

## **Catechesis and Religious Education: One Brother's Journey**

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As my father had been a pupil of the Brothers in their first Australian foundation in Armidale, he insisted that we attend the school of the De La Salle Brothers even though there were other Catholic secondary schools for boys which were closer. In my six years as a pupil of the Brothers I looked forward to the *Reflection* that was given first thing every day after the morning prayers. I still remember some of them. The catechism lessons always seemed to have been well prepared and given in a way that I found interesting. I was attracted to the Brothers' life by the quality of the Brothers who taught me and who looked after sporting teams and other activities. When my father's employment demanded that the family would have to move away from the city, I entered the Juniorate for my final year of schooling. I was fortunate to be part of a large intake of 29 postulants to a two-year novitiate under the guidance of a forward-looking novice master from the Baltimore District.

### **Early Influences**

During the teacher-training part of the scholasticate, I read and was greatly influenced by the English translation of the Institute's *Catechist's Manual* and developed my religion teaching on its principles. In my first community of twenty Brothers where the *Catechism of Formation* was still practiced, I learned from the older members of the community. One of the senior Brothers prepared a set of *Reflections* for each month and distributed them to all who wished to make use of them. The District's publication, *Our Apostolate*, which began in 1953, was the only national catechetical publication. Its content was influenced in some aspects by the French journal *Catéchistes*, especially in the development of Australian *Catechism Workbooks* for primary and early secondary classes. These workbooks, used widely in most Catholic schools in Australia and New Zealand, made the Brothers leaders in offering another kind of methodology for catechetics, especially at the primary and lower secondary levels. In the early 1960's, the Australian Catechisms, written largely by experienced teachers, some of whom had been sent to study at *Lumen Vitae* in Brussels, were edited by Monsignor John F. Kelly. These excellent new resources strengthened teaching in the primary schools, but in the excitement before, during and after the Second Vatican Council, I became increasingly conscious of the lack of adequate resources at the upper levels of the secondary school. This led me to bring in from the United States the recently-published Saint Mary's Press *Living with Christ* series for the last four years of the secondary school. Although it is difficult to assess the impact of these publications in the schools that used them, the positive aspect was that the students were introduced to a well-produced printed book that was in sharp contrast to the paper-covered Australian Catechism which was the same book as students had used in every class since they had first attended a Catholic school.

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Probably the most important ‘innovation’ that I experienced during my teaching in the secondary school was the impact made by the Young Christian Students movement, known simply as YCS. This was an application of the principles of “See, judge and act” enunciated by the great Canon Cardijn. This movement in schools, and the complementary organization, the Young Christian Workers (YCW), had a great influence in Australia because of some Australian lay leaders who were trained in Belgium.

### **Catechetical Seminars, Weekends, and Camps**

By the early 1960’s, a number of Brothers, dissatisfied with the general apathy of senior students to the formal religion lessons, began a number of practices which took the religion lesson outside of the classroom to late afternoon seminars that grouped all the students of the same level and frequently invited similar age groups, boys and girls, from neighboring Catholic schools. The success of these innovations led to the development of occasional weekend residential activities, usually at holiday houses or camps by the seaside associated with religious congregations of Brothers. Many religious Sisters became enthusiastic participants of this movement in accompanying girls from their schools and this, in turn, influenced some communities of Sisters in the renewal that followed the diffusion of the documents of Vatican II. New music, provided by teachers and students, was a very important ingredient in the success of these activities. Sometimes the focus was to offer a more up-to-date catechesis especially on the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist and provide opportunities for the participants to receive these sacraments. Usually the weekend activities culminated in a Eucharist, carefully prepared over the whole period with as many students involved in various ways as much as was possible. *Our Apostolate* carried a number of articles that showed the content and activities of these seminars and weekends. A long-term development from this movement was the development by a number of Brothers’ Congregations of mobile pastoral teams operating out of a residential center that conducted retreats for various levels of students.

