

CHAPTER SEVEN

DESIRED CHANGE: AN INCLUSIVE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

Changes that respondents would like to see in the Catholic Church are many and varied. That women wanted an inclusive church was not surprising, given how strongly they expressed the pain of the exclusion that they experienced. It is indicative that 'inclusion' was used inclusively to refer beyond 'women' to 'every person', and especially to marginalised groups and persons.

According to McEnroy (1995) and Goldie (1998), the women auditors of Vatican II took the approach that women were laity, that what pertained to laity pertained equally to women and to men, that this was the way into women's recognition in the church, and that women should not be placed apart as a category within the church. According to Winter, Lummis and Stokes (1995), Catholic women wanted inclusive language and female images and names for God, to participate fully in the church, to have access to decision-making and positions of leadership, and women to be ordained. According to the Marxist Fathers' 'Women and the Church' Committee survey (1995), women wanted equality for women, and wanted the men who held authority in the church to listen and to not feel threatened.

As a group, respondents were educated, reflective and articulate. Many suggestions and stated reasons were informed, and many respondents have taken responsibility for personal practices and beliefs, self-defining the meaning of being Catholic.

Many desired changes were predictable - the ordination of women, the optional celibacy of clergy, the inclusive language in liturgy, the participation of women in decision-making. Sometimes reasons were given, and these are discussed with the changes to which they referred. The following comment gave reason broadly for change: *our Christian heritage is rich and worthwhile, but some of the 'barnacles'*

on Peter's boat need shedding if we are not simply to be an anachronism and treated either with ignore or disdain (R284).

This chapter addresses respondents' desire for an inclusive, relational church. Their suggestions to achieve this included attitudinal and structural change, the former being incomplete without the latter. Specific changes included involvement in decision-making and in new models of ordained ministry, and focus in morality on justice and development of personal conscience. There was a perceived need for education and formation of clergy and laity. Although gender issues were significant, the focus for changes was on 'laity' more than on 'women'.

A NEW CHURCH?

Approximately one-seventh of respondents described the model of 'church' they would like in ways that echoed Vatican II: *the church to be what it could be ... inclusive, relevant (S45);¹ a change in the church from the linear to the horizontal so that we all sit at round tables: a pope and a local church truly of and for and with the members (R264);² democratization of the church so that it is actually the People of God (R75);³ a more 'relational' community-based church (M198);⁴ a recognition of the unstructured as church (R95); a church where the voice of every person is valued (M151);⁵ a church that is for the little ones (R319),⁶ its role one of service and pastorship (S78),⁷ smaller, less sure of itself, a more humble, searching, fallible and forgiving church (S245);⁸ a less hierarchical church, less dominated by males (M233),⁹ less negative in outlook (S41); a church accepting diversity and not seeing this as an enemy of unity (M62), a greater emphasis on spiritual growth and faith rather than on rules and regulations (S78);¹⁰ a more ecumenical church,¹¹ a more global church (M233), with the proviso that a philosophy may be effective in one society, but in another culture may not be appropriate or relevant; the idea of being absolutely universal is too difficult to realise; the church needs to be more flexible*

¹ cf M256.

² cf R106, R113.

³ cf M68.

⁴ cf M50, S78, M102.

⁵ cf S 184, S195, M226.

⁶ cf M152.

⁷ cf M98.

⁸ cf R131.

⁹ cf M27, R107, M110, R157, R212, S 14, R217, R287, M314.

¹⁰ cf M99, M161, S174, R319.

¹¹ cf M176.

and break down into smaller, more functional units (L153, 3/10/96). One respondent suggested the focus for a new model: the future church will be a leaven - not the whole loaf; it will be a smaller and much more an action church; it will be out-going and not inward looking; it will not be trying to keep people in but will endeavour to move out to people - particularly the marginalised whom I see as a lost generation - perhaps now two generations (P131).

Suggestions for an inclusive, relational church translated into suggestions about structure at local level. It was perceived that *parish as geographic region is archaic and irrelevant in today's mobile society (R16)*.¹² Instead, respondents *would like to see the church operating from Basic Ecclesial Communities (S138) or the Home Church Movement whereby the community is developing its own alternatives to worship to ensure meaningfulness (M69)*.¹³ These are grass-roots movements that are centred on Scripture, reflect on, prayer and social action. Related suggestions were for *small community based worship (S195)*,¹⁴ *less frequent 'Mass of obligation' (S28)*,¹⁵ *a more personalised church where each member can take up the challenge of baptismal promise (S78)*.¹⁶ As a young woman commented at interview: *If you don't feel you belong, you're never going to be any kind of witness (S138, 3/10/96)*.¹⁷

Also suggested were: *greater emphasis on spiritual growth and faith (S78)*,¹⁸ and *recognition to the many groups, including women's groups, that exist and are meeting the spiritual (and other) needs of the people (M260)*.¹⁹ A woman commented at interview: *I'm in this group where we nurture each other, because we don't get it in the church ... I think the early Christians who met in living rooms had a nurturing; we've lost that by the fact that we have an authoritarian, patriarchal church (M68, 9/10/96).*

Such a loose 'grid-group' (Douglas, 1982) sociological construction of the Catholic Church can be criticised as blurring boundaries and hierarchies, allowing diversity in belief and practice, and leading to difficulty for young persons in finding a firm

¹²cf R283.

¹³cf R207.

¹⁴cf S140.

¹⁵cf M79, *M110, M171.

¹⁶cf R5, R16, M17, R19, S28, S45, M101, M128, S139, *M141, M198, R207, M226, *DA241, M327.

¹⁷cf *W221.

¹⁸cf M17, M77, M260, R290, S315.

¹⁹cf M44, S138, *D179, M268, M285, *M314.

sense of identity and in maintaining commitment. The loosely constructed community that respondents described in fact is dependent upon the strongly integrated society to which they react (Hamilton, 1998, 17).

Respondents suggested at papal level: *infallibility needs a re-think! (S45); abolish the Vatican ... other world religions can exist with infinitely less circumstance (S42)*. Others suggested as pope: *someone like Helder Camara (M228); free thinker and feminist (M338)*. The International Movement *We Are Church* (IMWAC), representing over 140 groups in 27 countries, issued a statement in October 1998 entitled 'A Pope for the Time to Come: Bishop of Rome and Universal Pastor'. This was to mark the 20th anniversary of the election of John Paul II. IMWAC called for 'a Bishop of Rome', who would collaborate with 'the world's bishops', 'who would reform the Curia so that it might serve, rather than dominate ... who is willing to restore the tradition of full participation of the people in church'.²⁰ Respondents and IMWAC do not question that there be a pope but, borrowing the words of the pope, they 'seek the forms in which this ministry may accomplish a service of love recognized by all concerned ... [and] find a way of exercising the primacy which ... is open to a new situation'.²¹

Respondents mentioned 'bishops', with focus on structures: *appointment of bishops - method be consultative and open (R186);²² election of bishops to be just that - elections; clergy and people to participate; a mechanism of accountability to be set in place (S201); bishops to share governance of the church through regular synods ... less interference from Rome (M161);²³ the collegiality of bishops as instituted by Vatican II be restored for a more democratic and aware church to emerge when bishops could truly dialogue with their own people at all levels, so every voice would be heard (M198);²⁴ a bishop who openly 'names' women as part of leadership within his diocese (F7)*. In order to underpin collegial and consultative structures, respondents suggested: *bishops and priests to update their theology (M73)*.²⁵ A recent survey by Greeley and Hout, of Catholic opinion on seven reform areas, found majority support for the election of bishops in all six countries

²⁰ Press Release, 15/10/1998.

²¹ John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint* : 'That they be one', 1995.

²²cf M161, M256.

²³cf R11.

²⁴cf M256.

²⁵ cf *M132.

surveyed.²⁶ The recent Austrian Summit found 89% of the 280 delegates in favour of local churches having more say in episcopal nominations.²⁷

Respondents referred to 'priesthood', and suggested new models of ministry: *a re-look at priesthood and what it means, (R230) especially the myth about ordination creating superior personages to lay (R192);²⁸ power-oriented structure of priesthood to be replaced by a service orientation (S48);²⁹ the community should discern its needs and call forth the people who are best able to minister to those needs (R283);³⁰ not necessarily working full-time for the church (M188);³¹ liturgical leader/Eucharist presider emerging from within local community grouping (R4);³² temporary priesthood or leadership, called by the community for the community (R26);³³ young people giving 2-6 years full-time between other life experiences; elders called by the community after 20-30 years adult life experience (S275).*

'Clergy' in the present model were mentioned in comments that ranged from *priests ... trained to spiritually accompany people (R154) to clergy moved off their pedestals! (R162)*. One woman commented: *our biggest change would have to be the 'mind-set' of the clergy (W221)*. Focus in suggested changes was on selection, training and accountability: *more tangible support for seminarians and former active priests (S231); seminary training to be improved plus selection methods (M256); seminarians to be taught by qualified women as well as by men to obtain a balance in attitudes (M183);³⁴ women on the selection board for candidates for ordination to the priesthood, to share their character insights (M249); theological education for priests that emphasises the feminine aspects of the Gospel (M58); education on women's issues (M215) and to deal with change (S275); educational sessions for parish priests about domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse from a feminist perspective (M215); train priests as counsellors/pastoral care workers (M338); parish appraisal to be undertaken at regular intervals (R95).*

References to congregations of religious were minimal. One woman would like to see *religious congregations become a more dynamic part of the church (S67)*.

²⁶ *The Tablet*, 23/3/1997, 389.

²⁷ *The Tablet*, 31/10/1998, 1436.

²⁸ cf R4, S43, S304.

²⁹ cf R46, S94, S201, R230, M273.

³⁰ cf R16, R192, S201, R283, R300.

³¹ cf M273.

³² cf S45.

³³ cf M68, R192, M273.

³⁴ cf M72.

Several women suggested changes to the Code of Canon Law *to remove the dependent state of religious women (R252)*.³⁵

For the laity, one woman wanted *an emphasis on personal responsibility and people empowering themselves instead of a focus on ordained leadership, patriarchy, paternalism which creates dependency - a shift from patriarchy to partnership (R229)*. This echoed the initiative and leadership of the laity before, during and immediately after Vatican II that reflected the influence of Giovanni Battista Montini, later Pope Paul VI. Montini, an Italian, ‘had grown up with Catholic Action ... [and] had helped to build its ethos of [the] Christian secular responsibility ... of “authentic” lay people’ (Goldie, 1998, 132). In contrast, Pope John Paul II came from a ‘limiting’ Polish regime and accordingly experienced only ‘an *organised* apostolate in the parish [of] catechesis, liturgy, charitable activity ... [and] an *individual* apostolate for the professions’ (Goldie, 1998, 121).

Like the women auditors of Vatican II (McEnroy, 1995; Goldie, 1998), respondents expressed strongly: *I would not like changes to occur for just women. I would rather look at both men and women and break down the hierarchical structure for the benefit of the church, the wider community and both sexes (M37); recognition of the giftedness of non-ordained men and women (R107)*.³⁶

One woman stated bluntly: *drop the term ‘lay people’; ‘lay’ in relation to whom? (R192)*. This was the thrust of Goldie (1998) detailed in Chapter 3. It was the thrust of Bishop Geoffrey Robinson in a public address:

The term ‘lay persons’, with its negative and relative connotations, cannot adequately express the whole reality of those in the church who are not clerics. The clergy are not the basic point of reference for understanding the People of God. Those baptised into Christ, *Christifideles*, provide that basic point of reference. We need to re-think very carefully our understanding and use of the term ‘laity’ as it has significant implications for our understanding of the church as such (The Mix, 1.2, 1996, 5).

On the topic of the lay-clergy divide, one woman spoke strongly at interview:

³⁵cf R3, M256.

³⁶cf R84, M124, R144, M170.

A lay-centred church is where the people know they are the church ... If we have a sense of being church, it must flow over into our work life and into our civic life and our leisure. A lay-centred church is the opposite to all these sub-divisions. There's still a fair amount of dualism around, about the world and religion, which Vatican II tried to overcome but didn't, and compromised so that it's still there in people's thinking. But that means we're not integrated human beings. It means we're not holistic in what we do. The people and the church are not separate things ... So a lay-centred church would come to grips with that integration. That is life as a Christian. There is nothing that you do that isn't Christian if you are Christian. Baptism changes everything (S275, 11/10/96).³⁷

Several women suggested that 'church', presumably hierarchy and clergy, *apologis[e] to women for past and present injustices (M88).*³⁸ As one woman commented at interview: *asking forgiveness shows a willingness to change; the church doesn't seem interested in that; ... by not recognising and valuing my pain as a Christian woman, I feel disempowered in the Christian society; I feel disinherited in a way, and it hurts (M68, 9/10/96).* Comment is made in Chapter 2 on Pope John Paul II's apology in his 'Letter to Women' (1995).

Reasons given for suggested changes centred on the church, its members and its mission: *so that the gifts of all are utilised and the Spirit can be fully alive in the church (M69);³⁹ to participate in spiritual growth we humans must, by necessity, participate in the spiritual growth of the church, its structure, and develop the interpersonal skills we require to participate in the process; our growth as Christians and as humans depends on the growth of our church as an institution (M68); as church we need to be able to offer an alternative lifestyle to the world; the present church structures and leadership are a scandal particularly in its repression of freedom of speech and thought (M314).*

An effective definition, role and theology of laity can be developed only within a total ecclesiology (Goldie, 1998). *The church, the Body of Christ, is the people, not only the hierarchy (M208).* The baptismal formula of Galatians 3:28 is the early church's self-definition of ecclesiological oneness (Fiorenza, 1983) and model for an inclusive church in the present: *in Christ there is no longer ... male and female.*

³⁷ cf R283.

³⁸cf S40, M62, M170, R285.

³⁹ cf R113.

EQUALITY, INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

Respondents stated that they wished to see equality between women and men,⁴⁰ between hierarchy and laity,⁴¹ between *the leaders and the led* (M314), *equal opportunity for both men and women to advance into positions of influence* (M333),⁴² *otherwise women will only participate at levels where men are comfortable with them* (M312). This would require *changes in attitudes* (R246); *real commitment to lay, female involvement - affirmative action even* (M132);⁴³ *an acknowledgment that we matter where it counts - enough of dignity and motherhood and all those things and attitudes that keep us in our place* (R230).⁴⁴ *I would like my church to take Jesus' teaching seriously - this would first of all demand radical inclusivity* (M45).

For some the issue was personal: *because for too long I have felt oppressed, excluded, put down, ruled over, diminished and patronised, only a girl* (R246); *if one of the blocks of Christian anthropology is that we are 'liberated in Christ' then, as a woman within the church, I would like to experience that liberation in concrete ways; I would like to feel that no avenue of service within the church, no ministry of 'priest, prophet or king', is closed to me because of my gender* (M223). Others were concerned for the church and its mission: *because I firmly believe that the church will be enriched, more alive and more relevant to people today if women are more involved* (R204); *because women working as equals with men could produce together a new and creative way that is non-patriarchal, feminine and inclusive and provides meaning for all people* (R200).

Equality required that *women's issues [be] taken seriously by church men* (R136); *that the Catholic Church truly recognise women by listening to them and their experiences/ wisdom* (M88);⁴⁵ *I really would like ... the church to realise that we live in a male/female world* (M121) ⁴⁶ Women commented: *the church doesn't have any idea of the lived experience of some of its members; the church thinks we're all just women, but we're individual, and our experiences are so different; we struggle with all sorts of things, and the church is not even aware of it* (DA 241, 11/10/96); *it is*

⁴⁰cf M69, R75, R97, R107, M161, M167, M224, R246, R250, R267.

⁴¹cf M167, *S175, R192, S214, R252, R332.

⁴²cf R1, M70, M87, M89, M99, R172, R173, R177, S187, M190, M205, M232, M244, M260, M279, M285, M294, R319, M320.

⁴³cf *M132, S214.

⁴⁴cf M129, *M142, *M273.

⁴⁵cf M255, M314.

⁴⁶cf M93, M253.

expecting too much of the priests to understand the complex problems women can have in their lives today (M268). Suggestions were made: I would like the hierarchy to have more education from/by/about women's values, and make no major or lasting decisions without female input (M72); requirement that the Magisterium spend time listening to the People of God ... and maybe the teachings of the Magisterium would reflect a 'sense of the faithful' (S283).

