

BEING SINGLE, BEING CHURCH

by

Martin J. Rose B.A, Dip. Ed. B.Th. M.Th.

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This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Martin J Rose

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Abbreviations

- A.A.** Apostolicam Actuositatem in Walter M. Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II*. (New York: G. Chapman, 1966).
- Christifideles.** *Christifideles Laici* in John Paul II, *Post – Synodal Exhortation Christifideles Laici. On the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World*. (Boston: St. Paul Book and Media, 1988).
- E.O.** Ecclesia in Oceania in John Paul II, *Post- Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Oceania. The Church in Oceania*. (Strathfield: St. Pauls Publication, 2001).
- F.C.** *Familiaris Consortio* in John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio. The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*. (Homebush: St. Paul Publication, 1982).
- G.S.** *Gaudium et Spes* in Walter M. Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: G. Chapman, 1966).
- L.G.** *Lumen Gentium* in Walter M. Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: G. Chapman, 1966).
- Pontifical Council** Pontifical Council for the Laity. *Elements for a Theology of the Laity*. (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanus, 1979).
- P.O.** *Presbyterorum Ordinis* in Walter M. Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: G. Chapman, 1966).
- Vatican II** Walter M. Abbott ed., *The documents of Vatican II*. (New York: G. Chapman, 1966).
- Working Document** Synod of Bishops. *Instrumentum Laboris. The Vocation and the Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World. Twenty Years after the Second Vatican Council*. (Rome: Vatican Press, 1987).

Introduction

The world of the 20-21st century is one of rapid change – for family life, for our work environments, in friendship structures and general attitudes about ourselves. We question who we are and our values. We seek to understand ourselves more fully as individuals and as groups within a world of flux. Within this context a significant change that has taken place in the church is the growing emergence of people remaining single for a variety of reasons. I understand that the term “single” denotes that group of baptised Christians who have never married and who have chosen to remain single or who continue to affirm their singleness but not foreclosing on the possibility of marriage. As with any change, the transition that is required is never easy. Raymond Brown (1979)¹ touched upon this type of transition and movement for change in society when he said that

more and more are finding the single life-style suitable as new territory in which to dwell. They see the structures of society beginning to shift. They see a growing awareness on the part of many people toward an acceptance of single adulthood.

This growing awareness has also been paralleled within the thinking of the church. However, many single men and women “generally feel that the church has geared its ministry toward those who are married and towards nuclear family units”.² The reflection by Brown reflects my own thought about being single, particularly with regard to single people and their being church. I will argue in this thesis that being single has theological value as a way of living out one’s baptismal call to follow Christ in work, relationships, in attitudes and values. This thesis represents a critical search in, my own need for self-understanding as a single person together with other single people as I believe we contribute to our society and to our Christian calling.

At the beginning of Mark’s gospel Jesus’ baptism is recorded as a prelude to his ministry:

¹ Raymond Brown, *Reach out to Singles* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), 29

² *ibid.*, 29.

It was at this time that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised in the Jordan by John. No sooner had he come up out of the water than he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit, like a dove, descending on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you' (Mark 1:9-11)

Jesus' baptism is the impetus and is at the heart of his ministry for a mission that is favoured by God. Likewise, baptism is at the heart of the single person's way of living for Christ.

Further, the sentiments of Paul in Ephesians 3: 14-21 serve as a goal for all Christians which includes single men and women. Paul speaks about a unique relationship with Christ, one based on love and openness to Christ.

This, then, is what I pray, kneeling before the Father, from whom every family, whether spiritual or natural, takes its name:

Out of his infinite glory, may he give you the power through his Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, you will with all the saints have strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth; until, knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you are filled with the utter fullness of God.

Glory be to him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine; glory be to him from generation to generation in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen.

Jesus' baptism as depicted in Mark together with Paul's thoughts concerning the reception of the power of the Spirit for our hidden selves to grow in love and faith and journeying with others in the Christian tradition, represent the underlying theological attitude of this thesis about the single person. The single person by the nature of his or her baptism, is called to follow Christ – to grow in personal stature as one who is open to the presence of Christ in and through the events of daily life. Integral to this baptismal call is the need to challenge those constructs which don't enhance and give voice to the single person within the church. I consider that one such construct is the notion of 'vocation' as it has been used traditionally in the church's thinking for its self-understanding. In this regard, it is my contention that 'vocation' is about following Christ in and through baptism. How one lives one's life is his or her career choice; how one lives in response to Christ – whether as married or single, priest or religious. It is our primary vocation to follow Christ as promised at baptism.

The chosen definition, however, ought not to exclude those Christians who, for reasons beyond their control, for example find themselves living the single life because of their separation from their partner or are widowed, although the primary thrust of the definition will focus on those Christians who continue to affirm their choice for the single way of life. The term Church here is explained by *Lumen Gentium* 9: ‘This was to be the new People of God. For, those who believe in Christ, who are reborn not from a perishable but from an imperishable seed through the Word of the living God (cf 1 Pet. 1:23), not from the flesh but from water and the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn. 3:5-6), are finally established as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people ...”³ This definition has been chosen as it articulates a point of view about the people who comprise the church. In particular the definition speaks of the ‘signs’ of baptism – water and the Holy Spirit. It is these signs that characterise those called by God through baptism to be the people of God, the purchased people. I argue that the sacrament of baptism is what characterises all in the church irrespective of their state.

The primary methodology for our critical examination of the meaning of the single state is by case study. The Case Study method will allow me to elaborate upon a developmental theological perspective from within the Vatican Council documents. By this method I examine the single state from within the ecclesial as well as a sociological understanding. Secondly a dialectical approach will enable me to argue the case for the single state as a valid way of life. From this I aim to highlight the single state and its key attributes as well as to provide a personal perspective about single living. Further, this secondary method allows me to highlight the way in which single people contribute to, and are a part of the life of the

³ Walter M Abbott ed , *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: G Chapman, 1966), 25.

church. This twofold methodology enables me to look at the particular issue of the single state within the wider context of the church, and to argue for the significance of the part to the whole. The logic of the thesis is as follows

Chapter 1. A Consciousness of the Single State

This first chapter has two focal points. The first aim of this chapter sets out to describe the relationship between ecclesiology and sociology in order to show the way in which the church, as a key institution within society, uses sociology to inform ecclesiology. Sociology is used to show the way in which church developmental thinking regarding the single state, takes place. The second aim is to establish how the church has developed its understanding of the single state. The development of the first chapter will proceed as follows:

A: Social Theory and Practice

This section of chapter one sets out to establish the interaction of the sociological perspective with the Ecclesiological perspective. In this section of chapter one, I aim to show that the developments within society are paralleled within the church and that sociology can inform ecclesiology so as to come to a fuller understanding and appreciation of the single way of life. The sociological perspective is provided by the work of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann while the ecclesiological perspective is provided by Joseph Komonchak

B: The Single State: Ecclesiology: A Journey in Thought

In this section of chapter one I examine the documents of the Second Vatican Council, in particular: *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Apostolicam Actuositatem*⁴ in order to trace the nascent development of ecclesial thought toward a greater inclusive understanding of the single state. Later documents such as the working document for *Christifideles Laici*

⁴ *Lumen Gentium* Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. Hereafter as L. G. *Gaudium et Spes* Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. Hereafter as G. S. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* Decree on the Apostolate on the Laity. Hereafter as A. A.

as well as *Ecclesia in Oceania* (The Church in Oceania)⁵ are touched on to show the way in which the church's self-understanding has changed to a fuller articulation of the single state *Gaudium et Spes* in its discussion concerning harmony between Christian formation and culture, argues for the use of the secular sciences such as psychology and sociology, in order to assist the development of 'new theological investigations.'⁶

Chapter 2: The Single Story and Role Models

In this chapter I aim to show the way in which the single vocation is evidenced in the lives of a select but significant group of single men and women in Western culture whose lives have impacted on others. Their lives, I believe, serve as exemplars for others choosing the single way of life. I examine the life experiences of the following: Dorothy Day, Simone Weil, Caryll Houselander, Søren Kierkegaard and Dag Hammarskjöld. First I establish a framework that enables me to examine their lives as single people. Second, I examine their lives to come to an understanding of the life and work of these men and women that suggests how these men and women can be regarded as role models for those living the single life in the contemporary church. In a modern and ever-changing world, we look for guidance and encouragement from others. We seek relevant role models who can assist us in the living out our Christian journey.

Chapter 3: Vocation: Living The Single Life

Having established a framework for examining the lives of single men and women and come to an understanding and appreciation of their lives and their contribution to church and society, I turn to contemporary men and women. This chapter will focus on contemporary men and women living the single life. The framework developed in the previous chapter

⁵ The Synod of Bishops, *Christifideles Laici-(Instrumentum Laboris)* Homebush: St Pauls, 1987) Hereafter referred to as Working Document. John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Oceania -The Church in Oceania* (Strathfield: St. Pauls Publication, 2001). Hereafter as E.O.

⁶ *G.S.*, 62, 268-269

will be used in order to provide continuity in the argument for the lived expression of the single life. The purpose in doing this is to show firstly that single people contribute to and are part of the ongoing story of the church and secondly that one's self-commitment to the church has its sacramental basis in the sacrament of baptism – one's primary call to follow Christ.

Chapter 4: Vocation: The Three States

In chapter one, I establish the development of thought within the church concerning the single way of life. In the second and the third chapters, I set out to show the correlation between single men and women considered to be exemplars with those men and women wishing to live the single life in a modern technological society. The stories of contemporary single men and women highlight the way in which this group of people contributes to society and to the church. Having done so, it is essential to come to an understanding of how the single state is different from that of the clerical and the marital state. Intrinsic to this development is an understanding of the term 'vocation'. I argue that vocation is derived from baptism rather than from a state such as the clerical state or the marital state. As a starting point, I examine the term 'vocation' and its traditional use within the ecclesial context. In this context, chapter four will further highlight an understanding of the vocation to the single life and its distinctive features. My aim is twofold: firstly, to show the inadequacy of the traditional usage of the term 'vocation', and secondly to demonstrate that the sacraments of initiation that begin with baptism, underpin any understanding of what it means to have a vocation in the Christian sense. My thesis in this respect is that our primary vocation is our call to follow Christ in and through our baptism. How we choose to live out our life is our response to our baptismal call. If we have a renewed sense of vision of what baptism implies, this will impact on the manner in which each of us will live out our

lives. Further, integral to this impact will be an examination of one's faith expression, one's spirituality.⁷

Chapter 5: Theological Perspective of the Single State

The theological perspective presented here is one which I have developed as a result of research and personal critical reflection based primarily on my own experience as a single person and that of other single people who have contributed their story to this work. This theological perspective about the single life, I understand, is essential to a fuller comprehension of what it means to be church; what it means to talk about the People of God as outlined in *Lumen Gentium*. The perspective that I outline, is not so much a rationale about being single, but a perspective which seeks to elaborate the single person's way of being a Christian man or woman living and working in the world. Such a perspective, is, I consider essential to an appreciation of the baptised men and women who remain single and who not only work in the world environment, but also participation in an active church life engaging in its ministry. As such, this perspective is both informative as well as personal. It is for me; it is for other single men and women and it is for the wider church and society.

General Conclusion

The concluding chapter summarises the work as a whole. Each chapter is briefly summarised in order to highlight the aims and the general line of discussion of the respective chapters. It is the finding of this thesis that single people are church together with the ordained and the married and that it is through baptism that each member of the church, irrespective of state, is to be acknowledged and understood. It is time for the church to acknowledge the presence of the single person and his or her contribution to the life and mission of the church.

⁷ Spirituality: this is understood in terms of a lived expression of personal faith; a personal relationship with Christ through relationships with others, through prayer, the reception of the sacraments and through the participation in the liturgical life of the Church. This understanding of spirituality will be developed in subsequent chapters

Chapter 1

A: THE SINGLE LIFE - SOCIAL THEORY AND PRACTICE

A(i) Introduction

In this first section I turn to the work of sociologist Peter L. Berger,⁸ to explicate the way sociology provides a tool for theology in the church and is enabled to understand itself and so a theological understanding of the single state

I make two points. The first considers how the way we use language has a bearing on the way in which we perceive who we are and the way in which each of us lives. The second point is in regard to the way in which institutions perceive themselves and the members who make up the institution. I make the point that institutions can only be maintained if there is a constant dialogue between those in authority and the other members who constitute the institution. Here the church is the institution in question. My working definition of institution is that of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann.⁹ Institutions arise out of habitualized activity. They develop as a result of human social activity and are realized, grounded and strengthened by ongoing human activity and control. In effect,

Institutions also, by the very fact of their existence, control human conduct by setting up predefined patterns of conduct, which channel it in one direction as against the many other directions that would theoretically be possible.¹⁰

However, before continuing to this discussion, it is necessary to establish the relationship

⁸ Peter L. Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969)
See also Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1967)

⁹ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *ibid*, 71-72

¹⁰ *ibid*, 72.

between sociology and theology. Joseph Komonchak, in reflecting on the works of Bernard Lonergan in his article *History and Social Theory in Ecclesiology*,¹¹ makes an important point regarding the relationship between sociology and theology.

To achieve its redemptive purpose, the Church must become “a fully conscious process of self-constitution,” and this will require it “to recognize that theology is not the full science of man, that theology illuminates only certain aspects of human reality, that the Church can become a fully conscious process of self-constitution only when theology unites itself with all other relevant branches of human studies”.¹²

A(ii) The Contribution of Sociology

In order for the church to be effective in its redemptive purpose, it needs to interact with society at large but importantly Joseph Komonchak points to the complementarity between theology and other branches of human studies. Such a relationship enables those in the church to

engage with society to enable the church to communicate with society, to mediate within society and to thereby come more fully to understand human experience as the context for its own particular role of preaching the Gospel to a technological world. In making this point, Joseph Komonchak is taking up the line of thought proposed by *Gaudium et Spes*¹³

Sociology, as one of the human sciences, affords the church the tools with which to understand people, their behaviour and ways of interaction. It allows the church to develop a fuller realization of people both in general society as well as the church. In this respect the use of sociology works with theology in order to assist the church in its own self-understanding, its ecclesiology. What happens in society at large is often mirrored in the life of the church. Sociology assists society to understand itself as a human institution – one

¹¹ Joseph Komonchak, *History and Social Theory* (Chicago: Scholars Press, 1981), 1-53

¹² *ibid.*, 38

¹³ *GS*, 5, 62 and 203, 269.

which grows and changes. Similarly, sociology can assist the church to understand itself as an institution – as a people being challenged, as a vibrant people who are open to the challenges and beckoning of the Spirit. Joseph Komonchak, in speaking of the church notes the importance of the relationship between theology and the human sciences for it to achieve its purpose. Theology illuminates but the human sciences develop and en flesh human reality. The church, as a fully constituted group, benefits in its own self-understanding as a result of the complementarity of the human sciences with theology

Further, Joseph Komonchak in his article entitled *The Enlightenment and the Construction of Roman Catholicism*¹⁴ offers a pertinent comment regarding the church and its ongoing development. He quotes Emile Poulat's statement that

Aggiornamento meant taking into account that the earth was turning, that the world was moving on, that the relative position of the Church was being altered by this and required a redefinition.¹⁵

Such a redefinition is suggested by the spirit of the Second Vatican Council which sought to reflect such a dynamism implied by the term *aggiornamento*. Prefatory writers to *The Documents of Vatican II*, voice some of their thoughts with regard to the nature of the writings of the Second Vatican Council documents.

Taken as a whole, the documents are especially noteworthy for their concern for the poor, for their insistence on unity of the human family and therefore on the wrongness of discrimination, for their repeated emphasis on the Christian's duty to help build a just and peaceful world, a duty which he must carry out in brotherly cooperation with all men of good will.¹⁶

¹⁴ Joseph Komonchak in CCICA annual publication of the 'Catholic Commission on Intellectual and Cultural Affairs (Notre Dame: The Commission, 1985), 50.

¹⁵ *ibid*, Komonchak quotes Emile Poulat *Une Eglise abrantee: Changement, conflit et continuite de Pie XII a Jean Paul II* (Paris: Casterman, 1980), 41.

¹⁶ Lawrence Cardinal Shehan, 'Introduction' in *Vatican II*, xvii

Pope John and Pope Paul as well as the Council documents themselves call for Catholics to engage in that sincere dialogue which knows how to listen humbly as well as how to speak candidly.¹⁷

These words of the Council look to renewal of the Catholic Church, to compassionate dialogue with modern man, to peace, to social justice, to whatever concerns the dignity of modern man and the unity of mankind. The message shows awareness of the world's problems and a keen desire to help. It emphasizes the quest for a community of peoples, the motivation that comes from Christ's love, the need for cooperation with all men of good will.¹⁸

These quotations highlight the church's reform platform as it were. They point to the needs and problems of society and demonstrate the way a Christian person ought to respond to these situations in the light of the Gospel. Sociology assists the church to understand these problems and issues. Sociology, as outlined by Congalton and Daniel,¹⁹ focuses on human interaction and the actions of humanity. However, other disciplines such as psychology and psychoanalysis for example, contribute to understanding social activity. Theology, in dialogue with sociology, is enabled to more fully understand and express the Christian person's relationship with God as well as their Christian interaction within the church community. As such, sociology affords theology avenues so that it may continually dialogue, listen and thereby promote human dignity. Inherent in this approach is communication. In speaking of the church, Joseph Komonchak argues that for the church to further its role of redemption, it must be concerned with communication. The church is, he says:

the effect of communication of the Christian message through doctrines but especially through the existential history and traditions of earlier generations of Christians who sought to bring others to share the cognitive, constitutive and effective meaning that informed their lives.²⁰

¹⁷ *ibid.*, xix

¹⁸ *Opening Message in Vatican II*, 2

¹⁹ A. A. Congalton and A. E. Daniel, *The Individual in the Making* (Brisbane: John Wiley and Sons, 1976), 2ff.

²⁰ Joseph Komonchak, *History and Social Theory in Ecclesiology* (Chicago: Scholars Press, 1981), 37

Joseph Komonchak here succinctly articulates something of the relationship that exists between sociology and theology. For him, the result of this relationship ought to be a church which is properly grounded in the social order, a church which is vibrant and alive in its message of faith, hope and love -

the Church, as a community of faith, hope and love, is the bearer of the concrete possibility of a new self-understanding of a reconciled social order, and of a cultural reintegration . . . a concrete Church existing and active in the actual universe²¹

A key feature of a Catholic ecclesiology then, focuses on the permanent charismatic structure of the church. Self-understanding “grows out of understanding continuing charisms such as prayerfulness, Christian parenthood, virginity, evangelical simplicity, leadership roles and other charisms”²². One such charism, as “suggested” by the documents of Vatican II, is the single way of life.

A(iii) The Church as an ‘Institution’

Having said this, I now turn to examine the way in which the church is coming to understand and to integrate its perception of the single state within the broader context of church. I do this by making use of Peter Berger’s work *Religion and World-Construction*²³ where he speaks about the way in which each of us is socialized

It is important, however, to preface the discussion on socialization with a theological description of the nature of the church. I do this to set the context for an understanding of the relationship between the theological and the sociological in order to establish an understanding of the church as an institution within society. I begin with a comment from

²¹ *ibid*, 24.

²² Joseph Komonchak, ‘Is there a Catholic Ecclesiology’ (*Catholic Theological Quarterly* Proceedings 29, 1974).

²³ Peter L. Berger, *ibid*, 3-20.

Peter Berger. He argues that every “individual biography is an episode within the history of society, which precedes and survives it”. This is a subtly important point because when we come to talk about the church, we see that it has existed before each of us and will continue after us. In itself this is not a major revelation. However, it is important to note that precisely because of this status, the church has, over time, come to understand itself and the way in which it works in a number of ways. It does so in part to meet the needs of the world in which it is situated and in part to order itself. This ordering is ongoing. Its origin is in Christ, the Word of God. The Prologue to the Gospel of St. John aptly captures the ontological nature of the church.

In the beginning was the Word:
 The Word was with God
 And the Word was God.
 Through him all things came to be ...
 All that came to be had life in him,
 And that life was the light of men ...
 He came to his own domain
 And his own people did not accept him
 But to all who did accept him
 He gave power to become children of God²⁴

John speaks of the Word, existing from before time, becoming Incarnate in time to a people of God, a People who rejected him. Further, John articulates the Word as the Light coming into the world. All created things having their being through him. Those who accepted him became one with him. The quotation highlights the ‘history’ of the church, one which has its existence in the Word – the word which always was and will be. There was never a ‘time’ when the Word was not. In a sense, time is not the issue. Rather at issue is the ongoing presence of the Word and the way in which human kind are in relationship with the Word. The Prologue to the Gospel of John encapsulates, I believe, the essence of this dynamic presence.

²⁴ Alexander Jones ed., *The Jerusalem Bible* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966), 146

Bruce Vawter, in his commentary on the Gospel of John, makes the point that “John is a profoundly ecclesiological Gospel”.²⁵ In making comparisons with the Synoptic Gospels, he affirms not only the eschatological nature of the Gospel but also attests to the

Incarnate Word of God, Son from all eternity who has also become man that he might in turn give us a share in his divinity... The shared life... is important to the Christian precisely because it is the same life that – he possesses in the Church.²⁶

Bruce Vawter’s comments are indicative of the dynamic presence of the Word as outlined in the prologue to the Gospel of John. This introduction to the Gospel is describing the ontological status or nature of the church. It is divine in origin but intrinsically bound up with the world of people. *Lumen Gentium* 4-7²⁷ describes the nature of the church

Thus, the Church shines forth as “a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”

5 The mystery of the holy Church is manifest in her very foundation, for the Lord Jesus inaugurated her by preaching the good news, that is, the coming of God’s Kingdom, which, for centuries, had been promised in the Scriptures.²⁸

The Church on earth, while journeying in a foreign land away from the Lord (cf. 2 Cor. 5;6), regards herself as an exile. Hence, she seeks and experiences those things which are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God, where the life of the Church is hidden with Christ in God until she appears in glory with her Spouse (cf. Col. 3:1-4)²⁹

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in his conference address – *The Ecclesiology of Vatican II*³⁰ speaks of the church as being more than an organization – it is the organism of the Holy Spirit. He quotes Romano Guardini’s comment that the church is not an institution built by

²⁵ Raymond E. Brown ed. et al., ‘The Gospel according to John’ in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (London: G. Chapman, 1968), 418-419.

²⁶ *ibid.*, 419.

²⁷ *L. G.*, 4-7, 16-22.

²⁸ *ibid.*, 4-5, 17.

²⁹ *ibid.*, 7, 19-20.

³⁰ Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, ‘The Ecclesiology of Vatican II’
<http://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/CDFECCV2/htm> accessed on 8/8/2002

men, but is a living reality; it lives throughout time and its inmost nucleus is Christ, “it is a living reality and our relationship with it ought to be – life”.³¹

The ontological nature of the church is, therefore, divinely willed and ordered. However, the church lives in the world and has its mission in the world. To this end, the ongoing dialectic between the divinely willed and the human ordering is one which seeks to make both the mission of the church alive and ever present in its members and for the world in which it is present.

Everyone in the church, therefore, has a proper place in its self-understanding. In other words, the church is self-ordered. Such an ordering is explicit in *Lumen Gentium* chapter 5 paragraphs 40-41. The three states – clerical, married and single states comprise this self-ordering. The biography of each baptised man and woman contributes to the totality of the hierarchical self-ordering of the church. Each biography of each member is a biography which is intrinsically bound up with the biography of the church as a whole. In this context all share in the life and mission of the church. All are called to personal holiness and charity. According to *Lumen Gentium* paragraph 40 the “Lord Jesus, the divine Teacher and Model of all perfection, preached holiness of life to each and every one of His disciples, regardless of their situation.” All are called to grow in love and perfection according to Christ’s own purpose and grace. The point being made is that everyone, irrespective of “rank or status is called to the fullness of the Christian life to the perfection of charity”³² This in part is to be achieved by participation in the sacraments especially eucharist as well as prayer, self-denial, acts of service and the practice of the virtues³³ This participation highlights something of what it means to say that the church is self-ordered. The old adage that everyone has a place

³¹ Romano Guardini, *The Church of the Lord* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1967), 160

³² *L G.*, 40, 16.

³³ *ibid.*, 42

is a truism when we speak of the social construction of the church. Just as each of us is in an ongoing dialectic with the world in which we live, so too each of us is in an ongoing dialectic with the church to which we belong. It is precisely this dialectic which gives each of us the impetus to seek the identity that we have as baptised members of the church. In this respect we not only contribute to the shaping of the world in which we live, but we also contribute to the shaping of the church to which we belong.

A(iv) The Function of Communication and Consciousness

For Peter Berger, society is constituted and maintained by people who are acting human beings.³⁴ The primary means for so acting is through language. For him, language is objectively given and it is through language that we come to understand ourselves and who we are in our own given universes – our own little worlds whether it be that of Queensland or that of our local parish. In this respect we come to our sense of identity. This is an important point in its bearing on the church's self-understanding. He says that it "is possible to sum up the dialectic formation of identity by saying that the individual becomes that which he is addressed as by others".³⁵ Single people come to see themselves and their sense of identity, their sense of worth and their role in the church, primarily as a result of the way in which the institution regards them, addresses them, gives them utterance within official documents such as *Lumen Gentium* or *Gaudium et Spes* to name two such documents. However, Berger continues his discussion about socialization by saying that socialization can never be completed because it is an ongoing process or dialectic throughout the lifetime of the individual. He says that the world "is built up in the consciousness of the individual by conversation with significant others".³⁶ As an 'institution', the church evolves,

³⁴ Peter L. Berger, *ibid*, 7

³⁵ *ibid*, 16

³⁶ *ibid*, 17.

grows and reshapes itself as a result of its conversation. It is an institution based upon communication.

Each baptised person is inextricably caught up in this communication and is thus involved in the shared mission of the church, in the process of the “divine self-disclosure”. Each individual baptised person becomes a co-worker with Christ and for Christ. This dynamic of communication, of being in conversation with the world, can never be static. It is on-going, vibrant and active.

Patrick Granfield, speaking about the church, theology and communication, argues that the primary function of the church is communication – the communication of the Word and Sacrament. “Communication is an essential function of the Church, because it sustains Christians in their pilgrim journey toward the full realization of the Kingdom of God”³⁷. What is being communicated is the “divine self-disclosure through its faith in God, Christ and the Gospel”³⁸. In this context Granfield argues that each generation has the task of receiving, interpreting and handing on the Gospel.

In this dynamic is both the human and the divine “The Church is a human society, albeit unique because of its divine foundation, guidance, and goal.”³⁹ The socialization referred to by Berger, would be an inherent aspect of the dynamic. A necessary component, I believe, is the integration of baptised single men and women into the totality of the conversation and

³⁷ Patrick Granfield (ed.), *The Church and Communication* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1994), 4-5.

³⁸ *ibid.* See also ‘Aetatis Novae’ in Patrick Granfield, *ibid.* 219, 6. Here the Pastoral Instruction focuses on the nature of and role of communications in the mission of the church. ‘History itself is ordered toward becoming a kind of word of God, and it is a part of the human vocation to contribute to bringing this about by living out the ongoing, unlimited communication of God’s reconciling love in creative new ways. through our very way of life.’

³⁹ *ibid.*, 7

the church's mission of communication; in its mission to bring Christ to the world.

In coming to understand those in the single state and better appreciate them as baptised members of the church, those in the clerical and the married states can better come to an understanding of themselves as baptised Christians within the church living and interacting with each other. In other words, each of us comes to appropriate for ourselves our sense of identity within the whole. No one is passive; each of us is, in Berger's terms, "a *co-producer* of the social world, and thus of himself"⁴⁰

What enhances the conversation within the church is the ongoing dialogue of others in society who may or may not be practising Christians. By this I mean, that there is at present a cultural awareness in Australia that being single is an accepted way of life. Recent newspaper articles highlight the acceptance of the single life: "Not so long ago, single females were social outcasts. Thankfully, those days are over, writes Cheryl Critchley"⁴¹ And "Popular culture is awash with romance and the desire to find a mate. But, as Jennifer Dudley reports, being single and proud is the new way."⁴² This culturally determined way of knowing, unfortunately, has negative connotations as well as positive. One such negative understanding finds expression in ideas such as singles being selfish and living for themselves; having a great time without responsibilities; being part of a swinging set of people. While such attitudes are evident, there is a growing perception that being single is an authentic way of life. An example of this culturally determined acceptance is the growing number of single households that exist in Australia -- one parent families, divorced or

⁴⁰ *ibid*, 19

⁴¹ Cheryl Critchley, 'Happy to Ms out' (*Courier Mail*, 20th October 2000), 18.

⁴² Jennifer Dudley, 'Single Life' (*Courier Mail*, 15 June, 2000), 14

separated people, people never married to name a few⁴³ Taking into consideration the media coverage about single people, it is becoming evident that the single state is becoming more readily incorporated into the mindset of western consciousness as a way of living that has value. This is not to suggest that people will not choose the married state but the emergence of the single way of life is indicative of a way of life that, for many is the way to manage a technological world, a world full of change and challenge. It is my supposition that the single way of life best articulates what for many, is an appropriate manner of working and seeking personal fulfilment; the world 'is the oyster' as it were. Queensland statistics as at July 2000 indicate that Queensland was .2% behind the national average for single households. This figure excludes those in de facto relationships and single parent households. Being single means that there are not the same boundaries that are inherent in the married or the clerical states of life.

It has been established that the single way of living has become more obvious as an alternative to the married state in society in general. The church as an institution within society has also come to accept the single way of life as a vocation, as a way of baptised men and women living and working in the world. In this respect the church has been a mirror to what has been happening in wider society. The mission of the church as well as its pastoral care for all, can only benefit as a result of such acceptance. This necessitates that the church

Foster within . . . herself mutual esteem, reverence, and harmony, through full recognition of lawful diversity. Thus all those who compose the one People of God, both pastors and the general faithful, can engage in dialogue with ever-abounding fruitfulness⁴⁴

⁴³ Robyn Payne, *Embracing the Single Life* (Brunswick East: Acorn Press, 1994), 182-183 outlines the statistics from the 1991 Australian census. In brief, approximately a twelfth to a thirteenth of the total population in the given age group of 30-65+ were single / never married. Queensland statistics as provided in the *Sunday Mail* of 9/7/2000 indicate that 24% of households in the state are single.

⁴⁴ *G. S.*, 29, 306

In sociological terms, organized religion will not only continue to legitimise itself in the world in which it is situated, but it will also legitimise and 'sacralize' those who are legitimated. In other words, the dialogue allows for all in the church to be sanctified and find new ways of self-understanding and self-expression both from within the church and for the world in which it serves. Thus, there exists a relationship which is mutually beneficial to all

Thus, through her individual members and her whole community, the Church believes she can contribute greatly toward making the family of man and its history more human⁴⁵

This brings me to my second point, the institution's self-perception, namely that of the church. This institution, one which has been concretely realized in and through Christ, is not simply an organization with rules and structures. It is a group of people of diverse cultures and backgrounds united in and through their baptism and adherence in faith to Christ. The fact that the perception of the single state has been, until recent times, an impoverished perception, can not be solely the responsibility of the organizational church. As an institution, the church is an organic construction, that is to say, that it is dynamic and always in the process of defining and redefining itself. All in the church have a role to play in the perception and understanding of the single way of life. However, it must be said that those whose role is governance in and of the church, must assume a more obvious responsibility, given that ultimate human authority rests chiefly with those in charge. Such authority needs to be informed if it is to better appreciate and know of the diversity of states of baptised Christians. In this respect, the informing conversation may need to come from a 'ground-roots' mentality. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann⁴⁶ argue that such conversation is all-important for the way in which self-understanding and hence, identity, come to be shaped and affirmed. If there is no conversation about the single life, then there will be no understanding, appreciation or acknowledgment of the single way of life. The more the

⁴⁵ *ibid*, 40, 239

⁴⁶ Peter I. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *ibid*, 170-174.

conversation occurs, the more potent is the ability to affirm the reality. One maintains a Catholic faith in so far as one continues in a significant relationship with the Catholic community.⁴⁷ So too, single Christians can maintain their sense of identity in so far as they are 'allowed' to identify themselves with the Christian community which acknowledges the variety of Christian states: single, clerical, married and religious.

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann⁴⁸ use the terms "reality-maintenance and reality-confirmation" in their discussion about the way in which institutions come to understand themselves and enhance their identity. Reality-maintenance is the term used to describe the way in which reality is apprehended by the individual consciousness. It is often embodied in routines. The reality of everyday life, however, is ongoingly reaffirmed in the individual's interaction with others.⁴⁹ Reality-confirmation on the other hand, describes the way in which significant others assist in confirming identity. The process is aided by the dialectic or interaction with the wider community.⁵⁰ For them the question becomes: what is this institution about and how does it acknowledge itself? In other words, what does the institution do that enhances its identity and how does it go about reinforcing this identity? Berger and Luckmann argue that inherent in the process of identity formation and development is the engaging of the objective as well as the subjective reality concerning the institution. When considering the church in this context, what the church as an institution does therefore, is to engage in an acceptance of both realities. The objective reality being that the church contains a group of baptised single men and women and that this group is recognized. The subjective reality, therefore, is that the church as an institution better understands itself as an inclusive and diverse group and as such has the voice to speak of

⁴⁷ *ibid*

⁴⁸ *ibid*, 171,

⁴⁹ *ibid*, 169

⁵⁰ *ibid*, 170-171

itself, to express itself as an institution within the wider society of western culture. In other words, the experience of being single finds its way into the language and can therefore, become accessible to the wider group. This in turn, widens the perceptions of the group and furthers the process of acceptance of the role being defined or articulated – namely the single state.⁵¹

A(v) Contemporary Reflections on the Nature of Change

Nancy Peterson and Kathleen Gerson⁵² sought to explicate the single state. Their approach was to interview single people. Gerson set out to examine the changing commitments of men to family and work while Peterson's main emphasis was primarily to establish a general understanding of what it meant to be single and female. Many of her observations and comments could also be said to be true for males because their observations are also indicative of the struggles of single men and the way in which they seek to ground themselves and their way of living as single people

Kathleen Gerson makes a significant point in her introduction which underscores the way in which change has occurred for males in western society. She states that revolutionary “change reorganizes the basic foundations of society, changing the rules and dynamics of social relationships among dominant as well as subordinate groups”.⁵³ Her point was to establish the framework for the nature of the change and in particular in the context for women. She spells out the changes in the statistics of women in the work force and marital status. Her point is that since the beginning of the 1960 period, the roles of women in both

⁵¹ Berger and Luckmann speak of the way in which the shared common biographies of individuals become incorporated into the “common stock of knowledge” (*ibid*, 85) Their point is that the language objectivates the shared experience which allows for incorporation.

⁵² Nancy L. Peterson, *The Ever-Single Woman* (New York: Quill, 1982) and Kathleen Gerson, *No Man's Land* (New York: Basic Books/Harper Collins, 1993)

⁵³ Kathleen Gerson, *ibid*, 4.

the workforce and in marital status have changed. Patterns in behaviour for men have also changed during this period. These include changes in domestic roles and to life choices for singlehood or fatherhood. "The rise of divorce and singlehood as acceptable alternatives to marriage has allowed a growing group of men as well as women to choose freedom and autonomy over economic and social ties to parenthood and family life."⁵⁴ One reason given for this is that men and women are postponing marriage and choosing to remain permanently single. In 1991 close to "16 percent of white men and close to 24 percent of black men in this age range did not live with a spouse a parent, or a child"⁵⁵ Other reasons provided for this increase in life choice include rapid change and growing confusion in society.

Nancy Peterson, on the other hand, firstly establishes that there is a paucity of literature relating to the status of the single life. For her, the area is neglected. Her primary concern is to examine the situation of single women. As part of her introduction, she establishes that the term "ever-single" is a more positive term than never married or spinster or other such terms to denote the single woman.⁵⁶ In seeking to develop her work, she theorised as to why women remain single taking into account areas such as commonalities in childhood and family background, the quality of the life of the parents, role models and expectations to list a few.

These areas were considered in her case study approach in which she interviewed women from a broad range of ages and socio-economic backgrounds. While a number of these areas were inconclusive, one area did stand out from the rest. This concerned "permission-givers",⁵⁷ those people who, either overtly or covertly sent the message that it was "ok" to be

⁵⁴ *ibid*, 6

⁵⁵ *ibid*, 71.

⁵⁶ Nancy I. Peterson, *ibid*, 19

⁵⁷ *ibid*

single. The point that I would raise in this respect and one which is not made explicit in this section of her work, is that whatever the background of the permission-giver, the nature of the permission would have been an expression of the giver's life experience. I suggest that this factor ought to be considered as it suggests that giving permission to be single is an attitude that has developed out of a lived experience.

Further, an interesting point raised by Nancy Peterson concerns role models. These mentor figures did not seem to be obvious as role models. These people "did not seem to loom large enough to be true models; they seemed to be seen as good examples"⁵⁸. Be that as it may, it would seem that at least at one level, models, mentors or good examples would seem to be another factor that may lead one to choose the single life over marriage and family.

Other factors that have allowed for the increase of people choosing to be single relate to self-esteem and self-perception. Key concerns for single people relate to personal space and freedom, education, career as well as a general well-being about themselves.⁵⁹ Peterson points to a University of Michigan study to show that while there may have been negative attitudes to people choosing to be single in 1975, by 1979 the situation had changed. She makes the point that people's life choices and life-styles had changed and had become more widely accepted. She attributes this to the "large presence of divorced, separated, and other single people"⁶⁰ being in the population. For her, what was the most significant factor for social change was "the women's movement with its affirmation of autonomy and self-determination, its constant emphasis on equality and freedom, its questioning of traditions which have subordinated half the human race has placed a major role in the thinking of

⁵⁸ *ibid*, 76.

⁵⁹ *ibid*, 254-255

⁶⁰ *ibid*.

women about marriage and singleness .”⁶¹ A necessary consequence of this, I suggest is the impact upon men and the way in which they see themselves, their roles and the life choices that are available to them. To critique one section of society and not to impact upon the rest would seem to be ineffectual. Change, irrespective of its starting point, impacts upon all. In this respect, the impact has been upon a re-examination of the roles assigned to men and women with regard to life choices. Both Kathleen Gerson and Nancy Peterson have set out to articulate the ways in which this impact has occurred for men and women respectively. A direct outcome of this critique of society and its assigned roles for marriage, work and life choice, has been the choice that many make to remain single.

B: The Single State: Ecclesiology - A Journey in Thought

The purpose of the second part of this chapter is to show a particular development of thought by the church in its processes of self-consciousness as church. The focus of this development is the recognition of the single state as a group within the baptised, committed Christians who, together with married people, comprise the laity.⁶²

Since Vatican II there has existed the notion of the Pilgrim People of God as a community. This ecclesial idea of a pilgrim community of people is important because it denotes a people moving forward:

This people is itself on pilgrimage through history like the rest of humanity . . . It is a historical community on pilgrimage. Not only has it not “arrived”, it still has a long way to travel; it has limitations that are to be overcome with the assistance of the Spirit of God.⁶³

⁶¹ *ibid*, 261

⁶² The role of the laity is outlined in *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 2, 491-492. : “have a role to play in the mission of the whole People of God in the Church and in the world . . . he (the layman) is called by God to burn with the spirit of Christ and to exercise his apostolate in the world as a kind of leaven ”

⁶³ Yuri Koszarycz, ‘The Church After the Deliberations of the Second Vatican Council’ <http://www.mcauley.acu.edu.au/~yuri/ecc/chap3.html> accessed on 7/8/2002.

This notion of the Pilgrim People of God is established early in the text of *Lumen Gentium* (ch.2 paragraph 9): “For those who believe in Christ, who are reborn not from a perishable but from an imperishable seed through the Word of the living God...”⁶⁴ *Lumen Gentium* refers to the church as *communio* – a communion. This is taken up by Klaus Kienzler. For him, the “Church is, in all its dimensions, the *communio* willed by God: with God, among all humans, and for the world”.⁶⁵ It is communion because it is the people “made one with the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”.⁶⁶ The People of God then, are a communion of the baptised born of “water and the Holy Spirit” and who thereby share in the life of God – the Father, the son and the Holy Spirit. Such a concept of the People of God means that the community of baptised men and women form a communion. This is a communion with Christ in and through the church. Within this communion no one is a stranger or merely a guest. There exists something profound which animates and sustains the People of God. This is the presence of Christ in and through the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist.⁶⁷ This *communio* is never static but always transcending itself – “New insights, ideas, methods and approaches are continually to be expected... Yesterday was yesterday –today we have new ground to cover”⁶⁸ In practical terms then, *communio* can be seen to evoke a moral imperative – growth and renewal are signs of *communio*, signs of a people moving with Christ and towards Christ; a consecrated people that includes married people and single people. All are at home in the church. All comprise the communion of the faithful. Having established this concept, there follows in *Lumen Gentium* a more detailed analysis of the composition of the People of God: the ordained clergy, the religious both

⁶⁴ *L G*, 9, p 25

⁶⁵ Klaus Kinzler, ‘The Church as Communion and Communication’ in Patrick Granfield (ed), *The Church and Communication* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1994), 80

⁶⁶ *L G*, 4, 17

⁶⁷ *L G*, II, 28. See also Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, ‘The Ecclesiology of the Constitution on the Church, Vatican II, ‘Lumen Gentium’ ’ <http://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/CDFECCCL.HTM> accessed on 8/9/2002.

⁶⁸ Yuri Koszarycz, ‘The Church after the Deliberations of the Second Vatican Council’ <http://www.mcauley.acu.edu.au/~yuri/ecc/chap3.html> accessed on 7/8/2002.

brothers and sisters and the third group comprising the laity in order to show the distinctiveness and characteristics of each state. In particular, I will draw attention to the lay state by examining in detail the married as well as the single state to demonstrate that within the laity there exists different groups of baptised Christian men and women and that they are responding to their baptism through their own distinctive way.

With regard to the ecclesial development in thought concerning the single way of life, the primary resources to be used include the Vatican Council's documents *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, as well as the later document *Familiaris Consortio* and more recently the *Working Document for Christifideles Laici* and *Ecclesia in Oceania*⁶⁹. These are examined to articulate the development of the church's understanding with regard to the single way of life. In the first section of chapter one, the work of sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann has been used to show firstly the way in which society comes to accept change and secondly, the way sociology can inform ecclesiology – theological reflection on how the church understands itself. In so doing, sociology enables me to explore more fully the way in which the development of church understanding has taken place. The works of authors Nancy Peterson (1982) and Kathleen Gerson (1993) will be used in order to establish the sociological background that has enabled the emergence of the single state and its general acceptance into the life of society. It is one of Kathleen Gerson's contentions that the rise of divorce and singlehood is a viable alternative to marriage – that freedom and autonomy are more important than the economic and the social ties of parenthood.⁷⁰ Nancy Peterson (1982) on the other hand, focuses on single women, their relationships and commitments. "Social relationships are looked at in a

⁶⁹ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World (Homebush: St. Paul Publication, 1982). Hereafter as F C. The *Working Document* and *Ecclesia in Oceania*.

⁷⁰ Kathleen Gerson, *No Man's Land: Men's Changing Commitments to Family and Work* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993)

new way. ...⁷¹ Their work furthers the sociological study of men and women and their singleness.

B(i) The Council and Later Documents

Having examined the relationship between the sociological and the ecclesial with respect to the single state, I now turn to the Council and later documents. My purpose is to examine some of the documents of the Council in order to establish that these documents lay the foundations for the emergence of the single state as an acknowledged group within the laity. However, prior to this examination, it is of importance to situate the context of the Second Vatican Council which developed and promulgated the documents being used – *Lumen Gentium* (1964), *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (1965). A major concern or focus of the Council, called by Pope John XXIII in 1963, was for the renewal of the Catholic Church. This would include dialogue with modern men and women, focus on issues of peace and justice but above all be concerned with the dignity and the unity of humanity. The Council emphasized ‘the quest for a community of peoples, the motivation that comes from Christ’s love, the seed for co-operation with all men of good will.’⁷² Whereas prior to the Council the single state per se was not an issue or concern, the focus was on the laity in general, the Council in its explication of the Church within the context of the modern world, began the process of thought of singleness in its ecclesial reflections. In this context the thought concerning the single state began to form. It is briefly mentioned in the earlier document *Lumen Gentium* but within a specific context. That is, the relationship of lay spirituality to the mystery of the church. In particular, *LG* 41 mentions each state separately in order to stress that Christian perfection is related to one’s state of life and how

⁷¹ Nancy L. Peterson, *The Ever-Single Woman: Life without Marriage* (New York: Quill, 1982)

⁷² Walter M. Abbott ed., *Opening Message: The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: G. Chapman, 1966), 2.

it is lived.⁷³ While it has been given brief mention within a specific context, such a reference emanated from the broader deliberations of the Council concerning *Lumen Gentium*. The broader focus was upon the nature of the church itself. Cardinal Ottaviani, leader of the Commission set about to examine many issues: membership of the church, the episcopate, states of evangelical perfection, the laity, ecumenism, authority and obedience, as well as the relationship between the church and the state to name a few of the issues at hand.

The mention of one's state of life and in this respect, the single state, is a small aspect of a total picture. Gerard Philips in his presentation of the history of the decree⁷⁴ shows that given the wider perspective on the church, the section on the laity was a realistic description of the role of the layman and woman who are called to give testimony to the church and to the presence of the Spirit everywhere. The reference to the single way of life or the unmarried person, is situated within this context. I now turn to the Council documents to examine this development of thought from nascence to fuller articulation of singleness as a vocation and as a response to Christ.

I begin this development in thought by examining *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Apostolicam Actuositatem*. I then turn my attention to the later documents *Familiaris Consortio* and the working document for the Post-Synodal Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* of 1988⁷⁵ in order to describe the development of the church's understanding of the single

⁷³ Aloys Grillmeier, 'The Mystery of the Church' in Herbert Vorgrimler ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II Vol I* (London: Burns and Oates, 1966), 267-269

⁷⁴ Gerard Philips, 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: History of the Decree' Trans. Kevin Smyth in Herbert Vorgrimler ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II Vol I* (London: Burns and Oates, 1966), 130-131.

⁷⁵ *Working Document*, 56: 'Another vocation worthy of great esteem is that of the laity who choose to remain unmarried so as to dedicate their whole life to the mission of caring for other lay Christians.' The *Working Document* is used primarily because it specifically speaks of the single life.

state. This understanding is the determination of different authorial processes beginning with the Council Fathers and culminating with the Synod of Bishops of Oceania. In this regard, the understanding of the single state that I propose is the culmination of the continuity of different voices over a period of almost forty years. The most recent document – *Ecclesia in Oceania* will highlight the church's most recent articulation of the single state in the context of vocation and place within the laity.

B(ii) *Lumen Gentium* (21 November, 1964)

I begin this examination with *Lumen Gentium* paragraph 11. This section of the document talks about the sacred and organic structure of the priestly community. Of significance is the statement: “Incorporated into the church through baptism, the faithful are consecrated by the baptismal character to the exercise of the cult of the Christian religion.”⁷⁶ This statement highlights the significance of baptism for the Christian life. This significance is developed in section 11 in its emphasis upon the role of the sacraments in the life of the community. While the overarching context of chapter II (paragraphs 9-17) is the People of God, it is the sacraments especially that of baptism which is regarded as integral to the development of the People of God in paragraph 11. It argues that baptism, confirmation and eucharist incorporate and confirm the faithful into the life of the church. Further, the sacrament of penance enhances as well as promotes the conversion and ongoing fidelity to one's ‘confirmed’ acceptance of Christ in the church. If we assume that the sacraments of initiation serve this confirmatory purpose, then we also need to assume that all Christians who have received these sacraments, irrespective of state or condition, are members of Christ's faithful and actively participate in the life of the church. Further paragraph 11 clearly prepares the way for the development of thinking concerning the single state: “all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father Himself is perfect.” As a result then, there exists a

⁷⁶ *LG*, II, 28

cohesive whole which seeks to enhance and promote every baptised person further into a life of grace with Christ who is the centre of the church and at the heart of every baptised Christian. While the term single state is not mentioned directly, it is implicit in the usage of phrases such as “their condition or state” and “each in his own way”.