### **Important Influences from Europe**

As already mentioned, there was a significant European influence through the introduction of the Cardijn principles of “See, judge and act” into the YCS and YCW movements. Books based on the worker-priest movement in France, especially the book by Maisie Ward known in English as *France Pagan*, were being read and discussed as was a book called *The Mass of the Future*, which detailed experiments in the use of vernacular languages in the celebration of the Mass in Southern Germany and Holland.

I was greatly influenced by the presentations of Johannes Hofinger, SJ, who gave summer schools in Melbourne on *Kerygmatic Catechesis* in 1959-1960, and by Marcel Van Caster, SJ, around 1962-1963. The English-language version of *Lumen Vitae* offered a complementary international perspective to that of our local *Our Apostolate*. Around 1965 or 1966, at the time of the Second Vatican Council, I first met Brother Didier Piveteau who, having taught courses in New Caledonia, passed through Sydney and stayed in one of our communities. Didier’s inspiring presentations at the Scholasticate, where I was then Director, were so far ahead of anything else I had heard that I would have to rank them as a most significant part of my formation. I, and many teachers at this time, was greatly influenced by the writings of Gabriel Moran, especially his

*Catechesis of Revelation* and *God Still Speaks*. The question of the personal freedom of students in religious matters was frequently discussed.

Around 1966, I was asked to act as editor of *Our Apostolate*, a position I held until I left for overseas studies in 1969 and resumed when I returned to Australia in 1973. After the 25<sup>th</sup> year of *Our Apostolate*, I changed the name of the periodical to *Word in Life*. In doing this, I was undoubtedly influenced by Didier Piveteau's decision as editor of *Catéchistes* as it reached its 100<sup>th</sup> edition to change it into a journal better suited to the changes in European cultures and societies. The subsequent *Temps et Paroles* did not find an assured market and was eventually terminated for financial reasons. I continued to edit *Word in Life* until the end of 1982 when my appointment as Director of the institute's International Lasallian Center (CIL) meant that I could no longer return to Australia after the CIL session each year. The publication *Word in Life* was eventually taken over by the Catholic College of Education and subsequently by the Australian Catholic University. It continues today as the *Journal of Religious Education*, published four times each year.

### **CIL 1969**

I attended the second three-month CIL session from March to June 1969, a session intended for Brothers associated with Institute formation centers from around the world. This was my first experience of the international Institute and it broadened my understanding in very significant ways, especially as the Brothers from Latin America were excited about the new directions taken by the local churches at the Medellin Catechetical Week. As the Brothers called to the session were all involved in the formation of young Brothers in novitiates or scholasticates, there was a common interest in exchanging information and ideas about the new vision of Church resulting from Vatican II and from the document of the 1966-67 renewal Chapter, *The Declaration of the Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today*. French, Spanish and English were the three languages used so that Brothers who were not fluent in one of these languages had to find ways to communicate in the group sessions. All presentations were made in one of the official three languages.

The dynamic of the session had been entrusted to an outside team which was given the task of creating a kind of "vacuum" in which each participant was challenged to discover and experience a kind of "new beginning," and develop a new approach to the initial *formation* of young members of the Institute. As the 70+ participants came from 43 different countries, there were significant differences in the level of education received, the nature of tertiary studies undertaken, and the degree to which the teachings of the recent Vatican Council had been implemented. As I had only recently completed post-graduate studies in psychology and counseling, I was aware of Carl Rogers' "non-directive" techniques being used by the facilitators and gradually adjusted myself to it. This was not the case for some participants who, for various reasons, found it difficult even to consider discussing new approaches to formation into the Brother's life, and this led them to leave the session by the end of the first week. I can now understand that some members of the General Council, the recently elected Assistants who were all graduates of the former nine-months Second Novitiate, did not support the approach taken in the session, and even actively opposed it by allowing Brothers from their Assistancies to depart

after a few days or weeks. This was especially true of Brothers attending from certain Districts of Central and Latin America.

