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The Lived Experience of Irish Diocesan Priests.

A Qualitative Study of Clerical Identity, Obedience and Celibacy.

John A. Weafer

A thesis submitted for the award of Doctor of Social Science to the National University of Ireland, at the School of Applied Social Studies, National University of Ireland, Cork

Submission Date: May 2013
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DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis which I now submit for examination for the award of Doctor of Social Science, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

This thesis was prepared according to the regulations for postgraduate study by University College Cork and has not been submitted in whole or in part for an award in any other Institute or University.

The work reported on in this thesis conforms to the principles and requirement of the University's guidelines for ethics in research.

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this thesis is to document and explore the lived experience of Irish diocesan priests and former priests, in order to explore the reality of diocesan priesthood in contemporary Ireland, and to investigate how, if at all, diocesan priesthood has changed in Ireland during the past fifty years. It sought to do this by interrogating the stories of thirty-three diocesan priests and former priests, and by placing their individual stories within the broader context of Irish society and the Catholic Church, during the fifty-year period, 1962–2012.

The research focused on three core areas of priesthood – identity, obedience, and celibacy – and it addressed the following questions. First, how do Irish diocesan priests understand their priesthood and how has this understanding changed over time, if at all? I will argue that three paradigms of priesthood co-exist in the contemporary Irish Church, and that each of these models corresponds with a distinct period in contemporary Irish Church history. I will also demonstrate the existence of underlying similarities in the cultural practice of priesthood that transcend the different generations of priests.

Second, how do Irish diocesan priests negotiate their priesthood within a large and complex institution? My study suggests that Irish diocesan priests are typically loyal and obedient. However, they are not necessarily subservient. Third, how do Irish diocesan priests understand and experience celibacy in their day-to-day lives? My study demonstrates that celibacy is typically understood and experienced along a continuum, ranging from total acceptance to total rejection, with most priests somewhere in between. Fourth, I will argue that while priests are experiencing many difficulties in their lives, there is insufficient evidence from the present study to indicate they are experiencing a crisis.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

> The Dublin priest is first and foremost a man of God.... Sometimes he gets support from the priests he works with, sometimes he doesn't. He is deeply hurt by the scandals that have tarnished the reputation of the priesthood and by the way these scandals have been treated in the media. He is not greatly impressed by authority. He is critical of those that hold power in the Church… He wants to see a greater participation by the laity in the government of the Church…. He feels he is overworked…. He has to be constantly available to his parishioners. He finds it impossible to live up to the expectation of others. He feels the sting of celibacy. He worries about the future. And yet, he is on the whole a fulfilled and happy man (Forristal, 1997, pp.27-28).[1]

1.1   Aim of the Study

The main aim of my research is to document and explore the lived experience of Irish diocesan priests[2] and former priests, in order to explore the reality of diocesan priesthood in contemporary Ireland, and to investigate how, if at all, diocesan priesthood has changed in Ireland during the past fifty years. I have sought to do this by interrogating the stories of thirty-three priests and former priests (twenty-four diocesan priests and nine former diocesan priests), and by placing their individual stories within the broader context of Irish society and the Catholic Church, during the fifty-year period, 1962–2012. Stories are 'interpretive devices through which people make sense of, understand and live their lives' (Lawler, 2008, p.13). The research participants were facilitated to tell their stories of diocesan priesthood, using a narrative-style introduction, which

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[1] This quotation was taken from one of the few published empirical studies of diocesan priests in contemporary Ireland. The comment by Fr Des Forristal captures some of the key elements of diocesan priests' lived experience in the contemporary Church. Some of these themes will be explored in the course of the current study of Irish diocesan priests.

[2] Unless otherwise stated, all references to priests in this thesis will be to Irish diocesan priests.

allowed them to emphasise those aspects of their lives they deemed most pertinent to the study. A central premise underlying the study is that the stories of these priests and former priests will provide an in-depth, coherent and credible account of Irish diocesan priesthood, and that their stories will contribute to an 'interpretative understanding' of the actions and lived reality of diocesan priests in contemporary Irish society (Weber, 1968, p.4).

A review of the literature and the wide range of anecdotal evidence on Irish diocesan priesthood suggested four questions I considered worth investigating in furthering my understanding of Irish diocesan priests' lives in contemporary Ireland. First, how do Irish diocesan priests understand their priesthood and how has this understanding changed over time, if at all? The literature suggests that priests have a strong sense of professional priestly identity that is grounded in their vocation and strongly influenced by the prevailing culture when they come of age. The literature also suggests that theological divisions exist in priesthood that are manifest in distinct political generations of priests. Research in the US by sociologists Hoge and Wenger, for example, concluded that the 'essence of priesthood has undergone two shifts' since the early 1960s, each with its own distinctive understanding of priesthood (Hoge and Wenger, 2003, p.59). I will argue that three paradigms of priesthood co-exist in the contemporary Irish Church, and that each of these models corresponds with a distinct period in contemporary Irish Church history. I will also demonstrate the existence of underlying similarities in the cultural practice of priesthood that transcend the different generations of priests.

Second, how do Irish diocesan priests negotiate their priesthood within a large and complex institution? Obedience, or rather disobedience, is not a major issue in the literature on Irish diocesan priests, and there is little empirical evidence of individual priests speaking out in public against Church policy or practices. Anecdotal evidence suggests that priests are loyal 'company men' who are firmly positioned within, and constrained

by, a highly structured, centralised and strictly hierarchical Church. However, my study suggests that Irish diocesan priests are possibly more accurately depicted as 'company men, with attitude'. Thus, while diocesan priests are typically loyal and obedient, they are not necessarily subservient. Many of the research participants said they learnt to deal with senior authority figures by keeping their heads down and doing their own thing in the seminary, and by adopting a pragmatic, pastoral approach to some aspects of their ministries following ordination. I will argue that their relative freedom to act independently is only possible by the symbiotic, if unequal, relationship they have with Church leadership, where priests are expected to be discrete and not to infringe accepted 'rules of the game'.

Third, how do Irish diocesan priests understand and experience celibacy in their day-to-day lives? The literature suggests that many priests experience personal difficulties with celibacy (Anderson, 2005, Hoenkamp-Bisschops, 1992, Sipe, 1995), and that priests experience celibacy along a continuum, ranging from acceptance to rejection, with most priests somewhere in the middle (Bordisso, 2011). The literature also suggests that Irish diocesan priests understand celibacy in diverse ways, with some priests in favour of mandatory celibacy and others against it. Finally, international research further suggests that a generational difference exists within priesthood, with younger post-Vatican II priests most likely to embrace the ideal of celibacy, while their older Vatican II counterparts experience most difficulties with the lived experience of mandatory celibacy (Hoge and Wenger, 2003).[3] My study supports the notion of a celibacy continuum. It also highlights inter-generational differences in how priests understand and experience celibacy.

Finally, the literature suggests that the priesthood is in crisis. Fitzgibbon identifies a range of symptoms of the alleged crisis, including a crisis of

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[3] As previously mentioned in chapter one, the analysis is divided into three categories of priests: pre-Vatican II priests (priests ordained before Vatican II), Vatican II priests (priests ordained between 1965 and 1978), and post-Vatican II priests (priests ordained during the papacy of John Paul II).

ministry, a crisis of morale, a crisis of intimacy, and a crisis of identity (Fitzgibbon, 2010). I will argue that while priests are experiencing many difficulties in their lives, there is insufficient evidence from the present study to indicate they are experiencing a crisis.

1.2 Background

There is considerable evidence to suggest that that the Irish Church[4] has 'being going through a period of intense crisis over the past decade or more' (Duffy, 2010b, p.7). The Catholic Church is no longer the dominant force it once was in Ireland and secularisation,[5] 'formerly so slow to take hold in Ireland intensified in the 1990s and the early years of this century' (Fahey et al., 2005, p.54). Social surveys have consistently indicated that substantially less Irish people in Ireland are going to Mass nowadays, or are willing to accept traditional Church teachings on morality (Association of Catholic Priests, 2012, Irish Times, 2012, MacGréil and Rhatigan, 2009). Furthermore, many Irish people no longer trust the institutional Church, particularly following disclosures of child sexual abuse by priests and religious, and a perceived mismanagement by Church leaders (McGreevy, 2010). The situation is perceived to be so serious that Irish theologian and missionary Fr Donal Dorr wrote that Ireland is increasingly a missionary country in need of re-evangelization and 'frontier work' (Dorr, 2003, p.583). Even Church leaders, such as Archbishop Martin, accept that the Irish Church may be on the brink of collapse and that Catholicism will 'inevitably become more a minority culture' (O'Doherty, 2011). This Church crisis is part of the context within which Irish diocesan priests are situated. Diverse aspects of the broader socio-religious landscape will be explored in chapter four.

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[4] Unless otherwise stated, all references to Church in this thesis are to the Catholic Church.

[5] The concept of secularisation is used here in a generic sense to denote a decline in religious commitment and influence. A more detailed discussion on the nature and extent of secularisation in Ireland may be found in chapter four.

The primary concern of the present study was not, however, with the millions of lay Catholics that constitute the majority membership of the Irish Catholic Church. Rather, it was with the three thousand or so diocesan priests, most of whom work and live in Ireland's 1,365 parishes (O'Mahony, 2011). In 2006, there were 3,078 diocesan priests attached to Ireland's twenty-six dioceses,[6] representing an average of 118 priests per diocese and a ratio of one priest per 1,416 Catholics (Table 1.1). The number of diocesan priests in Ireland has been declining steadily since the mid 1960s, and particularly since 1990 (see Appendix A, Table A2). A similar trend has occurred in most of Western Europe, where the number of priests working in dioceses has declined quite rapidly (Kerkhofs, 1995). Conversely, other parts of the world have reported increases in the number of priests (Vatican, 2010).

Table 1.1 General Statistics of the Irish Catholic Church 2006

Number of Dioceses in Ireland	26
Number of Diocesan Priests in Ireland	3,078
Percentage of Diocesan priests categorised as 'Active' (n=2,342)	76%
Number of Catholics in Ireland	4,359,908
Ratio of Diocesan priests to Catholics	1:1,416
Number of Parishes	1,365
Number of churches	2,645

Source: Council for Research and Development Fact Sheet Series '*Diocesan Priests in Ireland 2006*'.

Ministry is central to the life of a diocesan priest and the Church believes that the 'very life and work of the priest' are 'inseparable theological realities' (Congregation for the Clergy, 2002, p.12). The rite of ordination states that a priest is chosen by God 'to carry out publicly in the Church a priestly ministry in his name on behalf of mankind' (International

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[6] The Irish Catholic Church comprises the 32 counties of Ireland and it is divided into 26 dioceses.

Committee on English in the Liturgy, 1975, p.11). Most diocesan priests in Ireland are actively[7] engaged in pastoral activities (Table 1.2, overleaf).

Table 1.2 Deployment of Diocesan Priests in Ireland, 1970-2005

Deployment of Diocesan Priests	1970	1981	2005
	%	%	%
Parish ministry	81	79	78
Teaching	13	13	n/a
Catechetics	2	1	n/a
Social Work	*	2	n/a
Retired	2	5	8
Pastor Emeritus	n/a	n/a	7
Students	1	1	1
Other	1	-	6
Total	100	100	100

Sources: (Weafer and Breslin, 1983, Council for Research and Development, 2005)

A priest's life is relatively structured and potentially very busy (Forde, 1987),[8] especially for priests engaged in parish ministry. The typical duties of a priest working in a parish, include saying Mass, preaching, officiating at weddings, baptisms and funerals, visiting the sick at home and in hospital,[9] giving the last rites, burying the dead, and visiting

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[7] In 2006, 76% of all priests in Ireland were active in their diocese, with 9% retired and another 8% designated Pastor Emeritus (Council for Research & Development, IBC 2007).

[8] Fr Forde, a priest in the diocese of Ferns, kept a diary of his activities over a five-week period in March/April 1982 and documented the 'reality' of how a priest spends his life. He reported that he spent 275 hours involved in activities relating to his priesthood but excluding private prayer, reading, reflecting and leisure. These activities comprised pastoral care (30%), liturgy and public prayer (25%), social and community activities (16%), administration (11%), 'external' responsibilities (12%) and formation (7%). He concluded that these findings highlight the extent to which 'local pressures and expectations have a strong influence on how a priest spends his time' and it also underlines 'the wide range and variety of demands on his time while very few people realise the time put in on the job or the sheer pressure of conflicting demands' (Forde 1982, p.695).

[9] In the past, priests used to visit homes of parishioners on a regular basis, sometimes administering the sacraments. In 1974, half of all Irish adults said they had received a visit from a priest within the past six months. In 1984, this figure

schools. In spite of various developments in lay ministry since Vatican II,[10] many of these tasks and activities are still performed exclusively by priests in modern Ireland (Gaughan, 2000, Brady, 1991). While some priests find their ministry to be fulfilling and challenging (Casey, 1992, Daly, 2000, Gaughan, 2000, O'Callaghan, 2007), others believe that priests often find it stressful (Casey, 1992, Casey, 1997, Fitzgibbon, 1996, Fitzgibbon, 2010, Hoge et al., 1993, O'Meara, 1996).[11]

The priest is a familiar figure in Ireland and it is probably true to say that most Irish people are accustomed to the notion or person of a priest,[12] whether it is through their local priest as he carries out his public ministry, priests in the media, the activities of some notorious 'paedophile' priests, or through the satirical portrayal of priests in the media, such as 'Fr Ted'. A priest's life is typically very public and, in spite of the increased irrelevance of religion to the everyday lives of Catholics in recent years (Andersen, 2010, Irish Times, 2012), the priest's lifestyle can still attract national interest.[13] Yet, in spite of their public ministry,[14] priests are

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[10] had fallen to just less than one third (Breslin and Weafer, 1985, p.112). Nowadays, the priest shares the pastoral task of visiting the sick and housebound with lay ministers, although administering the sacraments remains the priest's responsibility.

[10] Many parishes have lay readers, Eucharist ministers, baptismal and bereavement teams, and liturgical committees.

[11] The interpretation of the stress is however, contested, with some researchers believing that priests can be stressed and contented (Hoge et al, 1995), while others believe that the increased workload of priests in recent years has led some priests to feel 'exhausted and close to burnout' (Casey, 1992, p. 188). The reality for some priests is that they get 'lost in their work' when faced with difficult personal decisions (Fitzgibbon, 1996, p. 227) or to avoid the 'terrible loneliness' that might emerge if you are not constantly doing something (O'Meara, 1996, p.158). A study in the United States, found that secular clergy experienced a higher degree of burnout and depression than monks or religious priests and that the lack of social support and a sense of isolation were key elements associated with the difference (Virginia, 1998).

[12] National research by the author in 1999 found that the vast majority of Irish adults were sufficiently familiar with diocesan priests to give an opinion of them – 52% had favourable impressions of diocesan priests, 29% had mixed feelings, 8% had unfavourable impressions, and 11% had no opinion. Furthermore, one fifth (20%) of Irish adults in the study had attended a school run by diocesan priests and approximately one eight (12%) had a relative or friend who is a diocesan priest (Weafer, 2000).

[13] In May 1999, for example, the *Irish Times* ran a story of a county council in the south of the country that passed a motion to call on the Catholic Church to change

undoubtedly an enigma to many lay people (Draper, 2001). The literature suggests that a priest can be a 'lone ranger,' a person who is set apart by virtue of his spiritual role, clerical garb, celibate lifestyle, position within the community, and his approach to work which is often one of 'rugged individualism' (Fitzgibbon, 2010, p.175).

Most Irish diocesan priests lead relatively anonymous lives and are not known outside their own parishes, apart possibly from some priests with a national profile and others who have published their memoirs (Daly, 1998, Daly, 2000, Gaughan, 2000, McVeigh, 2008, O'Callaghan, 2007). While there are examples of priests who have stood out in Irish history for a variety of reasons, including their engagement in political action and involvement in social justice issues during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Daly, 1998, Daly, 2000, Kerr, 1982, McVeigh, 2008, Moran, 1998), and for more notorious reasons, such as disclosures concerning their illegitimate children (Murphy and de Rosa, 1993), and the sexual abuse of children (Murphy et al., 2005, Murphy et al., 2009), the norm is that the lives of Ireland's 3,000 or so diocesan priests are relatively anonymous.

The literature suggests that diocesan priests may be experiencing a crisis, which is related to, but distinct from, the crisis in the Church (Fitzgibbon, 2010). One symptom of a possible crisis in priesthood is the falling vocations to the priesthood that will inevitably mean that 'forms of pastoral ministry and parish life that were such staples of the Catholic Church in Ireland for generations will no longer be possible' (Duffy,

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its laws on celibacy and women priests in order to address the problem of falling vocations. In November 2009, The *Irish Times* and other media, ran a story on a priest who decided to leave the priesthood to be with a woman, while in July 2012, The *Irish Times* had a photograph of a young man being ordained in Cork. More recently, a priest who left to marry his partner was photographed on the front page of a national tabloid newspaper in August 2012.

[14] Opportunities for any form of meaningful contact between priests and people are, however, declining due to the ageing profile and a shortage of priests. It is increasingly likely, according to Fr Tony Draper, that 'more people will never have talked to a priest' in a 'human, person-to-person fashion' (Draper, 2001, p.349).

2010b, p.7). Another symptom of the alleged crisis is the increasing administrative and pastoral workload for a diminishing number of priests, especially concerning administrative tasks, where too much is often expected of priests (Lane, 1997). Some priests find that they are expected to work too much, particularly in areas that have more to do with administration than spirituality or preaching the gospel (Brady, 1991, Forde, 1987, O'Meara, 1996). For example, priests often find they are sidetracked into areas of work that 'have little to do with being a priest' and where they have 'little skill and competence', such as 'chasing the Department to get the new extension done' (O'Meara, 1996, p. 159). Others are stressed because they find themselves 'struggling with methods of ministry that worked well a generation ago' but are no longer suitable for the post-Vatican II Church (O'Driscoll, 1988, p.26). One serious issue facing the Church as a result of declining numbers of priests is the threat it poses to the provision of the Eucharist in some peripheral parishes (Duffy, 2010a, Duffy, 2012, Fitzgibbon, 2010).[15]

Some priests are disillusioned with the direction taken by the Church following Vatican II (Hoban, 2010, Standún, 1993). They are also concerned about various issues surrounding clerical identity (Fitzgibbon, 2010). Fr Eamonn Fitzgibbon, for example, believes that many priests currently 'feel threatened and diminished as they struggle to maintain a distinct identity and role' (Fitzgibbon, 2010, p.173) due to the 'increased status and profile of lay ministry' (Fitzgibbon, 2010, p.172) and a lack of 'any clear direction for priesthood' (Fitzgibbon, 2010, p.168) following the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). There are also indications that many priests hold unorthodox views of some Church teachings. For example, a national survey of Irish priests by the *Irish Catholic* newspaper in 2004 reported that more than half (57%) of priests were in favour of a change in the discipline of mandatory celibacy and most priests (74%) were

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[15] When asked what action should be taken regarding Sunday Masses if vocations continue to decline, half (50%) of all priests that responded to a national survey felt there should be less Sunday Masses, while one third (32%) said that parishes should be amalgamated (Irish Catholic, 2004).

dissatisfied with the recognition given to the role of women in the Church (Irish Catholic, 2004).

Conversely, anecdotal evidence suggests that many Irish priests are fulfilled and happy in their ministry, even if they sometimes find it difficult (Forristal, 1997, O'Brien, 1995, Olden, 2004). Empirical research on Irish priests is scarce. However, research amongst Catholic priests in the US, for example, reported that the vast majority of priests are satisfied with their ministry and lives (Hoge and Wenger, 2003, Rossetti, 2005). Furthermore, as the introductory quote suggests, the average priest in Dublin is 'on the whole a fulfilled and happy man' in spite of all the difficulties he encounters (Forristal, 1997, p.28). Although vocations to the priesthood have declined sharply during the past five decades, there are still men who are willing to dedicate their lives to the Church as priests (Appendix A).

1.3 Definition and Scope of Diocesan Priesthood

The notion of lived experience is quite broad, so I decided that the study should concentrate on three core aspects of priesthood that are central to an understanding of priesthood – identity, obedience and celibacy.[16] For the purposes of this study, a diocesan priest is defined as an ordained[17] man[18]

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[16] These qualities are discussed in detail in chapter five.

[17] A diocesan priest is typically ordained in a ceremony performed by the bishop of his diocese, which usually follows seven years of philosophical and theological studies in a seminary.

[18] All diocesan priests in the Catholic Church are male and in 1994, Pope John Paul II declared in his letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* that 'the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgement is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful' (Reference 4) (http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_22051994_ordinatio-sacerdotalis_en.html). However, in spite of the threat of automatic excommunication for the bishops and women involved, a relatively small number of women have been ordained by groups 'within' the Catholic Church, such as the international Roman Catholic Women Priests (http://www.romancatholicwomenpriests.org/index.php) and it is alleged that women priests are celebrating Mass in Ireland http://www.rte.ie/news/2012/0420/group-claims-women-priests-are-celebrating-mass.html.

who has a vocation or 'call' to the priesthood, who promises to live a celibate life,[19] and who ministers in a geographic area (diocese/parish), under the leadership and authority of the bishop of the diocese to which he belongs. Unlike his religious (regular) clergy counterpart, a diocesan priest does not belong to a religious order, live under a monastic rule, or take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. He is however, bound by Canon Law,[20] the law of the Catholic Church, to live a celibate life and to be obedient and respectful to his bishop.

The Irish diocesan priest lives and works within a centralised and strictly hierarchical organisation, the Catholic Church, the main features of which include the pope as its supreme leader on earth (McGarry, 2012),[21] a bishop who is in charge of a diocese,[22] and a parish priest who is the pastor

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[19] Celibacy is an obligatory discipline of the Catholic Church, which, at its most basic, means that priests cannot marry or engage in sexually intimate behaviour (Canon 277, Code of Canon Law).

[20] The code of Canon Law is an extensive body of laws and regulations used by Church authorities to administer the Church http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_INDEX.HTM.

[21] Only the pope can create or change law within the Church. The College of Bishops exercises power over the universal Church but only when approved by the pope and in an ecumenical council. Official declarations of infallibility by the pope are very rare in the Catholic Church and only two instances are accepted as infallible declarations – Pope Pius IX's 1854 definition of the dogma of the *Immaculate Conception* and Pope Pius XII's 1950 definition of the dogma of the *Assumption of Mary*. However, some commentators, such as former Irish president Mary McAleese believe that the Catholic Church is arriving at 'a situation of creeping infallibility about everything' where it is no longer acceptable to discuss controversial issues, such as women priests (McGarry, 2012, p.9).

[22] An individual bishop is entrusted with a given territory called a diocese. He acts as a vicar of Christ in his diocese and not as a vicar of the pope. Consequently, he is not answerable to the pope and he can exercise his power personally and directly for the benefit of the people entrusted to his care. A bishop can make 'particular law' for his subjects as long as this law is in harmony with the universal law of the Church and/or divine law (Can. 393.1). The bishop must appoint a vicar general to assist him in the governance of the whole diocese and to deputise in his absence. His authority is the same as that of the bishop although it must be exercised in the name of the bishop. Canon law requires the establishment of a Council of Priests to assist the bishop in the governance of the diocese by providing advice and information to him when requested to do so or when required by law.

of a parish under the authority of his bishop.[23] *The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church* (*Lumen Gentium)* acknowledges the primacy of the pope as pastor of the entire Church and the supreme authority of the bishops (acting together with the pope). It is 'a Church of unequals' (Dulles, 1976, p. 35) where power passes down through the hierarchy from the pope and bishops to the clergy and laity. The laity has no formal role in the management of the Church.[24] In effect, bishops manage their dioceses without serious challenge from any quarter,[25] either internal or external, other than the pope in exceptional circumstances[26] (Fuller, 2002). The *Ferns Report* (Murphy et al., 2005), for example, highlighted the independence of each diocese as follows: 'The Bishop is free to organise the day-to-day running of his diocese as he sees fit, provided he operates within Canon Law… There is no central authority in Ireland to whom individual Bishops are accountable or to which they can turn for advice or support' (Murphy et al., 2005, p.28).

The hierarchical nature of the Catholic Church is illustrated in the following chart (Figure 1.1, overleaf).

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[23] Although canon law describes the parish priest as answerable to the bishop, he is not simply his delegate but enjoys ordinary authority within his parish.

[24] Where they exist, Parish Pastoral Councils have only a consultative vote, and it is regulated by the norms laid down by the diocesan bishop.

[25] Although there is an Episcopal Conference that meets four times a year in Maynooth to 'consider matters relating to Ireland as a whole*'* the day-to-day running of each diocese is left to the discretion of individual bishops (Fuller, 2002, p.140).

[26] Some commentators argue that Pope Benedict VXI diminished the authority of bishops when he acted his own initiative through a *Motu Proprio* in reviving a number of Church traditions, including elevating the (Latin) Tridentine Mass to a more prominent position in 2007 (Hoban, 2009). A *Motu Proprio* is a document personally issued by the pope on his own initiative.

Figure 1.1 The Hierarchical Structure of the Catholic Church 2012

Pope Benedict XVI
(Supreme Authority in the Church)

↓

Bishop
(A bishop exercises power in his diocese without reference to any higher authority)

↓

Parish Priest
(He is the authority in his parish, subject to his bishop's authority)

↓

Laity
(The laity has no formal management role in the management of the Church)
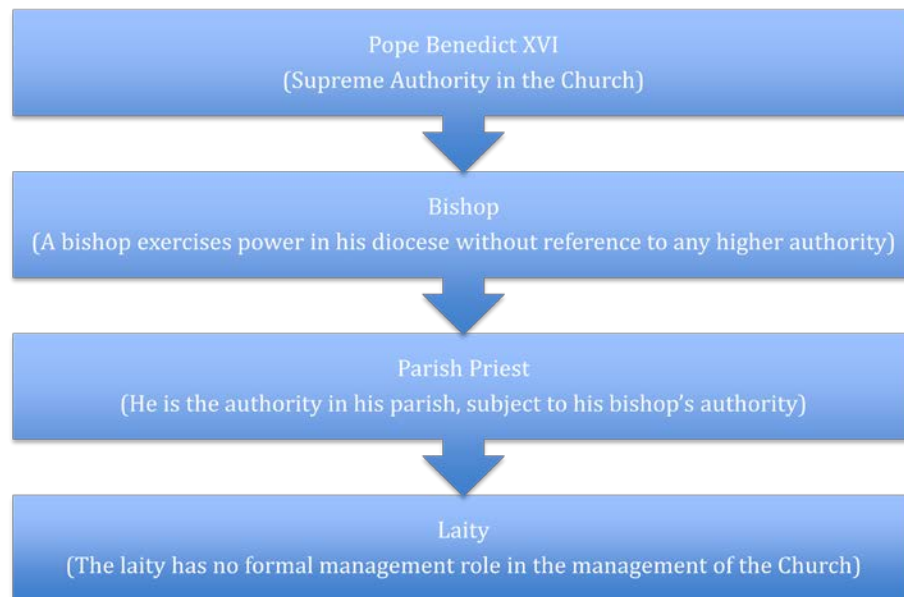
1.4 Study Rationale

The main reason for undertaking this study is the dearth of sociological research on the lived experience of Irish diocesan priesthood. Much of the literature on Irish diocesan priesthood has been written from an historical (Kerr, 1982, Connolly, 2001) or theological/pastoral perspective (Duffy, 2010a, Fitzgibbon, 2010, McGovern, 2002).[27] With some exceptions (Lane, 1997, Mulcahy, 1971, Mulcahy, 1974, Rice, 1990),[28] most social research on the Catholic priesthood in Ireland since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) has concentrated on producing statistical profiles of priests and religious (Council for Research & Development, 2007, Hanley, 1995, Hanley, 2000b, Lennon et al., 1972, MacGréil and Inglis, 1977, Weafer and Breslin, 1983). These studies collected substantial amounts of

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[27] Theological studies are generally considered to be outside the scope of my research except where they inform the debate on priesthood.

[28] Attitudinal research on priests is much less common in Ireland, with most research commissioned privately by individual dioceses. Unfortunately, most of this research is not published.

data on vocations and Church personnel (Breslin, 1981, Breslin and Weafer, 1986b, Council for Research & Development, 2005, Council for Research & Development, 1971-2004, Lennon et al., 1971, Lennon, 1974, MacGréil, 1997, Newman, 1966, Newman et al., 1971, Ryan, 1972).[29] Little or no sociological research has been published on the more personal side of Irish diocesan priesthood. A positivistic[30] bias was typical of much social research in Ireland and other Western countries, such as the US[31] (Fichter, 1968, Greeley, 1972),[32] during the latter part of the twentieth century (Conway, 2006b, Share et al., 2007). Sociologist Perry Share (2007), for example, wrote that a 'major limitation of Irish sociological research into religion is that it has tended to be highly positivist' (Share et al., 2007, p.398), while sociologist Tom Inglis argues that research into

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[29] The reason for the empirical focus on Church personnel in Ireland was 'to provide an accurate and comprehensive statistical picture of the Priests, Brothers and Sisters in Ireland' in order to 'provide information and guidance for those whose task it is to direct and coordinate the affairs of the Church in the country' and 'to lay the foundation for future research' (Lennon et al., 1971, p.i).

[30] A positivist paradigm was dominant during the second half of the twentieth century because of its emphasis on prediction and explanation of social phenomena within an objective, scientific framework. Positivist research typically entails the collection of large amounts of quantitative data that is subjected to multivariate analysis in order to identify statistically significant correlations between variables in order to explain social facts and predict future trends.

[31] Comparisons with US studies are considered appropriate for a number of reasons. First, both the US and Irish Catholic Churches are part of a global Church, that is governed by the Vatican and which has similar hierarchical organisational structures and laws throughout the world. Second, both Churches have experienced secularisation and similar organisational changes following the Second Vatican Council, such as a decline in vocations and a shortage of priests. Third, Irish culture is strong in many parts of the US due to the millions of US citizens who claim an Irish heritage and the thousands of Irish priests and religious who emigrated to the US. Fourth, a number of relevant studies on priesthood have been conducted in the US and, since they were published in English, they are readily accessible.

[32] This trend for statistical studies was particularly obvious in the U.S. where resources were sufficient to enable the Catholic Bishops to commission large-scale studies of Catholic priests that were 'stimulated by problems facing the Church' (Hoge et al, 1988, p.264). For example, a number of studies were commissioned by the American bishops in the late 1960s and 1970s to consider the causes of priests leaving the priesthood and the decline in vocations (Greeley, 1972), while other studies made projections regarding the future of the Catholic priesthood in terms of age and ideology (Schoenherr and Young, 1993). Statistical data on Catholic Church in Europe was also available in the Vatican's *Statistical Yearbook of the Church* and various publications, such as Jan Kerkof's *Europe without Priests?*

religion in Ireland 'concentrated on gathering facts and data, usually through social surveys, and has avoided dealing with the larger, more general questions about the position and influence of the Church' (Inglis, 1987, p.2). The action research vision of the Council identified by one of its directors failed to materialise (Council for Research & Development, 1981).

More recently, some personal information on Irish diocesan priests has emerged in the form of autobiographies (Daly, 1998, Daly, 2000, Daly, 2011, Gaughan, 2000, McVeigh, 2008, O'Callaghan, 2007, Tierney, 2010). Other priests have provided details of the lives of priests and, occasionally their own lives in religious journals, such as *The Furrow*, or have had stories written about their lives (Murphy and de Rosa, 1993). Information on the Irish diocesan priest is also to be found in various surveys (Irish Catholic, 2004), academic studies (Keenan, 2012), and tribunals of Inquiry related to clerical child sexual abuse (Murphy et al., 2005, Murphy et al., 2009). However, while some of these stories are informative, they are largely descriptive and lacking sufficient data to understand how Irish diocesan priesthood has changed during the past fifty years. Accordingly, the present study will situate the empirical findings within an appropriate theoretical framework by utilising two core concepts of habitus and agency-structure to explore the data. I believe that the data from the research participants is original and that it will fill an empirical and theoretical gap by addressing my research questions (see below). I also believe the research is timely as it provides access to different generations of priests, some of whom are quite elderly.

I also had personal reasons for undertaking this study. My interest in religious research goes back many years, starting with my employment as research officer in 1982, and subsequently, as the first lay director of the Irish Bishops' Council for Research & Development in 1989. During this time I conducted research into diverse areas of religious life in Ireland, including priesthood (Breslin and Weafer, 1985, Breslin and Weafer, 1986a, Breslin and Weafer, 1986b, Weafer and Breslin, 1983, Weafer,

1986a, Weafer, 1986b, Weafer, 1988, Weafer, 1990, Weafer and Noonan, 1990, Weafer and Hanley, 1991). I subsequently retained an interest in religious research (Weafer, 1993, Weafer, 2000, Weafer, 2007), together with diverse related areas, such as death and dying (Weafer et al., 2009, McCarthy et al., 2010).

At one time in my life I seriously considered the vocation of priesthood and I spent almost five years in the seminary discerning my vocation to the priesthood or rather, lack thereof. My initial choice of 'career' had a significant impact on my life and it took some years after leaving the seminary before I came to terms with my decision to leave. It was not an easy choice, even with the unspoken support of my family, bishop and most priests of the diocese.[33] These thoughts were not, however, to the forefront of my mind when I decided to undertake the research. I did not consider my past to be significant in the research process, and I initially adopted the position of a relatively detached observer, which conformed to the parameters of traditional qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).[34] However, with hindsight I accept that my motivation for undertaking the research was possibly as much personal as professional, and that the project entailed a degree of reflexivity I had not anticipated (Etherington, 2004).[35] In some ways, the study has helped me to make

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[33] I am aware of men who continue to feel guilty for leaving the seminary many years ago, or who regret their decision to become a priest and now feel unable to leave because of guilt or a misguided sense of duty. My recollection is that seminarians who considered leaving ('cutting') or who were uncertain of their vocation were made to feel guilty in different ways, or so it seemed to me at the time. References to scripture, such as Luke's '*Once the hand is laid on the plough, no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God*' (Luke 9:62) added to the sense of guilt. Consequentially, students who left the seminary often did so without telling anyone, sometimes not even their closest friends. Some students left the seminary within weeks or sometimes days of their entering but most stayed for years before leaving as 'spoilt priests'. The vast majority of the hundred or so students who entered Maynooth with me in 1976 subsequently left the seminary.

[34] Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p.3), for example, define qualitative research as 'a situated activity that locates the observer in the world' and which 'consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible' and meaningful.

[35] Etherington (2004:31-32) defines reflexive research 'as the capacity of the researcher to acknowledge how their own experiences and contexts (which might be fluid and changing) inform the process and outcomes of inquiry.

sense of my own biography in the context of others. My research experience has confirmed for me that I do not have a vocation to the priesthood, although, like many others, there is a sense of unfinished business about what could have been if I, or the priesthood, were different. I also believe that my background helped me to establish rapport with the research participants and to bring an intuitive narrative to the analysis, including the selection of key themes and the identification of questions that should be addressed in this study (see Chapter Two).

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

Following this introductory chapter, the methodology used in the study is reviewed in chapter two, and the core theoretical concepts used to interrogate the data are presented in chapter three. The wider socio-religious context during the fifty-year period, 1962-2012, is reviewed in chapter four, followed by a thematic and chronological profile of Irish diocesan priests in chapter five. The findings from the research are presented and analysed in chapters six to eight, commencing with the topic of identity and followed by obedience and celibacy, respectively. The final chapter will draw together the main findings and insights from the research. The appendices contain miscellaneous data on the Irish Church and Irish diocesan priests, together with relevant material relating to the study, such as topic guides and a copy of the explanatory letter sent to respondents.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to outline the method of data collection used in the research from a number of perspectives, including rationale, details of the research strategy, and ethical issues.

2.2 Appropriateness of a Qualitative Research Methodology

A qualitative research approach was deemed to be appropriate for the study for a variety of reasons, but especially the depth of data generated on Irish diocesan priests' lives The primary focus of qualitative research is on understanding the lives of individuals and groups in different and changing social contexts. This fits with my primary aim of understanding the lived experience of Irish diocesan priests during the fifty-year period, 1962-2012. Exponents of qualitative research believe that this approach makes it possible for the researcher to 'explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences and imaginings of our research participants, the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate' (Mason, 2002, p.1). Accordingly, I believed that the use of a qualitative research methodology would contribute to the discovery of a richer type of sociological knowledge that has not previously emerged from existing studies on diocesan priests, and which does not readily emerge when researchers are using quantitative approaches (Skinner et al., 2000, Inglis, 2007).[36] I also envisaged that a qualitative methodology would address

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[36] In the context of management research, for example, Skinner et al argue that there 'are circumstances in which qualitative research could offer a richness and depth of understanding unlikely to be achieved with quantitative approaches'

the perceived positivist bias and limitations of Irish social research, as outlined in chapter one (Share et al., 2007).

Qualitative research has inherent strengths that are different and, in this context, superior to those of quantitative methods. Punch (1998), for example, lists some of the strengths of qualitative research as including a greater flexibility than quantitative methods, thereby allowing them to be used 'in a wider range of situations and for a wider range of purposes' (Punch, 1998, p. 243). Furthermore, Punch states that qualitative methods can 'also be more easily modified as a study progresses' (Punch, 1988, p.243) and because of their greater flexibility, 'they are well suited for studying naturally occurring real-life situations' (Punch, 1988, p.243). This flexibility was useful in my research on a number of occasions, leading to a number of modifications in the methodology during the research process. First, the interview was piloted to check the relative benefit of using two different introductions. The sample was also expanded to include more priests than originally envisaged, including a number of priests with 'alternative lifestyles' (see below). The interview process was also sufficiently flexible to facilitate the research participants to tell their stories in the way they wanted and in as much detail as they wished.

An important consideration in choosing the methodology was that it should be sufficiently systematic and robust to conform to data collection norms, whilst at the same time ensuring the interviews were conducted in a spirit of trust to allow the participants to speak openly about their lives. It was important that respondents would be given sufficient time and opportunity to raise pertinent issues, including any that I had not considered important, or which I was reluctant to ask because of their potentially sensitive nature. For example, I did not ask direct questions about research participants' personal practice of celibacy because my

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(Skinner et al, 2000, p.163). Inglis notes that while social surveys are 'very good at mapping changes in religious belief and behaviour', they are 'not very satisfactory for exploring the transitions in the meaning of being Catholic' and other issues that have taken place over time (Inglis, 2007, p.209).

primary focus was on their understanding of celibacy, the potential sensitivity of the topic, and my desire to avoid sensationalising priests' stories. However, neither did I exclude discussion on sexual behaviour. Instead, I created a space, which invited the participants to discuss their experience of celibacy at whatever level of intimacy they felt comfortable. This enabled some priests to give details of their sexual lives, including one priest who chose to disclose some details of his private homosexual orientation. The narrative introduction (see below) was followed by a number of prompted questions when a priest found it difficult to respond to the open question. I am satisfied that this approach worked satisfactorily for the research and the research participants. As previously stated in chapter one, I believe that my personal biography helped to create a rapport with the research participants that enabled them to speak openly about most areas of their lives. Indeed, some priests gave details of their lives that I regarded as too personal or of no direct relevance to warrant inclusion in the thesis.

A qualitative methodology is consistent with the underlying epistemology. The study is underpinned by an interpretative, hermeneutical phenomenological epistemology (Lindseth and Norberg, 2004),[37] which seeks to understand how individuals 'interact and make sense of the world' (Smith, 1998, p. 171). The interpretative epistemology is based on the premise that reality is socially constructed and there is 'no fixed and unchanging 'Truth' (Etherington, 2004, p.27). Thus, I believe that our knowledge of the social world, including knowledge of Irish diocesan priesthood, 'can only be understood in the historical and social situation in which it was produced' (Smith, 1998, p.172). Such a view is consistent with the findings of some empirical studies of priests in the US, which

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[37] It is hermeneutical because it involves the interpretation of narrated texts and it aims to interpret social behaviour by studying it within the context from which it originated. It is phenomenological because of the primary concern with understanding the meaning of lived experience. The method involved reading the text of the interviews several times 'in order to grasp its meaning as a whole' (Lindseth and Norberg, 2004, p.149) before engaging in thematic structural analysis, which conveys 'an essential meaning of lived experience' (Lindseth and Norberg, 2004, p.149). The process was also informed by a review of literature.

identified different generations of priests, who 'came of age during different periods of time' and 'who were influenced by the prevailing culture of the times' (Gautier et al., 2012, p.4). The existence of different generations of priests in Ireland will be explored in chapter six. Finally, the potentially sensitive nature of the research topic suggests that a personal interview that is flexible and open to modification is most appropriate from an ethical perspective (see section 2.6).

No research method is perfect and qualitative research, like its quantitative counterpart, is perceived to have limitations and potential biases. One problem common to most forms of research that is based on memory, is that it 'depends on participants accurately remembering their previous activities and on subjects answering the question that the interviewer thinks he or she is asking' (Kramer, 2011, p.115). However, it may be argued that the accuracy of recall data is more of an issue for quantitative research since qualitative research is more likely to focus on the meaning behind an action rather than the accuracy of the details surrounding the event (Elliott, 2005). Another issue is that the findings of qualitative studies cannot be taken as statistically representative of any larger group because they typically use relatively small samples.[38] However, this was never my intention. Rather, like other social researchers, my primary goal was to produce data from a relatively 'small collection of cases' that would 'illuminate social life' (Neuman, 2003, p.211). Thus, I believed that qualitative research would be most useful in illuminating the lived experience of Irish diocesan priests.

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[38] This contrasts with the 'primary goal' of quantitative research in sampling, which is to get a representative sample 'such that the researcher can study the smaller group and produce accurate generalisations about the larger group' (Neuman, 2003, p.210).

2.3 The Interview

The data was gathered by means of thirty-three semi-structured interviews, which entailed a relatively lengthy personal interview, using a semi-structured topic guide (see Appendix C) and a narrative-style introduction (see below) (Mishler, 1999, Etherington, 2004).[39] The structured questions were designed to reflect the primary focus of the study on Irish diocesan priests' lived experience, and specifically identity, obedience and celibacy. Two different approaches were piloted with two priests; one utilising a standard set of questions, and another using the same questions but preceded by a narrative-style introduction, which read as follows:

> I am interested in hearing about your life and experiences as a diocesan priest; from the time you felt you had a vocation to the present day. Take your time and try to mention anything you feel is important because everything that is of interest to you is of interest to me. Where would you like to start?

On balance, the narrative introduction proved most effective in helping priests recollect their stories in a relatively seamless and natural way, possibly stirring up memories they had forgotten, and allowing them to take control of the interview process by emphasising those aspects of their priesthood they deemed most important. While most priests spoke with the minimum of prompting, others required more prompting before they got into a rhythm and embarked on their stories.

Most of the priests began their stories chronologically, with accounts of their vocation and seminary life, before moving to other topics of interest to them. For example, once they had discussed their early years as students, older priests spoke a lot about the legalistic control in the pre-

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[39] Narrative research is 'an umbrella term that covers a large and diverse range of approaches' (Mishler, 1999, p.xv). Since a core element of the present study entailed the use of 'a methodology based upon collecting, analysing, and re-presenting people's stories as told by them', it may be classified loosely as a narrative inquiry, without complying with the conditions of a fully narrative approach (Etherington, 2004, p.75).

Vatican II Church and how their priesthood had changed following Vatican II. Conversely, priests ordained around the time of Vatican II were most concerned with Vatican II and the difficulties of living celibate lives. Six of this latter group, for example, spontaneously began their interviews with reference to the difficulties of celibacy or their wish to have married if circumstances had been different. The nine former priests spoke at length about their reasons for their leaving the priesthood and the process of leaving, while two gay priests gave candid details of their lives as gay priests.

Initially, I was concerned when some respondents spoke quite generally about their lives as priests, with little specific reference to the core questions of celibacy, obedience or identity. However, upon reflection during the analysis stage, I realised that much of what they said provided important contextual data for the more specific analysis of celibacy, obedience and identity. In the end, most priests gave quite specific data on these core areas. Overall, I am satisfied that the research process worked and all of the participants spoke relatively openly and honestly for more than one hour. This is important because priests can be reluctant to share their 'more vulnerable side', particularly in an environment where priesthood is often sensationalised in the media through their 'professional' association with priests engaged in criminal or unsavoury activities (Fitzgibbon, 1996, p.226).

I believe that the success of the research process was partly due to my 'middle' research position, similar to Breen in her psychological study of grief following car crashes in Australia (Breen, 2007). I was not a diocesan priest; so I could not be regarded as an insider researcher. Yet, I benefitted to some extent from being an 'insider' researcher, by having 'a superior understanding of the group's culture: the ability to interact naturally with the group and its members' (Breen, 2007, p.163). Participants were told of my background in the seminary and my time as researcher/director in the Irish Bishops Conference Council for Research and Development. However, I was also an outsider and I believe that most of the research

participants perceived me to be 'independent, unbiased, and objective' (Breen, 2007, p.171) because I was engaged in doctoral research. The interviews were held in a mutually convenient location, usually the respondent's home, resulting in more than forty hours of interviews and more than 3,500 miles travel during the summer of 2010.

2.4 The Sample

Sampling is a key concern for social research, whether it is large-scale survey research, which typically adopts a 'structured approach to data collection and analysis' (de Vaus, 2002, p. 7), or a smaller qualitative study where smaller unstructured data sets and analysis are the norm. While the sampling process in survey research is typically concerned with 'principles and procedures for obtaining accurate samples' that enable the researcher to 'generalise from a sample to a wider population' (de Vaus, 2002, p.69), different considerations such as depth and relevance are more pertinent to sampling in qualitative research (Flick, 2006, Long and Godfrey, 2004).

I decided to select a broad sample of priests from a variety of backgrounds, using a combination of non-random quota and purposive, snowball sampling techniques. My reasons for this decision were both intuitive and theoretical. The primary aim of the research is to explore the lived experience of Irish diocesan priests and to investigate how this lived experience had changed over time. Accordingly, it made sense to me that I should include a relatively broad age-range of priests from different generations and backgrounds. This view was supported by the literature review, which suggested that different generations of priests have evolved since the Second Vatican Council (Hoge and Wenger, 2003). It is also consistent with the theoretical framework, which, further to Bourdieu, suggests that a priest's habitus evolves over time to reflect different generations of priests (Maton, 2008). Accordingly, in order to explore the potentially shared understanding within different cohorts of Irish diocesan priests and differences between cohorts, I decided to recruit priests

ordained during each of the decades during the past fifty years or so. Although I did not set quotas for ministry or diocese, the sampling process resulted in priests being selected from nine dioceses, and priests with experience in a range of different ministries.

I employed a four-stage process in selecting the sample. First, all priests and former priests had to be ordained during the fifty-year period, 1955-2005. This was done to ensure there were respondents who could discuss the lived experience of priests in different eras of the contemporary Irish Church. In the beginning, I was undecided about the total number of respondents that would be needed, other than there should be more than two and at least five priests from each of the three historical eras identified by Hoge and Wenger (2003) in their study of US priests. I felt that this number would be sufficient to identify and provide an understanding of issues emanating from a range of lived priestly experiences.

Second, twelve priests from different dioceses and representing a range of ages were identified from the ordination photographs[40] displayed in the cloisters of Maynooth College. I identified fifteen priests and subsequently made contact with twelve of them,[41] using details published on their diocesan websites, and invited them to participate in the study. Where they agreed or showed an interest in participating, they were sent further information on the study and details of what would be expected of them (Appendix B). This phase resulted in the recruitment of eight priests. Two priests did not respond to my invitation and two priests chose not to participate for personal reasons.

The third phase of the recruitment process took place with the assistance of the first group of research participants who, following their interviews, when a degree of rapport had been established, were generally satisfied to

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[40] The photographs of ordination classes are displayed on the walls of the cloisters of St. Patrick's College, Maynooth.
[41] I was unable to make contact with three priests, one of whom I later learnt was ill.

recommend the research to other priests. All of them were also happy for their names to be used in the recruitment process or to make initial contact with the individuals. At this stage, I sent out invitations to twenty priests and former priests in the hope of getting ten interviews but, at the conclusion of this phase, I had recruited twenty-five priests (twenty-one priests and four former priests. One young priest chose not to participate in the research because he did not wish to add to the controversies surrounding priests in the media. The others were not interested in taking part.

Finally, I decided to include a number of priests with 'alternative lifestyles' in order to provide a degree of depth to specific areas of priests' lived experience. The literature review suggested that some priests may be sexually active, and that some priests are homosexual. It also suggested that some young priests are caught up in a world of 'smoke and lace'[42] that is reminiscent of the pre-Vatican Church. I also became aware of priests who had changed their allegiance from diocesan priesthood to religious orders and the Church of Ireland. Finally, I decided to include priests who had been falsely accused of abusing children because of their specific experiences.

However, I was also conscious of the difficulty in contacting these 'alternative' priests, some of whom were living hidden lives as priests. As it transpired I was fortunate in receiving the assistance of a priest who was prepared to contact some of his colleagues in the strictest of confidence, and the unsolicited assistance of some respondents. One former priest

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[42] This expression was used by one of the respondents in this study to depict what he perceived as the re-emergence of an older form of priesthood, which was central to the pre-Vatican II Church. The smoke refers to their use of incense in ceremonies, while the reference to lace refers to the tendency of some priests to wear clerical garb that was fashionable in pre-Vatican II Ireland. Journalist Fintan O'Toole captures the appeal of this form of priesthood for a young altar server considering a vocation in early 1960s Ireland. He recollects his thoughts as follows: 'I did come to love the ritual – the sonorous secret language of call-and-response Latin formulae; the candles and incense; the luscious whiff of altar wine; the dazzling white of the host… holding the holy water for the priest to sprinkle over the coffin (at funerals) made me feel serious and important … the solemn requiem of Latin High Mass (O'Toole, 2000, p.13).

spontaneously suggested that I make contact with two former colleagues who were gay for their stories. Another priest mentioned how one of his friends had become a minister in the Church of Ireland and he was willing to contact him on my behalf. I was less successful in recruiting older priests who had left the diocesan priesthood and entered a monastery following Vatican II, although I did interview two priests who had changed allegiance to a religious order. Finally, while I attempted to interview some younger priests I knew to have relatively extreme views, all but one refused.

Thus, of the thirty-three people interviewed, twenty-four priests were in active ministry (although four priests were semi-retired), seven priests had left the priesthood, and two had changed their allegiance from a diocese to a religious order. Ten priests had entered the seminary before the Second Vatican Council, fourteen were ordained in the 1970s and 1980s, and nine were ordained in the 1990s and 2000s. One priest and two former priests were gay; two priests had been falsely accused of sexually abusing young men; and one former priest had become a minister in the Church of Ireland.

2.5   The Analysis

The interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and transferred into a software programme, NVivo, which I found useful in organising the primary data into meaningful categories. Unsurprisingly, given my initial focus on the three themes of celibacy, obedience and identity, much of the material was classified under these headings. The coding process also identified a number of interesting sub-themes, which are outlined in Table 2.1, overleaf.

Nothing unexpected emerged at this preliminary stage of the analysis, with most of the data related to the three core areas of celibacy, obedience and identity (Table 2.1, overleaf). Much of the ministry data was subsequently

recoded into one of these three core areas, where relevant. For example, when priests spoke of difficulties working with a parish priest, this comment was recoded under obedience.

Table 2.1 Emerging Themes and Sub-Themes

THEME	Respondents	References
1. Celibacy	**33**	**166**
Lived experience of celibacy.	31	122
Views of celibacy.	26	42
Sexuality and intimacy.	24	59
Support structures provided by priests.	32	80
Alternative support structures from non-clerics.	33	79
Seminary life.	7	10
Identity	6	9
2. Identity	**33**	**341**
Vocation story/journey	33	124
Clerical sexual abuse	25	43
How they see themselves as priests.	24	86
How they see other priests	21	52
How they see priesthood	12	27
New models of priesthood	7	12
Priests as lone rangers	7	7
Crisis of priestly identity	10	15
Seminary training	7	10
Laity	6	8
3. Obedience	**33**	**416**
Seminary training.	29	112
Impact of clerical sexual abuse.	18	40
Changes since the Second Vatican Council.	28	63
Clerical resistance	25	43
Clerical culture	16	54
Authoritarian priests	15	28
Hierarchical power.	12	27
Leaving the priesthood	12	82
Passive priests	11	13
Sin	10	12
The fall from pedestals	5	6
Promise of obedience to bishop.	8	9
Laity	8	11

Note: Some categories are included under different themes and some references are included in more than one category.

2.6   Ethical Procedures

The protocols of the SRA (Social Research Association, 2003) and the Ethical guidelines of the Sociological Association of Ireland (Sociological Association of Ireland, 2004) were used to guide the research process. Each potential respondent was given a verbal and written explanation detailing the nature and purpose of the research (Appendix B). The information gave potential respondents details of the proposed research process, the expected duration of the interview, and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. They were also told that they could withdraw from the research, without repercussions at any time, and that if they withdrew their permission to use their data within two weeks of the interview, all their data would be deleted. Counselling was offered to all the research participants but not taken up by anybody.

Whilst acknowledging the contentious nature of achieving informed consent in social and medical research (Martin and Marker, 2007, Miller and Boulton, 2007, Corrigan, 2003), every effort was made to ensure best practice was followed in this regard. Each respondent was given a consent form to sign prior to the commencement of the interview, together with a written and verbal summary of what the research entailed. The respondents were informed in advance that disguised extracts of the interviews might be quoted in the thesis and in any subsequent publications. Everyone agreed to these conditions and duly signed the consent form. However, it is accepted that it is not always possible to predict how much information a respondent will reveal and if it exceeds the amount he/she intended when giving informed consent (Miller and Boulton, 2007). A typed transcript was subsequently offered to each respondent for clarification or amendment. Thirty participants accepted the offer but, for the most part, any changes they requested were minimal and related mainly to concerns about confidentiality. Indeed, it seemed as if most respondents had moved on from the interview and did not feel the need to revisit either the content or the emotional links generated by the interview.

2.7 Concluding Comment

Overall, I am satisfied that a qualitative research approach was appropriate for this study and that it produced valuable data that helped me to explore the lived experience of Irish diocesan priests. I also believe the recruitment process and the interviews were planned and executed in such a way that respondents felt at ease in telling their stories. Finally, I believe that the accounts of the thirty-three research participants can be judged to be comprehensive and honest, partly because of the sheer amount and sensitivity of the material, but also because their accounts were found 'to resonate with those others in the research' (Birch and Miller, 2000, p.200).

CHAPTER THREE

THEORISING PRIESTHOOD

3.1 Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to introduce core theoretical concepts that I will use to explore the views of the research participants across three core areas of priesthood. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus will be used to explore different aspects of priestly identity, particularly the notion of evolving identities. His concepts of field and capital will be used, in association with the writings of Anthony Giddens (1984) and Peter Saunders (1983), to understand priestly obedience and celibacy. I will use these concepts to support the arguement that different generations of priests exist in Ireland, and that Irish diocesan priests have the capacity to exercise agency in some aspects of a strictly hierarchical and highly structured Church.

3.2 Bourdieu's Concepts of Habitus, Field and Capital

Habitus is one of the key concepts underpinning the writings of French social philosopher Pierre Bourdieu. It is widely regarded as an 'enigmatic concept' and also 'one of the most misunderstood, misused and hotly contested of Bourdieu's ideas' (Maton, 2008, p.49). Although a distinct concept in its own right, it can only be fully understood when considered alongside two of Bourdieu's other core concepts, capital and field (see below). According to Bourdieu, habitus is a mental or cognitive construct used by social agents (individuals, groups or institutions) to make sense of the world and to interpret what is happening in their lives. It explains why people come to think, feel and act in certain ways and not others. It reflects our way of being in the world, embodying not just how we think about the world but also how we interact with the world. It is effectively a shared

way of understanding, or a collective phenomenon that is embodied in individuals. Bourdieu referred to habitus as a 'structured and structuring structure' (Maton, 2008, p.51), whereby it is structured by one's past; it is structuring insofar as one's habitus helps to shape one's present and future practices; and structured 'in that it is systematically ordered rather than random or unpatterned' (Maton, 2008, p.51). People are socialised into embodying certain beliefs, practices and dispositions by a variety of factors, such as family background, education and social class.

Bourdieu argued that a habitus evolves over time when agents interact with different groups and structures, and that it is transformed during times of significant and rapid social change. Thus, for example, a religious habitus would be expected to change significantly during times of heightened secularisation or religious fundamentalism. However, for the most part, it is a relatively gradual process. It is an 'ongoing and active process' whereby we bring our history into our present circumstances and we 'make history, but not under conditions entirely of our own making' (Maton, 2008, p.52). In effect, we 'receive the cultural identity which has been handed down to us from previous generations' and we modify this identity by 'the social expectations with which we are associated' (Robbins, 1991, p.174). There are various forms of habitus, two of which are considered below, the Catholic habitus and the priestly habitus.

A Catholic habitus is 'a deeply embodied, almost automatic way of being spiritual and moral that becomes second nature and creates a Catholic sense of self and a way of behaving and interpreting the world' (Inglis, 2007, p.205). It is an evolving habitus that influences and is influenced by changes in society. Prior to the Second Vatican Council, the Irish Catholic Church was largely homogenous and most Irish Catholics grew up in a society permeated by a Catholic *habitus*. They were socialised into Catholicism in the home and through school, and they, in turn, responded to society in a Catholic way. They went to Mass, received the sacraments, obeyed their priests, and acted in ways that were regarded as moral. People effectively inherited a given way of being a good Catholic, in the amount

and quality of religious capital they acquired, the way they spoke, their gestures, their fear of mortal sin, and their adoption of a humble, pious and self-deprecatory attitude (Inglis, 2003). However, over time, and especially during the past two decades, Catholicism began to diversify and new ways of being Catholic began to emerge in an increasingly polarised Church. While some Catholics exhibit similar characteristics to their per-Vatican II counterparts, others have become more marginalised from Church beliefs and practices, whilst still considering themselves as Catholics. For example, in her study of shifting religious and spiritual identities of young Irish Catholics aged 18-29, Andersen argues that a new[43] Catholic habitus has emerged for young adults in Ireland, which combines a strong cultural attachment with substantial autonomy in their religious practices, beliefs and values (Andersen, 2010). Andersen draws on Bourdieu's writings to explain the emergence of a new Catholic habitus, when she argues that part of the reason for this decline in young adult's religiosity is that this group of young adults 'was socialized during the period of structural change in Ireland and is therefore more likely to have been affected by macro-level secularization' (Andersen, 2010, p.16). Consequentially, she argues that as a result of organisational changes in the Catholic Church and socio-economic and cultural changes in Irish society, a new way of understanding Catholicism emerged that contrasts sharply with the understanding that prevailed in previous generations of Irish people. I will argue that a similar shift is also apparent in the priestly habitus.

A priestly habitus denotes a shared or collective understanding of priesthood that is embedded in individual priests at a particular moment in time. It is formed during the course of a priest's lifetime and is influenced by a variety of factors, including his seven years in the seminary, and the 'prevailing culture' when he came of age (Gautier et al., 2012, p.4). However, like other habituses, the priestly habitus is not static, leading to changes in the way priesthood is understood when the context changes

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[43] Whether the changing Catholic habitus is a new habitus or an evolving habitus is open to discussion.

over time. It is to be expected that the lived experience of a priest in the 1950s would be quite different to a priest's lived experience in the 2000s.

A habitus does not function in isolation from other factors and Bourdieu introduced two other theoretical concepts to explain agents' practice. He argues that while people are constrained by their habitus, they are not simply programmed to act in certain ways, and that 'practice results from relations between one's dispositions (habitus) and one's position in a field (capital), within the current state of play of that social arena (field)' (Maton, 2008, p.51). Thus, practices are the culmination of '*relations between* one's habitus and one's current circumstances' (italics in original) (Maton, 2008, p.52).

Bourdieu identified four types of capital: economic capital (control over economic resources e.g., cash, assets); cultural capital (knowledge, experience and connections gained through an individual's life course, e.g., forms of knowledge, cultural preferences, language); social capital (resources based on group membership, relationships and networks of influence and support e.g., networks, family); and symbolic capital (things which can be exchanged for other forms of capital, e.g., status). He argued that an agent's position in a field is determined by the type and amount of capital h/she possesses. Agents occupying different positions in fields compete for additional capital and a superior position within the field using their capital resources. However, in order to understand how and why people act in certain ways, it is necessary to consider both 'the evolving fields within which social agents are situated and the evolving *habituses* which those social agents bring to their fields of practice' (Maton, 2008, p.53).

Bourdieu believed that the social world was divided into a number of different, relatively autonomous social fields, where social agents (people or institutions) interact and compete with each other. According to Bourdieu, in order to understand interactions between people, or to explain an event or social phenomena, 'it was insufficient to look at what at what

was said, or what happened'; it was 'necessary to examine the social space in which interactions, transactions and events occurred' (Thomson, 2008, p.67). Bourdieu believed that social fields had their own internal logic and regulatory principles. He defined a field as 'a structured social space, a field of forces, a force field. It contains people who dominate and people who are dominated. Constant, permanent relationships of inequality operate inside this space, which at the same time becomes a space in which various actors struggle for the transformation or preservation of the field. All the individuals in this universe bring to the competition all the (relative) power at their disposal. It is this power that defines their position in the field and, as a result, their strategies' (Thomson, 2008, p.74).

Bourdieu believed that fields are places of competition where agents compete for capital that is most effective in the field, and where the power relations within and between these fields structure human behaviour. For example, just as players on a football field compete with each other by playing within specific boundaries and observing specific rules, so too with agents in a social field. They have different dispositions (e.g., striker, defender) and they use different strategies to score/defend goals in order to improve their position within the field. However, neither the social agents nor the fields are equal, with some agents advantaged from the outset by having more of a capital that is highly regarded in the field. Thus, for example, people with most money occupy a more privileged position in the economic field when compared with agents who have less financial resources. Bourdieu was also unequivocal that some 'fields are dominant and others subordinate', such as the role played by the state in housing through various policies and financial measures (Thomson, 2008, p.80). An agent's position in a field is determined by a number of things, including his/her habitus and the doxa (rules of the game). Both of these factors constrain the influence of agents in a field. While some agents in the same field will often share a common doxa, it can happen that some agents will try to change the status quo and the rules of the game in their favour. In this struggle, agents will make use of the different capital at their disposal, resulting in either a preservation of the status quo or a

change in the relative positions of agents. This question will be explored in chapter six.