This implicit reference to the single state further indicates that there is beginning to emerge a pattern of thinking which will eventually articulate the single state as a vocation ‘Vocation’ is the term used here to denote the outward manner in which one lives in response to Christ. In its discussion on holiness and the manner in which the People of God are to respond to God, *Lumen Gentium* 4-7 addresses this issue of the call holiness- “the Church exists so that she may become God’s dwelling place in the world.”⁷⁷ The faithful are at the heart of this dwelling place where the Spirit works to make a community of worship and fellowship in service.⁷⁸ Specifically, such a call to holiness is echoed in *Lumen Gentium* paragraph 41 It states: “A like example, but one given in a different way, is that offered by widows and single people, who are able to make great contributions towards holiness and apostolic endeavour in the Church.” Friedrich Wulf in his commentary on *Lumen Gentium* notes that “Christian sanctification is not a road running parallel to the road of one’s ordinary life and work, but is a thing achieved in and through one’s state of life with its daily tasks, in and through the concrete circumstances and events of one’s existence”⁷⁹ The contribution made by single people is to be done both individually as well as collectively because Christians have a responsibility to bear witness to Christ. (*Lumen Gentium* paragraph 38)

⁷⁷ Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, ‘The Ecclesiology of the Constitution on the Church, Vatican II, ‘Lumen Gentium’ ’ <http://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/CDFECCCL.HTM> accessed on 8/8/2002

⁷⁸ Aloys Grillmeier, ‘The Mystery of the Church’ in Herbert Vorgrimler ed , *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II Vol. 1* (London: Burns and Oates, 1966), 142

⁷⁹ Friedrich Wulf, ‘ The Mystery of the Church ’ In Herbert Vorgrimler, ed , *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II Vol. 1* . (London: Burns and Oates, 1966), 268.

In addressing each “individual layman” and charging each one to bear witness to Christ, to his resurrection and thereby the life of God, each lay person has an obligation. This same obligation applies to the single person. Whereas *Lumen Gentium* 38 speaks of laymen and their witness to Christ, paragraph 41 moves from the general to the specific. It refers to single people and their contribution to holiness. Such a reference is significant as it lays the foundation for the involvement and contribution of single men and women to the life of the church. To argue, as *Lumen Gentium* does in paragraph 41, that holiness and apostolic endeavour are bound up with the members of the Christian community, is to argue that single people are also to be understood within this context of holiness. Further, paragraph 42 shows that the role of the sacraments of initiation has a considerable bearing in the ongoing life of the church. ‘For it is in baptism that we are formed in the likeness of Christ: ‘For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (I Cor. 12:13)...’ Paragraph 11 stresses the significance of confirmation in the life of the baptised person. In confirmation the individual is bound “more intimately to the Church”⁸⁰ and is endowed with the power of the Holy Spirit. Each is thus enabled and obliged to bear witness to Christ in their life and work. Eucharist strengthens and nourishes the faithful so that they may manifest the “unity of God’s People which is suitably signified and wondrously brought about by this most awesome sacrament.”⁸¹ Further, *Lumen Gentium* paragraph 42 argues that the sacraments especially the eucharist, as well as prayer, brotherly service and the exercise of virtue, to name a few, are essential to attaining holiness. *Gaudium et Spes* takes this line of thinking one step further. It points to the way in which such holiness is to be achieved. Paragraph 26 entitled *Promoting the Common Good*, focuses on the dignity proper to the human person as well as on conscience. Humanity and hence the social order, will be promoted provided our efforts are motivated by respect for the person and the exercise of right conscience.

⁸⁰ *L G*, 11, 28

⁸¹ *ibid*

God's Spirit, who with a marvellous providence directs the unfolding of time and renews the face of the earth, is not absent from this development.⁸²

Each baptised person has a moral responsibility to work in partnership with Christ, not simply for his or her own good but for the good of all. Such an active role is at the heart of our call to holiness and to follow Christ, in and through our baptism.

Since they have an active role to play in the whole life of the Church, laymen are not only bound to penetrate the world with a Christian spirit. They are also called to be witnesses to Christ in all things in the midst of humans society.⁸³

Both documents *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* are important; they complement each other. As such they contribute to a larger picture of the nature of the church and its mission in the world in which it is situated.

Lumen Gentium sets out to focus specifically on the church's understanding of itself. It aimed to be more biblical, more historical, more vital and dynamic than the earlier document on the church – *Ecclesiam Suam*. It did so in order to speak to the needs of the church in a rapidly changing world,

Christ is the light of all nations. Hence this most sacred Synod, which has been gathered in the Holy Spirit, eagerly desires to shed on all men that radiance of His which brightens the countenance of the Church. This it will do by proclaiming the gospel to every creature (cf. Mk. 16:15).

By her relationship with Christ, the Church is a kind of sacrament of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind, that is, she is a sign and an instrument of such union and unity. For this reason, following in the path laid out by its predecessors, this Council wishes to set forth more precisely to the faithful and to the entire world the nature and encompassing mission of the Church. The condition of this age lend special urgency to the Church's task of bringing all men to full union with Christ, since mankind today is joined together more closely than ever before by social, technical, and cultural bonds.⁸⁴

⁸² *GS*, 26, 226

⁸³ *ibid*, 43, 244

⁸⁴ *LG*, 1, 14-15

Lumen Gentium imaged the church in terms of a loving mother of all spreading everywhere the fullness of Christian charity. Further, the council, as outlined by Avery Dulles,⁸⁵ described the church in terms of the Good Shepherd – of being of service rather than being served. In particular, the church was shown to be existing in time, subject to the forces of history but moving forward beyond history towards its ultimate goal – Christ. As such *Lumen Gentium* is shown to be pastoral, Christocentric, biblical, historical and eschatological⁸⁶

B(iii) Gaudium et Spes (7 December, 1965)

Gaudium et Spes (1965) came about after a suggestion from the Council floor and ranks as ‘perhaps the most characteristic achievement of an essentially “pastoral Council”’⁸⁷ *Gaudium et Spes* is regarded as a synthesis of Catholic thinking as laid down in many sources especially from Leo XIII to Paul VI. Campion in his commentary notes that -

Again, though it is true that much of what the Constitution has to say on modern man’s economic and political life merely echoes teachings of Leo XIII or Pius XI and Pius XII, the very restatement of well-known passages sometimes uncovers a nuance of personalism that owes much to later Catholic thought...⁸⁸

Gaudium et Spes, then, seeks to address the issue of the church’s identity and role in the world. As a document it is influenced by John XXIII’s *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris* in which John XXIII dealt with the issue of dialogue between church and world. *Gaudium et Spes* continues on from and adds to *Lumen Gentium*. The document seeks to speak to all men and women so as to shed light on the mystery of humanity and to co-operate

⁸⁵ Avery Dulles, ‘The Church’ in Walter M. Abbott ed., *ibid*, 11

⁸⁶ *ibid*

⁸⁷ Donald Campion, ‘The Church Today’ in Walter M. Abbott ed., *ibid*, 183.

⁸⁸ *ibid*, 185. See also Charles Moeller, ‘Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: History of the Constitution’ In Herbert Vorgrimler ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II Vol V* (London: Burns and Oates, 1969), 9.

in finding solutions to the problems of the time⁸⁹ For John XXIII it was about the relationship of the supernatural order to the temporal order and the subsequent impact on mankind. In this context the expression ‘*i segni dei tempi*’ - the signs of the times occurs. *Gaudium et Spes* addresses the issue of ‘mankind’ and its status in the world. Charles Moeller outlines the issues of focus for *Gaudium et Spes*: the fundamental equality of all nations in the exercise of their rights and duties; defence of the sanctity of marriage; social responsibility; the underdeveloped countries the role of the church especially for the poor; disorders of social life; the rights to religious freedom and peace between nations. Paragraph 4 of *Gaudium et Spes*,⁹⁰ argues that the church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. The opening lines of paragraph 11 state:

The People of God believes that it is led by the Spirit of the Lord, who fills the earth. Motivated by this faith, it labours to decipher authentic signs of God’s presence and purpose in the happenings, needs and desires in which this People has a part along with other men of our age. For faith throws a new light on everything, manifests God’s design for man’s total vocation, and thus directs the mind to solutions which are fully human.⁹¹

Paragraph 15⁹² takes up the issue of the way in which humanity is enabled to “make progress”. In this context the document speaks of the role of human intellect and wisdom as being integral to humanity’s development or quest for perfection. Intellect and wisdom, together with gifts of the Holy Spirit assist humanity not only in its quest for perfection but also in its quest and appreciation of God’s plan for all humankind. The point is made by Joseph Ratzinger however, in his commentary on article 15 that there is a relationship between (intellect) science and wisdom – it is wisdom which humanizes humanity’s actions.

⁸⁹ *ibid*, 186. See also Charles Moeller, *ibid*, 7

⁹⁰ *ibid*, 201-222

⁹¹ *ibid.*, 209.

⁹² *ibid* 212-213.

New discoveries of their own may not be automatically more humane. Wisdom is the key.⁹³

The laity, being members of the human family, have an active role to play in this regard. The laity are called upon to take on their own distinctive role: to “penetrate the world with a Christian spirit. They are also called to be witnesses to Christ in all things in the midst of human society” (paragraph 43) This is the vocation of the laity and the Constitution speaks of this vocation; “members of the laity, all Christians, are to appreciate their special and personal vocation in the political community ... devotion to the sense of duty and of service to the advancement of the common good” (paragraph 75). This is what Oswald von Nell-Breuning in his commentary refers to as the ‘*pietas erga patriam*’⁹⁴ As with *Lumen Gentium* what emerges in *Gaudium et Spes* is the specific role of the laity. Theirs is a vocation in the world, to bear witness to Christ⁹⁵. *Gaudium et Spes* (paragraphs 26-29) seeks to explain the role of the church within the world in the context of its ongoing call to make holy and challenge structures that fail to promote and engender - dignity and the recreation of the image of the creator within the created order. This call and challenge is exemplified –

Since all men possess a rational soul and are created in God’s likeness ... the basic equality of all must receive increasingly greater recognition... every type of discrimination is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God’s intent.⁹⁶

The essential equality of all is founded in the basis that all are created by God as persons having a rational soul in God’s image. Further, all are redeemed in Christ and have the same eternal salvation.⁹⁷ Each baptised person has a role to play in working towards promoting such equality of all.

⁹³ Joseph Ratzinger, ‘The Church and Man’s Calling. Introductory Article and Chapter 1. The Dignity of the Human Person’ In Herbert Vorgrimler ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II Vol V* (London: Burns and Oates, 1969), 132-133

⁹⁴ Oswald von Nell-Breuning, ‘The Life of the Political Community’ in Herbert Vorgrimler ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II Vol V* (London: Burns and Oates, 1969), 322

⁹⁵ *GS*, 43, 244

⁹⁶ *GS*, 29, 227-228

⁹⁷ Otto Semmelroth, ‘The Community of Mankind.’ In Herbert Vorgrimler ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II Vol V* (London: Burns and Oates, 1969), 175

The call and challenge is further emphasized in *Gaudium et Spes* paragraph 43 which speaks about the way the church strives to assist human activity

Since they have an active role to play in the whole life of the Church, laymen are not only bound to penetrate the world with a Christian spirit. They are called to be witnesses to Christ in all things in the midst of human activity⁹⁸

Examples afforded by the document in this context are problems faced by race, social condition, language and fundamental personal rights of individuals being at risk. The document provides an example of such thinking when it asserts the rights of a woman to “embrace a state of life which is equal to those recognized for men, (paragraph 29). Such a statement is indicative of the call to equality of human dignity whether in the political or the social sphere. This type of statement allows for the inference that inequality wherever and however it exists, needs to be rectified. Given that *Gaudium et Spes* argues that inequalities, social constructs and the like need to be challenged, it is right to infer that single people ought to be allowed to be whom they so choose. Otto Semmelroth’s comment about equality – ‘Equal personal dignity demands a common endeavour for equal living conditions, that is, the overcoming of economic and social inequalities’⁹⁹ could be applied to single men and women. They ought to be able to embrace their state of life which will allow them to live out their baptismal commitment to Christ, of living a Christian life and bearing witness to Christ. The language of “rights” as suggested by *Gaudium et Spes*, in this context can be balanced or given a fuller impetus by *Lumen Gentium* 33. Each member of the lay faithful has a role in terms of building up the community of the church. The sacraments of baptism, confirmation and eucharist are seen as being inherent in promoting the growth and life of the church. I conclude that the single person as a member of the lay faithful needs to be recognized as being integral to the life and mission of the church. According to the gifts bestowed – each

⁹⁸ *GS*, 43, 244

⁹⁹ Otto Semmelroth, *ibid*, 176

layperson is a witness and living instrument of the mission of the church. This is clearly indicated by:

...let every opportunity be given them so that according to their abilities and the needs of the times, they may zealously participate in the saving work of the Church¹⁰⁰

In so doing, single men and women promote the Kingdom of God as well as personally respond in faith to God

Gaudium et Spes suggests that our way of living be positive, be done out of a spirit of charity and for the common good¹⁰¹ Earlier in paragraph 30, the document argued that we all have a moral obligation to exercise our abilities for others in order to promote justice and love. Such a task is for the community but carried out by individuals who have a concern for their solidarity with the tasks of the world and its destiny.¹⁰² Further, *Gaudium et Spes* paragraph 22¹⁰³ speaks of our involvement in the mystery of the Incarnate Word and our involvement in this mystery.

The Christian man, conformed to the likeness of that Son who is the firstborn of many brothers, receives the ‘first –fruits of the Spirit’ (Rom. 8:23) by which he becomes capable of discharging the new law of love.

What is underscored here is the impetus of the sacraments of initiation. The moral obligation ‘imposed’ on the Christian man and woman, is related to or comes about as a result of their being made one in Christ, of being one with Him in his Incarnate word. Joseph Ratzinger comments in respect of article 22 that what is being evidenced here is a Christological reality. ‘Human action, thought, willing and loving have become the

¹⁰⁰ *LG*, 33, 60

¹⁰¹ *GS*, 43, 244.

¹⁰² Otto Semmelroth, *ibid*, 178

¹⁰³ *ibid*, 221-222.

instrument of the Logos’¹⁰⁴ I argued earlier that the eucharist as well as confirmation, both nourished, strengthened and confirmed the Christian in his or her faith. Nothing less is suggested by *Gaudium et Spes* in its statements about justice, love, being involved in the first-fruits of the Spirit. What I am suggesting in this respect is, that it is precisely the sacraments of initiation that afford us our identity in the church and the manner in which we each live out our common call in Christ. Baptism is our common grounding. Our common call is ratified, as it were, in the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and eucharist.

The sacraments of Christian initiation – Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist – lay the *foundations* of every Christian life. ... by means of these sacraments of Christian initiation, they thus receive in increasing measure the treasures of the divine life and advance toward the perfection of charity.¹⁰⁵

It is these sacraments that enable us to be sacrament to each other¹⁰⁶ and to the world as suggested by the Vatican documents. *Gaudium et Spes* 48, *Lumen Gentium* 9 and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 3 speak of the responsibility of the laity to bring Christ and the church to the world; to sanctify the world. In effect, their call is to be the leaven of Christ. By their life and work, they are to be a living sign and witness for Christ – a sacrament of Christ to the world. Baptism, confirmation and eucharist are, according to *Lumen Gentium* 33, the basis of the layman’s call to be sacrament in the world. This, I believe, is a crucial point about our being in Christ, whether married, priestly/religious or single. However the point needs to be made that the single person is called in Christ and therefore with others in the church, seeks to define him/herself in the light of the Gospel message and in the “midst of human society” as suggested by *Gaudium et Spes*. It is only through having a common perspective about the sacraments of initiation, that the church can better articulate the vocation of all in the church and of being of service to others in the advancement of the common good (paragraph 75). The sacraments of initiation, are therefore, a necessary aspect

¹⁰⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, *ibid*, 160

¹⁰⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Homebush: St Paul’s Pub, 1994), paragraph 1212, page 311

¹⁰⁶ This concept is one which will be given further explanation in chapter 4 section D(III).

which not only denotes belonging to the church but also denotes the manner in which each state: clerical, married and single, can be church to each other and to the world. The sacraments of initiation indicate a commonality that underpins what it means to be Christian, what it means to be Christ to the world

These three sacraments of Christian initiation “closely combine to bring the faithful to the full stature of Christ and to enable them to carry out the mission of the entire People of God in the Church and in the world”¹⁰⁷

B(iv) Apostolicam Actuositatem (18 November, 1965)

Apostolicam Actuositatem paragraph 3¹⁰⁸ speaks of the sacraments of initiation as being the basis of the apostolate of the laity. Such an apostolate is the expression of the Trinitarian love evidenced in the faithful in and through the reception of the sacraments. Further, the Holy Spirit provides the faithful with spiritual gifts which are to be used in the service of “the Church and in the world for the good of mankind and for the up-building of the Church”(paragraph 3). The sacraments of initiation together with the gifts afforded by the Holy Spirit therefore, underscore our common vocation which is to be Christ to others. It is these sacraments which indicate the ecclesial nature of the person’s relationship with Christ. Such a relationship maintains the person in his or her apostolate.¹⁰⁹

Having said this, it is possible to suggest that *Gaudium et Spes*¹¹⁰, *Lumen Gentium* and *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, while concerned in their own way with addressing what it means

¹⁰⁷ Ronald Lawler ed, *The Teaching of Christ A Catholic Catechism for Adults* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor Inc, 1978), 457

¹⁰⁸ *A A*, 3, 492

¹⁰⁹ Ferdinand Klostermann, ‘Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity’ in Herbert Vorgrimler ed, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II Vol 3* (London: Burns and Oates, 1967), 315.

¹¹⁰ *G S*, 6-10, 204-209 examines the changes in the social order, the moral, psychological and religious changes as well as the imbalances, desires and the deeper questioning of humanity. In this context, it is possible to read that society is examining its social construction and questioning it.

to be church and to be church in the world, affirm the single state within the life of the church. This is encapsulated in the following quotation from *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 3

‘Thus may the individual, “according to the gift that each has received, administer it to one another” and become “good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Pet. 4:10) and build up thereby the whole body in charity (cf. Eph. 4:16) ¹¹¹

What is suggested here is that each baptised man or woman is to use their gifts in the service of others. This act of service ought be done irrespective of state. However, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* gives voice to the single state, albeit in the context of the layman’s religious program of life, when it says that this program ought take its special quality from “his status as a married man and a family man, or as one who is unmarried or widowed, from his state of health. . .”¹¹² Ferdinand Klostermann, in his commentary on article 4 speaks of the ‘single layman.’ This is a more direct usage of the word single as opposed to the word ‘unmarried’ as used in the text. What we see in these documents of the Vatican Council is the development of a line of thinking concerning the single state. Further, Ferdinand Klostermann in his commentary on this part of the Decree comments:

The Christian vocation is always realized concretely in the individual Christian, according to his personality, his personality, his personal and immediate social situation, and according to his profession, his position in the church and in society. Indeed, the Christian calling is frequently considered in the pages of the NT to be a charism in itself, whether it be in the married or unmarried state (cf. 1 Cor. 7:7) ¹¹³

This line of thinking will be further developed in terms of the single state and vocation. We see this development taking shape in later church documents: *Familiaris Consortio*, the *Working Document* and *Ecclesia in Oceania*.

¹¹¹ *AA*, 3, 492

¹¹² *ibid*, 4, 494. See also Ferdinand Klostermann, *ibid*, 319.

¹¹³ Ferdinand Klostermann, *ibid*, 317

B(v) Recent Literature

The documents - *Familiaris Consortio* (The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World) (22 November 1981) and the working document for *Christifideles Laici* (The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World Twenty Years after the Second Vatican Council), provide an important guide as to the significance of the single state to the life of the church

Familiaris Consortio sets out to elucidate the nature of Christian marriage and to 'offer help to those who are already aware of the value of marriage and the family and seek to live it faithfully.'¹¹⁴ Furthermore, the synod sought to continue its interest and deliberations already begun previously to this Exhortation. Explicitly, the focus of the Exhortation is reflected by John Paul when he said –

At a moment in history in which the family is the object of numerous forces that seek to destroy it or in some way to deform it, and aware that the well-being of society and her own good are intimately tied to the good of the family, the Church perceives in a more urgent and compelling way her mission of proclaiming to all people the plan of God for marriage and the family.¹¹⁵

Christifideles Laici on the other hand, focuses on the labourers in the vineyard; the lay faithful and their interaction with the church and its mission. 'The Council, in particular, has written as never before on the nature, dignity, spirituality, mission and responsibility of the lay faithful'¹¹⁶ This Exhortation re-echoes the words of the Council – 'enriched by preceding synods, treated in a specific and extensive manner the topic of the vocation and mission of the lay faithful in the Church and in the world.'¹¹⁷ Both Exhortations are used in the context of the relationship between the sociological and the ecclesiological in order to speak about the single state.

¹¹⁴ *FC*, 1, 9

¹¹⁵ *FC*, 3, 12.

¹¹⁶ *Christifideles*, 2, 10

¹¹⁷ *ibid*

The working paper is used chiefly because it makes explicit reference to the vocation to the single life in paragraph 72. The final document *Christifideles Laici* (30 December, 1988), refers only to the lay faithful. This represents a retardation in the process of thought concerning the single way of life. It has already been shown in the earlier document *Lumen Gentium* paragraph 42 that an understanding of the single state was implicitly present. *Familiaris Consortio*, while being a document about the family, clearly establishes an important point. It sets out to establish that the family is the “first and vital cell of society”. This was earlier affirmed in *Lumen Gentium* paragraph 38 which spoke of the sacrament of marriage being of great value. It is precisely the family, made up of baptised Christians, who represent the “Church of the home” which is itself a sacrament of Christ and a means whereby the church’s mission is continued through such means as social service to others and to the bringing of Christ to the world. This is forcefully indicated by paragraph 47 of *Familiaris Consortio*. The sacrament of marriage gives to Christian couples and parents a power and a commitment to live their vocation as lay people and therefore to “seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God.” *Gaudium et Spes* 48 argues that the family is the reflection of the loving covenant uniting Christ with the church. Further, participating in this covenant manifests the presence of a loving Saviour to the world. In *Familiaris Consortio* we see a later document reinforcing the notion of the role and vocation of the lay members of the church. However, paragraph 16 entitled *Marriage and virginity or celibacy* is interesting for its train of thought. Virginity or celibacy is described as being something special. Celibate people are waiting, “in a bodily way the eschatological marriage of Christ with the church. The celibate person thus anticipates in his or her flesh the new world of the future resurrection”.¹¹⁸ In practical and earthy terms, celibacy liberates the human heart so that it may “burn with a greater love for God and all humanity”. The fact that this description is not directly

¹¹⁸ F.C., 16, 32

associated with the clerical or religious state in any overt way,¹¹⁹ allows for the interpretation that what is being said can be ascribed to any person wishing to live the single celibate state. *Familiaris Consortio* 16 allows for this interpretation as it discusses the significance of celibacy or virginity as edification for others especially Christian couples. The document speaks of the way in which the celibate person co-operates in the plan of God. He or she, while remaining single and celibate “becomes spiritually fruitful, the father and mother of many, co-operating in the realization of the family, according to God’s plan”.¹²⁰ Further, the concluding comments to section 16 affirm that there are single people who “for reasons independent of their own will ...” assume a celibate state. *Familiaris Consortio* here refers to those who are single beyond their own will and unable to marry. These people can take heart from what has been said about celibacy.

From my point of view, given that these two statements about celibacy exist alongside of each other, this is indicative of a process of thinking by the church concerning those baptised Christians who remain single. By implication, what is evidenced here is a recognition that there is something taking place in the mindset of the church which is allowing for a more developed picture of single people. At this point in its development of thought, there is no expression of the single state as being a vocation or as being seen as an integral group within the People of God. This will be articulated in the later document - the *Working Document (The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World Twenty Years after the Second Vatican Council)* and more fully in *Ecclesia in Oceania* (22 November, 2001).

The *Working Document* while reflecting on the vocation of the laity seeks to detail this

¹¹⁹ While *Familiaris Consortio* refers to “consecrated virginity or celibacy” within the general context of marriage, virginity and celibacy, it does not specifically say religious Life or Ordination per se. The point of section 16, I believe, is to highlight the celibate person. The concluding lines refer directly to the celibate single person.

¹²⁰ *F.C.*, 16, 33.

vocation in the context of mission. Explicitly the vocation of the laity is “to infuse the reality of the world with the Christian spirit...”¹²¹ However, this document is significant in that it makes two important points concerning those in the church. Part Two (paragraph 29) speaks about the married state. The marital state is, according to the working document, the “majority of the laity”¹²² as well as being the domestic church (as already noted above). In the discussion about *communio*, the document speaks of the reciprocal relationship that exists between the three states: consecrated, marital and the single states. They exist for each other in a spirit of charity.¹²³ Nothing is said about the single state as being integral to the lay state *per se* as the document at this point is focusing on the nature of the lay faithful in general. However, towards the close of the document in paragraph 72 (there are 76 paragraph headings), in the context of the deepening of the awareness of Christ as integral to the vocation to the lay state, reference is made to those “unmarried”; those who have been nurtured and grounded in their faith in the family.

Another vocation worthy of great esteem is that of the laity who choose to remain unmarried so as to dedicate their whole life to the mission of caring for other lay Christians.¹²⁴

This represents the first explicit reference to the single way of life as being a vocation¹²⁵ albeit limited in its context to a specific role rather than a full explication and understanding of what it means to be a single baptised man or woman living and working in the world. However, this recognition is the end product, as it were, of a process in the development in

¹²¹ *Working Document*, 14, 17.

¹²² *ibid*, 14, 29.

¹²³ *ibid*, 3, 31.

¹²⁴ *ibid*, 72, 56.

¹²⁵ In 2000 the Vocations Office in the Archdiocese of Brisbane listed for the first time on its vocations posters and brochures the vocation to the Single Life as being a vocation and life choice. Further, the Vocations office of South Australia 2002, outlines all states – consecration, marriage and single within the context of the Vocation for Christ begun at baptism. This represents a time span of 15 years from the writing of the *Working Document*

thought of bringing to consciousness the existence of the single state as being integral to the life of the church and as being a vocation in its own right

Ecclesia in Oceania (The Church in Oceania 2001) further explicates the development of church understanding of the single state. While reinforcing earlier statements of the role of the laity in bringing Christ to the world, *Ecclesia in Oceania* is more positive and forthright in its statement:

Through the witness of love in the Sacrament of Matrimony or the generous dedication of people called to the single life, through their activity in the world whatever it might be, lay people can and must be a true leaven in every corner of society. ¹²⁶

Single people, together with married people in this context are called to be Christ-bearers to the world in and through their lives and work. They have a specific mission to be the leaven of Christ in the world. Their mission, together with all Christian men and women, is founded in baptism. "In Baptism, all Christians have received the call to holiness. Each personal vocation is a call to share in the Church's mission. . ."¹²⁷

In this first section of Chapter One, I have sought to show the development of thought concerning the single state from nascent references in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, to that of a full reflective expression in its 2001 document to the church in Oceania. This development of thought is crucial for there exists alongside of this ecclesial development, a societal shift in thought along similar lines. It is to this societal shift that I now turn.

¹²⁶ *EO*, 59

¹²⁷ *ibid.* 102.

Summary of Chapter One

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann have looked at the way in which language can be the tool for reassessing the way in which we understand ourselves, our institutions and the subsequent interaction of both. This allows us to construct a language that enables us to articulate being single and to integrate both the language as well as the newfound articulation into the fabric of society. Kathleen Gerson and Nancy Peterson, examine the situation through investigative case studies and looking for the factors that have enabled people to make a choice for single living. The result is that there is now a language that articulates single life. There is an acceptance by single people that the single life is a valid way of living. More importantly both impact upon the church. They provide the sociological background that enables the church to be informed about its members and the life choices that are being made. As a direct consequence of society's critique there is the inevitable critique made by the church about itself. Sociology informs ecclesiology. Both ratify and 'welcome' single living as being a valued and acceptable way of life.

In this chapter, I have sought to establish the process of the development in thinking about the single state. In the first instance I used the work of sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann as well as the ecclesiological perspective of Joseph Komonchak to elucidate the way that sociology informs ecclesiology. I also examined the church documents *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes*, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, *Familiaris Consortio*, the *Working Document and Ecclesia in Oceania*. My aim in so doing was to examine the way in which these church documents explain the nature and the purpose of the church. What emerges from this examination is that the church sees itself as a group of people who are baptised each having a particular state of life. Both the history of the church as well as the theology of the church has a rich tradition in this regard.

Since the Vatican Council, there has been a growing awareness of the single state. This has been articulated in its documentation especially *Lumen Gentium* and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* and finds its more detailed and formalised expression initially in the *Working Document* and more specifically in *Ecclesia in Oceania* (2001, 59). The reasons for this situation have been the basis of the first chapter of this thesis. It has been part of my intention in this chapter to use the works of sociologist Peter Berger (and Thomas Luckmann) to assist me to articulate the sociological foundations for the development of the journey on the part of the church. In particular, the main point has been that the church needs to have a language which enables it to dialogue with single people. As such it has not been able to articulate how a single person could be single. The mindset of the church has traditionally been on the established states of marriage and the celibate states of priesthood and religious life. The key then, to a better and fuller knowledge and appreciation of the single state is dialogue.

The works of authors such as Nancy Peterson and Kathleen Gerson can play a vital part in assisting the dialogue as they provide insight into the lives of people living the single life. Further, they attempt to spell out factors which enhance one's choice for this state of life. The ongoing dialogue of the church with the wider society is a dialogue that engages single baptised people. Ultimately the dialogue becomes the total conversation of the church with wider society in revisiting its own values and judgments about what it means to be a baptised member of the church. In chapter two, I aim to consider the story of a select group of single men and women in order to show the way in which singles not only contribute to the world in which they live but also to show their significance as models for living the single life.

Chapter Two

THE SINGLE STORY: SAINTS OR UNCANONISED SINGLES:

WHO ARE THE ROLE MODELS OR EXEMPLARS FOR THOSE IN THE SINGLE LIFE?

Throughout the history of the church, there have always been models or exemplars for Christian living. These are the canonised saints; those men and women, who by their exemplary Christian living, are held up as role models. Traditionally, these role models have been popes, bishops, martyrs, holy men and women. Put simply these models traditionally have been men and women who were in an ecclesiastical position within the church. Very few have been single people: names such as Maria Goretti or Joan of Arc are typical examples. I use these two examples as the nature of their living and dying, are not, I believe, relevant for today. Theirs was a world far removed from today. These examples as handed down to us as exemplars of Christian living, are inadequate for the modern technological world where the demands of society, technology and rapidly changing life patterns, impact upon all Christian men and women. I believe that modern men and women need models who have been challenged by a rapidly changing world environment and or who are able to speak to the needs of modern Christians. A cursory examination of the *Ordo* of the Catholic Church for 2001¹²⁸ lists approximately one hundred and thirty saints most of whom are in the category of ecclesiastical figures, some are listed as virgin and martyr such as St. Lucy but none is specifically listed as a single man or woman. Given that the predominance of saints are ecclesial figures, the question I ask is who are the role models for single people in the church today? Is it adequate to continue to suggest that those in the Canon of Saints are adequate models for single people let alone Christians living in a technological and industrial era? It needs to be acknowledged too, that the church over time has lost sight of the

¹²⁸ Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, *Ordo - The Celebration of the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours in Australia and New Zealand* (Brisbane, The Liturgical Commission, 2001).

relevance of single men and women in favour of marriage and those in formal ecclesial states. The early church acknowledged the importance of such men and women living the single and celibate life. Paul spoke of this aspect from an eschatological perspective when he addressed the Corinthians about marriage and virginity (I Corinthians 7). Subsequent church figures such as Cyprian of Carthage, Gregory of Nazianzen and Clement¹²⁹ also wrote about single men and women in the context of virginity. This state was regarded as being Christ-like in that virginal people were following the example of Christ. However, with the growing structured nature of the church and the influence of Greek philosophy, the emphasis would change from the eschatological to the protological; there is a move from the way things will be at the end to the way they were in the beginning in the earthly paradise. This shift of thought will also mean that in actuality there is a shift in the way that single people will live their lives.

The virgin's model and goal, rather than to live as "children of the resurrection," becomes to live a life free from concupiscence, as before the fall. Rather than an anticipation of the final Kingdom, virginity is seen as a return to paradise. Or rather, the life of the end times is itself conceived on the model of how things were at the beginning, as a "restoration" (*apokatastasis*) of the original state.¹³⁰

By the fourth century this emphasis brought about a change in the way in which the early church understood the role and place of virginal men and women. A direct result of this renewed understanding would be that such people live within the framework of a consecrated lifestyle. In such a way, they could attend to the works of the Lord as indicated by St Paul, in a fuller and freer way being able to devote themselves to prayer and work. Given that there is an emergence of single men and women in society today, it is apt that a reappraisal of church thought give consideration to this.

¹²⁹ Raniero Cantalamessa, *Virginity: A Positive Approach to Celibacy for the Sake of the Kingdom of Heaven* (New York: Alba House, 1995), 27, 16, 15 respectively.

¹³⁰ *ibid*, 35.

In chapter one I showed that there has been a development in thinking in the mindset of the church that the single life is a dynamic and growing part of community and the church. No longer is it satisfactory to refer to the bulk of the church community as the laity. It is to be acknowledged that within this broad spectrum there exists other groups: singles never married, married but separated.

It is my contention in this chapter to argue for a re-envisioning of the church's role models to include those single people who, by their life and experience, provide relevant modelling for single people. My position is that there needs to be people from the modern era who show modern men and women an example of a lived Christian story. These stories need to reflect the composition of those in the church. The stories of single men and women are needed to inform the church in general, of its own ongoing story.

I propose to briefly examine the lives of Dorothy Day, Simone Weil, Caryll Houslander, Soren Kierkegaard and Dag Hammarskjold as being eminent single people whose stories could serve as inspiration to single men and women. Further, I also propose to extrapolate common threads in their lives in order to highlight aspects of the single story and the way in which these threads may inform others in the single life. In this respect, I am indebted to the works of Susan A Muto and her writing on the single state. Her work will be used to assist me to examine the attributes of being single from within a Christian context as well as to propose a theological perspective concerning the single state.

In considering the significance of the lives of single people as role models, four questions need to be directed at the lives of those mentioned. These questions are designed so as to gain an understanding of the person: influences, motivation, work. They are not specifically Christian in intent because my aim is to establish their significance as individuals and the way in which each person interacted with the Christian tradition. My argument is about

human persons as role models. *Gaudium et Spes* (ch. 1 #15)¹³¹ speaks about the dignity of the human person. It addresses the aspect of dignity from the perspective of mind, truth and wisdom. In this context the Council argues

The intellectual nature of the human person is perfected by wisdom and needs to be. For wisdom gently attracts the mind of man (and woman) to a quest and a love for what is true and good. Steeped in wisdom, man passes through visible realities to those which are unseen.

Our era needs such wisdom more than bygone ages if the discoveries made by man are to be further humanized.

The Council's point is that human persons have the dignity of being created in God's image. In order to promote and foster dignity and thereby grow in Christ, we need to quest for truth but truth must be relevant for today, not a bygone age. The voices of men and women convey their wisdom. In the telling of their story, wisdom is shared, there is reciprocity of understanding and the community of the church grows in its own self-understanding. There is the sense that all in the church are being humanized. The single person's story contributes to this story and thereby to the growth of the church and its story.

Chapter four of *Gaudium et Spes* reinforces this aspect of relatedness between persons of faith acknowledges that the gifts and talents of all are needed if the Gospel is to be conveyed and men and women are to live lives of value in freedom and dignity

The gospel has a sacred reverence for the dignity of conscience and its freedom of choice, constantly advises that all human talents be employed in God's service and men's, and, finally, commends all to the charity of all¹³²

Gaudium et Spes thus lays the foundation for ongoing dialogue between the church and it acknowledges the talents of all human persons who are made in the image of God and who share a common dignity in Christ irrespective of ecclesial tradition. Such an openness is one

¹³¹ *G.S.*, 15, 213

¹³² *G.S.*, 41, 240

which is open to listen to all voices, all stories – including that of single men and women. In order to reach out to men and women of this era, the church broadens its perspective on the way we can each model Christ. My argument is that the ordinary lives of single men and women are relevant role models for single people. The church in dialoguing with, in listening to the story of the single person – enriches its perspective and its relationship with in all its forms.

The four questions posed, enable me to unfold the fabric of the single story as a lived reality and one which makes Christ present through effective role modelling. The four questions are:

- How were their formative years shaped?
- How did they come to be involved in the work that would occupy their adult working lives?
- What was their contribution to society and or the church?
- How are they role models for single people today?

I propose to examine each life separately using these questions as the framework.

Dorothy Day (1897-1980)

Dorothy Day was a woman who contributed greatly to the welfare of others especially working men and women through her role as a writer chiefly for *The Catholic Worker*. What animated her was her understanding of the mystery of the incarnation

We felt a respect for the poor and the destitute as those nearest to God, as those chosen By Christ for His compassion. Christ lived among men ... His feet once trod the same earth.¹³³

¹³³ Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness* (New York: Curtis Books, 1952), 231 Hereafter *The Long Loneliness*.

This understanding and deep felt conviction developed over a period of years in and through her work and relationships. In *Loaves and Fishes*¹³⁴ Dorothy Day further elaborates upon this conviction. She says, "I felt keenly that God was more on the side of the hungry, the ragged, the unemployed than of the side of the comfortable churchgoers ." In this quotation, we see Dorothy Day as the socially oriented lay-woman whose sense of the incarnation was one which enabled her to see beyond that which was comfortable for many in their Christianity.

Her Formative Years

These were probably similar to the lives of other poor children of the time living in American cities during the early part of the twentieth century. Religion, formal and informal, was not significant in her family. Her introduction to Christianity came from others such as Mary Harrington, a nine-year-old playmate who told stories of the saints to her. Later, Dorothy came to realize the influence of a neighbour Mrs Barrett, the mother of her playmate Kathryn. On one occasion she recalls that she came across Mrs Barrett on her knees in prayer. This experience gave her her first impulse towards Catholicism. Dorothy Day recalls that these influences were the stuff of "spiritual adventure"¹³⁵ and she and her sister began to play at "being saints - it was a game with us"¹³⁶

A letter she wrote at age fifteen reveals the growing sense of her understanding of God and her quiet interaction with this God. "He communicates Himself to me and fills me with a deep quiet peace. I need these hours alone..."¹³⁷ As a result of reading St Augustine, Dorothy came to question her love of God. Her reading was wide ranging and included the

¹³⁴ Dorothy Day, *Loaves and Fishes* (New York: Maryknoll / Orbis Books, 1963),13. Hereafter *Loaves and Fishes*

¹³⁵ *The Long Loneliness*, 25

¹³⁶ *ibid* , 26

¹³⁷ *ibid* , 37.

writings of Therese of Avila, St Francis de Sales and *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas a Kempis. Her secular reading included works by authors such as Dostoyevsky and others.

We see in Dorothy Day's adolescence a growing awareness of God but not Religion; this would come later. In fact, she was appalled initially by Christianity when confronted by complacent Christians and injustice¹³⁸. The Marxist slogans at the University contained more meaning for her. She admitted feeling "one with the masses"¹³⁹. This apparent paradox between Christianity and Marxism, I believe, would lead her in a direction which would become formally Catholic but socially oriented in her work. But for the moment, she continued to believe in a people and their needs. "For me Christ no longer walked the streets of this world. He was two thousand years dead and new prophets had risen in His place"¹⁴⁰. Here was youthful disillusionment. What would she do?

Her Involvement in the Social Sphere

In New York she was sickened by the poverty and loneliness around her. She became aware of her own loneliness and how it overwhelmed her.¹⁴¹ However, rather than go elsewhere, she determined she would remain in this environment and face the negativity and the anxiety that her surroundings presented to her. It was the only way she could be freed from loneliness and sorrow. She said, "I wanted to go and live among these surroundings"¹⁴².

Her first job was with *The Call*. Its staff was a mixture of radical personalities: marxist, anarchist, communist and the like. While she admits she never was a member of any

¹³⁸ *ibid*, 46

¹³⁹ *ibid*, 47

¹⁴⁰ *ibid*, 47

¹⁴¹ *ibid*, 57

¹⁴² *ibid*, 57

organization,¹⁴³ it is not difficult to see that here in this environment would be the germ of her social outlook.

In working for *The Call*, she remembers an interview with a Jesuit priest and his discussion on Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, the church's social teachings. She recalls that she paid little attention to it at the time, but the event was sufficient to make an impact on her, albeit subconsciously at the time.

During her time at *The Call*, she would meet people such as Trotsky and anti-conscription marchers and become involved in issues dealing with war, poverty, rights, strikes to name a few. For her, reality was represented by the here and now –

There were no doubt those whose souls glowed with belief, whose hearts were warmed by the love of God, on all sides of us. But mingling as we did, in our life together, and in our life apart, with radical groups, we never met any whose personal morality was matched by a social morality or who tried to make life here for others a foretaste of the life to come.¹⁴⁴

Nowhere was this more fully realized than during the jail period and subsequent hunger strike.¹⁴⁵ There was a little or no thought of religion. This experience would leave her humiliated, weak and chronically aware of suffering and injustice.¹⁴⁶

Her Contribution to Society and or the Church

The major focus of her life was *The Catholic Worker* first published in 1933. Within three years it had a circulation of 150,000. It was bought and read by people from diverse backgrounds including miners, doctors, seminarians and high school personnel.¹⁴⁷ It

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, 63

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, 81.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 83 ff

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 94

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 207

represented for Dorothy Day a type of turning point in her life. She likened this experience as that of St Paul in his early endeavours for the church in spreading the Gospel.¹⁴⁸

Sometimes our contacts have been through the Church and sometimes through readers of our paper, through union organizers or those who needed to be organized¹⁴⁹

The paper became a means of community involvement and focused on issues relevant to all those in need. We see in this the coming to fruition of her earlier years of questioning and social involvement.

The establishment of houses of hospitality was one means whereby she became intimately involved in and with the plight of those who were suffering. “One must live with them, share with them their sufferings too. Give up one’s privacy, and mental and spiritual comforts as well as physical.”¹⁵⁰ This was her response to a question posed by a colleague who had suffered in Russia under the Czars. After 1935 Community Farms developed to meet the needs of individuals and groups. These ‘garden communes’ were a mixture of socialism and Christianity. They were meeting places for discussions, retreats as well as affording individuals the opportunity of being usefully employed in a community setting. Fr Roy, one of the visitors to Maryfarm commented that a “community of Christians is known by the love they have for one another. See how they love one another!”¹⁵¹ The Community Farms like the Houses of Hospitality became places where people were loved: they were looked after, fed, clothed and regarded as people with dignity.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 230

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 243

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 242. These she describes in *Loaves and Fishes* 1963, 42-43. These houses sprang up across the country and were run on an individual basis. They usually had no formal support from either the Government or the Church though priests, bishops and nuns contributed to support them in some form or other but not necessarily financially

¹⁵¹ *Loaves and Fishes*, 60-61.

In her post-script Dorothy Day wrote –

We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love we must know each other. We know Him in the breaking of the bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone any more. ¹⁵²

What we see in Dorothy Day is that there is a conviction in the goodness and integrity of human beings irrespective of their race or religion or personal background. In effect, her stance for the workingman and woman can be regraded as a Christ-like stance for the well-being and betterment of others. This stance reflected for the church the praxis of the Gospel in action. All it takes is conviction, commitment and trust in a God visible in others. Hers was a conviction not only in her personal relationship with Christ but a conviction, and on-going affirmation in the Catholic Church, its teaching and its hierarchy. Through the Church she was able to enrich and develop her relationship with Christ through the reception of the sacraments especially eucharist and penance. ¹⁵³

A Role Model for Single People

Apart from her intense commitment to the socially deprived people of her time, Dorothy Day models commitment to personal faith and a commitment to the church. Hers was a faith which developed throughout her life. It was a faith initially modelled by the people in her life, in her formative years – the young Mary, Mrs Barrett, Miss Adams whom she accompanied to early Mass. ¹⁵⁴ But hers was a struggle; a struggle between her sense of God and an emerging awareness of what God wanted of her

In her formative years, she read the works of St Augustine, Therese of Avila, St Francis de Sales and *The Imitations of Christ* by Thomas a Kempis to name a few. ¹⁵⁵ She was also

¹⁵² *The Long Loneliness*, 317.

¹⁵³ Jim Forest, *Love is the Measure* (New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 80, 95, 130, 154-155

¹⁵⁴ *ibid*, 106

¹⁵⁵ *ibid*, 155

influenced by the writings of Dostoyevsky and others. She could claim, as did a character from *The Possessed*, that she was haunted by God.¹⁵⁶ This line of thinking, I believe, summarises the tension she felt between her sense of mission in life and the sense of mission that God was asking of her – namely to be a modern day evangelist and herald of Christ to and for the poor and the dispossessed. She believed that every person had a tendency toward God. Being so involved with these people was an act of worship.¹⁵⁷ Her struggle soon brought her to a spiritual crossroads – whether or not to become a Catholic. To do so would mean leaving a relationship that she had come to appreciate, love and see as important in her life.¹⁵⁸ She describes this period in her life as a “struggle for my own soul”.¹⁵⁹ What was happening in her life was the growing sense of vocation –

My very experience as a radical, my whole make-up, led me to want to associate myself with others, with the masses, in loving and praising God.¹⁶⁰

Significantly for her, Sister Aloysia¹⁶¹ was to become the person who would assist Dorothy Day in her struggle to be Catholic. She entered the church which she came to love¹⁶² and she saw in the church the visible presence of Christ.

Dorothy Day is a model for single Christian men and women. She typifies in her life the struggles of work, relationships, the struggles in faith and the growing sense of awareness of the presence of Christ in her life. Dorothy Day is not a canonized saint nor in general terms is her life different from that of many people. She does, however, show us how she met the

¹⁵⁶ *ibid*, 10.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid*, 107.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid*, 155.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid*, 157.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid*, 159.

¹⁶¹ *ibid*, 162.

¹⁶² *ibid*, 171.

struggles in her life. She does show us the importance of prayer, the sacraments and of belonging to the church. She shows us that as a single person, hers was a life of commitment and of personal sacrifice – one that put Christ and the church ahead of self. Finally, I would say that as a committed Christian, she came to realize and put into practice, what she calls “the failure of the cross” in her life.¹⁶³ Of herself she reflects -

We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love we must know each other... We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community.¹⁶⁴

Recent biographers of Dorothy Day speak of her remarkable life. William Miller, reflecting on the life of Dorothy Day and her contribution to the Church and Society comments. ‘The significance of Dorothy Day to contemporary Christianity is that she overcame the afflictions so peculiar to our time to become a revolutionary of the Second Coming’¹⁶⁵ Jim Forest in the concluding lines of his biography says of Dorothy Day

Many regard her as a saint, but not a way of keeping her at a safe distance. . . she set an example which continues to influence many people. One can say she helped bring about a reformation that centered on the Catholic Church but reached far beyond it. It is not a reformation emphasizing theological doctrine but one rooted in the sacredness of life, the truth that we are each made in the image and likeness of God, and the real presence of Christ in the poor.

