A WAY OF BEING WITH CHILDREN: EXPLORING THE CATECHESIS OF
THE GOOD SHEPHERD FROM A PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

by

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

The research concern, upon which this thesis is based, is to explore in what way the Good Shepherd Catechesis serves as a means of empowering adults to accompany children on their spiritual journey in a mutually formative manner, so that the adult is prepared to nurture, and the be nurtured by, the spiritual lives of children.

The applied research study (pastoral experience), designed to investigate this concern, has an especially practical orientation. Its participants, settings, and content all relate to the adult formation programme of which I am the formation director (Good Shepherd Catechesis Certificate Programme, under the aegis of the Toronto Roman Catholic archdiocese, and the Continuing Education Division of the University of St. Michael’s College).

Since this catechesis is little known here, the written account of the research project opens with a contextualization of the catechesis, followed by an introduction of the seven participants in their present ministerial setting. After setting the scene, there is a presentation of the theoretical bases supporting the study, including some theological, pastoral and catechetical aspects.

Returning to a focus on praxis, the three-phase pastoral project is explored, especially in terms of the theematics emerging from the data: sources of nourishment in, and means of empowerment for ministry. The thesis continues with a reflection on other major theematics relating to communion, community and ministry. This is followed by an evaluative treatment relating to the participants’ formation and ministry experiences, and a discussion as to their practical implications in terms of shaping future courses (Certificate Programme). Finally, this work concludes with a retrospective look at some additional contributions of the study as a whole.
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

My first three years of life were lived in the context of an extended family, three generations sharing a home located on St. Joseph Street until it gave way to the building now housing St. Michael's Faculty of Theology. From the start there were four constants: faith, celebrated in vibrant lay and religious communities clustered around St. Basil's Church; family and children, born third into a family of ten children, of which the next generation happily became an integral part; and the fourth was the University of St. Michael's College itself.

As if by some homing instinct, my path returns recurrently to St. Michael's. First there were the undergraduate years studying Philosophy and English, just at the time when Jean Vanier held seminars with students to reflect on his newborn l'Arche voyage.

Hindsight shows the experience of hearing Jean Vanier, alongside the presence of children, set me in a place where “roads diverge”, to borrow Robert Frost's image. To Ireland, then, to receive the Association Montessori Internationale Diploma, followed by some peripatetic years teaching in Cork, San Diego, and Toronto.

Something was lacking in this teaching experience to which I gave the name spirituality, and specifically as linked to children—the connective tissue for me. A letter to Sofia Cavalletti at the Centre of Catechesis in Rome, an invitation to participate in her first course on North American soil, a desire to see the Rome Centre for myself — these led me back to St. Michael's and a fortuitous meeting with Elliott Allen, C.S.B. then Dean of the Faculty of Theology, who, along with many others, helped me to go for two years' study in Rome.

The Centre there was a base for immersion in the study of catechesis/religious education, for which I was granted the Catechetical Diploma from the Vicariate of Rome. As well, this Centre was a base for a rich spectrum of pastoral experience: with children from pre-school age through adolescence, in parish, school, and hospital settings, including intensely enriching sacramental retreats for the celebration of First Eucharist, Reconciliation, and Confirmation.

Coupled with this formative apprenticeship mentored by Dr. Sofia Cavalletti and Professor Gianna Gobbi, this Centre also served as a launching-pad for theological courses at various Pontifical universities during the time (1975-1977) when laywomen studying theology was not the norm.
It is a continual source of wonder, on looking back, that what began simply as a desire for a first-hand experience of this religious education approach (which at this time had no identifying name) soon opened onto unforeseen horizons, thus becoming a full-time ministry. Once again, St. Michael’s figured prominently in this.

While completing studies for the Master of Religious Education degree, Dean Allen invited Sofia Cavalletti and I to collaborate in a three-week Spring course in 1978. The offshoots of this led to a variety of pastoral initiatives, the initial base for which Fr. Allen provided. This was a seminar room in the Faculty of Theology building prepared as a religious education environment for children (atrium), and as an adult training site where I served as tutor for theology students, consultant for teachers from the Metropolitan Separate School Board, and catechist to catechists, including those from ethnic parishes.

An outgrowth of this was the rooting of a children’s centre in a parish setting (St. Philip Neri), where for six years my full-time work was to direct child and adult formation programmes. While there, Bishops Aloysius Ambrozic and Marcel Gervais invited colleagues and myself to co-ordinate an international adult training course in the Good Shepherd Catechesis (as it had come to be called by that time) held at St. Joseph’s College (summers of 1986 and 1987). From this in turn, grew parish-based atrium centres in Toronto, on whose behalf I was invited in 1987 to act as a resource person, and then as co-ordinator, my full-time position since 1991. Out of this growth came the recent initiative with the University of St. Michael’s Continuing Education Division: a systematic adult formation program, the Certificate Programme in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

There have been other unexpected forms of ministry connected with the international network that has arisen around this Catechesis. Unexpected, that is, in view of those early days in Rome as the sole English-speaking student at the Centre, soon to be surprised by a fast-growing family, offering new opportunities in terms of collaborating in works of formation and organization, translation and writing. Many surprises, all of which give rise to the grateful recognition that “Lord... it is you who have accomplished all we have done” (Is. 26:12).
DEDICATION

Consider Abraham your father
and Sarah who gave you birth
(Is. 51:1-2)

In memoriam

James W. Coulter and J. Patricia Coulter
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many persons, over a long stretch of time, have had a hand in what is written here. While this results in a rather lengthy list of thank-you’s (perhaps boring for the reader!), their contributions need to be acknowledged (certainly delightful for the writer).

My gratitude reaches back to the late Elliott Allen, C.S.B., for his suggestion to consider the D. Min. course and for his help in pursuing it. Ten years later, it was my father who, shortly before his death, recalled me to and encouraged me in the D. Min. choice. Nearly another decade afterwards it was my mother’s encouragement that embarking me on the programme. Next to God, it is to them — parents in faith no less than flesh — that I attribute the completion of these pages.

On the home front as well, despite the times of absence my studies meant for them, the presence of my sisters and brothers, and the next generation of nieces and nephews too, meant for me the indispensable environment of love and expert computer support required to sustain this study. Special gratitude goes to my sister Felicity for her help with this work, and Christina, for her ongoing support.

At the Archdiocese of Toronto, first thanks go to Archbishop Aloysius Ambrozic, whose longstanding endorsement of this ministry has made these years of research possible. As Director of the Office of Religious Education, Mrs. Helene Royes helped me along the first phases of the D. Min., after which Sr. Caroline Altpeter, I.B.V.M., continued C.O.R.E.’s commitment through its latter phases. Many times they stepped in to fill the gaps that study left in my work there, as did the team in general, and Mrs. Brenda Voisin in particular.

At the Toronto School of Theology, support has been shown on many fronts. I am especially grateful to Most Reverend Attila Miklósházy, S.J., and Dr. Vivian Ligo, both of whom I was fortunate to be directed by in courses early on in the programme, and ever since then as faculty advisors. Along with assistance of Professors Ron Barnes, S.J., Sr. Cathleen Flynn, C.S.J., and Sr. Margaret Brennan, I.H.M., Vivian Ligo’s direction with the thesis research and writing has been invaluable. Support also came from the D. Min sector, its Directors, Sr. Mary Ellen Sheehan, I.H.M., and Rev. Dorcas Gordon currently, and all the members of the Collaborative Learning Group, specifically Reverend Ralph Eibner, its representative on my thesis committee.

This work has been sustained throughout by many co-workers in Toronto: each of the persons in my ministry base group, especially Mrs. Ellen Marchildon, its representative on my thesis committee; Mrs. Christine Ennis and Brother Ignatius Feaver, O.F.M. Cap., who
collaborated in the applied research study; and above all, the seven participants of the study—this "group of seven" are the co-authors of this work. In the international community associated with this catechesis many offered assistance, especially the Rome colleagues, Gianna Gobbi, A.D. Mongillo, O.P., Silvana Montanaro, M.D., and the Cocchini family, as well as other European and American catechists, such as Tina Lillig, the National Director of the United States Association of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

There are others who have served as an extended support network in this research: Mary Hayes, Director, Montessori College, Dublin; Dr. Mimi Marrocco, Director, Continuing Education Division, University of St. Michael's College; Sr. Elaine McCarron, S.C.N., Representative for Catechesis and Multicultural Concerns, United States Catholic Conference of Bishops; and Renilde Montessori, Secretary General, Association Montessori Internationale, to name a few.

But this work would neither have begun, nor reached this point without a wonderful prayer-network: my family, immediate and extended; friends, near and far; some powerfully prayerful octogenarians, Mrs. Mary Kehoe, Mrs. Helen English, and Mrs. May Hayes; Brother Mary James and the Carthusians of the Charterhouse of the Transfiguration; and the Sisters of Loretto and St. Joseph, especially Sr. Rosella Dowling, C.S.J.

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INTRODUCTION

To indicate the general orientation of this written account as a whole, a symbol is taken from *The Hidden Mountain*, Gabrielle Roy’s portrayal of a French Canadian artist, Pierre Cadorai. Pierre travels the mostly untravelled northern reaches of Canada. Always in motion, he moves from the Northwest Territories and Saskatchewan in the West across to Labrador in the East, in his life’s search to perfect his craft. Pierre’s unrealizable dream of seeing the works of the European masters unexpectedly becomes possible, and so he sets out for his first trip to Paris.

One important moment in this man’s solitary sojourn occurs on board ship at one point during his Atlantic crossing. Standing by the rail of the deck, stooped over and wrapt by the movement of wind and water, we hear Pierre’s musings on a phrase from Shakespeare: "[Pierre] lifted his head, repeated to himself: 'To tell my story...’ Yes, such was the deep desire of every life, the longing of every soul..."¹

That phrase, "to tell the story", captures the intent as well as the form of the following work. It is a telling of stories, on various levels. Principally, the narrative is woven around seven stories, those of the participants of this study, or rather, its co-researchers.²
At another level are the stories of others involved in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (GSC)\textsuperscript{3}—still a little-known approach here in Canada. For this study also highlights the contribution of Maria Montessori and Sofia Cavalletti, as well as those who have helped in this research.

In keeping with the qualitative research method it follows, this is a very limited study.\textsuperscript{4} In presenting the stories of the seven participants, this account does not purport to do more than explore one area of the GSC and only one brief segment of it at that. In that sense, it is a study in miniature, like one of Pierre's paintings of his "resplendent" mountain in Labrador, depicted in a space that "was not twice the size of a man's hand".\textsuperscript{5} Also in keeping with the qualitative research approach, there is a necessarily high level of specificity undergirding the presentation of this study. This density of detail also makes this study similar to a work in miniature, but one in which, like Cadorai's sketch, has "opened what might be called a perspective"\textsuperscript{6} on the GSC.

That shipboard moment in Pierre's crossing from the known to an unknown world, also offers a symbol both of how this research has configured itself and how it will unfold here. Even at its inception, this study presented itself in terms of setting forth toward new territory, represented by the experience of the seven participants in formation for ministry with children.\textsuperscript{7} Thus there are repeated references to imagery related to this metaphor throughout these pages.\textsuperscript{8} As well, that shipboard scene throws light on an inner dynamic underlying this work. In all its phases, the research process has been similar to that moment when
Pierre held himself stooping forward, like a tree listening to itself sing. "To tell my story..." the human being cast forth upon the waters is humble, its modest, its so legitimate request. With one difference, however. Here it is listening to the song of others. In terms of the qualitative research methodology guiding this study, this has proved to be an arduous discipline. For instance, it is one thing to put on blinkers, so to speak, in order to focus on the land's features one is most intent upon exploring. But it is quite another to block out other sounds one hears while there, especially when the melodies are many and the pitch varied, if one is to catch hold of the key strains in their singing. To employ the words of Kate, one of the co-researchers in this study, "often there's a struggle before you get to that story at the end." From the outset there will be constant references to the seven participants, and in their own words, since this study attempts to give voice to their stories.

**PART I: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY: PERSONAL AND MINISTERIAL**

The GSC is an approach to the religious formation of children between the ages of 3-12 years approximately. It began in 1954 at the Centre of Catechesis in Rome directed by Sofia Cavalletti and Gianna Gobbi. Its pedagogical principles are informed by the Montessori vision of education in general, and religious education in particular. The GSC has spread to many countries in Europe, the Americas, and in Australia, rooting itself in a broad range of social contexts, as well as in different faith traditions.

When I went to study at the founding Rome Centre as the first English-speaking student there (1975-77), this approach was still new enough not to have an official name.
Only recently did it come to adopt its now-identifying name, drawn from the Christological parable fundamental to the curriculum for young children. An encounter that happened near the end of my stay in Rome seems to have set me on the path of continued commitment to the GSC, namely, presenting the good shepherd parable (with the aid of wooden materials depicting it in three-dimensional form) to a hospitalized child named Maria. This personal experience, recounted here by Sofia Cavalletti, is the remote origin of this study, that pre-dates problematic questions and concerns about the GSC:

There is a story of little Maria—she was 21½ years and very sick with cancer in a hospital in Rome. She was very lonely, very sick. It was impossible to establish a relationship with her. I tried everything I could but didn’t even get a glance from her. The other children said she scarcely spoke and often wept quite alone (the family lived far to the south so she was alone in the hospital). A co-worker of mine went and presented the [good shepherd] parable. At first Maria seemed to be asleep or at least very far away, but when it was finished and the materials were being gathered up the child suddenly jumped on the bed and showed quite clearly that she wanted to listen once again to the parable. The catechist presented it again and the child jumped into her lap, kissed her and wanted to be fed by her, when dinner arrived. The night nurse knew nothing of this, but later said that Maria had started singing and saying: "He knows my name." This fact had struck her.¹⁵

On the ministerial level, three basic characteristics of this catechetical approach are identified, inasmuch as they influence this practical research study.

1) The GSC is experimental in nature.¹⁶ Developed and guided by means of an uninterrupted experience of catechesis with children,¹⁷ the GSC continues to be tested as to its validity in service to children, with the support of a network of collaborators, which is international in scope.¹⁸
2) The GSC is a dynamic, rather than a static approach, involving an on-going commitment to researching and refining its content and methodology in terms of its adequacy to nurture children's religious potential.\(^\text{19}\)

3) As a result of the above, the GSC is still evolving in terms of its content and methodology for children and adults. An important practical ramification of this is that the GSC is yet to be fully systematized, and translated, in the literal and figurative sense, into the English language, and into the Canadian context.\(^\text{20}\) While it has the endorsement of the Toronto Roman Catholic Archdiocese, the GSC is still seen as a new initiative. That it is perceived here as in the process of being born has significant implications for this study.

The GSC has been my full-time ministry since 1978. For the first ten years, my time was proportioned between ministry with children and teaching adults, with the major part of time dedicated to children. Since 1987, when I was asked to assume the role as co-ordinator of this catechesis for the Toronto archdiocese, this has shifted to represent the inverse ratio, i.e., adult formation occupying the primary position. In 1991, this position was put under the aegis of the Office of Religious Education, with an expanded mandate, namely, to develop a systematic programme for the training of adults wishing to enter into ministry with children, in particular by implementing this form of catechesis.

My present responsibilities as co-ordinator of the GSC are basically as follows: 1) facilitating and acting as consultant or resource to the archdiocesan parish atrium centres for children; 2) initiating on-going catechist formation processes; 3) acting as liaison between the GSC Resource Committee and the Archdiocese; 4) providing outreach
initiatives in response to requests from interested parties (e.g., school boards, etc.). As director of the GSC Certificate Programme my responsibilities relate to: 1) liaison-work with the co-sponsors of the CP, the Archdiocese and the University of St. Michael's College; 2) the role as a Canadian representative to the international council supporting the growth of the GSC; 3) the translation of written works by Dr. Sofia Cavalletti and Prof. Gianna Gobbi; 4) writing, speaking, and teaching in Toronto and abroad.

PART II: ORIGIN OF THE PASTORAL RESEARCH

While my involvement in this catechesis has always included the teaching of adults, the present mandate is to develop a systematic adult formation programme, with an academic (theory) format that accents a strong pastoral (praxis) orientation. This mandate is expressed in the Certificate Programme of the GSC. It is important to mention that the CP, like any GSC adult formation programme, has some particular qualities.

1) There is a crucial interconnection between content and method in the catechesis with children. This must be reflected in the adult programme as well, i.e. the integration of theory and praxis. Therefore, this study introduced an element explicitly designed to encourage this integrative dynamic (by means of reflection, and observation of children).

2) The methodology of the CP reflects the Montessori orientation, e.g., some materials, and the prepared atrium environment for children. Also, the three fundamental (curriculum) levels addressed in the catechesis for children are mirrored in the basic three-levelled (proposed) structure for the adult formation programme. That is, the essential
coherence between the child’s developmental stages is represented in the structure and content of the CP:

- first level: children 3-6 years of age (approximately);
- second level: children 6-9 years of age (approximately);
- third level: children 9-12 years of age (approximately).

3) Further, the general content of the CP has three basic components, corresponding to the three foci in the catechesis with children. This includes:

- the theological dimension (e.g., a selection of biblical and liturgical themes);\(^{23}\)
- the pedagogical dimension (e.g., the "contemplative" principle in Maria Montessori's work);\(^{24}\)
- the methodological dimension (practice in the use of catechetical materials designed for the child’s use).\(^{25}\)

These elements are highlighted here insofar as they are operative in the first phase of the research process (seminar sessions in Phase One).

**PART III: PURPOSE OF THE PASTORAL RESEARCH**

Since its beginning (1991-92), this systematized adult formation initiative (CP) has dealt only with the first level, i.e., Level I, ministry with children six years of age and under. With the demand to expand and develop the CP into the next level, the practical research centered on this second level, namely, to prepare adults for ministry with children between the ages of 6-9 years approximately, whether as parent, teacher or catechist. This is the context of the pastoral research experience, which represents one segment (the final semester) of Level Two of the CP. However, this study concerns more than teaching and exploring the participants’ formal formation experience (the content and methodology of the seminar sessions). Since it involves participants who are presently in an atrium with
children of this age group, the applied research has an additional aspect, and that is to address their practice of ministry. Practically, this amounts to almost a double research project, one that encompasses two intrinsically linked components in the participants' lives: 1) the formation experience (CP); and 2) the ministry experience. This accounts for the complexity of this study. Nonetheless, it also contributes to a necessary inclusivity of approach, inasmuch as it allows for an investigation of the whole ministerial journey of each participant, which is the major purpose of the research.26

I want to study in what way the Good Shepherd Catechesis serves as a means of empowering adults to accompany children on their spiritual journey in a mutually formative manner, so that the adult is prepared to nurture, and to be nurtured by, the spiritual lives of children.

This research statement needs to be briefly addressed. But in order to avoid a repetition of the description of the research interest, as well as the questions and objectives related to it (material already presented in detail in the Thesis Proposal, Appendix A), it may be approached from another angle, and phrased in another fashion: How to nourish the spirituality of the adult? Certainly there is the concern about how to prepare adults for ministry in order to put children "not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ" --described as the "definitive aim of catechesis".27 But there is an additional question, related to nurturing the adult's spirituality, which propels the practical research process as well. Of course, this concern is not unique to the GSC, as this excerpt from Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community points out.

Especially for the lay catechist, formation will be at one and the same time theoretical and practical, intellectual and spiritual. It will insist on the development of interpersonal relationships and a community-oriented attitude, always keeping in
mind methods suitable for adult formation. Only in this way can the secular character of the lay catechist's identity and mission be expressed.\textsuperscript{28}

Nevertheless, it does represent a core concern or problem:

...if a spiritual characteristic of the catechist of the Good Shepherd exists, the characteristic must be an expression of the soul of our work; if such a spirituality has to take some shape, this shape must emerge from inside our work and must adhere very closely to it. The path is already indicated by the principal aim of our association: "To involve adults and children in a common religious experience, in which the religious values of childhood are predominant..." And then the problem arises of how to nourish it.\textsuperscript{29}

This concern is far from incidental, in that the research participants are not an ad hoc group, brought together temporarily for the purpose of testing out or experimenting with the formation programme (CP). Rather, all the co-researchers have received training at the foundational level, worked in an atrium setting for at least three years, and apparently intend to continue their involvement in the GSC. Thus the question of sustaining these lay catechists in their long-haul commitment is central to this study.

\textbf{PART IV: OVERVIEW OF THE WRITTEN ACCOUNT}

The form of this written work grew out of the research process itself. The thesis is constructed to reflect this organic growth, and is written primarily as a narrative account, in keeping with the story motif, an undercurrent flowing through the pastoral research.\textsuperscript{30} However, the text is interspersed with another schematic format (charts, tables, figures, etc.) accompanying and illustrating the narrative in a synthetic form. As an example, a graphic representation of the written account is presented on the final page in this chapter as a guide to, and a means of abbreviating, the outline of the following chapters.
Chapter Two immediately situates the research in its living context, with real-life people. This early entry into the pastoral experience is due to the fact that the GSC is not well known here. It is commonplace when asked about this ministry, to hear the reaction: "What's that?" or when showing someone an atrium environment to be asked: "What are those toys? Where can I buy them?" Where there is some familiarity with the GSC, it strikes people as quite a "defined", or even "discreet" world. For this reason, then, the account begins with a personalized contextualization, by introducing the participants themselves and an inside view of the settings (academic and ministry) in which their experience takes place. For the same reason, the doors are opened early into some of the findings of the research experience, by presenting three themes that emerged from the outset of the study: the call and commitment to the GSC, and the challenge it contains for the participants (as represented by the research process). Thus this chapter provides a concrete backdrop against which to highlight the theoretical foundation of the practical research.

The three theory bases supporting the applied research are examined in Chapter Three. The first is the pastoral base, which investigates the spirituality of childhood inherent in the GSC. The second is the theological base, which addresses ideas on the theology of childhood. The third is the catechetical base, which examines issues relating to the ecclesial and historical-cultural context of catechesis in general, with some specific references to the GSC. Theoretical considerations are not relegated only to Chapter 3; however, Later chapters (for example, chapter 7) will continue and build upon the theoretical treatment presented in this chapter.
Chapter 4 addresses areas critical to the qualitative research methodology used in this study. First the methodological process is outlined (e.g., phases, components and instruments involved in the pastoral research). Following this, there is a personal (in the first person voice) presentation of the manner of data analysis. Then there is a brief preview of the findings emerging from the data. Although one is required to indicate such aspects of the research process, nevertheless, dealing with (and reading about) specific areas such as these can easily become cumbersome. Therefore, in an attempt both to maintain the narrative tone and also to abbreviate the text, there is a heavy reliance in this chapter on supplementary material, contained in appendix form. Finally, this chapter concludes with a global picture, in the form of two different graphic representations (linear and circular), of the seven major themes and the rationale for their manner of presentation in the last four chapters.

Chapter 5 marks the start of the in-depth treatment of the overall findings and discoveries of the pastoral research experience. Chapters 5 and 6, detailing the data from the primary components of study, are generally descriptive in nature. Chapters 7 and 8, detailing certain contributions and implications of the study, are more reflective in nature. The following schema highlights the main thrust of these four chapters, as well as a brief reference to the interpretive stance employed in each.32

Chapter 5 begins the investigation of the first phase of the research proper. The two components of Phase One--the seminar (CP) and ministry experience--are investigated in light of the adult education perspective inherent in the GSC, which also corresponds roughly to George Schnier's formational perspective: the theological (personal/devotional)
dimension; the methodological (practical) dimension; and pedagogical (professional) dimension. In examining the primary experience of the research process, the formation and ministry components manifested various sources of nourishment and means of empowerment for the participants.

Because Phase One is the primary phase of the pastoral research (two months in duration), composed of two components (academic and ministry), there is a richness of data. Therefore, the other significant findings from the first phase are examined in Chapter 6 (the remaining five thematics). These are examined in light of a movement discerned beneath the research process; this is brought to the fore here as the movement from communion, to community, to ministry.

In Chapter 7 the overall research process is addressed (especially Phases Two and Three) in an evaluative key. Following the participants' own summary-stories of the experience (Part I of this chapter), the remainder of this chapter (Parts II and III) highlights two specific contributions of the study. The first is the understanding it gave rise to about the formation process (CP), particularly by means of the reflection exercise (built into the seminar component of the research experience). The second is the understanding the study gave about ministry with children, especially by means of the observation exercise (built into the participants' atrium sessions). Both these exercises are examined in detail, particularly as attentiveness activities, an expression relating to Simone Weil's thoughts on the faculty and habit of attention. Interwoven with the participants' first-person accounts in this chapter is a discussion of the various theoretical implications and pastoral applications they contain.
This written work closes with a retrospective chapter. From a distance of many months, Chapter 8 looks back on the whole pastoral research, inclusive of all its phases. It presents three valuable facets of the experience that came into clear relief only with the passage of time, which appear to the author as signposts towards mutuality in ministry with children. The first is the transformative potential within the GSC. The second is the significance and role of community in ministry. The third is the perspective revealed in the participants’ summary of the research experience: the GSC as a way. Fruitful as the pastoral experience was for the author, these three facets are a particularly gratuitous gift.
Ch. 1: Introduction
Orientation of narrative
account and origins of the
study

Ch. 2: Contextualizing
the Research:
Context of and persons in
study

Ch. 3: Theoretical &
Theological
Underpinnings of the
Applied Research Study

Ch. 4: Some Elements &
Sources Shaping the
Study: Components of and
entering into the applied
research

PRACTICAL RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Ch. 5: Exploring the
Experience
2 major thematics

Ch. 6: Reflecting on the
Experience
5 remaining thematics

Ch. 7: Evaluating the
Experience:
Contributions

Ch. 8: Further
Significance of the
Study:
Retrospective
ENDNOTES

1. Gabrielle Roy, *The Hidden Mountain*, p. 123; the phrase, "To tell my story" is taken from *Hamlet*.

2. Hilary E. Bender and Merle R. Jordan discuss the rationale for favouring the word "co-researchers" over "subjects" in reference to the persons participating in a qualitative research project. See their section, "How A Qualitative Researcher Engages", "Qualitative Approaches", in *Research in Pastoral Care and Counselling: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*, pp. 84-85.

3. Henceforward referred to as the GSC.

4. This fact reflects the guidelines set by the Toronto School of Theology for the D. Min. study: "...the D. Min. does not require the student to gain extensive breadth in an area. Rather then D. Min. concentrates learning on a specific aspect of the student’s practice..." (D. Min. Handbook: Section: T.S.T. D. Min., Programme Committee, p. 1; document's emphasis).


7. See Thesis Proposal (Appendix A, Section 5).

8. The journey metaphor appears as a recurring symbol also in the reflections of the participants, as will be mentioned later.


10. Due to my previous unfamiliarity with this methodology, in the course of the D. Min. study it has assumed the stature of a discipline within a discipline, i.e. qualitative research as applied to theology.

11. This is due to the fact that this is a practical, rather than a purely theoretical research study, that chronicles the pastoral experience from the participants’ perspective (whose names have all been changed).

12. Because one may not presuppose prior knowledge about the GSC, and also to shorten the text, I will include my sketch of some of the history and major aspects associated with it in Appendix F. This was included in our recent work on young children, *The Good Shepherd and The Child: A Joyful Journey*, as an Appendix (A), pp. 89-91.
13. More will be said about specific educational principles in Montessori's work that are significant in the practice of the GSC. The word "vision" instead of "method" is used advisedly, and for different reasons (also mentioned later). But here it is enough to point out that Montessori's own account of her experience with children—on looking back at a distance of 30 years—is full of "mystery" and "wonder". Almost akin to a moment of revelation, she writes in an article, "How It All Happened" (Communications, Association Montessori Internationale, No. 2/3, 1970, pp. 5-6):

"What happened more than thirty years ago now, will always remain mystery to me. I have tried since then to understand what took place in those children. Certainly there was nothing of what is to be found now in any House of Children. There were only large rough tables...What was the wonder due to? No one could state it clearly. But it conquered me for ever, because it penetrated my heart as a new light. One day I looked at them with eyes which saw them differently and I asked myself. "Who are you, are you the same children you were before?" And I said within myself: "Perhaps you are those children of whom it was said that they would come to save humanity. If so, I shall follow you". Since then, I am she who tries to grasp their message and to follow them. And in order to follow them, I changed my whole life. I was nearly 40. I had in front of me a doctor's career and a professorship at the University. But I left all, because I felt compelled to follow them, and to find others who could follow them, for I saw that in them lay the secret of the soul." Her works in religious education are outlined in Silvana Montanaro's article, "Maria Montessori and the Religious Education of the Child" (GSC Newsletter, Dec. 1990, pp. 15-16).

14. Principally the Roman Catholic and Episcopalian traditions at present in Canada and the United States. As to the latter, a major proponent is Rev. Jerome Berryman. In his article, "Montessori Religious Education: Sofia Cavalletti (1917-)") (in Professional Approaches For Christian Educators, May, 1994, p. 5), Dr. Berryman writes: "There are four major contributions that the work of Sofia Cavalletti and her associates have made to the Montessori tradition of religious education. They are: (1) curriculum expansion and integration, (2) setting up an international organization, (3) providing an ecumenical spirit, and (4) developing an explicit theological base."

15. Sofia Cavalletti, "Symposium - Amsterdam, 25.4.1984", A.M.I. Communications, No. 2/3, 1984, p. 13. For brevity's sake, I include Sofia's account of this experience, rather than a lengthy personal reminiscence. Reverend Walter Lewis, then studying in Rome and part of a team from the North American College who were pastoral counsellors in Bambino Gesu hospital, accompanied me on my first visit to Maria (there were others subsequently).

16. This is a key feature of the GSC. that assumes first place in a list of 32 "Points For Reflection" (drawn up at the first International Conference in Rome, 1993, and revised in 1996) on the "Spirit of the GSC": "The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd has an experimental character, and it is ever open to an ongoing penetration into the infinite mystery of God and the covenant between God and the [human] creature" (my translation).
17. Here I refer particularly to S. Cavalletti and G. Gobbi in the Centro di Catechesi, Rome, where they have worked uninterruptedly with children (weekly sessions) since 1954, up to and including the present. Definitely a hands-on approach; to illustrate the importance of this I include a brief excerpt from an interview by Carol Dittburner and Catherine Maresca with Sofia Cavalletti, in Sojourners (January, 1987, p. 23):

"In many methods of educating children, the adult first formulates a theory, then develops a curriculum based on what he or she thinks the child needs. You have not sat behind a desk developing your work with children. How have you learned about their spiritual life? The children showed me. I never thought to establish a theory or to start from something that was in my mind. The work came out of observation of the children. And it was the joy of the children, their eagerness to go on listening, that showed me the way. They show quite clearly through their eyes what engages them."

18. The collaborative spirit is a hallmark of the GSC, as instanced in the early-formed association (1963) in support of the critical refinement of the GSC (Maria Montessori Association for the Religious Formation of the Child). In the last three years a more formal, still international, "Council" has been formed. In October, 1996 it convened for the first time with representatives from all the countries where the GSC is rooted. A major aim of this international group is precisely to promote the "experimental nature" of this work in service of children.

19. In keeping with the above point, Sofia Cavalletti is insistent, for example, that the curriculum be in service of children, not vice versa. This is included as a kind of caveat in her "Curriculum Outline For Children", contained in Appendix B of Joyful Journey (pp. 93-98). There she emphasizes:

"The outline is intended only as an orientation or indication to help you arrange your calendar with children. It developed from and is based on the religious capacities of the child. Therefore the actual curriculum--the sequence and timing of presenting the various themes of the Christian message--depends on the individual child and the nature of the group of children (pp. 93-94).

20. Not only does the lack of formal curriculum texts for child or adult programmes in English pose a challenge. Also, even where this work is better known, as in the United States, there are other challenging aspects. For example, as Elizabeth McMahon Jeep writes ("A Very Fragile Treasure: A New Look at Ministry To Children", p. 49):

"The growth of the Good Shepherd movement has necessarily been slow, though steady. One cannot introduce it into a parish as one would another kind of class, simply by ordering a new set of textbooks. Teachers must be trained, equipment constructed, and space provided.


"In our estimation, the choice of method is related to the question of content. There are certain contents that cannot be communicated except by certain methodologies. The method is not like
an empty box that can be filled with anything whatsoever; the method has a soul, and this soul should correlate to the content that is being transmitted through the method. Between method and content there should be a profound accord, an affinity of nature; otherwise there is the risk of distorting the content."

22. Much more will be said about this (e.g., ch. 4, ch. 7). However, it is mentioned here because, although reflection and observation are implicitly important in the GSC, in earlier CP courses, I did not make it an explicit part of the theory basis. In this research it acquired an intentionality with the introduction of specific exercises (see chapter 4) in which the participants engaged.

23. This is the heart of the seminar component of the research experience. See Appendix G for a listing of these themes, upon which chapter 5's data are based.

24. As mentioned in the thesis proposal (Section 5), the research project was preceded by developing theory. One example of this, was giving the participants Rev. Barry Meehan's article, "The Contemplative Potential of the Child" (Pace, December 1993, pp. 15-19), wherein he discusses various meditative and contemplative aspects contained in Montessori's approach.

25. A practical application of this is that the participant/catechist prepares one's own handbook or album of all the materials associated with the curriculum, attending to such aspects as: biblical/liturgical sources; aim of the presentation; doctrinal content; presentation of the material: the child's use of material (individual and group activity); and liturgical time/season in which the material is presented.


27. On Catechesis In Our Time (Catechesi Tradendae), 1.5


29. Sofia Cavalletti, "The Characteristics of the Catechists of the Good Shepherd," Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Newsletter. Spring, 1986, p. 4. Cavalletti is not categorical; later she adds "If we dare speak about a spirituality of the catechists of the Good Shepherd..." (p. 5). This theme is addressed again in Chapter 8.

30. Brother Ignatius Feaver, O.F.M. Cap., who facilitated Phases II and III of the pastoral research experience, referred to the fact and significance of the shared story telling among the participants (in Phases II and III). As an example, see "Reflections By Brother Ignatius", Appendix P.

31. For instance, "define your terms", "give the content", and these adjectives were used by my D. Min. peers (collaborative learning group) during a group review of my thesis outline. Almost all were at pains to point out that one must be initiated into the GSC world, lest it
remains unfamiliar territory. Hence this is a contributory factor in the positioning and arrangement of chapter 2 here.

32. See Thesis Proposal. Section 5 on "interpretation" and its Appendix D: "Possible Interpretative Vantage Points."

33. George Schner, *Education for Ministry*, pp. 1-72. Schner's basic points in addressing the formation of adults for ministry—in terms of the personal, practical and professional aspects of formation—acted as a guideline in analyzing the data in general. See Chapter 4. and Appendix R for examples.

34. Henri J. Nouwen, *With Burning Hearts: A Meditation on the Eucharistic Life*, Chapters IV and V. pp. 65-95. Actually, this work by Rev. Nouwen was also influential in designing the latter two phases of the research experience, in that they both represent an effort to include the dimension of community (see Chapter 4 for further details).

35. See Simone Weil's essay "Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies With a View to the Love of God" in *Waiting on God*, p. 66-76. Previous to the pastoral research experience, part of the "development of theory", alluded to in the thesis proposal, involved discussing Weil's insights on attention. Thus, both the exercises (reflection and observation) were looked at in the context of the disposition and practice of attentiveness.
CHAPTER 2

A LITTLE-KNOWN WORLD: THE CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

"Catechesis is at the heart of the Church's mission."¹

An important factor in contextualizing this study is to provide the reader with an inside view rather than a purely abstract, theoretical presentation. This avoids the risk of leaving the reader in the position of an outsider.² Each participant in the study is presented, in her first-person account of her ministry, in order to put a personal face to this little-known world. This chapter will be divided into four parts, all of which relate to data contained in the personal profile form,³ and from the initial formal gathering of the research group that inaugurated the research.⁴

Part I presents a personal as well as composite profile of the co-researchers, including information on their personal, professional and ministerial background. Certain commonalities found about the research group will be indicated, both on a general and specific level. This section also introduces the places in which the research occurred: the academic and the ministry setting.

Part II enters more deeply into the co-researchers’ lives as religious educators/catechists. Here the reader is initiated into essential thematics emerging from the data. The first of these is the theme of vocation. This thematic is the foundation on which the study rests, and implicit in the participants’ personal statements, from which the excerpts in this section are taken.

Part III addresses a second emergent thematic: the commitment to a specific call, represented by the co-researchers’ involvement in the GSC. This section highlights some elements particular to the GSC that undergird the participants’ personal statements. These elements will be
clarified by inviting other initiates into the conversation, namely, some American and European catechists associated with the GSC.

Part IV examines the third thematic, issuing from the inaugural meeting of the research group. At this time (April 17, 1995), the nature, purpose and instruments of the research study were discussed in detail. The responses of the participants revealed the aspect of challenge inherent in the study and hence also in the ministry it explores. The thematic of challenge will be examined by presenting the participant's personal response expressed at the time of this meeting. Then the participant's words will be clarified by inviting persons outside this ministry into the conversation.

**PART I: MINISTRY PROFILES AND SETTINGS**

- **Profiles**

  A significant aspect of the research group is that it represents a sampling of persons presently involved in the GSC ministry, as opposed to an uninitiated or random sampling. This element of the participants' pre-history in the GSC, from 4 to 11 years, provides rich insight into this world. Before introducing the co-researchers by name, there are general and specific commonalities to this research group which can be schematized as follows and which will be highlighted in the following schematic forms:

**GENERAL COMMONALITIES**

- All the participants are laywomen (this preponderance of women is representative of, but not exclusive to, the GSC catechetical ministry);
- in the Roman Catholic tradition (one comes from the Anglican tradition);
- married (presently or previously);
- mothers (with the exception of one);
- who have professional training (in various areas);
•in the position of volunteer catechist (except one).

SPECIFIC COMMONALITIES

•All participants are part of the larger Certificate Programme group (15 persons);

•in its final semester of Level II (6+ children; April-June, 1995);

•previously trained in the foundation level (3-6 children, either in the CP or in American courses);

•presently involved in a parish-based atrium;

•engaged in the catechesis with older children 6-9 years of age (some for the first time, others with many years’ experience);

•preparing children for the reception of the sacraments of First Eucharist and Reconciliation (in different capacities, some as observer/assistant, others with responsibility for directing the children’s group);

•involved in a sacramental retreat with children related to this (which occurs within the time-frame of the first phase of the research study).

The following are brief biographical sketches of each of the participant’s personal, professional and ministerial background. Following these personal profiles will be a schematic synthesis of the research group with respect to the participants’ involvement in the GSC at the time of the study, and as well as their previous formational (training) and ministerial experience with children in the GSC (Table 1).

Eileen: 35, mother of three children (ages 10, 8 and 7) and expecting her fourth child in December. Early childhood educator: specialization in developmentally handicapped children. GSC involvement: 11 years; participation in all phases, as well as co-director and co-founder of an
atrium. Eileen is the only participant to serve in the position of co-instructor in the Certificate Programme (Level 1: 3-6 children).

**Francesca:** 46, mother of two children (ages 21 and 18), and presently going through the process of separation. Home economist; food and consumer consultant and writer. GSC involvement: began first as a parent (her two children in an atrium). Since founding the atrium in her parish in 1986, she has served as its director, a full-time position on the parish staff. Francesca is the only one of the research participants to hold a salaried position in relation to her involvement in this catechesis.