It was here for the first time that I heard the presentations of Brothers Maurice-Auguste Hermans and Michel Sauvage which made a lasting impression on me, especially in my coming to a much deeper understanding of the role of the Brother as catechist. Although I had not been able to continue my study of French at university after secondary school, I could read, write and speak it. My effort during the CIL session to make my way with great difficulty through Michel Sauvage's *Catéchèse et Laïcat* transformed my life. My post-CIL studies had been originally planned to be in the field of education and arrangements had already been prepared for me to study at Cambridge (United Kingdom). My deeper understanding of the essential link between the Brother's vocation and catechesis led me to change my field of study, even though I was initially uncertain as to where or how I would find the kind of studies that I felt I needed.

### **Study Years: 1969-1973**

The insights into my own vocation and into that of the Brother as catechist during CIL led me to study in the Institute of Education at London University which had become a leader in the English-speaking world through its innovation in studies in the philosophy of education. Successful in a competitive entrance exam, I followed a seminar program restricted to a small group and presented a Master's thesis in Moral Education. During this time, I was invited to attend the Rome International Catechetical Week in 1971 as a delegate of the Institute. In this Congress, I was particularly impressed by the work of D. S. Amalorpavadass, whom I was later to recommend as a speaker to groups in Australia. I noted that the English-speaking group of which I was part made no distinction between the concept of *catechesis*, i.e. faith based activities, and the concept of *religious education* in a more general sense.

This important distinction was already part of my struggle in my thesis on Moral Education: what was the essential difference between a moral education based on a faith tradition and one which was based only on ethical principles? After the acceptance of my M.A. thesis, I had intended to continue doctoral studies at London University by examining the distinction between the concept of catechesis and the concept of religious education in a pluralist society. My supervisor, however, pointed out to me that continuing my academic work with a philosophy faculty would limit the scope of my research to philosophical principles only. After he had suggested that I would have much greater scope by continuing the research in a school of religious studies, he gave me a personal introduction to Professor Ninian Smart of Lancaster University who agreed to direct my thesis.

### **Studies in Religion**

**1970-1971:** Lancaster University specialized in the study of religion in an inter-disciplinary manner: history of religion, philosophy of religion, sociology of religion, psychology of religion, but also intensive study of individual religions – Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity from different historical perspectives. As I was required to be generally resident during my first year in the university in order to present my research plan, I was invited to follow any seminars that were of interest. It would be impossible for me to set down the importance of this year for me as I followed seminars given by world experts in all the major religions as well

as taking part in various prayer and meditation groups. In retrospect, I can see now that I was taken out of the “limited” Catholic world in which I had been born and raised as I came to know and meet teachers and fellow students who introduced me into a much wider world where the underlying mystery of God appeared in so many diverse ways. It was an enlarged vision that still challenges me.

**1971-1973:** To further my research on the European Post-World War II catechetical movement, I lived in Paris during two long periods, once at Rue de Sèvres and a second period with the community at École Rochefoucauld in Rue Sainte-Dominique. During this time I had access to libraries at the Institut Catholique and read most of the catechetical journals published in French, especially *Catéchistes*, *Catéchèse*, *Vérité et Vie*, and *Lumen Vitae*. I read the work of Josef Jungmann and books and articles of Joseph Colomb, and followed the history of his dismissal as director of Institut Supérieur de Pastorale Catéchétique. I met a number of important persons who had contributed to the history of the modern catechetical movement, Jacques Bournique and François Coudreau and his Parish catechumenate groups. I visited the catechetical centers at Lumen Vitae (Brussels), and the Higher Catechetical Institutes at Nijmegen in Holland and at Munich in Germany.