To put it as simply as possible, she gave an example of active love.¹⁶⁶

As a woman who lived the single life, these reflections attest to her dynamism and her commitment to her work and her church. Her own faith and her sense of belonging to the church is a measure of her ecclesial presence and is representative of Christ in the world. Her

¹⁶³ *ibid*, 244.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid*, 317-318.

¹⁶⁵ William D Miller, ‘Dorothy Day’ in John J Delaney ed, *Saints are not Now Eight Portraits of Modern Sanctity* (New York: Image / Doubleday Inc, 1983), 21

¹⁶⁶ Jim Forest, *Love is the Measure* (New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 156

response is one which reflects the mood and thought of *Gaudium et Spes* which speaks of the responsibility of the layperson to 'penetrate the world with a Christian spirit.'¹⁶⁷

Simone Weil (1909-1943)

Simone Weil was a young woman with a great intellectual capacity. She was a prolific writer and like Dorothy Day, had a concern for those who were suffering. Not only did she take time to work with them in the factory but she also became involved in anti-war movements and advocated pacifism as did her contemporary in the U.S. A. Her life represents a mixture of social involvement as well as spiritual and mystical writings and experience. Her book *Waiting for God* and other writings provide much insight into the life of this woman who died aged thirty-four.

Her Formative Years

Simone Weil described herself as a person whose outlook on life was *christian*. The 'notions' ascribed to Christianity formed a part of her outlook from her earliest memory.¹⁶⁸ She said: "I always adopted the Christian attitude as the only possible one. I might say that I was born, I grew up, and I always remained within the Christian inspiration"¹⁶⁹ This was, however, as she acknowledged in hindsight, in spite of being brought up in an agnostic family 'belief structure.'¹⁷⁰

At age of fourteen Simone admits that she was in a bottomless despair and felt a great inward darkness. It was then that she came to see that truth including beauty, virtue and goodness

¹⁶⁷ *G S* 43, 244.

¹⁶⁸ Simone Weil, *Waiting for God* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), 63 Hereafter *Waiting for God*

¹⁶⁹ *ibid*, 62

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 95

were the means of deliverance from this darkness and despair.¹⁷¹ Even though she had not as yet read the Gospel, this conviction became foremost in her. At this time, St Francis and the ideal of poverty also made an impression upon her. She recognised too that she had always had a love of neighbour. She called this justice and equated this with the Gospel.¹⁷²

Within two years she came to believe that her perception of life was Christian but that there was no need for dogma to confuse her growing sense of Christianity as she understood it. At this time there were three contacts which reinforced this sense of Christianity in her.

The first of these contacts was with the factory workers with whom she worked for some time. She came to see that affliction was the root of their situation. The experience was so personally intense that she says the experience left her “in pieces”¹⁷³ and she became aware of the affliction not only of others, of the “anonymous mass” but also that this affliction had entered “my flesh and my soul”.¹⁷⁴

While staying in Portugal, she labelled this experience as that of the “mark of a slave”¹⁷⁵ and from this point on she became aware that Christianity was pre-eminently the “religion of slaves”.¹⁷⁶ In her letter to Joe Bousquet, a war afflicted soldier, she uses the language of suffering and the Cross as she ‘consoles’ him

To think affliction, it is necessary to bear it in one’s flesh, driven very far in like a nail, and for a long time, so that thought may have time to grow strong enough to regard it. To regard it from outside, having succeeded in leaving the body and even,

¹⁷¹ *ibid*, 64.

¹⁷² *ibid*, 65

¹⁷³ *ibid*, 66.

¹⁷⁴ *ibid*,

¹⁷⁵ *ibid*, 67

¹⁷⁶ *ibid*

in a sense, the soul as well. Body and soul remain not only pierced through but nailed down at a fixed point.¹⁷⁷

In the same letter, she relates how her own experiences with suffering have impacted on her heart. She states she came to associate her experiences and growing spiritual awareness of these as being of God.¹⁷⁸ She shares with him her lived contemplation of the reality of the crucifixion. She empathises with him; she understands and appreciates his suffering, his affliction and does so out of her own experience.

Human beings can live twenty years, fifty years in this acute state... What man is capable of discerning them unless Christ himself looks through his eyes? ... There is not really affliction where there is not social degradation or the fear of it in some form or another.¹⁷⁹

The second experience occurred while at Assisi in the Chapel of Santa Maria degli Angeli, where she felt compelled to go down on her knees. This she had never done before. But the experience was intensely spiritual for her.

In Solesmes in 1938, she became involved in the Holy Week liturgies. This experience was a marker event in her life. "This experience enabled me by analogy to get a better understanding of the possibility of loving divine love in the midst of affliction."¹⁸⁰ Such was the impact of the third experience. It was here that she met a young Catholic who introduced her to the poetry of George Herbert and his poem "Love" was to forever remain with her. It was during one of the recitations of this poem that Simone Weil had a mystical experience in which "Christ himself came down and took possession" of her.¹⁸¹ Thus her personal, mystical experience of Christ's presence left an indelible impression on her.

¹⁷⁷ 'Letter to Joe Bousquet' in Eric Springsted, ed., *Simone Weil – Selected Writings* (New York: Maryknoll / Orbis Books, 1988), 35

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.* 39.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*, 42-43

¹⁸⁰ *Waiting for God*, 68.

¹⁸¹ *Waiting for God*, 69

These experiences assisted in the development of Simone Weil's growing sense of Christianity in her life and while she was during these latter experiences no longer an adolescent in the sense of being in her formative years of growing up physically, she was in a type of spiritual formation.

Her Involvement in the Social Sphere

As with Dorothy Day, Simone Weil's involvement in the social sphere was quite dramatic. Her life was one of radicality. She spent time working in factories in Paris in order to appreciate the lot of the worker. She became involved in workers' movements, in anti-fascist movements such as the Spanish civil war and was desirous of being involved in some way in the war against Nazism.

She entered the factories so as to reflect on human dignity and humanity's role within the scheme of society. She came to realise that labour was universally humiliating: "Here, you are nothing. You simply do not count. You are here to obey, to accept everything, to keep your mouth shut". . . One comes to acquiesce down deep that he counts for nothing"¹⁸² She came to experience first hand the needs and desperation of others who worked in such conditions. For her the whole experience was one of impotence; there was nothing in the way of personal satisfaction or dignity in what she saw in the factory workers.¹⁸³ She described the situation in such dismal terms as befits the situation that she experienced.

The faces drawn with anxiety over the day about to begin, the dejected looks in the morning subway-trains; the profound weariness, spiritual rather than physical, reflected in the general bearing, the expression, the set of the mouth, an quitting-time; the looks and attitudes of caged beasts, after the ten-day closing when a factory reopens its doors as the signal for the beginning of another interminable year; the pervasive brutality . . .¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² 'Factory Work' in G Panichas, ed , *The Simone Weil Reader* (New York: David Mackay Co , 1977), 56

¹⁸³ *ibid* , 61

¹⁸⁴ *ibid* , 65

Simone Weil came to see that there was evil in the factory system. It was an evil that had to be corrected. The worker was not to be made docile but given a sense of dignity and worth. Her factory experiences left her with an indelible mark which she describes as that of a slave.¹⁸⁵

Simone Weil was an idealist if not naively. Her involvement in anti-fascist campaigns and anti-Nazi programmes, reveals the way in which she saw the problems of her day and sought ways to rectify these. She was motivated by her sense of justice which she saw as a duty. In this she was inspired by the Stoic philosophy. She regarded her duty of justice as the idea of Christian love – love for one’s neighbour. Pre-eminently the life of St Francis of Assisi was instrumental in grounding her in her attitude to justice.¹⁸⁶

In a letter to Georges Bernanos¹⁸⁷ she speaks of a desire to enlist in Barcelona during 1936 in the anti-fascist campaign. She wanted to do something to assist even though she regarded herself as a pacifist. However, after an accident, and rest she came to see the reality of the situation. She became demoralised with the war

I no longer felt any inner compulsion to participate in a war which, instead of being what is had appeared when it began – a war of famished peasants against landed proprietors and their clerical supporters – had become a war between Russia on the one hand and Germany and Italy on the other.¹⁸⁸

She reveals that her idealistic naivety regarding the war situation changed “One sets out as a volunteer, with the idea of sacrifice, and finds oneself in a war which resembles a war of mercenaries, only with much more cruelty and will less human respect for the enemy”¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵ *Waiting for God*, 6.

¹⁸⁶ *ibid*, 65.

¹⁸⁷ ‘A Letter to Georges Bernanos’ in George Panichas, ed, *ibid*, 73-78

¹⁸⁸ *ibid*, 75.

¹⁸⁹ *ibid*, 77.

Her proposed corps of nurses on the war front programme as a means of combating Nazi propaganda was laudable but also naive. She writes about this idea in a letter to Maurice Schumann.¹⁹⁰ Weil wanted to respond to a perceived need: How to counter the idolatry of the Nazi war machine. A corps of women would demonstrate what she believed to be a positive influence on all and would stand out against the negativity of the S S troops and their way of life. She says: “There could be no better symbol of our inspiration than the corps of women suggested here”.¹⁹¹ She points here to women of courage, of moral integrity prepared to sacrifice their lives if necessary.¹⁹² However, these women are to be single and “passed her first youth, without marrying or having children”¹⁹³ In her letter, she argues a case for their integrity as moral exemplars in assisting to ameliorate the effects of war.

One can see in these instances cited, that Simone Weil sought to become involved in the social sphere of life. Her idealism and her sense of justice led her to want to become involved. Her naivety was challenged by the reality of the situation but what is important is that she was enabled to reflect on the issues of her time and to write about them. They stand as a testament to her.

Her Contribution to Church and Society

Simone Weil’s primary contribution was her writing. She believed that this activity was her vocation; how she should contribute to society and to the welfare of others. She regarded her writing as her primary goal. In this respect, her commitment meant she could not formally enter the church. Hers was a vocation outside the church.

¹⁹⁰ ‘A Letter to Maurice Schumann’ in George Panichas, ed., *ibid*, 94-105.

¹⁹¹ *ibid*, 101

¹⁹² *ibid*, 99

¹⁹³ *ibid*, 98.

that my vocation imposes upon me the necessity of remaining outside the Church. . . And that is in order that I may serve God and the Christian faith in the realm of the intelligence¹⁹⁴

This concept of a vocation is interesting as it details Simone Weil's understanding of her life in response to her relationship with Christianity and the church. Her contribution in this respect outlines a response which is in the service of Christ as Truth but not Christ in the institutional church¹⁹⁵ By this it is meant that she understood and loved Christ but wanted to remain outside the church in order that she could serve God and the Christian faith through the realm of the intellect.

In *Last Thoughts*¹⁹⁶ Simone Weil speaks of Saints John of the Cross and Francis of Assisi as saints who made an impression upon her. In this context she argues that the present world demanded a different type of saintliness. A new sense of sanctity was required "The world needs saints who have genius. . ."¹⁹⁷ Her idea as told to Fr Perrin (her spiritual confidant), is important for her time as she argues for a renewed sense of 'saintliness' during a time of poverty and international strife.

In a letter to Joe Bousquet, Simone Weil philosophies on affliction. A key contribution of Simone Weil to the church, I believe, was the way in which she philosophised about Christianity and in particular teaching such as the Trinity and the Cross¹⁹⁸ Hers is an insightful but lucid way of talking about such teaching to the extent that she adds a richness that allows others to penetrate, as it were, into the mystery that she is talking about. Her understanding is that the Trinity and the Cross are poles apart but that the essence of

¹⁹⁴ *Waiting for God*, 85

¹⁹⁵ *ibid*, 86

¹⁹⁶ *ibid.*, 88 ff.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*, 99

¹⁹⁸ Eric Springsted ed, *ibid*, 59.

Christianity is the Cross for underlying the experience of the Cross is the experience of affliction. How poignant is her understanding and expression when she says that the word of God is silence. "God's secret word of love can be nothing else but silence. Christ is the silence of God."¹⁹⁹ This almost summarises or encapsulates for Simone Weil her own experience of suffering and the process of discerning God in her life.

Simone Weil as a Role Model for Single People

Simone Weil typifies in her life a person who is struggling not only with herself but also with the issue of religion and faith. She was a person who, in spite of the contradictions inherent in her own life and in her world, she stood for personal integrity. She recognised that she would remain outside of the church but she wanted to be part of common humanity.²⁰⁰ However, this did not prevent her from having a love for things Catholic: liturgy, hymns, architecture. "I love God, Christ and the Catholic faith as much as it is possible for so miserably inadequate a creature to love them. I love the saints... and the genuine spirituality."²⁰¹ She believed that the spiritual direction of her soul lay in the hand of God and that God would direct her and look after her. In a sense this represents a very child-like attitude to God but one which is also indicative of trust and confidence in God.²⁰² Indeed, one biographer, Dr. Jacques Cabaud, argues that before death, Simone Weil allowed a friend to baptise her – perhaps out of a gesture of friendship.²⁰³ This, if accurate, would not be an entirely inconsistent outcome of a life of intellectual searching. Another biographer, Jillian Becker, argues that she refused baptism even as she lay dying.²⁰⁴ Whatever the truth

¹⁹⁹ *ibid*, 70

²⁰⁰ *Waiting for God*, 49

²⁰¹ *ibid*

²⁰² *ibid*, 73.

²⁰³ Lyn Gallacher, 'Simone Weil'. <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/relig/enc/stories/s116621.htm> accessed on 22nd April, 2004.

²⁰⁴ Jillian Becker, 'Simone Weil: A Saint for our time?' <http://newcriterion.com/archive/20/mar02/weil.htm> accessed on 22nd April 2004

of the matter in this respect, Simone Weil was Catholic in attitude and disposition if not formally with baptism. It is claimed that Paul VI regarded Simone Weil as one of the three intellectual influences upon him – (Weil, Pascal and Bernanos)²⁰⁵

Simone Weil's life depicts an individual who is tenacious and not timid at tackling issues or allowing herself to be confronted by them. About herself, she uses the Greek term translated as steadfastness.²⁰⁶ She describes herself as being in the service of Christ as the Truth but also acknowledges her own sense of inadequacy. But this is the price that she is willing to pay in order to be true to herself and to her intellectual vocation. She realises that the more inadequate she is, the greater is the immensity of the love of God.²⁰⁷ The poet I. S. Eliot is recorded as speaking highly of Weil as a woman of genius, a 'kind of genius akin to that of a saint.'²⁰⁸ – a sentiment reflected by another writer Leslie Fiedler – 'the Outsider as Saint in an age of alienation, our kind of saint.'²⁰⁹

Caryll Houselander (1901-1954)

Caryll Houselander, like Simone Weil, was a prolific spiritual writer. She was a contemporary of both Dorothy Day and Simone Weil. The world in which they lived was one of Depression and War. All three women had an intense love of the church as the Mystical Body and all three became involved with the people who were experiencing life in its toughest dimension – poverty, depression, affliction. Both she and Simone Weil had mystical experiences but they were also keenly grounded in the problems of their world. Caryll's basic message was that Christ was to be seen in everyone. In *A Rockinghorse*

²⁰⁵ *ibid.*

²⁰⁶ See *Waiting for God* page 86 where Weil spells out how she understands her position regarding her intellectual faculty

²⁰⁷ Eric Springsted, *ibid*, 80

²⁰⁸ Jillian Becker, *ibid*

²⁰⁹ *ibid*

Catholic she says, “I had gradually ceased to look for Christ in the churches and had begun, though I had not yet realised it, to look for Him in the streets and in the people who thronged them”²¹⁰ She was a person who has felt the confusion of her own life. She realised her love of things Catholic, but sought to find God in many directions, all the time coming back to the Christ that she saw in humanity²¹¹ Hers is a journey, not unlike that of Dorothy Day or Simone Weil.

Her Formative Years

Unlike Simone Weil and Dorothy Day, Caryll was baptised into the church at an early age²¹² She was very much influenced by family associates and the school environments in which she was placed. Her initial mentors in faith were household staff. These, however, supplied her with a limited understanding of religion and God. Her earliest impression of God was that of a God of wrath that she saw in a picture book.²¹³ More importantly, however, was the influences of a family friend affectionately called Smoky (George Spencer Bower K C) and Dr. Paley, a classical scholar and father of the family doctor. Both men would be instrumental in assisting the young Caryll in her faith development and perceptions of life and the church. Smoky was an agnostic and Dr Paley a Catholic. From Smoky Caryll learned the love of literature, the theatre and poetry. She also came to believe in God, angels and it was from him too, that she learned of Paul and Jesus.²¹⁴ It was to Smoky that she always turned for advice and who instilled in her the conviction of the authenticity of the Catholic church and its divine origins.²¹⁵

²¹⁰ Marie-Anne Mayeski, ed., *A Rocking Horse Catholic – A Caryll Houselander Reader* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1991),19.

²¹¹ *ibid* , 20-21.

²¹² Caryll Houselander, *A Rocking Horse Catholic* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955), 3

²¹³ *ibid* , 8.

²¹⁴ *ibid* , 20

²¹⁵ *ibid* , 25.

Dr Paley's children were an example of Catholic family life. This impressed Caryll's mother and she desired Caryll have some creed to assist her through life.²¹⁶ This together with Smoky's arguments would bring Caryll and her sister to baptism.

As if as an afterthought, Caryll adds at this juncture in her autobiography, an incident she says she has remembered all her life. It was the reverence, the devoutness with which Dr Paley's son kissed the feet of Christ on his crucifix that had dropped on the floor.

These people, in their own way, influenced Caryll during her formative years. Their influence was primarily evidenced in her being baptised. However, their impact was to underpin her spiritual self and the way in which she would approach life.

Her formative years were also marked by periods of acute anxiety, often associated with guilt.²¹⁷ This came about as a result of a retreat experience she had at age seven. Here she heard for the first time of death and mortal sin. She was left in a state of "shock and fear"²¹⁸ and desirous of making her first confession. Following her confession, first communion and shortly afterwards confirmation, Caryll was struck by an illness which would leave a deep mark upon her that would remain with her during life.²¹⁹

Following one such attack, she was given Communion as Holy Viaticum²²⁰. The result, according to Smoky, was that a miracle had occurred. Her experience impressed upon her the reality of the "Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament". Further, Caryll adds that her experiences of neurotic bouts and subsequent healing in and through Holy Viaticum, "has

²¹⁶ *ibid*

²¹⁷ *ibid*, 41.

²¹⁸ *ibid*, 37.

²¹⁹ *ibid*, 43.

²²⁰ *ibid*, 45.

conditioned my attitude towards psychological suffering during my whole subsequent life”²²¹

In writing of this period of her life, Caryll Houselander speaks about the sickness in the context of the Mystical Body of Christ. For her the Sacred Host was the very heart of the mystery of God’s love and that Christ’s love and giving flowed from this same mystery.²²² Her cure came about as a result of receiving Holy Viaticum. As an adult she reflected that what was of utmost importance in being cured was what she called abandoning of the self to God’s love. Her definition of this is very specific:

.. I mean giving oneself up to God, to be transformed in Him. It is the cure for self that is the core of the whole thing; we require to be cured of *self* by being changed, as the bread and wine on the altar are changed, into Christ²²³

For her, such transformation meant that the individual becomes Christ, is able to be transformed by Him to see and love as Christ did²²⁴

Her formal years of schooling were to bring Caryll to a renewed understanding of her relationship to God and humanity. At the convent boarding school life was simple but good and Caryll experienced the joy of the simplicity of life of the nuns. “There was something for me that was almost sacramental in the substance of everything around us. We seemed to breathe Him in the air that we breathed”²²⁵. The convent experience reinforced for Caryll her newfound awareness of self-giving to God – of being abandoned to the presence of God.²²⁶ As such, the love of God became a tangible reality at that time

²²¹ *ibid.*, 49

²²² *ibid.*, 52

²²³ *ibid.*, 54

²²⁴ *ibid.*, 55

²²⁵ *ibid.*, 60

²²⁶ *ibid.* 63.

During this period of her life, war broke out and the convent became a haven for refugee children. She became aware of a Belgian lay sister whom she regarded as a lonely woman. On one such occasion Caryll found this not-named sister in tears. She describes the scene with sensitivity and poignancy. She captures the stillness of the moment – a moment which would bring about an intense mystical experience for her.

At last, with an effort, I raised my head, and then – I saw – the nun was crowned with the crown of thorns.. That bowed head was weighed under the crown of thorns.²²⁷

The result of this experience was such that it taught the young Caryll a lesson in sacrifice and showed her an attitude to suffering and the visible love of God.²²⁸

Her second mystical experience occurred a few years later. Caryll had experienced the boredom and the loneliness of non-convent schools. Her experiences were prison-like; one was a number.²²⁹ Here she learned to rebel and to reject authority as she saw it. Her health also suffered. At age fifteen, she was again sent to a convent boarding school primarily to jolt her out of her recent attacks of poor health. “I was sent for the sake of the seaside air for my health, and as a “kill or cure” method of forcing me to adjust myself to other people”²³⁰ The positive influence of this school was that it forced Caryll to be more responsible for herself and her own growth. She became more interested in the Gospels and the New Testament. Smoky’s letters in response to Caryll’s questions became a catalyst for self-determination and self-knowledge.²³¹

²²⁷ *ibid*, 74

²²⁸ *ibid*, 77.

²²⁹ *ibid*, 78

²³⁰ *ibid*, 85.

²³¹ *ibid*, 98

At this time, the world was ugly and so was her home. The Liturgy was the only beautiful thing in her life²³² The Tsar and his family had been murdered in July, 1918 and the night was raining, the environment was dull and drab. In this setting Caryll ‘saw in her mind’ “a gigantic and living Russian icon... It was an icon of Christ the King crucified”²³³ The experience brought her to tears but moreso would impact on the way she would view other people.

The “Christianity” I had been searching for was becoming more and more tainted by a socialistic tendency, and if not class-consciousness, at least money-consciousness. Christ Himself in my mind began to belong to one class of people only, those who were poor and who in my ignorance I supposed were despised by the rich.²³⁴

This realization meant that every cross was a cross of Christ. Every suffering – a suffering of Christ. And that a crown of gold – even that of a Tsar or King – is a crown of thorns.²³⁵ In this respect we see something of the journey of Caryll Houselander during her formative years - a journey marked by confusion, by sickness, by changes of circumstance but at the same time a journey in development of personal identity and faith.

Her Involvement in the Social Sphere

What brought Caryll Houselander into the world of adult men and women was an Art scholarship.²³⁶ Her circle of acquaintances immediately broadened and included people described as Bohemian and eccentric and who had their own religion.²³⁷ At this time Caryll began to search for truth in the different religions. Her work was a matter of necessity, as she had to support herself as well as find lodging. She took a room in a lodging house but it

²³² *ibid*, 107

²³³ *ibid*, 112

²³⁴ *ibid*, 114

²³⁵ *ibid*, 116

²³⁶ *ibid* 119

²³⁷ *ibid*, 122.

was quite spartan in all respects. Here she would experience hunger and darkness²³⁸ but her fascination with people meant that she was compelled to go out onto the streets in the evenings.²³⁹ Her work would also bring her into contact with other people²⁴⁰ She undertook a variety of jobs including commercial artist, letter writer, child minder. The necessity of work she said was “good for me”²⁴¹ On one such occasion when she was walking at night, she happened upon the Catholic Evidence Guild. Here she found a vibrancy about the Catholic church that she had not encountered before. Here she found Christ- Christ going out to the people as did the Good Shepherd.²⁴² She immediately felt at home with the Guild Her self-chosen displacement she saw as a divine compulsion to pursue loneliness. She now looked for Christ in the people on the streets and not in the churches.

I had gradually ceased to look for Christ in the churches and had begun, though I had not yet realised it, to look for Him in the streets and in the people who thronged them²⁴³

Her involvement with the people on the street would bring about her third mystical experience. Christ everywhere and in all men. The vision lasted several days²⁴⁴ but it brought home to Caryll a renewed sense of the incarnation and the sacramentality of ordinary life. “In this sense the ordinary life itself becomes sacramental, and every action of anyone at all has an eternal meaning”²⁴⁵ This represented a life-changing perception for Caryll and would underpin her relationships and work from this point onwards. She says

²³⁸ *ibid*, 128-129.

²³⁹ *ibid*, 130

²⁴⁰ *ibid*, 126

²⁴¹ *ibid*, 132.

²⁴² *ibid*, 133.

²⁴³ *ibid*, 135.

²⁴⁴ *ibid*, 137-138

²⁴⁵ *ibid*, 139

that the realization of oneness in Christ was not only the cure for loneliness but this oneness was the ultimate meaning of life, “the only thing that gives meaning and purpose to every life”²⁴⁶ In writing *This War is the Passion*²⁴⁷ Caryll would make reference to the sacramentality of life; that in the midst of war when the situation looks terrible, Christ is still there and as such the sacramentality of humanity is still a force to be reckoned with. She says:

Our life is sacramental, we are Christ’s final sacrament... Our humanity is the substance of the sacramental life of Christ in us. .²⁴⁸

Further, in *This War is the Passion* Caryll writes about vocation. For her, vocation meant love. Whatever one did, ought be done as a result of love even in war. Every Christian has this vocation to love. For her, such a vocation is of Christ; it is of the essence of his Passion. It is what animates and calls one to go out to others in selflessness²⁴⁹ Only Caryll who had experienced her own passion and personal struggle could speak convincingly of going out to others

Because He has made us “other Christs,” because His life continues in each one of us, there is nothing that any one of us can suffer which is not the Passion He suffered.²⁵⁰

Becoming involved in the lives of others is redemptive. It is transformational as it encounters Christ in the other – this self same Christ in oneself that goes out to meet the other

We are in the world now as Christs; in the midst of this storm. We are here to keep Christianity alive, to keep Christianity pure, intact, to ensure by our own lives in Christ that the gates of hell shall not prevail. This cannot be done if there is the least compromise with love...²⁵¹

²⁴⁶ *ibid* , 140

²⁴⁷ Marie-Anne Mayeski, 1991, 49.

²⁴⁸ *ibid*

²⁴⁹ *ibid* , 26.

²⁵⁰ *ibid* , 24.

²⁵¹ *ibid* , 43

Caryll's involvement in the social sphere of life included being with the people and sharing with them in their sorrows and hardships of life. She was thus enabled to write about the presence of Christ in everyone even in war. The words that she wrote impacted on her readers for hers is a message of the ever-present incarnational Christ in all men and women in spite of the circumstances. Hers is a message of hope and inspiration.

Her Contribution to Society and the Church

As with Simone Weil, Caryll Houselander's main contribution was as a writer. She wrote of her own experiences. She shared the lives and living conditions of others and her visions are part and parcel of the totality of her experiences. Her life and her writings were imbued with the richness of Catholicism. She interprets her life and her work from a Catholic perspective.

Her autobiography – *A Rocking Horse Catholic* is the honest reflection of a journey of faith in the Catholic tradition. It is important because it is her story – not that of the Saints and Martyrs but the story of an everyday Catholic growing up in a world of war and confusion. In *This War is the Passion*, Houselander reflects upon Christ's Passion and how this is evident in her experience of living in Europe. In this book she puts the flesh of Christ into the lives of the people with whom she lived and worked. *The Reed of God* focuses on Mary the Mother of God. She is the empty reed and the bearer of Christ to the world –

We ought to let everything grow in us, as Christ grew in Mary. And we ought to realize that in everything that does grow quietly in us, Christ grows. We should let thoughts and words and songs grow slowly and unfold in darkness in us.²⁵²

Her other works such as *Guilt* and *Wood of the Cradle, Wood of the Cross – the little way of the infant Jesus*, are also imbued with the same Catholic intensity. She writes as a single Catholic woman. She writes so as to make sense of her world and her environment. She

²⁵² *ibid.*, 80

does so from the perspective of an incarnational model because if it were not for Christ and His presence sacramentally, then there is a limited perception of reality. Hers is a message for society and the church which is always relevant

It would be impossible to set down here all the implication of this “vision” of Christ in man; it altered the course of my life completely... In this sense the ordinary life itself becomes sacramental, and every action of anyone at all has an eternal meaning.²⁵³

Margot King writes of Houselander that her

Legacy therefore includes much more than a few devotional works, Indeed, she can best be described not as a writer, nor even as an artist, but as a mystic and a visionary in the tradition of Julian of Norwich, Catherine of Siena, or Teresa of Avila.²⁵⁴

King concludes her brief biography by referring to Caryll Houselander as a saint with whom lay people can identify – it is though her willingness to suffer for Christ and allow herself to be transformed by him which is of relevance for today.²⁵⁵ As with Dorothy Day, her commitment to the Church and to her work is a testament to her faith relationship with Christ. It is my contention that being as single woman enable her to live an ascetical life, to work, to write and to reflect on the ills of the world and to seek out the visible presence of Christ in all men and women.

Caryll Houselander as a Role Model for Single People

Caryll Houselander is a model for single people. She shows in her life the value of struggle and the ongoing search for personal and faith identity. She shows that it is a value to be spent on the world and to pain. Sickness, struggle and hardship are to be seen as redemptive qualities. In *Guilt* she writes:

²⁵³ Caryll Houselander, *A Rocking Horse Catholic*, 139.

²⁵⁴ Margot King, ‘Caryll Houselander 1901-1945’. <http://www.peregrina.com/caryll/caryll.htm> accessed on 12th October, 2001.

²⁵⁵ *ibid*

To *each* man who lives in Christ, *all* men belong, all love and wisdom and joy, all suffering and fear and atonement, all power and beauty, all living and dying, all childhood and manhood. Because Christ is whole in each member of his Body on earth now, each in a sense is the Mystical Body. He is in a sense all humanity. Each man owes his tears for his own sins to every other man, and each owes the joy of Christ to every other. . . . We cannot escape from Christ, the destiny of our being²⁵⁶

Houselander shows that faith is not easy and that believing is more than just an intellectual aspect; it is intrinsic to everyone's journey. In her chosen field of writing, she freely speaks of life, of issues from a faith perspective and one which is unashamedly Catholic. Hers is the story of a single woman living at a particular period in world history and who had to make sense and meaning of the issues, wars and the culture in which she lived. She did this by going out to people and becoming involved in their lives both personally as well as a writer. Her final meditation, sent to Frank Sheed in 1953 reveals a person who believed simply and who understood the message of Christ. It was one which always involved the crowd and for whom both he and his mother Mary sacrificed themselves.

And she heard
 the sound of his blood,
 that was hers,
 like the sound of a great sea
 flowing in waves of light
 over the world's darkness,
 flowing down the hillside,
 through the holy city,
 and all cities,
 all over the world
 till the end of time,
 flooding the souls of men
 with the waters of life.
 Mary, the Mother of God
 looked from the night
 to a million million dawns,
 whose rising suns
 were a million million Hosts.

And she saw the crowds. . . .²⁵⁷

²⁵⁶ Marie-Anne Mayeski, 1991, 179

²⁵⁷ Caryll Houselander, *A Rocking Horse Catholic*, 146-147

Synthesis of Day, Weil and Houselander

Having briefly examined the lives of these three women, and before moving to Kierkegaard and Hammar skjold, I propose to draw together the threads that connect these single women.

Firstly, they were contemporaries all born in the early part of the twentieth century. They lived in America, France and England respectively. In this respect theirs was a world suffering from the effects of war and depression.

Secondly, Day, Weil and Houselander lived their lives on two levels. Each worked with ordinary people, many of whom were poor and destitute. Each knew the pain of loneliness, of poverty, hunger and cold. Dorothy Day set up and helped maintain Christian communities which tended to the needs of others. Simone Weil worked in the factories where she experienced first hand, the experiences of the poor and often marginalised of Paris. Caryll Houselander worked both day and night at any work she could get – from looking after children to writing letters for the illiterate. Further, Day, Weil and Houselander lived their lives from a stance of personal faith. For Day and Houselander, their lives were motivated by their Catholicism. Weil herself admitted to being Christian and would have been baptised had she thought this was the will of God for her.

Thirdly, Day, Weil and Houselander were prolific writers. Day worked in the media especially *The Catholic Worker*. Her impact as a writer was incredible by today's standards. But hers was a message Americans welcomed. Her message was the Christ of the Gospel in action. Simone Weil wrote numerous works which are academic in style and reflect her classical education. Hers is a writing which sets out to argue why the world is as it is. She is not unfamiliar with Biblical material and used this as required. Examples include *Gravity and Grace*, *Decreation* and *The Cross*.²⁵⁸ Hers is however, a rhetoric but not devoid of

²⁵⁸ Such as are found in Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace* (New York: Routledge, 1952)

personal experience. Her experience is shown poignantly in and through her letters. Caryl Houselander was an overtly spiritual writer. She took many of the issues of the time, including her own life, and wrote of these from a Catholic perspective. In particular her writings focused on suffering and how this is intrinsic to an incarnational theology. She wrote for people to understand their world but did so using Catholic teaching.

Finally, these women were single. Day, however, had been in a de facto relationship and had a daughter. In order to become a Catholic, she separated from him and remained a single person for the remainder of her life. Both Weil and Houselander never married. Each of these women represent values and a model of living which exemplifies faith, searching for integrity, living and working often with the poor and the dispossessed in a Francis of Assisi type of spirituality. Their lives are examples for others – for women in particular, but also for men. These are ordinary women but larger than life in what they did and in what they achieved. Singleness enabled Dorothy Day, Simone Weil and Caryl Houselander to live such lives of commitment to themselves, to society and to faith.

Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855)

Søren Kierkegaard was born in 1813 in Copenhagen. He was born into a Lutheran household. He wrote profusely over a thirty-eight year period. Some of his works were pseudonymous (*Either/Or* and *Fear and Trembling* in 1843) whilst others were directly attributable to him: *The Concept of Irony* (1841), *Christian Discourses* (1848) and *Practice in Christianity* (1850) to name a few. His writing is often in the style of philosophy. In the following quotation we see something of the nature of his work.

The thing is to understand myself; to see what God really wishes *me* to do; the thing is to find a truth which is true *for me*, to find the *idea for which I can live or die* (*Journals and Notebooks 1 A 75*; August 1835 (d))²⁵⁹

²⁵⁹ J Chamberlain and J Ree eds, *The Kierkegaard Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 15

In this we see something of what Kierkegaard's work will focus upon – the use of philosophy as a tool to understand truth; the truth which he understands as being of God in his life. To say that he was in love with language is to underscore his gift.

So I have sometimes sat for hours, in love with the sound of words. That is to say, when the pregnancy of the thought is echoed I have been able to sit for hours on end, like a flute-player entertaining himself with his flute. (XI¹ A 214; 1854, (s), 24)²⁶⁰

Formative Years (As suggested in Johannes Climacus, or *De Omnibus Dubitandum Est* ²⁶¹)

In this work Kierkegaard states that his initial desire was not to be prominent but to live in quiet seclusion – a quasi form of monastic life lived in the world. He was, however, in love – “ardently in love- but with thought or, rather, with thinking”²⁶². His love for thought far surpassed that of a love of or for feminine beauty. His love was that of ideas taking shape or formed “in the silence of his soul”²⁶³ and then coming to pass. This love he came to develop as a result of his relationship with his father.

Johannes Climacus tells us that his father was a stern man outwardly unassuming but inwardly a man of “sparkling imagination”²⁶⁴. This would take hold in the child as a result of the father's adventures in and through story-telling.

Before long he developed magic powers like his father's, and then what had been an epic became a drama – their journeys became conversations rather than monologues. ... For Johannes it was as if the world came into existence through these conversations, as if his father was the Lord our God and he himself one of the elect, permitted to weave his own poor fancies into the drama however he pleased²⁶⁵.

This form of adventure often took the form of dialectics – discussions between characters.

²⁶⁰ *ibid.*

²⁶¹ *ibid.*, 346-380.

²⁶² *ibid.*, 347

²⁶³ *ibid.*

²⁶⁴ *ibid.*, 348.

²⁶⁵ *ibid.*

The drama for Johannes was totally engaging and delighted his soul. This form of home instruction would serve him in good stead for his university study and the life of writing in which he would soon engage himself. Negatively, however, this form of solitude would impact on the way in which he would engage socially with his peers. It would also lead in due course to his choice not to marry but to remain a single person.

There are two thoughts which were so early in my soul that I cannot really discover their origin. The first is that there are men whose qualification is to be sacrificed, in one way or another, sacrificed for others in order to forward the idea – and that, with my particular cross, I was such a man. . .²⁶⁶

Paradoxically, this idea of being a single individual (as opposed to someone who is married or a part of a crowd) would occupy his thinking especially with regard to salvation. One had to be conscious of following one's eternal vocation but to do so as an individual irrespective of time or circumstance²⁶⁷

In speaking of his role as an author, Kierkegaard admitted the burden of his upbringing and its relationship to his being a Christian author – but an author who stood alone with his gifts in the world.

He describes this relationship:

I had a thorn in my flesh, intellectual gifts (especially imagination and dialectic) and culture in superabundance, an enormous development as an observer, a Christian upbringing that was certainly very unusual, a dialectical relationship to Christianity which was peculiarly my own, and in addition to this I had from childhood a training in obedience, absolute obedience, and I was armed with an almost foolhardy faith that I was able to do anything, only one thing excepted, to be a free bird.²⁶⁸

In this we see something of the tension faced by Kierkegaard which came about as a result of

²⁶⁶ Peter Rohde, *Søren Kierkegaard* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1963), 69.

²⁶⁷ Soren Kierkegaard, *Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing* [Douglas Steere trans.], (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), 184-185

²⁶⁸ J. Chamberlain and J. Ree eds, *ibid*, 330.

his formative years. On the one hand there exists the tension between a love of language, of philosophy and that of faith; on the other hand we see the tension between being an intellectually gifted person and being a person who ultimately chooses the vocation to be a writer and remain unmarried. In reflecting on his life Kierkegaard records in journal entry XI² A 250

... My task is to make room for God to come (+). So it is easy to see why I must be quite literally a single man, and so must be maintained in great weakness and fragility...²⁶⁹

His Involvement in the Social Sphere

Initially Søren Kierkegaard believed he would finish his theology degree and become a country parson

My intention was to finish with the poetical as speedily as possible - and then go out to a country parish - ... to leave the city immediately and find a living as a country parson²⁷⁰

However, this was not to be the case. The truth for Kierkegaard, meant that Governance (God) had chosen him (as it were) for a life of authorship. This was to be his method of engagement with the world

Governance now had me securely bound... For even if the religious had not been in the background, that thorn in the flesh would have prevented any such thing. And in relation to the religious authorship, governance had a check on me²⁷¹

His relationship with young women and especially Regine serves as a good example of his social interaction as a young man. Whether he was conscious of his own feelings and those of others is open to question. Certainly he played with their affections rather like he and his father had played at dialectics. His relationship as outlined by Peter Rohde (1963)²⁷² details

²⁶⁹ R Gregor Smith, *Søren Kierkegaard. The Last Years Journals 1853-1855* (London: Collins, 1965), 300.

²⁷⁰ 'My Work as an Author' in J. Chamberlain and J. Ree eds, *ibid.*, 332

²⁷¹ *ibid.*, 332

²⁷² Peter Rohde, *ibid.*, chapter 2

the way in which the witty and socially adept young Søren was charming and polite – and taken by the ladies. In Kierkegaard's words from *Either/Or*

I kept egging them on: spirituality, wit and aesthetic objectivity all contributed to make the atmosphere freer, and yet everything was kept within the bounds of the strictest propriety. . . Now I led my tale – telling to the fringe of sadness; now I let playfulness prevail; now I coaxed my hearers out into dialectic play²⁷³

In reality, however, these social 'party games' reflect the way in which he interacted with young women. It was not malicious but a playing out in the social sphere, the mind games he had learned from his father. His behaviour towards the young Regine and their subsequent engagement break-up typifies the relative immaturity of Kierkegaard especially with regard to human emotion and personal responsibility.

Kierkegaard acknowledged that in reality his was a life to be at the behest of God and not to a wife in marriage. He believed that there was a God relationship which was more important and represented a truth for him. In commenting on his role as an author, Kierkegaard speaks freely about this relationship in a way which shows he has matured in his thinking and in his ability to relate with others.

This God-relationship of mine is the 'happy love' in a life which has been in many ways troubled and unhappy. And although the story of this love affair (if I dare to call it such) has the essential marks of a true love story, in the fact that only one can completely understand it, and there is no absolute joy except in relating it to one only, namely, the beloved, who in this instance is the person by whom one is beloved, yet there is a joy also in talking about it to others²⁷⁴

His Contribution to Society and Church

Kierkegaard's main contribution was in the field of writing. Some of his work appeared under pseudonyms: *Fear and Trembling* by Johannes de Silentio and *Either/Or: A Fragment*

²⁷³ *ibid*, 51.

²⁷⁴ J. Chamberlain and J. Ree eds., *ibid*, 320.

of Life. Edited by Victor Eremita serve as examples. In writing about his work as an author, Kierkegaard explains the reasons for his pseudonyms:

It is Governance that has educated me, and the education is reflected in the process of productivity. The process is this: a poetic and philosophic nature is put aside in order to become a Christian. But the unusual feature is that the two movements begin simultaneously, and hence tis is a conscious process - . . . The religious is decisively present from the first instant and has a decisive predominance, but for a while it waits patiently to give the poet leave to talk himself out. . . .²⁷⁵

His work is both aesthetic as well as Christian. However, his style is suggestive of there being a close relationship between the aesthetic and the religious.

A constant theme or point of focus for Kierkegaard is Christianity. He is at once in pains to critique the Christianity he sees in his country and in so doing he writes to establish for himself what is the truth. Much of this critique and reflection can be found in his Journals. He raises key questions such as: How is it possible to love God in the Christian sense and if you say you love God – what does this imply for human relationship?²⁷⁶ Another issue was the nature of discipleship. Does one follow Christ as a model or follow only his injunctions? What does it mean to say that one is a disciple of Christ?²⁷⁷ Another area is that of celibacy and the single life. For Kierkegaard, celibacy is a positive if understood correctly.

In the Christianity of the New Testament God wishes to be loved, and therefore he wishes man to abandon the egoism of giving life. . . . Every time we see celibacy from love of God we see an effort to comply with God's intention.²⁷⁸

As a single person, Kierkegaard came to understand and love the majesty of God's love in his soul. "There was and there is a need of majesty in my soul, of a majesty I can never tire

²⁷⁵ *ibid*, 325

²⁷⁶ R. Gregor Smith, *ibid*, 108.

²⁷⁷ *ibid*, XI¹ A 160, 74.

²⁷⁸ *ibid*, XI¹ A 154, 267

of worshipping.²⁷⁹ The sacrifices Kierkegaard made in his life and the inherent suffering he experienced as a result, are almost inconsequential given this later understanding of his celibacy and what this has come to mean in his life. Thus, as an author who has critiqued his own Christian society and thereby his own place in that society, he comes to a renewed self-understanding. He is enabled to reflect and comment in such a way as to offer Christendom (Christian society), a renewed way of looking at itself. In this respect, his methodology is suggestive of an 1850's Protestant Vatican II – how to renew the Protestant religion. Kierkegaard's contribution to and the church is through his writing, his reflection and critique. He offers a sense of what could be – and in the language of metaphor he says –

In order to swim one strips oneself naked – in order to aim at the truth one must undress in a much more inward sense, one must take off the inward clothing of thought, ideas, selfishness, and the like, before one is naked enough.²⁸⁰

Søren Kierkegaard: A Role Model for Single People

We see in Kierkegaard, someone who was searching for his own truth. He sought this not only through theology but chiefly through his engagement in the area of philosophy. When in *Purity of Heart* Kierkegaard comments –

Do you not now live so that you are conscious of yourself as an individual; that in each of your relations in which you come into touch with the outside world, you are conscious of yourself, and that at the same time you are related to yourself as an individual,²⁸¹

he shows the relationship between philosophical and theological reflection. One's salvation comes through being an individual but always mindful of one's relationships. Being in touch with yourself is to be able to balance the self as an individual with the self who is in relationship with others. In this respect Kierkegaard reflects something of what it means for

²⁷⁹ *ibid*, 268

²⁸⁰ *ibid* XI¹ A 480; 1854, 25

²⁸¹ Søren Kierkegaard, *Purity of Heart is to Will one Thing* [Douglas Stere trans], (New York: Harper and Row, 1956),187

him to be a single person – and in this respect single people can see in him a possible methodology for reflection with oneself and one's environment.

In describing his work as an author, Kierkegaard is mindful of 'godly fear' and the way this has given impetus to him in his work

... I cannot and dare not say that it is He who immediately inserts the thoughts in me, but that my relationship to God is a reflection-relationship, is inwardness in reflection, as a general the distinguishing trait of my individuality is reflection, so that even in prayer my *forte* is thanksgiving.²⁸²

This quote highlights and sums up Kierkegaard's dialectical relationship with God. It's a relationship of creative tension but above all is one of awe and respect. In a sense the relationship is reminiscent of the type that existed between God and Moses on Mount Horeb: the burning bush; the 'come no closer', be mindful of yourself and of me and respect the distance. The dynamic is a biblical dynamic established from within a philosophical framework.

Kierkegaard is a role model for single Christian men and women. His story is one which speaks of giftedness and the loneliness that can accompany this. His story is one which shows to others that creativity is always a challenge. We see in Kierkegaard someone who came to recognize that his salvation could only be met by utilising his gifts and abilities in the field of philosophical and theological reflection. Commitment to one's sense of self is what is important. From a Christian point of view such commitment typifies and reflects his need to be an authentic witness to his own understanding and lived-out experience of faith. He did this as a single person.

²⁸² J. Chamberlain and J. Ree eds, *ibid.*, 322

Dag Hammarskjold (1905-1961)

Dag Hammarskjold was born in Sweden in 1905. His is an interesting story. Not only was he involved in many aspects of public life but it was his position as Secretary General of the United Nations (UN) which would see him involved in world affairs. It would be his active role in this international organization which would bring about his death in 1961 whilst on a UN mission to the Congo. In an address given by Gunnar Jahn in awarding Hammarskjold the Nobel Peace Prize posthumously in 1961, he speaks in praise of such a noteworthy man.

Fully aware of the magnitude and complexity of his task, he devoted himself to it completely, exerting all his determination and strength in carrying it out. In a private letter written in 1953 he says: "To know that the goal is so significant that everything else must be set aside gives a great sense of liberation and makes one indifferent to anything that may happen to oneself."²⁸³

In this quotation we see not only the esteem of his colleagues but also the character of Hammarskjold in his commitment to the UN and its aim for peace was his major directive irrespective of any imposition it would have on him.

His formative years

It was the influence of his parents that moulded Hammarskjold not only for public office but moulded his integrity and strength of character. He acknowledged this in a speech given in 1953. He says of his parents Hjalmar and Agnes:

From generations of soldiers and government officials on my father's side I inherited a belief that no life was more satisfactory than one of selfless service to your country – or humanity. This service required a sacrifice of all personal interests, but likewise the courage to stand up unflinchingly for your convictions. From scholars and clergymen on my mother's side, I inherited a belief that, in the very radical sense of the Gospels, all men were equals as children of God, and should be met and treated by us as our masters in God.²⁸⁴

²⁸³ Gunnar Jahn, *The Nobel Prize for Peace 1961*
<http://www.nobel.se/peace/laureates/1961/press.html> accessed on 30 December, 2001.