3.3 Agency and Structure

Structure is 'one of the most important and most elusive terms in the vocabulary of current social science' (Sewell, 1992, p. 1). The concept is 'usually employed to refer to any recurring patterns of social behaviour' (Walsh, 1998, p.33). It is a core sociological concept and many studies have identified key changes in different social structures over time. Sarre, for example, wrote about the 'restructuring' of the British class structure (Sarre, 1989, p.79). Social structures suggest that people are constrained by the structures that frame their behaviour, such as gender, class, and religion. Smith notes that the organisation of social structures can 'enable certain things to happen but at the same time this places constraints on what can be done' (Smith, 1998, p.351). He gives the example of a child in a family, where the child benefits from educational opportunities, but they are also constrained by formal rules and cultural expectations.

My study is primarily concerned with one aspect of structure, its relationship to agency. One of the theoretical dilemmas in sociology, according to Giddens (2000) is 'how far are we creative human actors, actively controlling the conditions of our own lives or is most of what we do the result of general social forces outside our control?' (Giddens, 2009, p.87). This is the key question that will be addressed in chapter seven i.e., to what extent do Irish diocesan priests exercise agency when negotiating their priesthood within such a large institution as the Catholic Church? Contrasting opinions on this theoretical dilemma has led to a long and unresolved debate within sociology, between theorists adopting a structuralist position and others advocating 'the efficacy of human action' (Sewell, 1992, p.2). In brief, structuralists argue that society and structures determine human behaviour, while opponents of this view believe that social structures and society are the product of human agency. The 'truth',

according to some writers lies somewhere in between both extremes. On the one hand, some structural arguments 'tend to assume a far too rigid causal determinism in social life', leading to insufficient, if any, attention being given to agency and effectively reducing actors to 'cleverly programmed automatons' (Sewell, 1992, p. 2). Conversely, on the other hand, Sewell argues against discarding the concept altogether because structure 'does denominate, however problematically, something very important about social relations, the tendency of patterns of relations to be reproduced, even when actors engaging in the relations are unaware of the patterns or do not desire their reproduction' (Sewell, 1992, p.3).

The 'foundation of the structuralist position' is that it makes no sense to speak of human beings being independent of the social context within which they live with others, because human beings are 'essentially creatures who by their very nature are made by their social habitat which is society' (Walsh, 1998, p.9). This position was advocated by a number of classical social theorists, including Emile Durkheim and Karl Marx. Durkheim's position is expressed in the following quote from his book, *The Sociological Method*: 'When I fulfil my obligations as brother, husband, or citizen, when I execute my contracts, I perform duties which are defined, externally to myself and my acts, in law and in custom. Even if they conform to my own sentiments and I feel their reality subjectively, such reality is still objective, for I did not create them; I merely inherited them through my education … Similarly, the Church-member finds the beliefs and practices of his religious life ready-made at birth; their existence prior to his own implies their existence outside himself' (Durkheim, 1964 (1938), pp.1-2). Durkheim argued that 'society has primacy over the individual person' and that 'society is far more than the sum of individual acts' (Giddens, 2009, p.88). He emphasised the determining character of 'social facts', such as social class, the family, work, and the state, on the behaviour of individuals. He argued that individuals internalise norms of behaviour associated with these social facts through socialisation and education. Conversely, Marx believed that social relationships have 'an essentially economic foundation' (Walsh,

1998, p.11), whereby changes in the means of production lead to changes in the relations of production and ultimately, the form of society. In both cases, an individual's position within institutions and structures determined their actions. Others, such as Claude Levi-Strauss went further to suggest that individuals make sense of their worlds by diverse cultural factors, of which they are unaware. Thus, at its 'most extreme' structuralist sociology 'treats society as an autonomous entity composed of structures and institutions that impose themselves upon and control the actions of the members of society by organising themselves in terms of their own logic, which is dictated by the economic and cultural factors that have produced it and which are extra-individual' (Walsh, 1998, p.11).

This view has been sharply criticised by theorists who perceive society to be an accumulation of individual actions. Max Weber, for example, argues that social action entails a 'subjective meaning' by the individual and that society is the culmination of interactions between individuals (Weber, 1968, p.4). The purpose of sociology, according to Weber, is to arrive at 'an interpretative understanding of social action' (Roth and Wittich, 1968, p.4). Exponents of the agency perspective argue that institutions, such as the state and social class, are not autonomous entities. They are not external to individuals in the same as the physical world. Rather, they make sense because of the meaning given to them by people; they represent a shared orientation to the world, which enable individuals 'to act in typical ways in terms of these institutions, which are legitimated by their shared interests and values which motivate how they act' (Walsh, 1998, pp.21-22). They believe that the structuralist view dehumanises the world and that it is incorrect because it does not allow for the impact of individuals on society. Change happens because of individual deeds that the individuals deemed to be subjectively meaningful and directed by their interests and values. Thus, for example, Vatican II occurred because Pope John XXIII wanted it to happen. This view does not deny the existence of structures, as clearly religion existed before everyone currently alive on the earth, but only their alleged impact on human behaviour. While

members of a social class may act in similar ways for much of their lives, they are not bound to act in a specific way.

Symbolic interactionism is generally associated with this agency perspective, although more so the 'nominalist position' advocated by John Dewey, than the social realism perspective proposed by George Herbert Mead. The nominalist position argues that although macro-level phenomena exist, they do not determine the consciousness or behaviour of individuals (Ritzer, 2008, p.348). Conversely, the social realism of George Herbert Mead emphasised the influence of society and argued that 'rather than being free agents, actors and their cognitions are controlled by the larger community' (Ritzer, 2008, p.348). For the most part, sociologists influenced by symbolic interactionism believe that 'we inhabit a social world permeated by cultural meanings' and that 'human beings have reasons for what we do' (Giddens, 2009, p.89).

A number of writers have attempted to reconcile the 'paradoxical relationship between both the individual determination of action and its socially structured organisation' (Walsh, 1998, p.23). Three theorists are briefly considered, Anthony Giddens, Pierre Bourdieu, and Arpád Szakolczai. Giddens introduced the concept of structuration to sociology in order to demonstrate a relationship between structure and agency. Structuration, according to Giddens, refers to the 'two-way process by which we shape our social world through our individual actions but are ourselves reshaped by society (Giddens, 2009, p.1134). He argued that societies, communities or groups only have 'structure' insofar as people behave in regular and fairly predictable ways'. On the other hand, action is only possible because 'each of us, as an individual, possesses an enormous amount of socially structured knowledge' (Giddens, 2009, p.89). For Giddens, structures are created by humans, which, in turn, constrain and enable human action. Referring to Marx, Giddens argues that people 'make history, but not in circumstances of their own choosing' (Giddens, 1984 p., xxi). Giddens' attempt at a synthesis of agency and structure was subsequently criticised for adopting a predominantly agency perspective

(Giddens, 1984)[44] 'over and against the concern with structure' (Clegg, 1989, p. 147).

Bourdieu uses his concepts of habitus, capital and field to explain the practice of agents in the social world, whilst trying to avoid the theoretical extremes entailed in the agency-structure debate, thereby reconciling individual agency and social structure. The main purpose of habitus, according to Bourdieu, is to 'account for practice in its humblest forms' by 'escaping both the objectivism of action understood as a mechanical reaction 'without an agent' and the subjectivism which portrays action as the deliberate pursuit of a conscious intention, the free project of a conscience positing its own ends and maximising its utility through rational computation' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.121). He believed that individuals are neither completely free agents nor people whose actions are determined by social structures. However, some commentators believe that Bourdieu places most emphasis on structure and of being over-deterministic in his analysis (Adams, 2006), and 'there seems little we can do as individuals' (Robbins, 1991, p.175).

Sociologist Arpád Szakolczai sought to resolve the agency-structure dichotomy in identity studies by joining two perspectives, cultural anthropology and philosophical hermeneutics. Further to philosophical hermeneutics, he argues that 'an individual is not a self-contained entity' (Szakolczai, 1998, p.4). Rather, a person 'is born into a life-world, a culture or civilisation characterized by a language and a whole gamut of relations that are taken for granted' (Szakolczai, 1998, p. 4). People, according to this view, are 'formed as individual persons through a series of experiences' (Szakolczai, 1998, p. 5). However, he also holds that 'no human being is a mere cultural or social dupe' (Szakolczai, 1998, p. 8). The dichotomy between agency and structure, can, according to

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[44] In his 1984 publication, *The Constitution of Society*, Giddens stresses the importance of agency in relation to structure when he writes: 'While acknowledging that society is not the creation of individual subjects, it is distant from any conception of structural sociology'. (Giddens, 1984, p.XXI).

Szakolczai, be 'overcome with the help of cultural anthropology' (Szakolczai, 1998, p.5). Anthropologists Arnold van Gennep (Van Gennep, 1960) and Victor Turner (Turner, 1969) advanced the notion of 'rites of passage' to explain how an individual's identity is formed during a critical time in their lives. The rites comprise three stages – the rite of separation (from their normal lives), the liminal stage (a time when individuals reflect on the threshold between their old lives and a new life), and a rite of reaggregation (when they return to their communities as changed people). The person who begins the rite of passage is typically different to the person that emerges at the end of the process. Szakolczai argues that this indicates that 'the moments when single human beings acquire their role and place in society' is 'at the same time heightened moments of individualization' (Szakolczai, 1998, p.5). Aronson also noted the potential significance of personal events in the transformation of identity, although in a less formalised process. She found that a person's identity could be transformed by 'turning points' 'when events in one's personal history intersect with a rapidly changing cultural and historical context, particularly one that emphasises personal change' (Aronson, 2000, p.78).

The debate is ongoing but I believe that human action is the result of both agency and structure, with one more influential than the other in different circumstances. Thus, I would expect to find evidence of agency and structure in the lived experience of Irish diocesan priests. The Catholic Church is very hierarchical but I believe that priests retain the capacity to exercise agency in certain circumstances.

3.4 Rules of Access

Further to the writings of Bachrach and Baratz (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962), Saunders (1983) identified different levels of non-decision-making to explain why groups do not engage in political action. I believe his work may be useful in understanding why Irish diocesan priests do not protest

more often against their superiors. The first of these levels is 'negative decision-making' where 'those in powerful positions may simply fail to respond in any way to the articulation of political demands by less powerful groups so that no decision is ever made' (Saunders, 1983, p.29). This is a situation which, to use the metaphor used by Saunders, is where 'dogs may bark themselves hoarse in the night but nobody listens' (Saunders, 1983, p.29). However, of more concern to the present study is why disgruntled groups 'fail to press their demands' (Saunders, 1983, p.29). Anecdotal evidence, together with articles by individual priests in journals like *The Furrow* (Hoban, 1996), and the formation of priests' associations (Hoban, 2010), suggests that many priests are dissatisfied with some aspect of Church leadership (Forristal, 1997), and ill at ease with some Church teachings (Irish Catholic, 2004). Yet, few priests have spoken out on issues of concern to themselves, such as mandatory celibacy, or to others in the Church, such as Church policy on sexual morality. Religious Order priests are constrained by a vow of obedience, yet it would appear that their members are often more vocal in their public opposition to Church teachings and policy.[45] Accordingly, one puzzle which will be addressed in the course of study is, to use the metaphor used by Saunders in his study of political inactivity, that of 'dogs which fail to bark in the night' (Saunders, 1983, p.22). Saunders suggests that dogs (priests) fail to bark for various reasons.

First, he suggests they may have no reason to 'bark' if they are largely satisfied that their voice is listened to and that their interests are taken into account by their superiors. A second reason for inactivity suggested by Saunders is that people may 'be duped, hoodwinked, coerced, cajoled or manipulated into political inactivity' (Saunders, 1983, p.22). He suggests that political inaction can result from situations where the issue is not

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[45] Most of the priests that have been silenced, expelled or banished by the Vatican belong to religious orders (Fox, 2011). A similar situation has happened in Ireland, with the silencing of several Irish priests, including Fr Sean Fagan (Marist), Fr Tony Flannery and Fr Gerry Moloney (Redemptorists). Fr Brian D'Arcy (Passionist) and Fr Owen O'Sullivan (Capuchin). They were silenced for their liberal views on, amongst other topics, advocating a more tolerant attitude towards homosexuality and women priests.

formulated in people's minds due to a 'mobilisation of bias' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962).[46] Third, people may not act because of anticipated reactions. Thus, dogs do not bark because they are 'muzzzled', or because they believe they are muzzled' (Saunders, 1983, p.30). Ultimately, Saunders believes that people may not act because they realise that the 'rules of access' are biased against them. If they play by the rules, there is no guarantee they will achieve anything. If they 'flaunt the rules of access' they will 'find themselves engaged in a battle they are almost certainly doomed to lose'. Accordingly, the alternative for many people is to 'do nothing' (Saunders, 1983, p.64).

> Those whose interests coincide with those of policy-makers will rarely need to act at all in order to further or safeguard their position, and to the extent that they do act, they will generally do so in accordance with the rules of access. Those whose interests are opposed to the policies of powerful groups, on the other hand, find themselves in a dilemma. If they play by the rules of the game, there is no guarantee that their action will be deemed legitimate, and even if it is, they are likely to achieve little. If they flaunt the rules of access, on the other hand, their actions will undoubtedly be deemed illegitimate, and they will find themselves engaged in a battle they are almost certainly doomed to lose. The third and perhaps the most common alternative, is to do nothing (Saunders, 1983, p. 64)

Saunder's theory is useful in understanding why priests are reluctant to engage in dissenting action, when they hold views that are contrary to the institutional Church. For example, while the majority of priests would favour optional celibacy (The Irish Catholic, 2004), it is left to individual priests and representative associations to express their views. Similarly, it would appear that many priests disagree with some aspects of Church policy and yet few express their opposition in public. Further to Saunders, I believe that it is reasonable to assume that most priests are reluctant to

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[46] The concept of a 'mobilisation of bias' suggests that a potential grievance is not formulated because 'dominant interests' may have such a high level of control over the political system and 'the values, beliefs and opinions of less powerful groups' that 'they can effectively determine not only whether certain demands come to be expressed and heeded, but also whether such demands will even cross people's minds' (Saunders, 1983, p.30).

voice their dissent because they realise that the rules of access are biased against them and that they cannot expect to win any battles with the institutional Church. Conversely, priests can achieve some of their objectives, some of which may contradict official Church, by acting discretely and not flaunting the rules of the game. Thus, they need not choose Saunder's final option of doing nothing. The relevance of Saunders' work to Irish diocesan priests will be explored in chapter seven.

3.5 Discussion

The concept of habitus suggests that at any particular time, there is a shared way of understanding priesthood, which constrains the actions and thoughts of priests. However, it is an evolving *habitus* that changes over time to reflect different factors, including the changing socio-religious landscape and organisational changes within the Church. Hence, it is to be expected that different generations of Irish priests would have emerged during periods of significant change in the Church, such as Vatican II, each with its distinctive understanding of priesthood. This view is also consistent with empirical research by Hoge and Wenger (2003)[47] amongst priests in the US, which concluded that there are three historical eras in the contemporary Church and that the 'essence of priesthood has undergone two shifts' since the early 1960s (Hoge and Wenger, 2003, p.59). Accordingly, I would expect to find evidence of shifting priestly identities in the accounts of the research participants and for these shifts to have occurred during times of significant change.

The concept of field suggests that different agents occupy different positions in the religious field and that they compete for position and social capital within this field. The relationship between the institutional Church and priests is unequal, because the institutional Church is primarily responsible for setting the rules of the game that favour and sustain its dominant position within the religious field. For example, Australian

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[47] A more detailed review of the Hoge and Wenger (2003) model may be found in chapter five.

anthropologist, Jane Anderson argues that priesthood is not a level playing field, and priests cannot compete with the institutional Church to change the law on mandatory celibacy because of the latter's dominance over resources (Anderson, 2005). The unequal relationship between priests and the institutional Church is grounded in the centralised, hierarchical nature of the Catholic Church. All diocesan priests must take a promise of obedience to their bishop and accept the primacy of the Pope. Furthermore, priests are subject to new *Code of Canon Law* (1983) and the revised *Catechism of the Church* (1994). They are also subject to a range of sanctions if they breach Church law or the norms of the Church (O'Sullivan, 2010, Fox, 2011). However, Bourdieu and Giddens suggest that while agents are constrained, they are not determined by structures. Accordingly, while I would expect to find evidence to support the dominance of the institutional Church over its priests. I would also expect to find some evidence of agency in the lived experience of the research participants, and possibly some instances where priests have challenged the dominance of the Church. However, further to Bourdieu and Saunders, I would not expect this competition to be too public or confrontational, as priests should have learnt that the rules of access are biased against them.

Bourdieu's writings also suggest that the Church, as the dominant agent in the religious field, retains the capacity to change the rules of the game in its favour, particularly if its position is threatened. The relationship between priests and Church leadership is unequal but also symbiotic in the sense that both priests and Church benefit from the relationship. The priest's role is to represent the Church at local level, to act as moral guardian, and to preserve the Church's symbolic power and domination of the religious field. In return, Irish diocesan priests have traditionally occupied a relatively privileged position within the religious field. For most of the twentieth century, the Irish priest 'held the centre of the stage in Irish life' (Connolly, 1958, p.783). In both fiction and real life, the parish priest has been portrayed variously as powerful, respected, feared, and idealised (MacMahon, 1958, Connolly, 1958, Fitzgibbon, 2010,

Chubb, 1982).[48] Priests were automatically respected by virtue of their priesthood, and parish priests enjoyed virtual autonomy and high status in their parishes. Most Irish people, for example, would be proud to have a priest in the family (Breslin and Weafer, 1985), and many priests enjoyed the automatic advantages of a clerical culture (Papesh, 2004). However, this situation changed dramatically following disclosures surrounding clerical child sexual abuse. Irish theologian Fr Eugene Duffy, for example, expressed his concern that 'serious problems' are beginning to develop in the traditionally close priest-bishop relationship 'as a result of how the child sexual abuse crisis has been handled' (Duffy, 2006, p.339).

In the past, when a Catholic habitus dominated Irish society, the Church traditionally dealt with scandals and the indiscretions of priests in-house by transferring the problem elsewhere. The Ferns Report, for example, found that 'Bishop Herlihy and Bishop Comiskey placed the interests of individual priests ahead of those of the community in which they served' (Murphy et al., 2005, p.254). Other investigations[49] have also reported similar activities in other dioceses. However, following the demise of Church dominance in Ireland, some commentators believe that the Church is protecting itself against criticism and seeking to recover some of its lost social capital and position within the religious field, by adopting an exaggerated form of transparency and accountability. Comprehensive protocols and procedures are in place to protect children in each parish, and priests who are accused of an offence against children are immediately asked to step down from their ministry, regardless of the evidence or circumstances. Fr Hoban believes that a 'significant number of false and unsubstantiated allegations of child sexual abuse against innocent priests has brought an unprecedented level of personal vulnerability to the lives of priests' (Hoban, 2009, p. 349).

[48] Political scientist Basil Chubb, for example, notes that clergy in Ireland were powerful by virtue of their position, as 'local notables' where 'they are particularly active in rural community projects, rural social organizations, and sporting associations' (Chubb, 1982, p.127).
[49] For example, the BBC programme 'The Shame of the Catholic Church', broadcast in May 2012, outlined how the activities of serial paedophile priest Fr Eugene Greene were subject to systematic cover-up by Church authorities.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CHANGING SOCIO-RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE OF IRELAND, 1962-2012

4.1 Introduction

Irish society[50] has changed 'dramatically' during the past fifty years or so according to a former director of the Central Statistics Office in their review of the fifty-year period, 1949-1999 (Murphy, 2000b, p.6). Ireland has become a more modern, urban, cosmopolitan, educated, and secular society, where the 'influence of the Catholic Church' has 'waned further' and taboos are 'increasingly' broken (Murphy, 2000b, p.6). Mass attendance has declined sharply (see Appendix D, Table D 2), divorce has been legalised, homosexuality has been decriminalised, contraceptives are freely available, and increasingly, large numbers of Irish Catholics no longer trust the Church. No longer is Ireland permeated by a Catholic habitus, as defined by Bourdieu, where Catholicism is the unquestioned orthodoxy of everyday Irish life (Inglis, 2005). These and other changes suggest that the Irish Catholic Church is in transition and probably in crisis.

The aim of this chapter is to describe and explore the changing socio-economic and religious landscape in Ireland since 1962, in order to illustrate the changing, and more difficult, circumstances in which Irish diocesan priests live and work. It will also serve to inform the discussion on priesthood in subsequent chapters. Specifically, I will argue that the Irish Church is in crisis, following two decades of heightened secularisation and increasing levels of mistrust, subsequent to the disclosures and mishandling of clerical child sexual abuse. I will also argue that significant shifts occurred in the contemporary Irish Church that

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[50] Unless otherwise stated, the information in this chapter relates to the Republic of Ireland.

facilitated the emergence of different models of priesthood, as suggested by Hoge and Wenger (2003). The chapter is divided into four parts, the first three of which review a distinct period in contemporary Irish history,[51] beginning with the 'swinging' 1960s, followed by the 'disillusioned' 1970s and 1980s, and the turbulent years of 'Celtic Tiger' Ireland. The final section considers whether the Church is in crisis or not.

4.2   Social and Religious Change in 1960s Ireland.

Something happened in the sixties that led to a fundamental change in attitude and lifestyle in Ireland and other Western countries (Fallon, 1998).[52]   The 1960s were a 'time of rude energy' and 'a contempt for tradition', and 'like all such times', the 1960s 'threw up a generation that believed itself to have discovered the world anew and to have cracked codes that had eluded its elders' (Tobin, 1984, p.1). It was a time when one generation 'superseded another' (Whyte, 1980, p.361), when a 'new generation' (Ferriter, 2004, p.536) came to the fore in 'politics, the media, health services, sport, music, cultural and legal life, and religion' (Ferriter, 2004, p.537).

Free post-primary education was introduced in Ireland (Coolahan, 1981), population decline reversed and for the first time, the majority of Irish people lived in urban areas (Fahey, 2007). Censorship was redefined and curtailed (Woodman, 1985), second-wave Irish feminism emerged (Connolly and O'Toole, 2005), and John F. Kennedy visited Ireland. A national television service was launched in 1961 and shows such as the

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[51] The descriptors used for the different decades depict the type of society that prevailed in Ireland. The 'swinging sixties' is popularly used by writers to refer to the greater freedom that accompanied the social and cultural change that took place throughout many parts of the world (Tobin, 1984). Tim Pat Coogan refers to Ireland from the mid 1960s to the late 1980s as the 'disillusioned decades' (Coogan, 1987). The term 'Celtic Tiger' Ireland is a colloquial term used to refer to Ireland during the boom years of 1995 to 2007 (Murphy, 2000).

[52] Brian Fallon disputes the credit given to the sixties for 'Ireland's supposed leap into modernity' and instead argues that 'what happened in the Sixties was largely the culmination of a process which had begun well before that' (Fallon, 1998, p.257). Others, such as political scientist Tom Girvin (2010) argue that while Ireland's modernisation project began during the 1950s, it was delayed by conservative interests until the 1990s.

Late Late Show, 'enabled widespread discussion to take place on topics (which would) otherwise have been swept under the carpet' (Coogan, 1987, p.2), and 'sexual permissiveness was upon us' (Fallon, 1998, p.257). The sexual revolution was just one of the revolutions that was 'unleashed' as many young people 'rejected the narrow, restrictive moral values of former generations, and opted for a freer, more spontaneous, ultimately unrestricted lifestyle' (Twomey, 2003, p.136).

In contrast to the perceived 'archaic' country that prevailed during the 1950s, where 'all kinds of topics of everyday concern seemed to be under some kind of unspoken taboo' (Garvin, 2010, p.2), the 1960s was a decade when Ireland engaged with advanced western societies. It was a decade of freedom, a time of openness and while 'the isolation and introspection' of previous generations did not dissapear, 'the blinds were let up, the windows were thrown open, the doors were unlocked; and good, bad or indifferent, the modern world came in among us at last' (Tobin, 1984, p.8). For young radicals in the western world, the 1960s represented an opportunity to fight imperialism, capitalism, and bureaucracy as 'part of an imagined community of global revolt' (Prince, 2006, p.851). In the Republic of Ireland, radicalism took a 'gentler' form in Irish universities (Ferriter, 2004, p. 599), while, in Northern Ireland, a country dominated by the sectarian divide, the global revolt that was 1968 resulted in *The Troubles*[53] (Prince, 2006).

The success of the First Programme for Economic Expansion that followed the publication of T.K. Whittaker's celebrated report *Economic Development* in 1958, led to a dramatic increase in living standards during the sixties, giving the country the 'material and psychological basis for national recovery' (Tobin, 1984, p.4). For the first time in many generations, the 1960s offered 'employment, security, and the prospect of

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[53] The 'Troubles' denotes a period of sustained conflict between Catholics and Protestants, and between the British army and paramilitary groups, that erupted in Northern Ireland following riots in Derry in 1969, and which continued until the 1990s http://www.infoplease.com/spot/northireland1.html.

reasonable material comfort' for all of Ireland's population (Tobin, 1984, p.7). The 'associated expectations and excitement' that followed success in these state initiatives were 'captured in the catch phrase of the 1960s, 'the rising ride that would lift all boats' (Breen et al., 1990, p.1). The widely acknowledged results from the change in direction in Ireland's economic policy also led to some benefits for social policy, in areas such as education, housing, healthcare, and the expansion of the social welfare system (Considine and Dukelow, 2009).

However, the 1960s were far from idyllic for people living on the margins of society. In 1960 'Ireland was a very poor country' (Garvin, 2005, p.252) and for many, the 1960s was a decade of 'squalor and neglect in the midst of a new-found opulence' (Ferriter, 2004, p.536). It was a decade when young pregnant women were sent to Magdalen laundries to hide their shame, and young boys and girls were abused in industrial schools (McAleese, 2013, Raftery and O'Sullivan, 1999, Murphy et al., 2005). Hidden behind the optimism of the 1960s lay 'much stagnation and class snobbery' (Ferriter, 2004, p.537), where economic growth 'served to widen the gulf between rich and poor' (Ferriter, 2004, p.537). Sociological studies also highlighted the difficulties of living in isolated parts of rural Ireland and the widespread rejection of this life by many young people (Brody, 1973, Hannan, 1970, Healy, 1968). It was a time which Minister for Education, Ruairi Quinn, recalls was 'a horrible place to be …a cultural prison, a censored ghetto. If you were not conforming, you either shut up or you left' (Hanafin, 2012, p.21).

Irish Catholicism in the 1960s
The early 1960s 'found the Irish Catholic Church much as it had been for the best part of a century' (Tobin, 1984, p.38). The Church shared many of the features of the 1950s Catholic Church, which Church historian Louise Fuller believes represented the 'final phase of nineteenth century devotional revolution Catholicism' (Fuller, 2005, p.42). Fuller believes that the chief characteristics of 1960s Catholicism included a 'remarkably high level of religious practice, the legitimization by the state of the

Catholic ethos, the authoritarian approach of the bishops towards their followers, the high number of vocations to the religious life and the extent to which the thinking, rituals, language and symbols of Catholicism informed consciousness' (Fuller, 2005, p.42). The vast majority of Irish people were dedicated Catholics who held the Church in very high standing (Biever, 1976). Most churches were full on Sundays (Ward, 1964) and there were long queues for confession on Saturday nights 'throughout the length and breadth of the country' (Fuller, 2005, p.43). Vocations and ordinations to the diocesan priesthood were very high (Lennon et al., 1971), and thousands of Irish people worked in missionary countries (Humphreys, 2010, Lennon et al., 1971, Hogan, 1990).

The list of devotional practices engaged in by most Catholics during the 1960s was lengthy, including Mass (said in Latin up to 1965), processions, pilgrimages, confraternities, sodalities, parish missions, benediction, novenas, the rosary, Marian devotions, First Fridays,[54] and indulgences.[55] Many people wore 'an array of accoutrements' (Kerrigan, 1998, p. 110), such as a miraculous medal, a Pioneer Pin or a Scapular, and women were obliged to wear a scarf or mantilla on their heads when attending Mass. Thousands of people were members of Lay Catholic organisations, such as the Legion of Mary, the Children of Mary, and St. Vincent de Paul (Inglis, 1998). Together with a picture of President John Kennedy, the most common pictures in many Irish households were the Sacred Heart (with a red light) and Pope John XXIII.

The 'dominant form of religious behaviour' in Ireland during the 1960s was 'an adherence to the rules and regulations of the Catholic Church' (Inglis, 1998, p.30). The fear of mortal sin appeared to be everywhere in the pre-Vatican II Church,[56] with no one totally sure what constituted a

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[54] Catholics went to Mass on the first Friday of each month to venerate the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

[55] There are different kinds of indulgences that result in a lessening of punishment for a person's sins in return for undertaking some penance or prayer.

[56] It is difficult to portray the sheer amount and impact of rules in the Catholic Church before the Second Vatican Council. For example, prior to 1957, it was

mortal or a venial sin.[57] The fear of committing a mortal or venial sin as set down in the '*Penny Catechism*'[58] underpinned the legalistic response of many people and priests to their faith. It was a time of fear and secrecy, and rules were broken at your peril, especially those concerned with sexuality and 'impure thoughts' (Banville, 2004).[59]

To complicate matters further, some dioceses had their own 'reserved sins', such as not attending dances after midnight.[60] Accordingly, most people depended on their local bishop and priests to keep them informed on such matters. Sociologist Máire Nic Ghiolla Phádraig observed that Irish Catholicism was a personalised faith that relied heavily on 'authority figures like the clergy to adjudicate on moral issues' (Nic Ghiolla Phádraig, 1986, p.153). Most people accepted the reality of eternal damnation, and the threat of mortal sin was used to control sexual urges and 'impure thoughts' (O'Morain, 2012). Social conformity was regulated by state censorship and the rules of the Catholic Church. Homosexuality was illegal, as was divorce, abortion, and the sale of contraceptives. Irish society was permeated by a Catholic *doxa* up to the end of the 1950s,

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obligatory for Catholics to observe a Eucharistic fast from midnight. This requirement was replaced with a three-hour fast from solid foods and a one-hour fast from non-alcoholic liquids.

[57] For example, while most people accepted that serious matters such as murder, divorce, the use of contraception, and missing Mass on Sundays were mortal sins, the status of other activities were less certain e.g., eating meat on a Friday, not abiding by the rules of lent, arguing with a priest, a woman going to Mass without appropriate head-gear.

[58] The *Penny Catechism* contained a long list of questions and answers on matters of faith, hope, charity, and the sacraments, many of which were learnt word for word by school children. It guided the behaviour or Catholics for most of the twentieth century until the publication of the new Catechism of the Catholic Church in 1994. Ironically, perhaps, while the Penny Catechism consisted of 72 pages, the Catechism of the Catholic Church has more than 600 pages.

[59] Novelist John Banville (2004:26) described Ireland during the reign of Archbishop McQuaid as 'unique' and akin to 'a demilitarised totalitarian state in which the lives of the citizens were to be controlled not by a system of coercive force and secret policing, but by a kind of applied spiritual paralysis maintained by an unofficial federation between the Catholic clergy, the judiciary and the civil service'.

[60] This example was given to me by one of the older priests in this study. Although he disagreed with the liberal direction of the Church since the Second Vatican Council, he was highly critical of the legalistic nature of Catholicism in pre-Vatican II Ireland. Young people circumvented the law by going dancing in adjoining dioceses where it was not a sin to dance after midnight.

where an orthodox Catholic world-view was taken for granted by the majority of people (Andersen, 2010). This and the preceding decades was a time when the Catholic Church had 'almost total power' according to writer John McGahern, where it represented 'the dominating force' in his 'upbringing, education and early working life' (McGahern, 2009, p.133). To be Irish was effectively to be Catholic and 'the discourse engaged in by Church personnel played a powerful role in the formation of consciousness and identity' (Fuller, 2002, p.42). Those who opposed the Church and its clerical culture, the intellectuals and educated, were typically forced to emigrate or to live silent and hidden lives (Garvin, 2005).

The Catholic Church had a 'special position' in the Constitution (Article 44) and the hierarchy was regarded as 'without peer in terms of power' (Humphreys, 1966, p.53). The dominant position of the Catholic Church in Ireland at this time is possibly best illustrated by the power exercised by individual Church leaders, such as Archbishop John Charles McQuaid (Cooney, 1999), and the influence of certain lay organisations (Garvin, 2005).[61] Inglis believes that the 'symbolic domination' of the Catholic Church was 'manifested in the way Church teaching was enshrined in the Irish Constitution and social legislation, the censorship of publications and films, the control of the media, the public display of Catholic icons and symbols, clerical dress, and so forth' (Inglis, 2003, p.44). However, this was to change following the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), when the certainties of the Church were questioned and a gradual change was evident in the nature of Irish Church-State relations (Whyte, 1980).[62]

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[61] Some organisations, such as the Knights of Columbanus, allegedly 'controlled official and unofficial censorship systems', acted as 'para-clerics for the bishops', and 'reportedly scratched each other's backs in business' (Garvin, 2005, p.255)

[62] In 1950, Minister for Health Noel Browne proposed introducing a healthcare programme, *The Mother and Child Scheme*, which would provide maternity care for all mothers and healthcare for children up to the age of sixteen. However, following strong opposition from some conservative bishops (who saw the scheme as opposed to Catholic social teaching) the medical profession (who feared a loss of income), and some members of the Government (who disliked Browne), it was defeated and Browne was requested to submit his resignation. Historian John Whyte subsequently expressed surprise at the relatively moderate opposition of the Catholic Bishops to proposed constitutional changes in the 'special position' of the Catholic Church, or to changes in the censorship law and

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)

Vatican II is generally regarded by Catholics as the 'most important religious event of the twentieth century' (O'Malley, 2008, p.1), a time when the Catholic Church, like much of the Western world, was perceived to be on the brink of significant change and renewal. The Second Vatican Council marked the demise of the rigid institutional model of Church that prevailed up to the late 1960s (Horsnby-Smith, 1992).[63] The pre-Vatican Church was a Church of certainties and unquestioning obedience, where people 'looked out from the Catholic ghetto on a life in which sacrifice, suffering, resignation, detachment and acceptance of things as 'God's Will' were keys to salvation' (Nic Ghiolla Phádraig, 1982, p.486).

The Second Vatican Council 'effected a transformation in the life and habits of the Church' (Tobin, 1984, p.117). It initiated changes and pointed to the possibilities of enhanced participation in a hitherto remote and conservative Church (Flanagan, 1969). The new model of Church that emerged from Vatican II emphasised collegiality, ecumenism, community and the enhanced participation of the 'People of God'. It was a more open, optimistic and democratic vision of Church, albeit still hierarchical, where dialogue was encouraged. Archbishop Martin, who was a student at the time of the Second Vatican Council, recalls being 'inspired and energised' by the Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: *Gaudiem et Spes.*

> Coming out of a particular moment of a traditional and authoritarian Irish Church culture, the newness of this challenging and exciting notion of dialogue between the Church and the culture of the modern world …… was almost thrilling to our young ears. Rather than telling the world what to do, the Church was to listen to what the modern world was saying to and telling the Church (Martin, 2012).

education which were bound to reduce the Church's influence (Whyte, 1980, pp.350-51

[63] English sociologist Michael Hornsby-Smith summarised some of the main features of the pre-Vatican Church as 'stressing the virtues of loyalty, the certainty of answers, strict discipline and unquestioning obedience' (Hornsby-Smith, 1992, p.270).

The holding of the Second Vatican Council 'represented an irrevocable turning-point' (Kung, 2001, p.192) and the 'most significant influence on Catholic life and theology in general and moral theology in particular in the last fifty years' (Curran, 2006, p.410). In Ireland, the timing of the Second Vatican Council was somewhat fortuitous in that it coincided with 'a decisive shift in cultural experience', which had been taking place for the previous fifteen years or so (Connolly, 1979, p.755). There was a 'desire for change' in Ireland and 'when change came that desire spiralled' (Martin, 2012). For most Irish Catholics, the various liturgical changes in the Mass,[64] such as the use of the vernacular in the Mass and the priest/altar facing the people (Flannery, 1962, McCormack, 1962, McConville and McConville, 1962),[65] were 'the most visible and most dramatic signs of change in Catholic culture' (Fuller, 2002, p.109).

The impact of the Second Vatican Council was, more than a set of liturgical changes. It 'ushered in a new mood – a more optimistic Catholic culture' (Fuller, 2005, p.48), where the 'new brand of Catholicism underwritten by the Second Vatican Council' (Fuller, 2005, p.48) was perceived by many to be more democratic than the traditional authoritarian Church. Although it is perceived to have lacked practical details on implementation, the documents of the Second Vatican Council 'contained enormous developments in the theology of the laity and their mission in the church' (Dolan, 2007, p.52). The 'universal call to holiness' and the recognition of 'the dignity of lay men and women' energised and empowered lay people 'to fulfil their vocation in the church' (O'Malley, 2008, p.5). The Council also affirmed the primacy of moral conscience, thereby removing some of the traditional threat of mortal sin.

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[64] The first document to come out of the Council was the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* in December 1963, which came into effect in 1964. This particular Constitution was to have 'a profound effect on the Mass in Ireland: introducing the vernacular, new translations of texts, and the re-ordering of sanctuaries to facilitate the celebration of the Mass facing the people' (Lane, 2004, p.70).

[65] Numerous articles published in Church journals during the 1960s focused on changes to the design and architecture of churches to facilitate the liturgical developments.

Vatican II effectively gave 'permission' to question the way things were done in the Church, and 'possibly, the most important outcome for Catholic culture was that the era of certainties was undermined forever' (Fuller, 2005, p.49). Irish theologian, Fr Vincent Twomey, wrote that the theological and liturgical renewal inaugurated by the Second Vatican Council 'shattered old certainties' and suddenly 'everything was, in principle, considered capable of being changed, including the teaching of the Church' (Twomey, 2003, p. 136). The moral teaching of the Church was particularly challenged following Vatican II. Another Irish theologian, Fr Dermot Lane, for example, argues that 'the real significance' of *Humanae Vitae* was that it 'initiated an open discussion in the Irish Church, not only about the morality of family planning, but also about the authority of the bishops to teach on this subject – something unknown and unparallelled in the past' (Lane, 2004, p.72). Irish theologian, Linda Hogan, makes a more general point concerning the 'radical transformation' that occurred in the field of ethics.

> Prior to the council, theological ethics was primarily a legalistic and casuistic enterprise, which aimed at giving universally applicable answers to a set of predetermined questions. This approach to morals was underwritten by a starkly hierarchical model of church, with its exaggerated account of the distinctive and unequal roles of laity, clergy, bishops and pope…. The critical turning point was Vatican II, which utterly transformed the internal landscape of Catholicism and allowed questions concerning conscience, moral authority and the church's moral tradition to emerge in a different register (Hogan, 2012, p.16).

However, the Irish Church was very conservative and the 'primary concern' of the Irish bishops in implementing Vatican II was 'to bring about the changes of the Council without, however, disturbing the faith of the people' (Lane, 2004, p.70). Various Episcopal commissions were established to coincide with the publication of Council documents. Lay organisations that were committed to working among the poor, such as the Young Christian Workers, were formed. However, it was evident by the end of the 1960s that the promise and liberal spirit of the Second Vatican

Council would face opposition from within the Church. Some of the opposition came from people, priests and bishops who did not wish to change the way they did things (Flanagan, 1969, Houtart, 1968).[66] More significantly, perhaps, influential forces within the Vatican disapproved of the perceived liberal agenda. Consequently, the initial hopes and enthusiasm surrounding the Vatican Council were diminished by the end of the 1960s, with the issuing of an encyclical on Human Life (*Humanae Vitae)* in 1968,[67] together with other 'strains and tensions springing from contrasting ecclesiologies[68] that underlay the conciliar discussion of various topics' (O'Riordan, 1990, p.77). This represented a significant response from the conservative forces to the perceived liberal agenda of Vatican II, and, what many would see as the beginning of a return to a more orthodox and conservative Church. This is a subject that would play out in subsequent decades.

The landmark decision in *Humanae Vitae* to ban the use of contraceptives in 1968 was interpreted by some as a clear sign that the Church was not going to change, at least for the foreseeable future (Hoge and Wenger, 2003). While some theologians questioned the meaning of sin (Fagan, 1977) and the significance of a person's conscience in making moral decisions, other priests made a 'nonsense' of the primacy of the individual conscience by their interpretation of the 'informed conscience', which they take to mean that people should 'follow their consciences always, but only

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[66] Writing some years after Vatican II, Fr. Donal Flanagan made the point that the 'Roman Catholic Church in Ireland has shown and continues to show what seems to be an inherent anti-collegial tendency', which is 'evident in the Mass of laity who do not want to be bothered or involved; in the many priests who would prefer the simple straightforward decision handed down from above rather than to be asked to take counsel together and to help formulate decisions' and 'in those bishops who seem instinctively and collectively to want to isolate themselves as far as possible from the people and from the Mass media when they are coming to a decision' (Flanagan, 1969, p.106). Both Flanagan and Houtart, whilst acknowledging the tensions that accompanied the drive towards more collegiality in the Church, saw signs for optimism in the Vatican II Church.

[67] This decision created considerable controversy 'at both pastoral and theological levels, not least because the encyclical went against the majority opinion of the expert Commission set up to advise Pope Paul VI on this most contentious question' (Lane, 2004, p. 72).

[68] Ecclesiology refers to the theological study of the Christian Church.

if it agrees with what we tell you' (O'Sullivan, 1988, p.33). Thus, by the end of the decade, some of the optimism associated with the Second Vatican Council began to wane for some priests.

Younger priests, in particular, welcomed the developments that were taking place in the church, and the latter part of the 1960s saw the emergence of a new paradigm of priesthood, which contrasted sharply with the pre-Vatican II/ Council of Trent cultic model (Hoge and Wenger, 2003). However, it was becoming increasingly evident that some anticipated features of Vatican II would not materialise, such as the expected change in the discipline of celibacy (O'Malley, 2008).[69] By the end of this period, traditional Catholicism was no longer taken for granted, as Ireland's emerging educated class began increasingly to challenge the Church. Various commentators have observed, often in hindsight, some cracks appearing in the all-encompassing Catholic Church during this time. Sociologist Fr Conor Ward of UCD, for example, thought it likely that 'the current stereotype of the Irish Catholic would not survive empirical investigation' (Ward, 1964).[70] Political scientist, Tom Garvin, believes that Biever's study of political and religious attitudes in Dublin, and an earlier study by Jesuit sociologist, Fr Alexander Humphreys, in his sociological study of Dubliners (Humphreys, 1966), indicate the presence of 'an incipient anti-clericalism' amongst the educated Catholic upper middle class (Garvin, 2005, p.261). Sociologist Tony Fahey also detected signs of change in the sixties, and argues that 'the high-point of religious commitment in Ireland had already passed by the late 1960s and signs of decline had appeared, as shown, for example, by the diminishing authority

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[69] Church historian John O'Malley writes that three issues were 'so sensitive or potentially explosive that Pope Paul withheld them from the council's agenda – clerical celibacy, birth control, and the reform of the Roman Curia (the central offices of the Vatican) (O'Malley, 2008, p.6).

[70] Unpublished research conducted by Fachtna Lewis in 1961-62, suggested to Ward that there were different types of Catholics hidden under the cloak of uniform practice: 'Limited research already completed suggests that very many ordinary Irish Catholics are articulate, educated and intellectually committed to a mature apostolic faith'. However, the evidence also suggests that 'there are those who ill-informed, those who are disinterested, and those who are alienated' (Ward, 1964, p.28).

of the churches in the political sphere and the drying up of vocations to the religious life' (Fahey et al., 2005, p.30). However, change was slow in the Irish Church and, although change was happening and there were indications of further change, the change should not be overstated and much remained the same as the Church entered the 1970s.

4.3 The Disillusioned Decades, 1970-1989

The early 1970s continued more or less where the 1960s left off, 'upward, outward and onward seemed to be the direction in which the wagon was rolling' (Coogan, 1987, p.2). During this period, Ireland experienced two recessions linked to two international oil crises, and Ireland joined the EEC in 1973. It was also a time when the Northern Troubles reignited, with Bloody Sunday and the fall of Stormont in 1972 being recognised as two significant events. While expectations were high and Ireland did benefit from its membership of the EEC, economic performance was 'mediocre' for the first two decades after Ireland joined (Haughton, 2000. p.38). The international economy weakened following an oil crisis in 1973-74 and again in 1979-80, when the price of crude oil more than doubled, leading to very high inflation, high unemployment rates, and ultimately, falling living standards and 'a resumption of heavy emigration' (Kennedy et al., 1988, p.266). Ireland entered into a recession and did not begin to emerge from it until towards the end of the 1980s (Hagan, 1984). Ireland was a country in crisis (Crotty, 1986).

The 1970s was 'a decade of radicalism and protest for some organised groups, including community and women's groups and the trade union movement' (Considine and Dukelow, 2009, p.51). This period was also marked by poverty and growing inequalities in Irish society (Collins and Kavanagh, 1998, p.185). The establishment of The Combat Poverty Agency in 1986 served to highlight diverse aspects of poverty in Ireland, including the claim in its first annual report of 1987, that probably over a

quarter of Irish people were 'living in some degree of poverty' (Combat Poverty Agency, 1987, p.5).

Religious Change in the 1970s and 1980s

One of the distinctive features of Ireland[71] in the 1970s and 1980s is the large number of surveys[72] that were conducted into different aspects of religious attitudes and practice (Breslin and Weafer, 1982, Breslin and Weafer, 1985, Fogarty et al., 1984, Inglis, 1979, MacGréil, 1974, McAllister, 1983, McMahon, 1982, MRBI, 1987, MRBI/ Irish Times, 1983, Nic Ghiolla Phádraig, 1976, O'Doherty, 1969, Parfrey, 1976, Power, 1969a, Rose, 1971). Many other 'non-religious' surveys also routinely included questions on religious practice (MacGréil, 1977). The proliferation of survey research was a trend that was also found in other Western countries and one which was to continue in Ireland for some decades.

One reason for the relatively large number of surveys in Ireland was the establishment of the Irish Catholic Bishops' research unit, which built on the 'discipline's early affinities with the Catholic Church' (Conway, 2006a, p.30). In 1970, the Irish Bishops' Conference set up a special Research & Development Unit (R&D) within the Catholic Communications Institute, 'to research and report on every aspect of religion in Ireland, with a view to pastoral planning and programming, and to monitor changes in Irish society which impinge on religious belief and practice' (Council for Research & Development, 1981, p.vi). This unit was to the forefront of empirical religious research throughout the 1970s and 1980s, with the result that much more was known about the Irish Catholic towards the end of the 1980s that was known in the 1960s. Initially, the research focus of the 1970s was on the mapping of statistical trends in 'the

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[71] Most of the research on religious attitudes and practice was undertaken in the Republic of Ireland. Northern Ireland studies tended to focus on the political dimension of religious life, although some contained information on religious practice (Rose, 1971). Some took a cross-border approach (McAllister, 1983).

[72] Many of the earlier studies focused on university students, possibly due to the captive nature of the audience.

Church's manpower' (Lennon et al., 1972) and particularly vocations (Newman et al., 1972). These reports were followed by similar projects at regular intervals (Council for Research & Development, 1971-2004, Council for Research & Development, 2007, Hanley, 1995, Hanley, 2000b, MacGréil and Inglis, 1977, Weafer and Breslin, 1983). A second wave of research focused on religious belief and practice amongst the laity, the first of which was directed by Máire Nic Ghiolla Phádraig in 1973/74 (Nic Ghiolla Phádraig, 1976).

Another reason for the research was undoubtedly Ireland's ongoing interest, if not fascination, with religion. For the most part, these surveys confirmed the previously assumed high Mass attendance rates in Ireland, especially when compared with other countries in Western Europe (Fogarty et al., 1984). While some US studies cast doubt on the reliability of self-reported Mass attendance rates (Hadaway et al., 1993, Hadaway and Marler, 2005),[73] Mass attendance remains one of the traditional indicators[74] used to measure religious participation and commitment. The surveys conducted during the 1970s and 1980s indicated that Ireland was a very religious country, especially when compared with other Western countries (Table 4.1).

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[73] Hadaway et al (1993, 2005) suggest that Mass attendance rates were over-reported due to methodological issues and a social desirability bias. However, even if church attendance levels are over-reported in Ireland, Fahey et al (2005, p.41) believe that they 'indicate a continuing positive orientation towards formal religious observance' and not something to be 'dismissed as irrelevant' as this is something 'that has all but disappeared in some countries'.

[74] The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* lists five precepts of the Church that, in essence, represent the minimum requirements of Catholics' participation in the liturgical life of the Church. The five precepts listed in the Catechism are: attendance at Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation, confession of sins at least once a year, reception of Holy Communion at least during the Easter season, to keep holy the holy days of obligation, and to observe the prescribed days of fasting and abstinence.

Table 4.1 Frequency of Mass Attendance, Republic of Ireland, 1970-1989

Base: Adult Catholics, 18+ years

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Survey	More often than weekly	Once a week	At least Once a week (Cumulative)	Less Often	Never
	%	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**
R&D* 1973/74 (Nic Ghiolla Phádraig, 1976)	23	68	**91**	6	3
RTE 1974 (RTE, 1974)	n/a	n/a	**91**	n/a	n/a
MacGreil 1977 (MacGréil, 1977)	30	59	**90**	8	3
EVS 1981 (Fogarty et al., 1984)	30	57	**87**	13	n/a
R&D 1984 (Breslin and Weafer, 1985)	30	57	**87**	10	3
MacGreil - 1988/89 (MacGréil, 1996)	15	67	**82**	16	2.5

* R&D denotes the Irish Bishops Conference Council for Research & Development.

The authors of the 1974 R&D report, *A Survey of Religious Practice, Attitudes and Beliefs, 1973-1974*, summarised the situation in the mid 1970s as follows:

> … the general picture of religious practice in the country is a reasonably bright one. Even the most confirmed pessimist or the most biased commentator must acknowledge that a weekly Mass attendance of 91%, a monthly Communion rate of 65.5% and a monthly attendance at Confession of 46.5% to be something exceptional, if not unique, in the mid-20th century (Council for Research and Development, 1975, Volume 1, p.71).

Towards the end of the 1970s, little had changed in the statistics to suggest that Ireland was not still 'one of the last remaining countries where the overwhelming majority can be assumed to profess Christian belief both in theory and practice' (Connolly, 1979, p.757). The predominantly positive picture of Irish Catholicism continued into the 1980s. Fr Liam Ryan concluded his review of faith in Ireland in the early 1980s, with the observation that 'by any standards Ireland is still a pre-eminently religious country' (Ryan, 1983, p.4). The authors of the *European Values Study*

(EVS) held similar views: 'every indicator of belief, informal and formal practice and attitudes to the church or churches, shows Irish people, North and South, to be far more inclined to religion than those of other countries in Europe' (Fogarty et al., 1984, p.8). The 1985 R&D report, *Religious Beliefs, Practice and Moral Attitudes: A Comparison of Two Irish Surveys, 1974-1984*, also noted that nearly everyone believed in God and the vast majority (87%) of Catholics went to Mass every week (Breslin and Weafer, 1985).

Yet, some commentators were uneasy with the picture that was emerging from the statistics. A report by Fr Joseph Nolan on '*Youth Culture and the Faith*' for the Irish Episcopal Conference, for example, stated that although the 1974 research indicated that 'while there is no widespread unbelief among the young' nevertheless, there is 'widespread apprehension among parents' as to what is happening to their children in the area of religion (Nolan, 1974, p.10).[75] The *Working Party Report* that accompanied the R&D's 1974 national study also observed that 'some problems' were appearing in the 'structure of traditional Irish Catholicism' particularly in the areas of education and family life (Council for Research and Development, 1975). They concluded that the Irish Church was moving from its traditional position which 'attempted a universal embrace of society to a situation where the Church has become a recognised institution alongside other major institutions of the cultural system' (Council for Research and Development, 1975).

The R&D's 1985 report noted a decrease since 1974 in almost all religious indicators, including sacramental participation, moral attitudes, religious

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[75] Inglis subsequently questioned the reliability of statistics, and argued that there were many 'indications that the kind of overt expression of allegiance to the Catholic Church, which was associated with Ireland in the past, is changing' (Inglis, 1982-83, p.33). Some indicators cited by Inglis included, the reduction in the number of people who make the sign of the cross on passing a church, the minimal impact on the commercial life of Ireland when a pope died, an increase in the number of people who drink in pubs during Lent and Holy Week, and the greater concentration on leisure on Good Fridays.

beliefs and acceptance of Church teachings (Breslin and Weafer, 1985). Less than half believed in the devil or hell, just over six in ten fully accepted papal infallibility, over one third said they had difficulty with some aspect of Church teaching, only one sixth believed that married couples using contraceptives to avoid having children was always wrong, and almost half felt that divorce should be allowed in certain circumstances (Weafer, 1986a).[76] These trends were more pronounced for young adults, those living in urban areas, and people with higher levels of formal education. However, in the 1980s, it was more a case of confusion and uncertainty than outright rejection (Table D.1, Appendix D). Jesuit priest and academic Fr Michael Paul Gallagher summarised the predominant portrait of Irish youth which emerged from the major surveys conducted during the 1980s as 'a picture of high practice having little influence on values, of a solid institutional Church fostering little on the level of spiritual experience, and of a younger generation suffering more from confusion over faith than from any definite rebellion against religion' (Gallagher, 1986, p.36).

This led professor Liam Ryan to observe that the 'essence of religious belief in Ireland today is that conflicting values and beliefs are held by the same person' (Ryan, 1983, p.5),[77] and he hypothesised the emergence of a 'new' type of Catholic in Ireland, which, 'as yet in the minority, is characterised by an informed appreciation of the value of the supernatural and sacramental life of the Church, but retains an independence of mind largely on moral matters (Ryan, 1983, p.7). Other typologies constructed by other sociologists at this time also proposed the emergence of different

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[76] Other characteristics of Catholics noted in the R&D 1985 report included attendance at novenas (21%), private reading of the Gospels (18%), practicing penance, such as not eating meat on Fridays or doing something for lent (48%), wearing religious medals (44%), making the Stations of the Cross (52%), and going on pilgrimage (41%).

[77] Some of the conflicting data noted by Ryan included the observations that 'though nearly all believe in God nearly a quarter are not sure about what sort of a God this might be; some 35% either reject or are not sure of a life after death; nearly half do not believe in hell or the devil; only 53% with third-level education fully accept papal infallibility; while only 35% of the same group agree that divorce should not be allowed; over a third of those surveyed have difficulty with some aspect of Church teaching' (Ryan, 1983, P.5).

types of Catholics and the increasing polarisation of the Church (Nic Ghiolla Phádraig, 1982).[78]

The relationship between Church and State began to change in this period, with 'often acrimonious' debates on issues surrounding contraception, divorce, and abortion (Lane, 2004, p.72). However, the Church prevailed for much of the 1980s. The sale of contraceptives[79] was legalised (but not universally available) in 1979 (Fitzgerald, 1991); the first 'Pro-Life' amendment to the constitution was passed in 1983; and the first divorce referendum was defeated in 1986. Conversely, article 44, which acknowledged the 'special position' of the Catholic Church, was removed from the Irish constitution in 1972.

Ireland's problematic relationship with public morality was well illustrated by a number of events that occurred at this time, including the death of a fifteen-year old girl after giving birth in a grotto outside a church.[80] The Catholic Church was most defiant in relation to legislation that sought to legalise divorce[81] and abortion, which resulted in 'bruising national

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[78] Nic Ghiolla Phadráig suggested that eight different types of Catholics could be identified that help to understand lapsing Catholics. *Committed* (Accepts religion fully); *Sinner* (attends Church, accepts beliefs, compartmentalisation of religion from everyday life); *Cultural* Catholic (attends Church but minimal faith commitment); *Conformist* (Practices religion but does not believe or endorse Christian values); *Individualist* (Accepts basic beliefs and values but does not practice); *Seeker-Rebel* (Reacts against parents' religious practice); *Political-Radical* (Rejects religious practice and belief but is deeply committed to certain Christian values that are pursued in a political arena); and *Alienated* (does not practice or believe.

[79] The Health (Family Planning) Act 1979 provided that contraceptives could be dispensed by a pharmacist on presentation of a valid prescription for 'bone fide family planning or adequate medical reasons'. The Health (Family Planning) (Amendment) Act 1985 subsequently liberalised the law on contraception by allowing condoms to be sold to people over 18 without a prescription.

[80] In 1984 fifteen-year old Ann Lovett died after giving birth in a grotto outside Longford; the 'Kerry Babies' tribunal was established the same year to investigate how Joanne Hayes and her family confessed to the killing of a new born baby found stabbed to death on a beach in Kerry – the Tribunal concluded that Joanne Hayes was not the mother of the baby but that she was the mother of another new born baby whose body was found on the Hayes family farm.

[81] Following decades of opposition by the Catholic Church, the divorce referendum was passed in November 1995, albeit by a relatively small majority, while abortion is still not allowed in Ireland. According to the X case in 1992,

debates' and 'revealed widening gaps between what the Church taught and what significant proportions of the people were willing to accept' (Fahey et al., 2005, p.33). Fr. Liam Ryan suggests that the role of the hierarchy in the 1970s could best be described as the 'conscience of society' (Ryan, 1979).[82] Individual bishops also voiced their opposition to any change in the law that would permit the sale of contraceptives, abortion, divorce or homosexuality (Newman, 1983). This was a time when the cloak of power of the Irish bishops began to dissolve perceptibly (Inglis, 1998), when the Church decided to confront the State 'in the bedroom' (Inglis, 1986, p.48) and to restrict the liberalisation of sexuality. That battle that was effectively lost by the early 1990s when the moral authority of the Church was undermined by the disclosures concerning Bishop Casey and individual priests who engaged in paedophile acts.[83]

The Papacy of John Paul II (1978-2005)

This period coincided with the first part of the charismatic, conservative and highly influential papacy of John Paul II (Sunday Tribune, 2005). He was one of the most travelled popes and world leaders in the twentieth century. In September 1979, he visited Ireland. His visit was regarded as 'a truly mythic event' for Ireland's millions of Catholics (Garvin, 2005, p.263) and, for a short period, it led to increased religious practice and vocations to the priesthood. The visit literally 'stopped the country in its tracks' with over a million people attending Mass in the Phoenix Park alone and other venues. However, some commentators believe that its 'effects soon wore off' (Coogan, 1987, p.74). While some people were 'massively encouraged' by the visit, others saw it as akin to a nation

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abortion is allowable under the constitution when the life of the mother is in danger. However, this has not yet been legislated for.

[82] In the second edition of his book, John Whyte states that Fr. Liam Ryan's argument has 'force' and that 'although individual bishops, like Dr. Newman, may appear to be using a different set of assumptions, the hierarchy as a whole, in its collective statements since 1973, seems to have stuck closely to the 'conscience-of-society' model (Whyte, 1980, p.417).

[83] The position of the Catholic Church in Irish society was adversely affected by a virtual litany of sexual revelations, initially concerning Bishop Casey's and Father Cleary's sexual affairs, but most especially for the ongoing disclosures of sexual abuse of children by diocesan priests, and the culture of secrecy that prevailed and allegedly persists within the Church.

attempting 'to find solace in difficult times harking back to an era when life had seemed much less complex and much less threatening' (Sweeney, 2010, pp.174-5).

Pope John Paul II was one of the most influential leaders in the twentieth century (Weigel, 1999). However, while he was loved and admired by many, he was severely criticised by others for his centralising style of rule that failed to deal appropriately with clerical sexual abuse, and for his opposition to the liberal agenda within the Church (Cornwell, 2004). During his lengthy papacy, he took a strong stance on the sanctity of marriage and he opposed many issues including, women's ordination, married clergy, some elements of liberation theology, and aspects of sexuality morality. He has also been criticised for 'his policy of appointing very conservative bishops, theologically and politically, from outside dioceses, and, more often than not, disregarding the advice of local church leaders' (White, 2002, p.xix). His support for right-wing Church organisations, such as Opus Dei and the Legionaries of Christ, also caused considerable controversy. Ultimately, the papacy of John Paul II was divisive and further polarised the Church, laity and priests, into liberal and traditional groups. Conversely, his supporters perceived his papacy as a time of renewal when Vatican II was reinterpreted to reflect Church orthodoxy.

In summary, Ireland of the 1970s and 1980s was still very much a conservative country, and quite preoccupied with morality[84] and religion in its various forms.[85] Religion continued to be important to most people (Breslin and Weafer, 1985, MRBI, 1987), and sacramental participation

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[84] In August 1982, for example, the Holy Faith nuns in New Ross sacked a teacher, Eileen Flynn, who had become pregnant by a married man with whom she was living and whose marriage had earlier broken down.

[85] One memorable feature of the 1980s was the 'moving statues' phenomenon, where statues of the Virgin Mary were reported to move spontaneously. The first sighting was in Balinspittle, Cork during the summer or 1985. Peader Kirby saw 'the phenomenon of Ireland's moving statues' as 'a cry by ordinary people for spirituality, an attempt to cling to some secure landmark in a fast changing society' and that it 'shows up the spiritual vacuum or crisis that exists' in the Irish Church (Kirby, 1986, p.240).

was very high when compared with most other Western countries (Fogarty et al., 1984). However, Mass attendance had begun to decline, especially among young adults, and Ireland was characterised by a large number of people who continued to practice their faith but who increasingly paid less attention to the Church's moral teachings. The 'traditional image of Holy Catholic Ireland' was 'beginning to fade' (Inglis, 1985, p.39) and the legalistic characteristic of Irish Catholicism was undermined by a moderation of Church laws and regulations following the Second Vatican Council. These findings led some commentators to write of a 'major crisis' in the Catholic Church due to 'the accelerating decline in religious practice amongst young people, the legalistic motivation of many loyal Catholics, the high number of people who had some difficulty with some aspect of Church teaching, and the increasing irrelevance of religion for many Catholics (Kirby, 1984, p.36). However, at the conclusion of this second period, Ireland was not yet a secular society. English sociologist Hornsby-Smith argues that 'in spite of considerable social turmoil and the religious transformations over the past three decades, it is clear that modernisation processes in Ireland have not been accompanied unambiguously by secularisation' (Horsnby-Smith, 1992, p.289).