Equality was perceived to require: *more empowerment for women, more recognition (S34);⁴⁷ partnership model of leadership and operation (R106);⁴⁸ each person, gender, age, race and class given the opportunity to express a view, to give of their gifts, to contribute (S60).⁴⁹ As a woman aged 34 commented at interview: ... it's people my age, and people from different ethnic groups, I don't see any evidence of inclusiveness of them at parish level (M110, 5/10/96).*

Equality translated for many women to *access to decision-making at some level (R336).⁵⁰ Some women specified 'parish',⁵¹ some 'diocesan and national levels'.⁵² Several women referred to *higher levels of discussion eg Roman Synods (R36).⁵³ Many women referred in general to equal status in 'our' church and full access to decision-making (M159);⁵⁴ genuine participatory structures for decision-making (R189);⁵⁵ wider and genuine consultation (R276);⁵⁶ a forum for input to be heard (R222);⁵⁷ decisions made by those whose lives will be affected (R186),⁵⁸ including young people ... in decisions being made that affect their future (S140); there definitely needs to be a balance between stereotypical male logic and women's intuition; the church needs to embrace both methods of searching for truth and meaning as valid (L153, 3/10/95).**

⁴⁷cf R33, *M68, R86, M103, M105, S178, DA241, *M249, R292.

⁴⁸cf R86, S138.

⁴⁹cf R47, M90, DA241.

⁵⁰cf S3, R4, R38, R40, M55, M80, R84, M101, M102, M105, R135, M142, R143, L153, R156, D179, R191, R212, M253, M262, M268, M294, M295, M303, R311, R313, M316, M320, M327, M333.

⁵¹cf M17, S35, M127, M132, R162, M210, R330.

⁵²cf R19, M96, R100, R135, R192, R240, M243, R324.

⁵³cf R14, M32, M163, M194.

⁵⁴cf S3, R33, R40, M45, R46, S117, F149, S184, S195, R207, M208, R213, M237, M253, S329, R333.

⁵⁵cf R274, R295.

⁵⁶cf M150, M151, R177, M226, M260.

⁵⁷cf M58, M62, M85, M99, M223, S232, DA241, R317.

⁵⁸cf R197, M240, R252, S291.

At issue as to why there should be equality is ecclesiology: *the church belongs to and reflects the People of God (R207); we are all God's people and called to mission in so many different ways (S13)*. Concern for the church was expressed: *this collective wisdom of women needs to be channelled (R122) because we're depriving ourselves of the insights and experience of half the population if we don't (R30)*.⁵⁹ It was seen to be an issue of justice: *it is my duty and my right as a Christian and a woman (S269); I think I have a valuable contribution to make (R298)*. It was seen also to be an issue of witness: *it's 'embarrassing' to see secular organisations doing more for equality than the church of Jesus is (R155)*.⁶⁰

One woman wrote with feeling and at length:

There should be a recognition that each person, man or woman, has rights that are not conferred but are innate. We should have access to all roles, responsibilities and opportunities. We are told that we all share in the mission of Christ through baptism. Therefore we all have the right and responsibility to share in Christ's mission to the world and to contribute to the inner life and organisation of the church. We are all equal in the Body of Christ. We are all created in the image of God (S117).

Suggestion was made of structural change that extended participation beyond inclusion in decision-making: *there needs to be transparent openness and accountability at all levels of governance; the pyramid structures of hierarchy need to become circular (S45)*;⁶¹ *until the structure changes and includes representatives of all the membership of the church in the decision-making, law-making and sanctifying roles, I believe the church is going nowhere (R2); let's have new models of church; women don't want to join the old hierarchical structures; we are all the people of God walking together we all need to acknowledge our uniqueness and gifts (M170); the people who work for peace and justice, teach in schools, share their faith in their day-by-day lives, can change the church by creating a whole new structure; women priests, women in decision-making and organisational matters could be a beginning to this change (M316); we need to go ahead with 'pilot projects' on core groups to show what can be achieved; meanwhile, women need support groups to keep up morale and hope, as changes are slow (R91).*

⁵⁹cf S74, M260.

⁶⁰cf *M142, M232.

⁶¹cf R14, R229, R310.

Respondents wanted to be involved in ministry - *ministry being understood as a calling of many and a diversity of individual ministries ... caring, discerning, teaching, facilitating and preaching (R283);⁶² women and men are called to all kinds of ministries, and to deny this is to order irreparable harm to the church (S184). This would necessitate a wider role for laity (S231),⁶³ including extension of ministry opportunities for women (R330),⁶⁴ genuine collaborative ministry (R158), a vision of 'wholeness', not boxes or divisions or dividing lines (R7). To achieve this the laity, and in particular women, must be made to feel more 'worthy' to take on jobs (paid and unpaid) in the running of the church at all levels (M96);⁶⁵ people won't get involved unless there's something there (M262, 2/10/96); lay people should be running the church organisation, and religious responsible to spiritually minister to them; roles, accountability and responsibility to be clearly defined (M175).⁶⁶ Specific reference was made to opportunities for more leadership roles in church agencies (M80); it is remarkable how a male will be at the top of the organisation and also be chosen in terms of his ability to conform to the established norms rather than challenge them (M103).*

'Participation', arising out of the wording of the questions posed by the Bishops' Inquiry (1986) was another issue for suggested change. One woman elaborated as follows:

It's not 'In what ways do women participate in the church?' We're not on the outside and come in and do a few activities. We are the church. It's like someone asking me in what ways do I participate in my family, in my marriage. I'm there. I'm it. I'm not from outside it and come in. This is where I think we found these questions so terribly difficult and frustrating. 'What are the barriers to women's participation?', 'What are some ways in which women's participation in the church can be increased?' It's not increased. We should be recognised and acknowledged, and brought to the fore perhaps. Not 'increase our participation'. The questions, in our opinion, had come from a completely wrong mind-set. That's why we came across such a difficulty with these. That whole mind-set comes back in my opinion to 'God is man', and so women are from without, and we can only

⁶²cf R14, R16, R186, R188, R239, R247, R251.

⁶³cf M103, *M170, S209, M224, M262.

⁶⁴cf R1, R92.

⁶⁵cf M77, R81, R91, M114, M328.

⁶⁶cf S201, M273.

appreciate from afar. Or if you draw two circles, there's God, there's men and there's women over there. They don't interconnect (M142, 13/12/96).

WOMEN IN ORDAINED MINISTRY

One-tenth or more of respondents stated without qualification that they wished the church to ordain women.⁶⁷ The following were typical statements: *I would like to see women priests (M268); give women, if they wish, the right to have seven sacraments (M87).*

A further cluster stated their wish in strong, almost strident, terms: *The church, I have become convinced, must ordain women to the priesthood; it will continue to die or stagnate until men and women stand together as equal partners (M70); I think it is essential that women are admitted to the priesthood (R271); it goes without saying that it must happen (R84).* One woman added: *the thing that saddens me will be the waste of years in between (M121).*

Very few women expressed reservation about ordination and priesthood per se. This reflected the strong sacramental tradition of the Catholic Church and its theology of Eucharist. One woman implied reservation in her statement: *I don't know how I feel about priesthood - if it stays of course women should be included.* Her reservation reflected a power model of ordained ministry: *if they are, how to prevent them becoming icons and being the one who knows best (M176).*

Respondents were concerned that women would be restricted if they became part of the system by being ordained in the existing hierarchical model, as in the following comments: *I don't agree with women priests any more - it would tie their hands (M102); I do not think allowing women to be ordained is necessarily a step forward; women would then just join the pyramid of hierarchy and there would be little change from the present; ... if they are trapped in the system there is no way they can break it down - they become part of it (M323).* Of interest was that respondents hoped for change in structures to precede the ordination of women, as the following comments indicate: *I am not greatly in favour of women priests particularly if they only fit in the present structure: (M101); I certainly don't want 'women priests' unless there is a sea change in the concept of priesthood (S304); while I believe*

⁶⁷cf R11, M21, M24, S25, S28, M31, S34, M44, M65, R66, M68, M69, M71, M80, M93, S94, M96, M105, M110, M114, M127, M141, M166, *M170, M171, M183, M190, R197, M208, R213, M224, M228, R239, R247, S307.

women have the right to ordination and I will not be satisfied until they do, I would hate to see women becoming part of the present structure (R200); I am all for the ordination of women; however I believe that the model of priesthood needs to be different (R191); I see the ordained ministry being closed to women an injustice, though I wouldn't like to see women ordained in the present structure (R186); I keep hoping that we won't ordain women before the male priesthood changes (R36).⁶⁸ The strength of the church's tradition was reflected in one woman's proviso that the ordination of women be *achieved in a way that maintains the integrity of the church (M63)*.

Different reasons were stated for desiring the ordination of women. One woman challenged the pope's statement that women cannot be ordained because only a man can represent Christ: *I want to see a physical representation of myself in the sacred order (M133)*. Other women reflected on more general aspects of liturgy and worship: *in our worship the role of presider needs to be gender-free (S3); this would make the Eucharist - the source and summit of our faith - more readily accessible to people ... which would be their right as Catholics (R298);⁶⁹ many women would make better liturgists and preachers (R158)*.⁷⁰ Other reasons related to ministry: *in order to bring feeling, caring and nurturing back into ministry (R26); because I believe the church is missing out on so much richness of the love of God experienced by women and also the power women can use for growth and change in the church (S67); I grieve for what the Catholic Church is losing by limiting so severely the ministry of women (S48)*. 'Justice' was a stated reason: *as 60% or more of the active members of the church are women (S291); acknowledgment of the equality of women by baptism and right to minister at all levels (R135);⁷¹ to get away from the patriarchal church (M272); because women are representative of the majority of the worshipping community, and ministries come out of the assembly, it is only just that they share equally the ministry at the altar - at least as equally as is currently possible, given the official position on women's ordination (R335)*.

Respondents commented on the pope's prohibiting discussion of the issue, and on his reasons for not allowing women to be ordained: *the pope gags all discussion and makes no allowance for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit within and among the*

⁶⁸cf R15, S35, R40, R81, *M142, S3-5.

⁶⁹cf R193.

⁷⁰cf R120, R126.

⁷¹cf R15, S35, R40, M69, R81, R95, R149, M170, R185, M210, R252, M262, M272, S282, M314, S315.

People of God (M161);⁷² I do not subscribe to the statements, theories etc that God intended only men to follow on from the Apostles and that the church cannot or has not the power to have women play an all-inclusive role (M194); I do not feel strongly enough about women's ordination to hold the banner high but I can see no good reason to deny them ordination; nothing I have read on the issue seems valid - the views put forward appear to come from an authoritarian / power point of view (M52). Scriptures provided a counter-argument: the New Testament tells us of women involved with Jesus and, especially in Acts, women whose houses were churches where they meet for the breaking of the bread and for the liturgy of the word (M127).⁷³

Ordination in the Catholic Church confers the office of sanctifying, teaching and governing. Some respondents wrote of ordination accordingly in terms of *women having as influential a role, throughout the church at all levels, as men (M190),⁷⁴ able to ... lead us liturgically, theologically, and politically (M312)*. Most comments on ordination of women related to the sanctifying office, to sacraments and liturgy, and reflected the debate that was detailed in Chapter 2.

Respondents whose focus was the sacraments were often in pastoral roles. These women wished to exercise a limited sacramental ministry specific to their pastoral role. They wished for *'faculties to absolve and anoint be given to chaplains (R284); it seems feasible that anyone doing pastoral care in a hospital should have this option (R280).⁷⁵ Women involved in giving counselling and retreats, and women who would like to be ministered to by women, also stated that they would like women to be 'ordained' to the ministry of reconciliation (R234).⁷⁶ As one woman commented: *reality and theory are dysfunctional when women can 'hear confession', be reconcilers, but can't absolve (R247)*. Further related to the office of 'sanctifying', were suggestions that: *women should be ordained deacons and be able to preach, baptise, marry and anoint (R1920),⁷⁷ be liturgical assistants (M249) or acolytes (M69)*.*

More specifically, a woman wrote of *the hypocrisy of the situation that she is the church for five days of the week as chaplain in a government institution but on the*

⁷² cf R30, R92, *D223.

⁷³ cf R74.

⁷⁴ cf R40, S138.

⁷⁵ cf S25, R192.

⁷⁶ cf R81, M102, S199, R204, M248.

⁷⁷ cf S270, R290.

sixth, as for women who administer parishes, *an ordained male person has to come in and make it all valid for Mass (R264)*. This is illustrated also by the following comments made at interview about rural parishes that did not have a resident priest: *the parish co-ordinator trained and instructed children for the sacraments, got to know the children, developed a rapport with their families; ... the bishop who mostly did not know the children or their families would administer the sacraments; ... this procedure was flawed (M146, 3/12/96); a priest came in for Sunday Mass and for baptisms, weddings and funerals - you might say for all the important events of people's lives, yet with no real connection to the people involved - very strange! (M223, 8/12/96).*

A number of respondents suggested *opportunities for women to preach (R300)*⁷⁸ to *use the wisdom in the pews (S275)* and in *recognition of the irrelevancy of gender in preaching the gospel (M58)*. Because *the general type of practising woman's one contact with the church is Mass - be it Sunday, weekday, wedding or funeral mass (S199)*, respondents enlarged on why they wanted women to be allowed to preach: *the 'sameness' of the traditional view of the priest as educator or 'fount of all knowledge' is seen by me as boring, hypocritical and a completely condescending attitude towards the congregation at Mass (S199); we have only one person's view week after week after week, and it's nothing like mine; it's an injustice (S138, 3/10/96).*

One young mother expressed passionately at interview her feelings about the limited view and experience of priests:

I keep coming back to this thing, having heard a male priest speak for over thirty years, how he sees life, but also the bit that really gets me, how he imagines women are experiencing life. This whole crap at Mothers' Day, and Mary, this removing any of the normalness and earthiness of all that, making it a very purified-rarefied sort of mother-on-a-pedestal. How fantastic it would be to get somebody up there, male or female, if we had a married clergy, the guy who would get up on Sunday and say 'I've been up all night. The baby's vomited down my back. We were at the footy yesterday, taking the kids, and one to ballet.' If you could just hear that, it would mean that your whole experience is acknowledged and recognised, and not that you're from without ... All these experiences, every time they smile at you, and every time they punch each other, God's there. Yet how rare it is to hear

⁷⁸cf R4, S34, R40, R46, S147, R191, R222, M249, R280, R292, M322.

that from the altar ... This parish has a lot of people with big families, and they drag them along to Mass each Sunday. I think 'What's being said that really happens for them'. I don't know that there always is a part which relates to their experience (M110, 5/10/96).

Changes that respondents suggested in regard to ordination of women were summarised in the following comments: *I would like to see the ordination of women for those who feel called to this ministry; first I would like to see a whole revision of the idea of ministry, since the ministry of men is in many ways inadequate; then I would like to see a careful study of the specific skills and strengths which women bring to ministry for the pastoral care of the community (M53); inclusion of women at all levels would ensure a more balanced clergy, where all people would be ministered to by those with an experience of life that is representative of their own life experience (M142).*

Because there is historical precedent for lay men as cardinals, one woman suggested *women cardinals - no doctrinal problems here (R192).*

Optional celibacy was raised for women priests, as well as for men.⁷⁹ Respondents who wanted ordination for women stated also that they would *be happy to see married priests*.⁸⁰ Several of these respondents would like also *the utilisation of those men who have left the priesthood (M121)*. As one woman commented at interview: *I feel just as strongly about these issues as I do about women's role in the church (M170, 27/11/96)*. Wanting examination of whether celibacy is even relevant in this present circumstance (M37) gave rise to the comments: *I am really puzzled why the church puts celibacy for priests ahead of the celebration of the Eucharist in as many places and as often as required, especially when Anglican married priests are admitted to the church and permitted to celebrate Mass (M279); there would be less sexual abuse and alcoholism from loneliness, plus priests who respected and valued women (M303); married clergy would minister more effectively to parishioners who are married (R213)*. One woman suggested *possibly the concept of priests wives (S34)*.

⁷⁹ M8, M21, S28, M188.

⁸⁰cf M21, M24, S28, R36, M44, S67, M68, M71, M102, M141, M171, M188, M190, M208, M228, S231, M248, M272, M294, S307, M333.

INCLUSION IN LANGUAGE AND LITURGY

One-tenth of respondents⁸¹ named 'inclusive language' as a change that they would like: *inclusive language, if not about God, at least about the children of earth (R172); the Fathers of the church stop proclaiming (a) God in their image (b) themselves alone in God's image (S25)*. Other women expanded on why they would like inclusive language: *women need to hear themselves named if they are to be treated as equal in importance to men (R335); certainly I believe change in the exclusive language is essential to (my) increased participation in any liturgy, especially the Mass (S305); until we use inclusive language in prayer, song and worship, our relationship with God and others is incomplete, spirituality is stunted (M259); I don't ever again want to be one of the men/brothers/sons (M176);⁸² sexist language in liturgy is appalling (R185); I hate to think of the damage being done to this generation of youth who are much more attuned than we were when young (R258); women are the ones who are talked out of existence all the time - in liturgy, in sermon, in Scripture (S25, 2/12/96); the Bible legitimises some social structures that are obviously patriarchal, and does so in the name of God (R302)*.