²⁸⁴ Kofi Annan, *Dag Hammarskjold and the Twenty First Century*
<http://www.nobel.se/peace/laureates/1961/hammarskjold-bio.html> accessed on 6 January, 2002. Hereafter as *Dag Hammarskjold – Biography*

From this standpoint, it can be seen how his family background is congruent with the key principles of the UN Charter, principles Hammar skjold believed the core of an international community: equal political rights, equal economic opportunities, justice and the prohibition of armed force except in the common interest.

Kofi Annan (current Secretary General of the UN) in his address to the Hammar skjold Foundation on 6 September 2001, emphasized these principles in the context of Hammar skjold the man.²⁸⁵ In articulating these principles, he stressed that these were set down to promote peace. In this respect it is easy to see how Hammar skjold would readily be appropriated into his role as a public leader. An early reference in his journal *Markings*²⁸⁶ reflects or shows an insight into the character of Dag Hammar skjold.

Smiling, sincere, incorruptible –
His body disciplined and limber,
A man who had become what he could,
And was what he was –
Ready at any moment to gather everything
Into one simple sacrifice

His formative years taught him about service, about community as broad and all encompassing; that there was a bigger picture to life but above all he learned about sacrifice and self-giving. All these qualities Hammar skjold would bring to bear in his public office especially that of Secretary General of the U N.

His Involvement in the Social Sphere

In his address to the Swedish Academy in 1954, Dag Hammar skjold gives a brief overview of his father's family primarily as a means to assist him to speak of his father. Of his father's background he says – that it “had back of it generations of military and administrative

²⁸⁵ Kofi Annan, *The Dag Hammar skjold Lecture*
http://www.dhf.uu.se/DHLectures/Annan_speech.html accessed on 6 January, 2002.

²⁸⁶ Dag Hammar skjold, *Markings* (New York: Ballantine, 1983), 2.

service”.²⁸⁷ His father too had been a prominent public figure in Sweden rising to the position of Prime Minister, a post which he relinquished in 1917.²⁸⁸ Given his background, it is no small wonder that Dag Hammarskjold would enter into public life.

Before taking on the position of Secretary General to the UN, Dag Hammarskjold had already been in the public arena for several years: the Swedish Ministry of Finance (1936), Chairman of the Board of the Swedish Riksbank (1941-48). In 1945 he was Government adviser on trade policy and in 1947 he joined the Swedish Foreign Service. He also represented Sweden on UNISCAN (United Kingdom-Scandinavia – a free trade project) and was involved in the OEEC (Organization of European Economic Co-operation) as Vice Chairman.²⁸⁹ In this context Gunnar Jahn, in his speech to the Nobel Committee of the Swedish Government, refers to Hammarskjold –

Those of us who knew him before he became the Secretary General were also impressed by this young man’s wide knowledge and indefatigability, as well as by his quiet and unassuming approach to his administrative duties in the service of his country.²⁹⁰

An entry in his journal for the period 1941-1942 fleshes out Jahn’s understanding of Hammarskjold. In his entry Hammarskjold reflects on Truth, God, the paths to be undertaken but also what is critical to Hammarskjold the man and the public servant-

The more faithfully you listen to the voice within you, the better you will hear what is sounding outside. And only he who listens can speak. Is this the starting point of the road towards the union of your two dreams – to be allowed in clarity of mind to mirror life and in purity of heart to mould it?²⁹¹

²⁸⁷ Foote, Wilder, ed., *The Servant of Peace – A Selection of the Speeches and Statements of Dag Hammarskjold* (London: The Bodley Head, 1962). Hereafter as *The Servant of Peace*

²⁸⁸ *ibid.*, 76

²⁸⁹ *Dag Hammarskjold – Biography*

²⁹⁰ *ibid.*

²⁹¹ Dag Hammarskjold, *ibid.*, 8

In these comments and reflections from Jahn and Hammarskjold, we see something of the man and his personal motivation for involvement in public office. In an address to the American Jewish Committee – New York in 1957, Hammarskjold spoke of the call to be Secretary General and his response to that call. He says –

I was inducted into my present office, to which I had been catapulted, without previous soundings, indeed, without any pre-warning. I felt that it was my duty to accept it, not because of any feeling of confidence in my personal capacity to overcome the difficulties then prevailing, the one to whom the call had come seemed to me in duty bound to respond²⁹²

This humble expression of his response to become Secretary General, shows his sense of self-understanding and readiness for the challenges ahead. In the year of his acceptance of the post he wrote-

“Night is drawing nigh –“
For all that has been – Thanks!
To all that shall be – Yes!

And

I am the vessel. The draught is God’s. And God is the thirsty one.

And

The humility which comes from others having faith in you

His involvement in the social sphere, in public life, was animated in the first instance by his family background. In the second instance it was motivated by principles of integrity, humility and quiet reflection. The institution of the Quiet Room in the UN (the Meditation Room), typifies this involvement and the principles that he espoused. The room was to

²⁹² ‘Human Rights and the Work for Peace’. – in *The Servant of Peace* 126

provide people with space for quiet and for prayerful reflection.

We all have within us a centre of stillness surrounded by silence... It has been the aim to create in this small room a place where the doors may be open to the infinite lands of thought and prayer... the stone in the middle of the room... is dedicated to the God whom man worships under many names and in many forms... It is for those who come here to fill the void with what they find in their centre of stillness.²⁹³

In essence, Hammarskjöld is motivated in his social involvement by the inner stillness, by the god who is to be found in the inner stillness and this is what he holds out to his colleagues and co-workers at the UN.

In a poignant passage for 1957, the year in which the Quiet Room was dedicated, Dag Hammarskjöld wrote in his journal *Markings*²⁹⁴

*Night is drawing nigh –
each day the first day: each day a life –
each morning we must hold out the chalice of our being,
to carry, and give back. It must be held out empty –
for the past must only be reflected in its polish, its
shape, its capacity.
... and those things which for our unworthiness
we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask,
vouchsafe to give us... (The Book of Common Prayer, General Collect)*

and

*In Thy wind - in Thy Light –
how insignificant is everything else, how small
are we - and how happy in that which alone is great*²⁹⁵

Thus in the centre of his being there is stillness but one of simplicity, one of trust, of self-effacement and above all a stillness which radiates a magnificence. These are the underpinnings of his social involvement in public life

²⁹³ 'A Quiet Room', *ibid*, 160-161.

²⁹⁴ Dag Hammarskjöld, *ibid*, 126

²⁹⁵ *ibid*, 140

His Contribution to Society and Church

The impact of Dag Hammarskjöld's contribution is extensive. His was a life of dynamism and of active engagement for and on behalf of the UN. Kofi Annan bears witness to this in his address to the foundation at Uppsala in 2001.

His life and his death, his words and his action, have done more to shape public expectations of the office, and indeed of the Organization, than those of any other man or woman in its history.²⁹⁶

In his address entitled *An Instrument of Faith*, given to the World Council of Churches (W.C.C) in Illinois in 1954, Hammarskjöld points out the relatedness of the UN and the Churches.

The United Nations stands aside-necessarily outside – all confessions but it is, nevertheless, an instrument of faith.²⁹⁷

Faith and Order, the key concepts of the WCC are, for Hammarskjöld, what the UN is also about. For him, the UN seeks to promote faith between individuals and countries and to thereby promote order – peace and economic/social welfare. In a sense this is utopian but the ideal he says is to be striven for, irrespective of the cost.

The Organization must be animated by and defend Faith in the dignity and worth of men, born equal. It must serve and strengthen Order as a guarantee for peace, giving to everyone a possibility to live a full life of freedom.²⁹⁸

Put simply, this is to be the work of the UN and the governments and peoples it represents. It must have a “renewed faith, a faith renewed everyday, expressed in a never abandoned, every day newly initiated, responsible action for peace”²⁹⁹.

²⁹⁶ Kofi Annan, *Dag Hammarskjöld and the Twenty First Century*
http://www.dhf.uu.se/DHLectures/Annan_speech.html accessed on 6 January, 2002

²⁹⁷ *The Servant of Peace*, 56-67

²⁹⁸ *ibid*

²⁹⁹ *ibid*

Hammar skjold's commitment to the ideals of the UN reflect his own principles and desires for the community of humanity. His vision for the UN is also the vision of the Christian Churches. They too, have this self-same responsibility. They must promote unity and not division. It is an overwhelming task to be confronted by the Churches and "all men of good will of every creed in the work for peace".³⁰⁰

In challenging the WCC, Hammar skjold refers not only to the specific aim of Faith and Order but refers to the Sermon on the Mount as more than an ideological statement but one which sets out to challenge and to inspire, to make for the good of others.

Mustn't we learn to believe that when we give to this work, daily, what it is in our power to give, and when, daily, we meet the demands facing us to all the extent of our ability, this will ultimately lead to a world of greater justice and good will, even if nothing would seem to give us hope of success or even of progress in the right direction³⁰¹

A journal entry from 1954 contextualises Hammar skjold's thought in prayer. The preceding entries talk of drinking the cup, of being watchful and taking responsibility for mistakes in errors of freedom. Hammar skjold then addresses the Thou of his being

Thou who art over us
Thou who art one of us,
Thou who *art* -
Also within us,
May all see Thee – in me also,
May I prepare the way for Thee,
May I thank Thee for all that shall fall to my lot,
May I also not forget the needs of others,
Keep me in Thy love . . .
Give me a pure heart – that I may see Thee,
A humble heart – that I may hear thee,
A heart of love – that I may serve Thee,
A heart of faith – that I may abide in Thee³⁰²

His address to the WCC highlights what he believes is the close association between the

³⁰⁰ *ibid*, 60

³⁰¹ *The Servant of Peace*. 61

³⁰² Dag Hammar skjold, *ibid*. 83

aim of the UN with those of the WCC. The promotion of peace and mutual respect are the aims of all but especially the UN and the WCC. The prayer-reflection journal entry for 1954, typifies the way in which Hammarskjöld sought to integrate these ideals in his own mind and heart. In this respect, we see a person and his conviction at the heart of his wider vision for all. A comment made in 1953, in an address entitled 'The New Santa Maria'³⁰³, whilst being a reflection of the UN at that time, is in a sense a timeless comment Hammarskjöld commented

There are not absolute answers to the agonies and searchings of our time. But all men and women of good will can influence the course of history in the direction of the ideals expressed in the Charter.

This after all would seem to be the Gospel message of community, of searching, of reaching out towards what is god as symbolized in the Cross of Christ, the cross which enables all to come together in "universal brotherhood".³⁰⁴

Finally, Dag Hammarskjöld literally gave his life – his ultimate contribution to the aims and ideals which he promoted as Secretary General of the UN. It is ironic that in a speech given in 1953 ('The New Santa Maria')³⁰⁵ he made the comment – "There is a price to be paid for organized international cooperation ...". The price was life and the offering reminiscent of Christ. In his own words:

As I continued along the Way, I learned, step by step, word by word, that behind every sayings in the Gospels stands *one* man and *one* man's experience. Also behind the prayer that the cup might pass from him and his promise to drink it. Also behind each of the words from the Cross (Whitsunday 1961)³⁰⁶

³⁰³ *ibid*, 45.

³⁰⁴ *ibid*

³⁰⁵ *ibid*, 43

³⁰⁶ Dag Hammarskjöld, *ibid*, 180.

Dag Hammarskjold: Role Model for Single People

Kofi Annan, in addressing the Hammarskjold Foundation in 2001, speaks of Dag

Hammarskjold as a role model – one to be emulated as well as admired

His wisdom and his modesty, his unimpeachable integrity and single-minded devotion to duty, have set a standard for all servants of the international community.³⁰⁷

The life of the man and his strength of character and spiritual awareness were such that Kofi Annan would speak of him and his example of a life of dedicated service to the UN. In this same context he also refers to African nations where Hammarskjold is still remembered. Further, the Dag Hammarskjold Foundation was created as the official memorial to a “respected world figure”.³⁰⁸ The foundation hosts conferences and seminars which focus on issues of emerging nations: Africa, Bolivia, Ecuador for example.

Both Annan and the Foundation home in on Hammarskjold to emphasize the singular importance and contribution of Hammarskjold not only during the period of 1950-61 in world history but also to stress the relevancy of the man and his message for the present world.

Hammarskjold stressed the need for continued effort as well as our responsibility to better the welfare of the human community. For him, there was no reason why this could not be done.

Working on the edge of the development of human society is to work on the brink of the unknown. Much of what is done will one day prove to have been of little avail. There is no excuse for the failure to act in accordance with our best understanding, in recognition of its limits but with faith in the ultimate result of the creative evolution in which it is our privilege to cooperate.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁷ Kofi Annan, *Dag Hammarskjold and the Twenty First Century* http://www.dhf.uu.se/DHLectures/Annan_speech.html accessed on 6 January, 2002

³⁰⁸ Ted Trzyna, *Convening Thinkers and Doers: Sweden's Dag Hammarskjold Foundation* <http://cipahq.org/dhf.htm> accessed on 6 January, 2002

³⁰⁹ Gunnar Jahn, *The Nobel Prize for 1961* <http://www.nobel.se/peace/laureates/1961/press.html> accessed on 30 December, 2001

Dag Hammarskjöld is a role model for single people. He typifies in his life courage, a willingness to serve others and to be involved in the betterment of the world community. His was a life of public service and commitment to that service. He was motivated by his own inner faith relationship with God. His journal *Markings* records his reflections on his life, his work and his faith journey. In this story we see a remarkable man who ultimately died in the cause of the promotion of peace. His life is worthy of emulation. His life is a life of witness- and in a very real way what he stood for is timeless.

Synthesis of Kierkegaard and Hammarskjöld

It is my intention at this point to draw together the threads that connect Søren Kierkegaard and Dag Hammarskjöld. Unlike Day, Weil and Houselander, these men were not contemporaries. Kierkegaard lived and died at least half a century prior to the birth of Hammarskjöld. However, they were both from a Scandinavian background which was predominantly Lutheran.

Both men were prolific writers and influential thinkers: Kierkegaard in the field of philosophy and Hammarskjöld in the world of public affairs. Both men did however, have very interesting family backgrounds which would impact on their personal development and the work in which each would engage. Kierkegaard's background would enable him to be somewhat insular but able to look into the lives and writings of others as well as to engage in philosophical discourse some of which had a religious base. Hammarskjöld, on the other hand came from a very publicly spirited background, one more religious in attitude than Kierkegaard's. Hammarskjöld's background would be the foundation for his service and engagement in public office.

Both Kierkegaard and Hammarskjöld were single men. They chose not to marry. Kierkegaard's choice was made initially out of a sense of what God wanted for him whereas it is not clear as to why Hammarskjöld chose to remain single. When asked by Queen

Elizabeth II why he had not married, he replied that “having watched his mother suffer so much from his father’s absences on public business he did not feel he wanted to subject a woman to such a life”.³¹⁰ This reply suggests that he had seen the impact of public life on his mother and father and did not want the same for himself. Whatever the reason, both men chose to remain single.

Their stories typify stories of courage and of being alone. Both typify what it means to search for Truth whether using philosophy, the Scriptures or through relationships with other people. Whereas Kierkegaard’s faith seems a more distant involvement with his God, the relationship of Dag Hammarskjold shows a more personal and earthy approach to God and God’s involvement in the lives of humanity. However, both men show a commitment to their work and to their ongoing struggle for authenticity as single human beings.

The Single Story: An Appraisal of Role Models

In this chapter I have examined the lives of five Christian single men and women.³¹¹ My aim in so doing was to arrive at an appreciation of their lived experience in order to demonstrate their being role models for Christian single men and women.

As role models, they demonstrate a number of qualities: commitment, a sense of personal mission, practical austerity and a search for personal authenticity as Christian men and women.

³¹⁰ Joseph Lash, *Dag Hammarskjold* (London: Cassell, 1962), 219.

³¹¹ Simone Weil, while not formally a baptised Christian, was in conversation with her pastor about Christianity and her relationship the faith. She decided that if it were God’s will for her to be baptised, then this would have taken place. She remained, in principle, if not by desire and disposition, a Christian.

Commitment

Dorothy Day, Simone Weil, Caryll Houselander, Søren Kierkegaard and Dag Hammarskjold demonstrate in their own way a commitment to the work and the community to which they belonged.

Day's commitment was shown through her persistent efforts to work for the poor through her work as a writer and through the Christian communities that she established. Her commitment was a gospel commitment of love of neighbour.

Simone Weil, while not Christian by baptism, was Christian by desire and in lived reality. Like Day, she exemplified personal commitment through her writings and through her involvement with the workers and with causes which sought to improve the living conditions of the ordinary men and women in factories and war torn regions.

We see in Caryll Houselander, a woman who came to see the dignity and worth of human beings. Her commitment to her faith and to the men and women with whom she worked or came in contact, came about as a result of her searching and her visions in which she saw the incarnate Christ present in the world.

Søren Kierkegaard was a man committed to philosophy, to the intellectual life and to a belief that his relationship with God was one of ongoing philosophical conversation and examination of, and with Truth.

Dag Hammarskjold was a man of overtly intense commitment to public office. His was a dynamic, challenging and international commitment to working for people, their dignity and integrity as well as for their betterment and for world peace.

A Sense of Personal Mission

Generally speaking, these single men and women, through their commitment to their work and to the people with whom they came into contact, demonstrated a sense of mission. There was something to be done; there was a cause to take up; there were people who suffered at the hands of oppression or poverty. To be so engaged in the challenge to improve the lot of others, is to be on a mission in the sense as outlined by the Gospel of John (John 15:12-16).³¹²

This is my commandment:
love one another,
as I have loved you.
A man (or woman) can have no greater love
than to lay down his (or her) life for his (her) friends.
...
and I commissioned you
to go out and to bear fruit,
fruit that will last;

A Practical Austerity

A third quality generally displayed by these men and women was their practical austerity in the manner of their living. One of the spiritual motivations for so living, was for the women in particular, the ideal of poverty as outlined by St Francis of Assisi and other spiritual 'masters'. We see too, in Kierkegaard and Hammarskjold an austerity which had its foundations in the Lutheran spirituality. These men and women lived lives based on what they needed in order for them to be involved in their work and the lives of men and women. Claude de Kemoularia (Ambassador Advisor for the Congo) in speaking of the austerity of Hammarskjold remarked that his austerity informed his character, that there was a relationship between his faith and his daily living³¹³. Having examined the lives of these five men and women, I suggest that the comment made by de Kemoularia in respect of

³¹² Alexander Jones, ed., *Jerusalem Bible* (London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966)

³¹³ Hans-Rudiger Minor, 'Political Assassination – Documentary' *Night Flight to Death The Violent Death of Dag Hammarskjold* [Film] SBS Television, 19th December, 2001, 50 minutes

Hammar skjold, could in effect be said of all the men and women examined in this chapter

Search for Personal Authenticity as Single Men and Women

A common thread in the lives of these men and women was that nothing was ever easy. Each person experienced loneliness associated with their lifestyle and their involvements in work and with people in need. If to be a person of commitment were ever to be easy, then the ideal of the community of humankind would cease to be an ideal but become a reality. Christ in talking about the issue of greatness, remarked that to be great one had to be the servant of all and to have a simplicity of mind and heart reminiscent of that of a child (Mark 9: 33-37). The use of the terms slave and sacrifice appear often in the literature associated with these role models. Being authentic people, means to be at home with oneself, with one's work and being with others. It means having the courage of conviction or in the Pauline sense 'of putting on the mind and the heart of Christ' as exemplified in his letter to the Philippians (2:1-5ff)

If there is any encouragement in Christ, any solace in love, any participation in the Spirit, any compassion and mercy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing. Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but [also] everyone for those of others. Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus

What I have briefly outlined here, are the qualities associated with these men and women who sought by their lives to make a difference. These are people from the modern era, often unsung by church, but nonetheless, men and women of stature whose lives are of value to us. They teach us and show us what it means to be single and Christian. In this respect, their lives are representative of the lives of many single men and women who go about their daily lives, often unsung, unheard of, but being themselves as they understand it to be. They continue in their work and maintain a faith relationship with Christ in and through the church. In the next chapter, I propose to examine the story of modern day single Christian men and women in order to come to an appreciation of the single story and the way it may impact on the Christian story. They typify for us the impact of a life lived as single men and

women. In this respect singleness has been a major factor underscoring the lives of Dorothy Day, Simone Weil, Caryl Chessman, Soren Kierkegaard and Dag Hammarskjold

Further, the way in which these single men and women expressed their faith, highlights their relationship to the ecclesial dimension of life – to their association with church

Chapter Three

THE SINGLE STORY: THE LIVES OF CONTEMPORARY SINGLE MEN AND WOMEN

In the previous chapter, my focus was on role models for contemporary single men and women. My purpose was twofold. In the first instance, I proposed that there are single men and women who are not in the canon of saints but whose lives were exemplary. The canon of saints, with its heavy emphasis on saints of the church of bygone eras who, to all extent and purpose, were not single men and women, is enriched by the lives of these contemporary people. Secondly, my purpose was to highlight the way in which these exemplars reveal a story of what it means to live singly. In this chapter, I propose to examine the stories of several contemporary single men and women using the same four pointers as were used in chapter two. My aim is to come to an understanding of the way in which contemporary single men and women live their lives. In using the same framework as established in the previous chapter, I make the comparison to see how the contemporary stories “fit” with the five stories already told: the stories of non-canonized men and women: Day, Weil, Houselander, Hammarskjold and Kierkegaard. The framework will follow the established pattern from chapter two:

- **The formative years:** Who or what events influenced or shaped the respondents in their developing adulthood.
- **Contribution to church and society:** What contribution do the respondents make to the work and mission of the church as baptised single people? How do they see their role as contributing to society?
- **Involvement in the social sphere:** What is the respondent’s self-understanding of their role and life for their own development and the well-being of others?
- **Life story as a model for others.** How do the respondents see their story as being worthwhile and a credible witness to others as a single person?

The respondents who contributed their stories did so following consultation and by written invitation which included the focal points to be addressed ³¹⁴

Those in this study were invited to respond for the following reasons:

- They were known to me through work or social settings
- They were recommended by others
- They came from varying age groups and occupations.

Of the single men and women who contributed their stories (five men and five women), the men ranged in age from forty to seventy-eight years while the women's ages ranged from thirty-five to sixty. Most of the respondents are presently in full time employment predominantly as professional men and women either engaged in education or having been associated with education. Two respondents are now working in the area of travel and retail and two are retired. The respondents were selected from a range of men and women with whom I have worked or been associated with for a number of years – the period ranges from 6 years to twenty years. One invitee declined the invitation to respond and another's responses did not address the focus areas. Hence, the reply was not included

The process to be used to detail the single story is to examine their stories using the four-point framework. This framework provides for a general response in that it allows each person to respond as they reflect upon their own lived experience as a single man or woman

The development of the chapter is as follows:

- A. Single Women: their Story
- B. Single Men: their Story
- C. Synthesis of the Stories

A: Single Women: Their Story

Formative Years

The women who shared their story came from Catholic backgrounds predominantly Irish Catholic. The chief influence in their formative years was the family. For three of the respondents the background was that of an extended family with figures such as grandparents or neighbourhood children forming extended families to varying degrees. One respondent (Respondent E) referred to strong Aunts some of whom were unmarried

Parents especially mothers were seen as instrumental as mentors during formative years of growing up. Two respondents commented:

Religion played a part in our lives as my Mother was accustomed to visiting Churches on the First Fridays and we also as Irish Catholics had relics and holy pictures in our house (Respondent B)

And

She was an amazing role model for me in terms of her kindness, care and love. During my high school years, she encouraged me to explore the spiritual side of myself. So mum has definitely had the most impact on shaping me as a person. (Respondent A)

However, fathers too were seen as inspirational but not to the same extent as mothers. For one respondent: "My father – his generosity and acceptance were qualities of inspiration and admiration". (Respondent C)

A key feature in the lives of these single women was the impact of Religious Sisters such as the Brigidine, Mercy and Loreto Sisters. Their influence ranged from little significance to importance in their lives. Religious sisters were primarily influential as educators. However, they were also regarded as formators of spirituality, models of perfection and role models for Christian living. Typical responses ranged from:

³¹⁴ A copy of the letter of invitation is included at the start of the section Replies from Respondents

Some of my teachers were nuns but I was not influenced by these women
(Respondent B)

The nuns at Primary School were always a source of fascination for me. We were taught about saints in Grade One and I think I probably thought they were all living saints because they seemed so different from normal people... I had a heap of respect for these women who had given up their lives in the name of the Church.
(Respondent A)

And

... inspired by teachers (Brigidines) and respect for their way of life that seemed to make people happy. (Respondent C)

All respondents mentioned that they attended Catholic Primary and Secondary Schools and mostly in rural areas with some exception. While religious women were mentioned as key influences in the lives of single women, mention was also made of female lay teachers

For these women respondents the impact of family especially mothers and the school environment significantly Religious women, figures as a common aspect in the shaping of their formative years. In the words of Respondent E:

People impact on our lives in different ways – depending on who they are, what role they played. For children – parents, teachers. For adults – mentors, friends

Involvement in the Social Sphere

As responses to this area were quite different, it would seem appropriate to summarise or quote briefly what each person has said.

I became involved in education because I liked the school environment. It was always a very positive and enjoyable experience for me. (Respondent B)

And

My first job was very demanding... Overtime was welcomed as I was alone and single in an unfamiliar city (Melbourne)

Work became the focus both locally and overseas. Performance was seen as a key to positive results and meeting daily challenges –

I always put a lot of pressure on myself to perform and achieve at a high level, this approach to my work is also reflected in my personal life. (Respondent D)

And

My present (and past work) – as a teacher – that’s what I was trained to do NOT much option – not many avenues open to girls when I began work” And “My present job – radio operator for the Coast Guard I volunteered (Respondent E)

And

People had always said that I would make a great teacher ... I had the patience for it and loved working with young ones ... I knew from this time I started that I really wanted to do teaching and that was the start of it all. (Respondent A)

And

Through accepting the opportunities life provided I found my way back to roles of administration and teaching in Catholic Education I’m happiest working with and for people (Respondent C)

A key involvement for these single women has been their involvement in Catholic education. Two respondents (Respondents C and E) made comment that when they set out on their path to adult life, there were few options available for women. Initially, these women entered the convent as this was an expectation of single women in Anglo-Celtic households or at least one of the few options available to young women. Both women eventually moved out of Religious Life and focused their work in education.

For the other respondents (Respondents A, B, C), their involvement in education resulted from the influence of others whether teachers or peers. The choice for education was from a personal conviction. With two exceptions, most respondents remain involved in the work of education. The field of education being seen as worthwhile as it not only affords a sense of satisfaction and achievement but also is seen as a place for commitment to working with young people.

Contribution to Church and Society

The responses here were again varied and tend to reflect both the age of the respondents as well as their perceptions of life. Responses in general were positive though some negative ideas were expressed. These, I believe, point to an evaluation of the contemporary situation and not of the individual person.

I have always thought that I make a significant contribution to society and the Church through my work as a Catholic teacher. I suppose that is why I have always gone the "extra mile" because it is my way of giving back to society. I also try to find ways through my job of doing things for the community, like clothes drives etc. (Respondent A)

And

I contribute to society by teaching young people and trying to reinforce human values. I interact with my neighbours and others in my community. When I was at school I was involved in the YCW and spent time after school with the elderly in nursing homes and teaching Vietnamese refugees to speak English. I have also worked for many years with children at the royal Children's Hospital. Sometimes this societal contribution is a part of Church. (Respondent B)

The Church that I attend most at the Coast fosters a wonderful community atmosphere and I think that as a person who is single and has time to give to this community, I would be welcomed if I was there more constantly. The Parish Priest is supportive and challenges the community and myself about our attitudes to human rights issues. Justice is paramount and he is able to relate to everyday issues. (Respondent B)

And

One's contribution to Society or Church depends on personality type etc – some people are more socially active (charity working etc) others more contemplative (Respondent E)

And

The major contribution to Church is through education. The role gives me opportunity to lead others while relying heavily on my faith tradition and hopefully inspiring others to place more trust in God and Christian values. (Respondent C)

And

Gradually I started going to Mass and Church visits for quiet contemplation because I no longer needed a sanctuary for loneliness but wanted to become involved in the Church. I have become a reader and am now a member of my Church community

There is a desire to do more but at present my contribution to Society is through charity donations (Respondent D)

In summary, involvement in society and church varies according to the individual, their time, talents and their perceptions of themselves as members of the community. Two Respondents (B and E) noted that single people have more time and therefore availability for involvement is there.

Involvement, however, is seen as a choice – charity work, donations, being a reader, being involved in the wider community. It was pointed out that the work and involvement of single people often goes unnoticed. This is a legitimate comment but it underscores the fact that single people are often not known or esteemed by their peers or by of church. One respondent (Respondent E) commented that Joan of Arc became famous after her death. The George Bernard Shaw play has Joan telling the Bishops that if they were really sorry about ‘frying her’, she would come back to earth again so they could atone. They didn’t think that was a good idea.

Role Models

This concept posed some difficulty for the respondents. Did they see themselves as being a role model for others? Could their lives be seen as noteworthy by others? Were they a credible witness to being a single baptised person? Two respondents did not comment directly. Respondent E indicated “no” and Respondent D was ambivalent –

I don’t know if I see my life as being a role model for others. People who know me realise that my faith is important to me. I am not an advocate for anything in particular but value happiness and enjoyment of life. I hope by showing this that I can be a positive role model for others. (Respondent B)

Respondent A commented –

I certainly try to be a role model as a teacher. I think that’s part of the responsibility you take on. Considering that parents have entrusted me with the job of helping to

educate their daughters, I think I have to be conscious of how I conduct myself and the values that I espouse. (Respondent A)

Being a role model is perhaps something of a mystery. Educators hope that they are being a positive influence on their charges. While some respondents may not regard themselves as a role model, the way in which they have openly talked about their story, their journey in life, reflects or indicates that they are people of commitment to their work and to their faith. This, I believe, is where modelling is understated. There is a quiet conviction about themselves which is evident but not always understood in terms of being an exemplar for others. However, it is this simplicity which is the key to their being models for others even though they were clear in themselves about role models in their own lives.

Conclusion

The story as told by single women in this study is a story which exemplifies a richness of life. As single women they contribute to a story of living the single way of life which has the following components:

- a) commitment to work and faith (Respondents A-D)
- b) freedom for involvement in wider society (Respondents A-E)
- c) a story which reflects a society in flux – women who are able to move with the prevailing issues (Respondents A-E)
- d) that they are women of integrity (Respondents A-E)

Each of these components will now be outlined. They represent the extrapolated evaluations based upon the comments of Respondents A to E.

a) Commitment to Work and to Faith

The stories of single women indicate that they are engaged whole-heartedly in their chosen work. There is a job to be done and it is to be done well and with passion. Going the extra

distance, being at times tough on oneself, having high expectations are all integral to their work ethic.

There is also a commitment to faith – not only their own spiritual development but also that of those in their care. The single story is one which exemplifies commitment to Christian values and to a Gospel to be lived. Eucharist as well as prayer figure as integral to one's spiritual development.

b) Freedom for Involvement in Wider Society

The Pauline maxim – there is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit (1Cor 12:4ff) rings true in this regard. The story of single women reflects this variety of gifts and talents all being utilized for the benefit of self and others. Some women are more socially active whereas others are more contemplative. Whatever their stance, each gives according to time and talents. The nature of the giving also varies: donations, charity work, assisting others. . . . The story of single women reflects an element of sacrifice – giving without considering the cost.

c) Reflects a Society in Flux

The single story reveals women from varying ages and not too dissimilar a family background. There is the story being lived in a time of flux. Society has been in a state of constant change during the Twentieth century and into the Twenty-first century. Roles of men and women have undergone change; technology has made a considerable impact and war and instability among nations continues. These situations impact upon the lives of single women and the way in which they meet the challenges of their daily work and faith commitment. The story of single women has shown how women have adapted. They tackle issues such as justice and inequality as well as the day-to-day problems in their stride.

d) Women of Integrity

The single story indicates women of integrity. They value themselves, their work and their involvement in society. They are keen to be involved and to participate in the work of the Church – education, working for justice, working to improve the lot of others. Theirs is a story which shows no timidity but forthrightness. In their own way, the story of single women reveals the ‘movers and shakers’, those who often work behind the scenes to achieve not only for themselves but for others. In this respect, the story of the single woman is a story about modelling for others especially young women. Theirs is a story which can inform the stories of those other men and women who are listed in the canon of the saints. With their story being contributed, the story of Christian men and women is further enhanced.

B. Single Men: Their Story

Five men aged from forty to seventy-eight offered their story. All but one are from Catholic backgrounds except one who is from a Presbyterian background. However, all the male respondents are practising members of their respective faith traditions. The Catholic respondents had, to varying degrees, spent time within religious communities but have lived and worked for the main part of their adult Christian lives as lay men predominantly in the field of Catholic education. The male respondents offered their story using the same framework as used for the single women:

- The formative years
- Involvement in the social sphere
- Contribution to church / society
- Life story as a model for others

Formative Years

All but one of the respondents was originally from rural backgrounds. All except for one respondent attended Catholic Primary schools staffed either by the Christian Brothers, the

Sisters of Mercy, the Sisters of St Joseph or the Sisters of the Holy Family. The Presbyterian respondent attended a rural public primary school. The role modelling afforded by the religious teachers and clergy played a significant role during the formative years of the respondents.

The C.Bs (Christian Brothers) at school became in a sense role models, especially in contrast to my father, and thus I was convinced over my early formative years to follow in their footsteps. (Male Respondent A)

And

Apart from my parents and siblings the biggest influence in my early life was the Catholic Church. . . It is not surprising, therefore, that my early heroes were priests. (Male Respondent B)

And

The influences in my early years were mainly men and women in the priesthood and the religious life though there were a few single men and women who impressed me. These in the latter group were either school teachers or family friends. (Male Respondent C)

And

My role models were probably my parents. . . I suppose my main role model when I was a teenager was (parish priest) at Gordon Park. . . He seemed to see something in me and invited me onto the Parish Advisory Committee as secretary when I was 17. I grew to be fond of parish life, and so I suppose it was only natural that my thoughts should turn at some stage to being a priest. (Male Respondent E)

For one respondent, however, the primary influences in the formative years were his grandparents, cousins and family friends. Those with a Catholic background were influenced by celibate men and women who were associated with the church either as priests and religious or as celibate Catholic lay men and women. Male Respondent B commented that -

the priests, on the other hand, showed me another way of being male that was one to which I felt I could aspire. . . I grew up with the idea that not being married was a normal and valuable option for life.

To varying degrees, this sentiment is echoed through the stories of the other respondents. However, there is for some of the Catholic respondents an underlying inference that these ecclesiastical men and women were, to a degree, a type of replacement parent in that these men and women assumed a role or filled a void in the family situation such as left by the death of a parent or the absence of a parent for long periods. Male Respondent A commented that the Brothers filled this gap. They were the role models for him. Another respondent commented that the priests and religious displayed a sense of stability and a consistency in life approach which was attractive and appealing especially to a young mind.

Another respondent commented –

My uncles and other male relations (I do not include my father here) were countrymen with little education, rough manners and limited vision. I had little in common with them and often felt intimidated by them. The priests, on the other hand, . . . showed me that gentleness and studiousness were not 'sissy'. It was a vital lesson. (Male Respondent B)

The Presbyterian respondent (Male Respondent D), while not influenced by priests or religious, commented that –

I think God made some of us to remain single but some people seem to think everyone is the same with all the same feelings but that is not the case at all.

The significance of the influence of the church in the lives of most of the male respondents was such that they believed that a life lived in the church and for the church as a religious or a priest was the natural outcome of formative years greatly shaped by these men and women. However, at some point these men decided not to continue and sought to live Christian lives 'in the world' as it were. A selection of responses sums up the general attitudes of these men in this regard:

Didn't have a clue what I was going into, but weren't shown (at school at Warnambool) or experienced, any alternatives for future life. (Male Respondent A)

And

It became clear to me that my decision to join the Passionists was to some extent an attempt to escape these fears. My new found confidence showed me that I need not be afraid of the 'real world' and so I felt I needed to leave the Passionists in order to 'have a go' there before I made any commitment to religious life.

... At College, however, ... I realised that with teaching I could live the same kind of life as a modern religious. Also I did not want to give up definitely the possibility of marriage. (Male Respondent B)

And

I realised that the ordained priesthood within the structured institution was not for me. Yet the call to walk with others in their relationship with God – which was the heart of my vocation – was still there. How this was to be lived out, I did not have any idea, so a leap of faith was involved. I left active priestly ministry". (Male Respondent E)

The decisions made to leave religious life or priestly ministry directly impacted on the respondents and the way in which each would live his secular life

Involvement in the Social Sphere

The shared stories of the male respondents show an involvement predominantly in the field of education. However, for two of the respondents one has moved away from education and the other has worked in a non-educational environment for most of his adult life.

For two respondents (Male Respondents A and C), their early involvement in the social sphere was as a young religious in an educational setting. This early involvement was one which was thrust or imposed upon them. This would set the scene for their involvement in education both as religious and then predominantly as single laymen

Probably a defining moment in my development at this stage was to be given the responsibility of teaching a particular class half way through my third year of training. . this responsibility was certainly a confidence booster. (Male Respondent A)

And

I was sort of pushed into teaching. Not much choice but my director saw something about me that I couldn't at the time. These early teaching years represented for me a

love-hate relationship. In hindsight, I see the value of these experiences and have come to understand the way others sought to challenge as well as aid me in my personal development... My religious involvement came about as a result of wanting to be of service and work in the missions. Needless to say – I never saw the missions but I did get into the mission of education (Male Respondent C)

Similarly Male Respondent B spoke of his experience as having been shaped and moulded in a certain direction. After working as an articled clerk and studying law at night, he joined the Passionists. His loves at this time were literature, liturgy, history and theology. On leaving the Passionists, he completed tertiary study and took on the task of teaching, a task regarded as a blessing and source of personal grace.

I took on teaching originally because I had an interest in my subject areas and wanted to be able to explore them and be paid for it. I have remained a teacher for other reasons. I have discovered that I enjoy working with young people and I have also discovered an unexpected talent for teaching. It suits my temperament perfectly... Through teaching I have learnt to appreciate myself – to uncover hidden talents and unsuspected virtues... my profession has been for me, the greatest channel of grace over the past fifteen years (Male Respondent B)

The fourth respondent (Male Respondent D), spent his early adult years in the army in Bougainville and the Solomon Islands. On leaving the army, he returned to his former job at a furniture company. This would be his area of employment for his adult life. His other involvement was with an orchestra. Having taught himself to play the piano, he was invited to join the band –

They asked me to come and have a go at it and of course I was able to manage it and played with them for many years – they all dead now... (Male Respondent D)

This passion for being of service to others through music has continued and he continues to take music to others especially in the homes of the aged and other similar institutions. He comments:

I like living on my own as I lead a busy life and always have plenty of interests and I live peace and quiet so I'm a pretty contented sort of fellow.

As an older man, he is able to look back in appreciation of a life lived to its fullest. The younger male respondents (Male Respondents B,C and E) are still involved in education and

study and see this as a means of continued challenge for themselves in their work of teaching and in their personal faith development. For Male Respondent A, leaving education for the world of business was his greatest challenge.

This was a challenge in stepping out from a known comfort zone, risking all, and shaping my own destiny, responsible for my own future. (Male Respondent A)

The fifth male respondent (Male Respondent E) said that he became involved in the lives of others because he enjoyed talking about God with them; he enjoyed the interaction. While it seemed “fairly natural” that he should become a priest, it was precisely the ‘God-factor’ which took him to a different way of being involved with others in the spiritual journey.

Slowly though, people sought me out and seemed to think that coming to talk with me was beneficial. I am now more than full-time involved in one-to-one companionship, giving retreats and also teaching... For me, my vocation has not changed... I can only put it down to grace. (Male Respondent E)

This final reflection is one which is echoed throughout the stories of single men – the continual challenge to be themselves and be responsible for their own life journeys. Integral to this responsibility is the sense that what guided them, what assisted them in their convictions, was their own faith. In the words of one respondent:

I don’t see my work as at all separate from my faith life. I could never have a job and a life. I need to feel that every aspect of my life is part of an organic whole. ... My faith... seems to give me a real sense of direction and a conviction that I am loved and nurtured. (Male Respondent B)

Contribution to Society and to Church

The way in which the respondents viewed their contribution is related to the work that they do and their involvement with people during the course of their adult life. Generally speaking, the contribution of the respondents is reflected in their perceived role of leadership and service, either in the world of business or that of education, spiritual direction or tertiary work. Their contribution to church is associated with their contribution to society.

Male Respondent A provided what I believe to be the key idea with regard to one's contribution. He used the term "leadership" in his response. For him, his contribution is reflected in his business dealings. "A focus for fellow traders, who look to me for friendship, advice, or just plain conviviality." For him, there is a sense of confidence in him; people are able to trust him, rely on him and see in him a steady and stable approach to and conviction about his role in business.

On a more personal level, he comments further that local residents also tend to rely on him for similar reasons and are able to take their problems and shared experiences to him knowing they will be respected and that confidentiality will be ensured.

How does he see his contribution to the life of the church? His contribution to the "formal structure" is in the past, in Catholic education.

My worship is more than Sunday stuff. It's private; it relates to the whole of the universe, nature, space, events etc. . . In a sense, I have done my bit in the public sense. My challenge at this stage of life, is to develop stronger and further, some sort of relationship with God. I need to do plenty with regard to this: reading, contemplating, thinking; developing adult concepts, lessening those we picked up as young people. (Male Respondent A)

Another respondent spoke of his involvement in the teaching of religion and the organising of liturgy for students.

Particularly in the latter roles, I often have to take on a very public work of evangelisation and catechesis so that I often find myself doing exactly the sort of work I would have done had I stayed with the Passionists. (Male Respondent B)

His contribution to church is furthered by his parish involvement.

My contribution to the parish is similarly an extension of what I do at school. I work with many of the same people and I feel, in a sense, that it's all one community. In this regard I am particularly happy that my parents and many of my siblings are also part of the same parish. There is a sense that we have moved on together; a feeling of continuity. (Male Respondent B)

In a very real way what has been said by the Male Respondent B regarding his contribution to society is also true for Male Respondent C. However, he adds that his work in education also involves assisting students to develop an awareness of their world, their own faith dimension and the way in which the two interact. Further, he commented, as did the second respondent, that it is imperative to provide opportunities for liturgy, retreats and occasions for personal prayer for students especially as secular values often contradicted the integrity and value of the human person created in God's image to live a life worthy of their baptism

Apart from the challenging role of Catholic education, this respondent replied that he has a limited personal involvement in his parish: he is a financial contributor, attending parish meetings and is involved with the welcoming of people to liturgy.

Male Respondent D spoke in terms of being socially involved with others through visitation, music and entertainment. Personal commitment to God, and investing time and energy at the service of others is regarded as important.

This same level of commitment to God is evidenced in the reflections of Male Respondent E. For him "the accent is on individuals". In his personal life he recognizes both his own need for God – "I rely on the grace of God far more to fill the gaps of my own blindness" but he also recognizes and accepts his belonging to a church that is the "Broken Body of Christ". He maintains and values his personal ongoing commitment to a life of faith lived within a flawed faith community.

His real challenge is not in taking sides as to who is in the right or the wrong but of standing with others in their journey, "to stand in that terrible in between that refuses to take sides and to see the pain of both. That is certainly a challenge, but I know it is the only way through."

This final point is one which is underscored in the area of contribution. Availability of time and energy for others and for self is integral to the single story as expressed by the respondents. In a sense too, it has a bearing upon the challenges faced by the respondents, a sense of which can be gained from the following:

My real challenge in life at this point of time is to get to a situation where I don't have to rely on the continual struggle to meet the financial obligations under which we live; to get to a point where we can walk the beaches and smell the roses, to reflect on the diminishing future and enjoy it (Male Respondent A)

However, underlying their contribution to society and to the church, in its varying shapes and forms, is a sense of quiet confidence and conviction in the ongoing presence of God in their lives. There is a current of faith that underlies who these men are and the way in which they contribute to wider and to the church.

Role Models

The male respondents offered a mixed response regarding their understanding of themselves as role models. However, a common thread is apparent. It is best summed up by:

Perhaps because I am single, I invest more energy into my work and family, but it is not a conscious effort I make in order to 'make the most' of my lot. I do not at all see my single state as a negative or second-rate lifestyle. I've never thought of my life as being a model for others. If it is, I hope it would be in its struggle to live fully, not singly. (Male Respondent B)

Male Respondent C replied by offering a number of ideas to illustrate how he thought he may be a model for others: commitment to work; being open to others and being responsive to their needs; being confident in one's convictions to be able to challenge others and to take a stand on important life issues that affect people; witnessing personal faith and commitment to the church.

Male Respondent E said he was single because that is how his life has evolved. His work and his involvement with others in their journey leaves "little time for socializing". He adds that his work gives him great satisfaction but it is a work which, because of its interpersonal

nature, maintains his singleness. He accepts that he is in the business of mentoring others but as to being a role model – that is another issue. In his words – “people keep coming back, and new people come along, so perhaps I’m doing something helpful.”

The perspectives offered by these three respondents are not diametrically opposed. In a sense they compliment each other and typify the challenges, the contributions made and the present perceptions of a life lived as a single person. At the heart of the issue of being a role model – there is the ever-present commitment and a quiet conviction of the presence of God whether publicly or personally acknowledged by the respective respondent. One can only be a model for others to the extent that others respect and appreciate the lives lived by single people.

Conclusion

The story as told by the single male respondents in this study shows lives characterized by the following:

- a) Commitment (Male Respondents A–E)
- b) Freedom for Others (Male Respondents A-E)
- c) Being Challenged by Life Events (Male Respondents A-E)
- d) Ability to Move Forward in spite of the shortcomings of life (Male Respondents A-E)

I now outline each of these aspects. As with the female respondents, these areas are a representative evaluation based upon the comments made by the Male Respondents

a) Commitment

The shared stories show a deep lived personal commitment to work and to personal faith. The stories show men who have been instrumental in shaping their lives and being prepared to take up the challenge, experience inherent risks in order to further their involvement in

their world of work. It is evident that in so doing, the male respondents drew upon their store of faith or the prevailing interior faith dimension which had been earlier shaped by priests and religious but challenged and reshaped by study and personal commitment and openness to life experiences. Their stories, while being unique, reveal a rich tapestry of inter-relationships which highlight the aspect of commitment and involvement.

b) Freedom for Others

Being single means that there is more time and energy available but it is not a freedom used solely for selfishness. On the contrary, the respondents show that time and energy can be used for work, for study and for wider family involvements. This freedom is a freedom for others – it allows for openness to life and an ability to be involved more fully in working with others, in being inter-active but it is also a freedom for the Other – a freedom for being with God in a contemplative or reflective way. This is not to imply that loneliness is not part of their experience as single men. On the contrary, respondents in general commented that being alone is not always a negative. Two respondents said that they needed or enjoyed their solitude. They had time and energy for work, family or other interests. One respondent in reflecting on loneliness said that it was associated with the freedom of being single. A ‘cure’ for such loneliness could be seen in the security of having a family to look after you in old age.

c) Being Challenged by Life Events

The male respondents reveal that during their life they were challenged by peers or spiritual directors to examine their life. Some felt they were thrust into an apostolic task such as teaching but eventually chose this field whereas another came to see that teaching was a personal choice. Perhaps the biggest challenge for the male respondents is how to move on in life, how to cope with the movements and currents of life. There is a tendency shown in these stories for males to be self-critical, to question and to evaluate. A number of the respondents spoke about career choice and direction in life. Initially, their choices were

limited – they were either not shown alternatives or their choices were influenced by parents or significant others. However, these men in general, undertook the responsibility for their life direction. They saw it as a challenge and were prepared to meet the challenge. The end result then is to move on, even if that means tension and personal lack of certainty for a while.

d) Ability to Move Forward

Having said this, it is important to mention that the God-dimension has been both a source of challenge as well as a means of stability in the shared stories of the respondents. Challenge, movement, growth have been accompanied by a constant need for reflection, for prayer, for going to the centre – for being with God. St. Paul spoke of the thorn in his flesh - for the male respondents, this could be said to be their openness to the faith dimension in their own lives as being both challenge and response. One key challenge for all male respondents was the prospect of marriage and children. None of the respondents excluded this as a possibility for life and have always remained open to it. However, all have remained single for various reasons such as temperament and factors that have impinged on their lives.