During this time I was in close touch with Donald Horder and the team that produced *Working Paper 36* on Religious Education from Lancaster University. This group was looking at the practical implications of maintaining the provisions of the Great Britain 1944 Butler Education Act that required all government schools to have a “collective act of worship” at least once each week. The arrival of large numbers of people from India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan following the 1948 Partition of India, and the increasing presence of their children in large cities in Great Britain, raised important questions about the kind of “collective act of worship” which was appropriate when a large number of pupils were not followers of any form of the Christian religion. As part of the research work on this situation from Lancaster, I was able to visit a number of Catholic schools in London and Birmingham to interview the Principals and to hold discussions about religious education with Year 12 classes. This opportunity to see some very good Catholic schools, as well as some which were not very impressive, helped me to see that the thesis I was developing was certainly relevant and worth pursuing.

### **The International Catechetical Commission 1972-1975**

To address what was called the “malaise in the Institute regarding catechetics” noted by the Institute’s Inter-Capitular meeting in Rome in 1971, an international commission of ten catechetical experts had been formed in 1972 to produce a document for the General Chapter of 1976. I was named to this Commission which met over four years in Rome. I have no hesitation in declaring that working with this Commission complemented my experience in CIL and eventually became the most important formation experience of my life, because of the quality of the Brothers who were named to the Commission. Not only was each continent represented, but the Brothers from Europe were all prominent researchers and authors. The members from Latin America, Vietnam and Africa had completed postgraduate studies in Europe. The two members from Latin America gave me a deeper understanding of the vision of the Conference of Latin American Bishops (Medellin, Colombia) and introduced me to the development of *liberation theology*. As I was studying various aspects of the post-World War II catechetical and moral and

religious education movements in Europe, I had a particular “outsider’s” viewpoint which enabled me to understand most of the issues discussed. I had by this time enough competence in French to participate in the discussions and presentations and it was here that I first, tentatively, presented the proposed outline of my thesis, namely the importance of distinguishing the separate concepts of *catechesis* and *religious education*.

I realized very soon that my own academic background was very different from practically all the other members of the Commission because all my studies were done, of necessity, in secular universities. My recent exposure at Lancaster University to the study of other religions, and my experience of coming from a society where Catholicism was in a minority position, challenged the European members of the Commission to have to try to understand perspectives from countries where Catholicism was in a minority position. By the time we had met on four occasions in Rome and finished our document for presentation to the 1976 General Chapter, I think we had all profited by the mutual enrichment that came from my own English language perspective, as well as from that offered by Brother Jeffrey Calligan from the United States. Of course, we were all enriched by the particular issues brought forth by the delegates from Asia, Latin America and Africa. At the defense of my doctoral thesis in 1973, one of the examiners paid particular tribute to the rich background of reference, something for which I am indebted to the extraordinary formation I received through the International Catechetical Commission.

As the work of the Commission continued until 1975, I was able to return to Europe each year from Australia and make presentations in the CIL groups of 1974 and 1975, as well as to attend the meeting *Catéchèse 80* in Paris in 1975. My meeting there with Pierre Moitel, responsible for the *aumôniers* (chaplains) in Catholic schools, enabled me to invite him to present to the CIL groups in Rome in 1978 and 1979. My continuing contact with two members of the original commission, Herman Lombaerts and Jeffrey Calligan, and my introduction of Damian Lundy to them both, created an important English language reference group which offered mutual support for all of us until Damian’s untimely death in 1997. During my fourteen years as a member of the General Council, I was able to appreciate the pioneer work of another Catechetical Commission member, Flavio Pajer, in his development of excellent religious education (sic) courses for all schools in Italy, in spite of the misunderstanding and opposition of some bishops.

