaginative appeal... It lessened the feeling of isolation: Australian Catholics were not alone in their desperate encounter with hordes of enemies; their struggle was a microcosm of what was taking place in the centre of Christendom itself (O’Farrell, 1992, p. 197).

In Australia, nothing highlighted this battle better than the question of education. At the turn of the eighteenth century, Australian schooling was the prerogative of the church, and the Church of England enjoyed a virtual monopoly over education. Indeed, Catholic schools were banned entirely in the early days of the colony. From 1820 they were permitted and became eligible for government support – along with Presbyterians – however the Church of England still retained a privileged position, at one point even being offered one-seventh of all colonial lands in NSW (Jupp, 2001; Mayrl, 2016).¹⁹

¹⁷ This is not to imply that Moran sought to lead a belligerent Irishism. Rather, he saw the Irish spirit as one of peacefulness and moderation, and thus ideally suited to achieving the integration of Catholicism into Australian society. Unfortunately, however, many of his followers had other ideas.

¹⁸ Chief of these is the *Syllabus of Errors*, released by Pope Pius IX in 1864. It was seen by its critics as representing a ‘monarchical absolutism that would deny freedom of religion, freedom of the press, and the freedom of a secular government to operate without the religious *diktat* of the Catholic Church’ (Lockwood, 2009).

¹⁹ Under the Church and Schools Corporation, established in 1826, the NSW government set aside one-seventh of all NSW land for the exclusive use of Anglican clergy and schools (Mayrl, 2016). This plan

Yet despite the enthusiasm of both Catholic and Protestant church leaders for denominationally-based education, it was soon apparent that the churches could not create enough schools to accommodate all Australian children, let alone provide them with quality education. So, in 1848, the government established a parallel system, one that was to be secular but nation-wide, and before long critics suggested that it was wasteful to maintain a dual system whereby the government funded both public schools and church-run schools (Campion, 1988). By 1872 the question of state aid to schools had become the central feature of the national election campaign, and Catholics were ordered by Church leaders to vote against the sitting government and its policy of secular education. Yet this was not to be. The government was returned to power in a landslide and the origins of Australia's current education policy was set: centering around a national education system that was to be free, compulsory, and secular – or, more importantly for the largely Protestant government, non-Catholic. So when the educational reforms of the 1870s resulted in the removal of all state aid to church-run schools, Catholics were outraged. Other denominational schools accepted the new policy in time, but Catholics refused: 'If this was to be war – and that is how Catholics saw it – the Catholic community were unwilling to give up without a fight' (Campion, 1988, p. 34).

Although the quality of education provided in mid-nineteenth century Catholic schools left students 'in a deplorable state of ignorance' (O'Farrell, 1992, p. 145) – like most other Australian schools of their time – Catholics saw the parish school as emblematic of Catholic identity itself.²⁰ Education was seen not as something that could be delivered piece-meal, with spots of religious instruction interspersed between secular classes. Rather, education was something all-encompassing, a pursuit that 'must take place in, and be infused by, a religious atmosphere which would act upon the child's whole character of mind and heart' (O'Farrell, 1992, p. 160). In this light, public schools were condemned as corrupting. In the words of the NSW Bishops of the time:

[T]hey are seed-plots of future immorality, infidelity, and lawlessness, being calculated to debase the standard of human excellence and to corrupt the political, social, and individual life of future citizens... [this is] a

was short-lived however, sparking fierce reactions from other denominations, including Catholics, who were themselves celebrating news of the emancipation of Catholicism in Ireland. Under mounting public pressure, the Corporation was abolished in 1833, and with it 'the Church of England lost its monopoly over education' in Australia (Jupp, 2001, p. 323).

²⁰ This commitment to Catholic education continues today, with almost twenty percent of Australian children being educated in Catholic schools – over five percent more than are accommodated in all other independent schools combined (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

system which... promises to be a source of incalculable evil to the colony (Vaughan et al., 1879, p. 4).

To protect their flock from this influence, the Bishops framed the question of education in terms of political rights and loyalty to the church. Within a week, Catholic attendance at Sydney's public schools had dropped about twenty per cent, Catholic parents having become accustomed to following their bishops in times of perceived persecution. In turn, Catholics found themselves further alienated from their Protestant neighbours. The media's enthusiasm for public education began to take on a distinctly anti-Catholic tone, with Catholicism 'portrayed as the enemy of freedom, progress and enlightenment' (O'Farrell, 1992, p. 164). Job advertisements read 'No Catholics need apply' (Massam, 1996, p. 35). Faced with such antagonism, the Catholic community again found itself 'raising its ramparts against a threatening world' (Campion, 1988, p. 62). Rather than feeling acknowledged for their contribution to Australian society as it entered the twentieth century, 'Catholics were bivouacked on the outskirts of a hostile civilisation' (O'Farrell, 1992, p. 296).

This pattern of isolationism and defensiveness marked much of Australian Catholic life throughout the first half of the century. When World War I broke out and conscription was being debated, it quickly developed a sectarian complexion, sparked by the anti-conscription efforts of Melbourne Archbishop Daniel Mannix, who was known for his confrontational and provocative style. Having likened Catholicism's exclusion from school funding to that of slavery, Mannix saw conscription as 'a hateful thing... almost certain to bring evil in its train' (Niall, 2016, pp. 86-7). Mannix questioned why 'Irishmen and their sons in Australia' should be conscripted when the British Government refused to relocate its force of seventy thousand men from Ireland, where uprisings were still being crushed with a ruthless force (O'Farrell, 1992, p. 327). In Mannix's eyes, such a logic seemed to offer 'bitter repayment for Irish, and Irish-Australian, loyalty to Britain in Britain's war' (O'Farrell, 1992, p. 321). Indeed, Mannix could not see the need for Australian lives to perish in what he said was 'like most wars - just an ordinary trade war' (Mannix, 2011, p. 61).

Such rhetoric captivated his Catholic audiences and outraged his opponents. Soon Mannix was cast as the face of a disloyal church bent on national disintegration: 'the religion of sedition and shirkers' (O'Farrell, 1992, p. 325). Australian Protestants

resented what they saw as the Catholic Church's policy of placing its own welfare and interests before that of the nation, and its refusal to keep quiet when faced with injustice. At a time when Australia was gripped by a war-induced atmosphere of fear and menace, Catholicism became viewed as a 'dangerous and subversive power'. As the *Australian Baptist* put it in 1917: 'it is not so much the Germans as the Jesuits that we are fighting in this war' (O'Farrell, 1992, p. 334). Or in the words of Australia's then-Prime Minister, W.M. Hughes: Mannix is 'a man to whom every German in the country looks... if you follow him you range yourself under the banner of the deadly enemies of Australia' (Niall, 2016, p. 89).²¹

It was this polarised landscape that greeted Australia's next wave of Catholic immigrants. Although the fierce storms of sectarianism had eased by about 1925, this was 'the peace of exhaustion and of segregation' rather than of harmony and integration (O'Farrell, 1992, p. 352). The question of Australian identity had been cast in Reformation terms 'and the Reformation divide ran deep through all Australian society' (Campion, 1997, p. 7). But many of the two and a half million people who arrived as part of Australia's post-World War II assisted immigration scheme saw things differently. About half of the new arrivals were European Catholics, for whom Australian Catholicism's Irish working class heritage held little meaning:

They claimed the Catholic name yet refused to identify as Irish Australians... It was a hard lesson but the newcomers taught old Irish Australians that there were many different ways of being Catholic, all authentic... Slowly a realisation was dawning that there was a distinction between religion and religious culture (Campion, 1997, p. 9).

The timing of this lesson was impeccable – preparing Australians to grapple with the huge cultural transformations about to occur as a result of the second Vatican Council, also known as 'Vatican II'. This process would displace many of the cultural remnants that had been carried over from fortress Catholicism, leaving some Catholics feeling liberated while others mourned the loss of the certainties of their youth.

²¹ This motif of Catholicism as an organised threat to Australian sociability was further complicated by the efforts of B.A. Santamaria, who established 'the Catholic Social Studies Movement' (or 'The Movement') in the 1940s. Originally cast as a voluntary association to temper communist trends in Australia, Santamaria propagated an atmosphere of crisis and secrecy in which Catholic members learnt to gather intelligence on their friends and colleagues and report possibly communistic wrong-doings (Campion, 1988). Under the leadership of Santamaria, what began as an emergency task force soon developed into a powerful yet largely unseen network of agitators who fostered an increasingly hostile relationship to the rest of Australian society. In time 'The Movement' transformed into a political party (the Democratic Labour Party), with the goal of offering left-wing Catholic voters a new option for government representation, however Santamaria's efforts continued to foster an image of Catholicism as both a subversive and divisive force in Australia's national politics.

4.2.1.2 *The Second Vatican Council*

In 1959, less than three months into his papacy, Pope John XXIII shocked the Catholic world by announcing he would hold an ecumenical council²² for the first time in nearly one hundred years (Wilde, 2007). In light of global social changes following World War II, he saw a need to reconsider relations between the Church and the modern world. Recognising how little the Church had changed since the sixteenth century and the Council of Trent, Pope John XXIII saw an opportunity for the Church to shed its fortress mentality and ‘open the windows’ to let fresh air in (Sullivan, 2002, pp. 16–7).

Bishops worldwide were taken surprise by the papal declaration and largely unprepared for the changes that Vatican II would bring, but perhaps no more so than in Australia. The Australian church was ‘notably self-absorbed’, their prominent bishops lagging behind in an effort to keep up with the reforms of the Second Vatican Council (O’Farrell, 1992, p. 406). However, the processes of the Council took time, and by the time the fourth session of the Council was complete in 1965, most Australian parishioners and many clergy had enthusiastically taken on board the changes of Vatican II.

The changes began with the liturgy; in other words, with Catholic church services themselves. By the close of the first session of the Council, the bishops had overwhelmingly voted to introduce simpler ceremonies which called for greater participation of the congregation (Campion, 1988). This would include greater emphasis on the use of the Bible, and – most importantly for many – would entail a shift from the medieval use of Latin to the contemporary use of vernacular language, making the content of the rituals, hymns and prayers more accessible to lay people. Other changes were perhaps more aesthetic – such as the priest facing towards the congregation rather than away when standing at the altar, and even the removal of communion rails from Catholic church architecture – but nonetheless were symbolic of

²² Ecumenical councils, also known as general councils, are ‘legally convened assemblies of ecclesiastical dignitaries and theological experts for the purpose of discussing and regulating matters of church doctrine and discipline’ (Wilhelm, 1908b). The first ecumenical council recognised by the Catholic church was the Council of Nicaea, held in 325 AD. The Second Vatican Council is the twenty-first, and most recent, ecumenical council of the Catholic Church, and the second council to be held at the Vatican. Its full title is thus the ‘Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican’.

the Council's desire to see parishes unified as one rather than segregated by religious class.

Nowhere was this shift in power dynamics more evident than in church decision-making. With the 1964 promulgation of *Lumen Gentium* or 'Light of the Nations' and the 1965 'Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity', *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, the Council acknowledged the key role of lay people in the church (Second Vatican Council, 1964a, 1965a). No longer expected to silently and docilely obey, lay people were instead to be embraced as co-workers in the Catholic endeavour, or lay apostolates. Priests were called on to recognise the unique gifts and skills of their parishioners, seeking their advice and assistance and promoting lay initiatives.

In turn, parishioners were asked to take on greater responsibilities in the church. For some this meant forming a liturgical committee to facilitate changes to the new Mass, or opening up their homes for prayer groups and support networks to meet. For others it involved tackling the challenging task of updating the Australian Church's catechism – or method of teaching Catholic doctrine. Not only were content changes now required, the question-and-answer style rote learning approach of pre-Vatican II days was no longer considered appropriate to the engaged and inquisitive spirituality that Vatican II sought to inspire. Thousands of lay Australian men and women volunteered to prepare new training programmes and teaching aids, in turn realising the need to further their own understanding (Campion, 1988). Adult education classes boomed, focussing on theological and biblical topics previously deemed irrelevant to the lay mind.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the Vatican II Church opened itself up to people beyond the Catholic Church, with the Council releasing two decrees on religious freedom and the 'restoration of unity' with their 'separated brethren' (Second Vatican Council, 1964b, 1965b). Relinquishing their claim to be the 'one true church' (Wilde, 2007, p. 1), the Council highlighted the value that lay in rapprochement with other Christian denominations. Recognising the common goals that they share, Catholic leaders ceased labelling Protestants as heretics, and began using terms such as 'other Christians' to describe their fellow Christians (Thomsett, 2011, p. 244).

In short, Vatican II introduced what may be the most important revolution in the Christian world since the Reformation. With Vatican II, the Catholic Church moved 'from commands to invitations... from threats to persuasion, from coercion to conscience, [and] from monologue to conversation'. Most importantly however, it moved from principles of 'exclusion to inclusion, [and] from hostility to friendship' – with the outer world and with each other (O'Malley, 2006, p. 29). While patterns of conservatism still ran deep in the Australian Catholic habitus, there was enough change and elasticity to offer hope to those inspired by the Vatican II vision. But with change comes questioning, and for Australian Catholics this reflection returned to the perennial Australian question of identity. How should Australian Catholics define themselves in the post-Vatican II generation? As O'Farrell (1992) notes:

Previous questions about identity had grouped around the problem of how Catholics should relate to the wider Australian society. Basic Catholic identity had been assumed – Irish descent, working-class origins, possessed of the one, true and clearly-defined faith. The 1960s had called these things into question... What were they now? (p. 425).

Indeed, some may say that Australian Catholicism entered a period of post-Vatican II inertia in the 1980s. Many of the initiatives seeking lay involvement had petered out as volunteers wearied under the load left by a shrinking priesthood. The intellectual life of the church waned as the Catholic intelligentsia took a lead in the attrition that decimated church numbers in the 1960s and 1970s. And many Catholics, both lay and clergy, found themselves struggling with the increasing privatisation of Catholicism. Fondly remembered displays of Catholic pride and belligerence waned in an increasing emphasis on private spirituality and self-reflection:

It was this sharp switch to reliance on its own internal life, without the traditional abrasive stimulus of proclaiming itself in the often hostile world, which highlighted the thinness, confusion, and inadequacy of those resources that lay within, and added to... a creeping mood of inertia (O'Farrell, 1992, p. 432).

Writing in 1992, O'Farrell suggested that the 'near paralysis' of the eighties softened and matured in the nineties. Rather than denounce the hiatus in growth as a sign of crisis or collapse, O'Farrell instead concluded that the nineties offered 'a time for standing still, for appraising, investigating, negotiating, listening, regrouping, [and] surveying the terrain' of where the Church has been and where it is headed (1992, p. 450). This is the decade in which Spirituality in the Pub was born, and this is the journey that has shaped the Catholic narratives we are about to hear.

4.2.2 The joys and anxieties of being a (Vatican II) Catholic

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.

(Second Vatican Council, 1965a, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 1)

Like any other social group, there is no ‘typical profile’ of a Catholic Sipper. While every person I interviewed seemed to hold a general concept of the ‘typical Catholic’ in their mind, when comparing their experiences I soon realised the immense variety that exists within even this small community. As such, rather than blur all participants’ stories into one grey melange of purported uniformity, this section presents four case studies highlighting individuals whose experiences, although unique to them, were nonetheless echoed in the narratives of other Sippers.

Our first case study focuses on a nun who has dedicated her life to teaching, followed by a second on a grandmother who raised her children in the Catholic tradition through the 1960s and 1970s and continues to play a key role in her parish and the SIP community. In contrast, our third case study centres on an elderly retired solicitor who seldom attends Mass but still considers himself Catholic, while our final case study tells the story of a middle-aged mother whose experience of divorce helped her find new depths in her Catholic faith. Together, these narratives offer a broad yet representative brushstroke of the varieties of Catholic experience held within the SIP community.

4.2.2.1 *A disenchanted nun*

Sister Diana is not happy. After growing up in the Catholic faith and dedicating years of her life to the Catholic Church as a nun²³ – teaching in Catholic primary and secondary schools and even becoming a school principal – Diana has spent a lot of time thinking about her faith and the best way to evangelise it to others, particularly the young. But by the time I interviewed her in August 2011, Diana, then in her sixties, told me in a weary voice:

²³ The names of religious orders and parishes will not be specified when referring to individual participants, in the interests of maximising anonymity of reporting. In a small community such as SIP, even relatively generic details such as this risk revealing participants’ identities.

I actually feel as though I'm in a negative phase of my life at the minute, in every way. And I'm trying to read that book, all of the book, *Positive Thinking*. I've got it by my bedside and it's got little things that you can do. How to think positively... [But] I feel I'm a total cynic at this stage.

Life has not always been this difficult for Diana. She describes her childhood faith development in the 1950s as following 'a fairly straightforward kind of route' of attending Catholic schools and a Catholic teacher's college before joining the nunnery. She adds that, 'my mother was a convert, mind you, but that gave a healthy balance to our upbringing, I suppose'. Through years of daily contact with the nuns around her, Diana came to find herself thinking that committing herself to a life of religious service was the only natural path for her:

You were always getting presented with this as an option. You are either going to marry or be a nun. And it was really good. It was put up as the highest way you could devote your life to God. But I often ask women my age did they ever think about it. Some of them did, and some of them didn't. And I'm really surprised because they would have had the same upbringing [as me].

Of course, on further reflection she recalls that joining the nunnery was not as smooth a path as it might now seem:

It was a shilly-shallying a bit. I thought it would be a really good thing to do and then it would be the holiday time and I'd be having a good time and I thought it would be a bit boring becoming a nun. I couldn't do all that exciting stuff. And then it just clicked one day, when another person that I went to school with but wasn't really all that close to— The nun that I was friendly with told me that [my schoolmate] had been down to book in, so that made me make my decision.

I asked what her family thought about her decision to become a nun:

My parents weren't very happy. I was the eldest of four. I think they thought I'd do better with my life. My mother actually said, 'Oh, if you were going to be a priest, that wouldn't be so bad, but— a nun!'... There was more status in [being a priest]... I don't know what she thought about nuns. You were hiding yourself. And in those days you were, all dressed up in black and white, a very little bit of white, all covered up. It was quite upsetting for your families, really....

And my father was horrified. I think they thought I'd do something better with my life. But they came around in the end... Dad always said, 'Oh, she's just going in for the dress ups', 'she just wants to put on the dress ups, gliding around in them'. But, you know, it was— [being] in love with God, and, you know, what you wanted to do for God and religion. It was basically that that drew me. But it was a romanticised view.

Perhaps it is the simplicity of this romanticised view that Sr Diana²⁴ now grieves:

Life moves on and there's the realities of working pretty hard. I suppose we've worked pretty hard in the Church, for nothing. And bishops have just done all they can to squash it. We've been their slaves for ever, setting up Catholic education. I'm not so angry about it that I want to turn my back on it. But I think we've been [laughs] taken for a bit of a ride. They've used it. They've used us.

So when, in 2010, the Holy See²⁵ approved a new English translation of the Roman missal, the Catholic book of liturgy,²⁶ something within Sr Diana sprang up with indignation. Outraged by both the language used in the missal as well as the way in which the process of revision and consultation had been managed, Sr Diana described herself as leading 'a one-woman protest' against the new missal:

Well, I'm not going to churches that have brought it in! Some parishes that I've been to have got these [new missal] cards in.²⁷ And I started to take them home in my handbag. I folded them up. I stole one a week for three weeks and then I thought, "Oh, this is probably stealing. It's a bit stupid. I won't do this anymore" ... But I thought, if I took enough away, then they'd *have* to work out where they were all going?

Not only did she feel the new vocabulary 'sticks in most people's gullet', but by changing phrases from familiar vernacular into more formal language,²⁸ she felt the

²⁴ 'Sr.' is an abbreviation for the title 'Sister', commonly used in the Catholic Church.

²⁵ The term 'Holy See' is used in the Roman Catholic church to represent the pope as well as the central ecclesiastical government of the Church. It is also synonymous with the location where these parties reside, ie. currently an independent sovereign territory in the Vatican City in Rome (Baumgartner, 1910).

²⁶ More precisely, the Roman missal is the book of liturgy issued by the Roman Catholic Church, which specifies the words to be recited and actions performed by priests and parishioners when celebrating mass throughout the year. The text of the Roman missal has been revised multiple times since it was first issued in 1570 (Fortescue, 1910).

Following the Second Vatican Council, a new Roman missal was promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1969, with an English translation produced for official use in 1973 by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) – a group of eleven bishop representatives from those regions that use English in the liturgy. However, this translation was produced under the principle of 'dynamic equivalence', meaning that while it used more accessible language and thus was popularly well-received, critics argued that it suffered numerous translation inaccuracies and even verged into banality at times (eg. Elliott, 2006).

In 2001, the Holy See instructed ICEL to produce a missal under the principle of 'formal equivalence' i.e. in which 'the original text, insofar as possible, must be translated in the most exact manner, without omissions or additions in terms of their content, and without paraphrases or glosses' (*Liturgiam Authenticam*, 2001). In 2010 the Holy See approved the new translation ("ICEL Report 2001-2013", 2013). It was gradually introduced in Australia from January 2011, and its implementation was mandatory by 1 November 2011, causing deep divisions in the Australian Catholic Church (Zwartz, 2011a).

²⁷ Missal pew cards were delivered to parishes as a temporary replacement for the old missal while the new book was being produced. These cards were designed to make it easier for parishioners to understand where changes had been made, so that they could more effectively participate in the new mass prayers and responses.

²⁸ For example, under the previous missal, when the priest declared, "The Lord be with you", the congregation would respond with, "And also with you". This latter phrase has been changed under the new missal to read, "And with your spirit". It is argued that this new phrase more accurately represents the

Church was reversing much of the progress that was made under Vatican II. She recalled with fondness the many hopes that the Second Vatican Council prompted for her and her fellow novices:²⁹

Vatican II happened when I'd just went into the convent, really. Lots of hopes came out of that. And that produces my cynicism now... I suppose I was starry-eyed. And yeah, I was only in my twenties too. We were going to save the world! You were only mixing with other nuns. You weren't allowed to mix with other people really. You weren't even allowed to read the papers at one stage! So you weren't allowed to soil your mind at all.

But that was all changed [with Vatican II]. I suppose it's the reversal of things that happened in the recent papacy, you know, that has made a lot of us very cynical about it all. I suppose you start to realise it's all very fallible. They're just human. They're just like politicians. They play these games, all that sort of thing. The church is a very human institution... I think it's the last vestige of the Roman Empire, really, in operation. It hasn't died yet.

Worst of all, Sr Diana is keenly aware that for many people, seeing her as a nun means seeing her as the face of the church:

In a way, people think we *are* the church. We're *colluding* with the church because we're a religious order. So, sometimes they mistake *us* for the church! [Laughs]

Caught between her identity as a nun and her commitment to the principles of Vatican II, I ask Diana to describe 'what type' of Catholic she is. Her reply comes readily, but her voice is weary:

I'm still a Catholic. I'm not so disillusioned that I'm moving on. I would call myself a realistic Catholic [laughs]. Realistic in the sense that I can see the— tensions of the good and the bad. Timothy Radcliffe talks about it, reconciling the terrible things that the church has done in the name of the church. And yet the church has been a force for good. At the moment I sound very negative. But I think I'd like to think it's more realistic.

4.2.2.2 *A questioning grandmother*

Thelma is your quintessential grandmother. Just one smile from her and you feel like you're being wrapped up in a woolly jumper and given a nice hot cup of tea. But underneath the sweetness lies a troublemaker, or at least, that's what she learned as a child growing up in the Catholic Church. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

original Latin texts, providing 'a richer and more nuanced translation of our rich heritage of prayer that is contained in the Roman Missal' ("Parish Resources - FAQs", 2016).

²⁹ A term for a nun in training, prior to professing her monastic vows.

Thelma's childhood was in many ways the model of an ideal Australian Catholic upbringing. Born in 1935, she described herself as being from a long line of Catholics – at least seven or eight generations of her ancestors were loyal members of the Catholic Church. She went to a Catholic school, learned that 'the Protestants' were to be avoided, and attended Mass weekly, as well as all the special feasts and sacramental programs that came up for each child in her large extended family:

We'd support all of those. And if there was a baptism or a reception of communion, then all the family would come for a celebration afterwards. And I've got a gorgeous picture actually of my sister's baptism where there is one great-grandmother, two grandmothers, and I don't know how many aunts and uncles and so forth, and three or four little children in the bottom! It's precious because it was indicative of what it was. And with all of this, of course, every Sunday religiously we either went to my mother or my grandmother's or my great-grandmother's house. We were with family every Sunday.

For Thelma, the Catholic lifestyle represented something akin to a 'total institution'.³⁰ She was surrounded by Catholicism every moment of her day, from school to home to weekend play. And with a father who 'didn't brook questioning' and a mother who would not allow her to play with children who were unknown to the family (and thus unlikely to be Catholic), Thelma clearly recalls the first moment when she realised that she disagreed with her parents:

My first conscious rationalisation that 'that's not true' was when I was five. And I got into big trouble for it. [laughs] Which I knew I would... Anyway I had been at school for over twelve months by this stage. And one of the girls in my class went through a process of inviting each of her friends home after school one afternoon... And she'd invited me several times and mum had always said no. And then she'd got through everybody else and she asked me again, 'would you go? Come and have afternoon tea'. And I asked mum and she said 'no, because I don't know the lady'. And I said, 'you can pick up the phone and talk to her'. [But Mum said], 'no, I'm not doing that with someone I don't know'. Anyway, I thought, 'that's not fair. I've been waiting nearly all year and there's no rhyme or reason why she couldn't know who it was'. Everybody else had gone and I thought, 'that's just not rational'. So I went. Knowing I would get into *big trouble!*...

And I remember it clearly because I'd really thought this through. And when I got there the mother said, 'now, your mother knows where you are doesn't she?'. And I said, 'oh yes', thinking, 'there's a lie as well'. Anyway, I had a lovely time [laughs] and then I [went] home. And of course Mum was beside herself. So I got into big trouble... But I'd already by that stage formulated that I'd get into trouble, but it's worth it. You know, I'd

³⁰ This draws on the notion of total institutions developed by Goffman (1961) and Foucault (1977).

rationalised it and I would accept the consequences of what I'd decided to do. Just as I'd played billycarts and scooters in the street... I had learned that if you did silly things you were hurt very often, but sometimes it was worth it. So that I applied to this situation and thought, 'yes, it was worth it'... Even as a small child I can remember thinking, 'but this is reasonable' or 'that isn't reasonable'... and yeah, that I'll live with the consequences.

At the tender age of five, Thelma had not only learned to balance risk and reward, but had also realised that there were times when those in authority could be wrong. This represented the beginning of a lifetime of critical thinking for Thelma, kept afloat by her irrepressible need to question why things were so. By the age of eleven or twelve, Thelma recalls that her questioning had begun to annoy her family 'intensely'. So when, one day, her father contradicted something she said, she burst out:

'Well, I am entitled to an opinion too you know!' And he said to me, 'yes, you are entitled to an opinion. But we don't have to suffer it. So I'll thank you to keep them to yourself'. Now, that was quite a major thing to me. Because I took great offence at that and because I could go nowhere, I said, 'right. So you don't get my opinions. You don't hear what I think or what I do'. But it left me with nobody to discuss it with... So I bottled things up a lot... Now, why I'm telling you all of this is that my upbringing had a lot of— It didn't come out as real anger, but *diffidence* to my relationship with my parents I suppose. And that was expressed also in religion, because religion was so much a part of it.

Time passed, of course, and Thelma grew into a young woman, albeit one who experienced periods of profound unhappiness. In her twenties, she sought support from the church but found it lacked the answers she needed. She recalls going to a weekend spiritual retreat in the hope that it would help her find clarity, but instead 'it didn't help at all'. She remembers the topic clearly: transubstantiation.³¹

It was meant to be about the Eucharist in general. And I knew about transubstantiation. It had been talked about in school. But, to concentrate just on that and try to argue this philosophical question was impossible. The nonsense! *Nonsense!*... And all I could get was that they're playing with words. It's not making any sense at all. It is asking you to believe that white is black... So I thought, well, that's not much help either. And because I was against what they were saying, I didn't find anybody I could explore it with. Because it was still in this old system of the priests knowing everything... [And the priests] didn't speak to *that*. Why indulge when indulgences don't make sense? [laughs] Oh, tut tut!

³¹ Transubstantiation is the doctrine, taught by the Catholic Church, that the Eucharistic substances of bread and wine are converted into the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ through the sacrament of the Eucharistic sacrifice (Pohle, 1909b; "The sacramental sacrifice", 1993).

But then, in the early 1960s, Thelma met and married her beloved husband. At this point, she followed the 'typical' path for a young Catholic couple of that era, bearing three children in the first four years of their marriage. Struggling to find the cash to renovate their dilapidated home, her husband worked six days a week, leaving Thelma to manage the children and the household on a shoestring budget, before their fourth child arrived in 1972. This left little time or energy spare for thinking about religion and the deeper meanings behind their regular church attendance. So when the changes of the Second Vatican Council started to be felt in her local parish, Thelma hardly noticed:

I was in baby-mode. I was conscious that the priest was standing up and saying, 'well, I don't know why but this is what we've got to do'. Because there was no real endeavour to get the priests to understand what the changes meant or what they were about. And most of them sort of thought, 'why, why?' It worked perfectly well for now, why change it? And the parents of course were, 'well, you know— I suppose. But that's what we've got to do'.

Over the coming months and years, Thelma had a growing sense that the priests 'were really quite at sea as to what was happening' with the changes of Vatican II. But it wasn't until speaking with her sister that she realised how dire the situation was becoming for the next generation of Catholics:

I remember very clearly my sister, who by then was teaching high school religion in Melbourne. She'd been up for Christmas holidays and she said, 'I've got to go back! I feel sick in the stomach because we've been told what we can't say, but nobody has told us what we *can* say. There's no program, there's nothing to tell us. And I've got these sixteen-year-olds turning seventeen, and they are questioning what's happening. And I just don't know!'

Around the same time, Thelma was asked to join other parents in helping to revise the religious program, or catechism, that was being taught at her children's school. Like her sister, she learned that the programs had been found not to comply with current church teachings, and thus were summarily removed from the syllabus, yet nothing had been offered by the church in their place. This was a watershed period for Thelma. Not only did she start to realise, 'Well, hells bells! This is what I'm supposed to be teaching my kids!', she also discovered how little of the new theology she herself understood.

This was a challenge Thelma embraced with energy. Having spent all her life receiving unsatisfactory answers to the probing questions that stormed through her mind, at last

the doctrines of the church were starting to make sense to her. Thelma's appetite for learning was finally unleashed, and she was hungry for more. She started by attending classes with a Marian³² apostolic³³ movement dedicated to spiritual renewal, whose German founder had been 'carpeted' by the church in the 1950s for 'not toeing the line'. Banished to northwest America, he realised (in Thelma's words): 'I'm not allowed to *speak* about it, and I'm not allowed to *preach* about it, but *I can write*. They didn't tell me I couldn't write!' By the 1970s, his writings had spread as far as Australia, and Thelma, along with a small group of other mothers, devoured his work under the guidance of one of the local nuns.

Shortly after the nuns moved on to another city, one of Thelma's friends told her about some lectures she'd been attending at a local Marist centre for adult education. Led by a priest who had just completed his PhD in theology in America, Thelma found at last a home for her spiritual search: 'My friend and I used to say, "that's precisely what we've been trying to express!" But he had *language* that we could use.' At last Thelma could talk about God, theology and the history of the church in a way that made sense to her. Put in the context of myth and narrative, Catholic doctrines that had asked her to 'believe that white is black' could finally be understood:

Because there is no consensus I suppose, really. [Take] the Immaculate Conception.³⁴ I accept that, but I've thought long and hard about it. Because I believe that Immaculate Conception is a myth. It was an understanding to validate her place, Mary's place, in the whole system. Now you know with myth you tell a story that has a message. The facts of the story aren't important, aren't necessarily true, but the message is true. And I see that.

Reflecting on her faith journey thus far, Thelma remains grateful for the upbringing she had in the Catholic Church, recognising that despite its frustrations it gave her a religious basis 'without which I may not have continued'. But she can quite understand why so many of her peers, and even her children, have left the church. She describes the two generations of Catholics born from the 1960s to 1980s as having 'missed out' on their religious development due to the confusion being experienced by priests,

³² A Marian movement centres on the veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ's mother.

³³ A Catholic apostolic movement is one largely comprised of lay people who work alongside priests and nuns to perform the work of 'apostles' of Christ.

³⁴ The Immaculate Conception is the Catholic dogma that states Mary, mother of Jesus, was conceived free from sin, by the grace of God (Holweck, 1910).

teachers and parents who themselves were struggling to understand the changes of Vatican II:

The students at school in those years had teachers who didn't know what to say, and were uncomfortable with their whole religious identity. Not identity so much, as how they were supposed to be practising or expressing it. And that was the first generation. And then some of those students... of course then became teachers further on... And so they were making things up as they went along, as best they understood.

This is why there is such a gap, and a break between pre-Vatican II and post-Vatican II Catholicism. Because there's two generations who haven't got a clue. And it's only now that the kids in school have decent programs and are beginning to understand a bit more. But... people from [their] late thirties to sixty, really, have this just confusion... They've got nothing to build on. And when they see, well, the sexual abuse. They see the likes of Pell³⁵ speaking out from left field about silly things, *silly things!* I can well understand. They say, "Well why? What's the point?" Because they *haven't got a grounding*. And it's not their fault they haven't the grounding. And if you don't know that you haven't got a grounding, it's a bit hard to go and ask for it!

4.2.2.3 *A retired solicitor*

Like Thelma, Edward was born into a 'traditionally committed' Catholic family. His childhood in the 1930s and 1940s consisted of weekly Mass attendance, which then became daily when he began boarding at an elite Catholic college. When I asked him whether going to church was something he enjoyed during these early years, he replied pragmatically: 'It's what you did. You did what you were told. It wasn't a hardship but it's what you did.'

When asked to tell the story of the role that religion played in his life, Edward's reflections soon turned to his career, like most of the men I interviewed. As a solicitor in a large country town, Edward recalled having a reputation as 'a leading Catholic' in the town. After completing his articles³⁶ in Sydney and returning home to join his father's legal practice, Edward quickly began to build 'a persona which was strongly identified with the Catholic parish'. He joined the parish's finance committee and started doing legal work for both the parish and the diocese to which it belonged. Working under the 'imaginative leadership' of a priest with canny business acumen,

³⁵ Cardinal George Pell, then Archbishop of Sydney, Australia (2001-2014).

³⁶ The term 'articles' is used to represent a period of legal traineeship traditionally required before a law graduate can become a practicing solicitor.

the parish soon became ‘the second or third largest employer in the town’, and Edward had ‘a very detailed involvement in the running of the business side of the parish’. This served to further build his profile as a trustworthy solicitor:

I think I had a lot of clients who came to me because I was a Catholic. A lot of them would have come to me because they would have perceived that I was honest. And that was part of my life. The question of whether I was happy or unhappy about some of the attitudes and policies of the church was a question that I was just too busy to ever worry about.

After courting and marrying his wife and beginning their family of five children, they moved to the state’s capital city, buying a large house in the inner suburbs. He soon became a reader and commentator at Mass and built a close friendship with the parish priest, Father P., a man he still describes as ‘great fun... a great guy, and a great friend’. So, when the changes of Vatican II brought a more accessible Mass and ‘a more liberal, conscience-driven approach’ to religious practice, it seemed for Edward that life as a Catholic could hardly have been better.

By the time we spoke in 2011, however, Edward’s religious identity was markedly different. Over the previous fifteen years he had become ‘increasingly disenchanted with the management of the church’:

I would like to see a change in [the church’s] attitude to women and married priests... I think it’s unnatural and wrong not to have married priests... I mean, that’s the thing which is irrational and illogical. If you’re an Anglican clergyman with a wife and six kids and you convert to Catholicism, you can become a priest in the Catholic Church and bring your wife and six children.³⁷ I mean, I think that is just crazy!

I’m not saying we shouldn’t take the Anglicans, I think we *should*. But we shouldn’t have this situation where there’s a difference. But while ever the church is run by these elderly gentlemen, without, one assumes, much experience in family life, the chances of change are slight. And currently I think that it’s ridiculous that we are not allowed to even have a discussion about these questions.

So, when I asked Edward to describe ‘what type’ of Catholic he is, he paused for a moment to reflect:

I would still regard myself as a Catholic, but I don’t now go to Mass with the regularity that I once did... Some people use the expression ‘lapsed

³⁷ Edward is referring to the special pastoral provision made by Pope John Paul II in 1980, which effectively allowed Anglican or Episcopal priests, whether married or not, to be ordained as Catholic priests (*Declaration*, 1981). This change has brought into focus the ‘different cultural environments’ that married clergy experience relative to celibate clergy (“The history of the pastoral provision”, 2014).

Catholic', [but] I'm not even totally lapsed because I will go to the Catholic services sometimes. Sometimes if there is an occasion I will go to Mass with [my wife]. But I won't go as a matter of routine. [I'll go to] christenings, and weddings and funerals... And I'll go to Mass if it's what my wife would regard as a 'special occasion', when I might go out of support for her. [But] there would be some extracurricular activity or motivation which generally would prompt me to go. If [Father P.] were to be returned to the parish I'd probably start going again because I enjoyed him enormously.

He thinks further for a moment and realises the contradiction this poses:

It's interesting, because if you look back on my relationship with the church, which I've not ever really seriously done other than having this discussion with you, it's my relationships with [particular priests] which are the key things that I value in relation to my membership of the church...