Conclusion: Synthesis of the Stories

The single men and women who contributed their stories did so using the framework established in chapter two:

- The formative years
- Contribution to church / society
- Involvement in the social sphere
- Life story as a role model for others

The aim of this chapter was to examine the life story as presented by contemporary single women and men. My aim has been to come to an understanding of the way in which contemporary single people live their lives as well as to establish a continuity of living that is

reflected in the lives of the uncanonized single role models: Dorothy Day, Simone Weil, Caryll Houselander and Søren Kierkegaard and Dag Hammarskjöld

In considering the stories presented by the Respondents, it is possible to propose that a number of common threads emerge. These threads highlight a story that reflects the following aspects:

- 1) Commitment for work and for faith development for both men and women
- 2) Freedom for involvement and freedom for others
- 3) Lives that reflect a society in flux as well as lives that meet the challenges of life events
- 4) Women of integrity who are enabled to tackle change and challenge in their stride. Men who are able to move forward in spite of contradictions and instability, or a lack of clarity in their lives
- 5) Underpinning each of these common threads is the pervasive faith dimension for each individual

The stories of these single men and women together with those discussed earlier, indicate a pattern of life which is unique to being single. Their contribution to society and to the church is reflected in the manner in which they engage with their work and their relationships. They bring an energy and an enthusiasm as well as a commitment to themselves that they are contributing not only to their own lives but also to the lives of others in a positive way. In part this is what animates single people. However, from the stories provided, it must be said that one's personal and communal faith dimension plays a significant role in the way in which single people engage with their world. Their story is a story which adds a further dimension to the Story of the church. This is the story of the single person, who together with the canonized saints, adds to the depth and variety of the tapestry which is the church.

In the next chapter of this thesis, I propose to examine the three states within the church: marriage, priesthood and the single life, in order to come to a renewed understanding of what it means to be church. My purpose in so doing is to arrive at an understanding of the attributes of the single state and its distinctive features. This will serve to show the relationship between the states as well as to show how each can be characterised and understood. In this way, we arrive at a fuller understanding of those in the church and the way in which each responds to their primary call to follow Christ in and through baptism.

Chapter Four

VOCATION: THE THREE STATES

Introduction

In chapter two I examined the lives of single men and women who have had a significant impact upon society and who could be regarded as role models for single people today. This was followed by an examination of case studies of contemporary single men and women in order to establish their story - as their commitment to society and to church as well as to show how they are related to the first group of single men and women.

In this chapter, I aim to examine the three states: ordination, marriage and the single state. My purpose in so doing is to establish what I consider to be the nature of each state, their characteristics, associated expectations and their individual attributes. What I want to achieve is a synthesis of what it means to be in the single state as well as to show its relevance for the life of the church. A necessary aspect of this explication is an examination of the term 'vocation' and to reassess its mean and relevance in the light of the explication of the three states.

However, what needs to be further explicated with regard to the single state is the notion of the term 'vocation'. This is necessary as one cannot be a member of the church and be a non-person in terms of one's state. I use the term non-person to indicate that clerical, religious and married people are said to have a vocation. A question remains as to the vocation of single people in the church. If they do not have a vocation, then what is it that they do have and how do they formally 'fit into' and contribute to the life of the church?

This chapter examines 'vocation', its etymology and immediate context and its traditional use in the context of priestly life and marriage. My purpose in this investigation is to highlight the traditional notion of vocation and its use in the context of priestly ministry

Given that the church has been developing its understanding of an ecclesiological perspective of the single state (as I outlined in chapter one), the discussion surrounding the term 'vocation' will also indicate that it is no longer possible to maintain the traditional use of the term. Rather, if the church as an institution is to accept and acknowledge the single state as a vocation as well as incorporate this into its ecclesiology, then a renewed understanding of the term is required.

In effect the church as the Body of Christ comprises all three states: marriage, priesthood (and the religious life) and the single state. All members share a commonality in baptism. I envision here in this context that the church needs to come to a renewed vision of vocation. As part of this discussion, it is necessary to trace the development since the Second Vatican Council of the use of the term 'vocation' in order to show the ways in which this term has been used. This, I believe, will further the discussion towards a renewed understanding of vocation. Church documents *Lumen Gentium*, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, *Redemptionis Donum*, *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests* and *Christifideles Laici* as well as the works of current authors such as Nicholas Apostola, Francis Nemeck and Marie Coombs, Robert Kinast and others will be used in the development of the exposition of the term 'vocation'. A preliminary discussion will focus on the term 'vocation'. This is followed by a development of the 'vocation' to marriage. A development of 'vocation' to priesthood will follow this section on marriage. I include here what I consider to be the associated expectations of those in the ecclesial state as well as prevalent perceptions which tend to esteem more highly the ecclesial life to marriage and the single life. I will conclude by highlighting the single life and its attributes and how this relates to the previous two chapters. In this my aim is to show that a sound ecclesiology is one which incorporates a notion of vocation which is all-encompassing. All are called to follow Christ in the church; the body of Christ is the ecclesial life, the married life and the single state.

A: Vocation: How Do We Understand the Term?

What is it that people ‘hear’ when this term is used within Church circles? How is this term being understood? It seems that the word vocation generally evokes particular connotations. From my own experience and anecdotal reflection with older Catholic people, vocation denotes priesthood or the religious life. ‘Vocation’ has also been used to contextualise the state of marriage but not to the same degree or emphasis as that of the priestly or the religious life.

A cursory examination of the definition as outlined in a theological dictionary will afford a more comprehensive understanding of the way in which the term ‘vocation’ has developed. The *New Dictionary of Theology*³¹⁵ defines vocation in terms relating to the Biblical traditions. In the Old Testament, vocation is deemed to be a call from God to a selected person or persons such as Abraham (Genesis 12) or Moses (Exodus 3 and 6) whereas the New Testament speaks in terms of a call to follow Jesus. The key point focuses on the manner in which such a call is to be lived or fulfilled by the individual in the world. The way in which we live our lives, our occupations and relationships, is the way in which we live out our Christian vocation. This is a call to be ‘the presence of God’ in the world. In some cases such as that of Abraham, there is a specific call for a task to be done on God’s behalf. For others, the context is that of being a disciple of Christ in everyday life. What is envisioned is that the individual stands in a relationship with God. Paul Holland³¹⁶ takes a similar line to that of Sinclair Ferguson but with some difference. His definition of vocation is quite broad. It suggests that vocation, both as a concept, and as a way of being committed to Christ for a specific task, is not static but alive and dynamic. However, he stresses that prior to any such undertaking there exists a universal call to salvation and holiness. The New Testament, he argues, involves for some, a particular call to mission but for all the call

³¹⁵ Sinclair B. Ferguson, ed. et al., *New Dictionary of Theology* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 711.

³¹⁶ Paul Holland in Joseph Komonchak, ed. et al., *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), 1087ff.

to discipleship means conversion and means that Christian living becomes a moral imperative; lives must be worthy of the call to discipleship.³¹⁷ This understanding of vocation is important to my discussion of vocation within the church. It is this moral imperative which is at the heart of everyone's call to follow Christ in and through baptism. The more fully we as church come to a deeper and better self-understanding of ourselves, the more fully can we be effective disciples of Christ to each other and to the world.

The Second Vatican Council in its document *Lumen Gentium* ch 5³¹⁸ grounded its reflection on the laity within the context of Christian baptism. Baptism is the primary reality for serving the mission of the church in the world. Paul Holland further explicates the concept of vocation by saying that while there is a present concern regarding the nature of ministry and in particular, the ordained ministry, what is important is that human beings find fulfilment. In his terms this is our *human vocation*. In living out our baptism, however, we as Christians bear witness to the Kingdom and as such are living our specific Christian vocation. The Christian by means of his or her baptism is called to holiness. This call to holiness means that the Christian is to live in such a way as promotes personal fulfilment as well as advancing the mission of the church.

Traditionally, the word 'vocation' has been used in this context of being called to holiness. John Paul II's *Pastores Dabo Vobis (I Will Give You Shepherds)*³¹⁹ serves as a useful example of the use of the traditional understanding of vocation. Citing the Second Vatican Council's Decree on Priestly Life and Ministry:

The Council first affirms the "common" vocation to holiness. This vocation is rooted in baptism, which characterizes the priest as one of the "faithful" (*Christifideles*), as a "brother among brothers,.

³¹⁷ *ibid*, 1088

³¹⁸ *L G*, 5, 17

³¹⁹ John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation I WILL GIVE YOU SHEPHERDS Pastores Dabo Vobis* (Boston: St Paul Book and Media, 1992), 31,40 Hereafter as *Pastores*

With the same clarity the conciliar text also speaks of a “specific” vocation to holiness, or more precisely of a vocation based on the sacrament of holy orders - as a sacrament proper and specific to the priest - and thus involving a new consecration to God through ordination. Here we see the traditional emphasis of the use of vocation in the context of ministerial priesthood.

However, while the Council speaks in terms of vocation as the common heritage of all baptised people, the suggestion is that priesthood is different from that which is common to all baptised Christians. While the priest is one of the *Christifideles*, his ordination is seen as different from and more specific than the others. It needs to be acknowledged at this point, however, even though there are theological differences between the different states, that there is acceptance of baptism as common to all. Irrespective of the nature of the clerical vocation, it is baptism which is at its root and foundation of one’s Christian living. It is baptism which promotes the Christian life and not the specific state of living. Whether one is clerical, religious, married or single, it is baptism which is common to all and from which we all embark on our Christian living – to be salt of the earth or the leaven in the world.

The Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II *Redemptionis Donum (To Men and Women Religious on their Consecration in the Light of the Mystery of the Redemption)*,³²⁰ while directly addressing men and women religious, I believe can also be said to be true for priesthood. His line of thinking in this Exhortation can be regarded as referring to all those who have dedicated their lives to Christ through vows or ordination. John Paul II uses the term “choice” as integral to his development of thought concerning these ecclesial states. Vocation, according to *Redemptionis Donum*³²¹, extends the image of choice making and being involved in the mystery of God one step further. For John Paul II religious profession

³²⁰ John Paul II, *Redemptionis Donum* (Vatican City: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1984), 15

³²¹ *ibid*, 10-12

(public consecration) and by extrapolation, ordination, is an act which is linked to Christ in a very special way. These men and women are “*consecrated to God in Jesus Christ as his exclusive possession.*”³²² The ecclesial life determines one’s place in the community of the church, the People of God. Such exclusivity is inherent in their ‘call’. In particular, the discussion in section four argues for the ‘superiority of “being” over “having”,’ that is to say that the ecclesial life is not only different from the lay state but that it can be regarded as being ‘above’ the lay state by virtue of the renunciation of the material world. This is affirmed by the discussion centring on the nature of the relationship between those in this group of people and Christ. The ordinary Christian on the other hand, does not have this extra sacramental ‘overlay’ to further them in their Christian way of life. For them it is their baptism and the sacraments of initiation that confirm the non-ordained in their call to holiness. By contrast and by implication, the phrase “a choice on the part of God” reinforces the notion of pre-eminence of the ordained ministry as it implies a sense of selection. While this also applies to the sacraments of initiation, John Paul’s use of Isaiah to reinforce his statement concerning vocation - “Fear not, for *I have redeemed you, I have called you by name, you are mine*”³²³ – is a valid perception given its context, there are overtones of a pre-eminence for the ordained state in the words of John Paul II. However, the choice on the part of God is also God’s choice for all the baptised, irrespective of state. Such an attitude is affirmed by *Lumen Gentium* paragraph 10 which speaks of the way in which all the baptised share in the priestly ministry of Christ³²⁴

Indeed his expression of vocation as being consecration for the ecclesial life, while acknowledging that this has its origin in baptism, continues to reinforce the notion of separation, of being specially chosen and thereby the individual being put into a special relationship with Christ particularly as a result of ordination. This idea he reinforced in a

³²² *ibid*

³²³ *ibid*, 8, 19.

³²⁴ *I G*, 10, 27.

later Exhortation to consecrated people –*To All Consecrated Persons On the Occasion of the Marian Year*³²⁵ It is a useful Exhortation in this context as it highlights the nature of the ecclesial forms of living but importantly it underscores the role of baptism.

“Consecration through the profession of the evangelical counsels - through vows or promises - is an organic development of the beginning made at Baptism .. When we give ourselves to him in a total and undivided way, we wish ‘to follow him’, making a decision to observe chastity, poverty and obedience in the spirit of the evangelical counsels.”³²⁶ But this is done for the purpose of being in relationship with Christ as a reflection of Christ’s own consecration for the “sake of mankind.”³²⁷ Vocation according to John Paul II is the assuming or taking upon oneself a relationship with Christ which demands the total giving of the self. Vocation for him is seen in general terms as relating to the faithful but, more specifically, vocation is seen in terms of the ecclesial life. It represents, for want of a better phrase, a more stylised or more formalized way of living one’s baptismal promises. This is clearly exemplified in his comments about those called to the priestly ministry in the church

‘In particular, the Spirit reveals to us and communicates the fundamental calling which the Father addresses to everyone from all eternity: the vocation to be “holy and blameless before him... in love,” by virtue of our predestination He the Spirit of the Son (cf Gal 4:6), configures us to Christ Jesus and makes us sharers in his life as Son.....’³²⁸

The Council’s statement that ‘all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity’ (*Lumen Gentium* 40) applies in a special way to priests. They are called not only because they have been baptized, but

³²⁵ John Paul II, *To All Consecrated Persons On the Occasion of the Marian Year* (Homebush: St Paul, 1988).

³²⁶ *ibid.* 15

³²⁷ *ibid.*

³²⁸ *Pastores*, 19, 38

also and specifically because they are priests, that is, under a new title and in new and different ways deriving from the sacrament of holy orders³²⁹

The use of the term vocation is therefore a **nuanced term** that has, as its specific context, those in the ecclesial life and is, I believe, to be the generally held understanding of the lay faithful. Many of the faithful would have had an understanding of this nuanced understanding of vocation. Marie Coombs and Francis Nemeck³³⁰ aptly sum up this notion of vocation as it has 'come down' to us in its nuanced understanding and expression which has favoured the ecclesial life. However, what is significant in their thinking is that they evaluate the three states within the context of vocation.

There was a time when the prevailing attitude toward vocations ran something like this: the term "vocation" refers to priesthood or religious life, and both require celibacy. Marriage is for the masses of people unable to bridle their sexual urges. Single life is the predicament of those individuals who are without a vocation and left-out-of-marriage.

... Many people came to appreciate marriage as an authentic vocation. Some saw it as inferior to celibacy, but a true calling nonetheless. Others considered it on a par with celibacy. Singlehood, however, continued to be viewed as a non-vocation...

Past attitudes toward singlehood reflected models which might be dubbed negational or nondescript. Those models perceived singlehood as a non-calling, a non-institution, ... a sort of indefinable limbo.³³¹

Francis Nemeck and Marie Coombs' nuancing of the term highlights the nature of the paradox concerning the term 'vocation'. The term ought to be broadened so that vocation is a specific term used to denote those differing states of life which make up the body of the faithful: married people, separated or divorced people, single and never married people,

³²⁹ John Paul II is quoting from *L G*, 40, 238. John Paul's comment that all Christians in all walks of life are called to holiness and the perfection of charity, is important because by inference, it can be said that single people, as well as married and consecrated people, are called to that universal holiness and perfection that is theirs by right of their baptism

³³⁰ Marie Theresa Coombs and Francis Kelly Nemeck O M I , *Discerning Vocations to Marriage, Celibacy and Singlehood* (Collegeville: M. Glazier / Liturgical Press, 1994), 183

³³¹ *ibid* , 183.

those in the religious or the priestly life. Each in his or her own way has a 'call' to distinguish or discern what is the most appropriate way in which to live out their life as human beings and as baptised Christians. This is the moral imperative - the way we respond to Christ. M. Basil Pennington, encapsulates my point about vocation when he says:

Are you called?

Yes. Emphatically! Whether you are a priest or a minister, a religious or a married person, single or someone in partnership - you are called. And this is true even if you were not a Christian. Your very being is a call. And infinite love calls you forth from nothingness into activity, into being, into life, into love³³²

For M. Basil Pennington, vocation assumes a further dimension to that outlined by John Paul II. Our very being is God's calling each of us into life with Him. Further, M. Basil Pennington is interested in the way in which each of us discerns vocation. Vocation can be seen as a grace showing what is possible for each of us. Secondly, vocation is a grace which shows us what is perhaps applicable to us individually. And thirdly, vocation is a grace which enables us to make a choice. "Some are called to singleness. Our Lord Jesus was. If the married couple in their total gift of self to each other in love are to be a sign, a sacrament of the love between Christ and the Christian, the single person is called to forgo the sign in order that he might be freer to enter into the reality."³³³ This evaluation of the notion of vocation takes account of the various ways in which people seek to respond to God. However the point is made that this notional understanding is undergoing a redefinition so as to take into account new insights about the way in which the Christian is living their life. Being single is understood as a vocation in its own right. This is evidenced by the growing awareness in the church (and in society) that being single is a specific way of living. For example recent vocations promotional literature for the Archdiocese of Brisbane highlighted being single as one of the vocations pertinent to Christian living. It is my contention that vocation is to be expressed more along the lines as outlined by M. Basil Pennington. All are

³³² M. Basil Pennington O.C.S.O., *Called - New Thinking on Christian Vocation* (Minneapolis: The Seabury Press, 1983), 1.

³³³ *ibid*, 25

called by baptism to a relationship with God. How one responds to the call of God depends on circumstance, personality and the grace of God. Each calling has its own specialness and its own way of being expressed in the lives of each individual. In such a response does each individual promote the life and mission of the church. Thus the way each of us responds to Christ in and through our baptism has both the personal as well as the ecclesial dimension.

This understanding puts vocation into perspective; it allows us to see more clearly that vocation is a personal response to God. Hopefully, we can say that our ‘response-ability’ to God is one of ongoing identity formation in our relationship to Christ – a relationship initiated by God. If there is to be any exclusivity, it is to be found in God’s exclusive love for each of us. M. Basil Pennington’s idea that our “very being is a call” indicates and reinforces this God-initiated relationship and ultimately begs the question as to the way in which we use the term vocation in its traditional sense. It is through the sacrament of baptism that we come into the community of the church, that we become a member of the *christifideles*. Our Christian relationship with God begun at baptism continues and is fostered in the way in which each of us chooses to live out our Christian lives as married, ecclesial or single men and women. I now turn to examine each of these choices for living in order to highlight what I believe to be the significance of each way of living as response to one’s call to follow Christ in and through baptism. However, before moving to examine the different states, it is pertinent to reflect on ‘sacrament’.

As has been said, baptism is the primary sacrament which is at the heart of our Christian way of life. In the context of this chapter and indeed this study, an understanding of sacrament is beneficial to a fuller appreciation of the different states of life.

Sacraments are outward signs instituted by Christ to give grace.³³⁴ This is evidenced in the person of Christ. In assuming humanity, Jesus showed the nature of sacrament: God giving of Self to humanity in and through the visible presence of Jesus. In so doing, God is enabled to work redemptively through Jesus. In establishing the church, the redemptive work of God continues and the community of the faithful are marked and influenced by the Holy Spirit.³³⁵ The seven sacraments are those means whereby Christ in and through the church, reaches out to humanity. Thus the church and the sacraments represent the outward signs of the way Christ works to bring about the plan of God.

These seven sacraments, then, are actions of Christ and of His Church. They are symbols and signs that man is blessed by God and saved by Christ's redeeming mercy. They are signs of faith by which man clings in worship to Christ to share the fruits of His paschal gift; they are instruments by which Christ, through the liturgical acts of His Church, in fact confers the graces symbolized by the sacraments.³³⁶

Matrimony and the priestly life are characterized by the relevant sacrament. They are the lived outward expressions of the life of Christ animating husband and wife and those in the ecclesial life. Single men and women are marked by the Holy Spirit through the sacraments of initiation – baptism, confirmation and eucharist. While all experience the presence of the Holy Spirit through the sacraments of initiation, it is these sacraments alone which mark those in the single state. I now turn to examine the three states taking into consideration what has been said about vocation and sacrament.

B(i) The Married State

In this section, I argue that marriage is a way of living one's response to God begun at baptism. Using the definition already established, it is the sacrament of matrimony that characterises this response to God. The sacramental sign is expressed in a pledge of enduring

³³⁴ Ronald Lawler ed et al, *The Teaching of Christ* (Huntington, Ind: Our Sunday Visitor, 1978), 272.

³³⁵ *ibid*, 412-413

³³⁶ *ibid*, 413-414

commitment. “The love of husband and wife for each other signifies God’s eternal love for mankind and the love that binds together Christ and His Church.”³³⁷ The married state involves a commitment to one’s spouse, to one’s marital bond, to family and to church.³³⁸ These represent the outward aspects of one’s marital commitment to Christ. This is argued for in the “third section of the Decree- *Apostolicam Actuositatem* and underlines the special apostolate of married persons, which is particularly threatened today: the living witness to the indissoluble and sacred character of the marriage bond, the right and duty of parents and guardians to educate children, and the defence of the dignity and inner life of the family”³³⁹ The married state, therefore, involves commitment as well as valid expectations associated with this commitment. In particular I will be using the church documents: *Familiaris Consortio* - The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* - Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Lumen Gentium* - Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* - Decree on the Apostolate on the Laity as well as *Propositions on the Doctrine of Christian Marriage* by the International Theological Commission.³⁴⁰ I begin my examination of the married state with a working definition. This will be followed by an outline of the significance of marriage as a social institution within the church. I will then proceed to a detailed examination of the sacrament of marriage: commitment and associated expectations.

B(ii) The Context of Marriage: A Working Understanding

At the commencement of the study at this point, a working definition of marriage together with an understanding of the significance of the married state as a ‘social’ institution, is

³³⁷ *ibid*, 503

³³⁸ *AA*, 11, 502.

³³⁹ Ferdinand Klosterman, ‘Decree on the Laity’ in Herbert Vorgrimler ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II Vol III*. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 340

³⁴⁰ *FC, GS, LG, AA*. International Theological Commission ‘Propositions on the Doctrine of Christian Marriage’ *Origins* 8:15 (Sept. 28, 1978): 235-239. Other authors such as Lawler will also be used in the discussion of marriage as a vocation.

pertinent. From the perspective of this study, marriage will be defined from a Catholic perspective taken in the main from *Gaudium et Spes* paragraphs 47-50.

Article 48 of *Gaudium et Spes* focuses upon the sanctity of marriage and the family. It states that married life was established by the creator and as such is holy because God is its author. It is holy because it is modelled upon and reflects Christ's union with the church. "Authentic married love is caught up into divine love and is governed and enriched by Christ's redeeming power and the saving activity of the Church" God is shown as the author of matrimony and conjugal love. Marriage is holy because conjugal love and fidelity are the basis of marriage as a 'community of love' (paragraph 47). The sacrament of marriage is seen as a "special sacrament which strengthens and makes holy the spouses in the duties and dignity of their state" - mutual self help, service and the raising of children are cited as specific examples

The closing lines of paragraph 48 emphasize the way in which the Christian family is a reflection of the loving covenant uniting Christ with the church. In particular, the council stresses "mutual love of the spouses", their solidarity and faithfulness as well as the "loving way in which all members of the family work together".

Conjugal love is the focus of paragraph 49. The love between spouses is seen as "eminently human" and blessed, "judged worthy of special gifts, healing, perfecting, and of exalting gifts of grace and of charity" In this context such love involves the free and mutual self-giving by the spouses "This love is uniquely expressed and perfected through the marital act."

It has been said (paragraph 48) that spouses receive a special sacrament which strengthens and fortifies. Paragraph 49 also stresses the role of prayer in the married vocation. Couples will pray for "constancy of love, largeheartedness, and a spirit of sacrifice" Conjugal love is

authentic love when it bears “witness to faithfulness and harmony” and when it is seen to bear fruit: concern for the education of children and for assisting in social renewal are examples. Further, the family becomes a model whereby the young learn values associated with marriage: chastity and courtship are the predominant ideas in this respect.

The next section, paragraph 50, explores the fruitfulness of marriage and reinforces paragraph 48 which speaks of children and procreation as being the “ultimate crown” of matrimony. “Parents should regard as their proper mission the task of transmitting life and educating those to whom it has been transmitted.” Couples are urged to “cooperate with the love of the Creator” in this respect. However, they are urged to give proper consideration to issues such as the material, spiritual conditions, to consult with others such as family, society, the church regarding family life. Ultimately, couples are to be “governed according to a conscience dutifully conformed to the divine law itself...” As a final comment of paragraph 50, the Council re-emphasizes that marriage is an “unbreakable compact” and persists even when children are lacking.

Harmonizing conjugal love with respect for human life is the substance of paragraph 51. Two points are stressed: (1) that life is sacred from the moment of conception and must be protected; and (2) there exists a moral aspect involved and that acts which detract from mutuality, from human dignity and which are not determined by objective standards, cannot be accepted by the church as promoting human life.

Marriage, as discussed in *Gaudium et Spes*, places it within a sacramental context. This emphasis is important if we are to have an understanding of marriage which shows the ‘spirituality’ of this state. Marriage, the union of husband and wife typifies the outward lived expression of the reality of the presence of Christ and his love for the church.

If we synthesise the thoughts thus presented, we find that marriage is referenced in more personal terms to highlight the very personal and spiritual nature of marriage. In other words, couples give their whole persons to one another. This is not just the right for sexual intimacy but the mutual self-giving is a gift for their total well-being. Thus the perspective of marriage in this study focuses on marriage between a man and a woman in the context of sacrament and mutual self-giving. As sacrament, marriage represents an integral aspect of church. It represents a visible way of response to Christ to live in the service of others and is a means of personal fulfilment in Christ.

This last statement begs the question as to the significance of the married state as a 'social' institution within the church. Marriage is a key social institution in society for it has traditionally been regarded as the mainstay for appropriate adult living, for the raising of children and for the enculturation of the values and norms by which society operates and is thereby enabled to maintain itself. However, from the point of view of the church, marriage assumes a greater richness and expression because of its sacramental nature and it is to this point that I now turn.

B(iii) The Significance of the Married State as More Than a Social Institution

Within the Church

Initially, the significance of marriage for the church is its sacramental nature. The purpose of marriage, its interconnectedness with other sacraments, its uniqueness as a chosen way of living, all stem from and relate to marriage as being a sacrament – a sign of the presence of Christ and his redeeming grace at work. Marriage is, therefore, the outward expression on the part of the couple which expresses an inner reality which, in the first instance, is God's love for them as well as their love for each other and also their love for God. The purpose of the sacrament affords salvation for married Christians. It is through their union that they share in the unity of Christ with the church and thereby grow in holiness. In so doing they bear witness to God.

Christian spouses, in virtue of the sacrament of matrimony, signify and partake of the mystery of that unity and fruitful love which exists between Christ and His Church (cf. Eph. 5:32) The spouses thereby help each other to attain to holiness in their married life and by the rearing and education of their children.³⁴¹

Lumen Gentium here points to the social aspect of the sacrament of marriage. Not only is the marital union a sacrament of unity, it is also social in its context – rearing and education of children. In this respect marriage is a sacrament; it is the outward sign of Christ and his loving relationship with the church. Christ’s love for the church is the pattern for married love.³⁴² Selfless giving, personal sacrifice and love characterize Christ’s relationship with His church. Marriage, likewise exemplifies these same characteristics. It is these characteristics which determine the nature of one’s commitment and inherent responsibility to spouse, to family and to church. I move now to examine the social aspect and then follow this with an examination of the commitment and inherent responsibility that underlie the sacrament of marriage. This allows me to show that marriage is a valid response to God in Christ.

The introduction to the *Rite of Marriage*³⁴³ quoting from *Gaudium et Spes* 48 says that the institution of “marriage and wedded love have as their purpose the procreation and education of children and find in them their ultimate crown”³⁴⁴ The significance of this is that the sacrament of marriage is determined by God who is its “author”³⁴⁵ Practically speaking, marriage is important because it has a “decisive bearing on the continuation of the human race, on the personal development and eternal destiny of the individual members of a family, and on the dignity, stability, peace, and prosperity of the family itself and of human

³⁴¹ *L G*, 11, 28-29

³⁴² Ronald Lawler, *ibid*, 516

³⁴³ Australian Episcopal Conference *Rite of Marriage* (Sydney: Dwyer, 1984), ix, 4.

³⁴⁴ Paragraph 4 continues by saying that there are other purposes to marriage apart from the those already stated

³⁴⁵ *G S*, 48, 250.

society as a whole”³⁴⁶ The significance of the social aspect of marriage is not just its focus on child bearing and education, but relates also to the wider ‘ destiny’ of human society. Thus the significance is such that it is described in terms of an apostolate. The social aspect of marriage is, therefore, the lived expression of married life. As such the married state is described in terms of a specific mission in and for the church. The definition of vocation already established is clear in respect of marriage. Spouses are called for a specific mission.

This is spelled out in the Decree on the Laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem* 11) when it says that the “apostolate of married persons and of families is of unique importance for the Church and civil Society”³⁴⁷. In this respect we come to see something of the relationship between marriage as a sacrament and marriage as apostolate. Aloys Grillmeier³⁴⁸ in his commentary, argues that matrimony is a sacramental symbol. It signifies the relationship between Christ and the church. Marriage not only sanctifies the spouses but contributes to the ongoing presence of the People of God. Within the family, church service “is already performed, the first proclamation of the gospel, the first cherishing of the vocations which mirror in their diversity and rank the whole life of the community” are fostered.³⁴⁹ It follows that the sacrament of marriage is the source of commitment to the life and growth of the People of God and its continued mission in the world. When *Lumen Gentium* 11³⁵⁰ refers to marriage as being the “domestic Church,” this is in fact a reference to the inter-relationship between marriage as sacrament and marriage as apostolate. “For from the wedlock of Christians there comes the family, in which new citizens of human society are born.”³⁵¹ It is

³⁴⁶ *ibid*

³⁴⁷ *A. A.*, 11, 502.

³⁴⁸ Aloys Grillmeier, ‘The Mystery of the Church’ in Herbert Vorgrimler ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II Vol. 1* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), 163-164.

³⁴⁹ *ibid*, 164.

³⁵⁰ *L. G.*, 11, 29

³⁵¹ *ibid*

through this sacrament that husband and wife help each other to holiness, to a development of their baptismal commitment for themselves and for each other. The social impact of the sacrament of marriage is, in this respect, an indicator of their call to follow Christ within the married state and represents a socially binding contract between husband and wife.³⁵²

Such a 'social' sacrament emphasises the Trinitarian aspect of marriage in order to highlight the point that intimacy between husband and wife is both analogous with, as well as symbolic of, the intimacy that exists within the Trinity. The sacrament of matrimony, while outwardly manifesting human love, inwardly develops love of God and love for God. In this respect, there exists a commonality among all baptised Christians irrespective of their state in the church. However, with regard to the married state, this commonality is the basis of the social nature of the sacrament. In other words, there exists a precondition that underpins the married state and that precondition is the intimacy of the Trinity which reveals itself more fully to husband and wife in their love for each other and their children and consequently is revealed more fully in the family of the church. The family reveals in a very physical way the vocation to marriage as being a social sacrament. This is evidenced in the family as an integral aspect of the church, providing the natural social basis, the incarnational, human dimension of the church as a visible society.

It is clear that marriage is the social mainstay of the church. For in the first instance, husband and wife are covenanted to each other in mutuality and freedom. Secondly, the mutuality is a precondition for family life in which and through which husband and wife come to holiness and personal growth. Thirdly, the sacrament of marriage as the social mainstay of the church, evidences the intimacy of the Trinity and is therefore not only a sign

³⁵² Cf. The International Theological Commission, 'Propositions on the Doctrine of Christian Marriage' *Origins* 8:15 (Sept 28, 1978): 237 in its section on the sacramentality of marriage comments on *L G*, 11 as follows: 'From its own standpoint, Christian marriage, as a real symbol and sacramental sign, represents the church of Christ concretely in the world and, especially under its family aspect, it is called rightly the "domestic church".'

of the love of husband and wife, but also a sign of the love of God for them. The sacrament of marriage becomes, as it were, the sacrament of the love of God being manifest in a particular way. Finally, the apostolate of husband and wife, is not only an apostolate for the family but is also an apostolate for the life of the church. Marriage is thus an important social institution within the church and is necessary for the ongoing life, ministry and mission of the church. The married state represents the primary way in which to live out one's baptismal calling. As Christ was committed to his mission and the church, so too marriage is commitment – to Christ in the church, to one's family as well as to wider society.

B(iv) Marriage: Sacrament of Commitment

Marriage is defined or bounded by the level of commitment associated with the state

Commitment in marriage extends to one's spouse, to one's marital bond, to one's family and to the church. These ideas associated with commitment will be explored in this section.

Commitment in marriage extends to one's spouse. Such commitment is based on mutuality to "create and to sustain a climate of personal openness, availability and trust".³⁵³ It is a commitment which is total and allows for mutual self giving; it is a commitment which is a covenant, an "intimate partnership in loyal and faithful love"³⁵⁴ In speaking of covenant, the introduction to the *Rite of Marriage* paragraph 2³⁵⁵ establishes that the marriage covenant is a covenant of "irrevocable consent that the spouses freely give to and receive from each other." Such an understanding is more fully developed by Charles Gallagher³⁵⁶ when he says:

Marriage should then be experienced as a privilege in which two persons progressively learn to fall in love with each other and with God simultaneously

³⁵³ Michael Lawler, *Marriage and Sacrament. A Theology of Christian Marriage* (Collegeville: M. Glazer, 1993), 20

³⁵⁴ *ibid*, 21.

³⁵⁵ Australian Episcopal Conference, *ibid*, ix.

³⁵⁶ Charles Gallagher, ed et al, *Embodied in Love Sacramental Spirituality and Sexual Intimacy* (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 15.

It becomes their basic experience, allowing their loving service to each other to project outward into a series of unending loving communities.

Secondly, commitment in marriage is also a commitment to one's marital bond. Commitment to one's spouse and to the marital bond is the basis of fidelity³⁵⁷ Such fidelity is expressed in and through the "marital act" which promotes "that mutual self-giving by which spouses enrich each other with a joyful and a thankful will".³⁵⁸ As already indicated, the sacrament of marriage is a testament to the intimacy of the Trinity and to its presence in the church. Commitment to one's spouse and to married intimacy bears witness to this presence and is a sign of the fidelity of God to the church. This is at the heart of the personal relationship which highlights the nature of marital commitment. Commitment to one's spouse is a commitment of self-giving, a commitment of the self in intimacy, as well as a commitment to openness to the 'design' of the Trinitarian presence in married life.

Authentic married love is caught up into divine love and is governed and enriched by Christ's redeeming power and the saving activity of the Church. Thus this love can lead the spouses to God with powerful effect and can aid and strengthen them in the sublime office of being a father or a mother

For this reason, Christian spouses have a special sacrament by which they are fortified and receive a kind of consecration in the duties and dignity of their state. By virtue of this sacrament, . . . they are penetrated with the spirit of Christ. This spirit suffuses their whole lives with faith, hope, and charity. Thus they increasingly advance their own perfection³⁵⁹

Thirdly, commitment is to one's family. In a very real sense married life is a microcosm of human society³⁶⁰ with all its inherent complexities and problems. At times commitment to marriage is more than a 'sublime office' but rather is an office that taxes the human spirit and challenges the strength of one's commitment to spouse and to family. *Gaudium et Spes*

³⁵⁷ *GS*, 48, 253

³⁵⁸ *ibid*

³⁵⁹ *ibid*, 251

³⁶⁰ Charles Gallagher, *ibid*, 17 spells out the 'transfigurative' nature of marriage in the context of marriage and the Trinity when he says that "Marriage is meant by God to be a microcosm of human society and the entire universe as these are destined to become one in the Body of Christ."

speaks eloquently of the sacramental and human aspects of the married state but only hints at the demands that are inherent to this state. However, *Gaudium et Spes* paragraph 11 spells out the importance of the family for the church and for society. Briefly

it has always been the duty of Christian couples, but today it is the supreme task of their apostolate, to manifest and prove by their own way of life the unbreakable and sacred character of the marriage bond, to affirm vigorously the right and duty of parents and guardians to educate children in a Christian manner, and to defend the dignity and lawful independence of the family.³⁶¹

It is precisely these demands which characterize the married state and show the practicalities involved for married people and the way in which they exemplify the Christian relationship. Finally, for Christian couples, there exists also a commitment to church. The church, as outlined in *Lumen Gentium* paragraph 1, is seen as a “kind of sacrament of the unity of all mankind, that is, she is a sign and an instrument of such union and unity”³⁶². The Christian family in *Gaudium et Spes* 48 is seen in the terms of a reflection of the loving covenant uniting Christ with the church. In this respect married life is representative of that commitment which is evidenced between Christ and the church.

Thus the Christian family, which springs from marriage as a reflection of the loving covenant uniting Christ with the Church and as a participation in that covenant, will manifest to all men, the Saviour’s living presence in the world, and the genuine nature of the Church. This the family will do by the mutual love of the spouses, by their generous fruitfulness,³⁶³ their solidarity and faithfulness, and by the loving way in which all members of the family work together.

Seen in this context, the commitment of Christian couples also extends to a commitment to church through which they initially received the primary sacraments of baptism,

³⁶¹ *GS*, 11, 502-503

³⁶² *LG*, 1, 15.

³⁶³ This is not to deny that there will be couples who, for a variety of reasons, do not have children. This is acknowledged by *GS* 50, 255: “Marriage to be sure is not instituted solely for procreation. Rather, its very nature as an unbreakable compact between persons.... Therefore marriage persists as a whole manner and communion of life, and maintains its value and indissolubility, even when offspring are lacking—despite, rather often, the very intense desire of the couple.”

confirmation and eucharist. Their reception of the sacrament of marriage is a willingness to receive and express through their marriage the fullness of the sacraments that they received

The married state, therefore, is a state of commitment to another. It has been shown in the above that it is not possible to enter into the sacrament of marriage in a less than free and less than fully generous way. *Gaudium et Spes* 48 states that marriage is founded in “a conjugal covenant of irrevocable personal consent”³⁶⁴.

What we are seeing in these brief comments from church documents is the emphasis on the ‘gravity’ of the married state. To enter into this state requires that each person be willing to enter into and accept the responsibility for the development of the relationship, for family life and responsibility for the development of faith through their family and church interactions. However, it is important to again stress the point that marriage is a choice for a way of life. It is one way in which a person may ‘feel’ that he or she is called to live out their baptismal calling to be Christian in the world.

What needs to be remembered is that marriage, together with the priestly life and the single life, represent different responses to the universal call to holiness spoken about in *Lumen Gentium* 39-42. Both marriage and the priesthood as well as the single way of life, are ways which enrich and support the other.³⁶⁵

B(v) Marriage: Associated Expectations

The sacrament of marriage is a sacrament of commitment and responsibility. It can be argued, that the married state has its own set of expectations associated with it. In a sense these expectations derive from the state itself. Briefly, it is expected that a marriage will be

³⁶⁴ *GS*, 48, 70

³⁶⁵ *FC*, 16, 31-33

consummated, will be open to life (children), will involve a great commitment of time, energy, patience and love. The introduction to the Rite of Marriage³⁶⁶ states that married Christians “should be steadfast and ready to cooperate with the love of the Creator and Saviour, who through them will constantly enrich and enlarge his own family.” Moreover, the Christian family is expected to become a “community of life and love” such that in a very real way it reflects the love of God for humanity as well as the “love of Christ the Lord for the Church his bride”³⁶⁷. The Christian family is thus a reflection of the divine life of God. It is a sign of this divine relationship as well as a sign of the loving presence in and for his Church. Without wanting to diminish the richness of the imagery, what is expected of the married couple is a heavy demand. *Familiaris Consortio* spells out the expectations of the married state by stressing four points: that married life forms a community of persons; that married life exists to serve life; that married life is a participation in the development of society and that it is also a sharing in the life and mission of the church³⁶⁸. This schema has been picked up as being a useful framework from which to discuss family. This is not to suggest, as I have already indicated, that married life is without its share of problems and difficulties. To suppose otherwise would mean that there existed an inaccurate understanding of what it means to be in the married state. *Familiaris Consortio* 34, aware of the complexity and difficulties of marriage, particularly with reference to children, says “the function of transmitting life must be integrated into the overall mission of Christian life as a whole, which without the Cross cannot reach the Resurrection”³⁶⁹. Further, it is expected that those in the married state will painstakingly “cultivate and pray for constancy of love, largeheartedness, and the spirit of sacrifice”³⁷⁰. These words aptly summarise the nature of

³⁶⁶ Australian Episcopal Conference, *ibid*, ix

³⁶⁷ *F C*, 17, 35.

³⁶⁸ *ibid*

³⁶⁹ This is a point to which I will return with reference to the single life as I believe that living the single life entails its own cross

³⁷⁰ *G S*, 49, 253.

the commitment inherent in the married state. At the everyday human level, these qualities are symbolic of the way in which Christ 'relates' with the church.

Having looked at the term vocation, its nuances and its usage, I outlined what I perceived to be the context of marriage. I began with a working understanding of marriage and this was followed by looking at marriage from the following aspects: the significance of marriages as a social institution within the church; marriage as a Sacrament of Commitment and the associated expectations of marriage. This vocation, I concluded, was initiated at baptism and represented one way of living out one's baptismal response to God. The clerical state is another way through which to live one's baptismal response to God

C: The Vocation to Ordination

John Paul II argues in his exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*³⁷¹ that the 'vocation' to priesthood is indicative of a way in which to live out one's response to God. In order to explicate this way of living, I suggest three considerations need to be taken into account. These three areas sum up for me what I believe to be a way of understanding the ministry of those in the ordained life. The three areas are: (1) the nature and purpose of commitment to mission, (2) a commitment to identity and fraternity, and (3) a commitment to act and be the personal representative of Christ in the church. It is to these commitments that I will now turn as commitment has a major bearing upon the way in which the church has understood and continues to understand 'vocation' and why, as a result, it is slow in accepting or coming to be able to articulate a broader vision of 'vocation' which incorporates all in the church.

³⁷¹ cf. *Pastores Dabo Vobis* paragraph 20,40. Reference is made to the Conciliar texts: *Lumen Gentium* and *Presbyterorum Ordinis* in talking about the specific vocation to holiness or "more precisely of a vocation based on the sacrament of holy orders." Paragraph 23, 44 refers to the total gift of the self to the Church. Paragraph 24, 46 addresses consecration as being for mission; paragraph 27, 53 talks about goals which express priestly identity. The Congregation for the Clergy also addresses these concerns in its reflections of the Conciliar texts including John Paul's Exhortation *Pastores*. Paragraph 4, 9 speaks of the identity of the priest in the context of ministry of word and sacrament; paragraph 20, 22 is entitled priestly communion and focuses on priestly identity and paragraph 25, 26 highlights the fraternal nature of ministry in relation to the apostolate; paragraph 7, 12 addresses the role of the priest acting *in persona Christi* to lead people towards sanctity. paragraph 30, 30 focuses on the role of the priest and the common mission. John Paul also addresses some of these issues in his address 'The Image of a Priest's Vocation' *Origins* 24 40 (March 28, 1996): 667-668

C(i) The Nature and Purpose of Commitment to Mission

In order to examine the way in which many people have come to understand priesthood, it is necessary to come to terms with the three abovementioned considerations concerning the ordained way of life. The first premise is that the ordained life represents a commitment to mission—active ministry in the service of the church. By this, I mean a commitment not only to one's diocese but to the wider community of the church or, as in the case of religious orders, a commitment to the charism of the respective founder. *Presbyterorum Ordinis* reinforces this commitment in saying:

“Established in the priestly order by ordination, all priests are united among themselves in an intimate sacramental brotherhood. In a special way they form one presbytery in a diocese to whose service they are committed under their own bishop. For even though priests are assigned to different duties they still carry on one priestly ministry on behalf of men.”³⁷²

Commitment to mission, to ministerial service therefore, is an integral aspect for those who choose the ordained life. The Congregation for the Clergy³⁷³ quoting *Presbyterorum Ordinis* paragraph 8³⁷⁴ argues that through the Sacrament of Holy Orders every priest is “united to the other members of the priesthood by specific bonds of apostolic charity, ministry and fraternity”. The Congregation further argues that the office of pastor is not simply confined to the care of the faithful as individuals, but is also “properly extended to the formation of a genuine Christian community ... it must embrace not only the local Church but the universal Church”.³⁷⁵ The reception of the sacrament of Holy Orders, affords the priest an involvement with the church in a unique way. They commit themselves to the church for a particular mission, whether it be a commitment to the local church or to the congregation's mission activity. Theirs is a ministry in the service of the church. The bond referred to by

³⁷² *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 8, 549 Hereafter as *PO*

³⁷³ Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priest* (Homebusch: St. Pauls 1994), 26, 25 Hereafter as *Directory*

³⁷⁴ *PO*, 25, 26.

³⁷⁵ *ibid.*, 6, 545

the Congregation for the Clergy concerns itself with pastoral charity so that one's commitment is one of personal gifting of self to the church. Without such a gifting of the self to the life and mission of the church, the very nature of the church and the way it promotes mission, would be different and would call for a radical re-examining of the nature of ministry as it is presently understood. Ministerial service is a commitment of self which frames, as it were, the manner of thinking and acting, and relating to people. In other words, to be ordained by the church is to accept a commitment of oneself to the church with the freely-given gift of oneself. It is also a recognition and acceptance that the giving will involve demands which condition the manner in which one is able to respond. *Pastores Dabo Vobis* ³⁷⁶ speaks of one's commitment as the *amoris officium*, "the priest, who welcomes the call to ministry is in a position to make this a loving choice, as a result of which the church and souls become his first interest..." *Pastores* paragraph 24 simplifies priestly commitment by saying that "consecration is for mission". Those ordained for this service to the ministry become, as it were, public property³⁷⁷ to the extent that their ordination puts them' into the body of the church in a very visible way. Priestly ministry is a public ministry with a definitive role. The Congregation for the clergy comments that

Theirs is the task of making Christ "visible in the midst of the flock" entrusted to his care, having a positive and encouraging rapport with the lay faithful. Recognizing in these their dignity as sons of God, he develops his own role in the Church, and in their service he offers all his priestly ministry and pastoral charity ³⁷⁸

His role and visible presence is an act of leadership. By this I mean that the priest has a significant role in fostering communion among the faithful – in guidance, in assisting men and women in their daily lives ³⁷⁹. He does this within the church community for the building up of the community of the church and its "common mission of salvation" ³⁸⁰.