'Inclusive language' applied also to official documents of the church. As one woman commented at interview: *the language is still 'men'; do you want us to read it or don't you? (S138, 3/10/96)*.⁸³

Women expanded their views in the following ways: *I would like to be recognised - recognised beyond my role as wife and mother ... I would like the words, the structures and the actions to recognise that I exist (M129); I would like to see the church, as institution, adopt such things as gender equality, gender neutral language both for God and for its congregation and change other structures within the system (M128)*.

Suggestions were made: *a revised lectionary which includes positive women's stories (R156);⁸⁴ a feminist critique to be applied to Scripture and to all that is proclaimed (R74); all people to have the opportunity to hear the inclusive views of those who ... re-interpret God's message and apply it to twentieth century times (M165); education of all parishioners through a series of homilies that focus on the contribution of women in the early church (M98); start making the 'seats on Sunday*

⁸¹cf R15, S25, S35, R30, R36, R40, M14, R46, M54, M65, M90, R92, M103, R107, S148, S178, D179, M194, S195, M205, M244, N 248, R254, M260, R275, M279, R287, M292, R302, S307.

⁸²cf M210.

⁸³cf S275.

⁸⁴cf S214, R254, S307.

pews' aware of the need to update thinking on inclusion/exclusion - especially women of anglo-celt background and from age 40+ (R282).

Why inclusive language in liturgy and an inclusive lectionary were considered to be so important was stated keenly by one woman at interview.

Liturgy is where we celebrate, but it is also a very powerful teaching tool. Certainly in our liturgies, and particularly around Easter period, we are given readings which are presented to us as salvation history, and women were there. It is only the occasional recognition of Mary's role as mother that is brought forth, prised, and made something of. Every other woman in Scripture is cut out. It's done classically at Easter, because they never start the passion readings with the anointing. They always start after that. The one that really bugs me is Easter where they jump from Peter to Thomas, and they jump the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalen, in the straight reading of John ... Sometimes I think it's criminal negligence, but I think it's a theological statement. It's a statement about theology for the people who choose these texts. Women are absolutely irrelevant to salvation history. That's what they're preaching. I believe they have by now pretty well got a community of women in the congregation who believe that. Because what they're preaching all the time is that. It's chaps who've done all salvation history. God's a man, Jesus is a man, the Holy Spirit is very dubious but we still say 'him', 'he'. All salvation was brought about by Adam and Abraham and Isaac and Moses and Peter and James and John - and the women were throwing some money in the purse, cooking scones. That is constantly preached. I've never heard anything else. Our Scriptures are partly to blame, because they're patriarchal Scriptures. You've got to use hermeneutics of suspicion to get anything else out of them. The Scriptures are a patriarchal job, and therefore limited. But they could do a lot with what they've got ... There's so much good feminist theology about, and it's being ignored, so much of it is just ignored. The theological teachers are closing their eyes and are being allowed to (S214, 13/12/96).

'Inclusive' applied not only to language but to participation in liturgy,⁸⁵ and for all sections - old, mid-life, adolescents, children (M256); I'd like more flexibility in worship using female leadership and female models; after all it has been women

⁸⁵cf R20, S25, R30, S78, M105, S140 R162, R191, M225, R254, R330.

*largely who have been the carriers of the Catholic Faith (R33).*⁸⁶ The corollary was tokenism - *one woman on the altar e.g. reading with wall-to-wall men really bugs me (R36).*

Women stated that they wished for *liturgies that include greater appeal to the senses and to the symbolic in our lives (R229);⁸⁷ that lead to participation in the work for justice and the Kingdom (R186); that reflect the modern world and its concerns (M73).*⁸⁸ 'Inclusion' was taken to mean: *welcomes all, not just those in regular marriages etc (M260);⁸⁹ love, compassion and caring and less negative, inflexible and dictatorial approach (M190).*⁹⁰ To enhance participation and *allow more interactive service (M31)* changes in the physical setting were suggested.⁹¹ Also suggested were *new liturgies, e.g. for miscarried/ still-born babies, so that all parts of life may be blessed, acknowledged, and the healing process begun/continued (S307).*

MORALITY

Many women wrote in broad terms about morality. They would like to see the church *become a listening, collaborative body of people, centred on living the radical message of the Gospel .. to dare to risk becoming the mobile, open, inclusive body of worshipping, missionary people the Gospel names (M180); a church which encourages its members to experience God in their lives through showing compassion and love to their neighbour (M174);⁹² a church that is prophetic and oriented to social justice with the Gospel as its imperative (M45);⁹³ I would like to see the Catholic Church uncompromising in its commitment to justice/ truth/ integrity/ inclusivity (M114); a church for the marginalised not the comfortable, and that church leadership take on Gospel values especially service (M8).*⁹⁴ A stated wish was for a *theology that embraces the reality of right and wrong, not just sexual morality; a theology of justice and charity; an emphasis on 'original blessing' rather than 'original sin'; development of individual conscience (M21).*⁹⁵

⁸⁶cf M289.

⁸⁷cf R19, M79.

⁸⁸cf M54.

⁸⁹cf S78, *M170.

⁹⁰cf M273.

⁹¹cf M228.

⁹²cf M130, M175, M190.

⁹³cf M3, M17, R40, M88, M124, M128, M150, M165, M218, M223, M225, M328, M338.

⁹⁴cf M93, M118.

⁹⁵cf M254.

Sexual morality was more a focus of married women, a less frequently stated issue for single women and members of religious congregations. As one single woman wrote: *I have never married, had children or been in a long term sexual relationship; so I have never suffered the agonies I have seen my contemporary women friends suffer on matters such as contraception, marriage breakdown and so on; I have therefore enjoyed the luxury of simply believing that the hierarchy and the priestly caste are just wrong on such matters without ever having had to face any crisis of conscience (S304).*

Changes sought by single women and members of religious congregations were: *willingness to dialogue openly on issues of sexual morality (R30); less laying down of law regarding birth control (S28); new and better theology re marriage, procreation, annulments (R284), also homosexuality - and indeed sexuality (S45); divorced and remarried people treated inclusively (R91); more support and programs ... to assist married couples with families and those in divided/broken marriages (R267).*

Married women wanted similar changes: *acceptance of differences in lifestyle with emphasis on individual conscience (birth control, abortion) (M226);⁹⁶ dialogue on sexuality (M289);⁹⁷ sensible family planning attitudes (M90); relaxation on laws of contraception - young women do not abide by them anyway (M243); divorced people to be able to marry again without having to go before a tribunal (M31).⁹⁸ One woman stated passionately *the Catholic Church needs to remove its hands from women's bodies; their sex, their reproductive cycles, their conceived and unconceived children do not belong to the Catholic Church (M312).**

Suggestions were made concerning marriage and the raising of children: *marriage and the role of women needs greater theological thinking re the sacramental role of women in their married lives (M256); more recognition of mixed marriages and the problems ... more open acceptance of the struggle of all Christians to bring up our families with Christian values (M218).* One respondent wished for *some acceptance of the fact that there is a conflict of celibate male clergy giving homilies on family life and marriage whilst evading the issue of the practice among many to engage in sexual relationships (M240).⁹⁹* One young woman spoke at interview of changes that she would like:

⁹⁶cf M256.

⁹⁷ cf M73, M161.

⁹⁸cf M128, M256.

⁹⁹ cf S25, *M215.

In terms of sexual morality, I think there should be a different attitude of guidance, more like a parent you can talk to than an autocrat laying down the laws and boundaries ... Leave it up to an individual's decision. I know we live in a very individualised society, almost too individual, but as soon as you take away a person's choice, or even their perception that they have a choice, they will lose confidence and faith in the church. Jesus' message was of liberation, not repression - from sin, from fear (L153, 3/10/96).

Two older women expressed forcefully at interview why changes were needed in church discipline and pastoral practice in relation to homosexuality, divorce and contraception. The first woman illustrates Gilligan's (1982) 'different voice' in moral thinking that was noted in Chapter 3.

I don't know what I really think about homosexuality because it's personally repugnant to me. And you can't operate on those feelings, because I haven't had that choice plonked in front of me. Do I live a life of loneliness and misery because that sexual preference - I seem to have been born with it? How many people are? I don't know. All sorts of researchers saying that there are many people for whom there is no choice. What do they do in this life? Where's the compassion for people faced with that kind of really savage thing. You live a life of celibacy, you suppress total bits of your whole nature and then you can be a good Catholic person. I don't understand all that still. I don't know what to think about it, even about divorce. A life sentence for a prisoner for murder means sometimes you get off with ten more years of life to live. I know that at least annulements are not quite as difficult to obtain now. This is all tip-toeing around the central issue. It's almost hypocritical. I find it anyhow. It's like nobody wants to stand toe to toe with things and see where real justice lies, real love (D223, 8/12/96).

The disregard of the pope's teaching on sex. I disregarded it myself as a younger person. In the time when I took the pill, in the '60s/ '70s, as a married woman, it was a real trauma about me taking it. But I still did it. Most of the women I know still did it - that I've spoken intimately about things - all probably educated Catholic women who had been to boarding schools and had full nuns' teaching all those years. But they did do it. Then from there on, the younger women I have spoken to, and the young couples who go to Mass, and they still go to Mass - they are the Catholics in the pews - they would have been taking the pill. Their stance on abortion, I think, was

slower, but some of them have had abortions. They still justify it. They wouldn't be going to the priest asking permission ... But now most of the young people I know, as far as contraception and abortion, they would make an individual decision, and find it quite within their rights. I have noticed, too, and know lots of people, that divorced people I know - I think divorce has really been a big thing that's kept people away from the church, and the sexuality thing - but the divorced people I know have still kept going to Mass. They have started just going to holy communion without worrying. They're married again, a lot of them. They wouldn't be going to get permission ... Most of the younger ones I know, they disregard the church's teaching without thinking twice about it, about pre-marital sex - all really good people, nice people, but that just doesn't come into their calculations (M273, 7/12/96).

AN EDUCATED LAITY

Adult faith education and formation were included in suggestions for change. Respondents would like to see more theological education ... sharing spirituality and prayer ... the different age groups supported (R267);¹⁰⁰ opportunities for 'spiritual direction' for lay people who are searching for spiritual growth (M110); recognition of women theologians by the Vatican (M32). Respondents wanted encouragement and education as to what is possible future for the People of God (R276); development of a lay theology (R222); co-operative attempts to search for meaning (R211); greater access for lay people to the church's developing doctrine and ideas (R14); official acceptance and teaching of feminist, liberation and ecological interpretation of Scripture (M226); inquiry into the nature, use and anthropological application in our society now of liturgy, Eucharist and the sacramental system (M55); in short a complete re-education (R7) that will ensure an educated lay church even among the so-called less well educated (R319). As one woman commented at interview: *adult education gives us the opportunity to explore issues and to develop our minds; ... if we encourage one another to grow, both through challenges and nurturing, then we can only be better people; if we can participate in the wider church, it can only be a better church; ... adult education is as much about learning about ourselves as human beings, and loving and accepting ourselves, and putting God into the realness of ourselves, as it is about learning theology (M68, 9/10/96).*

¹⁰⁰cf S25, M167, M218, M224, R282, R332.

Associated changes were: *opportunities for decent, cheap, accessible (to women with children, people on low incomes, people in outlying areas) adult religious education (M110); tertiary education geared more towards the laity ... via correspondence, evening or part-time courses (S140); some community development activities in rural areas (S178).*¹⁰¹ Also needed in rural areas was *access to a Centacare or Catholic agency (M215)*¹⁰² where women would still feel it was ok, *because they were talking to someone within the church (M215, 7/12/96).* A suggestion made at interview by a young woman with pre-school age children was *to have a systematic way of accessing books ... to have at parish level, libraries; it wouldn't even have to be every parish; you'd just need one for the whole region (M110, 5/10/96).*

Related to *strong need for formation in the laity (S140)*¹⁰³ were: *money for lay involvement - books, travel etc (M132); scholarships or grants to support lay people in training for ministry ... and a living wage (S275);*¹⁰⁴ *the bishops, with some sort of funds, have to make commitment to allowing lay people to be involved; if they are genuine about wanting our church as it is to continue ... this Catholic Church that is supposed to be about communities, their funds have to come from somewhere ... dioceses have lands, dioceses have buildings; it needs a commitment and a plan, and it's not beyond the realms of probability that it could happen (M132, 26/11/96).*

Other aspects of church expenditure were noted: *there are still women working long hours for the church who are not being paid - or being paid very poorly; this is a gross injustice and needs urgent attention (R335);*¹⁰⁵ *conversely the lay people also have to commit more to their church ... other churches can have lay people involved because they're much more generous in the amount of money they give on a Sunday; ... it goes back to the history of the parish which is 'Father will do it' or 'Father won't approve' or 'the money will come from somewhere'; there's not a history of commitment of giving, so it goes back to that; but I don't know how we can get people to give more or to raise money (M132, 26/11/96).*

A woman who wanted *the promotion of women role models who are not saintly so much as forthright, practical achievers* elaborated at interview:

¹⁰¹cf M215, *M224.

¹⁰²cf *DA241

¹⁰³cf M132, M224, S275.

¹⁰⁴cf *M273.

¹⁰⁵cf R156, M278, R324.

I feel there were times in my education, and even now, that the role models who are held up to us are people who do good. But it's doing good in men's eyes because they don't make waves, they just get out there, and patch up, and do what needs to be done. They don't challenge the structures. Once they do, they're aggressive and hostile ... I'm encouraged that there's Mary McKillop. She was excommunicated - big one! I find that really encouraging. I find it encouraging that women I like have gone to the edge, they've stepped right over it and have taken risks, have gone into the grey areas. They have not necessarily all succeeded. They have taken the risk. At the bottom line they have tried to change the structure that keeps women oppressed. And they do so at great cost. Now I see enormous pain when I meet those women, and I feel it is an enormous privilege to be able to meet them ... We have women who are gifted leaders, and we're not given the opportunity to lead, even in a small way. I like to hold up these women (M80, 4/10/96).

The resonance of this group of educated women with the vision and teachings of Vatican II is strong argument for educated laity.

LINKS WITH THEORY

The thought patterns that were evident in suggested changes reflected and were strongly conditioned by church traditions, beliefs and practices. This might suggest loyalty. It might likewise suggest conforming loyalist behaviour (Hirschman, 1970). It might suggest strength of conviction or paucity of imagination to conceptualise other than what exists.

Conditioned thinking is a form of powerlessness within structures. Fiorenza (1983) urges bringing a hermeneutic of suspicion to the overlay of patriarchy. Her approach to Scripture texts, as detailed in Chapter 3, can be applied to the origins and evolution of church structures and practices. Collins (1997) and other writers detailed in Chapter 2 are informative in this regard. Fiorenza's approach is that biblical revelation lies in the life and ministry of Jesus who worked to liberate from patriarchal structures and relationships and whose praxis was equal discipleship; androcentric language in earlier periods functioned as inclusive and should be read accordingly, otherwise women continue to be erased by language from the construct of reality; historical criticism examines the context in which texts (and practices)

came into being, and does not allow social factors to become sociological justification.

Sungaila (1978) likewise demonstrates that knowledge of origin and evolution is emancipative. She uses history to deconstruct the present, to make present reality transparent, to help an institution to understand itself and its situation. She shows that, because what is 'man'-made can be remade, society is capable of constructing and reconstructing its social world and of changing those within it.

While respondents made suggestions for inclusion and participation, and claimed to 'be' church as People of God, their comments indicated thought patterns that defined church as 'they'. This is an inherent tension that gave authority and responsibility to the church hierarchy to bring about change. This hands over power, as one respondent noted: *by saying the church has to let us discuss, we're actually giving them the power; ... it's something women do well - fall into the victim role; we don't have to be victims of the church we keep speaking up (M68, 11/10/96).*

Another respondent spoke of the 'victim' role as a product of societal and church attitudes:

The other thing, I think, that is slightly stifling, is that idea of womanly humility. I've heard women say they want to share the power. We're told that's not the humble role of Mary that we are called to be, as if we're going to upset some holy balance. I've been thinking this and trying to explain it, that power is the ability to influence our own situation and the future ... It's taking our share in influencing our life, our world, our society, and the direction we're going. If you see power like that, it's not something that humility comes into. Humility means accepting the truth of the situation. You can still be humble and share in that (M62, 7/12/96).