### **Australia 1973-1977**

After I had submitted my doctoral thesis in October 1972, I accepted Brother Charles Henry’s invitation of appointment to the staff of the 1973 CIL session. The CIL sessions had run into difficulty for a number of reasons. To many members of the 16-strong General Council who had been formed through the traditional Second Novitiate, the whole concept of a “process”-based session of only three months was outside their experience. They could not accept that Brothers would be free to wear, or not wear, the traditional habit of the Institute. There had been such strong criticism of the first two sessions from the Council that eventually the Spanish director was led to resign and eventually left the Institute. Michel Sauvage had taken over the direction of CIL himself but various Assistants refused to offer Brothers from their Assistancies as staff members or as participants. My acceptance of the nomination and that of someone from Spain meant that although in theory there were to be five staff members, we began the work as three persons before Sister Claire Gérardin joined us as secretary.

I found my work as a staff member a very rich experience because I was working closely with Brother Michel Sauvage, and now, freed from the burden of my own study, I had the time and energy to devote myself completely to this new task. I had already felt privileged in studying with my thesis supervisor, Professor Ninian Smart, but working closely with Michel Sauvage made me realize that I was again working so closely with an outstanding scholar and presenter, whose integrity and scholarship so greatly influenced me and gave me the passion for Lasallian research that has become such an important aspect of my life. It is generally accepted that this particular CIL session “appeared” to be more “successful” from the viewpoint of a number of the Assistants who formed the General Council. The CIL program continued to develop and became an important instrument of renewal for the Institute.

When the CIL session concluded, it was Michel’s advice that I should return to my District to share the fruits of my scholarship, so for the next three to four years I served on the staff of Polding College, later Catholic College of Education, and today, the Australian Catholic University, of which I remain an Adjunct Professor. Once I had resumed the editorship of *Our Apostolate*, I had an important platform upon which to share the fruits of my own research and to invite articles from other sources. This led to me being invited to join the Bishops’ national committee on catechetics and to participate in a number of plenary sessions. I was asked to be a presenter at the newly-founded National Pastoral Institute in Melbourne, a role I fulfilled for three years until my return to Rome at the end of 1977. I was also asked to serve twice as a consultant in the development of a new set of catechetical guidelines for the Archdiocese of Melbourne. My contact with Brother Herman Lombaerts, whom I first knew through CIL and membership of the International Catechetical Commission while he was responsible for the first year of the *Lumen Vitae* course, enabled me to invite him to make presentations in Australia and subsequently to become a regular presenter and visiting professor at the National Pastoral Institute. My friendship with Brother Damian Lundy and my experience of working with him in England on a number of occasions, enabled me to invite him to make three visits to Australia to present with me in a number of centers as well as in the pastoral institute.

Published in 1975, the book *Catechesis and Religious Education in a Pluralist Society*, based on my doctoral research, became a prescribed text in Catholic teacher-training institutions and I had many opportunities to present its thesis. An edition published by *Our Sunday Visitor* the following year in the United States won the religious book of the year award. I was invited to run a number of workshops for school teachers and catechists based on my doctoral thesis. I also wrote a number of articles for *Our Apostolate* drawing some of the implications of the thesis for schools. Of particular concern for me was something I had learned from Gabriel Moran’s writings: the importance of respecting the freedom of the students, especially in senior classes. I made an appeal to the Vatican II document on *Human Dignity*, especially on its emphasis that *the act of faith must be free . . . and that therefore this Synod forbids every act of coercion in matters of religions*. This led to vigorous discussions which all tended to center on the thesis itself, namely the importance of distinguishing between matters of personal faith and general religious education.

I was asked to act as a reader for the doctoral thesis of Graham Rossiter who developed further implications from my own work. It is with some personal satisfaction that I note that curriculum in the vast majority of Catholic schools, primary and secondary, now distinguishes clearly

between activities that presume a common faith in those who participate – *catechesis*, or *the education of faith* – and the more general activities that come under the title of religious education.

As there was great interest in Australia at this time in the *moral education movement* which had grown up in England, Canada and the United States, I also ran a number of workshops with interested groups from government schools at their request, and published some articles as well.