It's a contradiction in a way to say that I might return to Mass if [Father P] were there... It's a contradiction if I'm now not going because of my degree of disillusionment with some of the activities of the church. Why would you go back if you happen to have a parish priest who is a friend of yours and whose preaching you enjoy? You're compromising the reasons why you don't go if he's not there... But I might.

In closing, I ask Edward to reflect on how he feels about his identity as a Catholic today, given all the changes in his life:

Oh, well, I feel positive about it. Because it's an identity that I have chosen to adopt by choice. I haven't abandoned the church. I haven't said that I'm no longer a Catholic. But I just choose not to participate to the extent that I once did because of my disillusionment with some of the current policies. I mean, you vote with your feet, a lot of the time.

4.2.2.4 The divorcee

Henrietta is a woman who knows her own mind. She is quick to speak out against injustice, has an incisive wit, and is highly respected in her profession, where she is renowned for the passion with which she seeks to understand what makes Australians 'tick'. And yet, when, in her early thirties and married with a baby, she fell in love with a married man, Henrietta's personal and professional life crumbled.

Born into an Irish-Catholic home in Western Australia in 1952, Henrietta is the only child of a 'very strong Catholic mother' and 'a father who sat at the back of the church, the way all Irish men did'. She has fond memories of her childhood experience of the church, describing it as a 'very vivid and rich part of my upbringing'. She attended a

Sisters of Mercy school for most of her schooling years, and continued being a 'very regular Mass goer' during her time at university, maintaining what she described as a 'very vivid' prayer life. Yet she was careful to avoid the term 'devout' when describing herself during these years. She shunned the piousness that is associated with the term 'devout', and preferred to describe herself as 'a strong Catholic'. When I asked her to describe what a 'strong Catholic' might look like, she explained:

Strong is like a robustness. A sort of lovely, broad, middle stream Catholic, Australian Catholic, which I still think are the heart and soul of the country. I think there's a lovely humour, a slight irreverence, get up, roll up your sleeves, non-judgemental— but a strong sense of culture and purpose that I think is very attractive.

Despite describing herself as a 'pretty good Catholic girl', Henrietta was quick to point out that she still thought for herself as a young woman in the 1970s:

I didn't believe that you had to remain a virgin until marriage, you know. I was affected by feminism, so I thought for myself around a whole lot of issues. Around abortion, contraception— But I think I was one who tried to imagine the dilemmas of the leaders of the church, as opposed to just deciding they were all knuckleheads.

My mother was always one to say, 'Well, if you don't like Father then go to another parish, but don't leave the church'. You know, there were always those people who would say 'I can't stand Father L, so I'm never darkening the door of a church again'... How idiotic is that? Because in those years, there... was another one around the corner! [laughs]... Some of the priests were appalling, but you just had to sort of say, 'Oh well, you're a twit, but I'll find somebody who is a bit more temperamentally suited to me'. And they usually existed.

Henrietta's sense of self-sufficiency was an invaluable resource in the cut-throat industry she chose to enter as a young woman. Within a few years she was known as one of the sharpest minds in her profession, winning accolades for her fierce intelligence and insight. But then, she met John. Both she and John were married to other people when they began working together on a new project. Toiling long hours side-by-side, a romance blossomed, and both felt they had found their soul mate in the other. But what does a respectable Catholic mother do in such a situation?

I suppose [it was] a huge crisis for me... To be perfectly honest— I had a child of one, I'd left my marriage. You know, it was both an extraordinary and a terrible time. And I felt that it was an incredible rite of passage... I had to think through how I was going to— make peace with my church, and my tradition, and my new life. And with the help of some very good priests I did just that...

And that's when I felt that the God to whom I spoke all the time, almost [in] a little girl way, didn't seem to be there. But strangely enough— as one priest said to me, 'This is a death and resurrection scenario, Henrietta— I actually developed a much greater sense of belonging in the wider church. [It's] really hard to explain. Like, it just belied all my thoughts. And something involved in that was very, very deep indeed. It was like a real yielding of self. And I had some extremely good care from some priests whom I thought the world of.

Three decades after this major life crisis, I asked Henrietta whether she still sees herself as a 'strong' Catholic:

Yeah, I do. Even though I'm a very critical Catholic now... I'm truly, *deeply* affected by the way in which the various hierarchies have dealt so incredibly poorly with the sexual abuse stuff. I can't believe their lack of humility. It's truly staggering that they haven't worked out that, actually, the secular world has often got far better values than they've got! And the fact that they're not even showing any interest in it staggers me. I'm just *stunned!* [laughs]

Like, you know, one of the key things that I thought should have happened after this latest burst [of allegations] started to appear... I thought that the Pope should have done something like declare, almost like a time— a two-year period in which the church wore sackcloth and ashes— the hierarchy— and said, 'We are going to spend two years in repentance, and we're going to humble ourselves and we're going to listen, and we're going to visibly *go through something*. That would have had great resonance with the... people. Instead, they— *they're dictating!* I just— I think they must think we're all mad!

Henrietta delivered these words not simply with passion, but with a strange amalgam of astonishment mixed with horror. It seemed almost incomprehensible that the same church that filled Henrietta with such vivid memories of hope and love could also rouse her to such dismay. Seeing this precarious balancing act playing out in front of me, I could not help but ask whether she could imagine living life without being Catholic. The answer was swift and simple: 'No'. But, in her usual erudite fashion, she went on to explain:

Look, oddly enough the only other thing I could imagine myself being is— except they'd never have me— is of Judaism, which I'm very, very interested in because it's the father faith, or the grandfather. So I suppose it's just— in a way, it's the core. It coheres— the culture and the search.

You know, I'm not interested in exploring some sort of eastern way of thinking about the sublime or the numinous... I'm quite an orthodox person... bordering on the conservative. You know, I'm a Westerner. Christianity is my outlet. And, yes, I could go to High Anglican. To some extent, I do— I read Rowan Williams quite a lot. I happily, in ways my

parents would have found quite difficult, go along and worship— or sort of be there when there is worship— at a High Anglican [church]. So, I'm not—

But it's just, I'm just *fundamentally Catholic!* And I suppose part of it is that when you do go to other forms of Christianity you just think, 'This is just not me. It's just *not me!*' The atmospherics, the identity is different.

Now, I should do better for you and be able to really sketch it. It's one of those classic things, you know, when something is so central to self you haven't even bothered to put words to it necessarily, because it's so imbued.

4.2.3 Case study implications

These case studies offer us intimate portraits of the joys and challenges of navigating a Catholic identity through the 1950s and 1960s and into the post-Vatican II Australian Catholic community. While each of my participants' stories has been unique, collectively they offer a fascinating insight into how an individual's Catholicity can persist, indeed even flourish, despite the person seeing many flaws in the Catholic system. The astonishing ability of Henrietta to persevere in her Catholic faith despite the repugnance which she feels towards some church practices suggests that there is much more to Catholic identity than simple 'blind faith'. Perhaps part of this tenacity might be explained by Thelma's ceaseless drive to interrogate the boundaries and foundations of her faith, forever questioning 'why?' rather than meekly accepting the edicts of those in authority. Perhaps a clue may be gained from Sr Diana's willingness to launch a 'one-woman protest' despite recognising that she is often viewed as the face of the church. Or perhaps the key to the mystery lies in Edward's simple answer: 'It's what you did'.

It is worth pausing to reflect on what can be learned from these case studies to shed further light on the religious identity construct reviewed at the outset of this chapter. In particular, what do these cases tell us about the role of habitus, difference and social recognition in the formation and maintenance of religious identity? And what can we learn about the ways in which believers carefully manage multiple, sometimes conflicting identities, so as to maintain a coherent self-narrative?

The importance of childhood experience in constructing the Catholic self is evident in all four case studies. Henrietta described her church involvement as a 'very vivid and

rich part of my upbringing', fondly recalling stories of the priest who regularly came to visit their family home and taught her to play table tennis. Similarly, the early lives of Thelma and Edward were thoroughly absorbed in the Catholic habitus. Both described their childhood life as 'highly regimented' and 'very restricted', but agreed that for the most part 'we just sort of accepted it as that was the way it was' (Thelma). They were keen to point out that 'it wasn't a hardship' (Edward), but nor was it an active choice. Rather, the doxic acceptance of the imposition of arbitrary rules – such as who you could play with and who was off limits, or how many times a week you attended Mass – was simply 'what you did' (Edward). Over the years, this led to a practical, embodied sense that alternate faiths, while perhaps equally valid, were 'just not me... I respected them and everything, but it wasn't really me' (Henrietta).

Essential to this assessment of what was and was not 'me' is the notion of difference. Thelma and Diana both recounted the experience of realising they were different from others because of their religion. They came to understand that certain practices were inappropriate for 'people like us' (Bourdieu, 1984), and that they ought to keep their distance from those that were different to them, ie. Protestants.

Thelma's early childhood experience of breaking the rules in order to visit a non-Catholic friend's home reinforced to her that while boundaries could be broken, there was a price to pay, and such decisions had to be carefully calculated. Sr Diana found this demarcation of boundaries further reinforced when she joined the nunnery: 'You weren't allowed to mix with other people really. You weren't even allowed to read the papers at one stage! So you weren't allowed to soil your mind at all'. Set apart as the 'one true church', the total institution of pre-Vatican II Catholicism enabled a clear demarcation of where one belonged – surrounded by other people who recognised you as authentically Catholic, and protected from the 'soiling' of Protestantism.

The individual's dependence on the recognition of others for their social identity is however a double-edged sword, as Sr Diana has experienced in recent years. While she may have seen herself as a 'realistic Catholic' carrying much disillusionment about the Church, she came to realise that those around her often saw her as the face of the Church – and thus complicit in the failings of the institution and hostile to the interests of the laity. Here we see Derrida's argument that 'no identity is ever complete or pure' come to fruition (Newman, 2007, p. 85). While Sr Diana may have sought to separate

herself from the implications of institutional complicity, she still wore the markers of being a nun and thus was contaminated by the very identity she sought to distance herself from. In this way, the sense of 'sameness' or natural 'fit' which the Catholic Church tried to inculcate into the lives of Sippers was not the result of an inevitable reality or natural difference, but rather represents practices of exclusion and power games. These themes will be further explored in the next chapters.

Finally, these case studies also illustrate the complexities of navigating a Catholic identity alongside the multiple other identities each individual carries. Henrietta realised as a young woman that she would have to carefully balance her identity as a 'strong Catholic' against her equally meaningful identity as an intelligent critical thinker. Later, she struggled over how to reconcile her identity as a Catholic wife and mother with that of the woman she was becoming as the 'soulmate' of another man. She recalls this period as a process of 'death and resurrection', which required 'a real yielding of self':

You know, I broke the rules. I was— I couldn't possibly begin to tell you how wretched that time was, or what a sense of accepting my fate [there was]... [But I] had to think through how I was going to— make peace with my church, and my tradition, and my new life.

But [there was] just a feeling that I was both caught up in something and running something, in this paradoxical way. And I just went with it! And found some form, in a way I can't explain it, [of] deeper relationship with God. But I do think it was a much more mature faith, even though I find it hard to put words to it.

By mourning the loss of her former identities as a 'pretty good Catholic girl' and a loyal wife – and embracing the symbolic deaths these losses represented – Henrietta found not only a deeper and more mature relationship with God, but also a 'much greater sense of belonging in the wider church'. In a phoenix-like transformation, a new, more robust religious identity was born from the ashes of her previous familial and religious identities.

Similarly, Thelma offers us insight into the creative self-work required to maintain a coherent self-narrative. Thelma discovered at an early age that there would be times when her identity as a dutiful Catholic daughter would conflict with her other identity goals, such as that of friend and playmate. But in recounting the story of her life to me, Thelma exercised several ingenious techniques of identity management and self-

representation to leverage the opacity between these competing identities and ensure she maintained a sense of coherence. First, she employed logic to argue that her mother's decision to refuse a play-date was 'just not rational'. Second, she recalls calculating the cost of her disobedience to determine that getting into 'big trouble' would be 'worth it' on this occasion. And later, when recounting another story of disobedience, she reallocated blame, arguing that 'it's mum and dad that have pushed me into this. It's their fault. Not mine'.

Yet she also recalled that this pattern of disobedience and dishonesty caused her to feel 'discomfort... with myself'. The sense of not living up to her assigned identity as obedient Catholic daughter sparked a psychological 'discomfort' that caused profound unhappiness in her twenties, to the point where she found herself thinking, 'it wouldn't matter if I jump off the cliff'. Happily, she made it through this period to find a new identity as a wife and mother, and in due course, as a student of Vatican II theology. Herein she finally found 'the language' she had been looking for to make sense of the contradictions she had identified in her childhood faith. Importantly, this period also brought confirmation of her identity as a critical thinker. Discovering this self-truth helped her understand her childhood drive to be 'entitled to an opinion', and helped explain the chafing she felt under a religious climate where 'we were taught not to think, not to question'. In this light, she was able to look back on her religious upbringing with gratitude:

I suppose my faith has developed to an infinitely greater depth than it started. But I still appreciate the fact that I had the upbringing that I had, without which I may not have continued.

In this way, the Catholic disposition doxically embedded in Thelma's earliest years has enabled her to continue in her faith journey, despite her storms of unhappiness and discontent.

4.3 'Catholics don't leave': The durability of Catholic identity

In this final section of the chapter, I will explore three themes that may help us understand how frustration and dissent can coexist with devotion and loyalty for so many Sippers, including Thelma. First, I argue that Sippers demonstrate a Catholic identity that is both tenacious and flexible, in part informed by historical necessity but also enabled by the very nature of the Catholic Church itself. Second, I argue that this

identity is doxically encoded through a process of both social embedment and physical embodiment. Finally, I suggest that Sippers have come to understand that paradox lies at the heart of their faith, and that this belief enables them to ‘take the good with the bad’ in their faith journey.

4.3.1 A tenacious and flexible Catholicism

Tracey, a Catholic schoolteacher and irregular churchgoer, offered a telling insight into the tenacity of the Catholic faith when she explained to me in detail why ‘Catholics... don’t leave’. We had been talking about the growing sense of disenfranchisement she was seeing amongst Catholic Church members when I said I was surprised such people ‘don’t just pack their bags’:

T: You wouldn’t do that as Catholics. We don’t leave.

H: Really?! So the Pope’s not listening to you, everybody is up in arms. They’re all really upset because this is not a Latin church; this is supposed to be our church—

T: We’re not going to give in. We’re not going to let them win.

H: Okay— It’s mine, not yours?

T: Umm— I think we’ve got the tenacity to hang in there. I think maybe because of a lot of the history of Catholicism. I mean, it’s always been political and corrupt and problematic. And I think you kind of know that as a Catholic. So nothing much has changed. So, the church is still doing what they’ve been doing for a thousand years. [laughs] So it’s nothing new! We’re not like, ‘Oh my God, the Pope’s being a bastard’, not that we’re—

H: But they seem to be saying that?

T: But that’s nothing different, you know what I mean? People have been saying that for centuries. So it’s not— Although it’s shocking, it’s not shocking that it’s shocking.

H: [pause] And so—

T: Oh, I would never dream of—

H: Of not being Catholic?

T: Of not being Catholic... I would never really contemplate ever— Well what would I then— I mean, I don’t consider myself a Buddhist, or a— I

mean, there's so many labels. It's all labels, isn't it? I'm happy to stay Catholic, and then within that... Shift.

Perhaps part of the mysterious tenacity of Catholic identity may be explained by Tracey's final emphasis: the ability to shift. As Chapter One demonstrated, flexibility – or the ability to shift between various spiritual foci – is seen as being key to the 'spiritual revolution' occurring in the pluralistic environment of the post-secular church. However, we would be wrong to assume that such flexibility is a recent invention of the 'spiritual age'.

When Jewish historian Abraham Duker explored the American Jewish community in the 1940s, he noted the existence of what he termed 'folk creativity' – a process by which American Jews were attempting to integrate Jewish customs into their modern-day life (in Zenner, 1988, p. 25). Like Judaism, Catholicism allows a vast potential for the 'folk creativity' that enables believers to adapt their religious beliefs to suit changing times and contexts. Half a century later, Nancy Ammerman also noted the need to look at everyday practice when trying to define religion, arguing that religion cannot be conceived as 'always (or ever) one thing' (Ammerman, 2007, p. 6).

Just a brief review of Catholic history, such as the Australian snapshot provided in this chapter, quickly shows how the inventiveness and fortitude of a few creative believers has enabled Catholicism to endure, often despite substantial opposition. By forming a sodality to guard over the sacramental remnants left by a forgetful priest, early Australian Catholics demonstrated the ingenuity and resourcefulness required to enable Catholicism to survive, even thrive, despite being separated from the sacerdotal ministry upon which the efficacy of the Sacrament depends. In the years following, inventiveness, adaptation and a willingness to seize opportunity gave Australian Catholicism a character of its own. As Cardinal Moran experienced on his arrival, while Australian Catholics 'welcomed the clergy when they encountered them,... when Catholic ministry was not available, they were little perturbed' (O'Farrell, 1992, p. 197). Moran most likely saw this indifference as a sign of weakness, but perhaps the ability to keep the faith despite the absence of priests bred an Australian Catholicism that was independent and self-sustaining.

However, the adaptive potential of Catholicism does not rest solely with a few creative believers. Such a perspective ignores the wealth of flexibility inherent in the Catholic tradition itself. Since the earliest days of Catholic evangelisation, the Catholic Church has demonstrated a remarkable ability to adapt to a diverse range of cultural environments. When Catholic Spain and Portugal encountered America, Asia and Africa, Roman Catholicism reached out to these new territories with the beginnings of a flexible cross-cultural tradition that would be formally enunciated at the Second Vatican Council.

Initially, the Catholic Church adopted a strategy of imposition in its missionary efforts – some may even say, conquest – seeking to enforce the use of unmodified Roman forms in foreign lands (Angrosino, 1994; Shorter, 2006). Soon however the Church learned that translation and adaptation was required to effectively evangelise the Catholic faith. One of the finest early examples of this trend is Matteo Ricci, a sixteenth century Jesuit missionary who sought to make the message of Catholicism understandable within Chinese culture. Ricci studied Chinese customs and traditions intently, wearing Chinese clothes and becoming one of the first Westerners to learn to speak, read and write Mandarin, enabling him to translate and publish the Church's first Mandarin catechism (Fontana, 2011). Recognising the centrality of Confucianism to Chinese culture, he drafted a book entitled *The True Idea of God*,³⁸ in which he drew on original Confucian texts to argue that the 'true' (ie. Catholic) God was already known to the ancient Chinese – known as the 'Emperor on High' (Hsia, 2016). Having examined the Chinese practice of ancestor worship, he allowed his followers to continue the practice, seeing it not as superstition or idolatry but rather an expression of respect, gratitude and filial devotion (Brucker, 1912; Fontana, 2011).³⁹

While Ricci may have been unusual for his time, he represents the beginnings of a dynamic of 'inculturation'⁴⁰ that would become central to the Catholic Church's

³⁸ Also known as *True meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, or *Tianzhu shiyi*.

³⁹ It should be noted that the Jesuit Ricci was not supported in his approach by his Dominican and Franciscan peers, who reported the issue to Rome. In 1645 the 'Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith', who oversaw the mission work of the Church, condemned the rites, sparking a controversy that spanned almost three centuries and eight popes. It was not until 1939 that a papal decree by Pius XII affirmed the right of Chinese Catholics to take part in Confucian ceremonies and ancestral rites (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d.).

⁴⁰ 'Inculturation' is the term that the Catholic Church uses to describe its efforts to create a dialogue with other cultures by respecting the variety inherent in Christian traditions and the integrity of other religious

cross-cultural outreach. In 1951, Pope Pius XII proclaimed *Evangelii Praeconas* to celebrate the achievements of the Church's missionary program, and stressed that missionaries should respect and appreciate the culture and customs of the people to whom they are preaching.⁴¹ In 1965, *Gaudium et spes* enunciated the views of the Second Vatican Council when it argued that each nation should have 'the ability to express Christ's message in its own way', and that the Church itself is enriched by the unique wisdom carried by other cultures (Second Vatican Council, 1965c, para. 44).

Carrying on the spirit of Vatican II, in 1975 Pope Paul VI stated that:

[T]he kingdom which the Gospel proclaims is lived by men who are profoundly linked to a culture, and the building up of the Kingdom cannot avoid borrowing the elements of human culture or cultures... Evangelization loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into consideration the actual people to whom it is addressed, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not answer the questions they ask, and if it does not have an impact on their concrete life (Paul VI, 1975, para. 20).

Similarly, in 1982 Pope John Paul II emphasised in his speech to the Bishops of Nigeria that 'the Church comes to bring Christ; she does not come to bring the culture of another race' (John Paul II, 1982).

What these efforts show, however, is not simply a drive for effective cross-cultural communication and missionisation. Rather, they are evidence of the flexibility and adaptability that lies at the very heart of Catholic identity. Seeking to be a 'universal church',⁴² or a church for all people and times, Catholicism has learned to adapt to a

traditions (Muonwe, 2014, p. 92). Precursors to the term included 'indigenisation' and 'contextualisation'; however, these terms were dropped over time (Angrosino, 1994). Inculturation is thought to represent a stage of cross-cultural communion that is more advanced than the pre-Vatican II concepts of adaptation and accommodation. It has been defined as 'the creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and a culture or cultures' (Shorter, 2006, p. 11), or a theological process that 'not only allows for pluralism but actually encourages it' (Fabella, 2003, p. 105). Inculturation can be considered a form of 'acculturation'; however, the two should not be confused. Acculturation refers to the cultural changes generated when two or more cultures meet; however, it is typically a process in which a dominant culture seeks to assimilate a non-dominant culture. Inculturation, on the other hand, is intended to produce a 'dual movement' of change whereby cross-fertilisation occurs but neither parties lose their autonomous identity (Angrosino, 1994; Follo, 2010).

Some may argue that inculturation may also be considered a synonym for syncretism, and as such is not peculiar to Catholicism (eg. Geertz, [1960] 1976). However, the Catholic Church would dispute any such suggestion, arguing that inculturation 'does not signify syncretism or a simple adaptation of the announcement of the Gospel, but rather the fact the Gospel penetrates the very life of cultures, [becoming] incarnate in them' (*Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, 1999, n. 5).

⁴¹ It must be noted, however, that Pope Pius XII still saw the purpose of missionary activities as being to elevate people to 'a higher culture', ie. Christendom (Muonwe, 2014).

⁴² In Catholicism, the word 'catholic' is thought to mean 'universal', or all-encompassing. The etymological roots of the term come from the Greek word *katholikos*, from *katholou*, meaning 'throughout the whole' or 'entirely'. The word *katholikos* appeared in the Greek classics well before the beginnings of the Catholic

wide variety of contexts, allowing multiple methods for expressing the Catholic faith. In the process, the 'universal Church' has come to develop a catholicity that may be equally represented by parishioners who celebrate Mass while seated barefoot on the floor in India, speak in tongues in Brazil, offer a dancing prayer for fertility in the Philippines, fast twice a week in Ethiopia, or pay their respects at roadside shrines in Chile ("Catholics & Cultures", n.d.).

Part of this flexibility lies in the Church's astute use of religious orders. In fact, one might argue that nuns, monks and brothers lie at the heart of understanding the ongoing global vitality of the Catholic Church – not simply because of their piety, but because of the institutional elasticity they represent. While Protestant movements have been splintered by sects wishing to recapture lost traditions or start new ones afresh, the Catholic Church has shown a remarkable ability to 'retain sect-like movements within its boundaries' through the judicious formation of religious orders (Finke and Wittberg, 2000, p. 154):

From the earliest days of the Catholic Church, religious orders have provided the principal voice for the most radical movements within the church. Forming in response to perceived problems within the church or culture, religious orders... served as sanctioned social movements within the larger church structure, and as relatively safe channels for ideological experimentation and adaptation... Retaining this form of sectarian expression within the larger structure allows the Catholic Church to selectively incorporate some changes, deny others, and still provide an outlet for religious movements that might otherwise threaten to leave the church (Finke and Wittberg, 2000, pp. 156, 166).

Church. It was used for the first time in relation to the Church (*katholike ekklesia*) in about the year 110, when St Ignatius exhorted Christians in Smyrna to remember that the bishop represented Jesus and as such, 'wheresoever... Jesus may be... there is the universal [katholike] Church' (Thurston, 1908). The adjective 'catholic' was included as one of the 'four marks of the Church' in the Nicene creed, with the statement 'We believe in... one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church' (Berardino, 2010).

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Church is Catholic for two reasons: First, because 'Christ is present in her' and thus 'she receives from him "the fullness of the means of salvation"'; Second, because 'she has been sent out by Christ on a mission to the whole of the human race'. This universality lies at the heart of the Catholic Church's inculturation efforts, with the Church seeing itself as 'unified in a common effort' – an 'undivided Church' which is made richer by the diversity of its various heritages (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1993, nn. 830-835). As such, the Catholic concept of a 'universal church' should not be considered synonymous with the globalised mission focus of the Protestant churches. While both may seek to spread the word of the Gospel to all corners of the earth, Protestant churches do not share the same focus on global unification that lies at the heart of Catholic Church doctrine.

Part of the appeal of religious orders lies in the fact that they exist outside the formal ecclesial⁴³ structure of the Catholic Church. While regular priests⁴⁴ belong to a specific diocese and report to their local bishop, the governance structures of religious orders enable them to stay focussed on their particular mission, or ‘charism’, whether this be education, spiritual formation, hospitality, prayer, chaplaincy, contemplative life, environmental work, social justice, aged care and healthcare, or service to the poor and vulnerable. In Australia alone, there are one hundred and eighty religious orders, or ‘congregations’, listed as members of the peak body for religious orders in Australia, ‘Catholic Religious Australia’ (“Member Congregations”, n.d.).

While the history of religious orders has not been free from attempts at interference by Church hierarchy, orders have generally been able to defend themselves by claiming their practices are not revolutionary but in fact represent a return to the spirit of the early Christian church (Finke and Wittberg, 2000).⁴⁵ In turn, religious orders offer distinctive subcultures to the believer in search of a spiritual home. ‘[W]ith each order appealing to the specific need of one segment of the market, the diversity of orders – supporting a variety of religious expression and institutional reforms – appeals to a broad spectrum of the total religious market’ (Finke and Wittberg, 2000, pp. 166–7).

It is perhaps this sense of ‘flexible Catholicism’ (Garelli, 2013) that Naomi drew on when she discussed with me her options should she find she had to leave the Church. As a lay woman who has been a Pastoral Associate for over three decades, Naomi sees herself as a committed Catholic who is loyal to the earliest traditions of the Church. But when we discussed the question of whether her involvement in SIP might ever cause her to lose her job, she admitted that the prospect made her feel ‘sort of happy’ as it would allow her to ‘just go off and do my own thing’. I asked her what doing her ‘own thing’ might look like:

N: Well, I would still belong to some community somewhere. But it would have to be the community that I'd feel at home with. And whether that is still part of an institutional, like parish [context]— and there is still, thank God, plenty of priests who live this sort of Vatican II vision, thank

⁴³ The term ‘ecclesial’ typically refers to that which relates to or constitutes a Church or denomination. It can also be used to reference the Church as a community of believers.

⁴⁴ The priests I describe as ‘regular’ are in fact known as ‘secular’ priests within the Catholic Church, however for the sake of clarity for non-Catholic readers, I have adopted the term ‘regular’ above.

⁴⁵ We see this same discourse appearing in SIP, as we saw in Chapter Three.

God. [But] if I ran out of them, and if there weren't any of those left, I'd belong to a small Christian community somewhere.

H: Not necessarily a Catholic community?

N: Well, preferably a Catholic community. But then I'd be very happy just to be a Catholic community that lived the way *we* want to be a Catholic community... If all the good priests I knew decided all to leave the church [laughs], well, you know, I wouldn't stay around just because there is some other priest and he's a bastard and he's on his high horse about this and that...

And I think there's enough people out there that would do that sort of thing too. I think I'd find them and they'd find me. And we would be Catholic and we would want to stick to our Catholic traditions. Maybe not all the Catholic traditions, because at the moment, and for the last thousand years, there have been male celebrant priests.

But I think I am much more, yes, a choose-your-own-adventurer. Coming to that sense of, you know, some of the stuff that we've been fed for a long time... I don't buy it any more... There are things that I think I really believe in strongly, and would hold onto. I think— I believe in the Mass. And I believe in Scripture. And I believe in the power of community and I believe in God and Jesus. But I don't think that all of that has to be channelled through the narrow funnel that we call ordained priesthood.

So, I'm happy to go exploring...

4.3.2 Catholicity as embedded and embodied

I think it would be easier to change the color of my eyes or to get a new genetic code than it would be to stop being a Roman Catholic.

(McGuire, 2008, p. 187)

A second explanation for the durability of Catholic identity can be found in the way in which Catholicity is learned, both socially and physically. As our case studies showed, the Catholic habitus offers a script for both acquiring and understanding Catholicity that is inculcated from the earliest days of a child's life. From baptism as a baby to confirmation in the Catholic Church and the taking of one's first communion,⁴⁶ a child is

⁴⁶ These are the first three sacraments of a Catholic life. With baptism, water is sprinkled or poured on the head of the person (typically an infant), representing the cleansing of sin and rebirth into a new spiritual life in the Church. During confirmation, the baptised person confirms their commitment to Christ and is

given a practical indoctrination into the manner and ways of being Catholic. Whether the church member is born into the church or chooses to join it as an adult,⁴⁷ the Church's comprehensive programs of social and physical instruction fundamentally shape the way Catholic individuals view themselves, as both people and church members, causing Catholicity to become both socially embedded and physically embodied.

Some Sippers find the analogy of a family offers a useful lens for reflecting on the nature of their loyalty to the church. As Lil said to me: 'It's a little bit like a dysfunctional family. You don't abandon the family... Even if you've got a murderer within your— You kind of don't then abandon it'. And as Levi added: while 'I have some fights at the present time with some of the church... I have some fights with some of my family from time to time too'. Despite the tussles and tensions of living as a community, for Sippers the baptismal bond ties them to the Church in a connection that runs even deeper than the bond of familial blood.

Teresa Pirola is a SIP supporter who once described herself as agnostic. In 2003 she contributed an essay to a small book compiled by Kate Engelbrecht, one of the editors of *The Mix*, the journal of Catalyst for Renewal. Pirola answered the question of 'Why I am Still a Catholic' in this way:

It's like asking why I am 'still' a member of my family. Can one resign from being a family member? I could move to the farthest part of the earth, I could disown my family and declare my absolute autonomy; but that would not change the fact that I am a daughter, a sister, an aunt, a cousin, and so on... In a sense this is how I see membership of my faith family, only the baptismal bond involves a mystery even deeper than blood (Pirola, 2003, p. 77).

For other Sippers, their bond to the church is much more embodied in nature, some might say even visceral. Several Sippers described themselves as 'cradle Catholics', implying they were born into a sense of Catholicity that was as natural to them as their own bodies. Sr Diana told me 'it's in my being. It's who I am', while Levi said 'it's kind of built in – sewn into the system'. One of SIP's leading ladies, Marea Donovan, wrote in

anointed with oil, and with the first taking of communion the believer is fully initiated into the Catholic community (Fanning, 1907; Gallagher and Henesy, 1986; Marienberg, 2014; Scannell, 1908).

⁴⁷ Adults who seek to join the church must complete a 'Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults' (RCIA) – a period of about one year in which candidates are expected to attend weekly Mass, participate in weekly RCIA educational sessions, and become increasingly involved in parish activities, all the while reading about the doctrines and traditions of the Catholic Church (eg. McCoy-Thompson, 2016).

Engelbrecht's volume that 'I feel that I am Catholic in my bones' (Donovan, 2003b, p. 114).

Most revealing, however, was my conversation with Charles, a then sixty-year old who was born Catholic but only returned to the faith in his thirties. He described himself as a 'welded on Catholic', a metaphor that I couldn't pass up without seeking further explanation. He went on to explain:

The imagery of welded on is that you're stuck to it and you can't— You can't be separated, I suppose. To the point where, you know, I can't really understand myself now, separate to my Catholic identity... I really feel discombobulated when I miss the Mass... My Christianity is just such a part of who I am, really. Take it away, and what's left of me?

This striking imagery of having one's identity 'welded on' to one's body offers multiple levels of analysis, the full scope of which would be beyond this thesis. At a basic level, one could reflect on the symbolic implications of the practice of welding, in which metals become reconfigured, refined and joined in a new creation – one that is made stronger as a result of the fiery process it has endured.

At another level, we might reflect on Celia Lury's (2013) exploration of the 'prosthetic culture' of modern identity management. Lury paints a portrait of empowered consumers flexibly selecting from a variety of stylistic resources, browsing until they find a prosthetic biography that suits their identity goals. However, Lury's emphasis on the experimental and even playful nature of identity work, not to mention her fleeting acknowledgement of the question of structure versus agency, suggests it cannot fully explain Charles' 'welded on' Catholicism.

Rather, I believe the most fruitful lens for understanding Charles' Catholicism lies in understanding the embodied nature of Catholic ritual itself, and the implications this offers for the Catholic believer's sense of physical self. Morrill et al (2006) argue that Catholicism is 'fundamentally a faith of ritual practice':

...that is to say, a religion whose core theology, individual believer's inner spiritual experiences, and a great variety of parochial and other social entities such as social, communal identities come alive pre-eminently through participation in and a sense of ownership of rite (p. 3).

At the centre of this ritual universe lies the physical body. Starting with the first Holy Communion, a child is taught specific physical techniques carefully designed to ensure that she or he develops not only a familiarity with the procedures of the ritual, but also the correct attitude required to ensure the efficacy of the ritual. As Mitchell and Mitchell (2008) note:

Children of eight and nine years old are brought together to learn these techniques in advance of their First Communion... There is an emphasis on collectively choreographed group activity as the children approach the altar... They are taught to approach the priest with eyes lowered in humility and to bow at the knees after the host has been ingested, avoiding eye or other contact with their fellow communicants until they have finished a prayer of thanks and returned to their seats in the congregation. We argue that the reverence with which these Catholic communicants act does not demonstrate an inner orientation to the host in Communion – a ‘belief in’ its capacity for salvation – but actively constitutes it... They are not ‘acting out’ belief, but performing it (p. 86).

In this way, Catholicism is a ‘practiced, performative faith’ (Morrill et al., 2006, p. 3) – one in which the mimetic body enables the believer to develop what Bourdieu (1990a, p. 68) would call a ‘practical faith’ or unquestioned orientation to the world which enables the believer to recognise and participate in the Catholic field. Although the Mass and the sharing of the Eucharist offer the most visible signs of communal ritual practice, Catholicism’s ritual heart can also be seen in the countless everyday moments through which a believer physically signals their Catholicity: by making the sign of the cross, whispering a prayer of ‘Hail Mary’, lighting a candle, or carrying a rosary, amongst countless other everyday practices (Marienberg, 2014). Each of these daily moments offers what Connerton (1989) would call an ‘incorporating practice’ – a habitual action through which knowledge and memories come to be embedded in a person’s bodily experience. Indeed, cognitive psychologists have argued that the physical action of performing certain rituals helps entrench religious ideas and emotions into the believer’s cognitive system, particularly through simple, repetitive actions (Barsalou et al., 2005).

However, as Bourdieu notes, this ‘dialectic of incorporation’, involving both the acquisition and reproduction of the schemas of the habitus tends to take place at a pre-conscious level:

The body believes in what it plays at: it weeps if it mimes grief. It does not represent what it performs, it does not memorize the past, it *enacts* the past, bringing it back to life. What is ‘learned by body’ is not something that

one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 73, original emphasis).

In this way, we can see that religious experience, like all other socially determined experiences, is 'a function of teachable bodies' (Asad, 2000, p. 50). Although Charles was only three years old when his father came home and declared the family was now Protestant, it seems that something foundational was established in those early years, calling Charles back to his Catholic habitus three decades later. The late Andrew Greeley, a former Catholic priest and one of American sociology's most outspoken commentators on Catholicism, joins with Mary Durkin in confirming that Charles' experience is not unusual:

The resilience of the Catholic sensibility is enormous. It is absorbed by Catholics in great part in the early years of their lives and in the environment of family and neighbourhood. It is transmitted unself-consciously and without the need of deliberate intent. If we have you for the first six years of your life, then the odds are overwhelming that your religious sensibility will be Catholic no matter what else happens. You may be a lapsed Catholic, but you will never be, no matter how hard you try, an ex-Catholic (Greeley and Durkin, 1984, p. 256)

4.3.3 Pragmatic acceptance of paradox

<p>I have seen the worst of the Catholic Church, but the best is awesome.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Pirola, 2003, p. 82)</p>

But while embedment and embodiment might explain the ongoing necessity of Catholicity to Sipper's identity, it fails to explain the passion with which people such as Henrietta continue to maintain their faith despite their awareness of the failings of the Catholic Church. Perhaps part of this mystery lies in their ability to embrace paradox. In 1999, Dr Michael Costigan, a leading Catholic academic and now Adjunct Professor at the Australian Catholic University, described it this way when addressing a SIP meeting:

Ours is... a paradoxical Church: both richly diverse and at times excessively uniform or monolithic; monocultural and multicultural; in some ways ecumenically inclined and in others seemingly insensitive to other Christians; encouraging external dialogue while not always tolerating internal dissent (Costigan, 1999, p. 5).