SUMMARY

Changes that respondents wanted were drawn largely from their direct experience. In parish they wanted participation in ordained ministry but within new models, and inclusive language in liturgy. They wanted changes in teaching on sexual morality that reflected their lived experience, lacking to a celibate male clergy, focus on broader issues of morality, and emphasis on personal conscience.

Desired changes that would contribute to church becoming inclusive and relational were primarily for the sake of 'church', and of laity in general. Changes that they wanted for women referred to what is not presently available to women as women.

Suggestions tended to be grounded in pastoral reality. This indicated that respondents as a group were committed and wanted to participate as mature adults in the church community, and to be able to inform the church's decision-making, especially in those areas in which they had experience. Specific suggestions were made concerning the education and formation of clergy and laity.

Respondents appeared to be deeply loyal to the church in that thought patterns evident in suggested changes were strongly conditioned by the Catholic Church's traditions, beliefs and practices. These women challenged the manner of exercise but not the structures of hierarchy, ordained ministry and teaching role. They did not take kindly to a church that 'talks you'. They claimed the authority of Scripture and of Vatican II for their understanding of 'People of God', 'collegiality' and 'mission to the world'. They named the centrality of Eucharist and the right of the People of God to the Eucharist as their main reason for reversing the church's discipline in regard to celibacy of the clergy.

This chapter develops further the we-they dichotomy that was discussed in Chapter 5 and again in Chapter 6. The we-they dichotomy and 'they' orientation are strong. To re-read desired changes from a 'church-we' perspective indicates ways in which 'we' can initiate and bring about desired changes. The next chapter examines what factors in 'we' and 'they' were seen to inhibit changes. Whereas the focus of this chapter was desired changes, Chapter 9 addresses how respondents viewed change process.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PERCEIVED CONSTRAINTS TO CHANGE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines what respondents perceived are constraints or major barriers to change. Sources of we-they and love-pain dichotomy and tension were evident in reasons that women gave as to what limited or prevented change in the church. Many respondents blamed structures. Others blamed persons among hierarchy and clergy and laity. As discussed in Chapter 5, 'church' and 'hierarchy' were often equated.

Inert structures, patriarchy and sexism, power and powerlessness are among system constraints. Fear of loss, apathy and conservatism, are among attitudinal constraints. Most constraints related to 'they', but 'we' were also identified within constraints to change.

INERT AND EXCLUSIVE STRUCTURES

Structural inertia was seen to limit or prevent change¹ as illustrated in the following comments: *Rome moves slowly (F 290); new theologies are not the concern of the central/male/Roman/hierarchical church (R113); systemic change is threatening (R100), risky (R298), difficult (M'02); a thousand years of hierarchical structure, based on sexist interpretation of the Scriptures, and of structural power bases (R264); the 'fixed' male hierarchy and history of the Catholic Church (S291);² attitude in the members of the hierarchy who take their present excluding stance as a given and not to be questioned or changed (R252) ³ continued sense of righteousness obscures any real*

¹ R2, M70, R122, R149, R189, R251, R274, R317.

² cf R247, R288.

³ cf R75, R97, M124, M223.

sense of the problems created, maintained by and ignored by the institutional church and its pervasive values (M325), the idea that the 'rules' are set in stone (M141); resistance to thinking laterally (R239); slow pace of integration of new better insights into all levels of society in the past thirty years; maybe because of lack of zeal and charisma (S28); we are still being governed out of a monarchical model set down in the early Middle Ages (R290); limitations caused by a structure attempting to cross barriers of culture⁴, class, gender, and ethnicity (M128). One woman summarised: I see the Catholic Church as turned in on itself, busy trying to survive and keep its authority and influence; there is no openness to the world and acknowledgment that the church is part of the world (S137).⁵

Specific comment was made: a good deal of the problem can be attributed to the institutionalisation and patriarchal structure of the traditional church; I believe we need institutional reform, and if the institution does not take the initiative it will be impacted upon by outside forces (R136); the whole structure needs to be addressed: (a) all decisions made by male clergy; (b) the top of the hierarchy is a European male, and Vatican decisions seem to be dominated by European culture as Gospel faith; (c) no opportunity for lay people to partake in decision-making, few opportunities for 'quality control' except to leave the church altogether (not a positive option for those who really believe) (L153); years of thinking and being that don't allow for inclusion (R230); lack of serious consultation which would lead to change (R162).

CONSERVATISM OF LAITY

Structural inertia was reflected in inertia and ingrained dependence of persons in the system, and *passivity in colluding with the dominant power-over practices of our church (R75)*, as the following comments indicate: *hierarchical structure so alien to what Christ proclaimed is the root cause of the problem because from it flows the denial of women's equality and whatever it is that forms the members to be subservient (M176); power, purpose and privilege are entrenched 'at the top' in the ordained clergy, and patriarchy and dependency are so deeply ingrained that we don't realise we are trapped in them (R229);⁶ all of the above lead to dominance by a few divisions that*

⁴ cf R66.

⁵ Cf R46.

⁶ Cf R144, R177, R197.

are counter to the Gospel, and submissiveness and passivity by many (R158); hierarchical structure so alien to what Christ proclaimed is the root cause of the problem because from it flows the denial of women's equality and whatever it is that forms the members to be subservient (M176); 'we' as church appear to have little power (M215).

Strict adherence to the rules (R157)⁷ was cited, too much compliance to papal rule (R107),⁸ 'I did as I was told' mentality (M21). This compliance was seen to include the Catholic Press that will only report 'nice' things about our church, refusing to discuss the roles of women because the pope has made a definitive statement (M98).

Present comfortableness (R66)⁹ and vested interest (S43)¹⁰ were seen as part of the inertia, together with unwillingness (R200), not even able to consider the possibility [of change] (R106); inability to admit that a wrong path has been taken (S43). It was perceived that: rigid modes of thinking would make change very difficult for those whose training and temperament are well suited for the patriarchal, hierarchical system (S305); the present pope, most bishops, most priests and many lay people believe, in my perception, that the church has no need to change and should stay with the 'status quo' in spite of large numbers drifting from the institutional/hierarchical church; the presumption seems to be that the drifters are wrong! (R287).¹¹

The conservative nature of the Catholic population (S187)¹² was noted, as in the following comments: there still exists a very large Catholic population with 'pre-Vatican II' values and beliefs, whose very faith and security are shaken by current thinking (M165),¹³ for whom change spells disaster (M73), who are frightened to 'rock the boat' (M171); most are unable to envisage a church outside of its clerical culture (M27); the majority acceptance of a male-dominated hierarchy (M249) is reinforced by that sector of the female and male Catholic population which smiles sweetly and says 'Father knows best'; it's lazy religion (S60).

⁷ cf R20, M218.

⁸ cf M171.

⁹ cf R14, R92.

¹⁰ cf R126, M232.

¹¹ cf M98.

¹² cf M54, R282, R287, R317.

¹³ cf R106, S138, DA241, M243, M256, R258, R292.

Conservatism and inertia were seen to relate to: *traditional upbringing and attitudes of both men and women (R91); the power of conditioning (M89); misinformed opinions on the male 'right' to priesthood (S138); the deeply ingrained religious mores in the faithful and clergy; traditional rituals; Establishment; reluctance to change the status quo (S28); basic human nature unfortunately – but that within us from which Christ offered us freedom (M68); an antiquated but ingrained thinking that we should abide by church teaching even when it constrains and limits us (M80)*. One woman stated a particular aspect of 'conditioning': *apologetic laity - middle-aged people (like myself) who were educated in the notion that vocation/call equals call to priesthood or religious life; therefore, because we missed out we never quite made it! (M114)*. As another woman commented: *my belief in God and in Jesus is quite different from acceptance of the centrality of the pope; few practising Catholics of my age (>65) are willing to separate the two; their attachment to the past, an emotional attachment, is stronger than that the church is irrelevant to their own children and grand-children (S42)*.

Apathy¹⁴ and unwillingness to change¹⁵ were cited: *a lot of people do not like changes of any sort (S74); some women and men want to maintain the status quo at any cost so as to avoid radical change ... in their own sharing of baptismal responsibility (DA241);¹⁶ the mainstream Catholics are not at screaming pitch publicly and just whinge quietly to themselves rather than implementing for change (S34)*. Fear¹⁷ and a *fundamentalist push (S138)¹⁸* were related to apathy and unwillingness to change: *resistance to what is new and challenging, and a clinging to old and secure ways of being church (R276)*.

A factor of conservatism and inertia was the perception that *many people who could make a change or challenge the present system have left it (M103);¹⁹ those left are likely to be conservative ... traditional and disinterested in the process (M69)*.²⁰ Also cited were: *the laity opting in and out and thus giving pastors the excuse to 'go it alone' (M132)*, as well as *lack of confidence among women (M80)* and *the reluctance of some*

¹⁴ M37, M146, M180, R189, M194, R212, R251.

¹⁵ R15, M146, M244.

¹⁶ cf M68, R212, M228.

¹⁷ S3, S209, R250, R332.

¹⁸ cf M32, M161.

¹⁹ cf M21, R30, S195, M260, S269, S270, M314.

²⁰ cf R258, S269.

women to be more involved (R330); the clergy have a vested interest in keeping the status quo and in hanging on to what they perceive to be their coveted role; the sad part is that most of us are leaving them to it - we find relevance elsewhere (M150).

The insight of one woman was reminiscent of the methodologies of Sungaila (1978) and Fiorenza (1983). She commented at length:

People want some fundamental things from religion - direction, interpretation, meaning, philosophy - an alternate way of life from the dominant consumer culture and family values, and a means of expression perhaps ritual. That 5% of the Catholic population leave the church each year is an indicator that they want something Catholicism is not providing. The issues are not gender oriented but are being manipulated to appear so. The questions are not feminist and neither is the solution. It is basic - much more basic than that. The really sad thing about the church is that no discussion can even be opened on these basic issues as very few people are left who have had a sound doctrinal education which would form the basis of the discourse. If you start with the premise that there is nothing 'new' then you can look back and see this has been tried before and what happened to the church then (M175).

Another woman commented: we need to listen to those who are leaving, and promote the good things that our church has to offer (M170).

PATRIARCHY AND SEXISM

Patriarchy and sexism were portrayed as barriers to change: *patriarchy, a system that discriminates the female in all aspects of life (M128),²¹ as well as to sexism (R122) and paternalism (R66). The Catholic Church's obsession with patriarchal structures, from the pope down, limits them from seeing the whole picture - the vision of equality/complementarity of the male/female, men/women partnership inclusively nurtured by Christ for the church (M88). Respondents noted that the church - hierarchically - is a male club (R290),²² male oriented, symbolised by male power,*

²¹ cf M31, M88, M102, R106, R122, S148, R185, R200.

²² cf M65, M129, M248.

(R284) *an all male system (R251)*²³ in which *all male thinking begets all male thinking (S45); the church is controlled by half the Body of Christ so cannot be whole (M226)*. Not only is the church 'male' but *male celibate (R264)*.²⁴

Some criticism of male dominance was strident, as the following illustrate: *a male concept of leadership (sometimes adopted by women) has nothing but an alienating effect (R19); unacknowledged misogyny and homo phobia permeates our institutional church and conditions people (R75)*;²⁵ *male reluctance [is] fuelled by angry feminist rhetoric (and sometimes patriarchal 'phobia') (M306)*;²⁶ *religion [is] part of private world but controlled by men (R251); the same old story, of course - Jesus chose males to help him in his ministry - it is written (R271); look around the world and see the problems created by religions - where is God in religion - the purpose seems to be to perpetuate a male hierarchy - Christian, Moslem etc (M281)*.

Portrayal of God as male (M190) was presented as a fundamental barrier to change: *while God is presented always as masculine, the church distorts who this God is we are supposed to be following; how satisfying can this be for those seeking God? (M226); what is at question are our most fundamental ways of imaging God - the whole system of presenting God to the people! not enough work is being done at the ground level to re-educate men to the imaging God as feminine (R234)*.

POWER AND POWERLESSNESS

The weighty structure of the hierarchy (R92) received considerable focus,²⁷ with its *lack of accountability (S184)*²⁸ and *associated power (M37)*.²⁹ *The real struggle is over power, not theology (M150)*. The corollary of power is powerlessness: *hierarchical structures impinge on the responsibilities and the exercising of these responsibilities in the ordinary, everyday, local community (R1)*.

²³ cf S35, S60, M85, M119, M121, M124, R132, M152, S178, M180, R185, M194, M215, S239, R290, R310, S315.

²⁴ cf M114.

²⁵ cf M68.

²⁶ cf M256.

²⁷ cf R14, M17, S35, S45, M58, S60, M62, M65, M114, R132, M152, M180, S184, R185, R189, M208, R239, R264, R290, R330.

²⁸ cf S45, S117, S148.

²⁹ cf M87, M101, S117, M124, M163.

Associated with hierarchical structure were *too much dominance of clergy (R107)*³⁰ and *the myth about ordination creating superior personages to 'lay' (R192)*. This was perceived by one respondent as *the main enemy of change - the clerical system which can be controlled financially and socially, and which provides rewards and safety for loyal members (R192)*. Another respondent wrote: *I believe the clerical system creates barriers; until clericalism is truthfully addressed, hence the power-base, very few men or women will be able to bring their gifts to fulfillment (R19)*.

*The power structures in the Vatican (R6),*³¹ *the Roman Curial power to silence thinkers, and the Australian Bishops dependence on the Roman structure (S45),*³² or simply 'power'³³ were noted as dimensions of 'hierarchical church'. *Centralisation of decision-making within Vatican congregations deprives local episcopal conferences of rightful autonomy in exploring solutions to theological and ethical issues, and in responding to them (R11).*³⁴

Criticised were: *papacy as responsible for the entire world rather than church as struggling pilgrim people (R47)*; *the church anaesthetised by its own self complacency and supposed infallibility (R14);*³⁵ *the church still carried away with 'thou shalt not' rather than love, sympathy and understanding for its members (S67).*³⁶ Women commented: *I see the church as turned in on itself, busy trying to survive and keep its authority and influence; there is no openness to the world or acknowledgment that the church is a part of this world (S137);*³⁷ *the corporate politics of the church hierarchy will be resistant to any real change (M175)*.

Power structures were seen to entrench privilege, as in the following comments: *the problem is the attitude of Rome and the power held by the male, celibate leaders of the church; it is primarily the power of ownership - of the church and of God; reasons are*

³⁰ cf M27, R158, R186, M194, M328.

³¹ cf M32, S34, M253.

³² cf R38, R122, R135, R149, M208.

³³ R15, M159, R311.

³⁴ cf R143.

³⁵ cf M325.

³⁶ cf M285.

³⁷ cf M124.

historical and patriarchal and are built into the structure of the church (M295);³⁸ not that all power is bad, but when it has been exercised as control it cannot imagine how else it might be diffused (R251);³⁹ power and control many clerics hold and want to hold onto (R33); the absoluteness and exclusiveness of authority; the need to control (S117); the human greed for power inherent in and maintained by the comfort of an institution (M68);⁴⁰ pre-occupation with presuming and assuming leadership in high moral ground, therefore being right more than being loving/ understanding/ compassionate/ forgiving (R47); a career thing which they are loathe to give away (M72).

Several women wrote that *power once held is relinquished only with difficulty (M52).*⁴¹ Others commented: *I've seen this happen in lay movements as well, so this is not necessarily a clerical thing (M50);⁴² I believe that change is resisted in the Catholic Church as in other transnational bureaucracies, because the fruits of power are sweet and not to be voluntarily surrendered; under threat, the survival of the institution becomes the primary aim (S304); it seems to me that the official church is doing a major 'shoring up' job – keep the citadel walls strong so they can't be breached and the power remains in the present hands (R157).*⁴³

Respondents commented on *present movements in the Catholic Church that differentiate people by their political persuasion, right wing, left wing or moderates (M128); the black/white mentality (or progressive/conservative), as well as the training in obedience to the hierarchy, which makes dissent likely to occasion guilt and accusation of disloyalty (R172); sense of non-belonging (R217).*

Several women made reference to Vatican II: *the church's hierarchical structure, which is still in place despite Vatican II, will not give up the power it holds; there are centuries of male dominance in church and state, that will not be abandoned lightly; until a more co-operative community type of church evolves, until there are finally too few priests to minister to the people, I don't think I will see the changes come about*

³⁸ cf R310, M327.

³⁹ cf R192.

⁴⁰ cf R95.

⁴¹ cf M50, S59, M99, R186, R211, S214, M223, R236, M279, R330.

⁴² cf M123, M237.

⁴³ Cf R33, M65, M89, M190, R204, M206, M232, M244, M254, M295.