4.4   The Turbulent Years of Celtic Tiger Ireland 1990-2012.

By the late twentieth century, Ireland had increasingly become a pluralist, secularist and cosmopolitan society. Much of Ireland's cultural landscape is perceived by some commentators to have been eroded by 'powerful waves of global liberal capitalism' by American 'consumerist imperatives' and a 'deepening' integration with the European Union (Tuathaigh, 2005, p.57). This contemporary period in Ireland's history has proven to be quite turbulent in areas relating to public morality, with referenda on abortion[86]

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[86] In 1992, a three-part referendum on abortion was held. The proposal to amend Article 40 of the Constitution so that it would be unlawful to terminate the life of an unborn unless such termination was necessary to save the life, as distinct from the health, of the mother was rejected. The right to travel and the right to information were passed. In 2002, the proposal to remove the threat of suicide as grounds for legal abortion in Ireland and to introduce tough new penalties for

and divorce,[87] the decriminalising of homosexuality,[88] and the holding of numerous tribunals and official government inquiries into areas as diverse as, illicit payments to politicians (*The 'Mahon' and 'Moriarty' Tribunals*), complaints against Gardaí (*The 'Morris' Tribunal)* and clerical child sexual abuse (*The Laffoy Commission; The Ferns Inquiry*). One consequence of these events is that many people no longer trusted the Church (McGreevy, 2010).

The final decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century will undoubtedly be remembered for two phenomena, one economic and the other religious. First, following relatively modest growth in the first years of the decade, both economic growth and employment increased substantially after 1993 (Murphy, 2000a), culminating in what became known as the '*Tiger Economy'*. The Irish economy began its roller-coaster ride from a long recession in the 1980s to a buoyant economy in the mid 1990s and early 2000s, before it experienced a 'downturn' and an enduring recession and hardship for many people, which 'is without precedent in Ireland's recorded economic history and has few modern parallels at an international level' (Government of Ireland, 2010, p.10). Economist David McWilliams summed up the 'new' Ireland at the height of the boom in 2005, as follows:

> Ireland has arrived. We are richer than any of us imagined possible ten years ago. No Irish person has to emigrate, none of us need pay for education and even our universities are free. Unemployment is the lowest in our history. We have more choice than ever, the place is more tolerant and no-one can be legally discriminated against (McWilliams, 2005, p.3).

those performing or assisting abortions was defeated. At the time of writing, the possibility of another referendum and/or legislation on abortion is once again in the public arena.

[87] The second divorce referendum was passed in 1995.

[88] The *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act* 1993 repealed legislation prohibiting all homosexual acts between males and introduced 17 as the age of consent for homosexual activities.

However, while there is no doubting the economic benefits of the boom years, which gave an impetus to Ireland's 'economic modernisation' (Fahey et al., 2005, p.32), nevertheless, there was a price to be paid for what has turned out to be a false boom, including a 'spiritual emptiness' that 'invariably attends the process of modernisation' (Coulter, 2003, p.25), and the increased marginalisation of poorer sectors of Irish society (Kirby, 2010). Geographers Bartley and Kitchen, writing in the latter part of the Celtic Tiger era, highlighted some features of the 'dark side' of the Celtic Tiger as 'a widening gap between rich and poor; rising crime rates; increased environmental pollution; a large infrastructure deficit; a housing market that excludes many; a huge growth in long-distance commuting; health and welfare systems creaking under pressure; a weakening rural economy with a decline in agricultural income; the continued marginalisation of Travellers; and in Northern Ireland sectarianism is still rife (Bartley and Kitchen, 2007, pp.303-304).

Clerical Sexual Abuses

This contemporary period in Irish history will also live long in Irish memories for disclosures surrounding the sexual abuse of children by priests and religious that emerged from various publications (Raftery and O'Sullivan, 1999, Moore, 1995, O'Gorman, 2009) and a number of Government inquiries (Murphy et al., 2005, Murphy et al., 2009, Murphy et al., 2011). One of the tribunals of inquiry set up by the state in the Dublin Archdiocese, *The Commission of Investigation Report into the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin*, highlighted the serious nature of their findings as follows:

> The Dublin Archdiocese's pre-occupation in dealing with cases of child sexual abuse, at least until the mid 1990s, were the maintenance of secrecy, the avoidance of scandal, the protection of the reputation of the Church, and the preservation of its assets. All other considerations, including the welfare of children and justice for victims, were subordinated to these priorities. The Archdiocese did not implement its own canon laws and did its best to avoid any application of the law of the State (Murphy et al., 2009, p.4)

The sex scandals began in 1991 with disclosures that Bishop Eamonn Casey had fathered a son by Annie Murphy when he was Bishop of Kerry two decades earlier and his subsequent resignation as Bishop of Galway in May 1992 (Murphy and de Rosa, 1993). The impact of these revelations were compounded by further revelations that another high profile cleric, Fr. Michael Cleary had had a long-term relationship with his housekeeper, Phyllis Hamilton, with whom he allegedly fathered two sons. However, it was the horrific disclosures[89] surrounding the abuse of children by priests and religious that shook the Catholic Church most of all during the past twenty years (Raftery and O'Sullivan, 1999, Murphy et al., 2005, Murphy et al., 2009). One of the most notorious abusers, serial paedophile priest Fr Brendan Smyth, epitomised the public face of clerical child sexual abuse in the early 1990s. For many, his face, which filled television screens and newspapers throughout Ireland, was the face of evil in the Catholic Church. For more than four decades he had abused children in different countries, during which time 'senior clergy within the Catholic church in Ireland turned a blind eye' to his criminal activities (Moore, 1995, p.15).

The extent of the abuse gradually unfolded during the 1990s and into the first decades of the twenty-first century when the focus shifted to the alleged activities of diocesan priests.[90] In October 2005, *The Ferns*

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[89] The initial disclosures of abuse followed the broadcasting of the three-part documentary series *States of Fear* on RTE during April and May of 1999, related to the abuse of children in Ireland's industrial schools. This 'provoked an unprecedented response in the country', resulting in the collapse of a government in 1994 as a result of controversy over the failure to extradite Fr. Brendan Smyth to Northern Ireland on charges of child sexual abuse, and the issuing of an historic apology by the Taoiseach on behalf of the State to the victims of child abuse within the system' and the establishment of a Commission to hear testimony from those who had suffered as children' (Raftery and O'Sullivan, 1999, p.9). While these disclosures related to abuse by religious rather than diocesan clergy, the focus soon shifted to the abuse perpetrated by diocesan priests, with several high profile cases in the media concerning Fr Sean Fortune, Fr Ivan Payne and Fr Paul McGennis.

[90] The public or the media did not always differentiate between diocesan and religious priests. A survey commissioned by RTE asked people if they felt that recent scandals such as those involving Bishop Casey and Fr Brendan Smith damaged the authority of the Catholic Church in Ireland, more than nine in ten adults said it would do damage, with the vast majority saying it would damage the Church's authority a lot.

Report[91] into the handling of complaints and allegations of clerical child sexual abuse in the diocese of Ferns identified more than 100 allegations of child sexual abuse made between 1962 and 2002 against twenty-one priests attached to the diocese of Ferns. A second Commission of Investigation into the Archdiocese of Dublin reported in 2009. The Commission 'received information about complaints, suspicions or knowledge of child sexual abuse in respect of 172 named priests and 11 unnamed priests' (The Murphy Report, 2009, p.171). A third investigation in Cloyne diocese published in 2011, concluded that the response of the diocese of Cloyne was 'inadequate and inappropriate' (Murphy et al., 2011, p.19). Other abuse cases involving diocesan priests also entered the public arena, serving to keep unwanted[92] attention on the Catholic Church e.g., allegations surrounding a former president of Maynooth College, Micheál Ledwidth (McCullough, 2005), and the ongoing publication of diocesan audits into individual dioceses' response to abuse allegations (http://www.safeguarding.ie/reviews-2012-media/).

While the Catholic Church is perceived by some to have eventually responded positively to the allegations and the findings from the various inquiries, with the publication of child protection policies and procedures in 2005 (Irish Catholic Bishops' Advisory Committee on Child Sexual Abuse by Priests and Religious, 1996), followed by the publication of standards and guidance document in 2008 (National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church, 2008), the value of such measures have been undermined by the 'drip-drip' revelations concerning tardiness by the Irish Church[93], interference by the Vatican,[94] and an

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[91] The investigation was established in the wake of the broadcast of a BBC television documentary, *Suing the Pope*, which highlighted the case of Fr Séan Fortune.

[92] Unwanted, that is, from the Church's perspective.

[93] A significant issue for the Catholic Church related to the 'slowness of the Irish hierarchy to acknowledge the problem and the clear pattern that existed of moving abusing priests from area to area', which served 'to seriously undermine the credibility of the Catholic Church in this country' (Raferty and O'Sullivan, 1999, p.255).

[94] It transpired that the that the Vatican's Congregation for the Clergy had written a letter to the Irish Bishops in 1997 directing them not to enforce their child

incredulous level of naivety on sexual deviancy by some bishops.[95] The revelations in the Cloyne report were particularly significant in the public deterioration of the relationship between the Irish state and the Vatican. The Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, made the views of his government very clear in a virulent speech in the Dáil on the 20th July 2011[96], as follows:

> It's fair to say that after the Ryan and Murphy reports Ireland is, perhaps, unshockable when it comes to the abuse of children. But Cloyne has proved to be of a different order. Because for the first time in Ireland, a report into child sexual abuse exposes an attempt by the Holy See, to frustrate an inquiry in a sovereign, democratic republic ….and in doing so, the Cloyne report excavates the dysfunction, disconnection, elitism – the narcissism – that dominate the culture of the Vatican to this day. The rape and torture of children were downplayed or 'managed' to uphold instead, the primacy of the institution, its power, standing and 'reputation' (Kenny, 2011, p.18) .

Former editor of *The Irish Times*, Conor Brady, is one of many commentators who believes that the past decade has witnessed 'the great levelling of the hierarchical Catholic church, as it had operated in Ireland, more or less since the immediate post-Famine era' (Brady, 2005, p.143).

protection policies they had published the previous year, calling for mandatory reporting of priests who molested children. The existence of the letter was broadcast on RTE in the course of a programme 'Unspeakable Crimes' on January 17th 2011. Part of the explanation for the letter is that the Church has an obligation to protect the canonical rights of accused priests. The Vatican subsequently refused to cooperate with two inquiries on abuse in the dioceses of Dublin and Cloyne set up by the Irish state. These revelations have undoubtedly seriously damaged the position of the Catholic Church in Ireland, and the pastoral letter from the pope to the Catholics of Ireland has done little to halt the public criticism. Seen in this light, the closure of the Irish embassy to the Vatican, although surprising, is understandable and according to journalist Patsy McGarry (2012) 'appropriate and proportionate'.

[95] For example, the bishop of Clonfert, John Kirby, admitted in August 2012 that he had moved abusive priests to different parishes in his diocese because of a lack of understanding of the destructive nature of paedophilia. He saw paedophilia as 'a friendship that crossed a boundary line'.

[96] A national survey commissioned by the Iona Institute in October 2011 found that one in five Irish adults considered the government to be excessively hostile towards the Catholic Church, with the remainder split between those who disagreed with this statement (40%) and those who could neither agree nor disagree (34%). An earlier survey commissioned by the Irish Bishops in 1997 found that 25% of adult Catholics did not think the media's treatment of the abuse scandals was unfair (Council for Research & Development, 1997).

This opinion is also largely supported by the findings of various surveys and public opinion polls commissioned in the 1990s and 2000s (Council for Research & Development, 1997, Gallup International, 1999, Goode et al., 2003, Greeley and Ward, 2000, Hanley, 2000a, Association of Catholic Priests, 2012, Iona Institute, 2011, Irish Times, 2012, MacGréil, 1996, MacGréil and Rhatigan, 2009, O'Mahony, 2010, RTE, 1998, RTE, 2003, Sunday Tribune, 2005, Weafer, 1993, Weafer, 2007, Whelan, 1994).[97]

A Polarised Church

Research and anecdotal evidence indicates that the Irish Catholic Church has becoming increasingly polarised into different types of Catholics. An increasing number of Catholics are maintaining a presence on the margins of the Church, without any real sense of loyalty or commitment, and others are committed to the Church in varying ways, some more extreme than others. Ryan was one of the first to identify the emergence of a 'new' type of Catholic in 1980s Ireland, where religion is important but separate from other areas in their lives, particularly moral issues (Ryan, 1983). Since then, other sociologists have constructed typologies to reflect the different types of Catholics in Ireland. Inglis, for example, constructed a typology of Catholic identity on the basis of the *European values Survey* (EVS) and *Contemporary Irish Identities* (CII)[98] study. He proposed the existence of four forms of Catholic identity: *orthodox* Catholics who are loyal and where religion permeates every part of their lives; *creative* Catholics, who choose different beliefs, teachings and practices (similar to the a la carte Catholic) but who also mixes these with non-Catholic beliefs and practices; *cultural* Catholics who identity less with the institutional Church and more with a Catholic heritage and identity; and *individualist* Catholics, who identify themselves as Catholics but who reject some fundamental

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[97] Some international studies include longitudinal data on religion, e.g., the European Social Survey website (www.europeansocialsurvey.org) and the European Values Study (www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/).

[98] He drew on research from a study of 'Contemporary Irish Identities within the Identity, Diversity and Citizenship Programme at the Geary Institute of University College Dublin; and the European Values Study, 1999.

Church teachings and practices (Inglis, 2007). A similar typology is also proposed in figure 4.1, below (See page 80).

4.5 A Church in Crisis?

Social research and anecdotal evidence indicates that the Irish Catholic Church is in crisis.[99] Its churches are increasingly empty and 'grey',[100] with the majority of Catholics apparently content to be 'cultural' or 'ritual' Catholics, often only using the Church for special occasions, such as marriage and First Holy Communion. Significantly less people are attending Mass on a regular basis nowadays when compared with the 1960s and 1970s. From a recorded high of 91% weekly or more often Mass attendance in 1973/4, to 85% in 1990, the percentage of Catholics in the Republic of Ireland who attend Mass at least once a week has fallen to just 37% (Table D.2 and Figure 4.1, Appendix D). Other forms of sacramental participation, such as confession and Holy Communion, have also declined (Figure 4.2, Appendix D). The future is also bleak because many young adults are 'moving towards a cultural attachment to Catholicism' (Andersen, 2010, p.37), although they have not yet replaced Catholicism with 'new expressions of spirituality'.

There is also evidence to suggest that less people trust the leadership of the Catholic Church (McGreevy, 2010, p.3). Research commissioned by the Iona Institute, an institute set up to promote the place of marriage and religion in society (http://www.ionainstitute.ie), reported that almost half (47%) of Irish adult Catholics have lost trust in the Catholic Church. They reported that only one in three (27%) Irish Catholic adults have a favourable view of the Church, with most of those having an unfavourable attitude citing the scandal over child abuse as the main reason for their views (Iona Institute, 2011). Research commissioned by the Association of Catholic Priests in 2012, an organisation of Irish priests that was established to give priests a voice in the Church (http://www.associationofcatholicpriests.ie), also noted a lack of trust, with

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[99] It is acknowledged that the Catholic Church is not universally in crisis.
[100] Older people comprise the majority of regular church-goers.

almost half of adult Catholics (45%) believing that the leaders of the Irish Catholic Church do not understand the challenges faced by Irish Catholics (Association of Catholic Priests, 2012). Research by *The Irish Times/MRBI* in 2012 found that almost one in ten Irish Catholics (9%) feel Ireland would be a better place to live if the Catholic Church withdrew tomorrow, with a further 46% believing it would make no difference one way or the other.

It is also the case that less than half (47%) of Irish people consider themselves to be religious (WIN-Gallup International, 2012), and many Irish Catholics experience difficulties with Church teachings that affect their daily lives. For example, only one in four (25%) Catholic adults believe that the teachings of the Catholic Church on sexuality are relevant to them or their family (Association of Catholic Priests, 2012), and a majority of adult Catholics disagree with the Church's position on divorce and contraception (RTE, 2003, Sunday Tribune, 2005).[101] There is, however, more support for general Church teachings, with almost half (46%) of adult Catholics believing that 'Despite the scandals, Catholic teachings are still of benefit to Irish society' (Iona Institute, 2011).

Much of the evidence presented in this chapter indicates that Irish society is now a secularised society. There are different levels of secularisation, including individual and societal. Individual secularisation is manifested in 'a decline in involvement in churches and denominations' leading to a more 'a la carte' individualistic religious commitment (Dobbelaere, 2005, p.18). With some caveats, the data presented in this chapter indicates that Ireland is secularised at this individual level (Breslin and Weafer, 1985, Inglis, 2007, Irish Times, 2012, Nic Ghiolla Phádraig, 1976, Weafer, 1993). There is also compelling evidence to suggest that Irish society is

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[101] A survey commissioned by the Sunday Tribune (2005) found that the majority of Irish adults believe the Catholic Church should (a) relax its views on using artificial contraception (83%), (b) relax its views on homosexuality (61%), support IVF treatment for couples (75%), relax its views on sex before marriage (73%), and relax its views on divorce (75%). This survey does not distinguish between the responses of Catholics and all adults.

experiencing 'societal secularisation', which sociologist Peter Berger defines as 'the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols' (Berger, 1973, p.113).

This form of secularisation is central to the whole notion of secularisation according to Inglis, who, with reference to Bourdieu's concept of social fields, states that 'secularisation is not so much about transformations in the religious field, as about the decline of the importance of religion in social institutions and everyday social life' (Inglis, 2003, p.48). The Catholic Church is no longer as dominant in the religious field and its influence in other fields is also decreasing. It has, for the moment at least, lost its absolute symbolic power, whereby it was able to construct a reality that was readily accepted by the laity. Andersen argues that the Church 'is now only one many influential institutions and has to compete for an audience in all the major social fields, such as education, the media, health and politics' (Andersen, 2010, p.36).

Conversely, Ireland is still very much a Catholic country, albeit a different country to the theocratic society that existed in the 1950s and early 1960s.[102] The vast majority of Irish people still identify with the Catholic Church and religious belief and practice is still considerably higher than most Western countries. The Catholic Church retains a strong influence in education, through its ownership and administration of the vast majority of primary schools, and the persistence of a Catholic ethos in many post-primary schools.[103] It also continues to act as the conscience of society in

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[102] John Whyte concluded his 1971 study of Church and State in Modern Ireland 1923-1970 with the words: 'The extent of the hierarchy's influence in Irish politics is by no means easy to define. The theocratic-State model on the one hand, and the Church-as-just-another-interest group model on the other hand, can both be ruled out as over-simplified, but it is by no means easy to present a satisfactory model intermediate between these two' (Whyte, 1980, p.376).

[103] The ownership of schools in Ireland is currently the source of debate and investigation by the Church and State. For example, Archbishop Martin has agreed that there should be greater diversity in the system of school patronage, while Minister for Education, Ruairí Quinn has commissioned a survey of parents' in selected urban areas.

some situations, albeit tentatively.[104] Furthermore, until relatively recently, the majority of adult Catholics (61%) felt valued by their Church (Weafer, 2007), and the majority (65%) of Irish people continue to believe that religion is important to them (Ipsos MRBI, 2012, p.54).

While there is no denying the increasing secularisation, the decline in religious commitment in Ireland has been less dramatic than suggested by classic secularisation theories (Weber, 1974). Fahey argues that the secularisation is real but 'incipient' and that it is as much 'a matter of the privatisation of religion as of a complete shift towards irreligion (Fahey et al., 2005, p.51). He believes that there is 'no inevitability to the decline' (Fahey, 2001, p.45) if the Irish Catholic Church can, like the US, become more competitive and less complacent. Fahey argues that the Irish Catholic Church has effectively become a 'lazy monopoly' (Fahey, 2001) and ill-prepared to counteract competition, with the result that it went into decline. However, the decline is less than in other Western countries because of the strong cultural position of Catholicism in Ireland.

4.6 Discussion

Irish society has changed dramatically in the past fifty years and so too, has the religious landscape of the Catholic Church. During the past fifty years, the Irish Church has become increasingly secularised and less trustful of Church leadership. Thus, it may be argued that the religious landscape has become more challenging for priests. Fitzgibbon argues, for example, that priests have become demoralised in Ireland, partly because of the attitude of people who have less regard for religion but who nevertheless, expect to avail of Church services whenever it suits them (Fitzgibbon, 2010). It may well be that, as he suggests, there is a crisis in priesthood. However, I believe that most aspects of the alleged crisis are in fact symptomatic of the crisis in the Church rather than priesthood *per se.*

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[104] The Irish Catholic Bishops Conference launched a pro-life/anti-abortion month in October 2012, which encouraged rather than demanded support for the unborn child.

The chapter also suggests that the Irish Church is increasingly polarised between different types of Catholics. Further to Bourdieu, it is argued that a significant shift occurred in the Irish Catholic habitus because of the significant and relatively rapid changes in Irish society, including a decline in Church power and influence. Whereas in the past, there was effectively only one accepted way of being a Catholic, there are now various ways of being Catholic in contemporary Ireland, with the result that it is now less clear as to what constitutes a Catholic (McBrien, 2004).[105] The research suggests that there are different types of Catholics in Ireland. First, orthodox Catholics who are loyal to the Church and religion permeates every part of their lives. This form of Catholic is typical of the minority of Catholics in the contemporary Church that have embodied the theologial orthodoxy of Pope John Paul II, the piety of Padre Pio, and who go on regular pilgrimages to Marian shrines, such as Medjugorje. A second cohort of Irish Catholics adopt a largely cultural perspective, whereby they are content to identify with a Catholic heritage and to use the services of the Church when it suits their needs. Finally, there is a large group of Vatican II Catholics who are loyal to the Church but who also reject some teachings that do not make sense to them, such as the ban on contraception and extra-marital relationships. Some characteristics of these three types of Catholics are illustrated in the following chart (figure 4.1, overleaf).

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the orthodox group occupy an advantageous position within the Catholic religious field, as the Vatican is perceived to have a similar conservative agenda. Fr Hoban is convinced that the 'pendulum has swung very firmly in the direction of the pre-conciliar Church' (Hoban, 2009, p.348). He cites various examples to support this view: the promulgation of the old Latin Mass, the

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[105] US theologian Richard McBrien believes that before the Second Vatican Council, most people 'inside and outside the Catholic Church had no apparent difficulty locating the line that separated Catholics from other Christians', even if their views were somewhat superficial e.g., abstaining from meat on Friday, regarding birth control as a mortal sin, or recognising the authority of the pope as the successor to Peter (McBrien, 2004, p.455).

diminishment of the authority of bishops, and the lifting of the excommunication of the four Lefebvrist bishops without their acceptance of Vatican II.[106] He could also have added the restoration of older Latin translations in the Mass, the replacement of bishops who die or retire with more conservative bishops, and a renewed emphasis on the sacramental role of the priest. The net effect of this diversity in Catholics is that priests have to cope with their varying pastoral demands, often in the same parish. Consequentially, I would expect to find priests who are experiencing difficulties in coping with the diversity and polarisation of Irish Catholicism.

Figure 4.1 The Irish Catholic Continuum 2012

The Cultural Catholic	The Vatican II Catholic	The Orthodox Catholic
• Young, single, urban dweller, educated, and socially liberal. • Raised in traditional Catholic family. • Marginalised and alienated from the Church but still a Catholic. • Occasional Mass and sacraments (Rituals). • A la carte Catholics who choose what makes sense to them. • Seriously question Church teachings and authority over their lives. • Unsure regarding life after death. • Religion compartmentalised and largely irrelevant to daily lives. • Spirituality important and Catholicism has not yet been replaced by other expressions of spirituality. • Religion important to their cultural identity. • Pro-choice in moral matters. • Lack of trust in institutional Church. • Most likely to exit the Church.	• Mixed demographics. • Religion is important and relevant. • Regular Mass and sacraments. • Generally orthodox but willing to reject some Church teachings and practices e.g., contraception, Church's treatment of people in second relationships, married priests, women priests. • . Angry at perceived arrogance of Church authorities e.g., handling of clerical sexual abuse cases. • Confused over their role in Church but 'nowhere' else to go'. Generally agree with spirit of Vatican II . • Loyal to their parish. Respect for local priests and willing to help in parish e.g., Ministers of Eucharist, readers, cleaners. • Sin and hell are perceived to be less of a threat. Most emphasis on a loving God and less on punishment.	• Range of ages but mainly older. • Religion important and highly relevant to their lives. • Total acceptance of orthodox interpretation of Vatican II by Pope John Paul II. • Emphasis on regulations, obeying rules – low tolerance for Catholics who do not obey Church rules. • Sin and hell are perceived to be real. • Frequent Mass and sacraments. • Preference for 'traditional' liturgies e.g., Latin mass, Benediction. • Supporters of traditional devotional practices e.g., pilgrimages, vigils, rosary. • Strong supporters of Catholic values e.g., pro-life, family values, and often act as moral custodians of Irish society, against moral relativism. • Willingness to be militant to support Catholic values e.g., pro-life. • Active in parish. • Respect and challenge local priests.

In conclusion, I believe the Catholic Church in Ireland is in crisis, and that the direction of the Catholic Church has been significantly affected by Vatican II and the papacy of John Paul II. The influence of these and other factors on the lived experience of Irish diocesan priests will be explored in chapter five.

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[106] It subsequently transpired that the Vatican decided to end discussions aimed at reintegrating the Society of Saint Pius X into the Church after a 21-year schism over its implacable opposition to the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, because of their refusal to accept the reforms of the council (Irish Times, 6th October, 2012).

CHAPTER FIVE

A THEMATIC AND CHRONOLOGICAL PROFILE OF THE IRISH DIOCESAN PRIEST, 1962-2012

> For years, the parish was run and managed by the priest with a few voluntary lay people. There was a priest at the altar, a priest in the confessional, a priest to bless the rings. There was a priest at the bedside with the oil for anointing, and a priest to trowel the clay over the coffin laid to rest…These days, for the foreseeable future, are gone (Neary, 2003).

5.1 Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to present a profile of the diocesan priest in contemporary Irish society and to explore how Irish diocesan priesthood has changed since Vatican II. The first thematic section will identify and explore the main issues in the literature that relate to the core priestly themes of identity, obedience, and celibacy. This will be followed by a chronological review of the lived experience of Irish diocesan priests since Vatican II. The review will be used to identify pertinent issues relating to Irish diocesan priesthood that will be explored in the data and to situate the accounts of the research participants into a broader context.

In the first instance, the literature review will explore Irish priests' sense of identity and suggest that Irish diocesan priests have a strong sense of professional priestly identity that is grounded in their vocation and formed by the prevailing culture when they came of age (ordained). The literature also suggests that theological divisions exist in priesthood that are manifest in political generations of priests. Research in the US by sociologists Hoge and Wenger (2003) concluded that the 'essence of priesthood has undergone two shifts' since the early 1960s, each with its own distinctive understanding of priesthood (Hoge and Wenger, 2003, p.59).

Second, the literature review will explore to what extent priests are loyal company men or if they exercise agency in their day-to-day lives. The relatively limited amount of literature on the lived experience of Irish diocesan priests suggests that they are, for the most part, loyal and obedient to their superiors; and that they are constrained by, but not necessarily subservient, to the institutional Church. Some of the reasons for this apparent compliance include the strictly hierarchical nature of the Catholic Church, which is supported by Canon Law; the threat of various formal and informal sanctions; and a culture of obedience that permeates seminary and clerical life. Conversely, there are some indications that priests exercise agency in the way they negotiate their priesthood by, for example, keeping their heads down in the seminary and adopting a pragmatic approach to some aspects of their ministry following ordination.

Third, the literature review will explore how Irish diocesan priests understand celibacy. The review suggests that Irish diocesan priests understand celibacy in diverse way, with some priests in favour of mandatory celibacy and others against it. It suggests that younger priests are most likely to embrace the ideal of celibacy, with their older counterparts experiencing most difficulties in the lived experience of celibacy. The literature review suggests that priests experience celibacy along a continuum, ranging from total acceptance to rejection. It also indicates that many priests experience personal difficulties with celibacy and that many of them fail to live up to the ideal set by the institutional Church. Fourth, the literature suggests that the priesthood is in crisis. Fitzgibbon identifies a range of symptoms of the alleged crisis, including a crisis of ministry, a crisis of morale, a crisis of intimacy, and a crisis of identity (Fitzgibbon, 2010).

The relevance of these findings for Irish diocesan priests will be explored in chapters six, seven and eight, respectively.

5.2 Identity

The concept of identity is a disputed term that has been conceived of in different ways in psychology, social psychology and sociology (Cote and Levine, 2002). Like many other sociological concepts, such as power and community, identity is characterised by a lack of clarity (Lawler, 2008). A review of the literature suggests that identity is 'our understanding of who we are and who other people are, and, reciprocally, other people's understanding of themselves and of others (Jenkins, 2008, p. 18). Identity 'provides a link between individuals and the world in which they live' (Woodward, 2004, p. 7). It is a 'socially recognized position, recognized by others' (Woodward, 2004, p.7) that requires 'an active engagement on our part' (Woodward, 2004, p.6). It denotes both similarity and difference, similarity with others who share a collective identity, such as diocesan priests, and difference from others who do not share this identity, such as lay people. A person's (social) identity matters, that 'who we are, or who we are *seen* to be, can matter enormously' (Jenkins, 2008, p.3).

Priests have a 'complex identity' which 'corresponds to the way they exist in the world' (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2001). According to the USCCB, priests exist in the world in three principal ways that are 'interrelated': as humans, believing Christians, and sacramentally. The concept of vocation is important to an understanding of identity because a priest's identity is the culmination of his vocation journey' (Irish Bishops' Conference, 2006, p. 21) or 'vocational dialogue' (Costello, 2002, p. 10). Three aspects of identity are singled out for attention in this study: vocation, evolving models of priesthood, and a crisis of identity. This study is primarily concerned with a Catholic priest's professional identity, which incorporates a multiplicity of different identities, public and private. Further to the definition of diocesan priesthood in chapter one, I would argue that a priest's professional identity is framed by his vocation, celibate lifestyle, obedience, and ministry. Within this framework, it is also possible to identity different types of diocesan priests: heterosexual and

homosexual, active and retired/semi-retired, curate and parish priest, current and former, to name but some. Research suggests that a priest's private identity is deeply embedded in his professional identity and that he is first and foremost a priest.[107] Keenan (2012), for example, in her study of child sexual abuse in the Irish Catholic Church found that many priests seldom have a strong personal identity apart from being a priest. The primacy of a priest's professional identity is also found in related Churches. Empirical research amongst Episcopal priests in the US found that some priests experienced a 'consuming identity of priesthood' over and above their personal identities (Kreiner et al., 2006, p.1043), which can result in excessive homogeneity of a social group that is detrimental to creativity, innovation, decision-making, and a host of other important social processes' (Kreiner et al., 2006, p.1031).

A Priest's Vocation

The notion of vocation is central to priesthood, and to a priest's well-being and his role as a priest: 'Priestly identity, presupposing personal identity, gives the priest a sense both of who he is and who he is not. A clear sense of priestly identity enables the priest to engage effectively in the church's mission, make transparent choices, establish unambiguous relationships, remain faithful to his vocation, and provides the inner resilience needed for coping with the pressures of a demanding life-style' (Costello, 2002, p. 9). A priest takes the first step in his 'vocational journey' when he answers God's 'call'.[108] A vocation is a 'call from God' and discerning a vocation is regarded by the Catholic Church as the first step in a priest's vocation journey that may result in ordination.[109]

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[107] This contrasts with the typical situation for nuns, who, in my personal experience, often introduce themselves as teachers, nurses, or parish workers, before they mention their religious status.

[108] Some of the terms and phrases used in this section assume a general understanding of Catholicism, such as the existence of a belief system that acknowledges the existence of a personal God.

[109] The notion of a vocational journey is used widely in the Church within the context of vocational discernment, including the Irish Bishops' Conference *Programme for the Formation of Priests in Irish Seminarians* (2006). The Archdiocese of Los Angeles, for example, has identified four phases in this

The Church teaches that a priest is called by God to be holy, to proclaim the gospel, and to be of service to people through his ministry (Congregation for the Clergy, 2002). Jesus called the twelve disciples (Luke 6:13-16), to the ministerial priesthood. Consequentially, a vocation is regarded as 'the fruit of being chosen, it is the fruit of a specific vocation' (Congregation for the Clergy, 2002, p.13). It is a life of service that is based on a special intimacy with Christ. A priest is called to be a man of faith and to respond to a call of holiness (Danneels, 1993, Brophy, 1960, John Paul II, 1997). If the call is accepted by the individual and he is deemed worthy by the relevant Church authorities, he will be ordained a priest, and remain a priest until death or laicisation.[110] The importance of God in the life of a priest is formally acknowledged during his ordination when he undertakes to fulfil the duties of a priest 'with the help of God' (International Committee on English in the Liturgy, 1975, p. 13).[111] A survey of Dublin priests in 1996, for example, emphasised the importance of God in the life of a priest when it stated that the Dublin priest is 'first and foremost a man of God' who 'relies on the nearness of God's help, which he experiences through the Mass and his own personal prayer' (Forristal, 1997, p. 27). A priest is also called to fulfil a specific mission within the Church and to be celibate.

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journey to the priesthood http://www.lavocations.org/4-phase-vocational-journey.php

[110] Laicisation is the process whereby a priest loses the rights to exercise the functions of an ordained minister. However, even when laicised, a priest retains the character of a priest, as sung at his ordination: 'You are a priest forever, like Melchizedek of old'. In some cases, a priest may be dismissed by the Church as a penalty for certain grave offences, such as child sexual abuse. However, voluntary requests for laicisation are most common in the Catholic Church, when a priest wishes to be dismissed from the clerical state for personal reasons. A separate dispensation is required if priests wish to marry.

[111] It is further highlighted in the first document published by the Second Vatican Council in 1964 - *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) – and in the document *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1992), the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, *On the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day*.

At one level, a vocation is a very personal matter between God and the person concerned.[112] However, at another level, a vocation denotes that a person is centrally connected to the structures of the institutional Church. The Church accepts that a vocation has a social dimension that is influenced both by personal and social criteria (Capps, 1970).[113] A religious vocation 'implies action in response to a 'call' from a larger social reality (Weigert and Blasi, 2007, p.23). It is a choice that occurs within a social context and accordingly can be influenced by societal, organisational, and personal factors (Giordan, 2007).

Identity formation is an ongoing process (Jenkins, 2008), which, in the case of priesthood, is influenced by a variety of factors, including a priest's family and social background, his seminary training, the clerical culture he joins as a priest, and ongoing training after ordination (John Paul II, 1992). According to the Church, a person's 'vocation journey' (Irish Bishops' Conference, 2006, p. 21) begins in the Christian community, and continues through the influence of other agents of change, and the candidate himself (Irish Bishops' Conference, 2006). Of these, the literature suggests that the seminary has perhaps, the most influence on the formation of a priest's identity.

A number of Irish studies have highlighted the influence of a student's background and familiarity with a priest(s) on his vocation (Breslin, 1981, MacGréil, 1997). In his study of 112 seminarians in Maynooth in 1997, for example, Fr Micheál MacGréil found that the home, school and parish were the three most important places in which their vocations were born and nurtured. The principal motivation for wanting to be a priest was their desire to be close to God or their sense that this was what God wanted from them. Conversely, the most discouraging factors were the negative

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[112] Theologian Fr Dorr believes that celibacy is such 'a specialized and personal call that it is not wise' and in his opinion, 'not just for the Catholic church authorities to insist that everybody who wishes to become a priest in the Western Church must take on celibacy' (Dorr, 2004, p.143).

[113] For example, the impact of both personal and social factors on the vocational conflict and resolution of John Henry Newman are described by theologian Donald Capps in his study of vocational identity.

attitudes of people, the scandals in the Church, and celibacy. Irish people have traditionally perceived the priesthood very positively, with relatively high numbers of men seriously considering a vocation to the priesthood or religious life (Breslin and Weafer, 1985). In 1974 and 1984, approximately one sixth (16%) of men said they had seriously considered a vocation. This figure had fallen to less than one in ten (9%) by 2007 (Weafer, 2007). The appeal of priesthood for many Irish people is also reflected in the proportions of people who would encourage their sons to be priests. In 1974, 91.5% of adults in the Republic of Ireland said they would encourage aspirants to the priesthood. Ten years later, in 1984, 70% of Irish adults said they would be willing to encourage a prospective priest (Breslin and Weafer, 1985). By 1998, the RTE/MRBI survey reported a further decline in support, although it was still relatively high at a time when considerable negative publicity surrounded the media coverage of clerical scandals: 63% would be either 'very happy' (35%) or 'fairly happy' (28%) if a member of their family entered the priesthood, with only 8% 'unhappy' with this prospect (RTE, 1998). By 1999, only a third of respondents said they would be prepared to recommend anyone to become a priest, brother or nun if they wanted to (Weafer, 2000).

Vocations to the priesthood have been declining since the late 1960s in Ireland and in many Western countries (Appendix A, Table A4). Studies have identified various factors that are linked to the decline, including celibacy, the counter-cultural nature of priesthood, and the ambiguous nature of a priest's vocation (Pro Mundi Vita, 1987, Weafer, 1988, Newman, 1966). In 1966, sociologist Fr Jeremiah Newman identified a number of factors that had a negative affect on vocations including, increasing affluence and materialism, the new emphasis on lay spirituality and particularly the spirituality of the married state, and the uninspiring, stereo-typed image of religious vocations (Newman, 1966). Twenty-one years later, some of these factors were echoed in a study of vocation decline in the US: 'a pervasive materialism, a new ecclesiology which is still not clearly defined, uncertainty regarding the precise roles of priests, religious and laity in the Church' (Pro Mundi Vita, 1987).

Celibacy is often given as a reason for not pursuing a vocation (MacGréil, 1997, Newman et al., 1971, Breslin, 1981, Curcione, 1973, Dunn, 1994), and it has been identified in a number of studies as one of 'the high occupational demands for becoming a priest (celibacy)' (Brunette-Hill and Finke, 1999, p.56). In brief, the argument is that men are reluctant to consider the priesthood because of the anticipated difficult nature of celibacy (Starke and Finke, 2000, Breslin, 1981, Breslin and Weafer, 1986b). A second factor associated with a decline of vocations is the counter-cultural nature of priesthood. A candidate for the diocesan priesthood is asked to live a celibate, holy, and obedient life. However, this can be difficult in a society where there is increasing sexual freedom, a focus on material gain, a rejection of traditional authority, and increasing secularisation (Curcione, 1973).

A third factor linked to the decline in vocations is the ambiguous nature of vocations that followed the Second Vatican Council. Prior to the council, a priest's vocation was widely regarded as a higher calling and theologically superior to other vocations. However, following the emphasis given to the position of lay people in the Church during the Second Vatican Council, 'a certain ambiguity began to blur the distinction between the priesthood of the baptised and that of the ordained' (Bohr, 2009, p.3). Increasingly, people began to question the difference between vocations in the Church, and, for a relatively short time in the decades following the Second Vatican Council, the term vocation was not synonymous with a religious vocation. Vatican II emphasised the equality of vocations and strengthened the theology of a lay vocation. However, it would appear that the Church is seeking to address some of these issues by emphasising the 'essential difference' between 'the ministerial priesthood and the priesthood of all believers' (Irish Bishops' Conference, 2006, p.9). Furthermore, it is increasingly accepted that the life of a priest is 'different' to that of even the most 'involved lay person' because it is 'a celibate life' and one that will 'involve the burden of other people's troubles' (Murray, 1988, p.23).

Finally, it may be argued that a vocation is intrinsic to priesthood and it signifies an idealism that is not required in most other 'careers'. In spite of the difficulties highlighted above, men continue to present themselves for priesthood, albeit in smaller numbers than in the past (Appendix A). For many priests, a vocation is a source of great joy, while, for others, it can be very difficult, particularly if they feel they don't have a vocation to celibacy (Castle, 2009).[114] Irish priest Fr Dunn, for example, believes the life of a priest only makes sense because it is 'all part of the mysterious process called 'having a vocation' (Dunn, 1994, p.15). The ways in which the research participants define their priesthood and experience their vocations are explored in chapters six to eight.

The Seminary

The formal purpose of a seminary according to Fr Liam Ryan, is 'to educate, to train the mind and character of the seminarian for his calling as a priest' (Ryan, 1972, p.61). In the pre-Vatican II seminary, this task was relatively straightforward as the role of the priest was 'taken for granted' (Ryan, 1972, pp.23-24) and seminaries were 'formally structured systems with rules and regulations' (Ryan, 1972, p.24) that were widely regarded as places with 'text-book professors, walled-in virtue, and docile students answering bells' (Ryan, 1972, p.10). Students were only allowed home during holidays and visits from family members were regulated. Strict discipline was enforced in areas dealing with personal friendships and the observation of strict silence, except at times when speaking was permitted (Dunn, 1994).

In his 1961 book, *Asylums*, Erving Goffman argues that the function of institutions, such as Catholic seminaries, is to mould inmates into socially approved individuals i.e., a priest that conforms to the identity of priesthood held by Church authorities. He argued that seminaries are

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[114] One former priest highlighted the difficulty of mandatory celibacy when he wrote that he was convinced he had a vocation to the Catholic priesthood but that he was 'equally convinced' that he had a vocation to marriage (Castle, 2009, p.146).

places where students and administrators compete with each other, leading, in extreme cases, to a 'total institutionalization,' which he defines as 'a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life' (Goffman, 1968, p.11). Inmates come to the institution with a 'presenting culture', which is a 'way of life' they would have 'taken for granted' until their admission to the institution (Goffman, 1968, p.23). Upon admission to the institution, which includes prisons, mental institutions, and Catholic seminaries, amongst others, an inmate undergoes a process of 'mortification' (Goffman, 1968, p.24), which consists of identity change, the provision of a uniform form of dress, rules concerning visitors, and the imposition of house rules that are tightly regulated. The end result, according to Goffman, is a priest that conforms to the image held by Church authorities.

A seminarian is typically separated from his family and community for extended periods of time, where he is taught a new belief system (theology) and conditioned to adopt new forms of behaviour by a dean/formator. Old, taken-for-granted ways of behaving are effectively replaced by newer forms, leading to the development of a priestly identity and a new way of being. Thus, it may be argued that the boy who enters the seminary is likely to be quite different to the man who emerges seven year's later. The likely influence of the seminary on a priest' formation is consistent with other research on identity formation in professionals, which suggests that most professional identities are formed in educational settings 'during a process that requires professionals and students preparing for those professions to engage and immerse considerable parts of their individualities in the practices, techniques, and values of the pre-service education and professional practice' (Krejsler, 2005, pp. 336-7). However, the variety of priests in the world suggests that the seminary may not be as influential as conveyed by these writers, or that something happens to a priest's identity when he leaves the seminary. The Church considered this to be a paradox and they remain puzzled as to why 'many

priests have personalized the ideals of their vocation and exercise their ministry in a mature and consistent fashion' and why 'there are many others whose priestly lives are marked by a lack of enthusiasm, internal and external conflict, and a seeming loss of community' (Costello, 2002, p. 12).[115]

Evolving Models of Priesthood

The literature suggests that theological divisions exist in priesthood that are manifest in political generations of priests. Research in the US by sociologists Hoge and Wenger (2003) concluded that there are three historical eras in the contemporary Church and that the 'essence of priesthood has undergone two shifts' since the early 1960s (Hoge and Wenger, 2003, p.59). The first historical era was pre-Vatican II, 'illustrated by the 'triumphant' church of the 1950s'; the second began shortly following Vatican II and lasted for approximately twenty years, when a 'new stage of ecclesiological conservatism' began; the third era 'began in the early 1980s and continues until today' (Hoge and Wenger, 2003, p.77).

Hoge and Wenger (2003) believe that the first shift in priesthood occurred around the time of the Second Vatican Council when a servant-leader model of priesthood emerged and effectively replaced the prevailing cultic model of priesthood. A second shift began in the early 1980s, which, 'for whatever reason' has resulted in 'newly ordained *diocesan* priests' (italics in original text) leading the transition to a model of priesthood that approximates to the earlier cultic model (Hoge and Wenger, 2003, p.117). They postulated that the first shift occurred largely in response to the significant organisational changes that took place in the Church following Vatican II, while the second shift occurred when younger priests, disillusioned by modern, relativistic society, went 'in search of stability and solidity' in the Church (Hoge and Wenger, 2003, p.121).

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[115] This paradox emerged during the 1990 Synod of Bishops with a topic of *Priestly Formation in the Circumstances of the Present Day*, and the subsequent post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* by Pope John Paul II.

The cultic priesthood which prevailed before Vatican II was so defined by theologian and historian James Bacik because of the central importance placed on the sacraments, most often Mass and confession (Bacik, 1999, p.51). According to Hoge and Wenger (2003) a cultic priest is primarily an 'administrator of the sacraments and teacher of the faith', compared to the servant-leader priest who is 'the spiritual and social leader of the community' (Hoge and Wenger, 2003, p.59). The cultic priest is a man set apart who leads 'a distinctive lifestyle by remaining celibate, living in a rectory, and wearing clerical garb' (Bacik, 1999, p.51). His parishioners place him on a pedestal, where he is content to stay, and further to the 'indelible character received at ordination' these priests are effectively 'other Christ's' who rule and sanctify the faithful (Bacik, 1999, p.51). According to Hoge and Wenger (2003), the cultic priest typically believes that a priest is ontologically different to lay people, he is orthodox in his theological views, loyal to the pope, follows established liturgical rules, values the hierarchical nature of the Church, unquestioning in his acceptance of the doctrinal teachings of the Church, and believes that celibacy is essential to the priesthood. They also note that this cohort of priests experienced significant change in their lives following Vatican II. While some priests were enthused by Vatican II, it was 'a time of bewilderment for those priests who were not caught up in the post-council enthusiasm' (Hoge and Wenger, 2003, p.77).[116]

The years after Vatican II 'were a time of uncertainty for priests' (Hoge and Wenger, 2003, p.9). The cultic model of priesthood, which had prevailed for centuries, was 'severely challenged' by the servant-leader model (Hoge and Wenger, 2003, p.9). The servant-leader priests embraced the spirit of Vatican II; they were generally more democratic and progressive in their outlook, more supportive of lay involvement, and more critical of some aspects of Church teachings, such as the ban on artificial birth control and married priests (The Irish Catholic, 2004). However, over the years, many of them have become frustrated at the perceived failure of

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[116] This trend was also apparent in Ireland and I am aware of a number of priests who left diocesan priesthood to become monks or priests in a religious order.

the Church to implement Vatican II. They have also reacted adversely to the emergence of a third cultic-like model of priesthood during the papacy of John Paul II, which suggested that the Church was moving back towards conservatism.

The third generation of priests emerged in the 1980s and various commentators have noted that the younger generation of priests is readily attracted to the more traditional forms of piety, worship, clerical dress, and the neo-scholastic theology that was predominant prior to the Second Vatican Council (1962-65)' (Bohr, 2009, p.160). Hoge and Wenger (2003) believe that this younger generation share many of the same characteristics as the pre-Vatican II cultic priest, and that seminarians of this generation felt the need to 'gravitate to safe ground and orient their ministry around institutional authority, including faithful adherence to Vatican rules about liturgy, sexual morality, and catechetical teachings' (Hoge and Wenger, 2003, p.121). However, this 'new type of priest' (Hoge and Wenger, 2003, p.61) is perceived to be different to the pre-Vatican II priests because the younger priests 'view the Second Vatican Council as merely part of a broader historical process. They take a longer perspective on the tradition and express a fascination with older liturgical forms and symbols – such as the ringing of bells at Mass and the priestly vestments (such as the birettas and cassocks), both of which were rejected after Vatican II. Priestly identity for these priests means having a unique and sacred position in the Church, clearly different from (though in principle not better than) the positions of lay people. Clarity about Catholic identity is also important to them, so they reject attitudes that strike them as too Protestant. Being solidly Catholic means following papal authority faithfully and unquestioningly (Hoge and Wenger, 2003, p.61).

The literature suggests that the presence of three models of priesthood has led to theological tension and possible competition as each model seeks to establish itself in the religious field. Bacik believes that there are 'fundamental theological tensions' built into the 'current understanding of priesthood' (Bacik, 1999, p.54) because the cultic model does not

'adequately represent the experience of many priests today' (Bacik, 1999, p.54). Rather, it is clear to him that 'many recently ordained priests favor the cultic model' and that they see themselves as 'part of a separate clerical caste' who 'resist the more collaborative approaches associated with the reforms of the Second Vatican Council' (Bacik, 1999, p.54). The main features of the cultic and servant-leader models of priesthood proposed by Hoge and Wenger (2003) are summarised in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 The Cultic and Servant-Leader Models of Priesthood

CULTIC MODEL	AREAS OF DIFFERENCE	SERVANT-LEADER MODEL
'Man set apart'	Ontological status of the priest	Pastoral leader
Values strict hierarchy	Attitude towards the Church Magisterium	Values flexible structure
Follows established rules	Liturgy and Devotions	Allows creativity
Defends 'orthodoxy'	Theological Perspective	Allows for theological differences
Essential to the priesthood	Attitude toward Celibacy	Optional for the priesthood

Source: (Hoge and Wenger, 2003, p.114)

The polarisation of priests in these two models 'mainly concerns ecclesiology, the theology of priesthood, and the liturgy' (Hoge and Wenger, 2003, p.114). Conversely, there are also 'many areas of *agreement*' (italics in original) according to Hoge and Wenger. Most priests agreed on 'their love for God's people, desire to serve God's people, love for the Catholic church, and acceptance of celibate homo-sexual priests' (Hoge and Wenger, 2003, p.114).

The Hoge and Wenger model would appear to fit many aspects of Irish diocesan priesthood. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there are different cohorts of priesthood in Ireland that have diverse views on what it means to be a priest. While some are imbued with a desire for reform and the spirit of Vatican II, others are intent on restoring orthodoxy within the

Church. Research in the US also found distinct generations of priests who 'came of age during different periods of time' and who were 'influenced by the prevailing culture of the times' (Gautier et al., 2012, p.4). The notion of different models or generations of priests is also generally consistent with the work of Mannheim (1952) when he argues that periods of rapid social change would serve as 'crystallizing agents' to produce common experiences and identities (Mannheim, 1952, p.310). Identity is not a fixed phenomenon and it is possible for identities to evolve or transform. Bourdieu's concept of habitus suggests that change is a normal feature of priesthood, and that this change is most dramatic following periods of significant and rapid social change. Pamela Aronson, in her study of the transformation of feminist identities, argues, for example, that identity change occurs when 'some individuals come to be out of sync with their own political generation' as a result of life course and individual experiences (Aronson, 2000, p.79).

This literature review on identity and specifically priestly identity, suggests a number of trends that will be explored in the primary data. First, social research (Keenan, 2012, Kreiner et al., 2006) and the views of the Catholic Church (Costello, 2002, Irish Bishops' Conference, 2006) suggest that a priest's personal identity is largely subsumed by his professional identity. It also suggests that a priest's sense of identity is grounded in his sense of vocation and largely formed in the seminary (Goffman, 1968, Ryan, 1972). Second, the literature suggests that theological divisions exist in priesthood that are manifest in distinct generations of priests (Bacik, 1999, Hoge and Wenger, 2003, Gautier et al., 2012). Third, the literature suggests that priests are experiencing a crisis of identity. I intend to explore the primary data for evidence of these trends in the Irish context.

5.3 Clerical Obedience[117]

Obedience, or rather disobedience, is not a major issue in the literature on Irish diocesan priests, and there is little evidence of priests speaking out critically in public against Church policy or practice. While some priests and theologians (McDonagh, 2009, Riegel, 2011, Hoban, 2012, Moloney, 2012)[118] have publicly challenged the Church on various issues, they would appear to have done so in ways that are acceptable to the Church and accordingly, they have not generally been subject to public sanction.[119] In Ireland and many parts of the world, most priests who have publicly criticised the Church, and suffered the consequences, belong to religious orders (Fox, 2011).[120]

However, this is not to say that diocesan priests are uncritical of Church policies, or that they are satisfied that decision-makers in the Church adequately take on board their views. To the contrary, it may be argued that Irish priests are often critical of Church leadership. A survey of Dublin priests, for example, found that 'general Church leadership' was a significant source of stress for many priests, and that few priests

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[117] Unless otherwise stated, the term cleric refers to a diocesan priest.

[118] Occasionally, individual priests are reported in the media for their criticisms of the Church hierarchy. Fr Joe McGuane, for example, recently criticised the hierarchy for excluding women from the priesthood (Riegel, 2011).

[119] Three exceptions to this general observation include Fr Good, Fr Hegarty,and bishop Comiskey. Fr James Good was banned from preaching and hearing confession in the Cork diocese when he refused to withdraw his public criticism of the papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in 1968. Fr Kevin Hegarty editor of *Intercom*, a Catholic Church magazine was allegedly sacked from his editorial post by the Irish Bishops in 1994 for raising issues of clerical sexual abuse and questioning compulsory celibacy and the issue of women priests http://www.independent.ie/national-news/bishops-gave-editor-sack-over-articles-on-sex-abuse-1764670.html. In 1995, the then bishop of Ferns, Bishop Brendan Comiskey was admonished and called to Rome to explain himself when he suggested that the celibacy requirement for priests should be relaxed (Ferriter, 2009, p.533). At least three other Irish bishops were allegedly admonished by the Vatican around this time.

[120] The six Irish priests silenced by Rome in recent years are all members of religious orders. Other religious order priests have also criticised Rome for their treatment of these priests. One theologian, Augustinian priest Fr Gabriel Daly, for example, spoke out 'against the unjust and sometimes cruel tactics resorted to by the papacy and its curia against good men and women who are genuinely concerned with making Christ present to the world' (McGarry, 2012).

experienced support being given by leadership in the diocese (Lane, 1997, p.41). Some commentators have referred to a deterioration in the relationship between priests and their bishops following the perceived mishandling of clerical sexual abuse cases (Duffy, 2006), while others believe that some priests have also 'lost complete confidence' in the present system of Episcopal appointments, with bishops 'effectively appointing their colleagues from a gene pool of those deemed loyal to Rome' (Hoban, 2009, p.345).

Obedience is a requirement for all diocesan priests. While all Catholics are expected to accept Church teachings and to practice their faith in accordance with the rules and regulations set down in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, clerics are bound by a 'special obligation' to obey the teachings and rules of the Church (Lynch, 2000, p.344). The Code of Canon Law lists a number of clerical obligations that are 'binding' and valid for the whole Latin Church (Lynch, 2000), including the following:

> **Canon 273** – Clerics are bound by a special obligation to show reverence and obedience to the Supreme Pontiff and their own ordinary.[121]
>
> **Canon 274/2** – Unless a legitimate impediment excuses them, clerics are bound to undertake and fulfil faithfully a function, which their ordinary has entrusted to them.

A diocesan priest is allowed to exercise a ministry 'only in dependence on the bishop and in communion with him'. He receives 'faculties' or legal permission to administer the sacraments of the Church from his bishop, and this permission is usually confined to his own diocese (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994, Number 1567). During his ordination, a diocesan priest is asked to promise 'respect and obedience' to his bishop

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[121] The term of ordinary is used to denote bishops, vicars general, episcopal vicars, and major superiors of pontifical clerical religious institutes. However, in the case of diocesan priests, it refers to the diocesan bishop and to vicars acting in the name of the bishop.

(International Committee on English in the Liturgy, 1975, p.14). With this promise, the priest is firmly positioned within the formal hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church (see chapter one).

Clerical obedience is a long-standing tradition in the Church that is grounded in Canon Law and the strictly hierarchical nature of the Catholic Church. A variety of sanctions may be imposed on a priest who is deemed to be disobedient. In general, the sanctions are imposed by people higher up the Church hierarchy on those lower down, although this is not always easy or possible (Murphy et al, 2005, p.254). For example, in some situations, the Vatican can silence or dismiss[122] priests from the clerical state, whom they deem to have seriously breached Church teaching. The Pope can also admonish bishops for inappropriate views or behaviour. A bishop can forbid a priest in his diocese from saying Mass in public or hearing confession in certain circumstances, or sanction him by appointing him to a less desirable parish or delaying his appointment to parish priest (PP).[123] A PP can also impose a range of sanctions over his curates, such as insisting they undertake some unpalatable aspect of ministry. However, a priest enjoys more autonomy in his life nowadays due to a reduction in the number of sanctions, and a shortage of priests. Most dioceses pay their priests a standard salary, thereby reducing inequalities between parishes, and since there are less priests nowadays, most priests can expect to become PPs sooner than in the past. Anecdotally, most priests are possibly 'kept in line' more by the threat of informal sanctions if they defy diocesan laws or norms.

In the pre-Vatican II Church, obedience reflected a legalistic understanding of priesthood. A strict adherence to rules and respect for

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[122] Although quite rare, the threat of dismissal is nonetheless real. For example, Pope John Paul II dismissed two Catholic priests convicted of sexually abusing children in the Ferns diocese from the clerical state in December 2004. This was the first time the Vatican has dismissed a priest in Ireland over sexual abuse.
[123] Anecdotal evidence suggests that most dioceses had parishes to which priests were sent as a form of punishment. Some parishes were significantly poorer or isolated than others, while other parishes had parish priests who were regarded as 'difficult'.

the hierarchical Church permeated the Church, and priests were expected to obey their superior's instructions, largely without question. If they disobeyed, they were subject to various sanctions. The legalistic view of obedience was grounded in the seminary, with its monastic-style environment and strict timetable of prayer, study, recreation, and sleep. Dublin priest Fr Dunn refers to the climate of fear and strict observance of rules that depicted the life of a seminary in the 1950s and 1960s (Dunn, 1994). Monsignor Michael Olden wrote that 'individuality and lack of conformity, creativity and innovation, were positively discouraged' in the seminary (Olden, 2008, p. 13). Seminaries were places where 'absolute conformity to superiors' was promoted (Keenan, 2012, p. 176), and gossip was endemic, leading to paranoia and superficial relationships (Keenan, 2012, p.176). According to a priest interviewed by social scientist Marie Keenan, 'Speaking one's mind was the thing most likely to have somebody told they were unsuitable for the priesthood' (Keenan, 2012, p.177).

The religious landscape was transformed following Vatican II, and the legalism of the pre-Vatican II Church was gradually replaced by institutional flexibility and a focus on the pastoral needs of people. Seminaries were increasingly seen as places of discernment rather than control. Fr Liam Ryan's review of the changing direction of Irish seminaries concluded that 'self-determination, autonomy, freedom of action, and a minimum of ritualistic formality' have become the 'hall-marks' of Irish seminaries at academic, administrative, and spiritual levels' (Ryan, 1972, p.67). For the first time, priests and lay people, alike, questioned the Church's teaching authority, particularly in areas of morality. However, there was no sense of revolt from either people or priests, rather a change in the way some teachings were perceived.

Following Vatican II, Irish priests directed their views through representative organisations rather than individual objections. The Association of Irish Priests (AIP) was established in 1971 and the National Conference of Irish Priests (NCPI) was formed in 1977. However, the

response of Church leaders to these associations was largely dismissive. Fr Brendan Hoban, for example, tells the story of Fr Seamus Ryan who, as president of the National Council of Priests in Ireland (NCPI) was called to an interview with the Papal Nuncio, only to be told 'he was a nobody, representing nobodies' (Hoban, 2009, p.351).[124] A third association of priests, the Association of Catholic Priests (ACP), was established in 2011, and its objectives and experiences suggest that little has changed for priests. One of the ACP's objectives is to provide a voice for Irish Catholic priests at a time when that voice is 'largely silent and needs to be expressed' (Hoban, 2010, p.485). However, in spite of some opinions to the contrary,[125] the ACP see themselves to be loyal priests.[126] They may question some teachings and the failure of the Church to implement the spirit of Vatican II but they are still loyal priests.

All of this suggests that Irish diocesan priests are constrained by the institutional Church. However, there is also some circumstantial and anecdotal evidence to suggest that priests can be relatively independent. First, although the Catholic Church is strictly hierarchical, a priest is relatively autonomous within his parish. This was evident, for example, in the inquiry into clerical child sexual abuse in the diocese of Ferns where it identified 'a serious difficulty' for two bishops 'in dealing with a priest such as Sean Fortune who refused to comply with the direction of his bishop' and step aside from active ministry. Second, it would appear that some seminarians and priests learnt to 'play the system in order to survive'

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[124] The demise of the NCPI was inevitable according to Fr Hoban, who served on its executive for six years. It was an organisation that gave the impression of facilitating 'a distinctive priest-voice but not listening to what it had to say' (Hoban, 2009, p.351).

[125] The formation of the ACP was severely criticised by some conservative interests within the Church. Journalist David Quinn, for example, branded the organisation as representing the interests of a sub-section of priests 'who want the Catholic Church to adopt the failed project of liberal Protestantism'.

[126] There is no evidence to suggest that Irish diocesan priests are anything but loyal. For example, in a letter to Cardinal Brady sent in June 2012, the Association of Catholic Priests were critical of the lack of 'real engagement' in the Irish Church. However, they stressed that the Association is not 'against' the Church. Rather, they say they are 'part of it' and that they 'care about it' and 'want it to survive' (www.associationofcatholicpriests.ie).

(Keenan, 2012, p.177). Fr Brady describes his pre-Vatican II seminary days in a semi-monastic Maynooth as follows: 'We were over-protected and under-estimated as persons. There were too many rules of the niggling type, rules for the sake of rules. Initiative was frowned upon. The system tended to produce a cautious, safe, middle of the road type of person and sometimes what we called an 'eye-server', one who obeys the rules only when the authorities are around' (Brady, 1980, p.707). Anecdotal evidence suggests that some priests continued this practice into their priesthood.

Third, priests can, within limits, choose the type of priest they wish to be, whether, for example, they wish to emphasise the sacramental or service nature of priesthood, or if they value hierarchy over creativity. They can also choose how to live celibacy, within limits, from total acceptance to rejection. Fourth, they can exercise agency in their ministry. For example, a priest who does not agree with the Church's position on the use of artificial contraception or homosexuality may decide not to preach on these controversial topics, preferring, instead, to adopt a more pastoral approach. It is also rare, nowadays, to hear of priests who refuse to give people Holy Communion because of their lifestyles.

The relatively limited amount of literature on the practice of priestly obedience suggests that Irish diocesan priests are generally loyal and obedient to their superiors, but also pastorally pragmatic. For the most part, Irish diocesan priests stay within the boundaries of loyalty and obedience, where they rarely if ever engage in public dissent against their superiors or express an opinion that is against Church policy or practice. However, this does not mean that they are subservient and accepting of all Church policies and practices. Anecdotal evidence suggests that priests are willing to adopt a pragmatic approach to their ministries and to 'turn a blind eye' to situations that do not conform to Church policy. For example, research suggests that many priests have difficulties with the Church law on contraception and the stance the Church has taken to mandatory celibacy, women priests, and homosexual priests (The Irish Catholic, 2004), with the result that few priests preach on these topics in order to

avoid confrontation with their bishop or the Vatican. There is also some evidence to suggest that they adopt a similar form of behaviour when dealing with their immediate superiors. Chapter seven will explore how individual priests negotiate their priesthood within a highly structured and strictly hierarchical Church.

