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“RIGHT AND JUST”

THE “STRUCTURE AND MEANING OF THE LITURGY” (SC 23): A PATTERN
FOR FORMATION AND THE MAKING OF COMMITMENTS.

Excerpta ex Dissertatio ad Doctoratum in Theologia Morali consequendum

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Abbreviations of Ecclesial Sources Used in this work.

In citing official Roman Catholic documents, the abbreviations will be found in parentheses followed by the number of the paragraph. For example “(LG 11)” signifies *Lumen Gentium*, article 11. When the texts of the Conciliar and Magisterial documents are not to be found in *Acta Sanctae Sedis* or *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* or the series *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*; *Insegnamenti di Benedetto XVI*; *Insegnamenti di Francesco* of Libreria Editrice Vaticana; they are taken from the official English online edition: <http://w2.vatican.va/content/vatican/en.html>.¹

AA	<i>Apostolicam Acutositatem</i> , Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, Vatican II, November 18, 1965
AAS	<i>Acta Apostolicae Sedis</i> (Typis Vaticanis:Roma)
AG	<i>Ad Gentes</i> , Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity, Vatican II, December 7, 1965
AL	<i>Amoris Laetitia</i> , The Joy of Love, Post-synodal Exhortation of Pope Francis, March 19,2016
ASS	<i>Acta Sanctae Sedis</i> (Typis Polyglottae Officinae: Romae)
CCC	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i> , 2nd Ed. (English translation by various publishers.) the 2nd Latin edition was promulgated on August 15th, 1997, by Pope John Paul II in the apostolic letter <i>Laetamur Magnopere</i> (1st Ed., promulgated October 11, 1992.) Text available online at http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc/index.htm
CinV	<i>Caritas in Veritate</i> , Encyclical Letter of Pope Benedict XVI, June 29,2009
DCE	<i>Deus Caritas Est</i> , Encyclical Letter of Pope Benedict XVI, December 25, 2005
DF	<i>Dei Filius</i> , The Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, Vatican I, April 24, 1870
DH	<i>Dignitatis Humanae</i> , Declaration on Religious Freedom, Vatican II, November 7, 1965

¹ Throughout the document I have left the quotations in their original form. This means that the ‘masculine’ pronouns are left undisturbed despite the deep personal discomfort. I had gone through the whole document and inserted the conventional “sic” but have been persuaded to leave the quotes in the original. Please read in all cases an included “sic”.

DiM	<i>Dives In Misericordia</i> , Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II, November 30, 1980
DV	<i>Dei Verbum</i> , The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Vatican II, November 18, 1965
ECS	<i>Ecclesiam Suam</i> , Encyclical Letter on the Church of Pope Paul VI, August 06, 1964
EG	<i>Evangelii Gaudium</i> , Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World of Pope Francis, November 24, 2013
EM	<i>Eucharisticum Mysterium</i> , An Instruction on Eucharistic Worship published by the Sacred Congregation of Rites, May 25, 1967
EN	<i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i> , Evangelization in the Modern World, Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI, December 8, 1975
EdS	<i>Editae Saepe</i> , Encyclical Letter of Pope Pius X on St Charles Borromeo., May 26, 1910
ES	<i>E Supremi</i> , Encyclical Letter of Pope Pius X, October 4, 1903
ET	<i>Evangelica Testificatio</i> , Apostolic Exhortation on the renewal of the religious life in the Light of Vatican II, June 29, 1971
EV	<i>Evangelium Vitae</i> , The Gospel of Life, Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II, March 25, 1995
FC	<i>Fulgens Corona</i> , Proclaiming a Marian Year to commemorate the Centenary of the Definition of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, Encyclical Letter of Pope Pius XII, September 8, 1953
GS	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i> , Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Vatican II, December 7, 1965
GIRM	"The General Instruction of the Roman Missal." New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference. <i>Roman Missal: English Translation according to the Third Typical Edition</i> . Wellington: New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference, 2010
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium</i> , Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Vatican II, November 21, 1964
NA	<i>Nostra Aetate</i> , Declaration on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian religions, Vatican II, October 28, 1965
OA	<i>Octogesima Adveniens</i> , Apostolic Letter of Pope Paul VI, May 14, 1971
OICA	<i>The Rites of the Catholic Church as Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Council and Published by Authority of Pope Paul VI</i> . New York: Pueblo Pub., 1976
OT	<i>Optatam Totius</i> , Decree on Priestly Formation, Vatican II, October 28, 1965

PDV	<i>Pastores Dabo Vobis</i> , Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II, March 25, 1992
PO	<i>Presbyterorum Ordinis</i> , Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, Vatican II, December 7, 1965
RD	<i>Redemptionis Donum</i> , Apostolic Exhortation to Men and Women Religious on their consecration in the light of the Mystery of the Redemption of Pope John Paul II, March 25, 1984
RP	<i>Reconciliatio et Paenitentia</i> , A Post – Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II, December 2, 1984
SCar	<i>Sacramentum Caritatis</i> , Letter to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons and the lay faithful of Pope Benedict XVI, February 22, 2007
SC	<i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i> , Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Vatican II, December 4, 1963
SNP	<i>Sacerdotii Nostri Primordia</i> , On St John Vianney, Encyclical Letter of Pope John XXIII, August 1, 1959

“Right and Just”: the “Structure and meaning of the liturgy” (SC 23) as a template for formation and commitment.

Introduction

The Sunday Liturgy, the gathering on the Lord’s Day, is the centre of Catholic life and understanding. Catholics are a people who gather to worship, be formed by the Word, to be part of the Sacrifice of Christ and to be sent into the world in service of the poor. Yet at every turn people are asking for the liturgy to be more life giving, more “attractive.” They want the Sunday gathering to be able to welcome and serve the migrant who finds a new language and different expressions of the faith difficult and at the same time to be relevant to the young and the questioning. Or there are those in the community who ask for a return to a form that is governed by a strict adherence to rubrics and have a longing for a ritual that is mysterious, otherworldly and formal; and yet others who seek a form of the liturgy in which they can remain silent and ‘in their own prayer.’

In the last twenty years, especially in the English speaking world, the liturgy has become a battle field on which the core virtues of Christian and Catholic life have often been sacrificed. Charity, patience, catholicity, dialogue, a discernment of what is the *sensus fidelum* and the mind of the Church, have given way to division, anger, and positions based on power or a narrow reading of the tradition. In the life of the local Church the presenting issue at Diocesan and parish levels is “How should we structure the formation of the community, to make informed decisions in respect of the liturgy, and its relationship to our daily lives?”

Within the community there are those who have found in the Rites of Initiation, especially the Catechumenate, a life giving encounter with Christ, but the ongoing connection to the Church is often short-lived. What is

going on, that their formation does not establish a lifelong connection to this community of faith?

In Moral thought there is a similar issue. Many find a disconnect between the lives of the faithful, and especially the understandings of their children and young adults, and the public teaching of the Church. This discontent arises both among those who question the moral authority or moral position of the Church, and those who seek to adhere to and understand the formal teaching of the Church; and finds many places to 'vent'. This can be from the ongoing media focus on the public failure on the part of members of the Church, or a disconnect between what is thought to be the teaching of the Church, especially in respect of social morality, and the demands that "public morality" makes on people's lives. There is tension over the way in which the Church's moral teaching is heard or portrayed, especially at the interface of major life issues and the teaching role of the Bishops, and specifically their relationship with those in public office.

There are complex moral issues which become the focus of public debate and legislation, from marriage equality, euthanasia and abortion legislation; to questions of migration, climate change and indigenous rights; to the manner in which truth and reconciliation should be enacted. On top of this people seek formation in respect of issues that arise in their daily lives, questions arise in respect of labour rights, tax evasion, equity of wages on the basis of gender and age; the use of low cost labour to provide a consumer culture. All of these issues are often too big for the individual, and are outside the ability of the local pastor to face, or to give an informed expression of the Church's position. The question arises, "what are we called to do?" "How should we face the formation of the community in such moral issues?" "What is involved in this commitment I have made to continue as a practicing Catholic?"

Formation and the effect of commitment. What does the Church offer us as a framework for engaging in these areas?

The experience of having watched a very strong catechist work for over fifteen years with adult converts, and how basing the catechesis on a

combination of starting with their questions, and, a weekly, reflection on the interface between the Sunday Scriptures and their lives; sitting on National Liturgy Office bodies, and discussing the Catechumenate and the resistance to implementing it as a central pastoral outreach; working in the governance of an international aid agency and learning the ways of encountering and dialoguing with people with different world views and needs; the experience of being welcomed in a structured process of powhiri onto marae in Aotearoa New Zealand, where you are 'formed' in a structured process into a person of the place; all coupled with a nagging questions from an article read thirty years ago led me to ask:

Surely the Rites of Initiation are the Church's process of formation?

Isn't their whole focus to form a person, and community, in a 'way of life'?

Isn't there an expectation that the person, and the community, will live in a certain way, that the community will interface with those being formed in a certain way and that their behaviour will change, in a certain way?

Didn't the Catechumenate of the early Church have more interest in the lives and moral formation of a person, in fact at one stage didn't the person not know of the content of the mystery until after they had been initiated?

Didn't the Catechumenate have a formative influence on the structure of the Sunday Liturgy; and didn't Vatican II ask that the liturgy should be a prime source for all theological study?

This was the genesis of the simple question which is the ground of this thesis: "Does the "structure and meaning of the liturgy" (SC 23) provide a template for moral formation and the making of commitments?"

An outline of the study.

The conclusion that this study comes to is that there is a pattern of formation, that would bring life to the Church and can help a community to face the issues of community life, and it is obvious and is right in front of us if we could only see it. It offers a structure, and a way of relating to each other which is life giving, fully human and reveals the very presence of Christ and the Spirit.

It is the 'structure and meaning' of the liturgy which we celebrate in the Sunday Mass.

This finding will be explained in four parts, structured on the call of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 23 to place the "structure and meaning of the liturgy" (SC23) at the heart of all theological analysis:

Firstly there will be a summary of Vatican II's understanding that the "Structure and meaning of the Liturgy" (SC 23) is to be the primary reference point of all theological thought, including therefore the formation of Christians, the Christian community and ultimately of all of humanity.

As part of this section and laying the foundation for how the structure and meaning of the Liturgy is to be interpreted, the four key interpretive frameworks of Vatican II will be outlined. They are: the process of Discernment; the process of Dialogue; the unity of Word and Deed revealing the Paschal Mystery; and the dual ways in which God's self-revelation is received and their expression. The reflections on these themes are to be used to interpret all aspects of the exposition of the relationship between the liturgy and formation.

Secondly, the common "structure" at the heart of the three major sources used, the Rites of the Christian Initiation of Adults, *the General Instruction to the Roman Missal* and *Gaudium et Spes* 1-45 will be identified and the pattern of formation therefore made clear. This is based on the detailed

study in Chapters two, three and four of the full thesis; but that material will not be repeated here, rather by outlining the interpretive frameworks and the Structure and meaning of the Liturgy the thesis will show their major contributions.

Thirdly, the “*meaning*” that the Liturgy contains for formation and the making of commitments will be outlined, by walking through the Sunday Liturgy and explaining the process of formation and commitment contained within it.

And lastly these elements will all be brought together to offer a generic pattern for formation and the making of commitments based on the structure and meaning of the liturgy.

1. The Call of Vatican II:

1.1. The call of Vatican II to link all of theology to the liturgy.

What did Vatican II say in respect of the relationship between the liturgy and theological thought?

The Second Vatican Council was a very clear it hoped that the processes of change it initiated would enable the Church to better engage with the world. The Council saw the reform of the liturgy as a key element in enabling this to happen. As part of this reform the Council asked the Church to integrate the study of the liturgy, in a very specific way, into the heart of *all* theological reflection.

The Council said that the sacred liturgy should “be taught under its theological, historical, spiritual, pastoral, and juridical aspects”; and that in pursuing “the mystery of Christ and the history of salvation from the angle proper to each of their own subjects” all theological disciplines “must do so in a way which will clearly bring out the connection between their subjects and the liturgy,” and this pertained “especially ... (to) professors of dogmatic, spiritual, and pastoral theology.” (SC 16)

The Council’s connecting of all theological thought to the Liturgy, was not only a reflection of one of the foundational expressions of the Church’s self-understanding, “*legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi* / the law of prayer is the law of belief,”² but it also expressed a methodological insight. The Council saw that the source of renewal of the Church would be the reform of the liturgy, and that the reform of the liturgy, and the other sacred sciences in partnership with it, would only proceed successfully by

² Migne, Jacques Paul. *Patrologia Latina*. Paris: 51, pp. 209–10, “...obsecrationum quoque sacerdotalium sacramenta respiciamus, quae ab apostolis tradita, in toto mundo atque in omni catholica Ecclesia uniformiter celebrantur, ut *legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*.”

“careful investigation,” and when “theological, historical, and pastoral” (SC 23) studies were guided by the “the general laws governing the structure and meaning of the liturgy.” (SC 23)

So what are those “general laws”?³

Conclusions 1: Moral Theology and the Liturgy.

1. Moral theology and all processes of formation are to have the “structure and meaning of the liturgy” at the heart of their exposition and structure.

1.2. The general principles of SC 24-46.

Vatican II presented these “general laws” as a series of norms, (SC 24-46) and they provide the foundational principles for formulating a response in which moral and pastoral theological studies are intentionally connected to the liturgy. They therefore are the background ‘matrix’ within which the relationship between the liturgical reform and the understandings of all other disciplines are to be framed.

The first norm says that all theological reflection should start from a “warm and living love for scripture,” because scripture is to be the foundation of all teaching and inspiration; as “it is from the scriptures that (the) actions and signs (of the liturgy) derive their meaning”. (SC 24) So the love and study of the scriptures is to be the primary tool of interpretation for all

³ All of these sectional conclusions will be asking the question: “what does the structure and meaning of the liturgy” offer moral thought, formation and the making of commitments?

theological reflection, and a 'loving' reflection on the scriptures will be the primary form of formation.⁴

Secondly, nothing in the liturgy, and moral formation, can, ultimately, be private⁵. All ecclesial activity and reflection is to be directed to forming a "sacrament of unity," (SC 26) and that sacrament is a community of human beings, who are understood to be "the holy people united and ordered under their bishops." (SC 26) Therefore, while recognising the concerns and abilities of individuals, the ultimate focus of all Christian life and formation, is a moral and ethical goal, it is that everything will "pertain to the whole body of the Church;" and will "manifest it and have effects upon it." (SC 26) The overall focus of formation is the good of the whole body, the common good. This will happen by creating a community with the Bishop as the focus of unity, and this is repeated constantly in the documents. However, this unity will only be created by the "the presence and active participation of the faithful," (SC27) where the "faithful" is not to be read as individual persons, rather as the faithful gathered, the communal, which is "to be preferred, so far as possible" to the "individual and quasi-private." (SC 27)

To enable this to happen the Council says it is essential that anyone who has "an office to perform, should do all of, but only, those parts which pertain to his office." (SC 28) As the Council recognises the different 'offices'/roles within the community it also describes how they are to be exercised. It is with "sincere piety and decorum", "deeply imbued with the spirit of the liturgy" and in a "correct and orderly manner." (SC 29)

⁴ It is important to note that the wording of SC 24 does not limit the focus on the scriptures to an intellectual understanding, It is essentially linked to an affective formation and response: "a love of" the scriptures.

⁵ This norm encapsulates the inner tension between a Catholic perspective, which of its very essence is communitarian and seeks a common good, and the prevailing culture of individualism. There are many places in which the insights expressed in this thesis direct us to a deeper study of fundamental theological positions which can only be indicated as footnotes for further debate and study. This fundamental relationship between the individual and the communal, especially in the formation of moral positions, is one.

Formation therefore requires the involvement of those with special roles and understandings, different “Offices;” but at the same time, it will be characterised by a certain way of engagement, an identified set of virtues.

Formation therefore has as its goal a ‘commitment’ within a ‘unified community’, aware of and directed towards the ‘common good’. This will be achieved by the active participation of the faithful, with recognition of the special gifts some bring to the process and in a manner that identifies certain virtues, piety, decorum, and simplicity, in the lives of the faithful.

The Council emphasises the wide variety of ways, in which people can contribute, “by words, deeds and silences.” (SC 30) Active participation, in all aspects of Church life, demands the recognition, not only of the role of those in “Sacred orders,” but of the way in which “the words, deeds and silences” of the faithful contribute to Church life, without any supporting “special honours or external display.” (SC 32) The balance must be made between recognising the contribution of all, and at the same time, appreciating and including the special roles and insights which certain individuals bring to the community, by expertise and commitment.

Thirdly, while the liturgy is centred on the “worship of the divine Majesty” it also “contains much instruction for the faithful. For in the liturgy God speaks to His people and Christ is still proclaiming His Gospel.” (SC 33) The liturgy itself, on a week by week basis, and in its very ‘structure and meaning,’ provides instruction for the community. This thesis posits that this is not limited to ‘spiritual’ matters but that the structure of the liturgy also offers a process which can form the ‘way’ in which the community forms new members, re-forms existing members, heals and re-incorporates ‘sinners’, evaluates moral positions, acts internally and in relationship to others, and reaches a common commitment to action.

Fourthly, the role of the presider within the assembly is clarified. The Bishop, or the priest ministering in His place, “presides over the assembly in the person of Christ (and the prayers that he articulates) are said in the name of the entire holy people and of all present.”(SC 33) This makes clear that there are parts of the liturgy “when things are read” which were

written for our instruction," (Rom. 15:4)" (SC 33) and it is the role of the presider to ensure they are heard. It is also clear that the presider is to recognise the presence of Christ in those gathered by ensuring that "the visible signs used by the liturgy" are clear and ordered, and that when the people "pray or sing or act, the faith of those taking part is nourished and their minds are raised to God, so that they may offer Him their rational service and more abundantly receive His grace." (SC 33)

There is therefore to be a form of presiding, in which while leading and 'overseeing' the formation and the bringing to commitment of all, does so in a way that is at once interrelated to and on behalf of a community. The overseer is to ensure good instruction and that the 'signs of the liturgy' are clearly articulated. These are the preconditions for enabling the "structure and meaning of the liturgy" to form the community. Because this is so important the Council is clear. The instruction and style of presiding are to be characterised by a "noble simplicity; they should be short, clear, and unencumbered by useless repetitions;" and all instruction "should be within the people's powers of comprehension, and normally should not require much explanation." (SC 34) It is the same when bringing people to commitment, and in all formation; all interactions should be comprehensible, short, clear and simple.

Fifthly, to ensure that there is an "intimate connection between the words and rites" (SC 35) the Council called for multiple readings from "holy scripture." The intention of having multiple sources is to provide points of view that are "more varied and suitable." The readings are then to be aided by sermons and preaching which are characterised by "exactitude and fidelity," based on the "scriptural and liturgical sources." However this preaching is not to stand in isolation. The intention of the readings and sermon is to reveal the "wonderful works in the history of salvation, the mystery of Christ, ever made present and active within us, especially in the celebration of the liturgy." (SC 35)

There are three sources of information directed to formation: they are to be found in revelation, the history of salvation and the liturgy. *Gaudium et*

Spes and the *Catechism*, are clear that there is a great width of insight contained in these sources, it is important therefore to understand the content and nature of these sources. The source documents used in this thesis have shown that revelation and the history of salvation are connected to all avenues of human seeking, wisdom, and the interface with the philosophies and understandings of the time. The two sources, revelation and the history of salvation, are much wider than an approach that restricts the scriptures to an isolated or religious usage, a liturgical aid. The history of salvation and the revelation contained within God's covenantal relationships with people provides a wide and complex matrix of thought which reinforces the need for the talents of the whole community to be brought to bear on these sources. Formation is to be supported by multiple sources and it is an awareness of the variety of ways God is revealed and the study and interpretation of these sources that enables those being formed to clearly see and to commit.

Sixthly, all communication within the Church must be comprehensible so as to enable the active participation of all. The Council saw the use of the "mother tongue," the vernacular, to be "frequently of great advantage to the people," (SC 36/ 2) because, as the GIRM says, the active participation of the faithful is to be based on the "conscious, active, and full participation of the faithful, namely in body and in mind, a participation fervent with faith, hope, and charity." (GIRM 18) The same understanding applies to all processes of formation.

This insight from the GIRM also reveals that while intellectual comprehension and involvement is an essential prerequisite for the "conscious, active and full participation" of the community, for there to be such a participation in the liturgical and moral life, there must also be the involvement of the fervour of faith, hope and charity of the faithful. Therefore all formation must include frameworks in which the development of the affections and virtues are part of the actions involved. Commitment is not founded upon an intellectual affirmation and understanding alone; commitment involves a total formation, which involves the intellect, affections and pastoral application.

However, it is also important to understand that entry into the mystery is not dependent on a person having a 'full consciousness' or a 'full understanding' or that they are committing with 'all their heart'; rather, as in all moral engagements, there is a necessity to recognise the particularity of the individual's situation, training, maturity and giftedness, and the way in which this impacts on their ability to engage. The variations in talent, understanding or motivation are not to lead to judgements in which those less endowed in any area are called to abdicate their ability to contribute or join the community; nor is it a call to a subservient obedience to the community, nor to a paternalism on the part of those in leadership or ministry; nor can it lead to a new form of Gnosticism in which only the 'fully engaged' are welcome in the community.

The call for comprehension is to be seen as an expression of the protection of the least in the community and is to be associated with the call in the norms of the Council to protect the core elements of commonality and the universality within the proclamation. The challenge of translating concepts and ideas, into different languages and cultural milieux, and to different levels of comprehensibility, is a vital task for all theological reflection, but especially for moral theology,⁶ and for those supporting those in formation and making commitments.