**Kate:** 40, mother of four children (ages 12, 10, 7 and 5). Chartered accountant, self-employed, part time. GSC involvement: previously a lay pastoral associate for three years, she has been involved in the catechesis for nine years, serving as the co-founder and director of her parish atrium.

**Ruth:** 46, mother of two adopted children (ages 11 and 6). Full-time nurse, with a specialization in lung cancer clinical research. GSC involvement: Ruth began her involvement with this catechesis as a parent; since her training in 1991-92, she has been involved in co-leading children’s groups, including three First Eucharist and Reconciliation retreats for children.

**Domenica:** 42, mother of three children (ages 16, 12 and 9). Teacher, in a Catholic high school presently. GSC involvement: Domenica’s interest began as a parent; since her training in 1991-92, she has participated as an observer/assistant in the atrium. This is her first time assisting with the children’s retreat.

**Mary:** 44, mother of two children (ages 7 and 11). Elementary teacher, presently supply teaching; kindergarten through grade six. Mary began her association with this catechesis as a
parent; since her training in 1991-92 she has participated as part of a catechist team; this year is her first time in co-leading the children’s retreat experience.

**Wendy:** 33, business educator; human resources and administration. GSC involvement: this is Wendy’s third year as an assistant in a parish atrium, and her first time participating in the preparation of children for the sacrament of Reconciliation.

Table 1

**MINISTRY PROFILES AND SETTINGS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>FORMATION BACKGROUND IN GSC</th>
<th>YEARS IN GSC MINISTRY</th>
<th>INVOLVEMENT TO DATE</th>
<th>PRESENT PARTICIPATION (IN ATRIUM SETTING)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eileen</td>
<td>Level I (USA)</td>
<td>11 (before as parent)</td>
<td>All phases; CP instructor</td>
<td>Leading retreat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francesca</td>
<td>Level I (USA)</td>
<td>10 (before as parent)</td>
<td>All phases</td>
<td>Leading retreat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level II (USA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>Level I</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>All phases</td>
<td>Leading retreat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part of Level II (USA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth</td>
<td>CP-I (1991-2)</td>
<td>5 (before as parent)</td>
<td>Co-leading children</td>
<td>Co-leading retreat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part of Level II (USA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>CP-I (1991-2)</td>
<td>4 (before as parent)</td>
<td>Co-leading children</td>
<td>First time co-leading retreat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domenica</td>
<td>CP-I (1991-2)</td>
<td>4 (before as parent)</td>
<td>Assisting/observing</td>
<td>First time assisting in retreat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>CP-I (1991-2)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Assisting/observing</td>
<td>First time in assisting in retreat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Ministry Settings

The first phase of the research study (April to June 1995) took place in the two settings that constitute the participants’ present involvement in the GSC: the academic and the ministerial setting. The academic setting (Teefy Hall, University of St. Michael’s College) represents the formational (training) element in their GSC involvement. For the participants, this component of the study comprised eight weekly seminars, two hours in length, the content and methodology of which will be addressed in detail in Chapter 4.

At the same time, the group of participants are also participating in catechetical sessions with children in the parish-based atrium centres. Before proceeding to indicate something of the nature of the atrium and the activity that goes on there, the following table identifies the participants’ association with and responsibility in the various atrium settings.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Atrium: Parish #1</th>
<th>FOCUS</th>
<th>TEAM</th>
<th>PARTICIPANTS’ ROLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preparing group of children for sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation</td>
<td>Eileen</td>
<td>Co-leading sessions and retreat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Francesca</td>
<td>As above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Domenica</td>
<td>Observing and assisting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atrium: Parish #2</td>
<td>As above.</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>Co-leading sessions and retreat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ruth</td>
<td>As above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>As above.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FOCUS | TEAM | PARTICIPANTS' ROLE
--- | --- | ---

**PART II: THE CALL OF THE CATECHIST: PERSONAL STATEMENTS**

In the above mentioned profiles certain aspects are implied relating to the importance and role of the laity in the Church. However, this is clarified further in the participants' response to the question in the personal profile form: "What brought you to the catechesis of the Good Shepherd?" The thematic of a specific vocation emerges clearly in these responses. Before presenting the participants' own words, certain characteristics with respect to the general and specific vocation of these laywomen will be highlighted in schematic form. These seven characteristics will be presented in dialogue with various documents of the Catholic Church.

Each participant is actively pursuing her overall vocation as a Christian layperson: "God reveals his plan and communicates to everyone their particular vocation and particular way of seeking the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God."7

This embraces the individual’s professional involvement:

The unity of life of the lay faithful is of the greatest importance. They must become holy in everyday professional and social life. Therefore, to respond to their vocation, the lay faithful must see their daily activities as an occasion to join themselves to God, fulfil his will, serve other people and lead them to communion with God in Christ.8
With a particular personal interest in and value ascribed to spreading the Gospel: "Those who with God’s help have welcomed Christ’s call and freely responded to it are urged on by love of Christ to proclaim the Good News everywhere in the world. This treasure, received from the apostles..." 9

In all cases this "treasure" is addressed especially to children: "...from infancy until the threshold of maturity, catechesis is thus a permanent school of the faith and follows the major stages of life, like a beacon lighting the path of the child." 10

And in all but one case, it is celebrated with one’s own children in the context of the family, as the "domestic Church", thus exercising the "very important creativity" involved in the commitment to the "spiritual dimension" of motherhood. 11

In addition, all the participants exercise the charism of religious educator on behalf of the larger ecclesial community, thus each has responded to a specific call: "At the origin of the catechist’s vocation, therefore, apart from the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, there is a specific call from the Holy Spirit, a "special charism recognized by the Church." 12

Finally, this call as catechist is lived in a communal way (as can be gleaned simply by seeing the team approach in the Table 2):

It has pleased God to make people holy and to save them, not merely as individuals without any mutual bonds, but by making them into a single people, a people which acknowledges him in truth and serves him in holiness. 13

Table 3

THE CALL OF THE CATECHIST: PERSONAL STATEMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eileen</th>
<th>&quot;I had finished my work at the Developmental Centre (due to pregnancy)...we had been meeting as a group in order to set up a new atrium. The formation drew me in and benefitted me personally. I decided to go and receive the formal training. Since then it has been vital for the catechesis to be a very large part of my life and the life of my family. It has always been a way to truly live my (our) faith.&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Statement</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Francesca</td>
<td>&quot;I was called! A desire to find out how to serve children in a Roman Catholic church. I was a convert, in charge of a Sunday morning liturgy program, with no direction or materials from the Catholic Church. When I heard that someone would be speaking about children and the Catholic Church, I attended an evening [seminar about catechesis]. I soon fell in love with what [was] said and wanted my 2 children to take part in an atrium experience. Soon after that, I realized that I wanted to hear more and more...just for me. I was hooked. I felt I had arrived home. The children in the atrium have helped keep me in the catechesis.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katë</td>
<td>&quot;1) the fact that the child is at the centre of this work; the love and respect for the child and his/her needs is clearly central; 2) This desire is particularly strong because the nature of the work is dynamic and changing/improving based on the needs of the child and...partly met by my own research and partly through other courses... 3) making materials has offered me a wonderful opportunity to work with my hands...[and] has kept me connected to the very essentials; 4) the integrity of the work...a deep understanding of our faith, of the bible and liturgy.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth</td>
<td>&quot;Interest in assisting as my child was involved.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>&quot;I was waiting with another mother from [parish] while our children took ballet. I was new to the parish and heard for the first time [about] the miniature world in the choir loft...[Another mother was] telling me she did not worry about the spirituality of her children because they were participating in the atrium. How could anyone have such assurance about a class? (I wanted to know more.) The next September my two children began in the atrium.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domenica</td>
<td>&quot;A friend suggested the programme for my then two-and-a-half-year-old daughter A. Curiosity and interest on how to follow up on what my children revealed to me about their experiences at the atrium...the atmosphere in the atrium, the quiet in there...I really wanted to know more...how to achieve the peace, the joy and the love the children experienced in the atrium...I wanted to experience over and over again that same joy and awe in Our Lord.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>&quot;I have been a liturgical minister for approximately eight years. The parish priest at the time asked me if I would be willing to give 'private' catechism lessons to three children...who appeared to be having difficulty in the classroom setting...During this time I realized how much I enjoyed working with children...It has been the combination of my interest in education and children that has brought me to the catechesis.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In summation, these accounts highlight another four characteristics contained in this call.

- Within this "very special call"\textsuperscript{14}, each catechist has a particular "interest" in or has been "drawn" to the GSC. In this regard, it is apparent that children play an important role. As Francesca puts it: "The children in the atrium have helped keep me in the catechesis. They energize me."

- In all cases, their involvement in the GSC is on behalf of their own or others' children, thus indicating the contribution children make in the church: "It must be acknowledged that valuable responsibilities exist even in the life’s stages of infancy and childhood, both for the building up of the Church and for making society more humane."\textsuperscript{15}

- The contribution of children is highlighted as "what kept me in the work" (Kate), and as the reason for "wanting to help others receive these wonderful gifts" (Domenica), thus illustrating why: "Jesus exalted the active role that little ones have in the Kingdom of God. They are the eloquent symbol and exalted image of those moral and spiritual conditions that are essential for entering into the Kingdom of God."\textsuperscript{16}

- Finally, these excerpts suggest that this small group is a microcosm of an ecclesial community: "Church is an organic community in which there is diversity and complementarity."\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{PART III: THE COMMITMENT}

Commitment is a melodic strain heard throughout the research process. It begins here at its start, audible already in these excerpts, and in other more explicit expressions from their personal statements: "What has drawn me to, and kept me in the work over the past nine years" (Kate); "Help[ing] with a group of 3-6 year olds really cemented my commitment" (Domenica). It is also the note on which the research closes: "We're the ones who got really involved and
committed" (Francesca); "It’s about...staying by your commitment and fulfilling your need and the children’s need" (Domenica).18

Moreover, this commitment has some specific aspects unique to this catechesis which are already identifiable in the above mentioned excerpts, especially Kate’s: the atrium, the materials, and hence the role of the catechist in relation to these and the child. In order to explicate the nature of the participants’ commitment, and to offer necessary background to the ministry component in this study, these aspects will be addressed briefly by bringing other catechists in the GSC ministry into the discussion.

• The Atrium

All the participants are engaged in catechesis with older children in the atrium setting, referred to as the "where" of catechesis:

Imagine a place where catechesis has to do with allowing the child and the adult to encounter God, through the aid of the catechetical material; to enter into personal conversation with God; to share that prayer with those who gather for catechesis; and to leave pregnant with a joy that can be brought into the world.19

The preparation of and care for this atrium environment, which has been compared to a "retreat centre" for children,20 is part of these participants’ commitment. Usually the children come once a week to the atrium. The weekly session is generally one and a half to two hours in length. The purpose of the atrium has been expressed as follows: "The child’s spiritual life is enhanced by the preparation of a special environment. The environment should allow the child to be independent and move about making choices of quality."21 One realm of choice for children relates to the catechetical materials.

• The Materials

The atrium is furnished with specially designed materials for the children’s use based on various biblical and liturgical themes. This is another part of the participants’ commitment, as these
materials are handmade. The selection of these themes, and hence the materials which concretize them, come from scholarship and experience with children. As one American colleague says:

[Sofia Cavalletti] began hesitantly and with no preconceived theories, but by gradually presenting scripture texts and observing the children’s reactions...she and her collaborator Gianna Gobbi, a Montessori educator, came to realize that certain passages called forth the same reaction.

The importance of materials in the formation of children is expressed in a recent letter from a European colleague, written after a period spent in the Rome Centre. She begins by referring to Sofia Cavalletti’s gift as a teacher which lies in her ability to place reflective questions and to lead the children in their meditation in such a way that it becomes for them a joyful pursuit to find new connections, which are objectively and theologically founded...it’s not an agility game of guessing, but a real search for the deeper meaning. Since this is the first time I observed the work with the older children, it became clear to me that this depth and obvious joy of the children is the product of many years of silent work and reflection through the materials. I don’t think it would be as concrete, objective and alive if the children only had training in reflective meditation without the help of the materials. These are the children’s guides. This became very clear to me...all these past years when I have had the opportunity to go to Rome.

This excerpt also highlights another part of the participants’ commitment in this catechesis: to introduce children to bible and liturgy (using the materials) and to help the child’s initiation to prayer (the aim of the materials).

- The Role of the Catechist

To indicate the primary role of the catechist, as well as to offer insight into the actual process involved in presenting the themes and materials, the example of the good shepherd parable will be used by means of excerpts arranged in the following schematic outline.

Central to this catechesis is the proclamation of the parable of the good shepherd (John 10:3-5; 11-16). Its manner of presentation is typical of other scriptural presentations.

A catechist gathers the children around, sitting on their level...and begins by retelling the story, never adding elements but drawing out those that are especially significant for the children.
The catechist would then lead a communal meditation on the text, perhaps posing evocative questions that help the children enter into the parable’s meaning.

After a sense of entry into the text is established, a solemn reading of the parable takes place. Candles are lit, and these words of introduction are sometimes used: "Now we will read the parable just as it is written in the bible."

[After this] the material is presented, typical of the kind of sensorial material with which the room is filled...

As the parable is read again, the figures are moved to correspond to the actions in the text. This gives children the basic idea of how to use the materials.

As [the children] return to use them again and again in the course of the year, their meditation will prompt them to make subtle changes in the movement, signalling to the observant catechist that they have personally appropriated the content.27

Although the participants are all practised in presenting this foundational parable to children, their present participation in the atrium involves themes and materials that are age-appropriate for elementary children (6+ years). To clarify the participants’ commitment to the GSC, as well as to preview the research study proper,28 some key themes for this age group will be identified here. This is done by excerpting an article mentioned earlier, presented in schematic form as well.29

We begin the elementary years with a time line of creation, which is also introduced in a visual way with a ribbon 50 metres long. We hope to bring the children to an awareness of the length of history, and in it they see the very recent arrival of human beings.

The parable emphasized at this time is that of the True Vine (John 15:1-11). In the image of the True Vine, we see our interrelatedness and our connection to Christ, whose resurrected life is the sap of the vine.

During the elementary years, we also present...Jesus’ own words about justice and morality: "Love your enemy as yourself...Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." What does this mean? Who is the enemy? Who is our neighbor? Can we forgive "seventy times seven?" Through these parables and maxims, the horizontal line is drawn in the children’s spiritual development. They now build relationship with community and will begin to examine their own role in the life of the vine.
[Concerning] our participation in the Eucharist...we present to children the gesture of peace and the breaking of the bread. This horizontal movement of sharing bread and giving peace happens wherever there is a circle of believers.

In sum, the three aspects highlighted here—the atrium, the materials, the role of the catechist—represent core dimensions inherent in the participants’ commitment to the GSC. By virtue of their commitment to them, certain challenges arise. Therefore, these three aspects provide a necessary backdrop against which to set the third and final thematic in this chapter: the challenges inherent in the research study for the participants.

**PART IV: THE CHALLENGE: BEGINNING THE RESEARCH: THE INITIAL GATHERING**

The Setting: The participants gather for the first time formally as a research group on Easter Monday, 1995. At this time the nature and purpose of the study is discussed, as well as the basic research instruments to be used in this first phase, that is, the reflective questions guiding their journalling.

The Response: The way in which the participants appear to position themselves in relation to the study varies. Some are enthusiastic: Francesca is ready to "just write and put in all kinds of things"; others appear ambivalent: "I feel protective of it [GSC] at this point...if I sound a little sensitive, it’s because it means so much for me to be here", Wendy candidly admits. All are eager to help each other probe questions and aspects of interest; and for all there seemed—with hindsight on the part of the author—to be a particular challenge posed by becoming a participant in this study.

The challenge will be investigated in a trifold way: 1) isolating the specific challenge for the individual, using the participant’s words (from this meeting); 2) situating this challenge in the larger framework of the GSC, with the aid of commentaries from persons outside the GSC ministry; 3) reflecting on the above in terms of adult faith development generally, especially with
the aid of Lorna Bowman's article, "The Religious Educator: A Vocation", and the recent Church document, *Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community*.33

*Eileen: "Why are we like that?"

The mystery though, that we're trying to penetrate [is] we have people who have been in this work, and in it like [we] are. We don't come and go. So why are we like that? Let's penetrate that mystery...We know we want to be there...but somebody looking at this goes, "Why?"... Everybody's benefitting...there's a ministry to adults happening at exactly the same time [as with children]. I think it's also helpful for us to even look at that...to start to go "Why?"

In this excerpt, as in the previous one by Eileen, the catechist's formation is the focus: "Look at the catechesis and the hours and preparation. But we don't think of it that way, because we think of it as our formation". There are three aspects to what Eileen terms "the mystery". The first is simply the question, "Why?" What makes one commit to what has been critiqued as "a long novitiate?" and singled out as unusually demanding: "Although catechists in the programme are required to study upwards of 100 hours before they are qualified to teach, they still occupy a far less than dictatorial role...[and] must completely trust the power of [the] message..."? The second aspect concerns Eileen's openness to "penetrate" what is mysterious even to herself. The research is an opportunity to probe "unarticulated thoughts, questions, feelings" and perhaps to "find new ways of synthesizing [one's] faith and life experience", both for herself and her work in religious education. The third aspect Eileen's response highlights is the "mystery of adulthood" in itself and thus also of the undertaking of catechesis of adults.

*Francesca: How to let go and trust?*

I [have] some really crucial questions to address as a person, as a woman...When you actually take this catechesis and walk through it in moments in your life, through your ups and your downs and your crises, it's like a true test of just where you are. It's so affirming and it's so wonderful to have that...and I want to open everything up...I'm thinking, it's this catechesis! It gives you life, but it kills you!... I think it's basically: how do we take what we're doing with the children and live it in our own lives? Really learning to let go and to trust, and walk in a way that meets our needs as individuals, and to be as we were
created to be? It’s to balance; there’s incredible highs, and there’s lows, but it’s this whole picture together.

Francesca’s candour provides a welcome reality check. As the only participant who is employed full time in the catechesis, the demands of this commitment are keenly felt. Not surprisingly, therefore, the GSC is the cause of questions for her, since "this faith-teaching process", as it has been described, is "an unfamiliar approach to religious instruction" which "raises questions". Elsewhere in her personal statement Francesca asserts the GSC to be "more demanding and challenging than any other thing I do", hence her need for trust in continuing in this commitment. In addition, trust is asked for on another level. About her personal life she asserts, "I don’t want to minimize my life by covering up the struggle", nor does she want her story "whitewashed", thus pointing to the fact that:

we each come to the ministry of religious education with our own life stories, from particular cultural backgrounds, with our particular gifts, interests and professional expertise. The particular aspect of the Church’s educational ministry where we feel most at home in our own ministry reflects all these facets of our person.

Finally, as the subject of catechesis herself, Francesca’s candour indicates a significant challenge for those of us involved in adult catechesis

A catechesis of adults will be acutely sensitive to men and women insofar as they are adults. It will approach them in their adult situation which is for the most part the lay state, and will be attentive to their problems and experiences. It will make use of their spiritual and cultural resources, always respecting the differences among them. Finally, adult catechesis will stimulate the active collaboration of adults in the catechesis which involves them.

*Kate: "I find I have to get in touch with myself."*

My sense of this whole project though is...how we’re affected by the catechesis, and what we’re doing in that area; with the material we’re receiving in the course, and our interactions with the children and how we’re reflecting on that. So I don’t see it threatening that way...but I find if you just ask me, "Is anything going on?" I say "nah". and nothing will be either, unless I stop and ask myself some good question. I find I have to get in touch with myself.
Kate’s preface to these words manifest her appreciation of analytical thought and research. Generally she welcomes the opportunity to participate in a study she interprets as "analyzing what [is] resonating inside and how it is affecting [her]". In itself, this "catechesis challenges adults to ongoing formation", but the added invitation in this study, namely, to reflect about oneself and one’s ministry through the journal activity, represents another challenge for Kate, here and throughout the research.

Important in Kate’s words is that her questions reveal the dynamic nature of the catechist’s vocation, for the questions one has "are integral to the ongoing call we all experience; in other words, we do not "have a vocation," we are "in vocation," in the process of becoming religious educators." In response to the question about various "capacities" in which she serves as a catechist, all the items are checked, with additional mention of other areas: "clean up, maintenance and supplies". Behind these words is a general challenge: "The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd often flounders in this country because the daunting demand for space and materials creates an immediate hurdle. A well-equipped atrium consumes a classroom and challenges the creativity of those who furnish the space." This recurring phrase in Ruth’s accounts—the "ups and the downs"—emphasizes a crucial element in sustaining the catechist’s call:

Always and in every way [such] catechists should be recognized, respected and loved by the priests and communities. They should be supported in their formation and encouraged and helped to accomplish a task which is indispensable but far from easy.
Further behind Ruth’s words is the fact that, in addition to the weekly formation course (CP) and children’s sessions, the study imposes extra demands, over and above her familial and professional responsibilities. Later she will make reference to the "stress" this entails, thereby alerting the author to another key consideration in the catechesis of adults:

Above all, one must begin by accepting adults where they are...it is essential to keep in mind the specific adults with whom one is working, their cultural background, human and religious needs, their expectations, faith experiences, and their potential. It is also important to be attentive to their marital and professional status.48

*Mary: "It can be so mysterious."

[It] can be so mysterious. [In] other children’s programmes you certainly don’t have to have any previous credentials, training or background, or anything else. Here [at my parish] they say, "You have to have had all the preparation in order to be part of it [the atrium]. I think there is a bit of scepticism on some people’s part. They don’t really understand that and it [GSC] isn’t something that shouts its own name either. So that even an observer [visiting the atrium] may not really completely understand what goes into it...

In these words, Mary puts her finger on a particular problematic recognized in this approach to ministry with children. At the close of the research project Mary expresses her appreciation for the GSC: "Life is so crazy now [I] don’t always succeed in slowing down as much as [I] would like, but it [GSC] keeps [me] in that direction. It’s like this pull...". Generally, Mary appreciates the focus of the research: [It] "really enables us to help ourselves" as she says. Nonetheless, her words here echo the mystifying aspect the GSC has for others:

[It’s] all so lovely and tasteful...the beautiful, miniature, handmade materials...Could this possibly work in our plastic. TV-saturated culture, where children’s imaginations seem most vividly engaged by Power Rangers and Barbies?49

With her allusion to the query of others about the "preparation" required of the catechist, Mary identifies another challenge implicit in the GSC, which Mark Searle expressed as follows:

It’s very difficult for people in our culture to look at this as something more than another idea of how to get things across to kids...It’s about how a teacher sits with a child under the word of God or before the sacramental signs in an atmosphere of prayer.50
Domenica: "I didn’t think I fit into the group."

The way that I come in with the children and just observing them and helping out if I can, I’m experiencing, really, a lot of what they’re experiencing. I might be thinking different things than they are though, or I might just be acknowledging it just like they are...That’s why I didn’t think I fit into the group because I thought, I’ve never presented these materials. I’m learning as I am observing with the children a lot of the new materials or the presentations. So I’m just like the kids, taking it all in and going "Wow" and enjoying it and receiving it with joy, just like the kids do. Meanwhile I’m observing them and their responses, but I’m also feeling the same things.

Domenica’s words here, as in the preceding excerpt, illustrate an awareness of the demand this catechesis makes on the adult: "The catechist occupies an unusual place in this method. Less a teacher who imparts knowledge...the catechist is an "unworthy servant" who announces the message of another and has no claim to its effect." Her words here also illustrate a marked sensibility to children. However, Domenica’s question concerning her suitability for this group stems, in part, from her inexperience with children at this age, and in part from the research’s invitation to become more observant in one’s ministry with children. Therefore, in addition to the general challenge involved in ongoing catechesis and formation for ministry: "catechesis is a distinctive kind of education/formation process", there is the specific challenge newly introduced into the CP: the journal activity relating to the atrium.

Wendy: "Under a microscope."

What I’m scared of [is] the research part of the work. I don’t want it to be held up under a microscope by somebody at university...It’s a sacred thing to watch a child...and I appreciate the fact that I can see that because they seem transformed somehow...But I just feel like something new is starting within us that’s going to affect all of us in a certain way. I have faith that it’s going to benefit us...I’ve worked in the business world for twelve years and this is so different for me as a person to just come into a place where the work is so communal, so Christian...I seek Christian work places.

Wendy’s words reflect the manner in which each participant represents a different level of entry into the study. As the youngest participant and the newest to the GSC among the research group, it is understandable that Wendy experiences some ambivalence. However, there is a deeper
significance to her apparent hesitancy, which is seen in her other references to children. In watching children in the atrium, she explains: "There's no words for that for me"; and she adds, "It's not like that anywhere else, it's just in there [the atrium]", because "that love" seen in children "is powerful". In such words Wendy is touching on the aspect of fragility that is characteristic of ministry with children in general, and specifically the GSC, described as "fragile and tenacious as dandelion tufts in the wind." In another article that addresses the GSC, entitled "A Very Fragile Treasure: A New Look at Ministry To Children", the deeper significance hinted at in Wendy's words is made explicit:

...children's spirituality is not just a matter of absorbing the faith of adults; it is a personal response to the indwelling God. Children have their own spiritual lives, and are capable of responding to the nourishment of Scripture and worship.

Thus, Wendy signals a justified concern that the research be conducted with a "delicacy of approach", one adequate to their experience with children.

CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an early entrance into the actual applied research, reflecting an eagerness to open up and welcome the reader into the GSC, and as soon as possible. Therefore, rather than contextualizing this ministry from a solely abstract, theoretical standpoint, a personalized approach was used, particularly the viewpoint of the seven co-researchers.

The rationale guiding this choice related to the nature of the GSC as a little-known ministry, as well as the nature of the practical research, as an organically unfolding experience characterized by the narrative (story) dynamic. Both these elements were emphasized. The first was highlighted by including the initial moment of the research experience (April 17, 1995), wherein the group voiced their expectations, interpretations and attitudes in relation to the overall process.
The second was highlighted by including the participants’ stories of what brought them to, and where they now find themselves in, the GSC.

The contextualization presented here was multi-layered. Part I introduced the persons as well as the two settings involved in the study. Delving deeper into the *sitz im lieben* of the participants, Part II began the investigation of the thematics emergent at the outset of the study: the theme of vocation.

Part III added another layer. Other GSC catechists from Europe and the United States were brought into the discussion of the data relative to the commitment thematic in order to further contextualize this ministry. In Part IV another layer was added. To address the third thematic—the challenge the research/ministry posed to the participants—various objective views from persons outside the GSC were expressed. Without anticipating the overall findings of the study, the three thematics of call, commitment and challenge facilitated an insider’s view of the GSC, thereby giving a concrete basis from which to examine its theoretical underpinnings in the next chapter.

2. Gretchen Wolff Pritchard. In her editorial "Onward and Upward with the Good Shepherd", Gretchen Wolff Pritchard critiques the recent work about the GSC, The Good Shepherd and The Child: A Joyful Journey: "The style and tone of the book display the tantalizing and often frustrating Cavalletti flavor...the reader still feels somehow outside, uninitiated" (The Sunday Paper: Materials for Christian Education, Epiphany 1996, p. 1). Therefore, this chapter attempts to invite the reader into the GSC, especially by means of meeting the persons (participants) involved in it.

3. See Participant Profile Form, Appendix D.

4. See the overview of the research process: Table 1 in Chapter 4.

5. The next section of this chapter deals more specifically with these areas.

6. See Participant Profile Form, Appendix D.


8. Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful (Christifidelis Laici), Prop. 5.

9. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 3.


11. Lumen Gentium 11; The Dignity and Vocation of Women, (Mulieris Dignitatem) no. 19.


15. The Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful, no. 47.

16. Ibid., no. 47.

17. Ibid., no. 20.
18. These two quotes come from the final meeting of the research group (Phase Three, January 21, 1996).


20. Gianni Gobbi, "Practical Suggestions", The Good Shepherd and The Child: Joyful Journey, p. 30. The analogy of the atrium as a retreat centre is highlighted: "[the atrium] has a special atmosphere which helps children to listen to the Christian message"; "This room or space is an environment where the child's activity unfolds in a meditative and prayerful manner."


22. The next chapter examines this further.


24. Deborah Presser-Velder, Personal letter to the author, February 10, 1996. Mrs. Presser-Velder, a catechist in Germany, also oversees the GSC in that country.

25. See Gianna Gobbi. "Iniziazione All'Esperienza Religiosa Dei Bambini", Keynote Address: International Conference of the Good Shepherd Catechesis, October 22, 1993; unpublished text. Professor Gobbi emphasizes the catechist's role in initiating children into the religious life, the core of which is the "initiation into prayer." In this regard one may understand the comment by Elizabeth McMahon Jeep: "The written word alone cannot convey the significance materials have for Montessori educators or their respect for children's capacity for discovery and reflection" ("A Very Fragile Treasure: A New Look at Ministry To Children, Church, Fall, 1993, p. 49). This comment would characterize Gianna Gobbi's attitude also.

26. The following seven points are excerpts from Barbara Schmich's aforementioned article, "Introducing Young Children To The Bible", p. 75.

27. Author's emphasis.

28. These themes are highlighted insofar as they represent the content of the formation course, a primary component in Phase One of the research project. See Appendix G.

29. The following four points are excerpts from Carol Dittberner's aforementioned article, "The Pure Wonder of Young Lives". Sojourners, January 1987, p. 24-25.

30. They will not meet again as a group until the fall, three months after the primary phase is completed.

32. Lorna M.A. Bowman, "The Religious Educator: A Vocation", Catholic Education: Transforming Our World: A Canadian Perspective, pp. 79-90. All the quotes from this article are taken from the section entitled, "Our common vocation in Christ", specifically pages 80-81.

33. **Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community**: Some Principles and Guidelines. International Council For Catechesis, 1990. USCC, 1992. This and the above text, help in contextualizing the study in terms of participants’ identity both as catechists preparing for ministry with older children, as well as recipients of catechesis themselves.

34. Gretchen Wolff Pritchard, p. 2.


36. Lorna Bowman, p. 80.

37. **Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community**, no. 31; also no. 29: "the catechesis of adults must be regarded as a preferential option".

38. Kate Convissor, "Feed My Lambs", p. 18, 20.


40. **Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community**, no. 26 (document’s emphasis).

41. Kate prefices this excerpt: "What Montessori did and what Sofia [Cavalletti] did with the children about research is to observe them. And they did incredible analysis and research from that. That’s what they did when they figured out what it was that resonated deeply within the child".

42. Kate Convissor, "Feed My Lambs", p. 21.

43. See Thesis Proposal, Appendices A, B, C, as well as Chapter 4 for further details about this research component introduced into the formation course (Certificate Programme).

44. Lorna Bowman, p. 81 (author’s emphasis).

45. See Participant Profile Form, Appendix D.

46. Kate Convissor, "Feed My Lambs", p. 20.

47. **Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community**, no. 76 (document’s emphasis).

48. Ibid., no. 56.

50. See Kate Convissor's, "Feed My Lambs", p. 19. On the same page of this article, Mark Searle is quoted further to say: "I feel very strongly that there's something fundamentally right about an approach which gives children the stories and vocabulary of the Christian tradition and does so in such a way that they feel themselves personally addressed by God."

51. Kate Convissor, "Feed My Lambs", p. 19.

52. Without anticipating the findings of the data, Domenica here already manifests what Archbishop Marcel Gervais of Ottawa relates as valuable in the GSC: "I appreciated the sensitivity of the catechesis [in] being led by children". (Ibid., p. 20).

53. See Thesis Proposal, Appendices B and C, and Chapter 4 for further details about this research component/instrument.


55. Kate Convissor, "Feed My Lambs", p. 20.

56. Elizabeth McMahon Jeep, Church, Fall, 1993, p. 48. Here the author is referring to what "Cavalletti believes", but it is also representative of the GSC as a whole.

57. Mary P. Hayes, "The Emotional Dimension In The Second Plane of Development", Communications, Association Montessori Internationale, p. 22. Mary Hayes is referring here to the need on the part of the adult for "a delicacy of approach" in relation to the older child's social and moral development. However, this is heightened further in the case of the child's religious development.
CHAPTER 3

A DIFFERENT SPIRITUAL GEOGRAPHY: THEORETICAL VISION

PREAMBLE

The correlation between theory and practice is such that it is difficult to find a structure to represent these two poles and the interpenetrating dynamic that exists between them, in a manner that both provides the theory behind this somewhat specialized ministry while at the same time affording each pole its due weight. Put succinctly: "There is more in theory than practice can contain, and there is more in practice than theory can explain." An image for this is to envisage the way a weaver works with cloth material. Theory and practice are the warp and the woof; they come together as inseparable threads, interwoven to the point that when one tries to pick up and trace the path of one, one meets another immediately adjoining and crossing its path from the other direction. It is inevitable that the same will happen here. Hence this image is offered in the hope that it may serve as a means to describe the material out of which the GSC is made and to delineate something of its primary colours and particular texture.

INTRODUCTION: The Spiritual Geography of Childhood

Because there is in the child,
there is in childhood a unique grace,
An entirety, a firstness
That is total.
An origin, a secret, a spring, a point of departure,
A beginning which might be called absolute.
Children are new creatures.
Theology of ministry, generally speaking, implies a vision of God, the human person, the Church, and Christian life. However, there is a dimension specific to this practical study of the GSC in ministry, that is, the vision of the child: "If you have not got a vision of the child's soul, you cannot help in its development." Therefore, we will view the elements that constitute a theology of ministry through this lens: the revelatory character of the God-child relationship; the child as a person having the status of full personhood; the child in the Church; and what childhood says about living the Christian life.

In this chapter, the GSC ministry with children will be situated in the framework provided by such persons as Bernard Lonergan, Karl Rahner, and Sofia Cavalletti. Rahner proposed an approach to the mystery of childhood: to be true to one's own experience with children in order to arrive at an enunciation of one's understanding of ministry. Rahner's principle suggested the following three sections, the first two of which will set the foundation on which the third will be constructed.

Part I deals with the pastoral base. In doing so, consideration was afforded to the following insight:

There is something peculiar about childhood that makes it difficult for anyone to think straight about it. We have all of course been children once, and that alone is enough to stock us with a powerful set of presuppositions, to make us all feel we know something about the subject.

Accordingly, this section addresses some fundamental presuppositions in terms of the who (God and the child), the what (content) and the how (methodology) that are operative in my understanding of and reasons for (the why) ministry.

Part II deals with the theological base. It will pick up the thread at the point where Lonergan raises the subject of the religious development dialectic. The dialectic in the
religious development of children resides within the experience of childhood as commonly lived in everyday life, and the revelation of childhood as it is contained in Scripture and tradition. Therefore, in relation to the question of the Christian biblical understanding of childhood, Karl Rahner and Sofia Cavalletti will be invited into the discussion.

Part III deals with the catechetical base on a contextualized level. In light of the two previous sections, the third section will address the ministry of catechesis with respect to some of its historical, ecclesial and cultural dimensions, especially in terms of the promise and challenges they imply for present and future ministry.

Then the children will be invited to join the conversation briefly and to speak in their own words.

**PART I: PASTORAL BASE: SPIRITUALITY OF CHILDHOOD**

"I have come so that they may have life, and have it in all its fulness." (Jn. 10:10)

The pastoral base comprises key assumptions (theological and educational) as well as important principles (psycho-pedagogical). Some major presuppositions will be outlined here by drawing mainly on the work of Maria Montessori and Sofia Cavalletti, both principal contributors in the development of the GSC.

*The Religious Context*. As noted earlier, the experience pole of the theory-praxis correlation will be situated initially in Lonergan’s framework, instead of confining it to the immediate sphere of pedagogy. Most important, for our purpose here, is to frame the discussion in its most generic context: Lonergan opens the horizons: "Being in love with God, as experienced, is being in love in an unrestricted fashion."\(^6\) This summary statement begins,
therefore, with the concern with which Lonergan begins his discussion on religion, which is essentially the question of being in love with God. This is also the fundamental question in the religious development of children, that is, of "helping the child establish a relationship of being in love with God."

*The Child as Paradox.* In this religious context, childhood assumes a paradoxical nature. The child is a central paradox in Christianity: it is the littlest who are the greatest, and if we are to receive the Kingdom of God we must become like a child (Mt. 18:3-4). An aspect of this paradoxical quality of childhood is captured by G. K. Chesterton who observed two facts about children: "First, they are very serious, and secondly, that they are in consequence very happy." These are also two qualities that characterize the spiritual lives of children and have important implications for their religious development. To put it simply, children are hungry for God and feeding that hunger is a serious concern; children have the potential to encounter God and actualizing that potential generates joy. Thus, in accompanying children along their religious path, we are invited into the child's way with God, which is to emphasize that:

There are no ordinary people....This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously.... (author's emphasis).

*Religious Experience:* Religious experience is essentially the experience of relationship, the covenant relationship. God creates a covenant relationship with the child, and the younger the child the more mysterious that unique bond appears: "We can say that the Church has always recognized in the child the great dignity of a partner in the covenant, baptizing them, even from very ancient times, at birth." God is in relationship with the
child from the beginning of life, although this reality is not easily observable. Nonetheless, as Maria Montessori states emphatically: "The child must be permitted to penetrate into his supernatural life in his own peculiar manner. Even in the presence of God the child must remain a child."\(^{15}\) Therefore, guiding children in their relationship with God requires a knowledge of their religious needs and potential.\(^{16}\) Since these are manifested in a subtle manner, in that the child's relationship with God is lived interiorly, and often remains unverbalized, an attentive and observant attitude is necessary:

The educator should, therefore, ascertain most minutely what are the circumstances and conditions—inside and outside the child—most favourable to the opening up of the child's soul to supernatural influences, to the vigorous and lasting cooperation with the grace of God.\(^ {17}\)

**Servant of the Relationship.** What is said above implies the need to serve (*diakonia*) the God-child covenant relationship. To return to the analogy of the child's hunger, it is obvious that the food provided to children directly influences their physical health, present and future; generally, the younger the child, the more determining this influence is. This is no less true in terms of the child's religious formation since what is given, or not given, significantly affects the child's harmonious growth as a whole person, both now and later in life as well.\(^ {18}\) Thus, in helping "the relationship between the child and God be established", we become "servants of this relationship".\(^ {19}\) To extend the analogy, on a physical plane it is evident that the child is born with the physiological apparatus and mechanisms required to ingest the food crucial for survival and growth. However, on the religious plane it is not readily apparent that the child is equipped with all the essentials necessary to receive and internalize the nourishment necessary to assuage the inner hunger and thirst.\(^ {20}\) Paramount among these essentials is the
child’s capacity to give and receive love: "in this covenant relationship with God, children find what is most precious in themselves: the capacity to love."\textsuperscript{21}

\textit{-Initiation Into Relationship: Word and Sacrament.} Only God can love immeasurably, for "God is love" (1 Jn. 4:8). But, as Paul maintains, no one can come to know who this God is without being told (Rm. 10:14). Thus children need to hear the Word, the Christian message (\textit{kerygma}), and therefore children need help in order to know and live God’s love through Word and sacrament.\textsuperscript{22} This alone can satisfy the child’s need for love without limits.\textsuperscript{23} Further, this is a request the child makes of us, albeit unspoken in the early years: "Help me to come close to God. Help me to be fully who I am."\textsuperscript{24} The child needs help to become an "initiate in the knowledge of God" (Wis. 8:4), meaning knowledge in the biblical sense of involving the whole person.\textsuperscript{25}

\textit{-Service of Mediation.} There is something of an urgency in responding to this silent call of children, in so far as the early years are the most formative in one’s life. What is experienced at this time has a radical impact; this is particularly the case in relation to the child’s religious formation, understood as comprising all the potencies of mind and heart, body and spirit.\textsuperscript{26} Therefore, this service is demanding because children live in a different religious world, and hence theirs is a different spiritual geography.\textsuperscript{27} Initiating children to bible and liturgy is to enable children their own personal encounter with God, rather than a second-hand experience, they must be given a means of actualizing this. Signs provide an essential instrument: biblical images and words, liturgical symbols and space (atrium), objects (materials) and gestures (rites). It is through these means that children gain direct access to the primary sources of God’s self-communication in word and sacrament. Therefore, preparing and
providing such signs are integral aspects of the adult’s service, in that they make accessible to the child a direct and personal experience of God’s self-bestowal.28

•Making Bible and Liturgy Accessible: Content. To indicate briefly how this works out in practice, the following are a few of the pivotal biblical-liturgical themes that engender that quality of solemn joy in children. For young children under six years of age, some of these generative themes are:29

1) There is One who knows us and calls us by our own name (Christ the good shepherd), to meet him in the Eucharist and who gives us his very life (Christ the light, in baptism).