³⁷⁶ *Pastores*, 23, 44

³⁷⁷ "Priests are public property. Priestly leadership is not anonymous but public, and we cannot expect to disappear into the woodwork once ordained" in J Peter Sartain, 'The Challenge of Priestly Leadership' *Review for Religious* 53:5 (Sept-Oct 94): 685

³⁷⁸ *Directory*, 30, 30

Put simply, commitment to mission is a commitment to an active and public ministry which is formal, and above all it is a commitment of oneself to a specific community. In this respect the concept of vocation for a specific mission as earlier outlined by both Sinclair Ferguson and Paul Holland, is evidenced in this expression of vocation as being for the church community both as its local representative and as a member of the wider community of the faithful. The way in which the Congregation for the Clergy outlines this specific call is an expression which clearly shows the specificity of the clerical life and the nature of the ministry of those ordained.

C(ii) Commitment to Identity and Fraternity

The second premise concerning the ordained life is that there is, together with a commitment to a mission, a commitment to a public and formal identity. Timothy Radcliffe³⁸¹ argues that identity is about making choices but it is a response that is not superficial but one which “summons one to life”³⁸², whether it be religious life or priestly life and presumably to life itself. Corporate terminology of vocation sees priesthood as being a specific call into a specific identity and with a specific ministry. It is a call to public leadership within the community of the faithful.³⁸³ John Paul’s terminology for priesthood typifies the way in which the institution regards the vocation of priesthood: “Let us consider our call, brethren” (cf I Cor. 1:26). The priesthood is a call, a particular vocation: “One does not take this honour upon himself, but he is called by God (Heb. 5:4)”³⁸⁴. One’s call places the priest within the Trinitarian mystery in an intimate relationship. My point is not to deny the nature

³⁷⁹ *ibid*, 30, 31.

³⁸⁰ *ibid*, 30.

³⁸¹ Timothy Radcliffe O P, ‘Leaving Behind the Usual Signs of Identity’ *Origins* 26 12 (Sept 5, 1966): 182-188.

³⁸² *ibid*, 184.

³⁸³ “It is thus clear that within the broader context of the Christian vocation the priestly vocation is a specific call.” in John Paul II ‘The Image of the Priest’s Vocation’ *Origins* 25:40 (March 28, 1996): 666-671

of the call nor to deny that priesthood ought to be regarded the less but that the language used to describe priesthood is indicative of a specific call and one which infers an importance amongst the three states.

In a very special way, the church ritualises the nature of the call to priesthood in the rite of Holy Orders. This ritual expresses both the commitment of the individual to the mission of the church as well as publicly articulating the church's position on the nature of priestly vocation and ministry in the life of the church.

Through the sacramental ordination conferred by the imposition of hands and the consecratory prayers of the Bishop, "a specific ontological bond which unites the priest to Christ, High Priest and Good Shepherd" is established.

Thus, the identity of the priest comes from the specific participation in the Priesthood of Christ, in which the one ordained becomes, in the Church and for the Church, a real, living and faithful image of Christ the Priest, "a sacramental representation of Christ, Head and Shepherd"³⁸⁵

The Congregation for the Clergy clearly establishes priestly identity from the perspective of being committed to mission; belonging is characterized by fraternity and membership of the presbyterate³⁸⁶. To this extent, identity is grounded in mission and the fraternity of belonging, all of which is symbolised in the imposition of hands. In reality, it must be said that commitment to mission and commitment to a formal and public identity go hand in hand. It is not possible to have one and not the other. This tends to indelibly mark those who accept the ordained life as their response to God. In a sense this indelible mark represents a freedom for mission in that one's energies are specifically channelled as well as challenged for and on behalf of the church. One's ability to respond, therefore, is conditioned by the nature of the call and the associated commitment to the life and ministry of the priestly life.

³⁸⁴ *ibid.*

³⁸⁵ *Directory*, 2, 8 quotes *Pastores* 11:1c, 675 and 15:1c, 680 to establish the point about the sacramental roots of priestly ordination.

³⁸⁶ *ibid*, 25, 26.

C(iii) Commitment to Being the Representative of Christ in the Church

This third consideration concerning the vocation to the ordained ministry is one which has traditionally understood this vocation to be representative of Christ in the community. Church documents continue to use this understanding of vocation to the priestly life. The term used is that of being 'in *persona Christi*'³⁸⁷. In examining priesthood in respect of the concept 'in *persona Christi*', it will be possible to obtain a broader understanding of the inherent commitment associated with the ordained life. I will draw upon church documents including: The Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, *Redemptionis Donum*, as well as pertinent authors such as Michael Lawler, Patrick Dunne, Michael Evans and Timothy Radcliffe³⁸⁸ in order to elucidate the areas of concern regarding this commitment.

Redemptionis Donum paragraph 9³⁸⁹ addresses the issue of priestly commitment. In particular it speaks of the manner in which those in ordination (whether a Religious or Secular Priest) are to evidence their commitment. 'In the economy of the Redemption the evangelical counsels of chastity, .. constitute the most radical means for transforming in the human heart this relationship with "the world": with the external world and with one's personal "I" . . .' Celibacy freely undertaken, together with obedience, represent in the life of the priest the 'constraints' that shape and mould identity and response to vocation. This is a

³⁸⁷ This term is used several times in Conciliar texts chiefly *L.G* 10, 27 and 28, 53; *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy) 33, 149; *Christus Dominus* (Decree on the Bishop's Pastoral Office in the Church) 11, 403; *P.O.* 2, 534 and 6, 543. The context is usually that of eucharist and the performance of sacred functions. However, *in persona Christi* is also used in the context of the attitude of the minister to his office - to be Christ-like. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (Homebush: St Pauls, 1994), 387, 1548 aptly summarises these references: "by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, acts *in persona Christi Capitis*."

³⁸⁸ Patrick Dunne, *Priesthood: A Re-examination of the Roman Catholic Theology of the Presbyterate* (New York: Alba House, 1990). Michael Evans, 'In Persona Christi - the Key to Priestly Identity' *The Clergy Review* LXXI: 4 (April 1986): 117-125. Michael Lawler, *A Theology of Ministry* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1990). Timothy Radcliffe O.P., 'Leaving Behind the Usual Signs of Identity' *Origins* 26:12 (Sept 5, 1996): 183-188.

³⁸⁹ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptionis Donum* (Vatican City: Polyglot Press, 1984), 9,25-26

key point in *Pastores* paragraph 21³⁹⁰: “the spiritual life of the priest is marked, moulded and characterized by the way of thinking and acting proper to Jesus Christ, head and shepherd of the church, and which are summed up in his pastoral charity”. Underlying the commitment to priestly ministry is a spirituality which reflects his relationship with Christ.

His freely chosen celibacy and obedience to his church condition the way in which the priest responds to God in the exercise of his pastoral ministry. Michael Lawler articulates what is central to this concept when he argues that those in ordination are to be imitators of Christ; to be of service to Christ and for Christ. Those in ordination are to be ambassadors, a sign, a sacramental presence of Christ.³⁹¹ In effect, those ordained for mission represent the person of Christ – they are *in persona Christi*. This concept of vocation further reinforces the specificity of the call and underscores the traditional notion of priesthood as a call by God. The subsequent response by the individual is for the church’s mission in the capacity of his being the direct representative of Christ and that of the church. Ordination in this respect is different from the married state. They share in the universal priesthood of Christ as outlined in *Lumen Gentium*. Those in ordination, while sharing in this same universal priesthood of Christ, are directly involved in the ministerial priesthood of the church. In effect their public ministry reflects the sacramental nature of Christ at work in and through the ordained. They are in a sense, the institutional representative of the person and presence of Christ within the church.

The Congregation for the Clergy³⁹² see this representation as being instrumental in leading people towards sanctity. Chiefly in this regard is the priest’s ability for leadership and his ability to act and think like Christ for the pastoral charity of the church. In other words, the

³⁹⁰ *The Directory*, 21,41

³⁹¹ Michael Lawler, *ibid*, 60. See also Michael Evans, *ibid*, 124. Patrick Dunne, *ibid*, 164 “... but they serve precisely by exercising leadership among God’s people in Christ’s name -as ambassadors and his vicars”

³⁹² *Directory*, 25, 26

priest's whole lifestyle, his actions, his leadership and his pastoral charity are to reflect Christ. When we think of commitment to mission, we need to consider this responsibility to be 'in *persona Christi*'. We also need to consider the priest in his role as *in persona ecclesiae*. In this respect, the priest acts in the name of the church. He does so when "presenting to God the prayer of the Church and above all when offering the Eucharistic sacrifice"³⁹³ as well as the sacraments. In so doing, the priest acting in the name of the whole church, "leads the faithful to an awareness of their own particular sharing in the priesthood of Christ"³⁹⁴. His role is one which shows the priest in his capacity as someone ordained by the church and for the service of the church. As the representative of the church, his is the task of leading the faithful in their worship and in their involvement with Christ's redemptive design for all. This responsibility represents a commitment to mission, a commitment which fashions and conditions the way in which ordained respond to Christ. The above three considerations, I believe, are inherent in the bringing into being the vocation to the ordained life. Commitment is to mission, to public and formal identity, and to being the personal representative of Christ. These represent a great demand on the individual who believes he is called to a life of the ordained ministry. One's responsibility and involvement, then, require an 'at home-ness'; a sense of both belonging and being an integral part of what it means to be church: to be committed formally in the church and for the mission of the church. This form of commitment highlights the way of life of the ordained. Celibacy, freely chosen, is undertaken in order to free the priest for service to the mission of the church.

C(iv) Expectations of Those in the Ordained Life

Generally speaking, the implied expectations and attitudes to those in ordination are a result

³⁹³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1552, 388

³⁹⁴ John Paul II, 'Holy Father's 1995 Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday'
<http://www.Library.catholic.org/plweb/cgi/fastweb?stateid> accessed on 14th September, 2002.

of, or flow from being personally and fraternally involved in mission. It is expected that those in ordination will 'conform' to their specific identity as formulated by the group. What is considered normative for the group such as a life of prayer, celibacy, openness to self and the world and above all willingness for mission, are necessary expectations that underlie the life of those in ordination. Cardinal Bernardin in "Priests: Religious Leaders, Doctors of the Soul"³⁹⁵ outlines these expectations in a poetic way when he says:

In short, the priest must be a mystic, a contemplative, a person of prayer. It is also the parish priest, the privileged bearer of the mystery of God, who must be, in very fiber of his being, formed by prayer. ...

The priest is not primarily someone who works, preaches, ministers, counsels. Rather, he is someone who, at the core of his being, has been set on fire by God and who invites others to catch the flame.

Cardinal Bernardin, initially speaks about the priest's role as the prayerful bearer of God to the community. His point, too is that there is another dimension which ought not be overlooked and this is to bring the fire of God to those with whom and for whom he ministers. There is an implicit expectation that the priest will be a man for all seasons and a man available to be the representative of Christ. Cardinal Bernardin's comment shows not only the way in which the ordained are called to be representatives of Christ, but also shows something of the way in which the ordained exercise their call to be holy. The following serves to illustrate the significance of this: "... if the Word does not come to birth in us today, it is of little value to read about the incarnation of that Word in a person long ago".³⁹⁶

Presbyterorum Ordinis 16 reaffirms that ordination frees the individual for mission. Celibacy, freely chosen, is the means whereby this freeing is made possible.

Through virginity or celibacy observed for the sake of the kingdom of heaven priests are consecrated to Christ in a new and distinguished way. They more easily hold fast

³⁹⁵ Cardinal Bernardin, 'Priests: Religious Leaders, Doctors of the soul' *Origins* 25:2 (May 25, 1995): 26

³⁹⁶ *ibid*

to Him with undivided heart. They more freely devote themselves to Him and through Him to the service of God and men.³⁹⁷

While such 'consecration' does free the individual to be available for mission, it also defines or characterises the individual in the sense that the institutional expectations such as are contained in the Congregation for the Clergy's Directory, represent a position which is very much ordered and controlled sociologically, theologically and ecclesially. The Matthean injunction of (19: 12) "Let anyone accept who can", would seem to remain the province of the few who are able to accept these demands. *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 16 acknowledges this lack of acceptance when it says that many "men today call perfect continence impossible"³⁹⁸ However, of itself this does not mean that the way of life is restrictive. Rather, the opposite is the case and while the ordained life is not a popular choice for many, the decision to be the "exclusive Spouse" of Christ as indicated in *Redemptionis Donum* 11 is a valid way of living in response to Christ.

Finally, it would be fair to say that the tradition in the church has always esteemed ordination. The concept that many are called but few are chosen, has tended to be shrouded in a sense of the 'majesty' and the mystery surrounding the call to priestly life and ministry. Nowhere is this more clearly shown than in the language used to describe the life and ministry of the ordained. The Directory is a good example. The emphasis of the wording in this text sets out to enunciate the specialness of the calling. It denotes the significance to the life of the church; it denotes call, and above all, it holds up the ordained life as being unashamedly valuable. I will contend in this respect that, like ordination and marriage, it is time for the church to assert the single life in similar manner. Language has been shown to assist in the development and ongoing understanding of the community of the faithful and its identity as those baptised in Christ, to live the Christian life and to imbue the world with Christ. What needs to be remembered, however, is that all three states are involved in the

³⁹⁷ *PO* 16, 565-566

³⁹⁸ *ibid.* 567.

mission of the church. Each state brings its own gifts to the life of the church. Celibacy is one such gift that enables the individual to be of service. It is a freely chosen gift which enables the individual to commit himself to ordination. In the words of *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, "This holy Synod likewise exhorts all priests, who trusting in God's grace, have freely undertaken sacred celibacy in imitation of Christ to hold fast to it magnanimously and wholeheartedly".³⁹⁹

Conclusion

I have argued that the married state is a state of commitment, of responsibility and entails expectations in a similar way in which the ordained life is commitment, responsibility and has its own expectations. Both these 'callings' entail boundaries, as it were, to the way in which the 'calling' is to be lived. In this way what we are seeing is vocation that is directed towards the Other; towards the Other who is spouse and family; to the Other who is the communion of the church in all its many facets. The sacraments of Marriage and of Holy Orders are sacraments of obligation, of self-giving, of personal involvement and the personal investing of one's total energies for the sake of the Other. These responsibilities and commitments represent in a very real sense, the practical aspects of the married life and the ordained life and ministry. The sacraments of Marriage and Holy Orders ecclesially formalise each way of living the Christian life. Having come to this conclusion about ordination and the married state, it is now my intention to consider the single state.

D(i) The Single State: An Introduction

In this section my main concern is to establish the qualities of the single state so as to show the way in which it is different from marriage and the ordained life. Its "uniqueness", I argue, lies in the fact that it is a state which does not involve a formal ecclesial commitment in the sense that both marriage and ordination require. This commitment is made either to

³⁹⁹ *PO*, 16, 566.

one's spouse initially and later to one's family or to a group such as a diocese or religious congregation. Such commitment is both formal and public. The nature of the commitment conditions the way in which the married person and the ordained person are able to respond to God. The single state is not 'sacramentalized' as is marriage and the ordained life. There is no sacrament which celebrates the single life. What I aim to show is that the single life is a state of radical freedom. Before continuing, it is important to understand what is meant by the term 'radical freedom'.

I consider that the single state is a radically different way of Christian living. It is different from marriage and ordination. Its own uniqueness is inherent in the nature of being a single baptised person. Part of its distinctive nature is, therefore, that the single person is seen to be one of integrity; such integrity being the unashamed statement about the importance of life for the single person and the way that the single person wishes to live his or her life as a baptised Christian. The values and approaches to living are seen in a different context from those of the other states. Ultimately, 'radical' means that the single state is a daring to be and a willingness to be alone. This can be seen to be making a statement about the manner of one's living. Freedom, on the other hand, connotes a sense of not being bound, defined or characterised by something such as vows or formal commitment as is the case of marriage or priestly ordination. Rather, the single way of life is reliant solely upon baptism, confirmation and eucharist as those sacraments which underpin the single way of life. Freedom means not being limited or allowing oneself to be limited to the espousal of a formal ecclesial commitment and its associated responsibilities and expectations. In effect, freedom means that single people have their own ecclesial boundaries and commitments. 'Radical freedom', therefore, is precisely that. It means that the single state is a different way of living. As with ordination and marriage, being single represents a public statement about the values of living as a single person.

It is also important to be clear on the use of 'laity' and 'lay' which are used by Church Exhortations such as *Lumen Gentium*, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, *Gaudium et Spes*,⁴⁰⁰ *Christifideles Laici*,⁴⁰¹ *Redemptionis Donum*, and *To All Consecrated Persons on the Occasion of the Marian Year*⁴⁰² in particular. The words 'laity' and 'lay' are used in these Exhortations to refer to the general group of baptised Christians who comprise the members of the lay faithful. This means that all baptised Christians: married, widowed and single are laity. For the purposes of this section, I argue that much of what is addressed to the laity in general and much of what is specifically addressed to married people as well as the ordained, can in fact be ascribed to the single life. My point in so doing is to stress the development of inclusion of the single state within the mindset of the church

In order to show the 'uniqueness' of the single state, I intend in the first instance to recall and to further explicate the definition of vocation as it applies to the single state. In this, it will be necessary to show the relationship of the single state to the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and eucharist. Secondly, the single state, because it shares in the common sacramental basis as with all baptised Christians, is also sacrament to the world and to the church. Thirdly, the mission of the church is also the mission of those in the single state and all gifts and charisms are, therefore, at the disposal of the church. As such, the single state assists in the growth and the development of the church as the Body of Christ. Finally, I intend to show the attributes of the single state that emerge from the proposed discussion.

⁴⁰⁰ References made to these Exhortations will be taken from Walter M. Abbott ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: G. Chapman / Corpus Books, 1966).

⁴⁰¹ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* (Boston: St. Paul Book and Media, 1988)

⁴⁰² John Paul II, *Redemptionis Donum* (Vatican City: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1984) John Paul II, *To All Consecrated Persons on the Occasion of the Marian Year* (Homebush: St. Paul, 1988)

D(ii) Definition of Vocation and its Application to the Single State

At this point, it is appropriate to recall some of the ideas from Section A about vocation in order to better understand the term with regard to the single state. This is necessary in order to show that the term “vocation” is applicable to the single state.

Several phrases from Section A are appropriate in this context: vocation is a specific call to holiness; vocation is a turning point on the path of our relationship with the living God; vocation involves choice and decision; vocation has its origin in baptism; vocation is a grace showing us what is possible for each of us; vocation represents a specific way in which to live out one’s response to God; all are called by baptism to this relationship with God and lastly, that our baptism is an exclusive⁴⁰³ relationship with the living God. Those who are single are also in this exclusive relationship with Christ. They, together with those married and ordained are also called to make a choice for God in the way in which they live their lives. Single people are also called to holiness by their baptism. What I am attempting to establish here is that the term vocation, as established earlier in this chapter, is applicable to those who choose to remain single as well as those men and women who continue to affirm their being single.

The Pontifical Council for the Laity (1979) establishes some general principles in its *Elements for a Theology of the Laity*. It argues, using *Lumen Gentium* 31, that everyone has a call to holiness; that there are differing roles and charisms for all baptised individuals; that there is a variety of gifts given to the faithful which are to be used for the service of the apostolate. The Council’s main contention is that these gifts, charisms and differing roles serve to promote the apostolate of the laity in the world⁴⁰⁴. For the Council, the lay vocation

⁴⁰³ In this context, I am not using exclusive in the same way as John Paul II who uses this word to specify the nature of the relationship of those in public and formal consecration to God. My usage denotes the general relationship of all those called in baptism to a relationship with God.

⁴⁰⁴ The general discussion is to be found in The Pontifical Council for the Laity, *Elements for a Theology of the Laity* (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanus, 1979), 64-67. Hereafter The Pontifical Council.

to holiness is a vocation to holiness within the secular world.⁴⁰⁵ The Pontifical Council is reinforcing what has already been said in *Lumen Gentium* #31 about vocation but stresses the context of the vocation of the laity, a context which is applicable to all including those in the single state. However, the distinction made, and it is an important distinction, is that while everyone has the “same ultimate vocation, the same baptismal dignity and the same condition, their charisms, roles and functions differ.”⁴⁰⁶ The role for some may be marriage; for others it may be the single life or the ordained life. The gifts that each of us receive, are also given to enable each of us to live out our baptismal calling and the way in which we respond to God in our Christian lives.

While those in ordination and marriage receive the relevant sacrament which formalizes their commitments, those in the single state do not have a similar sacrament upon which to base their choice for living. The single person, however, has the primary sacraments of initiation (baptism, confirmation and eucharist) as the basis for his or her commitment to God.⁴⁰⁷ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* acknowledges that every Christian receives the sacraments of initiation to enable them to live out their “vocation to apostolate”

The laity derive the right and duty with respect to the apostolate from their union with Christ their Head. Incorporated into Christ’s Mystical Body through baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit through confirmation, they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord himself.⁴⁰⁸

What is significant here is not only the acknowledgment of the role of the sacraments but more importantly, there is the understanding that vocation (being involved in the Body of Christ for the Mission of the Body), is assigned. I take this to mean that the manner in which

⁴⁰⁵ The Pontifical Council here takes up the position of *L. G.*, 31,57 and 36, 63

⁴⁰⁶ The Pontifical Council, 65

⁴⁰⁷ While it is acknowledged that everyone receives baptism, confirmation and eucharist, irrespective of state, those in consecration and marriage receive the ‘extra’ sacrament which serves them in their public and formal commitment to each other and to the Church

⁴⁰⁸ *A. A.*, 3, 492

each of us chooses to respond to our baptismal calling is directly attributable to Christ. This is not to suggest that there exists some preordained intention. Rather, we discern vocation and respond appropriately.

In continuing its discussion on the laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* takes up the above ideas to show the interrelationship between the “layman’s religious program of life” as it relates to ‘his’ chosen manner or state of living.

The layman’s religious program of life should take its special quality from his status as a married man and a family man, or as one who is unmarried or widowed, from his state of health, and from his professional and social activity. He should not cease to develop earnestly the qualities and talents bestowed on him in accord with these conditions of life, and he should make use of the gifts which he has received from the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰⁹

These statements show that there exists personal choice and responsibility when it comes to discerning and enacting vocation.

The manner, in which vocation is thereby enacted, is related to a variety of concerns such as occupation and personal gifts or talents. I argue that this is applicable to the single state. While the text at this point refers explicitly to the “unmarried”, it is a singular reference within a specific context – the ministry of the layperson. While it is a specific reference, it is not a reference to the vocation of being single per se. Nor does it offer any argument or development of thought concerning the lived experience of single men and women. It does, however, represent a limited understanding, one which needs a fuller articulation. I would also contend that all Christians, especially single Christians, need to develop their baptismal calling. The single person especially needs to develop, preserve and foster that relationship with Christ which was begun at baptism.⁴¹⁰ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* paragraph 2 reflects

⁴⁰⁹ *ibid.*, 4, 494

⁴¹⁰ Leonard Doohan, *The Lay-Centred Church* (Minneapolis, Winston Press, 1984), 112 argues this point when he says: “The fundamental moment of Christian life is the life received and the commitment made in Christian initiation.” For him, the commitment is discipleship embodied individually and collectively as Church. He further argues, that it is imperative that each

this point in its discussion about the Body and its parts working together when it states that “so intimately are the parts linked and interrelated in this Body (cf Eph 4:16) that the member who fails to make his proper contribution to the development of the Church must be said to be useful neither to the Church nor to himself”⁴¹¹ The single person, therefore, has the responsibility to develop his or her abilities and gifts and to thereby make an appropriate contribution to the church. I would argue here that there is a moral imperative for the single person to develop and to foster his baptismal calling as well as the gifts and talents that he or she has received. In so doing the single person is making a vital contribution to the life of the Body. The sacraments of initiation represent the building blocks upon which the single person is able to build his or her relationship with Christ. This is implied in the statement of *Lumen Gentium* 11 which says:

Fortified by so many and such powerful means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father Himself is perfect.⁴¹²

Such a call to holiness, directed at all in the church, is also true for single people. In this respect, the single state is characterised. Like ordination and marriage, the sacraments of initiation are its mainstay. However, unlike ordination and marriage, the single state has no other relevant sacrament such as orders or matrimony which grounds these choices for Christian living. Baptism, the common calling for everyone, is the primary sacrament together with confirmation and eucharist, whereby those choosing to live the single life are enabled to come to that fuller relationship with God. The grace of these sacraments and the continued development of this grace, is all that is required to sustain the single person in his or her journey towards God.

person needs a stronger sense of baptismal calling if both commitment and discipleship are to be engendered

⁴¹¹ *A A*, 2, 491

⁴¹² *L G*, 11, 29.

D(iii) Single State: Sacrament to the World and to the Church

Having established the significance of the sacraments of initiation as the basis for one's Christian living, it is pertinent to examine the manner in which the single state can be regarded as a 'sacrament' to the world and to the church given that the discussion on marriage and ordination has focused on the sacramental nature of these states

Leonard Doohan quoting Paul VI, uses the traditional image of the vine⁴¹³ and the branches in his discussion about a theology of the laity in the context of the relationship between the laity and the hierarchy. In looking closely at this image of ecclesial communion, for traditionally that has been the understanding of this image, we see that as far as the single life is concerned, we are talking about the way in which the single life is a vital part of the vine and that to deny it, is, in effect to do damage to the vine and hinder its fruitfulness for both the church and the individual. Regarding ecclesial communion, John Paul II in *Christifideles Laici* paragraph 20⁴¹⁴ outlines his understanding of the complementarity of vocations for the life of the church:

Ecclesial communion... is analogous to that of a living and functioning body. In fact, at one and the same time it is characterized by *diversity* and a *complementarity* of vocations and states in life, of ministries, of charisms and responsibilities. Because of this diversity and complementarity every member of the lay faithful is seen *in relation to the whole body* and offers a *totally unique contribution* on behalf of the whole body.

The key ideas here are diversity, complementarity of vocations and states of life as well as unique contribution to the whole body. What needs to be said in this context is that the single state needs the challenge and the example of the married state in order to learn how to love more deeply. In like manner, the married state has the right to expect from celibate persons a good example and a witness of fidelity to their vocation. "Just as fidelity at times

⁴¹³ Leonard Doohan, *ibid*, 5. His use of images such as Vine and Body are used to denote the Church.

⁴¹⁴ *Christifideles*, 20, 48

becomes difficult for married people and requires sacrifice, mortification and self-denial, the same can happen to celibate persons, and their fidelity, even in the trials that may occur, should strengthen the fidelity of married couples.⁴¹⁵ As such, the example set by single men and women can be an example to others. I see this complementarity and diversity as being vital to the overall growth and life of the vine. Further, John Paul II stresses this in article 56 of *Christifideles Laici*⁴¹⁶ where he speaks of the “rich variety” from each state of life. For him, there are diverse vocations, which he sees as being “different paths in the spiritual life and the apostolate.” Implicit again is the notion that the single state is an intrinsic aspect of church, of the spiritual life and the apostolate. Leonard Doohan spells out this belonging to the life of the church and the role of the laity (and in my view, the role of the single person), when he says that “an active member of the ecclesial people of God ... is called to incarnate himself or herself as sacrament of the world⁴¹⁷ in the specific circumstances of secular life”.⁴¹⁸ That is to say the single person is called to be Christ, to be a visible presence of Christ. John Paul’s comment is also suggestive of the idea that each of us is a ‘sacrament’ of Christ to each other and therefore, we are each sacrament of Christ not only to the Body but also to the world in which the Body is incarnated. The single person by his or her very belonging and contributing to the Body, is, together with clerical and married people, therefore a necessary part of this sacramental presence of being the visible presence of Christ to each other and to the world. This is a point which Leonard Doohan⁴¹⁹ takes up and elucidates when he discusses the relationship between baptismal commitment and the

⁴¹⁵ *F C*, 16, 33

⁴¹⁶ *ibid*

⁴¹⁷ “sacrament of the world”: I would prefer to say that the single person is called to be a sacrament to the world. Sacrament of the world suggests that the single person is a sign of secular life in and for the Church. While this may be true, my preferred option would be that the single person is more than this. The single person is sacrament. He or she is sacrament of the presence of Christ to the world and he or she is sacrament of the world in and for the Church. What I am suggesting is that sacrament has a much deeper connotation than at first appears.

⁴¹⁸ Leonard Doohan, *ibid*, 10.

⁴¹⁹ *ibid*, 44

mission and ministry of the church: "Called to be sacrament of the world in the circumstances of their own lives, they are challenged to mission and ministry as a necessary part of their baptismal commitment" *Lumen Gentium* paragraph 1 focuses clearly on the church as a sacrament – "a kind of sacrament of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind, that is, she is sign and an instrument of such union and unity" This concept is further articulated in *Gaudium et Spes* paragraph 45 as well as *Lumen Gentium* paragraph 9. *Gaudium et Spes* says that church is a ' "universal sacrament of salvation," . . . ' and *Lumen Gentium* says that those who believe in Jesus have been established "as the Church, that for each and for all she may be the visible sacrament of this saving unity". If we consider the importance of the church as a sacrament for salvation and for unity, then we must also come to the conclusion that the various members of the church are themselves a sacrament of what it means to be church. Each baptised person as the *christoforo*, bears witness to Christ in their everyday living. As the bearer of Christ and as the sign of the presence of Christ, each person is a sacrament. The single person is also a 'sacrament' by virtue of their baptism and subsequent commitment to Christ. He or she is a 'sacrament' to the total church group of the life of Christ present in the church and to the world

John Paul II in his Exhortation *Redemptionis Donum* paragraph 14⁴²⁰ argued that men and women religious represent an authentic contradiction to the values of the world. What is suggested here is also applicable for secular priests - that there is a value to the ordained life. There is the expectation that this lifestyle ought be a contradiction to the values of the world. However, the single life, ought also to be seen as an authentic contradiction to the values imposed. I say this because the single life is a radical departure from marriage and ordination which have already been discussed. The single life is an authentic contradiction because single people choose to stand up for the values that they think are important and

⁴²⁰ John Paul II, *Redemptionis Donum* (Vatican City: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1984), 41. Hereafter *Redemptionis Donum*

which motivate them in their living their response to God begun at baptism.⁴²¹ These are questions of consideration and suggest that a rethink or a re-envisioning of the single state is in order. I would accept John Paul II's statement that the sacraments confirm one in their vocation to the apostolate as he argues in *To all Consecrated Persons on the Occasion of the Marian Year 21*, but I would challenge his assertion that religious have been selectively chosen to develop the hiddenness of the relationship of Christ that he believes they 'contain' by virtue of their choice of the ecclesial life. The assumption here is that only ecclesiastical figures need to develop their relationship with Christ. This line of thinking fails to consider the common grounding in baptism that all receive. John Paul II's assertion also does not consider that the lay faithful have, by virtue of their baptism, an affective spiritual life. The *Working Document* points to the nature of the relationship of the laity to Christ – "each one of them has been called by God Himself and invited to a personal relationship with Him."⁴²² The relationship is personal; God calls each into fellowship, to holiness, "thus the Christian vocation is one of participation in the *communio* of love of the Holy Trinity."⁴²³ Raniero Cantalamessa makes an interesting point in this regard. He argues that

Virginity shows its most beautiful characteristic, which is gratuity. Christian virgin men and women imitate this gratuity to some degree when they love and care for children who are not their own... nurse the sick...⁴²⁴

His point is pertinent as it relates to sharing in *communio* in and through practical everyday activities. I would argue, that all baptised Christians by virtue of their baptism, have the 'right' and the 'authority' to articulate in themselves their relationship with Christ so that they represent a sacrament of Christ as well as contribute to the total Body of the church. In this, I would contend, that the single person, by virtue of his or her baptism, has an integral

⁴²¹ This point regarding single people and values was raised by single respondents who contributed their story in chapter three

⁴²² *Working Document*, 15, 18.

⁴²³ *ibid*

⁴²⁴ Raniero Cantalamessa, *Virginity. A Positive Approach to Celibacy for the Sake of the Kingdom of Heaven* (New York: Alba House, 1995), 17

part to play. The single person has been called by name (Is.43:1); he or she has been bought with a price; and has been espoused to Christ and the church by the love of God.⁴²⁵ These words, traditionally addressed to ecclesial persons, are relevant to the single person if we are to accept that baptism has any significance at all in the life of those called to follow Christ (in whatever state).

I have set out to show in this section concerning the single state, that the single state is a 'sacrament' to the church and the world in its own way. It represents a way of living that is a departure from the traditional expectation that people will marry. Single living represents a valid way in which to live out the baptismal call to follow Christ and to thereby stand up for the values that are inherently worthwhile as a single person. For me, this totality is 'sacrament', all of which bears upon the single state and their involvement in mission.

D(iv) The Single State: Mission

Taking up some of the threads so far mentioned: the vine and branches image; vocation; gifts and charisms and sacraments of initiation, we have the substance of the mission of those in the single state. It is my intention to discuss briefly each of these as they pertain to the single state in order to highlight what I believe is 'unique' about the single state.

The image of the vine and the branches is a traditional image used in relation to the church. It is a common theme of *Christifideles Laici* paragraph 58 and in this context is associated with vocation and mission: each person being called and sent for the Kingdom.⁴²⁶ Further, it is acknowledged in paragraph 56 that there are diverse vocations within the lay state.⁴²⁷ However, irrespective of the state or condition of the members of the laity, each is called to

⁴²⁵ *Redemptionis Donum* 8, 19 which discusses the covenant of spousal love; and 3, 7-8 which focuses on vocation

⁴²⁶ *Christifideles*, 58, 148.

⁴²⁷ *ibid*, 144.

incarnate the church and to be sacrament to church and world. The laity are shown to be “branches engrafted to Christ the true vine, and from him derive their life and fruitfulness”⁴²⁸ If the laity are branches deriving their life and energy from Christ, then we can assume given that there is a diversity among the vocations of the laity, that the single state is also a branch that is engrafted to the vine. The recent Code of Canon Law (204,1; 207,1 and 225,2⁴²⁹) articulates this when it talks about call and mission. The Code also points to the equality amongst the faithful, irrespective of state, which allows for the “building up of the Body of Christ”⁴³⁰ Michael Lawler argues that the laity have a responsibility to permeate the secular with the message of the Gospel. I would argue that if this is the case for the laity in general, then the single person, being an engrafted branch on the vine, also has this responsibility. While it could be said that this responsibility is not unique to the single state *per se*, it must be said, that in so far as this responsibility has not been fully articulated and given emphasis by the church, that what is unique is that single people are seen in regard to their particular gifts and the way in which they live. It follows that if the single state is engrafted to the vine as suggested by *Christifideles Laici* paragraph 9, then this state is one which very much belongs to the church and comprises an integral aspect of the Body of Christ. Yves Congar⁴³¹ has argued that the laity’s vocation is to “make their way to God while doing this world’s work; . . .” For him, the laity serve the church and its mission by engaging in “temporal tasks”. The vocation to the single state requires no less. However, the manner in which the single person contributes to this engagement will be a different response from that of others. It has already been said that being single is a departure from the traditional expectation that a person will marry. As such, the way in which the single

⁴²⁸ *ibid*, 10, 26.

⁴²⁹ Michael Lawler, *ibid*, 46

⁴³⁰ *ibid*, 46

⁴³¹ Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church* (London: G Chapman, 1959), 374

person engages with the world will be the outcome of this radical departure.⁴³² At the very least the vocation of the single person is one which bears witness to Christ who was the single man, the singular expression of the Father. He or she does this by reflecting or imaging their baptismal commitment in their everyday life and work.

This being the case, *Lumen Gentium* 30 and 33 and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 3⁴³³ take the time to develop the idea that gifts and charisms are allotted to each individual according to his state or condition. These gifts and charisms are to be expended for the growth of the Body, a responsibility which is highlighted by Leonard Doohan⁴³⁴ who argues that renewal in the church and subsequent growth in the church can only come about as a result of “a committed use of all charisms ...” However, responsibility is to be equally shared according to one’s allotted gifts and charisms and the manner in which these are utilized. The growth of the Body is a co-operative undertaking so that mission can be more actively carried out. Single people, as engrafted branches on the vine, share in a common baptismal calling to bring the world to God in Christ, and also share the responsibility for mission. What characterises the single way of life in this respect is the utilization of the gifts of the Holy Spirit which have been accorded to the individual. Such gifts can only be determined as the single person lives and reflects on his or her living in the light of their baptism. Mission is very much determined by the way in which each group: married, ordained and single, bring their own Holy Spirit-given gifts to bear.

These unique gifts have their foundation in the Sacraments of Initiation. It is from this basis that each Christian person is enabled to be involved in the mission of the church. The “mission of the sacramental church in the world is a continuation of the mission of Jesus,

⁴³² This is not to pre-empt the discussion of the living out of the single state in the concluding chapter. However, it needs to be mentioned in this context if we are to establish the point about vocation, difference and uniqueness.

⁴³³ *L.G.*, 30, 57, *L.G.*, 33, 59, *A.A.*, 3, 492.

⁴³⁴ Leonard Doohan, *ibid.*, 28

whom it confesses as Lord and Christ”⁴³⁵ The task is to bring the world through Christ to God⁴³⁶ The sacraments of initiation are the means whereby this is enabled. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 3⁴³⁷ takes up this point and adds that the sacraments nourish charity (fraternal love) which is the basis of the apostolate; the basis from which each baptised individual is motivated for the Body of Christ. All baptised Christians by virtue of the sacraments of initiation, are called to be integral members of the church and to utilize their gifts and charisms in the service of the apostolate or the mission of the church. For the “baptised person, therefore, is not only a member of the church who lives in the heart of the world, but is also a member of the world community living at the heart of the church”⁴³⁸ Each person is thereby challenged to be church and to live as an integral member of the church. This also applies to everyone irrespective of status or condition. Single people by virtue of their baptism, are also challenged to so engage with the world. The church itself also needs to be mindful of those in the single state so that it can assist them to promote themselves as branches of the vine, as integral members of the Body and as witness-bearers of the Christ through their lifestyle. This is what is unique to them and to them alone. However, before closing this chapter, I want to highlight what I believe to be the attributes of the single state

D(v) The Attributes of the Single State

There are five attributes of the single life to which I would like to make reference at the conclusion of this section on the single life. These attributes: Jesus as the model of the single life; the single person as a disciple; the single life as ‘presence’ of Christ; as prophetic voice and the way of the cross, represent what I consider to be key elements in how we understand the single life. I shall briefly comment on each by way of conclusion making use

⁴³⁵ Michael Lawler, *ibid* 59.

⁴³⁶ *ibid* 61

⁴³⁷ *AA*, 3, 492.

⁴³⁸ Leonard Doohan, *ibid*, 24.

of the work of Susan Muto who captures much of my own thinking in her work *Celebrating the Single Life*⁴³⁹

Jesus Christ as Model

The first attribute concerns the model for the single life. Jesus is the model and exemplar for those choosing the single state or re-affirming their single status. Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father is the 'singular' expression of the Father. The implicit suggestion in this is that Christ is the model not only for those ordained or married; he is also the model for the single person. Jesus was a man committed to the mission of the Kingdom but whose lifestyle and actions were those of a man who stood apart from the accepted norms of religion and the expectations of his day. Single people, as I have already said, are people who stand apart and who are able to be committed according to those gifts that have been given to each of them. Susan Muto⁴⁴⁰ argues that the single life has Jesus for its model but importantly she spells out the implications for the Christian single who models himself on Christ

Singleness is a way of life that sets one on the line between the known and the unknowable, between certitude and insecurity, between assurance and surrender. To be single, one has to be willing to meet life courageously, delighting in its advances and reversals ..

Single life is made up of this tension, this coincidence of opposites. . . Happily, for the single person who is Christian, the model for this way is Christ

Further, she suggests that single people can learn from their single peers such as Dag Hammarskjöld, Søren Kierkegaard and Caryl Chessman who remind us of who we are as single people and the contribution that we can make to the world. She argues that singleness is a "graced opportunity to orient one's life towards some kind of self-giving activity related to one's profession and position"⁴⁴¹ In this respect, one models Christ in one's single living.

⁴³⁹ Susan A Muto, *Celebrating the Single Life* (New York: Doubleday 1985). Hereafter Muto, *Celebrating the Single Life*. Her article 'Singlehood: A State of Life to Celebrate' *Spiritual Life* 35 (Fall 1989): 148-151 is also useful in this context.

⁴⁴⁰ Muto, *Celebrating the Single Life*, 34.

⁴⁴¹ *ibid*, 46

However, for this to be achieved, the single person needs first to respond to “His call in the depths” of one’s being so that one’s heart can be oriented towards Jesus “who listened to the voice of the Father and to the voice of the people who sought His care”.⁴⁴² Susan Muto’s reflections on Jesus as the model of single people is one which I find appealing and one which resonates with my own thinking. There is an underlying vitality in Susan Muto’s reflections which I believe, underscores the freedom which allows single people to respond to their calling. This is a radical freedom because it allows single people to engage more closely with the Christ in the world. Susan Muto ‘celebrates’ this freedom when she says:

They want to be a healthy, wholesome, unique expression of the God in whose image and likeness they have been formed. They want to explore fully their gifts of creativity; to feel deeply the whole mystery of being embodied spirits; to live in dedication to the betterment of the world. They know that the longing they experience for something more can only be quieted in union with the transcendent.⁴⁴³

Discipleship and the Single State

What has been said here concerning the single person’s relationship with Christ, bears upon my second attribute of the single life. The second attribute of the single state is related to discipleship. All in the church are disciples of Christ by virtue of their baptism and Christian living. For the single person, discipleship involves a reliance upon God which does not preclude the role of significant others such as one’s family and friends. Rather, being “single offers one an opportunity to celebrate life in a new way”.⁴⁴⁴ Singleness enables the individual to be available to others, to be able to share with them their own search and journey as well as be compassionately present to them. Susan Muto argues that in this respect singleness “tests our capacity to love selflessly against the most challenging odds”.⁴⁴⁵ I see this compassionate ‘being with others on their journey’ as

⁴⁴² *ibid*

⁴⁴³ *ibid*, 34.

⁴⁴⁴ *ibid*, 62.

⁴⁴⁵ *ibid*, 63.

discipleship in action.⁴⁴⁶ It is a significant way in which the single person is enabled to minister to others both married and single. The process of being a single Christian who engenders life is, therefore, to be seen in a different light from that of marriage or the ordained. The single life is not to be regarded solely as one of negation or of absence from a partner or sexual intimacy. Such an attitude would be contradictory to the Christian tradition and the value this has placed upon celibate living. Ultimately, the single person is on his or her own as they stand before God and it is precisely in this respect that this attribute of discipleship for the single person is unique. The sense of freedom that is available is dependent on their being in relationship with Christ from whom each person draws energy. Two quotations from Susan Muto, aptly sum up what I believe to be the significance of discipleship for the single person.

(1) Only when we face the limits of earthly existence and accept that without God we can do nothing, only in that moment of truth, are we living in the suffering and joy of singleness (Ibid, 136)

(2) Having faced so radically their own fallibility, single persons can identify compassionately with the wounded condition in which we all live.⁴⁴⁷

In the first instance, Susan Muto touches on our need for God and that it is only in and through our reliance upon God that single people learn to come to terms with singleness. Secondly, in recognizing that we are fallible, in recognizing that life is never going to be perfect or the way we think it might or should be, we are enabled to see through the eyes of compassion the 'wounded condition' of others. Thus discipleship becomes more than simply modelling oneself on the person of Christ; discipleship for the single person is a way of being with Christ and being open to oneself and to the world in all its goodness and its imperfections. This can be a cross which is heavy to bear. In her article *Singlehood: A State of Life to Celebrate*⁴⁴⁸ Susan Muto says:

⁴⁴⁶ This attribute was expressed by some of the respondents in chapter three

⁴⁴⁷ Muto, *Celebrating the Single Life*, 149.

⁴⁴⁸ Susan A Muto, 'Singlehood: A State of Life to Celebrate' *Spiritual Life* 35 (Fall 1989): 148-151

When one is single, one's experience, one's expression of love and service has to embrace whomever God sends one's way, wherever the need arises for care in the course of a day, a month, a year.

No matter how surrendered to the single state one may be, one is not free from suffering. To conform to Christ means to conform to the cross.⁴⁴⁹

Creative and animated discipleship is thus a necessary part of the dynamic of the single life. It is this dynamic which furthers freedom for engagement with oneself and the world in response to the call of Christ to model oneself on Him. The area of work is one such area of engagement where single people are able to exercise such dynamism. In a practical way work allows single men and women to express their energy and invest themselves. In one's work there is scope to reflect one's discipleship – values such as compassion and understanding for others, being present for others in need, allowing oneself simply to be a 'minister' of the gospel in one's work. The challenge, however, is to create the balance between investing of the self in work and being overly-committed to work as a substitute for family life and learning to live with aloneness.

Single Presence

The third attribute of the single state is Presence: being the Christ-bearer to others. I have already indicated that single people can be compassionately present to other singles, to the married and the ordained. However, 'presence' is more than 'a being with' another. Being present is also being a witness to the single life: to spirituality; to friendship and to celibacy.

In the first instance, being single is witness to the spirituality that animates single people. "My singleness frees me to see God's image in creation so that I can reverence the earth as

⁴⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 149 This is a point to which I will return in this section with reference to Jesus on the cross. I wanted, however, to make mention of the cross in the context of discipleship as I believe that it is relevant here and in a sense, discipleship and suffering for the single person represent a freedom which allows single people to be more fully present and active in their chosen profession and the way in which they contribute to the work of Christ. This latter understanding, I aim to develop more fully in this section also.

His dwelling place, as the House of God”⁴⁵⁰ It is from this perspective, that singles approach life and their relationship with God. As a result of this dynamic, singles are enabled to be Christ-present to others.

Single persons are thus conscious of living here and now on the road to eternity. On this road we go out of ourselves in love for others because we are all loved by the Other. By sharing our joys and pains, our hopes and disappointments, our realities and dreams, our affections and detachments, we tell our companions on the road that they are not really alone, that a loving, caring God is with them always. To love in this way calls for a depth of emotional and spiritual maturity and above all, a consuming vision of the world as the House of God, and all of us as His children, called singly by name.⁴⁵¹

Secondly, presence as witness bears upon friendship, upon caring relationships. Our friendships are blessed because we witness to the wholeness of the masculine and feminine and to the way in which these two sides of being human complement each other. The friendships of single people, irrespective of gender, are graced reminders to our culture of the transcendent in us all.⁴⁵² This is a fresh expression of what friendship is about and Susan Muto is right to argue for the celebration of this aspect of the single life as witness to Christ. Being single is something to celebrate as a unique presence of oneself with the company that one is sharing. This, to me, is very much a Christ-like attribute; a being-with others and a sharing-with others.

By thus serving the best interests of one another, single friends stand in the culture as reminders of the transcendent aspirations all persons experience, even if they are unable to voice them.

... We ought to celebrate this state of life in its own right a giving joyful witness to the uniqueness inherent in the human experience.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵⁰ Muto, *Celebrating the Single Life*, 50

⁴⁵¹ *ibid.* 50-51

⁴⁵² Bruce Yoder in ‘Singleness and Spirituality’ *Spirituality Today* 35 (W 1983): 407-416, argues that the friendships of singles are important because they afford the “opportunity to develop relationships of deep love and affection with both men and women. There God is found.” These relationships, together with that which focuses one’s intimacy on God, are ways of coming to terms with the aloneness but importantly, their relationships are the means whereby single people come to know and express love.