Seventh, as a norm for the liturgy and this applies to moral formation and evaluation, the Council says that it "has no wish to impose a rigid uniformity in matters which do not implicate the faith or the good of the whole community." Rather the Council says that the Church will "respect and foster the genius and talents of the various races and peoples." (SC 37) The criteria of judgment for ensuring this occurs is that all adaptations will

⁶ This clearly can lead to a deep study of the foundations of linguistics and especially the relationship of language to cultural norms and as the carriers of ethical value systems. As has been seen in the liturgical movement of the last 60 years words are not politically neutral, and the control of the language of presentation, and the form of the communication, is an area that needs careful reflection, especially in 'mixed communities' such as the Church. When this is not approached adequately we face the danger of retreating into ethnic and language 'ghettos', or of reverting to a 'dead language' as a guarantee of conformity.

“harmonize with the true and authentic spirit” of the liturgy. (SC 37) This means there can be “legitimate variations and adaptations to different groups, regions, and peoples” (SC 38) and specifically “adaptations, especially in the administration” (SC 39) of the various components of the liturgical life of the Church and that indeed “in some places and circumstances, an even more radical adaptation of the liturgy is needed.” (SC 40) If and when this is required there will be a need for the “competent territorial ecclesiastical authority” to involve the “Apostolic See”. (SC 39) The application of this norm to moral formation provides a deep challenge in the face of cultural diversity and the manner in which the Church’s moral teaching and processes of formation have become so deeply wedded to the expressions of Western European thought and cultural practice.

Eighth, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* then provides more norms emphasising the role of the Bishop. The Bishop is named as the “high priest of the flock” (SC 41) and while these norms stress his liturgical ministry they are accompanied by the call for his ministry be reinforced by the active and living ‘witness’ of the liturgy of the cathedral church, as a “pre-eminent manifestation of the Church.” The whole phrase is important as it links, the nature of the Church, the role of the Bishop, the interrelationship between those in ministry and the faithful, when it says: “the pre-eminent manifestation of the Church consists in the full active participation of all God's holy people in these liturgical celebrations, especially in the same Eucharist, in a single prayer, at one altar, at which there presides the bishop surrounded by his college of priests and by his ministers.” (SC 41) The consequence of this understanding is clearly expressed by Mitchell who writes that the ‘gathered assembly’ is not to be seen as a passive “ritual object, “*for* whom or *upon* whom ministerial acts are performed. On the contrary the assembly is *agent* and *event*, a *real symbol*, and the place and embodiment of the sacrament.” It is the assembly that is the place “both as *gathering* of the church and as an *event* in the life of the church,

the liturgical assembly actualizes the church and is a symbol of God's presence."⁷

The dialogue between the Presider and the 'assembly' is the place that the liturgy offers for moral formation and decision-making, and it is also the place in which the unity the presider proclaims is made incarnate. But there is more involved in this understanding, the assembly and the talents and charisms contained within it, are an integral part in all of the Church's sacramental response and action, including the formation of members for all degrees of commitment and action in the Church.

These norms therefore speak of a way of life and witness based on a communal understanding and interaction, the formation and active inclusion of the faithful; and an emphasis that the priest, in the local situation, acting on behalf of the Bishop and in relationship to the Bishop, is to establish "a sense of community within the parish, not only in the important place of the" common celebration of the Sunday Mass, (SC 42) but also in the commitment of all believers to aid others in the Christian 'way'.

Lastly, the Council was very clear that the intention of the "the promotion and restoration of the liturgy," as the outward sign of the reform of the life of the Church in the world, was to show forth the "movement of the Holy Spirit in the Church," (SC 43) and to ensure that "pastoral-liturgical action may become even more vigorous in the Church." (SC 43) The liturgical reform was intended to form a community deeply involved in the world, with pastoral outreach and energy. The liturgy is therefore intended to form and lead the community to a common ethic, action and way of life. This involvement requires formation on how to decide, to discern, and to act so as to aid others in their involvement and commitment. These are the elements that specifically involve formation in the ethical and moral sphere. The way offered by the Council to achieve this is by the study and the development of, and experiments in, the "liturgical science, sacred

⁷ Mitchell, Nathan. op.cit: 66-67.

music, art and pastoral practice” (SC 44) all of which is to be done in a manner of the “closest collaboration.” (SC 46)

These are the norms upon which the Council saw the liturgy was to be developed, reformed and taught, and based on *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 23’s understanding that moral and pastoral theology is to have the structure and norms of the liturgy at its foundation, these are the general norms which provide the matrix for uncovering the implications for moral theology, formation and aiding those coming to a commitment.

1.2.1 The Hermeneutic of the Liturgical Reform

Before we progress it is important to note that, in addition to these norms, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the Instructions developed to implement its call for reform use a set of understandings as a consistent mode of interpretation.

The first is that the *Paschal Mystery* of Christ is the central instrument for the interpretation of the liturgical action (SC 5, 6, 61, 104,106,107,109) and therefore of all Christian life and activity.

The second, more clearly seen in the GIRM, is the embracing of the concept of *dialogue*, evidenced by the manner in which the core structure of the Post Vatican II liturgy is characterised by a dialogical engagement between the presider and the assembly.

The third is seen in the depth of instruction in the GIRM in respect of the relationship of the Word to the Homily and the Universal prayer. Here the need for a clear process of ‘*discernment*’, to enable the application of the Word to the life of the community, is evident.

Fourthly, the very structure of the liturgy, the dual parts of Word and the Action, of thanksgiving and sacrifice, returns the liturgy and moral decision-making to the very heart of God’s self-revelation, the *unity of word and deed* as evidenced in the *Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation, Dei Verbum* 2.

And finally, is another question of methodology. The reform of the liturgy at Vatican II was achieved, by a methodology that focused on a “... Return to the sources” a ‘Ressourcement’. (SC 35(2), 50, 92(b), 121) It was from uncovering the ‘sources’,⁸ especially in the life of the early Church, that the revision of “The Rite of the Mass;” and the Rites of Initiation (SC 64-70), especially the adult catechumenate; (SC 64) proceeded. In the same way, sixty years after the end of the Council this study has ‘returned to the sources,’ the source documents developed at the Council, and as a response to the Council, to provide a foundation for identifying a way forward.

Vatican II called for moral thought and pastoral practice to be formed by the ‘structure and meaning of the liturgy.’

This study now identifies the ‘structure’ in the foundational documents *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the *Rites of the Christian Initiation of Adults* and the *General Instruction to the Roman Missal*; and then using *Gaudium et Spes* 1-45 and more recent Magisterial teaching, as a tool of interpretation, exposes the process and meaning that the liturgy offers moral formation and the making of commitments.

Conclusions 2: The Norms of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*

1. The primacy of Scripture as the source at the foundation of all moral thought and formation.
2. That all formation and preparation for commitment, while engaging the individual, is essentially communal and directed toward the creation of unity and the common good.

⁸ The nature of the catechetical practices in the early church, including its changes, has been seen in the church orders, homilies, catechesis, letters and stories that have been discovered, or closely studied, over the last 150 years. The impact of this study, on liturgical science and on the origins of Christian formation, reinforces the importance of understanding that the liturgical rites, both prayers and actions, are carrying the meaning of the Gospel and therefore the importance of the study of texts and their meaning and structure.

3. All processes of formation require the presence and active participation of the faithful, while recognising the gifts of members of the community to offer special insight and ministries.
4. The liturgy itself can be a rich source of instruction for moral and Christian formation.
5. All processes of formation can benefit from 'overseeing', in the Christian context by the Bishop, the pastor and teacher.
6. Formation should be based on multiple sources of insight; and all sources of insight need to be explained and applied. The sources of formation, in a Christian context include Scripture, the liturgy and the fruit of human wisdom and experience.
7. All communication and instruction in formation is to be comprehensible, to those involved, so as to enable active participation. Therefore they should progress using appropriate languages and cultural symbols, to aid comprehension.
8. There is not to be rigid uniformity in formation, especially in matters that do not impact on faith or the 'good of the whole community'.
9. That people are formed, and morality learned, as much by the lived example of others in the community, as by Words.

1.3 The structure and meaning of the Liturgy.

Vatican II calls for all pastoral and moral theological reflection to be guided by the "the general laws governing the structure and meaning of the liturgy," (SC 23) and this study has outlined these 'general laws, the norms;' and now progresses to identify the *structure* of the liturgy.

The first task is to identify the signs of 'structure' which are contained in the documents themselves. These are often overlooked, so let us make them clear.

Vatican II when calling for the restoration of the Catechumenate says: "The catechumenate for adults, comprising *several distinct steps*, ... this, means the time of the catechumenate, which is intended as a period of suitable instruction, may be sanctified by sacred rites to be celebrated at *successive intervals* of time...." (SC 64)

And, *The General Instruction to the Roman Missal (GIRM)* opens Chapter 2, which has the revealing title: “The *Structure* of the Mass: Its Elements and Its Parts,” (GIRM 27) by quoting *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 56: “The Mass consists in some sense of *two parts*, namely the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, these being so *closely interconnected* that they form but one single act of worship.” (GIRM 28)

The GIRM then adds immediately that both the table of “God’s word and of Christ’s Body” (GIRM 28) are to be prepared so that the “faithful may be *instructed* and refreshed.” (GIRM 28)

The GIRM also notes, almost as an afterthought, “There are also certain rites that open and conclude the celebration.” (GIRM 28)

Therefore both the *Rites of Initiation* and the *General Instruction the Missal*, recognise a structure, which provides worship to God, formation and instruction to the faithful, forms a community and enables the full and active participation of all in the Paschal Mystery of Christ. There is a structure in the liturgical texts which is directed to the formation and full commitment of the faithful in Christ.

The fact of this structure can be identified in other ways. There are indices and chapter headings to both the GIRM and the OICA which outline their structure and order.

However to underline the integral nature of this structure a simple ‘word search’ of words that signify “sequence and order,” that is that one element should follow from those that precede it or lead to those that follow, will help. The use of such words indicates an intentional structure. They often also indicate the stages of development or a hierarchy of structure.

A word search of the *General Instruction to the Roman Missal* shows that the word “then,” which indicates an action that follows its predecessor, is used 111 times, and of these 101 are specifically in respect of the relationship between actions or as guidance for when ministry is to

proceed. The word “after”, an indicator of an element following that which precedes it, is used 117 times and only 7 of these are not in respect of order and ministry, and the word “before”, again an indicator of structure, is used 60 times and only 12 are not in respect of order and ministry.

There is evidence therefore that elements of the liturgy follow each other in a consciously chosen, specific, and structured sequence of constituent elements, actions, and words. The structure of the Liturgy is not an accident; it can be clearly identified and it is foundational to the understanding of the liturgy.

This is clearly reinforced when the *Catechism* says: “The liturgy of the Eucharist unfolds according to a *fundamental structure* which has been preserved throughout the centuries down to our own day. It displays *two great parts that form a fundamental unity*: - the gathering, the liturgy of the Word, with readings, homily and general intercessions; - the liturgy of the Eucharist, with the presentation of the bread and wine, the consecratory thanksgiving, and communion. The liturgy of the Word and liturgy of the Eucharist together form “one single act of worship”; the Eucharistic table set for us is the table *both* of the Word of God and of the Body of the Lord. Is this not the same movement as the Paschal meal of the risen Jesus with his disciples? Walking with them he explained the Scriptures to them; sitting with them at table “he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.” (CCC 1346, 1347)

1.3.1. The Early Church: the Catechumenate and the Sunday Liturgy

To identify the elements arising directly from this structure, its origin is important. This is especially important as it is directly linked to formation. The origins of the distinction, between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, within a unified act of worship, as outlined above in the *Catechism*; is to be found in the practice of the second to the fourth centuries.

The Liturgy of the Word was the formative event in the life of the ecclesial community, most often celebrated in the early morning of the first day of the week. All would gather for the reading of the Scriptures and their being “broken open” by the Bishop and the presbyters. This had a dual focus, the formation of the catechumen and the on-going formation of the baptised. The Eucharist/ breaking of the bread/the *αγαπε* was celebrated in the evening, and only the baptised attended, those who had made a formal commitment. This practice varied and developed, and in time the two elements ‘became one’ but there was an extended period in the practice of the Church, in which the ‘formation of the catechumen’ was the clear focus of the Liturgy of the Word. The consistent order at the heart of the Liturgy preserves this memory and it helps explain, and interpret the structure and meaning of the first part of the Sunday liturgy, and its subsequent relationship with the Liturgy of the Eucharist. ⁹

So there is a structure at the heart of the Church’s liturgy but it is not only a structure. As already noted above, Vatican II and the GIRM expect this *structure* to be approached with a specific set of interpretive tools. The documents of the Council, coupled with the OICA and GIRM, place these tools very clearly before the Church. The knowledge that it is in the unity of Words and Deeds,(DV 2) Scripture and Eucharist,(CCC 1346; SC 56) that the presence of God is revealed, leads, in turn to a critical need for an accurate process to enable the discernment of what the Word is calling the community to do. (GIRM 65) This is reinforced by the need to understand what the needs, desires and the real happenings of people’s lives are,(GS 11) of the possible ways forward made in a mode of genuine dialogue,(ECS 69,70-75,81; LG 37; NA 2,4) collaboration (SC 46;NA 2; GS 36-40; D&P 7;ET 50) and co-responsibility.(GIRM 61,62,71)¹⁰ The heart of this understanding

⁹ This is important given that the twentieth century restoration of the catechumenate, being an active process of adult formation in ‘the way’ of Christian living, took the ancient form as its template.

¹⁰ Benedict XVI, “*Church Membership and Pastoral Co-Responsibility* Address at the Opening of the Pastoral Convention of the Diocese of Rome, Basilica of Saint John Lateran, 26 May 2009, *Insegnamenti di Benedetto XVI, vol V/1 2009*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Roma, (2010) pp. 899-906.

is that all members of the community need to be willing and able to see the Lord present, incarnate in the events of life and the community, and to know and be committed to an agreed way forward. This will only happen when the analysis of all the events and actions of the Christian community are characterised by the Paschal Mystery, (SC 5,6,61,104-107,109; GS 22,41,45; CCC 1115,1171,1239,1260) a dying to self in loving service of the other. In addition to this focus on the understanding of these mysteries in the lives of believers; the Council also understands that the Mystery of Christ's redemption can also be identified, if unconsciously, in the lives of all people of good will. (GS 22; D&P 15, 17, 47)

The link between all these themes can be clearly identified in the following paragraph from the *Catechism*: ""Since Christ died for all, and since *all men* are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that *the Holy Spirit offers* to all the possibility of being made *partakers, in a way known to God, of the Paschal Mystery.*" *Every man* who is ignorant of the Gospel of Christ and of his Church, but seeks the truth and does the will of God in accordance with his understanding of it, can be saved. It may be supposed that such persons would have desired Baptism explicitly if they had known its necessity." (CCC 1260)

The mystery revealed in Christ is directed to all of humanity, and life will be found, in Him, with Him and through Him; by any person seeking truth and understanding, forming and being true to the decision of their conscience, and committing to witnessing to the conclusions in their words and deeds.

So what does the structure of the Liturgy tell us in respect of formation and the making of commitments?

The first thing to highlight is that the two fold structure of the Liturgy identifies that the Liturgy of the Word has its origins in the Church's process of formation and discernment, the catechumenate; and that the

Eucharist is then the place where those who are 'committed' gather. The distinction between the two elements formation and commitment is at the heart of the 2-fold structure of the Liturgy. The structure of the Catechumenate, and therefore the Liturgy of the Word is *the* process of formation in the Church, and this directly influences our understanding of the gathering and the Liturgy of the Word, as it is here that men and women are welcomed with their deep, existential questions, to come to an understanding of the 'right and just' way forward.

Coupled with this is the understanding that by focusing on the purpose of the first part of the Liturgy as being linked to the rebirth of the OICA/catechumenate, it also reinforces the most ancient understanding: Christian formation is directed to a 'way of life' (Didache) which is communal and contains certain expectations. This will be the understanding of the manner of formation to which the Liturgy of the Word will be directed. However it is important to note that the post commitment life of the Church, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, while maintaining the element of ongoing formation, is focused on the action, the deeds of Christ, a life of sacrificial self-giving in active service.

Secondly, the OICA contains an understanding that the formation in this 'consistent way of life' is founded on a simple formula: the reflection on the scripture by discussion and instruction, coupled with accompanying the sponsor in the active living of their life, in prayer and service. The way of formation is to focus on a person's way of life and to support them as the Scriptures and prayer influences their character and behaviour, and this, in turn, will be expressed in their active involvement in the ministry and outreach of the community.

The way in which this happens is by a regular gathering and a communal listening to, and breaking open of, the scriptures, under the leadership and formation of the 'apostle.'

Thirdly, this formation is not a one-off event. The whole community, but particularly those in the OICA, live this formation seasonally, in Christ. Formation is an on-going focus of the lives of all in the community. But it

has the character of 'growth and development' as it follows the cyclic development of the mystery of the incarnation in the seasons of the Church's liturgy. The *Catechism* summarises this: "The one Paschal Mystery" (CCC 1171) unfolds, with the quality of 'gradualism,' during the liturgical year in a "cycle of feasts surrounding the mystery of the incarnation (Annunciation, Christmas, and Epiphany)" (CCC 1171) but at the same time "they commemorate the beginning of our salvation and communicate to us the first fruits of the Paschal Mystery." (CCC 1171) The liturgical celebrations of the mysteries of the incarnation, in this seasonal cycle, gradually reveal the fullness of the Paschal Mystery to which they are inextricably linked. The ordinary rhythm of Church life is therefore formative. The seasonal pattern, through Advent and Christmas, with the emphasis on the Incarnation; the Feasts, with their focus on one aspect of the mystery; Ordinary time in which the 'mystery' is revealed in glimpses; will through the pattern of reflection and guidance, lead the individual, and the whole community, to see and proclaim the fullness of the direct revelation in Christ, which is liturgically celebrated in the Paschal Triduum.

Conclusions 3: The Catechumenal structure of the Liturgy.

1. The Liturgy is structured with several distinct steps, and the structure shows that formation involves both Word and Deed. Formation will include Word, intellectual formation and presentation in words, written and spoken; but it also requires the witness of authentic deeds, a formation through action.
2. The fullness of formation will be seen when a community is brought together and sent on mission once formed.
3. The patterns contained in Christian formation are not just for Christians, but offer a model for all people of good will.
4. The starting point of all formation is the existential questions that are common to all people.
5. That all formation is primarily focused to living a 'way of life', and it will be characterised by being able to walk at the pace of those being formed, therefore it is gradual, developmental and is characterised by a progressive 'seasonal' development of understanding and commitment.
6. That formation is an on-going element of life and the re-formation of the community will follow the same pattern as the original formation of new members.
7. All those involved in the processes of formation are to be actively involved.
8. That formation is about inner change and growth, and this is expressed in external symbols and rituals of progress and support.
9. There is a common structure of formation to be seen in the OICA, the GIRM, *Gaudium et Spes* 1-45 and the seasonal life of the Church's year.

Diagram 1: A Comparison of the Structure of the Sunday Liturgy, the Rites of Christian Initiation and Gaudium et Spes 1-45

The Sunday Liturgy (GIRM)	OICA (up until the Lent)	OICA (Lent and the Vigil)	OICA simple form	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i>																	
Community gather #46 Entrance #47 Introduction#47-48	Community gather #70 Entry into the Church #90 (free choice) Introduction #68-72		Community Gather #244 Reception #245-250 (free choice).Entry into the Church #251	Situation of humanity in the modern world (GS 1-7)																	
Reverence of Altar and Greeting of People #49-50																					
Sign of the Cross #50	Sign of the Cross #83ff																				
Penitential Rite #51	Exorcism		Prayer and penitential #254	Situation of the heart of humanity (GS 10)																	
Collect																					
Word <table border="1" data-bbox="57 1142 246 1348"> <tr> <td>Silence</td> <td>#50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Biblical readings</td> <td>#57-60</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Psalm</td> <td>#61</td> </tr> </table>	Silence	#50	Biblical readings	#57-60	Psalm	#61	Word <table border="1" data-bbox="278 1142 501 1348"> <tr> <td>Silence</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Biblical readings</td> <td>#92ff</td> </tr> </table>	Silence		Biblical readings	#92ff	Word <table border="1" data-bbox="544 1142 842 1372"> <tr> <td>Silence</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Word</td> <td>#161,168,174</td> </tr> <tr> <td>And</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Homily</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Silence		Word	#161,168,174	And		Homily		Word #253 Sources of Wisdom and the presence of God's Spirit (GS 11-15)
Silence	#50																				
Biblical readings	#57-60																				
Psalm	#61																				
Silence																					
Biblical readings	#92ff																				
Silence																					
Word	#161,168,174																				
And																					
Homily																					
			Presentation of Creed and Our Father #181-190																		
Gospel #62	Gospel	#92	Gospel #191																		
Homily #65	Homily	#92	Homily																		

Creed	Scrutiny		Profession of faith #199		
Prayer of the Faithful (universal Prayer) #67-68	Prayer	#94ff	Litany #214		
Commitment			Commitment : Baptism (#220-222), anointing (#224) and confirmation (#227-231)	Baptism #261-262 Confirmation #266-270	Free choice to converse with God (GS 18-21) Accept the Incarnate Word (GS 22)
Liturgy of the Eucharist #72ff			Eucharist #232-234	Eucharist #271-277	Conform to Christ in the Paschal Mystery (GS 22)
The Lord's Prayer #81			The Lord's Prayer	The Lord's Prayer	
Sign of Peace # 82			Sign of Peace	Sign of Peace	Agents of peace (GS 39,46,48,7711,78)
Communion #84-87			Communion	Communion	Live in the Community of the Church, committed to love of neighbour and God (GS 23-29)
Concluding Rites, being sent #90ff			Concluding Rites, and Mystagogia #235-239	Concluding Rites	Put it into action (GS 35) In the world (GS 36.12)

¹¹ Especially GS 77 which is a hymn to peace as foundational to the life and virtue of the Christian

¹² The manner of this engagement is outlined in the following paragraphs: it will occur gradually and by collaboration in Christ (GS 36-40); by using all disciplines and expertise (GS 43) and in unity with all other disciples in the world for the salvation of all (GS 43 -45).