Such a perspective is not unique to SIP. In *Vibrant Paradoxes*, best-selling author and Catholic media personality Bishop Robert Barron suggests that the apparent contradictions noted above are not simply a result of the Church's size or scale. Rather, he argues that they reflect the creative dialectic tensions that lay at the heart of the Catholic faith itself:

Catholicism consistently celebrates the coming together of contraries, not in the manner of bland compromise, but rather in such a way that the full energy of the opposing elements remains in place... Once you grasp this principle, you begin to see it everywhere in the great Catholic tradition (Barron, 2016).

Rather than accepting the 'either/or' logic of modernity, the 'Catholic genius' so beloved by Sippers embraces a perspective of 'both/and' – as stated multiple times over the years in *The Mix* (eg. Lennan, 1997, p. 5; Pirola, 2003; Rausch, 1998; Whelan et al., 2002, 2005b). This logic of both/and can be seen in the Catholic doctrines that represent Jesus as being both fully divine and fully human, God as both immanent and transcendent, the trinity as both three and one, and Mary as both Virgin and Mother. For Catholics such as Sippers, recognising these paradoxes is an act of humility and wisdom. Reflecting the idea that 'reality is greater than we can grasp or comprehend' (Scalia, 2013a), it is thought that embracing the paradoxes and ironies of life serves to save the self from egotism. In the words of the Editors of *The Mix*:

Whether these ironic moments are in fact constructive or destructive depends on us. We may try to hide from these ironies of life, pretending that we are above them. Or we may turn and embrace them in gratitude, pleased that we have been called back to reality, saved – for the moment at least – from the illusions of egocentricity (Whelan, Doogue, et al., 1997, p. 1).

Importantly, developing a comfort with paradox enables Sippers to look beyond the scandals of the church to see both the good and the bad embedded within an institution that they see as both human and divine:

Comfort with this paradox makes a heart truly Catholic. It enables one to trust in the Church as Christ's voice and presence in the world... It likewise enables him [sic] to see scandals in the Church for what they are. He can see the horror of a scandal, and yet not stop trusting the Church. He knows the Church is at once divine...but also in need of reform (Scalia, 2013b).

For some Sippers, recognising the humanity of the system is simply a matter of pragmatism and common sense. As one contributor to *The Mix* put it, '[e]ven the dimmest of people can see that the Church, as the collection of sinners which it is, can

never correspond to God's expectations' (Balthasar, 2001, p. 5). For others, reflecting on the nature of the seminary experience undertaken by most Australian priests in the pre-Vatican II period helps them to understand the Australian Church's current failings.

As Thelma explains:

They've come out of this faulty system. They've come out of a system that fostered the way they are... Here in Australia, the clergy were not educated because they were Irish, by and large... Kids went into a junior seminary in high school at the age of twelve and they started their seminary at the age of fourteen or fifteen. So they came out as twenty-year-olds into the priesthood, having left home as a child and never growing up, and then they go straight into this male-dominated business.

And they don't know what they're talking about! They've got no concept! They don't know what a relationship is. And that's a major problem. But they are so far behind the eight-ball that they can't get out of it without some major thing happening... So the system has been against them from the very start.

For many Sippers, however, their ability to embrace the paradoxical intersection of good and bad in the Church reflects their understanding of what Catholicism terms the 'Paschal Mystery'. Herein we find perhaps the ultimate paradox, one that lies at the heart of Christian belief: that 'Jesus destroys death by dying' (Whelan, Thyer, Doogue, Kelly SJ, et al., 1997) – or in other words, that the eternal life offered to Christians was made possible only through the death of Jesus Christ. Reference to the 'paschal mystery' or 'paschal consciousness' is a regular theme in SIP discourse, and occurs over sixty times in the pages of *The Mix*. Through this lens, Sippers are offered a way to understand the cycle of death and rebirth, pain and renewal that lies not only at the centre of physical life, but is also reflected in the many symbolic deaths and disappointments experienced in communal life. As Father Michael Whelan SM describes it in the pages of *The Mix*:

When we enter the dying and submit to the natural rhythm of life, we live. We are purified. We grow in love. Our capacity to understand increases... Show me a person of depth, sensitivity, compassion and sincerity and I will show you someone who has entered the paradox... There can be no renewal – no rebirth – in the Church without such willingness to enter the paschal rhythm (Whelan, 1996b, pp. 4–5).

The willingness to engage that very pain and struggle, however, distinguishes a living tradition from one that has already died or at least has become dormant... By engaging in this struggle, in abandonment to Divine Providence, we are in fact entering the Paschal Mystery. It is, in faith, a dying to live. That is the way – the only way – to ensure the Tradition will live (Whelan, 1997, p. 5).

Such an image of death and renewal is highly symbolic, but it offers immense appeal to many Sippers, particularly when they place it in the broader context of Catholic history.

As Charles explained to me:

I think a fundamental part of our Catholic understanding is that there will be difficulties. To my mind, one of the great insights of Catholic spirituality is that dying and rising is the pattern of our lives. And we go through these little deaths all the time, but we have this constant hope, this expectation that, you know, we'll rise again... You know, leaders come and go, don't they? And it won't always be as ordinary as it is now!

For many Sippers, such a thought inspires hope for the future of the Catholic Church, and a certain humble pride in the institution they call home. As Father Whelan wrote: 'The fact that the good ever wins out – and, in my experience, it does so more often than not – suggests something inherently noble about this “catholic” reality... something very vital and enduring and wonderfully paradoxical' (Whelan, 2003, pp. 124–5).

But the final word on paradox is best left to Henrietta, who first sparked my fascination with how fervent abhorrence and passionate loyalty to the same institution could be reconciled within the one heart:

I mean, I still feel very, very wedded to the institutional church. I believe in structures. I believe in, um— You know, I am not an individual. I believe in collective efforts. That's my background, that's everything about me. Politically, I believe in that. I'm a joiner. And so, even though the church, some of the hierarchy I just think are profoundly arrogant and strikingly incurious about the lay, the virtues of the lay world. But somehow or other I feel that the church is still the thing to reach into the lives of *so many* people, and to have a chance of reaching into the next generation's lives! And if it's not to be there, you know I think there would be a real terrible vacuum.

Chapter 5: Being Heard in a Silenced Church

5.1 A dialogical vision?

If there is one word that we should never tire of repeating, it is this: dialogue. We are called to promote a culture of dialogue by every possible means and thus to rebuild the fabric of society...

(Pope Francis, 2016a)

The concept of dialogue has been at the heart of papal rhetoric since 1964, when Pope Paul VI published *Ecclesiam Suam* – ‘The Church in the modern world’ – and thus became known as the ‘Pope of dialogue’ (Dupuis, 2009). In this apostolic letter drafted during the Second Vatican Council, Paul VI proposed that Catholic dialogue should be understood as incorporating four dimensions, which he represented as four concentric circles. These encompassed all humanity, members of other monotheistic faiths, other Christians, and finally, Catholics themselves. Furthermore, he argued that the origin of dialogue lies ‘in the mind of God Himself’, who offers a ‘dialogue of salvation’ to all humankind (Paul VI, 1964, n. 70). In this way, Jesus Christ is understood to offer the Church a model upon which all Catholic dialogue should be mirrored, one that is based on an attitude of openness, kindness, understanding and mutual respect. Yet, ironically, despite the insistence of subsequent church leaders on the importance of dialogue to the Catholic faith, their focus has largely centred on enhancing Catholic dialogue with the world and with other faiths. John Paul II’s celebrity-like popularity across the globe was testament to the efficacy of these efforts. However, Catholics themselves, or more specifically, lay Catholics, have fallen behind as less valued conversation partners in the race for a dialogical church.

Indeed, while both lay people and church leaders consistently call for ‘more dialogue’, they carry two very different definitions of what dialogue itself entails. As Angela Coco (2015) argues, when Catholic Church leaders invite lay people to ‘dialogue’ they appear to mean ‘have a discussion or do some research’ (p. 1). In contrast, lay Catholics typically expect that dialogue will involve a process of mutual sharing and reciprocity aimed towards collective understanding and problem-solving. In this way, ‘two parallel

monologues' are created 'that miss each other on the way up and down the hierarchical ladder' – a 'dialogue of the deaf' if you will (Coco, 2015, p. 1).

In this 'dialogue of the deaf', lay members are increasingly turning away from church edicts with unwilling ears, while church leaders remain deaf to the pleas of the laity for a modern church, perhaps hoping that consistency of message will eventually win their followers over to agreement. Part of this is no doubt due to the Church's firm belief that it holds a unique key to the salvation of humankind, and its unfailing commitment to the evangelisation of this message. Such a conviction could understandably lead to a certain deafness to issues that are seen as peripheral to core faith. As Catholic theologian Bradford Hinze notes, some church leaders fear that dialogical practices will lure the faithful into dangerous waters:

They worry that an ecclesial culture of dialogue fosters an illiterate church culture because such dialogue will eventually be dominated by endless trivial conversations about individual, narcissistic experiences, and the latest social fads and movements... The working assumption is that in the calls for dialogue at all levels of the church one hears the voices of Beelzebub speaking in difference dialects that jeopardize the unity, apostolicity, catholic fullness, and holiness of the Catholic Church (Hinze, 2006, p. 241).

But for most Sippers, the Church's deaf insistence in the face of growing dissent is a sign of the hierarchy's fundamental inability to engage with a conversant laity awakened by the spirit of Vatican II. As a famous Australian Catholic historian described it at a SIP evening in 2010, 'the Catholic Church has the answers before it hears the question'. Or as a member of the Sisters of Mercy said when addressing a SIP night in 2010, 'the Church is an institution that thinks it can make you believe simply by tightening its grasp... [It is] an incantation desperate to conjure up a listening audience'.

As this chapter will show, this 'desperate incantation' represents a critical dynamic in the Church's response to its waning sovereignty. At its core lies a disciplinary strategy of auricular control that seeks to muffle and even silence the voices of its followers. This strategy of centralised silencing is complemented by a strategy of diffuse surveillance which ensures that even the most minor transgressions are reported back to the Vatican. In this context, the act of speaking and the act of being heard have taken on potent symbolism for Sippers, who see the metaphor of voice – or the ability to be *heard* in dialogue – as a critical part of their religious agency.

This chapter centres on five strategies of audibility that Sippers have developed in an effort to feel heard within the ‘dialogue of the deaf’ that still characterises much of Catholic Church culture today. However, to illustrate the lived experience of this ‘dialogue of the deaf’, I first offer a case study which occurred in the final year of my fieldwork. It centres on the experience of one man, an Australian bishop, and the extraordinary penalties he suffered for attempting to highlight the need for ongoing conversation around the issues of faith and governance which concern the laity in Australia. His experience highlights the Vatican’s remarkable preoccupation with controlling the voices and actions of its followers in the face of its waning sovereignty. Bishop Morris’ treatment at the hands of the Vatican served as a rallying point for Sippers and Catholics around Australia and even overseas, starkly highlighting the personal costs of the Church’s culture of silencing and surveillance.

5.1.1 Bishop Morris - ‘denied the right to be heard’

The whole process has relied on the presumption that I would be compliant and resign.

Bishop Bill Morris (2014, p. 196)

William ‘Bill’ Morris, bishop to the diocese of Toowoomba,¹ was one of the thirty-eight bishops who attended the Synod for Oceania in November 1998 – the ecclesial gathering that was to result in the now-infamous ‘Statement of Conclusions’ discussed in Chapter Two. With excitement at the prospect of being able to address Pope John Paul II and his ecclesiastical colleagues, he penned a speech that centred on the principles of collegiality² and ‘unfailing and truthful dialogue’ that were at the heart of Pope Paul VI’s first encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964). With the ongoing Australian conversations surrounding *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* no doubt in mind, he implored the group, and particularly the Holy Father, with these words:

¹ Toowoomba is a large inland country town in Queensland, Australia. The town is the heart of a vast Catholic diocese which is 487,00 square kilometres in size – two times the size of Italy (Morris, 2014).

² In Roman Catholicism, collegiality refers to the concept of shared episcopal authority – in other words, that the bishops of the Church, including the Pope as the Bishop of Rome, are an episcopal community of brothers (a ‘college of bishops’) who work together to govern the church, rather than being autocratically led by the Pope alone. This decentralised model of church authority was a strong theme of the Second Vatican Council (Fox, 2013).

We need to take the initiative and to participate in the conversation of our brothers and sisters, no matter what the topic may be... We need the trust and freedom to let our brothers and sisters... speak... We need to be trusted, for we love the Church, and it is in love that these conversations take place. Ears will be closed and hearts will be hardened only when there is a refusal to create a forum in which people can talk of their hopes and dreams, their hurts and failures, their relationships and their life... This is the ground in which the seed will produce, not tenfold, but a hundredfold. Trust us that in Australia, we will pass on that same faith (Morris, 2014, pp. 17-8).

With two words, Bishop Morris summed up the heart of the complaint of the Australian people and the bishops who represented them: 'Trust us', they begged. But twelve years later, Bishop Morris' dismissal from his position as Bishop of Toowoomba made it clear that he did not have the trust of the Vatican.

5.1.1.1 The prelude

Bill Morris is known by his friends as 'a deeply pastoral man' with an exceptional heart for the people of his church and a profound ability to listen to them and respond to their needs (Hamilton, 2011). It was this willingness to listen to his people that inspired him to provide a less common form of the sacrament of reconciliation³ in his diocese. Commonly known as the 'third rite of reconciliation', this ritual provides an opportunity for a congregation to collectively recognise its sins and seek repentance as a community (also known as 'general absolution'), rather than confessing individually, as the ordinary forms of reconciliation require.⁴ In a diocese where vast distances compounded by a priestly shortage made regular Mass attendance difficult for many, and in a climate where clerical sexual abuse had provoked a growing wariness of being alone with a priest, many priests and parishioners found the third rite a "profound and

³ In the Catholic Church, the Sacrament of Reconciliation (also known as the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation) is a ritual in which a believer confesses their sins to a priest, who forgives or absolves them of these sins, prescribes appropriate penance, and offers advice or counsel (Hanna, 1911). It is intended to 'reconcile' the believer again to God and the Church through the absolution of the believer's sins ("The Sacrament of Penance", 1993).

⁴ In Roman Catholic tradition, the 'first rite of reconciliation' is considered the 'ordinary' form of reconciliation, in which an individual meets alone with a priest to confess their sins, often in a small room designed for this purpose – known as the 'confessional'. The 'second rite of reconciliation' is an alternate form of reconciliation, often celebrated during Advent or Lent, where the congregation collectively participate through readings from scripture, hymns, prayer and an examination of conscience, before moving individually to meet with a priest and confess their sins. The 'third rite of reconciliation' follows the second rite but instead of individual confessions, a communal prayer of confession is made and general absolution is given by the priest. The 'third rite' is generally to be restricted to emergencies (such as war or imminent death), and other exceptional circumstances where moral or physical requirements make the practice of regular individual confessions impossible. Under canon law, the bishop of the diocese holds the responsibility for determining when such exceptional circumstances exist (Coffey, 2001).

transforming” experience in the life of the church’ (McGillion and O’Carroll, 2011, p. 89).

But the *Statement of Conclusions* was unequivocal in its assessment of the Australian Church’s use of the third rite. It declared the increasingly popular use of general absolution in the Australian Church ‘illegitimate’ and called for bishops to ‘exercise renewed vigilance’ to ensure the practice was ‘eliminated’ (*Statement of Conclusions*, 1998, n. 45). Thanks to the diligent reporting of local ‘temple spies’, Bishop Morris’s use of the third rite was well known to Vatican authorities, and he was called to Rome to explain himself. He was accused of ‘giving the priests and the people a vote’ despite the fact that ‘rules are rules’ (Morris, 2014, p. 40). But as Bishop Morris explained in an ABC TV interview:

I’m not giving them a vote. What I’m doing is, I’m finding out, I’m trying to find their voice. I’m trying to find the voice of the spirit in the context say of the local church. Which they do have a voice, as the Vatican Council tells us, the people have a voice. And if I’m not speaking for them, just in this particular area, well then they’re not going to be heard. Their voice is not going to be heard (“The Sacked Bishop”, 2011).

Despite the bishop’s attempt to explain how the unique challenges of the Toowoomba diocese made the use of the third rite appropriate in his diocese, he was told in no uncertain terms that his reasoning was inadequate – he would have to apply a much more restrictive interpretation of the ‘exceptional circumstances’ that allow the use of this rite in future. While frustrated that Vatican officials seemed ‘more interested in the mode of the sacrament than in contrition’, Bishop Morris ceded to their demands and began to phase out the use of general absolution as per their requests (Morris, 2014, p. 41). Yet this was not to be the end of the Toowoomba bishop’s tangle with the Vatican.

5.1.1.2 *The letter*

By 2004 the priest shortage in Toowoomba had reached almost dire proportions. Conscious of the aging profile of his priests and the falling number of seminarians,⁵ Bishop Morris recognised the need to plan for a diocese that by 2014 would have only eighteen priests across thirty-five parishes, resulting in an average of one parish priest

⁵ Seminarians are students in a Roman Catholic seminary, who are studying to enter the priesthood.

for every three and a half thousand Catholics in his diocese.⁶ In preparation, Bishop Morris gathered his priests and pastoral leaders together to collectively prepare a nine-year pastoral leadership plan which would identify and implement new pastoral leadership models to suit the changing needs of the diocese. By the end of 2006, Bishop Morris took the opportunity of his Advent Pastoral letter to reinforce the message of hope and solidarity that he saw contained in the leadership plan.⁷ However, in his own words, 'little did I know at the time what a controversial Advent Pastoral letter it would become' (Morris, 2014, p. 46).

The bulk of Bishop Morris's letter focused on the diocesan pastoral leadership plan and the enhanced role this provided for lay ministry in the diocese. At the heart of the controversy however was the following passage (Morris, 2014, pp. 56–7):

Given our deeply held belief in the primacy of Eucharist for the identity, continuity and life of each parish community, we may well need to be much more open towards other options of ensuring that Eucharist may be celebrated. As has been discussed internationally, nationally and locally, the ideas of:

- ordaining married, single or widowed men who are chosen and endorsed by their local parish community;
- welcoming former priests, married or single, back to active ministry;
- ordaining women, married or single;
- recognising Anglican, Lutheran and Uniting Church Orders.

While we continue to reflect carefully on these options we remain committed to actively promoting vocations to the current celibate male priesthood and open to inviting priests from overseas.

Within the month, Bishop Morris was again called to Rome to explain himself⁸ and shortly thereafter he was advised that an Apostolic Visitor⁹ had been appointed by Pope Benedict XVI to visit the Toowoomba diocese and investigate 'serious concerns' about the pastoral and theological climate of the diocese. Over the course of four days in April 2007, the Apostolic Visitor – Archbishop Charles Chaput of Denver, Colorado – toured the diocese, interviewing local church officials, priests and laity and carrying

⁶ These figures are calculated from a combination of sources across Morris (2014) and Wilkinson (2012).

⁷ Advent is the period leading up to Christmas, commencing on the fourth Sunday before Christmas. It is traditional for a bishop to write a pastoral letter to his diocese during this time.

⁸ Bishop Morris was unable to attend the proposed meeting given his pastoral commitments at the time and suggested a later timing – an offer that was not accepted.

⁹ In the Roman Catholic church, an Apostolic Visitor is a church official who represents the pope and has been tasked with visiting a diocese or region to investigate a particular issue. On conclusion of the visit, the Apostolic Visitor submits a confidential report to the Holy See.

reams of documents that had been sent to Rome by diocesan ‘temple spies’ over the past fourteen years.

Five months later, Bishop Morris received a letter summarising the outcome of the investigation, although the report itself would not be released by the Vatican. In similar format to the *Statement of Conclusions*, the letter commenced with a recognition of Bishop Morris’s good character, generosity, and sensitivity to his parishioners.

‘However’, the letter went on to state:

...the local church in Toowoomba is moving in a different direction than that of the Catholic Church... The diocese of Toowoomba is going through a severe crisis... Toowoomba needs a Bishop who, with determination and courage, will tackle the problems and rectify what is not in conformity with the doctrine and the discipline of the Catholic Church. Bishop Morris’s theological preparation and type of leadership are inadequate to confront the crisis of the Church of Toowoomba, despite his good intentions (Morris, 2014, pp. 103–5).

At the heart of the Vatican’s concern lay Bishop Morris’s Advent letter reference to the ongoing conversations that were happening around the world, both in and beyond the Catholic Church, regarding ‘other options’ for celebrating the Eucharist. Despite reaffirming his support for the Church’s current model of priesthood – one that is celibate and male – his reference to discussions about married priests, female priests, and the recognition of priests ordained by non-Catholic groups was considered to reveal ‘a flawed ecclesiology resembling that of a Protestant church’ (Morris, 2014, p. 104). Furthermore, to invite discussion about women’s ordination – a topic that had already been declared definitively closed by the Pope – was seen as counterproductive to the faithful and their ‘fidelity to the doctrine and discipline of the Church’ (Morris, 2014, p. 104). As Cardinal Re, Prefect for the Congregation for Bishops,¹⁰ is reported to have said:

What sense is there in discussing this ‘possibility’ that is, in fact, impossible?... To invite discussion on this topic as you did means not to accept the Pope’s decision... [and] to separate yourself from the teaching of the Catholic Church (Morris, 2014, p. 349).

With this, Bishop Morris was asked to promptly tender his resignation ‘for the good of the church of Toowoomba’ (Morris, 2014, p. 108). Thus began a three and a half year

¹⁰ The Congregation for Bishops is the department of the curia that oversees the selection and appointment of bishops in the US, Canada, Latin America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand (O’Connell, 2016).

'dialogue'¹¹ between Bishop Morris and Vatican authorities (including Pope Benedict XVI) in which Bishop Morris sought to understand the grounds for his dismissal, and attempted to clarify the many misunderstandings and errors of fact on which his dismissal appeared to be based, including the Vatican assertion that he was still approving the widespread use of the 'third rite' in the Toowoomba diocese. By April 2011, it was agreed that Bishop Morris would seek an 'early retirement' from his position as Bishop of Toowoomba. He remained resolute however in affirming his inability to accept the Vatican's request for his resignation. In his own words:

As a priest and bishop, I have always encouraged people to be faithful to their vocation... In times of difficulty, I have encouraged people to stay committed to their particular vocation. It is now the same for me. The call to be a bishop is a vocation. I cannot in conscience before God, resign (Morris, 2014, p. 118).

I cannot do so in conscience because my resignation would be based on my acceptance of a lie. My resignation would mean that I accept the assessment of myself as being unfaithful to the Magisterium and breaking *communio*.¹² I absolutely refute and reject this assessment (Morris, 2014, p. 196).

While Bishop Morris accepted that the wording of his Pastoral letter was 'clumsy' in parts, he maintained that he did not in any way seek to undermine Catholic teaching:

My intention was to encourage the diocese to think and prayerfully reflect on our pastoral situation... At no point did I assert that these options might be implemented in the diocese... [But] by referring to these 'matters in discussion', I was trying to reassure the diocese that we were not alone in facing the issue of priest shortage... The matters raised in my Pastoral Letter, which I acknowledge could have been worded better, are those which are in ferment generally across the Church (Morris, 2014, pp. 126, 376).

But Bishop Morris's attempt to encourage prayerful conversation in his diocese was taken by some as a challenge to Vatican authority:

[T]hey saw me as recalcitrant in my continual efforts to give a voice to the people and... they saw their authority being challenged... [T]hey want to control what people think and talk about and that is not going to happen in today's world... By stating that these questions cannot be spoken of is treating the people of God as children, gagging the Spirit (Morris, 2014, pp. 112-3, 175).

¹¹ While the Pope and his Vatican officials insist that they were engaged in a 'fraternal dialogue' with Bishop Morris regarding his resignation, Bishop Morris's experience was one of monologue: 'We had never been involved in a dialogue and my mistake from the outset was that I treated my brother bishops in Rome as equals' (Morris, 2014, p. 193).

¹² The Latin word *communio* indicates mutual participation or fellowship.

On Sunday 28 August 2011, after eighteen years as Bishop of Toowoomba, Bill Morris was farewelled by the Toowoomba diocese in a Mass of Thanksgiving. More than fifteen hundred people crowded into Toowoomba's St Patrick's Cathedral and its grounds to celebrate his ministry. His fellow bishop and friend, Bishop James Foley, remarked of the service:

There was neither bitterness nor recrimination. Rather there was good humour and loving tears quietly shed... I have never witnessed so simple yet profound an out-pouring of appreciation and love. As one of the other bishops there observed afterwards: The best way to go may be to get sacked! (Foley, in March, 2011, p. 19)

Bishop Morris stayed until the last person had left the grounds of St Patrick's cathedral, eager to ensure no one was left behind. But while he moved on to further episcopal ministry roles in the diocese of Brisbane, Catholics around Australia remained appalled at his treatment by the Vatican. At the heart of their disgust was that Bishop Morris had been 'denied the right to be heard' (Hamilton, 2012). As an editor of *The Tablet*¹³ had commented, 'in the secular world, only dictators silence their opponents and demand unquestioning obedience' (in Morris, 2014, p. 180). Within the Vatican, censorship remained strong – but this time, lay Australian Catholics were determined not to be silenced.

5.1.1.3 Catalyst's response

A week after Bishop Morris's 'retirement' had been announced, I was attending a SIP meeting in Victoria, some fifteen hundred kilometres south of Toowoomba. The room was abuzz with news of the bishop's ousting, and there was a palpable sense of outrage mixed with despondence and even helplessness among Victoria's faithful. As one attendee shared:

As an ordinary lay person, I feel pretty impotent when I see what happened to the Bishop in Toowoomba. And I wonder what we as individual Catholics can do? You know, I've got this crazy idea of starting up a 'get up'¹⁴ on the internet, which of course one wouldn't do for all sorts of

¹³ *The Tablet* is a Catholic weekly religious affairs journal that was founded in 1840. It is based in the United Kingdom and describes itself as being 'committed to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council' (www.thetablet.co.uk/about).

¹⁴ 'Get Up' is a progressive Australian activist group which was launched in 2005. It seeks to 'channel Australians' voices into politics' by encouraging voters to lobby their elected parliamentarians using

reasons. But 'get ups' give a lot of people a say, who wouldn't normally be heard, just by the sheer number of people prepared to respond.

Conscious of this desire to have 'a say', Catalyst for Renewal invited Bishop Morris to speak at a special event held in his honour. On 19 August 2011, two-hundred and fifty people crowded into the Hunters Hill¹⁵ Town Hall in an event that was sold out within five days – an unprecedented experience for the group. When the night of the forum arrived the weather proved stormy, but attendees were not to be deterred. For many, the lashing rains seemed deeply symbolic, as if the heavens were pouring out a torrent of angry tears over the injustices dealt to Bishop Morris.

In introducing Bishop Morris, Catalyst's then President reinforced how delighted the group was when they heard his 2006 Advent call for ongoing conversation around issues of church governance and pastoral leadership:

We believe so strongly... that we must all be prepared to engage in radical renewal [in the Church]... There will be no genuine and lasting renewal without good gospel-based and life-based conversation... We believe it is important to have a thoughtful Church. A church whose members are happy to talk with each other, in sensible and meaningful conversations. A church which follows its own dictates in relation to its own.

We all here tonight know that our Church... has made and continues to make wonderful pastoral statements in relation to social justice, and directs other institutions about the need to be consistent and constantly transparent and open in their dealings. But sometimes our Church isn't so consistent in relation to its own. So here in Catalyst we work towards a church which... [is] an adult church... A church where key principles are dialogue, good leadership, mutual responsibility and partnership.

Having laid the groundwork for the focus of the evening, the President also made it clear that the goal of the event was not to foment further anger or resentment. Rather, Catalyst sought to provide a space for laity, priests and bishops alike to collectively gather in 'good conversation' so that they might together work towards building a more 'adult church':

[T]he purpose of tonight's dinner is not an invitation to the publication of a manifesto, or for the passing of a revolution. The purpose is to show you, Bishop Morris, not only that the people of Sydney, through Catalyst and its friends, care about you, and are distressed about the less than transparent way you have been treated by Rome. But also through the conversation which will be led by you, that we may leave here tonight a wiser people,

personal email and letters on various issues, including refugees, climate change, health care, and animal cruelty. The group claimed over a million members in late 2015 (Vromen, 2016).

¹⁵ Hunters Hill is a suburb in the northwest of Sydney.

being better able to contribute to an ongoing conversation towards building an adult church.

In his address to the group, Bishop Morris drew on the concept of the church as a living, breathing organism, arguing that the church needs to ‘breathe together’ in unity in order to thrive. In this breathing organism, all members have a role, and each needs to listen to the others in order to understand its role in the context of the whole. At the heart of this breathing, for Bishop Morris, is dialogue, and in turn, voice:

The local church needs to breathe and the universal Church needs to allow it to breathe... One of the things I always struggled with in the context, say, as the Bishop of Toowoomba, was to figure out, ‘How can I give the people a voice? How can I enable their voice to be heard, in the context of the wider Church?’. I found at times that I was the only pipeline for them to get a voice, talking, say, to the various dicasteries¹⁶ in Rome, or talking to the episcopal conference¹⁷ and so on... I was the only way, because they didn’t really have any other means...

One quietly spoken member of the audience shared thoughts which reflected the mood of many in the room as he thanked Bishop Morris for his ongoing spirit of generosity in the face of injustice:

Bishop Bill – you’ve been most generous tonight. You’ve shown absolutely no rancour over the abominable way you’ve been treated as a bishop in the Church. I think all of us are here because we want to support you and because we think that you were very badly treated and it’s totally unjust. [applause]... By any standards, you were treated abominably... [T]here was a lack of due process, where you didn’t know your accuser, [and] where the report about you to the Vatican was not made known to you... I’m not quite as forgiving as you are.

Another participant commented on her astonishment when she learned that there was no canon law basis on which bishops could appeal their dismissal. ‘And yet, the church preaches justice for all. To me that seemed a very big anomaly’, she added. She asked whether canon law should be revised, and Bishop Morris laughingly agreed, ‘I think so too’, bringing peals of laughter from the audience. He went on to add that bishops, like the laity, also struggle to have their voices heard in the halls of the Vatican:

I would hope, that by making [my story] public, in the sense of— when Benedict said to me, you know, ‘I hire and I fire, and you’ve got no rights’¹⁸

¹⁶ Dicasteries are administrative departments of the curia of the Roman Catholic Church.

¹⁷ An Episcopal Conference is a conference of Roman Catholic bishops from a particular region or territory.

¹⁸ This paraphrases a letter from Pope Benedict XVI in December 2009 in which the Pope stated ‘canon law does not make provision for a process regarding bishops, whom the Successor of Peter nominates and may remove from office’. As the pope is considered ‘the successor of Peter’, this indicates that Pope Benedict

and so on. I was hoping that... by the very fact of being able to make that public and for it to have some momentum... maybe the discussion can go on and the bishops of the world can say, 'hey, you know, this isn't good enough'.

Somehow or other, there has to be collegiality again. I believe personally that collegiality is not working. It's not working. We're treated as branch managers... We're just pushed aside. We don't— we don't get a say. And so, until that collegiality starts to work, I don't think the voice of the bishops, or the voice of the body of the bishops, is going to be heard.

At the heart of this return to collegiality is, for Bishop Morris, a recognition that the role of a bishop is to serve his community. This recognition rests on embracing new models of priesthood:

I really believe that... we're moving towards a different model of church, and... a different model of priesthood. Why is there a lack of vocations to the priesthood? Why? I think unless we listen to the spirit and listen to that question, and maybe some of the model of priesthood— maybe some of that model's got to die, and out of the ashes a new model will grow. [applause] And as that new model grows [applause] there will be a much more service[-oriented] model. A model that *serves*.

This focus on service is what set Bishop Morris apart as a minister who put his parishioners before himself. Perhaps this is why so many were outraged by his treatment at the hands of the Vatican. The last question of the night was put forward by the quietly spoken Jonathan, and encapsulated the as yet unspoken concern held by many in attendance – how long to stay in a church where 'good people' such as Bishop Morris were treated so poorly? In Jonathan's words:

I've talked to so many really good people that for some time have been seeing themselves on the edge of the Church and asking the question, 'do I want to keep on connected to the Church or will I wave goodbye?' And especially since what's happened to you, I hear even more of those good people asking themselves that same question... What would you say to those many people, really good people, that are feeling very much marginalised by the Church?

Bishop Morris's reply showed the insight of a man who understands both the personal and institutional cost of declining church membership when he called the disenfranchised to 'stick at it':

My word to them would be, you know, stick at it. I think, you know, everybody is needed within the body of Christ. To make sure that their voice is heard, that their life is heard. All of us are gifts to each other. All of

us are connected to each other. We need each other... It's like the coals within a fire. The closer we are to each other... the warmer we'll be. And... I know it's difficult at times, but... I'd say, stay with it.

The evening was concluded by a priest who offered Bishop Morris a vote of thanks, describing his experience at the hands of the Vatican as unleashing 'a great force' in the Catholic Church – one that 'will not be without effect'. What struck the priest most however was Bishop Morris's 'ability to absorb suffering without rancour'. This, he argued, was based on the bishop's:

...ability to be faithful to the gospel and to realise that it's actually not about him, or authority or roles. It's about the gospel. It's about Jesus... Bill's contribution to the life of the body of Christ doesn't depend on him being the Bishop of Toowoomba. It depends on him being faithful to his baptism.

Bill – we are most grateful. Most grateful for your taking the time and energy to come down here and be with us. And to show yourself as a man of patience. A man who has absorbed suffering and grown through it.

Describing himself as 'one of the luckiest human beings around' thanks to the overwhelming love and support he'd been shown throughout his saga, Bishop Morris returned to Brisbane to continue his efforts to support the Catholic Church in his retirement. But for many Australian Catholics, his experience highlights the ongoing challenge to have their voices heard in the Australian Church.

5.2 Voice and the silent laity – to be seen but not heard

To have lost one's voice is not to keep silence: one keeps silence only when one can speak.

Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 2013, p. 161)

Catalyst for Renewal is not the only Catholic group to have identified voice as a potent metaphor for representing their sense of disenfranchisement. In 2002, a group of American Catholics formed 'Voice of the Faithful' (VOTF) in response to the clerical sexual abuse crisis that was gripping their Church. They describe their mission as to provide 'a prayerful voice, attentive to the Spirit, through which the faithful can actively participate in the governance and guidance of the Catholic Church' (www.votf.org). Within a year, VOTF had channelled the outrage of over thirty

thousand Catholics towards a unifying goal: 'keep the faith, and change the church'. In her sociological exploration of this grassroots movement, Trisha Bruce suggests a reason for their sudden popularity:

In the absence of trustworthy leaders who could positively represent the Catholic religion publicly, lay leaders active at the grassroots level emerged as an alternative voice for the U.S. Catholic Church... VOTF became a means of networking with like-minded Catholics... [M]any who joined the movement did not know that others in their parishes were also eager for change (perhaps just fearful to admit it prior to the emergence of an organized voice). VOTF gave Catholics a space to express outrage at the scandal along with frustration and hope for the contemporary, post-Vatican II Catholic Church (Bruce, 2014, pp. 172, 178).

Like Catalyst for Renewal, VOTF was driven by the energies and ethos of the Vatican II generation. The members of both groups are among the most educated and upwardly mobile generation of lay Catholics in the Western world to date. It is this educational and cultural capital that has enabled them to attain success in the corporate and civil spheres and drove them to mobilise against gender and racial discrimination in the public domain. Yet, as Bruce notes, 'come Sunday morning they had remained as powerless as children' (2014, p. 178). Like the children of the Victorian era, they were to be 'seen but not heard'.

Indeed, the notion of voice has become a central motif of popular emancipatory discourse since the US suffragette movement first rallied around the war-cry of 'I am Woman' in the 1970s. Scholars in the fields of feminism, civil rights, post-colonialism and development studies have leveraged the metaphor of 'voice', 'having a voice', and 'being heard' to explore the many emancipatory identity projects of late modernity. Across these bodies of literature, voice is seen as an aspect of agency: an ability, capacity or capability of self-expression. Whether seen as 'the ability to articulate practical needs and strategic interests, individually and collectively, in the private domain and in the public' (Gammage et al., 2016, p. 6), 'the capacity to debate, contest, inquire and participate critically' (Appadurai, 2004, p. 70), or 'the effort to represent one's own experience, rather than accepting the representations of more powerful others' (Gal, 1989, p. 2), these definitions recognise that voice is not simply a personal attribute. Rather, it relies on 'being heard' by the social or political domain which forms the target of the speaker's communication: 'voice must go beyond the capacity to speak, it must be heard, listened to, and acted on' (Gammage et al., 2016, p. 6). In this way, voice is typically identified with agency, selfhood and discursive power, as

marked by presence, intentionality and expressiveness. In contrast, the lack of voice is taken to signify attenuated subjectivity and a lack of agency, marked by absence, detachment, compromise, oppression and disenfranchisement (Fisher, 2010). In this context, silence does not simply represent an 'inability or reluctance to create utterances', but rather the 'failure to produce one's own separate, socially significant discourse' (Gal, 2010, p. 363).¹⁹

The task of forging their own 'socially significant discourse' is an emancipatory project that has captured the imagination of Sippers. In pursuing this project, they have embraced several key techniques of voice which provide them with a powerful, yet still partial, sense of being heard within the 'dialogue of the deaf' which characterises Catholic Church culture (cf. Coco, 2015). These strategies of audibility include developing a cautious voice, embracing a narrative voice, adopting a self-censored voice, employing a displaced voice, and leveraging a marginalised voice. At the heart of these techniques however lies a response to the 'monologic imagination' that is so cherished by the leaders of the Catholic Church.