2) This life is within us and suffuses the entire created world (parables of the seed and leaven, Mt. 13:31-33), and is given to us as a precious gift of inestimable value (parables of the pearl and treasure, Mt. 13:44-46).

For older children around the age of six to nine, some of these generative themes are:

1) There is One who invites me to share in the intimacy of the Trinitarian life (true vine parable, Jn. 15) and calls forth my unique contribution in God’s own loving plan (the materials relating to the unity in the history of God’s kingdom, see Eph. 1:10).

2) I am empowered to do this by God’s self-giving in the Eucharistic encounter (with children this is presented as the liturgical moment of the true vine parable), and in the experience of God’s unfailing love for me personally (the sacrament of reconciliation).

•Incarnational Approach: Method.30 Implied here is another aspect of this service, in that the adult’s presence is needed in order to help children enter into the Christian Message contained in the sign or symbol so that they can celebrate and appropriate the meaning to be
discovered there. One age-appropriate implication entails presenting signs in their most tangible form. By incarnating the sign, so to speak, in the concretized form of catechetical materials (such as wooden figures representing the elements of the good shepherd parable), its inherent power to engage the child is further enhanced, thereby allowing the child an immediate, first-hand experience. In this way children are enabled to meditate on the Message contained in a sign in a manner that involves them wholly—the faculties, physical as well as affective, rational as well as relational -- so that the resonance generated by these themes keeps sounding, in a different key, beyond the present experience to extend into the later stages of the child's life. In sum, what strikes the deepest chord in young children is the reality of relationship, the key component in religious development. Being "known" and "called by name" (Jn. 10) gives the child the reassurance of safety and protection; in the relationship with God they gradually discover the identity and dignity that is theirs as a partner in God's covenant. For older children around the age of six to nine, who are exploring new moral, intellectual and social horizons, the fundamental need is for a steadfast, unchanging love (Jer. 31:3). In this kind of relationship with God they discover the new identity and dignity that is theirs as a collaborator in the covenant.

**PART II: THEOLOGICAL BASE: THEOLOGY OF CHILDHOOD**

"There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done, but always to the same Lord; working in all sorts of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them." (1 Cor. 12:4-6)

What has been said up to this point about ministry implies a theology of childhood. This aspect is addressed in Rahner's "Ideas for a Theology of Childhood", which will be
paraphrased briefly according to two main insights: the first on the value of childhood, and the second on the Christian awareness of childhood. Following this, for a biblical treatment of childhood in a similarly far-reaching framework, Sofia Cavalletti’s exegesis on the synoptic texts concerning the “child as parable” will be presented.

**Theology of Childhood**

"In the intention of the Creator and Redeemer of children what meaning does childhood have, and what task does it lay upon us for the perfecting and saving of humanity?"34

With this question Rahner opens wide the frontiers of ministry with children. Rahner’s first way of responding to this question is his advocacy of the eternal value of childhood, against the too-common misconception of childhood as a solely provisional, preparatory state subordinate to adulthood. Divinely revealed scripture and Christian tradition, Rahner attests, attribute an unsurpassable, unique, and unrepeatable value to childhood. To these he adds the force of his own poetic voice. Childhood he depicts as "a field which bears fair flowers and ripe fruits such as can only grow in *this* field and in no other, and which will themselves be carried into the storehouses of eternity" (author’s emphasis).35 Reinforcing and developing this image, Rahner continues: "The strange and wonderful flowers of childhood are *already* fruits in themselves, and do not merely rely for their justification on the fruit that is to come afterwards" [emphasis mine].36

The second way Rahner answers his question is to explore what Scripture and tradition say about the Christian experience of childhood. In this part is found what can be seen as the basic dialectic in terms of the ministry of the child’s religious development. On the one hand, Rahner maintains that Scripture, especially in his references to certain New Testament and
Pauline writings, almost always presupposes we understand what a child is. It is left to us to determine what a child is from our own experience, even though we know this experience of ours is shadowy, complex and conflicting. On the other hand, Rahner states that the Christian understanding and experience of childhood as presented by Jesus is both realistic and idealistic at the same time. It is idealistic without glorifying childhood and it is realistic without failing to recognize the limits and insufficiency of childhood. But Rahner maintains, "this does not mean that the "little ones" are lightly estimated by Jesus in accordance with the attitude prevailing among his people and at his time".37 Jesus not only took children seriously, he was pointing out their revelatory character as well.

**The Child As Parable**

In what does this revelatory nature of children consist? The question is raised here both for its ecclesial implications, since as Christians we are not exempt from relegating children to a position inferior to that considered their due in the words of Jesus, and also because it directly impinges on ministry with children.38 One of the theological images that conveys the child’s revelatory character is found in Cavallelli’s exegetical work on the Gospel texts relating to children, which may be condensed in the following five points.

1) There are two series of Gospel passages concerning children. For the first series (Mt. 19:13-15; Mk. 10:13-16; Lk. 18:15-17), all the synoptic texts include Jesus’ insistence on letting the children come to him. Added to this, in Mark and Luke, is the passage about receiving the kingdom like a child, hence putting forth the child as an exemplar. The second series (Mt. 18:1-6; Mk. 9:33-37; Lk. 9:46-48) Cavallelli deems more pertinent to the child’s parabolic character. This is the case as much for the context in which these passages occur
(between the miracle of the possessed boy and the prediction by Jesus of his passion and resurrection), as for the exhortation they contain (that not only is the child to be welcomed, but to receive a child is tantamount to receiving Christ himself, and thus also, the One who sent him).

2) Then the biblical theme of contrast, is highlighted as it is found here in different forms:

- little/great
- first/last
- servant
- great/the one who makes oneself little.

Each of these opposite poles is present in the child. For example, it is the fact of the littleness of children that establishes them as great in the kingdom of God. Referring to other places in the teaching of Jesus where this contrast is to be found (especially in its parabolic form such as the mustard seed, yeast, and grain [Mk. 4:28]), Cavalletti isolates one particularity. Whereas in these kingdom parables the relationship is diachronic (for example, the mustard seed is the smallest and will be great), in the child the relationship is synchronic (the little child is greatest precisely because the child is littlest). Therefore "to understand the child’s greatness we do not need to gaze into the far distant future, as in the case of the mustard seed, but it is necessary to search for it in the present littleness, to learn to see the power, actual and operative, in it." 

3) Cavalletti then refers to two Pauline texts that, inasmuch as they present a similar juxtaposition of two apparently irreconcilable, elements which are fused synchronically together, throw light on Jesus’ words about children. The first text is Paul’s experience of God’s power working within his weakness: "power is made perfect in weakness..." (2 Cor. 12:9).
The second is Paul's self-description as an earthen vessel containing a treasure (2 Cor. 4:7). In the light of this first passage which Cavallelli sees as the "paradigmatic enunciation of the Christian paradox" as well as expressing "perhaps the foundational motif in all scripture", the texts relative to children acquire another meaning. That is, the child, whose weakness is a sign of strength, manifests a disconcerting reality, namely, "the coexistence of littleness/greatness, powerlessness/power—the paradox that Christ will live to its fullest in his death and resurrection."

4) The effect of this insight is heightened as Cavallelli examines the context in which this second series occurs: the miracle preceding, and the death/resurrection prophecy following the passage about the child; these are seen interlinked, and united. To help the apostles grasp what they were unable to hear about his passion, Jesus resorts to a parable, his habitual teaching method (Mt. 13:34). However, at this all-important moment, Jesus chooses a human parable, the child, in whose weakness and littleness is the greatest. The child is a living example of what he is proclaiming, namely, that the power and victory that would be his in rising would happen by suffering through the greatest weakness: death. This in turn deepens the meaning of Jesus' deep identification with and affinity for children: "whoever receives one such child in my name" (Mk. 9:37). For as it is in Christ, so too is it in children that God's power is revealed in weakness.

5) Cavallelli closes on a pastoral note. If the child is a parable, then, like all parables, the child is composed of two elements, one visible (littleness), one hidden and mysterious (greatness). In the child, as with all parables, these two elements are inseparable. Thus, we are summoned to look beyond appearances. Rewording Jesus' exhortation about parables in
general (Mt. 11:15), Cavalletti expresses it this way: "If anyone has eyes to see, look". Because one of the religious dispositions children call forth in us is faith: "We could say that the mustard seed is an object of hope, the child an object of faith." In summation, the theological base provided by Rahner and Cavalletti, impinges on the level of practice. In this light, it is not solely a matter of ministry to or even with children. But it becomes also a ministry of children, provided there is a willingness to learn from children.

**PART III: CATECHETICAL BASE**

"Each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift...to equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ." (Eph. 4:7; 12-13)

In addressing a few specific issues germane to the GSC, in terms of its ecclesial, historical and cultural dimensions as a ministry of catechesis, it must be noted that there is no demarcation line between these dimensions. For instance: the Word, the primacy of which has been previously established, involves the dimension of ecclesiology, i.e., the Church, as qahal, the people called together by God. The Word is also historical, meaning past history as well as present history with its implications for the future. These, in their turn, necessarily imply the cultural context. Therefore this section will be structured into two parts, the first of which briefly addresses the ecclesial, and the second the historical/cultural context.

- **Ecclesial Context**

We have explicated the pastoral aspect of ministry—which will be named here as one of holistic catechesis. This section will briefly contextualize the GSC from the vantage of ecclesiology, by pointing out a few challenges it faces and contributions it makes.
Catechesis is usually placed in the teaching category of ministry. Thus the GSC faces the challenge of maintaining fidelity to the Roman Catholic tradition, while surrendering to and seconding the Spirit’s transformative action in child and adult alike. This suggests two kinds of polarities: the institutional-charismatic tension, and the tradition-transformation tension.

A concrete ramification of the first is the need to empower the laity by providing initiatives adequate to the personal and professional formation required for this ministry. In relation to this, one contribution children make is to call some adults into a deeper faith experience and along the path of ministry as well. For instance, parents (Mary) and professionals (Ruth) have entered the adult formation programme (CP) in order to "know more" about what is affecting their children positively. Or as another parent expressed it: "I came because of the children, but I am staying for myself". This is a frequently heard comment. It is due also to the child’s contribution that the atrium can be described as a “room of revelation” (Domenica).

A concrete ramification of the tradition-transformation polarity is the need for catechetical initiatives for children, adequate to preserve the rich heritage of our community’s lived faith and also to respond to the exigencies of modern life. Rooted as it is in the Christian mystery and experience, clearly this catechesis is committed to hand on our tradition. However, the GSC approach seeks not only to help the child’s growth as a religious person, but also to liberate the child’s potential as a transformative presence in the Church. Thus children, simply by virtue of who they are, may acquire a prophetic role in the Church. This is implied in Rahner’s notion of the "childhood of God"—in which "human childhood" is
subsumed: "We only become the children whom we were because we gather up time—and in this our childhood too—into our eternity" (author’s emphasis). Perhaps children, by virtue of their way of being with God, become a sign of what the Church is yet to be and of who we are called to be.

- **Historical-Cultural Context**

  At the mention of the word "catechesis" one comes upon a tangled terrain in view of its history and this despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that "catechesis in one form or another is as old as Christianity, and the New Testament literature itself is in large part the product of catechesis." Without detailing its history here, the use of the word "catechesis" and the ministry it represents has undergone many transmutations. A key factor in this is the growth of the teaching ministry and the concomitant distinction between the ministries of "catechesis" and "teaching" in the Church. From the perspective of the present-day polemic over this same question within the Christian community, it is elucidating to read Bernard Cooke’s caution about "avoiding the pitfall of trying to distinguish more sharply than evidence will allow the various ministries of early Christianity," while at the same time stating the close link between teaching (*didache*) and catechesis (or rather *kutechein*, as catechesis is not used in the noun form in the N.T.).

  Catechesis, therefore, may be seen as an inclusive rather than an exclusive concept, however complex and sometimes contentious its metamorphosis has been throughout the centuries. And the fact of major cultural shifts, especially since Vatican Council II, and the rapidity with which they are occurring, holds out hope and challenge.
By way of contextualizing and then isolating one such promising and problematic aspect, Francis Kelly's construct will be employed in an abbreviated format. According to Kelly's stages of the catechetical movement, the development has been from the (a) classical approach of the Roman Catechism (Council of Trent, 1565); through to the (b) educative stage; and (c) the kerygmatic stage, typified by Jungman (1889-1975); into the present (d) human development stage; with the added emphasis on social justice which characterizes the (e) prophetic stage, of whom Thomas Groome is considered the chief spokesperson.52 Although catechesis as a ministry has received renewed attention in the Roman Catholic tradition (with such documents as On Catechesis in Our Time and The Catechism of the Catholic Church),53 on the pastoral level it is somewhat constrained within the school-instructional paradigm. This presents a challenge. If catechesis is to be a life-giving reality, a really vital force in the child's life and thus for the life of the Church, to what degree must it counter this school-instructional cultural overlay?

One contribution the GSC seeks to make is to free catechesis from the "school" model bias. It is akin to Groome's "shared praxis" in that "it is more an approach or "way of being with people", than a pedagogical method" (author's emphasis).54 In fact, it goes beyond, for not only does the GSC advocate the full status of all involved as agents-subjects-in-relationship, it also advances the role of the adult beyond that of Groome's concept of "co-learner", which still presupposes the school-instructional model. An example, by way of instancing how this catechesis may be said to be counter-cultural, is its invitation to the adult to welcome the stance as a "co-listener" with the child.55 This indicates a broader (the primacy of listening in Judeo-Christian spirituality) and non-limiting basis (catechesis is above...
all a *life* experience, in which one also happens to learn, not vice versa). Although one may be in agreement with Westerhoff that language is not a mere matter of semantics, nonetheless, it can also be assumed that much of the language around religious education points to one of the pervasive cultural biases of our society.\(^{56}\) In sum, the GSC aspires to highlight the child's "ministrations" no less than the adult's, in so far as the "society into which the Christian is called at baptism is not a collective but a Body...There is, in forms too subtle for official embodiment, a continual interchange of complementary ministrations. We are all constantly teaching and learning...."\(^{57}\)

**CONCLUSION**

Christ's insistence on the power of children is very striking. Almost more than anything else in the Gospel it proves that in God's eyes *being* something comes before *doing* something.\(^{58}\)

In outlining some basic principles and presuppositions operative in ministry, the various dimensions in the GSC were approached in the optic of the child as paradox, parable, and prophet respectively. The image of the child as paradox (Part I) delineated some aspects about the mystery of who God is and who the child is, and the implications these have on the pastoral level of serving the God-child covenant relationship. The image of the child as parable was then highlighted (Part II) with Sofia Cavalletti's exegetical insights, especially because "the texts on Jesus and the children are difficult to understand...Moreover, a superficial reading will not reveal that the very heart of the Christian Gospel is expressed in Jesus' gestures and sayings in relation to children" (author's emphasis).\(^{59}\)

The image of the child as prophet (Part III) alludes to some of the ecclesial, historical, and cultural dimensions of the GSC; brief reference was also made to the promising and
challenging aspects these present. Catechesis is envisioned as a revelational as well as an educational ministry, in that it involves more than proclaiming the Christian message to children and sharing with them what the Christian mystery reveals. It also involves an openness and attentiveness to what children may reveal about the mystery of God, the Church, and our Christian life. The child contributes to building the body of Christ by revealing to us who it is we are now called to become, and perhaps even to provide intimations of who it is that we will be when "God is all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28).

With this theoretical treatment as our foundation, the study will proceed in presenting details about the pastoral research experience.
1. Mary Ellen Sheehan, in conversation with my ministry base group (May 25, 1994). Therefore there is not a neat and tidy division between the theoretical and experiential, but rather an interpenetration (as evidenced already in Chapter 2, and will be later on as, for example, in Chapter 7).


4. See Karl Rahner, "Ideas For A Theology of Childhood", p. 41.

5. Edward Robinson, The Original Vision, pp. 7-8. In David Hay's article, "Children and God" (The Tablet, No. 74, 1995, p. 1271). reference is made to this work of Robinson's as a "pioneering study" in exploring the spirituality and religious experience of childhood.


7. Ibid., p. 105.

8. Sofia Cavalletti, "God and the Child Together", The Good Shepherd and the Child: A Joyful Journey, p. 13 (henceforward this work will be referred to simply as Joyful Journey). See also pp. 83-85 of the same work; for instance: "Childhood is the time for...being in love. Being in love is the essential foundation..." (p. 84).

9. Chesterton, "A Defence of Baby-Worship", p. 149. Following directly upon this is this insight: "The gravity of the very young child...is the gravity of astonishment at the universe."

10. Sofia Cavalletti employs the image of hunger repeatedly in Joyful Journey. For example: "...children not only have religious capacities but a particular hunger as well. When a child is hungry, he or she must be fed now, without waiting until tomorrow." (p. 12).

11. Ibid., p. 11: "One special feature of the religious life of children is the joy they are capable of when they are helped to draw near to God. They feel a particular kind of joy...".

12. C.S. Lewis, "The Weight of Glory", The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses, pp. 18-19. In the case of the child's religious development, María Montessori stresses the need to "respect the child's own religious life" and to realize "its lofty seriousness". See Montessori's "God and the Child", in The Child in the Church, p. 16 and following.
13. I speak here of the covenant relationship in its so-called vertical dimension: "For falling in love is a new beginning, an exercise of vertical liberty in which one's world undergoes a new organization" (Lonergan, p. 122). However, there is also a horizontal dimension implied in this, which, according to Avery Dulles' Models of the Church, is the "mystical communion" ecclesiology, i.e. "the People of God of the New Covenant" (p. 58).

14. Sofia Cavalletti. "On Moral Formation", Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Newsletter 1988, p. 7. Cavalletti continues: "I dare say...each time the child allows us to see the joy that s/he feels in drawing near to God...the child is allowing us to see his/her response to the God of the covenant."

15. Maria Montessori, The Child in the Church, p. 16. It may be noted that there has been no alteration to written works cited here. Although some are not written with the recent sensitivity to inclusive language—as in this excerpt—I have not attempted to alter or tamper with writings cited throughout this thesis.

16. See, for example, Montessori’s comments on pp. 15-16 of the work referred to above: "The educator who does not believe that children feel the truths of faith in a somewhat different manner from adults, and who does not realize that children need other ways than ours to express their hope and their love for God—such a one will not be able to guide the child in a manner suitable to his religious needs."

17. Ibid., p. 15. The emphasis Montessori attaches to the observation of children is highlighted clearly in this same work: "Now God has given to the child a nature of his own, and has fixed certain laws for his development...To discover the laws of the child’s development would be the same thing as to discover the Spirit and Wisdom of God operating in the child." (p. 14). Thus the importance of observation in the educator’s service is not only emphasized by Montessori and Cavalletti, but also may be seen as a spiritual practice. See Appendix X re their approach to the spirituality of childhood.

18. For instance, see the work Good Goats: Healing Our Image of God by the Linn's. especially for their portrayal of the effects of a negative image of God introduced early in life.


20. In promoting the child’s development, Montessori’s contributions—even on the psychophysical plane alone—are enduring. For instance, in Religious Education Development Gabriel Moran notes: "Adults are educating a child from the first moment of life. In its turn the child is absorbing far more than we can imagine. We used to think, Montessori says, that the child did not have intelligence: now we know the child is almost nothing but intelligence. Montessori is here referring to the total receptivity of the infant organism" (p. 175). On the plane of the child’s religious development. Montessori is insistent that "children are thirsty for a great vision"; see the aforementioned lecture "On Religious Education", p. 38.

22. Ibid., p. 16: "Christianity is above all an event. Children cannot know that Christ died and is risen if they are not told and they need to know this."

23. Ibid., p. 14: "In the covenant relationship the child finds the Partner who is limitless, unfailing love, who meets the child's deepest need, and the child is in harmony with the world."

24. Ibid., p. 11. This is a recurring phrase in Cavalletti's works, one which is picked up by others for its significance, such as Francoise Darcy-Berube. In her recent book, Religious Education At a Crossroads, Berube devotes much time in discussing the question, "How can we help our children become fully alive spiritually?", and draws on the writings of Cavalletti in doing so, especially pp. 112-113.

25. Sofia Cavalletti, Joyful Journey, p. 16: "We are helping a vital process, and not just an intellectual process." Later in this section, I address the centrality of symbol/sign in the GSC approach, precisely because of its part in this integrative process. "In the religious sphere, images function as symbols...They have an authentic appeal, and are apprehended not simply by the mind but by the imagination, the heart, or, more properly, the whole man" (Dulles, p. 24).

26. To cite but two treatments of this theme: See Powell (Happiness is an Inside Job, p. 27-28 particularly) for the psychological ramifications; and Keating (Intimacy With God, 34), for the long-term religious-relational ramifications. As to the latter, I add this brief quote: "The Christian spiritual path is based on a deepening trust in God...Because trust is so important, our spiritual journey may be blocked if we carry negative attitudes toward God from early childhood...which are implanted in us largely as a result of early religious training..." p. 22 (emphasis mine).

27. See Sofia Cavalletti, Joyful Journey, p. 12: "This hunger is not always easy for us to satisfy, because children live their relationship with God in a very different way than we do."

28. Rahner, "Childhood itself has a direct relationship with God. It touches upon the absolute divinity of God not only as maturity, adulthood and the later phases of life touch upon this, but rather in a special way of its own" (p. 36). What follows touches upon how the GSC nurtures this "special way" of the child. See also endnote #30.

29. I employ Thomas Groome's term "generative theme" especially because, in the course of explaining what he means by this term, he refers specifically to Cavalletti's work. For example: "...the generative theme signals to participants, and from the beginning, the vital core of the curriculum to be attended to...Then it functions akin to what Sophia [sic] Cavalletti, in her Montessori approach to religious education, calls a "linking point." By this she means "an especially striking element that emphasizes the vital nucleus of the theme. The linking point should introduce us into the heart of the subject in such a way that is gives us, in a flash, the global intuition of the essence of the subject we are considering." The generative theme then should be of life import to participants, pertain to their very "being" in place and time, and,
when possible, intimate the core...". In this excerpt from Sharing Faith, pp. 156-57, Groome quotes p. 98 of Cavalletti’s Religious Potential of the Child.

30. Cavalletti characterizes the GSC as a "method of signs" (see p. 159 in The Religious Potential of the Child, Chapter 10), which has "always remained alive where the life of the Church is living, and that is in the Liturgy. The Liturgy has always spoken through "signs"; and Jesus taught only "in parables" (Mark 4:34)." Montessori also states that she found her "technique pédagogique" in the liturgy itself, and she sought to "open" the liturgy (the Eucharist particularly) by opening "the book" (of Scripture, and the Roman Missal, in use at the time). For example, see L’Education Religieuse (p. 19ff and pp. 136-37), "Le problème fut de rendre le texte et le rite de la Messe accessibles à tous les fidèles...On se préoccupa alors d’aider les enfants "à écouter la messe"...Comment ouvre-t-on un livre?...Notre soin doit consister à mettre en rapport l’esprit de l’enfant avec le texte sacré, le laissant ensuite seul avec Dieu."

31. Chapter 5 deals with some of the practicalities of how this approach works, seen through the participants’ experiences.

32. This is a primary image in Cavalletti’s article "On Moral Formation", GSC Newsletter 1988, pp. 6-7. See Rahner: "The child is the man who is, right from the first, the partner of God...." (p. 38). Note in this section that the movement goes from the personal (sheep, branch) to the communal (flock, vine); these two ecclesial images are used in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (1.6).

33. This is the theme of Cavalletti’s reflections in "Religious Formation and Later Childhood" (GSC Newsletter, 1984, pp. 4-8): "The older child [age six years and beyond] wants to know what his/her place is in the world that he or she is in the process of discovering, and what his/her task is in it." (p. 4).


35. Ibid., p. 36.

36. Ibid., p. 37.

37. Ibid., p. 41.

38. Ibid., p. 34: "Now it is precisely the Christian above all who seems to lay special emphasis on the merely subordinate role of childhood, this character which it bears as preparation for the life that is to come, by comparison with the stage of adult life, which in consequence seems to be understood as life in the true sense."


40. Ibid., p. 45.
41. Ibid., p. 46.

42. Ibid., p. 47.

43. Ibid., p. 45.

44. Ibid., p. 45.

45. See Lonergan: "The word, too, is social: it brings into a single fold the scattered sheep that belong together because at the depth of their hearts they respond to the same mystery of love and awe" (p. 113).

46. To cite one example, from Gloria Durka’s The Joy of Being a Catechist: “There are many definitions of ministry, but all of them share the following characteristics: ministry is doing something in public, for the coming of the reign of God, on behalf of the community; it is a grace, and it has its own identity and structure. Teaching religion is a ministry because it fulfils these criteria” (p. 53, author’s emphasis).

47. Rahner, p. 36.


49. Cooke cites Hermas as a source that states "quite explicitly the early second-century existence of teaching as a distinct ministry in the Roman church" (p. 242).

50. Ibid., p. 225.


52. Kelly, The Mystery We Proclaim. See Chapter One, and Appendix (pp. 129-134).

53. See also Sr. Elaine McCarron’s article, "Our Very Special Call" (Religion Teacher’s Journal, Sept. 1995, p. 20), in which she points out that "another important catechetical event was the announcement of Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic letter, As the Third Millennium Draws Near, of a year of catechesis in 1997 as part of a three-year preparatory phase in anticipation of the Jubilee Year 2000."

54. Groome, Sharing Faith, p. 295.

55. For example, see Sofia Cavalletti’s section "The Receivers of the Proclamation" in The Religious Potential of the Child, pp. 49-50: "Listening in community is always enriching. Listening with children is especially so, in our estimation, because God’s Word resounds in a different manner in young children than in adults, and thus it is through children that another nuance of the Word reaches us. This will happen, however, on the condition that the catechist [has]...the attitude of one who is open to listening..." (p. 49).
56. Westerhoff, *Who Are We?* See the Introduction particularly: "Is education a helpful category? ...Is catechesis or catechetics?...The matter of a name is more than semantics" (p. 12-13). In his conclusion of the same work, Westerhoff puts forth an eloquent case for the use of the word "Catechesis" (p. 268-77). Some examples of the language usage are: Groome's "shared Christian praxis"; James Michael Lee, "religious instruction"; Gabriel Moran, "religious education". Westerhoff's treatment of the "school-instructional" paradigm (especially in the first chapter of *Will Our Children Have Faith?*) has been most elucidating in relation to this challenge facing our catechesis.


CHAPTER 4

MAPPING A NEW PASTORAL EXPERIENCE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the processes and procedures underlying the pastoral experience. It will clarify the research methodology employed. This task will be addressed in three parts: I) the methodological process; II) data analysis; and III) the major thematics (categories).

Before proceeding, it is appropriate to mention the form in which this chapter is written. It strives to maintain the narrative tenor. Hence it employs first person voice. It will also be more schematic and technical. Therefore, this chapter will use various forms of syntheses both to shorten and support the narrative account. For the same reasons, this chapter will rely heavily on the use of appendices.1

PART I: METHODOLOGICAL PROCESS

As a reading guide to this section, Table I provides an overview of the research process. In a glance, one can see the pastoral experience sequenced, including the various research phases, components, and instruments.

The qualitative approach to research methodology was used in this practical research study. Before beginning the research proper, there was a pre-initiation phase. This phase, which concluded prior to the pastoral project, addressed the following three areas:

1) Selection of the participants. This was a self-selection process whereby a letter of invitation was sent to all the CP course members (see Appendix B), followed by an informal
gathering of these participants drawn from three of the four Toronto parish centres (January 1995).

2) Presentation of research tool(s). As mentioned in chapter two, I introduced the participants to the concept of the journal they would be using during our initial formal gathering (April 17, 1995). It is important to note that, previous to this, we had discussed the theory underpinning this journal technique (e.g., the value the GSC ascribes to reflection and to observing children).²

3) Development of Theory. The participants were also previously introduced to some fundamental aspects that are implicit in the GSC orientation, for instance, Montessori's view of the role of observation.³

The following outlines briefly the three phases comprising the applied research.

Academic and Ministry Experience: The first phase began on April 24, 1995 and lasted for eight weeks until June 19, 1995. It was composed of two components: an academic component, which represented the final semester of the CP,⁴ and a ministry component, occurring at approximately the same time.⁵

In the academic component, the participants attended weekly seminars, two hours in length (Teefy Hall, USMC). In these seminars I presented the participants with certain biblical and liturgical themes, relating especially to the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation (see Table 2 for the outline of these seminar sessions).⁶ Following each seminar session, the participants spent one-quarter hour reflecting on these themes by means of a reflective journal exercise.⁷ In the ministry component, the participants engaged in ministry with children in an atrium (15-20 hours approximately). Generally, this occurred during the time of the children's
retreat. The participants were invited to observe, and reflect upon their experience with the children by means of two journal exercises. 8

**Group Reflection:** Phase Two took place on September 30, 1995. The participants came together for a day of reflection on the adult seminars and children's sessions. This gathering was audio taped and transcribed. For this communal moment, five hours in length, Brother Ignatius Feaver was invited to act as facilitator (see Appendix M). I was enabled to be a reflective listener with the participants. Practically, this helped the group to focus the reflections on their experience, rather than simply an evaluation of the seminar.

**Evaluation:** The final phase took place on January 21, 1996. This was a half-day communal gathering about three hours in length. It was preceded by filling out a participant evaluation form (see Appendix E). This meeting allowed an opportunity for the participants to assess the research process as a whole. During this group gathering Brother Ignatius again assisted with the facilitation and served later as a reflector with me.

From these phases there configured six sources of data: three in written form, three in oral form.

1) Personal profile of participants (See Appendix D). 9

2) First formal gathering of the research group (17 April 1995).

3) Journals: the participants kept journals of their experience in both the CP seminar component, and the atrium sessions component. Questions were provided by way of guiding their record keeping in this journal. 10 One question was designed to stir their reflections on our seminars: "What topic/theme was presented in this seminar? In what way was I touched by it? And why?" Other questions relating to their ministry were: "In attending to the children,
what did you notice... see... hear and so forth? Take ten minutes to make a note to yourself of what this time with the children has said to you.  

4) Transcription of the taped communal reflection day (September 1995).

5) Completed participant evaluation forms.  

6) Transcription of the taped communal evaluation day (January 1996).  

For data validation, all the participants were sent a copy of the data used in this text, and in its present context. This also enabled the participants to verify both my general orientation to, and specific interpretation of, the data.

Before presenting how the data were analyzed, mention needs to be made as to the personal research procedures implemented during these phases. My basic ground as a researcher was not only to avail myself of existing resources, but also to build in other support structures. In terms of the latter, the following three are highlighted:  

1. At the end of each seminar, I invited Christine Ennis (who was a participant in the CP, but not a member of the research group) to act as a peer supervisor for me. This took the form of taped conversations at the end of each seminar (a short segment is included in Appendix H).

2. To attend to the ministry aspect, I invited Ellen Marchildon’s assistance to reflect on our experience in the atrium (with a children’s group who were also celebrating First Reconciliation). This took the form of sharing our observations about children. An excerpt from her notes about the time in which the children and I were reflecting on the sacrament of reconciliation, and the true vine parable, is included (see Appendix I).

3. Throughout all phases of the research, I kept a personal research journal, a brief example of which is also included (see Appendix J).
### TABLE 1: APPLIED RESEARCH OVERVIEW: SEQUENTIAL AND STRUCTURAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Instruments</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 1994</td>
<td>Pre-Phase</td>
<td>Teefy Hall (USMC)</td>
<td>• Invitation to Group</td>
<td>• Letter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 1995</td>
<td></td>
<td>Parish Centre</td>
<td>• Initial Informal Gathering</td>
<td>• Discussion</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 1995</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• First Formal Gathering of Research Group</td>
<td>• Discussion</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 1995</td>
<td>Phase One:</td>
<td>Teefy Hall (USMC)</td>
<td>• 8 Weekly Adult Formation Seminars (Certificate Programme, Level II)</td>
<td>• Reflection Sheet/ Journal Page</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to June 1995</td>
<td>Part A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Parish Atrium Centre</td>
<td>• Atrium Sessions With Children</td>
<td>• Observation Sheet/ Journal Page</td>
<td>10.0 to 15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Reflection Sheet/ Journal Page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 1995</td>
<td>Phase Two</td>
<td>Teefy Hall (USMC)</td>
<td>• Second Gathering of Research Group: Day of Reflection</td>
<td>• Guided Points for Reflection</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 1996</td>
<td>Part B</td>
<td>Teefy Hall (USMC)</td>
<td>• Final Gathering of Research Group</td>
<td>• Group Discussion</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

**PHASE ONE: SEMINAR CONTENT**

1. April 24, 1995  The true vine parable (Jn 15): biblical exegesis: I.
                  Presentation of this parable to children: I.
                  The evangelical maxims of Jesus and moral formation.

2. May 1, 1995    True vine parable: biblical exegesis: II.
                  Evangelical maxims: II.
                  Reconciliation: rite: presentation to children: I.

                  Reconciliation: rite: presentation to children: II.
                  Eucharist and Reconciliation: celebrating with children: I.

                  First Reconciliation in the context of children's retreat: II.
                  Presentation of material: "Synthesis of the Mass".

                  Presentation of material for children: "Epiclesis" and "The Mystery of Faith".

                  Presentation of material: " Gestures of Gift": the offering, breaking of the bread, exchange of peace.

7. June 12, 1995  Background to the material "The History of the Kingdom of God: The Unity of the Kingdom".
                  Presentation of the timeline for children: I.

                  Group discussion/evaluation.

PART II: DATA ANALYSIS

And bless to me, O God,
The handling of my hand.15

In addressing the analytical process, I will indicate how I went about handling the data garnered from the three phases of the research. Handling the data is an accurate term, in that it connotes the physical actions involved: transcribing words, leafing through pages of written journals, which represented excursions into new territory. By listening to the participants’ words, one traverses the world they are inhabiting. With each new phase in the research process, more detail is added to that individual’s world.

In setting out to familiarize myself with each one’s terrain, two parallel paths were followed. The first was the act of writing down and commenting upon what was being said, either in the written or spoken word. Because of its effectiveness in situating me in their story, this commentary became a recurring technique, applied to each ensuing body of data.16 The second was to record my personal response to what I was hearing. This occurred spontaneously. Retelling the other’s story to myself (analysis summary) elicited an inner dialogue with the text (personal research journal). This too became a naturally recurring element with respect to each phase. These two paths served as ways by which to reach an understanding about, and thus to interpret, the data; they constituted an access route into new and changing regions.

Before delineating the principal topographical features of those regions, as it were, it is appropriate to describe briefly how they were reached. The handling of the journal data will be developed fully, since that it is indicative of the process used with the other data sources.
After repeated readings of each person’s seminar journal, I set about writing a page by page précis (see Appendix K, an analytical summary of Eileen’s journal). On completing all the CP journals, a mosaic of the participants in relation to one another was compiled. This amounted to a group summary (see Table 3). The combination of this twofold interchange with the data—one narrative and the other dialogic—contributed to the sense of discovery. While I had indeed participated in the seminars, it was from the outside, so to speak, interacting with the participants in an objective manner. Working in this way with their journals, however, gave access to their personal and subjective perspective, as well as a view of their inner world. In the case of their ministry journals, the same methodology was followed. A precis was made of each participant’s journal entries (as an example see Appendix L), followed by a composite summary of the group (see Table 4). A new dimension was added: the exterior, rather than the interior, landscape of their ministerial lives was depicted. Together these two sources of writings began to manifest a multidimensional reality of unexpected richness and complexity.

The reflective and evaluative gatherings yielded data of a different nature in that they marked excursions into the communal aspect of research. The focus of the primary experience (April-June) was the individual participant. Subsequently, the research moved to include the dimension and dynamic of community, thereby providing another vantage point: individuals in relation to the other participants in the research process. During this time my position as researcher changed. I moved from the role of facilitator/instructor to the position as listener to and with the research group.

The group reflection day in September (see Appendix M) gave an opportunity for the co-researchers to reflect on their previous experience. Complemented by the reflections of
Brother Ignatius, the data thus produced another perspective: the participants’ articulation of their preceding experience (from April through June), as well as their responses to hearing one another’s story.

The group evaluative gathering came nearly four months later (January 1996). It was another excursion into the communal realm. An evaluative dimension was added: (see the Participant Evaluation, Appendix E). This evaluation form served as a departure point for the community evaluative activity (see Appendix N). As in the September gathering, Brother Ignatius acted as facilitator for the day, and co-reflector with me afterwards. I was thus enabled to shift more specifically to the stance of listener. Moreover, I took one further step, and participated as a co-reseacher by proffering a personal word of evaluation in the form of an excerpt from my research journal (see Appendix O).

In sum, there were two levels to this evaluative process. The first was the individual completion of the evaluation form. The second was the group evaluation of the overall research process in all its phases and aspects. In addition, Brother Ignatius’s reflections at the conclusion of the day were taped (see excerpts from this in Appendix P). In relation to the group evaluative meeting, the results were analyzed in terms of the movements and commonalities (see Appendix Q). Three distinct moments appeared, each marked by a passage point relating to the personal, practical, and professional aspects of the participants’ experience (see Appendix R).¹⁷

From the first meeting with the prospective, although still tentative, participants (January 1995), to the last phase in our research (January 1996), a full year had passed. The
excursions into the territory delineated by the data revealed a world comprised of seven major
continents (categories), each with its own topographical features (subthemes).