Diagram 2: A comparison of the structure of the Sunday Liturgy, the Rites of Initiation, *Gaudium et Spes* 1-45 and the seasonal cycle of the liturgical year.

GIRM	OICA	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i>	Seasonally
Gather and prepare #46-48	Gather and prepare # 70-90	(GS 1-7) Ftnb13	Advent
Penitential Rite #51	Exorcisms	Dis-ease at the heart of humanity(GS 10)	Lent
Liturgy of the Word	Word revealed in two sources	Word in humanity	Word made flesh Christmas
Gospel	Gospel	(GS 21)	At the heart of all seasons
Homily	Homily	Dialogue	At the heart of all seasons
Prayer	Prayer	Openness to Spirit	At the heart of all seasons

¹³ Recognising the Lord, 'incarnate', present in the exigencies of the world, its joys and its sorrows, its reality.

Eucharist	Commitment :Baptism, confirmation and Eucharist	Choice for Christ (GS 22,32,39)	Paschal Mystery /Easter
Communion	Welcome into community	(GS 23 ff)	Pentecost
Go to love and serve	Mystagogia and lived out	(GS33 ff)	Ordinary time

1.4. The tools of interpretation:

1.4.1. The process of discernment.

The first process that is offered to interpret our understanding is 'discernment' and it is used to describe two aspects of interpretation within the processes of formation. Firstly it is used to describe the process of formation, in its entirety. Everything involved in formation focuses on 'discerning' the way forward, the authentic choice, and all the elements that will influence that choice. Secondly, it is applied more specifically to the homily. In this context it is used to describe the process in which the Word of God, the scriptures, are heard and a 'discernment' is made as to how the meaning of these scriptures should be applied to the lives of this congregation, on this day. Discernment is the process at the heart of the homily. It reveals what the Lord is saying to this people, here and now.

Using the first understanding of discernment reveals that formation is a process of mutual discernment. The one being formed is to be supported in discerning what their needs and desires are, and whether the community, and its message of a 'way of life,' will help them live life to the full. The community in this process is also involved in discernment, as it is part of

their on-going formation. In addition the welcoming of new members involves 'discerning' their readiness to commit to the life of Christ within the community.

So: What is discernment?

The structure and connected process of *Gaudium et Spes*, (Part One: GS nn.1-45), can offer both a process and content to this discernment.

The characteristics of discernment outlined here are founded on the response that the Council made for an understanding of how to engage in "deciphering the authentic signs of God's presence and purpose." (GS 11) The Council identified that this deciphering has to happen in three places: firstly, in a close examination of "the *happenings*" (GS 11) of daily life. Secondly, in the identification of the *needs* of the individual and community; and thirdly, in understanding the *desires* that express the hopes and aspirations of the people of God, in our age.¹⁴

Firstly, the Council identified the starting point as an examination of the lived happenings, desires and needs of those involved, these are the "joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties" (GS 1) with which *Gaudium et Spes* encounters the world. Secondly, once identified, these elements are to be analysed through an examination based on "those values which are most highly praised and relating them to their divine source." (GS 11) *Gaudium et Spes* summarises this very succinctly. It says that the "rightful function" (GS 11) of this analysis will occur when there is a willingness to go beyond any single system or ideology so as to let every aspect of a person or community's life be examined in such a way that their needs, desires and happenings, expressed in cultural, economic, social and political insights, are exposed to the supreme commandment of love. The primacy of love and sacrifice is underlined. This in turn will reveal "the full ... dignity

¹⁴ These three starting points show that commitment is not achieved by the implementation of authoritarian statements; rather commitment is to be the fruit of formation and will be based on an understanding gained by a reflection upon the happenings, hopes and desires, in the light of the Gospel, an idea founded in Paul VI's writing. (OA 39)

of the individual, the knowledge and respect of natural rights and duties especially freedom, and awareness that persons are the active and responsible subjects of social life, and that the foundation of human dignity lies in the interface between the principle of solidarity and the principle of subsidiarity.”¹⁵

It is this ongoing interface between people’s lives and the Paschal Mystery of love that has led the Church to identify the following as the core principles of this discernment: “the primacy of persons over structures,”¹⁶ the recognition of the “spiritual and moral capacities of the individual;”¹⁷ the “permanent need for inner conversion”¹⁸ and that all decisions are to “be at the service of humanity.”¹⁹

The response in any process of discernment and formation based on these principles will reveal the twin elements which create the inner tension of human life: being created in the image of God and therefore seeking companionship and interpersonal communion, and, the awareness of the human tendency to selfishness, arrogance and egocentricity.

However *Gaudium et Spes* declares that the “elements of this material world... reach their crown through him (humanity), and through him raise their voice in free praise of the Creator.” (GS 14) There is at the heart of discernment recognition of the shared destiny of creation and humanity, and that it is humanity that is called on to make reasoned and ethical commitments on behalf of creation and humanity.

At the heart of this searching for the good and true, and humanity’s very dignity, lies the awareness that this common task reveals humanity’s ability to “judge rightly that by our intellect we surpass the material universe, and share in the light of the divine mind.” (GS 15) This ability finds its home in

¹⁵ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Christian freedom and liberation*, 22 March 1986, AAS (1987) 554-599; n.73.

¹⁶ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, op.cit:75

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

the voice heard in the sanctuary of the heart, the conscience, and the message it contains: “love of God and love of neighbour.” (GS 16) This is not a subjective judgement, nor is it focused on the individual’s personal gain; rather it is a judgement that is revealed by joining “with the rest of humanity in the search for truth and the genuine solution to the numerous problems which arise in the life of individuals and social relationships.” (GS 16) This involves turning away from “blind choice” (GS 16) and as a result of formation finding life “guided by objective norms of morality.” (GS 16)

What are the conditions and elements required to enable this authentic discernment to happen?

Firstly, freedom and choice. It is “only in freedom that we direct ourselves toward goodness,” (GS 17) and therefore human decisions need to be based on what has been freely seen and chosen to be right and just.

But this is not an irrational or blind faith. It is faith seeking understanding, in a reasoned and structured manner.

In discussing atheism, *Gaudium et Spes* is very clear that it is the Church’s obligation to both “God and man” (GS 21) to oppose all “doctrines and actions” which “contradict reason and the common experience of humanity and dethrone humanity from its native excellence.” (GS 21)

The Council is consistent. The process of discernment is always to be relational and reemphasises the need for a commitment to enter into dialogue with those of all understandings, with the Council saying that it is the Church that must find the hidden reasons people hold for opposition. The Church is promulgating the understanding that all people were “made an intelligent and free member of society by God” and that human beings will always “remain an unsolved puzzle to ourselves.” (GS 21)

The way forward is to be led by the Holy Spirit (GS 21) who enables the community to be “renewed and purified ceaselessly” (GS 21) so that the relationship with the incarnate Son, present and visible, especially in the poor and those in need, of any kind, will be able to “penetrate our entire

life including its worldly dimensions, and activate us toward justice and love, especially regarding the needy.” (GS 21) Who is involved and how they are to engage in this discernment is also outlined by the Council: “The Church sincerely professes that all people, believers, and unbelievers alike, ought to work for the rightful betterment of this world in which all alike live; such an ideal cannot be realised, however, apart from sincere and prudent dialogue.” (GS 21)

The framework that the Council uses is to make a direct connection between Christology and a full humanism. It says that it is in the “mystery of the incarnate Word that the mystery of man takes on light.” (GS 22) Christ the Lord is “the image of the invisible God” (GS 22) however the place of initial encounter with his life and example is “deeply incarnational” and “in the world.” (GS 2, 40, 43, 44, 48, 57) The manner of His witness is thoroughly ‘human’, “he worked with human hands; he thought with the human mind, acted by human choice and loved with a human heart, he has truly become been made one of us” (GS 22) and to this is ‘added’ the element that makes the full revelation, it is fully revealed in the specific action of “the free shedding of his own blood.” (GS 22) The manner in which he loved and gave himself for us is specific, it was “by suffering for us that he not only provided us with an example for our imitation but blazed the trail, and if we follow it, life and death are made holy and take on new meaning,” (GS 22) and “This holds true not only for Christians but for all people of goodwill, in whose heart grace works in an unseen way.” (GS 22)

This is a crucial clause for the understanding that this mode of decision-making, formation and the making of commitments is applicable to all. The Council says “Christ died for all people, man offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this Paschal Mystery.” (GS 22) “At the same time, God and man that he is, he (Christ) reveals to us also the true face of man, ‘fully revealing man to man himself’.”²⁰ It is in Christ and

²⁰ Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses. 48th INTERNATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS. Guadalajara, Mexico. 10-14 Oct. 2004. “The Eucharist, Light and Life of the New Millennium”, n.15.

through Christ and with Christ that the riddles of sorrow and death grow meaningful.

Formation is to occur in the world and is not in conflict with a full humanism. What is critical and distinctive of the Christian understanding is the way of relating and finding the fullness of human life. It is revealed in the Paschal Mystery, to freely die in the service of love and truth.

Gaudium et Spes 23 to 32 show that having been shown the way to “a deeper level of interpersonal relationship,” (GS 23) and to the mutual respect for the full spiritual dignity of the person; people become aware that the fullness of understanding, will only happen by the promotion of “communion between peoples” (GS 23) and by a seeking a “deeper understanding of the laws of social life which the Creator has written into man’s moral and spiritual nature.” (GS 23) This means, authentic processes of discernment are predicated on leading people of all races, cultures and languages to realise that they constitute one family and are increasingly dependent on each other. This fundamental interdependence must therefore be at the base of formation. “The progress of the human person, and the advance of society itself, hinge on one another”, (GS 25) and it is in recognizing these reciprocal duties, and through fraternal dialogue, that human beings “develop all our gifts and are able to rise to our destiny.” (GS 25) This recognition coupled with the appreciation of a community’s “distinctive culture”²¹ is strongly acknowledged in the *Instruction on Christian initiation*. The Instruction calls for the church community to “carefully and prudently”²² display a deep consideration of “a country’s distinctive culture”²³ and to ensure that the elements of the local culture are enabled to “suitably” interface with the living tradition of the Church.

These are not just adaptations to language and culture, however important these are, the adaptations that are called for are those that will enable formation in a manner that will also “correspond to contemporary

²¹ *Instruction on Christian Initiation* 30 /2

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

needs.”²⁴ The formative processes of the Church, in all areas, are not to be ‘fossilized’ presentations; rather the formative response, will be the fruit of the dialogue between the established expressions of the Church’s understanding, sourced from the latest Conciliar and magisterial teaching, *and* contemporary need.

So based upon this “awareness of the exalted dignity proper to the human person” and a deep awareness of the human “rights and duties which are universal and inviolable,” (GS 26) the Council articulates a series of starting points which are non-negotiable and which are necessary for leading a truly human life. It is these that provide the basis for all formation and commitments. These rights and duties, start with a commitment to provide the most fundamental needs of a person or community. This is the provision of “food, clothing, shelter²⁵, the right to choose a state of life, freely, and to found a family, the right to education, to employment, to a good reputation, to respect, to appropriate information, to activity to accord with the upright norm of one’s own conscience, to protection of privacy and the rightful freedom even in matters religious.” (GS 26)

These are the first steps in formation but they will only happen if all aspects are worked in a way that is “founded on truth, built on justice and animated by love; in freedom (that) it should grow every day toward a more humane balance.”(GS 26)

There are then clear principles provided by *Gaudium et Spes* 27 to underpin formation and discernment and they, without exception, start from the protection of life and then move very quickly to recognizing examples of where the gift of life is violated. The Council names the following as places where the application of these principles reveals immorality or barriers to authentic formation as a ‘child of God’: subhuman living conditions, imprisonment, deportation, and slavery, the selling of women and children into prostitution as well as disgraceful working conditions where people are treated as mere tools for profit rather than as free and responsible

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Echoing Matthew 25

persons.” (GS 27) As the way forward in the face of such barriers the Council calls for the forgiveness of injuries, including those of the enemy (GS 28) and the removal of any type of discrimination “social or cultural, based on sex, race, colour, social condition, language or religion.” (GS 29)

This leads to a clear direction to moral theologians in respect of the process of discernment. The Council says all are called on to “cultivate in ourselves moral and social virtues” (GS 30) and this demands a willingness “to develop a sense of responsibility, be conscious for our dignity.” (GS 31)

The place and manner in which this is to happen is in the world, and by the application of humanity’s “labours and native endowments,” (GS 33) the ceaseless seeking to “better our lives” and doing this with “the help of science and technology” combined with “social contacts.” (GS 33) The Church is outlining the “moral and religious principles” that are to be applied, but, will not prescribe “a solution to particular problems,” (GS 33) rather she offers a set of principles which are to be applied, by discernment, to arrive at the right and just decision and a formed human being.

All of this can only occur when there is a fundamental commitment by human beings to taking “responsibility which extends to building up the world through the welfare of our fellows.” (GS 34)

All activity takes its “significance from its relationship to humanity, it proceeds from humanity, it is ordered toward humanity,” (GS 35) and human activity, specifically ‘work’, involves the cultivation of “our resources by going outside of ourselves and beyond ourselves.”(GS 35) This reveals the kenotic element that is involved in formation. There is a way of being and acting which is part of the formative process and the Council says that: “the norm of human activity is this: that in accord with the divine plan and will, it harmonizes with the genuine good of the human race, and that it allows men as individuals, and as members of society, to pursue their total vocation and fulfil it.” (GS 35)

Human activity and affairs have an “autonomy”(GS 36) that rests in the understanding that “created things and societies ...enjoy their own laws and values which must be gradually deciphered, put to use, and regulated by men” (GS 36) however the Council holds that this autonomy “harmonizes ... with the will of the Creator.” (GS 36) The very nature of created things means that they “are endowed with their own stability, truth, goodness, proper laws and order,” and humanity “must respect these as he isolates them by the appropriate methods of the individual sciences or arts.” (GS 36) The consequence of all this is that when “every branch of learning is carried out in a genuinely scientific manner and in accord with moral norms, it never truly conflicts with faith, for earthly matters and the concerns of faith derive from the same God.” (GS 36)

The Church and humanity are therefore to partner in unveiling the truth contained in creation and to form communities and individuals in the light of the findings. This will be done progressively and “gradually;” (GS 36) and it will involve the discovery of the patterns of each science according to its own laws; and will be seeking to “penetrate the secrets of reality with a humble and steady mind.” (GS 36) However, this will only occur when the sciences are given their “rightful independence,” (GS 36) and all the gifts received and the controversies perceived are explored and debated.

This whole partnership is in need of humility which is made possible by all involved in formation continually being self-examining. This is put rather graphically in *Gaudium et Spes* when it says “all human activity (is) constantly imperilled by pride and deranged self-love and must be purified and perfected by the power of Christ’s cross and resurrection” (GS 37) but this leads to the understanding that: “Redeemed by Christ and made a new creature in the Holy Spirit, man is able to love the things themselves created by God, and ought to do so. He can receive them from God and respect and reverence them as flowing constantly from the hand of God. Grateful to his Benefactor for these creatures, using and enjoying them in detachment and liberty of spirit, man is led forward into a true possession of them, as having nothing, yet possessing all things.” (GS 37)

True discernment therefore calls for the love of all the elements of this world, but it is with a deep respect and reverence that will mean the use and enjoyment of these elements will be with a detachment that displays a willingness to acknowledge their true use, the needs and requirements of others, and not to remain in selfish possession.

Therefore in all areas of the Church's mission "scriptural, liturgical, doctrinal, pastoral, ecumenical, missionary and social" (ET 50) there is to be an "openness to collaboration" (ET 50) and this in itself will lead to "human perfection and the world's transformation," (GS 37) but only when it is founded on an understanding of "the primacy of love (and) the new command of love." (GS 37)

The role of the believer in the modern world, individually and communally, especially when entering into any activity of formation or seeking to make a commitment to act with other parties, is to enter into the "dialogue between the Church and the world." (GS 40, 43) This dialogue is to be established on the basis of respect for "the dignity of the human person, and about the human community and the profound meaning of human activity" (GS 40) and the orientation of the Church is to "go forward together with humanity and experience the same earthly lot as the world does... (And) to act as the leaven, the soul, of human society." (GS 40)

It is here that the Council emphasises the critical link between the incarnation and the Paschal Mystery, the Word and the Eucharist: "For by his incarnation the Father's Word assumed, and sanctified through his Cross and Resurrection, the whole of humanity body and soul, and through that totality the whole of nature created by God for humanity's use." (GS 41)

Within creation, the human person, following the way of Christ, willing to serve the other in the world, can provide the "anchor of the dignity of human nature against all tides of opinion" (GS 41) and this reveals the heart of all formation. It lies in the: "freedom of the sons of God, ...(in) a sacred reverence for the dignity of conscience and its freedom of choice, ...

that all human talents are to be employed in God's service and humanity's, and that all is to be done in the spirit of charity for all." (GS 41)

And all of this is to be expressed in the second principle of discernment, which is the "rightful autonomy of the creature." (GS 41)

This means all involved in formation must recognise and protect "the basic rights of the person and the family, (and) the demands of the common good and the free exercise of the Church's mission." (GS 42) Both socially and individually all people of good will are to "keep the laws proper to each discipline, and labour to equip ourselves with a genuine expertise in various fields" (GS 43) so as to be able to "function in their well-formed Christian conscience to see that the divine law is inscribed in the life of the earthly city." (GS 43)

The Council summarises the intersection of all these themes, the centrality of Christ, the understanding of the incarnation and Paschal Mystery; human liberty and responsibility, the deep immersion in humanity and a full humanism based on the primacy of love; in a framework of understanding grounded in the kenotic, self-giving love and service of Christ, all lived in the complexity of joy and sorrow, hope and an awareness of the fruit of our choices. This is summarised in a paragraph of Gospel proclamation:

"For God's Word, by whom all things were made, was Himself made flesh so that as perfect man He might save all men and sum up all things in Himself. The Lord is the goal of human history, the focal point of the longings of history and of civilization, the centre of the human race, the joy of every heart and the answer to all its yearnings. He it is Whom the Father raised from the dead, lifted on high and stationed at His right hand, making Him judge of the living and the dead. Enlivened and united in His Spirit, we journey toward the consummation of human history, one which fully accords with the counsel of God's love: "To re-establish all things in Christ, both those in the heavens and those on the earth" (Eph. 11:10). (GS 45)

Ultimately therefore formation will consist in choosing to make a commitment to follow the way of Christ who as “God’s word (by whom all things were made) who was himself made flesh so that as the perfect man he might save all people and sum up all things in himself.” (GS 45)

The OICA sees this same pattern when after a long period of formation, founded on reflection on the Word, learning to meditate and discern and to live in the light of the understandings and frameworks discerned, the person, as the Council does in *Gaudium et Spes*; will be called to take a time of focused preparation, and to commit. However, the impact on the person’s life needs to be identified before a person comes to the place of public commitment. Public commitment comes when the person and the community have discerned that they are formed in Christ. This can only occur at a time when the person is ready.

The OICA teaches us that before someone makes such a public declaration or decision there must be clarity that they are enlightened or illumined. The public declaration of a decision in respect of a position or an act needs the person to know what they are doing, and be aware of and willing to live with both the consequences and the impact of the decision on their concrete situation and circumstance.

The OICA also reveals that even after a decision or commitment has been made there is a need to continue to be aware of the implications and consequences of such a commitment. In the catechumenate this is the ‘mystagogia’ which focuses on the impact of the individual’s relationship to the community and unpacks the depth of mystery which has been celebrated.

The OICA aids the understanding of discernment by offering four interrelated and ongoing aspects of formation and the making and maintenance of commitments. There are those factors which are *internal* to the subject and which can only be made known by the examination of the presuppositions and cultural demands the subject carries internally, by a personal self-examination in respect of their prejudices and barriers to accepting the other. These are the elements which are *external* elements,

that are exposed in the partnerships within the community and that call for a deepening of information, resources and companionship; some of these elements are *public*, the decision is to be lived out, in the public forum; and this happens whether the decision is to act or not to act; both involve a moral decision; both need to be the fruit of a full discernment; and lastly, these internal, external and public elements are not only interrelated but they are also *ongoing*. This means that with every decision comes the ongoing need to maintain the commitment, to die to self, to serve, to face the consequences and the demands that result, in other words, the content and the pattern of the Paschal Mystery becomes the ongoing methodology of a moral life.

This exploration of the complex reality of discernment is at the heart of the call to apply the Scriptures to the issues and life of the community gathered. It also makes clear that the Christian life cannot be reduced to a 'set of norms' or to 'blind obedience'. Formation is not a simple process. It is complex, and involves the bringing to bear of all the wisdom, experience and awareness of the whole community²⁶.

²⁶ It is at this stage of the Liturgy that the Church professes its faith in a series of summarised and concise statements: the Creed. It will do the same in praying for the coming of the kingdom in the Lord's Prayer. The OICA sees these as the appropriate symbols for expressing the full sharing of the Christian message and insight, and they are given as 'aide de memoire' in the process of initiation. These "Ancient documents of faith and prayer (...the Creed and Lord's Prayer)." (Christian Initiation of Adults: 25/2) are seen as carrying within themselves a summary of the understanding of the world that is foundational to the choice of the way of life, in Christ. The knowledge of the complete *Summa Theologica* is not required, however, the gifts that the whole community have are being promised, to all members of the Church, to aid in discernment, decision-making and the living out of our commitments.

Conclusions 4: Discernment.