### **1977 Synod on Catechetics**

To prepare for the 1977 Synod on Catechetics, I made an appeal in an article in *Our Apostolate* to engage young people in writing a letter to the Pope and the Synod delegates. Teachers at individual schools were contacted by phone or letter to encourage their young people to participate. Accompanied by Brother Damian Lundy, with his rich experience with young people as one of the founders of the Pastoral Centre in Kintbury, England, I accepted the invitation to conduct a series of workshops with young people and parents in New Zealand and in Australia over nearly three months in order to formulate the important issues regarding religious education. The excellent response to young people writing letters enabled us to send nearly 800 examples to the two Australian bishops who were delegates to the Synod. The experience of the workshops with adults brought to the surface some of the difficulties and tensions about religious education being experienced by parents and teachers because of the changes in society and changes in the church that resulted from Vatican II.

### **Teaching About Other Religions**

Government education in Australia was founded on the Enlightenment principle of “free, compulsory and secular.” Schools where religion is part of the curriculum have usually been founded by mainstream Christian groups, Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists and Presbyterians. There have been attempts to include the study of religion, understood as “teaching *about* religion,” in all government schools. My background from Lancaster University led me to be invited to work with a number of Anglican and Lutheran scholars who were interested in creating courses about religion that would be considered within the provisions of the Australian constitution. I was invited to speak at a bi-annual meeting of private religious schools at which the chief speaker was my thesis supervisor, Professor Ninian Smart, and to propose the vote of thanks to him at the end of the conference. It was through my conversations and recommendations with three Australian Catholic scholars that they eventually decided to complete their doctorates at Lancaster University.

### **Some Major Influences**

It is difficult to isolate individual incidents or particular writings which changed my way of thinking, although there are certainly some which had more influence than others. As I have noted earlier, it was the CIL experience of 1969 which took me very quickly from my limited Australian background to a much wider view of the world. There were many different aspects in this broadening but I can still recognize the following as very significant:



- I moved from a single-language English-speaking world to live with a group of Brothers who came from over 45 different countries;
- I met for the first time a number of Brothers from different countries who moved easily across two, three or more languages, while I was struggling to express myself through my secondary-school French;
- I became aware of Brothers from Latin America whose lives were endangered by their concern for the poor;
- I found that the excitement I felt following the event and the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the new vision I had experienced through reading the *Declaration of the Brother of the Christian Schools in the World Today* was not necessarily shared by all the Brothers following the session;
- As the Director of the first group of Scholastics following full-time university courses in Australia, I felt that our formation courses needed radical revision in some aspects, but I found that other Brothers were reluctant to make many changes;
- My communication through French with French Brothers showed me a deeply secularized society which I had never encountered before;
- My friendship with a Basque Brother, who was politically involved with strong political convictions about the independence of his homeland, was something I had never previously encountered;
- My “discovery” through the presentations of Brothers Michel Sauvage and Maurice-Auguste Hermans of a much more “human” John Baptist de La Salle than I had encountered in my formation in novitiate and scholasticate.

A second major and life-changing experience, as already noted above, was my experience at Lancaster University when I had the opportunity to follow seminars in the major world religions. It was not only the intellectual challenge of understanding these religions but also of meeting and discussing with people whose lives were based on them. This was especially significant for me in the experiences of prayer and meditation. I remain very grateful for having this background when I was called to work with the Brothers in many different Asian countries.

### **Intellectual Influences**

I know that the event and documents of Vatican II have been a lasting influence on my life in many different ways. I think it was the external changes – Mass in the vernacular facing the people, the wide range of new hymns including the “borrowing” of great traditional hymns from the Anglicans, Methodists and Lutherans, the practical social effects of ecumenism – that first excited and stimulated me. There was a second stage where I began to deepen my understanding of concepts such as “People of God”, the attention to a deeper understanding of God’s revelation, the vision of *Nostra Aetate* on other religions, the hopeful spirit of *Gaudium et spes* and the deeper understanding of “Church” in *Lumen gentium*.