⁴⁵³ Muto, *Celebrating the Single Life*, 144

Following on from what has been said, Susan Muto argues for a presence which is generous and gracious. For her, this means that singles need to be a reminder to others of “the mystery of God’s gracious love at work in their lives”.⁴⁵⁴ Being agents of affirmation, she argues, is to be an agent of benediction, an agent of the presence of Christ. Further, Susan Muto speaks of celibacy in this context. “To be single within the Church is to witness in a profound way to the uniqueness component or the celibate aspect of Christian life”⁴⁵⁵ However, this bearing witness is a dynamic which highlights the interaction of the single person with married people, with the way in which celibacy can be a graced aspect of both the single life and within marriage. “By bearing witness to the celibate component, by loving celibately, single persons offer the Church a much needed service. They stand for the spiritual love that binds the Church to its people. They remind married couples of the sacredness of their pledge, of the transcendent bonds that preserve their loving union...”⁴⁵⁶ Single men and women are people of the resurrection. Their celibate living highlights that Christ-like attitude of a life lived for the Kingdom and for the completion of the Kingdom.⁴⁵⁷

Presence, therefore, is a reminder of the Pauline notion of the variety of gifts but always to the same Spirit (cf. I Cor 12). It is a reminder that the church though made up of many parts is still one Body. The single state is but one component of the Body but unless it is tended, unless it is nourished and given life in the total Body, the Body suffers. The presence of single people in the church, therefore, is a presence which enriches the church and thus complements marriage and ecclesial living. For single people, being in the church, being able to contribute to the life of the church, is thus an expression of the freedom that they have as single people who feel called by God in Christ to follow Him in this way. The

⁴⁵⁴ *ibid*, 164.

⁴⁵⁵ *ibid*, 164-165.

⁴⁵⁶ *ibid*

⁴⁵⁷ Raniero Cantalamessa, *ibid*, 12 argues in this context that celibate men and women (irrespective of state), by virtue of their celibacy, work for the Kingdom through their chosen life styles

visible presence of single people can be evidenced according to Susan Muto, in a threefold way. Firstly, the grace of being single disposes us towards the sacred bond with God. Secondly, Susan Muto suggests that singles can “create around them a nonmanipulative space where others really feel comfortable being themselves”.⁴⁵⁸ Finally, an increase in compassion disposes us to move beyond ourselves to find a more “transcendent meaning” to our human condition. In reflecting on my own experience as does Susan Muto, I see that her way of thinking again is similar to my own. Her expression of Presence gives balance and solidity to the way in which I have thought about being single.

Single Person as Prophet

The single person is also a prophetic voice. It is the voice of those who are baptised, called in grace and who stand in relationship with God in Christ in a singular manner. The voice of God is at work in the single person as it is in the priestly, the religious, the married person but it is a voice which has something to offer and therefore needs to be heard.

Living in singleness not only makes one more perceptive of the will of God in events and people. It can also increase the courage to stand up for values in which we believe and to resist being swept along by the tide of popular opinion. A faithful single person may be called at times to be a sign of contradiction, as Jesus was.

. As guardian of these values, the single person, strengthened by the grace of solitude, is better able to resist the push and pull of the present age.⁴⁵⁹

Susan Muto aptly pinpoints the basis of prophetic voice when she talks about being faithful to values, having the courage to speak out on issues that are relevant not only to singles but to all people. Such issues could be the way in which the media reflects sex or materialism as being the all-important values for modern day living. Critical reflection and solitude enable the single person to thus take a stand. “We are thus enabled to take a committed stand to

⁴⁵⁸ Muto, *Celebrating the Single Life*, 90

⁴⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 44

uphold perennial human values whenever they are in danger of being violated. This stance would include a critique of any authority that denies human freedoms or any custom so encrusted by time that it ceases to answer real needs.”⁴⁶⁰ This is not to suggest that single people display a form of anarchy. Rather, what is being argued is that singles, precisely because they are single, have a capacity to engage the world without the same constraints as those in the ecclesial or the married state.

Single life is prophetic to the extent that single living is a commitment to values that reverence life and respect uniqueness. The challenge, according to Susan Muto, is for singles to “touch persons in their uniqueness without crushing them” and, I might add, without setting oneself up as a kind of ‘guru’ who has the answer or is the panacea for all problems. She suggests five conditions which would facilitate this expression of “single loving in word, action and style of life”.⁴⁶¹ These conditions are (i) treating others as persons by using appropriate loving action; (ii) receiving graciously acts of kindness from others; (iii) having a sensitivity to the real needs of others and (iv) expressing our love in such a way that reflects Christ in the other.

However, it is her fifth condition which presents the greatest challenge whereby all conditions can be achieved. The challenge for singles is to convert loneliness into solitude; to transform a negative attitude to life into a positive which allows for creativity and for loving action. In so doing, single people challenge current attitudes which suggest that single living is a lonely and an empty life. This is achieved through having a relationship with Christ and by centering one’s life in Him. Raniero Cantalamessa argues that celibacy is prophetic because it is a lived response to the Gospel. Celibacy exists for the sake of the Kingdom and is therefore a prophetic existence. It is of the present but looks forward to the

⁴⁶⁰ Muto, *Celebrating the Single Life*, 109.

⁴⁶¹ *ibid*, 179-180.

future. The celibate life is both *ontological* as well as *eschatological*.⁴⁶² It is a reality of the Spirit exercised in the present – “in reality, virginity makes sense precisely because eternal life and the risen state exist”⁴⁶³ Such prophetic resonance is important for it grounds the single person in his or her relationship with the risen Christ ever-present in the church. Single living, as a result, is a positive and reinforces the message that the single life is not a life lived in isolation. Rather, the message becomes clear to all that “far from being a negative experience of isolation and withdrawal, singleness as solitude is the root of solidarity and communion”.⁴⁶⁴ It is from this perspective that single people can derive vision and energy so as to engage themselves with their work, with their church and with the world.⁴⁶⁵ In effect, this implies that this vision and energy is what motivates the single person in his or her response to God

The Single Way of the Cross

The final attribute of the single life relates to the way of the cross and its relevance to single living. By this I mean that Jesus on the cross ‘stands’ quite alone in his choice for God. Likewise, those in the single state have their cross to bear.⁴⁶⁶ To choose to follow what one believes to be one’s vocation, means that aspects such as personal intimacy and family life are not part of the choice. As a single person, there is ‘a being alone’. One does not belong to someone in the sense of mutual self-giving. Rather, being alone can be a personal need as

⁴⁶² His comments bear upon his reading of Cyprian of Carthage, *De Habitu Virginem* 22;PL4, 475 in Raniero Cantalamessa, *ibid*, 7

⁴⁶³ *ibid*, 9.

⁴⁶⁴ *ibid*, 41

⁴⁶⁵ Bruce Yoder, ‘Singleness and Spirituality’ *Spirituality Today* 35 (W. 1983): 407-416, where he discusses the way singles respond to God. He argues: “Christian singles have the opportunity to be the troublesome and graceful reminders to the church and to the world that life cannot be lived well if loneliness is not accepted. . . . And as a separate, solitary individual each is called to respond to God. . . . To choose to respond to God, to decide to be a disciple of Jesus is to accept one’s individuality

⁴⁶⁶ I have already indicated that being a disciple involves bearing crosses that affect those who answer the call to be single. However, further comments need to be made in the present context

well as a challenge. One needs the quiet time and the solitude but one must also accept the challenge of being alone and learning to manage one's aloneness. Choosing to be single or affirming singleness, is a choice "to be freed from marriage so as to be free for the unique possibilities offered by the single vocation for personal and spiritual growth."⁴⁶⁷ The Christ model is the example in this respect. Carrying one's cross for the single person, is the condition of following Christ.⁴⁶⁸

The single state, therefore, represents freedom as well as responsibility. It calls for a response that is valid and represents the commitment of time, talents and abilities in a way which both enlivens the individual as well as the church; inclusion, solidarity and at 'homeness' with the church and with oneself. "There is no member who does not have a part in the mission of the whole Body. Rather, each one ought to hallow Jesus in his heart and bear witness to Jesus in the spirit of prophecy."⁴⁶⁹

Susan Muto outlines four ways in which single people express their being single:

- (1) ...it is up to single, believing persons everywhere to try to heal the artificial split between life and religion by living in the word, action and style of expression the unity of a fully Christian formation.
- (2) In the Church today we need single men and women of profound spiritual depth who, out of the resources of their own interior life with the Lord, live as other Christs in the world and radiate that power to a population hungry for true Christian formation. Singles do have a mission in life to fulfil.
- (3) Single spiritual living was never meant to be easy. We need only to witness the agony of Christ to understand the pain we may have to endure. But we have a promise in which to believe.

⁴⁶⁷ Muto, *Celebrating the Single Life*, 77

⁴⁶⁸ *Redemptionis Donum*, 10, 28 speaks of the challenge of the cross for those in consecration or ordination. However, I would add that the challenge is also addressed to all Christians to take up the cross that pertains to their own particular vocation whether it be single living, marriage or the ordained life. This is a point addressed by Yves Congar, *ibid*, 425 where he speaks of our Yes or No to the Cross. For him, there is no "charity without learning in the school of the Cross..."

⁴⁶⁹ *P. O.*, 2, 534

(4) Guided and inspired by the Spirit of the Lord, our lives as single persons can become models of peace, joy and integrity. People will behold in us a hope, a grace, a faith toward which they cannot help but feel an attraction⁴⁷⁰

These four points concerning the expression of the single life, are, I believe, a summary of what has been said concerning the attributes of the single life. In a very real sense, her summary represents a genuine framework which attests to the single way of life and the radical difference of singles from married and ecclesial people. In this respect, and as a final word to this section, Susan Muto's closing words⁴⁷¹ express my perspective. She says:

... we Christians need to celebrate the single witness of committed single women and men who, by their very lives, participate in the transforming and redeeming plan of God for every creature on earth

General Conclusion to Chapter 4

In this chapter, I have sought to examine all three states: ordination, marriage and the single state. My aim was twofold: firstly to show how each state is dynamic in itself and secondly, to highlight how each is different and to indicate that the literature concerning the priestly and religious state is nuanced to infer a sense of pre-eminence among the states. In so doing, I wanted to achieve a sense of what it means to say that a person belongs to the single state and through this state how that person exercises their baptismal calling to follow Christ. I argued that both marriage and the ordained life are bounded by commitment and responsibility and reflect the expectations that accompany these states. My point, as a result, has been that the single state is different. It is a state of radical freedom because it does not have the same form of commitment or responsibility. Rather, the single state is radically different because it is a state which stands apart from the normative and seeks to devolve for itself and according to the gifts and charisms which have been allotted to single people, a renewed sense of who single people are; how they feel about themselves and the way in which they are also church. In other words, I have sought to establish that being single is a

⁴⁷⁰ Muto, *Celebrating the Single Life*, 188

vocation alongside that of marriage and the ordained life. It is a vocation which needs to be further addressed by both the church as well as those either choosing the single life or those affirming their status as a single person.

The attributes that have been discussed could also be said to apply to all in the church. However, I want to stress the point that single men and women are present in the church and contribute to its life and mission. There needs to be a more clearly understood and articulated expression of the single life. In stressing these attributes and placing them within the context of the single life, this is a way of calling for a better understanding of the single vocation and its acceptance by the church.

Having said this, it is pertinent to ask: Ought the church give consideration to a form of public recognition of single people? If so, how would this be shaped and when would it occur – during the Easter liturgy for example? How or in what way can the church community picture the single life? How is it to be theologically understood? In chapter five I propose to detail a theological perspective of the single life. It is a perspective that could demonstrate the way in which the single life can be understood as an integral Christian way of living.

⁴⁷¹ Susan A Muto, 'Singlehood: A State of Life to Celebrate' *Spiritual Life* 35 (Fall 1989): 151

Chapter 5

THE SINGLE STATE: LIVING THE SINGLE LIFE: A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

In this section I propose a theological perspective about the single life which may serve as a focus for discussion and further elaboration in due course. I propose to look briefly at three areas: single life as a quest or journey; single life as exemplifying being contemplatives in the world and single life as a way of wholeness and personal integrity. These attributes, I argue, are integral to a theological perspective on the single life. They encapsulate what it means to be single and to be church. This perspective is based upon the personal experiences as provided by the stories of contemporary men and women as well as upon personal reflection and reading.

(i) The Single Way as Pilgrimage

The single person in the church is on a journey. It is a journey which travels towards God. Single people have this in common with married and ordained people. However, for the single person theirs is a different journey in that they journey alone. By alone I mean that the single person cannot rely on others. He or she ultimately assumes sole responsibility for himself or herself. The stories provided by the respondents highlight such responsibility. Single people travel their journey unaccompanied by spouse or a family of their own. Because there is not the presence of a 'significant other' with whom to share personal and intimate aspects of life, single people can experience a type of restlessness. Their restlessness means that they are constantly searching; they are always looking out for completion. As such, single people are not confined, as it were, by the constraints of a family life. While single people are members of their own immediate family – parents and siblings; they are not constrained by personal commitments to a spouse and children. The world for the single person is an open-ended world in which they share similar concerns such as time, money and employment in particular. However, the single person, I believe is able

to work with and manage these concerns in a different way. The way in which our commitments are structured, is, I suggest, different from the way in which non-single people would resolve these concerns. Like other Christian people, we continue on the journey begun by our Christian predecessors and contemporaries in their journey towards God. Traditionally the lives of the saints have been held up as exemplars and guides as to how to live the Christian life. Their lives were there for the edification of all Christian men and women. We all share in the communion of the saints; "our companionship with the saints joins us to Christ, from whom as from their fountain and head issue every grace and the life of God's People itself." (*Lumen Gentium* #50) The Christian tradition is rich with such examples of holy men and women who have been canonized because of the exemplary nature of their lives. What motivated these holy people was their relationship with Jesus Christ and their desires to emulate him in the practicalities of their everyday lives. Many of these exemplary men and women were not single in the sense as understood in this thesis. Rather they were Bishops, Priests, Religious. Single Christian men and women living in the twenty-first century, live in a world of change and technology. Theirs is a life which requires relevant role models. Who are our contemporary mentors who in themselves emulate Christ in their lives? We need to look to our contemporaries to be our mentors. People such as Dorothy Day, Caryl Chessman, Simone Weil, Dag Hammarskjöld and Søren Kierkegaard are such role models for Christian single people. These are the often unsung heroes of the age but who nonetheless, have a considerable impact upon the world. They are a part of a living tradition that values the journey of each person in their faith journey to God in Christ.

One image that has been used in the context of the Christian tradition and its ongoing journey through time is the image of the "pilgrim and wayfarer".⁴⁷² All Christians share in a common journey in Christ. They are the Pilgrim People of God, as outlined by *Lumen*

⁴⁷² Roger Repohl, 'The Spirituality of Singleness' *America* 17(November 27, 1976): 367

Gentium (ch.7) Roger Repohl, makes use of the term exclusively to refer to those in the single state. He does so in order to emphasize what he believes to be the context of single people and their relationship to the world and to the future. What is of particular interest is the suggestion that single people have a propensity for “openness to the future”⁴⁷³ which is important for the church and the world. His argument is that this openness typifies a “‘theology of hope’ ” because it provides for non-singles a ‘model of “eschatological” life’⁴⁷⁴ He envisages that the single person is one who is more apt to take risks and to be actively involved in helping to bring about the Kingdom of God. I especially appreciate his comment that single people are called “to use the circumstances and opportunities - the restlessness in their lives, the freedom from family responsibilities, the possibilities for change in their life styles - to build up the kingdom of God”⁴⁷⁵ This was a common theme in the life stories of the Respondents as shown by the following:

I didn't return to the Church until moving to Melbourne. I needed a place to fill my time because I was lonely... I have become a reader and am now a member of my Church community. (Female Respondent D)

And

Theoretically, assuming the single person's lifestyle implies they have more time – does not necessarily mean they actually do more or are more active. One's contribution to society and church can take different guises and depends on personality type. Some are more socially active... others more contemplative... (Female Respondent E)

And

Single life brings its own freedom, but also its loneliness. As life goes on, one reflects as one gets a little older, of the absence of my kids, grown up, who in turn would be there to look after me if the case warranted it – on the upside, because we do have to fend for ourselves... we tend to keep younger in attitude, simply because we have to keep active... (Male Respondent A)

⁴⁷³ *ibid.*

⁴⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁴⁷⁵ *ibid.*, 367.

These reflections by single men and women highlight the significance of single living in relationship to the church and to the wider community. The reality is that single people, while taking cognisance of the present moments including times of aloneness, they do, in fact, see in these the impetus for the future. They are not afraid to take a risk, to be involved or to challenge unjust or unethical structures in society.

In order to develop and articulate the personal perspective on the single life, I will refer to Susan Muto and Martin Israel in particular.⁴⁷⁶ Susan Muto elaborates upon the journeying of the single person. She adds a dimension which is grounded in our shared experience as single people. She acknowledges that we are people of the here and now but that we are “on the road to eternity”.⁴⁷⁷ In this context she uses the term ‘companions on the road’, an image which suggests the commonality of single people as people who are on a common journey. It is a common journey which they share with other single people and with a loving and caring God who journeys alongside of us. This image extends that of the pilgrim or wayfarer which is suggestive more of a lone or solitary journey; an image suggested or inferred by some Respondents. A number of the female respondents (A, B, and C) spoke of their journey; people who were of influence, their involvements in the wider community over the years and the life changing experiences that had impacted on their journey as single women.

The male respondents also indicated the ways their lives had changed throughout their life journey. A common aspect (for A,B,C and E) was the move from religious or priestly life to living as single men. All expressed the point that this change of direction impacted on their life-journey – personal responsibility for oneself, accepting the challenge that a change in life-style would bring, a sense of openness to change but above all the areas of faith and

⁴⁷⁶ Muto, *Celebrating the Single Life* Martin Israel, *Living Alone* (New York: Crossroads, 1983). Other references will be made to authors such as Roger Repohl and Bruce Yoder in order to elucidate the points under discussion

⁴⁷⁷ Muto, *Celebrating the Single Life*, 50

work were seen as important in the journeys of these men. Respondent D spoke of his life in the terms of a history – showing the continuity of his childhood upbringing, his life in the army and subsequent life, work and relationships that followed for him as a single man.

The stories described by the respondents show what it means to be on this journey. We journey alone but we also journey together. We seek to find the ‘shrine’ and yet the ‘shrine’ is already with us. We can be quite active in our work and in relationships whilst being content at other times to be hidden and silently devoted, to be quiet achievers and get on with the task at hand. Again this view was one presented by Respondents. Female respondents (A, B, C, and D) spoke of their involvement either in the community or in the field of education. Generally each was positive in her understanding of her role though one (D) spoke in terms of pressures and personal drive. The respondents were happy in their work and in their involvement with others. Responsibility and being of influence on others featured as a response to their understanding of their working life. The males, on the other hand, reflected a positive outlook concerning their work. As with the female respondents, the men were also happy in their working life. Having an impact on others was a key feature. Two male respondents (B and E) spoke of the work of Grace as being instrumental whereas B mentioned spirituality and goodness as important. What features for all respondents however, is their attitude to work, their positiveness, hopefulness and the intensely personal nature of work. The involvement, sense of hope, their impact on others, their dynamism and the work of Grace, exemplify the single person in their journey as pilgrim and wayfarer. In this respect this typifies a disposition which I call being ‘contemplative’ in the world. This is the second aspect of the personal perspective being outlined.

(ii) Single Life as Contemplative

The second aspect of the personal perspective concerns single people being ‘contemplatives’ in the world. My aim in this respect is to attempt to explicate a perception about the way in

which I see single people expressing their spiritual dynamism. My own perceptions are reflected in the thoughts of others who also seek to explicate single living and spirituality.⁴⁷⁸ First, single people are 'in the world' because of their active engagement in and with the world through work, relationships and other pursuits such as (depending on the individual) travel and study. Secondly, single people are 'contemplatives' because of their engagement in prayer and solitude. By this I mean that their faith is integral to the way in which they live. This has been exemplified in the stories of both the contemporary mentors but also in the stories of contemporary men and women going about their daily activities. Some single people may draw their energy more from the active engagement with the world while others may draw their energy more from the faith aspect of their living – enjoying solitude. However, I believe it to be necessary that a balance exists whereby single people draw energy from their work as well as from their personal faith. Work, relationships and study become an integral component of one's prayer, reflection and solitude. "Our call is to be contemplatives in the world, sanctifying it from within as a leaven. In this quiet, hidden way we make Christ known to others..."⁴⁷⁹ In the words of the Respondents:

My role gives me the opportunity to lead others while relying heavily on my faith tradition and hopefully inspiring others to place more trust in God and Christian values (Female Respondent C)

And

My challenge at this stage of my life, is to develop stronger and further, some sort of relationship with God. I need to do plenty with regard to this, reading, contemplating, thinking... (Male Respondent A)

And

This conviction (that I am loved and nurtured) waxes and wanes of course, but when it is at a low ebb, I tend to look to prayer and to the activities and circumstances of my life as they are... (Male Respondent B)

⁴⁷⁸ I am aware that there is a sense of the generalization and presumption here, but this is a calculated risk in order to explore the interiority of being single

⁴⁷⁹ Muto, *Celebrating the Single Life*, 173

This resonates with *Lumen Gentium* 11 which spoke of the way in which the faithful in general are to exercise their baptismal character. However, it concludes with

Fortified by so many and such powerful means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father Himself is perfect.

In a very practical way this is evidenced in the area of work. Work is one area in which the single person finds himself or herself able to be of service to others.⁴⁸⁰ Being of service is an appropriate way for single people to invest their time and energy into worthwhile activity. Being single thus “opens up ample possibilities for creativity and service on the part of an increasing number of men and women”⁴⁸¹ who choose or affirm their singleness. However, as singles, our work needs to be purposeful and to allow us to achieve excellence in our profession while at the same time taking into account one’s temperament and talents

Susan Muto uses the term “graced motivation”⁴⁸². It is particularly useful and insightful for it allows single people to see that the way in which we utilize our temperaments and abilities depends on our appraisal of our unique call. What I like about this term is that it lets us link work with reflection and prayer so that whatever the type of work we do, will ultimately be purposeful as we bring our prayer to it and take our work and daily life to our prayer. Work thus becomes a service to others, not a chore to be done. Giving that little bit extra is the fruit of our service to others in work. “When we give that extra touch of personal care beyond the call of duty, we tap into the creative potential hidden in us.”⁴⁸³ This is quite a

⁴⁸⁰ This is not to suggest that married people are not of service to others in their work. However, for single people, there does not exist the same encumbrances or concerns of the married person such as the marital relationship and family. What I am suggesting is that the single person is able to invest more of her/himself, more energy and perhaps time, to work. The Respondents indicated this in their stories. Female respondent A: “the extra mile” and female respondent C in her comments on her role in education serve as examples.

⁴⁸¹ Muto, *Celebrating the Single Life*, 70

⁴⁸² *ibid* 75

⁴⁸³ *ibid*, 74.

powerful statement. It is not that the single person is 'married to one's work' Rather, there is an energy, a dynamic at work which is borne out of commitment and personal prayer and reflection. This dynamic is exemplified in the stories of the Respondents. Muto's appraisal, therefore, highlights what I consider to be the positive expression of what it means for a single to work and to be of service to others - to be a contemplative in the world of work.

In this context, however, it is important that single people see that there is a responsibility to be carried, a cross to be borne. 'Graced motivation' can be at times a graced burden:

... singles must be willing to bear responsibility for actions taken. That is why decision should be preceded by much reflection, prayer, appraisal and a realistic anticipation of the consequences. Sometimes it is better to remain silent than to speak, to consider the long run versus the short run, to witness to values more by living them hiddenly than by promoting them publicly.⁴⁸⁴

All in all, single persons are aware of how important it is to be engaged in tasks that are meaningful, not popularly trivial. They realize that the business of living is important and, in the light of the rapid changes of our day, always challenging. One must be a good, even an excellent, player on the stage of life, a player ready to be flexible, to meet the present challenges and to be resilient to move beyond these challenges and demands. Such flexibility, resilience and ability to move forward is a key aspect in the lives of the Respondents.

Being actively engaged in and with the world is contemplation in action. But the point that must be stressed is that one's active engagement through work, requires an ongoing reflection and appraisal of being single, of utilizing one's talents, energies and time⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸⁴ Muto, *Celebrating the Single Life*, 109

⁴⁸⁵ Roger Repohl, 'The Spirituality of Singleness' *America* 27 (Nov 27, 1976): 365-367 focuses on what he considers important to the single life: spirituality. In this context he discusses what he believes to be the uniqueness of the state and under the heading "Risk and Future" he states: "Very often the single person - because of a certain restlessness and longing that have kept him single - is, in a unique and graced way, more apt to envision the destiny that Christ foreshadows and to use time and talents to help realize it in the world." His point reinforces my point of the importance of single people and their engagement with the world.

Being actively engaged also means being responsible for yourself as well as being prepared to shoulder a 'graced burden' should the occasion arise.

The second area of being 'contemplative' in the world focuses on relationships. Single people come to relationships in the context of their primary relationship with God. It is this relationship which is at the heart of our daily living. In all things we are able to turn to God and allow God to be the 'significant other' for us. We stand in relationship with God who is present to us, who is always near to us. During our daily living, we walk alongside of God in a state of conversational nearness⁴⁸⁶ "We may find ourselves quite literally talking to Him while cooking supper or driving to work, before a class or after an important meeting."⁴⁸⁷

What this highlights for single people, is the realization that ultimately our sole dependence is upon God and that our insufficiency is a source of strength and grace afforded by God to us. This attitude of dependence upon God is one reflected in the stories of the Respondents. One's daily living is dependent upon God from whom is derived strength and to whom we each come in our 'contemplative' musings or reflections. Male Respondent A commented:

My challenge... is to develop stronger and further, some sort of relationship with God. I need to do plenty with regard to this, reading, contemplating, thinking; developing adult concepts, lessening those we picked up as young people.

Reflecting on our relationship with God and working to further this relationship, enables us to be open to others and to express love in and through inclusive relationships. This is not an easy task but one which requires single people to engage in prayer and reflection. In this respect, inclusive relationships are nourished in a twofold way. In the first instance, the love and the generosity of friends affirms singles in their relating with each other and with

⁴⁸⁶ This is a term used by Muto, *Celebrating the Single* *ibid*, 132. I have found myself using this term as it clearly expresses what I (and I presume other singles) find myself doing. What may appear to be a talking to oneself can better be understood as times of reflecting aloud.

⁴⁸⁷ Muto, *Celebrating the Single Life*, 130.

married friends. Secondly, one's prayer and openness to life both affirm and fortify our relationships so that we experience a sense of well-being about ourselves.

Single people in this study showed that they are reflective people. They are able to talk about themselves, their work and perceptions of their involvement in church and society. From this, I would suggest that it is their singleness that affords them such awareness and ability. This disposition can be an occasion of grace. I would envisage that practical activity such as being of assistance to strangers in the street, visiting the sick and the elderly in their homes – “going the extra mile” and teaching English to refugees, are ways in which ‘graced burdens’ can become occasions of ‘graced’ activity. A ‘graced burden’ can, therefore, be a means of positive, outgoing graciousness for others. This further suggests to me that being single is to be a ‘contemplative’ in the world. In practical terms this means that singles will come to see their need of God and their dependence on ‘Him’ as being central to the way in which they seek to develop relationships with others - friends or strangers. To be thus engaged is to be involved in the dynamism of God; being ‘contemplative’ in the world. In this respect single people are different from those Christians who are formally engaged through a life of service and contemplation such as those in Religious Life and to a lesser extent, members of Apostolic communities and those in priestly ministry. These Christian men and women by their formal and public commitment to Christ, place themselves at the service of the church. This is what distinguishes them from other Christian men and women. Married men and women express their commitment to Christ through their formal commitment to each other and their family. The single person does not have the levels of commitment of the Religious/Priest or the married person. Their commitment to Christ is a personal one; they commit themselves to Christ through their work, their relationships and through their personal prayer and faith life. This is the way in which I perceive ‘contemplative in the world’ as having its effect. And it is in this regard that single people can be effective role models for others. By their lives and commitments to society and church, they are, I would argue, exemplifying Christ to others.

Relationships, if they are to stem from the heart, must be genuinely open to the dynamism of God. Our active engagement with each other must be founded on our relationship with God. If we are to take seriously our fundamental call to singleness as being the best way that we can live our lives towards God, to fulfil God's providential plan for us, then physical affection must be expressed within boundaries which best enhance our openness to life. Each of us is cared for by God. We can share physical affection with others through being open to the likeness to God in others. Such openness to the 'face' of God in others means that single people experience relationships in a way which sees people as special in God's eyes. This is what assists single people to commit themselves to their work, to their relationships and thereby more fully to God. This, to me, suggests church in action. Single people in their interaction with others and their openness to others, mirror Christ who accepted people as they were – good and bad.

Being actively engaged in and with the world means being a 'contemplative' in the world. Our work and our relationships are two main areas in which we can invest time, energy and talents. They are also the means through which we come to greater self-understanding as single people who are called to be single. Our daily living serves to show us our need and dependence on God who both challenges as well as nourishes us in the events of the day. Openness to the world necessitates openness to God through whom and for whom the single person is a 'contemplative' actively engaging with the world.

Being contemplative in the world involves prayer and reflection for two reasons. The first arises from the fact that the single person is indeed alone. By alone, I mean that the single person does not share in personal intimacy with an exclusive significant other. As a result, there exists a singularity of heart; it is a heart which is not fulfilled through sexual intimacy. For this reason the single life, if it is to be true to its calling, needs to be infused with a spiritual dimension: solitude, silence, prayer - the development of an interior life. Secondly,

the restlessness of mind and heart experienced by single people, needs to be 'managed' or given direction

In the first instance, being alone is a condition that many feel. However, the single person because he or she does not have a 'significant other' such as a spouse, is 'singularly' alone. In a sense it is a precondition for living the single life. The issue becomes one of using one's aloneness as a positive force in one's life rather than as a negative, something to avoid. Aloneness becomes graced⁴⁸⁸ when it is turned towards God, when the single person turns to God and seeks to see in God his or her 'significant other'. Aloneness is thus not something to be avoided but accepted and entered into as a normal part of one's single living. Aloneness becomes solitude when so directed. It becomes solitude when I "recommit myself to the Lord and enjoy His companionship ... In solitude I bring my whole being - physical, emotional, spiritual - before God and ask Him for the grace I need to live my single calling joyfully".⁴⁸⁹ What this suggests is that we enjoy solitude, that we enjoy being alone with God, that at times we distance ourselves from our work and play in order to reflect more deeply on our relationship with God. Such reflection becomes a graced opportunity and an opportunity which I believe, is necessary to the single life in order to maintain a balanced perspective about ourselves, our work, our play and our direction in life.

Silence becomes a sanctuary of reflection and prayer, an answer, as it were, to our deepest needs, a dimension of transcendence. In those silent moments singles enjoy at the beginning and end of the day, stress, confusion and agitation disappear..

Silence also denotes a deep quality of presence in which we may sense the nearness of God ... It helps us most of all to be centered in God.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁸ Roger Repohl in 'The Spirituality of Singleness' *America* 27 (Nov 27, 1976): 366 uses this term when he discusses solitude and aloneness. For him, 'graced aloneness' is a time to be welcomed as an opportunity for grace, not through action or community but in stillness and solitude

⁴⁸⁹ Muto, *Celebrating the Single Life*, 40-41.

⁴⁹⁰ *ibid.*, 86-88

Silence and the occasion for reflection offer single people balance and energize the spirit. Thus times of solitude become times of prayer in which we orient ourselves to God and to others with whom we may work and recreate. The grace of holy aloneness, therefore, is a grace which motivates the single person towards service of others. Such contemplative indwelling is a prerequisite, as it were, for the single life. Male Respondent B commented in this regard:

It has occurred to me over the past few years that perhaps my faith has kept me single in a way. So many people I meet who have no faith seem to be driven into an exclusive relationship because they need this to feel complete, loved and creative. They look to another to provide their self-esteem. My faith, ... seems to give me a real sense of direction and conviction that I am loved and nurtured.

This Respondent's comment bears upon an image which has been used in the context of being contemplatives in the world - the "hermitage of the heart".⁴⁹¹ Whether we are at home, the work place or walking down the street, we carry our hermitage with us. In our hermitage, the grace of inner silence aids reflection as well as promotes service and appreciation of self and others. There is direction and conviction.

The third area of our being contemplatives in the world concerns the restlessness of mind and heart experienced by single people. They experience this restlessness because they are incomplete. Their vocation to be single people means that they have to search life to be in contact with their 'significant other' - God. Consequently, there is this restlessness, a feeling of never being satisfied. St. Augustine wrote in his *Confessions*⁴⁹² - "For Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee". Augustine's comment is pertinent to those living the single life for it implies that single people need to continually

⁴⁹¹ It is an effective image as it describes the poverty of spirit that is at the base of a spirituality of singleness. Our dependence on God, our need to be in constant nearness to Him is characterized by our being in a quiet hermitage withdrawn from the world yet very much in the world. We take with us our nearness as we go about the day.

⁴⁹² Muto, *Celebrating the Single Life*. 49. Other authors such as Martin Israel, *ibid*, 2; Bruce Yoder, *ibid*, 414; Roger Repohl, *ibid*, 367 make reference to this idea in the context of the single life and prayer.

'rest' in solitude, to rest in the presence of God so that a balanced perspective can be brought to bear about our life. In so 'resting' with God, we come to see the daily events more clearly as graced moments. This is done through contemplative indwelling, through being in touch with the hermitage of our heart. This represents a challenge for single people to channel their restlessness into a positive and productive activity: work or assisting with a specific apostolate such as caring for the elderly or visiting the sick. In so doing, the single person achieves a sense of purpose about himself or herself as well as being of service to others. This represents a very practical way for single people to put into practice the words of *Gaudium et Spes* #43⁴⁹³ which speaks of animating the world with a Christian spirit – to be a witness to Christ in the midst of the society in which we live. In such a way is the single person being church, the embodied presence of Christ to others. What I am suggesting is that singles need to have a 'ministry' to others so that they become grounded, not in themselves, but in the Other: those for whom we work and care and who are the physical face and being of God. Restlessness is thus objectively channelled into worthwhile activity and moves us away from self-preoccupation. There is a movement away from the 'selfish' inward-looking disposition to an outward looking, other-centred approach. The focus is shifted from the self to others.

A true grace of being single is that it disposes us towards this sacred bond with God.⁴⁹⁴ We know that in our uniqueness we reach out for union. Self alone can never satisfy our longing to belong to Another. ... No one can ever satisfy this yearning - no one but the divine Other.

In the meantime, some spiritual satisfaction can come through a giving of self to others in service.⁴⁹⁵

Further, another-centred aspect has a positive effect in the lives of singles and those with whom they interact. Such example is provided by Male Respondent A who said:

⁴⁹³ *GS*, 43,244.

⁴⁹⁴ This sacred bond refers to the way in which single people orient themselves and their aloneness to the Divine Other. In so doing single people avoid a tendency towards egocentrism. "Perhaps the best and only way of tempering it is by this orientation to otherness that is at the base of our capacity to be of service"

⁴⁹⁵ Muto, *Celebrating the Single Life* 89

Within our neighbourhood, we are well respected in the street we live in, knowing all the residents, but not intruding. We're seen as a stable element in our neighbourhood, with people reaching out to us at all times⁴⁹⁶

Martin Israel uses the terminology of Juliana of Norwich when he says that prayer is the "ground of our beseeching"⁴⁹⁷. Like Susan Muto, Martin Israel sees solitude and prayer as times which transcend the person and orient them towards God. In so doing, the single person is enabled to move beyond their own self-boundaries towards a greater openness with God. A number of Respondents commented that it was this faith dimension that enabled them to move beyond their present and to contemplate the future. This is a particularly interesting phrase as is the 'ground of our beseeching' as these phrases or terms suggest that prayer is very much something that originates from experience. The underlying premise, I believe, is that our experience as single people is the basis of our prayer which supports and enhances us on our journey to God. Our restlessness is an integral aspect of this total experience in prayer towards God. In speaking of lay spirituality *Apostolicam Actuositatem* #4⁴⁹⁸ affirms one's state of life (married, celibate, family ...) as the ground for spirituality. From this, it is possible to conclude that the spirituality of the single person has its origin and development in the way in which he or she lives and comes to God.

What singles are looking for is a sense of connectedness. Their restlessness, their daily experiences, their need for prayer and service indicate that single people seek connectedness.⁴⁹⁹ They need to feel that they are an integral part of the whole schema of life

⁴⁹⁶ This Respondent shares a house with a business associate who is a widow. Their relationship is not defacto and they live as separate individuals.

⁴⁹⁷ Martin Israel, *ibid*, 76

⁴⁹⁸ *AA*, 4, 494

⁴⁹⁹ Connectedness is a term used in the context of prayer by authors such as Bruce Yoder, *ibid*, 410. Integration is used to convey a similar connotation by Roger Repohl, *ibid* 366. Charles Fracchia, 'A Modest Proposal Towards a Formulation of a Spirituality for Single Individuals' *Studies in Formative Spirituality* 6:3(November, 1985: 364-366) implies that single people need to come to terms with how they will structure their life taking into consideration aspects such as prayer, service, work, and so on. And Muto's emphasis on prayer and the hermitage of the heart is shown to be of great significance for single living.

and that they contribute to this. Having a sense of connectedness is also to have a sense of being at home in oneself,⁵⁰⁰ to be comfortable with oneself. This is a useful way to understand connectedness as singles become aware that the world in which they live and to which they contribute is not perfect. They have their part to play and they must learn to accept imperfection and what could be called human frailty, ignorance and sin. Christ himself learnt these 'lessons' and knew too well the imperfections of humanity. As Christ did, so too single people need to enter fully into prayer, solitude and silence if they are to live within this tension. Christ paid a price for his sensitivity to imperfection and his commitment to mission. Single people, in like fashion can also pay a price, as it were, for a heightened sensitivity to the world. We accept that there is a cost involved in reaching out for the 'pearl of great price'. Learning to manage restlessness; learning to manage the paradoxical situations of life - both our own and that of friends and associates - is integral to the cost. "To be single is to live in the tension between loneliness and solitude, recollection and communion, detachment and encounter."⁵⁰¹

Connectedness or a being at home with the self suggests that single people need to be able to come to terms with the paradoxical nature of single living. Being so engaged with the world enables the single person to attune himself or herself to the nature of the paradox and 'sit with this' before God. However, this is not to suggest that unjust or unethical situations ought not be challenged where such is possible and desirable. In a very real sense, our solitude requires us to stand in the 'inbetween' as Male Respondent E suggested. As singles we need to see that this will often be the nature of our prayer but it is a prayer that reinforces us in our daily activities. This, I believe, is what being a 'contemplative in the world' is all about.

⁵⁰⁰ Martin Israel, *ibid*, 15

⁵⁰¹ Muto, *Celebrating the Single Life* 42.

The call to the single life is a call to be restless. It is a call to seek God in others and in the solitude of the heart. It is a call to encounter life in all its paradoxes and to see that this call and its subsequent involvements are graced moments in the life of the single person. God is not asking something that is easy. God is not suggesting that single living will be uneventful. Rather, to choose or to affirm the single life, is to choose to accept inherent tension, to choose to accept life as it unfolds before us and for us. The choice is to be fully open to Transcendence and to the presence of Transcendence in our daily living. Such openness is voiced by some of the Respondents. Flexibility and openness, being able to move beyond, are key aspects of the single story.

(iii) Single and Celibate

I have explored the possibilities inherent in the everyday living of the single life in its continual journey towards completion. This journey requires that single people be contemplatives in the world who engage the world through service in their work and relationships. Contemplatives also engage in prayer and reflection. They take their life to prayer and in turn their life is reinforced and given substance and meaning. By this I mean that single people seek to respond to God in a way which enhances their growth as persons. Integrity as single people finds its strength and substance through their response to God in openness. The key to such response, I believe, is living celibately. Single people, as such, are continually open to wholeness and to personal integrity. They are, therefore, enabled to respond to God because the choice to live celibately best supports and encourages their ability to live singly. Celibacy enables singles to find the balance between the many forces and demands that impinge upon their lives. Living celibately best sustains effective single living for it best allows individuals to enter into their solitude, to make the inner journey.

(Male Respondent B) This is a lifelong process⁵⁰² and one which is aptly voiced by Susan Muto when she says:

To be single within the Church is to witness in a profound way to the uniqueness component or the celibate aspect of Christian life

...By witnessing to the celibate component, by loving celibately, single persons offer the Church a much needed service. They stand for the spiritual love that binds the Church to its people.⁵⁰³

She rightly equates single living with witness, with uniqueness and shows single people as being symbolic of Christ's love for the church. What Susan Muto does is to show that single people are integral to the church. Her implicit suggestion is that the witness value of celibacy for the single life is to show forth Christ. By this I mean that single celibate living is Christ-like and has a very real and substantial value for the ongoing life of the church. Her argument sets out to show that the single presence in the church is a vital part of the Christian heritage. Single living is not something new. Our Christian 'icons' have traditionally borne witness to Christ through their celibate journey and through their contribution to the life of the church. These 'icons' such as "those early Christians who lived single lives in the midst of the pagan Roman Empire as virgins and ascetics"⁵⁰⁴, are a means of inspiration for single people as are contemporary mentors such as Caryll Houselander, Dorothy Day, Simone Weil, Dag Hammarskjold and Soren Kierkegaard. Susan Muto reminds us that as single people, we stand in a tradition which has valued celibate single living. The stories of contemporary single men and women are stories which indicate commitment which is underpinned by their single and celibate living.

However, Susan Muto makes the point that single people, by virtue of their calling, and in

⁵⁰² A W Sipe, *A Secret World: Sexuality and the Search for Celibacy* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1990), 63. He points out that in order to choose celibacy, we have to be prepared to face the reality of ourselves - our strengths and weaknesses. I understand this to imply that learning to be ourselves accompanies or is bound up with the development of the celibate process.

⁵⁰³ Muto, *Celebrating the Single Life* 164-165.

⁵⁰⁴ *ibi d.*, 166.

the tradition of their Christian models, “can bring to light hidden values related to the universal quest for holiness”.⁵⁰⁵ Single people continue to witness to the importance of God-in-Christ present in us all. Further, Susan Muto believes, (and this is an important idea for all single people to contemplate), that single people are a mirror for the church to reflect this presence. Our spiritual ‘icons’ appropriated celibacy and this reinforced their ability to respond to God. Their stance not only contributed to their integrity and growth in wholeness, but importantly served to witness to the importance of their relationship with God. This has significance for those who choose the single life or for whom circumstance bring single life for others.

Living as a celibate person, means that single people are better able to respond to God and also to grow in personal wholeness and integrity. This can only be achieved if single people become more aware of their vocation that we learn to own it and to love it. In so doing, we better articulate ourselves as single people, as singles who choose and accept celibacy, and who are the modern day contemplatives in the world.

The living of a celibate life enables an authentic form of intimacy with others and with God. In effect, the appropriation of celibacy leads to the development of an incarnational spirituality. The more singles become open to this spirituality, the more they foster wholeness and personal integrity because they come to better understand themselves and their relationships, and see in these relationships the incarnate Christ.

I have argued that celibate relationships are important for effective single living. Single people are to be open to themselves, to others and to the God within. Henri Nouwen⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁵ *ibid*

⁵⁰⁶ Henry Nouwen, *Clowning in Rome* (New York: Doubleday and Co, 1979), 45

speaks of celibacy as a “vacancy for God”. Using the definition of Thomas Aquinas, Henri Nouwen sets out to explain his perception of celibacy in the context of relationship. His point is that to be celibate, one is to be open to, to be vacant for, to be empty for God so that he or she can be open to God’s presence and ready for service. Nowhere is this more clearly articulated than in relationships, in the way in which single people interact with their peers, with married people and with the cares and concerns of their everyday living. In effect, being ‘contemplative in the world’ is to be open to and ‘in tune with’ these inter-relationships. Nouwen addresses this point in his summation of celibacy:

Celibates by their dedication to God in a single life-style... are signs of God’s presence in this world.

... in a world torn by loneliness and conflict and trying so hard to create better human relationships, celibacy is a very important witness. It encourages us to create space for him who sent his son, thus revealing to us that we can only love each other because he has loved us first.⁵⁰⁷

What Nouwen is suggesting is that celibates bear witness to the Incarnation through being committed in single-hearted faith to their journey. To appropriate celibacy is to be an effective witness to Christ’s presence. Single people who are committed to celibacy, therefore, live in the awareness of God and realize that “His presence does make a difference in their daily actions and decisions. He is the foundation and centre of our celibate lives”.⁵⁰⁸ Having an incarnational spirituality is at the heart of the single journey which seeks always to comprehend God in the events and moments of the day. Behaviours of single people, as such, ought to reflect this incarnational spirituality, this presence of Christ within and with whom they continually converse.

Having an inner vacancy for God allows single people to be more fully a contemplative in the world. Vacancy for God or celibacy affords the single person freedom to be open, to

⁵⁰⁷ *ibid* 50-51.

⁵⁰⁸ Muto, *Celebrating the Single Life*. 170

walk the journey of life. Their lives and relationships, rather than being conditioned by a spouse and family, are conditioned by an openness to that vacancy. The more each person becomes open to the presence of God, the more each grows as a whole and integrated person.

This is the point that Keith Clark⁵⁰⁹ makes when he talks about the way in which celibate people integrate their life into prayer. In particular, he is interested to show the importance of relationships and intimacy for celibate single people. In his terms, the need for connectedness with others is what brings them to God and allows for the freedom for intimacy which is inclusive. In Clark's words, "Our choice of life . . . or being single for any number of reasons, is a choice made for the purpose of loving other human beings".⁵¹⁰ Such openness can only come about as a result of an openness to God, an openness to an incarnational spirituality which sees God at the heart of all things.⁵¹¹ The choice for celibacy, while allowing for freedom, also means responsibility. I take this to mean two things. In the first instance each single person has an obligation to respond to God. Time and energy need to be taken in making a response. This is the time for solitude, for prayer and reflection. Single people need to take time and energy to put into practice the art or skill of being with God, of entering into that vacant space for God. Secondly, there is an obligation towards others. Not only is the single person obliged to take time for God but there is also an obligation to put time and energy at the disposal of friends and work associates. This is evidenced in the stories of some of the Respondents. It is in fulfilling this

⁵⁰⁹ Keith Clark, *Being Sexual and Celibate* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1985), 103

⁵¹⁰ *ibid*

⁵¹¹ Henri Nouwen, *ibid*, 52 makes a pertinent point in this respect when he says that celibacy " . . . involves every part of our life, the way we eat and drink, work and play, sleep and rest, speak and be silent. It is an openness to God acted out in such a way that it must raise questions in those we encounter." Celibacy in these terms means for Nouwen, not simply an abstinence of sexual activity, but more importantly, celibacy is a lifestyle in which we witness to the priority of God in all relationships. This is rather a poignant way of expressing the heart of what it means to be celibate.

responsibility that single people come to wholeness, that they show themselves as people of integrity.