(M127); the church was not prepared for Vatican II to unsettle its power base (M55);⁴⁴ the changes that were envisaged by Vatican II and that great prophet John XXIII are the greatest threat to the power and control wielded by the church for centuries; the hierarchy will do all they can to suppress the church, for we are the church (M130).

Two other aspects of 'power' were cited. Two women linked the *power/ economic base (M65)*.⁴⁵ Another woman cited at length an incident in which priests objected to *being told at diocesan level what the local custom should be*. The woman wrote: *it is precisely this autonomy and unlimited power exercised by so many pastors that is a block to any effective large scale changes that would see women able to exercise their gifts equally for the assembly and acknowledge their visibility by means of inclusive language (R335).*

At the local level, one woman regarded the diocese as *the power base for the male dominated Church (R92)*. Several women commented on *the 'appointment' of bishops without consultation, preserving the conservative status quo (R135)*;⁴⁶ and on *the longevity of the bishops in office (R330)*. It was noted that: *all power is vested in the Cardinals and bishops; when a new bishop is appointed he soon learns the culture of the bishops and loses his initial enthusiasm for change and renewal; the law dominates, not human compassion; priests have too much invested to really share power with community as their identity is by being at the top of the pyramid (R26).*

Concern was stated that: *very conservative bishops are emerging in Australia (S195)*⁴⁷ with *the appointment of bishops who agree with keeping the church as it is (M279)*;⁴⁸ *conservative bishops (and priests) seem very quick to please the right wing faction when they complain (M102); many women have had individual support of bishops, but the public voice of bishops pro the ordination of women is very faint indeed (M70)*. Many priests (and bishops) were perceived to be *aging and outdated (R16)*,⁴⁹ *generally insular, uncertain of how to approach the broad community and its problems (M141), beyond changing, in many instances (R298), yet with all the power to say 'yea/nay' to suggestions for laity (R282).*

⁴⁴ Cf S45, M103.

⁴⁵ cf M285.

⁴⁶ cf M176.

⁴⁷ cf R75, M79, S270, M272.

⁴⁸ cf M32, M161.

⁴⁹ cf S67, M228, M248.

At parish level it was seen that: *in many ways parish 'church' is becoming less relevant despite many attempts to improve it ... maybe because many of those involved are comfortable with a pyramidal structure rather than a circular structure (M123); change in the way parishes are set up and administered requires a paradigm shift (R300); the parish system/institution is so well established in its present form I think it would be difficult to change; my big dilemma at the moment is whether I am supporting and participating in a structure which ought to be left to die? and with what do we replace it? if something is destroyed or left to die, we should have some ideas about what will follow - and how to help all those who will feel lost and floundering - or do we let sink or swim? (M296).*

DISEMPOWERMENT

This dilemma was felt by others. Women commented on *the sheer drudgery of trying to chip away at the old system which shows signs of being around for some time yet (R16);⁵⁰ lay people are, generally speaking, unaware of their worth and remain silent on matters where they should speak out loudly and clearly (S41); people have got lost in the maintaining of the system (R207); the difficulty that people within the system have in challenging it (M103); powerlessness that women feel to change the church structure as it is officially - not allowed officially to discuss questions such as ordination of women (M152); the power of the structural church to manipulate and control is awesome; one does not take it on lightly; and yet, so long as women keep supporting this church that ignores them beyond the most basic level, they are contributing to its dominance and preventing its collapse (M325).*

The People of God are not without power. Rather, their power has been denied them in an impoverished ecclesiology that needs to be reversed, as the following comments suggest: *I believe if we are to regain our sense of a community of God's people, then all must share equally according to our gifts (M52); it is very hard to relinquish power once you have it, but it has to be done if the church is to be a discipleship of equals (M323); those who want power and believe in hierarchical church will attempt to limit women coming together in small groups and sharing ... we will be less 'controllable'! I don't think it can be prevented from happening, and is probably the only way the church will survive (M125).*

⁵⁰ cf M44, M273, R336.

The problem for women especially, and for laity in general,⁵¹ was stated as structural: *refusal of official church to call its people to co-responsibility with God; refusal to honour the full dignity of women (R75); denial of responsibility in decision-making and structural-level ministry; exclusion ... from fully functioning as baptised Christians; therefore all are poorer, the ministers and those ministered to (R143).*

Structural and related issues included: *lack of opportunity for interested lay people to have their voices heard (R16); lack of encouragement of dialogue and debate about key issues (R207); no real dialogue between hierarchy and laity (M194); the need to create opportunities for people at 'grass roots' level to initiate change, have courage to express what the limitations are (S3).* Exclusion from decision-making structures was portrayed as follows: *consultation, it would be argued, is sought; in my experience there is either limited or pseudo-consultation; consultation is pointless if those being consulted are not listened to (R500);⁵² surveys of lay people, male and female, have tended to be ignored in the past by bishops (S74);⁵³ lack of serious consultation that would lead to change; there is often a feeble attempt to involve the laity in discussion, but there is little evidence that their opinions/ ideas are taken seriously (R162).*

These perceptions gave rise to expressions of cynicism about the Bishops' Inquiry. The small number of respondents who commented on the Inquiry mostly doubted that bishops were willing to listen and open to hear.

Women stated their perception of both problem and solution: *there are lay people willing and able to be church leaders; the major problems seem to be dominative power and, related, money; if these are to be resolved we have to change how people think (S275); the major limit I see ... is the fundamental attitude the church has to its position as law-maker and judge; when we truly find God in our lives, which we do from acting compassionately, we don't need a law-maker, we need a community of faith-filled people who support us on our journey (S174);⁵⁴ the whole system is so entrenched, it really needs to crumble into decay so that a new church can rise from the ruins (M73); an impoverished ecclesiology is at the heart of these blocks, especially on the part of the clerical leadership (R335).*

⁵¹ cf S25, S45, M80, M99, M101, S117, R126, M215, M237, S291, R310.

⁵² cf R30, M175.

⁵³ cf M96, M110, S231, DA241, R27.

⁵⁴ cf S78.

ATTITUDES OF CLERGY

Individual priests were valued for their vision and sensitivity, as the following affirmations attest: *we have some wonderful priests in the church (R319);⁵⁵ the best priests ... always listen, give great advice, are non-judgmental, and extremely compassionate and helpful; that's the way priests should be trained (M338); there are numbers of individual priests who whole-heartedly support the fact that the church will remain the poorer and out of touch with the reality of twentieth century living if women continue to be ignored (R204)*. However, 'clerical mentality', 'lack of vision' and 'attitudes to women' were cited by a significant number of respondents as factors that might limit or prevent changes in the Catholic Church.

Critical reference was made to the *mentality (S78) and attitude (S187)* of priests, and to the *age-old Catholic tradition that they, the priests, are chosen by God to rule; they are the holders of the 'knowledge' and power (R46);⁵⁶ clergy think and act as God, and that the parish is theirs (R106);⁵⁷ they have set up strong theological and philosophical bulwarks against change and in support of the status quo (R97)*. Coupled with this were *years of thinking and being in ways that don't allow for inclusion and sharing of authority; living in ivory towers so that life doesn't touch the heart; keeping the laity in their place (R230); the clergy seem to have more faith in the institutionalised church than they do in God!! (M151); the men who currently hold ... decision-making power are resistant to changes that will make them change (R97); there needs to be major conversion in attitude in the members of the hierarchy who take their excluding stance as a given not to be questioned or changed, regardless of whether this decimates the church and grievously hurts over half of the membership (R252); there is a definite sense of moral and theological 'rightness' and certitude among many of the most powerful church leaders that their stance is in obedience to God's will in this matter; hard for ordinary lay people to argue with that!! (M223)*.

Lack of vision, especially of those in leadership positions in the church (R40) was cited in relation to clergy,⁵⁸ as well as *suspicion of new ideas and lack of imagination in those who are in the church system (M316), lack of pastoral concern (R107) and lack of*

⁵⁵ cf R222.

⁵⁶ cf M102, R222, M248.

⁵⁷ cf R126, R310.

⁵⁸ cf M54, S231, S307.

personal interest at parish level (S139). Judgement was passed that if the majority of these people are not generous enough to understand the role of the whole Body of Christ, they will continue to opt for the status quo (S43).

Frequent mention was made of clerical attitudes to *the 'nature' and role of women (S184)*.⁵⁹ There was perceived *lack of good will towards the female members of the Catholic Church (M333); lack of understanding of the problems women and families face (M198); resistance to thinking laterally and logically working out there is no good reason for excluding women (R239)*. Respondents considered that clerics were threatened by women *in some instances (M278)*,⁶⁰ *see them as sexual threats (M65)* and deal with them in a *heavy handed way (S118)*.⁶¹ It was noted that: *there seems to be a great lack in any sense of justice toward women in particular (R252); clerics are often suspicious of women and regard them as lesser beings (R14)*;⁶² *[they] believe that women have no or little business or right to take an active role in church other than being hand-maidens and taking on the 'soft' roles - visiting the sick etc (R191); there are members of the male hierarchy of the church who lack the vision to see how women do and could enhance the living church (M105); priests are largely ignorant - perhaps afraid? - of women, and do not generally acknowledge the contribution of women (M159); women are not taken seriously (R113) and are not encouraged to use their creative gifts (R207); there is discounting of women's voice (R239).*

The following comment encapsulates the feeling of powerlessness that many women experience as a result of clerical attitudes: *'church' is like so many social structures, where women were/are regarded as second-rate; it was endemic in the system; I think it is harder in a religious, male hierarchy, because they've got God at the helm, and you can't argue with God (D179, 10/10/1996).*

The structural dimension was noted: *some faulty theology about women in the past still lingers (R247); lines of communication often do not promote women's issues and related justice matters (S187)*.⁶³ One woman commented at length:

⁵⁹ R33, M71, R75, R84, M90, R113, M285, R336.

⁶⁰ cf M105, R156, S195, M243, R292, M294.

⁶¹ cf M88.

⁶² cf R126, M133, M190.

⁶³ cf M198.

The main difficulty, to my mind, is that women's voices are not really heard at any level in the hierarchy of the official church. If we are not heard, our experience will not be validated or valued. When women cannot be part of any major decision-making processes because they are not ordained, their experience cannot be reflected in the decisions made. While positions of policy and power belong to single, celibate males, the church cannot hope to adequately understand or guide the people it is supposed to serve (M142).

The 'male hierarchical church' was perceived to extend to non-clerics: *apart from ordination, most of the peak bodies in the Australian Catholic Church are headed by lay men; women are not sought out to fill these positions, so I conclude they do not trust women and women's capabilities (M119); having to work for lay male church people in various organisations, many of these men are equally as autocratic as bishops and often more ruthless in their abuse of women employees; these men are protected by the system (M80).*

FEAR

Fear was cited as a factor that might limit or prevent change, 'fear' in general⁶⁴, fear on the part of clergy especially.⁶⁵ Typical comment was: *I believe fear is at the root of opposition to changes in the church, fear as experienced by the hierarchical or institutional church; people are ready to accept much, but priests have not been helped to move from the attitudes which have kept them imprisoned in the past (R193).*

A perceived fear related to pressure from above: *in religious circles, if one is seen as not toe-ing the party line, then advancement is less likely (M62); the church is rigid in its discipline ... priests who speak out are 'punished' (M338).*

It was considered that *those who are in positions of power will be too threatened to invite suggestions and ideas for change in meeting the needs of the church in the twenty-first century (R324).*⁶⁶ The hierarchy were perceived to be too 'frightened' to offer the door to possibilities; *they are afraid of losing numbers, not enough on the plate etc (R131); they are fearful of losing power and position (R92).*⁶⁷ The church

⁶⁴ R288, S305, M328.

⁶⁵ R217, S231, M233, R319, R336.

⁶⁶ Cf M69.

⁶⁷ cf R250.

leaders in parishes/dioceses are often people fearful of change and cling to the status quo (M69).

Fear of change (S307) was cited in general terms⁶⁸, and that fear limits or prevents change (M62), limits the will to change (M90). Related to this were: fear of rocking the boat (M72); fear of letting go (S117); the usual fear of risk-taking (S199); fear of the unknown (R264);⁶⁹ conservative forces over-reacting, scared of change (M170);⁷⁰ fear of freedom - failure to trust Jesus enough? (S307). Other fears were: fear of losing power (M314);⁷¹ fear of losing status (M167);⁷² fear of losing control, and an unwillingness to empower others (S269)⁷³; fear of loss of role by clergy (R19); fear and loss of security (M90); fear of losing money (M167).

Perceived barriers to the inclusion and participation of women in ministry and decision-making included: *fear of women (R264);⁷⁴ fear of the feminine (M254); fear of women's capacity and intelligence by male leaders and by conservative women's groups (M80); fear of women's power and insight by males (S315); fear of women in decision-making positions (M53); fear of sharing power with women (M53); clerical apprehension of the 'female person' (R33); fear in the male hierarchy that women want to take over (R81); the fear of the male hierarchy to share and listen to the female population (M163). Clerics were perceived to be threatened by the desire of women to participate in the sacramental ministry (R280), by women coming to the fore (R204),⁷⁵ or vocal about change (M203). Respondents commented: some clergy would recognise that women are better educated than they, and are fearful to acknowledge this (R19); then there is jealousy, especially if a woman, exercising a ministry of pastoral care, establishes relationships with people in the church (M53); there is real fear, I believe, that what we feminists want will change the church (which it will) and betray the message of Jesus (which I believe it won't) (S214). One woman expressed her personal fear that there are many 'Pandora's boxes' that women might want to open and clean out! (S269).*

⁶⁸ M6, M37, S45, M70, M72, M90, M160, M249, R264, R267, M279.

⁶⁹ cf S117.

⁷⁰ cf R40.

⁷¹ cf M8, R30, M53, R66, M90, S117, R120, M167, R173, R247, M256, M322, M333.

⁷² cf R120, R173.

⁷³ cf R267.

⁷⁴ cf R30, M53, R173, R186, M190, R208, M322.

⁷⁵ cf M93, R234.

There was a perception that priests feared to be equal with the people: *men and the fear they have ... of having to acknowledge that in the past half the congregation has been deprived of their rights (R313); fear ... of having to listen too carefully to the voice of the people; of admitting (by the hierarchy) that there is need for change and that there might be another way of doing things - that the Holy Spirit works in mysterious ways and speaks to the lowly as well as the mighty; and that mistakes have been made, learn from mistakes, be vulnerable (R254); priests' fear of just being in the presence of people as an equal (R154).*

Noted also was *fear among the congregation - about change and about alienation (M232).*⁷⁶ One woman commented at length:

Being a communion of people, I think if we really want to work towards the kind of equality Jesus showed to women and men, then we would find ways. I think we are finding ways. But I think also the obstacles are in ourselves. I can acknowledge my own fear on the one hand of stepping outside the expected role of a woman and risking the displeasure of male friends (even though they are of a sensitive kind!), and on the other, the fear of not gaining my own free ground as a person - not 'free' in the sense of having my own way, but 'free' in the sense of freedom for gift of self to others in the communion of church, to Jesus, to God as Trinity (R302).

ROMAN INFLUENCES

The present pope, John Paul II, was cited by many respondents as a key factor inhibiting change,⁷⁷ certainly in regard to the ordination of women.⁷⁸ Judgements were passed that *statements from the pope stopping all discussion on women priests put the cause back light years (M210); the pope is too afraid to look at current issues in the light of Christ's teaching, 'respect each other and love' (M303).* Respondents expressed that the pope was *conservative (M68), had a closed attitude (R204), was totally out of touch with the people (S195) and did not want to hear what people are saying (M268); that he operated out of an autocratic and male model (R33) and silenced bishops and people who speak out in dissent (M198); the pope demands religious tolerance and*

⁷⁶ cf M223.

⁷⁷ cf M73, M114, M123, M188, M205, R207, M253, M260.

⁷⁸ cf S25, R33, M44, M98, S147, M198, M210, M272, R280, M322.

equality for Christians in non-Christian countries yet allows the most repressive practices to happen to faithful questing members of the church (R252).