1. The starting point of discerning the way to proceed, in formation and moral decisions, is to identify the “happenings”, needs and desires of the parties involved.
2. The criteria of judgment will ultimately be the law of love, of God and neighbour, and sacrifice.
3. All involved in discernment are to be recognised as free, active and responsible subjects.
4. Discernment is to have at its foundation the work of the intellect, the primacy of conscience, freedom and choice, and aims to unveil the truth in creation and human wisdom, in dialogue.
5. Discernment is a rational process; nothing will contradict reason and the common experience of humanity.
6. The aim of discernment is the betterment of the world, in a fully human manner, recognising human dignity, reciprocal rights and duties, cultural diversity and fraternal dialogue.
7. There are non-negotiable elements at the foundation of moral discernment. They start with the provision of the essentials of life, and do not allow for violations of human dignity.
8. Discernment will involve the human sciences, studies, with their own laws, and will apply them with a deep respect and reverence for all the elements of the world.
9. The processes of discernment require collaboration, respect autonomy and proceed with a primacy of love. Discernment is an ongoing process; it is aware of and responds to the impact of the decisions made and the positions held. It involves an on-going commitment.

1.4.2. *The process of dialogue.*

Ecclesiam Suam, Gaudium et Spes and the documents of The Pontifical Commissions²⁷, show that at the heart of the structure of the liturgy, the formation of the OICA, and the formation and the encounter of all human beings, is the process of discernment, which has just been outlined, and it, in turn, has at its heart a distinctive mode of encounter: 'dialogue.'²⁸

Ryan observes that in the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: Lumen Gentium* there was a deliberate choice not to use: "Words of alienation and condemnation" but rather "The church developed a new language: friendship, brotherhood, sisterhood, and conscience, the dignity of every person, collegiality, reconciliation, and mutuality,"²⁹ and he concludes by saying that, "Dialogue is the word that captures their spirit. Vatican II represents a language reversal- from monologue to dialogue- in the history of the Church."³⁰

The focus on dialogue is a key element in the structural patterns of the reform of the Liturgy³¹ as they appeared. The concept made its formal

²⁷ Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses. 48th INTERNATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS. Guadalajara, Mexico. 10-14 Oct. 2004. "The Eucharist, Light and Life of the New Millennium".

- *The Apostolic Tradition*, A report of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, 55; Singapore 1991.
- *The Word of Life*, a Statement on Revelation and Faith, a Report of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity 122. Rio de Janeiro, 1996.

²⁸ Twice when outlining the content of discernment in formation *Gaudium et Spes* leads us to see that at the heart of discernment is: "a sincere and prudent dialogue" (GS 21) with "people of all opinions; and "Dialogue between the Church and the world." (GS 40,43)

²⁹ Ryan, Thomas. "Summary of Interventions." Proc. of Vatican II after Fifty Years: Dialogue and Catholic Identity, Georgetown University, Washington DC.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ As witnessed by the 25 direct examples of dialogical interaction between the assembly and the ministers in the Sunday Eucharist.

appearance in Paul VI's encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*³² and was refined during John Paul II's pontificate. The concept of 'dialogue' starts with the understanding that all people are to be approached as partners, with a readiness to adapt to their need by taking into account the intelligences, understandings and circumstances they carry. Therefore all authentic encounters will have a specific character: the partners will approach each other with clarity, combining the virtues of meekness and confidence, (ECS 81/2-81/3) and the understanding that they are seeking the good of both parties and looking for a relationship "built on intimacy and friendship." (ECS 81/3) This will be enabled by allowing for "the psychological and moral circumstances of the hearer" (ECS 81/4) and engaging with a mentality "wedded to charity and understanding and to love." (ECS 82) Dialogue seeks to "adapt the mode of the mission to the particular age, environment, education and social condition of men's lives;" (ECS 86) and will be characterised by a willingness to listen and to share the silence; especially when it is expressing the voice of suffering.

Dialogue is at the heart of all genuine partnerships of formation. Dialogue has the goal of seeking peace; by identifying common ideals. Paul VI outlined these: "religious liberty, human brotherhood, education, culture, social welfare, and civic order" (ECS 108) and with the expressed intention of aiding all to meet their "legitimate desires." (ECS 109)

Paul VI said that dialogue is best achieved by a "primacy of service and love" (ECS 110) and that this is the pattern that is called for of the Church. It is important to note that dialogue is not based solely upon an exchange of words; rather, it includes the witness that comes from the unity of the words and the deeds of those involved, particularly in service and love.

Nostra Aetate and *Gaudium et Spes*³³ identify the starting point of dialogue in the set of questions common to all of humanity, believer and non-

³² *Ecclesiam Suam: Encyclical Letter on the Church* of Pope Paul VI, August 06, 1964.

³³ And in *Gaudium et Spes* they are expressed as: "How to deal with our own discoveries? How to face the trends which are in the world? What is

believer alike. These have been outlined above but *Nostra Aetate's* form clearly provides an expression of the basis of the commonality required in dialogue:

“What is man? What is the meaning, the aim of our life? What is moral good, what is sin? Whence suffering and what purpose does it serve?” Which is the road to true happiness? And ultimately the mystery of our existence: whence do we come, and where are we going?” (NA 1)

These common questions, and the seeking of a common response, are the starting point of a dialogue which will “revere all ways of conduct and of life, precepts and teachings even though they differ from the expressions of the Church.” *Nostra Aetate* calls for a commitment on the part of the Church and all people of good will to seek the truth in the hearts of others, and therefore to enable all to move forward “through dialogue and collaboration.” (NA 2)

This commitment calls upon everyone involved to not just hear a different voice but to develop common practices and investigations. Dialogue, and the collaboration it demands, will not be achieved just through words. They occur by sharing in a “moral life and worship, prayer, almsgiving and fasting,” (NA 3) and commence by coming to an understanding of “the ways” of moral inquiry and the socio-cultural values and understandings of the other, in a manner of prudent loving, and the seeking, recognising and promoting of all that is ‘good’. The Council is clear that it is this pursuit of “mutual understanding...social justice and moral welfare, peace and

the place and role of humanity in the universe? What is the meaning of individual and collective strivings?”(GS 3) “What is man? What is this sense of sorrow, of evil, of death, which continues to exist despite so much progress? What purpose have these victories purchased at so high a cost? What can man offer to society, what can he expect from it? What follows this earthly life?”(GS 10)

freedom,” (NA 3) that will ultimately lead to the covenants of worship and the promises expressed fully in Christ.

‘Dialogue and collaboration’ are therefore undertaken with the intention of seeking the rightful betterment of this world by respecting the fundamental rights of human beings.

Dialogue has at its core the commitment to take human interaction beyond the sharing of technological developments, to the development of genuine interpersonal relationships. (GS23) This is to happen at all levels, communal, familial, and political and therefore will impact on organisational and associative structures. (GS 25)

Dialogue is an act that is founded on an attitude of “love, respect, courtesy and good will;” (GS28) and the Church sees herself as the servant of such a Dialogue. (GS 92)

Entry into formation based on such an encounter of dialogue therefore presupposes preparation: which in turn involves a requirement for “deep study and formation” and an awareness that this also involves the “seeking of civil, economic and social unity;” (GS 43) and a commitment to the provision of the “joint concern and energy” (GS 43) that is required for such an engagement. Dialogue necessarily entails the development of understandings between communities and cultures; (GS 56) and a commitment, by the Church, and all involved in dialogue, to ensuring its ethical application. Areas where dialogue had already been seen to bear fruit (sixty years ago) were identified in *Gaudium et Spes*, as: protecting those in the care of groups and individuals (GS 79), social justice, (GS 90) industrial conflict resolution (GS 65); and cooperation between nations (GS 90).

The major barriers to dialogue and collaboration are identified as the limitations that are imposed by ‘self-interest’.

The Council understands that dialogue requires the identification of all the “elements which are true and good” (OT 16), and that these are seldom

acknowledged in, political, economic and social analysis. The Council calls them: the “precious things, both religious and human” (GS 92); the “seeds of contemplation” (AG 18), the “elements of truth and grace” (AG9), and identifies these as the “seeds of the Word” (AG 11, 15), and says that it is their inclusion which will result in the formation of people who will seek to “raise the truth which illumines all mankind” (NA2).”(D&M 26)

Dialogue is also a way of acting. It is most clearly revealed in the attitude and spirit which guides the conduct of those involved. Dialogue calls for concern, respect, and hospitality toward the other while leaving room for the other’s identity, their modes of expression, and their values to influence the engagement. Dialogue is often a simple ‘presence’ and witness, revealed in service; before it is a direct proclamation of the understanding of the ‘receiving’ party. John Paul II says dialogue is the heart of moral formation: as in all encounters of dialogue the law of conscience is sovereign, and “no one must be constrained to act against his conscience, nor ought he to be impeded in acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters.” (DH3).

These understandings directly parallel the way of formation revealed in the OICA. In dialogue there is an expectation of “mutual transformation”. It is the place in which “the mysterious and silent Spirit (who) opens the paths of dialogue to individuals and peoples in order to overcome racial, social, and religious differences and to bring *mutual* enrichment.” (D&M 44)

The patterns of dialogue also recognise the contribution of those who enable the ‘breaking open’ of the wisdom of the age and of those gathered. In the life of the Church these are the ministers, the Bishop or priest and the catechists. This ministerial role, is called on to carry the wisdom of the Tradition, the magisterial element of the church’s contribution, but more, he or she is also to be a witness to the ‘method’ of Christ, the one who listens and does not judge, who seeks the opening of eyes, healing of hearts and the bringing down of barriers.

1.4.2.1. Dialogue in the Liturgy.

This pattern of dialogue is graphically seen in the examples which the Church has chosen, over the centuries for the Lenten formation of the Catechumen in the OICA. These are contained in the Lectionary readings, for the three Sundays of Lent, when catechumens are in their final preparation for making a commitment to Christ. They each have a strong illustration of a dialogue. The woman at the well and the man born blind are not disciples, they are people, encountered in the midst of their daily lives, who ask the questions which arise from their daily need and desires. Both of them were ostracised and socially isolated by norms and social conventions; the woman needing to gather water at midday when the other women are not there, due to their judgment ;(John 4:1-42) and the blind man left begging on the side of the road. (John 9:1-12)

The Christ figure meets them 'where they are at' and starts the conversation, a dialogue, at the point of their need. The same is true of the Gospel of the Raising of Lazarus. (John 11:1-44) It is in facing the delay of the Lord's appearing and His resultant non-appearance at the death and funeral of her brother, which caused the questions and anger of the sister to arise.

Christ meets the people in these encounters with an open heart, a clear focus and a willingness to face their reality. It is only then that he asks questions and listens, which in turn leads to references to the scriptures and tradition, "you say worship at Jerusalem and we say on this mountain;" and then, at the appropriate time, to the deep personal call: there will be "a well of life within you," (John 4:14) "stand up," "see and follow me", and "Lazarus come forth."(John 11:43)

Life and light, insight and wisdom, are the result of a process of genuine dialogue.

This same pattern of dialogue lies at the heart of all processes of discernment. The Church's teaching reveals that the moral life begins with

the dialogue of integral development, social justice and human liberation and in a particular fashion; it is achieved in a way that is seen to be “an unselfish and impartial manner.” (D&P 47) The orientation of the Christian/ the person of good will, is to have a “balanced attitude,” neither ingenuous nor overly critical; rather open and receptive, unselfish and impartial, “accepting of differences and of possible contradictions.” (D&P 47) There is a call to always go forward with an openness to the truth, and while entering the “unending process” (D&P 49) of such an encounter with “the integrity of his or her own faith,” (D&P 49) to be faithful to the engagement even in the face of difficulty and rejection.

Why is this understanding of ‘dialogue’ so important?

All these rich understandings of dialogue are of vital importance because one of the major changes, as indicated by Ryan at the beginning of this section, is that Vatican II, and specifically the liturgical form of encounter, has made a deliberate choice to be dialogical. The patterns of dialogue are at the heart of the liturgical “structure and meaning” and all the factors that have just been outlined are the deep moral and ethical presuppositions contained in the “dialogues of the Liturgy.” The actions and prayers of the liturgy must be read with all these understandings. There are at least twenty five³⁴ times in the Sunday Liturgy in which the form of proclamation and the interrelationship between Christ present in the Minister and Christ present in the Assembly, Word or Eucharist, are framed in a dialogical greeting or a doxology. Whenever a pattern such as this is used, in the Liturgy or in human moral encounter and formation, it is a call to apply all the principles of dialogue, outlined in these last pages, to the active involvement in the prayer or action that follows:

“The Lord be with you.”

“And with your Spirit.”

³⁴ There are more when other rites or elements particular to a season, feast or celebration are added.

It is a simple greeting, but it carries a vast message and demands a specific way of response.

Conclusion 5: Dialogue

1. All formation is called on to use the structures of dialogue.
2. In dialogue all people involved are to be seen as partners; and all involved are to be ready to listen and adapt to the needs of the other, to build upon an expectation of intimacy and friendship, and to adapt to the social conditions of the dialogue partner.
3. The goal of dialogue is peace. Peace founded on the recognition of fundamental human rights and needs.
4. Dialogue is NOT just a process of words; the primary witness in dialogue is the witness of life, service and love.
5. Dialogue starts with the existential questions, needs and desires of human beings.
6. True dialogue will build on collaborative action with the attitude of love, respect, good will and courtesy.
7. Dialogue demands the deep study of all elements involved, especially of the partner's positions.
8. Dialogue will always respect the conscience of the other, even if deeply opposed.
9. Those who enter a process of dialogue are willing to enter an 'unending' process.
10. Dialogue will ultimately lead to the discussion of truth, human worth and religious insight.

1.4.3. The unity of Word and Deed: revealing the Paschal Mystery.

The third interpretive insight of this study has been the unity of Word and Deed revealing the Paschal Mystery.

The 'word' is often emphasised as the core element in moral discernment and judgement, and it often dominates processes of formation with

resources focused on written sources and lectures of talks, again dominated by words. These are often disconnected from the situation of those gathered or facing the issue, what people are doing or have done, or should do; or are left as an objective norm to be applied.

The insight of the liturgy, reflecting the unity of *Dei Verbum 2*, is that the word can be preached, framed as a series of norms, and even 'dictated', but there comes a point at which a commitment, a step beyond 'knowing,' and words is called for.

There are many examples of 'people of good will' who witness to the same understandings, as those revealed in the Gospel. Without consciously naming that they are one in the Paschal Mystery of Christ or responding to the Holy Spirit; but that is what is happening.

This understanding is shown in the moment when, without words, and without knowing that they are revealing the way of Christ, a person acts in a way that is right and or just.

This will be an action of self-sacrifice, and the deep Christian insight is that it will also be an action of *αγαπε*.

People can conform to words and manifestos, or they can be judged as having broken the written laws and be punished; but at the deepest level, the giving of oneself to the other in response to the call of what is 'right and just', if it is to be life-giving and fully human, is an action, an act of love.

Human beings are not creating virtue. They become virtuous in response to the gift that has been received, and is revealed, when they respond in love to the other. This is the graced moment. It is here that the Holy Spirit; the patient, knowing, loving Spirit of Christ hovering over the darkness, changes the heart from one willing, or not, to recognise the truth and what is right, to one who is willing to do it.

The scriptural understanding of this insight is clearly seen in the story of rich young man, who has 'conformed' to all elements of the law: has tithed, 'done what he was told to do' but when faced with the final challenge, to

go and sell all you have and give it to the poor (a poor who are always with us and therefore this call is universal) and come follow me. And the young man went away sad because he was very rich, and this call to self-giving was too great a demand.

Here is the ultimate challenge of Christian moral formation. Is a person willing, on a 'daily basis,' to be part of the coming of the kingdom, not just by knowing or professing ,in words, what should be done; but by doing it in the specific form of "following me" to Jerusalem and the Cross.

The study of the liturgy tells us that this cannot be done alone. It is necessary to have the witness of the One who shows that it can be done, and others who are on the 'road' with us.

In the events of witness in the Gospel, particularly the post Resurrection stories which show Jesus of Nazareth as the "Risen Christ," it is the fearful disciples who met the one who had 'done it'. He is the primal witness. He is the one who was faithful even unto death. He is the Gospel, He is the Good News.

This is the heart of the Christian understanding, and the primary and initial proclamation, it is He who died, who is Risen. The development of this Resurrection revelation shows a solid bridge to the revelatory presences of Christ in the Liturgy (SC 7) and then to the place of revelation in the process of formation.

Firstly, it is seen in the Johannine understanding that Christ is the Word made flesh and proclaimed in the midst of the community. This is the first revelation of the Risen Christ; he is present in the *Word*.³⁵

Secondly, because no one individual has all the skills and resources required to 'bring in the Kingdom', others are needed. This is the second revelation of the Risen One. The charisms of the Holy Spirit are distributed

³⁵ These four ideas are going to parallel the four presences of the Risen Christ in the Liturgy spoken of in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7

in the community of the baptised, the Risen Christ lives and is revealed in a community, the *Assembly*, the Church, the Risen Body of Christ.

Thirdly, because there is the need for the members of the community to have their eyes opened, their ears unstopped, and their hearts made free; there is a need for a ministry of healing, teaching and leadership. This is the third revelation of the Risen One in the *ministry* and *leadership* of the Body of Christ, the Church. It is here that He continues to heal our blindness, deafness and hardness of heart.

Fourthly, because there is the ongoing need within the body of Christ, to have one walk with us and support us as we too walk the road that necessarily leads to Jerusalem and Calvary, we are in constant need of being fed and healed. Here is the fourth revelation of Christ, He is revealed in the *Paschal Sacrifice of bread blessed, broken and given*. He unites us with Himself, and we become one in His action and gift of thanksgiving to the Father.

The Post-Resurrection story of the road to Emmaus witnesses to these same understandings. Firstly, He shares their story and the scriptures, the *Word*; then he gathers with them around the table, the *community* is formed 'where two or three are gathered in my name'; and thirdly he is recognised, as Risen in the *breaking of the bread*; and it is He who does these things, he *ministers*. However there is still one element left to fulfil the revelation. There is the necessity for the two disciples to make a free choice to return to Jerusalem, the place of crucified witness and the community, so as to proclaim what has been seen: "And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven gathered together and those who were with them, who said, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" (Luke 24:33-25) The process of the Liturgy is lived out in the lives of disciples and is revealed in the complex of the presences of Christ outlined in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7.

So it is in the moral discernment, formation and the making of commitments. There is a need to recognise the 'Other', in the words that are spoken, the community gathered and in a willingness to serve them

and to be broken in care and attention to the reality involved at the heart of the situation or issue at hand. There is still though one more element required the commitment that knowing what to do a person is willing to do it, with courage and knowing that it involves risk and sacrifice. This is the Paschal Mystery revealed at every stage, die to self and there will be revealed the fullness of life.

Conclusions 6: The Presence of Christ in the Community.

1. What is seen, known, heard and read has ultimately, if it is seen to be 'right and just,' to be done!
2. The unity of our words and our deeds, the putting into action of that which has been discerned to be morally right, or the commitment that has been freely made after formation; will reveal the presence of God, and the fullness of life.
3. The putting into practice, doing what is known to be right and just, will always involve love and sacrifice. The revelatory nature of the union of word and deed, will ultimately involve others, the community; ministry and entry into the Paschal Mystery, of dying to self out of love of the other.

1.4.4 The sources of revelation.

The words and deeds of God in Salvation History are recorded in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and the fullness of Revelation in the words and deeds of Jesus recorded and handed on in the Gospel. In addition there are the letters which record the life, understandings and the issues arising in the early Church. These are the sources that the liturgy of the Word calls upon when responding to the call to "spread before the faithful, the treasures of the Bible." (GIRM 57 quoting SC 51) However, there is a need to clarify the relationship between the Scriptures, and the sources of Revelation, that are to be placed before the community.

The *Catechism* (CCC 50) identifies two ways in which the one source of revelation is revealed, and each of them is offered in the Liturgy of the

Word. The two ways are named. Firstly the encounter of humanity with God by the use of “natural reason,” (CCC 50) and secondly, the “utterly free” revelation by God in “his beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.”(CCC 50)

The first form of revelation is identified as having two places of departure: “the physical world, and the human person.”(CCC 31) The *Catechism* says that human reflection upon the reality of the physical world, especially from the perspective of “movement, becoming, contingency, and the world's order and beauty,” (CCC 32) and the human person especially from an examination of humanity's “openness to truth and beauty, his sense of moral goodness, his freedom and the voice of his conscience, with his longings for the infinite and for happiness;”(CCC33) will lead to ‘glimpses’ of God's action. This is especially seen in the events of the history of salvation and creation.

Where are these insights gathered and placed before us? In the story of the people of Israel's encounter with the Lord, and in their reflections on moral goodness, creation, the longings of the human heart and in the on-going experience of ‘ people of good will’ who respond to the same ‘glimpses’ of God.

The *Catechism* then proceeds, to outline the nature (CCC 51-53)and stages (CCC 54-64)of this, God's plan of revelation, and leads us to the heart of the Christian message, the second, and full way of revelation, in the words and deeds, the person, life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. (CCC 65)

The first way is a compilation of the wisdom of humanity, distilled from human experience and expressed in law, history, myth, wisdom sayings, proverbs, prayer and prophecy and placed before the community to articulate the insight of revelation contained in the life events of salvation history and human wisdom.

Liturgically this occurs in the First reading of the Liturgy of the Word. The response to hearing these stories is to meditate and reflect and to respond

with a communal acclamation. But more importantly, the readings from Torah and the Prophets are directly linked to the full revelation in Christ, brought to the community by listening to Christ in the Gospel. The insights revealed in creation, and the understandings of the Gospel are to be united and Christ takes the needs of *this* people, the wisdom seen in the readings, and He discerns and proclaims the Gospel of salvation. This is seen in the manner in which, in the Post Vatican II reform of the Lectionary, there is a direct link between the Old Testament reading and the Gospel. It is Christ who is the interpreter and who gives the “fuller understanding and a greater effectiveness of the word,” (GIRM 29) by making it a word which is “relevant to human existence.” (ES 91) It is Christ Risen and present in the Word, the Minister and the Assembly who makes the link between the hopes and aspirations of humanity, the glimpses that have been experienced and then expressed in their ‘reasoned’ understandings, and reveals the fullness of life in God, found in Jesus of Nazareth.