ANALYSIS: GROUP OVERVIEW

SEMINAR JOURNALS: SUMMARY

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eileen</th>
<th>Themes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Theological reflections (cites Mongillo's insights on &quot;relationship&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Biblical reflections: on parables, with her own connections and creations, e.g., in the true vine parable, the &quot;being/doing&quot; dynamic seems like the parable of the Pharisee and Publican, to her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pattern: each reflection contains: insight, that leads to intuition, and has a practical bent, i.e. how to apply it to child and adult; and/or how she has seen it with children/verified with children and what she has learned from the children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Role of adult/catechist: attitudinal, practical, professional.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Francesca</th>
<th>Themes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Impact of proclamation: e.g., quotes re parables; impact of &quot;revelation&quot;, and her insights stemming from biblical and liturgical theology. For example: &quot;creation&quot; theology (and her latter image of &quot;breathing of God&quot; in her); liturgical theology, e.g., her mention of &quot;work/worship&quot; in Liturgy text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Impact of materials: sensory impression (Synthesis of the Mass, and Timeline materials); materials as springboard for own insight and meditation, e.g., Genesis (God breathing into Adam, into her, into us all) and linking this to the History of the Kingdom of God timeline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Presence of children: 1) practical (responsible for materials); 2) professional (insights and new ideas re the &quot;evangelical maxims&quot;, for example); 3) personal (wants &quot;falling in love moment&quot;); insight about children (their &quot;silence and &quot;work&quot;) from her own experience of journaling in course and summer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interplay of cognitive (&quot;major insight&quot;) and affective (&quot;I love to hear...&quot;) levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Shifts: hearing proclamation (from Scripture and liturgy) and seeing the materials; to a personalization (her own life, in relation with self, God and others); and application to ministry (try new things and to test &quot;old&quot; ones, e.g., &quot;I heard this before but I didn't get this ut of it&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Movement in and out of a resolve/desire to change, with prayer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Themes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td><strong>Themes:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Critical and analytical style and mode:</strong> a) about the GSC as a method (needs adjustment, e.g., level of reading in North America lower than Italy); b) about the materials and the originators (e.g., why Gianna and Sofia did not include a material/piece “for the Our Father in the Synthesis of the Mass?”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Self-awareness:</strong> (“discouraged, “deflated”), world awareness (“atrocities”), and God awareness (“Why did God make us this way?”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Cost and demands</strong> this catechesis makes (“so much to do...; prepare...”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Concern re evangelization</strong> in general, children in particular (both the need to and struggle in proclaiming to them about God) and the challenges that makes to her (conversion: &quot;prayer, study, reflection&quot;). Personal, practical, professional level reflections: a) re premise, content and process of GSC; b) personal/ministerial journey; c) cosmic dimension: present world scene, to past history and its gifts, to future transformation and progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth</td>
<td><strong>Themes:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Orderly and succinct:</strong> the content (biblical and liturgical themes); about the method (materials, presentations); pedagogical aspect and the link between these (especially biblical and liturgical themes).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Reflects on three levels</strong> a) content: involvement in the themes herself; b) process: how it was too fast/ting; how it helped, challenged, “stretched” her; c) premise: knows her &quot;observation skills need honing&quot;, understands that the “impressionistic” dimension of the materials is what is “engaging” to children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Personal:</strong> one reflection is a most personal meditation moment, with her response in brackets, e.g., (Wow!).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Children/atrium:</strong> learning from children; re-living moment of love with them; feeling “like a child”—”wonder, expectation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Course itself:</strong> speed/frustration; models important (J. and F.); overflow into praxis (seminar helps her meeting with group of atrium catechists).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td><strong>Themes:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Concern for “truth”, “clarity”, “meaning”, “significance.”</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Reflecting</strong> on her experience with children during adult seminar: self-testing stance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Impact of materials</strong> as a medium for learning and appropriating the message (she quotes direct lines from seminar re proclamation to/meditation with children), and it also moves her to want to meditate more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Realism:</strong> difficult (“to get in right”), ”exhausting”, “so much to learn”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domenica</td>
<td><strong>Themes:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Presence of children:</strong> a) shared joy (A, her daughter); b) message which calls her to joy; and c) as &quot;educator&quot;, she reflects on children's needs and desires.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Effect of 1) group in seminar session (communion, shared faith, new dignity; 2) new identity; “dignity”, “respect” because loved.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Personal level:</strong> call in faith journey, in relationship with Trinity, Church and others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Prayer:</strong> reflection moves to prayer: directly addressing God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Themes:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Global reflections:</strong> on the GSC: as a &quot;way&quot; and its different &quot;moments&quot;; in community with children (atrium); in community with adults (catechists in seminar).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>The sense of &quot;mystery&quot;:</strong> experience of Christ and the Holy Spirit (enhanced, touched, &quot;called to share Christ&quot; through this catechesis).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Sense of being affirmed, &quot;built up&quot;</strong> in ministry (professionally) and being transformed in self, by children/and in the atrium (personally).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## ANALYSIS: GROUP OVERVIEW

### JOURNALS ON CHILDREN (ATRIUM): SUMMARY

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP OVERVIEW: JOURNALS ON CHILDREN (ATRIUM) SUMMARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eileen</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Constructs a parallel pattern: Five sessions with children, and each session has an &quot;observation&quot; component (page) and a &quot;reflection&quot; component (page).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Observations: focus on child's responses (in the presentations and meditations, that she and others are guiding). Global awareness: an intuitive, felt sense of the group and individuals (&quot;body&quot; manifestations, and soul ones, e.g., silences, atmosphere, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to recall child's actual words, and to record different responses in word (spoken), art (drawings, notes of children), and facial expressions (e.g., &quot;N's question...how she follows up on it in the next session, and comments &quot;that's why we are there&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Self-critical: &quot;should have done...&quot; because of change in children...&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Her own joy in &quot;sharing with them&quot;: sense of status and dignity of child(ren).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Francesca**                                          |
| • Observations: done about moments when she improvises and applies GSC materials and message in new and pioneering way (e.g., maxims to children under six; and maxims with History of the Kingdom of God to children in Gr. 5). |
| • Generally style is free, original, goes own way (does not follow sheets, timing). |
| • Observations reflect her own state of maturity in the work (tapes the children); and reflects her own particular gifts in the work (practical, innovative; very "materials"-oriented). |
| • Reflections are retrospective: backwards 10 years (before her own experience in an atrium), and towards the future ("eternal quality of their relationship with God", and remarks re "the coming of the Kingdom..."). |
| • Self dialogue from own broad experience; and examples range from inside atrium (hers and others) to inside homes (of children from atrium). |
| • Note "hunger, joy, peace and depth" of children; and her own "joy, laughter, tears, stress and exhaustion"—range of emotional impact. |
| • Examples/instances of children from before (three-year old) and after (Gr. 8 children) with her in atrium. |

<p>| <strong>Kate</strong>                                               |
| • Exercises different modes of observation:          |
| a) the whole group of children (naming who does what). |
| b) &quot;Group&quot; shifts (leaving presentation of the Synthesis of the Mass and going to the altar). |
| c) Use of the materials (&quot;symptomatic&quot; of needs deeper than &quot;social and energy&quot; needs). |
| d) Concern: &quot;what are the deepest needs?&quot;. |
| e) Reflection component is present in each; that is, not just a description or narration of events/happenings, but &quot;premise reflection&quot; (concern for the &quot;why&quot;) on children, on herself/her performance: on materials; group dynamics, etc. |
| f) Registers own preference (&quot;analytical&quot;, &quot;critical&quot;). |
| g) Personal disclosure (her lack of self-love) and surprise (after nine years!). |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GROUP OVERVIEW: JOURNALS ON CHILDREN (ATRIUM) SUMMARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Ruth | No entries for observation but present throughout seminar reflections.  
  *Seminar reflections mention children on all levels (that is, she does child reflections throughout adult part of the process—seminar). Different levels of engagement:  
  a) Personal: their (children) impact on her.  
  b) Professional: skills she needs, etc. (in ministry with them; e.g., "observation" skill needs "honing"; how to do maxims, and Synthesis of the Mass in three moments).  
  c) Practical: she needs information (e.g., album pages, "retreat package", if she is to do ministry adequately). |
| Mary | *First retreat experience: happy, "incredible experience".  
  *Focused almost solely (and many pages' worth) on retreat itself, with an entry for each day of retreat, both "observation" and "reflection page.  
  *Basic narrative or sequence of the day itself (as it is her first time).  
  *Focusing on contrast between individual children, e.g., M. and T., their "moods" and "resonances".  
  *Analytical: what works, what does not work; questioning (re children's prayer, and how she plans/wants to investigate that with children next year).  
  *Awareness: of what is "visible" (on the children's faces, in their moods), and what is "not visible" (when effect of retreat cannot be discerned in them, that it appears not to have affected children)—this seems a growing edge for her. |
| Domenica | *Very interesting as she did one "reflection" and "observation" page for the same day of retreat, and speaks at length about the one child in the prayer room.  
  *Sense of both the group of children (feel of group) and individual child.  
  *Involvement level: not leading group, but participating in the experience (as she mentions again and again—April 17 meeting; September 30 meeting).  
  *Child seems to point the way to her own longings: ("I felt jealous..." of child in prayer room), and the way to her relationship with God: ("Mass...should be this way, every time", that is, as it is readied and prepared for with the children's retreat period).  
  *Sort of "participant/observer"—and the child as representing something she values, desires, shares and longs for in her own life, and for the Church. |
| Wendy | *First retreat experience; in "assistant/observer stance"; not leading, rarely presenting to children. but this is her third year with this group of children.  
  *Entry for closing session of the atrium year with children. When she was left alone (lead catechist was ill) she wrote most (3 pages!).  
  *Impact of children in this atrium setting: how they are in it; what they do there and the way that they do it.  
  *Impact of the atrium setting itself: qualities of silence, stillness; the atmosphere, the materials.  
  *Impact of the community in the atrium: both child and adult. The child as creating a new form of community in atrium ("no differences in age...background"; no "separation" of adult and child).  
  *Child's "place" (atrium) becomes her "place": co-listeners, co-worshippers, co-celebrants, co-workers.  
  *Observations: a new form of community among child and adult reflects also the person's level of entry into the work (i.e. length of time in GSC), as well as level of involvement and responsibility in it (e.g., usually wrote briefly, but when she was solely responsible for children, she wrote unusually, in detail). |
PART III: MAJOR THEMATICS

"...the soul’s motions, senses and affections."\(^{18}\)

We will now identify the major thematics that this analytical process yielded. The basic categories will be outlined and detailed in relation to their specific subthemes. Two metaphors will be employed to chart the contours of this world: one geographical, the other musical.

Following the chronological sequence of the research process, the previous section alluded to the cumulative effect resulting from the repeated returns to the territory delineated in the data. What started out as random impressions and associations gradually began to coalesce coherently. The effect is akin to stepping into a terrain whose originally indecipherable features slowly took shape. Four distinguishing overall characteristics are as follows:

1. what is described is a complex (intellectually and affectively) and multidimensional world (dimensions of interiority as well as exteriority);
2. it is above all a relational world, composed of seven interconnected levels or spheres;
3. the hinge or axis of this relational dynamic is their relationship with God;
4. there is a pervasive presence of children in the participants’ world (even in the children’s physical absence).

In naming these seven categories, it is helpful to see them as configurations, to picture them first in their global perspective.\(^{19}\) A specificity and linearity will then be ascribed to the seven categories, with their respective subthemes (see Table 5). The categories are as follows:

A) Divine-human relations
B) Adult-child relations
C) Adult-self relations  
D) Adult-adult relations  
E) Adult-research process relations  
F) Adult-Good Shepherd Catechesis relations  

The interconnection between these relational spheres (categories) is better grasped by a non-linear approach, as if one were seeing a glimpse of the world as a whole. Therefore another (spherical) graphic representation is offered (see Figure 1). This synthesis has the advantage of providing an interconnecting view, which reflects more accurately the manner in which the research experience actually configured itself. It also encourages considering the various parts globally while investigating the specific thematics. Finally, the music metaphor will be used to describe the major themes issuing from the pastoral research experience.
### OVERVIEW: MAJOR THEMATICS

#### CATEGORIES AND SUBTHEMES

**Table 5**

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Encountering God through scripture</td>
<td>I. Personal relations: Experiences and insights.</td>
<td>I. Existential level.</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Profiles: The adult as reflective practitioner.</td>
<td>Adult as Catechist in Ministry • Journey • Call • Commitment • Cost • Opening to Conversion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Encountering God through liturgy.</td>
<td>II. Communal relations: Celebration and meditation.</td>
<td>II. Self identity/image level.</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>CP Process: • Information • Formation • Transformation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Mediating the encounter: The mode of the presentation and the nature of the materials.</td>
<td>III. Environment of encounter: The Atrium.</td>
<td>III. Faith level.</td>
<td>Shared Faith</td>
<td>Francesca</td>
<td>Profiles: Research Group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Meditation and the passage to prayer.</td>
<td>IV. Refining the relationship. Encounter shapes praxis.</td>
<td>IV. Ministerial level.</td>
<td>Shared Praxis</td>
<td>Eileen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V. Mutuality in relationship: Gifts from children.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Domenica</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Mary</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Kate</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ruth</td>
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</table>
CONCLUSION

The music analogy suggested itself early in the research process, in that listening became my primary task as a researcher. It became an increasingly apt image, as the study progressed, because the major thematics and the interrelatedness among them were clarified much in the way the parts and movements in a musical arrangement are appreciated upon the completion of the composition (see Figure 1).

In the academic and ministry components of the research, all seven themes were present. As the study progressed, some were discernible immediately (primary thematic). Others remained in a minor key, to emerge more clearly with the passage of time. Three were clearly in a major key: the relationship with God, children, and oneself (thus these are shaded in the diagram). The first two of these are explored in detail in the next chapter (chapter 5).

Since the adult is the subject of the research, the relationship with self is a constant, core theme throughout. Nonetheless, the adult-self relationship became especially defined during the group gatherings, along with the role of community (adult-adult relationship), and one's relation with the research process as it unfolded.

Upon completion of the evaluative phase (January 1996), two previously minor strains of music now achieved dominance: the participant's relation to the GSC on a generic level, i.e., as a catechist in ministry, and to the CP programme on a specific level, i.e., as a catechist in formation. After the gestation period following the months of analysis, the research process could be seen anew, in its entirety. It contained a crescendo, with certain melodic strains acquiring surprising significance. The process had reached a finale, as it were. Thus the retrospective chapter which concludes this work.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASES</th>
<th>RESEARCH PROCESS AND THEMATICS: RELATIONAL REPRESENTATION</th>
<th>CHAPTERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHASE I</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP &amp; ATRIUM</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHASE II</td>
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<td>Chapter 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>REFLECTION</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHASE III</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>EVALUATION</td>
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<td>RETROSPECTIVE</td>
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<td>Chapter 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>CP &amp; GSC</td>
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</table>
1. The appendices are a crucial complement to the chapter, especially in relation to the analyses (tables), since they indicate the means by which the data are approached and interpreted (in chapters 5 through 8).

2. For example, the experimental nature of the GSC (referred to in chapter 3) is related to observation of children: "What we have sought to discover during these thirty years is: What aspect of God corresponds most to the vital needs of the child throughout the diverse stages of development...What we have been researching is precisely this—that aspect...which appeases and satisfies that religious hunger in children" (Sofia Cavalletti, "Characteristics of the Good Shepherd Catechesis", GSC Newsletter, Winter, 1985, p. 3). This observant attitude implicit in the GSC is highlighted in a different way by Kathy Coffey, in Children and Christian Initiation: A Practical Guide, p. 18: "Sofia Cavalletti suggests that children’s exigencies or deep needs are met by the aspect of God that most corresponds to them. Thus, it may be appropriate to ask a form of the Ignatian question ("What is your deepest desire?") adapted to children ("What do you most need?")). See also p. 9 of Coffey’s work for her appreciation of Cavalletti’s contribution to the spirituality of children.

3. For instance, the participants were given a copy of what Montessori termed a "Guide to psychical observation". Although this is termed psychological observation, Montessori viewed it as attending to the "spiritual" growth of children. See Spontaneous Activity in Education, pp. 101-102.

4. The Certificate Programme for Level II (children ages 6+) began in September 1994. In December of its first semester, a letter was written to all the course members (15 in total; see Appendix B). In January 1995 there was a brief, informal meeting with prospective participants of the research group, with whom I met formally for the first time on April 17, 1995, the week preceding the start of the research proper (i.e. final semester of the CP).

5. Since a vital aspect of the research was to render an inclusive picture of the participants’ involvement in the GSC, their ministry practice was included. The children’s retreat coincided with this time frame (April-May particularly), adding another richness to the research scope.

6. As mentioned in Section 6 of the thesis proposal, a selection of themes were drawn from a rich curriculum for older children (6-9 years of age). While the seminar content is not the essential focus here, references will be noted as they appear in the data (for example, in chapter 5). As well, certain themes are highlighted (in appendices T-W) for the purpose of clarification.
7. The "reflective" exercise may be seen in two ways. One is a "ponder point", to use Leo Klug's term in reference to "operationaliz[ing] some aspects of adult learning theory" (see "Using 'Ponder Points' as a Learning Technique in Adult Religious Education", p. 118). The other is from the perspective of spiritual formation. In terms of the latter, Sr. Olga Warnke's assistance was important in phrasing the guiding questions (in our meeting of December 1994).

8. See Appendices B and C of the thesis proposal. The point of these exercises is to encourage an explicit, deliberate engagement in what is considered important in the GSC, but which—previous to this research project—had remained on an implicit level in other CP courses (i.e. neither formally presented as to technique, nor discussed in a group context). For this reason it is referred to (in the thesis proposal) as a new element in the CP initiative.

9. I am particularly grateful to Vivian Ligo, and my thesis committee, for their contribution to shaping this form, as well as the Participant Evaluation Form.

10. See Thesis Proposal, appendices A, B, and C. "Journal" is the word I used in introducing this activity, and in presenting the guiding questions (presented in coloured binder form, subdivided into three sections, one for each question). The notion of "journal" was not discussed; it was left open to the individual's interpretation and use (see chapter 6 re their individuality in relation to this). While journal writing is viewed as an adult learning methodology (see Joseph Lukinsky, "Reflective Withdrawal Through Journal Writing", in Fostering Critical Reflection In Adulthood, as an example), here it was conceived also in terms of the spiritual formation of the adults along the lines described by Parker Palmer, in To Know As We Are Known (see Chapter 7 particularly: "The Spiritual Formation of Teachers", pp. 106-125).

11. These two questions, although presented on separate sheets, were not to be seen separately, but together. They are intended to open up the activity to include what was experienced (e.g., seen, heard) and what/if they reflected on about it. As mentioned earlier, Simone Weil's essay ("Reflections On the Right Use of School Studies With a View to the Love of God") was discussed in relation to these activities. As well, Douglas Steere's reflection on Weil's work influenced my own appreciation of her insights (see Gleanings: A Random Harvest, particularly Chapter 2, "On the Power of Sustained Attention", pp. 37-53).

12. In terms of the evaluation of the research experience by the participants, all their responses are included in Appendix S.

13. Because of its length, the transcript of this meeting is not included; however, the significant portions are referred to in subsequent chapters, especially chapter 7.

14. "Existing resources" included: the collaborative learning group, the ministry base group, the thesis director(s) and committee. The following three support structures were also most helpful, even though only very brief reference is made to them (in Appendix form).
15. "Handling the data" is a term used in the research methodology literature. However, it assumed another meaning, which is best expressed in this celtic blessing quoted by Esther De Waal in *God Under My Roof*, p. 8.

16. Actually this technique was suggested to me by Sr. Olga Warnke, and another instance of her valuable guidance through this process.

17. This is an example of the interpretive stance suggested by George Schner's guiding questions, in relation to adult formation: Is it personal/devotional? Is it practical? Is it professional? This served as one key in analyzing the data, both on the personal level (it can be seen here in Tables 3 and 4), as well as the group level (highlighted in Appendix R). See Chapters 1-3 in Schner's *Education For Ministry*.

18. This phrase is taken from a sermon of Bernard of Clairvaux (Sermon 83, 4-6 on the Song of Songs) found in *The Liturgy of the Hours, Vol. III*, p. 205. It synthesizes the major impression received in reading the journals (i.e. the complex, dynamic, shifting, inner movements).

19. Two different representations are offered here. The linear represents one aspect of the analytical process. But the circular or "relational" figure reflects the "mystery" of the reality that Gerald May writes about in *The Awakened Heart*, p. 19: "It is the same for all important things in life; there is a mystery within them that our definitions and understandings cannot grasp. Definitions and understandings are images and concepts created by our brains to symbolize what is real. Our thoughts about something are never the thing itself. Further, when we think logically about something, our thoughts come sequentially--one after another. Reality is not confined to such linearity; it keeps happening all at once in each instant."
CHAPTER 5

EXPLORING THE PASTORAL EXPERIENCE: SOURCES OF NURTURANCE, MEANS OF EMPOWERMENT

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is to explore the first two themes: the adult’s relationship with God and the child. These are addressed in view of what they reveal of the sources of nourishment and means of empowerment contained in the primary phase of the research: the CP seminars and children’s sessions (atrium). This chapter is divided into two parts. Part I relates to the first major thematic: the adult-child relations. Part II relates to the second major thematic: the adult-child relations. Table I offers a detailed outline thereof, and also situates the themes within the parallel components of the first phase of the pastoral experience.

PART I: THEMATIC A: DIVINE-HUMAN RELATIONS

There are four dimensions to the adult’s experience of God: I: Encountering God through scripture; II: Encountering God through liturgy; III: Mediating the encounter by means of the mode of presentation and the nature of the material; IV: Meditation and the passage to prayer. Each of the participants will be represented at least once in the elaboration of these sections. Only fundamental characteristics and noteworthy dynamics relating to this thematic will be highlighted.
**DETAIL: MAJOR THEMATICS**

**CATEGORY A AND B**

**Table 1**

Focus: Exploration of the Research Experience  
Optic: Sources of Nurturance, Means of Empowerment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASE ONE</th>
<th>APRIL</th>
<th>JUNE</th>
<th>PHASE ONE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ADULT SEMINAR SESSIONS (CP) COMPONENT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>CHILDREN’S SESSIONS (ATRIUM) COMPONENT</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Primary Theme: Divine-Human Relations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B. Primary Theme: Adult-Child Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonalities (Subsections)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Commonalities (Subsections)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Encountering God through scripture.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I. Personal relations: Experiences and insights.</td>
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<tr>
<td>II. Encountering God through liturgy.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>II. Communal Relations: Celebration and meditation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Mediating the encounter: The mode of the <em>presentation</em> and the nature of the <em>materials</em>.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>III. Environment of encounter: the <em>Atrium</em>.</td>
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<td>IV. Meditation and the passage to prayer.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>V. Mutuality in Relationship. Gifts from children.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
A.1: ENCOUNTERING GOD THROUGH SCRIPTURE

For each of the co-researchers, the parable assumes a pre-eminent place. A common characteristic in their accounts is the affective level of engagement that the parable elicits. Their references to parables seem invariably accompanied with a high-feeling level.¹

*The power of parable:* Mary reflects on the particular impact that the Johannine parables (good shepherd, true vine) hold:

The presentations are beautiful - the very gentle introduction of the moral aspect is so perfect. The interweaving of the two images of shepherd and vine is so powerful in conveying what our God is like.

The parable has impact because of its "image" content. The image resonates deeply, thus powerfully communicating the presence of God.² For Ruth, the response to hearing parables is expressed as excitement: “Hearing the vine being continually linked to the Greater Being is exciting.” And later, in the same meditation, she states clearly: “The parable is very powerful to me. The love, the life surging through every part of the total.”³ For Wendy, the parable is a particularly rich source of nourishment and also as an entrance into mystery, the unknowableness of which will one day be revealed:

I believe that this is part of the mystery of Christ working in us. He is sharing himself with us, through our hunger to know him as he really is, is not completely satisfied. Especially in the parables, he is saying to me that I will know “the rest” in Heaven.

Domenica, recording phrases such as “to be is a fruit”, “to remain is a fruit”, indicates that the parable sets off a recollection "of A’s song [name of daughter] she sang to me, “Vieni Gesù - resta con me, resta con me, e non lasciarme piú.” More verses, I don’t know them."⁴ Then she states that joy is the special “fruit” this parable brings, hence the link to her daughter’s song: “The fruit is the joy - a scene after my daughter received her First Holy Communion.”
The joy that Domenica feels now—in the evening seminar reflecting on the true vine parable—is to be a definitive moment, one to which she will refer seven months later as a privileged and surprisingly “deep” experience. While this will be referred to in more detail in the concluding chapter, it is important to note it here because what is sparked during an encounter with scripture in spring becomes a moment whose life remains vivid for many months to follow. The enduring quality of the experience is significant. What is an obviously deeply felt experience of encounter through scripture does not disappear as a fleeting moment. Instead, it lingers and is recalled in the future.

Finally, Mary’s terse statement emphasizes the universality contained within the parable’s boundaries: "The richness drawn from the parable; that it is difficult to tell where the vine and branch begin and end, that there is a place on the branch for all people."

*An inclusive encounter*: The parable is pre-eminent in the participants’ reflections because it opens a way to a holistic encounter with God, one that embraces the Bible as a whole, including both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. Ruth writes:

> The Old Testament sources for the True Vine [parable]-I was amazed at the richness of the depth of their meaning in the early ages. That the simple parable that we are presenting to children has great meaning.

Indeed, the parable has an affective resonance. Ruth, for example, isolates certain phrases:

> Remain in my love.” “No one has ever reflected human love as Christ has shown.” With these two phrases, I would just “be”. There is great comfort and security with these words.

Domenica echoes a similar feeling-laden response:

> The idea of pruning of the vines, and creation being renewed, from the book of Genesis - made me think of just as nature is renewed each season we too are being renewed in our relationship, in our love of God.

Further, she alludes to the nature of scripture as an inexhaustibly rich source of personal
sustenance:

Hearing over and over again that God loves us, wants a constant union and communion with us, brings so much joy to my soul. Renews my spirit with the strength of his unchanging love. Renews my belief and faith in our partnership. No matter how much I hear about God's love for us, I can't get enough of his message.

*Scripture as integrating:* Scripture has the power to effect an integration between theology (biblical source) and praxis (ministry experience). Mary singles out the aspect of "revelation" in relation to the evangelical sayings of Jesus (maxims). As well there is an allusion to children (in the atrium setting). She points to the personal-ministerial interplay in the scriptural encounter. Mary's excerpt also exemplifies how the presence of children pervades the encounter even when they are not physically present: "The maxims as God's gifts, as His revelations, so we may be happy and grow and know His confidence is in us. The children will most certainly love these words as I love them." In the next excerpt, Eileen indicates the integrative aspect of listening to scripture (during the seminars), specifically in its relation to practice (with children):

In preparing to make these announcements to children, we steep ourselves in the theology of the proclamation, which would be enough already. But then, the experience with children is able to draw us to perhaps the most important or [to] simply explore, enjoy and give thanks for the gifts that are boundless.

*Scripture as consoling:* The affective impact of scripture comes in an explicit form of consolation. Wendy reflects on the biblical notion of parousia and highlights two important dimensions in her encounter with God, namely, mystery and emotion:

Our final destination of Parousia is revealed to us while remaining in powerful mystery, and affirms itself too. I believe the Catechesis draws each Catechist out as each is drawn inward, toward their own individual spirit. Jesus wishes that his light be revealed to all nations, that this flame will warm all hearts.

The feeling element in the encounter with scripture is also clear in the following excerpt from
Domenica's reflection on the maxims:

following the will of God’s heart - deep felt emotion. Commandment of God to us in Torah - God is disclosing to us of his nature.

- Maxims - tie in to above - what is very dear and deep in Jesus’s heart.
- new way of being and doing.

*Scripture as provocative: Scripture provokes as well as consoles. The biblical presentation/material for children on “The unity of the history of the kingdom of God”, spurs Kate to confront the harsh realities in the world in the light of the Gospel message of resurrection:

I love this presentation - it's so visual, so tactile - imagining thousands of years flowing through our fingers! And it's so hopeful. When I think that we have the risen life in us, that we have the benefit of God being made human and walking amongst us and then I look at the atrocities we as a society commit—Bosnia, Chechnya, Somalia, Rwanda, I can be totally deflated. But putting this into the perspective of time gives me hope. Reading Scripture makes me feel, I think, that the end time is just around the corner (I guess that's the best way to get us to “shape up”) but when we see how long it's taken to prepare all this for us and how relatively little time we’ve had to transform it and even littler [sic] time to experience the risen life of Christ, well there's hope!

*Scripture as transforming: Francesca’s meditation on the same biblical theme manifests the transformative quality in scriptural sources. The experience of listening to scripture draws forth from Francesca a deeply personal reflection. She is struggling with difficult personal issues—"the good and the bad times"—in the light of the biblical revelation that “creation is ongoing”. Her struggle, viewed in the broad vision of salvation history, brings hope. This hope includes others, in a kind of opening to the larger community. It is also linked to the insight that the true vine parable created within her earlier, in the adult seminar sessions. We note the recurrence of a receptive-responsive combination that is a commonality in the participant’s encounter with God through scripture:

It’s great to hear “creation is ongoing”. Not everything is set. While I try to let God
breathe into me, I am becoming a new creation. A creation for him, his glory, his love. That is when I remember! We fit on the time line as individuals not just as a moment. Not just as a series of holy sacred moments of sacraments on a time line but the good and the bad times mixed together going towards Parousia. Time in God’s time, in God’s breath, in God’s universe, in God’s plan. I don’t want to run so much. Where would I go? I’ll remain on the vine, in the plan, in the breath, in love - never alone.

This excerpt is the second reflection Francesca has devoted to the theme of creation, redemption and parousia. We will mention this again in the next chapter. However, it is noteworthy that this encounter with God, sparked by the creation theme, will perdure through time. In fact, Francesca will continue this inner dialogue for months afterwards. This moment, recorded in June, marks the initiation of a prayer-meditation that she will refer to in September as the most valuable aspect of the entire research process. "It began", she relates later, “with the whole creation thing”; when meditating about this, “it was like [I] actually got a gift out of it”. The gift was a form of prayer: “That’s what I will always remember from that moment; not so much the First Communion [retreat] and all those things that happened, but this prayer...” 7

A.II: ENCOUNTERING GOD THROUGH LITURGY

Liturgy is no less a means of encounter with God than scripture. Liturgy is as multi-faceted as scripture in evoking response from the participants.

*The power of liturgy:* After the seminar on Eucharistic Prayer IV, Kate reflects with enthusiasm: “the incredible words in the Liturgy hold so much meaning, it would take a lifetime to appreciate what they have to convey.” Her expression of appreciation then moves to a personal application which shows a marked level of self-awareness:

As usual, I see the glass half empty (as opposed to half full) - instead of delighting in what I do know and understand, I am focused on my need to fill up that glass - on my need to understand these words and all that is connected to them.
Furthermore, Ruth highlights the power of the liturgy to evoke a response. Captured by the "gestures of gift" in the Eucharistic rite, namely, the gesture of offering, peace, and breaking of bread, it is the "symbol" that is particularly captivating:

I am moved by the imagery of the hands as the symbol of the child's gift - the Epiclesis, the offering. Then, the Gift of Peace, so incredibly powerful, by joining hands, especially when it is equated to the Sap running through branches in the True Vine. The power of such great love in the Risen Christ.

Significantly, Ruth names liturgy here as an encounter with the risen Christ. Just as significant is her highlighting of the connection between Bible (allusions to the true vine parable) and liturgy (rite: its signs and gestures). Here, also, the impact of "imagery" is noted; that is, not simply the symbolism contained in the parable (sap), but also the images of gestures-movement as having a particularly forceful quality.

*Liturgy as living encounter:* This same particular adult seminar session devoted to the Eucharistic Prayer is recorded by Domenica as an actual experience. What has impressed Domenica about this session is the fact that it was not simply an academic study of the Eucharistic rite with an allusion to the presentations for the children of the gestures of gift.

Rather, it was a participatory experience in which the whole group was engaged:

As we each heard and partook in the reading of the Eucharistic prayer and as we sang the Holy, Holy, Holy and the Mystery of Faith, etc., I felt the harmony of our hearts together in faith and love and joy as we participated.

It appears that this seminar on the Eucharistic prayer was a lived, celebratory event. Domenica was led to a consideration of her own experience of the Mass:

Listening to Sofia's meditation on the Mystery of Faith fills me with awe and anticipation. I always believed that the people at Jesus's time were more fortunate because they heard and saw, but in retrospect we are more fortunate for we receive God's gift at every Mass that we attend.
Liturgical theology has stimulated a personal appreciation of the Eucharist.

*Liturgy as linked to scripture:* In a reflection entitled, "Reconciliation Meditation" taken from Mary’s seminar journal, we note this movement: from appreciation of the biblical understanding of commandment, to an awareness that this represents a personal invitation, through to a level of response:

I loved hearing that commandment is an expression of God’s will, the plan of his heart. Also, that we are invited into the love that unites the Father, Son and Spirit—that this is where we are asked to remain. It is so wonderful… that the closer we get to the true meaning, the more wonderful it is—God never disappoints us.

Implicit in this, once again, is the connection between Bible (Scripture as it is proclaimed) and liturgy (the experience of living God’s Word in liturgy). The final sentence reveals her realization of the unfailing nature of God’s love.

Eileen makes reference to an additional source relating to liturgy in probing the dynamics at work in the liturgy of reconciliation:

My reaction/reflection focuses on Mongillo’s comments on the reality of the breakdown of this relationship between God and person. When the need to draw closer is lessened or non-existent --> signal the “death” of this relationship.

Reflecting on this leads her to recognize the importance of what she terms “moments of encounter”, an allusion to the sacrament of reconciliation:

The need for moments of encounter are then a strong need in light of this closeness that must be indeed experienced to be “longed” for when there is separation.

*Liturgy as linked to praxis:* Liturgical theology (theory) has its ramification in catechesis with children (ministry). Francesca is reflecting on the presentation of the “Synthesis of the Mass”. She is struck by the sign or symbol—the language of the liturgy, highlighted in the materials for this liturgical presentation with children. This awareness will then be applied to her ministry. While this reflection occurred in the adult seminar session (theoretical learning),
it indicates her movement towards practical implementation. Francesca begins,

To see the material again... How simple it looks, how easy... The first time I saw it I was dumbstruck. I was in awe, it was so beautiful, the hands, the lights, the crucifix. All was complete. I love this and I am glad it’s familiar.

Now occurs the movement to its implication for ministry: “I wonder if the children will want to move pieces around. I’ll look back at this and freely let them.” After speculating about if and how the children will move it, she then moves to very specific applications of, for instance, changing one of the cards for the materials, etc. She then concludes, “The children will work with this material and love to go back to the altar in the 3 to 6 atrium and make the moment again and again and again.”

Wendy also illustrates the integration between theory and praxis. But in her particular case, the spill over works the other way: from experience of catechesis (atrium) to liturgical theology (theory). First she relates what appears an important insight to her: “As has been said about liturgy, how it brings the past into reality, makes it the present and the now”. In the other, linking a line in this work to her ministry experience, Wendy reflects:

I understand more and more why it is easy for me to romanticize the catechesis. The work is borne [sic] of love, in many shapes and forms. As Sofia wrote in Liturgy, “God reveals himself to us, yet we cannot see him.” So this love from God that has brought me to this place, makes me want to return again and again.12

“This place”, to which she is referring, is the atrium. How noteworthy it is that it is during her time of writing about ministry that she is recalled back to and appreciates the liturgical sources.


The materials, which are actually designed for the children’s use, can also mediate the adults’
encounter with God. The outline of the presentations and the guidelines about the materials mentioned previously, are the backdrop for the references that will be presented here, both with regard to the manner of presenting the materials and the impact of these materials themselves. The mode of the presentation, and the nature of the materials that are being presented, serve as a source of sustenance for the adult’s relationship with God. In this section, each of the participants in the research study are represented with an attempt to elucidate various aspects relating to the materials and presentations. However, the references to these presentations and materials are certainly not limited to these references.

*Facilitating adult learning:* One needs to see the GSC in action to fully appreciate the manner of verbal presentation and the way in which the concrete materials are moved about to illustrate a biblical or liturgical theme. The presentation and material both spur Eileen to meditate further on the meaning of the Eucharist. In a capsule comment, Eileen states:

> It struck me how much we all need this “breaking down” of such complex, rich experiences. We are able to look at, enjoy, and meditate on each part of the Mass. How rich that the potential for every “single” moment is great in regard to opening onto new horizons.

Eileen notes further that this is also true for other sacraments (“Baptism”), as well as scripture (“the Parable”).

*Appropriation of theoretical and experiential learning:* Ruth highlights the ability of the material and presentation to act as a means for deepening meditation. She notes: “I am very moved by the simplicity of the Mass presentation and how such simple things and words create such discussion.” About the parable she remarks, “As each phrase is presented, it provides more meditative ‘need’.” As that "need" is met, Ruth is encouraged to go deeper. “Having taught the maxims in a similar way for 2 years, I am now much more excited to meditate some
more and now feel more centred as to the meaning and presentation style."

The materials used for the presentation aid comprehension and clarity. They are a means of apprehending and learning more, for example, about liturgical theology in a way that engages the adult surprisingly. Mary writes: "I liked seeing the interchange of all the different elements of the Mass—of seeing the flow of the mass laid out on one flat plane." She then notes that it is different from other presentations in that it is a particularly rich liturgical presentation, and highlights its elucidating character: "The character of this presentation is so different from others we have heard recently—all these different facets that reveal the truth and clarify our understanding." This cognitive experience has a unifying effect on Mary. She concludes: "The whole (Mass) seems so much more whole after putting together the pieces. The signs, symbols, and prayers are so unified." Here it is clear that the materials are a means of facilitating the movement from intellectual knowing to a more holistic experience.

The materials may pose problematic aspects. Kate questions:

The question I was stuck on was why does Sofia have an object of some sort to correspond to all the written cards except for the "Our Father"; these are the kinds of questions I can get very hung up on and if I don't resolve them in some way before I do such a presentation it could create problems for me when I try to present.

But it is interesting to watch how the materials provoke new awareness of their purpose: "The materials are a point of departure for reflection and NOT a point of arrival."

*Invitation to communion with God:* The materials and presentations serve as a prism through which we can see the different ways in which the adult approaches the encounter with God. For Domenica, the materials are not problematic. Instead, they instill in her an altogether different sense: "The honour and dignity of presenting the materials in this course is always amazing." What is striking to her is the "tone, gestures, sensitivity to the materials, and the
group”. All of these, she says, “touched me”. Domenica is touched to the point of opening to God:¹⁴

I enjoyed hearing and envisioning the flow of the 5 moments of the True Vine presentation. It is probably the first time the children get to enjoy the presentation and with each moment get into it deeper because I enjoyed the revelation and the feeling of how close Jesus wants us to be to him. So close—the union is so vital, no separation between us.

We note again how in the seminar context the presence of children is felt. Ministry is central to their reflections even in their seminar journals.

Eileen probes the nature of the presentation, and indicates its value for the adult both personally and professionally. But, she also indicates that experiencing the presentation in the manner that it is given to children serves as an antidote to the inevitable frustration that is found in the ministerial practice:

The value, struck me, of the need to hear the richness of the parable in very small ‘doses’ that settle like water into soil as one waters a plant. The water does not pool but is fully absorbed into the soil and to the roots. So, we must value and respect this method of slowness and essentiality with the child. I know that it requires much ‘back planning’ to allow for this time, and at times there is a sense of frustration when time is at a premium in regard to celebration.