Identified with 'the pope' was *the entourage (M21) - the Curia, especially Cardinal Ratzinger (R135),⁷⁹ and all those who adhere often blindly to his decrees (M171).⁸⁰* Respondents were critical that *Rome's attitudes⁸¹ and fears limit possibilities - people at decision-making levels unwilling to risk/pioneer something different (S3); the present leadership seems determined to prevent structural change, and rulings coming out of Rome are becoming more and more rigid and repressive (M314); decision-makers are looking backwards to pre-Vatican II (S45); nor does Rome/the Curia understand the imperative to listen to the voices and experience of women in the interests of justice and its own authenticity (M55); the hierarchy or Roman Curia exert a stultifying effect on creativity and honest debate by silencing any who try to speak the truth in love (R252).* One woman wrote of *Vatican documents and letters re-enforcing women as 'nurturers' not as pro-activists (S187).*

AUTHORITARIANISM

Failure of official church to listen, and inability to hear, were criticised: *the years of the 'deaf ear' of the church hierarchy and the inflexibility of those governing the church, who give the impression that if they tell us what to do we are bound to do it or else! (M146).* This failure contrasts sharply with the evidence that respondents have listened to and heard and acted from Vatican II vision and teaching, listened to and informed themselves about current church statements.

It was perceived that: *some hierarchy pay lip service only to the values they promote, having their own interests at the centre of their concern (M165);⁸² some have good will but no skill to work with people giving them due respect (R177); it seems the hierarchy is obsessed with power and I often wonder if they've ever read the Gospel (M225);⁸³ they are not open to the Spirit in their own lives (R211).* Respondents commented that bishops are *out of touch (R177),⁸⁴ fail to listen to the faithful (M96),⁸⁵ have a closed*

⁷⁹ cf S34, S94.

⁸⁰ cf M21, M124, M254.

⁸¹ cf R120, R122, S138.

⁸² cf S231.

⁸³ cf S139, M180, R204, M210, M320.

⁸⁴ cf R154, R211, M268.

attitude (R204),⁸⁶ refuse to allow discussion (M44), do little to elicit feedback (R310) and 'censor' Catholic publications and the pulpit (M96). Judgement was that the hierarchical church has become distanced and non-relevant to most (R113).⁸⁷

CLERICAL TRAINING

Respondents stated as problems: *non-optional celibacy (M320),⁸⁸ the quality of priestly selection procedures and seminary training (R46),⁸⁹ lack of education and closed outlook (R204).⁹⁰ Several women were specific: *training for priests ill-equips them for parish life, and produces introverted men whose only vision is to retreat to the past (M210); very few young priests with more realistic attitudes are studying for the priesthood so no real change can be expected there (M183); I worry about the style of priest to come from a seminary such as X, and feel this will limit the development of a living, vital church (M141); the church is too rigid in its theology of priesthood (R131)⁹¹.**

Concern was expressed that *priests' education does not seem to include personal spirituality/psychological processes - this is a lack which works against flexible thought processes and openness to change in self, others and the institutional church (R126). Other concerns were expressed: lack of ability to consult or work with others, to listen (R186);⁹² lack of communication skills (M215); lack of education on social issues that affect women and children (M215); lack in education, particularly in the spirit of Vatican II,⁹³ feminism and post modernist theories (M128); lack in the gifts of listening, discerning, giving and receiving (M255). Priests were perceived to be ill-equipped to run the finances as well as pastoral duties (M243) and to have a wrong set of priorities (M273), money for things, not people (R332).⁹⁴ One woman made reference to personality disorders and the deviance in the church that has been covered up for*

⁸⁵ cf R258, R324.

⁸⁶ cf S139, M180, M320.

⁸⁷ cf R20.

⁸⁸ cf M129, M248, M253, M338.

⁸⁹ cf R30, R106, M273, M327.

⁹⁰ cf M228, M310, M320.

⁹¹ cf R172.

⁹² cf S209, R258, S275, M327, R336.

⁹³ cf R186.

⁹⁴ cf M159, M254.

centuries (R86). Women commented on *the vindictive response to those members of the clergy who have left the priesthood (M333)*.⁹⁵

LAITY, EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP

Concern of respondents was for the status and role of laity rather than for women's issues exclusively. Almost one-third of respondents referred to 'laity' - women and men. Of the one-seventh of respondents who referred to women alone as the instrumental or active persons in a statement, two only might equally have referred to men.⁹⁶ The others who referred to women alone did so in regard to: women prejudiced against other women;⁹⁷ why women might leave the church;⁹⁸ shortage of women with leadership skills⁹⁹ or lacking confidence;¹⁰⁰ the perception that women give power to men and see themselves as subordinate.¹⁰¹ One respondent commented: *the attitude and approach to women in the church is a part and an example of the general malaise in the institutional church's relation to the laity (M103)*.

For laity, *lack of awareness and theological education (R212)*¹⁰² were stated as factors that inhibit change, as well as: *lack of knowledge, so we stay with what we know even though that may be limiting (R257)*; *inability to accept that times have changed (R217)*; *lack of dynamic teachers (S28)*; *lack of support for innovative moves (R143)*; *lack of suitable leadership, not as one person but a group of people (R212)*; *little experience of community and often so little life-giving nourishment in worship and liturgy (R106)*. 'Lack' was noted in rural areas especially: *isolated communities have little opportunity for further education, growth or change (M215)*.

Associated with 'lack of education' was *lack of experience in Church/liturgical leadership*,¹⁰³ *over commitment*,¹⁰⁴ and *lack of funds*¹⁰⁵ (R4). As women commented: *for lay people to be involved in change requires a huge amount of energy and*

⁹⁵ cf M21.

⁹⁶ M152, R250.

⁹⁷ R4, S13, M73, R113, M183, M188, M190, R191, M205, M257, R280, M320.

⁹⁸ R30, M260, S269, M312, M314, R330.

⁹⁹ M125.

¹⁰⁰ M8, M80, R207.

¹⁰¹ S195, S315.

¹⁰² cf M8, M27, S67, R81, M93, M128, M194, R247, R282.

¹⁰³ cf M125.

¹⁰⁴ cf M54, M152.

¹⁰⁵ cf M90.

commitment and time; these elements are often needed in focussing on family needs (M69).¹⁰⁶ Also perceived to be needed was education of men and women on the call of all to leadership within the church (R100); we as women/men need to understand clearly power, authority, leadership in the '90s and onwards (R86); the church-going community is not challenged to imagine new ways of being church or of being involved in the new church (M226). One young woman commented:

I have gone to several conferences where the formation of the laity has been raised as an issue. I think the unofficial church are searching for how this can be addressed, and I do believe it is only a matter of time before it does happen ... I think this is where the unofficial church, through institutions such as WATAC, are leading the way; ... the church needs to address very practical questions including: when, for whom, for how long, at what cost (\$); only those involved in formation training, in consultation with the laity, can answer these questions (S140, 2/10/96).

Specific to women were: *lack of encouragement to discuss feminism and historical aspects of women's ministry (R172); shortage of women with a theological education, and shortage of women with leadership skills (M125); need for education, models of feminist other approaches (R211).* One woman expressed her personal 'lack': *I don't feel qualified (M203).* Another woman commented: *it is not as though the opportunity for further education is not there - people just don't either recognise or have the 'hunger' (M93).*

The corollary also was stated: *the change in education of the laity (often more than the clergy); where once the clergy 'knew all the answers', now the laity challenges, and can be seen as threatening the power structure, and ranks close (R36);¹⁰⁷ many women are now more highly educated re theology etc than males ... [this] causes further 'threatening positions' for ... bishops and priests (R120); church leaders often do not want to bring educated women out of their 'invisible' positions (R86).* Relationship between clergy and congregation in giving and feeling support and encouragement was perceived negatively - *lack of respect for each other, taking too much for granted, forgetting that Christ is present in each person (R267).¹⁰⁸*

¹⁰⁶ cf S3.

¹⁰⁷ cf R86.

¹⁰⁸ cf R247.

TRADITION

Many respondents stated that tradition might limit or prevent change. They highlighted different aspects: *we have a rich tradition, but we have powerful people 'dedicated' to maintaining some of the narrow, legalistic, backward-looking aspects of that tradition - rather than being open to its richness and diversity and openness to life; too many decisions are made by frightened old, celibate men who can't and won't hear the hopes and desires and needs of the ordinary people of today and tomorrow (S48).*

Some women wrote about *the leaning on the so-called tradition of the church (R92)*;¹⁰⁹ *holding onto past traditions for the sake of traditions (R120)*; *reliance on tradition – 'it has always been so' (R252)*.¹¹⁰ One woman commented that *the present church is too solidly entrenched in tradition to a stifling degree; tradition has its place, and customs of value should remain, but not a'l of them (M24)*. Related to over-reliance on 'tradition' were comments about: *conservatism and fundamentalism; continued narrow view of who is church (R274)*; *revert to a simplistic fundamentalism in regard to theology and Scripture (R30)*;¹¹¹ *adherence to official pronouncements, doctrine (M63)*. A woman commented that *the church needs to reconsider the foundation of its authority used to back up declarations e.g. the role of tradition, the level of the education of the laity, 'God's will/law', and whether these references are still valid today (M50)*.

Other respondents commented on specific aspects of 'tradition' as in the following: *tradition has always had men in positions of power i.e. decision-making; discussions have not been encouraged of alternative views of the very powerful few (S74)*; *long tradition of male dominance, and the lack of awareness of the damage and injustice caused by this tradition (R144)*; *the long, historical, patriarchal world-view, theology and law that have provided the basis for the present structure; this is being broken down but it is a very slow process; it is exacerbated by the abuse of power and position by the clerical model presently operating (R2)*; *tradition of celibate clergy ... mistaken interpretation of some passages from St. Paul's Epistles; also an inability to accept that times have changed, and the present society in which we live (R213)*; *so there is*

¹⁰⁹ cf M316, M328, M333.

¹¹⁰ cf M133.

¹¹¹ cf M6, M21, M73, M81, M102, M279.

tradition to overcome - and sometimes meaningless ritual practices that convey little or mixed messages to the people in the pews (R284); past/present practices are ingrained (R177).

The following respondents attacked what they considered to be the bases of ‘tradition’:

The fact that much of our theologies reflect a static, medieval worldview and a male worldview. Catholic Church clings to such doctrines as infallibility instead of, like our loving God, being vulnerable in history. Our need to accept our creaturely finitude. Our refusal to move into a relational worldview. Mainstream church’s refusal to listen to the ‘Transforming Grace’ that feminist, relational, liberation theology is (R75).

The intrinsic belief in Aristotle’s philosophy, picked up by church leaders and theologians, that ‘woman’ is an ‘incomplete male’. The ability or unwillingness to rewrite Christian tenets and to take out all the misguided practices and rites and beliefs that have developed over the centuries for political (usually) reasons that no longer apply to the twenty-first century (M87).

One of the things that will prevent changes in the church is the dualist philosophy that underpins most of the thinking in the church; this is what causes a sense of us and them; it is the claim that there are two human natures; this leads to specific roles for men and women as well as the split of lay and ordained; it causes an opposition in thinking so that there can be no overlap; ... if one human nature is accepted, then it is possible to see that each person is unique and also enables variety in the way people live, experience and celebrate church (R283).

What is at question are our most fundamental ways of imaging God – the whole symbol-system of presenting God to the people (R234).

SERENDIPITY

Given the focus on sexuality in changes that were sought, only one comment on *the church’s attitude to sex as sin (S:15)*, and two comments on *our impoverished theology of sexuality (R75)*¹¹² were made in relation to what might limit or prevent change.

¹¹² cf S45.

Perceived factors were predominantly structural – patriarchy, hierarchy and clericalism - and attitudes that resulted from these.

Finance was cited from differing perspectives. *Finance equals power; this would be a major stumbling block - lack of finance would be cited; however financial payment for work done is a justice issue (R156.)*¹¹³ Perceived problems were: *financial and facilities richness; imagination poverty (M328); supporting married priests is much more expensive (M190); the people who own the money have no say in how it is directed, and no way to achieve a say other than opting out of contributing (S275).*

Lack in social concern was evident to respondents. To understand church as ‘they’ or as ‘we’ gives different readings to the following comments: *the church is not seen as a leader in social justice (S67); cosmetic changes which ignore the big, underlying issues (R30); burying head in sand, as to the real situation of the church at the present time (R120); the ignoring of the problem of human survival and of environmental survival - that no matter how the quality of life is run down, we shall all be proud to say ‘well I kept the rules’, whilst surveying the joyless scene (M146); justice groups, eg WATAC, CCJP, have limited membership, and funds for action difficult to acquire (S187).*

One woman summarised:

All of these things - authority, clerical system, fear, power, lack of vision - remove us from the simplicity and beauty of the Gospel of Jesus who came to liberate not to condemn. The Jesus who was powerless and associated with the poor and the marginalised. Until the church stands for the poor, it cannot be what it is called to be (R40).

SUMMARY

This chapter deals solely with suggestions made by respondents as to what might limit or prevent change. Most suggestions fell into ‘they’ aspects of church such as structural inertia, pursuit of power and sexism. Corollaries were apathy and conservatism, disempowerment of the laity and especially of women.

Respondents perceived structural inertia and apathy, entrenched clericalism and ingrained dependence, as reverse sides of conservatism in the Catholic Church. Those

¹¹³cf M68.

who upheld the status quo were seen to claim God-given authority. Impoverished ecclesiology and faulty anthropology were seen to negate women.

Many perceived constraints were psychological in nature - fear of loss and change, and preservation of power and privilege. As one woman noted: *there are strongly held beliefs in many that are called theological; however, the ingrained psychological and sociological reasons are more significant (R84)*. Women commented on *the masculine need to be 'someone' - to be a success and to be seen to be in control and be powerful - ambition, opportunism, pride - maybe the old-fashioned word sin (R66)*; and on *the difficulty of taking up an alternative clerical approach when a hierarchical model has been practised for so long by many older priests and sought by many younger priests as a means of providing status, power and prop for shaky ego (R95)*.

Constraints such as lack of awareness and education can be, must be, and are being countered at grass-roots level. Efforts have been made at this level towards social justice and towards claiming images of God that go beyond inherited patriarchal images. From this level will come the growth of the faith-filled community that is needed to counter the weight of structures.

One perceived constraint that is unlikely to be reversed is that many who might challenge or change the church have exercised Hirschman's (1970) exit option and have left the church. This increases the likelihood that those in the pews will be conservative and resistant to change, with downward spiral effect. Some church authorities appear to have a 'remnant mentality' that values a small cohesive and orthodox membership, tight grid and tight group (Douglas, 1982), above a large membership that is loosely structured. These would perceive exit to be for the good of the church rather than feel concern for its members.

Hierarchical structures and clericalism were blamed more than persons of the hierarchy and clergy. Respondents appear to have fallen into the trap of 'reification', treating concepts like 'sexism' and 'patriarchy' as 'things' without demonstrating the connection between male-dominated institutions and the attitudes and behaviour of individual men (Hoff, 1990, 49). This is typical of 'victim' relationships that are ready to excuse. John Paul II was one of very few individuals who were named, although here also reference was made more often to 'the pope' in a gesture of distancing.

Apparent blame was laid on laity for their apathy and conservatism. However, these were blamed in turn on the power of conditioning and ingrained thinking.

Disempowerment was seen as structural.

Psychological factors that were noted included fear, especially fear of change and loss. Fear and loss belong to Arbuckle's (1993) model of chaos and change that provides a framework for the chapter that follows.

Respondents referred to need for an educated laity, and demonstrated their own educated awareness of Vatican II.

Dissatisfaction was evident. While its causes were seen predominantly to be 'they', the following respondents noted the step beyond, and that responsibility lies with 'we':

Attitudinal change can take place given time and effort on the part of many men and women; the attitudinal change has to take place with women themselves, but nothing is impossible (S13).

Many of us have continued to glibly and almost resignedly say 'well we know we are church' – and we're operating out of a different model; to continue this actually only sustains the status quo even further – the 'people's church' has disappeared (M312).

Young women will not tolerate their control and are educated to take their professional stand and be consulted (M243).

To change as a society needs much time, education and struggle, individually and together (R246).

I don't think we take the Gospel seriously (S201).

At issue is whether 'church' is regarded as 'they' or as 'we'. If 'we', then some perceived constraints lie within the scope of grass-roots facilitation of change, and there are grounds for hope. And respondents did express hope.

The chapter that follows will explore from whence hope derived. It also depicts how respondents believed that 'church' might go about change.

CHAPTER NINE

PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGE

INTRODUCTION

While Chapter 7 outlines changes that respondents stated they would like, and Chapter 8 considers factors that respondents perceived might limit or prevent change, this chapter considers perceptions of respondents about change. How the church might change was not an explicit survey question. However, so many respondents made reference to change process that the issue warranted to be addressed separately from desired changes. An interpretive framework is provided by Arbuckle (1993) and Sungaila (1990), which is detailed in Chapter 3.