5.2.1 The monologic imagination of the Catholic Church

In their edited volume, *The Monologic Imagination* (2017), Matt Tomlinson and Julian Millie offer a useful lens for understanding the Catholic Church's approach to voice and authority. While recognising the logic of Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981) argument that only Adam, the first human, was capable of truly monologic discourse – and that all communication, even that which is intended to be 'one-way', is responding to the real and imagined voices of past and future speakers – Tomlinson and Millie suggest that many speakers nonetheless are inspired by a 'monologic imagination'. This monologic strategy of voice is common amongst leaders in positions of political or religious authority (Keane, 1999), being performed by he or she who speaks but 'expects no answer' (Mannheim and Tedlock, 1995, pp. 1–2). For Tomlinson and Millie, the performance of such a monologue depends on linguistic strategies of erasure and creative performance.

¹⁹ This is not to suggest that silence cannot also be an act of linguistic agency, as section 5.2.2.3 demonstrates below.

The first strategy, erasure, is a semiotic process in which 'ideology, in simplifying the sociolinguistic field, renders some persons or activities (or sociolinguistic phenomena) invisible' (Irvine and Gal, 2009, p. 404). By ignoring or explaining away any facts that are inconsistent with the monologist's position, the process of erasure acts to 'make people, their actions, and their voices disappear' (Tomlinson and Millie, 2017, p. 3).

The second linguistic strategy, creative performance, 'attempts to unify speakers in a way that might be called the "repeat after me phenomenon"' which insists that 'the voice you are about to hear is the only one' and thus requires either 'perfect assent or faithful repetition' (Tomlinson and Millie, 2017, p. 3). Whether dismissing or denying the voices of those who have presented an alternate logic, or anticipating future criticisms and prospectively ruling them out, these monological techniques seek to ensure the impossibility of any meaningfully engaged dialogue.

Both of these strategies are clearly evidenced in the Church's response to the question of women's ordination, whereby Pope John Paul II attempted to erase any and all discussion of the topic by virtue of an edict re-stating the church's position. In so doing, he sought to exercise his sovereign authority as the Church's 'living law' (Agamben, 2008, p. 69) to declare that the topic was to be officially excluded from Catholic discourse – so that 'all doubt may be removed' (John Paul II, 1994). Anticipating future dissent, the curia then confirmed that the teaching against women's ordination is a core 'truth' of the Catholic faith which thus requires the 'definitive assent' of all the faithful (Ratzinger, 1995). In this way, the Pope and his curia sought to employ Schmitt and Agamben's 'state of exception' to the topic of women's ordination, so that anyone who failed to obey this decree could be declared *homo sacer* and thus their opinions legitimately excluded from Catholic discourse (Agamben, 1998, cf. 2008; Schmitt, 1985).

However, the personal culmination of both monologic strategies was brought into stark relief in the account of Bishop Morris' dismissal in the case study above. When a prominent voice such as his refused to be silenced by means of linguistic erasure, and he refused to adopt the position of docile audience to the curia's creative performance of authority, structural erasure was instead required, marking Bishop Morris as the Church's latest 'accursed man' (cf. Agamben, 1998). Ironically, such an approach only served to reinforce for many Catholics a feeling that the silenced topic therefore

needed to be spoken of – but now loudly, and more urgently. As one leading lady in the Catalyst for Renewal movement said to me: ‘I mean, it’s like a red rag to a bull for Australians. If we’re told we can’t talk about something, we’ll *talk* about it!’

And talk about it they did – at first cautiously, but then with increasing confidence and, in time, with a strong, clear voice that now respectfully demands to be heard.

5.2.2 Strategies of audibility

5.2.2.1 *Cautious voice*

For a generation who were raised to ‘pray, pay and obey’, as my participants would often tell me, the prospect of speaking out against the monological force of the Catholic Church was initially a daunting one. The all-encompassing symbolic domination of the hierarchy over the laity created a doxic acceptance of the pope’s right to represent the only legitimate voice in the Church. To speak up against the parish priest or local bishop was in turn to speak back to the authority of the pope. So when Catalyst for Renewal proposed to ‘give people a chance to be heard in an intelligent, compassionate and insightful forum’, at a time when ‘the people’s right to have a voice in the Church’s life’ was being ignored by Church leaders (Bates, 1996, p. 3), it took time for participants to find their voices.

Several Sippers described their early days of vocal awareness as a time of ‘whispering’. As one new Sipper described it, ‘SIP is a place where I can whisper my heresies’. Both presenters and attendees at SIP embraced the prospect of beginning to speak about those matters which were close to their hearts but banished from legitimate Catholic discourse:

And I think that’s what I find the most difficult thing. These issues, there’s nowhere for us to discuss them. Nowhere for us to have any input. Nowhere for us to hear what people in authority think and feel and to exchange ideas. And to me that’s just so sad.

Indeed, this ‘whispering’ of heresies was at times a literal experience. Throughout my fieldwork the topic of women’s ordination remained a constant theme, yet it would often be prefaced with apologetic words acknowledging that this was a topic that they were forbidden to discuss. On one occasion, the then President of SIP whispered the

phrase ‘women’s ordination’ so quietly that I had to ask for it to be repeated. It was, but reluctantly, as I was then informed in a quiet voice that this was a topic ‘we were not allowed to discuss’. The fact that a highly intelligent lay leader in the Catholic Church felt the need to whisper this heresy in a private conversation with a non-Catholic gave me the first sign of the extraordinary hold that the Church maintains on the voices of its members. As one religious sister stated at a SIP meeting in 2006:

To wag a finger and say that we are not even to talk about the issue, infantilizes who we are as Church. It negates just processes in the church and promotes the opposite of freedom, a culture of control where people are watched and reported (Fawkner, 2006, p. 5).

But it takes time to overcome the mute dispositions of the pre-Vatican II Catholic habitus. Even forthright presenters would at times pause before saying something ‘controversial’, perhaps turning to a SIP official to clarify, ‘Okay— we *can* say what we want to here?’. Some would jest that they hoped that no one here was a ‘friend of the Archbishop’. Gentle jokes at the expense of certain senior clerical figures were common, and served to alleviate some of the psychic tensions involved in speaking out against the monological authority of the Church. For the listening ear of the curia was felt to be omnipresent. In the words of one SIP presenter, the monologic imagination of the Church seemed to suggest:²⁰

Don’t think.
If you think, don’t speak.
If you think, and if you speak, don’t write.
If you think, and if you speak, and if you write, don’t sign your name.
If you think, and if you speak, and if you write, and if you sign your name,
don’t be surprised.

At other times, SIP presenters would joke that they ‘hope no temple spies are here tonight’. Indeed, while the figure of the ‘temple spy’ had been around since the late 1990s, by the time I started attending Catalyst for Renewal meetings these shady figures had reached almost mythological proportions. The haunting influence of the omnipresent ‘temple spy’ remained a constant reminder that, while we may have been off church property, we were still ‘being watched’. In fact, in the opening minutes of my first attendance at a national Catalyst convention, an official sought to reassure attendees that ‘Heather... is not a temple spy’ through the following account:

I wanted to tell you about one of my experiences (and this will get around to Heather) of when *somebody thought that I was a ‘temple spy’!*... As some

²⁰ The SIP speaker was recounting the words of Thomas Reese, an American Jesuit who was advised by a Vatican official on how to survive in the world’s oldest bureaucracy (Reese, 1998, p. 164).

of you know, [my parish was] privileged for nine years to have Father P as our parish priest. Now Father P always had something really interesting to say and I was always in the position of needing to think of something to say at some forthcoming gathering. So, I would often sit there [laughs] and scribble little notes around the edge of the weekly bulletin.

And one day, a lady took umbrage and came up and said to me afterwards 'what are you doing with those notes?' [laughter] So she thought that I was a temple spy because of that and was going to report Father for something that he said and who he said it to. And those were the things that people did report and he often, well, not often, but occasionally did get carpeted.

So, Heather here today (I'm getting to Heather) will be taking notes. [laughter] But what she has said is that she is very conscious of the privilege of being here with us and the confidentiality of what might be said, and that it won't go any further than Heather, who is *not* a temple spy. [laughter]

The fact that I would be taking photographs of the event was also canvassed, and the Catalyst official invited anyone who did not want their photograph taken to make themselves known to me. As it happened, nobody showed any concern about my notetaking or my photography at any SIP or Catalyst event I ever attended.

Yet despite the ever-intrusive aural panopticon of the Vatican, in time Sippers grew to feel more confident in their voices, heartened by the presence of others also willing to speak up and speak out. This came to reflect a growing sense of the legitimacy of their own voices – a dynamic that will be further explored in Chapter Six – and a mounting indignation over the injustice of being silenced by the Church's propaganda of fear. In the words on one of my SIP friends, a quietly spoken gentleman in his sixties:

The Catholic Church is *Jesus Christ talking*. We should be able to say what we want, and be listened to!... The real issue is... the fear within the Catholic Church of expressing views... So many people in positions of authority... feel they have to be careful of what they say. Priests, bishops, whatever, there seems to be that atmosphere of fear... But tonight, it's lay people who are expressing their views. It's taken away a *lot of my anxiety* because if we can *put things out there* as lay people, it might help this atmosphere of not being able to talk about issues disappear.

5.2.2.2 Narrative voice

Many Sippers found that the process of what bell hooks would call 'coming to voice' was most comfortable when simply telling the story of their own lives (hooks, 1994, p. 148). In fact, telling stories was a regular theme at SIP meetings. Several SIP groups

even chose it as their theme for a year – under the titles ‘Tell Me A Story’ or ‘The Power of My Story’ – asking presenters to speak from the heart and tell the story of their lives in their own words. For some, being asked to tell their story posed a novel challenge, as it forced them to discover within themselves the symbolic and emotional resources required to narrate their lives and identities. By enunciating their own stories, Sippers are also called to tell a story of reflexivity, ‘of oneself as the person who *did* say this or do that’ (Couldry, 2010, p. 8). In this way, story-telling enables Sippers to ‘make sense’ of their lives, and their place within the world. This is perhaps why the media sociologist Nick Couldry argues that ‘to deny value to another’s capacity for narrative – to deny her potential for voice – is to deny a basic dimension of human life’ (2010, p.7).

For one SIP speaker, the request to tell her story brought to mind deeply personal questions of ‘hearth and home’ as she reflected on where she has been and how she discovered a new home among the SIP community:

Ten years ago, my hearth was in Scotland... Since the death of my mother... if anyone had asked me to tell my story, I would have scratched my head and wondered what to say. It was not that I didn’t have a story; it was that I had no idea of honouring it. But it is also the case that my story, as I shall tell it tonight, was waiting to happen, and I am telling it around a different hearth – a ‘SIP’ hearth – where we have heard a collection of wonderful stories... each one bigger than the person telling it (Paton, 2003).

Many found the experience of story-telling profoundly moving, for both presenters and listeners. One SIP leader, Levi, told me the story of a particularly poignant SIP evening, where a former nun spoke of the challenges she faced when leaving her order, and shared her deeply personal account of discovering her sexuality over the years:

And she was so open in that conversation that her co-presenter... who is a thoroughly outed homosexual priest, non-practising homosexual priest— His talk was to be, I don’t know what, because— we never heard it.

When [she] had finished, he picked up his notes and [choking with tears] went like *that* [throwing a handful of notes into the air]. And then he shared his own story [voice breaking] from when he was abused by a priest himself as a kid. And the impact that it had on him and how his life had gone as a result of all of that. It was just brilliant [speaking breathlessly]. And of course, all the stories popped up [around the room].

By centering SIP evenings around the telling of stories, SIP organisers are tapping into a deeply human need. As Levi went on to say:

[Those nights] always seem to work well. We always feel— It’s a humanly satisfying process. Because you’re *sharing* with people, you’re *with* people, and their stories. I mean, that’s a self-sustaining thing... sharing your life

with people. We've done lots and lots of sharing. And I mean, I've publicly cried a lot of times in those circumstances. Other people's stories as well as my own.

The American feminist and social activist, bell hooks, argues that telling one's own story is an important part of developing confidence in one's vocal agency – coming to see oneself as 'a speaking subject worthy of voice' (hooks, 1994, p. 149). In this way, she suggests that:

Coming to voice is not just the act of telling one's experience. It is also using that telling strategically – to come to voice so that you can also speak freely about other subjects (hooks, 1994, p. 148).

Most importantly, the act of telling one's story also enables Sippers to tap into a collective sense of shared experience and thus of community. By speaking of their own fears and triumphs and hearing the stories of others, Sippers are able to discover commonality, realising that the frustrations and hurts they have experienced in the church are also shared by others who may otherwise stay silent in the pews on Sunday. Benedict Anderson (1991) offers a unique insight into this experience when he writes of unisonance as the collective synchronisation of imagined voices. While he depicts citizens joining in imagined national unison when singing a national anthem, Sippers hear themselves joining in unison with others as they 'sing' the stories of their lives at SIP. Indeed, at SIP and Catalyst meetings I regularly experienced the metaphor of story as song, with presenters sometimes finding they needed to break into song in order to do justice to the stories they were seeking to tell. As Anderson notes, these choruses join people together in deeply emotional ties of solidarity:

No matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes, there is in this singing an experience of simultaneity... How selfless this unisonance feels! If we are aware that others are singing these songs precisely when and as we are, we have no idea who they may be, or even where, out of earshot, they are singing. Nothing connects us all but imagined sound (Anderson, 1991, p. 145).

5.2.2.3 *Self-censored voice*

While some Sippers chose to speak out, albeit cautiously at first, others chose to demonstrate their vocal agency through silence, omission and self-censorship.

Although silence is typically understood as demonstrating a lack of agency (as outlined in section 5.2 above), by strategically performing acts of self-censorship when faced

with a religious script they could not accept, these Sippers have demonstrated that '[s]ilence and inarticulateness are not, in themselves, necessarily signs of powerlessness' (Gal, 1989, p. 2).

As Susan Gal and others have convincingly argued, the practice of muteness and self-censorship can be potent forms of strategic resistance in the face of oppression, enabling marginalised individuals to 'construct a new space for themselves and constitute themselves as agents of their own lives' (Nagar-Ron and Motzafi-Haller, 2011, p. 660).²¹ In the context of SIP, these strategic acts of self-censorship were adopted by some Sippers who, when reading the missal – the book of ritual text which is spoken during Catholic services²² – found themselves unable to stomach some of the words.

In 2011, all English-speaking churches were required to employ a new translation of the Roman missal when conducting church services. Words that had become second-nature to many Catholics were changed in order to more closely reflect the words of the original Latin text and thus to ensure greater uniformity across the Catholic world. In so doing, the new missal highlighted the divided nature of the Australian Catholic Church. While orthodox Australian commentators described the new text as 'reverential' and 'a triumph of tradition and intellectual rigour over post-modernism' (Livingstone, 2010), liberal Catholics such as Paul Collins, a famous Australian Catholic historian and occasional SIP speaker, described the new text as being full of the sort of 'pseudo mid-Victorian English that a minor 19th century romantic novelist might have used on a bad day' (in Zwartz, 2011a).

It is this type of 'archaic' vocabulary that prompted Sister Diana to commence her own 'one woman protest' of proactive censorship, as we saw in Chapter Four, by 'stealing' the new missal pew cards one week at a time. But this still left her with the question of what to say when the problematic words arose in Mass each week. As she explained to me in our interview:

I was talking to [a friend] about it recently. We were trying to work out whether we just continue to say the old ones— Well, that makes you angry.

²¹ See Thomson (2013), Koscianska (2009), and Nagar-Ron and Motzafi-Haller (2011) for vivid ethnographic examples of the power of silence and self-censorship as strategic resistance.

²² See Chapter Four, footnotes 24-26, for a more detailed description of the Roman missal and its translation.

If you're trying to get louder than the person beside you— Or, [you] go silent and say nothing.

But, I don't know. It hasn't happened at [my current parish] yet... They haven't got the cards so I'm quite happy to go along there. But I suppose Advent is the time when the Bishop will put out an edict or something which says that we are all supposed to be saying [it]. That will test [our priest], you know, whether he'll do it or not—

At the heart of many people's concerns was the absence of gender-neutral language in the new missal. While the text of the previous missal was full of male pronouns and imagery, in practice many Australian churches had replaced these words with either silence or gender-neutral alternatives. As a male Sipper in his sixties recounted to me:

I used to go through the readings and mark it in pencil. It's not hard, especially if you do it in advance. [But] I'd see one gentleman who'd walk up after the Mass and look at the book to see whether I'd, you know— 'what's he changing?'

Others turned the gender hierarchy on its head by replacing 'women' for 'men' in ritual texts such as the Nicene Creed. One Sipper, a nun and Catholic school teacher, shared with me her creative response to the creed's statement that Jesus died 'for us men and our salvation':

A lot of churches say 'for us and our salvation'... What I did one day at school was, I said a prayer with women in it instead of men in it. And I said, 'as we women pray together'. And I said, 'well that's how it feels when [I hear] 'we *men* pray together'... See, they weren't used to being called women. And I said, 'well I feel the same when we're called men!'

So when Sippers saw that the text of the new missal retained all the male-privileging words of the old missal, they saw this as yet another example of the hierarchy seeking to return the church to its pre-Vatican II values. In August 2011, Catalyst for Renewal hosted a seminar explaining the new changes, led by an eminent barrister and liturgical expert. But despite hearing the history, process and intention behind the changes, many attendees remained absolute in their unwillingness to embrace the new text. While the overall tone of the evening retained the respectful composure that is typical of most Catalyst meetings, one particularly distressed Catholic who we will call Joan came to have her voice clearly heard on the matter. She introduced herself as 'a very angry Catholic' and began by stridently asserting her intended audience:

Do you have a direct line to Archbishop Pell? Because, the only reason I'm here... It's like Rome is burning, and they're playing their fiddle while

Rome is burning. You know, I don't want you to comment on this. I just want you to take it back [to Archbishop Pell].

Having confirmed the presenter's access to authority, she addressed the focus of her concern:

They have the *audacity* to tell us that that the language of the common people was the original language? The original language was the language of the *common people*. And [they] want to turn it back to its old Latin so none of us understand it? I am just so *upset* with the church! And I hope that you go back and tell [Pell] *everything*... Who gave permission to this nobody? Just *one person* makes a decision and the rest of us are like little *lingerers*. They'll go along with it. I *saw* it at church. I saw *everybody*. We go along like a lot of sheep and *read* what's put in front of us.

The quote above starkly illustrates the polarising nature of the changes. By formally enunciating the values of a religious organisation, religious texts such as creeds and liturgies are 'organized attempts at boundary making' (Fountain, 2017, p. 207). As Joan's polemic demonstrated, changes to these texts can force devout church members to feel they have to choose a side: the 'I' who 'saw it at church' against the 'they' who will 'go along with it'; or the 'I' who shows religious agency by 'seeing' the performance of others, versus the 'everybody' who simply 'reads' whatever is put in front of them.

Philip Fountain suggests that by leading participants through collective refrains such as 'I believe', creeds 'perform and embody a monological script which leaves little space for diversity and differentiation' (Fountain, 2017, p. 207). Yet as Sippers have shown, even the monological force of the Catholic Church can be resisted through the strategic use of self-censorship. A few weeks after our interview, Sr Diana felt ready to share news of her protest at her local SIP. She tentatively took the microphone to respond to a presentation on 'Women in the Church: Hearing and giving voice to the other':

Sr Diana: I hesitate to say anything because I feel very despairing when we get onto a whole lot of this kind of stuff. Like, it's good to come here and it's nice to have this little group where we can be heard and say things that you wouldn't say in other places. But then I just think, 'where does it all go?' And I almost want to swear!...

Sipper: Oh – Go on! [laughter]

Sr Diana: No, there's too many connections to [my order] here! So I won't!

SIP group: [laughter]

Sr Diana: I have a little protest going at the moment in the parish that I'm in, and I won't tell you where it is! I'm systematically taking home one of their cards each Sunday [laughter]. And I am saying 'and also with *you*'²³ [laughter; 'hear hear!'] and 'for *us* and our salvation'²⁴ at the creed. So, I'm doing my own little protest. But the problem is my blood pressure will probably get the better of me! [laughs]

5.2.2.4 *Displaced voice*

For some Sippers, the overt practice of voicing their discontent out loud, whether via enunciation or omission, remained a step too far. In lieu of verbal statements, they preferred to adopt a more remote form of voice, one that is displaced or made distant to them via a mediated form such as a written document, yet one that still gives them the opportunity to express their thoughts and concerns. For some Sippers, this took the form of writing a personal letter to Church officials. One Sipper shared his thoughts on the idea with fellow attendees at Catalyst for Renewal's 2011 dinner for Bishop Morris. Feeling overwhelmed by the magnitude of what had been done to the bishop, and wondering what difference 'an ordinary Australian Catholic' could make, he suggested:

I had this crazy idea... I used to write letters to politicians... and I was just thinking, I suppose I could write a letter to the Pope, couldn't I? Do you know what I mean? It sounds silly, but— a letter of concern. Support for the Pope, but at the same time, expressing [my] concern as an individual Catholic. And I wonder if this might not be a way to go?

It sounds so stupid... [but] yeah, I do [write]. And I don't know whether it has an effect. But I write... And I feel that— Writing to the Pope and the Vatican, just as an ordinary Australian Catholic— No impact, at all, but [it]... reduces that level of tension... Belonging, but working to change.

Other Sippers felt that there was more strength to be found in joining the displaced voices of others, forming together to collectively draft communal expressions of concern. In the introduction to this thesis I shared the experience of attending one particularly lively SIP meeting in 2011, where representatives of a suburban parish described the efforts they had undertaken to make the voice of their parish heard by the Australian bishops. Having decided the time for 'just talking about it' was over, they had agreed to '*do something*' to get the attention of the Australian hierarchy. A group of about thirty parishioners worked together to draft a submission to the Australian

²³ In lieu of the new text, 'and with your spirit', which some Catholics feel is unduly alienating.

²⁴ In lieu of the text, 'for us men and for our salvation'.

Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) – the permanent collegial assembly of the bishops of Australia. Having carefully drafted a firm but respectful document outlining the concerns they had about the state of the Australian Church, they argued that ‘the Church is in great need of reform’, and proposed several initiatives that could offer a first step towards this much-needed reform.

The ACBC initially responded with courtesy. The Chairman of the ACBC referred the matter to the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life, whose representative met with them in a congenial conversation – albeit one that left them with the feeling that ‘we didn’t get very far’. In turn, he invited them to make a supplementary submission, which they did. Shortly thereafter, however, the head of the Bishops Commission replied in writing to say that ‘the things we were requesting were really outside the competence of his commission’, and that he would be referring the matter back to the ACBC’s permanent committee. About three weeks later, the parish priest received a phone call from the Secretary of the ACBC:

The phone call was a response, if you can call it a response, to our submission. And the content of the phone call was this: One, that the secretary of the bishop’s conference was instructed by the permanent committee to make this response. Two, the permanent committee thought that most of the things in our submission were beyond their competence [group murmurs and laughter]. And finally... this was to be the final conversation about this matter, and they wouldn’t continue the discussion with us. Full stop. *Finished!*

Despite being dismissed by the monological imagination of the ACBC, the parish was not to be deterred. They decided upon a letter writing campaign that would include all the parishes in their metropolitan region, all the individual bishops in Australia, the Chairman of ‘all the bishops of the world’, and lastly, the pope himself, to ‘give him an idea of what we were [concerned] about’. This letter writing campaign was to be supplemented by a further submission to the permanent committee of the ACBC, in the hope that they might be able to clarify their intent and convince the ACBC to take their concerns to Rome in an upcoming *ad limina* visit.²⁵

While some may suggest that even an ambitious letter writing campaign such as this will have little effect against the monological force of the Catholic Church, Sarah

²⁵ An *ad limina* visit is a visit to Rome that all bishops in the world are required to complete regularly, generally every five years, in which the bishops give an account of the state of their diocese to the Pope (Fanning, 1912).

Gammage and her colleagues argue that subordinated groups have a range of 'subtle, qualitative resources' which they can effectively 'bring to bear when they have intimate knowledge of those who have authority over them' (2016, p. 4). While the laity of the pre-Vatican II era had little visibility of the fields of power in which their religious leaders moved, many of today's laity are highly educated, widely read, and well-connected, both socially and electronically. Having studied the habitus of clerical elites, these lay members draft carefully worded documents that seek to speak in the language of their leaders so as to maximise the potential for their voices to be heard.

In so doing, these lay women and men collectively demonstrated their religious agency – claiming and enacting a dynamic religious identity which insists on 'active ownership' of what it means to be Catholic (Leming, 2007, p. 74). By coming together around a shared religious goal and agreed method of expression, these Sippers found they were able to amplify their individual voices and thus 'increase the likelihood of influence in ways that would not be possible for individual[s]... acting in isolation' (Gammage et al., 2016, p. 5). Most importantly however, as the parish representative explained to us at SIP, the process of drafting the submission was in itself a cathartic act of self-expression and identification:

It enabled people to see themselves as part of the universal church. To see themselves as *doing* something for the universal church. And it really was a sort of awakening for the people of the parish.

5.2.2.5 *Marginalised voice*

The final strategy of voice employed by Sippers is that of the marginalised voice. This was enacted by Sippers who had come to fully embrace the legitimacy of their voices, and with increasing confidence they were ready to demand they be heard. These loyal men and women loved their church, but were no longer willing to stand by and silently watch from the margins while the institution they loved was whittled back to its pre-Vatican II form. For some, it was simply a matter of feeling they now had little to lose. While they recognised that high profile speakers might be taking a risk by speaking out at SIP, as 'ordinary Catholics' they suggested that:

For most of us here, we're tired, and we've got nothing to lose. So, we are in a position of not having to worry too much about what we say, in terms of repercussions from the church.

Soon however, they realised that their very marginality could in fact be a hidden strength: 'I mean if you're standing somewhat on the margins you don't have to toe the line'. As Hillary, one of the founders of Catalyst for Renewal and SIP, described it:

I felt that the awful truth was the closer you were to the institution, in terms of working in it, I reckon the tougher it was. Which is a shocking, shocking thing to say. Really, it is. So that if you were actually on the edge of it, finding your own way— And of course that's exactly what we did in Catalyst. We did not depend on the church. We had our own— We ran our own race.

Many Sippers recognised that part of SIP's strategic marginality comes from Catalyst's decision to intentionally position SIP meetings off church property. But some Sippers saw a deeper dimension to SIP's marginality, seeing it as offering a prophetic voice to the broader Catholic community. As one Catalyst member said to me: 'SIP is a prophetic ministry... It's the very reason we exist: to bring fresh air where no fresh air exists'.

Refusing to silently assent to the monological force of the Catholic Church, these Sippers came to recognise the importance of leveraging their marginality in a voice which they came to describe as 'loyal dissent'. While some may argue that 'the subaltern cannot speak' (Spivak, 1988, p. 308), Sippers have shown that, at least within the context of the subalterity of the Catholic Church, their marginalised voices can indeed be raised and even heard. It is to this notion that our next chapter turns.

Chapter 6: Whose Church is it? – Owning identity and authority in the Catholic Church

6.1 A people rise up

It is rather remarkable to think that in the more than one hundred SIP and Catalyst events I attended over the course of my fieldwork, there were only three occasions on which the calm composure that typified these meetings was broken. The tenth of May 2011 was one of the most striking of these events. One week earlier, Bishop Morris's forced 'retirement' had been announced by the curia, and while in many ways the events that unfolded at SIP that night were a product of poor timing rather than revolutionary intent, they revealed the fiery undercurrent of hurt, anger and betrayal which many Sippers were feeling at the time, and perhaps continue to feel.

I had gathered along with about fifty other Sippers in a suburban Victorian pub to hear a renowned Australian academic and clinical psychologist speak to us on the topic of *'Stumbling blocks to lay leadership – Where might the spirit take us?'*. She delivered a thoroughly prepared presentation which drew on both her psychological expertise and personal experience to offer a carefully nuanced argument for the importance of understanding our own psychological and spiritual motivations when seeking change within the Church. She reflected on the need to eschew psychologically attractive but socially destructive dynamics such as scapegoating and victimisation when working towards these goals, and drew on René Girard's theory of mimetic desire to structure her argument (eg. Girard, 1988). At the end of her presentation she left us with several questions to consider as we reflected on how we might better work towards increased lay leadership in the Church. So far, this had been a fairly average night at SIP.

After the usual short break in which we refreshed our drinks and chatted amongst ourselves, question time began. The first question centred on how Sippers should understand the notion of victimhood in the context of Bishop Morris's treatment – was the speaker suggesting that we should see the Vatican as a victim in this situation also? Her response, albeit hesitating, sought to explain that while the Vatican was probably not 'the victim' in all this, we need to recognise that scapegoating and victimisation often plays out behind closed doors and so perhaps we will never know the truth of

who was affected by the decision regarding Bishop Morris. This was not the sort of answer to calm an aggrieved crowd.

Then a barrel-chested older man who we will call Gabriel came to the microphone. He cleared his throat and began by introducing himself and telling a small joke to break the ice. But then, in a big booming voice like that of a radio host he turned to the topic at hand: 'Stumbling blocks to lay leadership'. He referenced an article by religious commentator Barney Zwartz that had been published in *The Age* newspaper the day before (Zwartz, 2011b). Gabriel summarised it as saying that 'the biggest obstacle to the Catholic faith is the Vatican'. Gabriel went on to review the widespread involvement that lay members now had in the church 'because they *need* to be. The priests aren't there anymore... Because it's a necessity'. From there his voice started rising in both pace and volume:

And yet we see the Bishop of Toowoomba has just been sacked from his role because he *dared* to speak out in 2006, suggesting that we need to *look* at the opportunity that we might need to ordain married men and women. To— to *look at the issue!* And because of that he was *sacked*. And the angle from the curia was 'the pope appointed you, the pope has the *right* to sack you, for any reason whatsoever'.

I think— That sort of attitude, that doctrinaire attitude, the authoritarian attitude, the church will never change, unless we are *uprising* like the people of Egypt, to say, 'enough is enough!' It's *OUR CHURCH* [almost shouting] *NOT YOURS, Pope!* It's *OUR* church, not yours alone. We *ALL* belong to this church. I think we've got to be more *dominant* in the future. We've got to be *militant!* To get the church to *go*. Otherwise, it's going to fade, in my view, 'cos it's time for the end.

With that, Gabriel sat down to a rousing round of applause from his fellow Sippers, a few of whom called out with cries of 'hear hear' to affirm their support. For the rest of the evening, the presenter tried to pour calming oils on the troubled waters, asking the audience to consider 'how can we corral this energy... without fermenting the destructiveness [of it]'. Yet her audience continued in their frustrated vein, with one Sipper suggesting:

Sometimes you *have* to be head on. You have to *confront* the issue. And it's the catalyst for change. So... you take the risk to confront the issue, so that you can be an instrument for change... *Someone* has to take the risk.

This was an audience which our presenter was unlikely to win over. And while the MC for the evening thanked the speaker for taking a 'different' and unusually 'analytic' approach to the question, when speaking with audience members afterwards several of

them opined to me that they did not get what they had come for. They said they had wanted to gather ideas of ‘things to do in order to try and encourage lay leadership in the church, not a reflective piece [like this] but an active piece... And really, what [the presenter] suggested we do is pray and be passive!’

6.2 Exit, voice and loyalty – Should I stay or should I go?

The question of whether to stay and ‘fight on’ or to quietly pack up and leave the Church was a consistent theme at SIP meetings. As one gentleman asked at a SIP evening:

How long do you stick with the show? Or do you bloody become a bomb-thrower or something? I mean that metaphorically, of course... [But] I don’t see many manifestations of dissent around the system. One does a fairly lonely part in this process.

Without groups like SIP, it seems that people such as our ‘bomb-thrower’ would have ‘left the show’ a long time ago, disillusioned by the lonely feeling of being a solitary voice of dissent against the monologic force of the Catholic Church. Yet while many agreed that they were disillusioned with the Church, whenever the topic of whether to leave would arise there was almost always someone who would pipe up with a reason to stay. Some would simply state, ‘I’m not going to hand over my heritage’, or, ‘it’s too good to leave to the nasties’. But often someone would speak up with a reminder of the communal dimension of this decision:

I just have to make a little comment on whether it matters whether you stay or go. Now— It does matter. It matters to the other people around you. I think it matters to them if you stay or go... And as for the effect we have on people, we don’t really know how we effect people... There’s lots of little things we do, lots of little seeds we sow, lots of little bricks we chip, and we don’t know what effect we’re having. But there’s always some effect.

Or as another Sipper put it, in the wake of the dismissal of Bishop Morris:

We don’t seem to have any power but I think there’s the opportunity to have conversation. The opportunity to let those people know that we are in solidarity with them certainly has to make a difference to me, and it has to make a difference to them. I don’t think *my* moving outside the Church or being with the Church makes *any* difference but certainly my writing a letter to those people personally, my letting people know how I feel, has to make a difference to them, and it makes a difference to me [applause].

Of course, the Catholic Church is not the only institution to face opposition within its ranks. Early conceptualisations of the question of whether to leave a group or stay and voice one's concerns were based on a model offered by the political economist Albert Hirschman in his 1970 book, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*. Hirschman argues that 'consumers' of an organisation, whether a business, state, church or any other form of organised social group, have two options when they become dissatisfied with the organisation's products or services. The simple choice is to exit. This is a relatively 'neat', clear cut economic concept – one chooses to either leave or stay. Traditional economic theory proposed that the exit option is 'uniquely powerful' – by walking away the individual takes their potential contribution with them, in essence 'inflicting revenue losses on delinquent management' and thereby sending a strong message of dissatisfaction in absentia (Hirschman, 1970, p. 21).

In contrast, Hirschman sees voice as a 'political' and thus more 'messy' concept, one that exists on a continuum 'from faint grumbling to violent protest' (p. 16). Voice represents an attempt 'to change, rather than escape from, an objectionable state of affairs' (p.30). And although both exit and voice act as a message from consumer to management that something is amiss, exit spells the end of the relationship while voice implies an invitation to ongoing dialogue: an 'articulation of one's critical opinions rather than a private, "secret" vote in the anonymity of a supermarket' (Hirschman, 1970, p. 16).

This model offers unique insights for understanding the options facing Sippers. Hirschman argues that the choice between exit and voice is influenced by the member's expectations regarding the likely effectiveness of voice in getting the organisation 'back on track', the group's 'general readiness' to complain, and the presence of mechanisms by which to communicate one's complaints effectively (Hirschman, 1970, pp. 38, 43). According to this model, 'exit will therefore be a reaction of *last resort* after voice has failed' (Hirschman, 1970, p. 37).

While a 'general readiness' to complain did not characterise the Catholic Church of the early twentieth century, the Second Vatican Council brought with it increased expectations for the likely efficacy of lay voice and introduced numerous channels for lay participation in church affairs. This then influenced the decision by some Vatican II era members such as Sippers to stay in the Church, feeling that they want to 'do

something' about the Church's decline, and deciding that they will only be able to do so by remaining members of the Church. In this way, dissenting Catholics who choose to remain within the organisation seek to keep open the door to ongoing dialogue, in a hope that they can change their Church from within.

Yet Hirschman's model thus far does not explain the full scope of Sippers' behaviour. He argues that the institutional stifling of dissent will typically lead to increased exit patterns; yet as Chapter Five has demonstrated, many Sippers are willing to stay and 'speak back' to the monological imagination of the Catholic hierarchy. This is because exit and voice are not the only variables at play, and Hirschman accounts for this with the concept of loyalty. In situations where the possibility of exit is virtually 'unthinkable' for its members, such as we have seen in the accounts of Catholic identity found in Chapter Four, voice and loyalty correlate: 'the likelihood of voice increases with the degree of loyalty' (p. 77). Whether this is due to heartfelt devotion to the organisational cause, or a complex process of 'self-deception' (p. 93) in which members convince themselves that the high costs of exit – such as loss of community, status and identity – are unnecessary, loyalty 'thereby pushes men [sic] into the alternative, creativity-requiring course of action from which they would normally recoil... the use of voice' (p. 80). In this way, Hirschman unknowingly provides an early insight into the concept of 'loyal dissent' which underpins the Catalyst for Renewal movement. At the heart of this concept lie complex questions around authority and ownership in the Catholic Church.

6.3 Authority and ownership – Whose church is it anyway?

[A]uthority is often best analyzed by attending not to what the authority figures say, but to what the recipients of an order hear. If what is said is not regularly heard and heeded, it is difficult to argue that we have an instance of authority.

(Stagaman, 1999, p. 47)

Calls for a laity-led 'uprising', such as that voiced by Gabriel in the introduction above, are a relatively recent phenomenon in the Catholic Church. Up until the papacy of John XXIII – the pope who called the Second Vatican Council – a clear and widely-accepted division of labour had existed in the Church between leaders and followers. The

rhetoric of divinely-appointed inequality has featured consistently in papal statements since the sixteenth-century, when the Council of Trent first proposed the church as a perfect but unequal society. In the mid-nineteenth century Pope Gregory XVI argued: 'no one can doubt that the Church is an unequal society, in which God has destined some to rule and some to serve' (in Boff, 1981a, p. 50). As recently as 1906, Pope Pius X reaffirmed this stance, stating:

[T]he Church is essentially an unequal society, that is, a society comprising two categories of persons, the Pastors and the flock, those who occupy a rank in the different degrees of the hierarchy and the multitude of the faithful... So distinct are these categories that with the pastoral body only rests the necessary right and authority for promoting the end of the society and directing all its members towards that end; the one duty of the multitude is to allow themselves to be led, and, like a docile flock, to follow the Pastors (Pius X, 1906).