The words “slowness” and essentiality” are noteworthy here. Not only does the child have a need to experience this, but the adult needs to receive the Word in small doses as well.

*Levels of engagement: personal, professional and practical: Eileen comments: “I enjoyed the dialogue that was brought forward through these materials.” The materials not only generate discussion and dialogue among the participants but also a multi-levelled dialogue within themselves as individuals. The following reflection by Francesca will be quoted in full for three reasons. The first reason is that it is ostensibly the material that has stimulated this multi-levelled reflection. The second reason is that it reveals the complexity and the richness
especially from the most experienced members of the research group. The third reason is that it indicates the interplay between theory and praxis. There is a flow back and forth from self, with the materials as the departure point, to a movement toward children; then a movement back toward self at a deeper level still. In quoting this reflection, we will simply note these different movements in so far as they also give a preview to some of the other categories and subsections that will be dealt with further in this and the following chapters.

Francesca titles this reflection "Maxims". In response to the question, "In what way was I touched by it? And why?", she begins:

...wording about "ties you to creation and recreation" was a major light. Yes, the world is the same, not much changes. People can change --> new creation. With Christ in me, I am better able to fulfil the maxims. This is being led by Christ—very exciting potential for me.

Francesca points to the materials and their presentation leading to an encounter with Christ. Then she moves suddenly to a concern for children: "Why do we just do this material for reconciliation. We should re-present it several months after children have been receiving communion. To see, enjoy the growth, the gift of Christ in our own life." At this point, the meditation takes a turn toward the adult’s role in ministering to children: "We should take time to meditate more on this with the children and share this in a community ‘safe’ experience for them, not primarily as witnessing but as being part of the process of remaining." Now the reflection moves to creativity in the use of this material:

I can see developing more material for follow-up. Perhaps it could include a control chart of the maxims with an index of where these words can be found in the Bible. (This is for somewhat older children.) Then the words would be read including some of the verses before and after—this could be exciting!

At this point it is timely to mention that, in fact, Francesca does try experimenting with
the maxims material. Further allusions will be made to this in another section, but the practical implications of this reflection time in terms of application to ministry is obvious. Her reflection then moves to consideration of children at a deeper level: “If we have trouble, anxieties, problems that lead us as adults [to] sin, then this is true for children too!” Further, reflecting on reconciliation and the mystery of sin, she continues with a most personal application: “I feel like I’m a beginner at learning to let Jesus transform my life—not so that I stop sinning, but so that I can exercise options for revelation which attracts me more than the result of sin.” Here the reflection seems to have come full circle. Just as the maxims, the Gospel message of Jesus, acted as a springboard for deeper meditation, so too at this point the keynote is one of “revelation” which appears to her as an exciting prospect revealing to herself her own “potential”. What seems to have acted as the catalyst in this rich reflective moment for her has been the manner of presenting the maxims to children and the simple wooden plaques on which these maxims are written.

There are, then, clear indications that encountering God through the scriptural and liturgical sources themselves, and the impact of the presentation of the materials to mediate this encounter, leads to deeper levels of meditation. As the previous quote suggests, “I feel like I am a beginner at learning to let Jesus transform my life”, we can see a dialogue occurring. Meditative and profound, the reflections have yet another level. Meditation becomes a passage into prayer.

A.IV: MEDITATION AND THE PASSAGE TO PRAYER

The inward response to the presentation of the theological themes, and the use of the materials concretizing them, has a meditative element that at times leads to an engagement in
prayer. Since this is such a significant fact emerging from their journal reflections, one example from each of the participants will be presented here.

*The sense of discovery:* This meditative element can have about it the sense of discovery. Reflecting on the group discussion relating to the gestures of gift, Eileen notes:

At one point, the question was raised, 'Do the children comment on the fact that this bread has no yeast/leaven when the significance of its growth is so closely associated to the Kingdom of Heaven?' Silently, I answered, 'No', and then began to wonder, why?

In pondering this question, a beautiful phrase referring to the epicletic presence of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist emerges: "Perhaps it is a ‘given’ for the children that the Holy Spirit is present to transform; the real leaven of the Kingdom. Of course the historical significance of the unleavened bread at the Last Supper and therefore at Mass, is the obvious reason." This insight, to which she attributes the status of a personal discovery, brings joy: "I enjoyed my own little response, inwardly; my discovery."

*Invitation to meditation:* Stimulated by a liturgical presentation on the Mystery of Faith, Mary mulls over some of the words of the presentation itself and then addresses a specific aspect: "That we are more fortunate than the people who heard, touched and saw Jesus—that says a lot. To imagine Parousia—it’s something I would like to think about in a quiet moment."

There is an inner stirring that draws her toward "imagining Parousia—it’s something I would like to think about in a quiet moment." There is a significant fact emerging from their journal reflections, one example from each of the participants will be presented here.

*Invitation to prayer:* Kate’s reflection relating to the “maxims” materials highlights another aspect. Kate’s “analytical mind”, begins to probe the meaning these maxims for her personally: “Jesus leaves us with maxims—which are almost if not completely impossible
'Love... as I have loved you, forgive 70 x 7...’ With candour, she moves from an immediate feeling-response towards a deeper appropriation of the message contained in the maxims: “At first it feels very discouraging—to set goals so high makes me want to give up before I have even started. But then I receive the revelation that I can do this because of God’s love for me!!” Her concluding words indicate dispositions associated with prayer — openness to God, an attitude of willingness:

That never failing, abundant, unconditional, ever present flowing love which I need only receive empowers me, flows through me and out to the world, if only I allow it to. I only need say yes and it will be done. I only need to allow myself to be the instrument, the vessel to receive this treasure.

Wendy’s reflection occurred in a seminar during which the theme of reconciliation was addressed. What is interesting here is that while she is in the adult seminar, she is drawn back to the experience of reconciliation in the atrium which had just happened. This liturgical theme sparks the memory of the sacramental celebration with the children. In this case, we can see the praxis influencing the theoretical (seminar), informing it with evident emotion. She begins by alluding to the celebration: “We recently celebrated our children’s first reconciliation in the atrium. It is an hour that became a moment, a moment still alive for me” and concludes with an expression of praise:

Memories of the atrium, like the word, are brought forward into reality. Many moments of the catechesis for me have been lived this way. Ever present and alive, as the vine. We see the flow of God’s meanings and teachings to us. We are touched and enhanced by the reality that is in these moments. we experience Jesus being alive. Jesus is alive. He is risen. Alleluia.

This course is a meditative opportunity for Wendy. At another time, she is reflecting before the session began, as she notes at the top of the page, “This was written before class, as I had arrived early and often like to prepare for the evening by meditating.”
•Passage to prayer: The next reflection exemplifies the dialogue between the self and the proclaimed Word through the liturgy. This is what we call the passage to prayer. Ruth reflects on the presentation of the Mystery of Faith. It is given here exactly as it was written. Even the structuring gives an impression of dialogue, with one voice heard, the other responding, concluding with Ruth’s summary comment on the experience itself:

I feel so much like a 'little' child hearing this. I can't wait for the next word, what is going to happen, where my place in all this is.

Jesus calls us to be close (I'm here) by our name (Wow). Over time, how many people know Jesus. Imagine the tone of his voice. (I can hear it.) Are these people lucky? (We are too.) We know more. Death. Risen. Jesus is truly there. Our eyes not strong enough to face the Splendour of the Resurrection (But when?).

There will be a day!!! (Yes!!) There is such great wonder, expectation, excitement. I feel I am so much a part of this presentation. I can't wait to hear the next word.

Tonight has been a great "moment".

A similar dialogical movement is evident in this excerpt, written by Domenica during the seminar when the Eucharistic Prayer was presented. It begins with her response to "the great Amen—our yes to God". As in the previous reflection, one is reluctant to add too many words. Clearly, there is prayer happening here; someone is being addressed as, "you". This is an "I-Thou" encounter in an explicit form. For obvious reasons, this too will be offered in an unexcerpted form:16

Yes too I am here with you—in the trinity togetherness—that's what we long for, is to always be together—in relationship, in celebration.
- How much you loved us, how much we mean to you.
- Yes - I understand, I accept, I love you too, I also want to be a part of you.
- now I really understand—the meaning of this great Amen.
- What meaning this course has put to my words, understanding, love of God, knowledge of God's love for us.
- I keep on echoing - the aching, the longing, the yearning for God that this course has awakened in me through revelation - in words, in gestures, in respect, in dignity that is revealed.

•Meditation and prayer: The final quote provides a glimpse into what Francesca prized
as the best “gift” of the research project. It was initiated, as mentioned earlier, by the presentation on the history of the kingdom of God. Francesca’s immediate response is spurred by a few words: “‘Plan of love’. I’m so glad to re-hear that there is a plan to all this and God’s plan is love!” Her actual meditation is too long to reprint in full, but its flow will be highlighted here, inasmuch as it dominates her journal (with regard to impact as well as the amount of text it comprises).

First, there is a focus on God as creator breathing life into Adam; then there is a personal awareness: “I breathe. How much does God breathe life into me?” She continues to wonder, “Is every breath I take God breathing into me?” Going back in time to recall Adam, then coming back to her existential situation she wonders about God’s presence during times of “crisis, stress, illness, pain, rejection.” From this arises the image of “Jesus, the Good Shepherd, [who] is our friend and is always with us”, followed by the conviction that God does not “want to be with us in misery” only, but that God “is a God of love”. At this point, she recognizes an opportunity: “I really should try to invite God to breathe into me more often. Perhaps everyday. Let God’s breath come into me.”

The next day Francesca’s meditation continues. Returning to her painful life situation, she muses, “Can I change it by inviting God to breathe into me where it hurts the most? Can I change my life by inviting God to breathe into me like a new creation each day?” Her reflection lingers awhile on her attitudes, “What could happen? How would it feel?”. She speculates about launching out in trust: “Do I trust God to be there for me in the good and bad—sounds like wedding vows.” From this note, that is not without humour, her meditation touches on: Christ’s life on earth and after his resurrection; the Pentecost period when “three
to five thousand people were converted in one day”; and linking the action of God at creation in breathing life into Adam with the action of the Spirit of the risen Lord causing this “new explosion on earth”. Then, and here marks the passage to prayer, Francesca wonders if she should pray that the “explosive breath of God fill [her] life.” Self-awareness — “I’m a little-lot afraid”—is followed by prayer: “May every breath I take be of God. He will fill it with the quality of air I need to sustain life.” As if her meditation has come to a moment of completion, she offers a closing editorial on the experience, expressing joy and discovery: “WOW. I sure didn’t get this idea the first time I heard the words in other courses!”

The following week, Francesca’s meditation on the revelation that “creation is ongoing”, previously quoted in full, is now expressed in graphic form, representing her own version of salvation history; this “timeline” is about what "the breathing of God looks like." Finally, many pages and months later, there comes the statement “...a conclusion!” Once again, for brevity’s sake, only two points will be noted about her conclusion to this prolonged meditative experience. The first point is that this experience does not remain within the orbit solely of her own life; instead, it concludes with a reference to children. The imagery in these few lines is evocative:

I think I’m like the 6-9 year old children. Seeds are planted and it takes a while for them to grow in us, we hear and see things, but our reactions are not completely spontaneous. It takes time for us to work things through. (It took me all summer to get to this point.) I think I’ll always honour the children’s response of silence and work better because of the process I let myself go through.

The second point is the gratuitous effect of this experience as a whole: “I did not know where it was leading me, but I felt very directed and inspired by God. I pray that with each breath I take will be an explosion creating new life in me. I am now more able to trust in God’s plan
and God's love." In these concluding words, a transformation process seems to be occurring by means of this "gift of prayer". 17

**PART II: THEMATIC B: ADULT-CHILD RELATIONS**

The journal reflections and observations relating to the particular ministerial setting—atrium—present different facets concerning the relational world of the adult participants with children. Their journals indicate five levels of relationship: I: Personal relations: experiences and insights; II: Communal relations: celebration and meditation; III: Environment of encounter: the atrium; IV: Refining the relationship: encounter shapes praxis; V: Mutuality in relationship: gifts from children.

The adult-child relations is a major thematic, thus there will be a high level of detail in treating it. For each of the five subsections, excerpts that exemplify the various levels of encounter with children will be included.

**B.I: PERSONAL RELATIONS: EXPERIENCES AND INSIGHTS**

The journals relating to the adults' observations of and reflections upon their experience of being with children in the atrium setting reveal certain characteristics. The first is that children are related to on a one-to-one basis. There is little mention of "class of children" and there are plentiful references to this or that individual child, usually by name. By way of exemplifying this element, three following excerpts from the journals of Wendy are quoted here. Note in the first that the children are individuated by name (the child will be identified simply by means of an initial):

I observed M.'s enjoyment...

J. (preparation of the cruets) observed the pouring of the water and the wine very
carefully, as thought to savour it, as though she were searching to see the moment of mingling [of the water and the wine]. She seemed very pleased...

C. [who is using the material relating to the parable of the leaven] was very pleased with his leaven—it rose so high. He dissolved the yeast thoroughly (very) in the water mixture before adding the flour. C. was also very pleased...

Today was the last session for our Atrium year, and the last session for these children in their third year... One of the children, M., gave me a card...This is my second gift from M.

These individual experiences highlight the importance of the nature of the child’s activity.¹⁸

“Work” is the term Wendy employs for the child’s activity in the atrium. Once again, the theme of joy in their work is reiterated: “The children worked very hard today, and I saw their happiness and contentment.” In the case of Domenica, similar strains come to the fore about the nature of the child’s activity as “work”, and the quality of their activity in terms of joy, as well as love and respect:¹⁹

I love to see them working so diligently but so joyfully and pensive at the same time on the Reconciliation booklet.
- love and respect -
Quiet delight with work
- anticipation - joy of being so close to the day of reception of both sacraments

The accounts above were written by persons relatively new in the catechesis. The following two accounts are by two persons who have been in this ministry for many years. This first excerpt, Eileen’s, indicates the impact of the child’s responsiveness to the relationship with God, specifically during a time of meditation together on the true vine parable: "A real sense of wanting to stay. Even J. who may not want to settle sometimes was answering very softly: ‘We know who the one who cares for the Vine is, the vinedresser.’ ‘God the Father.’

This excerpt from Kate concerns the coming together of a small group of six children who are, as she terms it, “post-Communion children”. Here they are gathering to reflect on the true vine
parable:

Presentation of the True Vine, April 25, 1995
To gr. 3 kids post-communion 6 children while gr 2 were in chapel
and we spoke about coming to know the Good Shepherd and opening up the parable;
how we came to understand that we are the sheep... - children were invited to draw their branch on the True Vine.

Insights come from the relationship with children in terms of the child’s own individual activity
in the atrium and also when the children gather in small numbers for a communal moment.
This leads to the second area for consideration in the adult-child relations, which concerns
precisely these communal relationships and in particular, moments that highlight celebration
and meditation.

B.II: COMMUNAL RELATIONS: CELEBRATION AND MEDITATION

The journal reflections on the atrium sessions with the children reflect the element not
only of personal relationships, but also relationships in community. Of course, there are
communal moments and activities happening in the atrium environment. However, there
are two aspects of this experience of being in community with children that seem to be of
paramount importance for the adult researchers. The first relates to celebrating with children,
the second relates to meditating with children. These are highlighted, with a few excerpts that
exemplify their particular aspects.

• Celebrating in community with children: In terms of celebration, Wendy writes
succinctly about the children’s retreat in which they celebrated the sacrament of reconciliation.
This she capsulizes as being a moment of great insight for her, which she describes as:
“Children do not live ‘time’ as adults do. They live in the moment, never regretting or
wondering. They move forward in life, with time, toward more time. They look forward to
each moment, as it were...” Wendy’s account speaks of the sacramental celebration of reconciliation from the perspective of a catechist experiencing this for the first time with children in the atrium.

The following excerpt by Kate, a catechist of long experience, relates to an experience of celebration that also happened during the retreat, one that seems directed by the children themselves. It is this fact, and the excitement and delight the children apparently manifest during the celebration of the Word, that most strikes Kate:

Friday p.m. May 5.
- the children received their Bibles in the a.m. with total delight
- S. [catechist] invited them to choose a favourite reading or story which they might read for our celebration of the Word in the afternoon—they all offered at least one story, some of them choosing the same story:
The Last Supper: M.J. and T. [children’s names]
The Good Shepherd: G. and A.
The Missing Sheep: J. and N.
Feeding of the Five Thousand: E. and O.
Daniel in the Lion’s Den: L.
Catching the Fish
The True Vine: A. and O.
They were very excited about reading the stories and took great delight in finding them in the Bible. Two people could not read: one of them memorized, ‘This is my body—take it, eat it.’ and ‘This is my blood—take and drink it,’ and she pretended to read the words at the appropriate time during the Last Supper account. The two girls doing the Feeding of the Five Thousand couldn’t locate it in the Bible, so they wrote the story out on a piece of paper. When I located the story for them, they asked if they could read it from their Bibles (which is what, in fact, we were doing). Was it that the Bible seemed so precious, so sacred that they wanted to make sure they were allowed to read from it?
- the children were very attentive through our celebration—which was simply an opening and closing song and all their readings with an alleluia between each...

In Kate’s account, one senses a rather meditative and absorbed quality to the children’s experience of their “celebration of the Word”.

Francesca is impressed by the child’s capacity for and enjoyment in celebration. Here she presents a synthesis of six years of directing the children’s First Eucharist and Reconciliation
retreats. She notes the impact of these moments of celebration for the children, one that lasts well beyond the retreat itself. She begins, “this was our sixth retreat for children celebrating Reconciliation and First Communion”, then she comments on this overall experience with a hint of humour about any tendency toward idealism:

In all I did not observe something different or new. There was no major revelation to me that somehow this retreat was any better than any other retreat we had done in our atrium. It is not in the individual moments and the things the children said or how they responded that confirms my belief that what we expose the children to during this retreat proves to me how important the themes we present to the children touch their lives BUT rather in their hunger before the retreat, the silence, joy and community of the retreat and the outpouring of their response long after the retreat is over [sic]. So I’m not going to give you a series of beautiful statements said by the children during the times of our presentations of the themes of the Good Shepherd and the True Vine. I will tell you that there were such profound moments of silence, peace, joy, trust, and meditation that at times it was all I could do not to burst into song, tears, laughter or spontaneous celebration.

The mention of “such profound moments of...meditation” leads to the second element that emerges with respect to the communal moments with the children, the experience of meditating with children.

*Meditating in community with children:* One journal account by Eileen indicates that communal meditation is nourishing for children: “Such quiet and full attention”; another speaks about a specific moment of meditating together with the children on the rite of reconciliation:21

Reconciliation.

There was complete silence which was noticeable in the natural excitement of the day. Eyes were direct.

The meditation spoke to them. I believe, in a personal way as this stillness continued throughout meditation.

This meditative moment also appears to have a resonance within her. The importance of the meditative moments with children in terms of nourishing the adult is also evident in the
following two excerpts.

Domenica, records two different sessions in which the children gather to meditate together on the true vine parable. Because of the significance this holds for her, these two accounts, written one week apart, are included ("C" indicating the responses of different children). One senses an eagerness in Domenica to capture the flow of this meditation since there are incomplete phrases and sentences.

Meditation - The True Vine - Communion Group

[Catechist]: Things to look at while meditating. Who does the candle remind us of?
[C]: Jesus
The Great Light

[Catechist]: What does the Shepherd [do] for his sheep?
[C]: he takes care of his sheep if has 100 sheep - one gets lost - he searches - rejoices
lays down life for his sheep

[Catechist]: Why?
[C]: he loves them

[Catechist]: How do the sheep feel?
[C]: - good and happy

[Catechist]: Who are his sheep?
[C]: - Us

[Catechist]: Jesus said, "I am the True Vine, you are the branches"
What does sap do for [your branch]?
[C]: Gives it food
helps it live

[Catechist]: Whose life could be flowing in the sap?
[C]: Ours

[Catechist]: Where does it come from?
[C]: God
Jesus would give up his life for ours
Jesus rose again
He ascended into heaven

[Catechist]: How long does Jesus's life last now?
[C]: Forever.

[Catechist]: I wonder when your bud would appear on the True Vine?
[C]: Baptism
in your mother's stomach
when you were born
[Catechist]: What happens - are you always a bud?
[C]: You open and flower and grow.
[Catechist]: What came inside the branch?
[C]: Sap.
[Catechist]: Are all the branches the same?
[C]: No.
[Catechist]: What could we do to let more sap come to your branch?
[C]: Pray
Try to follow the commandments.
Help each other
To forgive
Do extra things to help.
To meditate.
My mom meditates each morning.
To sing.

[Catechist]: How green would it be?
[C]: As green as a plant could get.

[Catechist]: Vine and branches - how are they?
[C]: Already attached.
Have to stay at a good level of sap.
[Catechist]: What does Jesus ask us to do?
[C]: To remain.

[following session - another time children gather]

[Catechist]: Jesus said, "Who am I?"...do you remember?
[C]: I am the Good Shepherd... I am the True Vine.
[Catechist]: Who [is] the vinedresser? Who takes care of plant?
[C]: God.
[Catechist]: "True" - what do you think this means?
[C]: Real. Possible.
[Catechist]: If something is true, would it change?
[C]: No.

.....

[Catechist]: What happens when sap flows through the vine?
[C]: it grows
many leaves
energy.
[Catechist]: What would branch be like if blocked, had no sap?
[C]: Unhealthy
and sick leaves might all fall off

[Catechist]: What do you think [would happen to the branch] when a person dies?
[C]: branch will still be there
branch receives new life

It is interesting to note when speaking about the dynamics of celebration and meditation with children, that it is the atrium that is the locus for these communal moments. The atrium holds an important role in facilitating encounters at many levels: the child’s encounter with God; the child’s encounter with other children and with the adult; as well as the adult’s encounter with children and with God.

B.III: ENVIRONMENT OF ENCOUNTER: THE ATRIUM

The atrium is a factor that significantly affects the adult’s relationship with children. It is more than simply a room. It serves to provide a particular atmosphere which facilitates encounter. These are some of the facets of the atrium environment.

- **Place of encounter with children:** First, there is the fact of the atrium as specifically prepared place. It is especially conducive for the child’s own activity and allows the adult a special view of the child’s quality of engagement with the message and the materials presented: “All children today engaged in work that seemed practical and highly tactile.” To this observation made by Wendy is added her image for the atrium, “our vineyard that is the atrium”, thus indicating the atrium as a place of growth and fruitfulness. Moreover, in as much as these journal reflections occurred during the specific time of retreat in preparation for the sacraments of reconciliation and Eucharist, there are frequent allusions in the journal records to the way in which the atrium has been arranged (even more especially in the light of this retreat experience). “The atrium was inviting - dimly lighted, soft music, perfuming from
beautiful flowers.” Into this environment, as described by Domenica, the children enter with pleasure, noting their “surprise in environment which has changed - noticed and smelled the white carnations - noticed the new white placemats” all of which “were pointed out to [her] by the children.”

The atrium as it is prepared—especially during the times of retreat—serves as an invitation to personal activity, as Eileen notes in this excerpt: “excitement in ‘body’ and ‘talk’, such smiles, room that was dimmed with music seemed ‘quieter’ than other room (even though music heard), children anxious to do own work.” Kate also remarked on the effect that this atmosphere has on the children: “They were quiet, in awe of the surroundings - we had decorated with a lot of plants, we’re only using candle light.” In another journal reflection during the time of retreat, Kate mentioned specifically the area of the atrium arranged as a “prayer corner”. Here she describes the children’s reactions to discovering this area of the atrium and then adds her own question to herself as well: “They all discovered the prayer corner and four of the children were actually standing in a line waiting to get a turn; how is it that this communication among the children happens so quickly?”

*Space for the adult's encounter with God:* In these excerpts we see that the atrium is both a place in the physical sense of the word but also a space that makes room for prayer. Prayer—as a symbol of the encounter with God—is something that involves not only the children but the adults as well. Wendy writes: “It is important for all of us in the Atrium to allow God’s stillness and silence to breathe within us, so it can circulate freely, and be among us, thus being with Him, who has died and risen for us.” Two other brief excerpts indicate the fact that the atrium is not simply a place, rather it represents an experience for the adult as
well. Wendy writes on two separate occasions: “I felt the Holiness of God fill our Atrium.” “In moments of humility and stillness in the Atrium, I have come to understand that many wonderful things can happen to us, as Christ gives us so much.” The fact that the atrium is more than simply a place or a space, but actually an experience for the adult as well as the children, is true not only for a relative newcomer (Wendy), but also for one who has had over ten years experience of being in an atrium, such as Eileen.

Eileen reflects on the experience of being in the atrium with the children during the time of their retreat and explains the impact of this experience on her:

- I love to share this joy and excitement.
- the need exists: To focus this joy and excitement; not subdue it.
- the need for quiet and order is important to this focus but it must be gentle and natural.
* They are truly happy to be at this point in their journey.

This final excerpt displays Eileen’s concern for facilitating the child’s need for quiet and order while not subduing their natural joy and excitement. This indicates another level operative in the adult-child relation: the adult’s refinement of the relationship with children by means of their interactions with them, and hence to shape their praxis based on their experience in ministry.

B.IV: REFINING THE RELATIONSHIP: ENCOUNTER SHAPES PRAXIS

Another important element involved in the adult-child relationship is that being with children has an effect on the way in which the catechist approaches one’s present and future ministry. This takes place on many levels.

• **Attending to children:** On a foundational level there is the openness to children. For instance, Wendy watches a child and carefully attends to his behaviour also on an attitudinal level. Seeing this, she reflects about a different way of approaching this child in the form of,
as she says, wondering: "I wonder if it would not have been better for R. to be with us 'anyway' even though he was not receiving the sacraments. He seems to have lost some fellowship with the children - or may be just tired." In this case, she is speaking about a child who is not present for three weeks in the atrium while the others are doing their specific preparation for First Reconciliation because he was too young. Upon returning, he seemed to Wendy to indicate that he had missed being with the children during this time, even though it was not yet his time for preparing for the sacraments. What is interesting here is that Wendy, on observing this behaviour, considers an alternate option for the preparation for reception of the sacraments.

*Reflection on interaction with children*: On another level, experience can teach the adult to refine one's own particular interaction with children in practical terms. Eileen shows her concern to present a parable in a way that stimulates the child's involvement in its deeper meaning:

I was very aware in the change the dialogue with the children took when actual trees and plants were being recalled. More children took part; more spoke and commented. It was also the way in which they spoke that impressed me: relaxed, enthusiastically. I see that this element can be drawn our further next time (ie) relating what we 'know' about a plant or vine and that info in relation to the words of Jesus in regard to the True Vine.

The reference there to the "next time" indicates that the future way in which she will engage children in the meditation on this parable will be changed because of this particular experience.

Also, along more generic lines, Eileen reflects in terms of the time of preparation for reconciliation and Eucharist in the atrium: "I realized today, more than any other, that we tend to move quicker, become less focused on the simplicity of the Atrium for the older child. I feel this is something to be very careful about; especially in context of the retreat." Eileen's
awareness is heightened by her attentiveness not only to the children, but also to her role with the children. The length of experience in the catechesis, and the intentionality with which one observes children, are contributory factors in refining and shaping one’s practice.

*Critical reflection on methodology:* Kate reflects on the need to translate, as it were, this catechesis more fully into the Canadian context, alluding to the “Italian counterpart” (a reference to this catechetical method as practised in Italy). She specifically addresses the applicability of some of the materials:

Another significance I feel at least to North American catechists is the incredible discrepancy between the ability to read in our children compared to their Italian counterparts; at our first communion retreat there was not one child out of 11 that would be able to read the Good Shepherd or True Vine without stumbling many times and consequently materials that would appeal to Italian children at the age of 6, 7, 8, wouldn’t necessarily interest our children...

At the same time as Kate is questioning the need to adapt the materials, there is also a level of self-awareness. The problematic could relate not only to language and literacy but the manner of the catechist’s presentation: “Perhaps the way we present it is too overwhelming, too intimidating; perhaps if we broke it up into smaller units...perhaps...”

*Experimentation with methodology:* The final examples recorded by Francesca relates to her experimentation with the evangelical maxims material. In the first, she wonders if they could not be presented to children of a younger age. Thus she experiments, recording their response of "great joy". She is also convinced that, even though they did not copy it out again, "it’s inside, planted, like a seed growing."

In the second instance, she relates experimenting with a group of grade five and older children also using the maxim materials. She combines the maxims with the History of the Kingdom of God timeline as the major source of reflection for the retreat day. She records
what she did and, more importantly, how the children responded. It is her experience with

children that has spurred this interest in experimenting with this one material, both with young

children and over ten years of age, as in this instance:

Retreat for older children. Grade 5 and up.

- presented the maxims for older children and placed them on the time line of the
History of the Kingdom of God.
- words were said - by Jesus - how do they fit into our lives today on the white page.
- meditated, explained each one and then turned them upside down, divided the group
into partners. Each set of partners picked a maxim, secretly turned it over, read it, and
then told them to take 15 minuets and act it out like a little play to see if the rest of us
could tell which maxim they were doing.

What a great time. It took an hour to do, laughs, deep thought, conversation, a great
way to enter into something and break down the barriers of a group that doesn’t meet very
often and is so peer-pressured.

Noticeable at the conclusion of this excerpt is not only what the children were given by
means of this retreat time, but also the adult. Nurturing is happening both within children and
within the adult. Implied in this is the fact that there is a mutuality in the relationships, that the
adult is not only giving to children but receiving from them as well. This is the final area to
be addressed with respect to this thematic: the element of mutuality in relationships, and what
the adult is given through the encounter with children.

B.V: MUTUALITY IN RELATIONSHIP: GIFTS FROM CHILDREN

*The theme of gift:* The references in the participants’ reflections about children are rife
in terms of what they are given to see, to understand, to experience, and even to be challenged
about. Essentially, what they are speaking about can be identified in terms of gifts. This
opening reflection by Eileen names it as such and indicates that being with children assumes
the nature of the gift in three ways: 1) simply to be there with children and to see their quality
of responsiveness; 2) this quality in turn draws her more deeply into appreciating and
experiencing the power of the parable; 3) their capacity for surrender in a relationship with God and how this in turn is a challenge to her in terms of her attitudes toward children.

This time with the children was one of gift. I had a sense that the children and the adults present were receiving each word that Jesus was giving to us, to each one of us.

The complete attention; facial, physical, conversational, spoke to me in such a way that it became even clearer to me why our Lord chose this Parable [True Vine]. It seemed to be constantly opening before me and yet enclosing each of us within. The peace remained with us as we began individual work.

We must respect and be in awe of the full attention and such quiet in people we view as rambunctious and fully sociable!

It is their need; their giving over!

**Faith, hope, and love:** Our investigation initiates with the theological gifts of faith, hope and love. But such gifts do not exclude provocative, or challenging aspects of gift. This is indicated in the following reflection by Kate on "the True Vine", which opens with a recognition of the “wavering gift of faith”. Then she probes this “precious gift of faith” in terms of her role of proclaiming the good news to children. As she probes, she attests that children “possess the gift of faith”. That the children are “gifted with faith” spurs her to prayer, specifically to pray for “more faith”. In this account, this desire for more faith is directly linked to experiencing the child’s gift of faith.

- how wonderful is the good news - that to be fruitful we need only REMAIN in the vine; that god tends to me and ensures that I have the sap, the life of the Risen Christ running through my veins... what more could I want or ask?
- it is that wavering gift of faith however that sometimes isn’t strong enough to appreciate the joy and love to be found in this good news revealed to us by Jesus.
- the revelation, the words don’t make any sense unless I possess that precious gift of faith.

So what does this say about evangelization? About proclaiming? It seems to me it would be impossible to proclaim the good news to anyone who doesn’t have the gift of faith.
- with the children (possibly with everyone) we need to proclaim the good news in its entirety, in its abundance in its fullness assuming that the children possess the gift of faith and you know I think children do have this gift. Look at how they respond to our proclamations!!

Is it simply because we are adults and somehow authority figures?
Is it because they are a ‘blank slate’ and can have anything written on them? Or are they gifted with faith and thus a need for a relationship with God, and an acceptance in joy of the truth of the good news? We need to assume they are faith-filled, I think, or we could harm the potential of their relationship. And I need to pray for more faith so I can respond or present in truth to their needs and potential and because I’m sure my life could be more FILLED, had I more faith.

Ruth is struck by a similar awareness of what the children have to give. She links hope with the learning that happens when she is with children: “I’m hopeful knowing that our work with the children, in their natural state of being, we have the opportunity of learning so much.” As to the gift of love, Domenica records this incident: “One child spent 15 minutes in the prayer room meditating while all others were working fervently on booklets. She was so calm on the kneeler, meditating on a picture above.” Then, on another journal page she returns to that incident, naming for herself what attracted her to that moment that still lingered within her:

I felt jealous almost of the child serenely meditating in the prayer room. She seemed so peaceful. I guess I felt the need for peace as well. She seemed so intense with her feelings. She also knew when it was time to leave the prayer room. So focused on the love and peace of Jesus.

The naming of the word “love” is a hint that this was the gift given to her in this moment.

*Joy:* Generally, joy is prevalent in the participants’ writing about the time with children. Just the fact of being with children seems to bring joy. Wendy writes: “The children have changed profoundly over the last three years. I am so glad I was there with them.” Or it can be a specific moment that seems to give rise to joy in the adult, as in the instance which Kate records. Kate explains that while the children were getting markers, they are having a discussion which she overhears. Evidently, the fact that she had recorded it so carefully indicates that she in turn was delighted by their joy. This is how she writes it:

‘This is so much fun.’ M.J. [child].
‘You call this fun?’ E. [child]. I believe she meant this time was very special, but fun wasn’t the right word to describe it because her father told us the next morning that she hadn’t slept all night, so anxious was she to get back to the atrium.

A. [child] - energetic but not an enthusiastic boy agreed that it was fun.

These three children are missing their ‘Fun Day’ at the school on Friday and this is the first I’ve heard about it so I presume no one minded too much.

*Wonder:* For Francesca, the experience of the closing Eucharistic liturgy for the group of children ages six to nine proves to be a “beautiful time” for her. It is principally the way the children relate to God that gives something to her personally. For her, seeing children in this way is tantamount to being aware of the coming and the presence of the Kingdom of God:

Before we stop our regular sessions for the year, we end with a mass for 6-9 year olds. It’s a very beautiful time that is prepared by the children the week before. One of the most animated and verbal moments is when they get to pick the readings for the mass. Even before we do this I know that one of the requests to be read will be the True Vine. [They say:] “yes”, first the True Vine and then other suggestions come. And so the response of the child 6-9 years old is not just immediate and kept within the retreat. The hunger is before, during, and I dare say in their relationship with the Good Shepherd, their response is so deep it has an eternal quality - now how can you measure that but in the coming of the Kingdom.

This note of wonder can also be detected in Kate’s observation. It also reveals an inherent challenge to her. She is caught by the unpredictability of children and the manner in which they put to the test our own interpretations of their actions— and this comes as a “surprise” to her:

- sometimes the body language of children can be deceiving. I think the children can’t possibly be listening and then they surprise me. J. [child] was a prime example —> she cannot sit still on a chair when we are gathered in a group; she can easily frustrate me when I’m presenting - often I will try to ignore her disruptiveness because stopping and waiting for her wouldn’t allow us to every finish a presentation —> later she might say something which reveals she heard the presentation and in fact has been meditating on it - AMAZING.

*Prayer:* Children’s capacity for prayer is very striking to the participants. The child’s way of praying appears to be a privilege to “witness”. This is exemplified in the following excerpts
of Wendy. It can be the experience of simply watching a child at the altar [the miniature altar in the atrium]:

Again I am witnessing prayer - Today, J. prepared the altar. The moment arrived when everything was placed as she wanted it to be. She opened the missal, made the sign of the cross, bowed her head, and prayed, hands joined together. She appeared both solemn and joyful, very much with God.

In this next excerpt, it is rather the awareness of the group of children as a whole that once again calls forth this sense of being a privileged witness. Here, Wendy indicates that this experience is also an invitation to enter into prayer:

I witness our atrium becoming a community. We cross over the time and space, our different ages and backgrounds, together we love and praise God. In song and discussion we are joined and transformed into praise, moving in and out of the moments of prayer and wonder.

In this final excerpt from Wendy, we get the overall sense of this experience for her and it is one that lingers beyond the boundaries of the atrium room itself:

The catechesis continues to inspire me in very creative and what I would term soulful ways. This is especially true after I have been with the children [...]. Often after my sessions with the children I will go home and listen to very soft music.

*A way of being*: In concluding this section, an excerpt is taken from Eileen’s reflection concerning the message contained in the parable of the true vine relating to “being” and “doing”. Here, Eileen highlights an important element that runs through the reflections of all the participants as a sort of generic gift given to them by children. That is, an invitation to a different way of being as adults:

‘BEING’: focus being placed on the fact that ‘being’ is very difficult in comparison to ‘doing’. But that ‘being’ (remaining) brings ‘doing’ (fruit). Children very naturally, very effortlessly enjoy and continue to Remain. As adults, we ‘do’ to legitimize ourselves, value ourselves, desire others to value us --> all by doing. Is this the fruit that glorifies the Father? To say that we need to learn this quality of being is saying that we receive a great gift from the children when we experience it.
In enumerating these gifts, one catches sight not only of the theological gifts of faith, hope and love, but one may detect aspects of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:12) as well.

**CONCLUSION**

"Welcome the word planted in you that has power." (James 1:21)

In this chapter, the experience of the participants during the primary phase of the research project has been explored. The lens through which the data has been filtered has been in terms of what the journals have said concerning the sources of nurturance, present in the experience of the adult formation seminars as well as the experience in ministry with children. Investigating the first major categories that have emerged in relation to this, namely, the divine-human relations and the adult-child relations, showed that this nurturing that is happening within the adult in the adult seminar sessions also has an empowering aspect to it. The same is true for the experience in the atrium with the children.

Part I of this chapter, examined the divine-human relations in terms of the biblical and liturgical themes as a source of encounter with God. The mediating function of the methodological elements were also highlighted, namely, the manner in which the presentation and use of the catechetical materials for children appeared to facilitate the adult’s appropriation of the theological themes. It was illustrated that, in a combined effect, the content and method led to a passage to meditation and prayer. Furthermore, all the participants’ journals record the pre-eminent position of the parable in inviting an all-embracing response, cognitive and affective.\(^{22}\)

Part II of this chapter investigated how the experience with children also serves as a source of the adult’s own formation. Various sources of nourishment in the ministry with
children were outlined: the personal interactions with children; the effect of communal encounters, especially in terms of meditative and celebratory moments; and the contribution the atrium made in relation to these encounters. It was then indicated how the adult-child relation helped to shape and refine the catechists' practice of ministry. Finally, some specific gifts which the adult received in this ministry experience were pointed out, highlighting the manner in which the adult is nurtured by children both professionally and personally.