5.4 Celibacy

Celibacy can be a difficult life experience for many priests and consequently, it is likely that Irish priests live celibacy along a continuum, with most priests somewhere between the two extremes of total acceptance and rejection. This section will review the background and current views of mandatory priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church.

An Ecclesiastical Discipline and a Gift from God.

Allowing for some rare exceptions,[127] all Catholic priests and transitional deacons[128] are expected to refrain from sexual activity and marriage (Keenan, 2012, Congregation for Catholic Education, 2005). It is an ecclesiastical discipline that is governed by Church law. The legal position of the Church concerning celibacy is set out in canon 277 of the new Code of Canon Law (overleaf).

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[127] While the call to celibacy is absolute, some married Anglican priests have been accepted as Catholic priests when they converted to Catholicism following the introduction of women priests and openly gay clergy into the Anglican Church. By creating a *Personal Ordinariate*, the Vatican would appear to have disposed of a rule that is obligatory for the majority of priests. It is also the case that priests of the Eastern Catholic Churches who are in full communion with Rome can be married if they are married before their ordination. Celibacy is obligatory for all bishops in the Eastern rite and for any priest who was ordained while unmarried or if he is widowed.

[128] The diaconate is generally regarded to be part of the process for priesthood, with most priests ordained as transitional deacons the year before their ordination. Celibacy is part of the diaconate ordination. While the Second Vatican Council introduced the order of 'permanent deacons', which comprises men who might be married and permitted to have conjugal relations with their wives, it specifically determined that these deacons could not go on to priestly ordination. Ireland ordained its first permanent deacons in 2012, 50 years following the opening of the Second Vatican Council.

> Clerics are obliged to observe perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the kingdom of heaven and therefore are bound to observe celibacy which is a special gift of God by which sacred ministers can adhere more easily to Christ with an undivided heart and can more freely dedicate themselves to the service of God and human kind (Vatican, 1983, Canon 277, Code of Canon Law)

Put simply, to be celibate is to be 'unmarried' (O'Malley, 2002, p.8), while within the context of the Catholic priesthood it has come to mean being unmarried and 'the abstinence from sexual activity' (Sipe, 2007, p.545). However, this absolute definition of celibacy was increasingly disputed as being too restrictive in the years following the Second Vatican Council, with various commentators arguing that sexuality and intimacy needed to be embodied into celibacy, and that a celibate masculine-feminine friendship was possible if the individuals are prudent (Conner, 1979). US theologian Fr Donal Goergen, for example, wrote his classic book, *The Sexual Celibate* 'upon the growing conviction that friendship is not detrimental but central to celibate living' and that 'celibate persons are also sexual persons' (Goergen, 1974).

Many writers subsequently echoed this theme of the importance of integrating sexuality into celibacy and the dangers of trying to live a life without emotional support (Holmes, 1996).[129] Irish theologian Fr Enda McDonagh argued that for the celibate priest 'the stabilising influence of some intimate relationships in both his personal and ministerial life' are essential if he is to counter the 'isolation and superiority surrounding priesthood' (McDonagh, 2000, p.596). US theologian Fr Cozzens wrote that while 'the witness of celibate friendship is counter-cultural to the indulgence and radical individualism typical of Western society' it is possible for priests to develop intimate and chaste friendships with women or men (Cozzens, 2006, pp.403-404). A priest, according to Fr Whiteside, is called to 'experience life as a warm, sensuous, and passionate' person

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[129] Therapist Fr Holmes believes that some priests are unable to express their true feelings to anyone, while others engage in multiple anonymous sexual encounters.

rather than a 'cold, clinical, and distant' person (Whiteside, 1988, p.348). Writer and former nun, Kathleen Norris wrote of celibate men and women who 'express their sexuality in a celibate way' which means that 'they manage to sublimate their sexual energies towards another purpose than sexual intercourse and procreation' (Norris, 1996, p.117). A life of celibate chastity is just 'one way of being a sexual person' (Sammon, 1993, p.4) according to US Marist Sean Sammon, who believes that intimacy is possible and desirable for priests provided it has roots in the spiritual life and it does not involve 'sexual union or genital expression' (Sammon, 1993, p. 40). The perceived importance of intimacy in the lives of celibates gained momentum in the 1980s and subsequent decades, with the realisation that the Church was not going to introduce optional celibacy, and the reality that priests were leaving in search of marriage and intimacy (Carey, 1972, Schoenherr and Greeley, 1974, Starke and Finke, 2000, Verdieck et al., 1988).[130]

In addition to being a Church discipline, celibacy is also a way of life that is highly valued by the Church as a 'positive choice of the single life for the sake of Christ in response to the call of God' (Goergen, 1974, p.228). It is a distinctive part of a countercultural lifestyle that is 'part of the special logic of priestly life' and which can only be understood within the larger context of priesthood (Bleichner, 2004, p.108). The Church regards celibacy as 'a special gift from God' and thus, in theory, it only ordains those who have 'received' the charism (O'Malley, 2002, p.8). However, since celibacy is acknowledged to be a 'rare charism' that is 'bestowed upon relatively few men and women' (Cozzens, 2006, p.404), the Church teaches that a priest who accepts the 'obligation of celibacy' will be 'given the grace to live a faithful celibate life' (Cozzens, 2006, p.407). Accordingly, Roman Catholic priests are expected to accept celibacy

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[130] Using exchange theory, these studies noted the high cost of vocations and priesthood, with celibacy as the main factor influencing whether a person entered the priesthood and their commitment to priesthood once they were ordained.

willingly as a sign of their service to God and men[131] (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994, p. 354, No.1579).

The problem is that many priests have found celibacy to be an impossible ideal, resulting in many priests leaving to get married (Rice, 1990), while many others have remained in priesthood, living lives that are 'emotionally sterile and lacking in intimacy' (Whiteside, 1988, p.347), or ones where they lead double lives as celibate priests and sexually intimate individuals (Bordisso, 2011, Holmes, 1996). The problem is not with celibacy *per se*, since many opponents of mandatory celibacy see a value in celibacy for the priesthood (Dorr, 2004, Hoban, 1989).[132] Research from the US has shown that priests often live fulfilled lives as celibate priests and that many priests value their celibacy as an essential part of their priesthood (Greeley, 1972, Rossetti, 2005).[133] Other research indicates that priests can experience enhanced professional opportunities and spiritual benefits from their celibate lifestyle (Manuel, 1989). Furthermore, it is acknowledged that many priests struggle, more or less successfully, with the demands of celibacy (Sipe, 1995), and that it is possible to lead a happy and fulfilled life as a truly celibate parish priest, particularly if the choice is made voluntarily (Hoenkamp-Bisschops, 1992, p.335). Some Irish priests have also written about celibacy in a positive way. Monsignor O'Callaghan, for example, is grateful that celibacy did not become a 'personal problem' even though he admits to 'a mutual sexual attraction' with close women friends (O'Callaghan, 2007, pp 106-107). In his autobiography, *Steps on My Pilgrim Journey,* Cardinal Cahal Daly indicated that he found celibacy

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[131] The language used by the Church in official documents often lacks any sensitivity to gender issues.

[132] The issue is not with celibacy but with the demands of mandatory celibacy. Many individuals who oppose mandatory celibacy value celibacy 'as a freely chosen option' (Dorr, 2004, p.138) and believe that there 'is no doubting the value and the witness of a voluntarily assumed celibate commitment' (Hoban, 1989, p. 196).

[133] In his study of nearly 6,000 priests in the U.S.A., Fr Greeley (1972) found that most priests in the US would not marry if they were free to do so; Fr Rossetti (2005), in his study of more than one thousand priests surveyed from 15 U.S. dioceses in 2003/2005 reported that 67% of priests said, 'Celibacy has been a positive experience for me' and 53% endorsed the statement, 'I support the requirement that priests live a celibate life'.

to be 'a joy and a blessing,' which 'brought an ease and a freedom' to his 'relationships and my friendships, particularly with women, which otherwise would have been missing' from his life (Daly, 1998, p.270).

The History of Mandatory Celibacy in the Roman Catholic Church

Compulsory celibacy has a long tradition in the Catholic Church, it is one of the most contentious disciplines in the Catholic Church and 'the pros and cons of the practice have been debated for nearly two millennia' (Swenson, 1998, p.37). While the apostolic origins of celibacy are disputed (Auer, 1967), and celibacy was frequently 'little respected' by transgressors from the first centuries of Christianity to the Council of Trent (1545-63) and beyond, supporters of mandatory celibacy, such as Cardinal Stickler argue that 'there was never toleration for marriage after major orders had been conferred; and candidates who were already married were forbidden to continue their conjugal life after ordination' (Stickler, 1972, p.593). Following hundreds of years when clerical celibacy and chastity were widely ignored[134] (De Rosa, 1988, O'Malley, 2002, Parish, 2010, Laven, 2001), and during which the celibate ideal had 'become one of the principal liabilities of the Catholic church' (Laven, 2001, p.866), the Catholic church sought to impose order in relation to clerical celibacy in the Third and Fourth Lateran Councils (in 1179 and 1215, respectively), the Council of Trent (1545-63),[135] and ultimately through Canon Law.[136]

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[134] There is 'indisputable evidence' that 'many priests and bishops in good standing were married' in the third century (O'Malley, 2002, p.9) and that married clergy lived alongside celibate priests up to the second millennium. De Rosa (1988) makes the point that 'priesthood itself was practically hereditary' around the middle of the first century (p.402), and Sipe (1990) identified six popes who were sons of either bishops or priests during the second half of the first century. Conversely, while accepting that there is historical evidence for parish priests who lived in sin 'with a concubine and several children, or the lecherous friar molesting his female penitents in the confessional' (Laven, 2001, p.866), Laven also notes that the interactions between male and female celibates in sixteenth century Venice were frequently monogamous, long-term, and intense, although rarely overtly sexual.

[135] The Council of Trent (1545-63) reaffirmed the discipline of celibacy following challenges to celibacy by Luther during the Reformation in the sixteenth century.

[136] Code 132 of the Code of Canon Law of 1918 states: 'Clerics in major orders may not marry and they are bound by the obligation of chastity to the extent that

The Second Vatican Council confirmed the importance of celibacy as an inherent part of the priesthood although celibacy was not included in the agenda of the Second Vatican Council (O'Malley, 2008).[137] The Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), states that 'the church's holiness is fostered in a special way' by those who 'devote themselves to God alone more easily with an undivided heart in virginity or celibacy' (Flannery, 1996, p.64). Opposition to mandatory celibacy continued after the Second Vatican Council from many different sources,[138] resulting in the publication of an encyclical on celibacy, '*Sacerdotalis Coelibatus*' (Paul VI, 1967).[139] The encyclical determined that 'the present law of celibacy should today continue to be linked to the ecclesiastical ministry' (Paul VI, 1967No.14) . Critics, such as Swiss theologian Hans Küng, argued that the encyclical and the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church 'twisted what, according to the gospel, was a completely free vocation to celibacy into a law which oppressed freedom' (Kung, 2001, p.198). Others also disputed the encyclical's interpretation of the gospels. Gospel accounts suggest that the gift of celibacy is given only to a minority of people, those who can control their sexual urges outside of marriage (Matt. 19:11; 1 Cor. 7:7). Thus, while Saint Paul 'holds up virginity, continence and celibacy as Christian ideals' (O'Malley, 2002, p.9),[140] it would appear that priestly celibacy was not mandatory in the New Testament (Sipe, 2007, Dorr, 2011). [141]

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sinning against it constitutes a sacrilege' The current canon law, canon 277, reaffirms the compulsory nature of celibacy for priests.

[137] Celibacy was one of three topics, including birth control and the reform of the Roman Curia, that were considered 'so sensitive or potentially explosive' that Pope Paul withheld them from the agenda of the Second Vatican Council (O'Malley, 2008, p.6).

[138] Senior Church figures supported the notion of optional celibacy following the Second Vatican Council. In his memoirs, Cardinal Daly recounts that Cardinal Suenens, 'one of the great figures of the Second Vatican Council' (Daly, 1998, p.132) called for an end to mandatory celibacy at an international gathering of European Bishops in 1969.

[139] This encyclical addressed the objections against priestly celibacy, including the fact that the gospels present celibacy as a gift from God, the exclusion of priests who have a vocation to the priesthood but not celibacy resulting in a shortage of priests, and the view that celibacy is detrimental to the development of a mature and well-balanced human personality.

[140] For Paul, sexual abstinence is 'a suggestion, not a rule' (1 Cor. 7:7). For those with the charism or gift of celibacy, it is judged as the better option by Saint Paul

During his relatively long reign (1978-2005) Pope John Paul II affirmed the Church's commitment to the celibacy of priests on a number of occasions. In 1992, he published an apostolic exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, which concerned the formation of priests (John Paul II, 1992). In this document he stated that 'priestly celibacy should not be considered just as a legal norm or as a totally external condition for admission to ordination, but rather as a value that is profoundly connected with ordination, whereby a man takes on the likeness of Jesus Christ, the good shepherd and spouse of the Church' (John Paul II, 1992No.50). It is a gift, which will enable the priest to 'fulfil better his ministry on behalf of the People of God' (John Paul II, 1992). His successor, Pope Benedict XVI, has also affirmed the importance of priestly celibacy (Landsberg, 2010).

Opposition to Mandatory Celibacy in the Contemporary Church

In spite of the institutional endorsement of celibacy for priesthood, opposition to mandatory celibacy continues unabated in the contemporary Catholic Church. Dr Edward Daly, the former Bishop of Derry, in the second instalment of his memoirs, *A Troubled See*, questions the value of mandatory celibacy when he writes:

> I ask myself, more and more, why celibacy should be the great sacred and unyielding arbiter, the paradigm of diocesan priesthood. Why not prayerfulness, conviction in the faith, knowledge of the faith, ability to communicate in the modern age, honesty, integrity, humility, a commitment to social justice, a work ethic, respect for others, compassion and caring? Surely many of these qualities are at least as important in a diocesan priest as celibacy – yet celibacy seems to be perceived as the predominant obligation, the *sine qua non* (Daly, 2011, p.267).

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in 1 Corinthians 7 because an unmarried man can 'devote himself to the Lord's affairs' while a married man is 'torn in two ways' (1 Cor. 7:33).

[141] There is 'no scriptural evidence that Jesus practiced celibacy' (Sipe, 2007, p.549), or conversely, that 'he had an intimate sexual-genital relationship with anybody' (Dorr, 2011, p.431). It was an ideal of the emerging Church that would take hundreds of years to become a tradition and a discipline of priesthood (Pope Paul VI, 1967).

Many opponents of mandatory celibacy argue that celibacy is 'an ecclesiastical discipline, a ruling by the church for the church' (Sipe, 2007, p.552). Accordingly, they believe that as a discipline, 'the requirement of celibacy is something that can change, has changed, and might in the future change' (O'Malley, 2002, p.8), particularly if circumstances demonstrate that it is having a negative impact on the Church. They argue that there are many practical reasons for supporting the introduction of optional celibacy. For example, many studies suggest a link between mandatory celibacy and decreases in priestly recruitment and retention (Rice, 1990, Schoenherr, 2002, Cutié, 2011). Some commentators believe that the decline in the number of priests constitutes a threat to the celebration of the Mass (Duffy, 2010c, Schoenherr and Young, 1993). It is also perceived to be a challenge to the priesthood, with four in ten priests in the US reporting that loneliness is a problem (Gautier et al., 2012).

A number of studies have concluded that celibacy is a key factor for people considering religious life (Starke and Finke, 2000, Schoenherr and Greeley, 1974, Verdieck et al., 1988), and also a priest's principal consideration in determining whether he withdrew or continued in the active ministerial priesthood. Conversely, other studies have found that celibacy is just one of a number of inter-related factors that can lead to a priest resigning his priesthood (Association of Irish Priests, 1972, Hoge, 2002, Carey, 1972, Schoenherr and Greeley, 1974). Celibacy is also one of the main reasons given by priests who leave the priesthood and, sometimes, the Catholic faith (Cooney, 2008, Cutié, 2011). In his study of priests who left the priesthood, former priest David Rice estimated that more than 100,000 priests left the formal ministry within twenty years of the Second Vatican Council and that most of these priests subsequently married (Rice, 1990).

There are an ample number of international studies, which suggest that many priests find celibacy difficult. Some of these have been conducted in the US (Sipe, 1995, Bordisso, 2011, Hoge, 2002), with others undertaken

in the Netherlands (Hoenkamp-Bisschops, 1992), Australia (Anderson, 2005, Anderson, 2007) and Ireland (Lane, 1997, Keenan, 2012). While they are not directly comparable and some possibly exaggerate the extent of the problem by using samples of priests who had received counselling, and others who were self-selecting, it is clear from the literature that mandatory celibacy is difficult for many priests. In his study of more than 1,500 priests in the US, former Benedictine monk-priest, therapist and sociologist Richard Sipe estimated that only half of both heterosexual and homosexual priests practice celibacy, sometimes with an 'occasional lapse' (Sipe, 1995, p.69). Of the remainder, one in five priests (20%) were involved in sexual relationships with women, with the remainder involved in some form of sexual behaviour, such as homosexual behaviour and sexual experimentation.

In the US, sociologist and Bishop Lou Bardisso concluded from his doctoral research of 59 Roman Catholic priests regarding celibacy, genital-sexual activity, and priesthood, and a follow-up study, that 'there is a huge disconnect between the reality of celibate chastity in the life of a priest and the legal, theological, and spiritual ideals of holy Mother Church' (Bordisso, 2011, p.4). He recounted stories from many heterosexual and homosexual priests who were engaged in genital sexual behaviours, and he concluded that gay priests were most sexually active. Some of the priests who were in a sexual relationship justified it as their way of coping with loneliness and a natural need for sexual intimacy. Others felt the law of celibacy was a 'foolish law' (Bordisso, 2011, p.15) that goes against their human needs. One of his informants, Father Frank, for example, believes that he has 'a right as a person to healthy expression' and to express his love genitally as long as he is 'prudent' so that his 'loving actions' do not cause scandal (Bordisso, 2011, p.16). Others wrote of falling in love, their desire for long-term sexual relationships, their needs as gay men, and how they had first experimented with sexuality in the seminary. Conversely, some priests told of how they had lived a celibate life since ordination. Some of the priests regarded celibacy as a 'cross to bear' (Bordisso, 2011, p.31) that caused an unhealthy attitude toward women and which can

cause 'selfishness, oddity, and a desire to control others through power' (Bordisso, 2011, p.32). They had chosen celibacy because of their love of ministry and they had learnt different ways of coping with this unwanted lifestyle. He concluded that celibacy is best regarded as a continuum rather than an absolute, ranging from total abstinence to regular sexual activity.

In the Netherlands, psychologist, Anne Hoenkamp-Bisschops, conducted extended personal interviews with 24 priests. She constructed a typology of priesthood based on how they responded to the demands of celibacy i.e., living a life without a sexually intimate relationship. She identified three main ways in which these priests dealt with their celibate obligation. First, there are priests who reject the discipline of celibacy and who, at one point in their lives, have chosen to have a 'long-term, exclusive, and sexually intimate relationship,' whilst living apart from their partner (Hoenkamp-Bisschops, 1992, p.328). This priest justifies his behaviour on the grounds that his relationship made him a better person and ultimately, a better pastor. Second, there are priests who find celibacy relatively easy because of their psychological make-up. They value the benefits of greater availability that their celibate life-style allows. However, having made a 'free choice for celibacy does not, however, mean that he has no problems at all with it' (Hoenkamp-Bisschops, 1992, p.331). This priest can fall in love or feel lonely but 'since celibacy is what he really wants, this means he just has to go through this often painful experience, and so he does' (Hoenkamp-Bisschops, 1992, p.331). Third, there are priests who struggle between the demands of celibacy and their need for sexual intimacy. He accepts celibacy as part of priesthood, even if he occasionally lapses due to loneliness or falling in love. On a conscious level, 'he wants to comply with the rules and live up to the expectation of others' (Hoenkamp-Bisschops, 1992, p.331). She concludes that 'under certain conditions it is possible to lead a happy and fulfilled life as a truly celibate parish priest', particularly where the priest has made the choice freely' (Hoenkamp-Bisschops, 1992, p.335). However, due to the restrictive nature of their seminary training, whereby a student's education in celibacy and sexuality typically consisted of a strict prohibition against personal friendships, she

concludes the traditional education toward celibate priesthood 'often only thwarted the personal development of the students, thus diminishing the capacity to choose freely' (Hoenkamp-Bisschops, 1992, p.333).

Other studies and autobiographies testify to the difficult nature of celibacy for many priests. In her study of approximately 50 priests in Australia, anthropologist Jane Anderson tells the stories of priests 'with friends' who had formed long-term, intimate sexual relationships (Anderson, 2005, Anderson, 2007). US priest Fr Albert Cutie left the priesthood because of celibacy and redefined his relationship with God to become a husband, father, and Anglican priest (Cutié, 2011). Irish priest, Fr Dermot Dunne did something similar when he left the Catholic priesthood to marry and become an Anglican minister (Cooney, 2008). Fr. Brian D'Arcy wrote of his experience of celibacy where he admits to knowing 'what it is to love another human being who also loved' him but 'he has never known sexual love' (D'Arcy, 2006, p.202). Fr. Joe McVeigh wrote that while 'the rule of celibacy made some sense' within the context of 'making a sacrifice for a special cause', as the years went by, he 'began to question the whole idea of compulsory celibacy' and to discover that the 'the longing for intimacy and friendship did not go away' (McVeigh, 2008, pp 70-71). Others have made known the difficulties they encountered as a result of falling in love but surviving to stay in priesthood (Fitzgibbon, 1996).

The evidence in Ireland is largely anecdotal, backed up by some empirical research. For example, a substantial number of Dublin priests surveyed in 1996 found loneliness and celibacy to be stressful (Lane, 1997).[142] Some commentators have argued that the priesthood can be a very lonely place, where they can experience a 'terrible sense of isolation and loneliness', where 'keeping going' and surviving on 'resignation and tenacity' does for most of the time (Hoban, 1996, pp. 659-660). It is a loneliness that has

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[142] Fr Desmond Forristal in his commentary on the survey findings warns of the dangers of drawing 'too many conclusions from this single response'. He writes that while the response to the question shows that many of the clergy regard celibacy as a considerable source of stress' it 'does not tell us whether they wish to see celibacy retained or abolished' (Forristal, 1997, p.23).

been captured by novelists, priests and researchers alike (Power, 1969b, O'Connor, 1993, Harding, 1986).[143] Journalist and agony-aunt Angela MacNamara wrote that she had seen 'the breakdown of celibacy in terms of bitter, lonely men' and men who 'nibble at intimate relationships with women' (MacNamara, 1985a, p.240). Irish Redemptorist priest Tony Flannery captures the feeling of loss and isolation that he believes illustrates the celibate lives of some priests:

> A frequent case I meet is of the curate in his forties. He is a friendly man, sensitive, warm and with a real care for his people. He is devoted to his ministry and works hard. He lives on his own in what is often a large old house and a woman comes in about three days a week to do some basic cleaning. It is a lonely house and he is a lonely man; his loneliness accentuated by his very humanity and the intensity with which he responds to the problems of his parishioners. A drink at the end of the day enables him to unwind and what begins as a means of relaxation can enslave him as the years go on (Flannery, 1995, p.624).

Some researchers suggest that the celibate lifestyle, when it is imposed on an individual, may be detrimental to the physical, psychological and spiritual health of priests, leading to sexual immaturity and possible disorder (Flannery, 1999, p.75, Adams, 2003, Doyle, 2006, Holmes, 1996). Canon lawyer Thomas Doyle argues that there is a 'definite relationship between celibacy, the clericalist mystique, and the emotional health of priests' (Doyle, 2006, p.195). The priest's sense of loneliness is made worse by having to live alone due to there being less priests (Yamane, 2002), with a consequent decrease in traditional support structures for priests (Virginia, 1998)[144]. The loneliness is accentuated when priests no longer socialise with each other as much as they did in the

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[143] For example, Richard Power's novel *The Hungry Grass*, Michael Harding's *Priest*, and Frank O'Connor's *The Collar* all depict what were essentially the lives of isolated and lonely men.

[144] US priest Fr Stephen Virginia discovered that secular clergy experienced significantly greater depression when compared to religious and monastic clergy. He concluded that the lack of social support and a sense of isolation were key elements associated with secular clergy's experience of both burnout and depression.

past (Gautier et al., 2012).[145] Many diocesan clergy live by themselves, with limited support from their fellow clergy, and there are indications that this lifestyle may be a significant factor in the loneliness experienced by priests. Monsignor O'Callaghan believes that the traditional social practices engaged in by priests, such as playing cards and watching TV together are less frequent nowadays where 'priests across the generations may hardly know one another' and where in general 'we see one another only at funerals and at formal meetings of official diocesan committees' (O'Callaghan, 2007, p.196).[146]

Conversely, other commentators, such as Fr McVeigh believe a 'sense of fraternity and friendship' exists among 'the ordinary priests in the diocese' (McVeigh, 2008 p. 95), which is an important aspect of many priests' support networks, even if some priests are more 'aloof' or 'reserved' than others (McVeigh, 2008, p. 96). US sociologist Fr Greeley also describes a strong support network for and by priests, a 'band of brothers' if you will, which is a consequence of spending years together in the seminary, spending vacations together, taking days off together, eating dinners together, speaking the same kind of 'clerical lingo', sharing the same jokes, and sharing the same gossip (Greeley, 2004, p.105).

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[145] US research has found that 'loneliness tends to be more common among retired diocesan priests' because they have less interactions with other priests (Gautier et al., 2012, p.63

[146] In his memoirs, *Putting Hand to the Plough*, former Maynooth Professor, Monsignor O'Callaghan writes that contemporary Irish culture has resulted in a different reality for 'very many priests' who 'spin out quite lonely lives' (O'Callaghan, 2007, p.196). In the past, priests had live-in housekeepers who cooked, cleaned, answered the door and 'kept a light in the house' (O'Callaghan, 2007, p.196).

The Gay Celibate

Intimacy can be difficult for some people but it is possibly more difficult when your sexual orientation must remain hidden (O'Brien, 1995).[147] The Catholic Church has made very few official statements on priests' sexuality and its theology of sexuality is deemed by some to be 'inadequate for modern conditions' (Keenan, 2012, p.30). It is an area that is surrounded in secrecy (Sipe, 2004), and to some extent this is understandable, since all forms of intimate sexual behaviour by priests are prohibited. This would appear to be particularly the case for homosexual priests, with sensationalist disclosures of gay activity by priests in the media (Agnew, 2010). Unlike their heterosexual counterparts, gay priests have to consider the implications of their 'coming out' at some stage in their lives. US Jesuit priest Fr Thomas Brennan, for example, writes of his coming out that was informed by 'at least two identities', his being gay and a Catholic priest (Brennan, 2004).

A generation ago, according to Irish theologian Fr Raphael Gallagher, homosexuality in the priesthood was not 'publicly acknowledged' and accordingly, 'if it did not exist there was no need to discuss it' (Gallagher and Hannon, 2006, p.67). However, even though it is now accepted that there are homosexual priests in the Catholic Church, and possibly a large number of priests (Cozzens, 2000), there is nothing 'explicit' in canon law on the matter (Gallagher and Hannon, 2006, p.68), and very few official statements on priests' sexuality generally (Keenan, 2012). Accordingly, the publication of an official document on homosexuality, *Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in view of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Order,* represented a significant departure from tradition. This document states that the Church 'cannot admit to the

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[147] Fr Patrick O'Brien, for example, wrote of 'being present on several occasions when priests wept openly and with evident grief over the abuse cases and the death of a brother priest in a homosexual club'. The 'reality of homosexual and lesbian vocations' is one of the wider questions he believes that need to be raised by these events (O'Brien, 1995, p. 14).

seminary or holy orders those who practice homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called 'gay culture' (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2005).

However, Irish theologian Fr Patrick Hannon believes it would be a 'mistake to read the document as excluding all homosexual men from the priesthood' as the *Instruction* 'can hardly wish to say that no homosexual person is capable of right relationships with other men and women' (Gallagher and Hannon, 2006, p.79). Furthermore, it is alleged that many priests and bishops are gay, therefore making any blanket ban somewhat hypocritical. The actual number of priests who are gay is unknown, although various studies have estimated that the percentage may lie somewhere between 10% and 60% (Cozzens, 2000), with 'most experts' estimating between 25% and 40% (Plante, 2007, p.495). However, the level of sexual activity is possibly less than suggested by these figures, as it is unlikely that all gay priests, no more than their heterosexual counterparts, are in sexual relationships. Irish gay priest Fr Bernard Lynch says, for example, that homosexuality was not 'rampant' in the seminary because 'close physical contact was forbidden' and everyone had to be 'on their guard' (Lynch, 1993, p.19). Conversely, studies in the U.S. suggest that the number of men applying to religious life who are 'homosexual in orientation is significantly higher than in the general population of men and that these men are as well adjusted as and not significantly different in their psychological profiles from heterosexual men' (Plante, 2007, p.498).

Prior to the Second Vatican Council, and for many years afterwards, sex or celibacy was rarely if ever discussed in Irish seminaries (Hederman, 2010).[148] While some talks were given on purity and chastity, it was

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[148] A similar situation occurred in the training of religious priests. The Abbot of Glenstal Abbey, Mark Patrick Hederman, for example, describes the 'training received' as 'a lonely journey of self-sacrifice' where the 'important thing was to cut yourself off from all human affection and attachment, to kill off conscientiously any natural urges of the body so that the new kind of heavenly fuel, supernatural grace, might flow through the human infrastructure. You tried to be solitary, chaste, pure. You shunned all earthly goods and material wealth.

possibly considered pointless to discuss sexuality or celibacy, since all sexual behaviour was forbidden for Catholic priests and seminarians. Nevertheless, measures were put in place to control the behaviour of seminarians.[149] In the seminary, students' potential homosexual behaviour was strictly controlled through rules that strictly forbade students from entering other students' rooms, or developing 'personal friendships' with other students. Seminaries were also divided into junior and senior divisions, which kept younger and older students apart, thereby minimising the risk of sexual contact or abuse. This was not unusual for many of these students who had attended boarding schools with similar rules.

The ban on sexual activity continued into subsequent decades; however, there were fewer restrictions on students visiting each other's rooms or socialising outside the seminary with lay people, male and female.[150] In the post-Vatican II period friendships with females became more common, leading many students to leave the seminary and priesthood. Personal development courses were introduced into seminaries, including the Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) programme. However, homosexuality remained hidden in Irish society and the Catholic Church, with serious criminal and disciplinary consequences for anyone found violating this moral code (Doyle, 2006).[151]

Above all, you fought against your own good taste, impulses, inclinations and will' (Hederman, 2010, p.62).

[149] The behaviour of heterosexual seminarians was controlled by ensuring students had minimal contact with females. For example, students in Clonliffe were forbidden to speak with students when attending UCD, while there were no female students in Maynooth until the late 1960s. Visits from female family members were also monitored to minimise any contact with other students.

[150] All sexual behaviour remains a prohibited activity for students and priests, resulting in any such activity being conducted in secret, regardless of sexual orientation.

[151] Homosexuality was only decriminalised in Ireland in 1993 and it has been persistently linked with sexual deviancy in the Church. US Canon lawyer Thomas Doyle refutes any link between homosexuality and celibacy with sexual abuse when he says that it is 'both naïve and even preposterous to assume that the inability to turn to women for sexual release causes clerics to prey on children or adolescents' and that mandatory celibacy 'alone does not cause sexual dysfunction' (Doyle, 2006, p.195).

The Politics of Celibacy

The sublimation of one's sexuality is somewhat of a conundrum in a society where the majority of adults engage in sexual behaviour (Ferriter, 2009). While many priests accept it willingly as part of their priesthood, it would appear that many other priests accept celibacy reluctantly even when it is detrimental to their emotional and physical health (Anderson, 2005). Yet, apart from the exodus of priests who cannot live a celibate life, and opposition from individual priests and commentators, most priests would appear to accept celibacy with minimal dissent. The question addressed in this final section is why priests continue to accept celibacy as a requirement of their priesthood.

A twofold answer is proposed, both of which are based on the understanding that celibacy has more to do with 'the politics of control and the question of Church finance' than with spirituality or asceticism (O'Donohue, 1998, p.334). First, mandatory celibacy exists because it to be of benefit to the institutional Church (Sipe, 2004). In the Middle Ages, the universal imposition of a rule on celibacy on priests enabled the Church to counteract the power of priestly dynasties that virtually neutered papal power (Mackey, 2010). Thus, celibacy enables the institutional Church to control the activities of its priests more easily and to eliminate potential disputes over the ownership of Church property (Keenan, 2011). A celibate priesthood also represents a 'key economic resource and power elite of the hierarchical Church', which the Church is reluctant to change in case it leads to changes in other areas of its political and economic structures (Schoenherr and Young, 1993, p.353).

Second, the Church's Magisterium is enabled to impose mandatory celibacy because, further to Bourdieu, the institutional Church occupies the dominant position within the Catholic field, where they can set the rules of the game for their benefit. For example, priests are effectively muzzled in their opposition to celibacy because 'the papacy demands uncritical support of, and passive obedience to, its rigid belief system' (Anderson, 2005, p.199). Anderson perceives the imposition of mandatory

celibacy as an 'abuse of power' which is centralised in the Vatican (Anderson, 2005, p.199). This enables the Church to control both the rhetoric on celibacy and the resources available to priests that could potentially be used to instigate change. By concentrating 'leadership and decision-making power in a church bureaucracy distant from the life and ministry of priests' she argues that the pope and his curia are 'well placed' to promote the belief that 'celibacy is the one and only true way for a priest to serve God' and to imbed this belief into Church law (Anderson, 2005, p.12). Furthermore, priests are aware of the sanctions that could be imposed on them for violating a rule of the Church and they are naturally reluctant to do so.

Clerical sexuality is surrounded by a 'conspiracy of secrecy' (Keenan, 2012, p. 30), where the reality of celibacy is rarely acknowledged or discussed. This is not unexpected since most Irish priests grew up in a society where Irish Catholic sexuality was 'built on purity, chastity, virginity, modesty, and piety' which left the 'Irish psyche with a sense of shame and embarrassment about sexual practices, feelings, and emotions' (Keenan, 2012, p.149). They were accustomed to the Church controlling their sexual desires (Inglis, 1987) and celibacy was traditionally held in high esteem in Irish society.[152] This was reinforced when they entered the seminary, where their sexual education was minimal and 'only too often consisted of a strict prohibition against personal friendships' and a strict regulation of most aspects of their lives (Hoenkamp-Bisschops, 1992, p.333). However, just as the Irish people resisted the demands of sexual morality imposed on them by the Catholic Church through 'clandestine and illicit sexual behaviour' (Ferriter, 2009, p.546), it may be argued that

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[152] Prior to the Second Vatican Council, when the Catholic *habitus* was strongest, the Penny Catechism listed four instructions related to the sixth commandment ('Thou shalt not commit adultery'), which forbade Catholics to have any impure thoughts concerning another's wife or husband; to engage in any looks, words or actions that were contrary to holy purity; to look at immodest plays and dances; and immodest songs, books and pictures because they are 'most dangerous to the soul, and lead to mortal sin (Penny Catechism, 1985, p.36). The revised version of the Catechism published in 1994 contained considerably more detail on offences against chastity, fecundity and marriage.

Irish priests also resisted the imperative of celibacy in a similar fashion, and that they were facilitated by the Church's selective control of a priest's living arrangements.

The literature review on celibacy suggested a number of trends that will be explored in the analysis of the primary data. First, many priests experience difficulties with mandatory celibacy, some practical and others more personal and practical. This results in priests living celibacy along a continuum, ranging from total acceptance to rejection (Bordisso, 2011). Second, many priests have left the priesthood because of personal issues with celibacy. Others who stay can become lonely, disillusioned and angry. Third, gay celibacy is possibly more difficult because of the secretive nature and often adverse reactions to homosexual lifestyles. Being gay represents an additional and important identity that has to be dealt with by gay priests. Fourth, while it has spiritual qualities for some, mandatory celibacy is perceived by others to be an abuse of power by the Church (Anderson, 2005), which has more to do with controlling priests and Church finances than anything spiritual. Priests are reluctant to challenge the status quo because the institutional Church has a privileged position in the religious field based on superior access to the rules of the game.

This section has highlighted the importance of identity, celibacy and obedience to an understanding of diocesan priesthood, generally The literature regarding the lived experience of Irish diocesan priests during the past fifty years is reviewed in the next section.

5.5 Fifty Years of Irish diocesan Priesthood, 1962-2012

The Diocesan Priest in 1960s Ireland

The early 1960s was a time of relative certainty, continuity and homogeneity for Irish society, the Catholic Church, and diocesan priests. American Jesuit, Fr B.F. Biever's 1962 study of Catholic culture in Dublin also revealed an overwhelming support for the Church and its priests. Over two-thirds of the sample 'endorsed the proposition that if one followed a priest's advice, one could not go wrong' (Garvin, 2005, p.253). It was a 'pleasant life' for many priests (Olden, 2004, p.336), which often entailed a 'presumption of preference' and an 'assumption of power' (Hoban, 1996). Monsignor Michael Olden captures the essence of the pre-Vatican II Irish priest very well when he describes him as a person who was 'in undisputed charge of his parish, pretty well guaranteed the obedience of the people, unstressed by criticism of his work or absenteeism from the religious services which he conducts… largely unaccountable controller of parish finances. His social position and respect in matters other than strictly religious was assured: sporting, recreational, cultural societies and clubs would have had him as chairman or patron. He was indeed a determining figure in the community' (Olden, 2004, p. 336)

While the living standards of priests were 'considerably higher than average', they were not perceived to be 'grudged him by the people' (Olden, 2004, p. 336), because most priests dedicated their lives to the service of people. The priesthood was highly regarded as a career and people, with many young people considering the possibility of being a priest (O'Toole, 2010).[153] People in rural communities in particular 'encouraged their daughters to be nuns and delighted in a son who gained

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[153] Journalist Fintan O'Toole reflects on what might have been if he had decided to pursue his original desire to become a priest. He was eight when the possibility first struck him, but that was not unusual for boys in the 1950s and 1960s.

the priesthood' (Brody, 1973, p.177, O'Morain, 2010).[154] The whole parish community celebrated ordinations and a priest's first Mass.

One generally knew what to expect from priests in a parish during the first part of the 1960s (Ward, 1965).[155] He had a specific mission to fulfil that rarely if ever threatened the established order (Schneider and Zurcher, 1970).[156] Monsignor Olden, for example, lists a variety of 'clearly defined demands' that were placed on him and his fellow priests as they left the seminary in 1960, including the demand to 'dress in a special way', to 'pray the breviary every day', to be 'celibate' and never marry, to celebrate the Sacraments 'lawfully and validly', to 'preach the Word of God', to 'celebrate the Eucharist', to 'baptise', to 'pronounce the words of absolution in the Sacrament of Penance', to 'administer the Sacrament of the Sick', to 'conduct weddings', to 'officiate at funerals', and to 'bless people' and things in the name of the Church (Olden, 2008, p.16). The priest also knew what to expect from people in pre-Vatican II Ireland: full churches, busy confessionals, and people who obeyed priests without question (Hoban, 1996)

The early 1960s was a time when the lives of priests and seminarians were highly regulated by canon law, diocesan rules[157] and numerous rubrics.[158]

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[154] The status of priests in rural Ireland was evident in sayings, such as a farmer was well off when he had 'a bull in the yard and a son in Maynooth' or 'a priest in the parish and a bull in the yard' (O'Morain, 2010, p.14).

[155] Professor Conor Ward observed that when a priest comes to a parish to do a particular job, 'he knows what he is expected to do, and how he is expected to act, and everyone else knows what they expect him to do and how they expect him to act' (Ward, 1965, p.249).

[156] There are no known instances in the 1960s of priests rebelling against their bishop in Ireland as happened, for example, in Texas, when sixty-eight priests wrote a letter requesting the resignation of their archbishop.

[157] While some dioceses allowed their priests to attend horse racing, or the theatre, others did not. Some priests were also forbidden to drink poteen or gamble.

[158] Rules ('rubrics') were laid down for the recitation of the Divine Office, the celebration of Mass, and the administration of the sacraments. They governed, for example, how a priest held his arms when saying Mass. Anecdotal evidence exists that suggests some scrupulous priests took great pains to ensure they did not violate any of the rubrics. One priest friend told me that his uncle believed that he risked potentially hundreds of mortal sins every time he said Mass.

A priest who violated these rules risked committing a mortal sin, while students risked expulsion from the seminary (Dunn, 1994). Seminaries were very difficult places where 'there were rules for the sake of rules' (Brady, 1980, p.707). Students had to observe solemn silence at night and often during meal times, and they were discouraged from having 'particular friends' or visiting each other's rooms. Furthermore, staff treated students with 'excessive formality' (Brady, 1980, p.707). During the 1960s Maynooth seminary 'wanted rugged men for a rugged life of solitary confinement' (Brady, 1989, p. 11) that did not develop students' emotional side (Flannery, 1997).[159]

There was a plentiful supply of priests in the 1960s, which meant that some candidates for the priesthood could not study for their own diocese, and newly ordained priests typically had to spend time in another diocese, or in another country while awaiting a position in their own diocese. As was the situation in other countries, a priest's status was fundamentally linked to their seniority rather than any specific achievements they may have attained during their careers (Peterson and Schoenherr, 1978). Priests were promoted to the position of parish priest primarily because of their age and seniority in their seminary class. Money was an issue for some priests, with 'glaring inequalities' in the income positions of priests (Brady, 1980, p.712). Parish priests received substantially more than their curates, and assistants were often paid very poorly. In some dioceses, the parish priest lived alone, often in a large house, while his assistants had to find their own accommodation.

The turning point for the Catholic Church and the priesthood coincided with the convocation of the Second Vatican Council by Pope John XXIII

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[159] A similar situation existed in seminaries run by religious orders. Redemptorist Fr Tony Flannery, for example, noted that 'uniformity was a way of life', where training was 'geared towards suppressing the individuality of its members, and developing people with similar ways of thinking and behaving' (Flannery, 1997, p.21).

(Hebblethwaite, 1994).[160] Prior to the Second Vatican Council, priesthood was defined largely in cultic terms, with an emphasis on obedience and the sacramental role of the priest. Conversely, the servant-leader model, which emerged following Vatican II, trained priests who were more progressive in their outlook, more supportive of lay involvement, and more critical of some aspects of Church teachings, such as artificial birth control. The servant–leader model emphasised pastoral leadership, flexible Church leadership and structures, creative liturgies, tolerance towards theological differences, and optional celibacy (Hoge and Wenger, 2003). Following Vatican II, the theology of the priesthood was expanded to include priestly, prophetic and kingly roles. A priest was regarded as more than a dispenser of sacraments; he was also commissioned to continue Christ's mission by proclaiming the gospel and celebrating the Eucharist. Inevitably, some tension arose between the older priests and the younger, zealous priests, when their different visions of priesthood and Church collided.

However, not all priests welcomed Vatican II to the same extent.[161] Older priests who had been trained in the pre-Vatican II cultic model of priesthood found that they were required to undertake a greater range of duties, leading some of them to resist the 'immense changes in the parameters of priestly service' (Tierney, 1986, p.41). No longer was it sufficient for a priest to 'say Mass and give Benediction'; now priests had to have the ability 'to communicate the meaning of the liturgy', to have an understanding of Church music, to train lay ministers, and to have the 'skills and talents that go to the establishment and pasturing of the Christian community' and conflict resolution (Tierney, 1986, p.41). Some younger priests also found the transition to a Vatican II Church difficult. Fr Ray Brady, for example, described how the newly ordained priests who

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[160] Articles in *The Furrow* suggest that priests were already considering their position in the world. Volume 9 of the Furrow was dedicated to '*The Priest in the World*'.

[161] Anecdotal evidence suggests that some of priests resisted the changes and left the diocesan priesthood for the relative stability of monasteries and religious orders. I contacted one of these men during the recruitment phase of the research but, unfortunately, he did not wish to take part in the research.

had also been trained in the pre-cultic model of priesthood felt like 'yesterday's men', when the theology they had been taught in the seminary was 'consigned to the dump' following Vatican II. He describes how he felt a 'new kind of anxiety', a loss of 'confidence and security', and 'a sense of alienation' in 'those heady post-Vatican II days' as the 'ground began shifting' under his feet. The result was that he found himself 'marginalized at an alarming rate in the 1970s' (Brady, 1989, pp.9-10). Some older priests felt that the priesthood had been devalued (O'Carroll, 1987).[162]

By the end of the 1960s, ordinations and vocations to the priesthood began to decline in many Western countries, including Ireland and the US (Lennon et al., 1971, Starke and Finke, 2000), and substantial numbers of priests left the priesthood (Rice, 1990). However, the traditional respect for the clergy was still there, and even in the burgeoning urban areas of Dublin, the notion of the priest as community leader remained quite strong (Kenny, 1997, p.259). The old, devout Catholic Ireland was facing the prospect of change as it sought to coexist[163] with new, more radical, less deferential attitudes towards the Church.

The Diocesan Priest in 1970s and 1980s Ireland

The 1970s and 1980s was a period of significant change for the Irish Church and its priests, as the Church came to terms with Vatican II and increasing secularisation. However, the change was not immediate and the diocesan priest continued to be held in high esteem during this period, reflecting the enduring and strong Catholic identity of most Irish people (Council for Research and Development, 1975). In his study of Dublin adults, Fr Mícheál Mac Gréil found that Dublin adults had a very positive

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[162] Fr O'Carroll observed that while the Vatican II document, the *Constitution on the Church,* had chapters on religious and the laity, it had none on priests.

[163] Political scientist, Tom Garvin, points out that Biever's 1962 study of Catholics in Dublin highlighted a dilemma for Irish priests, who had to balance the needs of an emerging educated Catholic middle class, with the more conservative needs of the majority of Catholics who were 'hostile to change of any kind' (Garvin, 2005, p.260).

view of priests and (MacGréil, 1977).[164] The conservative nature of many Irish Catholics informed their views of priests, and in spite of the new model of Church that followed the Second Vatican Council, many Irish people did not want their priests to change. Substantial numbers of Irish Catholic adults supported traditional Church positions on various issues relating to the role and work of priests. For example, the majority of Irish people wanted their priests to wear clerical clothes in public. They were also against women priests and married priests. Priests were welcomed into most people's homes and they were often guests of honour at weddings and diverse secular activities. In many rural parishes, for example, the parish priest was automatically elected as chairman of the GAA, whether he wanted to or not.

However, change had begun and further change was inevitable as Ireland became more secularised and the implementation of changes from the Second Vatican Council began to gather pace. With hindsight, some commentators acknowledge that by the early 1970s 'priesthood was clearly perceived as a risky business' with priests leaving and vocations declining (McDonagh, 2000, p.592). People's views of what constitutes an 'ideal priest' changed noticeably during this period, with more people wanting a priest to be 'a person who gives an example of Christian living' and less emphasis on 'a person who visits people and helps those in trouble' (Table 5.2,overleaf).

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[164] Fr MacGréil used an adapted form of the Bogardus Social Distance Scale to measure attitudes towards priests. The Bogardus Social Distance Scale was initially developed to measure attitudes towards racial groups and nationalities. Fr Mícheál MacGréil adapted it to measure distance between different groups by asking respondents to indicate the closest level of social distance to which they would be willing to admit members from each of 70 groups. The first level of the seven-interval scale was 'Would marry or welcome as member of my family', while the seventh level was 'Would debar or deport from Ireland. More than nine in ten (91%) respondents said they would welcome a priest into their families.

Table 5.2 Qualities of an Ideal Priest, Republic of Ireland,

1974-1984

Priestly Qualities	1974 (N=2,473)	1984 (N=1,005)
	%	%
A spiritual advisor	22.4	20.4
A person who visits people and helps those I trouble.	42.7	25.6
A person who gives an example of Christian living.	24.5	43.7
A person who conducts religious services.	8.0	6.1
All these qualities are important	2.4	4.3

Source: (Breslin and Weafer, 1985, p.114)

More of a priest's time was dedicated to pastoral care, liturgy, social and community activities, and administration (Forde, 1987, McVeigh, 2008).[165] New roles emerged for priests, such as a 'youth' priest (Doherty, 1977), and 'vocations directors', amongst others, that sought to respond to the emerging needs of the times, a loss of traditional faith, and a steady decline in vocations, respectively. Individual priests became involved in areas such as social justice, community development (Callanan, 1972), adult education, and local politics (Freeney, 1979). Many priests, especially younger priests, felt energised by the Second Vatican Council (Mulcahy, 1974).[166] New roles and ministries also emerged for lay people,

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[165] Fermanagh priest Fr McVeigh, for example, describes a typical day for himself in 1970s Ireland, as follows: Each day was very structured and everybody knew what he was supposed to be doing. One of the three priests was always on duty. There was Mass to be said either in the church or in the Convent of Mercy every day and a number of Masses to be said on Sunday. There were confessions at set times every week, home visitation, the Legion of Mary meetings, etc.' (McVeigh, 2008, p.95).

[166] Many younger priests were enthusiastic about the spirit and potential initiatives of the Second Vatican Council, and many priests immersed themselves in pastoral planning with enthusiasm and energy. Research by Fr Brian Mulcahy in 1974 found that 60% of priests believed that the Second Vatican Council had inspired greater interest in the Church and made people think more seriously about it, even if it was also generally agreed that the council had 'left the older generation confused and disturbed'. The survey also found that over half the priests said they would be enthusiastic about experiments in liturgical matters, teaching religion, and in the area of the development of dogma and morals. Nearly three quarters of the priests said the laity should take a more active part in

leading to some discussion on the deployment of priests and lay participation (Ryan, 1988a).[167] It was a time when theologians and people alike began to seriously consider the practical implications of Vatican II for the laity (Birch, 1979). Priests had to come to terms with the many liturgical changes that emanated from the Second Vatican Council and the formation of structures and roles in their parish, such as Parish Pastoral Councils and lay ministries, to facilitate greater lay involvement. In some parishes, new forms of evangelisation and collaborative ministry were considered, if not always acted upon (Ryan, 1988b). Many parishes commissioned research or held open parish meetings to discern the needs and wishes of its parishioners.[168]

For the first time, it appeared as if the Church, clergy and the laity were questioning the 'special' nature of the priest's vocation. Theologians and priests began to view priesthood differently, as the servant-leader model increasingly prevailed in the Irish Church. No longer, in the opinion of some theologians, was the priest a man apart from the people, someone who has the 'sacramental power' to make Christ present in the Mass and confession (Corbett, 1979, p.456). Rather, there was a growing realisation amongst some priests and theologians that the 'lay person and priest are at one within the people of God' and that the priest can 'no longer be identified simply by the sacred actions he performs' or the clerical clothes he wears (Corbett, 1979, p.455). Irish society had changed and priests

the pastoral work of the Church. Most priests said they would involve the people in the 'traditional' social work of the Church and the administration of parish finances, while all priests agreed that celebrating Mass/ Sacraments, personal example, preaching and home visitation were essential priestly work. Finally, the reaction of younger priests to parish councils was very positive. The research was based on a sample of 500 priests, religious and diocesan, who were randomly selected from the Irish Catholic Directory.

[167] Some like Bishop Laurence Ryan argued that the development of lay participation in the Church should not depend on any shortage of priests, and that priestly and lay ministries 'need each other and complement each other' (Ryan, 1988, p.26).

[168] During my time as research officer and director of the Council for Research and Development in the 1980s, we conducted surveys and provided consultancy to various dioceses and parishes. Some dioceses also had their own specialist units and personnel. For example, Dublin Archdiocese initiated a parish renewal process in the mid-1980s.

were increasingly having to take positions on moral areas, such as divorce, contraception, sterilization, and abortion (MacNamara, 1985b). They were also faced with discussions on the nature of morality and sin in a changing Ireland (Fagan, 1977, Gallagher, 1981), and more specific debates on the ordination of women, homosexuality, and married priests (Maloney, 1981).

The 1980s concluded with priests generally satisfied with their lives[169] but increasingly confused about their role and identity. Since the Second Vatican Council 'many priests have found that their vision – their dream of priesthood – and their understanding of the role of the priest are no longer clear. Emerging new ministries, ever changing demands, personnel boards, retirement policies and many other factors have left far too many unsure about their role' (Dalton, 1990, p. 94).

A third model of priesthood emerged during the 1980s, which coincided with the conservative papacy of John Paul II (1978-2005). In many ways, it was perceived to be similar to the cultic model of priesthood, but with some differences (see above). The 'new priest' according to US sociologists, Hoge and Wenger (2003) typically believes that a priest is ontologically different to lay people, he is orthodox in his theological views, loyal to the pope, follows established liturgical rules, values the hierarchical nature of the Church, accepts the doctrinal teachings of the Church, and believes that celibacy is essential to the priesthood. The younger generation of priests were strongly influenced by the substance and style of the papacies of Pope John Paul II (1978-2005) and his successor Pope Benedict XVI (2005-2013). Both popes were concerned with the direction of the Church since Vatican II, and both sought to restore orthodoxy within the Church, and specifically a valid interpretation of Vatican II. Pope John Paul II was very strong in his emphasis on the

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[169] Informal inquiries by the National Conference of Priests during the 1980s found that while many priests experienced an 'overall sense of satisfaction', every priest contacted felt that their priesthood was 'an increasingly complex and difficult vocation' (Brady, 1989, p.9).

centrality of the ordained priesthood within the Church. He also began the practice of writing to priests on Holy Thursday, and in holding the Synod on Priestly Formation, *Patores Dabo Vobes.* In his final address to the clergy of Rome, Pope Benedict XVI was critical of interests within the Church who trivialised 'the idea of the Council' in their interpretation of the liturgy and the 'People of God' (Benedict XVI, 2013). In addition to restoring authentic, some say archaic, language into the Missal of the Mass, Pope Benedict XVI also influenced the style of some young priests by his support for traditional 'smoke and lace' liturgies and clerical dress. His red shoes became an iconic sign of his papacy.

The Diocesan Priest in Contemporary Ireland, 1990–2012

The enthusiasm and uncertainty of the 1970s and 1980s eventually gave way to what many commentators have depicted as a crisis period for priesthood. It is also a crisis period for the Irish Church, in which priests like Fr O'Brien believe the 'landscape of the Irish Church is being eaten away by sexual scandal, materialism, the dawning of new and welcome freedoms for women and minorities, the secularisation of minds' (O'Brien, 1995, p.13). One Irish priest expressed his disappointment with the Church which, he felt was no longer the Church for which he was ordained in the 'heady-post Vatican II days of 1971' (Standún, 1993, p.85).

> It is increasingly difficult to remain a priest in a Church, which has sidelined Loenardo Boff, Hans Küng, Charles Curran, Ernesto Cardenal, not to mention people nearer home. A Church which has lost more than a hundred thousand priests mainly due to its insistence on compulsory clerical celibacy, a Church which makes celibacy more important than Eucharistic ministry, a Church which preaches justice for all, yet refuses to contemplate equality for women in its ministry (Standún, 1993, p.85).

It is widely accepted that priesthood is in crisis in many Western countries, including Ireland. Some US commentators perceive it as a 'crisis of confidence' (Bacik, 2006, p.44) or a crisis of 'identity' (Wood, 2006, p.3). Kilalla priest, Fr Brendan Hoban believes that the clergy are 'in truth a demoralized force', where the media have declared 'open season' on

priests and where they are presented 'variously as a motley band of power-hungry semi-politicians, manipulators of civil legislation, self-appointed policemen, and latterly, closet sexual deviants' (Hoban, 1992). Author, philosopher and former priest John O'Donohue believes that the priesthood is in crisis and that priests are 'confused and demoralized' (O'Donohue, 1998, p.323). However, he also believes that the crisis could benefit priests if, for example, it results in a less clericalist world and an end to mandatory celibacy. Others, such as theologian Fr Enda McDonagh, believe that the 'priestly crisis is first of all a faith crisis for the people' (McDonagh, 2000, p. 592).

Fitzgibbon identified a range of symptoms of the alleged crisis, including a crisis of ministry, a crisis of morale, a crisis of intimacy, and a crisis of identity (Fitzgibbon, 2010). Perhaps, one of the most visible symptoms of the crisis affecting priesthood is the ageing profile of many priests, resulting in a crisis of ministry (Appendix A). The significant decline in the number of vocations to the priesthood (Dalton, 1990)[170] and religious life inevitably means that 'traditional structures and ways of ministering are no longer sustainable' (Fitzgibbon, 2010, pp.162-163). Not only is the number of priests and vocations declining (O'Mahony, 2011),[171] but those in active ministry are ageing (Moloney, 2007, Myers, 2001).[172] Of the 1,965 priests assigned to parish ministry in 2011, just over one third (37%) are over 65 years of age, with only one seventh (14%) less than 45 years of age. Accordingly, if there is no reduction in the number of Masses, priests

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[170] The crisis of ministry is linked to a decline in vocations to the priesthood, which is perceived to have been caused by an 'all pervasive spirit of materialism' in modern society, leading to a loss of the 'elevated status' traditionally enjoyed by the priesthood (Dalton, 1990, pp.92-93).

[171] In spite of the decline in vocations, only some of the men who apply to a diocese are accepted. In 2005, only 50% of applicants to the diocesan priesthood were accepted in 2005 (O'Mahony, 2006). The reasons for their refusal are not known. It may well be as a result of a diagnostic test conducted by a psychologist, which would appear to be increasingly used to test the suitability of candidates for the priesthood.

[172] While some people argue for the removal of mandatory celibacy as a solution to the current shortage of priests, US bishop John Myers advocates using older priests after the official age of retirement if they are willing to continue working, while Jesuit priest Raymond Moloney suggests that vocations may be found amongst older men in their fifties and sixties.

will inevitably become more stressed and exhausted as they 'continue to valiantly expend themselves in traditional pastoral practices, such as parish visitation, leading the prayers at the funeral home, visiting the school classes, receiving the remains of the deceased' (Fitzgibbon, 2010, p.163). The experience of 'being pulled in a number of different directions simultaneously' is a common theme in Irish priesthood (Ryan, 2008, p. 340). However, while some priests bemoan the amount of work they have to do, others believe that part of the problem lies with a priest's ministerial style. Draper (2001), for example, questions the need for priests to be constantly running around doing things, while McGuane believes that priests run around in circles chasing their own tails creating a 'myth of busyness' because they will not delegate due to personal insecurity and a lack of trust (McGuane, 2008, p. 558). Accordingly, some dedicated priests, whilst doing substantial amounts of work, effectively adopt a 'one-man-band approach to ministry' and are unable to delegate work to others in the parish (Whiteside, 1988, p.348).

Fitzgibbon believes that some Irish priests are experiencing a growing sense of disillusionment when faced with an increasing number of 'ritual Catholics' who no longer practice their faith or trust the institutional Church but who, nevertheless, turn to the Church for the sacraments. He argues that priests are demoralised when people use the Church for rituals, such as First Holy Communion and weddings, without any sense of 'faith conviction', which in turn grates upon 'the deeply and passionately held faith convictions of the priest (Fitzgibbon, 2010, p.164).[173] Empirical evidence in support of low morale amongst priests is however, limited to personal observations (Lane, 2004)[174] and indirect indicators[175], while

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[173] Ireland is significantly more secularised in 2012 than in 1962, with less people participating in the sacraments or engaging with the Church at any level. From a recorded high of 91% weekly or more often Mass attendance in 1973/4, to 85% in 1990, the percentage of Catholics in the Republic of Ireland who attend Mass at least once a week has fallen to just 34% in 2012.

[174] Theologian and priest Dermot Lane, for example, believes that the scandals in the Church since 1992 and in particular the abuse of children by a small number of priests 'have deeply affected the morale of most diocesan and religious priests' (Lane, 2004, p.76).

most large-scale surveys conducted in Ireland (Lane, 1997) and the US (Rossetti, 2005, Hoge and Wenger, 2003) have consistently found that, in spite of many difficulties and disappointments, priests are often fulfilled and happy men. One of the 'best kept secrets' in the Church today, according to Fr Stephen Rossetti, is that priests are 'happy and satisfied men' (Rossetti, 2008, p. 461). This does not mean that priests are not suffering or that some priests have become bitter over the years, but that most priests find joy in their lives and fulfilment in their ministry. This finding is also replicated in the stories of individual priests. Monsignor Olden, for example, found work in his parish 'very satisfying and very hard' (Olden, 2004, p. 341). Even critics of the Church, such as Fr. Patrick O'Brien, admit to 'a sense of life as joy' (O'Brien, 1995, p.15). In the absence of reliable research on priests' lives, Fr Aidan Ryan believes that the perceived low morale amongst Irish priests may have more to do with public perception than reality (Ryan, 2008).

Fitzgibbon believes that some priests are experiencing a sense of 'pain' and loss in 'relinquishing that which may have been formerly enjoyed' (Fitzgibbon, 2010, p.167). Gone is the certainty, leaving the priest without the 'special status' that characterised priests for much of the twentieth century (Fogarty, 1988). It is increasingly acknowledged that priests 'are living in very uncertain times' and that no longer is it the situation that priests will be regarded as 'the key men in the local areas and the people obeyed without question (Draper, 2001, p.349), or a person 'in undisputed charge of his parish' (Olden, 2004, p.336). Irish priests are more confused, disillusioned, over-worked, and possibly more lonely than previous generations of priests (Fitzgibbon, 2010, Flannery, 1999). Priesthood has become the subject of satire in television programmes, such as *Fr Ted*, and public criticism of priests is heard that would have unthinkable fifty years

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[175] Fr Eugene Duffy, for example, wrote of a 'real cry from the heart' from most priests in the West of Ireland when they articulated their need for ongoing formation in areas such as prayer, scripture, spiritual renewal, and a clearer understanding of the theology of priestly ministry (Duffy, 2002, p. 536).

ago (Council for Research & Development, 1997).[176] The clerical world in which many priests were trained and worked is 'falling apart' (Hoban, 1992, p.495). They are no longer instantly recognisable or automatically respected. It is a time of uncertainty for the Irish diocesan priesthood, especially for those priests who had trained before the Second Vatican Council. It is not a world many of them expected when they were ordained and not one they can readily adjust to. Bishop Murray captures the uncertainty of priesthood for many of his colleagues as follows:

> This is not how I imagined it! We are a long way from the world of the 1950s when many of us were seminarians. We expected to minister to large congregations with lines of penitents outside our confessionals every Saturday. We expected the full seminaries in which we were trained to educate large numbers of young men to follow us. The 'seamless robe' of Catholic life – the rules, the observances, the liturgy – which seemed fixed and universal unravelled. We wanted to serve a community, which was waiting for us to lead it in living out its shared faith. We didn't expect to find it, and ourselves, so full of questions, shocks and uncertainties (Murray, 1995, p.607) .