Such statements are met by laughter when read aloud at SIP meetings in the current era, but for much of the first two millennia of the Church this was a widely accepted representation of reality: the pope, curia, bishops and priests led, while the laity obediently followed. From this perspective, 'the Christian lay person [was] made to believe that, due to being a simple Christian, he or she [was] faced with divine givens that exclude or subordinate the lay person to a group whose power comes from above' (Boff, 1981b, p. 43). And while the original Greek meaning of the word 'laity' meant 'of the people' and thus represented *all* baptised members of the 'People of God' – including popes, bishops and priests – as the ecclesiastical division of labour strengthened over time, the term came to signify 'non-clerics': those who are dispossessed of the symbolic means required for the production of salvation. This is the field Bourdieu was thinking of when he proposed his notion of religious capital, arguing that religious specialists monopolise the 'administration of the goods of salvation' via maintaining a 'deliberately organized corpus of secret... knowledge' (1991b, p. 9). In this way:

The constitution of the religious field goes hand in hand with the objective dispossession of those who are excluded from it and who thereby find themselves constituted as the *laity* (or the *profane*, in the double meaning of the word), dispossessed of religious capital (as accumulated symbolic labor) and recognizing the legitimacy of that dispossession by the mere fact that they misrecognize it as such (Bourdieu, 1991b, p. 9, original emphasis).

At the heart of the Catholic division between clergy and laity lies a sixteenth-century distinction between the 'teaching church' (*Ecclesia docens*) and the 'learning church'

(*Ecclesia discens*). According to this model of church, the active reception of divine revelation was said to be the prerogative of the hierarchy, while passive acceptance of the mediated revelation was the duty of the laity.¹ Or in other words, the *Ecclesia docens* 'knows everything and interprets everything' while the *Ecclesia discens* 'know nothing, produce nothing and receive everything' (Boff, 1981a, p. 50).

This distinction rests on the concept of the magisterium as the teaching unit of the church, and was developed at a time when the model of all teaching, whether secular or religious, was 'one of an authoritarian imparting of information' (Daly, 1981, p. 52). From this perspective, learning was seen as an 'exercise of obedience' rather than as an opportunity for discovery (Kelly, 1988a, p. 474). While such a perspective might seem ludicrous to many modern intellects, in the almost two millennia between the third-century formation of the institutional Church to the dawn of the Second Vatican Council, this model of church held sway in the Catholic faith. Much of the authority of the model came from a largely unquestioned belief in the infallibility of the Roman Church and its leaders.

6.3.1 Infallibility, assent and the simple faithful

The Catholic doctrine of infallibility draws its roots from the Gospels, when Jesus instructed his followers to go and preach his commands, promising that the Holy Spirit will 'guide you into all the truth' (John 16:13). While this is not a promise that the leaders of the Church will never make mistakes, it is interpreted in the Catholic Church as affirming the inability of the magisterium to fundamentally err in matters pertaining to salvation (Gaillardetz, 2003).

In order to preserve the laity from 'deviations and defections', the Church has specified three means by which the magisterium may speak infallibly ("Christ's faithful", 1993, n. 891). The first form of infallibility, known as papal infallibility,² was defined at the First

¹ As section 6.3.2 will show, most theologians since Vatican II have argued that the *Ecclesia docens* and *Ecclesia discens* relate to different functions of the church, rather than different groups within it (eg. Boff, 1981b, pp. 138–40). However, the long-standing distinction between these two groups still fundamentally shapes the Catholic habitus today.

² The notion of papal infallibility is commonly misunderstood to mean that everything the pope says comes directly from God and thus must be true. Indeed, curial statements often magnify this perception – for example, when then Cardinal Ratzinger (later to be Pope Benedict XVI) stated that the pope is the 'spokesman for the will of the Lord' (Ratzinger, 1998, n. 7). However, specific requirements must be met

Vatican Council in 1870, at a time when papal power was being threatened by secular forces. Since that time, the Church has proposed two other forms of infallibility: conciliar infallibility, which is said to occur when all the bishops of the Church gather together with the Pope in an ecumenical or general council to solemnly define church doctrine;³ and collegial infallibility, which is exercised when, in the course of their ordinary teaching on faith and morals, the Catholic bishops of the world, including the Pope, are in agreement that a particular teaching is 'definitively to be held' by the faithful (Second Vatican Council, 1964a, n. 25).⁴

Canon law is clear that the magisterium must meet certain criteria when seeking to speak infallibly, including being explicit about the fact that they intend their statement to be infallibly held (*The Teaching Function of the Church*, 1983, c. 749§3). Yet despite this decree, 'sometimes Rome teaches reformable doctrines as if they were definitively closed, seeking to apply "the cloak of infallibility" to teachings that have not been formally defined' (Kaufman, 1989, p. xiv). Instead of providing a reasoned framework from which believers might be able to structure their active assent to a doctrine, the curia 'never argue their position; they simply state it' (Curran, 2001, p. 69). This 'creeping infallibility', where both infallible and non-infallible church teachings are considered equally beyond criticism, is a new feature of Catholic ecclesiology which concerns many theologians (Curran and McCormick, 1988).

Indeed, the question of contraception – perhaps the most substantial moral question in the Catholic Church of the 1960s and 1970s – provided a lightning rod for debate over whether Catholics may dissent from non-infallible statements of the magisterium.

for a papal statement to be considered infallible. These criteria include 1) that the Pope is acting *ex cathedra* (literally, 'from the chair' of Peter) as universal pastor of the Church (and thus not in a personal capacity); 2) that he is confirming an issue of faith or morals which has already been divinely revealed and belongs to the apostolic faith; and 3) that he makes clear his intention to solemnly define the doctrine by right of his supreme apostolic authority (Gaillardetz, 2003; Kaufman, 1989; Stagaman, 1999). In fact, most Catholic theologians agree that papal infallibility has been exercised only twice in the history of the Church: once when Pius IX defined the Immaculate Conception of Mary in 1854, and again in 1950 when Pius XII defined the Assumption of Mary to heaven (Stagaman, 1999).

³ The Nicene Creed and its definition of the divinity of Christ is an example of a such an infallible teaching, having been solemnly defined at the Council of Nicaea (Gaillardetz, 2003).

⁴ Collegial infallibility is technically called the infallibility of the 'ordinary universal magisterium'. After Pope John Paul II issued *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* on women's ordination, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith argued that that this was an exercise of the ordinary universal magisterium, being representative of a long-standing belief of the bishops of the Church (Ratzinger, 1995). However, many teachings of the ordinary universal magisterium are never enunciated in formal statements in this way, having not been seriously challenged. Belief in the communion of the saints or the resurrection of the body after death are two such examples of infallibly-held but undefined teachings of the ordinary universal magisterium (Gaillardetz, 2003).

Father Charles Curran is an American priest and moral theologian who has become infamous in the Catholic Church for his decision to assert the believer's right to dissent against the Church's ruling on birth control, arguing that *Humanae Vitae* was not an infallible statement (Curran, 1988, p. 402). Within days of the publication of *Humanae Vitae*, Curran and others had drafted a statement of dissent that over six hundred theologians and Catholic scholars would go on to sign. 'Overnight, dissent became a front-burner issue' (McCormick, 1993).

Over the coming years, Curran came to be known as a leader in the movement to recognise dissent as a fundamental right of lay Catholics: 'an expression of honest loyalty to, and co-responsibility with, both the church's magisterium and the entire People of God' (Häring, 1988, pp. 373–4). Indeed, he and others argued that this right becomes a duty when the good of the Church is involved. Many moral theologians offered themselves up as clear examples of this duty after *Humanae Vitae*, highlighting the moral mandate they felt to educate lay people about the choices available to them in response to the various levels of the church's 'hierarchy of truths'. As the Benedictine monk, Philip Kaufman, argued, 'to deprive Catholics of the knowledge of legitimate choices in their moral decision-making, to insist that moral issues are closed when actually they are still open, is itself immoral' (Kaufman, 1989, p. xiii).

However, as Curran's case makes clear, the Vatican's key concern seemed less centred on the absence of assent (in other words, silent dissent) and more focused on the presence of explicit, public and organised dissent. While, in practice, lay Catholics have dissented in droves from the Church's teaching on birth control, such dissent occurs in private. In contrast, Curran's decision to bring his dissent to the media was seen as presenting his personal judgement as if it were on par with that of the magisterium. Indeed, twenty years after *Humanae Vitae* was released, Cardinal William Levada, later appointed as head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, asserted unequivocally that:

Catholic theology does not recognize the right to dissent, if by that we mean adopting conclusions which are contrary to the clear teachings of the authoritative, non-infallible magisterium and are presented to the public in such a way as to constitute equivalently an alternative, personal magisterium (Levada, 1988, p. 147).

By publicly promoting his dissenting opinion, Curran was told that he ‘runs the risk of causing scandal to the faithful’ and that as such he should ‘assume a certain responsibility for the confusion caused by setting up one’s own theological opinion in contradiction to the position taken by the church’ (Ratzinger, in Allen Jr, 2001, p. 278).⁵ At the heart of this concern for scandal lies the magisterium’s tendency to see the laity as the docile and silenced *Ecclesia discens*, or in Curran’s words, ‘poor and ignorant sheep who had to be protected and helped’ (1988, p. 403). Cardinal Ratzinger epitomised this view when he stated in a sermon in 1979: ‘The Christian believer is a simple person: bishops should protect the faith of their little people against the power of intellectuals’ (in Robertson, 2010, p. 163). Yet, while such a statement may have sat comfortably in the pre-Vatican II Church, it ignores the fundamental revisioning that Vatican II offered of the role of the laity in the church – a revisioning that some senior church leaders have yet to fully embrace.

6.3.2 Vatican II and the ‘sense of the faithful’

“One is only teaching when someone is being taught” ... Teaching fails to be teaching when not accepted by those taught.

(Kaufman, 1989, p. 71)

Kate Engelbrecht is a product of the Vatican II era. Although she only came to the Catholic Church in her young adulthood, like most of her fellow Sippers she has embraced the emancipatory message of the Second Vatican Council with enthusiasm. As she states in her introduction to an article in *The Mix* on ‘The role of the laity in the Church’, the term ‘laity’ speaks to her of a pre-Vatican II ecclesiology:

I would like to drop the word laity. The word reeks of negativity; it smacks of being unqualified and not clerical. It marks the clergy as a primary reference point, and fails to reflect a new ecclesiology. The word does not speak to me of who I am; I do not feel like the bottom rung on any hierarchical ladder. Rather, I feel like a woman called into a relationship with Christ; I feel like one of the chosen people of God (Engelbrecht, 1996, p. 4).

⁵ In this context, scandal has a technical theological meaning, ‘referring to an action or omission that provides another or others with the occasion of sin’ (McCormick, 1988, p. 419). But equally applicable is the commonsense understanding of scandal, which might be understood as ‘the wonderment and confusion caused by a certain action or omission’ (Curran, 1988, p. 403).

As she continues, she seeks to instill this empowered sense of self-identity in her readers:

[O]ur role... our vocation... our ministry... [is] to reclaim a sense of the spirituality at the heart of our tradition, to plunge back into silent conversation with God, to remember and participate in the process which is discipleship in Christ, to remember and participate in – and to remain hopeful in – the dynamic tradition which is behind all the structures in our Church (p. 5).

Such a vibrant call for the full participation of the laity in the mission of the Church seems at odds with the Church's traditional distinction between *Ecclesia docens* and *Ecclesia discens*. But the Second Vatican Council turned this distinction on its head, proposing that lay people were not simply destined to silently follow their leaders, but were instead a key part of the apostolate, or mission, of the Church. By virtue of their baptism and confirmation, lay people were told they had a right and a duty to share in the mission of the Church, having been 'appointed to this apostolate by the Lord himself' (Second Vatican Council, 1964a, n. 33). No longer were the laity to be considered second-rate citizens due to their non-clerical status. Rather, in a vote which passed with the affirmation of two-thousand, one hundred and fifty-one bishops to only five negative votes (Gaillardetz, 2006), the Council declared that the lay state was a vocation to be valued as equally as that of clerical and religious vocations, all of which were recognised as essential components of the whole 'People of God'.

At the heart of this new ecclesiology was the concept of the 'sense of the faithful' and the role of the laity in 'receiving' and thus legitimating the doctrine of the magisterium. Rather than maintaining the distinction between 'teacher' and 'taught', the whole 'People of God' were recognised by the Council as equal and necessary participants in the collective construction and transmission of the faith. Through the sacrament of baptism, each believer was understood to have received a God-given instinct, or 'sense of the faith' (*sensus fidei*) – a 'sixth sense' if you will, that enables the believer to recognise the 'truth of the faith' and respond to it, while also being able to identify that which opposes this truth (Congar, 1981, p. 74; Rush, 2017). Individually, this instinct is understood to be manifest in a believer's conscience, which acts as a 'practical wisdom' that enables the believer to apply their *sensus fidei* to concrete situations (Rush, 2017).

Furthermore, the Council argued that this individual-level sense of the faith also operates collectively, in what they termed a 'sense of the faithful', or *sensus fidelium*. Operating as a kind of collective consciousness (cf. Durkheim, [1912] 1965, [1893] 1984), the *sensus fidelium* represents 'that which the whole people of God in fact believe' (Gaillardetz, 1997, p. 234). While orthodox voices such as Cardinal Levada (1988) are careful to point out that this concept is not simply akin to a public opinion poll, it is generally agreed that the concept of the *sensus fidelium* recognises the collective wisdom to be found when the faithful are united in a shared belief. Indeed, some theologians argue that this wisdom represents a fourth form of infallibility for the church, 'ecclesial infallibility', supporting their argument by drawing on the Council's affirmation that the *sensus fidelium* 'cannot err' when it is united in agreement (Second Vatican Council, 1964a, n. 12).⁶

The Catholic doctrine of 'reception' is key to understanding this dynamic. This doctrine is understood as 'the process by which a particular teaching, decision or practice comes to be accepted into the life of the Church' (Collinge, 2012, p. 371). However, it is by no means a neatly defined procedure. In the first millennium, when Christian churches remained largely independent of each other, reception was a process by which local churches received, assimilated and transformed the various teachings, rituals and practices which came from beyond their own community. This process required active discernment by local church members, who would assess the appropriateness of the doctrine or practice for revealing God's truth within their own lives and community. This ecclesial dynamic was overshadowed in the late Middle Ages by a hierocratic model of church that depicted reception as a matter of simple obedience; however, the Second Vatican Council brought ecclesial reception back into focus when it emphasised the active participation of the whole 'People of God' in confirming and communicating the faith. Indeed, as Luigi Sartori (1981) argues:

The *sensus fidei* cannot flourish in a Church where the consensus is expressed as mechanical repetition by an anonymous crowd; only free persons who freely communicate with one another can realise true consensus (p. 57).

⁶ The broader context of this passage makes it clear that the Council was not suggesting the laity hold a separate charism of infallibility 'in contradistinction to the infallible charism given to the Magisterium' (Gasser, [1870] 2008, p. 106). However, it does recognise that even 'the last of the lay faithful' plays an essential role in affirming the truthfulness of church teachings – a role that is as equally valid as that of the magisterium (Second Vatican Council, 1964a, n. 12).

At the heart of the conciliar understanding of reception lay the concept of dialogue. As early as the First Vatican Council, bishops were being urged to engage with their communities to understand ‘the mind of the church’ before seeking to formally define church teachings in their magisterial capacity (First Vatican Council, 1870). By the Second Vatican Council, it was clear that this engagement was not to be considered merely polite or pragmatic; rather, it recognised the integral role of the *sensus fidelium* in enunciating church beliefs. In this way, the role of the bishops was not to teach new revelation but instead to confirm the existing revelations which had already been passed on to the Church: ‘That which was taught by the bishops was always understood, in some sense, to be already in the possession of the Church’ (Gaillardetz, 2003, p. 113). As such, the ‘truth’ of the Catholic faith was to be found not in authoritarian edicts but instead as an emergent property of the ‘to and fro movement of proclamation, reception, assimilation and transformation’ that lay at the heart of the early church (Gaillardetz, 1997, p. 230). In other words, Vatican II recognised that the truth of Catholicism lives not in declarations, but in dialogue.

6.4 ‘It’s our Church too!’: SIP and loyal dissent

Catalyst for Renewal heard this call for dialogue and responded with vigour, affirming in *The Mix* that ‘there is no more urgent task than putting the Church in dialogue with itself, at all levels and across all divisions’ (Allen Jr, 2004, p. 5). Furthermore, they took seriously the Vatican II call to listen carefully to their conscience as they prayerfully took up their role in the royal priesthood of the people of God. This is the same conscience that is now calling them to embrace their identities as faithful Catholics by speaking up in a loyal but critically-engaged dialogue, founded on the recognition that ‘it’s our Church too’. In the words of one lay associate, addressing a SIP evening in September 2010:

The task of lay ministry is to transform ourselves so that we might transform our world. It’s *our* church. We have a responsibility! Speak up!... When you do, you’ll be a threat to others. They’ll call you names, and try to put you in your place... But we’re *all equal*, as equal to anyone, even the pope. No one is more baptised than anyone else! You’re all ordained at your baptism. Own it! Claim it! *Use* it! After all, you’ve got Jesus on your side.

This theme of a need for equality in the Church was a consistent one at SIP meetings. Some focused on their experiences of inequality, commenting that ‘we’re still being

ruled by a feudal monarchy', or that 'the popes and the bishops are still sitting up there like they think that they're the kings and the queens'. But others insisted that it was time to turn the tables on the hierarchy: 'you know, we are *more* than the popes', they would argue; 'I'm not going to let anyone walk over me!', they would add. In fact, one middle-aged Sipper went so far as to say that 'the bishops need to be reminded that they work for us. We don't work for them!' – a statement that was met with enthusiastic applause, laughter and calls of 'hear, hear!' by fellow Sippers.

Anthony Giddens might call statements such as this representative of an emancipatory political agenda within SIP. Seeking to shed the 'shackles' of the past, emancipatory projects strive to liberate individuals and groups from traditional structures of power such as gender, class and ethnicity so as to overcome 'exploitative, unequal or oppressive social relations' (Giddens, 1991, pp. 210–213). Indeed, many Sippers would agree that the task of freeing their voices from the shackles of the monologic Church, as discussed in Chapter Five, represents an emancipatory project according to this definition. However, I suggest that a solitary focus on the emancipatory lens fails to adequately capture the enduring framework of embodied religious identity and institutional loyalty which Sippers actively embrace as they work to renew their Church. When I asked one SIP presenter why she said she loves the Church after she had just outlined the many ways it oppresses people, she stated with surprise: 'Why do I love the Church? Well — it's *ours*! It belongs to us, and us to it'. Indeed, when someone would get caught up in presenting a depressing image of the Church at SIP, others would often chime in with a friendly reminder of their own responsibility and agency: 'Call it what you like, but it's your Church too!'

Yet Giddens argues that the 'main orientation' of emancipatory politics 'tends to be "away from" rather than "towards"' (1991, p. 213), implying that emancipators focus more on moving 'away from' structures of oppression than moving 'towards' a particular new configuration of social relations. This is quite different from Catalyst for Renewal's very conscious articulation of the goal towards which they strive: establishing a forum for conversation within the Australian Catholic Church which promotes 'unity in what is necessary, freedom in what is unsettled, and charity in any case' (Second Vatican Council, 1965c). Looking to the model of communal deliberation which they see epitomised in the ecclesiology of the early church, many Sippers have a very clear image indeed of what it is that they are seeking to move 'towards'.

This is not to suggest that unity, freedom and charity form a single clarion call within which all Sippers' voices are united in a collectively loyal discourse. Like any institution, Catalyst and SIP experience a dialectic tension between the core and periphery; between those who hold steadfastly to Catalyst's commitment to loyal and respectful dialogue, and those who come bearing the scars of decades of hurt and silencing which they can no longer calmly contain. Such diversity of experience was apparent as I travelled around the various inner city, suburban and rural locations in which SIP meetings were held, seeing some SIP locations that were consistently voicing their hurts while others seemed more hopeful for the future of the Church. Yet, while I was unable to identify the defining feature that would predict which type of location would be more likely to adopt the 'hurting' profile and which would be more likely to be 'hopeful', I soon realised that it is in the creative tension between these two expressions of faith that Catalyst finds its unique identity as it seeks to enunciate loyal dissent within the Australian Catholic Church.

To focus on dissent alone to the exclusion of loyalty is to do a great injustice to Catalyst for Renewal and to the many other pro-change groups which seek to advance the Catholic Church while remaining firmly within its structure and tradition. As the British moral theologian, Kevin Kelly argues:

The term 'dissent' has no feel for all that is positive in such a position – respect for tradition, concern for the truth, love of the Church, shared responsibility for the Church's mission in the world. It does not express the respect for teaching authority in the Church which motivates someone adopting this kind of stance (Kelly, 1988b, p. 480).

As such, the following sections will treat loyalty and dissent separately before concluding with a discussion of the three key strategies of loyal dissent pursued by Catalyst and SIP.

6.4.1 Loyalty

Of this I am certain, that protest made from outside the framework of the church itself is no protest at all.

(Harvey, 1996, p. 3)

In the early days of Catalyst for Renewal, its founding members asked themselves some tough questions about where they should best place their energies as they sought renewal within the Church. Some members of the group proposed that they should take an activist political stance, seeking to overtly challenge the power of the Australian bishops through protests and petitions. One member in particular, a relatively recent convert to Catholicism, had also been a very senior public servant and so was a firm believer in the need to 'speak truth to power'. On the other hand, other members of the group suggested that 'if you came out and took the bishops on, front on, you invariably lost'. Rather, they proposed that the group should undertake 'a much more subtle process of building a whole raison d'être'. As one Catalyst leader explained to me, this 'quiet build' of collective identity was to become grounded in:

...that idea of renewal through conversation, not renewal through protest and banging the drum and all that. A much different philosophy. A slower, gentler way. No less effective but not so loud as the 'let's storm the barricades' sort of thing.

In time, the proponents of 'renewal through conversation' won out and the voices of protest left the group to take up their activism elsewhere. Yet this story of early schism was not often talked about during my fieldwork. Indeed, only two of my SIP friends agreed to tell me their understanding of what happened in those early days, albeit in rather general terms. While some may see this early experience of division as a discordant note in an otherwise wholesome history of group unity, I suggest that the challenging conversations this schism would have entailed served as a vital proving ground for the vision that Catalyst would soon enunciate, thus enabling the group to remain true to its vision over the subsequent decades while avoiding the factionalism that is common amongst autonomous and countercultural religious communities (cf. Ansell, 2001, pp. 15–36).

As Catalyst and SIP grew to become a national presence, the Executive Committee of Catalyst for Renewal was highly conscious of the need to ensure that the growing organisation held true to its commitment to institutional loyalty. Soon, they would draft official documents which clearly asserted their allegiance:

Catalyst for Renewal... is not a canonical organisation within the Church. However, it does quite explicitly and publicly seek to remain loyal to, and always supportive of, the authentic tradition of the Catholic Church...

Catalyst is quite deliberate and explicit about remaining committed to, and in, the historical, social and institutional reality we call the Catholic Church.

Over time, they developed a series of policies to support the planning of Catalyst events and guide the development of new SIPs within this framework of institutional loyalty. Some of these policies were explicitly promoted and formed part of a 'Memorandum of Understanding' which new groups would approve, while other policies emerged as required, when groups would find themselves facing unexpected opposition from a hostile bishop and would write to the committee seeking advice. In this way, policy development remained an iterative process and Catalyst executives modelled the vision of deliberative and prayerful dialogue that they had first enunciated in those early days as a group.

Some of Catalyst's policies of loyalty-affirming practices include (Catalyst for Renewal Inc., 2002):

- 'Engage in constant prayer, reflection and self-examination to minimise the possibility of personal agenda distorting our work';
- 'Model or witness what we are intending to communicate and promote';
- 'Speak in accord with the mind of the Church, and, as far as possible, give references from official Church documents to support any significant statements we make';
- 'Build up rather than tear down, affirm rather than negate... facilitate bridge-building... avoid being preoccupied by what is wrong or not happening';
- 'Keep emphasising baptism and what unites us as Christ's faithful';
- 'Use language that is clear and free of emotional overtones, avoiding words and images that are tendentious or inflammatory'.

One of Catalyst's principal policies regards how to work effectively with Church officials. Policy documents emphasise the importance of building and maintaining open and respectful communication with the hierarchy (Catalyst for Renewal Inc., 2002):

[K]eep lines of communication open with appropriate Church officials, informing them of developments with our work as appropriate; leave Church officials room to manoeuvre and save face; generally avoid forcing a Church official to choose publicly between his or her personal opinion and official Church requirements.

During my fieldwork, new SIP and Catalyst groups were encouraged to reach out to their local parish priest and bishop to 'introduce' their new initiative. They were

advised not to 'seek permission', because, by situating SIP meetings off church grounds, no permission was required. But rather, they were encouraged to 'extend an invitation' for church officials to 'give their blessing' to the new initiative, and even to speak at a SIP or Catalyst meeting. Many parish priests responded with enthusiasm. Some bishops responded promptly with their blessing also. Yet threads of resistance remained. This would show itself in the occasional abrupt letter from a bishop who dismissed Catalyst's attempt to embrace the 'spirit of Vatican II' and asked to be taken off their mailing list. Or in a phone call from a parish priest who wanted to protest against the 'offensive and insensitive' selection of a gay rights activist as speaker at an upcoming SIP sponsored by his deanery. These incidents required careful handling by Catalyst, whose executive team would engage in a flurry of phone calls and emails to discuss the best path forward. During one such incident their emails confirmed:

We must avoid, in so far as it is possible, allowing SIP to become a platform for campaigners, especially when they are so publicly at odds with current Church practice and teaching.

So what do we do from here? This is the kind of single incident that can feed the scare mongers and doubters alike and lead to some serious opposition to SIP. We do not want SIP jeopardised. We are all too aware of how 100 good efforts can be overlooked because of one event... I think you are right, we need to have some kind of conversation about this.

As Hillary, one of Catalyst's founders, explained to me, it was important that organisers chose their location and topics carefully when planning an event, in order to avoid taking on particularly prickly bishops. Here again we see evidence of the intentionally self-constrained dialogue that we saw featured in the strategy of self-censorship that I explored in Chapter Five. For Hillary:

I think the whole driving sentiment and motivation for us was to simply be under the radar... And to not propose particularly anything that could be picked on as challenging the bishops teaching authority. Or challenging the Pope. So, anything that needed a blessing from the Bishop... So we, specifically, if we had conferences we went to bishops who are presiding over dioceses where we knew they'd say yes. Rather than be told no. We thought it was important not to get a no.

The minute you started to sort of take on the bishops and almost chalk up little victories, that was a slippery slide. And even if you went with the very best motives in mind, that you believed you want to contribute to bringing more people back to Mass on Sunday— You'd end up in bother. They, meaning the church politicians, are just much better than most other politicians. So the consensus inside Catalyst was that we had to really avoid all appearances of that.

Catalyst for Renewal recognised that there is a very fine line in the Catholic Church between disagreement and perceived disloyalty. Yet they argued that ‘tradition is not mere repetition’, and that ‘as people of the Church, we need to be loyal dissenters or the Church and its tradition will atrophy’ (Menadue, 1997, p. 3). Having chosen to take seriously their responsibilities as members of the ‘royal priesthood’, they decided that ‘there are times when loyalty demands more than keeping in step with an old piece of music’ (Suenens, in “News In Brief”, 1996, p. 7). Determined to introduce new harmonies to the time-worn chorus of their cherished but hierocratic institution, Catalyst members and Sippers lifted their voices in loyal dissent.

6.4.2 Dissent

When I was in year eight at school, [I was told by the teacher],
‘Father will tell you anything you need to know’ [Laughs].

And I thought, ‘*No he won't!*’

‘Thelma’, May 2011

Thelma found the voice of dissent came naturally to her, as we saw in Chapter Four. Despite being taught at school ‘not to think, not to question’, Thelma found herself driven to ask ‘why’ and to seek her own interpretation of the ‘truths’ she was offered by Church officials. But not every Sipper found the voice of dissent came this easily. Hillary spoke at length at a Catalyst meeting about the crisis of conscience she faced when finally, in the wake of the clerical sexual abuse scandal and the hierarchy’s secretive response to it, she reached the ‘extraordinary’ realisation that it was her duty to speak out against the injustices she observed in the Catholic Church and work to actively create a faith she could be proud to hand on to the next generation:

Deep down, I’ve come to realise that maybe the world beyond the institutional Church is a kinder, gentler place, full of more conscientious ethics and values and care for others, than the official Church. Which is a pretty extraordinary position to have reached...

Without the sense that the ordained officials of the Church had so powerfully lost their way, would I be speaking to you like this? Talking about my really quite rigorous audit of why I’m still Catholic? Well, I don’t know that I would. I didn’t *want* to come to these conclusions, that’s what I’m trying to say. But when I came to realise that the institutional Church had decided it had to protect its priestly caste, above all, rather than the most vulnerable— That was a shocking, gradual, slow realisation for me... I

don't think it can get any worse now. And I don't think I'm alone. I think there's a lot of shame actually there, I think for all of us to share.

So, you cross a particular rubicon in your attitudes as a Catholic, that I didn't want to cross because I'm really *quite a compliant person*. And it sort of took me a while to think, 'well, I'm sort of foolish at best and cowardly at worst if I don't have the guts to look this crisis in the eye, and see the devastating dysfunction... in an institution that's so close to my own value centre'. So, in its own way it required a self-audit...

Or do I just retreat into something very small? Into those little, sort of, reading groups and say, 'Oh, I'll be comfortable'. Mind you, I think that's certainly not what the tradition asked of me... So, if I believe in the wonders of our great tradition, how could I, knowing what I know— what should I *do* in terms of applying it to my own life... and how do I hand it on?...

I really did want to leave the bulk of that handing on to *them*, the officials. I wanted to be there as a faithful adherent and I wanted to turn up [but] I wanted the job of ritual and of teaching and of administration, and, sort of, spreading the word— I wanted all of *them* to do it. And I feel now, in a way, a bit naïve about that. I suppose I do wonder about how we lay people have let this happen... How we imagine that this thing, if it's *so* precious, and it's so central to [our] values—

Instead of retreating into comfortable circles of introspection, Hillary encouraged the attendees to reflect on their own personal responsibility for the current state of the Church, and to consider what they might do to renew the Church they love. At the heart of this project of renewal was a call for the respectful vocalisation of conscience-driven dissent.

In June 2000, *The Mix* published the transcript of a speech given by Bishop John Heaps at a SIP meeting in Bowral, NSW. Bishop Heaps was at the time a retired auxillary bishop of the archdiocese of Sydney and a very active Catalyst supporter, having written several articles for *The Mix* and spoken at numerous SIPs. In this address, he argued that 'the faithful person must dissent when well-informed conscience is in conflict with law', and that coming to disbelieve something in this way does not mean one has 'lost the faith' (Heaps, 2000, p. 4). In a remarkably bold move for a bishop, albeit retired, he suggested that '[w]e are not bound by faith to believe in a private philosophical or theological opinion of any human being, even if that person is the Pope' (p. 4). Indeed, he argued that dissent has a long and noble history in the Church, if we understand dissent as:

...the prophetic move by people who genuinely love the Gospel and the Church to offer responsible alternative ways of preaching the Good News to the world of our time. Jesus and the Prophets were dissenters in this sense. There is no need to drop this tradition-sanctioned term (Heaps, 2000, p. 4).

He went on to outline the many ways in which the Church and its leaders have been wrong over the years, including Pius X's 'fixation' on modernism, the condemnation and house arrest of Galileo, and the active support given to the practice of slavery. In fact, the long list of moral injustices and atrocities enacted by the Church in God's name is much longer than this, as Kerrigan (2014) and Ellerbe (1995) both attest. But Bishop Heaps proposed that church doctrine itself has called for loyal dissent as a necessary part of church community, with Cardinal Wotyla (later to become Pope John Paul II) affirming that the structures of community must 'not only allow the emergence of... opposition, but also make it possible for the opposition to function for the good of the community' (Wotyla 1969, in Heaps, 2000, p. 4). Indeed, canon law confirms the right and even duty of all the faithful to hold and share dissenting opinions for the good of the Church:

According to the knowledge, competence, and prestige which they possess, they have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful, without prejudice to the integrity of faith and morals, with reverence toward their pastors, and attentive to common advantage and the dignity of persons (*The Obligations and Rights*, 1983, c. 212§3).

Catalyst for Renewal has heeded this call for respectful dissent, offering itself as 'an honest voice' for the Church, one that is driven by 'ordinary people living ordinary lives, who seek more, and refused to be cauterised by a lack of direction'. As we saw in the case of Gabriel above and Joan in Chapter Five, at times this 'honest voice' has been energised more by anger and hurt than by respect and love. Over the course of my fieldwork there were often people who introduced themselves as 'an angry Catholic'. They would argue that 'polite gentility doesn't actually change things', and that a 'people's movement' of 'likeminded guerillas' was required if the Church was going to survive in the twenty-first century.

But most Sippers recognised that this anger was fruitful when channeled appropriately. As one speaker suggested, this anger is ‘an indication of our passion for the Church’. It is:

...the divine spark that has empowered us to action. This anger, now fully felt, has not been destructive. It is the very gift that gives us the energy to speak the truth, with courage, power, and discipline, to challenge what we believe are unjust systems legitimated by a clerical culture.

She went on to explore how this anger can be made transformative, so that Sippers can embrace their vocation as leaders in the Catholic Church and active members of the *sensus fidelium*, or ‘sense of the faithful’. Indeed, across my fieldwork, participants consistently emphasised the need for lay people such as themselves to actively participate in the *sensus fidelium* so as to hold the Church to the truth of its tradition. Even Bishop Morris affirmed this responsibility in his August 2011 address to Catalyst for Renewal. He offered an example of the impact of the *sensus fidelium* by recalling its role in the demise of the ‘Arian heresy’, a deeply divisive period of fourth-century theological conflict in which the bishops of the Church were unable to find agreement over the nature of the relationship between ‘God the Father’ and ‘God the Son’. Drawing on John Henry Newman’s ([1859] 1962) discussion of the controversy, Bishop Morris explained:

Newman could see that an absolute, docile laity was not good for the Church. He used the dispute of Arianism to contend that... the laity are not passive subjects in the Church, but integral actors – not just in carrying out the gospel message into the world, but also into the actual formation of Christian doctrine.

The Arian heresy did not prevail, because the laity strenuously and persistently dissented from the doctrine in the face of excommunication, persecution, and even martyrdom. Open, sustained dissent against an overwhelming preponderance of church authority was, Newman declared, the very instrument by which an erroneous doctrine had been eradicated and the true tradition vindicated.

Bishop Morris went on to argue that consulting the faithful should be considered more than a ‘friendly gesture’ by bishops, but rather is ‘something the laity have a right to expect’. Operating as a much needed ‘witness to the truth of revealed doctrine’, Morris described the *sensus fidelium* as a kind of ‘spiritual antibody’ that rejects ‘false teaching, just as the physical body tends to set up barriers against infection’. In closing his argument for the Church’s critical need for an active and vocal *sensus fidelium*, Morris concluded: ‘We are that voice. *You* are that voice. We are the Church.’

6.5 Loyal dissent and the Catholic Church

My dissenting voice will not go away, however, for I believe that the Church has a vital role to play in our world. I, for one, am not prepared to hand it over on a platter to anyone or any group that is not prepared to move forward, learn from what has gone before, and invigorate the message of Jesus for our own generation.

(Gonzales, 2000, *The Mix*, p. 3)

Although still novel, the concept of 'loyal dissent' is not completely new to the field of religious studies. Whether termed 'loyal dissent' (Curran, 2001, 2006), 'reluctant dissent' (Shannon, 2000), 'devoted resistance' (Zion-Waldoks, 2015), 'faithful revolution' (Bruce, 2014), 'pious critical agency' (Rinaldo, 2013, 2014), 'critical fidelity' (Vroom and Gort, 1997, pp. 52–5), or 'defecting in place' (Winter et al., 1994), these studies have shown that despite predictions of a mass exodus from organised religion in favour of a post-secular, non-institutionalised spirituality (eg. Fuller, 2001), many believers are choosing to remain within their traditions, by finding ways to, as SIP would call it, 'live creatively within their institutions'. In this way, these believers are refusing Wuthnow's (1998b, 1998a) dichotomous choice between a 'spirituality of dwelling' and a 'spirituality of seeking', by creating ways to 'search' and 'negotiate' *within* their faith traditions rather than forcing themselves into spiritual exile.

Many social theorists might be sceptical of the possibility of achieving change by choosing to stay within a monological organisation such as the Catholic Church. Followers of Foucault might argue that Sippers are legitimising the very mechanisms of their own oppression by choosing to voice their dissent within the institutional framework of the Church, thus being forced to use its conceptual structures. Indeed, even as Sippers strive to understand the 'truth' of their faith, Foucault would argue that they cannot escape the 'regimes of truth' by which they are dominated and made unequal (1991, p. 72). As such, he would suggest that while 'power is everywhere' (1978, p. 93), those who are seeking the 'practice of freedom' (1994) must leave institutional life behind in order to explore identity experimentation free from its constraints.

Yet, as Dillon notes, pro-change Catholics purposively choose to 'experience the excitement derived from the identity experimentation advised by Foucault... within rather than outside the bounds of an institutional tradition' (Dillon, 1999, p. 190). Indeed, Sippers' vocal exercise of their baptismal right to loyal dissent offers a strong rebuttal to Foucault's claim that 'power reduces one to silence' (Foucault, 1978, p. 60). By choosing to stay and continuing to contribute their vocal *sensus fidei* or 'sense of the faithful' to the Church, Sippers are living a 'spirituality of dissent' which many agree is sorely needed in the Church (Häring, 1982).