In closing, the first two thematics explored here are schematically represented by way of summary. The first figure synthesizes the inner dynamics operative in the divine-human encounter. The second figure synthesizes the inner dynamics operative in the adult-child encounter.
Figure I: Thematic A: Divine-Human Relations

- Encounter with God
  - Generative Themes (CONTENT)
    - Biblical Sources
    - Liturgical Sources
  - Mediated and Facilitated by Mode of Presentation (METHOD)
  - Leading to Meditation and Passage to Prayer (NATURE OF MATERIALS)
Figure II is the author’s graphic representation of Domenica’s insight, voiced at the conclusion of the research (January 1996). At that time, Domenica proffered an apt image with which to depict the dynamics of nurturance and empowerment, that is, an inclusive “cycle” of relationships: “It’s a kind of cycle. It reinforces us when we see that spark [in the children], or when we see that drive; it brings us closer and then we do something better. It’s just a cycle. You touch me, I touch you, and we’re touching God together.”

Figure II: Thematic B: Adult-Child Relations
Cycle of Relationships: Mutually Nourishing

"YOU touch me"

"We’re touching GOD together"

"I touch you"
1. As will be seen in this chapter, the affective nature of response is not restricted to parables. See endnote #22 for further reference to parables in the GSC.

2. For a psycho-spiritual treatment of the importance of images/imagery in nourishing the inner life, especially of women, Helen Luke's work, Women: Earth and Spirit. The Feminine in Symbol and Myth has been instructive, particularly Chapter One, "The Life of the Spirit in Women".

3. In excerpting the participants' journals an attempt has been made—as indicated here—to reproduce the author's emphasis, etc. While this results in some peculiarities (e.g., brackets, arrows, sentence structure, capitalization), it also conveys something of the personal style of their handwritten accounts.

4. This incident, of such significance to Domenica, is elaborated in Part II of Chapter 7. It also suggested the song motif mentioned in Chapter 1, and woven through subsequent chapters. The "joy" Domenica associates with this song recalls this line: "A song is a thing of joy and, if we think carefully about it, a thing of love" (St. Augustine, Sermon 34, 1-3 in Liturgy of the Hours, p. 537).

5. To assist comprehensibility in reading these accounts relating to the seminars (CP), brief mention will be made of the theme to which the participant is referring, where necessary. As a general guide to this chapter, see Appendix G. Here Mary refers to the maxims: single sayings of Jesus in the Gospel are written on individual wooden tablets for the children's use (see Appendix T).

6. See Appendix W: the "Unity of the History of the Kingdom of God" timeline material. Sofia Cavalletti's latest book II potenziale religioso tra i 6 e i 12 anni (henceforward referred to simply as II potenziale), develops this theme in detail (although this work is not yet translated into English). Some of Cavalletti's articles relating to this theme are: "Religious Formation in Later Childhood" (GSC Newsletter, 1984); "Social Justice: A Question of Relationships" (GSC Newsletter, 1987); as well as the article referred to in Appendix W.

7. Francesca develops this in Chapter 8, Part III. See also Chapter 6, Illustration 1, which is linked to her unfolding prayer experience.

8. In the seminar on the Eucharistic rite, the core themes were presented as they are to children: each element is individualized (e.g., the moment of epiclesis) and presented in terms of its liturgical gesture/movement as well as its accompanying prayer.
9. See Appendix V, which gives Cavalletti's presentation of the "Mystery of Faith". This refers to the booklet that contains brief explanations, accompanied by three illustrations (image of Christ dead, risen, and in glory) upon which this presentation is based.

10. Eileen is referring here to Rev. Dalmazio Mongillo's reflections on "Moral Formation and Reconciliation". Mongillo, a professor of moral theology at the Angelicum, was invited to offer these reflections during the first International Conference of the GSC (October 19, 1993), which I presented during a seminar.

11. See Appendix U. The "Synthesis of the Mass" is the title of a presentation given to children, which recapitulates previous Eucharistic themes already offered to them. The materials for this consist of models of the sacred vessels (e.g., paten, chalice) and cards for the various gestures (symbol of hands in various positions to represent the epiclesis, offering, exchange of peace, for example) and prayers (e.g., "Amen"). Accompanying these are other cards that assist in the child's use of this material (these are included in Appendix U, a chart by Joe Tanel, a colleague in this work).

12. Wendy is referring here to a text by Sofia Cavelletti, presently named Living Liturgy: Elementary Reflections. This was given in draft form as the resource text for the seminars (a translation of Corso di Liturgia).

13. For a discussion of the presentation of a biblical theme, see Joyful Journey, p. 45. The presentation of liturgical themes has been treated in numerous ways, such as Cavalletti's early work "The 'Maria Montessori' School of Religion" (The Child in the Church, pp. 124-132) through to Il potenziale (1996). Robert Piercey writes about the "fusion of liturgy and catechesis" that he finds in the GSC, in "The Religious Potential of the Child: The Awe and Wonder of Ritualized Catechesis" (see pp. 1-2, The Catechist's Connection, Dec. 1994).

14. Domenica refers here to a synthesis of the various presentations of the true vine parable to children. It is offered during the weeks preceding the celebration of the sacraments, in a series of meditative moments (i.e. proximate preparation).

15. Behind this discussion is the theme and presentation of the parable of the leaven (given to younger children). It is accompanied by a material/activity that involves actually mixing flour with and without yeast (this is referred to later in Wendy's account in Section B.1).


17. Sofia Cavelletti uses the image of "breathing" or respiration as a symbol for the dynamic present in the liturgy. For example, see Il potenziale, p. 165.

18. The importance of the child's activity in Montessori's vision (and hence the GSC too) cannot be overestimated, and it has been noted in various ways over the years. For example:

19. In this excerpt (and others), reference is made to a "reconciliation booklet". This is one of the children’s activities associated with the preparation for First Reconciliation. It is based on a material that outlines the various moments, gestures, and prayers of the rite itself, which is presented close to the time of celebrating the sacrament (immediate preparation).

20. That is, the atrium is the locus for the community of children, and their catechists. For an in-depth reflection relative to this, see Betsy Puntel’s article: "Atrium"--The 'Where’ of Catechesis" (*Living Light*, Summer 1990).

21. Mention must be made to the meditative quality inherent in the approaches of Montessori and Cavalletti both. It is the meditative aspect of Montessori’s pedagogical approach that Cavalletti repeatedly refers to, and as early as the 1950s ("Catechesi e metodo Montessori") and the 1960s (e.g., *Teaching Doctrine and Liturgy*, p. 50). For an appreciation of this element, see Barry Miller’s article "The Contemplative Potential of the Child" (*PACE*, Dec. 1993): "Cavalletti has consistently held to the contemplative principle behind Montessori’s work, with an accent on calm, absorption, and prayerfulness’ (p. 19).

CHAPTER 6

REFLECTING ON THE EXPERIENCE: COMMUNION, COMMUNITY, MINISTRY.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter continues the treatment of the thematics of the first phase of the pastoral experience (April-June) when seen through the lens of the research focus. The study explored what empowers the adult to nurture the older child’s religious potential, and if children are a nurturing influence in the adult’s spiritual life. As in the first two, the five thematics addressed here reveal the dynamic of mutuality undergirding the various relationships. Therefore, this chapter continues the exploration of the sources of nurturance and means of empowerment as they configured in the study. It also marks a transition point, in which the material collected in the journals (seminar and atrium) will be supplemented with data from the group reflection day (September 1995).

This chapter will point out how adults are assisted in accompanying children on their spiritual journey in a mutually formative way, according to the five following sections: I) through the relationship with oneself (adult-self relations), and II) others (adult-adult relations); III) through specific aspects of the research process that enable them to be reflective in their practice (adult-research relations); IV) by means of the way they are formed through this catechesis in a generic sense (adult-GSC relations); and IV) in particular through the formation
programme (adult-Certificate Programme relations). The specifics in each of these categories are detailed in Table I.

In addition, by looking at these thematics with a wide-angle lens, as it were, to see what they reveal about the adult’s spiritual life as a whole, another dynamic comes into relief: the movement from communion (with God, children and self), to community (with the other adults in the process), into mission (ministry with children). Or, to change metaphors, the manner in which the research unfolded is akin to a musical composition that develops organically across its different movements.

The academic and ministry components of the research represent the first musical movement. These thematics and dynamics are present, with certain strains attaining greater nuancing across the subsequent phases. Hence some of these will be addressed in the following two chapters. Nonetheless, since this trifold dimension is already discernible at this point in the study, it will be highlighted schematically here as a prelude to presenting the remaining five thematics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>relationship and encounter</th>
<th>relationship and encounter</th>
<th>relation to and experience of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• with God</td>
<td>• with other adults</td>
<td>• research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• with children</td>
<td></td>
<td>• GSC Catechesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• and self</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Certificate Programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \text{as communion} \rightarrow \text{as community} \rightarrow \text{as ministry} \]

"communion creates community"\(^2\) \quad "community leads to mission"\(^3\) \quad "true mission is giving but also receiving from those to whom we are sent"\(^4\)
DETAIL: MAJOR THEMATICS: CATEGORIES C, D, E, F, G

Table 1*

Focus: Reflection on Dimensions Operative in the Research Experience

Optic: Three Movements: Communion, Community, and Ministry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C. ADULT-SELF RELATIONS</th>
<th>D. ADULT-ADULT RELATIONS</th>
<th>E. ADULT-RESEARCH RELATIONS</th>
<th>F. ADULT-GOOD SHEPHERD CATECHESIS RELATIONS</th>
<th>G. ADULT-CP RELATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>--&gt; (Communion)---&gt;</td>
<td>(Community)---&gt;</td>
<td>(Ministry)---&gt;</td>
<td>(Ministry)---&gt;</td>
<td>(Ministry)---&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existential Level</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Profiles: The adult as reflective practitioner</td>
<td>Adults as Catechist-in-ministry:</td>
<td>Adult as Catechist-Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Image/Identity level</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>Journey</td>
<td>CP Process:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith Level</td>
<td>Shared Faith</td>
<td>Francesca</td>
<td>Call</td>
<td>Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministerial Level</td>
<td>Shared Praxis</td>
<td>Eileen</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Formation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Germinal in Phase I, investigated further in Phases II and III.
PART I: THEMATIC C: ADULT-SELF RELATIONS

The levels at which the adult is engaged, both in the course as well as the atrium experience, have already been intimated in the previous sections. Mention was made in terms of the adult’s encounter with God and with children and the ways that these provide nourishment and empowerment for the adult. Here, four dimensions will therefore be briefly enumerated in terms of the participants’ connection to and awareness of the various levels of personal interaction with one’s own self. This involvement, which may be termed communion, appears to have an all-embracing quality. All aspects of one’s life are included in the experience: the existential level, the level of self-identity and self-image, the faith level and the ministerial level.

*Existential Level:

An example that indicates the multidimensional engagement of the adult is the account by Kate. In this reflection, she is attending to why she does not have further pages of reflections on the children’s sessions. One major cause she describes as her “physical reality”. This relates to her life-situation as wife and mother—her existential (“physical”) reality:

The physical reality: I teach the 6-8 class immediately after school. It means I drop A. [daughter] (4 years old) at a friend’s house on the way to the Atrium. J. [son] (12 years old) brings a house key with him on the days that I am at the Atrium so that he can let himself and P. [son] (8) and D. [son] (6) in and look after them until I get home. I leave frozen pizza pockets for them to heat up in the microwave because they’re usually starving when they get home from school. Naturally as soon as the Atrium class is over, I’m rushing out of the door and home to check on the kids. Our class is from 4:00 - 5:30 [pm].
Francesca’s accounts exemplify the attention to one’s existential situation and the way that it impinges on one’s self-identity or self-image. In the first excerpt, written in relation to the seminar on Reconciliation, Francesca struggles with a line said then: “There is someone who loves you”. This made her aware of her difficult family situation. Francesca reflects: “Could it be true?” in the face of the personal challenges in her life: her son, her loneliness as a result of a marital separation, the worry of her parents, and her financial problems. Then she questions again, “And you say, ‘there is someone who loves me’?” Recalling her own relationship with God, she concludes:

Yeah, I know there is someone who loves me, now, today, tomorrow and it’s God. I’m really grateful. I know he knows my needs. I feel like I’m waiting in a darkness yet I’m happy and I’m not really lonely since the Good Shepherd is here and has already done so much, I just tend to forget sometimes so it’s really good to hear it again, ‘there is someone who loves you’!”

In a subsequent reflection on the parable of the true vine, Francesca expresses in rather descriptive language her own self-image. It spans a lifetime: from “a two-year old”, to “a teenager now about to grow up”, into future time as “an old lady”:

I really heard the word REMAIN. I want to run, I want to be free. I want to ‘do it by myself’. I’m like a 2-year old. I want to be independent and do it by myself. [...] I feel like a teenager now about to grow up. I remain because I resign myself to my mortality and all my mediocre abilities. I’ll go along for the ride. I’ll wait, remain and stay. [...] Now I feel like an old lady, a little fragile, broken and resigned to this life. It’s not so bad counting on God to produce the sap and tend the vines. I like the attention, the care. O.K. so we all make up a team. This life is a team effort, I guess. Ya, OK, I’ll remain, I’m in good company.
• **Faith Level:**

The manner in which the adult participant attends to her own self-image, as it is influenced by faith, is exemplified by Domenica. In her journal, Domenica’s identity is connected to her relationship with God:

We are reminded that God, our Father, continually loves us and holds us in high esteem. Perhaps if more people felt their importance to God, they would act differently. I know I need to be reminded often so that I can grow and change to become a better person, a person of service, but with dignity. Too many people feel downtrodden by society. And the response is not a positive one.

Steeping herself in the biblical message is a significant way for Domenica to deepen her faith:

I find I, as an adult, need time, much time to internalize and really feel the revelation happening. As an educator, I know that some children need more time than others to internalize, so coming back to the parable after a period of time could be more fruitful and the children will be ready to receive more information or enjoy more and more the revelation of the Good News.

Those closing words of Domenica’s reflection also show the connection between one’s own faith life and ministerial life.

• **Ministerial Level:**

The relationship between the adult’s concrete life-situation and her ministry is exemplified in excerpts from journal passages by Wendy. Using imagery that denotes the ambiguities of one’s existential condition, Wendy reflects:

However in our human form, we may not always be fully able to understand what is happening within our souls, where the curtains are drawn, and shadows of day to day living hide inner reflection (especially for someone like me, who always feels that I am running against the clock to get things done).
Across time, this seems to germinate within her. During another period of reflection she writes, “I feel within me the building of my ministry, my work to do in God’s name, and my love for all of this deepen.” Later, she recalls the experience of ministry and writes, “Sometimes after leaving the Atrium... I think about the children at the Atrium. I want this world we live in to be a better place, especially for them.” This leads to a consideration of how these different levels of self-awareness are further facilitated by the experience of learning in community.

**PART II: THEMATIC D: ADULT-ADULT RELATIONS**

Various aspects in the seminar journals indicate the effect of community, i.e., the presence of other adults in this formal learning experience. In this section, four different aspects will be highlighted briefly about the importance of community for appropriating theological learning and the importance of communication about one’s faith and ministry experience. Because the thematic of the adult-adult relationship will be revisited in the next chapter, here it will be sufficient simply to identify the four different aspects of community as experienced in the CP.

**Dialogue:** The most common effect of learning in community is the way that dialogue enriches and enlivens the learning experience. In Francesca’s words: “I enjoyed the adult moments of discussion. It helps to reshape it and keep it alive.” The discussions can stimulate profound personal reflection. During one evening in which the history of the kingdom of God material was presented, the discussion that ensued triggered Kate’s reflection about “transformation”: 
...the way in which we have transformed our environment is truly phenomenal and our transformations are continually progressing, developing and growing. Each invention or transformation is usually built on the ones proceeding it. In other words, I don’t think I personally could use natural elements to produce fire and yet I use fire all the time to transform other things. The people inventing computer chips might not be able to create a simple motor out of the natural environment and yet the environment that they grew up in provides them with the resources to go even further into the unknown. We creatures truly are fascinating.

And why did God do this?
Why were we made this way?

**Collaboration:** A second aspect of community relates to the manner in which the presence of others -- as collaborative learners -- influences the learning experience. Ruth writes: “I really appreciate to hear other people’s ideas - stretches my brain - and excites me.” Ruth also notes that there is a particular quality to this collaboration: “I have no particular comment, except [I] always appreciate the graciousness and commitment of Francesca. Graciousness in welcoming us, and obvious commitment in her work and sharing her experience.”

**Shared faith:** This quality of mutual presence among the participants, and the way in which others approach to the biblical message in the seminars, have impressed Domenica. She has underscored, in three different excerpts, the importance of community, identifying significant aspects in this communal learning experience. The first is linked to Ruth’s impression, just stated: “Perhaps the respect and high regard that is given to those who are ready to receive the message is what attracts me to this course.” This shared commitment to faith and ministry generates a bond between Domenica and others in the formation experience: “I loved the participation in the synthesis of the Mass and the closeness we all feel to each other as we experience the Monday night moments together.”
This bond supersedes what could be termed simply a learning experience among co-learners. It actually deepens into what Domenica indicates as an experience of shared prayer:

This made me reflect on the wonderful feeling, the focusing and wonderful prayerfulness of our group. This is the way we should always feel during Mass - our hearts should feel so full of honest love for God and closeness to each other. Is this not what the Good Shepherd wishes for all of us, all the time? During our class, there is such a tone of respect for each other along with a yearning to hear, learn and understand more and more. Can I say - happy expectation. Yes, this is what I feel.

*Shared praxis:* Yet another aspect of learning in community is illustrated by Eileen’s reflection in which community can be seen both as challenge as well as gift. The discussion during one seminar elicits what Eileen calls reflection of a “practical” nature:

A practical reflection came to me as well. We each have different experiences with the children we are involved with. This shapes our ‘sharing’ with other catechists. Indeed our way with children, people in general, is very individual and I suppose we must embrace this reality.

The importance of individual differences among the catechists is also noted: “In particular ways individual differences can be very ‘effective’.”

A final aspect of community is addressed in a global way in the following excerpt by Wendy. It highlights the significance of the gifts of others in community, and specifically as called together and sustained by the Holy Spirit:

We all bring our own hearts and we place them on the table. As at a party, we offer gifts. No gift is greater than the next, they are all the same. We are unified in the spirit of our sharing, like the Holy Spirit—he gives us these gifts, and no one is greater than the other. They are all the same, all great. These gifts, they come in all shapes and sizes, but all are great. I imagine all of us (catechists) sometimes as we sit around the table. Our hands are raised, open. We sit in silence and joy.
We wait for each other’s words; we listen for them, we hear each other, in words and silence. Calmness, with a current running through, seems to be the approach of this work.

These four aspects manifest the essential importance of community, both in facilitating communion with God and with self, and in light of its influence on one’s ministry. Thus, the discussion of the movement from community to ministry, which this category represents, now turns briefly to consider the adult in the overall context of ministry. This begins with the adult’s relation to the research process itself, that is, the adult as a reflective practitioner.

**PART III: THEMATIC E: ADULT-RESEARCH RELATIONS: ADULT AS REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER**

All the excerpts to this point are the fruit of simple and not too time-consuming instruments, namely journal reflections during the seminar (course) and ministry (atrium). In this section, it is sufficient simply to indicate the manner in which such elemental instruments can spark deep levels of appropriation of the theoretical learning with ministry experience and vice versa. In all cases, there is marked individuality in the manner of engaging in these activities. In one case, it spurs creativity. In another, it can be problematic. This will be illustrated with profiles in abbreviated form of the seven participants as reflective practitioners.

**PROFILES**

*Wendy:* Wendy’s response to the reflection and observation activities represents the movement mentioned earlier: communion (with God, children, self and others) into ministry. Wendy found the journal activity to be a welcome one. She begins one reflection,
written before the seminar, with this statement: “An opportunity to reflect on the events taking place in the Atrium and to write about them. When I reflect I feel more connected to my work, to my call, to this service.” Here the connection with ministry is explicit. Wendy’s unique use of the reflection experience is indicated in this excerpt that she titles, “Reflections on the Call of the Catechesis”.

This reflection actually occurred between our initial gathering as a research group (April 17, 1995) and our first seminar the following Monday (April 24, 1995). Dated April 22, Wendy writes her lengthy reflection, only brief parts of which will be included:

When one works with the children in this way, one understands and sees very early on that it is different from any other working of religious education; without ‘knowing’ all of the presentations, as of course when one begins one cannot possibly know. There is a certain gentleness with which my commitment to this work has built. In so many other types of work, there are comparisons drawn, between people, institutions... there are leaders and mentors even. The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd has been and continues to be an affirming human restorative for me. There is no competition, no judgement....

Similarly, she is appreciative of the value of observing the children in the atrium: “It is important to observe the silence, to hear it, just as it is important to listen to the sounds of water being poured, pages turning, children colouring very eagerly, especially when it is something new.” For Wendy, all of the senses are engaged in the experience of observation; not only the sight, but also the sounds of the children at work in the atrium are noted.

**Francesca:** It is apparent that the invitation to reflection was an appealing one for Francesca. Her journal shows unusual creativity. It has already been mentioned that her reflection activity was not limited to the boundaries of the research project proper (April
to June). In her case it continued into September, spanning several pages, some of which include original drawings of the nature and movement of her meditation as it occurred over the summer period. One of these (see Illustration 1 at the end of this section) is her own personal timeline which has the heading, “What does the breathing look like?”. This is in reference to the breathing-prayer which was the greatest gift for Francesca personally in the research experience.

**Eileen:** Eileen is long acquainted with the experience both of reflection and of observation. For instance, her journal relating to the children has equal number of pages for reflections as for observations. Interestingly, Eileen indicates her familiarity with the discipline and art of observing children in as much as she includes her own miniature version of a drawing that was brought to her during one of the atrium sessions by a child. This is an example of how creative, as well as effective, the simple journal technique can be in relation to one’s ministry with children (see Illustration 2).

**Domenica:** The impact of reflection and observation for Domenica, both in terms of the formation and ministry experience, is exemplified by her presentation during one seminar relating to an experience that happened to her as a high school teacher. In her ESL class, the students were given an assignment to write a story. In this case, the grade nine student chose to write about the "lost sheep" (Luke 15). This seeming coincidence was significant to Domenica. We see her reflectiveness, as well as the depth to which she has interiorized the parable in this excerpt. Domenica prefaces her reflection with the reason why she “brought in the story of the Good Shepherd which a fourteen year old Arabic student (grade nine) from [high school] retold in her E.S.L. class”: 
I think I was touched by the fact that the student was told to write about a childhood story, to practice (retelling and writing in English), of all the stories and tall tales etc., she chose to retell the story of the Good Shepherd.

When she retold the story she highlighted the determination and strong love that the Good Shepherd had for his lost sheep and how he wouldn’t stop looking for it. She also highlighted the feast, the joy, the celebration when the sheep was found.

Z. must have felt the warmth of this parable strongly to have chosen it to retell. She illustrated it wonderfully and wrote it in Arabic as well.

It reaffirmed in me what I’ve always believed, that is, that ‘teenagers’ are not a bunch of spoiled rotten brats that only think of themselves. They have so much love in them and such a sense of justice. They are very meditative, perhaps that’s why they question so many social issues.

Another point is the universality of God’s love and how the world is unified by the love of the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd brings so much light and love into all of our lives.

Mary: Mary’s approach to reflection will be indicated by presenting unexcerpted pages from her ministry journal. It illustrates the participants’ own preferred style. Mary has alternately observed children and reflected upon them throughout her first experience of the children’s retreat. Further, the reader is able to follow the experience through “first-time” eyes (see Illustration 3).

Kate: Kate found the journal technique, especially the invitation to reflect on what happened in ministry with children, to be problematic. Here, Kate’s explanation as to “why I can’t do the reflections on the children” is developed. Now it is “the spiritual reality”, as opposed to the "physical reality" mentioned earlier. Paradoxically, in explaining why she is unable to reflect, Kate presents a wonderful reflection. In subsequent phases of the research, she will develop this theme. Kate explains her “spiritual reality”:

While I have an analytical mind, I am not as in touch with my feelings. I might be able to tell you what my total experience over nine years in the catechesis has said to me but to analyze what 1 ½ hours in the work has said to me... I’m afraid I just draw blanks.
If and when I force myself to come up with something in these situations (and if I push myself hard enough or dig deep enough I can), I don’t trust what I have to say. In other words I feel as if I’ve concocted something in my imagination because it sounds so good as opposed to it being truth. Which doesn’t mean it isn’t the truth, but it doesn’t feel like me. Confusing? Probably and I could go on and on but I’m sure it would just get more confusing.

What is evident is Kate’s self-awareness in terms of the difficulty she experiences in being “in touch with [her] feelings”. There is another challenge, contained in the invitation to reflection, to which she alludes in the words: “If I push myself hard enough or dig deep enough I can.” The reference to the demand involved in this exercise of attentiveness brought the question of conversion to the fore.

**Ruth:** Ruth is clearly a reflective person. Rather than returning her journal at the end of June, she waited until the end of the summer, obviously taking great care in her approach to it. But a question was raised in terms of the absence of her ministry reflections on children. While Ruth has included references to children in her seminar (CP) journal, this lack suggested that her preferred mode might not be the written form. Instead, this remark indicated another preference: “We have a meeting Friday with the three catechists that worked on the retreat to share ideas, experiences, up-downs for future planning.” As well as indicating the significance of the personal approach to adult learning, the lack of written records of her observations on children posed further questions about the difficulty in undertaking ministerial reflections. Could this indicate something of a conversion process inherent in this activity for these participants? This subject is addressed in the next section.
Illustration 1: Francesca's Journal: "What does this breathing look like?"
Illustration 2: Eileen's Journal: Children's Session

CHILDREN'S SESSION: REFLECTIONS

DATE: Monday 6.1

Take ten minutes to make a note to yourself of what this time with the children has said to you.

- Children so comfortable in their work
- Happy
- Child showing me her work:
  The World a more beautiful
  if free - Animals
  People etc.
  - Same child beautiful picture
  of Mystery of Faith
  - Pictured Jesus at Parousia
  - 0 * in white gown "Because
  in the time of Jesus only
  the rich people could
  have one that colour, but
  here he does"

- Children working on long "work"
  (e) Basket of Good Shepherd=7 pages
  of writing"
  The time flew today!
ILLUSTRATION 3: MARY’S JOURNAL: CHILDREN’S RETREAT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBSERVATIONS</th>
<th>REFLECTIONS</th>
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| **First Evening of Retreat**  
May 4, 1995 | **Thursday Evening Retreat**  
May 5, 1995 |
| N. (a child once overheard to say, “I like the Atrium because I get to go to the bakery for a muffin every Wednesday.”) has been called by name. (Tonight they are to wait at the top of stairs to be greeted, shown to their own table decorated with a candle in a silver tray and a small vase of fresh flowers and their own folder with their name in gold letters. Each child is shown their table, their candle is lit and they are guided to a seat in the prayer corner.) Back to N., he is shining with excitement, “How did you know my favourite colour is green?” (His candle is dark green.) It is so clear he feels the specialness we have tried to create.  
My daughter A. on the way home says, “I’m so glad I’m not going to the zoo tomorrow.” (She will be missing a field trip to come on Friday and has been angry about this at times in the past week.) I said, “Well, I’m still sorry you weren’t able to do both.” A., “No, I’m glad I’m not going, being at the Atrium is so much better.”  
For their folders, all chose Reconciliation except two brothers sitting at opposite ends of the atrium. Each chose Penance and one child chose confession. | The behaviour was good, the children were making an effort, or I should say, the few who often have trouble being still and quiet are trying more than usual. They do sense the specialness we want them to feel. It is also the first time our two groups have joined together. There is an element of shyness present, too, but at least half already know at least part of the other group, and they feel already like “one group”. |
| **Friday Retreat**  
May 5, 1995 | **Friday Retreat**  
May 5, 1995 |
| The day began with a continuation of the journals for reconciliation. The children tended to be quick in their responses. This group is still struggling with reading and writing except for a few. During the time to choose a maxim they definitely agreed how difficult some of them were — especially “love your enemies” — which was chosen by several.  
I watched the children as they received their Bibles from our lay minister — some were very nervous at being singled out, others less so. About half said thank-you and half did not. There was universal joy in attempting to look up verses.  
They were quick with favourite verses and ideas for liturgy of the word — the planning went quickly. In fact, reading the Bible verses was what they liked — they were not excited about reading the prayers they had written. They (many of the group) were disappointed that it was the prayers and not the readings that were to be repeated on Saturday. (I know — we should have been flexible.) | “Love your enemies” was the maxim that many of the children felt they needed help with.  
The children were eager to use their Bibles.  
For the meditation on the individual reconciliation, the children seemed attentive but did not ask a single question. |
<table>
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<th><strong>OBSERVATIONS</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Friday Retreat</strong></td>
<td><strong>REFLECTIONS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>May 5, 1995 (continued)</strong></td>
<td><strong>May 5, 1995 (continued)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| After lunch there was the meditation on reconciliation. We went to the chapel together — the children were quiet. When we showed them where to kneel after reconciliation, a couple of children rolled on the floor. The rest were quiet. Then we went back up to the atrium to prepare for the liturgy of the word to be held in the space behind the altar. The children had all chosen a couple of verses to read — working in pairs of groups of three. Their selections were the Last Supper, the True Vine, the Good Shepherd, the feeding of the 5,000 and one more. They all read their verses, then they all said the prayer they had written. They were happy about the scripture; about the prayers, many were uncomfortable and shy.  
In the writing of the prayers, it was the same. (The writing of the prayers was in the morning as part of the planning of the Liturgy of the Word.) For a couple, it was spontaneous, but for the most it did not flow easily. There was a lot of "I don't know what to say" from several. |
**OBSERVATIONS**

**Saturday Retreat**  
**May 6, 1995**

The day began with the children preparing their candles. Then all go to the chapel, where Father B. says a few words; he is a calming influence on the children. Then S. [catechist] read the meditation (for immediate preparation). They seemed restless. I wondered what percent of it they were really hearing. Then the children went back up to the atrium to be called one by one. My role was to approach each child in turn, so they would be ready when E. [another catechist] came to walk them down. Only one child took a wooden maxim and the paper they had written. The rest preferred to not take anything — knowing what they wanted to say.

They did seem happy when they came back to the atrium from reconciliation. They were supposed to record the experience in their journals on return but only a few did. Most did not want to.

Next was the practice for Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning (yes, it was more a practice than a meditation). (There was a wedding schedule — so we had lunch at 1:00 in order to use the church.) The time from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. was difficult for the children. They were hungry in spite of having had a snack. And some had trouble remembering what we had just gone over.

During this time we also had the practice taste of the bread and wine. There were lots of faces made over the bread and the wine.

After lunch it was almost time for the celebration — which went smoothly. There was just an introduction to the symbols — no other reflection. There were several last minute changes to the participants presenting the candles and gowns — but none seemed to upset the children.

The children processed out singing, “We are Children of the Light”. They went up into the atrium and stood facing down in a line with their candles as the song ended. They were the children of the light and most of the parents had tears in their eyes.

**REFLECTIONS**

**Saturday Retreat**  
**May 6, 1995**

We seem to have been successful in the attitude we conveyed about Reconciliation because the children seemed ready to go. I was worried that some may be hesitant about going (especially my own daughter who is quite shy and had her own mother there to play off) but none were.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>OBSERVATIONS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Retreat</td>
<td>Sunday Morning Retreat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 7, 1995</td>
<td>May 7, 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children are so happy. As they arrive they</td>
<td>The children are so happy and excited. I do not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>put on their white gowns and sit in the prayer</td>
<td>feel that this is anti-climactic. In fact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>corner. We have a brief meditation. The</td>
<td>everything seems to come together at this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moment is finally here to be especially close to</td>
<td>moment, to have more meaning. The</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Good Shepherd — the children hold their</td>
<td>movements of anticipation, as they wait,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>breath...&quot;And what is your branch of the True</td>
<td>their candles lighted, are so beautiful. It</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vine like today?&quot;— &quot;green, very green...&quot;. Then</td>
<td>is very possible to believe that the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they line up with candles to wait a few minutes</td>
<td>preparation is part of the celebration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before lining up downstairs. They are well</td>
<td>Retreat General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>behaved and go up to receive communion in lovely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>order. Still a few &quot;faces&quot; and a couple of</td>
<td>This is my first retreat, so it has been an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children chose not to take the wine.</td>
<td>incredible experience. It has made me feel that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After, there is picture taking upstairs. The</td>
<td>all the atrium experiences have added</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parents come up and see the &quot;prayer place&quot; and</td>
<td>significance — to see them actually culminate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the special work tables. The children take</td>
<td>in the joy of the sacraments and the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>everything home, their flowers are wrapped up.</td>
<td>excitement of the new experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My daughter also carefully wraps her candles in</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>paper. &quot;A., we should be going downstairs.&quot; &quot;You</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tell me to never rush in the atrium.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<th>OBSERVATIONS</th>
<th>REFLECTIONS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday Atrium</td>
<td>Regular Wednesday Session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 10, 1995</td>
<td>May 10, 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is the last regular meeting for part of the</td>
<td>This is the final class of the year (except for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retreat Group.</td>
<td>the closing mass). Three days after the retreat,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a great contrast in moods today. Two</td>
<td>the moods are so different. For some it is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>girls in particular seem in a spiritually</td>
<td>obvious they are now carrying something new, that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heightened state — I can sense that the retreat is</td>
<td>this experience has changed them in a way that is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>still strongly an influence. One, M.J., is</td>
<td>still openly evident. For others, it is not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>joyous; the other, O., has a radiant glow. On the</td>
<td>obvious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other hand, T., who often has trouble settling</td>
<td>The children are shy about speaking their own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>down and being serious, is at his worst.</td>
<td>prayers for others to hear. (Next year I would</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children are planning prayers they will say</td>
<td>like to put more emphasis on prayer.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at the closing mass.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I ask if anyone would like to suggest a prayer</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>response. O. suggests, &quot;Jesus you are our</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shepherd.&quot; T.'s prayer is &quot;Thank you for the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fun.&quot; The moods of the children are so diverse</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>— some are still very close to the retreat, the</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>experience of the sacraments; for others, the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experience is not &quot;visible&quot; today. T. is restless,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cannot sit still. O. is shining like an angel.</td>
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PART IV: THEMATIC F: ADULT-GSC RELATIONS: ADULT AS CATECHIST IN MINISTRY

We have already noted the adult’s identity as catechist. We have also noted the adult’s identity in terms of a specific approach—the Good Shepherd Catechesis. This section addresses the nature of the catechist’s involvement in terms of a journey. Then, the principal aspects of this journey will be highlighted, namely, that it represents a call and a demanding commitment. Finally, the excerpts will touch upon the aspect of conversion: the experience of a particular call within a call.

•The Journey: “The frustration in it not being an easy journey.” With these words, Ruth states what is a common motif in all the journal writings. It is a journey, with its attendant demands. It is a journey primarily of relationships, hence the word “relations” in each of these categories. This is a commonality running through all the participants’ journals. For instance, Domenica describes the journey: “the peace, the love, the longing for relationship - the dignity, the respect, is sought and found in this catechesis.” Integral to this journey is the involvement with children in ministry. Such an involvement with children is experienced basically as liberation, as Wendy says: “In this work, I am truly freed.”

•Call and Commitment: Chapter two highlighted the aspect of call and commitment that emerged through this study.

•Costly Commitment: This catechesis is extremely demanding. Ruth, in her habitually succinct manner, sums it up in a sentence: “I’m so exhausted tonight. I have no mind/hand co-ordination to take notes.” One reason for this is the fact that the participants,
as well as being involved in the weekly CP seminar are also preparing for and participating in the retreat experience with the children. This requires a particular commitment. The retreat appears as a most privileged moment in the life of the children and of the catechist. But it also calls forth an unusual commitment in terms of time, energy and dedication.

Francesca reflects:

Perhaps that’s why it takes so much energy to do a first communion retreat. The children have been charged up for years, fed on essential materials and then now they have arrived. It’s as if they’ve been given and have responded back and forth over the years that now at this moment they are really ready to just take a deep breath, trusting that we’ll lead them through the process and can enjoy the journey...

...We are their servants. No wonder we’re exhausted afterwards. We do everything - anything we can think of to make each moment an opportunity to feel loved and special (perhaps even spoiled for a few days). The response of the children is always the same. They love it. But not just at retreat time but it seems to last forever. Even our oldest children, now in Grade 8 at school are in awesome joy when they talk about their first communion.

...It is as if the older child knows a secret, knows a joy. It’s almost as if it was the night before Christmas...

Such a demand, especially during the time of retreat, is also clear in Mary’s journal, in which she dialogues with the author as well as herself: “What stands out is your comment that celebrating with the children is like the maxims — in the striving we are increased (yet obviously it is difficult to do everything right).” This is not merely a concern with doing “everything right”, but also a statement of how much is asked of the catechist. As Kate illustrates: “So much is asked of the catechist in this catechesis but at the same time it is gift. The inspiration to reflect further, the need to reflect further cause me to reflect further!!”
•Opening to Conversion: A subtle but persistent strain could be heard that relates to the fact that this journey is sustained by commitment, no matter how costly. It is a journey toward conversion. There is a sense of it opening onto an horizon which draws forth from them a willingness, or in some case a desire, to enter more deeply into the call. Glimmers of this are caught in Francesca's journal about the children's retreat. The cost of commitment is evident. So too are the openness to surrender and echoes of expectancy that this brings new life, or in her words, contains a "promise":

First Communion Retreat completed. We're 'done', finished this part, exhausted yet energized, exhilarated. I gave every thing I had. I left no ounce of energy for myself. I did all I could do. I'm happy about that. I really get lost in the work. It becomes so focused so single-hearted. I lost myself in this retreat. It was life total surrender. The promise is I will find myself. I hope so.

Conversion here is in its literal sense--turning toward. It can also be glimpsed that it is a turning toward another, and perhaps more explicitly, turning toward God, the one who fulfils the promise.

This openness to conversion appears to contain within it an invitation that involves both a letting go and a letting come. In Wendy's words: "I am learning to let go of the desire to know and understand. I am discovering my desire to experience mystery. As much as he [Christ] has given us. I find it exciting to know that there will be more." This call to an interior change, taken both professionally (as a catechist) and personally (on the level of attitude) is articulated by Ruth: "Also more challenged in my own life to 'stretch' and also as a catechist to live with the 'Word'; then I come to the reality that I am a 'doer' by nature, and would love to 'just be'."
The concern with “doing” versus “being” is not particular to Ruth alone. It is present in many participants’ reflections on the manner in which the GSC calls them forth to a different way of being. It is expressed with different colourations. For Eileen, it is the call to trust: "I realize it is all a matter of trust. We must step back and trust the children to make, create, celebrate. I have seen the wonderful results when we relinquish and role of director and become facilitator. Dignity is communicated though unspoken." Further, this relinquishment of a certain kind of attitude vis-à-vis the child is in order to better nurture the child’s own relationship with God. Eileen says: “We must trust the child and the Holy Spirit working within the child. We must allow time and space for this relationship; it is why we are there.” In a similar vein, this invitation to empower children by a greater giving over of freedom to them is manifest in the reflection of Mary at the completion of the retreat: "After just finishing our retreat - the comments on retreat made a clear impact. We were not free enough in letting the children plan celebration during our retreat... I could see how we had not entered into that whole process... However, next year I think it will be different."