Priesthood can be very lonely for priests, especially those who find celibacy difficult and who live alone. Mandatory celibacy is a discipline of the Church and a requirement for priesthood. International research and some Irish research indicate that many priests find celibacy difficult to live and accept. In the past, priests lived in a small community based around their presbytery, comprising of fellow priests, a housekeeper, a gardener, and local people who had business with the Church. Nowadays, in many parishes, according to Bishop Walsh, many priests live alone and in need of 'human intimacy', which he defines as a 'safe place' where priests can be themselves, where they are valued and loved for who they are, and where they can share their joys and sorrows 'with others and equally share in their joys and sorrows' (Walsh, 2002, p.529). Vincentian priest Pat Collins argues that the dangers associated with a heterosexual relationship

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[176] Conversely, research by the Council for Research & Development found that less than one third (29%) of Irish adults felt that their confidence in the priests in their parish had been adversely affected by the clerical sex abuse scandals.

outweigh the 'difficulties and dangers associated with a life of isolation, devoid of intimacy' (Collins, 1990, p. 611). While some priests find support from each other as a 'band of brothers' (Greeley, 2004), others 'find themselves living lives of increasing isolation with few skills for developing true and appropriate intimacy' (Fitzgibbon, 2010, p.175). The causes of clerical loneliness are many, including the oppressive nature of clericalism (Hoban, 1996), the shortage of priests which results in more priests living alone, and the demands of mandatory celibacy which prevent a priest living a sexual relationship with an adult partner even when they fall 'madly in love with a gorgeous woman' (Fitzgibbon, 1996, p.227). Chaste love 'is possible and desirable' (D'Arcy, 2006, p. 202), but not easy (Sipe, 1995).

McGovern believes that there is substantial evidence to suggest that Catholic priests are experiencing an identity crisis, some symptoms of which include 'defections from the priesthood and a serious decline in vocations' (McGovern, 2002, p. 7). Theologian Fr Avery Dulles (1997) believes that 'one contributing cause' for the crisis of priesthood in Western Europe and North America 'has been the uncertainty about the role and identity of the priest arising from the introduction of new theological paradigms' (Dulles, 1997, p. 1). There are different aspects to this alleged crisis of identity, two of which are grounded in theology. Some commentators believe that the crisis of identity has its origins in Vatican II, which led to a confused identity for priesthood due to an 'increased status and profile of lay ministry' (Fitzgibbon, 2010, p.172) and a lack of 'any clear direction for priesthood' since this time (Fitzgibbon, 2010, p.168). There was no corresponding clarification of the role of priests in the Council's documents, to match the attention given to the laity. The Council's *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (*Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests*) 'disappointed many because it lacked a clear theology of the priesthood' and 'many priests now felt confused, since their earlier role and their secure status were lost' (Hoge and Wenger, 2003, p.9). With the introduction of various lay ministries, the Mass was no longer perceived to belong exclusively to ordained priests (Philibert, 2005). Consequently,

confusion was generated between the role and understanding of ordained priesthood and the 'common priesthood' of lay people, leading to a perceived diminishment of the ordained priesthood (Wood, 2006). The 'proliferation of lay ministers and the restoration of the permanent diaconate in the years following the Council also added to the confusion in the minds of many priests trained in a preconciliar, neoscholastic theology' (Bohr, 2009, p.4). Consequently, 'the image of the priesthood and the priest's own self-image were thrown into confusion. The mirror was broken' (Bohr, 2009, p.5).

In the US, Fr Greeley wrote that Vatican II was 'a severe blow to morale, the self-esteem, the self-confidence, and the self-respect of priests' (Greeley, 1991, p.122). Irish theologian Fr Michael Drumm believes that the Second Vatican Council document on priests, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (*Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests),* did not have the 'same cutting edge' as the renewed focus on episcopal ministry, the role of the laity, and those who live under religious vows (Drumm, 1999, p.589). This, he believes, has led to 'tension, misunderstanding and downright hostility' as 'priests ceaselessly ask themselves: who are we? and what is our role? what is the new relationship with the laity? what are the priorities in ministry? what exactly should one do from day to day?' These are questions to which Vatican II 'did not give theologically significant answers' (Drumm, 1999, p.590). The result is that many priests 'feel threatened and diminished as they struggle to maintain a distinct identity and role' (Fitzgibbon, 2010, p.173). The source of the confusion is linked to varying interpretations of the Vatican II documents, such as the following key sentence from the *Dogmatic Constitution of the Church* (*Lumen Gentium*): 'Though they differ essentially and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are none the less interrelated; each in its own way shares in the one priesthood of Christ' (Flannery, 1996, p. 14). While some theologians believe this sentence 'is mainly concerned with affirming a close connection between the two, and merely assumes the essential difference'

(Ryan, 1988b, p.63), others, including the Vatican believe otherwise (Irish Bishops' Conference, 2006).[177]

A second symptom of the alleged identity crisis concerns the nature of priesthood itself. Those who hold to the spirit of Vatican II believe that a priestly ministry 'that has a purely sacramental focus is a distortion' (Fitzgibbon, 2010, p.172). Priesthood, according to Fr Eamon Fitzgibbon, 'can never be adequately understood on a purely cultic or liturgical basis; if the sacramental aspect is divorced from the other aspects of ministry, such as preaching or pastoral care, it is a reduced and marginalised ministry which will become increasingly irrelevant in the lives of people' (Fitzgibbon, 2010, p.172). Irish theologian Fr Eugene Duffy believes that an emphasis on the cultic priesthood is, not in accord with 'the image of priesthood put forward by Vatican II, especially in its decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis,* which 'speaks of presbyters rather than priests, suggesting a shift away from a cultic understanding of ministry. It speaks more of a service of leadership within the Christian community' (Duffy, 1993, p. 210). Conversely, others, including John Paul II and Benedict XVI, believe that 'the distinction between the priesthood of the baptized and that of the ordained' has been blurred (Bohr, 2009, p.3) following 'the errant attempts by some theologians to reinterpret Vatican II's more elaborative teaching on the nature and mission of the Church and ordained ministry' (Bohr, 2009, p.1).

5.6 Discussion

The circumstances and lived experience of Irish diocesan priests have changed significantly during the past fifty years, so much so that the literature and anecdotal evidence suggests that priesthood is in crisis

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[177] The Irish Bishops' Conference *Programme for the Formation of Priests in Irish Seminaries*, chose to emphasise the difference between priests and lay people by changing the emphasis in the sentence as follows: 'Nevertheless, as the Second Vatican Council states, while the ministerial priesthood and the priesthood of all believers come from the one priesthood of Jesus Christ, 'they differ essentially and not only in degree' (Irish Bishops' Conference, 2006, p.9).

(Fitzgibbon, 2010, McGovern, 2002). Following the certainty that pervaded the Irish Church in the early 1960s, where everyone knew what to expect from priests (Ward, 1965, Olden, 2008), priesthood was seriously challenged following Vatican II. Prior to the Second Vatican Council, priesthood was perceived largely in cultic terms, with an emphasis on obedience and the sacramental role of the priest. Following the Council, the priest was regarded to be more than a dispenser of sacraments; he was also expected to continue Christ's mission by proclaiming the gospel and celebrating the Eucharist. No longer was it sufficient for a priest to 'say Mass and give Benediction'; now priests had to have the ability 'to communicate the meaning of the liturgy', to have an understanding of Church music, to train lay ministers, and to have the 'skills and talents that go to the establishment and pasturing of the Christian community' and conflict resolution (Tierney, 1986, p.41). Theological differences on the nature of priesthood sometimes led to tension between priests who held different visions of priesthood (Brady, 1989). Approximately twenty years later, the Vatican II priests were challenged by a new, conservative model of priesthood, leading to tensions and frustrations as the Vatican II priests increasingly believe that the Church is abandoning the vision of Vatican II.

Some symptoms of the alleged crisis in priesthood include a crisis of ministry, a crisis of morale, a crisis of intimacy, and a crisis of identity (Fitzgibbon, 2010). Irish priests are perceived to be increasingly demoralised (Hoban, 1992, O'Donohue, 1998), experiencing a loss of status (Dalton, 1990), ageing (O'Mahony, 2011), overworked (Fitzgibbon, 2010), lonely (Collins, 1990) and living lives that are uncertain and not what they expected at ordination (Murray, 1995). Of these, the crisis of identity has possibly received most attention in the theological literature, partly because the crisis of identity is perceived to be associated with other problems facing priesthood, such as declining vocations and defections from the priesthood (Bacik, 2006, Wood, 2006, McGovern, 2002, Costello, 2002). The alleged crisis of identity amongst the research participants will be explored in chapter seven.

The other symptoms of a crisis are undoubtedly real and serious for priesthood. However, I believe that many of them have more to do with a crisis in the Church than a crisis in priesthood, *per se*. For example, the implications of a continued priest shortage are at least as serious, and possibly more so, for the Church and the laity. Given that the priesthood 'in its present organizational form represents the key economic resource and power elite of the hierarchical church' (Schoenherr and Young, 1993, p.353), a shortage of priests represents a threat to the Eucharist and it will inevitably lead to an increasing number of churches not having access to the Eucharist on a weekly basis (Duffy, 2010c, Duffy, 2012).[178] Some priests believe it will also threaten the provision of other services that are currently delivered by priests (Ryan, 2008).[179] Thus, whilst acknowledging the seriousness of the 'collapse in vocations' (Olden, 2004, p. 338),[180] it may well be that this crisis in vocations will encourage the Church to consider measures such as optional celibacy and increased levels of lay participation.

Similarly, while the diocesan priest has suffered a decline in status and lost some of the comforts and conveniences that automatically came with priesthood, it may well be that their present discomfort is a sign of something positive for the priesthood in the long-term, a loss of the more negative aspects of clerical culture, clericalism (O'Donohue, 1998). At its worst, clericalism can be destructive and 'oppressive' nature of clericalism on the Catholic Church (D'Arcy, 2006, p. 289). Furthermore, while the

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[178] In August 2012, a nun led a communion service in a church when the priest did not turn up for Sunday Mass. However, it was subsequently described by the Archdiocese of Dublin as 'unprecedented' and a 'one off event' (*Irish Catholic*, 23rd August 2012). While such services are relatively common in other parts of Europe, it would appear that they are unlikely to be part of the Irish Church for some time.

[179] Fr Aidan Ryan identified five priorities which he estimated took about two thirds of his time and energy – the preparation and celebration of the Sunday Mass, preaching he Word of God, his involvement in primary schools, important sacramental moments, and pastoral care of the sick and distressed. Some of these tasks could be delegated to lay people, although it would require a change in the mindset of Church authorities and Irish people, alike.

[180] Monsignor Olden also makes the pertinent point that the 'current decline in vocations is as complex as the phenomenon of the vast numbers in Ireland who chose priesthood as a way of life;' when he was young (Olden, 2004, p.338).

priest may have fallen from his pedestal, I believe that he is still held in high regard by many people and I agree with the sentiments expressed by John McGahern when he says that there 'is no danger, even today, of the parish priest being excluded from a school ceremony in Ireland' (McGahern, 2009, p. 134). Irish diocesan priests are increasingly in crisis situations but that does not necessarily mean they are in crisis.

The following three chapters will build on the profile of Irish diocesan priesthood presented in this chapter, by exploring the lived experience of Irish diocesan priests in three core areas – identity, obedience, and celibacy.

CHAPTER SIX

EVOLVING CLERICAL IDENTITIES

6.1 Introduction

The primary aim of this chapter is to explore the research participants' understanding of priesthood and to investigate if, and how, this understanding has changed during the past fifty years in Ireland. This chapter will map out the research participants' understanding of priesthood, and explore if their changing understanding has produced different generations of priests that correspond to the cohorts described by Hoge and Wenger (2003). The literature suggests that distinct generations of priests exist with diverse values, beliefs and understandings of priesthood (Bacik, 1999, Hoge and Wenger, 2003, Gautier et al., 2012). The literature review also suggests that diocesan priests have a strong sense of professional identity and that priests are experiencing a crisis of identity. These questions will be explored using the stories of the research participants.

Bourdieu's concept of habitus suggests that at any particular time, there is a shared way of understanding priesthood, which constrains but does not determine the actions and thoughts of priests. He argued that it is an evolving *habitus* that changes over time to reflect different factors, including the changing socio-religious landscape and organisational changes within the Church. The literature review in chapters four and five highlighted the significant changes that have occurred in Irish society and the Irish Church, resulting in a religious landscape and Church that is very different to the situation that prevailed in 1962. Accordingly, I would expect to find evidence of a changing priestly habitus amongst the research participants.

Furthermore, empirical research by Aronson (2000), Hoge and Wenger (2003) and Gautier et al (2012) suggest that this evolving habitus will take

the form of distinct generations of priests that reflect significant changes in the cultural and historical context in which they came of political age. Hoge and Wenger (2003) argued that there are three historical eras in the contemporary Church and that the 'essence of priesthood has undergone two shifts' since the early 1960s (Hoge and Wenger, 2003, p.59). Their research suggests that the first shift in priesthood occurred around the time of the Second Vatican Council and a second shift began in the early 1980s, resulting in different models of priesthood co-existing in the Church. If their model holds true for Ireland, I would expect to find different cohorts of priests, with different values, beliefs, and understanding of priesthood. Accordingly, I intend to use Hoge and Wenger's framework to explore how the different generations of priests understand their priesthood and, in the process, to test the accuracy and usefulness of the US model in an Irish context.

This chapter will map out the research participants' changing understanding of priesthood, using categories identified by Hoge and Wenger (2003): ontological status of the priest, attitude toward the Church Magisterium, liturgy and devotions, theological perspective, and attitude toward celibacy. Their research also identified areas of agreement: love for God's people, desire to serve God's people, love for the Catholic Church, desire for personal fulfilment, and acceptance of celibate homosexual priests. I intend to use the five areas of difference in my analysis and to collapse four of the similarities into one category of vocation, since they relate to motivation i.e., why they became priests. The issue of celibate homosexual priests will be discussed in chapter eight.

6.2 How Pre-Vatican II Priests Understand their Priesthood

Vocation to the Priesthood

This group of eight priests and two former priests gave a range of reasons for wanting to be a priest included, 'the salvation of one's soul' (Retired priest, 1950s)[181], 'doing good, like a doctor' (Curate[182], 1960s), 'treating people in a Christian way with kindness' (Parish priest, 1960s), a 'call from God' (multiple respondents), and 'I just wanted to be a priest' (Parish priest, 1960s). Initially, four priests had considered being a missionary, largely for idealistic reasons, to 'convert the masses' of people in the foreign missions.

> I felt it would be safer as a priest, for the salvation of my soul, particularly a missionary priest. It was something I felt was well worth doing and I would be making a valuable contribution (Retired priest, 1950s).

> I felt it was the best thing I could do really. In the long run, God was first and to serve God was the best (Semi-retired priest, 1960s).

Four priests felt their response to God's call was a process rather than a 'flash of light', which emerged over time. It wasn't a 'once-off event that just happened' like St Paul falling off his horse on the road to Damascus (Retired priest, 1950s). Rather, their vocations 'matured' with 'age and experience' (Retired priest, 1950s). While all of these priests were ordained, others they knew did not reach this stage. One priest told of how his brother had entered the seminary 'full of hope and energy' only to leave it a 'broken and dispirited man' a few years later (Curate, 1960s). However, while he and his family were very upset, it did not stop him

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[181] Quotations from the research participants will be identified by their clerical status (parish priest, curate, semi-retired, retired) and decade of ordination. Where appropriate, reference will also be made to a priest's current status (e.g., former priest) and his sexual orientation. When single words are quoted, it may be assumed that they refer to quotes from priests belonging to the cohort being discussed at that point.

[182] A curate is a priest who assists the parish priest in the administration of a parish.

from entering the seminary some years later. He felt that God had called him and 'I am not my brother' (Curate, semi-retired, 1960s).

Most of the pre-Vatican II priests said they had first considered a vocation to the priesthood during their final year in secondary school. They had all attended a minor seminary or diocesan college where it was 'natural' and 'expected' that a number of boys would 'go for the priesthood'.[183] One priest reported, for example, that around 20 of the 30 boys in his Leaving Certificate year went on to a seminary. While he said that this number was higher than average, with most respondents recalling between five and ten boys who 'went for the priesthood' in their year, it is indicative of the popularity of priesthood as a 'career' at a time when the Catholic Church was in a 'pretty strong position' and other employment opportunities were scarce. None of these priests could recall being pressurised to become priests, but all of them said that they had been 'encouraged' by family members and friends, and, in most cases, a priest they knew who had impressed them in their parish or school. Most of them also had uncles or cousins who were priests.

> My parents were very religious people and my mother had two brothers who were priests in the US. I suppose religion was very important in our parish and the whole country at that time (Parish priest, 1960s).

> Every second house in the parish had at least one priest. It was normal and one of the first things you thought about when you were in secondary school. It was a natural thing for me to do (Former priest, 1960s).

In their final year, they received visits from missionaries looking for vocations and some school principals invited students to declare for 'Church or State' in their final year. While the pressure was perceived to be 'subtle', it was nevertheless quite effective. Eight of these ten priests

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[183] Life for students in a minor seminary or diocesan college resembled a seminary in many ways, including its Catholic ethos. Mass attendance was compulsory and students were expected to go to confession and Holy Communion. Most of the staff were priests and students often boarded. There was also spiritual reading in the refectory during meals.

had initially been most attracted to the 'foreign missions' in order 'to save the world and the conversion of heathens,' but all of them decided to 'go for the home mission' (Irish diocese) following discussions with priests in their school or parish.[184]

Most of these pre-Vatican II priests regarded priesthood as a 'choice' amongst a number of possible careers, such as doctor or farmer (Retired priest, 1950s). However, they felt that their career options were quite restricted, as most of the alternative career options were not appealing to them. One priest said that he wouldn't have known what to do if he hadn't been a priest because there was 'an awful lot of emigration from the country in the 1950s' (Retired priest, 1950s). Another priest considered life as a farmer but 'it just seemed such a hard life to sustain' (Parish priest, 1960s). Consequentially, most of them decided 'to give it a go and see what would happen' (Parish priest, 1960s).

Some chose to be priests even though they knew the life would be difficult. One priest, who thought he had a vocation to the priesthood but not a celibate priest, felt 'obliged' to accept celibacy as part of his vocation to the priesthood (Parish priest, 1960s). Others were similarly personally affected by celibacy. For the most part, these priests do not appear to have given much time considering the implications of being a priest and neither could most of them visualise themselves as priests before they entered the seminary. One priest said he had 'not really thought it through' (Parish priest, 1960s) and another said 'it was the thing to do' (Retired priest, 1950s). For example, while they knew that 'celibacy was a condition of priesthood' they did not dwell on it' at the time (Parish priest, 1960s). Conversely, two priests 'knew' from the age of seven or eight that they wanted to be priests. One could see himself saying Mass 'from an early

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[184] Anecdotal evidence suggests that Irish dioceses had first choice of candidates and that they usually chose from the junior seminaries, which were populated by wealthier students, leaving other students for foreign dioceses and religious orders. One priest recalled that diocesan priesthood was regarded as a 'higher calling' to some religious orders and that it often attracted the 'cream' of the students wishing to be priests.

age', while the second was 'captivated' as a Mass server (Parish priest, 1960s).

Ontological Status of a Priest[185]

While they usually took their position for granted, and most of them did not dwell very much on their clerical status, in hindsight they believe that their priesthood set them apart from their parishioners by virtue of their vocation, ministry, position in the community, education, and celibate lifestyle. They wore clerical garb at all times and they had to 'act with decorum at all times' (Retired priest, 1950s). They were 'men of the cloth' and 'representatives of the Church' (Parish priest, 1960s).

> There was a time when I was a man of the cloth. I was visibly a priest at all times and places. One time four of us went on holidays and we would go to a convent to say Mass and the four of us would put on our clerical gear and take it off when we came out. That was the way it was. You wouldn't dream of getting out of the black suit. You were in the army and you wore the boots and the regulated life-style until such time that you became yourself (Parish priest, 1960s).

Four priests said that the vocation to priesthood was generally regarded to be superior,[186] although none of them felt superior. Three priests said that they 'knew' they were different because of the way they were treated by the people in their parish and at home. Only a priest could say Mass or administer the sacraments. He had the 'keys' to the church and parish halls, and most priests were automatically appointed as the chairman of the local GAA clubs. These were things that were generally taken for granted by these priests and part of their clerical culture, which Papesh defines as 'the constellation of relationships and the universe of ideas and material reality in which diocesan priests and bishops exercise their ministry and spend their lives' (Papesh, 2004, p.17). This was a culture, which some priests perceived to be 'oppressive' (D'Arcy, 2006, p.289) and others saw

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[185] This category covers their view of priesthood, how it is and how it should be.
[186] Before the Second Vatican Council, priesthood was generally regarded to be a theologically and socially 'superior' vocation when compared with the laity.

as supportive (Olden, 2008). As one priest said, 'there is no getting away from it, we had the power'. It was only later in life, following Vatican II and maturity of years that some of these priests came to perceive priesthood in a different way that focused more on service than 'apartness'.

Most of these priests defined their priesthood as being 'who they were' as people (Parish priest, 1960s). They had been priests for a long time and priesthood defined who they were. One priest perceived himself to be a priest 'always and forever, like Melchizedek of old' (Semi-retired priest, 1960s), regardless of the work he is doing or the circumstances in which he finds themselves.

> There is no gap between my priesthood and my work. It is just me. It is my life. I am semi-retired now but I don't feel any different to when I was more active. You do different things but I am the same person. I freely picked this vocation and He called me. A priest can't be just the things he does. It must be the indelible mark you get at priesthood' (Semi-retired priest, 1960s).

None of them felt their priesthood was affected by falling Mass attendance or the clerical sexual abuse disclosures. They blamed the bishops for 'trying to avoid scandals at all costs' for their being 'tarred with the one brush' (Parish priest, 1960s). One priest said that the Church had 'gone through worse and it would survive this too' (Parish priest, 1960s). As priests, they had to 'continue doing what God had called them to do' (Semi-retired priest, 1960s).

They were not particularly concerned with the alleged conservatism of young priests, although they disagreed with this shift in attitude 'if it is true' (Retired priest, 1960s). One priest, who had 'heard that some young priests were going back and more interested in the sacristy' thought this might be a 'passing phase' and that no priest should ever 'be afraid to profess their beliefs' (Retired priest, 1950s). Furthermore, any difference of opinion is primarily theological, with little evidence of social tensions

between older and younger priests, and overall, they have a good degree of respect for their younger colleagues. One older priest criticised some of his counterparts for not 'moving on from being sacristy priests' (Semi-retired priest, 1960s). He believes that while the sacraments are important, so too is the need for priests to work with people. Overall, this cohort of priests was sceptical that a new model of priesthood was emerging, partly because there are relatively few young priests in the Church, and partly because they imagined 'things would settle down' as the younger priests got older (Retired priests, 1950s).

Both of the former priests had been laicised and no longer regarded themselves as priests. In one case, his identity as a Catholic priest had 'reached the tipping point' when, amongst other things, he was asked to preach against the use of contraception (Former priest, 1960s), while the other decided to leave 'when I fell in love' (Former priest, 1960s). Their circumstances had changed and so too did their identity as priests.

Attitude Towards the Church Magisterium[187]

For the most part, these priests obeyed their bishop and were loyal to the institutional Church. Obedience was regarded as a 'virtue' and the culture of the time 'programmed' these priests to obey their superiors (Parish priest, 1960s). However, legalism was so pervasive in the Church that little attention was given to their promise of obedience to the bishop during the rite of ordination: 'I can't recall obedience being emphasised that much. You were told you had to take a promise of obedience when you got ordained but I don't think it was anything stronger than that' (Retired priest, 1950s). To disobey would be to go against societal and Church norms, and to risk the imposition of sanctions. Everything was 'very rigid but the whole system was governed by canon law, which in pre-Vatican II

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[187] The Magisterium is the teaching authority of the Church. Priests are expected to respect the *Church Magisterium* and to obey the rules of the Church without question. Irish society and the Catholic Church were strongly regulated and everyone was expected to conform to established rules and regulations. For example, as already discussed, rubrics determined the minutiae of how a priest should celebrate the Mass, while Canon Law controlled his general behaviour.

days loomed very large. Everybody was bound by it. I found it very restricting. You nearly lived for the law than life. You didn't break away from the rules and as a result you missed out on life to some extent' (Retired priest, 1950s). The Church was strictly hierarchical and these priests rarely challenged their superiors, at least not directly. Some of them also learnt to by-pass Church authority on occasion by keeping their heads down and doing their own thing. Thus, while these priests accepted the hierarchy of the Church, it does not appear that they 'valued' it as suggested by Hoge and Wenger's (2003) model. Following Vatican II, most of these priests reacted against the extreme legalism of the Church and the strictly hierarchical nature of the Church.

Liturgy and Devotions

In the pre-Vatican II Church, liturgies and devotions were frequent and regulated by rubrics. Most ceremonies were conducted in Latin and often behind railings that separated the priest from the people. While some of their colleagues were regarded as being too scrupulous, fearing that they would commit a mortal sin if they didn't follow all the rules exactly as they were laid out in the rubrics, most of these priests were satisfied to 'do their best' to follow the rules. In the words of one priest, 'the rules were the rules, so that is what you had to do in those days' (Parish priest, 1960s). Two priests said they didn't always say their breviary and they felt guilty as a result. One former priest told of how he had been travelling all day but he had been awoken by his sister, as requested, to finish his breviary before midnight. One priest said that he had never considered experimenting with different liturgies or changing the wording of devotions, mainly because it never occurred to him, but also because the people were so familiar with the liturgies that they would probably report him to the bishop if he tried to change anything.

The liturgies of the pre-Vatican Church were remembered with fondness and longing by five of the older priests, although each of them also welcomed the end of legalism. One priest recalled how, on Christmas Eve, 'you had around seven hours of confession and you would be cross-eyed

coming out of the box' (Parish priest, 1960s). Another said it was a 'good time' to be a priest and 'there was a great buzz giving out communion in a big church, four or five of us marching out' (Former priest, 1960s). Two of these priests said they 'still had a hankering after Latin in the Mass' (Semi-retired priests, 1960s). It was a time of certainties and everyone 'knew where they stood' (Retired priest, 1950s). One former priest said that he had 'glorified being on the pedestal' as a priest and that he 'missed the certainties' following Vatican II.

> The Devotions were unbelievable, the Novenas were thronged with people. Priests had enormous swades of people to get through for communion, so that they had to cleave their way through like a great harvester going through a great harvest field. It was non-stop for confession and the same for communion. The priests had to do everything. There was an altar rail and the priest behind it and the laity shuffling their way up to get the Bread of Life. That was the Church (Parish priest, 1960s).

Theological Perspective

Their theology was underpinned by strict legalism and little variation. With the exception of three former academics, these priests were not too familiar with Church theology and two of them said they had 'learnt all they knew in the Penny Catechism' (Semi-retired priest, 1960s). They were taught theology in Latin and most of them recalled their lectures to be boring and unchanging from year to year. For the most part, they said that their job was to inform people what the Church taught and to forgive them with they sinned. Accordingly, they accepted its precepts without any fuss or discussion. One exception to this was the rule forbidding attendance at funerals of Protestant friends. One priest regarded this practice to be wrong but nevertheless, a rule he had to obey.

Attitude Toward Celibacy

All of these priests accepted that celibacy was an essential part of their priesthood, something they had to accept if they wished to become priests. However, with one exception, they also disagreed with the imposition of mandatory celibacy. Some felt it was a Church discipline that had been

imposed on priests to keep them under control, while others said it was introduced for practical rather than theological reasons. None of these priests would object to working with a celibate homosexual priest, although two of them had not 'seriously' considered the matter and one former priest would feel a 'bit awkward' (Parish priest, 1960s). The general view was that, provided the priest was celibate 'like the rest of us' there would not be a problem.

Change Following Vatican II For the Pre-Vatican II Priests

Significant change occurred in the lives of these pre-Vatican II priests following Vatican II. Five of the younger priests embraced Vatican II, with most of the remainder 'welcoming' the end of legalism but also somewhat concerned about the loss of certainty that had characterised their Church and priesthood before Vatican II. The big change for all of these priests was that 'legalism was gone from the Church' (Retired priest, 1950s) and they were no longer controlled by canon lawyers and 'pernickety' Church rules (Semi-retired priests, 1960s). However, Vatican II did not change the Church overnight and neither did it change the lives of these priests instantaneously. The oldest priest in this group said, for example, that 'nothing too much changed following Vatican II' and that he felt he was 'doing much the same thing afterwards, apart from saying Mass in English and some nuns stopped wearing the habit' (Retired priest, 1950s). Another said that the biggest change following Vatican II was that he had to shave for Mass now that he had to face the people. Another said that apart from noting that there were 16 documents in Vatican II and 'only reading tiny snitches of them' (Semi-retired priest, 1960s), change was slow to happen because his Archbishop, John Charles McQuaid was against it.

> I don't remember much about Vatican II at all. John Charles wasn't allowing much to happen and then only inch-by-inch. The vernacular wasn't allowed for a long time and then he allowed the 'I confess' in English. There was nothing allowed until he said it. The biggest change was a few years following Vatican II when they started putting the Mass into English (Semi-retired priest, 1960s).

Three of the older priests were critical of Vatican II for moving too fast and trying to change too much. For the most part, these older priests have retained their original identities as cultic priests. They value order, obedience, and Church traditions, and they are nostalgic for the full churches and certainty of the pre-Vatican II Church. They believe that the Church has 'lost the plot' following Vatican II, leading to a 'lack of balance' in the Church (Retired priest, 1950s). Consequentially, they said that they approved of the conservative shift that was introduced during the papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. However, they are also less subservient and more pastorally minded than they would have been in a pre-Vatican II Church. None of them would, for example, ever refuse Holy Communion to people in second relationships, although three priests said they would insist on speaking with them first to 'make sure' they understood the Church's position.

The younger pre-Vatican II priests found the mid 1960s to be 'a most exciting time with great hope and enthusiasm for the future' (Parish priest, 1960s). The opening of Vatican II coincided with the launch of television in Ireland, making the experience even more 'exhilarating' (Parish priest, 1960s). They had no sense of the change that would come with Vatican II when they entered the seminary in the late 1950s and early 1960s: 'The Church was very conservative and regulated at that time' (Parish priest, 1960s). Consequentially, the new theology and the young theologians gave one priest 'great life' and 'fire in his belly' to share this 'vision of faith' (Parish priest, 1960s). Over the course of a number of decades, the identities of these five younger priests were effectively transformed. They came to see their priesthood primarily in terms of service in addition to sacramental duties.

> Priests are called to be servants and Christian. The sacramental Church is part of who we are but it can't be the sole focus (Parish priest, 1960s).

> Priesthood is a combination of service and sacraments and I believe the strongest quality is serving the people, looking after them, especially when they are sick, bereaved or

> dying. The priest is there to serve the people but one would never think that looking at the structures that exist in the Church (Parish priest, 1960s).

Like the feminists in Aronson's study (Aronson, 2000), their identity changed following a change in their life circumstances. Many of the restrictions on their life-styles disappeared following Vatican II. Ireland and the Irish Church became more open and less restrictive following Vatican II. In the case of four priests, their new vision of priesthood was informed by travel to other countries for study and ministry, together with a 'great interest' in reading and talking to people from different faiths (Parish priest, 1960s). Their world had 'opened and expanded' with Vatican II and there was 'no turning back' (Parish priest, 1960s). However, it took some years before they were able to 'release' themselves from the 'legacy of clericalism', which, they feel many of their colleagues have not yet managed (Parish priest, 1960s). When they were ordained, these younger priests had accepted that celibacy was an inherent part of priesthood, but now they believed that celibacy should be optional. Three of them thought that optional celibacy would be introduced following Vatican II. They also came to disagree with the Church's stance on women priests, pre-marital sex, contraception, and mortal sin. In brief, their priesthood has become more pastoral and tolerant.

> It is all very well insisting on the ideal but it is rare for a child to be born before marriage, but that is probably the best the couple can do. You have to encourage people and hope they will work it out by themselves. Who can tell what is in their hearts or if they have been to confession. Judge not and you shall not be judged' (Parish priest, 1960s).

The transition between cultic and servant-leader priest was not easy and some of them remain 'divided' in their loyalties to the old and the new: 'Our generation is divided. There are two Joes[188] in me, one that has lived for years in a very conservative Church and is bound by it, and the other that is seeking to be more free and independent, and to say what needs to

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[188] This is not his real name. All names and details that might identify an individual have been removed or altered throughout the thesis.

be done. There are a lot of people like me in my generation. They recognise that we should be greater but we are tied down by the baggage we carry. My regret is that I didn't speak my mind more often and yet here I am in my 70s and I am more liberated than I ever was. We are getting old and there is not that much time left to give a stronger push for the Church' (Parish priest, 1960s).

While they learnt to question Church authority on some issues, they have difficulties with other issues, particularly divorce and people living together in second relationships. Marriage is a sacrament and, as one priest said, 'you don't want to go messing with sacraments' (Parish priest, 1960s). Conversely, he would have no problem in believing that a group of people could legitimately celebrate the Eucharist without a priest present if they did so in the name of Jesus. Obedience and loyalty are important virtues for this group of younger priests and they would be very reluctant to speak out in public against their bishop or Rome, especially in matters of doctrine.

However, this is not necessarily the case when it comes to practice, such as the proposed[189] introduction of a new translation of the Missal for the Mass, which one priest said would 'just make you despair'. Three of them were angry that Rome should consider the introduction of archaic language in the Mass as being more important than the crisis in the Church and priesthood, suggesting that it was reminiscent of 'tidying deckchairs when the Titanic was sinking' (Parish priest, 1960s) They are unhappy with the Missal changes because it confirmed for them that the Church is returning to a more conservative stance. However, it remains to be seen if they will follow through on their threats to 'say something' when the changes are introduced: 'I am never outside the Church in my pulpit but I might when they introduce the new wording of the Mass – it is crazy' (Parish priest, 1960s).

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[189] The new English translation of the Missal was introduced in 2011. I am not aware of any priest who has refused to say Mass with the new wording.

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6.3   How Vatican II Priests Understand their Priesthood

Vocation to the Priesthood

These fourteen priests and former priests entered the seminary in the 1960s and 1970s following the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The late 1960s and early 1970s was a time when ordinations peaked in the Irish Church, and Irish seminaries continued to attract relatively large numbers of students. Priesthood continued to be a respected career for many Irish men, although there were many more opportunities than was the case in the 1950s. Most of these priests said they had considered another career, such as medicine, teaching or banking, before 'finally opting' for priesthood (Parish priest, 1970s). While none of them felt pressurised into this choice, all of them said that family, friends and local priests supported them once they decided to 'try it out' (Parish priest, 1970s). One priest said that his father had made only one remark when he told him he was interested in becoming a priest, that 'if I don't like it, come home' (Former priest, 1980s). He felt that this short comment was 'just the right thing to say' and he knew his father was behind him. At least half of these priests had an uncle or cousin who was a priest. In hindsight, one priest described the support he received from his family and community as 'psychological channelling' (Parish priest, 1970s).

The majority of priests also said that they had found support for their decision in prayer. Like their older counterparts who had grown up in a Catholic country, priesthood was 'natural' for these priests (Parish priest, 1980s). One priest said he had 'kind of fallen into priesthood' (Parish priest, 1970s). Others suggested the same had happened to them: 'I don't think there was ever one moment when I said I had a vocation. My whole background had such a lot of prayer. My mom and dad were both great people for prayer and in the 1970s there was a lot of prayer in the community. My entering the seminary was kind of normal. It was in the atmosphere, in the ground, and in one sense, I fell into it rather than deciding anything' (Parish priest, 1970s).

Most of this Vatican II group were 'full of idealism' when they decided to become priests and six of them had initially considered a missionary vocation. While five of them did eventually work for a number of years on the missions, they did so as diocesan priests when they were persuaded to become diocesan priests following a 'talk' with a priest or bishop. Their reasons for considering the priesthood were similar to those mentioned by the pre-Vatican II priests. They felt 'blessed by God for the gift of priesthood' (Parish priest, 1970s), a desire to do 'good' and 'wanting to help people' (Parish priest, 1970s), a 'call' from God (multiple respondents), it was an 'attractive thing to do at the time' (Parish priest, 1980s), to 'convert the world' (Parish priest, 1980s), and to live a life that was 'holy' (Parish priest, 1980s). Most of them said that their prayer lives and a belief in Jesus Christ were at the heart of their vocations and that this was constant. It was a life they could believe in and one that would make a difference. Two priests said they were led to believe that the vocation of a priest was 'somehow better' and 'on a higher plane' to other Christian vocations (Parish priests, 1980s), but others did not feel this way, stating that Vatican II taught them that 'there was only one Christian vocation' and priesthood was one 'specific form' of this vocation (Parish priest, 1970s). Some priests had quite specific reasons for initially considering the priesthood but over time their vocation had developed. For example, one priest was initially prompted to consider the priesthood when he met a priest who worked in the same town as his favourite football club. While he did not go to this diocese in the UK, he still remembers how the thought of combining priesthood and a love of football was 'just perfect' (Parish priest, 1970s). He subsequently decided to study for an Irish diocese and to play golf.

Two priests regarded their vocation to be a 'vocation with a vocation', insofar as their vocation to the priesthood was prompted by their love of Our Lady and their involvement in the Legion of Mary: 'I have always seen my vocation to the priesthood as a calling within a calling. Both are specific vocations. If I look back on my life, I was reared in a good Catholic family and I had a good Catholic education but it wasn't enough.

It was at that crucial time that Our Lady intervened through her Legion of Mary, she took my hand and led me to faith in God number one, faith in Jesus number two, to the apostolate number three, and number four to the priesthood' (Parish priest, 1980s). Both of these priests were quite conservative when they entered the seminary and, with the exception of their dedication to a service-oriented ministry, they resembled cultic priests in most ways. They loved ritual, accepted Church teachings and governance without question, and both of them regarded celibacy to be an essential part of priesthood. One priest found it difficult to communicate with women or to trust lay people in his parish. Over time, however, one of these priest's identities shifted and he is now very much a servant-leader priest. He explained that he is 'not sure' why he changed but that it was partly because of 'theological difficulties, celibacy issues, and the way the bishops handled the abuse situation' (Parish priest, 1980s). He recalls that he was 'very conservative and that he had a tendency to spiritualise everything. I thought my view was to administer the sacraments but now I see myself as the centre of a community. I began to have doubts; how the hell can you believe in a wandering preacher 2000 years ago and how can he say he is God. My biggest problem is anger with clericalism and the way the Church is run. My response was to do my own thing' (Parish priest, 1980s).

Five of these Vatican II priests felt that they had a vocation but not necessarily to a celibate priesthood. One priest who is in a long-term gay relationship believes that God called him to the priesthood, knowing he was gay. He 'never believed in celibacy' and he 'figured that God made him a gay man and God was good enough to send another man into his life, so thank you God!' (Parish priest, gay, 1980s). He sees his vocation as 'a vision to try and bring the Church, kicking and screaming if necessary, where it will be a small community of caring and dedicated people, where everyone, gay and straight, are welcome' (Parish priest, gay, 1980s). Another priest who had 'difficulties with the whole concept that to celebrate the Eucharist you had to be a celibate male' nevertheless accepted this 'sacrifice' as a condition of his priesthood' (Parish priest,

1980s). Many other priests in this cohort felt the same way towards celibacy.

Most priests said they felt called by God and that they just had to 'try it out', no matter how unsure they were. One priest described the feeling like 'a tooth ache', while another said the main reason he went to Maynooth was to 'get the monkey off his shoulder'.

> If I had a plan for my life at 16 I would have invented a cure for cancer but I also felt that God too may have had a plan for me and while he might have got it wrong I would have to correct him. I discovered that God was suggesting to my spirit that I would lead my life through serving him in the priesthood. I fundamentally disagreed with his shortness of vision, so to help him out I went to Maynooth, but not to be a priest. I went to get the monkey off my shoulders. I went to get that settled so that I would be free to live my life and not feel guilty that God had been disappointed in me or that I had manipulated God in any way. I got ordained but it was a long process. I discovered the ability to say no, so that I could more freely say yes. It was an evolution. I definitely did get a sense of being chosen and that has never left me (Parish priest, 1970s).

Ontological Status of Priest

These Vatican II servant-leader priests believe that priesthood is primarily about service, and establishing relationships with people within the context of the Church. They believe that their role is to show compassion to people where they are 'broken' by life. Most of them welcomed the transition in priesthood that had occurred following Vatican II; from a cultic, sacramental priesthood to one where they are essentially servants of the people. Their role is to help people in their spiritual search, 'a saggart a rún,[190] if you will' (Parish priest, 1970s). The sacraments continue to be important for them, and some priests said that saying Mass was the most important part of their day, but not in isolation from their service to people.

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[190] The phrase refers to a fugitive priest that stood by his people during penal times, saying Mass in secret locations etc.

They do not distinguish between their priestly identity and the rest of their lives. Their professional identity as priests defines their personal and religious identities. One priest said, 'it is who I am' (Parish priest, 1970s), while another said that his identity was 'very much tied up with my whole being' (Parish priest, 1980s). A number of priests said that their identities are 'rooted' in their parishes: 'You become part of the community in which you live and you belong to the people of your parish' (Parish priest, 1970s). Their pastoral identity was reinforced at diocesan level. One bishop, for example, often referred to a priest by the name of his parish rather than the priest's own name. However, while their ministry is important in framing their vocation, it does not determine their sense of priesthood. Most of this group said they feel their priesthood is more 'authentic' in a pastoral situation; however, they all came to realise that it doesn't' matter where they minister, that their identity as priests is 'an awareness that they are doing God's work and where you are representing the person of Christ to people' (Parish priest, 1980s). For example, one priest who had originally decided against entering a religious order because he did not wish to teach subsequently spent most of his life teaching in the diocesan college. He was initially very disappointed but eventually he came to see it as ironic and he, like others in a similar situation, came to accept that 'this is where Jesus wants me to be as a priest'.

Three priests disagreed with the perceived conservatism of some younger priests and their tendency to become sacristy priests. They felt that this was the wrong direction for priesthood and the wrong direction for the Church. One priest was critical of his curate for not wanting to get involved in 'ordinary' parish duties, such as visiting schools or taking care of the parish hall: 'Priests are by and large conservative and younger priests are even more conservative. They are very conservative in their thinking, very black and white, and they are dressed up to the nines, and there is smoke everywhere at Mass. My own curate has more vestments than God. I find they can also be uncaring and dismissive. They are not good at visiting the sick or that kind of stuff. They mark out what they will

do within their own square, which is generally what I call sacristy priests. They are good at that but not if they are asked to go to a GAA dinner dance (Parish priest, 1970s).

Another priest was highly critical of the priest who took over from him when he was appointed to a new parish, for 'dismantling' the parish council and 'taking back control' of the parish (Parish priest, 1980s). A third priest criticised his curate for his intolerance towards people's difficulties and his 'hang-ups' with people who were in second relationships or who drank too much Parish priest, 1970s). Two other priests had difficulties with younger priests who wanted to say the Latin Mass and who were caught up in 'smoke and lace' (Parish priests, 1970s/1980s). They feared a return to a Church they hoped had been 'left behind' before Vatican II. However, for the most part, this cohort of priests are unsure if a new paradigm of priesthood is emerging, since not all young priests are conservative. Similarly, there was little evidence of animosity from this group towards younger priests. Some of them said that they themselves had been 'over-zealous' at times when they were younger and that they had 'grown out of it' over time. Two priests put the difference down to an age gap between curates and parish priests.

Attitude Toward Church Magisterium

Most of them are loyal to, but not subservient to their superiors in a hierarchical Church. They believe that Vatican II was a 'missed opportunity' for the Irish Church and that 'unfortunately, we are still a hierarchical Church, with structures that haven't changed' (Parish priest, 1980s). They believe that lay people have not been empowered because the Church 'likes control too much' and they 'ran the show the way they wanted' (Parish priest, 1980s). While the Vatican II document, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)* had focused on how the laity would be involved in the Church, 'this had not happened to any real extent and the Church remained very much controlled from the top' (Parish priest, 1980s).

> We lost a great opportunity in Ireland for Vatican II. We didn't implement it in the spirit it was intended. By and large we are still a hierarchical Church and structures haven't change (Parish priest, 1970s).

> The sense of Church that was promoted over the years, to pay up, pray up and shut up, is still a good description of how the Church operates. I am really disappointed with the failure of Vatican II, it just hasn't happened. The past 40 years is a failed opportunity in the Church because the church went back in on itself (Parish Priest, 1980s).

They are against rules for the sake of rules. They are generally loyal to Church teaching, insofar as most of them said they would always give the official Church position on issues if they were asked. However, they have also a very strong pastoral sense, where they believe that there are few absolutes in the lives of their parishioners. According to one priest, 'life is not all squares and absolutes; there are lots of circles and tangents too' (Parish priest, 1970s). In the past, people lived in a 'black and white world' where they were told what to believe and how to live (Parish priest, 1970s). This cohort of priest does not believe this is the case any longer and instead, advocates a more human, pastoral approach to moral problems. When they sometimes break the letter of a law in favour of its spirit, they usually do so discretely in the tradition of many priests who came before them. One priest recalled how his father wondered if he should attend the funeral of his Protestant neighbour at a time when this was forbidden by the Church. His parish priest told him to go to the funeral and say his prayers for his friend but 'not to broadcast it'. This is how this priest 'lives his priesthood - a measure of generosity and friendship whilst bringing people with me as far as I can' (Parish priest, 1970s).

Another priest said that he and many of this counterparts had been taught to view matters flexibly, with 'broad mental reservations', where he would 'couch things in such a way that people would get the import of what he meant without having to actually say the words' (Parish priest, 1970s). None of them has ever refused Holy Communion to a person, even in

situations where they know or suspect a person is not in 'full union' with the Church.

> If you walk up to me for the Eucharist I cannot judge your soul at that moment and I would not even try to. If I can help you and you come to me privately I will tell you what the Church teaches but I am not going to refuse anyone Holy Communion. While I understand that any club or organisation, like a golf club, has to have rules, that doesn't mean it is applied black and white wherever you go. I think every couple has to decide. I have never had any real problems with Church teachings (Parish priest, 1970s).

They cannot tell if the person is in a 'state of grace' or not, and 'neither should we'. Furthermore, they believe the Church should be more open to people who are divorced and in second relationships, and to people in homosexual relationships. A number of priests across the different cohorts made a similar comment, suggesting that there is culture of practice within priesthood that allows priests to be true to their personal beliefs and principles, whilst remaining within the Church.

They have boundaries in what they will and won't do as priests. Like some of their counterparts ordained before the Second Vatican Council, the sacramental nature of marriage is problematic for priests when dealing with 'irregular relationships'; however, 'nothing that can't be resolved with compassion' (Parish priest, 1980s). Contraception is a non-issue for these priests and none of them would ever preach on it. This does not mean that they disagree with *Humanae Vitae*, and one priest said it was a 'wonderful document' (Parish priest, 1980s) that is a 'guide for people to make up their own minds, but nothing more than a guide': 'You don't categorise a person as a problem and only see a problem. I believe the church has to be open and I believe on the pastoral level it is open to people who are gay, to people who have abortions, to people who use contraception but it must always set the ideal and the tragedy is that the ideal sometimes becomes an end in itself instead of an aspiration, and that

the church must love people because we are all sinners' (Parish priest, 1980s).

Liturgy and Devotions

Liturgies and devotions are more personal than in previous years, with fewer people attending less liturgies. However, they are still important to these priests and most of them enjoy liturgies, especially the more creative ones. One former priest, for example, recalls feeling 'really enriched and nourished' when there was 'exposition and celebration of the Eucharist, and experimental liturgies around the cross' (Former priest, 1980s). On another occasion, he held a special service for his parishioners, which 'used incense, gave Holy Communion under both kinds, and which had a great core liturgy'. It was the 'liturgical highlight' of his ministry. Others said that they tried to be creative and it helped when liturgy groups assisted them. Two priests just felt tired and did 'what was required'. Two priests said that the sacraments were 'meeting places' that enabled the priest to communicate Christ's love and message to the people in their parish.

> The paraphernalia of the sacraments is all right but it is only the machinery to meet people, whether it is their joys at baptism or marriage, or their sorrows at funerals, or sickness, it is people and community and belonging that matters. That is what keeps me going. You get a lot of life from the people and they get life from you (Parish priest, 1970s).

One priest, who loved the 'mystery of the Mass' contrasted the pomp that surrounded the High Mass when he was an altar server with the more personal liturgies of his parish: 'There was a great clerical caste and when someone important died in your parish, they would hold a High Mass in Latin and in black robes, with incense everywhere' (Parish priest, 1980s).

Theological Perspective

Theology changed significantly when this group were in the seminary. The Latin tomes and elderly lecturers were gradually replaced by new ideas

and energetic theologians. Theirs was a more flexible theology that allowed for theological differences; ecumenism, liberation theology, and an assumption of vocational equality. One priest who was ordained in the 1980s said that the theology he 'came out of' was post-Vatican II. It was liberation theology, which said, 'let's look at the issues in the Church and see what we can do. There were a lot of things we had not addressed before, like morality and the sexual teaching of the Church the place of women in the Church, the need to de-ritualise and de-clutter liturgies, the reorganisation of the governing system of the Church' (Parish priest, 1980s). A number of priests accept that their theology is quite 'relativistic' and 'almost Protestant' (Parish priests, 1980s). One priest, in reference to a comment by a journalist that the Association of Priests in Ireland was comprised of liberal Protestants, said that 'maybe a bit of Protestantism would do us good' (Parish priest, 1980s). This is a generation of priests who wanted to make the world more just and the Church more Christian. However, not all of them were so liberal, and two priests disagreed with women priests. Others were conflicted in how to deal with people in second relationships because marriage is a sacrament, but they disagreed with treating people in second relationships as 'second-class citizens' (Parish priests, 1980s). Similarly, most disagreed with the Church's position on contraceptives, homosexuality, and women priests. Their willingness to adopt a pragmatic, pastoral approach to some Church teachings does not mean that they have difficulties with all of these Church teachings. Rather, they see the implementation of the teachings as too regulated and not in the spirit of Vatican II or the gospels.

As was the case with the pre-Vatican II cohort, four priests took particular exception to the proposed introduction of, what they perceived as archaic language, into the new translation of the Roman Missal. They are angry at this development because they believe it represents a return to a more conservative Church that 'seems to be saying that Vatican II was a terrible mistake' (Parish priests, 1970s/1980s). Three of them said they would have to consider their public ministries if and when these changes are made:

One of the things that is niggling me, which will make me uncomfortable, is the publication of the new Roman Missal. If we are forced to use this archaic language, I will feel very uncomfortable with that and I will have to say to myself, if I can't do this and do it with some sense of belief, comfort, feeling it is part of who I am as a priest, then if I can't do that, I will have to just turn and do something else. At the moment, the only thing I feel uncomfortable with as a priest is the certainty. If all this certainty is being pushed upon us and we are told this is the style of priest you have to be if you want to be part of the church, that will make me so rebellious I will have to have a good chat with myself and do something different (Parish priest, 1980s).

One priest said that he would consider becoming a minister in the Church of Ireland if he was 'made to do things he did not wish to do' (Parish priest, 1980s), such as saying a Latin Mass, or possibly even the new wording of the Mass. He realises that this would be a radical change in his priestly identity but also one that would allow him to stay in ministry and give time to his prayer life.

Attitude Toward Celibacy

Mandatory celibacy is most problematic for this group of priests. With one exception, they disagree with mandatory celibacy and they do not believe that it is an inherent part of priesthood. Their attitude towards celibacy is very similar to the older generation of priests – for the most part, they reject mandatory celibacy, they regard it as having more to do with control than theology, and they are tolerant towards priests who slip up from time to time. Only one priest said he would have any difficulty working with a celibate homosexual priest.

6.4 How Post-Vatican II Priests Understand their Priesthood

Vocation to the Priesthood

The nine post-Vatican II priests were all ordained in the past two decades during the papacy of John Paul II. This was a time of decline for the Church on many fronts and vocations to the priesthood had dropped sharply. However, while there was less support for the Church in Irish society, this cohort of post-Vatican II priests said that they had received the support of their families, friends and people they knew at home when they announced they were going into the seminary. Their reasons for wanting to be priests were similar to those of previous generations. One priest said he felt 'completely humbled by God' to have been given the 'gift of priesthood' through prayer to Our Lady (Curate, 2000s). Others described their vocation in terms of 'wanting to help people' (Curate, 1990s), 'answering God's call' (Curate, 2000s), 'a question of faith' (Curate, 1990s), ' a sense of duty and obligation' (Curate, 2000s) and 'a desire to give' themselves to God (Curate, 2000s). As was the case with the other cohorts of priests, most of them spoke of being called by God.

> I suppose the whole idea of being a priest was something I felt was an expression of my faith and a feeling that I had a role to share that faith. I am not the answer to the Church's problems but I know this is my vocation and what I should be doing with my life. I am comfortable with it and it is who I am (Curate, 2000s).

A number of these priests said that they had been inspired by the theology and general conservative outlook of Pope John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Four priests felt that their vocations were connected to the Church and that it was more than a personal vocational journey that depended on their making a specific choice. Consequently, they see their vocations as different to that of lay people. Theirs is a sacramental priesthood, whose identity is rooted in Christ. One priest, for example, said that he felt his vocation was 'in some way connected to the Church, with the people in the parish, and his bishop' (Curate, 2000s). Others said something similar

and suggested that if the Church were to change significantly, then so too would their vocations. One priest, for example, said that while he could accept changes in Church discipline to allow married priests, he could not cope with women priests because it involved a sacrament: 'If they ordained women I would leave. I would be very uncomfortable if the Church changed its mind on things that are absolute' (Curate, 2000s). This is a view that is also shared by some priests in the other cohorts.

Five priests mentioned a piece of scripture that had inspired them to become priests, while some said they had been inspired by the lives of saints and priests who were 'heroes' (Curate, 2000s). One priest spoke of how his vocation had developed with his spirituality and interior (internal) life. Three priests said their vocation had come to fruition following a pilgrimage to a Marian shrine, Lourdes and Medjugorge. One priest, who had not previously been particularly religious, recalled how an impromptu pilgrimage to Medjugorge had resulted in a mystical experience[191] or locution[192] in which he 'definitely got an awareness that he was being called to the priesthood' (Curate, 2000s).

> For some reason, there was just this desire to go to Medjugorje. Towards the end of the first week I had what you might call a bit of an experience of God. In that experience I definitely got an awareness that He was calling me to the priesthood. It was not seeing any visions at all. It was an interior experience or what theologians would call a locution that was based on a voice that was very gentle and authoritative calling me to the priesthood. Again I would emphasise its gentleness and warmth, a sense of truth behind it. The second locution was based on an interior image where I saw a beautiful area of light and I was being called out of darkness to this beautiful area of light, with this voice – 'think about the priesthood, think about the priesthood'. This thing happened one night when I was trying to get asleep but I am aware it was not a dream (Curate, 2000s).

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[191] It would appear that mystical experiences are as infrequent for priests as they are for lay people. Two priests spoke of having a mystical experience in prayer. Conversely, many more said that they felt a sense of closeness to God during prayer.

[192] An interior locution is a mystical concept that refers to a set of (usually auditory) ideas, thoughts, or imaginations from an outside spiritual source. These locutions are most often reported during prayers.

He, like most of the other priests, said that he fought the urge to be a priest, because he wanted to get married and have a family, and because he was unsure if he truly had a vocation.

Two priests had been uncertain about their vocation and they had entered the seminary to 'get rid of a nagging doubt' (Curates, 1990s). Another two priests said that they had 'no sense' of Church when they went into the seminary but decided to give the priesthood 'a try' because of a 'feeling' they had been called by God: 'Every year I went back to Maynooth to get it out of my system and I nearly hoped and prayed that someone in Maynooth would say I wasn't suitable. The discernment process was agony really and I laboured over it (Curate, 1990s). Conversely, five priests said they had 'always known' from an early age that they were going to be priests and that it was something they had always 'felt comfortable with': 'My vocation story goes back as far as I can remember. I always wanted to be a priest, even before I went to school. I pretended to say Mass and when I was an altar server, and I loved dressing up in the soutane and surplice. It was very exciting being involved, especially during the big feasts of Christmas and Easter' (Curate, 2000s).

One gay former priest felt his vocation was defined and ultimately destroyed by his sexual orientation. He felt he had a vocation to the priesthood but because he could not live a life of celibacy, he felt he had to leave the priesthood. This was all the more difficult for him to accept, when he knew bishops and priests who were closet gays and hypocritical in their opposition to gay priests. When he told his bishop why he was leaving, he got a 'very strong vibe from him' and he was given 'a hug and a kiss, which no bishop should give anybody'. He, like two other former priests in this cohort, believe that they had a vocation to the priesthood but no longer. Their experience in the priesthood, and particularly its leaving, have led them to feel distant from the Church, with the result that they no longer attend Mass regularly.

One former priest chose to become a minister in the Church of Ireland because it more closely reflected his identity as a minister and Christian. He felt that he was 'always quite liberal' in his theology and he could not countenance the fact that the Catholic Church seemed to 'place belief in the Blessed Trinity on the same level as contraception'. While he had questions before his ordination to the Catholic priesthood, he 'felt very strongly that he was called to the priesthood'. Ultimately, he became disillusioned and demoralised as a priest with the 'hypocrisy' of some priests and his lack of acceptance of some Church teachings. He is now 'extremely happy' in his ministry, where his priesthood is regarded as a job rather than a sacrament. In hindsight, he believes that he was called to priesthood 'but not exclusively to the Catholic priesthood'.

Ontological Status of Priest

Orthodoxy is perhaps, the principal defining characteristic of this generation of priests. They value orthodoxy in a wide range of areas in the Church, especially dogma and liturgy. They love and are committed to the Catholic Church and they have a strong respect for their bishops and the Pope. Most of them said that they had been inspired by the theology and writings of Pope John Paul II, which they believe represents a legitimate reinterpretation of Church teachings following the 'imbalance' that was created by Vatican II (Curate, 2000s). However, they are not against everything that happened following Vatican II. For example, they are happy to say the 'new Mass' and some priests hope for a time when the Church will be more democratic.

One of the criticisms levelled against this generation of priests is that they are sacristy priests who are primarily interested in administering the sacraments. The present study suggests this is the case for some younger priests but not all of them. Three priests said that service and sacraments are both important dimensions of priesthood. One priest described his priesthood as 'a service thing' (Curate, 1990s), while another priest believes that 'ultimately priesthood is about service, service through sacraments' (Curate, 2000s). He feels that 'every sacrament is evangelical'

and he uses baptism, weddings and funerals as 'an opportunity to minister to people in some way' (Curate, 2000s). However, his service is done within a 'faith dimension', which is different to the 'call of a social worker' (Curate, 2000s). One priest thought the alleged conservatism of younger priests was exaggerated.

> I think there are definitely some priests who are conservative but not as much as some older priests might think. Some lads are very much into the sacramental Mass and stuff but most of us are think revising the Missal is silly and there are not many of us floating around in soutanes or saying Mass in Latin. One priest I know is very trendy like that but it is only skin deep and not the core of his being. It is like being into Gothic art or Chopin and I don't think he imposes his views on people. Sometimes he will float around in a soutane, but maybe he will wear a pair of shorts and flip-flops the next day (Curate, 1990s).

For the most part, they do not see a new type of priest emerging in the Irish Church. They are just 'defending the Church they are in now' and they are likely to be 'just like the priest who came before them when they get older (Curate, 1990s). They believe that change is a natural part of any organisation and their role is to help ensure 'we don't lose the important bits' (Curate, 1990s). One priest thought that most young priests are 'just going through a phase' (Curate, 2000s), while another said this trend was no different to the 'fear' of change in previous generations of priests who had not wanted anything to change (Curate, 1990s). One priest thought that too much 'fuss' was being made about the tendency for young priests to wear ostentatious clerical garb. However, he also acknowledges that priesthood is 'moving towards sacristy priests' and that some of their peers have been drawn into the priesthood because it offers them certainty 'in a world that is so uncertain' and that they will 'cling to this certainty for dear life' (Curate, 1990s). One priest admitted being a little worried when he recalled conversations with classmates in the seminary about the 'number of tassels on a stole and stuff like that' (Curate, 1990s). Another spoke of how 'his heart sank' at ordinations when he saw the priest and Mass

servers 'caught up' in how they should hold their hands, 'peripheral stuff' (Curate, 1990s).

Two priests admit that they were primarily attracted to the sacramental side of priesthood when deciding to become priests. For them, priesthood has a 'sacramental focus' (Curate, 2000s) and the celebration of the sacraments is very important. The biggest source of tension between these priests and their older counterparts has more to do with practical issues than theological divisions. A number of them complained that they or their counterparts were not allowed to do what they wanted by their Parish Priest or bishop. One PP was judged to be 'intolerable' and unwilling to listen, while a bishop was described as a 'man without a vision' (Curate, 2000s).

Attitude Toward the Church Magisterium

This cohort of priests is committed to the Church and they value the hierarchical nature of the Church. This does not mean that they believe their superiors to be without fault or that they are against change. One priest, for example, hopes that the Church will become more the 'Diarmuid Martin Church' where 'there is a stronger sense of lay collaboration, of lay people working in parishes, and lay people ministering informally to lay people' (Curate, 2000s). However, he also acknowledges that the Church is different from other organisations, insofar at it doesn't have a 'manifesto' and that it moves 'frustratingly' slowly. One priest criticised his bishop for 'refusing to listen' to his priests, while most were highly critical of the way the bishops handled the clerical abuse cases (Curate, 2000s). They have a very high regard for authority and they do not see the value of criticising Church leadership. However, while they are obedient, they also recognise that there are different ways of 'getting things done' in the Church. Like other priests, they are pastorally pragmatic in how they deal with their superiors and their parishioners.

Liturgy and Devotions

As previously stated, this group 'love' liturgies, old and new. They spoke of 'loving the Mass' and being 'true' to the traditions of the Church (Curate, 2000s). They do not see the Latin Mass as regressive or reactionary. Rather, it is part of the 'integration and synthesis' process in the contemporary Church (Curate, 2000s). They are priests of the Vatican II Church who also believe that some elements of the pre-Vatican II Church should be restored.