The Marianist sister and sociologist, Laura Leming, has argued that the concept of 'religious agency' lies at the heart of understanding laity-led pro-change movements such as Catalyst for Renewal. While the intersection between personal agency and religious fields has been widely studied (eg. Agadjanian and Yabiku, 2015; Ammerman, 1997; Desai, 2010; Habashi, 2013), the study of 'religious agency' itself remains nascent. Leming defines religious agency as 'a personal and collective claiming and enacting of dynamic religious identity' (2007, p. 74). It is a process in which 'individuals and groups... assert ownership of a religious tradition and exert pressure to transform it even as they transmit it through their active participation' (Leming, 2006, p. 56).

In her study of the US-based 'Voice of the Faithful' movement, Leming (2007) identified three key strategies that religious agents use when seeking to exercise loyal dissent within the Catholic Church: gaining voice, negotiating place and space, and flexible alignment. All three strategies are also apparent within the Catalyst for Renewal movement. The first strategy has been explored in detail in Chapter Five of this thesis. However, the latter two offer important complements which enable Sippers to maintain their 'devoted resistance' at times when they feel disheartened by the monological force of the Catholic Church.

6.5.1 Strategies of place and space

While sacred space is perhaps always 'contested terrain' (Leming, 2006, p. 85), the landscape of the Catholic Church is in many ways a constant battlefield. Perhaps there could be no better example of this than SIP, whose founders explicitly chose to situate their meetings off church property in order to give their lay-led initiative a chance to

survive. Those few SIPs who attempted to hold meetings on church grounds soon found themselves 'running into trouble with the diocese'.

In one instance, a group were planning a SIP evening around the topic of clerical sexual abuse. Hearing the news, their irate Archbishop not only contacted the SIP organisers but is rumoured to have also telephoned the proposed speaker, telling her directly that she was 'not to speak on church property'. After long discussions with Catalyst leadership, the SIP organising committee agreed to cede to the Archbishop's request, albeit temporarily. Within months they had moved SIP meetings to a nearby golf club and their first SIP starred the 'forbidden' speaker, who was warmly welcomed by a large crowd of attendees. Indeed, this SIP group went on to become known for its controversial speakers. Ironically, the Archbishop's proscription of the event became a catalyst for the group's future identity and assured its popularity.

Similarly, in April 1999, Catalyst offered another striking example of the power of place-making when it hired the Sydney Town Hall for a watershed event in the life of the group. In the midst of all the hurt surrounding Rome's *Statement of Conclusions* on the state of the Australian Church, Catalyst hosted this forum in order to examine the *Statement* more closely and explore its implications for the Church in Australia. To open the conversation, Catalyst invited a panel of five speakers, including one of the bishops who had been in Rome for the discussions leading up to the *Statement* and signed the *Statement* itself, Bishop Brian Heenan. Other panel members included Sr Annette Cunliffe RSC⁷ (then president of the organisation that represents Catholic sisters, brothers and priests in Australia),⁸ Bishop Geoffrey Robinson (known to Catalyst members for his firm criticism of Rome's response to the clerical sexual abuse crisis), Robert Fitzgerald AM (Catalyst patron and then Community Services Commissioner for NSW), as well as Catalyst's own Father Michael Whelan SM.

Almost three thousand people braved torrential rain to attend the forum in what Father Whelan described as 'a marvelous affirmation of faith' (1999a, p. 1). While a handful of protestors attempted to interrupt proceedings, the forum maintained its focus on the goal of 'good conversation' – a concept that will be further explored in the

⁷ The post-nominal RSC indicates a person is a member of the religious order called the Sisters of Charity.

⁸ The Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes (CLRI).

conclusion of this thesis – as Catalyst sought to affirm the faith and hope of attendees.

In the words of Father Whelan:

One of my own fears had been that it might degenerate into some kind of public slanging match. It was far from that. Despite the attempts of a small group of hecklers to disrupt the event, it proceeded with an almost tangible sense of faith, hope and joy (Whelan, 2001, p. 3).

After the event, Catalyst's journal, *The Mix*, reported the reflections of various attendees who had written to the journal to share their thoughts. These comments vividly illustrate the personally meaningful effect of Catalyst's strategic use of place-making as the group sought to offer its gift of loyal dissent to the Church ("Report on the public forum", 1999):

Thursday night was a triumph. Thank you indeed. I believe it was an historical event – the grown-up Bar Mitzvah manifestation, turning point for the Australian Catholic Church. Not a shred of petty destructiveness, but solid dignified loving dialogue. Congratulations!

To me, the overwhelming response of the 3,000 people who packed the Town Hall confirmed the fact that the time for pussy-footing around has passed and the people of God require straight talk. Hopefully, you and the organisation you head will influence those who have ears but do not wish to listen.

I thoroughly enjoyed being at such an exciting and historic event!... It was truly a great gathering of the people of our Pilgrim Church... Let the dialogue continue!

If ever there was any doubt that the Church in Australia can be a dynamic, lively and participatory faith, that doubt would have been dispelled last Thursday. The struggle that we are now engaged in... will be a long and difficult one... I have become starkly aware of the way in which the Vatican Curia has become even more distant from the faithful and more controlling than I have ever realised... Last Thursday, however, renewed my hope and I am sure the hope of all of those present that we can work collaboratively together, Bishops, Priests, religious and laity, in seeking to forge a strong future for the Church of Australia.

Full marks for the Town Hall event - I've decided to stay in the church!!

By choosing to create a neutral space for conversation on topics that they felt were denied voice elsewhere in the Church, and carefully crafting an 'atmosphere marked by prayerfulness, respect, honesty and humour', Catalyst leaders sought to offer hope to the many Australian Catholics who were struggling to respond to the Vatican's indictment of their Church. Yet, Catalyst's public forum also made it clear that the docility and loyal submission that marked 1950s Australian Catholicism had now

disappeared: 'mainstream Catholics who once would have simply accepted something like the *Statement* in silence, will not do so anymore' (Whelan, 1999a, p. 1).

Furthermore, the forum made it clear to Church authorities that controlling the use of church grounds and banishing the discussion of controversial topics would no longer ensure control over the voices and actions of its members. Rather, the attempts of church leaders to defend the physical space of church grounds from the defiling presence of illicit speakers and events is often seen as a clownish exercise of authority by Sippers. As Andrew Hamilton, one of the patrons of Catalyst for Renewal, wrote in *The Mix*:

When you draw lists of people who may and may not safely speak on church property, and of authorised and proscribed events, you are usually engaged in an exercise of authority. The boundaries drawn are a symbol of clerical authority over Catholic conversation... In anxious times, the free exchange of ideas is an early casualty (Hamilton, 2005, p. 3).

These attempts to limit the discussion of illicit topics on church grounds are more than simply political exercises. In effect, church leaders are seeking to control Catholic identity, by 'saying that only one of the many ways of thinking and acting common among fervent Catholics is truly Catholic' (Hamilton, 2005, p. 3). In response, Catalyst's strategic use of place-making has not only enabled Sippers to find their voice beyond the walls of the traditional church, it has also prompted them to reflect further on the biblical basis of authority itself. In this way, Catalyst pairs 'place-making' with a complementary strategy of theological 'space-making' as it seeks to support Sippers in their attempts to voice loyal dissent in the Church.

Indeed, the basis for legitimate authority in the Church was a consistent topic in SIP discussions and *The Mix*. While the need for authority itself was never in question – most Sippers believed that authority and obedience were at the heart of the Gospel message – the doctrinal grounds on which authority was based was a hotly contested terrain. Drawing on the concept of *sensus fidei*, or the 'sense of the faith', Sippers argued for the right to assert their interpretive authority up and against that of the hierarchy. Thelma demonstrated this interpretive agency when she pointed out to me the importance of understanding the role of myth when interpreting scripture:

Now, to me that concept of myth explains quite a number of things. There's the whole garden of Eden story, which is generally accepted as a myth. But [to me]... the point [is] that human beings took upon themselves the right

to say 'I will decide what I will do'. So, they believed that they were told not to eat fruit from the tree of knowledge, but they decided they would do so. So that to me is the relevant point there. Because I think we all say, 'nuh-uh. I'm going to do it my way'.

Similarly, she argued that an informed understanding of symbolism and the impact of sociocultural norms on doctrinal development had enabled her to develop a more nuanced appreciation of the divine:

He, she, it. Whatever God is... There's a lot of talk about the feminine aspect of the godhead. I reject that totally. Because I think God is male *and* female. He's not gender-based... And this is what limits us enormously, because we've *got to use the language that has meaning for us*. But it's so limiting! Of course it's limiting, but we've *got to use it*. And it's also just a symbol anyway. So it's very hard to describe core [beliefs], like this, because we've only got symbols that don't relate to it in fact.

Michele Dillon (1999) has explored this concept of interpretive authority in detail in her sociological study of pro-change groups in the American Catholic Church. While the doctrinal reflexivity demonstrated by Vatican II era Catholics is clearly part of a broader trend towards reflexive spirituality in the Western world (Roof, 1999), Dillon argues that the Second Vatican Council generated a rich array of symbolic resources which have uniquely empowered pro-change Catholics such as Sippers to apply their interpretive autonomy to contest doctrine and challenge official church practices (Dillon, 1999, p. 185). In this way, Vatican II provides an extraordinary example of institutional reflexivity in modern times (cf. Giddens, 1991), one which subsequent church leaders have failed to fully embrace.

6.5.2 Strategies of flexible alignment

Leming's (2007) final type of loyal dissent is what she terms 'flexible alignment'. This is represented in a dual dynamic of approach and avoidance in which loyal dissenters seek to exercise their religious agency by sometimes drawing closer to their religious institution and its traditions, while at other times distancing themselves from these structures. Like the strategy of voice, flexibility enables loyal dissenters to defer exit strategies by 'allowing [them] to adjust their stance and align themselves as appropriate to the situation, sometimes more closely, and sometimes less' (Leming, 2007, p. 87).

During my fieldwork, I often observed Sippers demonstrating strategies of flexible alignment. Like Leming's pro-change Catholics, Sippers would at times draw nearer to the Church, demonstrating what Leming would term 'engagement strategies'. For example, Catalyst regularly hosts 'reflection mornings' – meetings which are allowed to be held on church grounds because they seek to deepen attendees' knowledge of Church traditions. For some Sippers, 'reflection mornings' feed their thirst for a deeper understanding of the timeless riches of the Catholic faith tradition. These meetings often have a focus on the mystical dimensions of Catholic spirituality, and are embraced with enthusiasm by both Sippers and regular parishioners alike.

For other Sippers, attending 'reflection mornings' is an exercise of ecclesial emancipation – as Leming's participants argued, 'you can't critique what you don't understand' (2007, p. 87). By learning about the history and logic behind certain Church doctrines, these Sippers feel better resourced to employ their own interpretive skills to the task of applying these doctrines in their lives. Similarly, some Sippers established reading groups, where they would meet with other members from their parish or SIP group to discuss spiritual and theological books and reflect on the implications for their spiritual lives: 'opening our eyes to things that are helping us to go places', as Levi described it.

At other times, Catalyst's 'engagement strategies' include the incorporation of Catholic rituals in their meetings, such as a Eucharist, which is generally led by priests or bishops who are also 'friends' of Catalyst. These ceremonies allow space for Catalyst members to re-interpret the symbols of the sacraments in ways that are personally meaningful to them. On one particularly memorable occasion – at least for this non-Catholic observer – the Eucharist was conducted in a hall while we all reclined in a circle on wicker lounge chairs bearing luridly patterned cushions. Sharpening the contrast with the hallowed sanctity of a chapel even further, the attending Bishop donned his sacramental robes in front of us, in so doing removing his shirt and thus revealing his singlet. Yet no one responded with surprise to this event. Rather, it demonstrated the mutual abandonment of pretence and the egalitarian principle by which Catalyst for Renewal seeks to operate. By highlighting the 'ordinariness' of the bishop's role in the Eucharistic service, the ritual was transformed into a deeply

meaningful experience for many attendees, one that fortified them for their return to the less egalitarian reality of parish life.

However, I also observed Leming's other type of flexible alignment during my fieldwork: strategies of 'distancing', in which Sippers pull away from the Church in order to create the psychological breathing room required to maintain future engagement. A key distancing strategy of Leming's pro-change Catholics – financial withdrawal – was also shared by Sippers. This is a topic that easily lends itself to catchphrases – for example, 'No donation without representation'; or 'Women will pay when women have a say'. Such statements were always met with loud applause and laughter at SIP meetings, but this laughter masked a very real sense of disenfranchisement. As one Sipper proposed during a SIP meeting, having just commented on the dire lack of priests in Australia and the pressure this puts on them:

Are we going to allow our beloved priests to self-immolate? The one thing our 'superiors' recognise and listen to is money. What would happen if we stopped contributing? Saying, 'we're not going to stand by and watch these men that we love, slowly, painfully, die!'

The speaker for the night responded with the voice of reason, pointing out that because government money funds a large part of Catholic social services in Australia, a collective lay strategy of financial withdrawal would likely have little substantive effect: 'The priests will be harassed by the Church for falling donations, but overall – *nothing will change*'. Nonetheless, despite this broader picture, for some people money is 'the only voice they have' (Leming, 2006, p. 66), and thus it is with financial withdrawal that they will seek to make themselves heard.

Other Sippers exercise a strategy of distancing by choosing not to attend church services for a while. Some told me they would occasionally visit other parishes where the priest's message more closely aligned to their own, while others simply chose to explore their spirituality alone. Levi, who had returned to regular Mass attendance by the time I spoke with him, recalled a period of 'drifting' that he and his family experienced in the 1990s. As Levi explained it, under the guidance of some good parish priests and intensive adult education seminars, 'going to church had started a process of thinking things through for myself'. But when he and his young family moved to a new diocese and found that they were unable to find a 'spiritual home' in the new parish, he decided it was time to take control of his own spirituality.

In that time, we developed almost a separate spirituality, separate to Church. [I realised] it's *my* spirituality... My spirituality is now grounded in God, not the Church... I'm going places the Church could never take me... I now have a self-generating, self-sustaining spirituality. It's a very exciting spirituality.

In this way, by drawing away for a period, Levi and his family were able to develop the interpretive skills required to fashion a new spirituality for themselves, one which could find strength in the Catholic tradition without being overwhelmed by it.

For the most part, however, Sippers' practice of flexible alignment tends to follow a pragmatic path, one that is characterised by neither wholehearted engagement nor disheartened distancing. Ray and Lil demonstrated this pragmatism when they explained to me their approach to attending Mass in their local rural parish, alongside people whose beliefs markedly differ from their own. While they admitted that at times reconciling the disjunction between their own beliefs and those of their fellow parishioners is 'a struggle', they have come to realise that:

Ray: People put their own meaning onto [church teachings]. So, you can have a congregation of three hundred people and some will be seeing God in Old Testament terms... and see God as judgmental, fierce, you do this or you go to hell... So there'd be a group of people thinking like that. There'd be a group of people thinking we've got to earn God's love... and all that. There'd be a group of people that would say, like I've been talking about, you know, 'none of that'. Like, that helps you get to be where you are. You've got to grow through that and understand the development of religious thought and understanding as people mature...

Lil: I don't mind now. I've got to the stage where, if those people I am sitting beside are dear sweet souls who that's their belief, I don't believe kind of the same way but I don't care. That's okay. How do I know I'm right? I just get a bit more irritated by things, and then I think, 'oh, seriously, please don't worry about that'. Let's not get scrupulous about something that's quite unnecessary...

By distancing themselves psychologically from the battle between 'right' and 'wrong' in the Church, Sippers such as Ray and Lil are able to practice a strategy of flexible alignment that energises their ongoing commitment to the Church, despite the flaws they observe within it. Furthermore, by honing this ability to accept the many disparate preferences and beliefs that exist within the Church, Lil and Ray find that they are able to better understand and engage in what they call the 'deeper, broader,

interconnectedness of life', which they see evidenced in the community they build with their fellow spiritual travelers. As Lil explained to me:

What keeps us in there I think is that sense of community, that we build locally. And that's the critical thing. So, we have a ritual together that we share. Some of which we mightn't like all that much or agree with some of the words. But we're there to support each other. And if we decided we weren't going to go any more, I reckon we'd be letting some people down whom we go to be with and support on a weekend. And so, we go. And it's not a chore to go at all... We're part of it... And it's part of our life.

Conclusion: Conversation, hope and the future

This thesis has painted an ethnographic portrait of a small group of deeply loyal Catholics who, in the face of the many crises of authority and conscience that have shattered the defensive walls of the Catholic fortress church in recent decades, have chosen not to leave the Church they still love. Rather, fortifying themselves with the emancipatory resources of the Catholic faith tradition, they have drawn on the tenacious and flexible Catholic identity which resides deep in their 'bones' to persevere in the Catholic community, knowing that 'Catholics don't leave'. But instead of getting caught up in the destructive potential of anger and disillusionment as they watch the leaders of their Church maintain a culture of secrecy, silencing and surveillance, this small group of Catholics decided to voice their informed and conscience-driven dissent with love, hope and loyalty, recognising the transformative potential of a vocal and engaged 'sense of the faithful' for the future of the Catholic Church. Choosing to develop their strategies of audibility and loyal dissent in the secular privacy of pubs and clubs around Australia, 'Spirituality in the Pub' thus forms part of a broader pattern of emerging church practices across post-secular society, wherein believers work to balance the joys of religious identity experimentation found in a 'spirituality of seeking' with the deep emotional and symbolic riches to be found within a 'spirituality of dwelling' (cf. Wuthnow, 1998a). In this way, they reject the late twentieth century trend towards 'believing without belonging' and instead affirm their rights to reflexive spirituality *within* rather than only beyond church walls (cf. Davie, 1994).

One of the most remarkable features of this group of pro-change Catholics, however, is that they are not issues driven. While women's ordination, contraception, Rome's treatment of the Australian Church, and the clerical sexual abuse crisis, along with countless other moral and doctrinal concerns, have regularly featured in SIP and Catalyst discourse, they have refused to become crippled by angst over any particular issue. Rather than focus on the *content* of what is wrong in the Catholic Church, they have chosen to centre their attention on promoting a *method* of renewal that is larger than any specific issue. This brief conclusion returns to the 'theology of conversation' with which I began this thesis. This theology represents the cornerstone of Catalyst's unique identity and thus offers a window into understanding the hope that drives Sippers to continue to persevere against the forces of the monological Church.

The theology of conversation

While theology is something many of us think lives in cathedrals and seminaries, in fact, 'any conversation between faith and experience is an on-the-spot doing of theology' (Lee and Cowan, 2003, p. 10). In this way, theology belongs in pubs today as equally as it did on the streets and hillsides on which Jesus preached some two thousand years ago (Berghoef, 2012). Catalyst's theology, however, is unique in its steadfast emphasis on the methodology of conversation as enabling believers to deepen their understanding of the mystery of the divine. They argue that human conversation is 'part and parcel of God's conversation' with humanity (Whelan, n.d., p. 4), and with the 'dialogue of salvation' which God offers humankind (Paul VI, 1964, n. 70). In this way, for Sippers each act of genuine conversation is a way of drawing closer to God.

By emphasising the transformative potential of conversation, Catalyst for Renewal echoes the thoughts of German philosopher and Protestant Christian Hans-Georg Gadamer. Writing in 1960, Gadamer argued that true conversation is a process of mutual discovery which requires both parties to be willing to hold their presumptions lightly. For Gadamer:

Conversation is a process of coming to an understanding. Thus it belongs to every true conversation that each person opens himself to the other, truly accepts his point of view as valid and transposes himself into the other to such an extent that he understands... what [the other] says (Gadamer, [1960] 2013, p. 403).

At the heart of this process of building shared understanding is the need for a common language. For Gadamer, understanding does not precede speech, but rather is formed by the very act of speaking. Understanding thus occurs through the process of mutually crafting a collectively meaningful language and by the 'coming-into-language' of conversation itself (Gadamer, [1960] 2013, p. 386). Furthermore, this ground of shared meaning, while constructed by both conversation partners, belongs to neither of them:

The language in which something comes to speak of is not a possession at the disposal of one or the other of the interlocutors. Every conversation presupposes a common language, or better, creates a common language. Hence reaching an understanding on the subject matter of a conversation necessarily means that a common language must first be worked out in the conversation (Gadamer, [1960] 2013, pp. 386–7).

Like Gadamer, Catalyst argues that good conversation is the property of neither party but instead exists in the liminal space which is formed by the question itself: 'Good conversationalists are thereby able to meet beyond themselves, in the in-between space which is owned by neither yet belongs to both' (Whelan, 1996a, p. 4). Yet Gadamer argues that finding common ground through self-transcendence is not simply a matter of adjusting our conversational 'tools', nor is it a matter of adapting ourselves to our conversational partner ([1960] 2013, pp. 386–7). Rather:

...in a successful conversation [both partners] come under the influence of the truth of the object and are thus bound to one another in a new community. To reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were (Gadamer, [1960] 2013, p. 387).

In order to allow this transformation to occur, Catalyst for Renewal argues that conversational partners must be deeply versed in the practice of rigorous and persistent self-reflexivity. This calls for 'ruthlessly honest conversations' with oneself (Whelan et al., 2006b, p. 1), in which otherwise destructive assumptions, prejudices and resentments can be transformed into 'a constructive part of the encounter', giving 'birth to compassion rather than alienation' (Whelan et al., 2006c, p. 1). In turn, Catalyst suggests that conversation partners must also be comfortable with the need for silence so that this reflexivity can blossom. In this way, they propose that the 'gaps between the words' are as important, if not more important, than the words themselves. Drawing on Thomas Merton, Catalyst suggests that:

In healthy and rich conversation, our words come out of silence and lead back to silence. Speech that is full of the noise of unresolved personal conflicts or self-absorption or thoughtless point-scoring is at best pointless and at worst destructive. We who promote conversation ought to be familiar with 'silence, emptiness and grace'... In the depths of each of us are wells of silence waiting to give birth to words – good, life-bearing words. Good conversation demands that we all drink from those wells of silence (Whelan, Doogue, Hammond, et al., 2003, p. 1).

By drawing on prayerful and self-reflective silence, Catalyst proposes that good conversation facilitates 'the emergence of truth... At its best it is an act of faith, confident that the Spirit of God is right there, very busy, in that forum' (Whelan, n.d., p. 5). In this way, through its emphasis on genuine conversation, questions, and a search for shared wisdom, SIP can be seen as a sacramental activity, one which points beyond

itself to 'lead us toward the great Mystery' (Whelan, Thyer, Doogue, Kelly, et al., 1997, p. 1).

In this light, SIP can be seen as an activity of 'theology-making', rather than one that is simply guided by a 'theology of conversation'. If we join Gadamer as understanding conversation as a model of knowing, Catalyst's proposition that 'conversation is a process whereby we engage the inexhaustible intelligibility of life' can be seen as a theological assertion. Similarly, when Catalyst leaders argue that 'the point of all conversation is to encounter the True and the Good', they suggest that it is through conversation that we come into 'God's liberating Presence' and are given the 'privilege and obligation to be instruments of that Presence' (Whelan, 1999b, p. 1; Whelan et al., 1999, p. 1). In this way, God is seen to enspirit the conversations of SIP in the same way that Gadamer argues conversation has a 'spirit of its own':

We say that we 'conduct' a conversation, but the more genuine a conversation is, the less its conduct lies within the will of either partner... No one knows in advance what will 'come out' of a conversation... [C]onversation has a spirit of its own, and... the language in which it is conducted bears its own truth within it - i.e., that it allows something to 'emerge' which henceforth exists (Gadamer, [1960] 2013, p. 401).

Indeed, in one of Catalyst's most popular fliers, entitled *Good Conversation*, the authors again echo Gadamer by affirming:

The best conversations have a life of their own... They have a graced quality if we are attentive and faithful to the moment... [W]e experience them as taking us where we have never been before (Catalyst for Renewal, 1999).

In this way, Catalyst seeks to fulfil its promise to create imaginative spaces for conversation about 'what really matters', both in life and in the Church. Reflecting on their journey some twelve years after Catalyst for Renewal was formed, the editors of *The Mix* noted that 'the idea of focusing on conversation was not common' in society when they first set out to develop a methodology for church renewal (Whelan et al., 2006d, p. 1). Over the course of Catalyst's lifetime, the practice of genuine conversation has come to be recognised as a fundamental necessity for an engaged community (eg. Rapport, 2012). And while Catalyst acknowledges that the ability to 'speak coherently to one another' has been affected by the rapid and profound technological and social changes of modern society, they argue that 'if we become indifferent or lazy about our

ability to converse well with one another, our future is indeed grim' (Whelan, Doogue, Hammond, et al., 2003, p. 1). Furthermore, for the Church, Catalyst suggests that:

There will, quite simply, be no renewal without a serious commitment to good conversation. Where such a culture does flourish, even when so much in our circumstances seems to suggest doom and gloom, we have every reason to be hopeful (Catalyst for Renewal Inc., 2009, p. 9).

It is to this notion of hope that we now turn.

'You've got to have hope': The sustaining power of hope

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world, and indeed it's the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead, cited at SIP 21 April 2010

The idea that religious and spiritual practices offer hope is not new. Indeed, as early as 1920 Max Weber had proposed that religions offer a 'theodicy of suffering', comforting believers with the knowledge that today's tribulations and sacrifices would be rewarded with future abundance (Weber, [1920] 1965). But the hope found in SIP and Catalyst is of a qualitatively different nature – theirs is a determined, collective hopefulness in the possibilities of the future Church despite a heavy sense of sadness with the current Church. A hope against all hopes, if you like. A gritty determination to continue loving their Church when others would have long ago packed their bags for more progressive spaces. The content of Sippers' complaints has changed very little over the past twenty years, and the strength of their disillusionment seems to have only grown stronger. And yet they remain, steadfastly pursuing their long hoped-for dialogical Church of the future.

Indeed, the theme of hope was a constant feature of SIP and Catalyst discourse during my fieldwork. Across the eleven years of *Mix* articles, the word 'hope' appeared 576 times, overtaken only by the word 'conversation' (957) and followed by 'dialogue' (559). At SIP meetings, Sippers would affirm, 'ours is a faith of possibilities', saying, 'things *are* changing. Perhaps not in all corners of the church, but things are changing and I think there's hope'.

As Esther shared with me:

You've just got to keep dreaming and keep imagining and keep that side of us alive. Otherwise it will become perhaps very bitter and angry. So, we've just got to keep that dream going.

SIP speakers sense the vitality of this hopeful imagination too, some as soon as they enter the room. As one speaker, new to SIP, said in the opening words of her address: 'The only reason you guys are here tonight is because you have hope in your life'. And while disillusionment abounded, whenever a SIP would turn particularly gloomy, SIP organisers were careful to always close with the voice of hope, saying, for instance: 'I'll be optimistic. I think with the power of prayer change *is* possible in the Church'. After all, 'you've got to have hope', they would add.

For some SIP organisers, this call to keep the 'dream' of hope alive is seen as a prophetic vocation. Standing 'outside the temple' like the 'prophets of old', SIP organisers would say, 'we have a prophetic role in becoming more human – it's about spreading the capacity for others to become more fully human'. This emphasis on 'spreading the capacity' was a key theme at Catalyst's annual weekend retreats. At the 2011 retreat, one of the founders emphasised that the presence of Catalyst for Renewal is 'a sign of hope' in the Church, one that is vitally needed for the 'long rocky' road ahead. He illustrated the prophetic role of Catalyst by way of analogy, contrasting it with the situation in Nazi Germany, where informal organisations were banished so that resistance could be contained:

But if you've got structures such as Catalyst floating around in a society, it not only prevents the nasty people from taking over and doing their nastiness, but it also keeps life happening in a very significant way. And I'd see Catalyst for Renewal in that context in the Australian Church and in the universal Church.

I suspect we're in for a long rocky, rough ride. It's going to outlast our generation. And I do believe it's absolutely critical that we have organisations such as ours. The very existence of Catalyst is a sign of hope. It doesn't reject the formal structural organisations of the church. But it doesn't automatically submit to those structures.

However, for something like Catalyst to go on it needs a lot of energy... And it takes skill and commitment... I hope that we can continue Catalyst and keep it alive as a— some little stroke against the nasty influences that are around, the more dictatorial influences. Remain *loyal* but critical. Faithful dissenters if you like. Keep alive the diversity *and* unity within the church.

This recognition of the need for ‘skill and commitment’ is an important one. For Catalyst, hope is not a Weberian fantasy, a theodical promise of future reward, an honorary gift for those who suffer. Rather, it is a skill that needs to be actively learned, practiced and resourced – both symbolically and practically. In this way, Catalyst for Renewal echoes Paulo and Ana Freire’s (2004) call for a ‘pedagogy of hope’. Catalyst recognises that the energising potential that comes from true hope – hope born of a tripartite sense of agency, goals and pathways (cf. Snyder, 2000) – must be built on a strong foundation of critical awareness and knowledge of both the past and the present. Indeed, Henry Giroux (2012) argues that ‘critical education’ is fundamental to the development of the kind of courageous hope that drives renewal movements like Catalyst. In this way, the hope that Catalyst offers is both a pedagogical and performative practice – one which enables Sippers to ‘combine a gritty sense of limits with a lofty vision of possibility’ (Aronson, 1999, p. 489).

This is not an easy path to tread. When I asked Hillary to reflect on all that Catalyst had achieved thus far, she paused for a moment:

Has it achieved renewal? Truthfully, it hasn’t. I don’t think it has. I think we— I— No, I don’t think we have achieved nearly enough. I think we have probably kept ourselves going. And so that’s been an immensely rewarding process. But... you can’t honestly, if you’re a progressive Catholic, look around and feel hopeful. You just can’t. You just— You sort of have this awful tendency that there are big forces, cyclical forces, at play in the Church that [you] don’t really seem to be able to intervene upon terribly well.

But despite her present sense of weariness, Hillary went on to remember that Catalyst for Renewal still offers a vital sign of life for many others in the Church:

I may be wrong here, because I do think we’ve had a big impact on a significant number of priests who started coming along who actually got an immense sense of a venue where they could properly meet the laity. And religious, who have also been quite financially helpful to us. And, you know, we’ve got remarkable letters from people, particularly people in the clergy and the religious, who say, ‘Don’t ever give up. You really matter. Don’t give up.’ ... [So] there is something miraculous that we can’t see, we’re not able to put words to. It defies human words, but it’s *happening*.

Looking forward, looking back: The post, post-Vatican II generation

Indeed, Hillary is right, something *is* happening. In fact, it is even catching on outside of the SIP framework. While Sippers often note with concern the aging profile of the SIP population – with more than one in three Sippers being over the age of seventy – in pubs around Australia today you can find hundreds of young Catholics also gathering to talk about their faith with like-minded believers. Operating under names like ‘Theology @ the Pub’ and ‘Theology on Tap’, these monthly events attract much larger crowds than you would find at an average SIP gathering. At some of the events I attended in Sydney and Melbourne, over four hundred young people aged eighteen to thirty-five were said to be present, though crowds can reportedly swell to a thousand at times (Stimpson Chapman, 2012). Like SIP, friends greet each other with hugs and are careful not to spill their drinks. Like SIP, an energetic buzz of excitement passes through the crowd in anticipation of the speaker’s arrival. And like SIP, attendees are keen to ask the speakers questions as soon as their presentations are complete.

Unlike SIP, however, the speakers are current bishops and leaders of the institutional Church, and the questions centre on clarifying the points of theology of most concern to young people, such as what the Bible says about sex before marriage, and how to balance career interests against your moral and religious obligations. On one occasion, the topic centred on ‘rediscovering the sacrament of reconciliation’ – commonly known as confession. Attendees were encouraged to remember to ‘check in on Facebook’ to tonight’s event, and to make sure they availed themselves of the priests who were waiting in side rooms to hear their confessions at any time over the course of the evening. In his speech, the presiding bishop sought to enlist the help of his audience in bringing confession back to the regular practice of the Church – saying ‘we need help from the young to learn how to be better at confession’. But the most revealing part of the evening came during question time, when a young man asked: ‘If a priest commits a mortal sin on a desert island, and there’s no one else around, can he confess to himself?’. The bishop, happily, had a clear answer for the earnest young man seeking self-confession for his imaginary friend: ‘No’. While the bishop recognised that the idea of self-confession is ‘very popular these days’, with some people thinking that ‘absolving yourself is the fourth rite of reconciliation’, he declared unequivocally that ‘there is no such thing as self-confession’ in the Catholic Church.

When I recounted this story to my SIP friends, I was met with a mixture of wry humour and outright horror. For some, these meetings were seen as an explicit attempt to 'actively undermine us'. I often heard the rumour that these 'weirdo groups' were established by Cardinal George Pell as an intentional competitor to SIP, although when I asked the young organisers themselves no one had heard of such a history. Some Sippers even went so far as to suggest that these groups had ties to Opus Dei – one of the most conservative and controversial groups in the Catholic Church.

Yet none of this 'weirdo' mentality was apparent when visiting their pub meetings. Indeed, I came away energised by the palpable sense of enthusiasm and indeed hope that these young people carried for the future of the Church. As the renowned Catholic historian, Paul Collins, argues, 'we are now in the post-post-Vatican II era' (1997, p. 117). A whole generation has grown up for whom the 'changes' of Vatican II mean nothing. Indeed, like birds in flight they do not notice the 'fresh air' that Vatican II brought to their predecessors. Nor do they hanker for a nostalgic past, one that was filled with excitement for the Church they could build from the emancipatory resources of the Second Vatican Council. Instead, these young people are simply getting about the business of building that future for themselves as they see fit.

Yes, for now, this process may be marked by a desire for certainty and a black-and-white understanding of Catholic doctrine. But as Richard Rohr (2011) notes, this is natural for people who are still in the 'building' stage of their life. He argues that understanding the parameters of one's existence is central to those in the first half of life, who are still building a strong 'container' or identity for themselves. Those in the second half of life then enjoy the luxury of 'filling' that container, carefully identifying and selecting the treasures that they feel the container is meant to hold.

This need not suggest that an insurmountable chasm lies between the silver-haired Sippers and their younger counterparts. As one of Catalyst's patrons noted in a 2003 speech to a Melbourne SIP, while the driving interests of younger Catholics may be different to those of Sippers, their 'need for places of free and deep conversation is no less real' (Hamilton, 2003, p. 5). But it does require a reflexive review of the symbols of Vatican II that Sippers hold so dear, and a consideration of fresh ways of representing these symbols if indeed SIP is to start attracting a younger audience.

Perhaps the conversation will continue nonetheless without any explicit attempt to bridge the gap between young and old. The young voices who are joining the Church's conversation through 'Theology on Tap' and 'Theology @ the Pub' are bringing their own needs and goals to the chorus of the Church, introducing new melodies. Perhaps, in time, these new melodies will form a unique harmony with those of SIP and other renewal groups in the Church. Or perhaps they will set forth a new rhythm by which the Church of the future will be known.

Appendix A: National SIP Survey Report

Spirituality in the Pub 2011: **A National Snapshot**

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Introduction

In 2011 *Spirituality in the Pub's* first national survey was conducted. Seeking to better understand the needs, habits and interests of SIP participants around the nation, a sample of nine SIP locations were chosen and 406 completed surveys were received. Participating SIP locations were carefully selected so as to best represent the overall SIP population nationwide. As such, the sample included SIPs from both NSW and Victoria, with this selection including inner city, outer metropolitan and country SIPs. The list of participating SIPs is as follows:

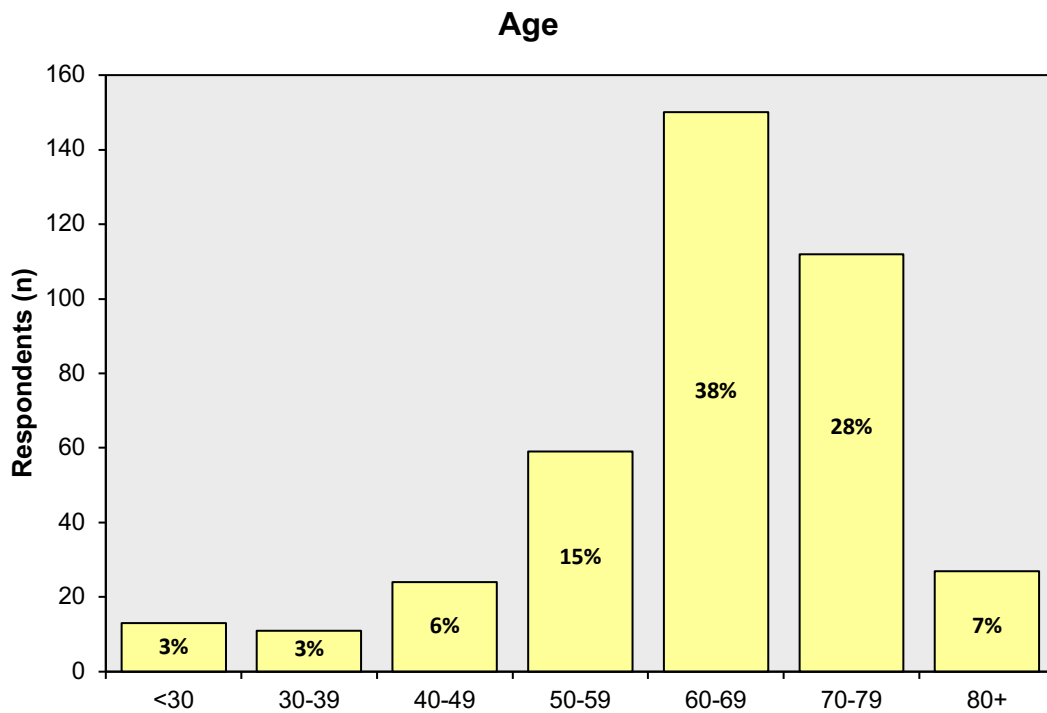
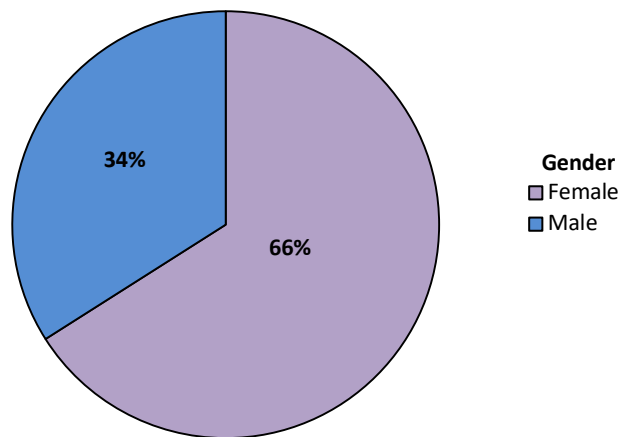
- Paddington, NSW
- North Sydney, NSW
- Sutherland, NSW
- Fitzroy, Vic
- 'Western SIP', Vic
- 'Southern SIP', Vic
- Clayton, Vic
- Bendigo, Vic
- Mernda, Vic

This report outlines the findings of this inaugural survey project. A copy of the survey itself is included in Annex 1.