Arbuckle's (1993) applied model of change posits that the culture reversal of Vatican II led to tension and alienation in the Catholic Church as conflicting forces struggled for ascendancy. Restorationist forces, especially at the hierarchical level, seek to return uncritically to pre-Vatican II certainty and control. These constraints to change were discussed in Chapter 8. Conversionist forces for change are evident at grass-roots level, where there appears to be willingness to question the status quo and to propose alternatives. These will be discussed in the present chapter. In Arbuckle's (1993) five stage model, stages 3, 4 and 5 overlap in the present – political reversals, cultural breakdown of meaning systems, and restorationist and conversionist movements.

Sungaila's (1990) model of dissipative structures posits that systems are self-renewing. They seek to contain fluctuations and act as constraints to change. Systems are also self-organising. They accommodate to the second-order level of change that occurs when fluctuations reach a point where they cannot be contained. The fluctuations of Sungaila's (1990) model parallel the conversionist movements of Arbuckle's (1993) model.

Accordingly, tension and polarisation are both a natural part of change process and a reaction to change already occurring. Both Arbuckle (1993) and Sungaila (1990) point to the potential for change through grass-roots efforts. Other writers referred to in Chapter 3 endorse the effectiveness of partial action (Welch, 1990; Trice & Beyer, 1993), the need to cultivate inner growth (Greenleaf, 1977; Bridges, 1995; Chaleff, 1995) and to develop supportive networks (Welch, 1990; O'Sullivan, 1997).

The chapter discusses the above from responses to the questionnaire and comments made at interview. It considers the 'why?' of change and the backdrop of Vatican II. It considers also, in the context of change, how respondents viewed the absence of young people from the church, and the role that Catholic schools might play in this regard.

WHY CHANGE?

Changes to 'church' were sought for the sake of the church and its mission, to live and promote Gospel values.

Respondents wrote as follows of change for the sake of 'church': *even the church must continue to 'become' or it will die (M226); essential for the 'wholeness' of the church to have females as part of governance, decision-making and policy-making (R120);¹ I want my daughter to, one day, see my church's full potential (S60); if we are to have a healthy growing church which is relevant to the modern world, we must all accept changes as a challenge, not as a threat (M333).*

Respondents would like 'church' to *come into the twentieth century (R284);² to be living and meaningful for our time (R267);³ to be life-giving for all (R310); more personal for those who really want to experience it as strengthening/re-vitalising (R189); if we are to have justice and peace on earth, the church has to change its way of being (M151).*

Respondents advocated that 'church' would have *the Gospel as its imperative (S45);⁴ would offer an alternative lifestyle to the world (M314); alternatives to*

¹ cf M37, S67, M70, M105.

²cf R324.

³cf R204.

⁴cf R40, S78, R155, R173, R197.

materialism ... alternatives to bring people in contact with the mystery of God (M170). Women commented: I would like to participate in a church which encourages its members to experience God in their lives through showing compassion and love to their neighbour; then to worship this God and to live their lives in the light of this experience; I would like these changes because they would bring about a more noble and just society (S174); where role or responsibility was based on gifts (R144);⁵ where all can exercise baptismal rights (R113);⁶ where our children experience equality - empowered they can make a positive contribution against injustice (M170); I want to be included in this church of great tradition and be proud of its adherence to the gospel (M124); if we are to have justice and peace on earth, the church has to change its way of being (M151).

One woman identified changes, and placed in a Gospel context the outcome that she hoped from each: *review of language of the church ... so that all might feel/be included; review/overhaul attitudes to love, social justice, women, creation ... so that the views/values of Jesus might prevail; re-selection of stories ... so that the full role of women in salvation history can be acknowledged and celebrated; review of priestly celibacy, to reflect life in apostolic times and reflect the freedom Jesus offered; review of who may be ordained ... to include women, so that radical trends/values espoused by Jesus may be brought to fruition; inclusion of many new liturgies ... so that all parts of life may be blessed, acknowledged (S307).*

VATICAN II

Background to change lies in Vatican II. While few respondents named Vatican II, thinking and attitudes indicated that they were imbued with Vatican II influences. The hopes and disappointment of respondents reflected the hopes and disappointment of women who were auditors at the Council (McEnroy, 1995). Comments made included: *Vatican II gave such hope of a more Gospel-centred church (R47),⁷ embracing the world ... a church of the poor (R186); new status for laity invited participation; remoteness and authoritarianism of the past gave way to small enthusiastic groups (M161),⁸ renewal and celebration (M170), collegiality of bishops, ... dialogue (M198). A Vatican II image was cited of: *church as struggling pilgrim people (R47).**

⁵cf M69.

⁶cf S43.

⁷cf M128.

⁸cf M333.

Respondents commented as follows on the lack of readiness for Vatican II: *Vatican II was not understood by priests; and thus was not taught to the laity (R14)*.⁹ As a result: *the church seems to have lost the spirit ... that was evident in the early post Vatican II years (M333); there seems to be a movement away from the spirit of Vatican II (M6)*.¹⁰ However some of the enlightened ways introduced still remain ... *the determination of many lay people to preserve the concept of 'this is our church' (M161)*. One woman commented at interview: *Since Vatican II, we changed a lot of things exteriorally – external things that had to be changed. Perhaps it's now that the heart's being changed after 30 years. Perhaps our hearts have to catch up a bit (M62, 7/12/1996)*.

CHANGE PROCESS

Change began for the following respondents through changed awareness, developed through knowledge of cause and evolution (cf Sungaila, 1978), or by bringing to bear on church structures and practices, often unconsciously, a hermeneutic of suspicion (cf Fiorenza, 1983). Such awareness might lead to action, as women in the American study demonstrated (Winter, Lummis & Stokes, 1995). Like the 'women of Vatican II' (McEnroy, 1995), respondents perceived *danger that women may be seen only interested in (i) ordination or (ii) women's issues, rather than women as absolutely crucial for the turning around of a different relational/inclusive community of equals; experience of oppression gives women a fire/energy for change that may be lost if too narrowly focussed (R66); possibility for change which is not radically feminist but radically human - inclusive of all people (M165)*.

Respondents noted ways in which their awareness of 'church' had changed. Some respondents had become theologically aware, as the following comments showed: *I can see from Scripture that once there was a church that was not like this (S43); my concepts of religion/God etc have changed so dramatically that present way of being church is irrelevant (R157); the Catholic Church will continue to change as individual faith is translated into theology and then expressed in symbols and practised in liturgy (M77)*.

Other respondents indicated that they had become socially and politically aware: *with the insights of women, I am no longer satisfied with the gender differentiation;*

⁹cf R5, R186.

¹⁰cf M180, R290.

... the differentiation no longer makes sense to me philosophically or theologically (R97); my life experiences heightened my awareness of social structures, justice and feminism, and of personal awareness and growth; I have practised and experienced and learnt from sharing with other women, and from reading (D179).

The present awareness of other respondents derived from their questioning aspects of church structures and teaching: *for most of my life I was loyal, obedient and unquestioning of the church and its hierarchy; ... that has gradually changed; I began to question, to doubt, to think for myself; I see now I am 'the church'; ... I have grown and moved, but the official church hasn't kept up with me (R264); I recognised the suppression of women and educated myself to take my place in my church; now I know we are equals in the Body of Christ (M249); I experienced the church's authoritarian attitude as very inhibiting; equally inhibiting was the lack of openness and willingness for discussion; Humanae Vitae was an example; yet it was this encyclical that helped me personally to re-think my spiritual journey (M256).*

Respondents stated personal energy and will to change. They acknowledged that, for the church to change, individuals must change and themselves be what they would like the church to be: *the church belongs to and reflects the People of God (R207); I have imbibed the paradigm that I was born into and for change to happen; I need to change myself to be more assertive in promoting the rights and responsibilities of women in the church, especially my own (M103); the church will not change until people like me go forward; sounds arrogant, doesn't it, but I do not blame a hierarchical church for lack of change; certainly a large institution like the Catholic Church possesses great inertia; however the church is also fortunate to have many voices and a great diversity in all its different expressions (M77); I am confident enough to challenge the church - in the form of my parish priest (S43).*

The corollary was also stated: *though I can see the issues, I find it difficult to step out of the role of being the respectable woman, so as to be able to stand my own ground; ... if we really want to work towards the kind of equality Jesus showed to women, then we will find ways; I think we are finding ways; but I also think the real obstacles are in ourselves; I can acknowledge my own fear (R302).* One woman commented on the change in herself that must happen: *forgiveness and love - this is what I need for the church (M79).*

Grass-roots change was perceived by the following respondents to be desirable. They perceived also that it had begun and would continue: *I would like to see changes coming from the bottom up ... for the Vatican to listen (M6); laity to feel they can make a difference in the life of the church (R310);¹¹ on good days I think of all that is happening in the church - the ground swell of hope from those who are brave enough to question the established structures and hierarchies (M99); the movement in lay people re social justice, feminist theology and a search for an authentic spirituality is a grass-roots movement; ... changes are happening from the 'bottom up' (R197); I don't think initially changes will happen at a formal structural level, as they are already happening to individuals and small groups who are ignoring the formal church (R236); I believe the church is reforming at the grass-roots level of the laity (church as in whole world community); like-minded people gather together to share stories and pray, mindful of a God presence (S137);¹² change begins at the grassroots level, and a new life, new vision, new structures will emerge out of what happens at that level; the responsibility is ours; let's hang in and do our bit (R135). A woman who wanted to get rid of the title 'Father' wrote: *I believe these changes are at the grass-roots level before we see the bigger changes such as ordination of women and married clergy (R66).**

Optimism was expressed that 'change', although difficult, would happen: *to relinquish the male-centred theology of God will be a tough one; but there is a spiritual energy working to liberate the world and the church; the hierarchy/patriarchy is on the brink of its own renunciation as the world moves towards maturity!! the acceptance of 'inclusive language' is broadening significantly, just by our using it, as is the concept of married priests by our discussion on parish staffing (R135); change is never easy; ... however there are many wonderful open articulate men and women; ... change must come; change will come, all in God's own time (M224); change has happened, is happening and will always happen; maybe some of this change could be acknowledged - men and women breaking bread and the word together; I believe change takes place when people have the courage to live out their convictions (R217); as the church has changed from the first century to the twentieth century, it can as a living organism change again (R290); times change, as do ways of thinking; church should move with the demands, and, more importantly, the needs of her people (M171); the world is changing and the church will change in time (M71); we are entering into a new era, a new consciousness,*

¹¹ cf S184, S270.

¹² cf M55.

and the tradition needs to preserve its essential truth but not insist on clinging to rules no longer life-giving (M6); I'm for the revolution, but can't see why it can't be a peaceful process of give and take undertaken as hopeful members of the life-giving church (M176).

Need for action and for patience was stated: *the women in the church will just have to continue the ball-rolling and be prepared to wait for a while (M121); what we have to do now is to co-operate with the Holy Spirit to hasten the development of the lay-centred church without too much pain and loss (S275); perhaps we need greater energy and courage to really work together to bring about change (R200); even when wanting changes maybe we are forgetting God; more trust in the Holy Spirit (M273); I'm impressed with Miriam Therese Winter's book, *Dissenting in Place*,¹³ and the possibility of a critical mass of women digging their heels in; maybe this is the only way change will happen (R239); need to create opportunities for people at 'grass-roots' level to initiate change, have courage to express what the limitations are (S3); after all, it is my/our duty; we, too, are the church; ... we, the laity, have our responsibilities too (M224)*

The following comments indicate that there was an expectation of delay before change would occur, if it did occur: *I think the mainstream Catholics are not at screaming pitch publicly, and just whinge quietly to themselves rather than implementing for change; change is so difficult in the church and always so slow; but I feel much is wrong and out of harmony with God that change will come (S34); until a more co-operative community type of church evolves, until finally there are too few priests to minister to the people, I don't think I will see these changes come about; however I think we do have to work towards the time, so that there are structures in place when they are needed (M127); equal rights for women is still a relatively 'new' issue and still, sadly, very much in the western world; however the truth and justice of this issue will carry it forward and, as the larger outside world changes, so will the Catholic Church, because more and more women will find their public voices (M77); history shows us that attitudinal change is slow! thankfully there are a few priests who dare to be different! (R222); change and/or development takes time and can be threatening; have we the patience? let's try (M256).*

The 'death-life' process of change was acknowledged: *many believe the church in its current form must die before re-growth can begin - so they watch and wait*

¹³ See: Chapter 3, Winter, Lummis & Stokes (1995).

(S195); the whole hierarchy and clerical class needs to disintegrate (S137); the church as we know and have known it needs to die for new life to come (R5); the whole system is so entrenched it really needs to crumble into decay so that a new church can arise from the ruins (M73); a total renewal of the church - after the collapse of present structures (P157); broom sweep through the whole church, clear of dead wood; then, in its place, men and women who want to work and have fully prepared themselves for this work will surge forward to fill the many gaps (M24); chaos will ensue when old models finally break down and out of chaos a new and renewed church will be born (M70); I believe we need institutional reform, and if the institution does not take the initiative it will be impacted upon by outside forces; the present trauma of sexual abuse by clerics may be the saving grace that lays bare the wounds for radical healing (R136); there are some hopeful signs of change around the edges ... but they are yet in their infancy ... forced to some extent by Vatican II, shrinking vocations to the priesthood, and attrition among the clergy, to relinquish some lesser responsibilities (M223); the church as social institution is following the dynamics of all social institutions in its currently dying stage; what next? (R143).

Comment was made on ways in which change is not encouraged and could be encouraged: *church-going community not challenged to imagine new ways of being church or being involved in new church (M226); surfacing of issues is a necessary stage ... of healthy development for the future (R317); 'church' to be acknowledged to exist where it is being best experienced; growth in liturgy, theology and structure to start from there - from grass-roots up (M152); the church needs courage and daring to start new and exciting initiatives ... Catholic people encouraged to form small groups for discussion and prayer, and encouraged, too, to take responsibility for the life of the church (R5); women ought to be encouraged to look at how they experience God in their lives for themselves, apart from how they are told by a male priesthood, culture and institution; the majority of women in the pews do not look at themselves as having any particular insight or way of looking at their relationship with God (S43); everybody relax more - the men don't have to be so defensive of everything (R288). One stated external factor was change that has happened in other churches: as more other Christian Churches move to the ordination of women, we might eventually get there (R271).*

Changes for women were perceived to be central to change in the church: *nothing will change until an authentic mutuality of respect is developed (R19); changes must*

come if women are truly equal (R15); a true acceptance of women would bring about a change to the way we are 'governed' and the way decisions are made; a feminist model of consultation and decision-making would ensure changes to the church's teaching and policy, which in turn would drastically alter the ways God is imaged and worshipped; the main difficulty, to my mind, is that women's voices are not really heard at any level in the hierarchy of the official church; if we are not heard, our experience will not be validated or valued (M142).

Respondents stated that there is need to perceive the need for change: *I believe that the Catholic Church has the potential - but the will? - to change (R310);¹⁴ all our best efforts to effect change are ignored (M325); one of the first things is to get people to be aware that there really is a need for change; there is also a need to keep working to bring about this awareness for the need to change (R155); if we don't work on changes we are living with hypocrisy; how to convince traditional religious and lay people of the need for change is a big problem, but the church's survival is dependent on this recognition followed by action (M44); individuals and parishes need to be shocked out of present views, made helpless and vulnerable, so that co-operative efforts to search for meaning can be made; pilgrim journey people have few securities - unafraid to be pro-active also (R211).*

The difficulty was noted: *change is a painful process for both those wanting it and those resisting it; maintaining the status quo can be an unsatisfactory but less painful alternative (M69). Polarisation of those seeking and those resisting change was seen to be inherent in change process: it would seem to me that there are two developing groups in the church - those that are concerned with authority, power and tradition, and those whose focus is living Christianity and are open to change; either these groups will both be accommodated or the church could well split (M262);¹⁵ already we are experiencing a more polarised church which is confusing, and some go 'right' because it is what they know (R197); people who want change are labelled 'not true Catholic' (M99); women are seen as deviants - those who want change and participation (M240); training in obedience to the hierarchy makes dissent likely to occasion guilt and accusation of disloyalty (R172); the authoritative structural institution will survive and attract numbers who demand certainty; the emerging church of those whose cry will not be silenced will grow*

¹⁴cf M124.

¹⁵cf M102.

stronger and continue to give prophetic witness to that truth which the structural church cannot strangle, namely the uncontrollable freedom of God (M55).