Being so disposed means that the single person is never fully alone. He or she is always in the 'company' of others and the 'Other'. Being single means, therefore, to be in community with others. Community for the single person is not a narrow or exclusive relationship but a much wider, more inclusive situation in which and through which we grow in wholeness and integrity.

Finally, it is important that single people become actively involved in their journey in order to be personally responsible for themselves and for their involvement with others, so that they may have a more developed consciousness. Such activity furthers single people in their understanding of themselves and their context, and better places them at the heart of what it means to be single and to carry a hermitage of the heart. In so doing, they also assist the church at large to have a wider vision and better understanding of itself. This is, as I have argued in the first chapter, part of the process of church coming to its own fuller ecclesial self-understanding of the body of Christ in the world today. A critical consciousness on the part of the individual as well as the wider community, is to the benefit of all. Susan Muto argues that for the single person such consciousness needs to have a practical side which can allow the single person to be an effective person. "Critical consciousness demands that single persons also foster a sound intellectual life by selecting and reading good classical and contemporary literature that not only imparts information but also forms heart, mind and will. Such reading helps us to be attentive to and supportive of efforts to liberate fellow humans from injustice, from lack of mercy, compassion and peace."⁵¹² However, depending on the gifts of each single person, he or she will appropriate methods of interaction with their

⁵¹² Muto, *Celebrating the Single Life*, 108-109

environment which allows them to be involved in areas of justice and the needs of others. In so doing, the single person is enabled to be more involved with God, with peers and with married people in day-to-day relationships in a way which is open and honest. This in turn allows for a development of relationships and intimacy which sees God at the centre of their living.

Summation

In this section I have been arguing that celibacy is an important aspect of the single person and his or her journey. Christian 'icons' can play an important role in this respect because they model a life of witness to God lived in celibacy and prayer. Following in their footsteps, single people appropriate celibacy and take time for God and others. They do so because of the responsibility to God, themselves and to others. Without this, there can be no authentic single witness to Christ. Rather, taking time and energy for God and for others is to continue to be open to a vacancy for God. A celibate commitment is, therefore, necessary for single people on their journey, in their relationships with others and with God.

What I have been outlining in this section of chapter five, is a possible theological perspective concerning the single life. In articulating this perspective, I have made use of various authors in order to assist me to explicate what I believe to be key characteristics of single men and women and their being church: Life - Journey; Being contemplative in the World and Celibate living. The main point to emerge from this exploration is that what is at the heart of being a single person is one's interior disposition towards self and God. The single person does not have a public vow, does not have a spouse but is ultimately a person who is on their own whilst travelling in the company of others. Theirs is a journey which is a lone journey; the way in which they live, interact with others, become involved in their spiritual life, are indicative of the single life. In this way single people live out their baptismal calling to follow Christ. They demonstrate that their lives are integral to and flow

out from, the life and mission of the church. In effect, to be single is to be church together with ordained and married men and women who seek to live their baptism in a way which best allows them to be effective witnesses for Christ in the world. Such a perspective as I have outlined is indicative of single people being Church. There is an involvement in day to day activities such as education. Such engagement and their commitment to the life of the church highlights their being at home in the church, of being in the service of the church, of being church.

The theological perspective outlined in this chapter is a perspective which I believe will serve two purposes. The first purpose served is to address the issue of single people within a theological context. The second purpose is a subsequent purpose which is to allow for further discussion on the single life – its place and life in the ecclesial context.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

This thesis has focused on the single life. The heart of the issue was the way in which single men and women were understood and appreciated as members of the lay faithful. Traditionally, the lay faithful were those men and women who were neither in the clerical nor the religious state. Reference to the laity usually was from a context of marriage and the family. My concern arose in response to this context. As a single person, my objective was to examine the single life and its relationship to the life of the Church. My aims have been threefold:

1. To show the way in which church thought has developed since the Second Vatican Council to the point whereby single living is understood as a vocation in its own right.
2. To show that there has been a societal shift of attitude regarding single men and women and that this societal shift has ‘co-incided’ with and been in ‘dialogue’ with church thought.
3. My third aim has been to articulate the way in which the single life is a vocation; that it can be understood theologically as well as ecclesially. Within this context, I have examined via the case studies, the need to reassess role models such as are pertinent to single people: the lives of exemplars such as Dorothy Day, Simone Weil, Caryll Houselander, Dag Hammarskjöld and Søren Kierkegaard were examined. The structure for this explication of aims has been the following.

Chapter One

The first chapter set out to examine church thought and its development concerning the single state by focusing initially on church documents such as *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes*, and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* from the Second Vatican Council. Subsequent

Exhortations as *Familiaris Consortio*, *Christifideles Laici* and its so called initial work *Instrumentum Laboris*, as well as *Ecclesia in Oceania* have been used to show that an articulation of the single state has developed during the forty years or so since the Second Vatican Council.

No development of thought can occur in isolation to current societal thinking. The second part of the first chapter focused upon the relationship between sociology and ecclesiology. Joseph Komonchak shows the way in which the church has been informed sociologically. Further, the work of sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann emphasize the way in which society is self constructed or ordered. I have used their work to show the way in which the church is structured and ordered. This, together with the theological as well as ecclesiological underpinnings of the church as an institution, emphasizes the nature of the relationship between sociology and ecclesiology. This relationship is largely responsible for contributing to the articulation of the single state as a vocation – as a way of response to one's call to follow Christ in baptism.

Chapter Two

Having examined the development of thought concerning the single state in church documents from *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* to later documents *Familiaris Consortio*, *Christifideles Laici* and its initial work *Instrumentum Laboris*, I sought to explore the relationship between the ecclesiological and the sociological development in understanding concerning the single state. These developments served to set the scene for the second chapter in which I examine the lives of men and women who as single people, have made an impact on the world environment in which each lived. These studies are integral to this thesis as they not only reinforce the foundational development of the first chapter but serve to highlight the substance and the manner of living of single people and their importance as models for others. The lives of Dorothy Day, Simone Weil, Caryl Chessman, Dag Hammarskjöld and Søren Kierkegaard are used in this context.

Whereas in chapter one the examination focused on highlighting the nature and role of the laity – the married and the single, in their call to holiness of life, to infusing the world of work and leisure with the spirit of the gospel, the second chapter takes up this development and shows that single men and women are people of dedication and commitment. They are single by choice or by continued affirmation. As active and committed members of the laity, the lives of these single men and women show commitment to Christ through baptism – a commitment which infuses their thought, action and way of life. Further, these studies emphasise the significance of single people for the life of the church and serve to inform the church of the need to fully incorporate and accept the single life as intrinsic to a fully developed and informed ecclesiology. They are people of commitment, personal mission, have a practical austerity towards life and search for personal authenticity through the events of their daily journeys.

Chapter Three

The third chapter draws upon the contributions of single role models and the conclusions that have been drawn concerning a fully informed and developed ecclesiology. The focus of the chapter is upon the contemporary lives of single men and women – it is the study of the single story. The framework for this chapter is that used in chapter two:

- 1 The formative years
2. The contribution to church / society
3. Involvement in the social sphere and
- 4 Life story as a model for others.

The first part of chapter three focused upon the female respondents who contributed their stories. Having used the above-mentioned framework, a number of conclusions were drawn. That single women are –

- 1 Committed to work and faith
2. Have freedom for such commitment and involvement in wider society

3. Show a life story which, though in a state of flux, is a story of resilience
4. People of integrity

Using the established framework, the lives of single male respondents were examined. I concluded from these stories that single men showed lives that indicate –

1. Commitment
2. Freedom for others
3. Challenged by life events
4. Flexibility to move forwards.

Underpinning these case studies was the pervasive faith dimension for each individual. These case studies, while highlighting the above attributes, also serve to inform the church of the manner in which single baptized men and women engage with their world. Their story is one which also informs the church of its ongoing ‘big picture’ of self-understanding – its ecclesiology. The stories from the second chapter - the uncanonized saints, together with the story as presented by these respondents, adds to the depth of ecclesial self-understanding and shows the richness and the diversity which exists among this group of baptized men and women and their contribution to society and the church.

Chapter Four

In this chapter there is an examination of the three states – clerical, married and the single, in order to explore and expound the intrinsic nature of each of these states. This is done in order to flesh out as it were, how each state is to be understood within the context of ecclesiology. The inherent theological examination of the three states serves a twofold purpose. Firstly, there is the theological understanding of each state and its significance for the life of the church. Secondly, the examination highlights the single state and its uniqueness. This is done to emphasize the nature of being single so as to inform ecclesiology.

While all states are incorporated into the life of the church, it is baptism which is at the heart of all and their commitment to Christ. However, the point is made that both the clerical and the married states are formalized sacramentally: ordination and matrimony respectively, whereas the single state has no such formalization but has as its basis the sacraments of initiation

The chapter begins with an explication of the word 'vocation'. This is done to lay the foundation for an understanding of what it means to be a follower of Christ in baptism. Vocation is to be understood as one's personal response to God. In this context, I examine the three states – the clerical, the married and the single, to show how each state is a way of responding to God in Christ. A necessary aspect of such an understanding is to show the intrinsic nature of each state and its distinctive qualities. I begin with the married state, then the clerical and move to the single state.

The framework for the examination of marriage has been:

1. An understanding of marriage
2. The significance of the married state
3. Marriage as a sacrament of commitment
4. Associated expectations.

The vocation to ordained ministry focused upon:

1. The nature and purpose of commitment to corporate mission
2. Commitment to identity and fraternity
3. Commitment to being the representative of Christ in the church
4. Associated expectations

I concluded in these respects that these responses to God are callings towards the Other – to a spouse or family; to the Other who is communion of the church in all its facets. The

married life and the clerical life are sacraments of obligation, of self giving, of personal involvement as well as the personal investing of one's energies for the sake of the Other

The single state focused upon:

1. The definition of the single state and its application
2. The single state as a sacrament to the world and to the church
3. The single state – mission
4. The attributes of being single:
 - Jesus as model
 - Discipleship
 - Single Presence
 - Single personas as prophets
 - The single way of the Cross.

I concluded in this chapter that the single state is a state of radical freedom. It seeks to devolve for itself and stands apart from the sacraments of commitment – marriage and the clerical states. The single state is different and this is what I wanted to highlight in this chapter. Single people respond to their baptism by their singular responsiveness to Christ.

In the fifth chapter, I propose a theological perspective of what it means to follow Christ as a single person. This perspective has, in part, been formulated using the work of Dr. Susan Muto, as well as my own reflections of life and the life stories provided by the respondents. The perspective proposed is one which will allow for future possible elaboration and development.

Chapter Five

The theological perspective I outline focuses upon:

1. The single way as a pilgrimage

- Single people need to be seen along with others in the church as being on a pilgrimage
- The stories provided by the Respondents are a reminder to the church of what it means to make life's journey in a spirit of openness to the future and with a reliance upon God.
- This, I assert, is a necessary quality for living as a single person but importantly this hope is a giftedness to the community of the faithful

2. The single life as contemplative in the world.

- In itself, being a contemplative in the world seems a contradiction in terms.
- It is though their engagement with the world of work and their ability to exercise their giftedness, that single people are enabled to be a presence of Christ.
- It is through prayerful reflection and a deepening relationship with Christ, that the single person can be a presence in the world whilst also being able to withdraw for reflection and prayer.
- Managing solitude; learning to manage aloneness and to use gifts and time for self and others.
- Living with restlessness of heart; single people look to prayer and work, to being flexible and being resilient as a means for openness to Transcendence.
- Connectedness; there needs to be a balance between the various facets of life – work, family, prayer, free time and the day to day challenges

3 Being single and celibate

- Celibate living is an authentic response to Christ begun in baptism.
- Celibate living allows for an openness to life and to one's relationships.

- Celibacy means an open-hearted response to God.
- Personal wholeness and integrity result from one's open-hearted response to God.
- Appropriation of celibate living is being an authentic witness to Christ
- Celibate living enables the single person to carry his or her hermitage daily and to be a 'contemplative' person engaging with the world

Much of what has been outlined in this perspective, could also be said of priestly life. This is not to be denied. However, I assert that it is time that due consideration be given to those single men and women who live their lives in response to Christ and who do so celibately. It is time for the single person to claim his or her position as a baptised person. It is time that single people were acknowledged for their contribution to and commitment to the life and mission of the church. The conclusion to be drawn from this perspective is that what is at the heart of being single is one's interior disposition towards self and God. The single person is on a journey. It is a lone journey in the main but what is important is the way in which single people live and interact with others whilst at the same time, become involved in their own spiritual life. I concluded this chapter by saying that being single means to be church together with the clerical as well as married men and women who seek to follow Christ through their baptism.

Invitation to contribute to this Thesis and the replies from Respondents.

The responses have been included here as they were presented. I include here also the letter of invitation sent to Respondents asking for their involvement in this study

25 November, 2001

Dear

I am currently working on a Doctoral Thesis for the Griffith School of Theology. My focus is on the single life and its contribution to the life of the Church.

In chapter 3 I have been focusing on looking at appropriate models for single living. These are people who have worked and contributed both to Society and to the Church in various ways. What I plan to do as a result is to examine their lives and to see what common threads there are and whether or not these allow me to construct a framework for what constitutes the single life. To this end I have formulated and been working on the following areas:

- The shaping of their formative years
- Their involvement in their work and how this became a significant aspect of their adult life
- Their contribution to Society and to the Church
- Their lives as being role models for those in the single life

In chapter 4 my focus will be on the contemporary scene especially Brisbane. I propose to engage a number of single men and women and ask them to talk about their lives using a similar framework as that listed above. My purpose here is to ascertain the single story of contemporary men and women and their relationship to Society and the Church. My intention here is to get a sense of what the story is and not to delve into the personal lives of those who contribute their story. To this end I would like to invite you to assist me in this task and ask you to consider your story along the lines suggested:

- 1 How were your formative years shaped? Role models, significant others, education etc.
- 2 How did you come to be involved in the work that presently engages you?
- 3 Would you consider that you contribute to Society? To the Church? Here I am thinking of the way in which you practice faith formally as well informally. What challenges you etc.
- 4 Do you see your life as being a model for others?

Thanks in advance for any assistance you are able to offer me in this work. If I can be of further assistance in any way, please contact me at 36300897 or mrose@gil.com.au. Your involvement is greatly appreciated. Whatever you contribute will be used with discretion and anonymously.

Sincerely,

WOMEN:

Respondent A

My Formative Years

I suppose the people who had the most influence on me when I was young were my Mum, my grandma and the teachers at my Primary school, especially some of the nuns.

My Mum wasn't overly religious when I was young (probably because she didn't have time to think about anything besides raising 4 children). But she was an amazing role model for me in terms of her kindness, care and love. During my high school years, she encouraged

me to explore the spiritual side of myself, which wasn't too difficult because after visiting Japan when I was about 12 years old, I was captivated by other religions and different ways of thinking about existence and the world. Still today we have long conversations about all of this kind of stuff, which is great. So Mum has definitely had the most impact on shaping me as a person.

My grandma moved in with us after my Pop died when I was about 4 years old. Because she didn't really have to do the disciplining around the place, she became more of a friend to me during my formative years. I think that at that time in my life I related better to older people which is why we got on so well. She grew up in the bush and had a hard life as the wife of a shearer, so she was the one who gave me a real sense of my history... maybe the start of my love of history?

The nuns at Primary School were always a source of fascination for me. We were taught about saints in Grade One and I think that I probably thought they were all living saints because they seemed so different from normal people. I took their word as gospel truth and apparently used to quote them at home. I had a lovely nun in Grade 2 who really encouraged me academically and I became her top student. She gave me a "glow-in-the-dark" statue of Mary for a prize and crocheted picture of Mary, so Mary got my vote early on too thanks to the nuns. I had a heap of respect for these women who had given up their lives in the name of the church.

How I Came to My Current Work

Definitely fate, I think. People had always said that I would make a great teacher... I had the patience for it and loved working with young ones. Academically I was near the top of my senior class and I felt that my teachers thought that I would be cutting myself short by doing anything else other than something like Law at Uni. So "Law" it was. The gods thought otherwise because I didn't get the IE I needed. Apparently the whole grade's IE

scores were a lot lower than predicted so I headed off to do a BA at uni. I knew from the time I started that I really wanted to do teaching and that was the start of it all.

Contribution to Society and Church

I have always thought that I make a significant contribution to society and the church through my work as a Catholic teacher. I suppose that is why I have always gone the “extra mile”, because it is my way of giving back to society. I also try to find ways through my job of doing things for the community ... like clothes drive etc.

A Model for Others?

I certainly try to be a role model as a teacher. I think that’s part of the responsibility that you take on. Considering that parents have entrusted me with the job of helping to educate their daughters, I think I have to be conscious of how I conduct myself and the values that I espouse.

Respondent B

1. My Mother, Father and my relatives shaped my formative years. Before I started Primary school I did not attend pre-school or kindergarten. I spent most of (my) time, as my Father was working with my Mother and Nanna and later with my Sister when she was born. Religion played a part in our lives as my Mother was accustomed to visiting churches on the first Fridays and we also as Irish Catholics had relics and holy pictures in our house.

I had an extended family of relatives and our neighbourhood had many children of my own age. I was educated at Catholic schools. Some of my teachers were nuns but I was not influenced by many of these women.

2. I became involved in teaching because I like the school environment. It was always a very positive and enjoyable experience for me. I wanted to teach English and History as my cousin taught these subjects but my Business teacher at high school was a positive influence on me and this was the area that I pursued.

3. I contribute to society by teaching young people and trying to reinforce human values. I interact with my neighbours and others in my community. When I was at school I was involved in YCS and spent time after school with the elderly in nursing homes and teaching Vietnamese refugees to speak English. I have also worked for many years with children at the Royal Children's Hospital. Sometimes this societal contribution is a part of church.

Church does not have to what happens within the formal building. I don't have an active role in my local Parish church or the church that I attend most weekends at the Gold Coast. The church that I attend most at the Coast fosters a wonderful community atmosphere and I think that as a person who is single and has time to give to this community I would be welcomed if I was there more constantly. The Parish Priest is supportive and challenges the community and myself about our attitudes to human rights issues. Justice is paramount and he is able to relate to everyday issues.

In more formal settings such as the cathedral I feel it would be more of a challenge to contribute to the life of this church.

4. I don't know if I see my life as being a role model for others. People who know me realise that my faith is important to me. I am not an advocate for anything in particular but value happiness and enjoyment of life. I hope by showing this that I can be a positive role model for others.

Respondent C

1. Formative Years

- Irish Catholic family tradition
- Religion and Priests, Brothers, Nuns were very important.
- Parish Primary School – Brigidine sisters as teachers right through. Lay teachers for physical education/singing. Co-educational to Grade 3.
- Secondary Education- Catholic, single sex college. Taught by Nuns Lay teachers (all female) for French, Art, Elocution (to Yr 12).
- Teachers College. Brigidine lecturers nuns, teaching rounds in Brigidine/Parish schools (1 year).
- Entered the Brigidine – inspired by teachers and respect for the way of life that seemed to make people happy
- Limited options for girls I didn't want to be a nurse
- Religious life gave me experience of adapting to new challenges. Taught only in co-ed schools. Four years Primary then the rest in Secondary.
- At age 33 – Chose to be an educator. Started Arts Degree Christian Community College – Life changing experiences.
- Significant Others: Teachers with whom I lived and worked. Family: I didn't get to know them in the first 17 years I was the weakling. My father: his generosity and acceptance were qualities of inspiration and admiration.

2. Through accepting the opportunities life provided, I found my way back to roles of administration and teaching in Catholic Education I'm happiest working with and for people.

3. (and 4) My major contribution to church is through education. My role gives me opportunity to lead others while relying heavily on my faith tradition and hopefully inspiring others to place more trust in God and Christian values.

Respondent D**The Shaping of My Formative Years**

- Primary education at a country catholic primary school of approx 100 students (Mercy Nuns).
- Secondary education at a regional city catholic all girls boarding school Approx 400 students (Loreto Nuns).
- Both parents practising Catholics
- Both parents very involved in the up-keep of my primary school as they spent hours on Parent School Committees.
- My parents did not involve themselves directly in my actual primary and secondary education This was left to the educators.
- My spiritual development was also greatly shaped by the nuns, my parents relying very much on the nuns as they saw them as perfection This perhaps has much to do with parents own upbringing, both of which went to catholic schools run by nuns

Involvement in Work and this Became a Significant Aspect of Adult Life

- My first job was very demanding as I was straight out of Uni into a multinational company. I was yet to develop my own work ethic
- Overtime was welcomed as I was alone and single in an unfamiliar city (Melbourne).
- My workplace was all I really had. It also became my social outlet as well.
- I also worked overseas and spent even more hours at the work place The job was so demanding and challenging that I did not resent the pressure put on me or the fact that I became a slave to the job. The positive results kept me driven.
- I always put a lot of pressure on myself to perform and achieve at a high level This approach to my work is also reflected in my personal life as I expect partners to be strong capable people.
- High expectations and pressures I have place upon myself both in the workplace and private life probably explain why I am still single at 43.

Contribution to Society and to the Church

- Once away from the influence of the religious, I stopped going to Mass on a regular basis and thought little of the church and the consequences of my actions in the eyes of the church.
- I didn't return to the church until moving to Melbourne. I needed a place to fill my time because I was lonely
- Gradually I started going to Mass and church visits for quiet contemplation because I no longer needed a sanctuary for loneliness but wanted to become involved in the church
- I have become a reader and am now a member of my church community.
- There is a desire to do more but at present my contribution to society is through charity donations.

Regarding being a role model. The respondent answered this in her introductory letter. I have included her comments as made to me. "I have thought hard about area 4: being a role model. To be honest I don't know if I can answer this as I have never wanted to remain single; I have not deliberately or consciously chosen to be single. I don't see myself as a role model because I don't want to be what I am...single. All very confusing and probably no help to you at all "

Respondent E

Formative Years

Child? Teenager? Young Adult? A person(s) can be influenced in childhood in different ways. But it is only on reflection/looking back that such influence can be recognised, (e.g. Hazlett said "things present are seen in the size of life. Things past are reduced too the size of the understanding.") What does influence mean? Our lives can be affected without being effected. People impact on our lives in different ways depending on who they are, what role they played. For children – parents, teachers, For adults- mentors, friends. Does the term 'influence' imply change??

Contribution to Society and to the Church

Theoretically, assuming the single person's lifestyle implies they have more time – does not necessarily mean they actually do more or are more active. One's contribution to society or church can take different guises and depends on personality type etc. Some people are more socially active e.g. charity workers. Others more contemplative: the bloody do-gooders who do things for the accolades. The single person's contribution to society and church is often not recognized when they are alive. Therese of Lisieux was very ordinary and became famous after the event. Joan of Arc became famous after they got rid of her. G.B. Shaw has Joan telling the Bishops that if they really meant they were sorry for frying her, she's come back to earth again so they could atone. They did not think that was a good idea!!

Some people need to be active. They can't handle silence: the hermit, the anchoirite, the activist, the contemplative. All made their contributions if we are to believe the litany of saints.

Given that my response has to emerge from all the variables mentioned above, I have to, for the time being – respond thus.

- 1 **Formative Years:** Child- extended family with strong aunties (some unmarried). A sense of humour. Balance: Irish Catholic Religion. Role models?? not sure but probably traits and characteristics, beliefs etc that have been learned.

My present (and recent past work) as a teacher. That's what I was trained to do. Not much option; not many avenues open to girls when I began work.

My present job: radio operator for Coast Guard. I became involved – I volunteered.

Do I consider I **contribute to** society and the Church? Don't know – probably not.

Role Model? No.

What challenges me? I want to be good at golf.

MEN:

Respondent A

Shaping of Formative Years: Role Models, Education

Normal happy stable childhood (family of 5 kids) in a small country town, Woolsthorpe, north of Warrnambool in the Western District of Victoria, until one of life's crises hit in a major way, namely the death of my mother when I was 12 years old

Coping with this was difficult, particularly when my father couldn't cope, so in hindsight, I virtually ran away to the Christian Brothers at the tender age of 15 plus years of age. The C.Bs at school became in a sense role models, especially in contrast to my father, and thus I was convinced over my early formative years to follow in their footsteps. Naturally, over several years, there was a fair bit of subtle persuasion, encouragement to all pupils to consider joining the Brothers! Again, easy to see in hindsight! Didn't have a clue what I was going into, but weren't shown (at school at Warrnambool) or experienced, any alternatives for future life.

Brothers played a big part in my life in training, from men who cared (could see and protect a bit of an innocent from the country), to men who took an active interest in sport (and became heroes of many of the trainees) – all of these men were also our teachers, role models to aspire to. Thus, I forged through training, and completed the course consequently posted then to my first school.

Probably, a defining moment at this stage was to be given the responsibility of teaching a particular class half way through my 3rd year of training, replacing the sick class teacher; to

be thought competent enough by men at the top to be given this responsibility was certainly a confidence booster.

Where Am I at Present?

Post training, spent 25 years in teaching, 16 of which in the Order, and thus directly, in C B schools. I left at age 36 and spent time in two C B schools and directly a Principal of a Parish Primary school for a full contractual term of 5 years. Decided to step outside teaching completely, as a consequence of a challenge from my brother, to develop a retail clothing outlet as part of his Importing Company. Spent six years at this, until the company folded. This was a challenge in stepping out from a known comfort zone, risking all, and shaping my own destiny, responsible for my own future. This was further challenged, when I bought a business in Surfers Paradise in 1995 selling all in Melbourne, risking everything to take up ownership of three retail stores. Amazingly, we're still here, having faced the crises the world's economy and external events have thrown up against us.

Contribution to Society

Directly yes, in terms of relating to customers in the shop, people who actually return the next day, or many cases, on a return holiday usually 12 months later, to renew acquaintances with us. A focus for fellow traders, who look to me for leadership, advice, or just plain conviviality.

Within our neighbourhood, we are well respected in the street we live in, knowing all the residents, but not intruding. We're seen as a stable element in our neighbourhood, with people reaching out to us at all times.

Contribution to Church

My church life is active, in that I am a regular attendee at Sunday Mass though I have moved past the point of guilt if I happen to miss a Sunday. My worship is more than Sunday stuff. It's private; it relates to the whole of the universe, nature, space, events etc. I'm not really concerned that I don't become more involved in the formal structure of church. My contribution to that part is in my past, when I was involved in Catholic Ed. In a sense, I have done my bit in the public sense. My challenge at this stage of my life, is to develop stronger and further, some sort of relationship with God. I need to do plenty with regard to this, reading, contemplating, thinking; developing adult concepts, lessening those we picked up as young people

My real challenge in life at this point of time is to get to a situation where I don't have to rely on the continual struggle to meet the financial obligations under which we live; to get to a point where we can walk the beaches and smell the roses, to reflect on the diminishing future, and enjoy it

My Life as a Role Model for Others?

I've really got to say no to this question, at least initially. I think that if I had it all over again, I would opt for the married life, for the companionship, trust, and security this brings, for the diminution of selfishness that comes with sharing with someone else. Single life brings its freedom, but also its loneliness. As life goes on, one reflects as one gets a little older, of the absence of my kids, grown up, producing my grand kids, who in turn would be there to look after me if the case warranted it; I guess, in short, a sense of security in old age

However, on the upside, because we do have to fend for ourselves in all aspects of life as a single person, we tend to keep younger in attitude, simply because we have to keep active, in terms of employment (we need to keep the money rolling in). I could probably see some

younger people wanting to aspire to this, especially the independence issue which we have (comes with the territory). I've got to say, however, that in the main, we are in the minority and only a very small minority of people would intentionally and deliberately aspire to this life.

Respondent B

Formative Years/Role Models/Significant Others/Role/Faith

I am the second eldest in a family of six children. I have four sisters and a younger brother

Apart from my parents and siblings, the biggest influence in my early life was the Catholic church. I was fascinated by religious stories (Bible stories, lives of the saints) from an early age and I enjoyed going to Mass. In my adult life I have realised that much of this fascination was a combination of several quite secular attractions. Firstly, I am very susceptible to language and story. The Catholic tradition of my youth was rich in these things. I vividly remember begging my Year 1 teacher to let me take my RE text home. I used to love the sound of the words, often being moved to tears. Similarly, I loved going to Mass because it was the only place that I regularly heard music and got the chance to sing (We didn't have radio or a stereo at home until I was well into Primary School). I was also greatly attracted, I now realise, by the visual richness of the liturgy; the theatricality of it impressed me

It is not surprising, therefore, that my early heroes were priests. My mother used to nurse an old retired priest who lived at the presbytery in Dalby. I remember going with her on these visits and loving the company and attention of these men. In fact, throughout my early life, until adolescence, I wanted to be a priest when I left school. My uncles and other male relations (I do not include my father here) were country men with little education, rough manners and limited vision. I had little in common with them and often felt intimidated by

them. The priests, on the other hand, showed me another way of being male that was one to which I felt I could aspire. They showed me that gentleness and studiousness were not 'sissy'. It was a vital lesson. I also grew up with the idea that not being married was a normal and valuable option for life. Growing up, I never regarded celibacy as odd or unhealthy. Indeed, on this subject I never heard a negative opinion expressed until after I had left school.

I attended convent primary schools and in Year 6 went to St Laurence's Christian Brother's College. I did very well at school and was Dux of my class most years. This became the cornerstone of self-esteem. Although St. Laurence's had a very macho sporting ethos, my academic success seemed to gain me some kudos, as well as a strong friendship group which in turn prevented any serious ridicule. I was certainly never bullied.

I remember High School as a time of high anxiety. I seemed always to be worried about failing or losing my high placing. I seemed always to be worried about failing or losing my high placing. I always felt that my success was a fluke and that one day I would be exposed. School work dominated my life at this time. While I had quite a few friends at school I rarely saw them outside of school hours and my social life was restricted almost entirely to my family.

My interests at this time were also mainly intellectual. I enjoyed history, literature and theology (although there was little encouragement given to the latter at SLC). I would have liked to have pursued these subjects after leaving school, however, I was persuaded that they were not practical and my parents could not have afforded to have me study full time. I therefore, became an Articled Clerk and studied Law at night. This lasted one year after which I joined the Passionist Fathers.

My time with the Passionist Fathers was absolutely crucial to my personal development. For the first time I experienced deep emotional attachment to people outside my family. I was able, for the first time, to articulate my anxieties and hopes. I began to explore my own tastes and my personality seemed to blossom. I was studying subjects that I enjoyed and that I found compelling. I felt that here at last was the stuff worth studying; the stuff that really mattered. All in all, it was a very liberating experience. So much so, that I realised that I had been very afraid after leaving school – afraid of sexuality, afraid of disappointing my parents. It became clear to me that my decision to join the Passionists was to some extent an attempt to escape these fears. My newfound confidence showed me that I need not be afraid of the ‘real world’ and so I felt I needed to leave the Passionists in order to ‘have a go’ there before I made any commitment to religious life.

Spiritually, this time was one of real conversion. I prayed deeply for the first time in my life and my faith became much less an intellectual exploration and more of a relationship with God and with Jesus.

After leaving the Passionists, I went to University full-time to study theology, history and French. (This had been my original desire on leaving Year 12, although never admitted.) I was at Uni for three years and throughout this time I felt strongly that I would return to the Passionists or that I would ‘end up’ in some monastery. I went to Teacher’s College after Uni in order to ‘get a trade’ just in case religious life didn’t work out. At college, however, thoughts of religious life quickly faded as I realised that with teaching I could live the same kind of life as a modern religious. Also, I did not want to give up definitely the possibility of marriage.

I took on teaching originally because I had an interest in my subject areas and wanted to be able to explore them and be paid for it. I have remained a teacher for other reasons. I have

discovered that I enjoy working with young people and I have also discovered an unexpected talent for teaching. It suits my temperament perfectly – the mixture of intellectual activity and public ‘performance’ enables me to explore my interests and express my personality. Even though teaching has been and still is very tough at times, I can think of no other profession which would have suited me better. Through teaching I have learnt to appreciate myself – to uncover hidden talents and unsuspected virtues. While the opposite is also true – I have been brought face to face with my own weaknesses and sinfulness – my profession has been for me, the greatest channel of grace over the past fifteen years.

My work is mainly in teaching religion and organising liturgy. Particularly in the latter role, I often have to take on a very public work of evangelization and catechesis so that I often find myself doing exactly the sort of work I would have done had I stayed with the Passionists

I don’t see my work as at all separate from my faith life. I could never have a job and a life. I need to feel that every aspect of my life is part of an organic whole. That’s why I was so depressed doing Law and why I was attracted to religious life. It is also, I believe, why I was so single-minded at school. My contribution to the parish is similarly an extension of what I do at school. I work with many of the same people and I feel, in a sense, that it’s all one community. In this regard, I’m particularly happy that my parents and many of my siblings are also part of the same parish. There is a sense that we have moved on together; a feeling of continuity.

I still rely very much on my family for my social and emotional life and as my siblings have married and have had children I feel my affective life has expanded. By nature I am an introvert who enjoys and needs solitude. I am also a person who is not used to intimacy and I realise that I am even a little afraid of it. My self-sufficiency means that I don’t feel any

internal imperative to seek out a partner. Even my friendships tend to have arisen out of my work and usually it has not been through my taking the initiative. I do see this as a failing and a challenge, particularly as I get older; although I must say, I don't feel neurotic about it. It's just how I am and something I need to work at. I've also become very aware lately that life changes you and that one day I may feel the need for deeper intimacy and even marriage.

My single state is not a deliberately chosen vocation. It is a result of my particular temperament and the particular facts of my life. It would be true to say that it is also a result of my particular woundedness. I do not rule out marriage and I certainly don't see singleness as fundamental to my vocation. Perhaps because I am single, I invest more energy into my work and family, but it is not a conscious effort I make in order to 'make the most' of my lot. I do not at all see my single state as a negative or second-rate lifestyle. I've never thought of my life as being a model for others. If it is, I hope it would be in its struggle to live fully, not singly.

It has occurred to me over the past few years that perhaps my faith keeps me single in a way. So many people I meet who have no faith seem to be driven into an exclusive relationship because they need this to feel complete, loved and creative. They look to another to provide their self-esteem. My faith, particularly thanks to my time in religious life, seems to give me a real sense of direction and a conviction that I am loved and nurtured. This conviction waxes and wanes of course, but when it is at a low ebb, I tend to look to prayer and to the activities and circumstances of my life as they are (work, family etc), rather than outward to another person. I realise this can be a hindrance to growth and to intimacy, however, I do believe that there are healthy and positive aspects to this tendency.

The major frustration with being single is that married people often give the impression that you are not really an adult; that somehow you have refused or are unable to take on grown-

up responsibilities – in short, that you are selfish (Of course, there is the added frustration that people often assume you are homosexual) Marriage in our culture tends to be the great coming of age ritual and so I think single people often miss this public affirmation of their maturity.

Respondent C

My Formative Years

The influences in my early years were mainly men and women in priesthood and the religious life though there were a few single people. The Sisters of Mercy: Francilla Cosmos and Antonio were women who were kindly and made an impression on me. Antonio in particular, was like a grandmother type figure. The local parish priest also made an impression on me. I served as an altar server for him most days of the week while I attended the local Catholic primary school. The single people were lay men and women. One was a teacher from my high school; one was a man for whom I did part time work each afternoon and the other person was a school friend of my own age who later became a Sister of St. Joseph.

In my adolescence I was impressed by religious people. Some of these were priests and religious, two of whom were of much assistance to me in my personal and spiritual development as an emerging adult. Other notable men were Dr Billy Graham who impressed me for his talent as a speaker, I.F. Kennedy was an impressive and persuasive speaker and Pope John XXIII was to me a kindly pope who was a courageous man in the work that he undertook on behalf of the church. All these men and women were in some way connected with the church and its mission in the world. I appreciate these people for many reasons: for honesty, for non-judgmental care and acceptance of me and my faults; for their guidance and giving me a sense of direction and hope for my life. They were great role models whom I admired greatly. They gave of their time and their energy. As a teenager I

wanted to become a priest but family circumstances and financial concerns meant this could not happen.

As I was growing up I was unaware of family beyond my immediate family circle and so was not influenced by family to any great extent. I suppose the nuns and priests were to me, a sort of surrogate parent. In hindsight I saw in them the qualities I suppose I would have liked to have seen in my own parents as I was growing up.

Involvement in the Social Sphere

My early work was in the hospitality area. I worked part time initially but later worked full time in service for the government. I dealt with people and attended on them as the role demanded. My involvement was limited. My experience in religious life was a catalyst or stimulus for working with youth and teaching catechetics. This was for me a sort of love-hate relationship as it made me aware of my own inadequacies and also the desire to better myself.

I suppose I was pushed into teaching. Not much choice at the time. Again, this was a sort of love-hate situation. The work was good but there were many challenges that I couldn't always deal with adequately. In hindsight, these were a means to personal growth. Given the opportunity for study – I met new people especially adults both religious as well as lay men and women. These people were good and encouraging. It was great to be in an environment in which I could explore both my intellectual as well as my personal and spiritual capabilities. Full time teaching became a choice and my main involvement. I feel a bit like St Paul at times who referred to the thorn in his flesh. Teaching is a bit like this: it is all-encompassing, a challenge, a reward and always something new to learn about oneself and others. More importantly, teaching shows me continually the goodness, the generosity,

the simplicity and wholesomeness of the youth of today. They are socially minded; they seek a spirituality that is genuine and they are open to the world in which they live.

Contribution to Church/Society

1. Commitment to Catholic education.
2. Commitment to personal development in faith: personally as well as for others.
3. Promoting the works of the church: St Vincent de Paul, Caritas etc
4. Prayer / Retreat work for adolescents and staff.
5. Personal Prayer and reflection developed in religious life but later as a single man.

Role Model

1. Try to model Christian values; to be an example to others of my own faith commitment.
2. Confident to challenge others; stand for the courage of conviction.
3. Witness to supporting the church: presence, employment and monetary contribution.
4. Person who takes an interest in welfare and development of others.
5. Commitment to work.

Respondent D

This respondent replied in the form of a letter. Some editing of punctuation has occurred.

I don't know if I could be of any help with your Doctoral Thesis but I'll write about my life and maybe there might be something of interest.

I was born 24 December 1923 and was the oldest of five children: three girls and two boys.

There is two years between our ages. My Dad was a tailor and worked at Cantors and

Usights. My Mum was Jessie Kahler and it was her parents who lived next to Mackays in Fitzroy Street.

When I was ten Mum had a stroke and died in about half an hour. We had just moved into a house in Guy Street a couple of days before when that happened. Dad wouldn't stay there so we moved to a house in Hamilton Street. Mum was only 35 and Dad died about 18 months later with appendicitis.

After Mum died Dad hired a housekeeper to look after us and that didn't work out for long as she also had a son and they lived with us. Grandma Kahler used to give us clothes and things and as soon as we got home Mrs Tate would take them off us and give these to her son. So you can imagine there was quite a lot of upsets as we were all so young.

When she left, a cousin of ours who was very young and who only lived a couple of blocks away used to come and get our meals and look after us and go home very night. Dad's mother looked after us after that but she was too old to be looking after five kids and she also had Dad's brother who also lived with us – he never married. When Dad died, that's when we were all split up as we didn't have much family life together when we were kids. That's when I went to my Grandparents in Fitzroy Street. They reared me. May and Carley were going to Tweed Heads for a holiday and they asked my Grandparents if they could take me so I was very lucky as I had never been anywhere. I remember on the way down May said, "The sea tastes just like lemonade and you can drink as much as you like" – funny how there are some things you never forget.

I went to East School only half a block away from our house and later on I went to Intermediate until I was 14. I left and started work at Renaud's garage. I was there for three

months and then got a job at Hyslops where I remained for 42 years until I got sick and had to retire.

I went into the army when I was 18 and was a signaller in the army for four years over in Bougainville – the Solomon Islands and when I finally got out of the army, I went back to my old job at Hyslops

When I went to live with my Grandparents, they had a piano and I taught myself to play over the years- that has always been a big part of my life as I have always played in a band. When I came out of the army there was a band called “Sweeneys Orchestra” and they used to get all the Balls and main events around town and also a lot of country dances. Their pianist was getting married and leaving Warwick so they asked me if I would join their band. They always used orchestration music which I had never heard of and I said I didn’t think I would be able to play that. They asked me to come and have a go at it and of course I was able to manage it and played with them for many years – they’re all dead now but I must admit they were older than me

I used to play tennis every weekend and I was always lucky enough to have plenty of good friends – we used to go to the pictures every week and quite often go to the coast for the weekend as I had an Austin A40 in those days. I always had a motorbike until the last few years

I often used to take a girl to the pictures and on the motorbike to my sister’s place at Killarney but nothing ever happened. I was lucky enough to have plenty of girl friends to take around but I never fell in love with any of them. I like living on my own as I lead a busy life and always have plenty of interests and I like peace and quiet so I’m a pretty contented sort of a fellow. I think God made some of us to remain single but some people

seem to think everyone is the same with all the same feelings but that is not the case at all. It always annoyed me when some people try to match make and get you married off to someone. I think there are enough unhappy marriages around now and I guess after so many years on your own, nothing is going to change. I don't know if I have been of any help but I wish you well...."

I would add here, that Respondent D was known in the town as the most eligible bachelor. He was highly regarded as a musician and freely gave of his time to many people especially those in need such as in the nursing homes. This respondent also built his own house in stages and still lives in this house. He is also known to be a man of integrity and someone who goes about his work and relationships in a quiet way. He is usually available to greet those who knock at his door and to welcome strangers. As a Christian man, I regard this respondent to be a Christ-like person and based upon the comments of others in the town, they would agree with this evaluation. I have added this paragraph as I believe it fleshes out some of the thoughts and ideas about this respondent.

Respondent E

1. How were my formative years shaped? Role models, significant others, education etc.

I was born in 1958 of Catholic parents, and grew up at Wavell Heights in Brisbane. I went to St Anne's primary school at Kalinga, run by the Sisters of the Holy Family, for two years, then to Holy Cross Convent School for Grade three. From Grade four until Grade 12, I attended St Columban's College at Albion Heights.

I was of average to above average intelligence at school. I was certainly not a 'sporty' type of person, as I suffered from bronchitis and had to "sit on the sidelines" very often. Yet this

developed my reading and reflective skills, and so I enjoyed writing and exploring through books

My role models were probably my parents, who were very loving, yet not I can see how they were restricted and limited (like all of us) in their own ways. The local parish of Wavell Heights and then Gordon Park were very formative: we always attended Mass and any novenas and missions. These I always enjoyed, for I loved thinking about God and “what it all meant” I suppose my main role model when I was a teenager was Fr Jim Conneely at Gordon Park. He seemed to see something in me, and invited me onto the Parish Advisory Committee as secretary when I was 17. I grew to be fond of parish life, and so I suppose it was fairly natural that my thoughts should turn at some stage to being a priest

Yet when I left school, I did not really know what I should do, so because I got 7's in accountancy, and my dad was an accountant, it was natural that I went to Qld University to study commerce. This was not a raging success as my heart was not in it, and thoughts wandered off to possibly going to the Seminary. This happened in 1977 when I was still 18 (I was a February 28 baby).

Significant others: none really, other than those in books and as mentioned, parents and Fr Jim. The children in the family from down the road that we grew up with and played with as children had now gone their separate ways. Seminary, of course, was a different matter, with exposure to many other young men and staff.

2. How did I come to be involved in my present work?

I was ordained in 1983, and went to St Peter's Parish Caboolture. From my First Mass onwards, it was “busy, busy”, and hasn't stopped since! I enjoyed the interaction with parishioners on a one-to-one level, and always loved talking about God with them. It seemed

to come naturally. However, after two parishes (Caboolture and S Mary's at Maryborough) and a stint as both chaplain to McAuley College and as Vocation's Director, I realised that the ordained priesthood within the structured institution was not for me. Yet the call to walk with others in their relationship with God – which was the heart of my vocation – was still there. How this was to be lived out, I did not have any idea, so a leap of faith was involved. I left “active priestly ministry” at the end of 1992, and did not know where I was to go from there.

Slowly though, people sought me out and seemed to think that coming to talk with me was beneficial. I now am more than full-time involved in one-to-one spiritual companionship, giving retreats and also teaching three subjects at Australian Catholic University. For me, my vocation has not changed; I have always loved talking with others about God, and that is exactly what I am doing – for 50-55 hours a week. I can only put it down to grace.

3. Would you consider that you contribute to society? To the Church? How do you practise faith formally as well as informally? What challenges you...

I don't really think about the ways that I contribute to society; the accent is on individuals, and so if I find I can help on that level, then well and good. I suppose though I haven't considered it. People keep coming back, and new people come along, so perhaps I'm doing something helpful.

As regards the church: I certainly regard myself as a member of the church, and haven't had a time when I haven't considered myself part of it. I am an active parishioner at St Carthage's Gordon Park each weekend, where I look after the music ministry with my sister. It is still my parish even though I live at Stafford, for I feel at home there and literally know everybody. I think I contribute to the church, in that I help people not only to recognise the presence of the sacred in their lives, but also to help them be a little more accepting of the

church as the Broken Body of Christ. In being reconciled a little more with their own selves, they can be a little more reconciled with a church which they do not demand anything different than they would ask of themselves: reconciliation with both the light and the darkness.

As mentioned, I am an active member of Gordon Park parish. My work forces me to be a pray-er, although certainly I have a long way to go there. Yet I rely on the grace of God far more to fill the gaps for my own blindnesses which I hope do not get in the way too much with those whom I companion. I do not pray as much as I could, yet I know that God has come through in my work despite my efforts sometimes within my own life when I want to avoid too much God!

As regards challenges: I don't find a problem in being part of a broken church because I have had the privilege of seeing the church from "both sides". That is, I have experienced what it is to be a parishioner and yet also be "inside" the hierarchical structure. I can understand the pressures and blindnesses that clergy can get into, and I often think "who am I to throw stones", for as the old saying goes, "there but for the grace of God ...". More and more I am learning to take sides less, and more to stand in that terrible in-between that refuses to take sides and to see the pain of both. That is certainly a challenge, but I know it is the only way through

4. Do I see my life as a model for others? Mentoring others?

I have never really thought about it. I am single not because I have designed it that way, but because that is the way things have worked out. I would like a relationship with a woman, but the opportunity and the right sort of person has not come along. I am restricted because of the nature of the work: it is demanding and takes a lot of time, including many weekends. Because of this, there is very little time for socialising. I am certainly not trying to find

anyone to fill a gap in my singleness, because I believe this would be simply using another for my own neediness. However, I am certainly open to relationship, and would definitely welcome a relationship with the right person. I am a mixture of both a romantic and a realist, and these two can tend to conflict at times. However, my work does give me enormous satisfaction, and I wouldn't trade it for the world. If a female came along that would be a partner who could understand why I do what I do, and could companion me in some way in this, then that would be wonderful. So far that hasn't come, but the romantic in me doesn't close the door!

As far as being a model for others, I have no particular design for others to do what I do – although sometimes people have wanted to know more and learn more about what and how I do what I do. I mentor others for my daily bread, and if they find that their life is more peaceful, prayerful and honest before God, then that is really good. I hope though I don't need a good outcome to continue doing my work. I live quietly here at Stafford by myself, and respond to people's spiritual needs as far as I am able.

As far as being a single person in the church: certainly I would say that those over 35 tend to be overlooked. I don't blame this on the church: I have to reflect that I did nothing for the over 35s and over 40s single people when I was a priest within parishes. Overall, I don't feel as if the church has left me out, because if I am left out then, I have chosen to remove myself. Have a satisfying feeling of being part of church life, even though I am a person who does not fit the norm of statistics

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