Conversion is a continuous process. It has a future dimension to it. And it is a process in which the Holy Spirit plays a key role. Kate illustrates this in describing a moment during the retreat when she and five children had gathered together to go over the readings for the celebration:

They [children] wanted to keep reading over and over and over because they wanted to be able to say it well (proclaim it). I was very impressed with their desire and willingness to work at it without a suggestion from me. It says so much about knowing when to let go, knowing when to trust the children and trusting the Spirit. After all, it’s God’s work, not mine. (And
God will love me just as much even if it ‘flops’ (according to me); but will I be able to love myself as much??).”

Finally it appears that being a catechist with children can represent a call to change. Entering upon an ongoing formation process is an opportunity to hear and to catch hold of the stirring within oneself of a call to deeper growth. Listening to the true vine parable, the word “remain” lingers within Domenica: “To experience the joy of relationship with God and others we must feel the peace (Christ’s peace) in our hearts, knowing, really knowing that it’s where it’s meant to be. Remain.” There is an invitation heard in these words, which Domenica expresses this way:

I’m wondering what kind of an effort am I really making to go to Mass more often than once or twice a week. After most of our classes, I feel a great anticipation to be closer to God. Perhaps it’s the words, the inspirations, the meditations or a combination but I want to feel more joy in being in relationship with God. I want to become a little more perfect or strive to achieve closer to the goal of being perfect for me—being a little bit of a better person.

The reference to the “course” in Domenica’s reflection leads to a final thematic running throughout the journals. It is the relationship of the participant to this ongoing CP itself. For each of them, a significant aspect of their ministry is the fact that each has committed to further training. But what is this “course” for them? This pastoral research has provided glimpses of a multi-levelled experience, one which has an aperture toward hidden regions within the individuals themselves.
PART V: THEMATIC G: ADULT-CERTIFICATE PROGRAMME RELATIONS: ADULT AS CATECHIST IN FORMATION

The thematic relating to the adult’s relation to the Certificate Programme is one that will be dealt with again. However, here we will address the fact that within the CP another movement emerged: information, formation, transformation. Now it envisaged not horizontally—as a movement forward from call to commitment, toward conversion—but rather vertically (downward).

There is a deepening movement occurring during the eight weeks that the participants recorded their reflections. It is a movement toward interiority, an inward-directed movement; it is informational, certainly, but more importantly, formational and even transformational. Francesca’s comment is quite revealing: “Too busy, too much information. What about the first moment of falling in love?” Her comment reveals an expectation that demands to be taken seriously. It served as a stimulus to remain open to comments of a similar nature from the other participants.  

Some profiles: The CP as information, formation and transformation

In order to illustrate the manner in which this trifold dimension—information, formation, transformation—is present within the experience of the participants, a few of the co-researchers will be singled out. It will be done with little commentary since this dimension will be dealt with as one of the major contributions of the study in the next chapter.

**Ruth:** For her the CP is informative: “The thought that remains in my mind is the impressionistic idea that ‘engaging the imagination we stimulate religious sense of
awe.” And of course, there is an expectation that it be informative: “I had a sense of relief that the possibility was there to present it [material] in 3 moments. Also delighted that J. was able to put together a package, because in September when we get back to the Atrium, some of the minor points may need to be reminded.” Ruth is also appreciative of the handouts relating to the children’s retreats: “The package on ‘Retreats’. It looks great. I’m almost sad that we have to wait one year before we are involved in another Retreat.” However, there is the insistence that this be more than an informative experience: “I’m again frustrated by the speed of things being presented, as I need more time to feel the moment.”

“Feeling the moment” is an indicator of the need for time to interiorize the learning: “I felt more relaxed after tonight’s presentation and class. Not as rushed and I don’t feel like I missed anything and have to go home and piece it together.” While Ruth experiences the need for practical training, she also needs space and time to incorporate this learning. “Since the true vine was first presented,” Ruth notes in her reflection, “I’ve been very anxious to get every word, as I had to present it to the First Communion children on several occasions. Now that the retreat is finished, this is the first night I can enter into the moment...” The reason for and the significance of “entering into the moment” is reiterated in another reflection: “The first time I heard the presentation of the Good Shepherd, I was in great awe - and recall the feeling frequently when preparing for presentations or reliving the moment of love that Jesus has for us.” “Reliving the moment of love that Jesus has for us” contain hints relating to a transforming process within Ruth.
Mary: A similar movement can be gleaned from the journals of Mary. She speaks about qualities that open her to the transcendent: “The beauty and truth of the presentation of the material never fails to make me happy.” Further, she writes elsewhere: “The significance of a few words, of what is said and in what order—the profoundness of this—that the small can be so great—the subtle so powerful, this touched me tonight.” Again, she refers to learning the presentation of the true vine in terms of a light for her path in future ministry: “The sequence, or outline, of the true vine helped to put that long flow into focus—to give emphasis to each side of the mystery in turn. There is always so much more—I feel so rich after each of these classes—the way is being lighted.” In this final excerpt, Mary intimates a growing experience, specifically in relation to the eucharistic gestures of offering, breaking of bread, and peace: “The gift that comes down; is given back up; and then the gift that spreads. I thought I knew enough about the Mass but it is becoming so much more.”

Wendy: She indicates that the CP is more than simply an academic experience: “In the atrium, and here [Teefy Hall], we find that the theme is always the same. There is a way to be simple and clear. There is a way to ‘be’ and peace, as we are transferring/sharing God’s love (message and meaning, Jesus’) to the children and each other, with our hands, our ears, our voice.” The same strain of that being/doing melody can be heard here. In this second reflection, Wendy uses an image to symbolize the formation-transformation dynamic happening: “The Catechesis is an open door, always saying welcome to those who enter: shalom; peace. You have a place here. I hear this
always when I sit with other catechists; the voice of love and welcoming, as we look beyond what is seen and search for what is unseen, to the greater life.”

**Domenica:** She appreciates qualities in the CP that are not typically associated with adult learning. Three excerpts, each a sentence long, are sufficient to indicate this experience of learning as informative and formative, as well as potentially transformative:

This course and class inspire me to get closer to our Father so that I may feel the peace and joy of Christ in me.
- This time in the course gives me time to meditate and gives me new avenues via the catechesis to experience God’s undying love for us.
  - Listening to these seminars helps me to love as Jesus loves - ‘to be’
  - this is the attraction
  - this is the reception
  - inspiration happens at these seminars

**Kate:** In closing this section, two excerpts by Kate will be offered. The first is from her seminar (CP) journal, where she is reflecting in a generic way on the "message and the materials" presented. It contains the recognition of what the CP demands from the catechist. Then it moves to another dimension, towards transformation:

It feels like so much preparation is required in order to pass these wonderful treasures on to the children in the right way. Certainly it can’t be that the message, the truth is vulnerable, yet it seems that we could damage the message, or damage the child’s perception or understanding of it, if we are not fully prepared. And how to be fully prepared?? Besides, of course all the knowledge that is impacted through the classes and written materials, we need to internalize the message. That can only happen through our own prayer, study and reflection.

Kate has put her finger on an important issue: that learning—considered as informative and formative—cannot be contained within the walls of the university, nor within the walls of the atrium. What is important to point out here is her final word: “reflection”.
The second excerpt is taken from Kate's comments during the group evaluative discussion (January 1996). Looking back across many months, Kate offers a summary of the CP experience (April-June). She also identifies a key factor in the process: the dynamic of attentiveness. There is an invitation not only to learn (CP and atrium) but also the challenge to reflect deeply on the experience. The role of reflection is highlighted here:

When I think of a course, I think of something fairly academic—you go and you 'learn'. That journaling made such a difference. In fact, the work that we're doing is not just something 'academic'. It's much more than that. It involves our spirituality and who we are, and what we offer the children. In a sense it is a very important element, and that the journaling does allow us to attend to our own personal spirituality and our deeper self. It's not just 'learning'—this is what you do and how you do it, this is the theory behind it, and this is the way it works. But it involves us very personally and that is very important. It's so much more than just an 'academic' course.

This quote marks the passage to the next chapter in which the research experience is evaluated as a whole.

**CONCLUSION**

The first section in this chapter addressed the levels at which the pastoral experience (seminar and atrium) penetrated the participants, touching the existential, faith and ministerial aspects of their lives. This adult-self thematic is the transitional category, inasmuch as the self is at the core of all the phases and components of the research. Then there was an investigation of the participant's relationship with other adults, specifically in the CP (seminars). This emerged as a principal thematic: the importance of community in collaborative learning, in the deepening of one's faith, and
in an enlivening of one’s praxis. The research process had a cumulative effect. Since the role of community becomes more defined in the subsequent phases of the study, the communal aspect will be addressed again in the final chapter. Nonetheless, we have already emphasized that communion with God, self and children is enhanced when shared in community: as co-learners in formation, as sojourners on a faith-journey, and as co-catechists in ministry.

The next finding was then treated: the adult as reflective practitioner. Examples were given as to the unique and creative way the group engaged in the spiritual practice of attentiveness. These representative samples illustrated that the reflection and observation activities were sources of nourishment, both in terms of the theoretical learning (CP), as well as the experiential learning (atrium). Since the attentiveness exercises represent a major contribution for the participants, they will be further treated in the next chapter, particularly in terms of empowerment for ministry.

The final thematics, the adult’s relation with the GSC generally, and the formation process specifically, were viewed in terms of the movement from communion, to community, into mission. The forward moving direction, detected in the dynamics of the call, commitment and cost inherent in the GSC, is summarized in Figure I, which employs some of the participants’ words (in italics).
Figure I. Dimension: Forward Moving Direction: GSC Journey as a Whole

GSC journey comprising CP (academic) and atrium (ministry) experience.

```
Source
of
Movement
(comprises)
Direction
“closer to”

“open door”

call
commitment
“letting go”

“letting come
to
“mystery”

forward moving
opening
growth
conversion
```

The dimension of interiority discerned in considering the Certificate Programme is illustrated in Figure II on the next page (the participants’ words are in italics).
Figure II. Dimension: Deepening Direction: Formation Process (Certificate Programme)

CP formation process, and as influenced by presence of children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Formation (CP) Process as:</th>
<th>Direction (of Movement)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(of Movement)</td>
<td>information: &quot;course&quot; &quot;class&quot; &quot;teaching&quot; &quot;learning&quot;</td>
<td>appropriation of theory/theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>biblical and liturgical</td>
<td></td>
<td>reflection on ministerial experience (praxis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(content)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>presentation</td>
<td>formation: &quot;touched me deeply&quot; &quot;way being lighted&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and use of materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(method)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deepens into</td>
<td>transformation: &quot;personal spirituality&quot; &quot;our deeper self&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>potential for transformative process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this instance, there was a downward movement through three levels: informative, formative and transformative. The impact of biblical and liturgical sources are noted, as is the experience with children, to indicate the contributory elements combining to facilitate this interiorization effect.
The third figure highlights the dynamics in the pastoral experience, thus indicating the factors that contribute to making the formation process a potentially transformative experience for catechists. First, there is the dynamic of attentiveness, seen as reflection and observation. Inherent in these is the call to growth and conversion. Second, there is the dynamic of community, particularly with respect to the intentional sharing of one’s faith and ministry journey.

**Figure III: Dynamics Operative: Formation -- Transformation**

Dynamics involved in preparing adults for ministry with children.

- **Dynamics of Attentiveness**
  - as reflection (God, self, children, other adults)
  - [growth as conversion]
  - as observations (children: “a different way of looking at children”)

- **Dynamics of Community:** intentional faith - and praxis sharing

This third figure also represents some of the major contributions of the study in light of the participants' evaluation of the research. One of these contributions is encapsulated in a comment by Eileen: “It’s about a different way of looking at children.” This statement is a departure point for the discussion of the understanding that came forth from the study, which is the subject of the next chapter.
ENDNOTES

1. Henri Nouwen, in *With Burning Hearts*, speaks of this sequence in the spiritual life, p. 87.

2. Ibid., p. 75.

3. Ibid., p. 76.

4. Ibid., p. 89

5. The depth of insight here recalls a central point repeated by Scott Peck in *Further Reading Along the Road Less Travelled*: "We all have this unrealistic sense of our unimportance, of our unlovliness and undesirability...So, I repeat, there is nothing that holds us back more from mental health, from health as a society, and from God than the sense we all have of our own unimportance..." p. 98.

6. Domenica made this connection between hearing the "Good News" with the ramifications it would have for children. This echoes Peck's conviction: "Let us prepare ourselves...And let us, as best we can, go out into the world to teach others how important they are..." Ibid., p. 99.

7. In the research process as a whole, one of the discoveries was to realize the need on the part of the participants for more intentional sharing than on the level addressed in the course. This will be more fully explored in the next chapter.

8. It is in the subsequent phases that the discovery happens concerning the degree in which these basic dynamics of attentiveness contributed to their integration of theory and praxis. This is examined in the next chapter.

9. Thus it came as a surprise to hear (during Phase Two), that Ruth had taken days off in the summer to reflect on her notes. Her account of this experience indicated a positive retreat-like time for her.

10. It was in Phases Two and Three that I realized the degree to which these dynamics of reflection and observation represent the call to and the experience of conversion. See the next chapter for a detailed treatment of this theme.

11. See Grant, Thompson, and Clarke, *From Image to Likeness*, pp. 195-6: "The process of letting go--and of letting come..."
12. Francesca's critical comment alerted me early to this theme (before the group phases, in September 1995 and in January 1996).

13. "J" refers to Joe Tanel, our colleague, who presented the "Synthesis of Mass", and related handouts to the CP group.

14. Ruth is referring to resources relating to the celebration of the sacramental retreat which I handed out. One example is Cavalletti's article "O Taste and See That the Lord is Good" (GSC Newsletter, 1994).
CHAPTER 7

EVALUATING THE EXPERIENCE: SOME CONTRIBUTIONS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will address some of the contributions of the study both for the participants and the author. The following three sections will attend to the effect of the research on the participants in terms of their personal and professional lives, as well as look at some practical ramifications for ministry with children. Each part of this chapter has a four-fold structure: 1) an introduction to the theme; 2) a narrative section, employing excerpts from the participants; 3) implications relating to the preceding sections; and 4) a brief summation.

Part I looks at the significance of the study with respect to the personal growth of the participants and in their relationships with one another. This led to an understanding about the integration that the process effected in them, and thus to consider the implications the research holds for future formation programmes (CP).

Part II addresses the contribution that came from an understanding of the formation process (CP) in light of the role and dynamic of attentiveness, specifically the activity of reflection. Reference will be made to the stories each of the participants related about the CP, followed by a consideration of some theoretical and practical implications contained in their accounts.
Part III addresses the contribution in terms of understanding the ministry experience of the participants, specifically in light of the role and dynamic of observation as an attentiveness activity. Reference will be made to the participants' evaluative comments concerning the atrium sessions, followed by a consideration of the theoretical and pastoral implications contained in therein.

**PART I: SEASONS OF GROWTH**

Brother Ignatius acted as facilitator for, and offered the orientation to our reflection day (September). Before getting into their personal comments on the research experience as a whole, there was an unexpected occurrence that signalled growth of the group qua group and therefore also of the individuals themselves. Spontaneously a round of discussion erupted on the part of all the participants as to the process itself. What was significant about this brief opening round of comments was the way in which it indicated the difference from their first meeting as a research group (April). This inaugural moment highlighted not only the importance of community, mentioned earlier, but also made apparent the signs of growth as individuals and as a group. Some of these signs signalling this growth were seen especially in the qualities listed below.

- **The quality of dialogue.** The group, perhaps due to the self-consciousness of being taped, initiated a lively and honest series of comments that differed markedly from the general flow of the first meeting in April. For instance, then Ruth was reticent, speaking very few words. Now she was forthcoming and direct. Another example of the growth as a group was evidenced by the fact that there was also much humour at this point. The recording of this
exchange is punctuated with bursts of laughter, following lighthearted self-descriptions such as Ruth’s "old-timer's" disease.

**The quality of listening.** The quality of their listening to one another during this, and all the following exchanges, was intense. Apparent as this was at the time, it was more notable in transcribing the audio tape. There is at least a full minute of silence between the personal reflections of the participants. As well, in this opening exchange, there were constant references to the importance and nature of listening. "Respect", "reverence", "non-judgmental" were some of these qualifiers. As the day progressed, these listening silences revealed both a new level of personal ease among the group members, and a noticeable level of reflectiveness within the individuals themselves. Such was the degree of this reflective presence that Brother Ignatius commented that they had indeed gone to the deepest level of reflection, the one hoped to be reached only by the end of the day. Further, according to Brother Ignatius, there seemed to have been a "movement" within the group members:

My sense is about this interim time [between June and today] is that they have changed in some way by this experience. I was particularly touched by Wendy’s speaking about "observation" as "witnessing". I felt there has already been that "deepening moment"...I believe I was able to feel that this experience for them moved them, moved them in their own faith journey. That’s what I experienced from them.

**The quality of shared faith and praxis.** While this will be addressed specifically in the concluding chapter, it is sufficient to say here that the preceding qualities served as the foundation for this level of intercommunication of one's faith and ministerial journey. In sum, this group gathering was rich in personal self-revelations, giving a window into the growth occurring within the seven participants over the last months. Not only did this dialogic phase indicate a change in the level of communication, but this phase also served as a springboard
to the present and future shared faith and praxis. However, it is timely, before proceeding to address these aspects, to return to the initial round of responses and to consider their implications in the context of adult development, as well as linking it to the final evaluative meeting (January 1996).

Implications: Transformative Learning in Adult Education

The eruption in response to the suggested format (see Appendix M) could perhaps be viewed as a negative finding, to use research terminology. However, their candour revealed some measure of transformative learning, seen in the context of adult development per se. (The theological interpretation of this growth is addressed in the following sections and in the beginning of the next chapter.) Second, though it was but a brief exchange, representing little time with respect to the day as a whole, it provided important, immediate and long-term learning for the author. Third, it both indicated and initiated the significant contributions contained in the formal evaluative component of the research (January 1996).

In specifying some of the implications relating to adult learning in general, Jack Mezirow’s work Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning will be alluded to, insofar as it represents the transformation theory in adult education and development.

- The development of reflective, critical thinking. This dynamic indicates a basic life-sign in adult learning and is an indicator of the health of this group. Indeed, not only is this a welcome sign, but it also represents a discovery about the group itself. For instance, at the outset, one of the risks in setting about this study was that, in my role, I "could be seen as an authority". This concern was heightened in reading this note by Mezirow:
The transformation process and rational dialogue in groups will be hindered if group members possess an unquestioning, "organic" loyalty to the group rather than a "contractual" or provisional loyalty or if members indulge in "group-think" in order to protect a leader from conflict or to present an appearance of unanimity.\textsuperscript{8}

In fact, in consulting about writing a participant evaluation form,\textsuperscript{9} consideration was given to allowing for anonymity in responding to it. This was the case particularly with respect to questions relating to my role as instructor and facilitator.\textsuperscript{10}

Instead, this intense moment of critical reflection highlighted the need for adult learners to draw on their own experience as a primary authority, and source to be appealed to in assessing their learning.\textsuperscript{11} This was indicated by such examples as Mary's suggestion concerning "circles" in children's groups; Wendy's comment concerning the twelve-step spirituality; Ruth's preference to be given time to offer a balanced and thoughtful response; and Domenica's response that writing a journal was more meaningful to her than simply talking in a spontaneous manner.

*The multi-levelled nature of reflection: content, process and premise reflection.* Mezirow states that reflection is integral to adult learning in the transformative sense, as a process of "critically assessing the content, process, or premise(s) of our efforts to interpret and give meaning to an experience."\textsuperscript{12} In the following sections this will also be addressed in a theological key. Here, however, the latter aspect—process reflection—comes into clear relief in reading their comments. What was happening in this initial round was the participants' desire to shape the process themselves. But if this kind of critical reflection was apparent now (September), it was more pronounced later during the evaluative meeting (January 1996), thus meriting mention here.
Instances of learning provided by the group's assessment of the study as a whole are numerous. For this reason all their comments contained therein are included. Only a few practical examples are given, namely those arising from the group discussion based on the evaluation form (January). They point out the central role that dialogue plays in adult development and learning generally: "We give meaning to experience in large part by participating in dialogue with others". This became clear by the fact that many suggestions concerning the CP were not expressed on the written form, but rather through the "effective participation in the reflective dialogue" during this final group gathering. The importance the dialogic dimension is further instanced by Domenica's insistence on what she terms "bonding", and to which she is not alone in ascribing value:

For the first time together in course, make it one long day, like a Saturday, so that first of all you can bond. Have some activities where you do bond, do a bit of theology, some presentations... You want people to feel comfortable with each other, to become close to each other. That has a lot to do with this experience, like the prayer has really brought us together, powerful [in course]. Start off with the bonding in community and go from there.

As will be mentioned later, obviously "a program designed to encourage communicative learning, therefore, should have as its goal the establishment of the ideal conditions for rational discourse and adult learning." But in the case of formation for ministry the need for community is more crucial still.

However, the process and premise reflection of the evaluative meeting reached a decidedly concrete and challenging level. Due to the highly specified nature of their points, it is sufficient simply to give a few examples, in schematized form.

1) Concerning the manner of presenting the children's materials (concretizing the biblical and liturgical themes), suggestions for a future course included:
Kate: I prefer the presentation [of material] to be done first, then go to talk about the theology, methodology and pedagogy behind it, because there is something so pure and special about that moment. Then you’re experiencing it, whereas the other way you’re already analytical about it maybe. You enjoy it—for that first moment of enjoyment.

Francesca: That’s the way we do it with children. We let them see the presentation first—that first moment.

2) Concerning the manner of approaching the writing and use of the catechists’s album or handbook:

Kate: When I know we’re getting album pages or information, I’m able to enter into the presentation totally. I know there’s pressure [not to give out copies of these] but I find it so liberating when it is, so I can just be there, enter into it, enjoy it. I don’t have to worry about taking it all down so that when we go to present it, we’ll have something.

Mary: Have us focus on the direct aim. Encourage us to develop the things we need to do to write our own album page. If you hand out the album page, have us think it through first. We don’t want it all in front of us, so we never have had to think it out. But encourage us to think it out for ourselves before we received the [resources and album page]. If you have a group [of children] you’re presenting for, that’s the most important thing to be thinking to yourself. What is the purpose of this? What is the essential?

3) Concerning the advisability of encouraging future catechists-in-training to practise presenting the materials in the context of the CP, Kate recommends that they:

work up their own presentations and album page to give [to be checked], then to be given to the group because time is so limited in the course. I don’t see participants presenting [during] in the course [seminar] as essential. Maybe the ’ideal’, if we had another year. But it’s more important [to take that time] to cover all the 6-9 presentations, so if we give them to children we have everything available to us. If we had the time, great. If not, it happens when you do it with the children.20

4) Finally, in reference to long-term implications coming from the dialogic evaluation, Francesca addresses the question of future instructors for the CP:

This is really long range... If you’re going to give another course and people want to come forward to teach, there has to be a really concrete plan. This was the first
[second-level course]. We were walking our way through it as we were doing it, but it was too vague for me to see my way through. There [must be] a programme, plan—these are the dates and these are the presentations. That [might] destroy the rhythm with the children and you tried to accommodate us in that way. But the reality is, there is a lot of things that didn’t get done. Do the programme, complete it, then evaluate it afterwards. There will be a sense of completeness.

In summation, the growth discernible in the participants also constitutes an invitation to probe the import of their comments with regard to future CP initiatives. Also, their comments have provided the author with the opportunity to explore the new perspectives contained in them. In Mezirow’s words, "Meaning perspectives and schemes can be transformed through a reflective assessment and critique of the presuppositions upon which they are based."\(^{21}\)

**PART II: UNDERSTANDING THE FORMATION PROCESS (CP): THE DYNAMIC OF REFLECTION**

*Listen to me; pay attention (Is. 49:1)*

Following the opening round of discussion, the group began to attend to the first reflective question proffered by Brother Ignatius: "I invite you now to reflect on this time period of the last few months since you finished your journal. What has been your experience: new awareness, joys, frustrations, surprises?"\(^{22}\) In response, each spoke in turn about the research process as a whole, in the form of a personal story that revealed the integration that had happened within them.

Their stories revolved around two basic points. The first was the experience of the seminar (CP), specifically in terms of the new activity introduced as the research component of the CP: the practice of reflection. The second was the ministry experience with children,
specifically in terms of the activity accentuated by the research component: observing children in the atrium.

Overall, these personal stories represented an epilogue to the research proper (April-June). They contain a reflection on their reflections (seminar) and an observation about their observations of the children (atrium). Listening at a later date to the tape recording of their stories gave the impression of hearing variations on a musical theme. These stories summarize the research experience with regards to its two orbits: the academic (CP) and the ministry (atrium) components, with emphasis given to the dynamics at work in these orbits.

In this section, the CP will be isolated, and treated by drawing on the participants’ words. Then some implications will be examined, especially with regard to the underlying thematic in their accounts: reflection.

In the final section, the ministry experience will be isolated and treated, once again, by drawing on the accounts of the participants. Each excerpt will be followed by an examination of key implications it contains, particularly with regard to the principal thematic: observation.

Eileen: "It goes through to my formation with the children". Eileen, 11 years in the catechesis and the only one involved as a co-instructor in the CP, emphasized in her earlier reflections (Chapter 5) the need for children to receive the biblical and liturgical themes in a measured manner. Using the image of water falling on the ground, she stressed the necessity for adequate time in order for the message to be absorbed by the children. However, in her account, Eileen, a busy mother of three children and awaiting the birth of her fourth, conveys the importance of the adult’s need for time to be receptive to the Word. To return to her former
image in the light of her following words, one thinks of the biblical image of the seed (Isaiah 55:10-11) that requires a receptive soil for it to take root and fructify:

When we did take that few minutes after the lecture, after our time as adults together, I found that very valuable. Because I find that I'm "there", and then I'm gone out of there. I think it's really permeated, and it's gone in. I really did value those reflection times...I think it really was a good exercise, that I never would do myself. It's very little time, but...there usually was one particular thing that I would hang on to. It might not have been something that the group hung on to at all. Obviously, as an adult, it benefits me, but it goes through to my formation then with the children. That was to me valuable. I enjoyed that.

• Francesca: "It was that moment of falling in love again." Francesca, 10 years in the catechesis, is the only one of the co-researchers to have received the training (in the United States) at the level of older children (6-9). However, because of the opportunity to dwell on the theological themes, especially creation, Francesca has been able to reflect on her relationship with God. Recall her reference (Chapter 5) to the conviction that presenting the Christian message to children is like planting seeds, that she believes will grow inside them over time. This appears the case for the adult too, because Francesca experienced a germination time which influenced her own sense of self-identity and became fruitful in the gift of prayer:

I think for me too, I've taken the course before in the States. So I allowed myself to go into it in another way, in a deeper way, but more than just doing it to take it back to the six to nine-year olds [children], but doing it for me. So it was more of a personal journey...I enjoyed taking the fifteen minutes afterwards and writing down some things because what would happen was, in the class, I would be struck by something...a line, or a few words and it hit me where I was in my life, and I would be gone! It was like every time you came down [to the seminar] you knew you were going to get a gift...You couldn't predict it, you couldn't plan it and you couldn't set it up. [For example] something about creation, and it would just be exactly what I needed to hear for that time, and I would put a little star beside it. Then, sometime the next day, I would write out pages or I'd think about it, and I found that to be good.
That was very much like hearing about the catechesis for the first time. It was that moment of falling in love again, just hearing about it again; it was hearing some new things, and the same things just going deeper, and that was very comforting.

I didn’t hand in my journal on time...I allowed myself the time over the summer to go back over those notes and what was in my mind, because tending to keep things in your head is very hard, and it’s freeing again when you put it down on paper. I’m starting to develop a prayer...The prayer became really a way to get through things.24

Kate: "I think it’s a very important part of me." Kate, nine years in the catechesis, and mother of four children, highlights the need for meditative moments. This need arises not only for herself in terms of her familial commitments,25 but also in relation to her role in ministry.

I found the time after the lecture as well to be very, very fruitful. It allowed me to in some way be a bit meditative, reflective, something that I often yearn to do, but am not very good at making the time to do. Having that chunk [of time] there really helped that. I think it’s a very important part for me, partly because this is the kind of thing that in a sense we are encouraging the children to enter into, and to be meditative and contemplative in the atrium. If I can’t do that myself, it’s pretty hard to imagine that I could be able to create an atmosphere that would encourage that in the children.

We find intimations of Kate’s desire to become more contemplative in her catechetical practice. To be able to accompany and nourish children on their spiritual journey, one must be nurtured oneself, especially by means of time to stop and reflect.26

Ruth: "It was a very personal journey." Ruth has been associated with the catechesis for five years. Since her formal training (1991-92), she has been actively involved in leading groups of older children, including the sacramental retreat. Juggling professional (as a nurse), and personal demands (as a mother of two adopted boys), as well as directing the atrium groups during the most intense period of sacramental preparation, leaves little time for a deeply felt need. She again refers to herself as a "doer".27 Obviously Ruth feels keenly the tension arising from the many demands in her life and the value of quiet and meditation.
For me, coming to the course at night was quite stressful, especially at the time that we started the [research] group, and we were taking notes, and trying to focus in. It was at a time, too, when we were preparing for the First Communion [retreat]...and I was very anxious about that. So in a way, being asked to focus in on something really important in the group was a gift. Because after taking all these crazy notes and reading every word, I had that time after just to sit back and say, "What was important?" and forcing [myself] to be quiet, and focusing in was very important. I was very late handing in my notes, and that turned out to be a gift, too. Because I had a lot of notes written, but they didn't have a lot of continuity at times. So in the summer I spent two or three days looking at the points I had made, sometimes knowing what I had meant, and sometimes not knowing, and going back to the notes and just spending a lot of meditative quiet time in going over it. And it really was a very positive experience, it was a very personal journey...things that maybe I hadn't heard, because I'm such a doer, writing down every single note. Sitting back and reading these carefully written notes at another time, I was able to experience it, and that was a very positive thing for me.

Ruth's words bring to mind the call of the Second Vatican Council for the laity to be like leaven in the world. However, Ruth's account indicates the importance of the means and time to let the leaven work within, in order to be truly fruitful in one's ministry.

Mary: "Something small...but very significant." Mary, also very active in her family and professional life, is without the luxury of much free time, especially since she too is involved in the sacramental retreat with children. Thus she mentions the tiredness she feels. It is all the more striking, therefore, that the exercise of becoming attentive to what she had heard in the seminars was viewed as significant by Mary:

I found [the process] very beneficial...I know how important it is that we try to reflect, and obviously observation is the key to the whole catechesis. And yet I know both of these are things that I hadn't really focused on...I found I was really tired at that time [of the course] but it was worth the effort [i.e. journaling]. And I found, too, that each evening I'd try to be thinking, to focus on that one thing that really hit me. And sometimes it would be something very small, but for that moment it was very, very significant. All the kinds of journaling were really good, because it really helped me to become a better observer. The same thing—if you make notes, evaluating how the class went, it helps you to remember better for the next time all the different things [one took note of re the children].
Important also in this account is the reference to remembering. One senses that what is remembered had deep meaning for her. In hearing these words, the mustard seed parable is evoked. Like that seed, so very small, the biblical and liturgical themes appear to have great power as they are recalled.

-Domenica: "Remembering, with joy." Domenica’s pressing teaching and family activities, in addition to her atrium involvement, means she arrived tired to the CP. Thus her recall of what was a moment of revelation during the seminar is striking. In synthesizing the experience as a whole, Domenica singles out the moment mentioned earlier (Chapter 5) when she links together, on a profoundly affective level, the true vine parable with the experience of listening to her daughter sing "Vieni Gesu". Domenica sees the connection between listening to the biblical theme and its association with children. She felt the connection between the moment of nurturing by means of hearing God’s word (seminar), with a similar moment of being nurtured by hearing her daughter’s song:

I really liked the idea of journaling because, when I went back after [seven] months and read my reflection I went, "Wow! Did I write that?" "I was amazed how deep it really was. Then reading it again I felt that joy, remembering. Then I went back to my [journal] notes; that’s how I got back into it again [night before Phase III meeting day]. And then I called my kids over, because one reflection reminded me of a song my daughter had been singing in Italian, and so I called both of my daughters over and said, "Can you sing me that song again?" [It was] "Come Lord Jesus, Remain in Me." My daughter was preparing for First Holy Communion at her school and obviously her Italian teacher had taught them. I didn’t know the words, but she had sung it for an hour in the van one day when we were going to see my parents in Guelph...So I called them last night and said, "Come and sing me that song again." So it’s like recalling, remembering, with joy again, when reading that. If I was to take another course, I’d start journaling, just to internalize it; five minutes it took us at the end, but I needed that five minutes because by the time I got home, I was either too tired or had forgotten half of it. But that’s what struck me.
It is worth noting that remembrance is suffused with joy. Moreover, there is the explicit reference to the fact that, had it not been recorded (journal), she may have missed the "Wow" experience expressed here.

Wendy: "Remembering God." It is only this year, her third in the atrium, that Wendy has assumed a more active role with children—she has begun presenting materials to the children. She sees herself akin to the children in that she, too, is seeing presentations for the first time in the atrium context. There is a desire, however, to move to another level. She identifies it as becoming more of an "instrument". Wendy too highlights the importance of remembering "the encounter":

My personal and spiritual development has been really challenged as a Christian. Since I began, this has been part of my Christian growth...I've identified with the feeling that I was one of the children watching these presentations for the first time, and then moving on from there to a place where I can actually take this information in and look at that information and then present it as an experience, offer it. I want to go from being a person who takes notes of some form of instrument.

When you remember something, your own spiritual encounter with God or with a child, your spirit has changed, you have evolved from that point. So you bring something more, or you have something deeper, a depth to give. We always grow in that part of yourself [in] the Holy Spirit through the gifts that are offered. Maybe it sounds kind of vague, but I'm a person who's always relied on writing things down. It's a big part of my expression as a person. Something I feel [is] a catechist taking the course should journal at least once a week at some point, and share [it] with us and the group and will grow in some way.

Implications: Reflection as Attentiveness

The reflection exercise originated simply as an instrument with which to gain access to the participants' experience. It was a means of providing an opportunity for articulation in written form (journal). It has already been indicated that there is a pastoral value in attentiveness. There is also an applicability of this spiritual practice beyond this research.
project. The inner growth ensuing from attentiveness, and the contemplative attitude it gives rise to, make this practice a valuable element in future adult formation programmes.

The importance of this practice is a constant refrain in the written evaluations of the participants. Moreover, its significance is such that Kate suggests not to relegate the time for this reflection exercise to the closing moments of the seminar, as it was done during the research study. Rather, she recommends that the reflection moment follow directly upon the presentation of the biblical/liturgical theme in the seminar itself:

After that moment [during the adult seminar], after you’ve experienced the presentation as it would be given to children, that would be a nice moment to journal. If [we] take that moment to journal, maybe out of that will come, when you’re writing up the presentation later, some of the thoughts and meditation of your own moment. It would give the benefit that we all found from journaling—the going deeper. And also that wonderful moment—we would then remember [it] when we go back later to do the presentation [with children].

In addition, Francesca emphasizes the importance of sharing one’s reflections with the learning group (CP) members:

I tend to be a very practical person, and...one of the things that strikes me is, if we hadn’t had the opportunity to do this [journal], we would have missed so much. Not everyone who has taken the course is doing this, not everyone in the catechesis is doing this. The idea of learning to observe and to be present to our own self spiritually, maybe in some way could be incorporated into some of the course in the future...It’s a very enriching process to be able to share with other people on that level, not [only] discussing presentations and "how big should this be?" and "how many of those do you need?" and that kind of thing. It’s a good kind of way to enter into it: it’s very helpful, if we’re going to live this.

In short, attentiveness appears as a vital practice in their personal and ministerial journey.

In summation, the value ascribed by the participants to what was temporarily inserted into the CP leads to three core considerations relating to future formation programmes.
1. The importance of providing means for reflection (such as the journal technique).

2. The importance of offering an opportunity for this (the time and atmosphere).

3. The importance of inviting group sharing about their reflections, in view of its integrative value, both in learning and praxis.

**PART III: UNDERSTANDING MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN: THE DYNAMIC OF OBSERVATION**

The second basic point around which the participants’ summary of the pastoral experience revolved was the observation of children in the atrium. Since this activity plays a significant role in their stories, it will be examined by presenting their atrium accounts, followed by some theoretical and pastoral implications.

Observation, as an aspect of attentiveness, was a complex experience for all the participants. While they are unanimous in seeing its value, all indicated in their oral accounts that this exercise posed challenges. In many cases an ambivalence was apparent. In their written evaluations, all rate this as a constructive component of the research. Nonetheless it posed problems for all the participants, in various forms and to different degrees.

Indeed, observing children is a valuable activity. Observation has a place in their spiritual preparation and professional formation, as well as in refining their experience with children. All the participants expressed a willingness to continue with observation. Some suggested that this skill be investigated further (Ruth). Some want to exercise it more fully (Mary). Others are aware that this is a skill that needs development in their praxis (Eileen, Kate).
The problems arise from the tension between what can be called the aesthetic and the ascetic. The aestheticism is apparent in the participants' atrium accounts. Observation appears something of an art, an integral aspect of the craft of the catechist, and it is recognized as such. Insofar as it is an art, it needs "honing". The medieval craft guilds come to mind, in that it appears an art that requires practice, so as to refine one's skill and thus result in more fruitful activity. As well, this aesthetic is directly related to children.

On the other hand, asceticism is also apparent, in that each participant recognized that it requires effort and is, to varying degrees, a demanding undertaking. These demands have particularities according to personal style and strengths, and as such can be quite distinct to the individual. Nevertheless, there is an invitation inherent in the observation activity for all the participants. Each seems to be conscious of the need for growth in this area. Further, in each case there is a willingness to persevere in what is apparently one of the more difficult dimensions of the catechist's service.

Finally, it appears that those who are most involved in the GSC, in terms of duration and responsibility (for example, directing the atrium, leading children's groups), are the ones who express explicitly the interplay of aestheticism and asceticism. For this reason, the accounts are sequenced in terms of this factor (length and quality of involvement), so that this aspect can be more easily highlighted. The following excerpts are taken from participants' oral accounts (reflection and evaluation meetings) since they clearly contain the chiaroscuro of the positive/problematic tension.