The following quotation was a perception of the present stage of change within the Catholic Church, and promise for the future: *I feel quite strongly that changes will come, and are coming, from basic levels; in many ways the 'official church' is becoming irrelevant; women are exercising ministry and leadership among the 'small people' - on fringes, without pay, and in some ways this is so prophetic that it is a powerful way for change; I think 'let it die'; natural attrition is already happening, and the new church on the fringes (which is really the centre) is so alive (R9).*

ABSENCE OF YOUNG PEOPLE:

Young people were defined by one respondent as aged 17-30 (R19), and by another respondent as under 40 (M73). Respondents perceived that the absence of young people was an issue for the church: *dismissal of our young people - categorising them as unchurched rather than searching; we dismiss their questions and their spirituality at great risk to our own spiritual growth (M114); adolescents of today are not enlightened by religion therefore something needs to be done to get adolescents back to the church for any religion or institution to survive (S147); more involvement of children and young people regularly so that we have more good examples for future generations to follow (M49); youth are lost to the church - no saying they will be interested in trying to form a new church (R16); the fresh, relevant insights of younger generation are not heard (R19); general lack of interest in things church caused by absence of young vibrant membership (R282); urgent need to beckon youth towards 'church' - where are those under 40/30 in 'the church' (S307); our parish has a large number of committed and involved people; however in essence it is dead since large numbers of teenagers are not part of the worshipping community (M69).*

Concern was expressed that the church holds no attraction for young people: *most youth have no interest or involvement of any type in the church (R16); there is little that is of appeal to young people (R162); the young feel excluded from meaningful forms of ministry (R280); there is little intelligent inclusion of youth 17-30 (R19); the church is irrelevant to the majority of young people¹⁶ (under 40) so they won't*

¹⁶cf R143.

be able to suggest changes - or to pay the mortgage (M73). That parishes lack presence of young people (R247) elicited the comments: I conclude the church is not meeting the spiritual liturgical needs of younger people (R213); there is that deep spiritual sense there, but somehow or other our services aren't touching them; so they're bored; they don't go to church (M62, 7/12/96); my children feel that the church is not a place for young people, it doesn't give them anything (M221, 10/10/96); why expect young people to respect an institution as a matter of course when they are questioning and abandoning most institutions? (M129); youth are being disenfranchised since neither gender wishes to be part of an archaic hierarchical system (M69).

Suggestions were made: *I don't believe you can encourage the youth unless the church feels and works at developing a truly Christian community who can work together encouraged and supported (not directed or led) by insightful and sensitive priests (M49); as a teacher I rarely teach units on 'the church' as it seems so irrelevant to young people who do not come from any practising background; ... their greatest hope in the church lies with practical involvement in church-sponsored activities; the only way that the church will really continue is by being 'out there' working for justice and providing welfare services and support; this is where it will firstly appeal to young people - then it can introduce them to prayer, meditation and the richness of the liturgy (M262, 2/10/96); consult the young people on how the church needs reforming - they have a vision and experience not contaminated by pre-Vatican II experiences (R229); unless the church is seen to be a witness to the teachings of Christ it will die and will lose even more of its credibility; it has already lost a large majority of our youth, and will lose more if something isn't done (M105); the Catholic Church often lacks joy, the kind of joy and enthusiasm that would attract students and young people (the joy which is part of youth's baggage); I see trends, but could we aim for general acceptance that God is not a 'dag'; that it is ok to love God without prejudicing the crazy, unpredictable joy of just being young and alive (M146).*

The following comments were made by women at interview as to why the church is seen as irrelevant by young people:

I think the younger ones have more choices available to them now. They're more shrewd, they can ask questions, they can see things more clearly ... And why would the young ones sit in church and be lectured at by a man who's

telling them what they should do, when it's nothing to do with their lives. They're part of the much wider world, the much freer world, and they've so many more ideas. So I think part of it is society (M179, 10/10/96).

Young people today have no respect for hypocrisy. They're not going to look at a structure like the Catholic Church with reverence, without questioning it. They see all the negatives ... the leadership and administration ... Students need to hear the church making a statement about welfare and government policies. The church is not just concerned with money and power. They need to hear the church speaking up on things they can identify with and say 'Yes, that is a good idea'. That's what they don't hear. It is actually there. The church is involved, with people doing wonderful work, but they don't see ... that there is good practical Christianity in the church (M262, 2/10/96).

The idea of 'Call to Discipleship' was to work with 18-24 year-olds for ten months, a lot of fun, starting to work with their own inner journey, connecting that with the Gospel ... the idea was to introduce them to other groups in the church where they could belong. That was my question, where do you put young people ... there didn't seem to be anything in the church that young people could fit in (M289, 8/10/96).

Being a grandmother has shaped my concerns about church. I'm so sad to hear them say 'The church means nothing grandma, the church doesn't mean anything to me, a bunch of hypocrites' ... 'I can't hack the church grandma'. I find that very, very sad. The church has lost its relevance. They see the church as very restrictive, rule-ridden. I hear that frequently. 'Too many rules, too many rules' (M249, 9/10/96).

Conversely, two young women in their twenties spoke of their personal commitment. The first young woman contributed to music ministry in her parish, and hosted a home Mass each week for people in neighbourhood boarding houses. She had been a diocesan youth worker for two years, and had lived in a Vincentian community house. She wrote:

I love the Eucharist. I could feel excluded, but Jesus was not on about that. He is present in the Eucharist whoever consecrates. I feel that church documents that use exclusive language are affronting, yet they remain rich. I

feel rebuked and unimportant when I am not allowed to preach or preside. I have a great sense of belonging to all this, and hence the energy for change (S138).

She commented further at interview:

I feel very much as a young adult ... I'm still youthful, I've still got that energy for change. You think that you're important enough to make a difference, and I live my life in a way that I'm mixing with people who feel that way. So I get energy from that. We all think that we belong to church, that we are church where we are, that we can make a difference, that we belong, that we have a right. If I was alone, if I wasn't talking with likeminded people, I know I wouldn't have that (S138, 3/10/96).

The second young woman, when at university, attended justice seminars and meetings, then spent several months as volunteer pastoral worker in aboriginal missions in the Kimberley. She commented:

It was a deep spiritual challenge ... that's what I found exciting. Like a lot of young people, I think they get sucked in once they sense their excitement in this form, more a spiritual hunger (S140, 2/10/96).

IMPACT OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Catholic schools have been perceived since last century to be the agency of the Catholic Church in Australia to support families in fostering faith and committed membership. In considering how respondents viewed issues that related to young people, it is appropriate to consider comments on Catholic schools made by women who were teachers or parents.

Respondents who commented as teachers in Catholic schools did so positively. They noted especially how they experienced the communal dimension of the Catholic school: *the church for me is increasingly the Catholic school community where I teach and worship; this is a 'feminine' church (M152); I find the example, decision-making, policies and worship, a positive model for these young women and myself (M79);¹⁷ as a secondary Religious Education teacher - positive experience,*

¹⁷ cf M141.

respected, trusted, part of a community of teachers and especially Religious Education teachers - great deal of sharing and co-operation; opportunities for spiritual development (M296). One 'outsider' comment was particularly telling: I am a non-Catholic teaching in a Catholic High School and currently completing Grad Dip RE; I love the school in which I teach and have never experienced such a strong feeling of 'koinonia' - the experience of God's love working in the 'real' world; we have, as a school community, experienced a number of tragedies during past years and it is the sense of community and faith which really has seen us through; I feel a valued member of the community - I especially appreciate the fact that I am welcomed as part of the RE staff and into all experiences of church, including worship, liturgy etc; this I see as the Catholic Church living out its values (M165). A teacher who was interviewed stated similarly: at least in a school context, from my own experience - it is one place where a lot of our girls look back; that sense of caring environment is what we try to create; most of the students I work with wouldn't go to a church; this is the only place they are going to experience it; the common thread within the staff and principal is caring for anybody in need; we care for the students; we try to give them every opportunity; I know some people find this at parish level, but I haven't (M262, 2/10/96). Liturgies with students were meaningful (M142).¹⁸ However one teacher noted that it is impossible to keep teaching Catholic school girls that they can do anything, be anything in life, when next moment they go to church and are treated as second rate people (S67).

Comment passed on Catholic schools by parents was critical.¹⁹ One woman would like to see school exposing children K-12 to women's issues (S187). Other women would like to see the emphasis taken off Catholic education for children, and church resources spread over all stages of life (R43).²⁰ Another woman would like less emphasis on Catholic schools, more on Christian way of living - doing justice (M273).

A mother of four adult children commented at interview:

In the Catholic school, I think they teach kids to be Catholic, to keep church laws. They don't teach them to know Jesus. Two of my kids went through a Catholic secondary school, the others didn't. The ones who didn't go through the Catholic school went to Scripture classes, one of them went to

¹⁸ cf M262.

¹⁹ cf M69, M132, M273..

²⁰cf M68, S201, S275.

Anglican fellowship in the school. They've both got very deep Christian faith. Catholic education at that time didn't give you that. And I still think Catholic schools teach you to keep church rules rather than to know Christ. I think sometimes that that's a lot of what comes from the church, in instructions and sermons, a lot of it is about keeping rules, rather than to love God and love your neighbour. I think social justice is very important in being a Catholic. But I do think mostly the average Catholic doesn't want to know about social justice. So it's going to be a long process because people have been so used to just turning up for an hour on Sunday, and no other demands to be a Catholic. As I see it, the church is going to virtually disappear, and then worship will take over. The pendulum has got to swing lower (M218, 10/10/96)

A woman whose five children attended Catholic schools raised questions related to grid-group theory (Douglas, 1932) explained in Chapter 3:

From what I've seen since mine have left, the Catholic schools have gone overboard. They've produced all these highly individualistic people who are the radicals of the church now. The Catholics who went to the Government schools, they wouldn't probably think of it. But mine are fairly radical and indifferent. If they were to fully participate in the church as their community, they'd want radical changes ... I'm sure they learnt in Catholic school that God loves them. We went from rules to 'God loves us and that's all we need'. They've got to have a bit more identity than that, or there's no church. We can all have this lovely thing 'God loves me', and 'I'm an individual, I can do what I like'. But then we've got no church ... I often wonder what the bishops or the church want from the Catholic school. Do they have to look at the end product to know whether they're successful. It's really hard to evaluate if they are successful, because if you're looking at the population that they're putting out, for the last twenty years, they're not church goers but they've got this wonderful sense of social justice ... They've got laughable things they're saying about their schooling, but they are the social conscience of the world. But I don't know whether God ever hits the centre of their heart. If that's what they want, that's what they're getting. They're good at that but I don't know whether they need a little bit more identity (M273, 7/12/96).

A woman who withdrew her three sons from Catholic Schools raised further questions:

How many lay people, mothers and fathers, are consulted on the Catholic Education curriculum. And yet the church calls them 'the experts', 'the domestic church', etc. But they are never consulted - in fact, not only never consulted, but that whole area is taken out of their hands. If you send a child to a Catholic School, they are given the type of Catholic education that a stranger thinks is valid for them. I reject that totally. I pulled my kids out of Catholic School and sent them to a Government School, and said 'I want to educate my children in the faith. I will not have strangers educating my children in the faith'. I sent them to the sacraments when I felt they were ready - I prepared them - for Eucharist and Confirmation when they were ready. But the church wasn't interested in listening to my experience or anyone else's experience. I would have liked to have been recognised and acknowledged as the primary educator of my children in the faith, and then given support and formation for that role myself, so that I could do an adequate job with my three boys. I was never ever given any help as a parent, any resources or formation, to be able to do that job adequately. I floundered on, fortunately having enough background myself through YCW ... I could connect Scripture, life, faith into one. I never taught my children any set prayers, but we prayed together as a family. But the church wasn't interested ... So the consultative process would have been 'You are the primary educator. What skills do you need? How can we assist you in that role?' But they do the opposite. They take that role away from the parent, and they do it - without telling you what they're doing (M314, 28/12/96).

Two women who attended Government schools projected an experience of exclusion. The first woman wrote: *I'm not a 'traditional' Catholic in that I didn't go to a Catholic school, so that a lot of the paraphernalia that goes with being Catholic still eludes me - and hence I feel left out sometimes (M99).* The second woman enlarged at interview:

For a long time I felt quite marginalised in the church because I attended a Government school ... A lot of it was some of the subtle things, like an assumption that one has an education around Catholicism that isn't available to Catholics who don't attend the Catholic school ... I've read

figures that something like 45% of Catholics now aren't attending Catholic schools. So I think it's quite an erroneous assumption that the church is making, and it's going to continue to marginalise people. They really ought to get their act together in recognising that if most Catholics, or a large minority of Catholics, aren't going through the Catholic school system, then we'd better start looking at educating Catholics in Catholicism, and not assume that everyone has had that access ...

There were issues at a personal level of never having spoken to a priest or a nun ... And so when invitations are made within the church to become involved in this that or the other, I could see that everyone else was on first name terms with the priest and the religious ... So there were these subtle barriers to access. Then there were the more overt things. A recurrent refrain in the church is to talk of children who attended Government schools as if they're the heathens ... I found all that stuff offensive and marginalising as well ... It's taken me a long time to actually feel a part of the church, and even then I still don't have that feeling of ownership and belonging that I see that other people have that went through the Catholic school system. I feel it's a real shame, because access to faith and to the church and to all the riches of the church shouldn't be tied to what school system you attend. It should be something that comes through what happens in your own faith participation ...

The positive side, not having to unlearn. I see that particularly when I look at my husband who went through the Catholic school system, and other families who went through those systems ... they're not able to separate the core issues of faith from the problems of the structure, and the problems of the system. Because they've been exposed to that system from such an early age, it all gets enmeshed in their minds and their emotional experiences ... I feel really privileged that I don't have anything of that. I can hear those stories about the church, and the problems of the church, the pedophilia, the horrific stuff. But it in no way impacts on my faith. It impacts on my anger at the structure and the institution, but it doesn't have any effect on my faith (M110, 5/10/96).

A teacher in a government school spoke from her perspective:

I've had to work out, having been a teacher in a Government school, that I was regarded in my faith community as at best competition and at worst the enemy ... So I've had to think that one through. I think that Christians have abandoned the school system. I've met lots of Christians in the school system, lots of Christian teachers struggling to make comment, but they weren't getting much affirmation from anywhere ... There are also lots of students, more and more. So who are looking after those children and their families. Some are trying to, through the catechists. I went along to a course to be a catechist. I found out how they operated. I looked in our diocese. There were Catholic Education Commissions, but they were geared to where the school system was, and paying some scant attention to where the adults were, and none at all to where Catholic and other Christian children were in the Government schools. So catechists were Cinderella and they felt it. They're struggling to keep one another going ... They want more affirmation for their ministry from the parish, but I don't see it happening ... There's a real mission there for all these children who are growing up with no help at all ... It seems to me neglect from us as Catholics. It may require some painful undoing of what we have now. There may have to be some rethink of it all. It won't happen unless somebody acknowledges there's a need out there. It's no doubt a good thing to have a Catholic school, although that's not my question ... There's need for some change to the model. They're all connected, because if we educate Christian adults, then they will educate their children ... It's a family experience of which the school is the adjunct (S175, 11/10/96).

SUMMARY

Some respondents were optimistic and confident that change would occur. They were constructive and realistic, and were prepared to wait and to work for change. They believed that what would appeal to young people between late teens and thirties age groups was a Gospel vision and hope, a church that was a community that worked for justice, gave witness to the teachings of Christ and was joyful. However, questions were raised as to the identity transmitted by Catholic schools and how identity is transmitted to those who did not attend a Catholic school. Many respondents expressed concern for young people in the church, broadly those up to the age of 40.

Respondents described grass-roots change that was occurring: questioning of structures and hierarchies; movements towards social justice, feminist theology and spirituality; groups embracing Scripture reflection and prayer; increasing acceptance of inclusive language and the concept of married priests. They saw possibility of further grass-roots change: surfacing issues; imagining new ways of being church; growth in liturgy, theology and structures; being aware of the need to change.

In the context of change, respondents noted that the church was not ready for Vatican II. Change was described as a death-life process, painful and polarising, reflecting Arbuckle's (1993) model. Respondents demonstrated that they resonated with Vatican II self-identification as church as People of God. They wanted this model of church to come about for the sake of 'church'.

Respondents noted that for change to occur there must be awareness of need for change, and willingness to undertake the learning that will bring about change in oneself as a preliminary to working for wider change. They commented on attitudinal change in themselves brought about by theological, social and political awareness, and by questioning church structures and teaching. They demonstrated the will to work for change: *pilgrim journey people have few securities - unafraid to be pro-active also (R211)*.

The women of this study were predominantly in the 50+ age group and lived through Vatican II and its 'death-life' outcomes. Many were realistic. They had built supportive networks, were part of grass-roots movements, and were prepared to work and to wait for change. Their attunement with theory and models of change, however intuitive, gives confidence in their collective wisdom, and is reason to have their voices heard.

In tying together aspects of the thesis, the next chapter will discover what are the conclusions and implications of the study, and what new research directions might flow from observations and suggestions of respondents.