> I am more conservative than other priests but I am not an extremist. Most younger priests are quite clear about where we stand but not in a reactionary way. We operate out of a genuine spirit of Christian love. The celebration of the sacraments is very important to me and it is very, very important that the sacrament is celebrated in an integral way as it is laid down. That is the way it works. I believe in what the Church teaches. I would have no issue with the Tridentine liturgy and if people wanted me to celebrate it, I would. I know some priests would see that as the ultimate symbol of something that is wrong in the Church. I certainly wouldn't. I am a priest of the era of the Second Vatican Council. I grew up in this Church and it is a Church I want to be part of. I can't imagine the Church going back to what was there before Vatican II but I still would have no problem celebrating Mass in Latin (Curate, 2000s).

They like using incense when 'appropriate' and they generally believe that sacraments are central to the life of the Church.

Theological Perspective

Two of this group of priests described themselves as 'theologically conservative and pastorally pragmatic' (Curate, 1990s) and this is a description that also fits two other priests in this cohort. They have little personal difficulty in accepting Church teachings, but they regard themselves as 'pastorally pragmatic'. For example, most of them would not condemn a person in public if they could avoid it, and neither would they feel comfortable in preaching on controversial issues from the altar. They believe that the world of morality is a 'grey area' and one that requires compassion, even if they feel somewhat uncomfortable 'questioning' 2000 years of Church tradition.

> In theology, we were taught there is an internal forum and the external forum. In other words, what you say to someone in the confessional isn't necessarily what you are going to say in the pulpit. In the public forum I am not going to say something that is directly contrary to church teaching, that just wouldn't be me. I am not going to preach about contraception or divorce; I am just not going to go there. If you are dealing pastorally with a couple in a second relationship or a young lad who is gay or a mother who had had an abortion, I will deal pastorally and sensitively with them. You are dealing with people and a more pragmatic approach is required (Curate, 1990s).

Furthermore, with one exception, they would never refuse anyone Holy Communion at Mass, unless it was a potential source of scandal in the parish. However, that being said, they are committed to the Church and its teachings, and if possible, they will inform the person of the Church's position on the issue in the hope that they might 'do the right thing' themselves. They are not always comfortable in adopting a pastoral approach, but it may be the best option in a 'grey world' (Curate, 1990s). Three priests said, for example, that the use of contraceptives is 'wrong' because it is an 'objective truth' of the Catholic Church. Accordingly, they will inform people of this truth if they are asked. However, ultimately, people have to make up their own minds on this and other Church teachings. One priest said there is a 'lot of grey in the world and the Church has to be able to minister to the grey' (Curate, 1990s). Thus, while priests must preach the ideal, they also have to find some way of ministering to people in second unions, or same sex unions. Mortal sin exists but only when three conditions are met – grave matter, full knowledge, and full consent. None of them would be comfortable in giving a blessing to a second relationship because it is a sacrament, and most would find 'another way', such as blessing the couple's house.

While most of these priests veered towards conservative orthodoxy, one priest was highly orthodox and conservative in all aspects of his priestly life. He perceives himself to be in a 'grey zone' where he has to fight for the faith and stand up against the sinfulness of the world and the Church. He believes that a priest is 'defined' by the stance he takes towards

controversial Church teachings and that a priest must be willing to withstand the pressures from liberal groups, including other priests, to take the 'easy option'. He is also in full agreement with the interpretation of Vatican II by John Paul II and Benedict XVI. He is 'deeply committed to, and loves, the Tridentine Mass', although he also recognises that the Tridentine Mass is just one form of the rite. He loves the 'solemnity, the ritual, they mystery, and the depth of the liturgical tradition that reaches back over 1500 or 1600 years'.

> I am not a priest who is alone. I am part of a small number of priests who are dedicated to authentic reform. The important thing for us as priests is to follow the orthodox faith in the Church. There is a holiness in the Church but there is also a sinful side as well. Priests have a huge responsibility in preaching. We can all teach on the necessity for forgiveness when you come to the controversial teachings of the Church, particularly moral teachings in relation to contraception, homosexuality, divorce and remarriage, and being in a state of grace to receive communion. But if you are going to be a Catholic priest, you have to preach the truth in love, even against opposition from other priests. There is a huge disunity within the priesthood and some priests are afraid to say something that might be reported in the media. I believe I have a responsibility to tell the truth to my people, whether they like it or not (Curate, 2000s).

He is the only priest in this study to admit refusing Holy Communion to people 'he knew' were not in a state of grace because of their public behaviour. This priest does not see his behaviour to be in any way judgemental.

Attitude Toward Celibacy

All of the priests in this cohort have freely chosen celibacy as an inherent part of their priesthood, and something they feel defines their priesthood. Their understanding of celibacy has more to do with their idealism as priests than control. Thus, while they are tolerant towards priests who breach this rule, they believe that every priest should try their best to be celibate. Similarly, none of these priests would have any difficulty working with a homosexual priest provided he was celibate. Two of the former priests in this cohort left the priesthood because of difficulties with celibacy.

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6.5   A Crisis of Identity in Priesthood?

The literature suggests that priesthood is in crisis. One aspect of this crisis considered in this study relates to a crisis of identity (Fitzgibbon, 2010). The evidence from the research is ambivalent on this matter. First, most of the priests that participated in the research have a strong sense of priestly identity. They are certain that they have been called by God to be a priest in the Catholic Church and their sense of vocation has not been affected by external factors. A number of them said that they had been 'rocked' by a number of events in recent years, and that they are conscious of a change in the way some people treat them following the child sexual abuse cases and the way the bishops mishandled the situation. Four priests mentioned that they had been verbally abused and threatened by strangers because they were wearing collars. However, because their sense of being a priest is so strong, it sustained them against challenges to priesthood and enabled them to withstand societal disparagement of the profession of priesthood. Two priests who had been falsely accused of abusing young boys said that their vocation had not been affected and if anything, it was stronger at the end of the process because their priesthood was intrinsic to their identities.

Second, while the emergence of a new paradigm of priesthood challenged and upset some priests with a different understanding of priesthood, the research suggests that the three generations of priests are content within their own paradigm. They are aware of theological differences between themselves and other cohorts but this can be a source of strength for some priests as difference can help to define identity. For example, a Vatican II priest summarises his view of younger priests as follows: 'Our generation were always very much into the mission of the priest. The young men are more likely to be into the identity of the priest, which was there prior to Vatican II. These men are big into prayer and study, they are very committed. They are trying to nail down certain things and I am not comfortable with that. There is always a dilemma for priests in wanting to have a clean-cut Church where you have everybody practising, everybody clean and white. There is that desire but that is not the way society is and

you have to accept that society is messy' (Parish priest, 1970s). Conversely, he is happy to be part of an uncertain Church, which is 'messy but acknowledges that life is not black and white' (Parish priest, 1970s). Similarly, the younger priests are aware of how they are perceived and some of them are happy to be seen in this light, as defenders of the faith and priesthood.

Third, the research showed little evidence of any sense of animosity towards lay people. It would appear that most priests have come to terms with the empowerment of lay people and their presence on the altar. Conversely, three priests, one from each of the three generational cohorts, felt that lay ministers should not give out Holy Communion if there were sufficient priests available. Two others questioned the relevance of Parish Councils when they had 'no real function or power' (Parish priests, 1980s/2000s).

Fourth, while priests from each of the generations have experienced points of crisis that have caused them problems, most of them are capable of adjusting to new situations in a pragmatic way. For example, the emergence of new paradigms of priesthood upset some priests that were embedded in an older version of priesthood. However, most priests appear to have survived the various transitions. Few of the research participants appear unduly troubled by the theological divisions in practice, and for the most part, they are content to work alongside priests holding different views, or to work relatively independently in their own parishes. While some difficulties can arise when a more conservative/liberal priest is appointed to a parish and proceeds to change structures put in place by the previous priest, it may be argued that these are as much problems for the parishioners and the Church as the priests concerned.

Fifth, while some individual priests across the generations have, and are currently, experiencing individual elements of crisis, these are not yet sufficient to force them to leave the priesthood. For example, some priests believe they will have to cease their public ministry if they are obliged to

use the new wording in the Mass; some priests are experiencing difficulties with celibacy; and some priests feel challenged by the attitudes of their fellow priests. While these represent a potential crisis for the individuals concerned, there is no indication that these issues are widespread in diocesan priests.

All of these factors suggest that the research participants are not experiencing a crisis of identity. Conversely, it is clear that many priests have left the priesthood because their values were out of sync with the institutional Church. The literature suggests that some priests left following Vatican II because the change was too much for them. Others left when they could not marry, or because they disagreed with some aspect of Church policy and practice. This is also the case with some of the research participants who left the priesthood out of principle, while most left because of celibacy. There is uncertainty in the Church and priesthood, as manifest in the different models of Church and priesthood that have prevailed in a relatively short period of time. However, whether the difficulties experienced by priests is the result of a transition or crisis remains to be seen. My overall sense of the research participants is that they are not experiencing a crisis of priesthood at the present time.

6.6 Discussion

The primary aim of this chapter was to explore how the research participants understand their priesthood, and to establish how, and if, their understanding of priesthood has changed since ordination. The literature suggested that distinct generations of priests exist in the Catholic Church with diverse values, beliefs and understandings of priesthood (Bacik, 1999, Hoge and Wenger, 2003, Gautier et al., 2012). The literature review also suggested that diocesan priests have a strong sense of professional identity and that priests are experiencing a crisis of identity. Overall, the research found evidence of three distinct cohorts of priests amongst the research participants, each of which prevailed at different times during the past fifty years and each of which has a different understanding of priesthood. A

cultic model of priesthood prevailed before Vatican II, followed by a servant-leader model in the years following Vatican II, and a neo-orthodox model that emerged during the papacy of John Paul II (1978-2005). Representatives from each of these models are currently ministering as diocesan priests in the Irish Church.

The research is largely consistent with the model proposed by Hoge and Wenger (2003), Bourdieu's concept of an evolving habitus, and the work of Mannheim (1952) and Aronson (2000) who suggested that different political generations evolve over time, which reflect the cultural and historical context within which they came of age. Thus, similar to the research by Hoge and Wenger (2003) my research found three generations of priests with different attitudes towards ecclesiology, liturgy and theology. However, while Hoge and Wenger found the largest difference between cultic and servant-leader priests, my research found that the two older generations of priests had effectively merged into a single cohort, with similar values, and that the largest difference was between these priests and the neo-orthodox generation. Furthermore, while Hoge and Wenger (2003) emphasised the differences between the different cohorts of priests,[193] my research found significant inter-generational similarities, some of which will be further explored in chapter seven.

One of these similarities refers to the research participants' sense of priesthood. Most of the research participants had a strong sense of priestly identity, where they felt called by God to a career that is more than a job or a religious belief system, and where their professional priestly identities largely consumed their personal identities. Regardless of age and background, they are first and foremost, and forever, priests of the Catholic Church. This is a shared understanding of priesthood that is common to the three generations. However, most significant is the underlying culture of practice that my research found across the three

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[193] The differences between these models have been noted on a number of occasions and need not be reiterated here.

generations. Priests from the different generations indicated that they were prepared to be pastorally pragmatic in certain circumstances, even if this entailed disagreeing with some Church teachings. This suggests that they have developed similar ways in which they negotiate their personal sense of priesthood whilst remaining loyal to the institutional Church. The nature of clerical practice will be explored in chapter seven.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE POLITICS OF CLERICAL OBEDIENCE

> Clerics are bound by a special obligation to show reverence
> and obedience to the Supreme Pontiff and their own ordinary
> (bishop) (Canon 273, The Code of Canon Law, 1983)

7.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on the relationship between individual priests
and the institutional[194] Church. Its primary aim is to explore how, if at all,
the research participants exercise agency in the context of a highly
structured and strictly hierarchical Church. The chapter will also explore
how the different generations of priests understand and practice clerical
obedience. Obedience, or rather disobedience, is not a major issue in the
literature on Irish diocesan priests, and there is little evidence of individual
priests speaking out critically in public against Church policy or practice.
Conversely, the theoretical literature suggests priests have the capacity to
exercise agency in certain circumstances, and anecdotal evidence indicates
that some priests challenge authority, albeit often discretely.

A diocesan priest is severely constrained by the institutional Church and
that there are few opportunities for priests to exercise agency in a highly
structured and strictly hierarchical Church. Some of the main constraints
identified in chapter five, include a variety of formal and informal
sanctions that can be imposed on disobedient priests: Canon Law and other
rules of the Church, and a seminary and clerical culture that emphasise
conformity and obedience to superiors. Diocesan priests are also bound by
a sense of duty to their bishop to whom they take a solemn promise of
obedience. Conversely, anecdotal evidence suggests that priests can and do
exercise agency in certain circumstances. For example, although the
Catholic Church is strictly hierarchical, a priest is relatively autonomous

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[194] Unless otherwise stated, the concept of institution is used in a broad sense to
include persons with formal authority over priests, such as the papacy, the
Vatican, the Roman Curia, and bishops.

within his parish according to Canon Law. It would also appear that some priests are relatively flexible in the way they interpret some Church rules and theological positions, and that they learnt to get things done by keeping their heads down in the seminary. If these factors hold true for the Irish context, I would expect to find priests who are loyal to the institutional Church but who are also capable of exercising agency in certain circumstances. However, further to Bourdieu and Saunders, I would expect their actions to be constrained by the institutional Church.

Bourdieu's concept of field suggests that priests and the institutional Church occupy different positions in the religious field and that they compete for position and social capital within this field. However, the relationship between the institutional Church and priests is unequal, because the institutional Church is primarily responsible for setting the rules of the game that favour and sustain its dominant position within the religious field. The unequal relationship between priests and the institutional Church is grounded in the centralised, hierarchical nature of the Catholic Church. From the day they enter the seminary, priests are taught to obey their superiors. However, Bourdieu's concept of habitus and Giddens' concept of structuration suggest that while agents are constrained, they are not determined by structures. Accordingly, while I would expect to find evidence to support the dominance of the institutional Church over its priests, I would also expect to find some evidence of agency in the lived experience of the research participants, and possibly some instances where priests have challenged the dominance of the Church. However, further to Saunders, I would not expect this competition to be too public or confrontational, as priests should have learnt from experience that the rules of access are biased against them.

7.2 How Pre-Vatican II Diocesan Priests Understand and Experience Obedience.

The eight priests and two former priests that comprised this cohort of pre-Vatican II priests all entered the seminary prior to the commencement of Vatican II, and all of them were ordained before the conclusion of the council. Thus, all of them were formed in a Church that was very legalistic, strictly hierarchical, and dominant within Irish society. The Catholic habitus at this time was so strong that very few people, priests or laity, would ever consider challenging Church policies or practices (Inglis, 2005). Obedience was regarded as a virtue that permeated Irish society and the life of the Church. However, as discussed in chapter five, anecdotal evidence suggests that while priests from this era were obedient, they were not necessarily subservient, and some priests learnt how to survive in the seminary and in priesthood by 'keeping their heads down' and 'playing the game'. The views and experiences of the pre-Vatican II research participants are summarised under three headings: the pre-Vatican II Church, seminary life, and the lived experience of clerical obedience.

The Pre-Vatican II Church

The three oldest priests in this cohort recalled the pre-Vatican II Church with a sense of nostalgia; however, they also remembered it as being very regimented and legalistic, with too many 'pernickety rules' (Curate, 1960s). At the time, they took this for granted since many aspects of Irish society were also strictly controlled: 'The Church was very regimented but, in those days, life was regimented too. It was no bed of roses anywhere' (Retired priest, 1950s). Ireland was 'a very different world altogether to what we are used to now. It was very tough in many ways. There was no electricity or running water in the countryside' (Retired priest, 1950s). Two of the older priests recalled how it was a hard time for many people with few employment opportunities for anyone unless they had the financial means to attend university. They also recalled the pre-Vatican II Church as a time of fear, when priests and people were 'very

conscious of sin' and eternal damnation (Retired priest, 1960s). There were many occasions of sin in day-to-day life, such as eating meat on a Friday and not observing a proper fast before receiving Holy Communion. Everyone had to learn the *Penny Catechism* by rote in school, which clearly set out the basic tenets of the Catholic faith and the many occasions in which it was possible to commit sins. Some dioceses also had their own moral laws (reserved sins), such as forbidding people from attending dances after midnight. While two priests felt 'there was something to be said for these moral laws,' they also said that it was 'too much for them to be binding under the pain of mortal sin' (Retired priests, 1950s).

Priests were not exempt from the threat of mortal sin. Some dioceses forbade priests attending the theatre, going to the races, or hunting. Others forbade priests drinking, especially poteen, and gambling. Some scrupulous priests considered it a mortal sin if they didn't say their breviary or if they didn't strictly follow the many rubrics[195] when saying Mass. While some of the respondents were conscious of the seriousness of violating 'fussy' Church rules, others were less concerned.

> You had scrupulous priests scraping the corporal trying to get the last fragment of the host. I will never forget when a host fell and the whole Mass had to be stopped like a train in mid flight and the brakes were put on. The altar boy had to bring out water and the priest had to get down on his knees to clean everything three times and then everything had to be put into a special washing machine (Curate, 1960s).[196]

Two priests felt they were often treated like 'children' when they asked permission from their bishop or parish priest for relatively mundane activities (Curate and parish priest, 1960s). One priest told of how he was refused permission by his parish priest to go on pilgrimage because the parish priest was being 'awkward' for the sake of it, even though the

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[195] A previously discussed, the way a priest said Mass was subject to detailed instructions, known as rubrics. Amongst other things, they governed a priest's hand movements, triple blessings, genuflections, and how he changed the Missal from side to side during Mass.

[196] This was not too unusual and I can recall a number of occasions when a similar event happened during Mass.

curate had found a replacement priest for the time he planned to be away (Curate, 1960s). Another had to ask permission whenever he wanted to leave the parish, even for a few hours (Parish priest, 1960s). One priest described Church discipline as 'contradictory to God's love' (Curate, 1960s). For him, the way people and priests were treated by Church authorities was 'dictatorial, condemnatory', and 'everything was designed to conform to the law' and 'catch people out' (Curate, 1960s).

Pre-Vatican II Priests' Views of Seminary Life[197]

Most of these priests were critical of the formation they had received in the seminary, largely because of its regimented nature, which reflected the pre-Vatican Church and the way seminaries operated at this time. As a group, they condemned seminaries for being too 'regimented', 'rigid', 'soulless', 'secretive', 'places where students were groomed and brainwashed', 'blinking jails', 'dictatorial', and 'totally lacking in compassion or vision'. One priest told of how he and some of his counterparts 'hate' the college and the people who ran it 'to this very day' fifty years later (Curate, 1960s). The following quotes are typical of the negative feelings expressed by these priests towards their time in the seminary:

> There were a lot of rules and looking back now, I am inclined to say they were the worst years of my life. It was so drab, especially going back after Christmas and you knew you wouldn't be coming out again until the middle of June. It was very enclosed and you weren't challenged enough. I suppose it was a test of your vocation and we just got through it (Parish priest, 1960s).

> Maynooth was like a prison and it was hard to get out in those days. It set out to destroy your individuality and make fellows comply; to regiment them and make everyone the same but it failed. The whole system was geared to getting rid of fellows that didn't fit in. It didn't scar me, like many

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[197] The research participants attended a number of seminaries including Maynooth, Clonliffe, Thurles, Carlow, and Rome, with some priests attending more than one college. Unless otherwise stated, references to a seminary in this section are generic.

others guys, and I remember saying that I just had to survive this place. Fear was everywhere and some bullying too (Retired priest, 1960s).

Clonliffe was absolutely appalling. The staff was arrogant and remote. It was very rigid and very structured. The rooms were freezing and the rules were ridiculous. We weren't allowed into other students' rooms but we were never told why. The dean was a bit of a policeman and once he got us all together and told us there was going to be a reign of terror in Senior House. It was a dreadful place. You had to wear your biretta[198] all the time, day and night, eating your dinner, going up the stairs and you had to take it off before a priest or before the crucifix or the Sacred Heart or Our Lady. It was so infantile, you might as well have been in a kindergarten (Semi-retired priest, 1960s).

When in the seminary, students felt they had no choice but to accept the many rules that were imposed on them, including, early rising and lights out; observing strict timetables during the day; wearing appropriate religious garb at all times; observing solemn silence at night, during meal times, and during retreats; not visiting other students in their rooms; and not leaving the grounds of the seminary without specific permission from the President of the college. This latter rule was particularly harsh for students who were not allowed out to play in their parish or county teams, even for important matches.[199] Letters were censored, visitors were monitored, and newspapers were only allowed towards the end of the 1950s. Their lives were controlled by bells and monitored by staff inside the college. Students were taught etiquette, such as how to peal a potato or top an egg, or what type of present a priest could give a woman, and if you did anything incorrectly you would be 'put out to the line' as punishment (Curate, 1960s). Outside college, a student was regarded as 'a priest in

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[198] A biretta is a square hat with three ridges or peaks, worn by clerics.

[199] One priest recalled how he was refused permission to play in an All Ireland final, even though he had been part of the team that had won the Munster championship earlier in the summer, and how he, together with other students, had to crouch below the open window of a professor's room to listen to the match on his radio. Others noted how sorry they felt for some of their classmates in Clonliffe who were refused permission to play in Croke Park although they could hear the match being played just outside the walls of the seminary. This was particularly galling for one priest who argued that the GAA and the Catholic Church were closely connected at parish level.

training', subject to the informal supervision of parish clergy and others in the parish who would report 'inappropriate behaviour' to the bishop or the college authorities: 'You were aware that there was always somebody watching you'. It was 'ridiculous' and 'just part of the game' for students (Retired priest, 1950s).

One priest recalled his seminary days as 'almost living like a hermit' because of the silences he had to observe during lengthy retreats, solemn night silence, and during meal times (Retired priest, 1960s). Students who violated college rules were sometimes asked to leave or they were 'docked' by not getting Orders[200] with the rest of their class (Retired priest, 1950s). One priest spoke of how he was not called to take his diaconate with the rest of his class because he was 'not always as punctual as he might have been' (Parish priest, 1960s) He considered this punishment to have been a 'harsh blow for something petty' but, as was the custom at the time, he was never given an explanation for his punishment: 'If the authorities felt you weren't suitable, you would be told to stay at home at Christmas or the summer, but other students would never know if you were fired or if you decided to leave' (Parish priest, 1960s). Another student was asked to leave when he was found reading a French novel, although he was later accepted into a different seminary outside Ireland and subsequently returned as a staff member in the first seminary. Two priests said that they believed that some students were 'fired' from the seminary because of their country accents, which could not be understood in Dublin (Curate, 1960s).

One priest felt he was 'groomed' in his school and the seminary to be a priest, although he felt that he never lost his sense of 'who he was' (Former priest, 1960s). This was a common theme with a number of these priests. One priest felt he was 'brainwashed' in the seminary and that he was a 'different person' when he came out, but only in terms of discipline and his need to help people (Former priest, 1960s). Another priest said that

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[200] Students received various Orders as they progressed through their training, including reader, acolyte, deaconate and priesthood.

the seminary prepared him for priesthood in a 'functional' sense, by, for example, teaching him to say Mass (Parish priest, 1960s). The seminary was perceived to be a place where students were 'tested out, where you were challenged to see if you were equal to the life in different ways' (Parish priest, 1960s). Students were told they were free to leave at any time: 'You are here of your freewill and the gates are always open' (Parish priest, 1960s). It was a place where students learnt to accept the relatively harsh regime of seminary life and to obey the often 'unreasonable' instructions of their superiors (Parish priest, 1960s). There were many rules in the seminary but some of them were regarded by students as 'the greatest load of rubbish' and not to be taken seriously (curate, 1960s). However, other rules were considered to be important, with serious consequences for violations, and therefore, duly obeyed by most students. In this sense, and possibly in this sense only,[201] it was regarded as 'good training' for their lives as priests, where they were expected to obey the instructions of their bishop and parish priest without question (Parish priest, 1960s).

While two of the older priests felt that they had no choice in accepting lives that were often 'unfair' and 'bound by rules' (Parish priest, 1960s), others admitted to breaking some rules in the seminary. One priest spoke of how he had learnt to 'survive' the seminary by keeping his head down and not attracting attention (Parish priest, 1960s). Another priest said that while the seminary may have 'done its best' to control and make students 'conform' to a certain type of priest, it had 'obviously failed' because there were 'lots of different characters' in Maynooth and the priesthood (Parish priest, 1960s). It was accepted that students could break the 'odd rule' and most of the rules that were broken in the seminary were usually relatively minor, such as speaking to lay students in UCD, eating biscuits in their rooms, listening to the radio or reading newspapers (Retired priest, 1950s). Some students were more adventurous and one student, who later left the

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[201] When asked if their seminary training had prepared them for priesthood, most of these priests said their training was very poor, with outdated theology and few opportunities for personal development.

seminary, 'evaded capture' on many occasions when he climbed the college wall to go into town to the cinema (Parish priest, 1960s). Another student was fired for leaving the seminary to play in an All Ireland final without permission. Allegedly, he later became a government minister. Seminary life was not completely negative and most of these priests could recall some positive elements that helped them to 'survive' the system, including the camaraderie of their classmates, some staff and sport. The importance of sport was singled out by a number of respondents.

The Lived Experience of Priestly Obedience in the Pre-Vatican II Church

As previously discussed, obedience was considered to be a 'huge virtue' in the pre-Vatican II Church, and this was 'ingrained' in priests (Parish priest, 1960s). For the most part, priests obeyed their bishops, and curates obeyed their parish priests. For many of these priests the process of obedience had begun in their secondary school, most of which were minor seminaries and boarding schools, and reinforced in the seminary. One former priest recalled 'with some bitterness' how his education was all about obedience, although he didn't realise it at the time.

> Guilt was beaten into us and it was certainly a hard decision to leave. Looking back on my education, it was all about obedience and nothing else but obedience. Your personality was kind of destroyed. For me, obedience and goodness were identical. Whoever was the most obedient was the best student. I hardly ever broke a rule. I was very docile (Former priest, 1960s).

Five of these priests regarded 'disobedience' to their bishop to be 'unthinkable' and 'disloyal'. Priests were expected to do whatever their bishop asked and, for the most part, they did so without question. Five of them said they obeyed their bishops out of loyalty, which was 'very important' because without this 'you would have no order in things at all' (Retired priest, 1950s). However, one priest qualified this statement by saying he 'understood' that a priest would always be able to discuss an

appointment with his bishop, especially if 'he was being sent to a parish and there was some reason he didn't want to go' (Retired priest, 1950s).

> You more or less did what you were told and you would maybe pay for disobedience by the type of appointment you received. It was very much a clerical Church, very autocratic, which we are paying the price for now. People were rightly critical of the vow of silence imposed on the two boys by (Cardinal) Brady but the Church I knew, if you were asked to do something by your bishop, you didn't size it up and say I won't do it (Parish priest, 1960s).

In the pre-Vatican II Church, a bishop usually made parish appointments[202] without consultation with the priests concerned. A number of priests told of how they or their curates were transferred by the bishop without any prior notice. Others sometimes heard of their new appointments from other priests before being contacted by the bishop. However, while most respondents were critical of the process, only three priests had ever challenged their bishop, and then only following Vatican II, when the environment was more open.

One priest who was falsely charged with child sexual abuse, felt he was being 'disappeared' by his bishop who, he felt, wanted him 'out of sight', when he was asked to move to a different parish (Parish priest, 1960s). However, when the priest refused to move, the bishop accepted his argument and 'backed down, at least for a while'. Another priest refused an appointment but it 'never crossed his mind' that he was being disobedient, and if the bishop had insisted, 'he would have gone' (Parish priest, 1960s). That was the 'first and only time' he had done that. Questioning a bishop was rare for priests of this era and any form of confrontation was virtually unheard of. The reason for the lack of consultation was, according to one priest, because of 'power', where the bishop wanted to 'make sure that everyone knew he was in charge' (Parish priest, 1960s). One priest summed up the power of bishops over his priests in one word, 'money' (Parish priest, 1960s).

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[202] Priests are appointed to their ministries by their bishops.

> In the old days the bishop had the threat of moving you if you didn't step up to the mark. There were punishing parishes, which were poor. Money determined where fellows were put. That was the big thing hanging over you, whether you would get a poor parish or a rich parish. If you didn't measure up, you got a poor parish. Money was the big factor in punishing fellows short of silencing them (Parish priest, 1960s).

In those days, the wealthier parishes were in towns, while some priests lived in virtual poverty in some rural parishes. One priest recalled how he earned just over £500 in 1963, which was 'enough to get by' but that this was very low when compared the salary received by a curate in the adjoining parish: 'His salary was one of the best kept secrets in Dublin at the time but he told me it went into five figures, which was a lot of money in those days' (Parish priest, 1960s).

Following ordination, a young priest was usually appointed to a parish, as a curate or an assistant. While some parish priests (PPs) were 'gentlemen' (Retired priest, 1950s), many were regarded as 'awkward', 'authoritarian' 'horrible' and 'bullies' (Parish priests, 1960s). One priest told of how his PP punished him when he challenged him on a relatively minor matter by ordering him to say an extra Mass in an outlying parish 'at a time when you had to fast from midnight' (Retired priest, 1950s). He was hungry and tired but 'not bowed down'. Other priests were given duties that were considered to be difficult or awkward by the PP. Two priests recalled how they could only leave the parish with the 'express permission' of their PPs, and while they did not always ask permission, they knew they would be rebuked and punished if the PP discovered their disobedience (Curate and Parish priest, 1960s). Other priests told of how they had to find their own accommodation in the parish, with very little money, while their PPs and senior curates lived 'alone and in relative luxury' (Former priest, 1960s). They were made to feel 'bottom of the pile' and to understand who had the power within the parish (Former priest, 1960s).

The 'grooming' of a young priest was considered to be a normal part of the process in becoming a priest, so it was just something 'you had to go

through' as a priest (Former priest, 1960s). For example, attendance at meetings for priests in a particular deanery was compulsory at this time and young priests were often 'picked on' to examine their knowledge about theology (Parish priest, 1960s). However, most priests learnt 'how to handle PPs' and, in two cases, their bishop, by not confronting them directly.

> I learnt to get things done in Maynooth by not asking for permission, and just getting on and doing it without fear. When I was ordained I didn't want to create trouble for the sake of it, so I wouldn't go looking for fights. Sometimes you will achieve more by doing something quietly. I have known fellows down through the years who were very direct and I always thought they could have got more if they were less direct. I have enjoyed the confidence of bishops and I know how to handle them. You have to absorb their anger first and then he would be a different man altogether and easier to get things done (Parish priest, 1960s).

One priest told how he regularly 'avoided' asking permission for certain things because 'it was easier to get forgiveness than permission' (Parish priest, 1960s). Four priests spoke of 'doing their own thing'. Most of the priests gave examples of how they done something, which their PP would probably have disapproved of, and undoubtedly forbidden if he knew about it in advance. However, they felt that once it was done, there was little the PP could do about it. For example, one priest organised activities in the parish for young people, and another introduced meditation into a local second level school. Both priests 'knew' they would not have been given permission from their PPs if they had asked, so they proceeded without asking, and 'nothing was ever said' (Parish priests, 1960s).

Most, but not all, priests knew the boundaries of obedience and dissent and they were careful not to anger the bishop or to place themselves in a situation where they could be formally disciplined. However, not everyone stayed within the boundaries. One former priest, for example, refused to read out a letter from the Archbishop at Mass detailing the instructions contained in *Humanae Vitae* because he disagreed with the 'absurdity' of telling women with large families that they could not 'stop'. When he had

finished Mass and left the altar, his PP read the letter to the congregation. There was no discussion with the PP and he had not been forewarned of the PP's actions. This same priest also angered some of his clerical colleagues when, in another parish, he donated some of the parish dues to poor people in his parish and when he gave sermons that were regarded by some of his parishioners as 'communist'. Ultimately, he felt that 'he had to go' because no one was 'allowed to challenge Rome or the diocese' (Former priest, 1960s). Generally, however, it would appear that priests of this generation accepted the status quo with minimal confrontation and one priest criticised the priests of his diocese for being too 'passive' (Parish priest, 1960s).

During the pre-Vatican II Church, there was little scope or expectation of priests dissenting from official Church teachings. The 'law was the law' (Retired priest, 1950s) and there were serious consequences if it was not obeyed. However, over the years, most of this group came to accept the spirit of the Second Vatican Council and to adopt a more liberal, pastoral approach to their ministry. For example, most of them said they would be reluctant to condemn people in morally ambiguous situations, such as people in second relationships, gay people or people who used artificial contraceptives. With the exception of two of the older priests who said they would be sympathetic but that they could not in all conscience give Holy Communion to people in an 'irregular' relationship, most of these priests would have no problem doing so.

> How could you refuse someone you knew to be divorced? How would you know they had not been to confession? How would you know if they are intimately involved in sin? There are a whole lot of factors and you can't really judge people. Our Lord didn't condemn people, so how can we? (Retired priest, 1950s).

Similarly, most of these priests said they would have no difficulty working with married priests even though this is against current Church policy. The group was more divided in relation to women priests 'because it involved messing around with the sacraments' (Parish priest, 1960s), with seven

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priests open to the possibility and others unsure or content to follow Church policy.

In spite of their unorthodox views on some Church policies, all of these priests regard themselves to be obedient and loyal priests: 'We are 'men of the cloth and like, soldiers in an army we regulate our lives accordingly' (Parish priest, 1960s). However, this does not mean priests have to accept everything that 'comes out of Rome' (Parish priest, 1960s). Two priests do not believe that a priest would be disobedient if, for example, he refused to accept the introduction of new wording for the Mass, which was clearly 'concocted by a civil servant in the curia who cooked it up to get a promotion!' (Parish priest, 1960s).

> You have to hold the party line in public regardless of your own view at times. An odd time I depart a little but not often. I would get rapped and I might be told to resign if I persisted, I don't know. But I believe I am right about the new wording in the Mass and I might say it someday. I am not a public person in the sense of speaking out and I have never written anything other than a few homilies and I am never outside the Church in my own pulpit but one day, you never know (Parish priest, 1960s).

Rules continue to be important for this group of priests and, as illustrated by the following story, they are willing to be obedient even in situations where they feel 'wronged' by the Church. The following is a story of an elderly parish priest in good standing who was falsely accused of abusing a young boy.

The Story of Fr Paul[203]

Fr Paul was ordained approximately five years before the Second Vatican Council. From the outset, he was 'always comfortable' with his vocation and he had little difficulty in obeying seminary rules, no matter how 'ridiculous', or living a celibate life following ordination. In hindsight, he realised that the seminary tried to 'programme him for life as a priest' but it failed. His priesthood is integral to his identity; he is 'always' a priest, which he describes as 'just me', whether he is saying Mass or going on holiday. Over the years, his understanding of obedience has changed from virtual subservience to a situation where he 'is not too bothered with the authorities' and where he is content to do his own thing, although he doesn't break many rules.

> We are obliged to 'listen carefully' to our bishop but not to do it blindly like many of the priests in this diocese. Most priests are happy to tow the line and keep their heads down and not ruffle the waters. None of us got too caught up with Vatican II and we let them break up our beautiful altars. I really don't pay too much attention as to whether or not I am being disobedient or not.

Over the years he had 'got into trouble once or twice with the bishop' but nothing serious, and overall he is regarded as a priest of good standing in the diocese and he did what was expected of him in the various parishes in which he worked. However, in May 2008, his bishop turned up at his parish Mass to inform the people that Fr Paul had been asked to step aside because an allegation of child sexual abuse had been made against him. The following is an account of what transpired when he was accused of sexually abusing a young boy, 'contrary to the sixth commandment and the provisions of Canon 1395/2'.

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[203] This is one of two stories of priests who were falsely accused of sexually abusing children. Both priests were deeply affected by their ordeals, yet both remained loyal to the Church and their sense of priesthood has been strengthened rather than diminished. Some details have been changed to protect the identities of the priest and his accuser.

Mid 1980s: The alleged sexual assault took place.

May 2008: Twenty years later, Fr Paul received a letter in the post from a solicitor alleging that he, Fr Paul, had 'done something terrible' in a previous parish. However, the letter did not contain the details of the accusation. Fr Paul recalls that his heart 'was pounding' and he knew instantly that 'this was one of those accusations,' and he 'knew' what was going to happen. Two days later, he rang his bishop's house and arranged to meet with the bishop and his child protection team. The following day the Gardaí arrested him when he presented himself at a Garda station, as requested. The following is his memory of his ordeal in the Garda station.

> When you are arrested, your belongings are taken from you, your shoes are taken off you, and your belt is taken, and your mobile phone, everything. Now I know what they mean when they call the cells a slammer. The cell door is like the door of a safe and they bang it behind you, and you are in this place, with a toilet in the corner, which is not very clean, a hole in the ground. The ground is cold and you have a bench to sit on or lie down, whatever you like. There is a slit in the door and they come down every 15 minutes or so to see if you have done yourself in or whatever. It was absolutely ludicrous to see the head of a Garda above the glass looking at you. You are left there for half an hour for, what my solicitor told me, was to soften me up. You are then taken and put into a fixed chair that won't move facing a video camera and I was questioned for two and half hours.
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> Then they told me what I supposed to have done and I absolutely denied it. They finger-printed me and they took my mugshot. The photograph can never be removed from the police station; it is there for the rest of your life. Then they took me back to the cells and gave me a mug of tea. I was then interviewed for a second time. I wasn't allowed to have my solicitor with me for the initial interview. Some of my friends had been ringing me but I was completely incommunicado; no one knew what had happened to me. I could have been killed. When I spoke with the bishop, he asked me to step aside, but I refused since I was totally innocent. I eventually signed the papers and went off to the caves like a leper. I was advised by another bishop, 'a friend', not to refuse because it would

> become a battle of wills between me and my bishop, and I
> could not win.

The following weekend, the bishop came out to Fr Paul's parish to 'proclaim from the house-tops' the allegation that had been made and that 'they were standing me aside'. Fr Paul was told in advance of the announcement, that he could not defend himself or speak in Church. The announcement was greeted with shock by parishioners, some of whom came to him afterwards to give him their support. Fr Paul was removed from the exercise of his office and ministry in May, 2008.

July 2008: The Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) dismissed the case against Fr Paul in less than one month, although he was not told this until later when the Gardaí confirmed through his solicitor that the DPP had directed that there would be no prosecution in relation to Fr Paul arising from the allegations of sexual abuse.

August 2008: Approximately one month following the DPP's decision, the Church finally began its preliminary inquiry. However, they reached no conclusion and their main concern seemed to Fr Paul to get him out of the parish residence. But he was 'not for moving' against the 'might of the institution'. While he accepted that all allegations concerning children should be investigated, he believed that he was treated like a 'leper' or possibly a 'lamb' that was 'thrown to the wolves' to take pressure off the bishops. As soon as the 'denunciation' was made against him, he believes that 'the shutters came down with the authorities' and he was told nothing about his position in the parish. His bishop wanted him to 'leave the parish quietly in the night' but he refused to go because he believes that 'there is too much control in the Church' and he didn't want 'to be pushed about'.

August 2009: One year later, the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith in Rome informed Fr Paul's bishop to establish a Canonical trial to hear and adjudicate on the allegation.

November 2009: Fr Paul eventually moved residence but remained in his parish. He wanted to resume his life and 'enjoy his enforced leisure'. He also went to Mass in the local Church because he knew he was innocent. His view was vindicated when a number of people later told him that 'they knew he hadn't done anything' when they saw him 'around the Church' and because t he hadn't 'run away'.

December 2009: Another statement from the diocese was read out at Masses in the parish reminding parishioners of the allegation against Fr Paul and telling them that the Canonical process had begun. However, this process was slow to begin, partly because of the shortage of canon lawyers. His bishop later told him that they only 'do cases like mine in their spare time'.

December 2010: Approximately one year later, and more than two years following the DPP decision that 'no prosecution' be taken in relation to Fr Paul arising from the allegations of sexual abuse, the Church's judicial process effectively started and the various parties were interviewed. The unanimous decision was to 'clear me and to remove all restrictions'. He was told he could go back to work but then told not to as the diocese wanted to 'sort out' things first.

October 2011: A short notice was read out in the parish that Church and state investigations had been completed and that Fr Paul was returning to ministry and that he remains a priest in good standing in the diocese. However, it fell short of stating he was innocent.

Fr Paul feels anger towards the Church, partly because it left him hanging for more than three years following the DPP decision that there was no case to answer. He is angry because he believes the diocese abandoned him, in spite of his previously good record as a priest. For example, he believes that his name 'fell off' the diocesan mailing list for priests, and his status as PP was effectively revoked without any consultation. He knows that his reputation has been damaged seriously, possibly

irreparably, and that this has not been helped by the long delay in holding the Canonical Inquiry. He believes he has always been a loyal Catholic priest and that his treatment by the diocese was a betrayal of this loyalty. However, he remains loyal to the Church and slow to accuse or condemn anyone for his ordeal. Fr Paul has now retired. His last words to me on the matter, 'Dying should be easy after this!

In summary, this generation of pre-Vatican II priests were initially taught in their seminaries to obey authority without question. They were also given this message when they were ordained and started work in a parish. However, they also learnt how to circumvent some rules by 'keeping their heads down'. Following the Second Vatican Council, their legalistic understanding of obedience was replaced by a more liberal interpretation., leading some of them to question some Church teachings. However, while many of them do not always accept 'everything that comes out of Rome', they believe they are loyal priests. This is a characteristic that is also evident in the next cohort of priests, the Vatican II priests.

7.3 How Vatican II Diocesan Priests Understand and Experience Obedience.

The eleven priests and three former priests in this cohort were all ordained in the 1970s and 1980s. Accordingly, their experience of Church is framed by the Second Vatican Council, which challenged the strictly hierarchical nature of the Church and sought to reform some traditional practices. As previously discussed, a new paradigm of priesthood emerged, which increasingly replaced the prevailing cultic model, with its pastoral agenda.

The Vatican II Church

Many of these priests have a somewhat ambivalent view of the Second Vatican Council. On the one hand, most of these priests regarded Vatican II as a revolution that represented a significant improvement on the more legalistic and regimented pre-Vatican II Church. Most of them spoke of being 'initially enthused', 'impressed by the documents of Vatican II',

'encouraged by modern priests', and generally feeling 'energised' during the years following Vatican II (Parish priests, 1970s). They believed that Vatican II promised that the Church would be a Church of the people and that the hierarchical framework of the Church would be replaced by more collegial structures.

However, for many of them, their initial enthusiasm has been replaced by frustration and an acceptance that little has changed with the Church's hierarchical form of governing during the past fifty years. In their opinion, the Church is still fundamentally hierarchical and the empowerment of lay people only occurred to 'a very small extent' (Parish priest, 1970s). While many of these priests had set up pastoral councils, liturgy groups and financial groups, they acknowledged that these groups have limited influence and that many of their colleagues still act as 'plant managers' where they control the 'keys of the parish' (Parish priest, 1970s). The Church, in their opinion, is still 'very much controlled from the top' (Parish priest, 1970s): 'I feel we lost a great opportunity in Ireland in Vatican II. We didn't really take it and implement it in the spirit in which it was intended. By and large we are still a hierarchical Church, and I think it is an awful pity that structures haven't changed. I would sometimes despair at the institutional Church' (Parish priest, 1970s).

Most priests said they had been 'disappointed' (Parish priest, 1970s), 'saddened' (Parish priest, 1970s) and 'angered' (Parish priest, 1980s) by the 'failed opportunity' (Parish priest, 1980s) of Vatican II. However, it is a controlled anger because they have learnt from experience that 'patience wins more battles than confrontation' (Parish priest, 1970s). Vatican II was 'supposed to be a time when the windows of the Church opened to the world and a lot of change would happen but this didn't happen', according to one priest (Parish priest, 1980s). He, like others, eventually learnt to accept that any form of change or progress in the Catholic Church is very slow and that 'there is not a lot you can do about it': 'You discover as you go along that the Church moves in centuries and that everything takes a long time. Sometimes things move backward before they move forward.

Vatican II moved the Church forward before it was dragged back by John Paul II. As a young priest I was very frustrated with this and I can see the same thing happening with young priests today. However, when you get older, you see things in a different way. It is not that you are throwing in the towel but you see that things move slowly and that there is not a lot you can do about it' (Parish priest, 1980s).

While they realise that change on the scale envisaged by Vatican II is never going to be easy or immediate, many of them are increasingly frustrated at the perceived reversal in the process towards a more conservative Church that occurred during the papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Five priests said they had no wish to return to the restrictions or control of a cultic Church that prevailed before Vatican II, and accordingly, three of these priests reacted with anger towards any initiatives that suggested the Church was returning to a conservative model of Church. Two priests admitted being 'frightened' at the way young priests were 'going around in soutanes, white-cuffed, and saying Latin Mass' (Parish priests, 1980s). Three priests said they would have to consider their positions when the new wording of the Mass missal is introduced because, for them, it symbolised the resurgence of a clericalist Church. They believe that the Church is 'turning back in on itself' and if this continues, this will mean that the past fifty years will be seen as a 'failed opportunity' (Parish priests, 1980s).

> Vatican II was a fabulous opportunity for the Church to keep pace with the modern world and in the beginning it was brilliant as poor old Paul VI was virtually out of touch with everything. But then John Paul II and Benedict XVI seem to be saying that it was all a big mistake. That is very sad for me. The feeling seems to be that if we go back to what we had before Vatican II, with the rigid liturgies and all the rest that we will go back to full churches but we won't (Parish priest, 1980s).

However, in spite of their frustration, most priests accepted that change has occurred in the Irish Church since Vatican II, even if most of this change has taken place in the attitudes of priests rather than in Church structures. For example, one priest said he no longer regarded a priest's

vocation to be superior to that of a lay person: 'When I was in the seminary, you either became a priest or you took second best and got married, or maybe you would go as a lay missionary that was not quite up to the mark. That was a dreadful way of understanding your vocation' (Parish priest, 1970s).[204]

Another priest said that when he was ordained, the priesthood was 'more spiritualised' (Parish priest, 1980s) and that he thought that he was 'a channel' to God and that his job was to administer the sacraments and lead the people to God. He now realises that his role is more communal and a 'shared responsibility'. He felt that when he was ordained, he didn't see the need for a parish council because he was 'trained' for the job and lay people weren't (Parish priest, 1980s). It was his job to 'take care' of the keys in the parish and no one ever objected, at least not to his face. He was in charge and 'everyone knew it'. However, it is only with the passage of time that he has come to see that he was 'part of the control the Church exercised over people' and that his approach had been 'destructive' in forming a parish. Most of this generation of priests are content to live with uncertainty and less power if it means that the Church is less authoritarian.

> When I grew up and went through the seminary and priesthood, one of the big things was that we had left this older church behind that had all the answers because it didn't serve us well, where the PP was lord and master of all he surveyed. Whatever he said, the whole of society had to bow and scrape and put their shoulder to the wheel. You couldn't question anything. The Church had all the answers, whereas the Church I was ordained into had a new way of thinking, where a priest's own personal experience carried some authority and weight. The whole fact of uncertainty and searching, trying to find our own way within a certain structure, within the teaching of the Church, with scripture as our guide, praying with it, reflecting with it; that was all part of the new Church (Parish priest, 1980s).

The response of most priests is to accept the situation, and to do the best they can in their own parishes, where they still have some say. One priest

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[204] This priest had entered the seminary shortly after Vatican II and still held traditional views of a vocation.

who considered leaving the priesthood because 'there was so little progress' since Vatican II decided to 'give up in reforming institutional structures' and instead, to 'work within the situation and to do what he could within his own parish' (Parish priest, 1980s). However, even there, he recognised that his freedom to act was curtailed by the clerical culture where other priests might criticise him for doing something outside the norm. Some priests felt that obedience was not as strict following Vatican II, even though they rarely went against Church policies or practices: 'Maybe it was the air of freedom or the greater sense of fraternity between priests, but even though you had a vow of obedience and you had to obey it, there seemed to be a greater freedom in how this was done' (Parish priest, 1980s).

Vatican II Priests' Views of Seminary Life

Seminary life was slow to change and it took some years before theology courses and staff reflected the new theology of Vatican II. During the second half of the 1960s and early 1970s, it remained a 'very regimented' environment and the 'whole idea seemed to be that they should kick you around plenty and if you are tough enough, you will survive on the outside' (Parish priest, 1970s). A description of seminary life in the late 1960s showed how little seminary life had changed since the pre-Vatican Church. Many practices from the pre-Vatican II era continued after Vatican II.

> Theology was out of date, with little interaction or understanding of what was taught. Some lecturers hadn't changed their notes for years and very few of the staff ever spoke to students by name. You got home for Christmas and summer but there were no breaks in between. It was a very closed system and you never got out unless you were going to the doctor or a very close family member had died. We couldn't get the newspapers and everything was black. We were identified by a number, like being in a concentration camp. There was no human development and students would receive solemn warnings without notice. There were lots of silly rules (Parish priest, 1970s).

However, change did come in the early 1970s, and there was 'a greater openness' about the seminary (Parish priest, 1970s). The content and style

of teaching changed, with the appointment of some new lecturers, following a strike by theology students in one college and subsequent pressure by some bishops. Students were allowed out of college for sporting occasions and increasingly for personal reasons. They were also allowed access to newspapers and radio, to buy sweets and biscuits, and the prohibition on visiting students in their rooms was increasingly ignored. Some seminaries opened their doors to lay students, male and female, in the late 1960s.

Unlike many of the pre-Vatican II priests, these priests found their seminary life to be disciplined but less restrictive. Some priests said that they enjoyed a range of college activities, including studies, sport, debating and drama. The spiritual environment and pastoral activities fulfilled others. In hindsight, however, the majority of priests said that their seminary training did not prepare them well for the priesthood or life as an adult. For one priest, it was 'a prison' to which he has never returned, while another regarded the experience as 'stultifying' (Parish priests, 1970s).

> The training in Maynooth was a very rugged and impersonal training, with little awareness of human needs. They prepared us for nothing and the theology was very poor and part of a pre-Vatican Church. The dogma was staid and very dead. It was awful stuff really (Parish priest, 1970s).

Sexuality was a taboo subject in seminaries, particularly homosexuality, and most priests said that there was little or no provision for personal development, celibacy or sexuality. One priest said that 'the gay thing' was 'strong' in his seminary (Parish priest, 1980s) and that he personally knew students who used to meet in private outside the seminary and sometimes inside. Conversely, most priests said they were unaware of a homosexual culture in the seminary or the wider Church. One gay priest said that homosexuality was never acknowledged by the authorities or students in his seminary, even students he knew were gay: 'There was a group of gay men in the college and we would have gravitated towards

each other, but we couldn't talk amongst ourselves or ever say we were gay' (Former priest, gay, 1980s). Students joked about it and the college authorities tried to avoid it. However, it was only a 'firing offence' if a student was caught in the act or another student reported 'being interfered with' (Parish priest, 1980s). One former priest told of how he got a 'terrible fright' when he was sexually assaulted by a priest on the seminary staff, but that nothing had happened when he reported the priest to his spiritual director. He was simply told that the priest concerned had 'gone a little cracked'.

Four priests felt that the seminary system continued to emphasise conformity over individuality. For them, the seminary 'tried to kill any spark of initiative' in students and to 'impose obedience, authority, discipline, order, and time-keeping' (Parish priests, 1970s/1980s). Individuality continued to be a serious threat to ordination. However, most priests felt they beat the system,[205] in this regard, at least.

> I think that is what Maynooth trained us for, to be rugged, tough individuals who can survive on their own. That is an awful thing; no one can survive alone. That is one of the awful things about Maynooth. They wanted to make everyone the same and if you put your head above the parapet you were nearly shot on sight. But you just learned to retain your own personality and to keep your head low. We told each other not to let the system get you down, and you could beat the system with the help of your peers (Parish priest, 1970s).

While the seminary had 'streamlined them' and possibly 'conditioned' them 'a bit' to act and think like priests in certain situations, a number of priests felt that their time in the seminary had not significantly changed their vocation or their personality: 'The boy will always out, maybe not for some time, but eventually' (Parish priest, 1970s).

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[205] I am aware of one priest who insisted on getting ordained in the 1980s, against the advice of many people and allegedly the reservations of his bishop, only to leave the priesthood some months later. He had allegedly become a priest to show he could beat the system.

> We are a bit conditioned and it is a pity. It is a mindset and approach to life we were taught in the seminary and reinforced afterwards. It seems to me that anyone with new ideas is seen as a threat. I think we are conditioned in Maynooth to keep your head down and don't get caught. Maynooth trains us to be lone rangers, to be rugged tough individuals but I think that is awfully wrong. It is easy to be a lone ranger but nobody is a lone ranger. It is easy to hide behind your black soutane and your black whatever, but society has changed and we need to form relationships with people. Maynooth wanted to make everybody the same and if you put your head above the parapet you were nearly shot on sight. But you learned to retain your own personality, to retain your own giftedness and you just kept your head low. The whole idea seemed to be that you should kick students around plenty and if they are tough enough they will last outside (Parish priest, 1970s).

In spite of the changes, seminaries remained places of discipline, albeit less regimented than in the past. In the words of one priest, his seminary was 'kind of like monastic living for kids', an 'endurance test' that was clerical and closed' (Parish priest, 1980s). There were timetables for everything and everything was spiritualised. Most of these priests believed that a student would be ordained if they 'ticked all the right boxes', including being present for morning prayer, passing exams, and not getting caught (too often) breaking the rules (Parish priest, 1980s).

The Lived Experience of Priestly Obedience in the Vatican II Church

The openness that followed Vatican II did little to challenge the hierarchical nature of the Church, with priests expected to obey their bishop and to accept the teachings of the Catholic Church. For the most part, these priests were content to obey their bishop provided they remained true to themselves. However, most priests felt that obedience did not impinge on their day-to-day lives, as they were largely 'independent' of their bishop provided they did not give him 'reason' to interfere in the parish (Parish priest, 1980s). The important thing was to 'keep your head down and do your own thing' (Parish priest, 1970s). In contrast to the 'extraordinarily dictatorial' relationship of the past, five priests believe they have developed a 'working relationship' with their bishop. However,

while some had queried appointments or other matters, and others felt they could if they needed to, very few had done so.

Nevertheless, everyone acknowledged that the relationship with their bishop was an unequal relationship, which was based on a one-sided authority. One priest was convinced that mandatory celibacy persisted because it was 'easier' to control priests (Parish priest, 1980s). Some priests felt they 'didn't have a voice' (Parish priest, 1980s) because they feared being punished by their bishop or being 'dismissed' by Church authorities if they complained about their bishop (Parish priest, 1980s). Most were aware of 'awful stories' where priests had been punished for getting on the wrong side of their bishop (Parish priest, 1970s). A number of priests gave examples of how priests had been punished by their bishop in 'subtle ways'. One priest told of how a hot-headed priest was appointed PP to a parish 'before his time' and while this could be seen by some as a promotion, the parish to which he was sent was a place no one would want to be appointed (Parish priest, 1980s).

> The whole hierarchical Church is a very difficult mechanism and it is very difficult to speak out. Where do you go? You go to your bishop because he is the one you are accountable to but to whom is he accountable? You go to the Nuncio or the Congregations in Rome but you can easily be dismissed. You are such a small player in a global organisation (Parish priest, 1980s).

For the most part, it would appear that most bishops continue to make appointments and other decisions with minimal consultation with their priests.[206] A number of priests told of how their bishop had 'asked' them to undertake a specific ministry, which, at the time, they didn't wish to do. However, they felt they could not refuse 'God's work' and they had to 'just get on with it' (Parish priest, 1980s). A number of priests told how they had been appointed as newly ordained priests to situations that were difficult and 'something of a test' for them (Parish priest, 1980s). One

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[206] I am aware of some dioceses where the bishops have held diocesan synods and commissioned research amongst its clergy to ascertain their views.

priest who had 'never been in the countryside in his life' was appointed to an isolated rural parish where his PP was 'an alcoholic and a bully' (Former priest, 1980s). Another was 'thrown' into a parish where the PP was an alcoholic and had 'let the parish go' (Former priest, 1980s). The advice from more experienced priests was generally to do what was requested and 'await a transfer' to a better parish in due course (Parish priest, 1970s). When a dispute arose, it was regarded as best for the priests to settle the argument themselves. If the bishop became involved, he tended to support the PP.

While most of these priests had served with PPs who were 'gentlemen' (Parish priest, 1980s), most had also encountered PPs who were bullies. In some parishes, the curates were not allowed to do anything, while, in other parishes, they were restricted by the PP in what they could do. One priest only learnt what was happening in his parish by reading the weekly newsletter compiled by the PP. Another told of how he was 'given no space whatsoever by his PP who was a controller' (Parish priest, 1980s) even though he was a senior curate, while another was appointed to a parish where his PP insisted on doing all the weddings and baptisms. Whether this was to do with money or simple control was not clear to this priest.

> There is a great tradition of bullying in the Church and the old guys are great at bullying. They would shout everyone down at meetings and intimidate everyone around them. Imagine being with a PP who said you could not do weddings or funeral Masses and that he would do everything (Parish priest, 1970s).

Curates who were more popular with parishioners than their PPs were liable to 'shunning' by their PPs (Parish priest, 1980s). One priest who was subject to this type of behaviour said he would advise any young priest to 'make sure he had a good relationship with his PP and not to do anything unless he wants you to do it' (Parish priest, 1980s). However, this same priest did many things 'independently' from his PP and in practice, he did what he wanted in the parish. He, like most of these

priests had learnt to 'do their own thing' and to 'keep their head down' while in the seminary. Other priests spoke of approaching their PP in an 'indirect' way that 'gave him the impression he was in charge' (Parish priest, 1980s). The danger of directly confronting authority was also mentioned in relation to the bishop: 'Some guys in the diocese have difficulties with the bishop if they come at something head on, particularly if it is a big issue. The bishop may back off but he won't forget. They may not have much vision but they do have long memories. There are many different ways to skin a cat and there are ways of dealing with a bishop (Parish priest, 1970s).

Thus, while there are less rules and sanctions in the Vatican II Church when compared with the pre-Vatican II Church, these priests understood obedience as an important part of their priesthood. However, it is something they feel they have to do rather than something they believe is inherent to priesthood. None of these priests have ever refused the sacraments to anyone they suspected to be outside of the Church. While they regard rules and regulations to be an important part of any organisation, they believe that they cannot know the state of a person's soul. Their approach to people is pastoral rather than dogmatic, where 'you have to see the person first' (Parish priest, 1980s). In contrast to the certainty of the pre-Vatican II Church, they believe that many teachings and practices of the Church are not always straightforward and need to be contextualised for different situations and individuals. Four priests said they were 'disappointed' or 'angry' at the way the Church treated people who were divorced or homosexual. Their response was to 'interpret' these Church teachings, discretely and compassionately.

One priest would 'leave it to the people' in an irregular relationship to tell him if they were sexually active or living as brother and sister under the same roof (Parish priest, 1980s). If they turned up at the altar, he would give them Holy Communion but if they lied, it would be 'inviting God's condemnation on them'. Most of these priests are open to the possibility of married priests, women priests, and gay priests. The opposition of the

Church towards these groups has 'distanced' some priests from the Church, leading some priests to question their priesthood.

> They have done a lot of stuff that have distanced myself from them – no discussion of women priests, no concentration on justice – it wouldn't take much to push me out. If they put in a conservative bishop who told me to wear black clothes and who was anti-women, and lacking in compassion, my tolerance level would be very low (Parish priest, 1970s).

One priest who disagreed vehemently with the new wording for the Mass felt he would have to stop saying Mass in public because it represented a 'step too far' towards a more archaic Church (Parish priest, 1980s). Someone has to 'stand up and say no' and he is 'scared' that the freedoms of Vatican II will be eradicated unless people object. He is unsure if he will be disobedient by taking such a position as he regards himself as a 'party man', and he would not wish to do anything to 'embarrass' his bishop or diocese.

The story of Fr Henry illustrates how one priest remained obedient and true to his vocation in a situation he found to be 'intolerable'.

The Story of Fr Henry[207]

Fr Henry is a senior and widely respected priest who was falsely accused of sexual abuse. Although the State and the Church declared that there was no case to answer in less than five months, this was not before he went through a 'really horrendous experience' where his priesthood and public ministry were threatened. Immediately the allegation was made, and before he was told anything about it, he was asked to step aside by his bishop. He felt his bishop treated him 'disrespectfully' when he refused to give him details of the accusation or to enter into any form of dialogue. All

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[207] While Fr Paul's story focused on the practical details of being falsely accused, Fr Henry's story illustrates the personal implications of a false accusation. Both accounts tell of the pain they experienced at being abandoned by the Church.

he knew was that there was an accusation and while they might have said something about it, he was in shock and could not take in what they were saying. Later, when he had asked for a copy of the accusation, he was told that someone had stolen it. This was the beginning of his 'bizarre' story.

He felt he was 'disenfranchised' by his bishop who came out to his parish to announce the allegation to his parishioners. He was not given any time to think about what was happening. Neither was he allowed to speak to the people in his parish to explain that the accusation had nothing to do with him.

> I said to the bishop that I absolutely know that you must act on this but just let me have some time to discover what exactly is being said, where it is coming from. If you are coming to my church, I want to be the one who will speak because I want my voice and my face to own this accusation, to own what is happening in my life, to face the people. He said you can't do that. I asked if we could agree a script to be read out and we could stand beside each other so that the people would know we were standing together in addressing these very real issues. He said no and told me that I could never enter this church again. I wrote a statement and stood at the church door and handed it out to the people as they left Mass. They were very confused. I was told to leave my home and live with my family. I was never asked if I had any money or offered a solicitor. When I asked who would pay my bills, the bishop said that 'I won't anyway'. I was told I could give retreats to nuns provided it was a small group of nuns and I told them my full story. The whole thing fell apart very quickly, almost as soon as it was announced, but the process had to take place.

> The civil process was completed in four months and I was found to have no case to answer. The canonical process followed, but it was delayed while they appraised themselves of what the elements of a canonical process entailed. I was really angry at this, to think that after four months, knowing that they had to have a canonical process, they hadn't appraised themselves of the procedures. I was subsequently allowed back to my parish after five months. It was awful. I wasn't naive about the institution and its foibles but I had no idea that the Church could extend such callousness to any priest, even if they were guilty. I was just shocked at the way the Church dropped me. I am absolutely supportive of the

procedures that are there because people were not listened to in the past but there should also be a real semblance of truth before a priest is asked to step aside and publicly denounced. My particular accusation was so flimsy. Others would naturally ask, am I next?

The experience has brought me closer to the gospel message. It has also brought me into a new awareness of my cherishing of the priesthood. In a moment when it was almost taken away, I realised it is my essence, the very definition of what I am and that I cherish it. I never feared that I would not be back in priesthood during my 'time off' but I did go through terrible, terrible sorrow and wept profoundly. This was a profound pain that I had never before experienced. I remember saying at the time that I wished I had cancer instead of this because cancer has dignity. I am sorry for thinking that now but I did at the time. I was destroyed really. It had huge implications for my family too.