In addition to the ‘scriptures’ it is important to see that in the process of discernment there is the ability to include the wisdom of other traditions, ways of thinking and investigation, among the sources of wisdom and revelation. This was identified in *Nostra Aetate* and the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue’s document: “*Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflections and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel*” of 1991. In these reflections dialogue starts with the common experience of humanity and both documents call for a deeper understanding to be made available by a common reflection on the wisdom contained, specifically, in Hinduism, Buddhism, (NA 2) Islam (NA 3) and the experience of ‘the people of the covenant.’ (NA 4)

1.4.4.1. The process to discern the Voice of the Risen Christ.

Within the structure of the Liturgy of the Word there are also dialogues and acclamations (Psalms and Gospel acclamations) which are to be “signs of the communal celebration and to foster and bring about the communion between priest and people.” (GIRM 34) The response and the

interpretation are therefore not personal or arbitrary, rather, the proclamation of the Word, with its associated silences, meditations and responses, is always dependent on the ministry of multiple members of the assembly in their “proper office”, and demands a response to readings which come from multiple sources. However, the process leads all to the same lens of interpretation: “the reading of the Gospel (which) is the high point of the Liturgy of the Word” (GIRM 60) and where “the Risen Christ speaks through the holy scriptures.” (SC 7) There is an additional element that helps in understanding this process. The GIRM describes an element in the liturgy that is “an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word and holds great liturgical and pastoral importance, because it fosters meditation on the word of God.” (GIRM 61) It is the “responsorial Psalm.” (GIRM 61) The Psalm is coupled with a period of meditation and this shows that the acceptance of the message is based on a meditation which provides the place for the “action of the Holy Spirit.” It is the Holy Spirit who ensures that “the Word of God may be grasped by the heart,” (GIRM 56) and to ensure that this can occur, “any kind of haste is clearly to be avoided.” (GIRM 56) After the meditation, the Psalm is sung. It is also important to note that it is the silent meditation that leads to a ‘communal’ response, the singing of the Psalm.

There is a process and order here. *Listen* to the insight gained from history, law, the prophets; the communities around, their proverbs and wisdom; *receive* it; *meditate* upon it; *respond* to it in a common acclamation, and then *interpret* it in and through the direct revelation of God, the ‘words, deeds, life and death of Jesus’, the Gospel.

There is one more step, the message heard is to be *applied* so that it might provide that which is “necessary for the nurturing of the Christian life” (GIRM 65) of the community and the individuals gathered. This is achieved in the homily which is to “take into account both the mystery being celebrated and the particular needs of the listeners.”(GIRM 65)

The application of this liturgical insight to the sources and the processes of formation and the making of commitments will be made clear by the inclusion of elements from the development in *Gaudium et Spes*.

The Second Vatican Council was clear that Christians need a keen awareness of the “diversity and difference of opinion even within the Church” (GS 43) and it is only by “unremitting study” and “establishing dialogue with the world and the people of all shades of opinion” (GS 43) that Christian communities, and any individual, can develop relationships with the world. The essential character of this encounter is understood when the elements to be included in such a dialogue are outlined. The Council: “is very clear that it is in the Church’s mind that she has “profited by the history and development of humanity, the experience of past ages, the progress of science, and the treasures hidden in the various forms of human culture.” (GS 44) This is reinforced when the Council talks of the necessity of exploring all of these sources, aided by the “ideas and terminology of various philosophers, by the clarification of their wisdom, by adapting the Gospel to the grasp of all, as well as to the needs of the limited.” (GS 44)

The interface and the inquiry are to be wide. The engagement in formation and preparing to make commitments, requires a recognition that there is an enormous depth to wisdom and that while the Church “shares in the light of the divine mind,” (GS 15) human wisdom is achieved “by relentlessly employing his talents” (GS 15) through making “progress in the practical sciences and in technology and the liberal arts,” (GS 15) and recognising the victories that have been won by the “probing of the material world and in subjecting it to himself.”(GS 15) The Council calls for an ongoing searching “for more penetrating truths” and then emphasises that human “intelligence is not confined to observable data alone, but can with genuine certitude attain to reality itself as knowable, though in consequence of sin that certitude is partly obscured and weakened.” (GS 15)

Where are these certitudes to be found? In similar sources to those found in the Old Testament readings shared in the Liturgy of the Word: in the history, science, law and wisdom of our time; in the expressions of poets and prophets, and in the theories and expressions of understanding that are used to express order and an understanding of the world.

It is on this foundation, after meditation and reflection in the light of the Gospel, that the “intellectual nature of the human person is perfected by wisdom,” (GS 15) a “wisdom (which) gently attracts the mind of man to a quest and a love for what is true and good.” (GS 15) And it will be “steeped in wisdom” (GS 15) that humanity “passes through visible realities to those which are unseen.” (GS 15) In seeking to be fully human, and with the eyes of faith, believers can see that it is the “Holy Spirit” who leads them “by faith to the contemplation and appreciation of the divine plan,” (GS 15) revealed in these elements.

There is one more element to add to the understanding of the revelatory process. Coupled with the centrality of the scriptures as the formative agent in the lives of believers, both in their initial formation and the ongoing formation of the Sunday Liturgy, Pope Paul VI in *Ecclesiam Suam* offered an important insight as to how the revelation occurs, and therefore how we can expect it to continue. Paul VI said that the characteristic way in which God has revealed Godself in human history is in “dialogue.”(ECS 72, 78)

With this element the process is clear but so too is the necessity of pursuing this in a community and by dialogue. Wisdom is to be the fruit of an open exchange and sharing of the insights of all, as none hold all the elements required. The role of the Church is to gently serve, to bring to the table, to enable the other to speak and share, to facilitate the reflection and meditation, and then to offer the gift of the Gospel as a ‘lens’ of clarity and interpretation, so as to apply the wisdom revealed to the needs of this place and time.

This speaks of the complexity involved in making an ‘informed and applied’ moral decision and commitment. Moral and pastoral theology is therefore

not able to be a practice that remains detached. The wisdom of philosophical ethics, the norms of the legal system, the objective truths seen and identified over time and experience, are all to be sources and resources, but the formation is ultimately to be the fruit of the bringing together of such a rich plethora of sources, which are then applied to the needs of the community in this place and time, and enable a 'conscientious' decision to commit to the life of the Gospel.

Liturgically this proclamation of the 'way forward' and the implications of what has been discerned is the role of the homily and the Universal Prayer.

Conclusion 7: Sources of Revelation.

1. There are two sources of insight and 'revelation' to be incorporated in all formation and moral thought.
2. Firstly: natural reason. Which focuses on the understanding of the physical world, and the human person. Therefore it includes reflections on creation, human longings, the patterns revealed by sciences of all descriptions, and the fruit of artistic insight and inspiration.
3. Secondly: the free gift of God's self-revelation in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and the Gospels, which share the Paschal Mystery and the story of the Incarnation seen in the words, deeds, life, death and resurrection of the Lord. These sources will also include the wisdom of the contemplatives.

1.5. The Catechumenate as the archetype of formation and of commitment.

From the earliest time the integrated structure of the Catechumenate was seen as the way of forming the individual and the community, and it is this pattern that has been restored by the OICA. All members of the community lived 'the way' that they had chosen, with all its ethical and moral, social and communal implications. They were aware that there were certain behaviours and occupations which were incompatible with Christian life, and that an integral part of the Christian life is a willingness to self-examine and to be 'evaluated' in respect of their "reason for coming" (*Apostolic Tradition* 15) and that all aspects of the Christian life involve "an in-depth inquiry," (*Apostolic Tradition* 15) conducted by the individual and those in charge of the catechesis.³⁶

Additionally, at the heart of the catechumenate, with the understanding that there were behaviours that were clearly incompatible with then Christian life, the faithful knew they were living a response to the Spirit; and the Spirit, is a force of love, life and free choice, who brings a freedom from a legalistic or socially imposed conformity.

The life of the community therefore had at its heart a conscious process the intention of which was to form and sustain disciples, by a liturgical process, as people with the character of Christ, virtuous persons. This formation would be displayed, publically, in the way of life of the individual, primarily arising from their incorporation into the Body of Christ, within the community. The nature of this formation was recognised from the earliest times. The catechumens were formed by listening to, and reflecting on, the Scriptures and hearing the teaching of the apostles and prophets, and this led to the careful preservation of these stories, homilies, and understandings. The intention of this manner of formation was to ensure both the ongoing unity of the Church, the "preserving the assembly

³⁶ Metzger: op.cit: 46

of the Church" (*Didascalia* 13) and the continuity and authenticity of the way of life, among believers.

This pattern of initiation involved ongoing processes of inquiry and renewal both by the person involved and the formator, the sponsors, the 'leaders of the community' and the catechumen's neighbours,³⁷ those who are living in the same reality as the inquirer.

This pattern worked well in the first two and a half centuries when the Church lived with the element of 'hiddenness' and separation; but after the Edict of Milan, when the Sunday gathering became the place where all were welcome, it had to adapt. Many joined the catechumenate and remained there for a life time. This elongation of the catechumenate was caused by the impact of understandings of forgiveness, the nature of baptism and when combined with the movement to infant baptism, in time, it led to the decline of the catechumenate as a whole.

However the examination of the structure contained in the processes of the post-Constantinian OICA and the OICA of Vatican II; show that the core elements required for formation, and the symbols that carry the meaning, remain in the Liturgy. Within the catechumenate the core symbols are always seen as outward signs of an inner change. For example; the fasting and abstinence involved were seen as outward signs of an inner change of heart. The scrutinies of Lent focus on the preparation of the inner being. Christian life was formed more by an internal 'Examen', than conformity to a set of external norms. However, at the same time, there was a need for the inner change to be revealed in external actions and there was a necessity to be 'seen' doing what is right and just. This 'outward sign of an inner reality' is explicitly named by Ambrose when reflecting on the example of the external anointings; he saw them as the preparation of the athlete for action, for *doing* that which is right and good. (Ambrose *Sermon* 1, 4)

³⁷ *Instruction on Christian initiation* : 7

The link between inner formation, and the outward ways of life was reinforced, in the understandings expressed in external symbols. For example when John Chrysostom said that the post baptismal clothing with Christ, symbolically seen in the white garment; was more than external, it is, the sign of the internal change of “being filled with the Holy Spirit and the Trinity indwelling”, (ACW 4.17) and this internal change will be displayed in “scrupulous conduct,” (ACW 4.17) the moral life.

Formation therefore calls for the “Full and active participation by the people of God.” (SC 14) The source of the Christian Spirit lies in the liturgy, the sharing of the common life of the faithful, and it is this that “contains much instruction for the faithful.” (SC33) The whole formative process occurs over time and it is the extended formation that enables the “spread of the faith by word and deed.” (LG11)

Thirdly, the structure of catechumenal formation is intended for mature adults. The movement to infant baptism and the decline in conscious adult formation was a result of the interface between Christianity and the events of history in the late fifth century, and the philosophical understandings used at that time to express the Mystery. It has however had a consequential impact on the core understandings of formation and responsibility which have moved from an adult conscious interrelationship of responsible believers; to a sacramental theology that focused on the structure and actions of sacramental rites on ‘unresponsive subjects’.

Fourthly, the formation has at its core the weekly celebration of the community, which is itself focused on Easter. As Jungmann says: to gain an understanding “we must turn our gaze first and foremost upon the Christ of Easter, who is risen and lives on as the glorified head of his Church; and from that understanding we will gain insight into the weekly gathering of the community: the Easter/Sunday Eucharist.”³⁸

The manner in which this understanding is to be expressed is recognised in the Catechumenate to include the need for adaptation to the “practices

³⁸ Jungmann, Josef A. *Pastoral Liturgy*. Op.cit.:342

and needs of local churches and diverse peoples,”³⁹ however, again in the model of “both/and” outlined earlier in the thesis, this will be with the understanding that there is a framework, which can be consistently seen in the first seven centuries, and this was revived at Vatican II. The catechumenate is to be seen as being grounded within “a particular ritual, which had basic features although it was in a process of structural evolution and theological and ethical development.”⁴⁰

This ritual referred to is the central formative act of the community, the weekly gathering which involved “the blessing of bread and wine to be shared among its members; and it was from this that people remember Jesus and were incorporated into his body and that had ethical implications for those who participate in it.”⁴¹

The preamble to the GIRM expresses this clearly when it speaks of the Sunday Eucharist as the “font and apex of the whole Christian life (LG 11)” and as providing the Christian understanding of “ecclesial life”/Christian life. Where does the ‘life’ of the Christian, the ethical and moral expression of belief take its form, expression and understanding? From the Sunday Eucharist! And the simplest description of where and how this occurs in the Sunday Eucharist is seen in the most ancient of sources. The consistent message of these sources is that the meaning of Christian life is to be found in the weekly celebration, being formed by the hearing of the readings and the breaking of Word and prayer. (*Apostolic Constitutions*, John Chrysostom, and Augustine).

This is the heart of the catechumenal process.

³⁹ Huels, John M. op.cit:508

⁴⁰ More op.cit: 12

⁴¹ Ibid.

2. The Process of Formation that enables the making of a Commitment.

Having established the call of Vatican II to make the 'structure and meaning of the liturgy' our framework and having outlined the principles of interpretation, the study summarises the findings that a detailed analysis of the source documents has brought, by bringing them together on the framework of the structure of the Sunday Liturgy.

2.1. The Introductory Rites

2.1.1 The gathering.

"The rites before the liturgy of the Word have a "character of a beginning, an introduction, and a preparation" (GIRM 46)

The starting point of the Sunday Liturgy, the OICA and of *Gaudium et Spes* 1-45 and the 'way' of formation is the same.

It is the encounter with people, as they are, with their issues and concerns, 'at the door'.

People are met specifically in the Catechumenate, and in all places that the Church commences her mission, 'where they are at'. In fact all encounters start with what *Gaudium et Spes* calls those things that are "genuinely human" (GS 1, 77, 87) and which it summarises as the "the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially those who are poor or afflicted." (GS 1)

The ‘Hopes and desires’ (GS 10, 11; ES 109) of the human person, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Nostra Aetate* say can be expressed as a series of questions, which were outlined above.⁴²

Benedict XVI and Francis have enriched this understanding when they identify the starting place of encounter as being the concerns and understandings of all those who come to the “courtyard of the gentiles,”⁴³ or who appear in the areopagi with its varied scenarios. Francis says that within a “single city”, generation or community there can be “various collective imaginations”⁴⁴ and that it is essential to understand “the existential issues of people today, especially the young, by listening to the language that they speak.” (Rio de Janeiro July 2013) This requires the ability to recognise the variety of issues that impact on the life of a single person or community. The starting point of Christian encounter and worship is “in the world,” (GS 2) within the “theatre of our history, the heir of our energies.” (GS 2)

This is the context in which people gather and therefore is the place where individuals and the Church start their encounter.

The fundamental orientation of *Gaudium et Spes* follows a similar pattern. Based on an intentional “dialogue with the world”⁴⁵ its methodology is to read the signs of the times and “interpret them in the light of the Gospel.” (GS 4)

The questioning, seeking, human being is also the starting point for the inquiry of the OICA, the gathering of the Liturgical community and of the person who confronts the realities of life that call for formation and decision making as outlined in *Gaudium et Spes*.

⁴² Cf page 24 of this chapter.

⁴³ Benedict XVI, Address to the Roman Curia, 21 December 2009, AAS 102/I (January 2010) p.40. Is the foundation of a number of references that can be followed at <http://www.cultura.va/content/cultura/en/dipartimenti/ateismo-e-non-credenza/discorso-di-fondazione-di-benedetto-xvi.html>

⁴⁴ Francis. "Rinnovamento della Chiesa e Dialogo con il mondo attuale." Op.cit:3.

⁴⁵ Gallagher, Michael Paul, SJ. op.cit:370.

There follows the specific manner in which the person is to be welcomed and encountered. It is in a “dialogue”. The way forward in this dialogue is to be the imitation of the person of Christ who: “entered this world to give witness to the truth, to rescue, not to sit in judgement, to serve and not to be served.” (GS 3) This is the modality of formation and response, welcome and inclusion.

For the community to respond in this manner involves training and the presence of people who are both willing to walk with and make the necessary adjustments to the pastoral need that is seen. This will be based on the Church’s understanding that while there is a “single noble destiny of humanity” (GS 3) and that the manner of authentic human activity in the world will be the seeking out, and serving of the peoples of the world with a willingness to embrace the cost of witness and to stand alongside them as they face the challenges of life. The Gospel expresses this as “taking up the cross of Christ, and following Him.”(Matt 16:24)

Gaudium et Spes understands this process to be accompanying people in a staged growth; firstly, by the formation of conscience; secondly, by understanding the need to live in community; thirdly, by a commitment to activity in the world and fourthly by the preaching of the Gospel.

The fundamental starting point in *Gaudium et Spes*, the GIRM and OICA therefore is that the church is to stand alongside and in solidarity with whoever walks through the door, and walk forward with them.

The first element of gathering and of formation is to recognise those with whom we gather and the questions they bring?

The liturgical reform emphasised this when it spoke of the right for all parties to be able to comprehend what is being said, to be able to express their hopes and needs and to be understood by the gathered community. This will be achieved by the use of the vernacular in all communication, liturgical and moral. The OICA speaks of an awareness of the local issues, and the needs of the inquirer, leading to the pastoral imperative that

people must be met “where they are at” with the recognition of their cultural, economic, gender, and socio political differences.

The presupposition of all ecclesial processes therefore is that nothing is to stop a person from coming to the door of the Church, entering to listen and being welcomed and cared for. This is the promise that the Body of Christ makes. As Benedict XVI says: the Sunday gathering of the Church is an “ingathering of all members of the local parish who stand before God offering thanksgiving and praise”⁴⁶; it is not an assembly of the like-minded, or the comfortable, nor is it to be ethnically, socially, economically or politically homogenous.

This is the starting point of formation; a welcoming of the parties ‘as they are’ and with an attitude that is non-judgemental. The example of Christ in the Gospel makes this clear. A person was “caught in the very *act* of adultery” (Jn 8:3) was “brought to the front of the crowd” (Jn 8:4); with the expectation that Jesus would pass judgement. Jesus’s response is: “where are your accusers, neither do I judge you” (Jn 8:11).

This parallels the way people are to be welcomed at the liturgical celebration and to the place and form of formation and the manner in which communal decision-making is to be made.

The process does not start with a detached examination of the act, even though the act and the circumstance may be clear and in full sight of the community. Rather, the model that is offered by the scriptures is of an encounter, characterised by acceptance and forgiveness, which starts with the person, and then progresses with the ‘love’ that the Paschal Mystery will reveal. This is coupled with the clear understanding that this type of encounter enables the other person to continue in life having experienced the fullness of forgiveness, love and life, and with this strength to change and go away to “sin no more.” (Jn 8:11)

⁴⁶ Benedict XVI, *op.cit.*

The OICA says that the 'way of encounter' of the whole Christian community during of the period of Inquiry is to be one of welcome. It emphasises that this is particularly at the moment of first encounter, symbolically, at the door. These insights are applicable to the workings of all gatherings within a community.

Firstly, what is revealed is a primary orientation of co-responsibility. In the OICA, the person who walks with the one who "comes as they are", the sponsor, is both the witness and an agent of formation in the 'way of life' of Christ and when the GIRM (61, 62, 71,91ff) speaks of the recognition of the diverse and complementary ministries that are required for the Liturgy to fulfil its core task, it is this accompanying, witness and forming that it is recognising.

Secondly, the 'way' of formation understands that those who meet a person at the door and agree to accompany them are committing to being involved in the life of the person. This includes an active sharing in their prayer life and service of the poor, and 'to the best of their ability' answering their questions from the wisdom of living the message.

Thirdly, all responses are to be adapted to the local and contemporary needs (*Instruction on Christian Initiation* 30 /3) (echoing the call in the GIRM 37ff from SC 26) so as to establish a dialogue between the 'Tradition' and the local and the needs of the person who is 'on the way'.

However this is a dialogue and there are also expectations of the person entering into the process of formation. They need to be 'willing and capable of hearing.' Secondly, all involved must approach and treat each other as adults, with the deep awareness that it is only then that they will be able to encounter "the Holy Spirit who opens their hearts." (CIA 1) Thirdly, all that happens in formation is to be a "free and knowing seeking of the living God and an entry on a path of faith and conversion," (CIA 1) As the Council declares: "the human person has a right to religious freedom... (and is) to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power...whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others." (DH 2)

The Christian understanding of formation therefore is based on the presupposition that moral growth will take time, accompaniment and change. It presupposes an adult interrelationship, open and supported, conscious and accompanied. It involves openness on the part of all parties to dialogue, but at the same time awareness that all parties may require support and guidance, from the beginning, so as to be able to form a decision and to act.

The OICA reinforces this when it describes the formative processes as being dependent on a manner described as 'freely and knowingly.' (CIA 1) There is an invitation to live in the way of Christ, not an imposition. It involves an awareness of *καιρος*, the 'proper time,' and therefore, while maintaining a formal integrity, it proceeds, step by step, according to the order prescribed; however, it will proceed, in the midst of the community adapting to the needs of the individual. This is because it is in mutual, personal relationships, that God is encountered and revealed.

All of this understanding has been gained, before the person has walked through the door! These are the core understandings that are involved in having open doors to the Cathedral.⁴⁷

Benedict XVI recognises the complexity of this when he writes: for a person to "enter through that door is to set out on a journey that lasts a lifetime,"⁴⁸ and John Paul II summarised the manner in which the dialogical encounter is to progress: Firstly do not "raise arguments or disputes," (D&M 20) rather, "be subject to every human creature for the love of God;" (D&M 20) secondly, ensure that in all dealings with the other there is no "hint of coercion" or "of a kind of persuasion that would be dishonourable or unworthy." (D&M 20) Thirdly, there are to be no opportunistic tactics, rather, the dialogue is to be "based on the personal

⁴⁷ This is a reference to the change in perception of the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Palmerston North, Aotearoa/New Zealand, from the simple action of having the front doors open for the whole of the year of Mercy; a practice that has been continued, as people find a home in the Church, find a welcome and a listening ear, and see the witness of people of prayer.