From a specifically intellectual viewpoint, it was my systematic reading of the literature of the post-war catechetical journals from France and from *Lumen Vitae* that made me aware that, although some of the recurring issues were not yet typical of the Australian society I knew, it was only a matter of time before they would be. I was greatly influenced by my reading of Joseph Colomb, especially as I became aware of the issues which had led to his dismissal from

ISPC in Paris. The author to whom I feel I still owe most debt in changing my thinking about *the importance of culture* in a fundamental way is Jacques Audinet. I had come across Audinet's presentation, "Catechesis: The Church Building the Church in a Given Culture", given to the French Episcopal assembly in Lourdes in 1975 and this had drawn my attention to the importance of *inculturation* as distinct from *acculturation*. These two words were to dominate much of the discussion in the 1977 Synod of Catechetics. With the help of a colleague, the article had been translated and was published in English in *Our Apostolate* where it attracted a good deal of attention. I had devised a catechetical workshop based on Audinet's article and had the opportunity to give the workshop many times in Australia and in New Zealand and once in the Philippines. Audinet, the reporter for the 1977 Synod, published the reflection entitled *Message to the People of God* which developed the leading ideas from that Synod. I made extensive use of the ideas of this document as well and was therefore somewhat disappointed when the official document from the Synod, *Catechesis in our Time*, authored by the newly-elected Pope John Paul II, seemed to me to look backwards rather than forward.

### ***Catéchistes and Temps et Paroles***

I can recall how puzzled I was as a young Brother in the 1950's when I first began to read *Catéchistes*. This was not the kind of church which I knew in Australia and the editorials spoke of a world which seemed very different. Re-reading *Catéchistes* in Paris some fifteen years later was such a completely different experience that I began to realize just how much I had changed from living two years in Europe. This feeling was even stronger when I read Didier Piveteau's editorial and content of the first edition of *Temps et Paroles*. The insight was brilliant. The whole catechetical approach had to be in "synch", to be "relevant" with the "times," with what was happening in the society, and the "words" used had to be words that could resonate in the society.

I think this insight was brought home to me in a special way by the controversy surrounding the program *Pierres vivantes*. While I did not understand all the aspects of the differing opinions, I did learn that the "condemnation" of certain parts of the overall program came from Rome. I found this failure to respect the particular cultural circumstances of France and the work of those who composed the program an unwarranted intrusion, reminiscent of the condemnation of the Worker-Priest movement of the late 1940's and of the dismissal of Joseph Colomb from the ISPC.

The fact that *Temps et Paroles* eventually could not guarantee a readership that made it financially viable brought home to me the imposed limitations on the content and methodology of any forward thinking about catechesis. My subsequent experience has only confirmed that original impression.

### **My Fundamental Convictions about Catechesis and Religious Education**

I feel that the best way for me to try to express my "fundamental convictions" is to trace what I can recognize as important moments in my journey as a Brother.