When the bishop told me the case was over and that there was nothing in it, I think he expected me to thank him. He was trying to say that he couldn't see what all the fuss was about but I just said nothing. The statement that was read out when I was asked to step aside was four lines, so I gave him a statement which I had prepared I felt was appropriate. He said that he didn't think the lawyers would allow him to use the word innocent. That was the last conversation I had with him. The statement read out at Mass was powerful and quite fulsome but you are left with a residue of pain and grief. It is not the whole story of my priesthood. It is only one chapter but there is no lower you can go.

In general, this group of Vatican II priests believe that diocesan priests are reluctant to 'speak out' against Church policies and practices with which they disagreed for a variety of reasons (Parish priest, 1970s). First, one priest felt that his generation of priests were 'a bit conditioned' into a clerical mindset in the seminary that regards new ideas and individuality as a threat to the status quo (Parish priest, 1970s). He argued that the diocesan priesthood does not attract 'free thinkers' and the institutional Church 'doesn't encourage it'. Second, two priests said they get sufficient opportunities to 'say things' at diocesan level and that 'there is no need' to stir up things outside of these structures (Parish priests, 1970s). Third, three priests said that they are so busy, that they 'just don't have the energy' to complain (Parish priests, 1970s/1980s). Fourth, two priests said

that the 'mentality' of a diocesan priest is to be content if he can 'look after' his own patch, with minimal interference from outside the parish (Parish priest, 1980s). Fifth, one priest felt there is 'little scope' in challenging the Vatican or their bishop, as nothing ever changes. Finally, a number of priests said that while they would not be afraid to challenge their bishop if 'difficult decisions had to be made', this would be exceptional as they 'don't like upsetting anyone' (Parish priests, 1970s/1980s). Many of these reasons correspond with Saunders' explanation of political inaction (Saunders, 1983).

In summary, the Vatican II generation of priests have grown up in a rejuvenated Church but also one where there have been few changes to its hierarchical structures. Similar to previous generations of priests, they are typically compliant to their superiors and reluctant to engage in behaviour that could be perceived as disloyal. However, their obedience is largely pragmatic in pastoral issues and they are content to voice their dissatisfaction indirectly through surveys and their representative associations but not directly to their bishop.

7.4 How Post-Vatican II Diocesan Priests Understand and Experience Obedience.

This group comprised five priests and four former priests who were ordained in the 1990s and 2000s. Their experience of Church is very different Church to the triumphalist Church of the 1950s and early 1960s, and the resurgent Church that followed the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). This generation of priests has largely experienced a Church in decline, a Church that is no longer dominant within Irish society. The prevailing model of Church is underpinned by the conservatism of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. The literature suggests that this generation of priests are quite conservative, and that they value orthodoxy in Church teachings and obedience to the hierarchical Church.

The Post-Vatican II Church

The post-Vatican II Church is increasingly secularist, with less people attending Mass or willing to accept Church authority. It is also a Church that has become increasingly polarised between liberal and conservative interests. Following a period of approximately twenty years, in which the moral authority of the Church was questioned, the traditional conservatism of the Catholic Church re-emerged in the post Vatican II era, during the papacy of John Paul II (1978-2005). The importance of rules and regulations was given a boost in the publication of the new *Code of Canon Law* in 1983 and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in 1994.

Whereas the Vatican II generation are frustrated by the lack of perceived progress following Vatican II, a new generation of priests, ordained during the past twenty years or so, appear to have been energised by a return to tradition and relative certainty. The revolution of Vatican II had come and gone by the time most of these priests entered the seminary, with the result that most of them said that Vatican II *per se* had no significance for their lives as priests. However, further to the inspiration and writings of John Paul II, most of them believe that Vatican II 'went too far' and 'lost' its sense of perspective (Curate, 2000s). Accordingly, most of them have adopted a more conservative theology that is at odds with many Vatican II priests: 'When Benedict was elected, a lot of the older priests were in despair, whereas a lot of the younger priests were saying thank God' (Curate, 2000s). Unlike many of the older counterparts, they find comfort in a Church that moves slowly and in line with orthodox tradition: 'In the end of the day, this is the Church. It moves slowly and it has a theology, not a manifesto. It can be very frustrating sometimes and unfortunately it is terribly undemocratic but that is the nature of it' (Curate, 1990s).

They claim not to be against change, provided it happens in accordance with the traditions of the Church. This generation of priests have 'grown up' with disclosures concerning clerical sexual abuse (Curate, 2000s). They, and many of their colleagues, have been 'disillusioned' by the 'wave after wave' of scandal in the Church, which they thought 'would never

end' (Curates, 1990s/2000s). However, while some older priests 'took it to heart' and were 'fearful' and 'embarrassed' to meet people (Curate, 2000s), most of this cohort felt that these scandals were nothing to do with them and that they had nothing to feel guilty about: 'It would get you down when some priest did something or a bishop said something, but then you remember that your ministry is rooted in Christ and that it doesn't depend on anyone, no matter what mistakes they have made' (Curate, 2000s). They believe that their job is 'to help turn things around' (Curate, 2000s).

Most of them said they were 'angry' and 'disappointed' at the way their bishops mishandled the sexual abuse situation: 'Most guys would believe the bishops were way off in the way they covered up the abuse and how they handled the fall-out from it. There is no question that this has been very annoying but in the end of the day, they are fallible' (Curate, 1990s). For two priests, the activities of a small number of priests and the 'failures' of bishops reflects 'demonic evil' at work in the world, which they believe can only be overcome by 'prayer and authentic discipleship' (Curates, 2000s). The others believe the problem is grounded in the weaknesses of bishops who are 'only human with a difficult job to do' (Curate, 1990s).

> It has given me a deeper perspective on the reality of evil in the world and particularly how evil has worked its way through men, some of whom are priests. It also shows how evil has compromised leadership. I am obedient to my bishop. I love my bishop and I pray for him. He is a very good man but I also know that our Church leaders are weak and that they need prayer. It has not destroyed my faith and when I look back at the way clerics were treated in the past, they had almost God-like status given to them and that was very unhealthy for them and also for the people (Curate, 2000s).

In spite of their criticism of bishops and the Vatican, most of these priests are unquestionably loyal to their leaders. They believe that everyone has a job to do, including priests, and that it is important they don't give in to 'defeatism' (Curate, 2000s).

Post-Vatican II Priests' Views of the Seminary

The seminary continued to change during the 1980s and 1990s, with less emphasis on rules, although they are still institutions where discipline is imposed on students. For many of these priests, the experience was 'formative' and 'interesting at times' but not an experience they would wish to repeat: 'It was grand at the time but I would never go back' (Curate, 2000s). However, the culture of fear that prevailed in the pre-Vatican II Church is no longer an issue. There are fewer restrictions on socialising with lay students, male or female, and seminarians can go to the cinema, pubs and even night-clubs without fear of punishment. The emphasis has changed from control to personal discernment with a sense of discipline, where students are increasingly encouraged to take responsibility for their lives. However, in spite of greater freedom and the introduction of new courses on personal development and pastoral studies, most seminaries continue to have regular timetables that are almost monastic in the rhythm of the day. Times are set-aside for prayer, study, recreation, spiritual activities and meals. Punctuality and obedience continue to be valued in seminaries, and students have to comply with core rules if they wish to receive Orders and eventually, ordination.

There are less students in seminaries and one priest recalled how he and the other first years had only taken up one tenth of the college chapel for their introductory Mass, a chapel that was filled to overflowing during the visit of John Paul II in 1979: 'The rest of the chapel was in virtual darkness and a very bleak experience' (Curate, 2000s). Some of these students lacked the basics of Catholicism that previous generations of seminaries would have taken for granted. For example, one priest had never said the angelus or the rosary because his parents had never said these prayers at home. Another student was embarrassed when he told a spiritual director that he had never prayed to Jesus and that he didn't really know much about the saints or how the Church worked. Most of the remainder were imbued with Catholicism from their homes and local parishes.

Ironically, given the historical dislike of the control exerted by seminaries over students, the college authorities were more liberal than some conservative students in at least one seminary. In one college, for example, the authorities allegedly had to lock the oratory at night to prevent some students from prostrating themselves before the altar and praying all night. One priest was critical of the formation he received in the seminary because he felt that it lacked an authentic faith basis.

> I had reservations about the formation system, which I felt lacked a certain rigour and weightiness. Some of the reading stuff we were given and some of the people who came in to talk to us were not really the best calibre people to be talking to seminarians… Some people had difficulties with Church teachings in certain areas and some were going through a crisis of faith. Some fellows who were very much into the rosary or Eucharistic adoration got the feeling that these things were not appreciated as much as they should have been. One weakness of the seminary is that that it did not facilitate students who were searching for holiness (Curate, 2000s).

Two priests felt that the real character of seminaries lies hidden beneath the surface. One priest said that students learnt to 'play the system' and to 'do anything to get ordained because it was so important to them' (Former priest, 2000s). In one seminary, students were excluded from pubs in the town but this rule was 'universally ignored by students' (Former priest, 2000s): 'This was pure nonsense. It sort of brought about the attitude that you were doing things behind their back but it was ok once you weren't caught. We weren't supposed to be in the pubs but we were and they knew. It was just so hypocritical and immature. You also had the nonsense of guys coming back to the college late and hopping the wall so that they wouldn't have to sign in at the gate' (Former priest, 2000s).

Some students also hid their relationships from college authorities, especially same-sex relationships. Students who felt they were gay were told to 'pray about it'. In hindsight, most of these priests were critical of the seminary system because they felt that it did not prepare them for life as a priest, although most accepted that no seminary

could ever teach what priests or any other profession 'in the real world' requires: 'You have to learn on the job' (Curate, 1990s). While it may teach philosophy and theology, 'it does not prepare you for the mind-numbing meetings and the number of funerals' (Curate, 1990s). Some felt that the 'monastic lifestyle' was very different to the lives of most secular priests and therefore, inappropriate (Curate, 1990s).

The Lived Experience of Priestly Obedience in the Post-Vatican II Church.

Obedience is an important dimension of priesthood for this generation of priests and it is part of what gives their priesthood meaning. A number of them said that they had taken a 'solemn promise' to their bishop and that 'order' was important in the Church. Accordingly, at one level, their understanding of obedience is fundamentally ideological and quite different to the pragmatic understanding of other generations. These priests fully realise that, as young curates, they 'occupy the bottom of the ladder' (Curate, 2000s) and that they are subject to the authority of the Vatican, their bishop, and senior priests. It is something that some of them are willing to accept and even embrace, while others are frustrated by their lack of responsibility: 'When you are in the seminary, you think of all that you will do in the parish but then you discover that there is little that you can or are allowed to do'. Even when your voice is heard, 'nothing changes' (Curate, 1990s).

However, while their understanding of obedience may differ from their older counterparts, their experience of obedience was quite similar. Priests are appointed to parishes by their bishop and, with some exceptions, most bishops do not consult with them before they make their decisions. One priest spoke of the 'trauma' on hearing that his friend was being transferred to another parish (Curate, 2000s). Another remembers 'crying' when he was appointed to a difficult parish (Curate, 1990s). While two priests had asked their bishops to move them from a parish because of bullying by a PP, it would appear that few priests feel they can challenge the bishop, partly because they 'probably got hit hard early on' and that is

what they still expect (Curate, 1990s): 'In my experience bishops have very poor people management skills and guys get hurt when wrong decisions are made because the proper conversation never happens. Even if you get a parish you don't want, you could say to the bishop that you will be back in six or seven years for another parish. There is almost always a plan B, which the bishop would be willing to consider if he is asked' (Curate, 1990s). They anticipate a negative reaction and hence do nothing (Saunders, 1983).

Two of these younger priests said that some of their peers had not learnt that the direct approach rarely works with bishops. Rather than confronting them head-on, especially in public, they believe that it is much more effective to 'work with the bishop and give him some room for manoeuvre' (Curate, 1990s). When a priest challenges his bishop in front of others, there is 'only ever going to be one casualty and it is not going to be the bishop' (Curate, 1990s). While the priest may not be formally sanctioned, 'like the communists, it is noted' (1990s). Most priests agreed that diocesan priests were reluctant to speak out because of 'fear' and 'a learnt discretion'. One priest was told by an older colleague to 'write nothing until you are a PP': Once 'you have your own Church, you can basically do what you want' (Curate, 1990s). Another priest believed that while obedience is important for 'order', he would have 'no problem' criticising the bishop 'if it were necessary and prudent'. However, he added, 'why should I create trouble for the sake of it?' (Curate, 1990s).

The power of PPs has diminished somewhat in recent years due to the decline in vocations, resulting in less curates and more PPs working alone in a parish. However, a number of priests told of how they had not been able to do things in the their parish because the PP did not allow them. One priest spoke of how he had been 'kept down' by his PP for more than 12 years and that he found him to be 'intolerable' and unwilling to listen (Curate, 1990s). Another spoke of how his PP 'had gone ballistic at a meeting and tore shreds of him afterwards' when the curate had contradicted him (Curate, 1990s). It is a 'cycle of abuse' that is replicated

from generation to generation: 'You have to sink or swim when you come out of the seminary and often you end up with a priest who might bully you because he was bullied himself as a young priest. So unfortunately you have to take care of yourself because other priests are too busy with their own work' (Curate, 1990s). The abuse can also come from other priests when they 'shun' you for having different views or alternative lifestyles (Curate, 2000s). One priest, for example, spoke of how he and 'other outsiders club together' when confronted with priests who 'are afraid to stand up for what they believe'. However, for the most part, he believes that priests treat each other with respect, if not always warmth (Curate, 2000s).

This generation of priests are more orthodox and traditional in their views and practices than many of their older counterparts. Most of them said they are 'theologically conservative' and many of them would not be comfortable with women priests. They also believe it is important to inform people of the 'truth' concerning sin, contraception, and immoral behaviour 'if they are asked' (Curate, 2000s). However, with one exception, they are unlikely to take the initiative in telling people how to behave and most of them hold views that are contrary to the institutional Church. For example, they believe celibacy should be optional and that homosexuality should not be grounds for excluding people from the priesthood. Furthermore, most of them have never, and would never consider refusing Holy Communion to a person at the altar even if the person was, for example, divorced and in a second marriage. However, they do not publicise their views and, if asked, they would 'have no choice' but to 'say things how they are'. Three of the five priests would prefer to adopt a more pastoral approach.

Thus, most of these priests believe themselves to be 'theologically conservative but pastorally pragmatic' (Curate, 1990s). For example, when asked to bless a second marriage one priest said he would offer a blessing for the couple's home instead of 'doing something in a formal visible way' (Curate, 1990s). This approach also allows him to 'be fair to

what marriage is about'. Two priests acknowledged that 'there is a lot of grey' in the Church and that priests have to minister to the 'grey' (Curates, 1990s). However, this does not mean that 'everything has to be thrown out'. Rather, 'someone has to stand up for marriage and someone has to stand up for people in second relationships'.

> Making a big fuss on the altar would not do anyone any good. At the same time, I wouldn't be afraid to name certain things if people asked me honest questions in confession. I would say that it is up to them to make up their own minds, but this is what the Church teaches. There is an objective truth and this is it (Curate, 2000s).

One priest was adamant that priests need to stand up for the Church in 'telling the truth' to people (Curate, 2000s). He regards himself and other priest like him to be 'prophets in the wilderness' that cannot shirk their responsibilities to tell people that they are committing sin when they use contraception, engage in homosexual sex, or get divorce, and that they should not receive Holy Communion until they have been to confession. He is the only priest in the sample to have refused people Holy Communion who are in 'bad faith' with God.

Two former priests, one gay and one heterosexual, left the priesthood because, unlike 'many' of their colleagues, they could not live 'double lives'. Another former priest who had spent time in Rome felt that 'rules had to be interpreted' for different parts of the world: 'The attitude of Italians is quite different to Irish attitudes and Northern European attitudes. Our attitude seems to be that if you make a law it is very black and white, and this what you have to do. All Italian laws are very clear but nobody obeys them and there is never a problem. They see exceptions everywhere' (Former priest, 2000s).

Another former priest agreed with his former colleagues who said that he has to be able to minister to a world of 'grey'. In his view, if the Church follows everything 'to the law', it will end up with very few people or priests! 'Many of the people involved in our parish meetings were gay or

in second relationships. If you follow the letter of the law, they should have been cast out and yet these are the people who keep things ticking over. It used to amaze me that women continued to come and help, given the attitude of the Church to them' (Former priest, 2000s).

In summary, the post-Vatican II priests are ideologically obedient and they embrace their solemn promise of obedience. Conversely, while they are theologically conservative, most of them are pastorally pragmatic and willing to address the needs of people rather than automatically imposing Church law. Thus their response to obedience is similar in many ways to their older counterparts. They are loyal and reluctant to question their bishop or confront their superiors within the Church hierarchy. However, they are not always subservient and they have learnt to circumvent rules and 'do their own thing' from time to time.

7.5 Discussion

The primary aim of this chapter was to explore how, if at all, the research participants exercise agency in the context of a highly structured and strictly hierarchical Church? The chapter also explored how the different generations of priests understand and practice clerical obedience. The literature review suggested that a diocesan priest is severely constrained by the institutional Church and that there are few opportunities for priests to exercise agency. Conversely, anecdotal evidence, supported by Bourdieu's concept of habitus and Giddens' concept of structuration, suggests that Irish diocesan priests should have the capacity to exercise agency in certain circumstances, but within the parameters set by the institutional Church.

Overall, the evidence from the research suggests that Irish diocesan priests have the capacity to exercise agency in the Church and that many of them do so routinely in their day-to-day lives. Many priests disagree with Church policy and practices, whilst remaining loyal to their Church. However, the data also shows that their actions are typically exercised

discretely and within boundaries set by the institutional Church. Thus, while many of the research participants disagree with some Church teachings and positions, they typically do so in private, without challenging their superiors by expressing their dissent in public. Similarly, many of them have learnt to do their own thing in the parish without directly confronting their PP or bishop. Thus, it may be argued that a relatively clandestine culture of clerical practice underpins the practice of these research participants. However, in other respects, it is an accepted way of being a priest in Ireland. The research indicates that this pragmatic approach is consistent across the different generations of priests.

The underlying culture of pragmatic priestly practice may be understood as part of the priestly habitus, insofar as it represents a commonly shared view of priesthood by priests and Church alike. Many priests pursue this cultural way of exercising priesthood because it enables them to be true to their own sense of priesthood, whilst accommodating the authority of the institutional Church. For example, one gay priest who disagreed with the Church's stance on homosexual priests, was enabled to remain in the priesthood because he did not have to take a public position on this matter. A similar situation applied to most priests who disagreed with the Church's position on contraception, mandatory celibacy, and celibate homosexual priests. Similarly, priests who differed with the majority of their colleagues by, for example, preaching on the importance of avoiding pre-marital sex, also exercised agency. One young priest rejected the pastoral response because it did not reflect the truth of the Church. Others left the priesthood because they perceived this pragmatism as double standards, which they could not reconcile with their personal view of priesthood. However, for the most part, it would appear that this culture of pragmatic practice facilitates most priests to survive in priesthood.

Bourdieu's concept of field helps to explain why the Church tolerates the pragmatic, if somewhat disloyal, practices of its priests. The Church is the dominant agent in the religious field and, as such, it sets the rules of the game. If individuals wish to be ordained or to minister in a diocese, they can only do so with the permission of their bishop. However, in many

senses, the Church and its priests have a symbiotic relationship, albeit with the Church dominant. The Church recognises that priests are the principal resource of the Church and that they are needed for the Church to function (Schoenherr and Young, 1993). Thus, while the Church may be happy to get rid of some extremist priests and students who seriously challenge the system, it is tolerant towards priests who engage in behaviour that is inconsistent with priesthood but not necessarily damaging to the Church, e.g., celibacy violations. Conversely, the pastoral response of individual priests allows the Church to be simultaneously empathetic and unyielding. Individual priests can act in a pastoral, empathetic way that is in keeping with their values and understanding of priesthood, while the institutional Church continues to uphold the truth of Catholicism. As discussed previously, this 'double-think' is similar to the flexible way the Vatican views the implementation of laws, when compared to the more rigid implementation of some Northern countries. For example, priests are not allowed to engage in sexually intimate behaviour and lay people are not allowed to use artificial contraceptives, yet both practices happen with minimal protest from the Church. Difficulties only occur when a priest is too public about his dissent, thereby provoking a response from the Church, or when the Church declares a practice to be beyond discussion, such as female priests.

The Church has the capacity to reassert its authority if it is unduly challenged by an individual priest or group of priests. Individual priests can be silenced, while others, including lay people, can be reminded of their duties as Catholics. In extreme cases, the symbiotic relationship with priests can be altered to protect the institutional Church, such as happened when priests were 'abandoned' by the Church once they were convicted of abusing children, thereby suspending or ending a traditional practice of protecting clergy against prosecution. The research indicates that priests can be loyal and simultaneously disobedient because they recognise the rules of the game in the religious field. They are allowed liberties in how they conduct themselves, provided they tow the party line in public and they don't 'flaunt' the rules of the game (Saunders, 1983, p.64). Further to

Saunders, they realise that access to resources within the Church is biased against them and they don't 'bark' because 'if they play by the rules of the game, there is no guarantee that their action will be deemed legitimate, and even if it is, there are likely to achieve little (Saunders, 1983, p. 64). They are content to accept the rules of the Church because they have little choice and they benefit by their relative autonomy in the parish. Research commissioned by the Irish Catholic, for example, found that the majority of Irish priests disagree with some aspect of Church teaching or practice, and yet very few diocesan priests have publicly criticised or deviated from traditional Church positions (Irish Catholic, 2004).

The research also indicates that while the neo-orthodox generation of priests have a different understanding of clerical obedience to the other generations of priests, the experience of obedience is very similar for most priests. Most priests are prepared to adopt a pastorally pragmatic stance towards their ministry if required, and they have also learnt to reject some Church teachings whilst remaining loyal to the Church. This characteristic of priesthood is possibly most striking in relation to the neo-orthodox priests, most of whom are ideologically and personally committed to obedience. Most of them believe that celibacy should be optional and that homosexuality should not be grounds for excluding people from the priesthood. Furthermore, most of them have never, and would never consider refusing Holy Communion to a person at the altar even if the person was, for example, divorced and in a second relationship.

In summary, this chapter has demonstrated that the research participants are always loyal but sometimes disobedient; severely constrained but not determined by Church structures. They exercise agency in certain aspects of their priesthood but only within the parameters set by the institutional Church. They do not generally express their dissent in public because they understand and accept the rules of the game in the religious field, which indicates that their relatively privileged position is subject to the dominance of the institutional Church. Above all, they want to be priests of the Catholic Church and only the Church can permit this to happen and

continue happening. Those who can accept these conditions stay, even in times of personal difficulty, while others who cannot cope with these structures tend to leave or become very marginalised men. Some priests have challenged the Church but none have emerged victorious. One of the priests who was falsely accused of abusing a young boy, for example, initially refused to leave his parish residence or to retire as parish priest. Ultimately, he did both because he was just a 'foot-soldier' in the Church's army, a man who was obliged to follow orders.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE CELIBACY CONTINUUM

> Celibacy is an ideal and a challenge. It is an ideal to be striven for, an ideal which we may never achieve as we seek to actualise our human potential, an ideal that cannot be achieved without God's grace. It is not only an ideal, however; it is also a challenge. To live celibate love incarnationally day by day in a secular world amid an alien value system is not easy and borders on the heroic (Goergen, 1974, p.226).

8.1 Introduction

The primary aim of this chapter is to explore how Irish diocesan priests understand and experience celibacy in their day-to-day lives. The chapter will investigate if the lived experience of celibacy is different for the cohorts of priests identified in chapter six, and how priests with a homosexual orientation experience celibacy. Finally, the chapter will explore to what extent priests experience emotional support from priests and other sources.

The literature review in chapter five suggested a number of themes that will be explored in this chapter. First, the literature suggests that Irish diocesan priests understand celibacy in diverse way, with the Vatican and some priests in favour of mandatory celibacy and others against it (Dorr, 2004). It suggests that younger priests are most likely to embrace the ideal of celibacy, with their Vatican II counterparts experiencing most difficulties with the lived experience of mandatory celibacy (Hoge and Wenger, 2003). Second, the literature suggests that many priests experience personal difficulties with celibacy (Sipe, 1995, Hoenkamp-Bisschops, 1992, Anderson, 2005) and that some of them fail to live up to the ideal set by the institutional Church. Accordingly, some commentators believe that priests experience celibacy along a continuum, ranging from acceptance to rejection (Bordisso, 2011), while others leave the priesthood (Rice, 1990). Third, there is some indication that gay priests find celibacy

different and possibly more difficult than their heterosexual counterparts (Bordisso, 2011).

Given the widespread opposition to mandatory celibacy because of the unnecessary difficulties it causes many priests, and the threat it is perceived to pose to the Eucharist and priesthood (Schoenherr and Young, 1993, Standún, 1993), the reasons why mandatory celibacy persists in the Irish Catholic Church will also be explored. Bourdieu's concept of field offers some assistance in this task. It will be argued that the institutional Church imposes celibacy on its priests because celibacy is of benefit to the institutional Church. It is enabled to do this because it is the dominant agent in the religious field and because of priest's strong sense of priestly identity, whereby some priests will accept the burden of celibacy in order to become a priest. Anderson, for example, perceives the imposition of mandatory celibacy as an 'abuse of power' (Anderson, p.199). Conversely, it will be argued that priests are allowed to violate the discipline of celibacy provided they don't 'flaunt' the rules of the game (Saunders, 1983, p.64).

Celibacy is possibly most often associated with sexuality, or rather a lack of sexual intimacy. In this study, celibacy is considered in broader terms, to include both sexual and emotional intimacy of unmarried priests. Unlike many of the published studies on celibacy in the priesthood, the present study did not explicitly request information on priests' sexual behaviour or orientation. Rather, as documented in chapter one, a space was created by the narrative-style interviewing process for respondents to disclose whatever information they deemed relevant to their lives as priests. In most cases, they were prompted with follow-up questions. Some priests chose to give detailed accounts of their sexual history, while others were content to speak quite generally about the impact of celibacy on their lives, sometimes suggesting that they had experienced 'difficulties' with celibacy.

8.2 How Do Irish Diocesan Priests Understand and Experience Mandatory Celibacy?

This section will explore if and how the lived experience of celibacy is different for the three cohorts of priests identified in chapter six: pre-Vatican II, Vatican II, and post-Vatican II.

The Pre-Vatican II Priests

All of the priests and former priests in this cohort entered the seminary before the start of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and all were ordained before it concluded. Most of these priests are in their seventies, with two in their early eighties. At this stage of their lives, celibacy is effectively a non-issue for most, but not all, of these priests, and for the most part, they have learnt to live with the demands of celibacy. Two priests regard themselves as 'confirmed bachelors' (Retired, 1950; Semi-retired, 1960s), and they believe they are too old and set in their ways to change their lifestyle now. If they ever had personal issues with sexuality or celibacy, and some did, these difficulties are either long forgotten or celibacy is so well assimilated into their lives that most of them are effectively natural celibates.

Four priests saw themselves as 'natural' celibates[208] who had 'never' wished to marry and neither had they experienced any 'serious' problems with celibacy: 'priesthood and celibacy was like a doddle really, like a duck getting into water' (Semi-retired priest, 1960s). These priests regarded celibacy as a practical blessing to their ministries because it allowed them to work in different ministries and locations, including foreign countries, which would probably not have been possible for a married man with a family: 'I think it has been a blessing to my ministry. In order to give yourself to your people it is better that you be celibate' (Retired priest, 1950s).

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[208] The term 'natural celibate' is used colloquially to refer to priests who have little difficulty living a celibate life.

Five priests said they would like to have married, with some of them wondering what they had 'missed' by not having a wife and family. Celibacy has been particularly difficult for three of these priests, and possibly more so as they became older, when sexual attraction to women has effectively been replaced by a 'certain loneliness' in living alone (Parish priest, 1960s), sometimes often in relatively isolated areas. One priest referred to celibacy as 'a curse' he had 'endured' for 'too many years' and he still regarded it as an 'awful trial' (Curate, 1960s).

> I suppose I wanted to be a family man at times in my middle years when you see your friends married with families and coming back to this house on your own. You would miss that, even more than when I was younger and full of enthusiasm and energy (Parish priest, 1960s).

Vatican II was a significant factor in how three priests came to understand and experience celibacy. One former priest who regarded himself to be an 'extremely conservative person' and 'very cut away from life, with little experience' travelled on holiday to America with two priest friends shortly after his ordination. He 'came of age' when he met a beautiful American girl.

> I went with two friends to America. I was a pioneer and I had absolutely no experience of women's company or anything like that. Over there, we visited friends and cousins of my priest friends, and there was a glamorous girl there and I couldn't believe it when she danced with me and wrote a big note to me afterwards. I was very infatuated with her but it blew over (Former priest, 1960s).

This was a time when 'things were beginning to change and a lot of priest friends were beginning to mix in female company, having dinners and that kind of thing' (Former priest, 1960s). However, while he 'got looser and looser', it was only when he met the woman he would eventually marry that he realised he could not live a celibate lifestyle and remain true to his vocation as a Catholic priest. Other priests were able to lead a double life, and he spoke of how some of his colleagues 'were in and out of relationships' and that one priest had 'destroyed two girls by long

relationships'. Many of them are still priests. Another priest who had travelled abroad for further education was 'almost overcome' by the freedom he had compared to the closed environment in Maynooth (Parish priest, 1960s). The theology was 'so different' and the experience was a 'real liberation' for him, and it was only in this country that he 'encountered ladies for the first time'. However, while the 'thought did strike him', he was 'very committed to the priesthood then' and he has continued as a priest for the past fifty years, albeit not without some difficulty.

Most of these priests spoke of celibacy as a 'choice' they had made in order to become a diocesan priest. For them, it was 'just another condition of diocesan priesthood' that everyone had to accept if they wished to be ordained. However, it was a choice constrained by circumstances: 'You make your choice and you have to live with it and see it through. You can't hanker after every alternative. I suppose I would like to have been married but I would like to have been a farmer too' (Retired priest, 1950s).

Conversely, five priests suggested that they had little option in making this choice, and that, in hindsight, it was not a 'free' choice. They had been so caught up in the attraction and fascination of priesthood, that few of them had given much time or consideration to the implications of celibacy. After all, it was not something they could change and all of them knew priests who lived celibate lives and 'if they could do it, why not them?' (Parish priest, 1960s). One priest who was ordained almost fifty years ago, for example, said he knew he had to accept celibacy because he wanted to be a priest: 'When I hear them say celibacy is a gift and the presumption by the Church is that if a man has a vocation to the priesthood he gets the gift of celibacy. I just don't believe that. I would quite honestly say that I wasn't meant to be celibate but I am sure that I was meant to be a priest' (Parish priest, 1960s). They accepted a life of celibacy as a rule of the Church and their duty as priests: 'I can see the reasons behind mandatory celibacy and I am prepared to accept those reasons. I don't think it would be wise to try and change it' (Retired priest, 1950s).

One former priest in this age cohort had entered the seminary and become a priest 'in order to do good for others'. He had a 'deep faith' and he accepted celibacy 'freely' and 'wholeheartedly' (Former priest, 1960s). He stayed in Maynooth even when some of his friends left because he 'knew' that priesthood 'was for him'. However, he accepts that his vision of marriage was somewhat idyllic and when he saw couples heading home after Mass, he often thought of how 'happy they must be and how great their sexual lives were together'. Ultimately, he left the priesthood because of love.

> The big factor in my leaving was falling in love. I couldn't bear leaving this woman. We had done our best to break off contact. We tried but it was too powerful for me. Other things that wore down the edges to make it come to that were the freedom of the 1960s and the self-confidence I got when I realised women found me attractive (Former priest, 1960s).

Another former priest, who had left for different reasons, subsequently 'discovered the joy of marriage', although he had not been particularly lonely as a priest and he had not left the priesthood because of celibacy (Former priest, 1960s). Only one priest in this cohort said he was in favour of mandatory celibacy, with all of the remainder against it. Four priests felt that mandatory celibacy had endured in the Catholic priesthood because it enabled Church authorities to 'crack the whip' over priests and to give the Church 'total control over these guys' (Semi-retired priest, 1960s). Without celibacy, he felt that it would not be possible for the Church to have 'the same level of control over priests at all'. Another priest perceived celibacy as being 'part of the game' priests played with Church authorities and 'you just had to get on with it' (Curate, 1960s). It is a 'game' that is controlled by Church authorities.

> The people at the top seem to have excluded any discussion of celibacy, which is totally contrary to the world we live in. We should be open to different forms of priesthood but that is not possible with the present administration. The ordination of women priests is probably too much for the Church to swallow but there should be more discussion of it and married priests (Parish priest, 1960s).

Nine of the ten priests in this age cohort disagreed with mandatory celibacy because they did not believe it was intrinsic to priesthood, and because they felt that 'a lot of good men are lost to the church because of celibacy' (Curate, 1960s). One priest gave examples of priests he knew who had endured lives of loneliness and bouts of alcoholism because of mandatory celibacy. Furthermore, none of these priests felt they would have any problems working with married priests, and most of them said they would be tolerant towards 'lapses' in celibacy, provided the violations were not too many or too public (Retired priest, 1950s). Accordingly, most of this group of older priests believe that celibacy should be optional, even if they themselves are too old to change their ways.

> I would say there is no reason it shouldn't be optional for students to declare one way or the other. It shouldn't be made a condition for priesthood. It wasn't a condition in Our Lord's time. It is only a law of the church and it was for reasons to cut out nepotism. But you have married priests in the Orthodox Church and the Uniate church. I would be quite open to married priests. I don't see why celibacy should be made a condition for priesthood (Retired priest, 1950s).

Three priests dismissed the potential disadvantages for priests having to rear a family and 'do some work as well'. After all, they argued that 'this is what most people have to do' (Parish priest, 1960s).

In summary, most of the priests in the pre-Vatican II cohort understand celibacy as a restricted 'choice' that has been enforced on individuals who wish to become diocesan priests. Over the years, three priests have rationalised their celibacy because of its perceived practical benefits to priesthood, while the majority of priests in this cohort do not believe it should be mandatory for all priests. Rather, they believe that the potential practical advantages of celibacy are outweighed by its disadvantages. Furthermore, they believe that the introduction of married priests would 'probably enrich priesthood' (Parish priest, 1960s) and it 'would provide a real choice' (Retired priest, 1950s) for priests. Only one priest, the oldest,

disagreed and, instead argued that he and everyone had ample opportunity to consider the implications of celibacy: 'You can't be everything. You have to choose' (Retired priest, 1950s).

The Vatican II Priests

The second and largest cohort of research participants is comprised of 11 priests and 3 former priests, all of whom were ordained in the 1970s and 1980s. Most of these priests are in their late forties and fifties, and unlike most of their older counterparts, many of this group readily admitted to ongoing difficulties in their personal struggle with celibacy. Most of them said they would like to have married, or at least to have had the option, including one gay priest who is in a long-term relationship and is 'just waiting for the right time' to marry his partner secretly (Parish priest, 1980s). For some priests in this cohort sexuality is the main problem: 'Sexuality has always been a problem. I am gay myself, although that is not known by many people, and I would consider the equivalent of marriage if it was a real alternative' (Former priest, 1980s). For others, the problem lies in the potential threat posed by intimate relationships for a celibate priest. For the most part, these priests see celibacy as a discipline that has been imposed on them by the Church and they have no choice other than accept celibacy if they wish to be priests.

Three priests were somewhat embarrassed to say that they left their radios or lights on when they left their houses, so that they wouldn't feel quite so alone when they returned home. One priest said that while sexuality was more important to him when he was younger, he could cope with celibacy then because of 'the newness of priesthood' (Parish priest, 1980s). Three others agreed with this sentiment. Two priests admitted to feeling a 'deep deprivation' and an 'emptiness' in not having a special person that 'has laid down their lives for you in a continuous on-going life-supporting way' (Parish priest, 1970s). Having said that, five priests said they are unlikely to marry if the rule changes because it is 'too late' (Parish priest, 1960s).

Celibacy is very much a live issue for this group of Vatican II priests. Thus, while most of them have 'come to terms' with celibacy as 'part of the package of priesthood' (Parish priest, 1970s), they continue to struggle and to 'compartmentalise the demands of sexuality' (Parish priest, 1970s). One priest who admitted to loving 'women's company' considered celibacy to be a 'barrier' to the development of relationships with his female parishioners (Parish priest, 1970s), while another felt he used it as a 'defence mechanism' for avoiding relationships (Parish priest, 1980s). Three priests fear the danger of becoming 'cosy old bachelors' that are content 'to settle for the comfortable life' without the balance a partner brings into a person's life (Parish priests, 1970s). Another priest said that he lacks an understanding of women that a married man and father would have. One priest believes that priests are largely 'incorrectable' and because of celibacy, there is 'a real danger of becoming odd and isolated' (Parish priest, 1970s). Violating the discipline of celibacy is a problem for the individual priest and the Church, but not a serious one in most cases. For most, it is just another part of being a priest. Two priests believe that while falling in love is not ideal for a priest, it is something many priests have to cope with during the course of their priesthood. One priest believes it only becomes serious when, for example, a child is conceived and a priest is responsible for a life.

Vatican II has had a significant impact on their priesthood, with most of these priests embracing the progressive spirit of the Second Vatican Council, including doubts concerning the value and future of mandatory celibacy. Unlike many of their friends and colleagues who left the seminary and priesthood because of celibacy, this group of priests believe celibacy has a value for the priesthood, but also some disadvantages: 'Celibacy has been both a blessing and a hindrance for me. A hindrance because it has always been a struggle for me. It has brought me and others pain because of relationships I have been in or am still in. That is the pain that goes with celibacy. The other side of that is that it has helped me grow through the pain and difficulties, falling down and getting up again. It gives me the time to devote to my priesthood and my own spiritual life that

would not be possible if I was married. I have to believe it is a virtue and a help to my pastoral ministry and priesthood but the compulsory thing is crazy' (Parish priest, 1980s).

Only one priest in this group is in favour of mandatory celibacy. He believes that marriage would be a 'distraction' to his priesthood and that celibacy is a blessing that represents the ideal way of being a priest (Parish priest, 1980s). He also believes that a celibate lifestyle is consistent with the gospels and Church teaching, and a lifestyle that enables a priest to be more available to his people. Conversely, the other thirteen priests in this cohort believe that celibacy should be a free choice, and that diocesan priests should have the option of getting married. While most of them highlighted the practical benefits of celibacy for their ministry – 'I see a value in being available and relatively free' (Parish priest, 1980s) – and others mentioned the 'sign' value of celibacy, all felt somewhat uneasy about their celibate lifestyle. One priest felt it was 'a very unnatural life' that obliged him to live alone without the company of anyone (Parish priest, 1970s). Another priest spoke of how he occasionally invited in homeless people to share his home because 'it is nice to have someone in the house' (Parish priest, 1980s). Another priest believes that the 'supposed' benefits of celibacy are often used by 'bachelor priests' as an excuse to play golf or play cards, rather than working in their ministry (Parish priest, 1970s).

They do not believe that celibacy is an inseparable part of priesthood or that is grounded in the gospels.[209] Consequently, while all of this group believe they have a vocation to the priesthood, many of them would question if they have a vocation to a celibate priesthood. One priest said that he 'sacrificed' his wish to be married because of his desire to celebrate the Eucharist: 'I have never accepted that to celebrate the Eucharist, you

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[209] One priest said that the writings of St Paul (1 Corinthians, 7), which are often used to advocate support for mandatory celibacy were 'written by a man who was expecting the imminent end of the world' and thus in a very different context to today's Church (Parish priest, 1970s).

had to be a celibate male, but I accepted the huge imposition of celibacy at 21 and now because I wanted to be a priest so much. I believe it is wrong but I really want to give my life as a priest (Parish priest, 1980s). Another priest, who is happy with his life as a celibate priest and considers himself too old to ever get married, nevertheless has an 'open mind' to married priests and feels that optional celibacy would 'provide a real choice and probably enrich priesthood' (Parish priest, 1970s).

This group of priests also believe that mandatory celibacy is a key contributory factor in priests' loneliness and that it constitutes a threat to the Eucharist through its impact on declining vocations and priests leaving the priesthood. Six priests found it difficult to see any positive side to celibacy and three of them, including one priest who is not openly homosexual, resent not being able to marry and have families. Because of a Church law that is a 'kind of a deformity' (Parish priest, 1970s), they now lack the support that other men receive from their wives and families. It is an unnecessarily lonely life that some of them have coped through humour. One priest spoke of 'running away' from a widow in his parish when she showed too much interest in him (Parish priest, 1970s). Another was 'terrified' of ghosts when he moved into a large old country house as a young curate (Parish priest, 1980s). Five of these priests suggested that celibacy was essentially an issue of Church power over priests.

> I think one of the big reasons for celibacy is that it is easier to control me. I have been moved five times in my life and if I had a wife, the bishop would not have had that freedom. The property thing is also big. If I was a married priest and I died, what would happen to my wife and where would she live? So, it is more about control and that is a bad thing. It should definitely be optional. Why can't there be part-time priests? Why does it have to take over your life? (Parish priest, 1980s).

Three priests suggested that celibacy was mandatory because it suited the Church authorities and the clerical lifestyle. One priest said that Church authorities can more easily move celibate priests to a different parish or ministry with minimal or no consultation. It is also the case that a married

priesthood would create problems related to property and inheritance. As detailed above, one priest felt that the Church used celibacy to promote sexual desire in a negative way, as 'a weakness' that was to be controlled rather than embraced (Parish priest, 1980s). It was, he argued, used to 'keep women in their place' by treating them as second-class citizens. Celibacy was 'more about power' than anything else. The story of Fr Dave illustrates the impact of celibacy on a priest who was otherwise committed to his priesthood.

Fr. Dave

Fr Dave was ordained in the 1980s and his life as a priest was 'frantic, phonetic and extraordinarily busy with very little time for reflection'. He 'lived hard and he played hard', combining his busy ministry with a hectic social life. However, he was always committed to the priesthood and he felt 'privileged' to have a 'huge and profound access to people's struggles and pains' that would not have been possible in any other profession. He still misses the 'seamlessness of life' that enabled him to 'do something important for people he valued'. He was one of the young priests that was 'cutting a dash' in many Irish dioceses as they sought to change the direction of the Church to meet the needs of young people. However, he felt that some of the older priests treated him and others like him 'as if they were not real priests at all' because they had missed the 'glory days of the 1940s and 1950s when Churches were full and there was a rosary said in every home. The younger priests were seen as 'Johnny come-lately' or 'Gay Byrne' priests, who were part of the problem facing the Church, whereas the goal of the older priests was to 'get the Church back to the authoritarian model' where everyone obeyed priests rather than moving things on. Eventually, he 'cracked' and sought support from a female friend he had known for many years in college. There was 'no drama' about their meeting, but 'for the first time' he realised that there was 'more' to their relationship that neither she nor he was willing to admit. She was sensitive to his situation and ultimately filled a 'void' in his life through love and marriage. He believes that celibacy is the principal

reason he left the priesthood and that if he had been 'able to integrate celibacy into a spirituality and, in some way, make it meaningful to the core' of what he was, he would have stayed and been a 'very good priest'.

> I think celibacy is a disaster, an absolute bloody disaster. I took celibacy as part of a package, like saying the breviary or saying Mass without every thinking seriously about it. Like most young lads growing up, you think that any issues you have around sexuality are a phase that will pass and you will grow out of. We always looked to the older guys and thought they were over it but you don't, and so it was like a cancer constantly eating away there. Perhaps it was inevitable that I would leave but had I been able to embrace celibacy and make it a meaningful part of my life that would have been very important to me. I would say celibacy and sexuality, the whole thing, were the reasons I left.

He believes that celibacy is just another form of control that the Church exerts over priests and people. This contrasts with his vision of priesthood, which is to serve and be with the people at their most important times. Just as he was controlled as a priest, he sees his children being 'moulded and controlled' as they are taught what to believe and how to live their lives. However, ironically, it was a lack of control that probably contributed to his decision to leave: 'I came from a very controlled environment in Maynooth and suddenly I was given the keys of a car, the run of a parish, thousands of pounds in cheque books, and I was expected to get on with things'. The pressure to stay a priest, although intense, was also less than in previous generations. While some family members, parishioners and priests showed their disapproval at his decision to leave, most people were supportive. He feels that he was 'culturally conditioned' and although he struggled with it for many years, he 'swallowed' it until he left.

Fr Dave is now happily married with children, although he considers himself more of a cultural Catholic, and he doesn't always go to Sunday Mass. It took him many years to stop dreaming about saying Mass and to come to terms with his new life. At one stage, he considered becoming a minister in the Church of Ireland because it would allow him to continue

his ministry as a married man in a Church that he considers to be 'basically the same as the Catholic Church'. His priesthood ended with the 'silent scratching' of names on paper, which, he felt, was in sharp contrast to the 'pomp and ceremony' of his ordination. He has not returned to Maynooth since leaving the priesthood but feels he will, some day.

In summary, the group of priests in this generation understand celibacy to be a mandatory discipline of the Church, which has some practical benefits for ministry. It enables priests to be more available to his parishioners and to move more freely between appointments. However, with one exception, they do not believe that celibacy is an intrinsic part of priesthood, and they suggest that the value of celibacy is often negated by the many difficulties caused by a celibate lifestyle. Accordingly, they disagree with mandatory celibacy. Their comments would also suggest that they and some of their colleagues sometimes engage in sexually intimate behaviour. However, when this happens, they are understanding and tolerant, provided the priest is discrete and not a serial offender. Celibacy has a value but not as an mandatory rule for all priests. In many ways, their understanding and lived experience of celibacy is similar to their older cohorts. However, some differences are apparent when they are compared with the youngest group of priests.

The Post-Vatican II Priests

The nine priests in this cohort of priests were ordained during the 1990s and 2000s. Five of them are active priests, while four are former diocesan priests. Unlike their older counterparts who emphasised the practical benefits of celibacy, these younger priests embraced the ideal of celibacy, which they feel is central to the identity of priesthood. They regard celibacy as a blessing to their ministry, and an inherent part of their vocation to the priesthood. However, few of them would oppose optional celibacy if the Church permitted it and none of them would find it difficult to work or live with a married priest if this became necessary. However, they believe they would never marry even if given an opportunity to do so. While some of them struggle with celibacy more than others, all of them

regard their personal struggles as a challenge that is worthwhile and part of priesthood.

Celibacy is a discipline, which this group of priests believe 'makes sense' for a variety of ideological and practical reasons. They believe that celibacy gives a counter-cultural 'sign value' of Christ's love and presence in a consumerist, secular world (Curate, 2000s). They also believe that it is grounded in the gospels and consistent with Church tradition, even if it is not always explicitly stated. Two priests referred to the gospel of Matthew in support of their position. One priest referred to Matthew 6 ('No one can be the slave of two masters') while another referred to Matthew 19 ('…. there are eunuchs who have made themselves that way for the sake of the kingdom of heaven').

> Trying to live a married life and raise a family is a bit like trying to serve two masters and, as the Lord says in Matthew 6, you cannot serve two masters. It is either one or the other because one is going to be compromised by the other. It is all about total availability that we see in Christ's life when he saw it fit to lay down his own life for his flock (Curate, 2000s).

While not all of them are totally against optional celibacy for other priests in 'exceptional circumstances' (Curate, 2000s), such as saving the priesthood from an extreme shortage of priests, all of them embrace celibacy as an inherent part of their personal vocation to the priesthood. It is a part of a priesthood that they are 'tied into' and which is a core part of 'who they are' as priests. In the words of one priest, it is 'a part of priesthood now whether we like it or not and it is probably intrinsic to it' (Curate, 2000s). It is regarded as a 'blessing' to them personally, a 'gift' to their ministry and the Church, and a way of life that is consistent with the life of a priest. Furthermore, a number of these priests felt that celibacy was a choice they and other priests had freely made when they were ordained. It is a Church discipline that is part of the 'package' of priesthood and, as such, it should be 'honoured and respected'. Life is comprised of many decisions and celibacy is one of these choices.

All of them have chosen celibacy freely and they continue to choose it freely: 'I am happy with my decision to be celibate. I don't feel celibacy is being pushed onto me. I can live my priesthood anyway I want to live it and I want celibacy for myself' (Curate, 2000s). Although celibacy is an ecclesiastical discipline and thus, a requirement for priests, five of them said they would definitely have made the choice to be celibate even if it had been optional. Their vocation is to a celibate priesthood and they would be uneasy if a married priesthood were introduced. One priest felt that the introduction of a married priesthood would have adversely affected his decision to study for the priesthood in the first place.

> If celibacy wasn't there in the first place or if it wasn't an option I might not be a priest. I might not have been called to be a priest. For me, it would change it. If married priests came in, I would not leave. It wouldn't change my priesthood but I would not have come in if celibacy wasn't there in the first place (Curate, 2000s).

Another priest felt that to 'turn back' on the promise he made during his diaconate would be a betrayal of his priesthood: 'I have my hand on the plough and that is what I am going to do' (Curate, 2000s).[210]

For the most part, they do not spend much time thinking about celibacy or its consequences for their lives. Rather, it is 'just another part of life', which 'neither dominates nor detracts' (Curate, 1990s). However, when asked to discuss celibacy, most of them were adamant of its importance to priesthood and their lives as priests. Most importantly, they felt it 'enriched' their lives as priests and enhanced their spiritual lives: 'Celibacy has deepened my relationship with Christ profoundly because it makes me more like Christ' (Curate, 2000s). Another priest said it helps keep 'the ideal of priesthood more in focus' (Curate, 1990s) for him, while

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[210] Jesus emphasised the high expectations he had for discipleship in Luke 9:62, when he said that 'Once the hand is laid on the plough no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God'. This was used regularly by some priests in the seminary to make seminarians feel guilty if they considered leaving or 'cutting'.

another said that celibacy means that 'people know I am a priest and I know I am a priest' (Curate, 2000s).

> Celibacy has been an absolute blessing for me and my ministry. It has given me a freedom to live a life of service that I wouldn't have through marriage. It has been a personal enrichment and I would like to think an enrichment to other people as well. I think it is an ecclesiastical discipline that makes sense and that it has led to an enrichment of the Church even though there have been some who have found it very, very difficult (Curate, 2000s).

Celibacy also has a number of practical benefits for these priests including, the greater freedom it is perceived to give them for their ministry, making them more available to their parishioners: 'It has enabled me to live in the midst of many families in the parish, and it has given me the freedom to serve and to live a life of service that I wouldn't have through marriage' (Curate, 2000s). However, another priest disagreed and felt that this claim was often overstated: 'It is a nonsense saying I am more available to people, that's bullshit. I know a Church of Ireland pastor who is married and who does far more work than I do. I can play far more golf because I am single and the car is better because I don't have kids (Curate, 1990s). Two priests gave examples of married priests they knew from other faiths who were often lonely. Others felt that marriage to a priest would 'be asking an awful lot from a woman'.

> I know a Presbyterian minister who is married and he told me that it gets very lonely in ministry because he has to leave so much of it behind him when he goes home. If Mrs B is giving him grief he can't go home and tell his wife because she might tell Mrs B where to go! That opened my mind (Curate, 2000s).

Most of these priests felt that they were personally responsible for setting boundaries in their relationships with women, and while this can prove 'messy' at times, the challenge is deemed to be worth it (curate, 1990s). One priest said that he doesn't 'feel racked with guilt' if boundaries occasionally get blurred. He doesn't spend the entire day 'lamenting' that

he cannot get married (Curate, 2000s). Furthermore, while he believes that priests should endeavour to avoid 'inappropriate relationships,' a sexual encounter need not wreck a person's priesthood: 'If it happens, just forget it, bury it, and get on with it' (curate, 2000s). Another young priest described his ongoing struggle with celibacy as follows: '

> If I fall in love and get into a situation with somebody that is obviously wrong, but I can still see celibacy as a very good quality within priesthood despite my failing. If a man falls in love, ok that is not what the Church would want or the man himself might want but that's what happens (Curate, 1990s).

The reality of celibacy for one priest is that 'I go to bed on my own and wake up on my own' (Curate, 1990s). Another priest expressed a similar sentiment but, on balance, he feels that it is worth 'the hassle' because it provides him with the 'head-space to reflect' and work as a priest: 'Celibacy is part of my life as a priest. It is real and sometimes difficult but it is part of my faith response to God. I am enjoying my priesthood but that doesn't mean that there are not plenty of nights when I am going to bed when I say, what am I doing? There are plenty of moments like that' (Curate, 2000s).

For the most part, they do not see a difference between heterosexual and homosexual priests provided both priests live celibate lives. They believe that a priest who is in a sexual relationship 'compromises' himself and his priesthood and while 'there are probably many priests in relationships or who are alcoholics and they may function perfectly well as priests' this double-standard is unacceptable for this group (Curate, 2000s): 'If you have signed up to a life of celibacy, you have made the same commitment as anyone else, regardless of your sexual orientation. As a young man, you have to ask yourself if you can stand up in front of people if you are in a relationship, heterosexual or homosexual. I have no issue with gay priests provided lads are trying to practise morally what they know they should do. If in conscience you can do that in relationship, then ok but I couldn't' (Curate, 2000s).

While celibacy is not particularly difficult for most of these priests, they acknowledged that celibacy could be difficult for some priests, particularly where they lacked a support network. One respondent suggested that the heavy drinking of some priests is understandable, if not excusable, because 'it is very hard for lads if they are crippled with loneliness' (Curate, 1990s). Others suggested that it is in a priest's own hands how he copes with loneliness:

> As a priest in the parish, you could end up sitting alone in your own room. You could just go to the church and say Mass, then come back and not stir out for the rest of the day, or you could say to yourself it is only right that I go out. It would be an awful lot easier for me to just close the door. It is really up to ourselves (Curate, 2000s).

They acknowledge that they are fortunate to have the support of their families and particularly the friendship of other priests, since they believe that non-priests can never understand the life of a priest. Most of these priests spontaneously contrasted celibacy with marriage. They pointed out that marriage is not always easy and that married people have to make choices too. One priest suggested that 'everything would change' if celibacy was not mandatory because, amongst many changes that would be required, 'priests would have to be paid an awful lot more and (we) couldn't all be lumped into parochial houses together' (Curate, 2000s). He felt that a married priest would face difficulties not currently encountered by celibate priests. In effect, 'it is easier to be a priest and celibate' and the way priests live nowadays would not be possible if they were married.

In summary, this group of young idealists believe that celibacy is central to priesthood and that it is embodied into their lives as priests. They perceive their celibacy to be a 'privilege', a 'joy', 'a challenge', and a freely chosen 'duty' of their priesthood. While celibacy can be difficult at times for some of this group, it is not perceived to be a sacrifice or a significant loss in their lives. It helps define their identity as priests for themselves and others. However, in spite of their commitment and idealism, it can also be

difficult. The research indicates that the research participants have different understandings of celibacy, with the younger cohort most idealistic, while many of their older counterparts perceived it to be an imposed discipline on their priesthood. The research also indicated that priests experience celibacy along a continuum, with some priests rejecting their priesthood because of celibacy and others embracing it as an ideal of priesthood. The remainder are to be found somewhere in between these two extremes.[211]

8.3 The Gay Celibate

This section will explore how homosexual priests understand and experience celibacy, and to investigate if their lifestyle is distinctive when compared with their heterosexual counterparts. The literature is vague on this issue, with some commentators highlighting the difficulties of their vocation because they are gay priests (Murray, 2008), and others suggesting gay priests lead a more active sex life (Bordisso, 2011). Homosexuality was hidden and largely ignored in Irish seminaries and priesthood for most of the past fifty years (Gallagher and Hannon, 2006). This is reflected in the comments of some respondents, young and old. One priest, who was ordained in the 1950s, suggested that by prohibiting close personal friendships and ensuring students did not visit each other's rooms, the college authorities 'somehow succeeded in preventing homosexual activity', even though there were no females 'to take your mind off other attractive seminarians' (Retired priest, 1950s). To this day, he is not sure if 'it' ever existed. The expression of sexuality is more open in seminaries nowadays and a number of the younger priests indicated that they or some of their colleagues were sexually active with females during their studies and following ordination. Three priests admitted having a 'few girlfriends' in the seminary and that they felt that it was accepted by Church authorities (informally) that students could 'see girls' (Former

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[211] More focused research on the sexual behaviour of priests would be required to establish more clearly the relative positioning of priests on the continuum. I did not consider this to be an important part of my research.

priest, 2000s), but only during holidays as part of their discernment process where they 'learnt what celibacy meant in practice.' However, homosexual behaviour has remained a largely hidden and a taboo subject, often from students who were gay themselves. Students were very fearful and reluctant to trust anyone 'even when everyone knew they were gay' (Parish priest, gay).

A number of priests interviewed in the course of this research have been responsible for student discipline at different levels in various seminaries, and while they accepted that some students must have been sexually active, or that they 'had suspicions about fellows', they believed that 'there wasn't much of it' or 'guys were good at keeping it secret' (Dean, 1960s). They did, however, accept that sexual activity between consenting adults 'wouldn't come to light unless they were caught in the act or the other fellow would tell' (Dean, 1970s). Thus, they argued that while students were branded in various ways, such as the 'Jaffa Cake' group in one seminary, there is nothing to say that students who were more effeminate than others were also homosexual. Conversely, one priest spoke of the 'gay thing' being strong in his seminary during the 1980s but that no one had ever said anything about it, even though some students were 'fired because of their homosexual activities' (Parish priest, 1980s).

The stories of three gay priests who participated in the study are outlined overleaf in order to illustrate the challenges celibacy posed to a gay man. Fr G is a priest who struggles with celibacy, without engaging in sexually intimate behaviour; Fr L left the priesthood because he was unwilling to lead a double life as a sexually active celibate; and Fr C is a priest in active ministry who is in a long-term sexual relationship.

Fr G.

Fr G was ordained in the 1980s. He is a homosexual priest who is very discrete about his sexuality. While some of his close friends know he is gay, most people are not aware of his sexual orientation. In fact, he was not aware himself until quite recently, and it was only when he was in his forties that he came to realise he was gay. I had not been aware of his sexual orientation until he disclosed it during the interview, without any prompting on my part. He has struggled with celibacy for many years and particularly the loneliness of his life as a diocesan priest. Through the medium of dreams and discussions with a counsellor he came to 'understand that sexuality is far more than having sex or necessarily being in an individual relationship'. However, this cerebral understanding did not make his physical desires any the less, although to date he said that he has managed to maintain a celibate life without physical intimacy. While he received some education on sexuality in the seminary, there was 'very little direct talk on homosexuality' and students dealt with it by 'making jokes'. If given a choice, he would like to be in a relationship and would consider the 'equivalent of marriage' if it were allowed and a 'real alternative'. However, he does not believe the Church will change its laws anytime in the near future and he is unlikely to break his vows because of the 'scandal' it would cause. He would also find it difficult, but not impossible, to live a double life as a sexually active priest. So, for the moment, Fr G is an example of a gay priest who disagrees with the mandatory nature of celibacy but who is willing to accept it, at least for the foreseeable future.

Fr L.

Fr L was ordained in the 1990s. At that stage, he was aware of his 'attractions to men' but he did not consider himself to be gay. Before he entered the seminary he had 'never done anything about it'. It was only in his third year of seminary when someone 'made a pass' at him that really 'freaked him out' and it 'scared the life out of him.' But when he

mentioned his feelings to the spiritual director (and subsequent spiritual directors), he was always told to pray about it. Another encounter with a different student some years later resulted in 'kisses' but nothing more. It was only when he was ordained that he finally ended up 'sleeping' with another priest.

> The year before ordination I had a few drinks with another student and he ended up kissing me. I found that uncomfortable but also exciting. I got ordained and ended up sleeping with a priest a year later. Although we both vowed it would never happen again, it did and I was really very confused'.

At this stage, he was still uncomfortable, if somewhat excited, with his emerging sexuality. He always thought he could be a celibate priest, and following some counselling, he resolved to remain celibate. However, when he ended up in bed 'fumbling around' with another priest, he was 'even more confused'. He eventually decided to try the gay scene and found it 'very daunting' meeting people. He was surprised at the number of married men who were on the gay scene but, unlike other gay men, he felt some empathy for them because they, like him, had 'a lot to lose' if they were discovered: 'At that stage, there was a whole underbelly of gay life I hadn't known before. I found out about cruising, where gay men would go to pick someone up. I tried that a few times when I was a priest and it really upset me'.

Like many of his peers, he resorted to copious amounts of drink to summon courage before dating. However, he still believed he could continue to be a priest if he 'tried hard enough to fight his sexual urges'. A turning point came when he went on holiday with another priest and he had his 'first real gay experience' with a non-priest and he 'really loved it'. During nearly three years of counselling, he had never mentioned the word gay, but when he returned from holiday, he finally said the words to his counsellor and family, 'I think I am gay'.

He discovered a strong clerical gay scene in Ireland, although it was not easy to access because of their need to be even more secretive than non-priests. He believes that there a 'quite a lot of gay guys in the priesthood' and on one occasion when he went into a gay bar in Dublin, he recognised at least nine priests in the bar. On another occasion, in the same bar, a deacon who was due to be ordained the following month 'chatted him up.' He was also friends with two priests in his diocese and it later transpired that they were gay. They told him stories of long weekends and holidays abroad, which he found exciting. They were sexual but not with him and he 'lived a fairytale life through their stories'.

Ultimately, he decided to leave the priesthood because he did not wish to be celibate and neither did he wish to live a double life. He did not wish to be dishonest, like some other priests he knew. He also panicked when he read about a priest who was found dead in a sauna following a heart attack.

> I don't think a priest has to be celibate but neither should they be giving it away to everybody either. I couldn't balance it but maybe others can. I know some priests who are doing it and it works for them. My wish would have been to be celibate and I really admire those priests who really live celibacy. However, celibacy is not a natural thing and I wanted to be loved and to be in a relationship with someone who loves me. I realised that this was not going to happen in priesthood. I wanted to be honest, so living a double life, I just couldn't see myself doing it.

On one occasion, when he was 'picked up' in a gay cruising place in Dublin, he discovered the man was a priest and 'a barrier came down'. He got out of the car and refused to engage in sex because of the priest's dishonesty. He also has a 'big issue' with the Church's negative stance towards homosexuality.