⁴⁸ Benedict XVI Apostolic letter *Motu Proprio data Porta Fidei* (2011) op.cit.n.1.

and social needs,” (D&M 20) of the other, and is to proceed in fidelity to humanity itself which is to: “walk together, with others, toward that goal” (D&M 21) with a willingness “to listen to” (D&M 21) and to “strive to understand” (D&M 21) always recognising the interdependence of all involved. The encounter with the other, the formation of the members of the community, and the discernment of a moral decision will be founded on the “normative description of the way of life of the church and initiation which is received from the past ages but which is adapted to the circumstances of the modern world.” (GIRM 9) It is this recognition of what is given and the needs of the situation that provides the Church with the ability to respond to the various “proposals and measures of a pastoral nature” (GIRM 10); that “could not even have been foreseen” in previous times⁴⁹ and which, also appear as distinctive issues to be understood in the life of the person and the community being accompanied!

The GIRM doesn’t make specific note of these diverse characteristics of the community gathering for the Liturgy, it only says that the “faithful who come together as one, establish communion and dispose themselves properly to listen to the Word of God and to celebrate the Eucharist worthily;” (GIRM 46) but the Church’s understanding of the ‘inner disposition’ called for in this encounter has been provided in *Gaudium et Spes*, the OICA and the Magisterial teaching as outlined in this section. This is the nature of the community that now ‘enters’ the place of assembly.

Conclusion 8: The Gathering, the start of formation.

1. The gathering teaches formators to start with people where they are: with their issues, and real life questions.
2. The way forward in formation is to be by an ‘intentional dialogue’ so that all the elements involved in the dialogue partner’s questions are understood.

⁴⁹ The GIRM specifically says “four centuries earlier” which is making the point that the liturgical reforms of Vatican II have at their heart an awareness of the response to the changing situation since the Council of Trent. This awareness is clearly part of the formation of the GIRM as the same element is referenced in GIRM 6, 10 and 15.

Conclusion 8: The Gathering, the start of formation. (Continued)

3. To progress at the pace of the partner.
4. There is a preference to support and form solidarity with the poor, those in need and the stranger.
5. Formation is open to all, the parish with the open doors, includes all people within the boundary, regardless of their belief or situation; all are welcome to enter the dialogue of formation.
6. Formation meets people 'where they are at'.
7. Formation will provide a companion for anyone coming to the door.
8. Formation will adapt to the local need and circumstance.
9. The only demand on the dialogue partner is that they capable and willing to listen and hear.
10. Formation takes time and is never to be time limited.
11. When commencing a partnership of formation it is entering a journey that lasts a lifetime, and is to progress at the pace of the partner.
12. Formation is not a place for disputes, arguments, coercion; rather all involved are to be treated with the Love of God.

2.1.2. The Entrance into the Assembly

We are now ready to enter the Assembly.

The Rites of the Liturgy are divided into four parts: the Introductory Rites, the liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and the Concluding Rites.

Each has a specific purpose and character and "The Rites preceding the Liturgy of the Word, namely the Entrance, Greeting, Act of Penitence, Kyrie, Gloria, and collect, have the character of a beginning, introduction, and preparation."(GIRM 46)

"The Entrance" opens, with a simple introductory phrase "after the people have gathered."(GIRM 47)

It is the gathering of the diverse members of the community that is the signal for the liturgy to commence and this initiates the singing of a chant which "is to open the celebration, foster the unity of those who have been

gathered, introduce their thoughts to the mystery of the liturgical season or festivity” and to “accompany the procession of the priest and ministers” (GIRM 47).

The Liturgy therefore commences with the clear articulation of the purpose of the gathering and all hear the same message, including those who are going to serve the community by proclaiming the Gospel and facilitating the discernment and commitment; and all of this happens in the midst of the community. The purpose of the gathering, as in all discernment and formation, is specifically and publically proclaimed. Liturgically, it is the ‘naming’ of the season or particular celebration. In formation it is naming the issue or situation at hand.

The element to be emphasised is that the intention of this focus is to “foster the unity of the community.” The people who have gathered are diverse but they are to have a common focus.

The coming together and the being formed in such a unity of purpose, is described with a specific series of verbs: “gather...greet... recognise...sing... respond...confess... carry...acknowledge the altar... make the sign of the cross... greet and address” (GIRM 49-51): and each of these is an action with a specific character and content.

Firstly, they clearly articulate the qualities of dialogue, outlined above. The intention is to form the assembly of the Risen Christ and this is recognised in the initiating dialogue between the assembly and the minister. “The Lord be with you;” “And with your Spirit”. It is even clearer when the Bishop presides and greets the community with the Post Resurrection greeting of the Lord: “Peace be with you”. (Jn 20:21) The Risen Body of Christ is recognised in the dialogue between the Apostle and the disciples gathered.

Secondly, there is the acknowledgement that the bringing together of this group of people is the work of the Holy Spirit. This is a unity founded on: “The presidency of the Bishop, the gathering of priests, deacons and lay

ministers, and the full and active participation of the faithful – give rise to what IGMR 2002 calls “the pre-eminent expression of the church.””⁵⁰

Thirdly, the gathering and the statement of intention are linked. This is something common to all successful acts of human decision-making. An assembly of people seeking a common outcome starts with a clearly articulated expression of the purpose the community has gathered for.

Fourthly, the ministers proceed to the “salutation of the altar and the people gathered together.” (GIRM 49-50) They articulate, in action and word, an element common to all successful human encounters, but made explicit within the Christian assembly; all open and successful human encounters involve sacrifice and tolerance, forgiveness and, at times painful honesty.

The symbols that surround the dialogue of welcome and gathering also reveal that there can be no understanding of what is ‘right and just’ without there being a conscious relationship to those who live in the same place and time. There can be no movement to unity of mind and action without some form of sacrifice on the part of one, both, or all parties involved. There can be “no love without sacrifice, no life except through death to “life as we know it.”⁵¹ The way to life, love, truth, justice and peace is going to be sacrificial, or to use the theological motif, involve the person in the “Paschal Mystery.”

This understanding is reinforced in the elements that are carried and the words of greeting which form these actions of greeting. The ministers carry and wear the symbols of the crucified and Risen One. They follow a cross; they carry, the Easter light of the one who was crucified, buried; and then Rose again. They carry the Book of the Gospel, the living Word; and a thurible that burns the oils of the Chrismating, and they are clothed in the alb of baptism, clothed in Christ. Those who wear the alb are those who

⁵⁰ Connell, Martin, and Sharon McMillan. *Op.cit.*: 225

⁵¹ Searle, Mark. *Op.cit.*:27.

have gone onto the cross with Him, been buried with Him, and risen to new life with Him; they are the baptised.⁵²

This core orientation is made explicit, in word and deed, when the first greeting to the assembly is ‘the sign of the Cross’.

This is a repetition of the first symbol used in the OICA. When entering into formation the “Taking of the Cross” was the first thing those entering the Catechumenate are asked to do; to accept onto their eyes, ears and heart, the sign of the cross, and with their hands to grasp, and their feet to follow, the cross of Christ. The central act of the Rite of Election, on the first Sunday of Lent, is that the Bishop anoints the elect with the oil of Catechumen; on their head, heart and hands. The following of Christ and the formation of a person involves three elements, an intellectual understanding and choice, the alignment of the emotions and affective orientations and finally a willingness to act, “to put the hand to the plough,” (Lk 9:62) “to take up the cross.” (Mk 8:32; Matt 16:24; Lk 9:23)

In this symbolic opening of eyes, ears, heart and hands there is an articulation of the prerequisite of all open dialogue, common activity and decision-making. There is a need to face and remove all prejudices, so as to be open to seeing, hearing and being moved by the need of the other, the acceptance of the truth displayed as the answer to the inquiry and the formation that is required.

To be able to follow the call of *Gaudium et Spes* the individual and the community must be able to see and hear the signs of the times and the situation of humanity in the modern world, (GS 4) and to do so with an open and non-prejudiced heart and mind. This attitude of engagement precedes the interpreting of the elements by insights revealed in the light of the Gospel. The “perennial” (GS 4) questions raised by the partner in the dialogue call for a partner who is willing to see and hear their questions as the expression of this time and place. All parties to processes of

⁵² It would be wonderful if the whole community dressed in white, their baptismal gown, Christ. This is the practice among the people of Samoa who celebrate “White Sunday” on the 2nd Sunday of October.

discernment, decision-making and formation, are required to face their presuppositions and prejudices.

Conclusion 9: Entering into an Assembly.

1. Formation starts when the people have gathered, not when the minister is ready. Formation is of its nature communal.
2. At the start of all processes of formation there is a clear statement of the intention and focus of the community gathered.
3. The best communities of formation, though not necessarily the easiest to minister to, are NOT homogenous; they are diverse.
4. The formation community seeks and expects the active involvement of all those gathered.
5. All formation progresses in the 'light of the Cross'; meaning that those involved are ready to serve, to carry others, to love, to accept, knowing that this is often difficult and requires love and sacrifice.
6. The sign of the Cross is the pattern of all formation: people must start by acknowledging their prejudices, the areas they are closed to seeing, hearing or are not willing to engage in; and then to be asked and supported to move past them; this requires love and sacrifice, the Cross.
7. At the heart of the community of formation is the altar, of sacrifice all parties must be open to dying to self, and to the possibility and need for 'conversion'.

2.1.3. The Penitential

This openness and honesty will necessarily expose the interior 'ill ease' or 'dis-ease' of the parties to the dialogue and reveal, and demand engagement with, a "new series of problems which call for efforts of analysis and synthesis." (GS 5)

Gaudium et Spes identifies some of the elements that are prerequisites for full engagement in the process.

They include: being ignorant of the impact of propositions on the understandings of the dialogue partner; (GS 6) being blind to the social and

economic consequences impacting on a peoples' ability to be involved in processes of formation or to understand the issues involved; an awareness of the disproportionate impact on those who carry the burden of being refugees and the poor. (GS 7) These concerns are expressed by the Council as the need to have a "keener awareness of the inequalities in the world;" (GS 8) the innate "contradictions and imbalances" that lie in, and between, members of society and communities. Other elements identified as impacting on engagement in formation are the frequent "imbalance between an intellect which is modern in practical matters but does not have a theoretical system of thought which can master the sum total of its ideas, or arrange them adequately into a synthesis;" (GS 8) an "imbalance (that) arises between a concern for practicality and efficiency, and the demands of moral conscience; ... between the conditions of collective existence and the requisites of personal thought" (GS 8) and the "imbalance between specialized human activity and a comprehensive view of reality." (GS 8)

Gaudium et Spes couples all these insights to the complex issues arising from "population, economic and social pressures", and the imbalances expressed in intergenerational, gender, and racial conflict and "collective greed." (GS8)

The Council says these are the factors that have a tendency to lead to "mutual distrust, enmities, conflicts and hardships" (GS 8)

These are complex issues that people bring to the door of the Church and to formation. This matrix reveals the depth of work involved in establishing the foundational understanding of the environment/situation in which an ethical response and formation is to occur. However, liturgically, these elements can be summarised in a simple formula. When a person opens their eyes and ears, their heart, to the reality of their own prejudices, and the situation in which they live they will say: "I /We have sinned in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do."

This is the insight expressed liturgically in the *penitential rite*. At the heart of all human thought and interaction is the common reality of inadequacy; that will only be resolved by an action that is best described as 'dying to self' (interest) with the accompanying acknowledgment that to live this sacrificial element is dependent on a willingness to know and accept loving forgiveness, mercy, an act of grace, the gift of 'another'.

All men and women are aware that they are both the cause and the victim of 'sin'; which many people of goodwill will identify, with believers, as selfishness, self centredness, greed and blind self-interest.

The Christian understanding of the Paschal Mystery reveals that the free gift of mercy enables individuals and communities to overcome the innate tendency to be blind to the needs of others, deaf to the pleas of the needy, and to be inactive due to selfishness; this free gift is revealed when a person is willing to accept the 'grace' that enables them to die to self, in love of the other.

The song of mercy, the Kyrie, and the content of the Gloria, both express this.

The way forward, says *Gaudium et Spes* 10, is cooperative problem-solving using the language and skills of humanity. It is in cooperative dialogue, that the Church sees the Spirit moving in the world.

A parallel exposition is to be found in the OICA. The starting point of the catechumenate and the Sunday Liturgy is in the world. The place of encounter is among the non-baptised, men and women of good will, who share the common questions of humanity, outlined in *Gaudium et Spes* and while the OICA commences with a "hope" of initiation; people are met at the doorway, in a Spirit that recognises it is a portal, not a destination with a predetermined time or expression.

The focus of the Christian dialogue in the OICA and of those welcoming, whoever comes to the door of the Church, is to: "Bear witness before the world and eagerly work for the building up of the body of Christ." (AG 36),

and the pattern of this engagement is made clear, it will reflect: “a pattern that is constituent of the Christian lifestyle it is “a baptism that produces all these effects by the power of the mystery of the Lords’ passion and resurrection;” (Instruction on Christian initiation: 6) and that this ultimately involves being “engrafted in the likeness of Christ’s death.” (Instruction on Christian initiation: 6)

The repetition of these understandings from the process of initiation, at the beginning of every gathering of the faithful, shows that all believers are in constant need of being renewed and re-formed. The moral life is not achieved in a once and for all decision or profession. The formation of the human, and the Christian, is an ongoing process, which deepens and enriches, the more it is lived and reflected upon, publically witnessed to and lived, and accompanied by others. It has a character that is seasonal, that is, appropriate to the time and need, and involves a continuous life of internal conversion. So the important question is how?

Initially, for most people it occurs in a sequence of insights and glimpses, which gradually as a person lives the insight of self-giving love more deeply, leads them to see more clearly the Paschal revelation in the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

This is summarised succinctly in the *Catechism*: “In the liturgical year the various aspects of the one Paschal Mystery unfold. This is also the case with the cycle of feasts surrounding the mystery of the incarnation (Annunciation, Christmas, and Epiphany). They commemorate the *beginning* of our salvation and communicate to us the *first fruits* of the Paschal Mystery.” (CCC 1171)

The penitential rite reflects this willingness to engage in a deep examination of the self, and to possess honesty in respect of “what I think, and what I have done or what I have failed to do.”

Formation and the making of commitments must also start with such a deep self-examination. The fullness of the moral character, as with the understanding of the full revelation in Christ, is usually the result of having

seen ‘glimpses’ in the moments of life, but then realising that they are the “first fruits of the Paschal Mystery”. This is one of the core skills taught in the catechumenate, and it is emphasised in the final preparation for baptism and initiation, where the fuller internal examination, that is the focus of the scrutinies of Lent, provides the core meaning of the accompanying, fasting, prayer and service of the poor.

The Penitential Rite⁵³ which had its origin as a ministerial preparation before approaching the altar, and with Vatican II has become part of the liturgy of the whole community, reveals the need, of all, to be aware of the barriers to involvement in the assembled Body of Christ and to hearing the Word and being formed.

There is, then, a preparatory stage in the Christian life, and formation as a Christian and a human being: it is honest self-evaluation and regular and full Examen. All people come to situations and circumstances, formation and decision-making, with a set of understandings, many of which need to be challenged.

Authentic dialogue is dependent upon both parties to the conversation entering into a process of honest self-evaluation and examination. One of the gifts of the recent crisis in the ministerial church has been an awareness that ALL, from the perpetrators, to those ‘overseeing’ the community, can be blinded by the presuppositions or habits they carry and can therefore avoid actions, or act, in ways which are counter to the Gospel. Ordination or public commitments do not exempt anyone from the need to form, and reform; and to examine their conscience, before making decisions on whether to act or not to act. This carries the concomitant obligation of acknowledging that people often do not possess all the elements necessary for living the fullness of their commitments. This awareness is a requisite part of formation or to a person being in a position to make an authentic decision or to act responsibly.

⁵³ in its original form it was a ministerial self-examination : cf. Witczak, Michael G. Op.cit.p.140.

This is a process that will not be instant; it may “last several years.”⁵⁴

Conclusion 10: Examen.

1. The process of formation, if it has helped people to face their prejudices and areas of unwillingness to engage, will expose those areas where people need forgiveness, reconciliation and healing.
2. The process of Examen, will lead to an awareness of those things which have been done or not done, said or not said.
3. The process of formation will share an unqualified acceptance and forgiveness in the face of such realities.
4. This also allows those involved in formation to be aware of the issues and areas, of which they are not aware!

2.1.4. The collect

After the processes of encounter, and (the entrance and penitential Rite) have being completed, the liturgy places before the gathered community a very clear summary of the purpose for gathering. The Collect. This may be expressed in the prayer from the ‘proper of the day’ and therefore be in harmony with the seasonal celebration and formation of the church universal; or it may focus on the particular reason for this gathering of the community such as a marriage, ordination, or funeral. In Western meeting traditions this would be called the “agenda”. In the scientific tradition this is called the “hypothesis”. In political spheres this is called the “bill to be debated”. It is an articulation of the issue around which the group has gathered.

The Collect, has two roles to perform as the climax of the introductory rites. It is a “collecting” of the “prayers of the community by the

⁵⁴ Christian Initiation of Adults: 7b.

presider,"⁵⁵ so as to bring unity to the community, and in doing this the prayer fulfils the second goal, the expression of the "character of the celebration." (GIRM 54) At each gathering of the community there is to be a unity of purpose. So one aspect of the faith is celebrated, one feast, one purpose, is placed before the community, and it is in the light of this declared focus that the Liturgy of the Word "follows." The Collect sets the agenda for the formation of the community and those within it.

After the preparatory work has been done, and the issue at hand has been clearly identified; the community is in a position to seek wisdom and understanding. Without this clarity there is no focus of the mahi⁵⁶ at hand.

So it is in formation and the making of decisions and commitments. There is a need for a "clearing of the boards," an honest examination and evaluation of the 'heart and mind' to identify prejudgments and barriers to dialogue and then the common focus can be expressed to provide clarity of direction. The purpose for the community's gathering, or the issue to be resolved is articulated, and it is affirmed by the common response of those assembled: "Amen."

Conclusion 11: Collect – The Purpose.

1. All formation requires a restatement of the purpose of the gathering, the intention of the community's gathering, and the form of the proceedings.
2. There is the understanding that the process of formation is based on collective and co-operative dialogue.
3. There is a single focus to each gathering, but there may be a seasonal and developmental structure to the overall formation.
4. The intention of the statement of purpose is to build and maintain unity in the formation group.

⁵⁵ Foley, Edward. "Chapter II: The Structure of the Mass, Its Elements and Its Parts." *A Commentary on the Order of Mass of the Roman Missal: A New English Translation Developed under the Auspices of the Catholic Academy of Liturgy*; General Editor, Edward Foley; Associate Editors, John F. Baldwin, Mary Collins, Joanne M. Pierce; Foreword by Roger Mahony., (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2007) p.145.

⁵⁶ Mahi is a word in Te reo Maori that means "work".

2.2. The Liturgy of the Word

2.2.1. “Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path”. (Ps 119:105).⁵⁷

The heart of the Liturgy of the Word, and the OICA catechesis, is the *proclamation* of the Word of God accompanied by a *meditation* in which, with open hearts and minds, those present focus on how the Sunday scriptures will impact on their lives; and in the OICA on the lives of the catechumen, their sponsors and catechists.

The history of the development of the Liturgy of the Word, with its clear link to the formation of the catechumen, provides the insight that what happens in the hearing and reflection upon the Scripture has as its focus *formation in the Christian life and ethic*. This understanding reveals that a hearing and reflecting, in common, is an essential element of formation and reveals that moral development and moral formation cannot be based upon shared ignorance but rather must be grounded on seeking after truth and insight, together. In the Church community the fundamentals of the spiritual life and Christian teaching are contained in the Scripture and the Liturgy. This insight though is also of import for the wider community as it underlines the fact that all moral decisions require an openness to being informed.

There is therefore a *co-responsibility* called for between the one who is being formed and their mentors and companions, to ensure that all are aware of what is going on in the heart of the individual and the questions and issues that the scriptures are resonating with. This evaluation is not limited to the catechumen. This is the fundamental role of the scripture in the ongoing formation, reformation and guidance of all members of the Christian community. This principle is also to be applied to all those who would help in the formation of decision-makers and individuals. Living

⁵⁷ This quote is a little long for a title, but it expresses the way in which the Word of Scripture, and of the Lord revealed in creation and the history of salvation, is to guide the path of life, the practical journey with the Lord.

within a community is neither minimalistic nor formulaic rather it requires an integrated, informed and ongoing formation for all those who hear the Word.

The liturgy of the Word consists of two elements: firstly, the *proclamation* of texts that carry the insight and secondly, an '*interpretation*' so as to elucidate the insight which they contain. It is a fundamental understanding that it is this combination that enables the revelation of "The mystery of redemption and salvation, and offer spiritual nourishment, by Christ himself present in his word in the midst of the faithful." (GIRM 55)

There are several elements that need to be emphasised in respect of the use of the scriptures in this exercise of seeking insight and understanding so as to provide the 'food for instruction and reflection' and 'interpretation'.

Firstly, the community has *prepared* the Liturgy of the Word. The 'treasures of the Bible (that) are to be opened' have been specifically chosen, and at times edited, so as to provide insight and formation, in respect of the feast, season, or the event at hand. The scriptures are not used 'randomly.' They are focused to the question or event at hand, they are chosen by those who know their meaning and origin, and it is often the provision of interrelated texts that will give an 'authentic' expression of the Word of God.