- From my early training and from my experience as a pupil in a Brothers' school, I have always believed in the importance of having a privileged moment in each day when I shared from my heart something that was important to me. This, of course, was the *Reflection* and I can look back honestly on all my years of teaching and know that when I gave my reflection each morning in the class that was my particular responsibility. In my last seven years as a Senior teacher with graduating students, I not only gave this reflection myself but each week I invited anyone who wished to volunteer to give the reflection on Friday. While the quality of such presentations may not have been uniform, I was impressed not only by what certain students chose to say but also by the fact that they were always listened to attentively by their class mates. I think this kind of 'faith sharing' is always risky but it is one of those traditional Institute practices that can be a deep form of catechesis, "faith speaking to faith."
- A second conviction to which I came, largely through the writings of Gabriel Moran, was the importance of personal freedom. I came to see and appreciate that the traditional Latin expression, "oremus" or "let us pray," was always invitatory, so that in my last years of secondary school teaching, I would often point this out to students and invite them to think of class prayer as an invitation. If they themselves did not wish to pray, they should always respect others who were present and ensure that they could do so. The Council's document *Dignitatis humanae* stressed that "the act of faith must always be free" and that "no one is to be forced to embrace the faith." By stressing the importance of the direction that "every act of coercion in religious matters" is forbidden, I know that some of my graduate students have been able to change the culture of some Catholic schools with regard to the compulsory attendance of students at Masses or the reception of sacraments.
- A third conviction arising from my year of interreligious activities at Lancaster University has been to recommend and sustain the study of other religions by educating students to the beliefs and practices of the world religions as well as to their understanding of the different Christian groups in their country. While such studies inevitably have a certain comparative aspect to them, I have always stressed the importance of meeting and listening to people who belong to other religious groupings. This is not to promote a certain relativism but to help students appreciate the dignity of their Christian baptism and to understand the impossibility of containing the mystery of God within any particular set of definitions.
- A fourth conviction about the value of Catholic schools grew from my experience of visiting Brothers behind the Iron Curtain and later in Vietnam. Listening to the individual stories of brothers in Czech, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania was life-changing. The Brothers' communities were closed and in most cases the Brothers had to work in labor camps or spent many years in prison precisely because they were religious. Priests who were similarly detained were usually released to return to parishes, but in none of these countries were the Brothers allowed to re-open their communities, and even less, their schools. The communists had a very clear

perception about the strength and importance of Catholic schools. They also knew that a religious community was always stronger than its individual members.

- A fifth conviction is the importance of providing our students in secondary schools with various kinds of opportunities to be involved in different forms of Christian service. Often it is the de-briefing following such activities that can bring to light the strength of certain Gospel teachings, such as the parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son, or of the Last Judgement as told in Matthew Chapter 25.
- A sixth conviction, and a continuing influence in my thinking, was the document *Evangelii nuntiandi* of Pope Paul VI. It offered the most comprehensive vision of the task and duty of every Christian to share the gospel with others. It was particularly the sections on the crisis brought about by the separation of “faith” and “culture” which have had the most lasting impression on me. I see now why I found the Audinet article to which I have already referred so important because of the way in which the various models proposed by the author were easy-to-grasp concrete examples of the interplay between faith and culture. Pope Paul’s emphasis throughout his document on the importance of “witness” has always resonated strongly with me.

## Conclusion

I can now look back and appreciate that the particular circumstances of my own studies led me to spend many years of my life as a Brother outside my own country. I think that I encountered pluralism not as an abstract idea but through my experience of having to live in different countries and societies and, in particular, to learn and use other languages. This experience has helped me to realize that each language introduced me to another way of thinking and so relativized the limitations of one language and of one culture. My appreciation of the importance of pluralism grew only gradually through my years of doctoral research but I now see how important this understanding has become for me. As I have already mentioned, my appreciation of Audinet’s writings was that it made me realize the fundamental importance of culture in any presentation of Catholic teaching or ritual celebration.

## Notes

1. Gerard Rummery, FSC, was born March 7, 1931, in Australia. He was a pupil at De La Salle College, Ashfield, Sydney from 1940-1945; Juniorate 1946, Novitiate 1947-1948, and Scholasticate 1949-1950 at De La Salle Training College, Castle Hill. He was a teacher at De La Salle College, Malvern, Melbourne from 1951-1964. His studies were in Literature, Latin, and History with a Diploma of Education at University of Melbourne, 1952-1960. He served as Director of Scholastics at Castle Hill from 1965-1969. He received his Master of Education at Sydney University, 1966-67. He participated in the International Lasallian Center (CIL, Rome), 1969. He received his Master of Arts (Philosophy of Education) at London University, 1969-70, and his Ph.D. in Religious Studies Lancaster University, 1971-1973. He held the following positions: staff member of CIL 1973; 1974-1977 Catholic College of Education, Castle Hill;

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