Fr. C

Fr C became a priest in the 1980s 'out of a sense of wanting to help people'. He wasn't overly religious but his faith was a 'motivational factor' in his decision to become a priest. He 'hated' the seminary and he found the first few years of his priesthood to be very difficult, with two parish priests who would 'not give him any space at all'. He is now in charge of his own parish and enjoying it. He has always felt somewhat marginalised from the 'clericalist talk shops', with the result that most of his friends are lay people. He also believes that his homosexual orientation has marginalised him from other priests, although he keeps this part of his life hidden. While he believes that 'well over half' of his class in the seminary were gay, the subject was 'never touched upon' by the college authorities and only rarely by students. It was as if homosexuality would cease to exist if it wasn't discussed.

> There was only one form of sexuality recognised by the system, heterosexuality. How incredible. It was such a taboo subject that even amongst ourselves, we didn't acknowledge it. We knew who the other gay ones were, you can tell at 50 paces who is and who isn't, but we couldn't discuss what it is like to be a gay man in that environment. The word was anathema and you couldn't say it because if you were known to be gay, that was a ticket out the door. The authorities will remain in denial until they die. So it took many years and well after ordination before I came out to anybody.

He was part of a clergy support group, which started more than 15 years ago, for priests who were gay, and many of whom had not yet 'come out'. They had to be very careful in case the media discovered its existence. He believes that 'a lot of priests found support', especially those who had never come out to anyone before. There were a 'lot of recovering addicts' which was their way of 'dealing with it' and he is very proud that they helped so many priests to 'restore some balance' into their lives. He was always comfortable with his sexuality, although he struggled for many years with the dating scene. There was no shortage of sexual liaisons and although he was in his 30s, it was like 'going through his adolescence'.

Following many sexual encounters, he eventually decided to look for 'something more stable', which was based on more than sex. He wanted that too but not only sex. He finally met his current long-term partner through the Internet and both of them are very happy together. He is very much at ease with this relationship and he does not see any inconsistency between his lifestyle and his promise to be a celibate priest.

> I don't see any difficulties reconciling my life as a celibate priest and a lover in a long-term gay relationship. I figured that God made me a gay man and God was good enough to send another man into my life, and thank you God! Why should I have any guilt about it and I find it is such a wonderful support to have someone, a partner who cares about me. When civil partnership comes in and if we could do it on the quiet, we would in the morning.[212]

He has chosen to remain in priesthood as an active sexual celibate because of his love of ministry and a belief that celibacy should not be mandatory. He 'knows' that there are 'lots of gay guys' in the priesthood doing the same as himself. For example, he knows of one priest in another diocese who lived with his male partner in the same house for seven years and it was never an issue for anyone, parishioners or the bishop. This man is still a priest, although now with a different partner. Fr C believes that he was called to the priesthood and that, provided he is careful, he will continue to be a priest for another few years.

> To have someone that cares and supports you, someone who I can go to who will understand and accept me totally. It is fabulous! I feel very blessed and lucky, I couldn't have asked for anything more. When I was younger I prayed to God to make me straight like everybody else. To me, straight people were all happy and they didn't have problems. Now I have gone the full circle. Once I got comfortable with myself and went through the phase of cruising and looking for sex, and getting over that, I thank God for making me gay and for giving me a partner. Life couldn't be better.

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[212] The Civil Partnership Act came into effect in Ireland on the 1st January 2011.

He believes that his life is not much different to other priests he knows who are in long-term relationships with women.

8.4 Priests' Support Networks

The literature suggests that clerical friendships constitute an important source of intimacy and support for celibate priests. US research suggests that most priests receive support from other priests, and that they are likely to be less lonely when they interact with other priests (Gautier et al., 2012). Conversely, when priests live more isolated lives as 'lone rangers', they are often lonely and liable to being demoralised (Fitzgibbon, 2010). This section will demonstrate that while priests value the support of family and friends, they believe that only priests can truly understand the lives of other priests.

The Housekeeper

In the past, a priest's housekeeper was central to his wellbeing and mental health. She/he[213] would look after the priest's domestic arrangements, and often act as the first line of defence in deciding who got to speak with 'Father'. She was his housekeeper and a friend/life companion. One older priest summarised the value of his housekeeper as follows:

> A woman makes the home. I have a live-in housekeeper and I couldn't envisage her not being here. Part of making priesthood palpable is having a life-in housekeeper who you can trust. If you want a hot meal, get a housekeeper. We have not all been gifted as being good cooks. Women are home-makers and men aren't, let's face it! (Retired priest, 1950s).

Most of the older priests agreed with this sentiment, although they also acknowledged that it is more difficult nowadays to get a 'woman who is willing to dedicate her life to you' as a live-in housekeeper (Retired priest, 1950s). A live-in housekeeper can also cause difficulties for a priest, if for

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[213] While most housekeepers were female, some were male, including one former butler who acted as housekeeper for one of the participants in this study.

example, parishioners take a dislike to the housekeeper. One priest was reported to his bishop because he brought his former housekeeper (and her children) with him when he changed parish. This, it appeared, breached an unspoken tradition of employing local women for the job and the 'unacceptable sight' of 'children in nappies' running around the presbytery (Semi-retired priest, 1960s). However, the report to the bishop suggested her presence was inappropriate for 'other reasons' and he was told to discontinue the arrangement. As already discussed, some middle-aged priests highlighted the gap in their lives coming home to an empty house, with a radio playing or a light left on to give the impression 'you are not alone' (Parish priest, 1970s).

The Support of Family and Friends

Most priests emphasised the importance of their families and friends in encouraging their vocations and sustaining them during difficult periods of their lives. For example, one priest who meets up with a group of walkers from his parish every Sunday finds the walk 'socially and physically beneficial' (Parish priest, 1980s). Another enjoys the 'warmth and camaraderie' he experiences when playing football with 'guys he knew in school' (Curate, 1990s). Other priests spoke of the support they received from family members, parishioners, and people they socialised with from time to time. However, most priests also said that no matter how close they are, lay people cannot not fully understand a priest's life: 'The best supports would be other priests' (Curate, 2000s).

The Support of Other Priests

A number of priests believe that a bond exists between priests that is loosely based on the realisation that they are 'doing something, which is not the norm (Curate, 2000s): 'I know there are friends outside of priesthood I could go to at a drop of a hat. There are good people around but largely it is the sort of stuff that only people on the inside can understand what is going on, so you kind of keep it within that' (Curate, 1990s).

Most priests socialise in small groups of like-minded priests and particularly priests of a similar age: 'My support network is mainly other priests. I have a few very good friends amongst priests. I can talk with them about most things I am feeling or thinking. I play golf and cards and I mix with a wide circle of priests' (Parish priest, 1970s). Most of these priests felt that they received most support from other priests, often from their own diocese, but especially from priests with whom they studied in the seminary: A priest from my diocese is my brother. A priest from another diocese is a colleague. You would naturally feel inclined towards your own and outside your diocese is foreign territory' (Curate, 2000s). Much of the networking centres around golf, cards, and class reunions. A number of priests play golf or cards together on a regular basis, sometimes in 'exclusive' clerical clubs, where only priests that 'can play cards' are allowed in. Others meet for walks and conversation, and it is also not unusual for priests to go on holidays together: 'I got on very well in Maynooth and I made good friends there. We have our reunions down through the years. If we didn't get to go out, we played cards in the clubhouse or something. We would take every Monday off ' (Retired priest, 1950s).

The strongest bonds are based on the friendships formed in the seminary: 'In the seminary you are forged as a class and it not unusual for classmates to be lifelong friends' (Parish priest, 1960s). The bonds between former classmates are strong and enduring, and they regard themselves as 'just like brothers, a band of brothers really, looking out for each other' (Curate, 2000s). They bounce things off their friends from the seminary, with the result that their friends from Maynooth are 'probably the only ones who would have some sense' of their frustrations (Curate, 2000s). In one diocese, the younger priests meet a number of times each year to 'drink a few beers, eat pizza and chat about things that are important to us' (Curate, 1990s). One priest compared the support he receives from his clerical friends with the closeness of a married couple: 'I am lucky that there are lads I get on very well with and can share anything with. You absolutely need that support. To be able to go to someone, like other people in

relationships, husband and wife or partners, you need someone to open up to and really say what is going on and that is what I do with these lads' (Curate, 1990s).

The relationships formed in the seminary often continue for the duration of a priest's life, and most of the older priests and former priests continue to meet up with their classmates. Many of the priests mentioned instances where a colleague had helped them in their ministry, particularly when they were starting out, or who had 'stood by them' in difficult times (Semi-retired priest, 1960s). Some of these older priests 'looked out for each other' (Retired priest, 1950s), with due recognition of their colleague's human frailties. One priest told a story of being appointed to a parish when he was a young man and he was advised that he might find things 'trí na chéile' (upside down) and 'books that might not be up to date' (Retired priest, 1950s). He was also advised to do his own driving although he was not told the reason for this advice. He subsequently learned that his elderly parish priest (PP) was such a bad driver that 'he had killed nearly every dog and cat in the place'. However, rather than confronting his PP and embarrassing him, this young curate 'decommissioned' the PP's car by putting a rag up the exhaust and telling the bishop afterwards.

Conversely, as previously discussed, some priests also acknowledged that priests could be hurtful in the way they bullied and marginalised other priests, sometimes because they could or because 'they knew no different' (Curate, 1990s). One young priest, for example, felt that he and other priests were treated as 'outsiders' because they held more orthodox theological views than other priests in his diocese. Others spoke of how they had been bullied by their parish priests or ignored by their bishop. One priest felt that 'priests don't share that much, except with a couple of guys, and that priests can be hard on each other, often laughing at guys and making fun of them' (Parish priest, 1970s). Others spoke of how their parish priests had curtailed their freedom and authority in the parish, especially if the parish priest suspected his curate was more popular than

him. Other priests felt that they 'never really belonged to the diocese' (Former priest, 1980s) or that they 'never had many priest friends' (Semi-retired priest, 1960s).

Priesthood could be lonely for some priests, especially if they do not play golf or cards, or when they are living or working with another priest that is much younger or older. Some priests felt excluded by clerical gossip or when they felt excluded from some activities, such as diocesan card games. While support from their fellow priests is generally 'ok', some priests felt it could be much better.

> Being a priest nowadays is certainly a lonely life in the sense of isolation. You would wish there was more warmth amongst the priests themselves, more support. The relationship between priests in a parish can be difficult and we live very separate lives, even though we get on well. The age gap is huge and that doesn't help. As you get older, there is something odd about a fifty something year old man living with a man who is just 30 (Parish priest, 1960s).

A number of priests agreed that the image of a lone ranger was 'sad' but one that encapsulated the lives of some priests they knew, with little shared intimacy or friendship. A former priest, who is gay, suggested the image of 'batman' because 'a lot of priests are in disguise and afraid to show emotion or who they really are' (Former priest, 1990s). Support from other priests was most often achieved in small groups. One priest said, that while 'you can be friendly with everyone, you know where the boundaries are with others'.

> The banter is good when we get together as a group but you would know the parameters of what not to cross with certain guys. There would be certain fellows you would normally gravitate towards, guys you would go on holiday with or be friends, and then there are others you would avoid' (Parish priest, 1970s).

In summary, priests get most emotional support from other priests, their 'band of brothers', who most fully understand what it is like to be a

diocesan priest. Most of these brothers were in the seminary at the same time as the research participants.

8.5   Discussion

The primary aim of this chapter was to explore how Irish diocesan priests understand and experience celibacy. The research found that most priests experience difficulties with celibacy and most would favour the introduction of optional celibacy. The youngest cohort of priests stand out from their older counterparts because of their ideological commitment to celibacy and their belief that celibacy is an inherent part of priesthood. Their older counterparts perceive it more as a necessary sacrifice for the sake of priesthood. This finding is consistent with the literature (Hoge and Wenger, 2003).

Most of the priests in the pre-Vatican II cohort understand celibacy to be a restricted 'choice' that has been enforced on individuals who wish to become diocesan priests. Over the years, some of them have rationalised their celibacy because of its perceived practical benefits to priesthood, while the majority of priests in this cohort do not believe it should be mandatory for all priests. Rather, they believe that the potential practical advantages of celibacy are outweighed by its disadvantages. Furthermore, they believe that the introduction of married priests would probably improve priesthood for priests and lay people, alike.

The Vatican II cohort was most critical of mandatory celibacy and they resent having to give up married life so that they can be priests. While they can see some practical benefits of celibacy for their ministry, they do not believe that celibacy is an intrinsic part of priesthood, and they suggest that the value of celibacy is often negated by the many difficulties caused by a celibate lifestyle. The post-Vatican II group of young idealists believe that celibacy is central to priesthood and that it is embodied into their lives as priests. They perceive their celibacy to be a privilege, a challenge, and a freely chosen duty of their priesthood. While celibacy can be difficult at

times for some of this group, it is not perceived to be a sacrifice or a significant loss in their lives. It helps define their identity as priests for themselves and others. However, in spite of their commitment and idealism, it can also be difficult. Thus, celibacy is difficult for many priests with younger priests most likely to embrace the ideal of celibacy, while their Vatican II counterparts are most likely to experience greatest difficulties in the lived experience of celibacy (Hoge and Wenger, 2003).

The research also explored how gay priests experience celibacy. The research suggests that celibacy is difficult for most priests, regardless of sexual orientation. It is a blessing for some and a challenge for most. However, there is an added level of complexity when a priest is gay, due to the traditional secrecy surrounding homosexuality and the Church's negative stance towards gay seminarians and priests. The gay priests in this study indicated that homosexuality was taboo in their seminaries and also in their dioceses. One of the gay research participants was celibate and hoped to remain so. For him, celibacy was difficult but no more so than his heterosexual counterparts who tried to live celibate lives. Conversely, other priests found it more difficult because they had to come to terms with their sexuality and their celibacy.

CHAPTER NINE

IRISH DIOCESAN PRIESTHOOD, 1962-2012

9.1 Introduction

This thesis is concerned with the stories of Irish diocesan priests. A considerable amount of theological and historical material has been published on priesthood. However as discussed in chapter one, relatively little social research has been published on the lived experience of Irish diocesan priesthood, particularly qualitative research. Consequentially, the main aim of this thesis was to document and explore the lived experience of Irish diocesan priests and former priests, and to investigate how, if at all, diocesan priesthood has changed in Ireland during the past fifty years. It sought to do this by interrogating the stories of twenty-four diocesan priests and nine former diocesan priests, and exploring how their priesthood has changed during the fifty-year period, 1962–2012. The research focused on three core areas of priesthood – identity, obedience, and celibacy, and it was guided by a number of key questions as outlined below.

First, how do Irish diocesan priests understand themselves as priests and how has this understanding changed over time? Second, how do Irish diocesan priests negotiate their priesthood within the context of a highly structured, centralised and strictly hierarchical institutional Church? Third, how do Irish diocesan priests understand and experience celibacy in their day-to-day lives? Fourth, is Irish diocesan priesthood experiencing a crisis of identity? These questions are explored in the thesis using the accounts given by the thirty-three research participants.

9.2 Evolving Identities of Diocesan Priesthood

The research found evidence of an evolving priestly habitus amongst the research participants, and the presence of three different generations of priests, each of which corresponded with a distinct period in contemporary Irish Church history. Further to Bourdieu, a priestly habitus denotes a shared or collective understanding of priesthood. My research indicated that a cultic model of priesthood prevailed before Vatican II, followed by a servant-leader model in the years following Vatican II, and a neo-orthodox model, which emerged during the papacy of John Paul II (1978-2005). This finding is largely consistent with the findings by Hoge and Wenger (Hoge and Wenger, 2003) in their study of US priests, which found similar generations of priests had emerged in the US Church since Vatican II. This finding is also consistent with Bourdieu's concept of an evolving habitus (Maton, 2008), and the work of Mannheim (Mannheim, 1952) and Aronson (Aronson, 2000), who suggested that different political generations evolve over time that reflect the prevailing cultural and historical context within which they came of age. The 1960s was, for example, a time of significant socio-economic and cultural change for Irish society and the Catholic Church, particularly around the time of Vatican II (1962-1965). Accordingly, it is not surprising that a new model of priesthood should have emerged at this time.

I found the Hoge and Wenger (2003) model to be a useful framework for understanding inter-generational differences in priesthood, and the Irish cohorts corresponded closely to their US counterparts, as described by Hoge and Wenger. However, one important difference emerged in the findings of my research concerning the practice of priesthood. Hoge and Wenger's study mainly identified intergenerational differences, with less emphasis on similarities. This made sense because their research concentrated on aspects of priesthood where most change has occurred since Vatican II – ecclesiology, theology, and liturgy. My research also covered these areas of investigation, but it also explored the practice of

being a priest, where I found many underlying similarities. Consequently, I found both inter-generational similarities and differences. I had not expected the similarities to be so strong but the richness of the qualitative data helped me to identify this underlying trend. Accordingly, while the research confirms that different models of priesthood exist in the Irish Church, which differentiate diocesan priests in terms of their ecclesiology, liturgy and theology, it also suggests that Irish diocesan priests are united in their shared understanding of priestly practice. The main inter-generational differences and similarities are summarised briefly below.

Inter-Generational Differences

The lived experience of the research participants who were ordained before Vatican II were set apart from their parishioners by virtue of their superior vocation, ministry, position in the community, education, and celibate lifestyle. They were the centre of their communities and perceived to be a man of substance and power, but they were also subject to the constraints imposed by a hierarchical and structured Church. Obedience was regarded as a virtue and their lives were largely governed by Canon Law and the norms of a strictly hierarchical Church. Their liturgies were regulated by detailed rubrics, and their theology was static and underpinned by legalism. They accepted the discipline of mandatory celibacy as part of priesthood, although not necessarily a discipline they approved of. In brief, they were obedient, theologically conservative, ontologically distinctive, dutiful and institutionalised. The characteristics of the Irish priests ordained before Vatican II are thus similar to their US counterparts. However, the Hoge and Wenger model presented a relatively static profile of this cohort of priests, which did not did not allow for inter-generational change. Following Vatican II, half of this cohort evolved into servant-leader priests, where they adopted many of the characteristics of the emerging paradigm. Further to Aronson (2000), it may be argued that the five priests who made the transition into servant-leader priests did so following significant changes in their individual experiences, with most of them spending some years studying abroad while pursuing further studies.

The lived experience of the Vatican II servant-leader research participants also corresponds closely to their US counterparts. When compared with their pre-Vatican II counterparts, their priesthood was more flexible, pastoral, creative, and open to theological diversity. They emphasised service in ministry but they also valued their sacramental duties. They are loyal to the Church but not necessarily subservient, and most of them are critical of the Church's reluctance to decrease the strict hierarchy and structures of the Church following Vatican II. Their approach to priesthood is largely pragmatic, where they are willing to be flexible in certain circumstances. They are against rules for the sake of rules, and most of them have a very strong pastoral sense, with few absolutes. They are reluctant to judge people and none of them would refuse Holy Communion to anyone who approached them at the altar. Most of them are also personally critical of some Church teachings, such as mandatory celibacy and contraception, and the way the Church deals with people in second or homosexual relationships. However, they also accept most of what the Church teaches. They are also discreet in the way they express their differences with Church policy, with none of them willing to preach against the Church or show dissent in public, a point which is discussed in more detail in the next section. Some of them enjoy creative liturgies and their theology is relatively liberal, with some of them advocating liberation theology. However, there are also some rules they are very reluctant to violate, such as blessing a second relationship or using the new translation of the Mass Missal.

Hoge and Wenger (2003) did not develop the model of post-Vatican II priests, other than to suggest that the younger priests shared many of the characteristics of cultic priests and that they were more interested in blending pre-Vatican II and post-Vatican II elements 'into a new vision of priesthood' (Hoge and Wenger, 2003, p.113). My research found that the post-Vatican II research participants are quite different in their ideology and motivation to both of the previous generations. While they share many of the characteristics of the pre-Vatican II cultic priests, they are motivated by a love of the Church rather than legalism. They embrace the orthodoxy,

conservatism and certainty of the contemporary Church. They love the Mass and other liturgies, including the Latin Mass, so much so in some cases that they are referred to as 'smoke and lace' priests. However, while all of them are attracted to the sacramental dimension of priesthood, some of them perceive their priesthood to be a combination of service and sacramental duties. They see themselves as defenders of the Catholic faith and a means by which orthodoxy can be restored into the Church. They value strict hierarchy and established rules, and they believe that celibacy is a central part of their priesthood. Above all, they value orthodoxy and they do not see themselves as reactionaries. They consider themselves to be theologically conservative but pastorally pragmatic.

Inter-Generational Similarities

In addition to the differences noted above, my research found significant similarities between the different cohorts of priests in terms of their motivation but especially in the way they carried out their priestly practice. In the first instance, priests from the three cohorts had similar motivations for wanting to be priests; they believe that they are called by God to work as priests in the Catholic Church. They are first and foremost priests, and their sense of vocation is strong and not easily disrupted by any external factors. This vocational response was largely consistent across the different generations. They felt compelled to 'try it out', although unsure if the life was for them. Similarly, priests in each generation pursued their vocation by adopting the Church's core values that prevailed at the time of their ordination. For example, the younger priests adopted the conservative values of a conservative Church, while the Vatican II cohort adopted the liberalism of a Church energised by Vatican II. Thus, their vocation journey is essentially similar, even if the destination is somewhat different for each cohort of priests.

The most significant inter-generational similarity occurred in terms of how the different generations of priests practiced their priesthood. Most of the research participants exercised their priesthood in a pragmatic way that reflects both a willingness to be flexible in their pastoral response to

parishioners' needs, and a tendency to circumvent Church authorities by doing their own thing in certain circumstances. They believe that the world of morality is a grey area and one that requires compassion, even if they sometimes feel somewhat uncomfortable questioning 2000 years of Church tradition. Their capacity to carry out their ministry in a pragmatic way enables them to be true to their own sense of priesthood and remain loyal priests within the Church, whilst reconciling conflicting values. This is an aspect of priesthood that will be discussed more fully in the following section. The main inter-generational differences and similarities are summarised in Table 9.1, below.

Table 9.1 Evolving Models of Priesthood: Irish Diocesan Priesthood

Identity Indicators	Pre-Vatican II Cultic Priesthood	Vatican II Servant-Leader Priesthood	Post-Vatican II Orthodox Priesthood
Ontological status of the Priest	A man set apart. Focus on sacramental duties, and teaching of faith.	Pastoral leader. Focus on service and sacraments. Reformists.	A man set apart – freely chosen. Importance of sacramental aspect of priesthood.
Attitude toward the Church Magisterium	Loyal but not subservient. Accepts Church hierarchy as part of legalistic culture.	Loyal but not subservient. Favours less strict hierarchy. Questions Church moral teachings.	Loyal but not subservient. Values Church hierarchy. Embraces sense of duty.
Liturgy and Devotions	Follows established rules and rubrics.	Favours creativity.	Loves liturgy, old and new.
Theological Perspective	Orthodox, conservative, unchanging.	Allows for theological differences. Questioning.	Defender and restorer of orthodoxy.
Attitude toward celibacy	Optional for priesthood.	Optional for priesthood.	Essential to priesthood.
Attitude towards women priests	Unsure but willing to discuss.	A possibility that many favour.	Against.
Priestly practice	Pragmatic – pastorally and organisationally.	Pragmatic – pastorally and organisationally.	Pragmatic – pastorally and organisationally.

In summary, the research suggests that Irish diocesan priesthood has evolved during the past fifty years, leading to the emergence of different models of priesthood. The accounts of the research participants suggest that the Hoge and Wenger (2003) model approximated to the Irish context but that it did not place sufficient emphasis on inter-generational similarities, which reflect an underlying culture of clerical practice.

9.3 Negotiating Priesthood in the Church

The empirical literature and theoretical reviews suggested that diocesan priests are severely constrained by the institutional Church and that there are few opportunities for priests to exercise agency in a highly structured and strictly hierarchical Church. Conversely, anecdotal evidence suggests that priests can and do exercise agency in certain circumstances. For example, although the Catholic Church is strictly hierarchical, a priest is relatively autonomous within his parish according to Canon law. Furthermore, Bourdieu's concept of habitus (Grenfell, 2008) and Giddens' concept of structuration (Giddens, 2009) suggest that while agents are constrained, they are not determined by structures. Hoge and Wenger's (2003) model also suggests that the Vatican II priests are relatively flexible in the way they interpret some Church rules and theological positions.

Overall, my research suggests that while Irish diocesan priests are constrained in many ways by the highly structured and strictly hierarchical Church, they also have the capacity to exercise agency in certain circumstances, and that many of them do so routinely in their day-to-day lives. The research indicates that the research participants exercise a degree of agency in their thoughts and actions. In the first instance, while the research participants accept the principal teachings and practices of the Catholic Church, most of them also hold opposing views on some aspects of morality, theology, and ecclesiology. For example, most priests have difficulties with some aspects of Church teaching on morality, such as the law forbidding the use of artificial contraceptives and pre-marital sex.

Similarly, many of them also disagree with the Church's official stance on homosexuality, women priests, and mandatory celibacy. Many Vatican II priests disagree with the perceived conservative shift in the Church and priesthood that gathered momentum during the papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, while neo-orthodox priests disagree with some interpretations of Vatican II. However, most priests are able to reconcile their personal views with those of the Church, in a way that allows them to remain true to their own values as a priest and remain within the structures of the institutional Church. They are loyal priests but not always subservient and obedient.

They also exercise a degree of agency in their actions and non-actions. For example, most priests avoid confrontation with their superiors by not preaching on controversial issues, particularly where they hold opposing views to the institutional Church. Similarly, few if any priests would consider refusing Holy Communion to anyone who approached them at the altar. It is also the case that some priests do not live celibacy in the ideal way envisaged by the Church. However, in most cases they understand that there are boundaries, which they should not cross if they wish to remain in their ministry. For example, one gay priest says that while he preaches as often as he dares about homosexuality within the context of diversity and Christian values, he could not risk being more direct in his comments. The findings from the research suggest that the research participants have a shared way of understanding priestly practice that is sufficiently pragmatic to enable them to be true to their core values ('This is what I think as a priest') and to hold contradictory values, whilst remaining loyal to the Church.

Some priests learnt to circumvent Church authority in the seminary and later in their priesthood by keeping their heads down and not confronting their superiors (Keenan, 2012). Thus, they can question Church authority, disagree with some teachings and practices, but only if they do so discretely and within limits set by the institutional Church. The culture of priestly practice, which enables priests to exercise agency in their

priesthood appears across the different cohorts of priests, although, ironically less so in the youngest group which might be said to have the greatest freedom of all the generations. The legalism that permeated the pre-Vatican II Church constrained priests in many ways and priests had little opportunity to challenge or disobey their superiors. However, some of the research participants in this cohort indicated that they broke some rules in the seminary and that they learnt to do their own thing in the seminary and afterwards by keeping their heads down and not attracting unwanted attention. Furthermore, as previously indicated, following Vatican II, many of them adopted the values of a more liberal Vatican II priesthood where they learnt to accommodate the rules of the institutional church with the pastoral needs of people and their own sense of priesthood. Agency was possibly strongest during the Vatican II era, when theology, liturgy and ecclesiology became more uncertain and open to change. The Vatican II priests embraced change and many of them learnt to do their own thing in the seminary and how to deal with PPs and bishops. They also learnt to stay within the Church whilst disagreeing with the Church's position on various issues, such as married priests, women priests and contraception. For the most part, they adopted an empathetic pastoral approach, which sought to balance Church teaching with parishioner's individual circumstances. The youngest cohort also exercise agency, although often in sync with the institutional Church because of their ideological commitment to the Church.

The theoretical framework suggests that priests who deviate from official Church policy are acting in accordance with a culture of priestly practice that is, to some extent, facilitated by the institutional Church. It may be argued that the institutional Church is prepared to be flexible and allow a degree of disloyalty provided priests do not cause scandal by engaging in activities that are deemed to be in violation of the mutually understood rules of the game. Bourdieu's concept of field helps to explain why the institutional Church tolerates the pragmatic, if sometimes disloyal, practices of their priests. The Church is the dominant agent in the religious field and, as such, it sets the rules of the game. If individuals wish to be

ordained or to minister in a diocese, they can only do so with the permission of their bishop. However, in many senses, the Church and its priests have a symbiotic relationship, albeit with the Church dominant. The Church recognises that priests are the principal resource of the Church and that they are needed for the Church to function (Schoenherr and Young, 1993). Thus, while the Church may be happy to get rid of some extremist priests and students who seriously challenge the system, it is tolerant towards priests who engage in behaviour that is inconsistent with priesthood but not necessarily damaging to the Church e.g., celibacy violations.

The pastoral practices of individual priests allows the institutional Church to be simultaneously empathetic and strong. The human side of the Church is represented by the actions of individual priests when they act in a pastoral way. Conversely, their pastoral practice enables the institutional Church to protect the truth of the Church by being unyielding and rigid in the laws and truth it promulgates. Difficulties only occur when a priest is too public about his dissent, thereby provoking a response from the Church, or when the Church declares a practice to be beyond discussion, such as female priests. The Church has the capacity to reassert its authority if it is unduly challenged by an individual priest or group of priests. Individual priests can be silenced, while others, including lay people, can be reminded of their duties as Catholics. In extreme cases, the symbiotic relationship with priests can be altered to protect the institutional Church. For example, in the past priests were protected by the Church when they committed a transgression. This practice would appear to have ended, or at least, suspended following the clerical child sexual abuse cases, with many priests being effectively abandoned by their bishops. The research indicates that priests can be simultaneously loyal and disobedient because they recognise the rules of the game in the religious field. They are allowed liberties in how they conduct themselves, provided they tow the party line in public and they don't 'flaunt' the rules of the game (Saunders, 1983, p.64).

In summary, the research indicates that diocesan priests can be simultaneously loyal and disobedient; severely constrained but not determined by Church structures. They exercise agency in certain aspects of their priesthood but only within the parameters set by the institutional Church. They do not express their dissent in public because they understand and accept the rules of the game in the religious field, which indicates that their relatively privileged position is subject to the dominance of the institutional Church. Above all, they want to be priests of the Catholic Church and only the Church can permit this to happen and continue happening. Those who can accept these conditions stay, even in times of personal difficulty, while others who cannot cope with these structures tend to leave or become very marginalised men.

9.4 The Celibate Priest

Celibacy is an interesting phenomenon that brings together identity and power in the lived experience of priests. It is a feature of priesthood that varies for different generations of priests, and it also illustrates the dominance of the institutional Church over its priests. In the first instance, the literature and anecdotal evidence suggests that priests understand celibacy along a continuum, ranging from total acceptance to rejection. Furthermore, it argues that this celibate continuum varies by clerical generation, with younger priests typically embracing the ideal of celibacy, while older priests less positive towards the discipline (Hoge and Wenger, 2003). The literature also suggests that mandatory celibacy is a good illustration of power in the Church, and that celibacy has an added complexity for gay priests.

The findings from the research are generally consistent with the literature. The research participants understand and experience celibacy along a continuum and younger priests embraced it as an ideal of priesthood. Most of the pre-Vatican II priests understand celibacy as a way of life that was enforced on them when they decided to become diocesan priests. Few of

them considered the implications of celibacy at the time of their ordination because of their idealistic desire to become priests, and many of them thought that any difficulties would eventually pass. Over the years, some of these priests did come to rationalise their celibacy because of its perceived practical benefits to priesthood and their age. Conversely, the majority of priests in this cohort do not believe it should be mandatory for all priests. Rather, they believe that the potential practical advantages of celibacy are outweighed by its disadvantages. Furthermore, they believe that the introduction of married priests would probably enrich priesthood and provide priests with a real choice.

The Vatican II generation of priests understand celibacy to be a mandatory discipline of the Church, which has some practical benefits for ministry. It gave them greater freedom to engage in different ministries, including some who worked abroad, and undertook further education in foreign countries, and it did sometimes allow them to be more available to their parishioners. However, most of them also accepted that it allowed them to play more golf than their lay friends. Most of them do not believe that celibacy is an intrinsic part of priesthood, and they suggest that the value of celibacy is often negated by the many difficulties caused by a celibate lifestyle. For some, it is a sacrifice that is required if they wish to be priests and celebrate the Eucharist. Accordingly, most of this group disagreed with mandatory celibacy. Their comments would also suggest that they and some of their colleagues sometimes engage in sexually intimate behaviour. However, when this happens, they are understanding and tolerant of themselves and each other. Overall they believe that celibacy has a value but not as a mandatory rule for all priests.

The post-Vatican II priests believe that celibacy is central to priesthood and that it is embodied into their lives as priests. They perceive their celibacy to be a privilege and a challenge, which they have freely chosen. While celibacy can be difficult at times for some of this group, it is not perceived to be a sacrifice or a significant loss in their lives. It helps define their identity as priests for themselves and others. However, in spite of

their commitment and idealism, it can also be difficult personally. In summary, the research indicates that the research participants have different understandings of celibacy, with the younger cohort most idealistic, while Vatican II priests are most against the notion of mandatory celibacy. The research suggests that priests experience celibacy along a continuum, with some priests rejecting their priesthood because of celibacy and others embracing it as an ideal of priesthood. The remainder are to be found somewhere in between these two extremes.

Celibacy is a good illustration of how power functions in the Church (Anderson, 2005). The continued existence of mandatory celibacy in the Catholic Church is somewhat of a puzzle. Many different interests in the Church, including a majority of priests and people (The Irish Catholic, 2004, Irish Times, 2012) are opposed to mandatory celibacy; it is associated with loneliness and a demoralised priesthood; its gospel foundations are uncertain; and it is perceived to pose a threat to the Eucharist and priesthood (Schoenherr and Young, 1993, Standún, 1993). However, it is argued that celibacy is mandatory because it is of benefit to the institutional Church. Some of the research participants believe that it makes it easier for bishops to control priests if they are not married, while others referred to the potential financial and property-related difficulties of having a married clergy. The Church is enabled to impose its will because it is the dominant agent in the religious field. Conversely, transgressions in celibacy are rarely punished provided priests don't 'flaunt' the rules of the game (Saunders, 1983, p.64). Thus, it may be argued that priests are reluctant to speak out personally against mandatory celibacy either because they anticipate a negative reaction from the Church, or because they are content with the current situation because of the relatively high tolerance by the institutional Church towards violations of celibacy.

The literature is vague on the lived experience of celibacy by homosexual priests, with some commentators highlighting the difficulties of their vocation because they are gay priests (Murray, 2008), and others suggesting gay priests lead a more active sex life (Bordisso, 2011). My

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research found that while homosexuality is a hidden feature of Irish Church life, it is a reality of seminary and diocesan life. The gay priests in this study indicated that homosexuality was taboo in their seminaries and also in their dioceses. The research suggests that while celibacy is difficult for most priests, regardless of sexual orientation, there is an added level of complexity when a priest is gay, due to the traditional secrecy surrounding homosexuality and the Church's public negative stance towards gay seminarians and priests. One of the gay research participants was celibate and hoped to remain so. For him, celibacy was difficult but no more so than his heterosexual counterparts who tried to live celibate lives. Conversely, it would appear that being sexually active was different for gay and straight priests because of the more serious consequences for gay priests if they are discovered.

9.5 A Crisis of Priestly Identity?

The final aspect of priesthood considered in this study related to an alleged crisis of identity within diocesan priesthood. The evidence is somewhat ambivalent on this question, with most evidence suggesting that Irish priests are not yet experiencing a crisis of identity. First, most of the priests that participated in the research have a strong sense of priestly identity. They are certain that they have been called by God to be a priest in the Catholic Church and this sense of vocation has not been affected by external factors. A number of them said that they had been 'rocked' by a number of events in recent years, and that they are conscious of a change in the way some people treat them following the child sexual abuse cases and the way the bishops mishandled the situation. However, because their sense of being a priest is so strong, it sustained them against challenges to priesthood and enabled them to withstand societal disparagement of the profession of priesthood. Second, while the emergence of a new paradigm of priesthood challenged and upset some priests with a different understanding of priesthood, the research suggests that the three generations of priests are content within their own paradigm. They are aware of theological differences between themselves and other cohorts but

this is a source of strength for some priests. For example, the younger priests are aware of how they are perceived by their older counterparts and some of them are happy to be seen in this light, as defenders of the faith and priesthood.

Third, the research showed little evidence of any sense of animosity towards lay people. It would appear that most priests have come to terms with the empowerment of lay people and their presence on the altar. Fourth, while priests from each of the generations have experienced points of crisis that have caused them problems, most of them are capable of adjusting to new situations in a pragmatic way. For example, the emergence of new paradigms of priesthood upset some priests that were embedded in an older version of priesthood. However, most priests appear to have survived the various transitions. Few of the research participants appear unduly troubled by the theological divisions in practice, and for the most part, they are content to work alongside priests holding different views, or to work relatively independently in their own parishes. Fifth, while some individual priests across the generations have, and are currently, experiencing individual elements of crisis, these are not yet sufficient to force them to leave the priesthood. For example, some priests believe they will have to cease their public ministry if they are obliged to use the new wording in the Mass; some priests are experiencing difficulties with celibacy; and some priests feel challenged by the attitudes of their fellow priests. While these represent a potential crisis for the individuals concerned, there is no indication that these issues are widespread in diocesan priests.

All of these factors suggest that the research participants are not experiencing a crisis of identity. Conversely, it is clear that many priests have left the priesthood because their values were out of sync with the institutional Church. The research indicates that some priests left the priesthood out of principle, while most left because of celibacy. This is undoubtedly a symptom of a crisis of identity. They wanted to become and remain priests but were unable to do so because they could not reconcile

their values with those of the priesthood. However, my overall sense of the research participants is that they are not experiencing a crisis of priesthood at the present time.

9.6 Concluding Comment

To conclude, I believe that my research has contributed to an understanding of Irish diocesan priesthood in two key ways. First, the main reason for undertaking the study was the dearth of sociological research on the lived experience of Irish diocesan priests. I believe that the research has addressed this gap in research and that the substantial amount of qualitative data that I collected in the interviews has provided core insights into the lived experience of Irish diocesan priests in the contemporary Church. Specifically, it provides us with a greater understanding of how Irish diocesan priests understand their priesthood, and experience celibacy and obedience in their lives. I believe that the research is stronger because it represents the voice of priests, and I believe that the qualitative research process allowed them to tell their stories in their own way and in as much detail as they wished. Second, the research has drawn attention to the underlying similarities in priestly practice. While previous research has highlighted differences between the different cohorts of priests, my research also found that Irish diocesan priests have a shared way of doing priesthood and a deep personal commitment to priesthood that sustains them through societal challenges to the profession of priesthood. Finally, the process has been satisfactory from a personal perspective and it has enabled me to make sense of my vocation journey, which continues to evolve.

Appendix A

Statistical Profile of Irish Diocesan Priests

Statistical Profile of Irish Diocesan Priests[214]

In 2006, there were approximately three thousand active diocesan priests in Ireland, representing a steady decline in the number of priests since 1980. However, as will be evident from the following chart, the numerical and statistical decline for diocesan clergy was less than other sectors of the Irish Church (Council for Research & Development, 2007).

Figure A1 Total Church Personnel in Ireland, 1901-2006
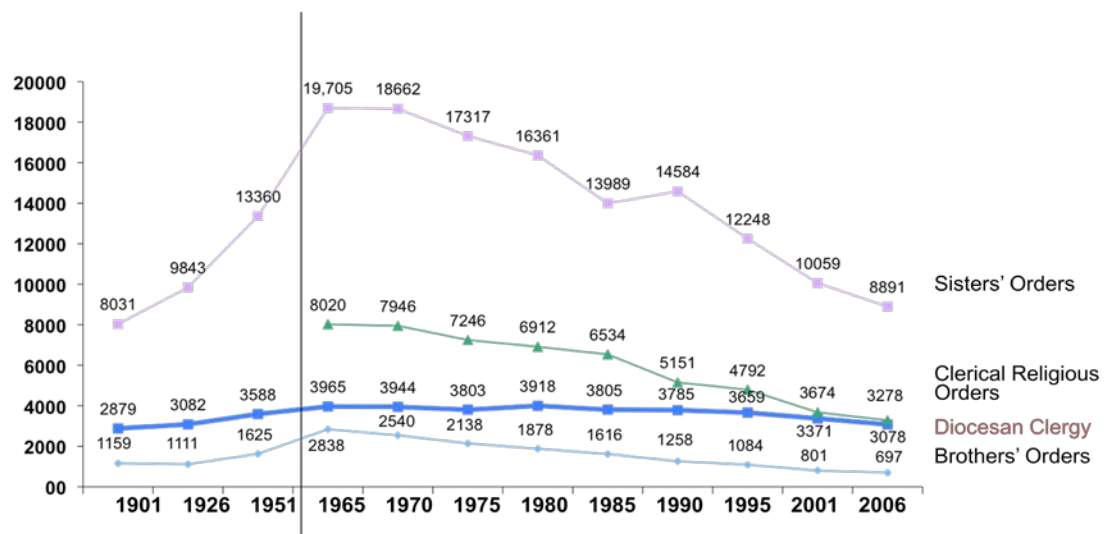
The downward decline for diocesan priests has been consistent since 1965 with 887 less diocesan clergy (-22%) in 2006 than in 1965. Most of the numerical decline has taken place since 1990, when the number of diocesan clergy declined by 707 or 80% of the total decline since 1965. The number of clerical students also fell quite dramatically during the 1990s (Table A.1, overleaf).

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[214] The most comprehensive source of statistical information on the Catholic Church in Ireland is the Irish Bishops' Conference Council for Research & Development. Since its establishment in 1970, the Council for Research & Development has collected detailed information on various aspects of Church personnel including, total personnel numbers, vocations, ordinations, deaths and departures. The current data represents the most up-to-date information on Church personnel in Ireland at the time of writing.

**Table A.1 Numbers of Irish Diocesan Clergy and Clerical Students
1901-2006**

Year	Number of Irish Diocesan Clergy	Clerical Students
1901	2,879	n/a
1951	3,588	n/a
1965	3,965	n/a
1970	3,944	670
1975	3,803	n/a
1980	3,998	n/a
1985	3,805	n/a
1990	3,785	556
1995	3,659	332
2000	3,403	150
2001	3,371	120
2002	3,289	88
2003	3,238	78
2004	3,168	90
2005	3,129	n/a
2006	3,078	n/a

Sources: (Lennon et al., 1971, MacGréil and Inglis, 1977, Weafer and Breslin, 1983, Hanley, 1995, Hanley, 2000b, Council for Research and Development, 1971-2004, Council for Research and Development, 2005, Council for Research & Development, 2007).

The total number of diocesan priests at any time is dependent on the balance between ordinations, deaths, and departures. In 2005, 11 men were ordained for diocesan priesthood in Ireland, while 38 died and 8 departed the priesthood, resulting in a net loss of 35 priests (Table A.2).

Table A.2 Statistical Profile of Irish Diocesan Clergy 1966-2005

Year	Number of Irish Diocesan Clergy	Ordinations for Irish Dioceses	Deaths of ordained priests	Departures of ordained priests	Net Balance (Ordinations – Deaths + departures)
1966	3,958	82	88	1	-7
1970	3,944	67	55	6	+6
1975	3,803	52	83	20	-51
1980	3,998	78	78	8	-8
1985	3,805	86	80	2	+4
1990	3,785	73	70	10	-7
1995	3,659	59	82	19	-42
2000	3,403	24	75	27	-78
2005	3,129	11	38	8	-35

Sources: (Lennon et al., 1971, MacGréil and Inglis, 1977, Weafer and Breslin, 1983, Hanley, 1995, Hanley, 2000b, Council for Research and Development, 1971-2004, Council for Research and Development, 2005).

The decline in numbers of diocesan clergy is directly related to the sharp deterioration in the number of ordinations and entrants to seminaries. For example, the average number of ordinations in the first half of the 1960s was 91, compared with only 18 in the first half of the 2000s (Table A.3).

Table A.3 Ordinations to Irish Dioceses 1951-2005

	Total Ordinations	**Average per Annum**
1951-1955	396	79
1956-1960	451	90
1961-1965	457	91
1966-1970	381	76
1971-1975	364	73
1976-1980	350	70
1981-1985[215]	418	84
1986-1990	373	75
1991-1995	309	62
1996-2000	176	35
2001-2005	88	18

Source: (Lennon et al., 1971, Hanley, 1995, Hanley, 2000b, Council for Research and Development, 2005)

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[215] The number of ordinations increased in this period, due in part to the inclusion of ordinations for foreign dioceses since 1981. However, the number is relatively small and the downward trend in ordinations continued in the 1990s.

The number of entrants to diocesan seminaries has also fallen sharply since the 1960s, with 291 entrants to diocesan seminaries in 1967, compared with only 27 entrants in 2005. Furthermore, a substantial number of clerical students left the seminary over the past 40 years. Thus, while 1,750 men entered a diocesan seminary between 1971 and 1980, almost half this number (n=842) left the seminary (Figure A2/ Table A.4).

Figure A2 Vocations in Ireland, 1965-2005
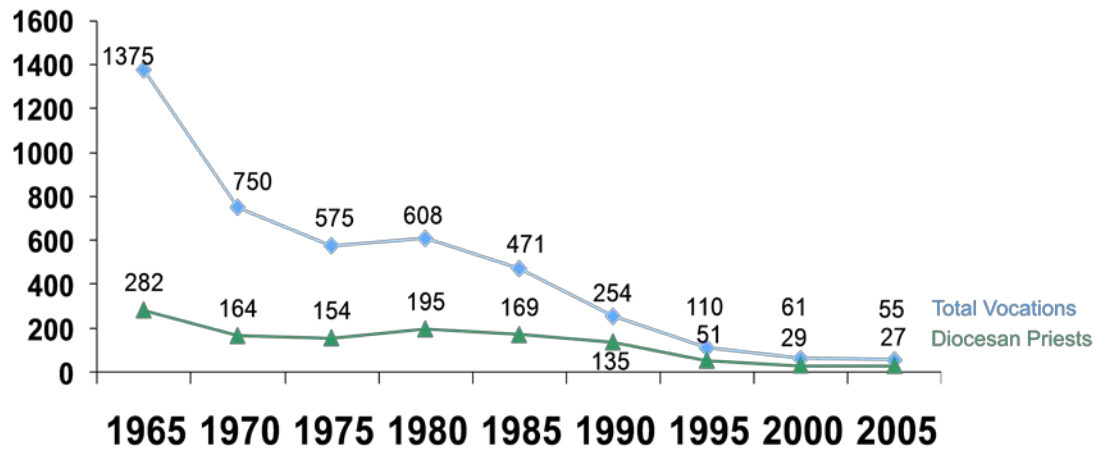
Source: Council for Research & Development, IBC

Table A.4 Entrants and Departures of Clerical Students 1965-2005

Year	Entrants 'Vocations'	Departures
1965	282	n/a
1966	254	n/a
1967	291	n/a
1968	219	n/a
1969	221	n/a
1970	164	n/a
1971	179	169
1972	184	102
1973	157	101
1974	144	95
1975	154	50
1976	181	54
1977	206	72
1978	175	69
1979	175	71
1980	195	59
1981	176	34
1982	187	25
1983	154	95
1984	154	40
1985	169	57
1986	170	63
1987	168	76
1988	155	76
1989	139	93
1990	135	51
1991	120	81
1992	101	88
1993	93	31
1994	98	94
1995	51	67
1996	52	59
1997	53	43
1998	45	40
1999	46	41
2000	29	24
2001	32	27
2002	20	28
2003	19	7
2004	28	11
2005	27	8

Sources: (Lennon et al., 1971, Weafer and Breslin, 1983, Hanley, 1995, Hanley, 2000b, Council for Research and Development, 2005)

Age Profile of Diocesan Priests

While the age profile of diocesan clergy is younger than their religious counterparts, it is nevertheless ageing (Council for Research and Development, 2005). In 1970, just over one in ten priests were aged between 20 and 29 years. In 2005, the figure had fallen to just 1 per cent. Conversely, the proportion of priests in the older age categories has progressed steadily since 1970 (Table A.5). In 2005, seven in ten Irish diocesan priests were aged over 50 years of age, and it is estimated that approximately 50 per cent of Irish Catholic priests are over 65 years of age.

Table A.5 Age Structure of Irish Diocesan Clergy, 1970-2005

Age Group	1970	1981	1990	2001	2005
	%	%	%	%	%
24-29 years	11	9	9	3	1
30-39 years	22	18	18	15	12
40-49 years	20	21	18	18	20
50-59 years	22	20	21	21	21
60-69 years	16	19	17	21	22
70-79 years	8	11	13	16	17
80+ years	3	2	4	6	9
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Sources: (Weafer and Breslin, 1983, Hanley, 1995, Council for Research and Development, 2005).

In 1970, diocesan clergy had higher proportions in the two youngest age groups (24-29 and 30-39 years), when compared with their counterparts in the total male population. However, by 1981, this trend was reversed for these age groups, and conversely, most age groups above 40 years had higher proportions of priests by comparison with the proportion of total males (Weafer and Breslin, 1983). The ageing of diocesan priests relative to the Irish male population has continued into the 2000s (O'Mahony, 2007). In 2011, just over three quarters (75%) of priest in Ireland were aged between 45 and 74 years of age, compared with just less than seven in ten (69%) in 2007 (O'Mahony, 2011). The age of entrants to the diocesan priesthood is also older than was the case in the 1970s and 1980s,

with most entrants older than 20 years but younger than 35 years (Council for Research and Development, 2005).

Appendix B

Letters of Introduction to Research Participants

'The Lived Experience of Irish Diocesan Priests'

DSocSC Research Study, UCC

John A. Weafer

The following information provides details of a study on the lives of Irish diocesan priests I am undertaking through the Department of Applied Social Studies in UCC. Please read carefully and if you have any questions I would be more than happy to answer these when I contact you to arrange an interview should you wish to proceed.

1. The main aim of the study is to document and analyse the lived experience of Irish diocesan priests and former priests.

2. The interview will cover your life as a priest, commencing from the time you felt you had a vocation to the present day. I will have some questions to ask you but initially you will be given an opportunity to mention anything about your life as a priest that you think is pertinent to the study. You may also decide to withhold any information you deem to be too personal.

3. The study is being conducted in fulfilment of a Doctorate in Social Science (DSocSc), which I am undertaking through the Department of Applied Social Studies in University College Cork (UCC). It is my hope that the study will complement the existing research on priesthood with more qualitative in-depth information.

4. The study will involve a personal interview with me at a time and place that is mutually convenient. I expect the interview to take approximately one hour. You do not have to prepare for the interview, other than perhaps thinking about your life in the seminary and your life as a priest since ordination.

5. With your permission, I will be recording the interview and, if you wish, I will provide you with a written transcript of the interview. At that stage, we can meet again and/or you could write a written response to allow for any after-thoughts on any topic discussed. If you are concerned about any section of the interview that might identify you or others, I undertake to delete or change these sections in line with your expectations. Furthermore, you can withdraw permission to use any of the data within two weeks of the interview, in which case all the material will be deleted.

6. Please be assured that, insofar as possible, your participation in the study will be kept confidential. I will ensure that no clues to your identity appear in the thesis and that any extracts from what you say that are quoted in the thesis will be anonymous. Everything you say will be treated with the strictest of confidence. Your name, personal details or what you say in the interview will never be disclosed to anyone.

7. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you will have the option of withdrawing at any point during the study. Giving your consent by signing the consent form confirms that you have read this letter but does not, in any way, mean that you are bound to participate.

8. The recorded information will be kept in a secure and confidential place for the duration of the study. On completion of the thesis, the recordings will be retained for a further 12 months and then destroyed unless I have your specific permission to retain them longer. The results from the study will be presented in a thesis, which will be read by my supervisor and others associated with the university. It is also my intention to publish tsome or all of he results in an academic journal or possibly in a book.

9. I hope to interview approximately 30 priests and former priests from different dioceses for the study. I have asked you to participate because your are a diocesan priest or former priest and because you represent one of the age groups I have identified as important for the study.

10. While I don't envisage any negative consequences for you in taking part, it is possible that talking about your experience may cause you some distress. If you feel in anyway distressed during or following the interview, please inform me immediately.

(Contact details provided).

Consent Form

I…………………………agree to participate in John Weafer's research study (*The Lived Experience of Irish Diocesan Priests, 1962-2012*).

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.

I am participating voluntarily.

I give permission for my interview with John Weafer to be tape-recorded.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data within two weeks of the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.

I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the thesis and any subsequent publications and I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview.

Signed……………… Date……………   Year ordained: ……………

Appendix C

Topic Guides – Priests and Former Priests

July 2010

I. PRIESTS

Introduction
I am interested in hearing about your life and experiences as a diocesan priest, from the time you felt you had a vocation before you entered the seminary to the present day. Take your time and try to mention anything you feel is important because everything is of interest to me.
Q. Where would you like to start?

Key Questions to Prompt and Guide Discussion

1. The Vocation and Discernment Process
Q. What led you to become a priest? (Prompt: What factors encouraged or discouraged you on your vocation journey?).

Q. What was your seminary life like for you? (Prompt: Did your seminary life adequately prepare you for your life as a priest?).

Q. Have you ever had any doubts about becoming or remaining a priest? (Prompt: Were there times when you wished you had done something else for a career?).

2. Your Life as a Priest
Q. Describe your life as a priest? (Prompt: What do you do/ ministry, how do you live/ personal life).

Q. Was priesthood what you expected? (Prompt: Compare with initial vision of priesthood).

Q. What is it like being a diocesan priest nowadays and has it changed much for you since your ordination?

Q. What stands out for you most in your priesthood – high and low points?

Q. How do you feel about your priesthood now? (Prompt: Is it a good life? Any regrets? Would you do it again?).

3. Celibacy and Relationships
Q. Has your celibate lifestyle been a blessing or a hindrance to your life as a priest? (Prompt: Ministry, personal life).

Q. Were you adequately prepared for a life of celibacy? (Prompt: In the seminary and since then?).

Q. Do you agree or disagree with mandatory celibacy? (Prompt: For yourself and others?).

Q. What type of support networks do you have? (Prompt: Do you socialise much with other priests? What about family, friends? Do you have a spiritual director/confidant?).

Q. Do you feel there is a real sense of trust and camaraderie between priests in your diocese?

Q. How would you describe your clerical colleagues and how would you describe yourself?

4. Obedience

Q. To what extent do you feel you can voice your opinion in the Church and that it will be heard? (Prompt: What consequences face priests who speak out?).

Q. How important is your promise of obedience and how much does it impinge on your life?

Q. Have you ever questioned or disobeyed your bishop or parish priest? (Prompt: Examples of when you spoke out or wanted to speak out but didn't).

Q. Why is it that so few diocesan priests speak out in public against their bishop or official Church teachings or practices?

Q. Are there any Church teachings or regulations that you disagree with and if so, how do you deal with the difference in your public ministry and private life? (Prompt: Have you ever spoken out in favour of or against the Church's position on contraception, homosexuality, people in second relationships?)

5. Identity

Q. Is the priesthood something you do or more something you are? (Prompt: Has your sense of priesthood changed since your ordination?).

Q. Are you a typical priest? (Prompt: What type of priest are you? How are you similar or different from other priests e.g., theological outlook, ontological status of priest, liturgy, mortal sin, attitude towards married priests, women priests, permanent deacons?

Q. Have you ever refused anyone Holy Communion?

Q. Did anything ever seriously challenge your priesthood and if so, how did you respond to the challenge?).

Q. Did any of the following affect your sense of priesthood?
- Vatican II – change in the liturgy, the liberalising of the Church, greater role for lay people etc.
- The sexual abuse scandals.
- The increasingly conservative nature of the Church under Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict.
- The decline in Mass attendance.
- Personal issues, such as friends leaving the seminary/priesthood?

Q. Are there times when you've wanted to distance yourself from the priesthood? When and how did you resolve it?

Q. How would you sum up your sense of priesthood now?

II. FORMER PRIESTS

Introduction

I am interested in hearing about your life and experiences as a diocesan priest, from the time you felt you had a vocation before you entered the seminary to the time when you left the priesthood and up to the present day. Take your time and try to mention anything you feel is important because everything is of interest to me.
Q. Where would you like to start?

Key Questions to Prompt and Guide Discussion

1. The Vocation and Discernment Process
      Q. What led you to become a priest? (Prompt: What factors encouraged or discouraged you on your vocation journey?).

      Q. What was your seminary life like for you? (Prompt: Did your seminary life adequately prepare you for your life as a priest?).

2. Your Life as a Priest
      Q. Describe your life as a priest?

      Q. Was priesthood what you expected? (Prompt: Compare with initial vision of priesthood).

      Q. Did your experience of priesthood change much during your time as a priest?

      Q. What stands out for you most in your priesthood – high and low points?

3. Leaving the Priesthood
      Q. Why did you decide to leave the diocesan priesthood? (Prompt: When did the doubts start? What factors were most important in your decision to leave the diocesan priesthood – another career more attractive, celibacy, sexual orientation, disagreement with Church teachings, disillusioned, parent dying etc?).

      Q. What was the reaction of your colleagues, friends, family etc to your leaving?

      Q. What was the laicisation process like?

      Q. Describe your relationship with the Church now? (Prompt: Do you still go to Mass? Have you been back to the seminary/ parish you worked in?).

      Q. Do you still consider you have a vocation to the priesthood?

      Q. Would you like to be in active ministry again? (Prompt: What would need to change if this were to happen?).

4. Celibacy and Relationships

Q. Was your celibate lifestyle a blessing or a hindrance to your life as a priest? (Prompt: Ministry, personal life).

Q. Were you adequately prepared for a life of celibacy? (Prompt: In the seminary and since then?).

Q. Do you agree or disagree with mandatory celibacy? (Prompt: For yourself and others?).

Q. What type of support networks did you have? (Prompt: Did you socialise much with other priests? What about family, friends? Did you have a spiritual director/confidant?).

Q. Did you feel there was a real sense of trust and camaraderie between priests in your diocese?

Q. How would you describe your clerical colleagues and how would you describe yourself?

5. Obedience

Q. To what extent did you feel you could voice your opinion in the Church and that it would be heard? (Prompt: What consequences face priests who speak out?).

Q. How important was your promise of obedience and how much did it impinge on your life?

Q. Did you ever question or disobey your bishop or parish priest? (Prompt: Examples of when you spoke out or wanted to speak out but didn't).

Q. Why is it that so few diocesan priests speak out in public against their bishop or official Church teachings or practices?

Q. Are there any Church teachings or regulations that you disagreed with and if so, how did you deal with the difference in your public ministry and private life? (Prompt: Have you ever spoken out in favour of or against the Church's position on contraception, homosexuality, people in second relationships?)

6. Identity

Q. Was the priesthood something you do or more something you are? (Prompt: Has your sense of priesthood changed since your ordination?).

Q. Were you a typical priest? (Prompt: What type of priest were you? How were you similar or different from other priests e.g., theological outlook, ontological status of priest, liturgy, mortal sin, attitude towards married priests, women priests, permanent deacons?

Q. Did you ever refuse anyone Holy Communion?

Q. Did anything ever seriously challenge your priesthood and if so, how did you respond to the challenge?).

Q. Did any of the following affect your sense of priesthood?
- Vatican II – change in the liturgy, the liberalising of the Church, greater role for lay people etc.
- The sexual abuse scandals.
  - The increasingly conservative nature of the Church under Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI
  - The decline in Mass attendance.
  - Personal issues, such as friends leaving the seminary/priesthood?

Q. How would you sum up your memory of priesthood?

Appendix D

Selected Data on Religious Belief and Practice in Ireland

Table D.1 Comparative Religious Data, 1974-1984

1974 %	RELIGIOUS INDICATORS	1984 %
	RELIGIOUS PRACTICE	
91	Mass attendance – weekly+	87
66	Holy Communion – monthly+	64
46	Confession – monthly+	26
	RELIGIOUS BELIEFS	
Accept Fully - 95 Unsure - 4 Reject - 1	Belief in God	Accept Fully -93 Unsure – 7 Reject - 1
Accept Fully - 50 Unsure - 18 Reject - 32	Belief in the Devil	Accept Fully - 45 Unsure - 34 Reject - 21
Accept Fully -51 Unsure - 22 Reject - 27	Belief in Hell	Accept Fully - 41 Unsure - 40 Reject - 19
Accept Fully - 83 Unsure - 9 Reject - 8	Belief the Catholic Church is the one true Church	Accept Fully - 73 Unsure - 20 Reject - 7
Accept Fully - 69 Unsure - 18 Reject - 13	Belief in Papal infallibility	Accept Fully - 61 Unsure - 29 Reject - 10
	CHURCH TEACHINGS	
Always wrong - 71 Generally wrong/ depends on circumstances - 18 Always/Generally right - 9	Attitude towards a man and a woman having sexual relations before marriage	Always wrong - 46 Generally wrong/ depends on circumstances - 41 Always/Generally right - 9
Always wrong - 74 Generally wrong/ depends on circumstances - 23 Always/Generally right - 1	Attitude towards having an abortion	Always wrong - 68 Generally wrong/ depends on circumstances - 30 Always/Generally right - 1
Agree - 54 Disagree - 41 Don't Know - 5	Divorce should never be allowed	Agree - 43 Disagree - 41 Don't Know - 9

Source: Breslin and Weafer, 1985 (+ includes more often participation.)

Table D.2   Weekly or More Often Mass Attendance, ROI 1973-2012

(Base: Catholics, 18+ years)

Year of Research	Study	Weekly + Mass attendance %
1973/74	A Survey of Religious Practice, Attitudes and Beliefs 1973-1974 (R&D). (Nic Ghiolla Phádraig, 1976).	**91**
1981	The Irish Report of the European Value Systems Study (EVS, Wave 1) (Fogarty et al., 1984)	**87**
1984	Religious Beliefs, Practice and Moral Attitudes (R&D) (Breslin and Weafer, 1985)	**87**
1988/89	Prejudice in Ireland Revisited (MacGréil, 1996)	**82**
1990	Values and Social Change in Ireland (EVS, Wave 2) (Whelan, 1994)	**85**
1991	International Social Survey Programme (Wave 1) (Greeley and Ward, 2000)	**65***
1992	Comparison of Three National Surveys, 1974-1992 (Weafer, 1993)	**78**
1997	Religious Confidence Survey (Council for Research & Development, 1997)	**67**
1998	Attitudes Towards the Catholic Church (RTE, 1998)	**60**
1998	International Social Survey Programme (Wave 2) (Hanley, 2000a)	**63**
1999	European values Survey (Wave 3)	65
2002	Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland (Goode et al., 2003)	**63**
2003	Religious Issues (RTE, 2003)	50
2005	Attitudes to Irish Church (Sunday Tribune, 2005)	44*
2007	Irish Religious Monitor (Weafer, 2007)	50
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2012	Irish Attitudes and Values Survey (Ipsos MRBI, 2012)	**37**

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