Secondly, the scriptures, the sources of insight, are themselves not uniform in their origin or form. A wide variety of forms or literary genres are included in the Scriptures, and they need to be understood and interpreted according to the form, in which they were written, and the place and time of their writing. The forms include: history, law, wisdom sayings, ethical instructions, hymns and proverbs, the insight of prophets and lawyers, and the fundamental understandings of the people expressed as creation myths and expectations of hope.

The recognition that this diverse group of writing have been gathered as the source of wisdom and insight, and having passed through the processes

of acceptance as ‘canonical’ by the fruit of Rabbinic and Ecclesial wisdom, have become treasured sources of wisdom; does not remove the fact they are fundamentally, legal and ecclesial documents, prophetic utterances, myths, and hymns and proverbs. There are also contemporary sources of such insight that do not lie in the canonical scriptures. They will be the place where the Church will find the expression of “contemporary needs”⁵⁸ that the *Introduction to the Rites of Initiation* says are to be part of the discernment. It is here that will be found contemporary expressions of wisdom and of the encounter with God.

The GIRM sees the community gathered as a community who in the hearing of the Word seeks an understanding that resonates with the hopes and prayers of all humanity. The reception of the Word is expected to be comprehensible and relevant to all peoples as this is the primary site where God speaks, not only to the community of believers, but to all of humanity. It is therefore necessary, in the process of finding and expressing the relationship with God, in the modern world, that the sources of this time and place are recognised as sources of inspiration and instruction. It is here that God speaks to his people, and proclaims the Gospel.

The insight of faith is that, in the Canonical Word, God is speaking directly to the people, individually and communally, and calling them to that “perfection belonging to the essence of the Christian vocation.”(RD 4)

Conclusion 12: Proclamation and Meditation.

1. The content of formation will be two fold, it will have elements of information and ‘proclamation’, of understandings and points of view, but it will also have interpretation and application of those insights.
2. The resources are ‘prepared’ for the purpose of forming and supporting the understanding of those who are present.

⁵⁸ *Instruction on Christian Initiation* 30 /2

3. The resources of formation are multi-sourced.

4. There is a need for 'reflection' and 'mediation' on the sources of information: they need to be listened to, received, meditated on, responded to, interpreted and applied; and this is a process best engaged in by the whole formation community.

2.2.2. The Gospel

Another change in the liturgy, reflecting the insight and direction of this study, was the manner in which the Lectionary of the Post Vatican II Liturgy balances an Old Testament passage with the Gospel of the day.

The juxtaposition of the Old Testament readings with the Gospel tells us that the insight of the Gospel has its foundation in the reflection on the sources of the Old Testament, the life of the Church and human experience, and then directly reveals, to the eyes of faith, the revelation of the Lord in the person, words and deeds, life, death and resurrection, the Paschal Mystery, of Christ.

The two are not contradictory or in conflict, one sees "in a mirror dimly" (1Cor 13:12), and they are both a revelation of the same loving and life giving, covenantal God, in relationship with His people. The additional element of the Gospel is that God is 'Emmanuel' and among us, in His Risen Body, the Church and the Spirit, and to the eyes of faith has a specific modality of encounter and life.

The breaking open of the Word is an action of Christ, in the assembly, and is achieved through the ministerial gift to the community. But the liturgy tells us that it is focused on the Day, the Hour, the reason for the gathering, and then through a focused and directed act of discernment, reveals the elements that are 'right and just' and which the Church, authorities, the needs of the poor and the tradition, demand be responded to by those gathered.

The Gospel is the place where the Risen Christ speaks directly to those who believe. This is underlined by all the liturgical actions that accompany its proclamation. The actions are the same as were seen at the gathering at the beginning of the Liturgy, where the Risen Christ was recognised in the Assembly and the Minister. They are: standing to recognise the Lord, a dialogue recognising the Lord in the Assembly, the Minister and the Gospel; a sign of the Cross, surrounded by the light of Christ, and anointed with the chrism, in the form of incense. This symbolically brings to bear on the issues and lives of the community the contradiction of the kingdom and the Cross. He has walked with us on the road, we had glimpses of his presence, now in the breaking open of the Word and the Bread, he speaks clearly and directly and when our eyes are opened we know Him; and it is at that moment that "He vanished from their sight." (Lk 24:31)

Conclusion 13: Christ speaks in the Gospel.

1. The insight and revelation of Christ is gradual, even in the Gospel readings of the year. In formation therefore the fullness of insight should not be expected immediately; rather those involved get glimpses in the words and deeds spoken of in the Gospel stories; and in time, at Easter, they will come to comprehend the fullness of the revelation, and then be in a position to make a commitment.
2. The Gospel is always linked, as a fulfilment, to the Old Testament 'glimpses' and hopes, and the insights of human wisdom.

2.2.3. The Homily

The process and form of the liturgy has brought us to the homily, and as in the sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:3-12) and the Transfiguration, (Mk 9:2-8) this is where Christ can be seen taking this community up the side of the

hill, sitting them down, offering the insight into the fullness of creation⁵⁹, the law and the prophets. It is here that the same Christ brings 'good news', to all who will follow Him and who will sit and listen. That is a free gift to each and every one present.

The Gospel is to be proclaimed and preached with the understanding that here the 'real presence' of Christ is revealed as the fruit of the dialogue with those who are gathered. The presumption of encounter which the Gospel brings is exactly the same as the historical encounter between Christ and the people of his place and time. In the Gospel Christ brings a challenge and a specific understanding to the table of the Word. It may be summarised as the "fundamental elements of the kingdom of God" and it contains ethical presuppositions and insights. They are clear but do not come with a predetermined moral and ethical solution or application.

It is therefore essential to understand that the first presence of Christ in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7, "in the person of His minister", is vital, to enable understanding, discernment, facilitation and the proclamation of the living Gospel, in this place and time.

The homily is not an additional element, rather it is the place where the fruit of the act of discernment and application is spoken; it is where the message of the Living Christ is, after careful reflection, is taken and proclaimed. It is here that the wisdom of the Scriptures, the Magisterium and the Tradition, are brought to bear upon the concerns of those gathered which have already being identified and articulated. They are however, as in all aspects of the liturgy, and moral discernment, to be articulated with the foundational understanding of the framework of dialogue.

⁵⁹ The symbolic links in the setting of the Transfiguration show the centrality of the seventh day, the fullness of creation, but also the day of the Community's gathering, the Sunday, and here the elements outlined in the first reading, the Law and the Prophets are taken and the fullness of God's glory is seen. In Matt 17:12 this revelation of the $\delta\omicron\xi\alpha$ of the Lord is directly linked to the crucifixion and dying, the Paschal mystery.

To expect the parish priest of Eketahuna⁶⁰ to have the fullness of insight and/or understanding and/or knowledge to bring a full and rich articulation and understanding to aid the moral discernment and/or decision-making or even the formation of all present, is to undervalue the richness of what may be required. This is why people live in community and why Christians live in a community of believers. It also has the direct implications on the role of the Bishop to 'oversee' what is taught and the formation of all so that, while it includes ensuring that the Parish Priest of Eketahuna is interpreting correctly, it also implies that he is not to be the only one who articulates the understanding and/or wisdom of the Gospel. Within the local Church, and within the Church universal, there is a need for an ongoing, deep and rich dialogue to bring the Gospel to an interface with the wisdom and the problems of the world in which we live.

This dialogical nature of the homily has its first expressions says McGowan in the "collective, dialogical inspiration" that took place in the pre-Constantinian church. McGowan suggests that formation would have taken place in a 'discussion', a reflection on the scriptures led by the local bishop and presbyters. In such a dialogical model, there were a variety of understandings, or responses to the readings, offered to those gathered. It was probably limited to the ministers, but it was not limited to a single interpretation or a single voice of proclamation.

If this insight is extended, it offers an insight as to how the sharing of the wisdom and problems of the world, especially with the wider dialogue required at the heart of formation, can combine the insights that the lawyers, philosophers, scientists, economists, psychologists and counsellors, anthropologists, the prophets and contemplatives who are called into this process can offer. They need to be welcomed as the dialogue partners of the one who is to proclaim the Gospel, with the

⁶⁰ A very small community of 15 to 20 farmers living in an isolated situation and visited by the Pastor of the neighbouring towns of Pahiatua and Dannevirke, up to 70 km away, on the south-eastern part of the North Island of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

explicit recognition that these dialogue partners have a vital role to play in the discernment of the way forward.

At the level of the church universal this impacts on the roles, and the mode of engagement, of groups such as the Pontifical Councils and Academies⁶¹, Caritas, Catholic academics and Universities and associations of professionals. The need has been seen to create these essential partnerships as they are required by the processes of discernment, for the universal Church; but the same applies to the, National, Diocesan and local communities, and this extends to ensuring that the Church also knows those who are to be the agents of application who can direct the community to the resources and the methods of effective implementation!

The required relationships have a direct consequence when it comes to the application and implementation of the Gospel that is to be preached in the homily. The discerning and preaching of the living Word cannot be limited by the experience and wisdom of the minister. The minister's 'job' is to 'dialogue' and 'discern' and then 'proclaim' a living Gospel for the Assembly; so building on the insight of *Gaudium et Spes* 43 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) was clear that those responsible for the application and implementation of moral insight will not directly be the pastors of the Church as they are not to "intervene directly in the political construction and organization of social life" rather this is the task "of the laity acting on their own initiative with their fellow-citizens."⁶² The application of the Gospel and moral insight is to be directed to "improving and raising the conditions of human life in this world"; by "social action" and "can involve a number of concrete means." It will "always be exercised for the common good and in conformity with the Gospel message and the teaching of the Church."⁶³ However, it is

⁶¹The Pontifical Councils for: the Laity, Justice and Peace, migrants and itinerant peoples, health and pastoral care, interreligious dialogue, culture and social communication. The Pontifical Academies of : social science, science, Life, St Thomas, Theology, Fine Arts, Archaeology, Cults of Martyrs and Latin.

⁶² Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. "*Instruction on Christian freedom and liberation: "The Truth Makes Us Free"*", 1986:80.

⁶³ Ibid.

recognised that these partnerships, especially those focused on the application of Gospel and Moral insights, require processes of “collaboration”, firstly, in the “acquisition of the essential technical and scientific skills”⁶⁴ and secondly, in “the moral formation of character and a deepening of the spiritual life;” and all of these elements will be coupled with the exercise of “the political prudence needed for guiding and running human affairs.”⁶⁵

There is a need for dialogue and collaboration so that the Gospel message may be discerned, the applications identified and the community harnessed to act. It is this bringing to the fore of the fruit of the meditation upon the Gospel, the preaching and the clear application that completes the process of the discernment of what is “right and just”!

Conclusion 14: The Fruit of Discernment.

1. The fruit of discernment in the processes of formation require a ministerial input and the proclamation of what has been discerned as ‘right and true’ for the here and now.
2. This though will be the fruit of a communal process, and will involve the need for wisdom wider than that in the formation group. In Church terms this requires the wisdom of many groups and skills, depending on the issue, and will also need an awareness of the scope and ‘level’ of need. Discernment and the application of insight therefore need to be cooperative and open to the wisdom of other voices.
3. The discernment of the messages contained in the resources used will be focused on this world and the provision of realistic applications.

2.2.4. The universal prayer: the Application

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

All that has preceded this point in the Liturgy of the Word has involved the requirements for being formed to make a choice and therefore it has focused on the relationship between the preparation, the identification of barriers to discernment, sources of wisdom, the Gospel, the Homily, and the discernment of what the assembly is called to do. Now we come to the identification of where and how this is to be applied.

It is important to be able to articulate the wisdom and understanding that is found in the dialogue between the wisdom of the world and the Word of the Gospel; but the core framework of *Dei Verbum* 2 is clear, it will not be revelatory of God's presence, or bring the fullness of life and love, unless it is applied and acted upon.

Where and how is the formation that has been gained, as a result of this discernment process, to be applied? The liturgy again is clear.

"The people" (GIRM 69) will exercise "their office of baptismal priesthood" (GIRM 69) by responding "to the Word of God which they have received in faith." (GIRM 69) They will do this by praying the Universal Prayer, or Prayer of the faithful. The form of the Prayer provides four "series of intentions" (GIRM 70) with which to discern and express the application of the Word received, to this place and time, and the needs, desires, and questions of this community. In other words it identifies what is required to bring the "way, the truth and the life" to reality, and having identified what is involved in the Gospel for the community, the liturgy now asks the community to decide how and by whom it is to be done! The points of focus are simple:

- "For the needs of the Church
- For public authorities and the salvation of the whole world;
- For those burdened by any kind of difficulty;
- For the local community?"⁶⁶

⁶⁶ These elements are taken from GIRM 70 quoting SC 53.

It is the response to these four points of reference, which will lead to the understanding of what is to be proclaimed as the “right and just” activity that the community must take, to respond to the question that was framed at the time of gathering, has been the focus of the study and meditation, the proclamation of the Gospel and the process of discernment.

When put through this simple filter the response will be :“ as a community the Church must...as a community we need the public authorities to...as a community we can identify these people who are burdened and we need to...as a community we can see in our local community the following needs and therefore...”

Then, in public, before the whole assembly, we ‘pray’ for what needs to be done and who needs to act! As if to underline the importance of this the GIRM is clear to enunciate that the intentions prayed for will be the fruit of a process that is “sober, composed with a wise liberty and in few words expressive of the prayer of the entire community.” (GIRM 71) The other elements that show the importance of this contribution of the Prayer of the Faithful is that it is proclaimed from the ambo, the place reserved for the proclamation of the Word. (GIRM 71) This application is therefore seen as the proclamation of the fruit of the Liturgy of the Word and the voice of the Lord calling the community to action. This is the expression of “the duty of the faithful: to cooperate in the missionary activity of the church and to have a “lively awareness of their responsibility in the world.”(GIRM 36, 69)⁶⁷

Conclusion 15: Application to Life.

1. It is the role of those being formed, of the people of the group, to ultimately decide on how the insights offered and discerned are applied in their lives.
2. This is where they are deciding how what they have heard and learned will impact on their lives.
3. The places which they will need to examine are: the relationship to the local community, those in authority, the local church and those in need.

⁶⁷ Foley. *Op.cit.* p.160.

4. When the person has applied what they have 'heard' and seen what the consequences are for these relationships, they are in a position to make an informed decision and commit, or not, to the hoped for result of the formation.
5. In the community the one who has broken the Word to discern, will join the People, in forming the Prayer of the Community, with its accompanying expectations of action.

2.2.5. The commitment

The community now understands what it is called to do, and who is to do it. What is now required is a public commitment, to act and to live the decision made.

There are two elements that occur at this point of the liturgy and they both underscore the nature of the commitment, especially in the Christian Community. The first is the communal *recitation of the Creed* and the second are the Rites of *Commitment*.

First the Creed. Before the prayer of the faithful which is a public proclamation of what has been agreed to happen, the community recites the creed in a common voice. But what is the Creed? It is the 'Words' of commitment, its origin being the baptismal promises and the recitation of the common beliefs of the community. It is the condensation in words of the promises of baptism, and the understanding of what is happening in baptism.

Secondly, though they are not included in the GIRM, rather they are in the Roman Pontifical, which says that they are understood as being in the ministry of the Bishop, are all the liturgies of commitment. Baptisms, ordinations into ministry, marriage, consecrations to religious life, confirmation, are all celebrated at this point. They all have a common form: after being formed by the word, and having discerned the appropriate response, and it being a life choice, the individual and or the community are called to make a formal commitment. It will be a public proclamation, a

Word, of commitment, but more it is a commitment to act. The Rites articulate, in Word and symbolic deeds, the understandings of what the person(s) will do to live their commitment to the Gospel and Christ Risen in the Body of the Church.

The fact that all commitments are celebrated here, at the place of baptism, and before the Eucharistic Liturgy, is no accident. The placement reinforces the understanding which has been preserved in the Church from the experience of the fourth and fifth century catechumenate. At that time, many would spend their whole lives in the catechumenate, unwilling to take on the responsibility and challenge of Christian commitment. What the Church understands is that those gathered of a Sunday, those gathered in any formation, must come to a point at which they make the most fundamental choice; will I do what I know is right and just or not!

In the light of Christ there is the understanding that commitment will always involve dying to self, going into the tomb with Christ, so as to rise to the fullness of life, a life of forgiveness and self-giving love of the brothers and sisters. This is the life revealed in baptism, the entry into the Paschal Mystery and it is expressed in the *Catechism*: “The essential rite of the sacrament follows: Baptism properly speaking. It signifies and actually brings about death to sin and entry into the life of the Most Holy Trinity through configuration to the Paschal Mystery of Christ.” (CCC1239)

This is why it is at this point that all commitments in the Church’s life are made. The commitment to act is the fruit of the processes of formation and discernment in the Liturgy of the Word, and it comes before the Eucharist.

Conclusion 16: Commitment

1. The place of commitment comes after the word has been shared, understood, reflected on, the implications discerned and the application understood.
2. What is now required in a process of formation is the commitment, to act on what has been seen to be the way forward as an action or position, or more importantly as a life choice.

Conclusion 16: Commitment (contin.)

3. The placement by the Church in the liturgy underlines the fact that any commitment of such importance means making choices which impact on other possible choices, both positive and negative.
4. It is therefore of the nature of commitment that it is both a choice for the fullness of life, and a choice that involves the sacrifice of elements that are known to be 'good'. The commitment to act, to choose a way of life, if authentic, is always sacrificial, and displays the fundamental character of the Paschal Mystery.
5. Therefore the formation for, and the decision to commit, require that the person is free, informed and is acting out of love.

2.3. The Liturgy of the Eucharist

2.3.1. The Eucharist: the Act of thanksgiving and commitment to sacrificial love in community.

The Mystagogy of the OICA teaches that there are three coextensive elements to the ongoing living of the Christian life, once someone has been formed and have made a public commitment. They are: *“Meditating on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist, and performing works of charity.”* (CIA 37)

The weekly gathering, as has been seen, provides in the Liturgy of the Word a meditation on the sources of insight and understanding and the Gospel. Now a community of individuals which has been formed and who made a free and knowing commitment, are pledged to being broken for truth and in forgiveness, and are willing to offer everything to the service and love of the other's need; and to actually doing what is good, right and true. They have made that public commitment in Baptism.

The Rite speaks of the “Christian” character of the individual being increased by “the way they live” (CIA 41) and this occurs in the circumstances of daily life. It is in the unity of the words of understanding

and commitment with the deeds of a person's life that the fullness of the human character is revealed.

The manner, in which this happens, expressed liturgically, is when the whole community makes a commitment and is con-joined as the body of Christ in sacrifice and service.

This requires humility (GIRM 84) and a willingness to "participate in the sacrifice actually being celebrated." (GIRM 85) The fullest expression of full and active participation is to be found in a response of the faithful which cannot be passive or subservient; rather it is formed, mature and articulate.

The Catholic understanding of the Eucharist is founded on the belief that this is the identification with the one "paschal sacrifice" of Christ, (GIRM 72) and that what occurs in the community takes place in and through "an action of Christ the priest and of his body, the Church." (SC7) The Liturgy of the Eucharist, is not a memory of a past event, rather it is the presence of the 'one' event revealing the love of God in "the sacrifice of the Cross continuously made present in the Church."(GIRM 72) The Church is one with "what the Lord himself did and handed over to his disciples to be done in his memory." (GIRM 72) The GIRM has spoken much, in reflecting on the Liturgy of the Word, of listening, instructing, teaching, receiving and forming. But at the heart of the liturgy of the Eucharist, and this expresses the fruit of formation and choosing to be one in Christ, is the commitment to *doing*. The focus of the Eucharist is a dialogue that results in action. The dialogue between Christ and his Body, assembly and minister, is the locus where the Paschal Mystery continues. Or more exactly, it is in the Paschal Mystery, that the words and deeds, life death and resurrection, the dying on a cross, the place of ultimate self-giving of Christ; the source of life and love; is revealed.

The link between the incarnate response and the Paschal Mystery, both in Christ and the life of the Church, is strongly expressed in two paragraphs of the *Catechism*. Firstly: "Jesus' words and actions during his hidden life and public ministry were already salvific, for they anticipated the power of his

Paschal Mystery. They announced and prepared what he was going to give the Church when all was accomplished. The mysteries of Christ's life are the foundations of what he would henceforth dispense in the sacraments, through the ministers of his Church, for "what was visible in our Saviour has passed over into his mysteries."(CCC 1115)

And, secondly: "Sacraments are "powers that come forth" from the Body of Christ, which is ever-living and life-giving. They are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his Body, the Church. They are "the masterworks of God" in the new and everlasting covenant." (CCC 1116)

This then can be extended to all people of Good Will. While *Lumen Gentium* offers that such people "can attain to salvation" when they "sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience;" (LG 16) *Gaudium et Spes* and the *Catechism* say that: "Since Christ died for all, and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partakers, in a way known to God, of the Paschal mystery," (GS 22/5; CCC 1260) and that "Every man who is ignorant of the Gospel of Christ and of his Church, but seeks the truth and does the will of God in accordance with his understanding of it, can be saved".(CCC 1260) The Paschal Mystery has been seen in glimpses by people of good will, to the extent that they have the possibility of being partakers in this Mystery; and the glimpses have been revealed in the salvation history of the people of the covenant; but they are fully revealed in the assembly, the ministry and the Word, with their attendant symbols, gestures and words.

This revelation occurs in the "source and summit," (CCC 1324) the "font and apex of Christian life" (LG 11) the Liturgy which has at its heart two sources of meaning "Paschal sacrifice and banquet." (GIRM 72) It is "the sacrifice of the cross that is continuously made present in the church" (GIRM 72) and at its heart it "carries out what the Lord himself *did* and handed over to his disciples to be *done* in his memory." (GIRM 72 quoting SC 47)

The Eucharist therefore is about doing what the Lord did and what disciples are called upon to do in his memory. Knowing “what is to be done,” what is required, “what is right and just” those present are called upon to commit to joint action. This is proclaimed and enabled, by the Lord, in a set of actions which revolve around the sacrifice of the cross. Those gathered take “the bread and the chalice, give thanks, break the bread and give it.” (GIRM 72) From the moment of gathering, through the greeting of the Gospel proclaimed and the central prayer and action of the Eucharistic Prayer, to the final dismissal, it is the following and taking on of the Cross, the conscious entry into the Paschal Mystery, which gives meaning and direction to the whole Liturgy.