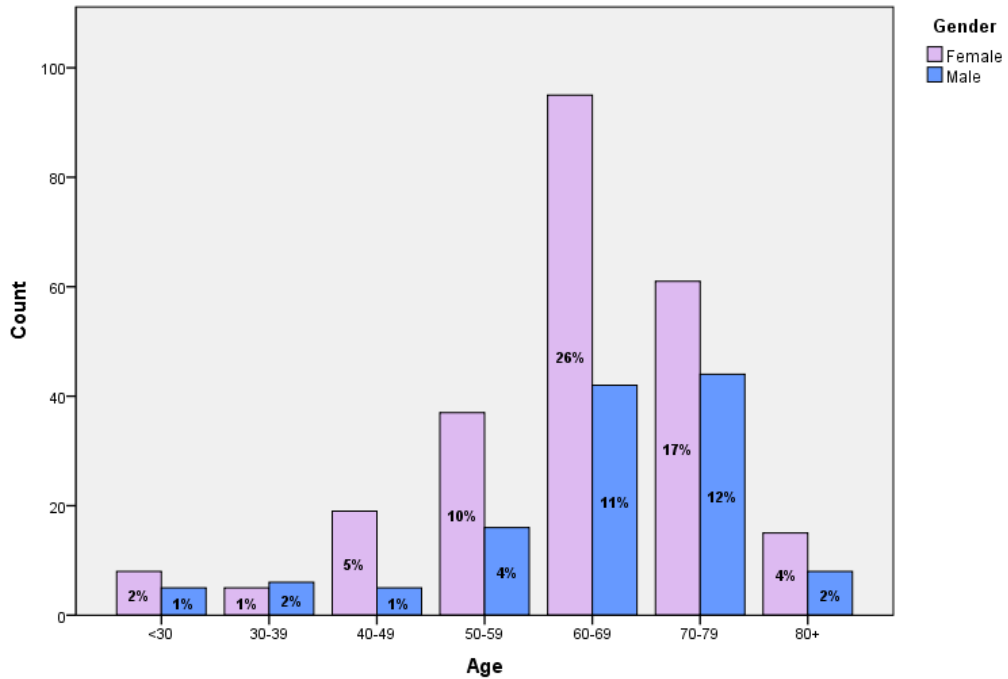
Demographics

Age and Gender

Cast an eye around the room at any *Spirituality in the Pub* meeting and it's clear to see that SIP attendees are predominantly older and female. The survey findings confirm this: 66% of those who answered the gender question were female, and 73% were over the age of 60.



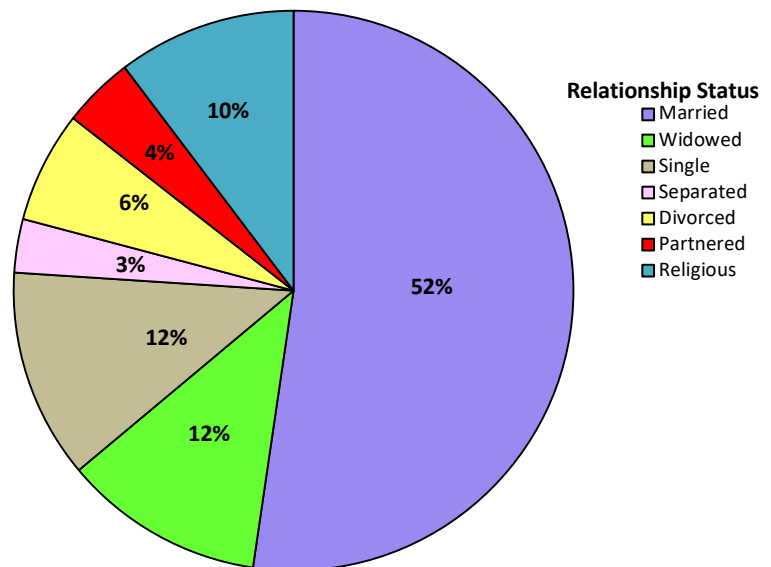
Broken down by gender, the age distribution of respondents was as follows. Here we can see that the most substantial difference in gender patterns of attendance is found amongst the 40-69 year olds:



Relationship Status

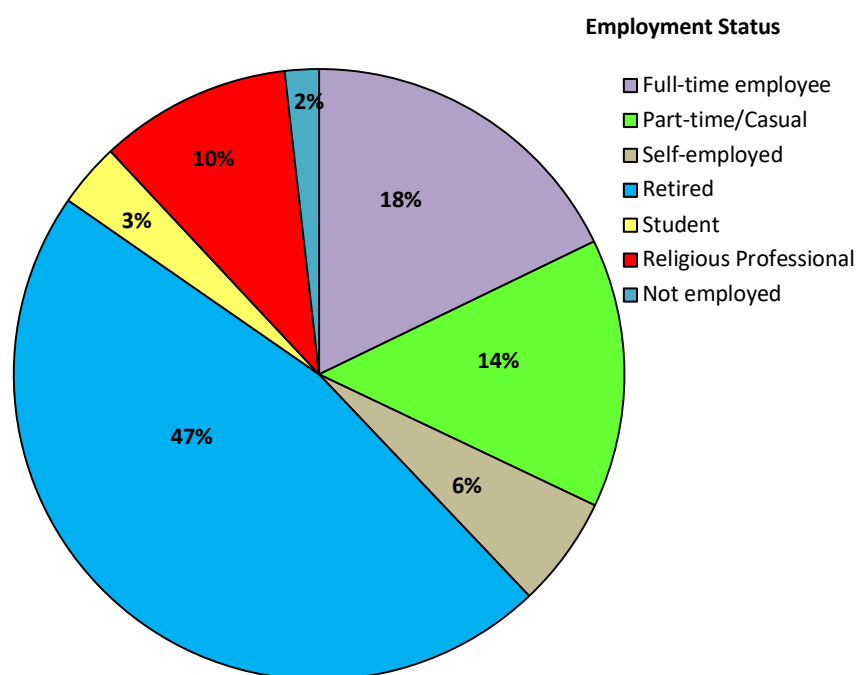
Over half of the respondents were married or partnered at the time of the survey (56%).

10% of those sampled indicated they were religious, while 12% were single and another 12% widowed.



Employment Status

The largest group of SIP respondents were retirees (47%), with only 38% indicating they were engaged in full-time, part-time, casual or self-employed work. Only 3.4% of respondents indicated they were engaged in studies of some sort (whether also employed or not), while 2% were unemployed.



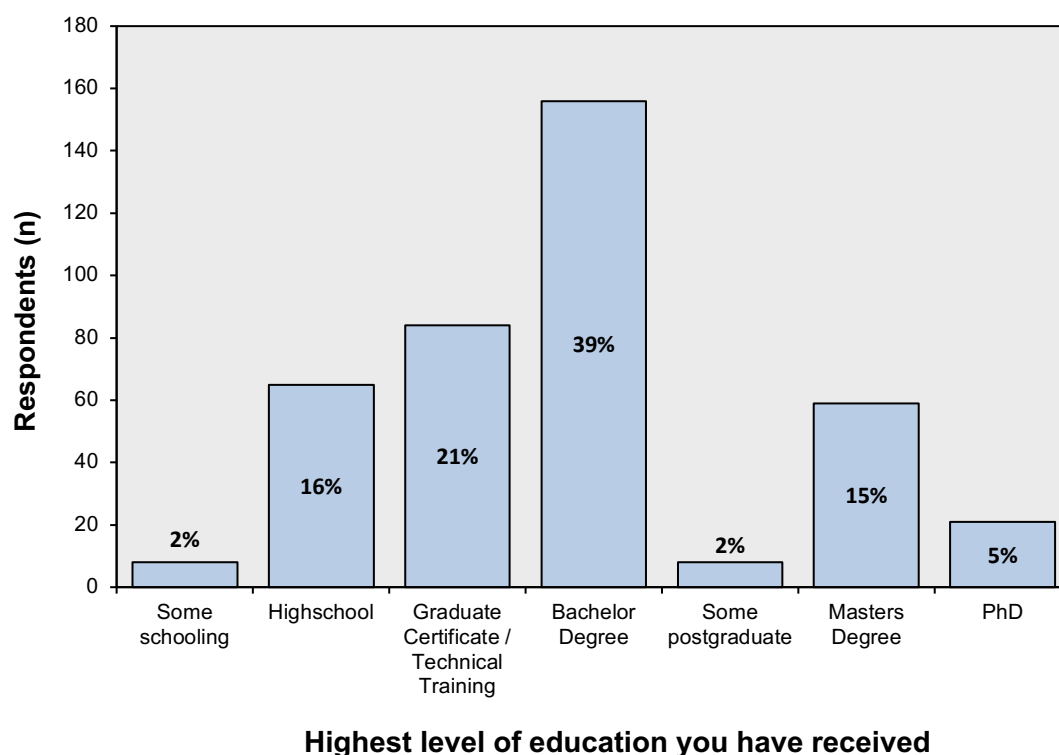
Of the 406 respondents, 271 people gave more specific details about their job or the industry in which they presently or have previously worked. These responses have been collated into categories, as follows:

Industry/Occupation	# of Responses	% of Responses
Teaching & School Administration	59	21.8%
Religious Profession & Pastoral Care - Catholic	44	16.2%
Healthcare & Aged Care	24	8.9%
Administration & Secretarial	19	7.0%
Research & Lecturing	16	5.9%
Accounting & Finance	14	5.2%
Business & Management	10	3.7%
Medicine (Specialist)	9	3.3%
Engineering, Architecture & Town Planning	8	3.0%
Hospitality, Retail & Sales	8	3.0%
Religious Profession - non-Catholic	7	2.6%
Media, Journalism and Librarianship	7	2.6%
Public Service	6	2.2%
Psychology, Counselling & Social Work	6	2.2%
Law	5	1.8%
Volunteer work	5	1.80%
Maintenance Services & Trades	4	1.50%
IT, Electronics & Communications	4	1.50%
Church Administration	3	1.10%
Domestic / Family Care	3	1.10%
Childcare	1	0.40%
Other	9	3.30%

Education

82% of our SIP respondents have pursued education beyond their school years, with 6 out of 10 SIPpers studying at university. 41% of respondents studied a Bachelor degree or Honours equivalent degree while 20% went on to further postgraduate education, studying Masters or Doctoral degrees.

These figures show a marked difference to the average Australian population. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in 2011 only 50% of Australians aged 15-64 had completed an educational qualification higher than that of school-level. Only 24% of people aged 15-64 held a Bachelor or higher degree – a figure which is less than half that of the SIP population. Furthermore, only 4.6% of Australian 15-64 year olds with non-school qualifications completed a Masters or Doctoral degree.¹⁷⁷



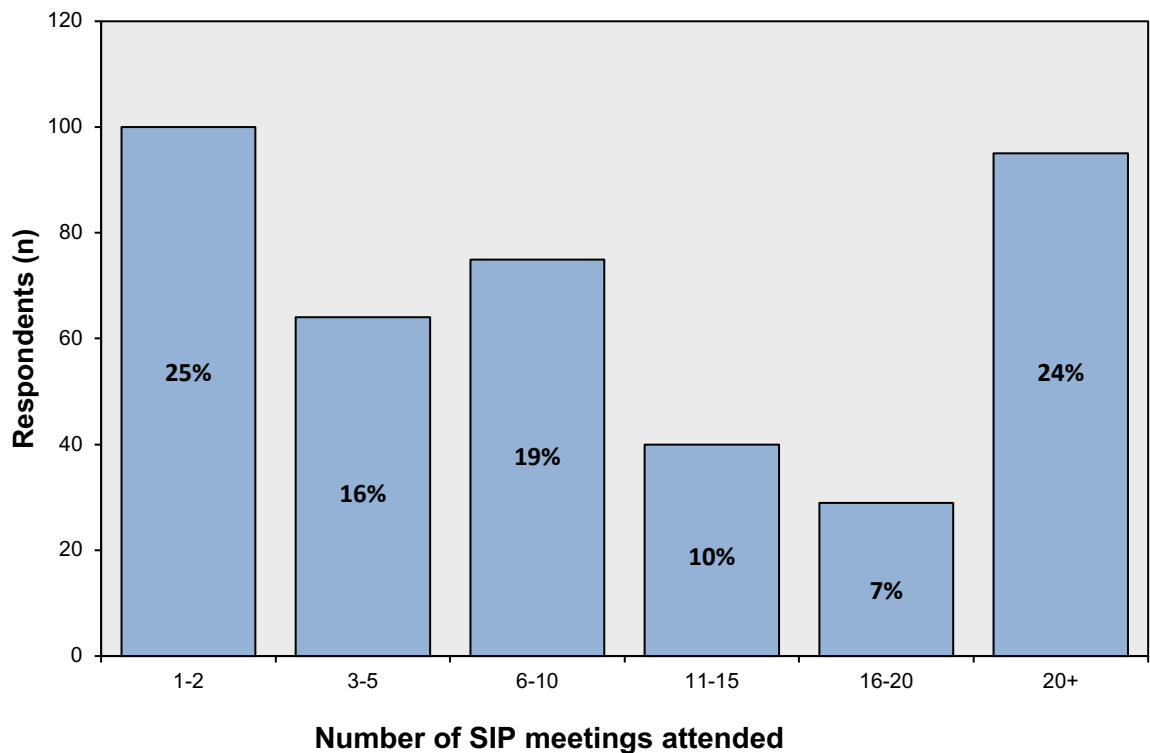
¹⁷⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011, Education and Work, Australia, May 2011, Tables 8 & 14, data cube: Excel spreadsheet, cat. no. 6227.0, viewed 29 Feb 2012, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6227.0Main+Features1May%202011?OpenDocument>.

SIP Attendance and Communications

Survey questions 1-5 pertained to the nature and habits of the respondent's attendance at *Spirituality in the Pub*. These questions sought to ascertain how many SIP meetings the respondent has attended, whether they have visited multiple SIP locations, whether they attend alone or with others, and how they hear about upcoming SIP meetings.

Number and Variety of SIPs Attended

Survey results indicate that the SIP audience predominantly falls into two camps: 'SIP newcomers' and 'SIP veterans'. A quarter of respondents were attending SIP for the first or second time, while about another quarter had attended an impressive 20 or more SIP meetings over time.



When asked about their attendance at other SIPs around Australia or overseas, 32% (n=130) of respondents indicated they had attended another SIP location at some point. Of those who specified other locations, 20% had visited one other location, 6.4%

had visited two other locations, and 2% had visited 3-5 locations. Finally, one truly remarkable respondent had visited an outstanding 12 SIP locations over time!

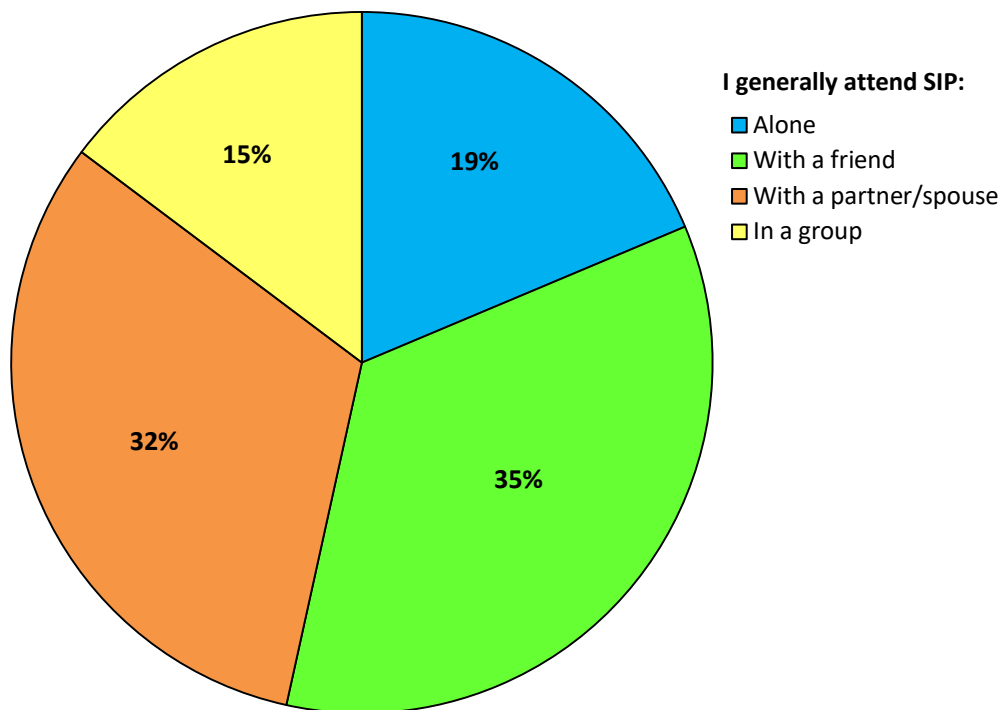
The following table lists those locations that were specified by respondents as 'other SIPs' they had visited, with the most often cited locations highlighted in bold:

		Responses	
		N	Percent
Other SIPs I've visited...	Paddington	10	5.7%
	Sutherland / Engadine	3	1.7%
	North Sydney	11	6.3%
	St George	2	1.1%
	Waitara / Pymble	7	4.0%
	Wollongong	6	3.4%
	Newtown	5	2.9%
	Central Coast	2	1.1%
	Jamberoo	2	1.1%
	Ramsgate	3	1.7%
	Inner West / Five Dock	8	4.6%
	Petersham	1	.6%
	Goulburn	1	.6%
	Braidwood	1	.6%
	South Hurstville	2	1.1%
	Penrith	1	.6%
	Bowral	1	.6%
	Chatswood	3	1.7%
	Albury	3	1.7%
	Burwood	1	.6%
Sydney Area	5	2.9%	
Melbourne Area	12	6.9%	
Southern SIP (Brighton / Mordialloc / Moorabbin)	12	6.9%	

		Responses	
		N	Percent
	Fitzroy / Collingwood	20	11.5%
Other SIPs I've visited...	Clayton / Notting Hill	7	4.0%
	Western SIP	5	2.9%
	Bulleen	13	7.5%
	Heidelberg	2	1.1%
	Alphington	3	1.7%
	Collingwood	2	1.1%
	Footscray	1	.6%
	Preston	2	1.1%
	Woodend	2	1.1%
	Shepparton	3	1.7%
	Echuca	2	1.1%
	Wangaratta	1	.6%
	Adelaide	1	.6%
	Canberra	2	1.1%
	Tasmania	1	.6%
	Perth	2	1.1%
	Theology at the Pub	1	.6%
	CFR Reflection Mornings	1	.6%
SIP weekends/3D Days	1	.6%	
Total		174	100.0%

Attending SIP with Others

Survey results suggest that SIP attendance is predominantly a social activity, with 81% of respondents indicating they attend SIP with other people rather than alone. Of these, over a third attend with a friend (35%).



Inviting Others to Attend SIP

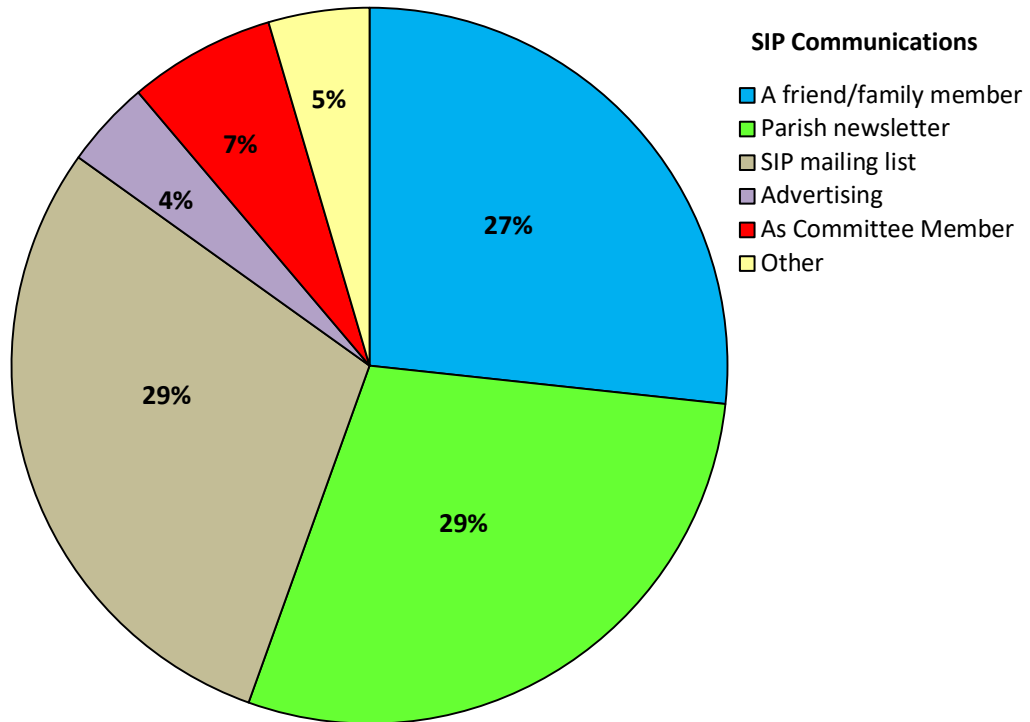
63% of respondents indicated they had invited others to join them at SIP. Over a quarter of those who answered this question provided further comment about why they had or had not felt able to extend an invitation. These responses were collated into categories where possible and are outlined in the following two tables:

		# Comments
I have invited others to SIP, and / but...	I have brought people to SIP	10
	Not always successfully	4
	I invite others frequently	4
	I talk about SIP to others at church and in my parish group	5
	I invite others occasionally	9
	I advertise in my workplace / school	3
	It's difficult to get interest/enthusiasm from others	3
	They haven't come yet, though they say they're interested	2
	Those that may be interested live too far away	1
	My friends are too busy / not available	1
	It was convenient	1
	I wanted them to be intellectually stimulated and also wanted someone to talk to about it afterwards	1
	Yes, because they enjoy a challenge!	1
	Too weary often these days	1
	Because the topic was likely of interest to them	1
	I have but belong to Uniting Church!?	1
I like to share good information	1	
Total		49

		# Comments
I have not invited others along to SIP, because...	I'm a newcomer	34
	I don't really know why	7
	My friends would not be interested	6
	I can't attend regularly myself	5
	I'm not organised enough / It's usually enough just to get there myself!	5
	Not yet, but I will!	4
	I depend on someone else to bring me	3
	My friends attend already / I already know people here	3
	Not yet	3
	No opportunity to do so	3
	Those that may be interested live too far away	2
	My friends are too busy / not available	1
	It's hard to contact them	1
	Just returned to this area	1
	I simply discuss the truth as I see it, if it is appropriate to do so	1
	Not sure how others might respond	1
	I'm rarely in this area	1
Seems a little structured in format	1	
Total	82	

SIP Communications and Advertising

When asked ‘How do you generally hear about SIP meetings?’, most respondents indicated that they hear about SIP via either a parish newsletter (29%), a SIP mailing list (whether email or postal; 29%), or via a friend or family member (27%).



Only 4% of respondents (n=19) nominated ‘advertising’ as one of the means by which they hear about SIP meetings. 15 of these respondents provided further information about where they had seen or heard these advertisements, as follows:

Where do you see SIP ads?	# Responses
Church noticeboard	4
Local paper / radio	3
School newsletter / noticeboard	3
Internet	2
Politics in the Pub	1
[Flyers] sent to me	1
Aquinas Academy	1

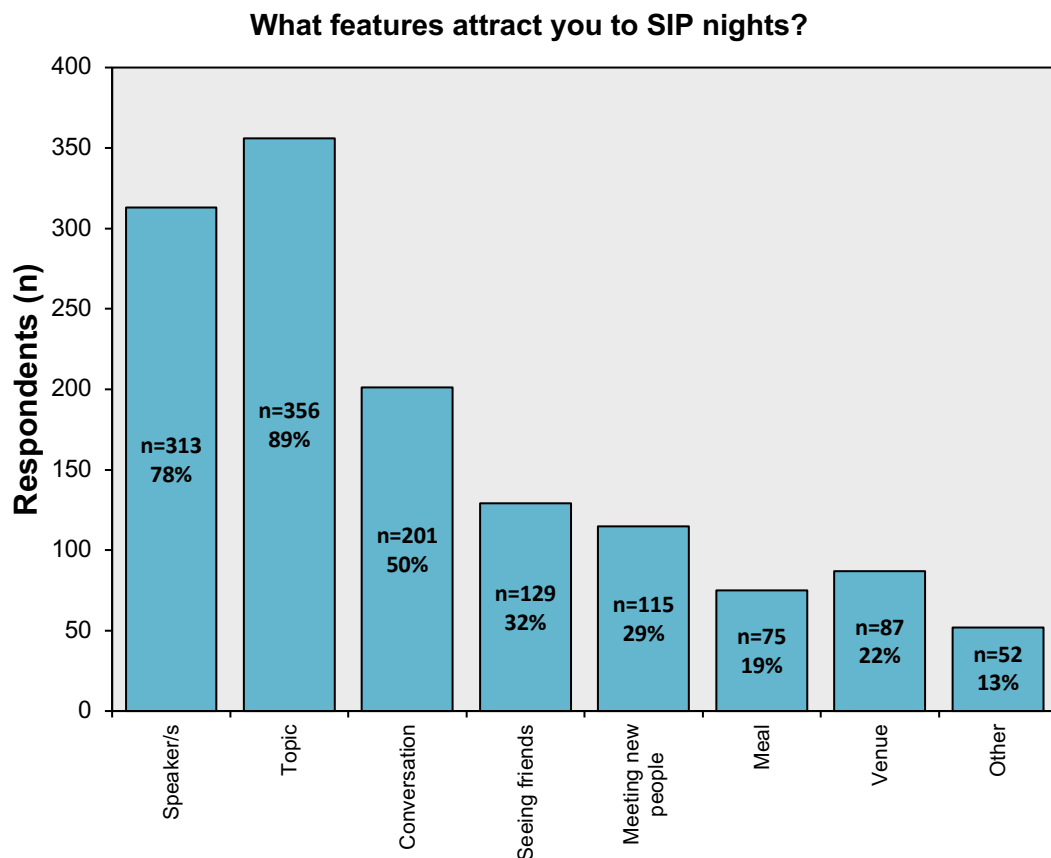
This question also provided an 'other' alternative regarding where people hear about SIP meetings. 5% of respondents ticked this alternative and provided further details as follows:

Where do you see SIP ads?	# Responses
Personal contact with organiser	6
via Catalyst for Renewal	3
At SIP meetings	2
Church word-of-mouth	2
Interfaith network group	2
via the guest speaker	2
[Used to see] SIP in parish newsletter, but not recently	1
At CFR events	1
At CTU Hunter's Hill	1
Because I'm not on email, I'm not notified anymore	1
Knowing its regular date	1
Local pastor	1

SIP's Appealing Features

Survey Questions 6 & 7 asked respondents to consider what features attract them to particular SIP meetings. Question 6 asked them to tick *all* the features that they found appealing, and Question 7 asked respondents to select the key feature that they felt *was most important* to them in deciding whether to attend a given SIP meeting.

In response to Question 6, most people ticked at least 2 or 3 boxes to indicate features that attract them to SIP, reaping a total of 1328 responses from our 406 respondents. The chart below illustrates these findings by specifying first the sum total (n) of people who ticked each category. Secondly, this figure is then transformed into a percentage of all respondents. As such, 89% of all respondents indicated that they were attracted to a given SIP meeting by the topic (n=356), and 78% of all respondents were attracted by the speaker/s (n=313). In contrast, only 19% of all respondents, or 75 people, indicated that sharing a meal was one of the features that attracts them to SIP meetings.



50 of the 52 people who indicated that an 'other' feature attracts them to SIP provided further details about this feature. They are listed as follows:

'Other' features that attract me to SIP:	
As an outreach of our parish	
At SIP I see a side of religion that I don't see in the general community *	
Being part of an ecumenical group	*
Come with husband	
Concern for people and church failing to care for them	*
Enjoying a night out with our other parishioners	
Exploration of Spiritual in Human Life	
Getting the feel of what other Catholics are really thinking on issues	
Good conversation about what matters in life	
Growth through conversation	*
How others think	*
I am on the committee	*
I need to do 50 hours for accreditation to teach in a Catholic School	*
I'm attracted by the concept, and being available. My most important reason for attending is being exposed to the ideas discussed (generally no specific topic)	*
Interaction and educating myself	*
Interdenominational and thought provoking	
Interested	*
Joining with others with a similar view	
Just the whole atmosphere	
Keeping abreast of subjects	
Learning something new	*
Love that it is interdenominational	
Meeting like-minded evolving Catholics	
Meeting like-minded people	*
Meeting people from other churches & talking about our faith/beliefs	*
Meeting people from other churches and denominations in our area	*
My friends invited me	
People who think alike	*
Relevant topics - not theological.	
Spirituality	*
Stimulation - to hear and talk about stuff that matters	*
Support for the movement	*
The above with a drink in hand helps	

The chance to hear some fresh input	*
The community	*
The ecumenical nature of [our] SIP	
The fact that 'spirituality' is in the public arena	
The intellectual stimulation, listening to inspiring people and their life journey	
The involvement, the activation, true spirituality	*
The whole event	*
Time out	
To be educated	*
To broaden my knowledge of current thinking etc.	*
To generally support Catholic initiatives	*
To hear new ideas etc	*
To hear what they have to say about [the] spiritual	
To learn more and increase knowledge	
To really know and understand what is going on in the world	
Validation (or adjustment) of my own experiences & thinking	*

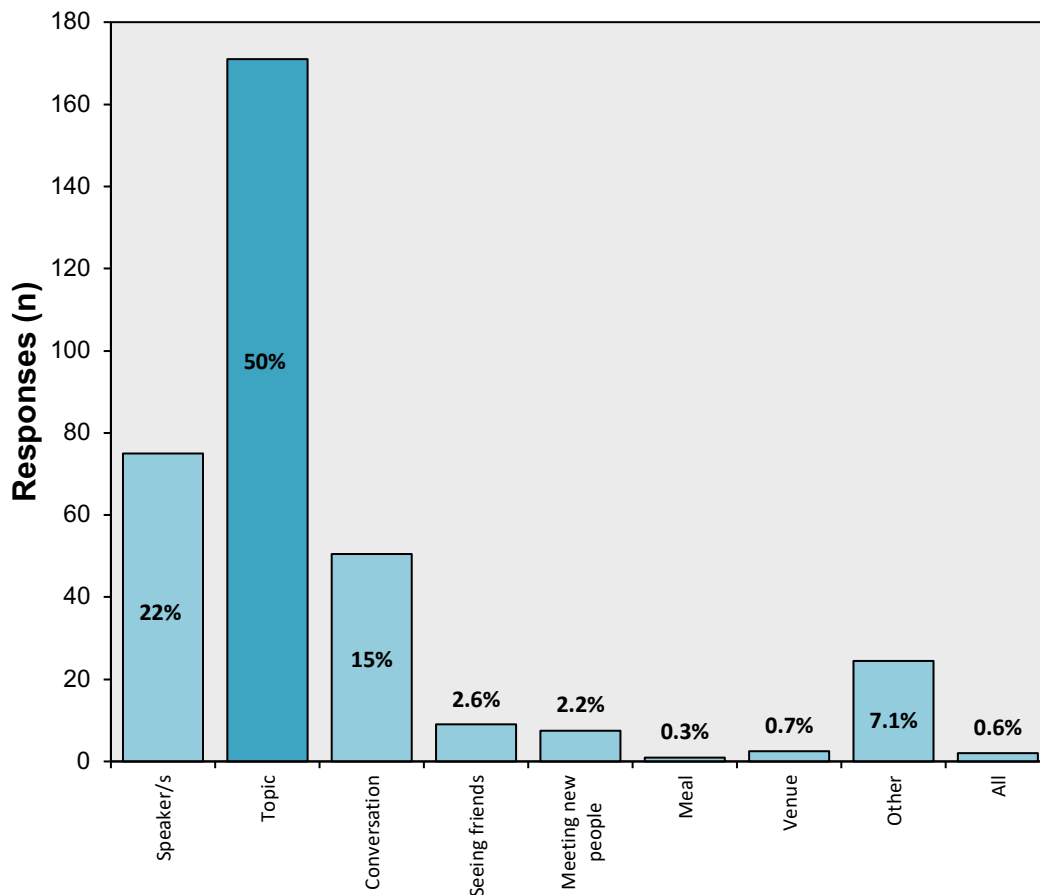
Alternatively, the above list can be coded into the following categories:

		Responses	
		N	Percent
Other features that attract me to SIP:	Spirituality	6	8.3%
	Conversation	2	2.8%
	Being Catholic	4	5.6%
	Ecumenism	6	8.3%
	Outreach	2	2.8%
	Likeminded people	7	9.7%
	Ideas / Intellectual Stimulation	14	19.4%
	Education/Development	8	11.1%
	Community/Friendship	8	11.1%
	Inspiration	3	4.2%
	Atmosphere / Whole Concept	4	5.6%
	Relaxation	2	2.8%
	Sense of duty / requirement	5	6.9%
	Other	1	1.4%

In regards to Question 7, 50 percent of our survey respondents indicated that the topic is of greatest importance to them in deciding whether to attend a given SIP meeting (n=171). With less than half the number of votes than ‘the topic’, ‘the speaker/s’ came in second with 75 people (or 22%) indicating that this was the most important feature that shaped their decision to attend. 15% of respondents (n=51) selected ‘conversation’ as their most important feature.

27 of the respondents who specified an ‘other’ feature in Question 6 also selected this as being the most important feature for Question 7. These responses are marked with asterisks in the table on the previous two pages.

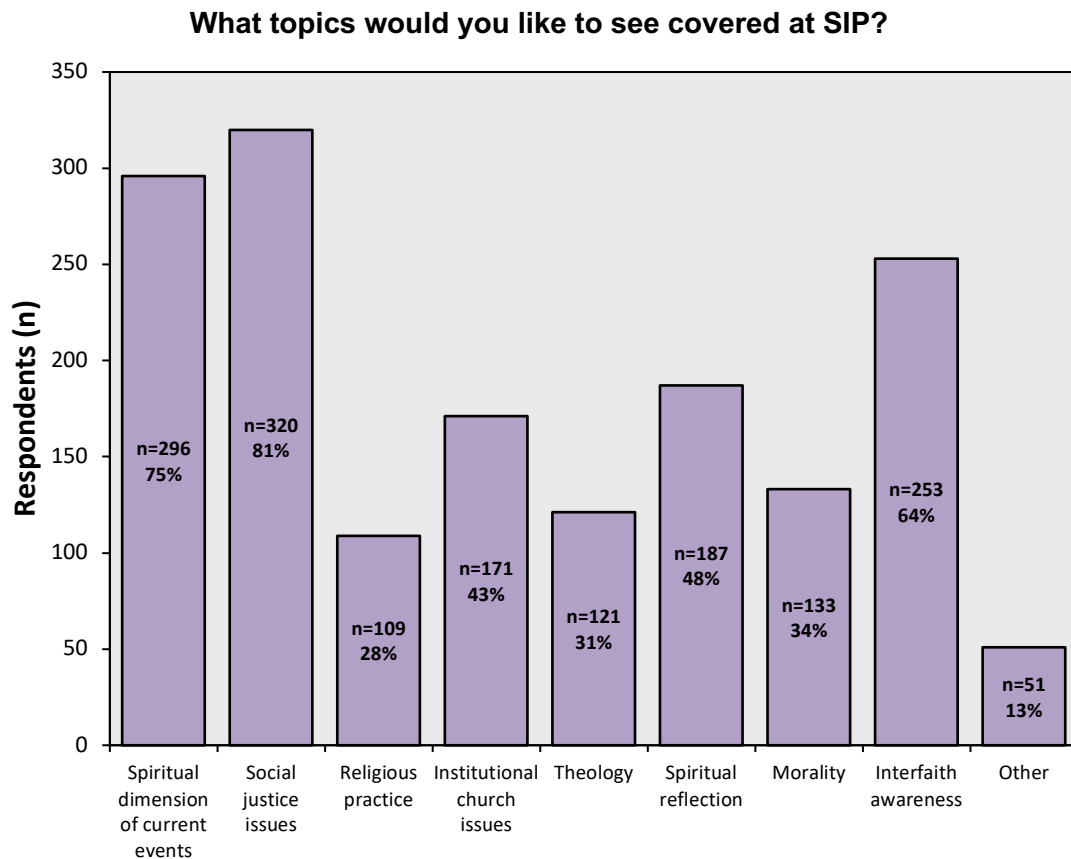
Of all the features that attract you to SIP, which is most important to you?



Preferred SIP Topics

Survey questions 8 & 9 asked respondents to nominate which topics they would like to see covered at SIP. Question 8 asked them to tick *all* the topic categories that appeal to them, and Question 9 asked them to select the one topic category that *most* appealed to them.

In response to Question 8, most people ticked at least 3 or 4 boxes to represent topics they would like to see covered at SIP, providing a total of 1641 responses from our 406 respondents. The chart below illustrates these findings by specifying both the sum total (n) of people who ticked each category, as well as representing this as a percentage of all respondents. As such, the two most popular topics were 'social justice issues' and 'the spiritual dimension of current events', with 81% of all respondents voting for the former, and 75% the latter. In contrast, only about a third of respondents indicated a preference for topics on 'religious practice' or 'theology' (28% and 34% respectively).



47 of the 51 respondents who indicated they would like to see an 'other' topic covered at SIP provided further details as follows:

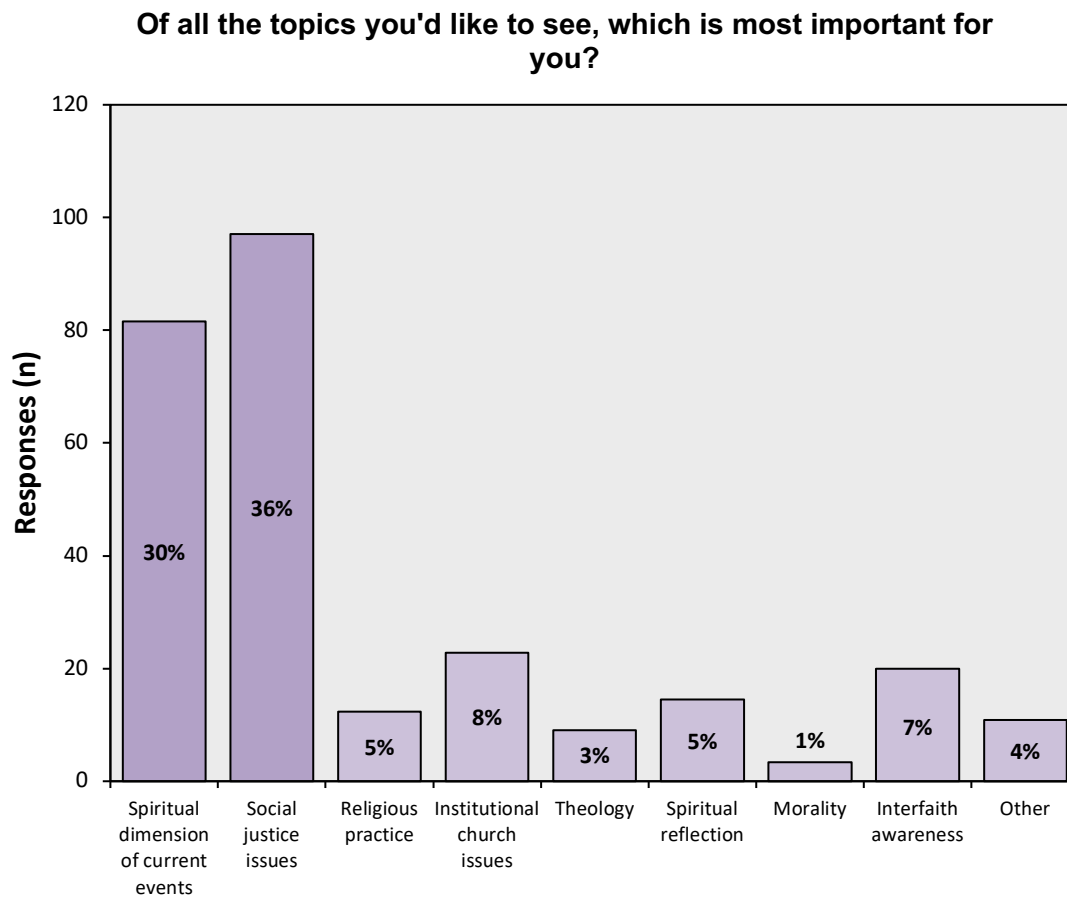
'Other' topics I'd like to see covered at SIP:	
ACTION - bringing heaven to earth	*
All. The diversity is an attractive aspect	
Animal welfare & spirituality	
Application of religious scripture	
Asylum seeker issues & Christian attitudes	
Bible interpretation for our times	*
Climate change	*
Community transformation	
Connection between spirituality and our cultural and political identity	
Constant covering of relevant & at the moment Aboriginal achievement & issues. NTER & consultations & what the elders are saying. Aboriginal entertainment.	
Correction of roles - eg Collegiality of Bishops - curious CORRECT role	
Especially interfaith with non-Christians eg Moslem [sic], Jew, Hindu etc	
Ethical issues	*
Ethics - particularly Politics/Governments	
Evangelism; Post-Christendom	*
Faith	*
How do you identify a Catholic Today??	
How faith can help / accept / nurture young people of today	
I have enjoyed all the topics I have seen in my 5 visits	
Music, Arts, Storytelling	
New theology - a la theology of Morwood, Spong, etc in light of new cosmic awareness	*
New ways of looking at theology	
Other religions, Muslim, C of E, etc	
Peace, militarism - non-violence. How do we follow Jesus commands 'Put down your sword', 'love your enemies'	
Personal growth in faith	
Personal life journeys & what people are passionate about	
Personal spirituality	*

Political issues, Journos, Authors	
Politics	
Practical spirituality	*
Progressive renewal (church)	*
Reaching out to people on the fringe - SIP does not. It is middle class.	*
Reform of the church	
Refugees	
Relevant topics of life and faith	*
Religious belief in practice	
Sexuality, Secular spiritual practices (if there is such a thing)	
Social commentators on church	
Spiritual diversity	*
Spirituality	
Structural analysis - local trends, population, age groups etc	
The return of the Church to the REAL MESSAGE of Christ and the Gospel - NOT CONTROL AND POWER	
The universe story	
Theology for the suburbs	
Those that challenge us into a new consciousness - new planetary awareness.	*
Topical community issues, ie gambling	
Universe story (science) & Christianity	

When asked in Question 9 to nominate their *most preferred* topic area, 36% of those who answered this question indicated they would most like to hear about ‘social justice issues’ at SIP. Another 30% preferred to hear about the ‘spiritual dimension of current events’. Less than 10% nominated each of the other topic categories as their most preferred topics. 14 respondents selected their previously specified ‘other’ topic as being most important. These responses are highlighted with asterisks in the table above.

However, in reading these figures one interpretive note must be highlighted: These figures do not represent the full sample of respondents, as more than one-quarter (n=

123) of our 406 respondents chose not to answer this question. This is in sharp contrast to Question 7, where only 16% (n=63) of respondents failed to nominate the feature that most attracted them to SIP. We cannot know whether the fall in response rates to Question 9 is due to respondent fatigue or an actual lack of 'greatest topic preference', however this smaller response rate should be recognised as potentially affecting the reliability of our results for Question 9.



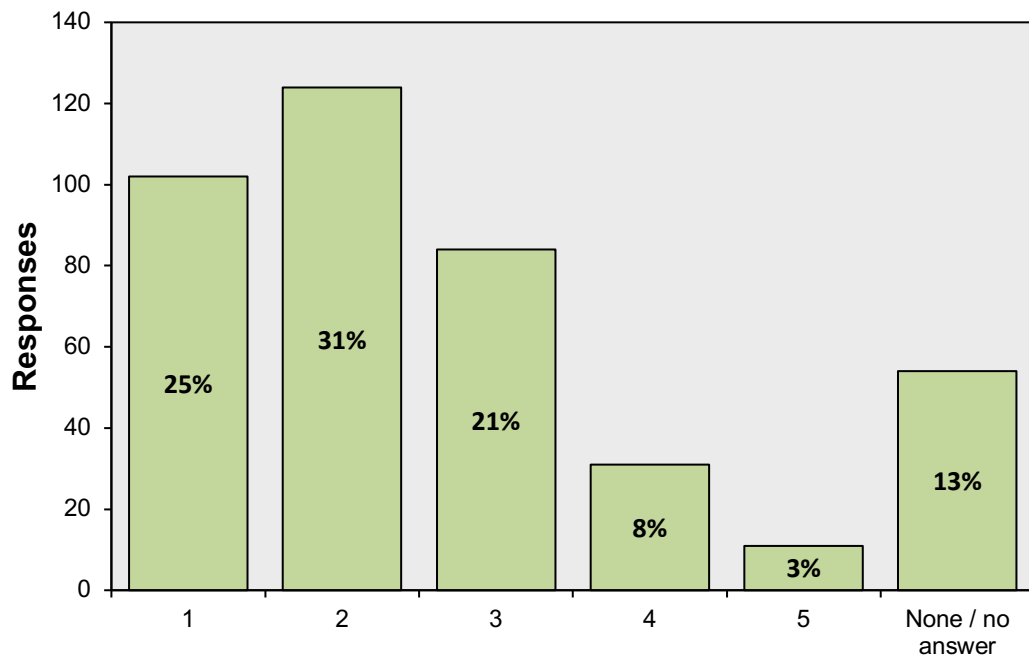
Participation in Other Social Groups

Survey Question 10 sought to identify what other social groups SIPpers choose to attend. It asked respondents to indicate which types of groups they regularly attend, and to provide further details regarding the group if possible.

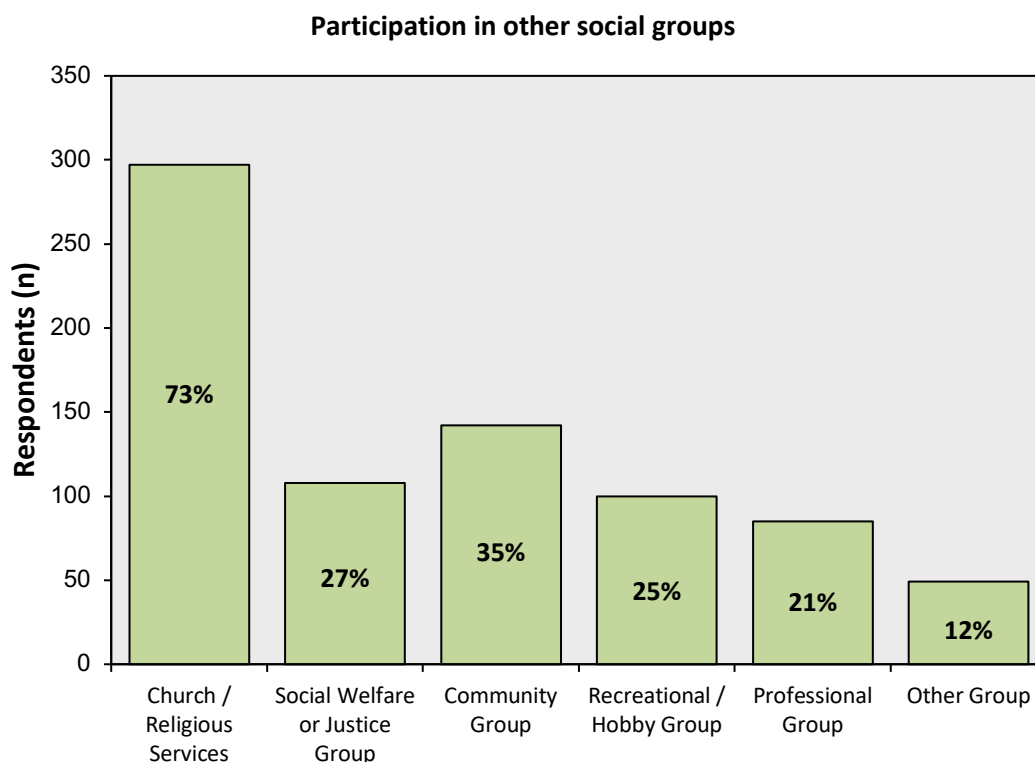
Our survey results show that SIPpers are a remarkably social bunch of people. Of our 406 respondents, only 54 people (13%) failed to nominate at least one other social group that they regularly attend. On average, respondents listed two other groups (mean = 2.22, mode = 2), however 31% of all respondents indicated that they attend between three and five of the following categories of groups:

- Church or religious services
- Social Welfare or Justice Groups
- Community Groups
- Recreational or Hobby Groups
- Professional Groups
- Other Groups

How many other types of social groups do you regularly attend?



Unsurprisingly, almost three-quarters (73%) of SIP respondents are regular attendees at church or religious services. However, participation in other social groups does not end there, as the table below illustrates.



The tables on the following pages summarise the more specific details respondents gave about the groups they attend. Please note that the percentage figures below refer to N as a percentage of those who provided specific details about their groups, *not* as a percentage of all respondents.

Other social groups I regularly attend...		Responses	
		N	Percent
Church or Religious Group	Roman Catholic	207	81.5%
	Anglican	8	3.1%
	Uniting	15	5.9%
	Ecumenical / Interfaith	3	1.2%
	Independent Christian church	6	2.4%
	Ukranian Catholic	3	1.2%
	Presbyterian	1	.4%
	Baptist	8	3.1%
	Jewish	1	.4%
	Sai Baba	1	.4%
	Brahma Kumaris	1	.4%
Total N who ticked 'Church/Relig Group'		297	
Total N who provided group details		254	100%

Other social groups I regularly attend...		Responses	
		N	Percent
Recreation or Hobby Group	Book club	6	11.3%
	Meditation group	7	13.2%
	Bridge club	5	9.4%
	Gardening / Nature Appreciation group	3	5.7%
	Walking group	2	3.8%
	Fitness / Gym group	4	7.5%
	Cycling club	3	5.7%
	Swimming club	2	3.8%
	Craft / Hobby group	3	5.7%
	Historical society	2	3.8%
	Theatre / Art appreciation group	3	5.7%
	Music / Dancing group	4	7.5%
	Sport club	7	13.2%
	Conversation group	2	3.8%
Total N who ticked 'Recreation / Hobby Group'		100	
Total N who provided group details		53	100%

Other social groups I regularly attend...		Responses	
		N	Percent
Social Welfare or Justice Group	Catholics in Coaliton for Justice and Peace (CCJP)	5	6.6%
	Women and the Australian Church (WATAC)	4	5.3%
	St Vincent de Paul Society	13	17.1%
	Local community support group	6	7.9%
	Disability / Health / Aged Care support group	8	10.5%
	Charity group	3	3.9%
	Parish / Congregational group	10	13.2%
	Human rights advocacy and action group	8	10.5%
	International aid organisation	5	6.6%
	Justice group	6	7.9%
	Asylum Seeker / Refugee support group	4	5.3%
	Peace group	4	5.3%
	Total N who ticked 'Welfare/Justice Group'		108
Total N who provided group details		76	100%

Other social groups I regularly attend...		Responses	
		N	Percent
Professional Association	Ministry / Pastoral Care	7	1.7
	Education & Childcare	10	2.5
	Health & Disability	4	1.0
	Engineering	2	.5
	Finance & Accounting	3	.7
	Psychology	2	.5
	Sociology	1	.2
	Professional Supervision	4	1.0
	Other	4	1.0
	Total N who ticked 'Professional Group'		85
Total N who provided group details		37	100%

Other social groups I regularly attend...		Responses	
		N	Percent
Community Group	Church / Parish / Congregational Community	31	40.3%
	Friendship group	3	3.9%
	Family / Marriage group	10	13.0%
	Ecology / Nature care group	4	5.2%
	Ethnic / Heritage group	2	2.6%
	Interfaith group	10	13.0%
	Local community group	6	7.8%
	Indigenous reconciliation group	4	5.2%
	Addiction support group	2	2.6%
	Rotary	2	2.6%
	Probus	3	3.9%
	Total N who ticked 'Community Group'		142
Total N who provided group details		77	100%

Other social groups I regularly attend...		Responses	
		N	Percent
Other Group	University of the Third Age	8	17.8%
	Political group	5	11.1%
	Catalyst for Renewal	6	13.3%
	Bible study or Theological/Spiritual discussion group	13	28.9%
	Volunteering	4	8.9%
	Prayer group	2	4.4%
	Other	7	15.6%
	Total N who ticked 'Other Group'		49
Total N who provided group details		45	100%

Comments

Finally, the survey included a section which asked respondents if there were any comments, suggestions or ideas they'd like to share with the SIP organisers. Being a very open-ended question, the responses were quite varied and at times it is difficult to identify whether a response is a criticism, a suggestion for a possible topic, or simply a comment on what the respondent enjoys about SIP.

Given the wide variety of responses, I have largely left the comments field unaltered and present the list of all responses in their original format. In cases where non-textual clarifications were made by the respondent on the survey pages (eg via arrows etc) I have incorporated these comments in square brackets. I have also used square brackets where editing of the original comments is required so as to maintain participant anonymity or improve readability.

Comments	[Would like to see] emphasis on various aspects of theology and interpretation of St Paul's Epistles and Gospels
	[First time visitor:] I found the format overly structural - Speakers a little esoteric - It's shut off. I expected to be in the bar with a sticky carpet.
	[I enjoy] just being there. [Re improvements:] attracting a younger group!
	1) Encourage discussion at individual tables by using a member of planning committee as facilitator. 2) A welcoming person to greet arrivals.
	A great forum. More please.
	A great learning experience. Good to mix with THINKING people
	A variety of topics - speakers are engaging.
	Advertise in other parishes.
	Advertise more amongst young people / young adults
	All is good so far.
	Although a speaker (or speakers) are stated, I like that a topic is announced and is explored.
	Any gathering (as important as this one) is very important. We need a place to voice our thoughts, etc.
	Any subject that stimulates the mind and enables outreach to the wider community and our planet/beyond.
	At present the organisers of the group are doing a fantastic job and the topics / speakers are well chosen.
	Availability of disabled access to the forum premises.
Better meals.	

Chair needs to keep conversation tight - & not talk too much - as [the chair] is doing tonight
Continue to explore areas of reform and to raise awareness of the various paths of and to spiritual awareness.
Conversation - Views - Further enrichment of my faith.
Conversation. Just to continue.
Current format is pretty good (ie talks and questions from the floor) however there is probably a place for a small group format after an initial talk to allow the interaction to be more participatory and intimate. Each small group could have a trained leader (minimal training) and a set of discussion questions for the group to address - then a quick plenary at the end would be interesting with each group reporting back and comments from the speakers.
Discussions in a friendly environment. Sharing thoughts.
Easier if more provision to eat whilst listening - tables?
Enjoy meeting people of other denominations ie Baptists
Firstly, thankyou for the efforts you put in to make SIP happen. Good work. In future, please take care to send emails with address in the BCC field so addresses are kept confidential.
Good to share speakers - especially in the country. Important to emphasise that SIP is a *conversation*, not a question and answer session focussed on speaker. Have a way to keep comments short.
Great as is - mixture of academic, 'experts', young, old, locals, different faiths
Great idea to have the spirituality of many aspects of life presented in a venue outside of church & able to be widely discussed
Great new venue. Topic only as good as the speakers.
Great to have female and male speakers and speakers of different faith denominations and of different ages and interest groups
Great venue - thanks!
Have some speakers from other denominations to compare institutional set ups, their faith growth, etc.
Haven't really attended enough to make realistic suggestions. I like to hear what the 'young' have to say.
Having formerly been on the SIP committee I think it is extremely difficult to find good speakers, particularly as we are getting older and less involved in church affairs, business, and schools etc.
I am NOT attracted to SIP by the venue - it is too noisy and I have great difficulty hearing
I am on "L"-Plates [ie first time - too new to comment]
I applaud you. Thankyou.
I appreciate good organisation and because of hearing difficulties, good amplification.
I attend SIP if the speakers are interesting.
I enjoy hearing different views pertaining to social issues and having an opportunity to reflect on our spirituality. Would like an opportunity to put written questions to the speaker - sometimes questions become a little wordy (I think).

I enjoy matters that give inspiration, particularly in terms of helping the church to address its issues & move progressively to a more compassionate truly Christian approach to its members & the wider world & the physical environment.

I enjoy meeting other Christians in the area. I enjoy listening to speakers. I enjoy fellowshipping/sharing a meal with my church group.

I enjoy some challenging ideas and conversation. When that's not available it's nice to just chat to new or 'old' people.

I enjoy the common interest/understanding, and sense of baptismal role which calls us to BE the PEOPLE OF GOD who share in the PRIESTHOOD of Christ

I enjoy the ECUMENICAL ASPECT of SIP

I enjoy the frank & realistic atmosphere of SIP, both in the speakers & in the questions (& discussion)

I enjoy the opportunity to be with, and listen to / talk to, people who share my idea/dream of church. One can speak honestly, and be encouraged by the support / inspiration of those who come to SIP.

I feel it has lost its 'edge'. With all the upheaval in the RC church (aside from abuse issues) these things of great moment are no longer even a topic. Unless there is a good speaker to attract, the topics are now passé and boring and little insight attained - old topics rehashed. Re conversation - none happens. A select few get to air their questions/views.

I hope SIP continues to grow

I just love getting together with like-minded people and listening to what is going on and talking about the topic. Sometimes I agree with what has been said and sometimes I don't - But I congratulate the SIP committee for their efforts.

I like hearing from well-qualified people - Stimulation - Hearing the stories of people's journeys & their definitions of spirituality. I'd like to see better communication though.

I like the annual theme approach. Speakers that challenge thinking.

I like the crowded space: it feels like the early (Christian) church... But it is hard to see the speakers.

I like the fact that discussion at the tables is sometimes included.

I like the open friendly atmosphere & realise that a huge amount of thought and organisation goes into this apostolate. Maybe sometimes having Catholic priests and Ministers of other Faiths could be good. I'd also like to hear more about the need for the Institutional Church to be more inclusive & more open to women.

I like the sense of community.

I like the variety of people that attend, each with their own views, beliefs, etc, and able to express them and be heard with respect.

I like the way it is run at the moment. I can't think of any way to improve it.

I love SIP - though I don't get here as often as I'd like. Re conversation - hearing what others think gives [a] feeling of shared communication on spiritual matters.

I love the atmosphere. I love the conversation. I am full-time Pastoral Associate in the Church & I have been working in the Church since 1962 - I need to be in contact with people who feel a vitality about a Community called Church in spite of all the ??????. I am 67 years old.

I love the social aspect, the standard of speakers, variety of topics. Venue is good, meal adequate and value. Hope the venue continues.

	I really appreciate the time and effort you all put in to arrange topics & speakers which are always worthwhile. The venue is comfortable, I always find a park. The cost of meals is reasonable. Thankyou. Topics and speakers are always good.
	I think we have to not just deal at the edges but have the courage to speak out if we feel injustice is done.
	I would like the speakers to discuss the named topic - many do not.
	I would need to attend a few more before [giving comments].
	I'd like the talks to be longer so that ideas are more fully developed.
	I'm interested in current religious thought and attitudes to life in general and the implications of Christian thought and responsibilities to life as it is lived today. What are our ethical values and how do we implement them?
	I'm interested.
	In my youth there was little apparent ease between Christian religions. It is delightful to comfortably sit and eat with people of all religions.
	Interaction with others.
	It is sometimes frustrating that whatever the topic our frustrations with organised church end up dominating. Perhaps we need to have more emphasis on the +ve
	It is very inspiring.
	It would be good to create discussion groups and then maybe a plenary.
	It's a good way for me to learn about the ways in which Catholic beliefs exist and have developed. Thanks for all the hard work that goes into organising it - I appreciate it!
	It's great for dialogue with other denominations from our own community and speaking about social justice issues.
	[Our regular MC] is charming. Friendliness.
	Just to hear what the speakers are about.
	Love it all.
	Loved tonight with Joe Caddy. Tried to Google tonight as 'Spirituality in Pub Melbourne' and didn't come up. Is it easy to find?
	Maintain a really good standard of speakers - by topic and presentation (and personality)
	Maybe name tags on each table.
	More about explanation of the Eucharist (mass) & ways of encouraging more young families into the Church - more participation & more interaction, & better liturgical services for children.
	More disciplined use of microphone - speakers who make the (ego-based) retort when given the mike ('No, I don't need that') are to be overruled by the chairman - whose job it is to insist that they abide by his/her instruction. And the chairs in turn need to be instructed to issue that instruction. Few people with poor hearing are prepared to be forthright & say that they can't hear properly. Instead they stay silent & hope for the best. And the majority of attendees that I've observed are well & truly in the hearing impaired age group.
	More of the same. Most of the speakers have been so informative and life giving. THANKYOU.
	More personal stories.
	More seats with backs, please.

More work on the facilitation of the conversation aspect. I think we concentrate too much on the speaker!
Most speakers have been excellent and I'm pleased to hear different views.
Mostly excellent speakers, disappointed with one or two
Moving on from conversation to strategic thinking and action for change in the church
Needs snacks - chips/cake/a free drink. You could charge entry, but need to give us something to eat.
No improvements. Thoroughly enjoy them.
No. It's fine.
Not experienced enough at this stage to comment.
Nothing [to comment on] now, but if something comes up, you will certainly hear from me.
Please ask MC & Guest speaker to use microphone more clearly.
Please could we have a better sound system for the roving microphone?
Possibility of life - ways of better[ing] our lot. Love and God. Spirituality in the world that we live in. How we overcome problems. What is love all about and how do we love God.
Questions asked should be limited to the topic discussed, and time limited so that others may express themselves
[Comment re the 'institutional church' topic] = "bog"
Recording of the talks and the Q&A on MP3 audio and put on Catalyst website - with express permission of the guest speakers of course.
Regular change of committee. More open to all. Yearly elections. Should be open to all - not to certain few
Relevancy of issues raised and topics discussed
[Our key organiser] does a great job. She is very inspiring and anything she is part of runs well and is really well planned and thought out. Always enjoyable! [Re. what's most important to me when attending SIP:] The topic is really important to give my night up for. It would be great to have a topic (eg education) that would include/interest teachers and staff at [our school].
Sharing info on meetings online so that young people can easily invite other young people.
SIP has a vital role in gathering like-minded people and voices to network and support each other. Authority today is not interested in our voices, but we need the conversation to continue for [the] day that the authority is open to listening.
SIP is important to provide a place where people can FREELY discuss issues that affect their involvement in church. Not many other opportunities.
So encouraging, inspiring to gather with like-minded people and special presenters.
So far so good.
So far so good. Well done, organisers.
Social. A way of learning current church issues.
Sometimes I think we go around in circles - See, Judge,... are we acting? I get disheartened.
Sometimes it's not easy to hear speaker / & Questions

Speaker / topic / meeting friends to expand on topic
Still too noisy from next room.
Stimulating & refreshing topics & Interesting writers. Leaders from other faiths
Talk about spiritual companionship. How can one access a spiritual director.
Talking with other guests & discussing church issues.
The noise of this venue is an ongoing problem [due to] trivia night downstairs.
The religious people I know are very self-absorbed with no empathy for others (eg refugees). At SIP I see the other side. I'm not a religious person, but wish to raise my awareness of spirituality and religion. I have been impressed with the various topics covered at the events I have attended. A warm friendly atmosphere.
The sound system could be improved. Enjoy the topics, especially the 'topical ones' eg organ donation, also the aftermath of the bushfire
The whole model of SIP is so innovative and refreshing. All are accepted, and the discussion is alive and challenging.
The wonderful idea of LISTENING to the youth. No improvements [to suggest]
This is my first SIP and I am impressed with the speakers and their engagement with the audience
Three occasions have suited me so far. Thankyou for good attention to microphone quality. We need something on the proposed Referendum re Constitutional Change - the racism in s51.26 and s24 - to prepare for conversation 19 Sep 2011.
To keep asking the questions and raising the issues.
To meet people who converse about spiritual subjects, who are open minded.
Topics for more young people.
Topics need to be pushing the envelope of our contemporary church organisation and management.
Try to lower the age demographic.
Very caring leadership team. I feel welcome - encourage us to talk to our neighbours. Pub venue: whole person, real life!
Very interesting, thought provoking. Great venue. Only complaint - difficult to hear at back as noise from pub
We all like topics which are a bit controversial.
We enjoy the wide range of topics covered.
Website & Email addresses - to continue momentum for change.
What about a debate? eg 'For' and 'Against' spiritual values being taught in all schools in Australia as part of a core curriculum.
What you do is good.
When I've attended I usually think of something to say - as NOBODY will start - then into the conversation I like to be part of it - but am given the 'brush off' - "You've had your say!" But often long-winded people are allowed to rave on. I think time should be limited for comments or questions.
Would it be possible to have one or two nights per year reserved for whatever issue is current at the time? Would need standby speakers able to improvise.

	Would like designated person/s to welcome people (regular/first time). I enjoy the challenge to faith, sharing of ideas.
	Would like to see the sound system improved.
	Would prefer to have SIP in a pub setting.
	You hear ideas etc not heard anywhere else.

Annex 1: The Survey

This survey is part of a nationwide study on Spirituality in the Pub conducted by Heather Skousgaard as a PhD research project in the School of Archaeology and Anthropology at ANU. Her study seeks to understand how spirituality is socially practiced by contemporary believers. By answering the questions below you'll also be helping your local SIP organisers better understand what it is that draws you to these events, and what you'd like to see at SIP in the future.

Please know that your involvement in this survey is entirely voluntary and your responses are confidential. Feel free to leave this survey blank if you don't wish to participate, or answer only those questions you feel comfortable with. Survey results will be collated and this data made available to SIP organisers, however as we do not ask for your name all reported data will be anonymous.

Thankyou for taking time to share your thoughts with us. Should you have any questions please don't hesitate to ask either Heather (0413 332 184) or one of the SIP organisers.

Spirituality in the Pub Survey

1) Approximately how many SIP meetings have you attended, including tonight?

(please circle)

1-2 3-5 5-10 10-15 15-20 20+

2) How do you generally hear about SIP meetings? (please tick)

- A friend
- Parish newsletter
- SIP mailing list
- Advertising - If so, where do you see this ad?
- Other - Please specify:

3) Do you generally attend SIP:

- Alone
- With a friend
- With a partner
- In a group

4) Have you invited new people to attend SIP with you? If not, why?

.....

5) Have you attended any other SIP locations in your city, around Australia or

overseas? If so, which:.....

- 6) What is it that generally attracts you to SIP nights? (tick all that apply)
- The speaker
 - The topic
 - The conversation
 - Seeing friends
 - Meeting new people
 - The meal
 - The venue
 - Other (please specify):.....
- 7) Of the above reasons for attending SIP nights, which is the most important for you?
.....
- 8) What kinds of topics would you like to see covered at SIP? (tick all that apply)
- The spiritual dimension of current events
 - Social justice issues
 - Religious practice
 - Institutional church issues
 - Theology
 - Spiritual reflection
 - Morality
 - Interfaith awareness
 - Other (please specify):.....
- 9) Of the above topics, which is the most important for you?
.....
- 10) Do you regularly attend any other group? If so, please specify: (tick all that apply)
- Church or religious services – if so, which religion or denomination:
 - Social welfare or justice group :.....
 - Community group:
 - Recreational/hobby group:
 - Professional association:
 - Other:

Appendix B: Glossary

This thesis draws on a vocabulary that may be unfamiliar to non-Catholic readers. The following glossary summarises the definitions that are included in text and footnotes within this thesis. It does not necessarily seek to offer the Church's formal definition of these terms but rather seeks to represent the meaning these concepts hold for Sippers and other members of the Australian laity. Italicised terms are from the original Latin.

<i>ad limina</i> visit	A visit to Rome that all Catholic bishops are required to complete regularly, generally every five years, in which the bishops give an account of the state of their diocese to the Pope. The literal translation of <i>ad limina</i> is 'to the thresholds'.
catechism	A summary of Catholic doctrine, sometimes specifically referring to the book in which these teachings are contained.
charism	A spiritual gift or divine capacity
christology	The theological study of the person of Jesus, his nature and his work. It includes issues such as his incarnation, resurrection, and human and divine natures.
clergy	Ordained male members of the Church – those who have taken clerical vows (eg. bishops, priests, and deacons).
collegiality	The sharing of episcopal authority among the bishops of the Church.
<i>communio</i>	Mutual participation or fellowship, often used to represent the relationship between all members of the Church
conciliar/post-conciliar	Relating to a council of the Church. Post-conciliar typically refer to the period following the Second Vatican Council.
Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF)	The department of the Catholic Church responsible for promulgating and defending the doctrine of the Catholic Church.
curia	The bureaucratic arm of the Catholic Church, which assists the pope in administering his pastoral role in the Church.

dicastery	An administrative department of the curia of the Catholic Church.
diocese/archdiocese	Territorial divisions of the church. A diocese is administered by a bishop who resides in the area. An archdiocese is a larger ecclesiastical province, headed by an archbishop.
dogma / doctrine	A formally stated official belief of the Catholic Church regarding faith or morals
Ecumenical Council	A conference of the patriarchs, cardinals, bishops and other leaders of the Church, gathered by invitation of the Pope to join him in deciding matters of the Church. Not to be confused with ecumenism.
ecumenism	The goal of promoting unity among the world's Christian churches.
<i>ecclesia discens</i>	The 'learning' function of the Church, traditionally used to represent the laity.
<i>ecclesia docens</i>	The 'teaching' function of the Church, traditionally used to represent the clergy.
ecclesial	Relating to or constituting a Church or denomination; or, relating to the Church as a community of believers.
ecclesiastical	Relating to a church or its clergy.
ecclesiology	The theological study of the nature and structure of the Christian Church.
encyclical	A letter sent by the Pope to the Church, usually addressed to the bishops of the Church, or the bishops in a specific region of the Church.
episcopal	Of or relating to a bishop or bishops
Eucharist	One of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church, also known as 'communion'
<i>ex cathedra</i>	Literally, 'from the chair'; refers to statements made by the Pope in his capacity as Universal Pastor of the Church.
<i>Gaudium et spes</i>	Literally, 'the joys and hopes'; one of the four main documents, or constitutions, resulting from the Second Vatican Council: The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.

Holy See	An ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Catholic Church in Rome; used to represent the pope as well as the central ecclesiastical government of the Church.
<i>Humanae Vitae</i>	Literally, 'of human life'; a 1968 encyclical from Pope Paul VI 'on the regulation of birth', or artificial birth control.
infallible/infallibility	Incapable of making mistakes or being wrong. The doctrine of infallibility argues that under certain conditions the Pope and the bishops of the Church are incapable of erring when defining the beliefs of the Church.
Jesuit	Members of or related to the religious order called the 'Society of Jesus'.
laicisation	The removal of a cleric from the clerical state – ie. being made a lay member of the Church again.
lay/laity	Members of the Church who are not ordained; often used to demarcate difference from the clergy.
liturgy/liturgical	Public religious ritual; or more specifically, the order or form of church service prescribed by a Church.
<i>Lumen Gentium</i>	Literally, 'light of the nations'; one of the four main documents, or constitutions, resulting from the Second Vatican Council: The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.
magisterium	The teaching authority of the Pope and bishops of the Church.
Marianism	Devotion to the figure of Mary, mother of Christ.
missal	The book of liturgy which specifies the words to be recited and actions performed by priests and parishioners when celebrating mass throughout the year
<i>Ordinatio sacerdotalis</i>	Literally, 'priestly ordination'; an apostolic letter from Pope John Paul II in 1994, confirming the Church's doctrine against the ordination of women.
papal/papacy	Of or relating to a pope or his period of office.
parish	Territorial divisions of the church, under the care and jurisdiction of a parish priest.

popery	A derogatory term traditionally used to refer to the practices of the Roman Catholic Church.
prelate	A bishop, cardinal or other high-ranking member of the Church.
religious	Noun; representing a person who has taken religious vows to join a religious order, such as a nun or a monk.
religious order/institute	A community of people who publically takes religious vows in order to live a fraternal life in common.
sacerdotal	Relating to priests or the priesthood.
sacerdotalism	The belief that the intervention of a priest is required in order to reunite sinful humankind with God.
sacrament/ sacrament of reconciliation	A significant religious rite. The Catholic Church specifies seven sacraments, including the sacrament of reconciliation, also known as 'confession'.
<i>sensus fidei</i>	Literally, the 'sense of the faith'; a supernatural appreciation for the 'truth of the faith'. Operationalised in a believer's 'conscience'.
<i>sensus fidelium</i>	Literally, the 'sense of the faithful'; a collective action of the <i>sensus fidei</i> , when the whole body of the universal Church, including popes, bishops and the laity, collectively agree on a matter of faith or morals.
sodality	A spiritual association or society; a group of people pledging to share a common pious cause.
synod	A council or governing body of a church.
ultramontane	Literally, 'beyond the mountains'; advocating that the pope holds supreme authority in the Church.
Vatican II	The Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, 1962-65, in which the bishops of the Church gathered with the pope to reconsider the Church's relation to the modern world. Widely considered to be the most fundamental change in the Catholic Church since the Reformation.

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