So it is in human living and formation. All growth moments call for a free giving of self to the other in love and sacrifice. It is therefore clear that “the entire celebration of the liturgy of the Eucharist in its parts corresponds precisely to the words and actions of Christ.” (GIRM 72)

What do the signs and actions teach us?

Firstly, it is the ordinary bread and wine, the lives and resources of the people gathered, which are taken, blessed, broken and given.

Secondly, it is an action of the Holy Spirit, in the midst of a community, following a prescribed pattern, which speaks of the manner of living which is conformed to the Paschal Mystery. The liturgy calls for the bringing to the table of the very being of the members of the community, carried in the gifts, which are the resources, life and commitment of the members of the community. The bread and wine are the symbols of the lives of those gathered the gifts which will be acted upon by the Holy Spirit.

The Central symbols of the Eucharist are: an altar, at the centre of a community, which has been made ready, in preparation for the action of self-giving and commitment. (GIRM 73) The nature of the action will be one of sacrifice, on an altar, but at the same stage it carries the significance of gathering around a table. There is a mutual dependency on the others gathered, and their willingness to offer their gifts, but more importantly on

the Spirit who enables and acts in the *αναμνησις*, and the Christ who is present in the midst.

The origins of the gifts to be given are clear. They come from the very place of creation: “they are the fruit of the earth and the work of human hands”⁶⁸ and they reveal the creative Word that has been spoken. There then takes place an action; they are taken, blessed, broken and given in the transformative power of the Holy Spirit, acting within those willing to be part of the Paschal Mystery. It is in these simple gifts and actions that the Holy Spirit provides the fullness of life revealed in Jesus Christ to the world.

The preparation of the gifts provides a symbolic link that speaks of the two sources of revelation being united, the bread and wine of creation “...bread and wine to offer, fruit of the earth and work of human hands;” and the Lord who reveals the Pasch; “It will become the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation.” (Jn 6:35-40) It also reveals that the words and beliefs are to be given life, “made flesh,” in the deeds and the actions which reveal the presence of life and love, of God, the very midst of the ordinary.

The second insight in the preparation of the gifts is that those present are willing to place the resources of the community, and the individual, at the service of the common understanding. The *General Instruction to the Roman Missal* speaks of the money and resources / gifts being brought forward by the faithful to enable the service of the poor and the maintenance of a community of service. (GIRM 73) The elements brought forward in the procession of the gifts, are symbolic of the everyday lives and resources of the faithful being placed at the service of a collective, to be given to those in need. The washing of the hands tells us that there is nothing left; all has been placed upon the altar.

Then, in the Eucharistic Prayer we come to the “centre and high point of the entire celebration.” (GIRM 78)

2.3.1.1. The Eucharistic Prayer.

⁶⁸ *Roman Missal: English Translation according to the Third Typical Edition.* Wellington: New Zealand Catholic Bishops’ Conference, 2010; n.23; p.519

The Eucharistic Prayer continues in the same pattern as has been identified in all aspects of the liturgy. It is not an instruction.

The prayers of the preparation of the gifts and the dialogue opening the Preface reveal that the fruit of the process of gathering is that all the resources of the community's ordinary lives are symbolically brought together in the bread and wine as a single communal offering. This is a recognition that the resources of people's lives are themselves gifts and therefore that the returning them to the one who gives them, "give thanks" is the appropriate response. However, full thanksgiving involves "lifting up our hearts and minds," it is interpersonal, communal and affective; and it is the combination of the two aspects that enables all to see what is "right and just" and to respond to the moral demand. This again reflects the pattern of formation and commitment.

That which is truly right and just, is then clarified in the body of the preface. The Preface always links these understandings to the fullness of the Christian life, and the interaction of the Incarnation and the Paschal Mystery. Following seasonal patterns, and those of the occasional feasts, it tells us that the element which is truly, "right and just, our duty and our salvation" is ultimately revealed in Christ.

Every preface has as its starting point a statement, "It is right and just", in other words it is morally correct, because it is a formulated position, the result of discernment and choice; but by saying "It is right and just our duty and our salvation" it makes clear that the ethical and the religious combine and that it is here that thanksgiving to God and worship become an ethical imperative.

That which is "truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, is always and everywhere to give you thanks,"⁶⁹ by offering all that we have been given,

⁶⁹ Preface 1 of the Passion of the Lord: *Roman Missal: English Translation according to the Third Typical Edition*. Wellington: New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference, 2010; n.43; p.547

life, resources, time and our talents to be taken, blessed, broken and given in an action that puts into practice that which has been discerned as right and just, the fruit of the Liturgy of the Word. This can be done in exceptional circumstances by an individual, as an act of martyrdom, but by and large it is going to be in the daily decisions and commitments of the individual within the community that a person, committed to the support of their neighbour; will do that which has been discerned as morally correct. The commitment revealed in the liturgy is that the resources of the individual, their understanding and commitment, time, property, their very selves are with one word committed to the need of the other. When an individual says within the community "Amen", to recognising the body of Christ in the Eucharist and the Community gathered, when they affirm that it is in them/Him and with them/Him and through them/Him that the glory of God's love and life is brought to this world: the response is to freely proclaim the great "Amen." Here the acceptance of the fruit of moral discernment and the commitment to action is publically proclaimed.

The 'success' of formation will ultimately be revealed in the action that is taken, or avoided, and it is here and here alone, that the action can be evaluated. At the end of this process it is the insights of the Gospel that bring us the richest form of evaluation and formation.

All will ultimately be "right and just" by 'following' the pattern of Christ which is always an action of love and *αγαπε*, not selfishness or self-centredness. The Eucharistic interpretation in John 13:1-17 makes this clear: it will be those, who are willing to get down from the table, take off the outer garment and wash the feet of those with whom they are gathered, serve the need of the other, who will be revealed to be fully alive and to reveal the totally incarnational God. God is revealed in and through creation and there is no seeking what is right and just anywhere other than in the world, in this place, in this time, in this contingency of choice, weakness, faith, hope and love. It is in the 'real world,' the world where Christ is incarnate, present in the hungry and the thirsty, the stranger and the naked, the sick and the imprisoned;(Matt 25:31-46) that a fundamental choice, an ethical choice, the Paschal choice, is put before the person: "I

offer you life or death.” (Deut. 30:19) However this choice has changed in Christ to: “I offer you life *through* death,” a death to ignorance, self-interest, and complacency.

Conclusion 17: Committing to total Gift, in action.

1. All commitments are a commitment to act, to live in a certain relationship or manner of action, expressing core understandings and beliefs, the fruit of formation.
2. To enable this to happen the person must place (all) the resources they have at the service of the commitment.
3. These are the ordinary elements of life, but they normally require or involve others, and their committing their resources, and selves to the same enterprise.
4. So all commitments are ultimately communal and need the support of others, and their willingness to gift and commit themselves and their resources to the action.
5. In such a commitment, nothing is left out, it is a giving of the person’s very self, but it is at the same time, very ordinary, it is the ‘bread’ of their being that is given and committed.
6. The only way that this can be life giving then is that the person, and all their resources and gifts are ‘taken, blessed, broken and given’ to the other, or to the task (which will always be to the people involved) which has been committed to. This is to enter into the Paschal Mystery.

2.3.2. The Communion

This fundamental understanding of formation and the necessity of communal involvement is summarised in the GIRM when it says that, after having gathered, prepared, sought insight, discerned, applied and committed (the actions of the gathering, liturgy of the word, and Eucharist) there is now an action that displays the nature of full commitment: “the Communion chant is begun, its purpose being to express the spiritual union of the communicants by means of the unity of their voices, to show gladness of heart, and to bring out more clearly the communitarian character of the procession to receive the Eucharist.” (GIRM 86)

In the introduction to the prayer after Communion it then says that to: “Bring to completion the prayer of the People of God, and also to conclude the entire Communion Rite, the priest says the Prayer after Communion, in which he prays for the fruits of the mystery just celebrated.” (GIRM 89)

The prayers tell us that there is a quality to moral actions and it is that they are fundamentally an action of the whole community, or at least will have an impact on the life of the whole community. It is therefore the hope that the unity of the preceding words and deeds will lead to a fruitful life and gift. The nature of this life and gift is again expressed publically, and in a manner which is dialogical. It is consequential; it is expected to happen, to be given flesh.

Moral commitments and decisions are to have consequences in the lives of others and the wider world. These are not private decisions or acts, they are public, and of their nature involve the input and reflection of others. One way of expressing this is that when a situation appears, it is seen, judgements are made about it and actions are taken; the next step is an awareness of the consequential demands and questions, and the judgments that need to be made in respect of the fruitfulness of the choices and actions that were made, and the life or death that resulted. This is in effect an audit that impacts on the next step of the process, starting all over again facing the new presenting issue, or the continuation in service and witness in the world of that which has been discerned to be ‘right and just’.

Communion tells us that Peace and unity in the community, and within the individual, is the fruit of being in a position to walk with others to the altar and simply, but profoundly, accept that the part of the Lord’s body given to me, the blood poured out and consumed by me, is also the simple gift and resource of my brother or sister, recognised and accepted.

The ‘other’ has become part of the very fabric of the life of the one who has received, and by saying ‘Amen’ they are recognising the gift, in Christ, of the other. But the other who is received, is one who has been willing to

be broken and given, and has not asked to whom the gift will be given.

Here is the heart of Christian ethics and ultimately moral decisions in humanity. A person is willing to give to the other, and to act in respect of what is known to be right and just, within the community, simply on the basis of the other person's humanity and need.

Conclusion 18: Commitment to Act in community.

1. The fullness of commitment is to belong to a community in which there is a commitment to act together, communally and publically.
2. This is a community in which the commitment is to freely give, and to freely receive; what the other requires and that which is needed to fulfil the discerned commitments.
3. This is a community in which all are committed to being taken, blessed, broken and given and it is reciprocal.
4. To enable this level of commitment all must be aware of what is right and just, and be willing to give the resources so that those identified can act.
5. This is how the community is sent into the world, as a community, focused, resourced, knowing who, where and what needs to happen, and willing to act, in the world for the good of the others.

2.3.3. The being sent

The liturgical process as a framework for formation and the making of commitments now reaches its last stage.

The elements which have been developed in the process and the pattern of the liturgy reappear and qualify the direction of a person's life.

The community is now sent into their daily lives to live what they have committed to. They are sent as members of a number of identifiable groups: as individuals, families, ministry teams, parish or chaplaincy

communities, or as the local, diocesan or universal Church but they will all hear the same simple command: “Missa”, “Go,” “You are ‘sent’ into the world. The nature and content of the response will be dictated by the ‘happening’, ‘need’ or ‘desire’ that has been identified by the community and what is required to be done to respond appropriately.⁷⁰ This will demand the concomitant commitment to finding the resources and the other people who are needed to respond adequately.

Secondly, the community is sent in the sign of the Cross. The Paschal Mystery is again the qualifier of the nature of the response and the way in which the commitment will be enacted. The patterns of the Paschal Mystery will be the framework in which the community will respond in the world, in which the love of God will be made incarnate.

Thirdly, when the episcopal dismissal is reflected upon: The dialogue involved can reveal the nature of the commitment.

In the first dialogue: The Bishop, the apostle says: “Blessed be the name of the Lord”, and the response is: “Now and forever”. The commitment involves a proclamation that it is the name, the full identity, of the Lord, the Christ; that is directing this community. The dialogue of the blessing is a repetition of when the Risen Christ sends the disciples, now recognised as the real presence of Christ, into the world.(Jn 20:19-23) The response of the Assembly proclaims that all aspects, are contained in Christ. There is nothing, no situation, it is ‘now’ and ‘forever’ that does not require the committed love and witness of this community, its words and deeds, to be given.

All aspects of human history, call for the ‘name’ to be revealed, the Christ who is the Good News to be taken forth.

In the second blessing the Bishop, the apostle says: “Our help is in the name of the Lord” and the response of the Faithful is “who made heaven and earth”. This takes the understanding revealed in the first blessing, that

⁷⁰ These will be identified as the end and the means needed to achieve the goal, to be and to act in a certain way.

the Lord is revealed to be in all places, to the proclamation that His 'name' is our help. His name, his "way, truth and life" are the one source of help. Therefore guidance, grace, wisdom, strength and direction; our help, is in His Risen presence. This presence is the Holy Spirit and her gifts, the one who is the love of the Risen One and whose specific gifts are present in His Risen Body, the Church. The assembly's response proclaims that the place of this interface is "on earth as it is in heaven." It is already fully revealed in heaven, but this phrase, using its references to the Our Father, asks that it would be in the here and now of everyday life.

This full response on the part of the faithful, the Assembly which is the Risen Body of Christ, enables the Bishop to say: "Go and baptise in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit", with the Paschal sign of the cross, and in all times and places.

Fourthly, the process of being sent carries the same pattern as all of the formational process revealed in the first part of the Liturgy. It is dialogical, and therefore all the elements that have been identified as necessary for effective dialogue are now to be lived in the variable elements of daily life. This dialogue is the pattern of encounter and support, and of communal life.

Lastly, there are two elements involved in what the community is asked to do. They are seen in the instruction: "Go in peace to love and to serve the Lord" or in the latest translation: "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life". Peace and fullness of life will be revealed in those who will love and serve, or expressed another way, in those who give worship by the things they say and do!

The Liturgy is a pattern of formation that has led to 'a' commitment and then to a weekly and annual re-commitment to bring to reality the 'way, the truth and the life' in Christ. This is the source of peace, love, service and of actively giving glory to God in our daily lives; and it has from its earliest days, and in its fundamental structure, followed a process of careful formation.

Diagram 3: “The Structure and Meaning of the Liturgy” as a template for formation and the making of commitments.

Stage	Element in the liturgy.	Corresponding element in formation and the making of commitments.
1.	Encounter at the Door	Meet the person ‘where they are at’; in their language, culture, with their fundamental questions, their happenings, needs or desires.
2.	Greeting : Opening dialogue	Full moral decision making, conscience formation and growth happen in a mutually chosen community. Moral formation and decision making carry the full understanding of a ‘dialogue’.
3.	The taking of the Cross in the OICA, and the sign of the Cross.	There is a need for ‘sacrifice’ and change in every moral process and decision. The first step in moral formation is the recognition of the prejudicial stances that each party to the dialogue carries. Self-awareness is foundational.
4.	Penitential Rite	Self-examination will inevitably lead to a need for forgiveness and reconciliation at the beginning of the formation, especially if the ‘other parties’ are directly involved.
5.	Collect	The identification and focus on a single issue or event is beneficial for discernment and for formation to be productive.
6.	Liturgy of the Word	Information needs to be gathered from: a wide number of sources, coupled with the

		wisdom of those who are informed, and then to be assessed according to the core values and understanding of the community.
7.	Psalm	The community is actively involved in discernment by common meditation and the sharing of insight and response.
8.	Gospel	The example and witness, the words and deeds, of the Lord, offer 'the' example and way of life that while not giving direct precepts offers principles and understandings for discernment.
9.	Homily	Discernment is established when the happenings, desires and needs of the community, are examined in the light of the understandings and wisdom of the community, and within the framework of the laws of each discipline involved, the fundamental rights of others, the protection of the vulnerable and all with the focus on what is life-giving and loving.
10.	Commitment	The decision to act in accord with that which is right and just is publically made.
11.	Prayer of the Faithful	The community discerns who and what are involved in the application of the insight so that the best response and action should take place.
12.	Procession of Gifts	The resources of the community are pledged to the action discerned.

13.	Eucharist	The words are given Flesh, by joining in the ultimate commitment to service, and sacrificial action, with and in Christ.
14.	Communion	The unequivocal commitment to be taken, blessed and given in service of those here, and the poor; is made publically and intentionally. The person will act to serve the other.
15.	Sent	This is a community that does what it says, and brings life.

General Conclusion:

This study has shown that following the structure and the meaning of the Liturgy can provide a framework for formation and the making of commitments which is *structured* and involves a series of staged elements. They are in order:

The Structure

- being called by name, welcomed and included, in a way that recognises the culture, level of understanding, hopes and joys , worries and concerns of the person or community being encountered;
- a willingness to enter processes of self-examination and self-evaluation; with the awareness that the starting point of formation and of a willingness to commit to joint action, is an awareness and acknowledgment of the prejudicial positions carried and the areas of understanding to which the individual or community is blind, deaf, will not speak of or acknowledge in their hearts; or the opinions that they are not willing to listen to. The prejudicial elements will mean there are sources of formation and options for action that will not be engaged with;
- as a result of an honest “Examen” the individual and community will be aware of areas for which they must seek forgiveness, reconciliation and the healing of the actions done or undone, and the thoughts and words that stand in the way of a common commitment;
- the collecting of the thoughts of all, and bringing them to a common focus, and then declaring, with clarity, the purpose or the issue at hand;
- the study and acceptance of the wisdom of humanity, and the Church, along with the gift of Christ’s message in all its richness and complexity, so as to discern with clarity and full knowledge that which is right and just. This involves the necessity of engaging with those who understand and are

the sources of wisdom and enable a full judgement to be made. The primary filter of evaluation and clarification of all the information gathered is going to be, the challenge “how does the response show forth the love of God and love of neighbour?”

- The direct application of the findings of this discernment process to the situation and needs of the community; and the happenings and the identified needs and desires that the community or individual have;

-the tools for identifying and proclaiming what is to be “done” and for assessing “how” it is to be done is the identification of what is called for from: the church community, the local governmental structures, those in need, both locally and universally, and the local community;

-a commitment by all in the community to placing themselves and all their resources, time and being at the service of those in need; to place themselves and their resources upon the altar;

-a uniting in the action of Christ; which is a re commitment and willingness to totally sacrifice, to die to self in love and service of the other, and in thanksgiving to the one who is the source of all the gifts that are ultimately given to humanity to be shared;

-a willingness to come to the altar and receive the commitment of the others in the assembly to be Christ to my need, and for my resources and skills which have been given freely to be called upon and used. This lives in the deep knowledge that to live in Christ is to freely give in love to the other, regardless of the cost. This is the foundation of unity in the community, and peace. So at the heart of the moral life, which has been formed in this way, is a commitment to unite with others in the community to bring peace, and service and then ultimately, going forth to do what has been discerned as ‘right and just’.

This template is staged and can be applied in each element to all processes of formation, and in preparing for all commitments, firstly by those “called in Christ” and then by all people of Good Will.

The Meaning

This structure also carries a series of *meanings*, which can be summarised as follows:

Firstly, moral formation in general and Christian formation in particular, involves the full, active participation of several parties. All those involved, the individual, the community, those who engage in dialogues, the providers of information and guidance, and those who partner in putting the understanding into practice, are “co-responsible” for the journey of discernment, formation, commitment and implementation.

Secondly, at all stages, consciously or unconsciously, moral formation, and Christian formation in particular, follows the pattern of the Paschal Mystery, a willingness to die to self-interested responses, and to serve the other, so as to be able to identify truth and life giving decisions.

Thirdly, within these processes of formation there is a presumption of mature, adult responsibility. All involved are to be treated as adults with the understanding that the preparation of moral decisions and authentic life decisions will take place gradually, in a staged manner using appropriate language, cultural imagery and will respond to the needs of the person. Formation is always to be a free process, there is no coercion, and it is patterned as a ‘seeking’, a journey, with an emphasis on patience.

Fourthly, there is an awareness that formation is always to proceed in ‘dialogue,’ aware of the place and time, the contemporary needs and the issues of the community and the one being accompanied.

Fifthly, the movement of formation works through reflection and the development of insight to a position of moral choice and conscience formation. There is a primacy given to reflection on the actions involved; it is only then that it proceeds to a conscious profession of the Christian message. Formation as a staged process involves the recognition of the events, needs and desires of a person’s life; reveals the person, or

community's hopes, the issues to be resolved; then through reflection, deep personal honesty and seeking reconciliation of issues that confuse or alienate, by formation and service in the community, and worship, leads to the formation of character which will find expression in a public choice, to act on what is right and just. This can be summarised in a pattern of: "see/judge/act" with a closing of the hermeneutical circle by the addition of "reflect".

Sixthly, moral formation and Christian formation in particular is not an individual/private affair. Rather it ultimately demands communal formation and support and is aided by there being a series of public proclamations of progress, which ultimately culminate in incorporation into the life of the community by a full public commitment, for the Christian into the Risen Body of Christ, by baptism.

The task of the moral theologian and the pastor is the creation of a community in which this open, free, conscious exploration of that which is "right and just" becomes a way of life; and to progress in the knowledge that the gifts involved in this discernment are present in the body of Christ gathered. This demands that all move beyond 'telling others what is to be done' to a pattern of gathering, opening, studying and dialoguing, discerning and forming, and then committing to "doing that which is right and just" in this place and this time. This is not limited to the formation of 'new members', the study has shown that the pattern of the weekly celebration of the Easter Mystery demands this ongoing formation as the 'way of life' of the Christian community, in all its structures, forms and situation. It is this form of life that will be lived on the road to Jerusalem where the Risen Christ will be revealed.

Concluding statement:

The findings of this study can be summarised in the knowledge and proclamation that when this process of formation, the uniting of the discerned words of what is 'right and just' with the commitment to

sacrificial actions that will give them flesh; when the Words and Deeds are united; when the two parts of the Liturgy are expressed in their ultimate unity; the very plan of revelation is realised, as *Dei Verbum* says:

“This plan of revelation is realized by deeds and words having an inner unity: the deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words, while the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them. By this revelation then, the deepest truth about God and the salvation of man shines out for our sake in Christ, who is both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation.” (DV 2)

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