*Eileen: "It opened up something that's really of value". In the course of her 11 years in the GSC, Eileen has already "done a lot of observing" of children. Her reference to
"choreographing the day" conjures the aesthetic quality—of catechesis as a dance. But for her, this dance calls for a certain quality of presence to children. In her case, the problematic aspect is above all a practical one:

The observation in the atrium: for so many years, I’ve been in a position of doing the presentations and choreographing the day, and I think that for a lot of years, really [I’m] observing, but it’s almost a very immediate observation. I don’t know how much I’m carrying over, maybe one week to the next, but I don’t know how much one year to the next...I think it’s something that I always valued about the atrium...[observation] was something that I really enjoyed; but my observation skills haven’t really been honed. I’m observing, but I’m taking one particular thing and I’m looking at it carefully, but I think I’m just at that level where I’m taking it in. At times, I had a difficult time putting down exactly what I’m seeing, or what was being said. Practically speaking, any kind of writing in the atrium, I felt very uncomfortable with...to me this felt intrusive and maybe a little dishonest with the children. I don’t know whether they would have an opinion on that, or if that was just me projecting. That I found to be a challenge...I can see the value of observation, but it’s **how** to do it, how to be observing, and yet to be fully present with the children, so that you’re completely with them. Yet, when you’re in an observation mode—maybe it’s just me—you’re almost standing alongside. That to me was a bit of a challenge. In general, I enjoyed it, just because it opened something up that’s really of value. But it’s just **how to do it**.

The pragmatic concern is paramount. Although observation is a valuable practice, it can come in the way of being fully present to children. There is an additional concern as well. The term observation has something alienating about it. It seems an intrusion into the naturalness of the atrium experience. Consequently, it may be beneficial, in presenting the theoretical basis for this activity, to include the element of art implied here:

What happens when we look at a rose? What do we do as we become aware of colour and form? Our soul is passive and receptive. We are, to be sure, awake and active, but our attention is not strained; we simply "look"—insofar, that is, as we "contemplate" it and are not already "observing" it (for "observing" implies that we are beginning to count, to measure and to weigh up). Observation is a tense activity...To contemplate, on the other hand, to "look" in this sense, means to open one’s eyes receptively to whatever offers itself to one’s vision, and the things seen enter into us, so to speak, without calling for any effort or strain on our part to possess them.\(^{32}\)
Emphasizing the contemplative attitude conveyed in this quote may minimize the risk of alienation inherent in the term "observation", which can denote a distancing from, rather than an enhancing of, the relationship with children.

*Francesca: "I know what their hunger is".* After 10 years in the GSC, Francesca is obviously familiar with the practice of observation in the atrium. Her account alludes to the art involved in this exercise, and she too employs the image of choreography in relation to her role with children. For her, the particular value in this exercise resides in the remembrance of important moments and manifestations in the catechetical setting. However, there is a problematic aspect, requiring a "long-range" approach.

I found the part about observing the children really hard, really difficult, because I guess being busy doing the things, you don’t observe them in the same way; you’re concerned about the choreographing. I’m not really good at writing things out when it happens, and I tend to think I’ll remember that, and then I forget it. It’s almost like if you’re sure you’ll remember it, that’s when you forget it...So the parts with the children were very important...I was just very free about it. With the children...I know what their hunger is already, and their response to the different things and their readiness for it and afterwards, as things go for several years afterwards. I’ve seen children afterwards saying, when we talk about the First Communion group..."Are you going to do this?" "Are you going to do that?"...it’s like, "Oh you’re so lucky, I wish I could come again." That’s a response that you don’t see when the children are there at that moment...To observe the children, I don’t think I could have done it faithfully if I had just looked at the time of the presentation. It’s the time before and the time afterwards, and the impact it had on their lives. You don’t immediately see the long range picture, but over time, you do see...

Although Francesca maintains she is attentive to the children’s "hunger", she admits to the difficulty that observation poses. One senses the discipline, or asceticism, involved in this dimension of catechesis with children. Nevertheless, we find an undercurrent of joy, derived from observing the children’s responses. This would also be an aspect to stress in an explicit manner in terms of the theoretical presentation of this exercise. Accenting the quality of joyous
observer, affording more emphasis to the enjoyment possible in exercising this skill, could serve to balance the difficulty inherent in it.

**Kate: "I see it...as a very important activity for myself"**. Kate’s nine years as co-founder and co-director of her parish atrium centre has not dimmed her sense of humour. Her account is lighthearted, provoking laughter amongst the group. While affirming the importance of this activity for herself, Kate is clear about the difficulties involved in its practice. Kate’s account is multi-layered. On the personal level, observation constitutes for her a "critical, analytical" disposition. On the professional level, observation heightens the need for "meditation" as a catechist. On the practical level, she prefers "group sharing" in order to develop the skill further.

Observing in the atrium, I likewise found some difficulties in that. I tend to observe situations in a very analytical, critical framework. And so it’s very easy for me to see all the things that don’t work and that need improving. It’s very hard for me to see things that are positive. This made me more aware; I became even more aware of that. I mean, if I only did that, I’m sure I would leave the catechesis! Because I would say, "There’s so much that needs to be done!" [Laughter.] That was hard...With the older group I was trying to take down notes; because usually I was rushing out afterwards, and then to find a moment to remember it is hopeless...at least three children came up to me and said, "What are you doing? Is my name in there?!?" I thought, "Oh, what am I doing?"...That was tough. On the other hand, I see it for myself as a very important activity, that I sort of still haven’t learned to do. And that’s to be able to observe and see the positive, and see what’s happening with the children. Because I find the work is sustaining when we have adult interaction, when we have courses, when we have ways that nurture ourselves. But just being in the atrium with the children, unless I step back and somehow meditate on that, or share that with other catechists, and take the time to do that, I find just being there for that chunk of time, for myself, it isn’t enough. I think it’s still something I personally need to develop a lot more.

It is interesting to note her reference to "step back and meditate". This points to another possibility for the theory underpinning the task of observation. Kate’s insight concerning meditation was confirmed later in a conversation with Renilde Montessori. In discussing the
participants’ response to this component of the research, Renilde Montessori offered her personal approach to the question of observing:

To me, observation and meditation are akin. [Also] I see observation as a scientific enchantment...enchantment calls forth a growth, a flowering of the personality...observation is a living experience. You are taking in the life of another element—a child...and you lose yourself in this...in awe and wonder.  

Another practical implication in Kate’s account concerns the individual’s interpretation of this activity, specifically in terms of "writing" notes while the children are actually present. This, in part, could be due to the wording of the observation/reflection pages, which may have caused a misperception (e.g., the need to write during the atrium session itself). Although Kate found the discipline of writing to be helpful, she also emphasized the contribution that community discussion could bring to this spiritual practice:

While I find it impossible to reflect on what my time with the children means to me—I think it is possible to do over a longer time period—like a "semester" or year of working with the children meant to me. Even this reflection, however, for me personally would be greatly assisted by more direct questions or by a group discussion which would trigger my own responses.

A third practical implication relates to the importance of offering clearer guidelines in discussing this activity in future courses. For example, to emphasize indicators that manifest the child’s satisfaction and engagement in the relationship with God:

1. A great desire to continue to listen to specific themes and to continue their personal work with them on their own.
2. A profound sense of serene peace, of enchantment.
3. Some themes become part of the children themselves... the result of a vital act, through which the child seems to have received something...in a profound way, and of which the child has need...

*Ruth: "Doing" versus "feelings and internalizing". Ruth, from the start of her initiation into the GSC, has served in a key position (co-directing the children’s groups,
including the older children’s retreats). Perhaps this is what is reflected in her concern about "just doing", a thread running throughout her reflections. As well, there is the suggestion that group sharing about one’s ministry would be personally nurturing and professionally empowering.

With the children, it was difficult observing. Because I don’t think I’d ever done that before, and I didn’t know how to do it...well I have Old Timer’s! I can’t remember things very long, it’s just for a few minutes! I didn’t try to write out the whole sheet, but I did take notes throughout the classes that we had. Sometimes they were good, sometimes not. But I did find it very positive having the opportunity to speak with other catechists after [the atrium session]...Did you hear that?" Then I would realize things from her eyes [other catechist], from what she observed, that maybe I hadn’t seen, that maybe I hadn’t observed. We had the chance to talk and I think that is really a positive tool, that we should begin to investigate. Because I agree with Kate that without that, we are just doing, and trying to make it better. The logistics are maybe really reinforced, whereas our observations and our feelings and our internalizing don’t get as much of a chance at this time. You have to do it at that time, right at that moment that it’s happening or maybe right after...

Apart from the practical ramification of including discussions about the atrium experience in the CP seminar, Ruth’s words have a theological implication. Constant reference to "doing" versus "being", as well as the dissatisfaction with the "logistics" of action over the attention to "feeling", point to the importance of "internalizing" the ministry experience. These words, coupled with Ruth’s mention of summertime "re-reading" and meditating on her journal, suggest the significance of what Gerald May calls the "fourth way".

In both Eastern and Western spirituality, there is a fourth way, an appreciation that embraces action, feeling, and knowing and also seeks the "more" that love always is...In the West, it is called the contemplative way.38

Ruth’s interest in integrating the atrium experience ("internalization"), as opposed to mere efficiency ("doing...it better"). points to developing a theory of observation that addresses this
"fourth" level. That is, it is essential to address the balance between the "how" and the "why", so as to more adequately orient oneself within this practice.

Efficiency is the "how" of life...how effective we are in our functional roles and activities. In contrast, love is the "why" of life; why we are functioning at all, what we want to be efficient for.39

*Mary: "I still struggle."* After four years in the atrium, this year is the first that Mary takes a co-leadership position in the children’s retreat. Mary’s primary challenge in observing, as she describes it, is very personal. At the same time, she views it as a beneficial practice, recommending its inclusion in a formal way in future courses.40

I really, really did appreciate it. Not only in, as you [Eileen] say, picking that key point from the meeting that we had or the [seminar] session, but also in the atrium. I mean I’m still very much in awe of that, because I tend to be the type, well, my family can ask me to pass them the salt and I wouldn’t even hear them! I’m often in another world. And I still struggle with that to a certain extent. So it’s definitely not one of my strong points, to be really, really observant to the very subtle things, but I can certainly start.

Mary’s words illustrate the radical nature of attentiveness in light of the personal call it represents. This is the first of Bernard Lonergan’s "transcendental precepts" on the path of conversion, taken in a global sense.41 Quite simply, one sees here the personal cost inherent in paying attention:

At the core of people’s experience of flow—feeling most alive and absorbingly engaged—is the phenomenon of attention. To enter the optimal experience of flow, people must concentrate in a special and enriching way...We call this ability paying attention because it is neither spontaneous nor free. Paying attention is a learned discipline and a developed skill.42

Of course, this is not unique to the GSC, for to respond to the call to be attentive is to set foot on the road of conversion.43 Therefore, to actively explore the conversion dimension
inherent in observation may encourage one to embrace what is necessary in all adult growth: "a willingness to accept...and to exercise courage and patience." 44

**Domenica: "It furthered my relationship with God."** Domenica’s excerpt is infused with emotion. Even recalling the atrium sessions evoked deep feelings. She relates the source of this emotion to being able to see the children’s "connectedness to God", especially in prayer. 45

I wanted to say about the focusing—that worked. And then we had to write it down, and I did that. I loved that [observation], because it really made me focus on how the kids were. But a lot of the times I felt schizophrenic because I was just seeing some of these presentations for the first time, so I was feeling, I guess, what they were feeling, yet I had to observe what they were feeling! It was hard to focus in, but I tell you, I rejoiced in the joy and peace of seeing some of those kids in the prayer room, their connectedness to God, and the whole spirit touched me [tears]. I found it furthered my relationship with God, and it gives me joy to be there with the kids, and watching them, because their relationship is probably greater than mine is, and I’d like to get it back to that plane.

There are two points of specific interest raised in Domenica’s account. The first is the child’s ability to be a source of formation for the adult. 46 This quality of the child’s presence—visible in Domenica’s accounts—was also noted in the final phase of the research by Brother Ignatius. After listening to Domenica’s reflections, he spoke about "the wonderful moulding of what exactly this [catechesis] is all about: the child becomes the "formator" together with the catechists; they’re [the children] the teachers." 47

The second point is the power of children to call forth a desire in the adult to seek that quality of relationship they manifest with God. 48 The adult’s spirituality may be directly influenced by seeing and hearing how children are in their relationship with God. "Getting it back to that plane", as Domenica expresses it, connotes an inner yearning, one that is not regressive, in the sense of a return back, but rather an advancement towards childlikeness. The
child becomes a spur for the adult to walk towards that radical relationship with God that the child displays.⁴⁹

*Wendy: "I am growing."* As mentioned earlier, Wendy’s role in the atrium has been, until this year, predominantly one of observer. Perhaps this has allowed her an intense, prolonged period of attentiveness. The contemplative approach is evident here. There is a recurrence of her understanding of observation as "witnessing,"⁵⁰ suggesting an experience similar to prayer for her. Nonetheless, she too indicates the problematic aspect in this practice, identified in her propensity for analysis and compartmentalization.

In this work, we watch the children grow, but we ourselves also grow. I remember when we first began to study observation...this question just popped into my mind: What is the difference between observation and Christian witnessing? I was trying to separate the two, trying to look at them as two different things and then over time, I realized that they’re often intertwined and you can’t really separate [them]. Then you watch a child pray, watch them light candles, or set up the altar...I saw such a love and a diligence [that] they poured into it. I thought, what am I seeing? Am I observing? Am I witnessing? Then I realized that...I think I was being too analytical in my approach, and I was trying to just compartmentalize things and experiences, and really many things are not like that. We experience many things at one time...and I have to learn to allow these experiences, just to enjoy them for what they are, and then later to give thanks that I was there and to ask the Lord to be with me the next time so I can do more for the children. My desire is always to do more for them, because I love being there with them and watching them. [God] puts us in a position where we are witnessing the child going through changes in life...Every time I go to the atrium it’s never the same as the last one, it’s always different in some way. So, for me too, I am growing...because [my] perceptions change as I go on. I think writing it down just gives you a chance to go back and to learn, because we forget things and [it helps] to re-enter. It’s to allow God to come back to you.

One implication contained in this account, in regard to the theoretical background to observation in future courses, is the importance of openness in order to receive, in gratitude, what children may have to offer the adult.⁵¹ A second implication is the element of enjoyment this practice can hold for the adult. Therefore, in terms of the theological orientation
to observation, emphasizing this element might provide a counter-balance to the effort this practice requires, especially in highlighting "enjoyment as an expression of worship." Observing children may be approached as an opportunity, as Wendy puts it, "to allow God to come back" to oneself. That is, to highlight this form of attentiveness as a disposition of surrender to God, as well as openness to children.

In summation, the theoretical and pastoral implications relating to observation are summarized in the four following points.

1) In future formation courses at this level, it is important to provide a fuller framework within which to approach this activity.

2) At the theoretical level, more attention should be given to the way of being present to and with the children in the ministry setting. A broader foundation, based on the orientation provided by Drs. Montessori and Cavalletti, needs to be provided.

3) On the practical level, opportunity to discuss this aspect of the catechist’s ministry needs to be provided in the CP. To help participants avail themselves of the larger catechetical community, in order to communicate their experiences, could also be beneficial.

4) To accent a theological basis for the activity of observation, possibly by contextualizing this practice in the perspective of a call to conversion. This may also provide a richer context in which to situate specifics, such as the question of method (how).
CONCLUSION

This chapter highlighted major contributions of the applied research. In Part I, some of the learning that had happened within the individuals and the author was pointed out. The study's phases (April 1995 to January 1996) represented seasons of growth for us. Emphasis was attributed to the manner in which this growth was manifested, i.e., in the participants' shaping of the process (research project), as well as some of their critical reflections concerning the CP.

Part II focused on the pastoral experience in light of the new understanding it brought concerning the CP. The aspect of reflection was singled out for two reasons: 1) the significance the participants attached to it; 2) the importance this practice may represent with regard to future Certificate programmes.

In Part III the participants' atrium experience was looked at through the optic of the catechist as an attentive observer, thereby providing significant understanding about this ministry with children. The problematic/positive tension inherent in observation was emphasized. While observation was considered a beneficial activity on the part of all, it was nonetheless a demanding practice. In proceeding through the participants' accounts, various theoretical and pastoral implications were discussed in relation to future CP initiatives.

Taken together, these two facets of attentiveness proffered insights into the workings of the research experience in both its orbits: academic and ministerial. Certain levels of integration were manifested, indicating that the process in its entirety contained a potentiality for transformation. The attentiveness exercises, as aesthetical and ascetic practices, played an integral role in actuating the transformative potential within the experience—seminar and
atrium combined. The aestheticism/asceticism interplay, manifested in the participants' observation accounts, is summarized schematically in Table I. The final chapter presents a retrospective of the pastoral research as a whole, especially in light of this transformational element.
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ENDNOTES

1. Brother Ignatius acted as facilitator both for the September 1995 and January 1996 phases of the research project. I asked Brother Ignatius for his own notes that he used during his orientation to the September morning and afternoon sessions (see Appendix M). These were not given to the participants.

2. Br. Ignatius helped when, introducing the tape recorder to be passed around, he used the image of the Celtic "story stick" that would be passed to signal a person's turn to speak. Domenica later said: "Brother Ignatius had a wonderful, peaceful, disposition which helped and encouraged us to speak up. As we got more comfortable about sharing the experience, others interjected and the tension was lessened."

3. This comment was expressed during the conversation between Brother Ignatius and myself, during the lunch break following the morning session, which I taped.

4. This aspect is treated more specifically in Part II of the next chapter (On The Journey Together: Growth In Community).

5. I say immediate in that the lunch-time conversation with Brother Ignatius about this event led to insight from his observation: "The very fact this is a new moment of being together, that they've never really been together this way, how has that impacted on them? Also, I thought that to have put the 5-10 minute time frame on that threw them off a bit."

6. "Transformation theory, a constructivist theory of adult learning", as Mezirow describes (p. 33 ff) and outlines it in this work, offers another context in which to situate some of the contributions to this study, particularly in terms of the Phase III evaluative discussion. Because of the high specificity of the participants' comments during that discussion, only excerpts that typify what I see as some of the challenging outcomes of that transformative dynamic will be used. The theological ramifications of these will be addressed in Sections II and III.

7. See Thesis Proposal, Section 6, in Appendix A.


9. See the participants' responses in Appendix S, clearly indicating their level of critical reflectiveness, as well as the points for me to consider in relation to the next Certificate Programme at this level. That is to say, this study encourages me in "taking action to implement insights derived from critical reflection." (Mezirow, Ibid., p. 225).

10. This was discussed at length with the members of my thesis committee. Hence the importance I attached to what could appear as merely a minor glitch in the day's proceedings.
11. Indications of this are apparent in Phase One but become more apparent in Phases Two and Three.


13. See Appendix S.


15. Ibid., p. 224.

16. See Appendix S.

17. Ibid., p. 214-5.

18. Challenging in that the basic assumptions and premises behind the manner of presentation are questioned, although the implications of these suggestions are not easily grasped except perhaps by those who share in the role of "trainers" in such courses.

19. These points were not contained in the written form and are included here to give some examples from the discussion/meeting component of this evaluative phase.

20. This is a frank example of the call to growth inherent in this study for me, as well as an indicator of the child's ability to act as formator.


22. See Appendix M.

23. See Thomas Merton, New Seeds of Contemplation, p. 32-33. Francesca's accounts indicate she has been touched on the level of her own identity by means of prolonged reflection. Thus, taken as a whole, her comments suggest these words by Merton: "To put it better, we are even called to share with God the work of creating the truth of our identity...It demands close attention to reality at every moment, and great fidelity to God...The seeds that are planted in my liberty at every moment, by God's will, are the seeds of my own identity, my own reality..."

24. Francesca's "prayer" is further discussed in the final selection of the next chapter.

25. Ann-Morrow Lindberg, Gift From the Sea, p. 54-55: "Woman's life today is tending more and more toward the state William James describes so well in the German word, "Zerrissenheit--torn-to-pieces-hood"...On the contrary, she must consciously encourage those pursuits which oppose the centrifugal forces of today. Quiet times alone, contemplation,
prayer...What matters is that one be for a time inwardly attentive." And this was written 50 years ago!

26. This excerpt by Kate suggests that: "to stop - 'to be' - in the midst of doing does not come easily to any normal active person. Yet if one has the courage to try and develop the habit, one sees what a difference it makes". (Vandana Mataji, "Being and doing", The Tablet, November 1995, p. 1406).

27. This theme is returned to in the excerpt by Ruth in the following section.

28. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 31: "...the laity...are called to...work for the sanctification of the world from within, in the manner of leaven. In this way they can make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity."

29. This excerpt and others suggest these lines of a poem entitled, "This Is a Beautiful Time": "This is a beautiful time, this last age, the age of the Holy Spirit...Oh, hear Him within you speaking this infinite love, moving like some divine and audible leaven". Jessica Powers, Selected Poetry of Jessica Powers, p. 27. See the next chapter also.

30. See Appendix S, Question 1D.

31. See Appendix S, Question 2C.


33. Maria Montessori, To Educate The Human Potential, see pp. 121-22: "...the first step...is to shed omnipotence and to become a joyous observer. If the teacher can really enter into the joy of seeing things...many delights are reserved for [that person]." This excerpt connotes a self-emptying attitude. But this "renunciation of power and authority" is, for her, "to renounce lesser for greater joys" (Ibid. p. 123). In her book of personal reminiscences on Dr. Montessori, Anna Maria Maccheroni emphasizes her qualities as an "observer" (Come Conobbi Maria Montessori, pp. 160-2).

34. Transcribed from a conversation with Renilde Montessori on January 30, 1996. Consolingly, for me, at the same time Renilde said: "So I find it very difficult when people ask, 'Give me guidelines for observation.' How can I give you guidelines for living?" Renilde also described children as "observers who observe because they need to know, because that is part of their self-instruction. Children are the best teachers of observation. They observe with total absorption; it's vital [for them]".

35. See Appendices B and C in the Thesis Proposal, Appendix A.

36. See Appendix S. Question 2C.
37. Sofia Cavalletti, *The Religious Potential of the Child*, p. 170. See Mark Searle, in his Preface to this book: "[Cavalletti] does not discourse at length about the religious experience of children. It is a mystery to be respected. All she will do...is report on what we might call the "symptoms" of that mystery: the sense of engagement, the quiet joy, the recognition of the truth of biblical or liturgical presentation, and the short, sharp insights offered spontaneously by children that, together with their drawings, represent the fruits of their contemplation of the mystery. That is what the catechesis is about. Is it not what all ministry is about: encounter with the mystery of God?" *Ibid.*, p. 4.

38. Gerald G. May, *The Awakened Heart: Living Beyond Addiction*, p. 23. The other three ways, "action, knowing and feeling" (p. 22-23) Ruth already attends to, but she seems to be seeking the contemplative way: "The contemplative way acknowledges that we begin to appreciate love's fullness only as we enter it immediately, directly, and with undefended awareness. This happens very simply, not by any thought or strategy, but by being present in love." *Ibid.*, p. 24.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 3-4, author's emphasis. Ruth's movement towards what I have interpreted as a contemplative approach in no way implies a distancing from children. Rather, as is seen in following excerpts, Ruth fits May's understanding of one who engages in contemplation: "Contrary to popular understanding, contemplation does not imply quietness or withdrawal. Instead, it is a quality of immediate, open presence that is directly involved with life-as-it-is." *Ibid.*, p. 23.

40. See Appendix S, Question 2C.

41. See Bernard Lonergan, *Method In Theology*, pp. 20 and 53: "...the transcendental precepts, be attentive..." (p. 20).


43. I am using the call to growth inherent in this exercise (of observation) in the context of conversion in its most generic sense. Or as Lonergan says so simply, "conversion is basic to Christianity" (*Method in Theology*, p. 130.)

44. Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community, No. 85.

45. See Ruth Burrow's article, "Faith, Trust, Surrender to God: This is Prayer", pp. 38-9. What struck Domenica so forcibly about "Those kids in the prayer room" may be linked to these words by Burrows: "In all other areas of life our own efforts and activity are crucial and we have to be thoroughly adult, but in the very heart of reality, where we stand vis a vis God, there we are only children. No other state is appropriate or possible." (p. 38).

46. Indeed, Sofia Cavalletti calls catechesis with children a "training school" ("and a little child shall lead them"), *Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Newsletter, Number 7, Winter 1990,*
Though it can be "challenging and at times very demanding", Cavalletti continues: "working with children" is essential "because if we lose our contact with children we will distance ourselves from the most significant source of our own personal formation".

47. See Appendix P: Reflections by Brother Ignatius.

48. Domenica's excerpt called to mind this insight: "The adult who prays will begin to see the child differently, which alone can initiate change. In prayer one also begins to see how children play a role in the formation of adults...We also begin to notice how close children are to the praise of God" (Dolores R. Leckey, "Children In Jeopardy: Who Cares?" (Church, Spring 1995, p. 8).

49. See Sofia Cavalletti: "And so if we let ourselves become involved in the Word of God with children we too...can discover or rediscover some fundamental values of the religious life which I would synthesize primarily as essentiality and enjoyment--the presence of God in our life as the source of deep enjoyment" (GSC Newsletter, Winter, 1985, p. 3).

50. See Henry Nouwen, With Burning Hearts, p. 89: "Here we come to realize that mission is not only to go and tell others about the risen Lord, but also to receive that witness from those to whom we are sent...In the long run, mission is possible only when it is as much receiving as giving."

51. See Gerald May's description of the contemplative stance: "The contemplative heart says, "Only open your hands, receive the gift." This does not mean we can control contemplation or that we can be contemplative at will. It is a gift that we can accept only as it is given. But it is given far more frequently, far more steadily than we could ever imagine." (The Awakened Heart, p. 25).


53. This, in turn, may facilitate and encourage catechists to welcome both the aestheticism and the asceticism involved in their ministry; see Table 1 at the conclusion of this chapter.
CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION: SIGNPOSTS

INTRODUCTION

In one respect, the three previous chapters, relating to the research findings and contributions, have already brought this study to conclusion. However, this study marks more than only a point of arrival: attaining the aim for which the applied research was undertaken. In another respect, then, it also marks a point of departure. The research has a cumulative or crescendo effect, whereby certain melodic strains—or signposts, to switch the metaphor—became detectable during the period following the completion of the pastoral project. The following three sections indicate these new perspectives, for the most part by drawing directly on the participants' words, with the help of syntheses (in table form) to abbreviate this concluding chapter.

Part I addresses the co-researchers' imaging of the research as a whole. In Part II their summary of their participation as members of the research group will be presented. This is an arrival point in terms of the participants' involvement in the pastoral experience. At the same time, this moment of completion also contains within it a turning towards tomorrow, a future-oriented direction. Therefore, it is at once both a point of arrival and departure. Part III of this chapter represents an especially gratuitous fruit of the research experience for the author, namely, the participants' representation of the GSC as a way.
PART I: IMAGES OF TRANSFORMATION

To live with the Spirit of God is to be a listener.4

The images which the participants employed in describing their overall impression of the research process5 appear as a fruit of the many aspects and dimensions of the preceding months. They are eloquent enough without commentary. Before listing them in schematic form, key commonalities in these images will be noted, by way of a reading guide to the participants’ words.

The first is the preponderance of biblical imagery, especially Christological. This reveals the power of the theological sources, the true vine parable particularly, and highlights the impact of the reflection activity. The second is the emergence of a defined pneumatological presence, in terms of the predominance of references to the person of the Holy Spirit (as “sap”, as “Wisdom”, in naming the gifts of the Spirit, and more allusively, even in the “white egg” image). Finally, there is a third thread woven into each of these accounts: the reference to, and therefore the relationship with, children. It is important to mention the appearance of children in all the images contained in the following excerpts. The children’s presence appears to be integral to the participants’ images.

Eileen: "The true vine"

The image of the true vine...I think that remaining, that just being--how we are with the children...because we are just remaining, and we are with the children in this way. That really sets us apart; that’s not something that we can "take". and that we can "learn", and we can "teach" that to the children. I think that it has always a double edge to it; because it makes it much simpler in so many ways, yet much...larger because it’s so deep. Or communicating to others, it can only be done this way. From what I’ve seen for myself and for other people,
this is a common thread: that everyone says this is "a part of their life"...So I think that the image of the true vine is very powerful...

**Francesca:** "It's wonderful...the white egg".

The first image that I got was one of a white egg... and I'm on the inside, and God is on the outside, and God looks at the egg...It's like God pecks from the outside, and gently taps on this egg, and knows that I'm ready, but gently taps...It's [a] very nurturing, very comfortable kind of feeling. It's not coming from me trying to break out, but it's like God inviting me to come out...So I see this white egg, but it's not just me; if I'm a white egg, then everyone's a white egg and so are all the children, and it's that kind of delicacy that we need to be able to honour the children, honour each other, and to just allow that gentle tapping. And then one day I'll get out! And it's that kind of moment, it's wonderful... the white egg.

**Kate:** "Just being with Wisdom".

I have an image...and it says that "wisdom permeates everything", and lives "in everything"; and then the last line was, "God loves nothing so much as the person who lives with wisdom". It just resonated within me when we talk about the sap of true vine and how wisdom is here and God loves nothing so much as us just being with wisdom. And I think it also resonates with me in the catechesis, in that there is a real trust in wisdom: that God is with us, God is within us. And that by being in this way is good, and that we don't have to be looking for all the results, or trying to measure, or trying to see if either ourselves or the children...are "accomplishing". But that is a gift in itself, that we don't have to do anything else.

**Ruth:** "When Mary said, 'Yes'."

What I was thinking of is [the phrase] "enter into"...And I think as catechists, that's what we have done; we have entered into the process of the journey together and this is quite similar to what Eileen was saying [concerning the true vine]. It permeates our life and we've entered into it together on this journey. It's similar to me -- this parable -- when Mary said, "Yes." When she said yes, she entered into, and nothing was the same again. So I feel that's the kind of journey when we do presentations: we invite the children to enter in with us, sharing with wisdom, sharing God's love on the journey of life.

**Mary:** "Illuminating, like the light."

Light...to have illuminated so much in me, and so many truths have become clear, and even so many connections and interweavings...that have become
clear. And just in preparing to make a presentation to the children, and in thinking about how to best allow them to, I guess to see that light, ...to think about staying with the essence and the heart is important too. It's helped me even in the atrium. And in general too, to be able to communicate better...And for it to grow and to deepen, because of the way that we're sort of guided to convey the information and...to look for the heart, the essence, and not go off on a tangent, and not to focus in too many directions. But just to [be] clear, crystal clear. I see that as something very illuminating, like the light.

**Domenica:** "Gifts of the Spirit".

I thought of when we used to do [the presentation of] the gifts of the Holy Spirit: knowledge and wisdom. And then I guess I realize that wisdom is like a spirit, a presence that is inside us, or close to us, so that we will know how to share that knowledge with the children, and with each other, of what we've learned in the catechesis...Looking at the first reading from Wisdom: that's inside us, the presence of our Good Shepherd, and the love of the whole catechesis; the love that we want to share with each other and with the children, and the love that we feel for each other here.

**Wendy:** "What is the 'sap'?'"

I chose the true vine also...What is the "sap" of the true vine? The "sap" is the Holy Spirit. That's what I think about...and I really enjoy being with [young] people a lot and working with them in this way. It's wonderful to see the Spirit come out [of children]. One of my favourite pieces of scripture is "God is Spirit". And I think about those three words sometimes and I often think that simple words say so much.

It is helpful to return to the sources of nurturance and means of empowerment (investigated in chapter 5) in order to track some of the most significant factors which contributed to this imaging experience. This recapitulation will be illustrated with graphs.

With regard to the the primary phase of the pastoral experience, we highlighted the divine-human relationship, as nourished by the biblical and liturgical sources. Also highlighted was the manner in which the encounter with God was facilitated by means of the methodological elements: 1) the materials concretizing the theological themes; and 2) their mode of presentation. It was discovered how these sources led the individual to a deepening
movement towards prayer and meditation, thus pointing to the potentially transformative dimension in the CP experience. A graph was then presented (chapter 5) to illustrate 1) the power of the theological sources (biblical and liturgical) in initiating, 2) and the impact of the methodology (presentation and materials) in mediating, the encounter with God. This can be developed further, in view of the understanding about the CP and the ministry with children that came from the participants’ stories (chapter 7). By means of the spiritual practice of attentiveness, various levels of personal involvement seemed to open within the participants. Their images for the experience add insight into this deepening dynamic, which is abbreviated in the following synthesis.

• **Identification:** The process appears to have been initiated by listening to and identifying significant “message(s)” (CP seminars), and important issues (seen in the atrium accounts).

• **Personalization:** The attentiveness exercises allowed time and space to relate that to one’s own life, and to record the “message” or point of learning that had impact.

• **Internalization:** The reflection time and activity provided an opportunity for them to begin to receive that “moment”, as it is frequently referred to by the participants, so as to hold on to and remember it.

• **Appropriation:** This, in turn, enabled the experience to be appropriated on a deeper level, intellectually or cognitively, as well as affectively or emotionally. A certain “intimacy” was arrived at, and the response was often recorded in affective terms of “enjoying”, and savouring the encounter. This resulted in a multiform experience of “connectedness”, with God, self, children, and other adults.
Transformation: The cumulative effect of these interior movements opened the possibility to "meditate" on the experience, to "enter into" it, sometimes to the point of being able to recall it months later. Gradually, new growth appeared, both a growing into it and letting it grow in oneself.¹⁰

To symbolize this growth, the seed and leaven were employed as symbols (in the last chapter). However, these symbols can now be expanded in light of the participants' images. What was indicated in the previous chapters and is further suggested in these images, is the transformative element, viewed in a theological key. It is seen as the individual's receiving of what has been called the "sources" of the encounter with God, scripture and liturgy (symbolized by the seed and leaven). The transformative element is seen also in the quality of the individual's responsiveness.

A simple graph will be used to show the complementary movements that reveal an inner view, so to speak, of the transformative process. The source is the gift coming from God (through biblical and liturgical means), which is received by the individual, and into the ground of oneself. Germinating there, through the attentiveness dynamic, it then bears fruit in a response. For example, as meditation, seen in Ruth's few days' in the summer going over her journal, or explicitly as prayer, seen in Francesca's summer-long journal process. What is most pronounced in these personal images is the indication that this transformation is sourced in God.
GOD: Biblical and Liturgical Sources
as “seed” and as “leaven”

Responding to “Source”:
as meditation, contemplation and prayer

Receiving “sources” into
ground/soil of oneself

Soil/Self

GOD: As sower and seed, operative in a fructifying, leavening presence.

There is a second aspect common to all these images: the presence of children. In as much as the participants were describing their personal experience, and offering self-images, the presence of children is unexpected. Therefore, that this is a commonality in all the participants’ images is very significant, and recalls an earlier theme of “remembering”: “remembering one’s spiritual encounter with God...and children”. Thus the child appears to be closely connected with the transformational element emerging in this study, as Table I highlights. Moreover, in considering these images, combined with the following summary by Domenica, a new perspective on the research process becomes apparent:

I think we learned how to sensitize ourselves, [to be] more sensitive to what was happening in class, in taking the course, and then when we’re in there [atrium] watching the kids...Also [to be] more appreciative of God, first of all; every time I came to the course I learned how to appreciate and know [that] all the time he is there and to remember he’s there...Because with our busy lives, who’s got time? We have to discipline ourselves and say, “Yes, let’s take a moment to think about this”...And [to] sensitize [ourselves] to the kids too,
watching what's happening, through all the senses, in their lives and what's in them."

In summation, the three preceding chapters investigated the different factors contributing to make the participants' experience not only one of being able to give, but also of being able to receive what children have to give. Underlying these chapters was the transformational theme. This means that the various components and dynamics in the research process appeared to facilitate a mutually transformative experience, one in which both adult and child are sources of nurturance, one for the other.

Accordingly, a fuller picture of the "cycle of relationships" comes clear in relation to the GSC ministry with children. In view of these images and Domenica's statement above, the cycle may now be depicted to include God as the source of this transformational, relational cycle.

Figure II: Complete Cycle of Relationships

"GOD touches me"  (as source of nurturance of adult and child)

"WE'RE touching God together"  (mutually transforming)

"YOU touch me"  (nurtured by children)

"I touch you"  (nurturing of children)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Biblical Allusion</th>
<th>Presence of relation to children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eileen</td>
<td>John 15:1-11</td>
<td>remaining-and we are with the children in this way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francesca</td>
<td>God: (brooding over &quot;chick&quot;), cf. (Mt. 23:37: &quot;as a hen...&quot;)</td>
<td>&quot;then everyone is a white egg, so are all the children&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>John 15:1-11</td>
<td>being in this way is a gift; don’t have to measure ourselves or children, or to see what we or children are accomplishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth</td>
<td>Annunciation: Luke 1:35-8; (the Spirit’s overshadowing presence)</td>
<td>we invite the children to enter in with us.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1**

IMAGES OF TRANSFORMATION
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Biblical Allusion</th>
<th>Presence of/Relation to Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>&quot;light...illuminating crystal clear&quot;</td>
<td>God (Jesus) as light&quot; Jn. 8:12; 1 Jn. 4:9</td>
<td>how to best allow children to see that light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;let there be light&quot; (after Spirit's hovering) Gen. 1:3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domenica</td>
<td>gifts of the Holy Spirit...knowledge and wisdom</td>
<td>&quot;The Spirit of the Lord...a spirit of wisdom...knowledge&quot; (Is. 11:2)</td>
<td>the love that we want to share with each other and with the children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>&quot;sap of the true vine&quot;</td>
<td>Jn. 15</td>
<td>It's wonderful to see the Spirit come out of the children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;sap is the Holy Spirit&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;God is Spirit&quot;</td>
<td>Jn. 4:24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART II: ON THE JOURNEY TOGETHER: GROWTH IN COMMUNITY

In each summary of one’s involvement in the research group, the aspect of growth in community emerged explicitly. The role that sharing faith plays in providing hope and strength to go forward in ministry is a common theme, especially during the project’s latter phases.\textsuperscript{13} Another dominant theme in the following excerpts is the role of community in giving impetus and momentum with respect to one’s role as catechist with children.\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{Eileen:} \textit{"Taking things to another level."}

It just struck me when we were talking...of taking things to another level; and so almost taking this now to the children, and our experience with the children. Because I think that this is so valuable, and we’re all speaking really, as we should be, from a personal point of view. But also I think would be so valuable to look at even the little observations that we have made, go back in our notes with the children, and maybe it would be more of a dialogue there, and how people see things with the children. Not so much people’s opinions or to compare notes, but it would just be to take this and [ask]: "How are we with the children?" It just seems like it would be a natural progression.

\textbf{Francesca:} \textit{"Go back and be real."}

I think one of the bonuses of doing the First Communion and Reconciliation [retreat] with the children is that through the work and everything else, at the end you have this real sense of community...the community sense is so strong. They’re so excited, they’re so involved with each other and all sorts of new relationships evolve. Almost to the point that you almost hear them saying, "Can’t we just keep this going?"...I’ve just seen over the years, the kids stay together, connected, and so they kind of live in both worlds: that sense of the community built in a retreat, an intimate experience, yet they still work with the other people. I think that’s probably the reality of what we have to do. We’ve had this intimate moment, and we need to be able to stay connected within that, but also go back and be real with other people, and the kids, the programme...Sometimes you don’t think you’re speaking the same language as anybody else. And you really wonder, do people understand what you’re trying to say?...Sometimes you wonder, and you really need to connect with
people...and just know that someone understands the language you’re speaking, and what you’re trying to do. It’s really, really, important.

Kate: "To take another step."

In my group [with children] I really need a kind of support that this kind of sharing brings. I guess in some ways it’s affirming each of our journeys. And I find that in the atrium, you know we have each other, but we don’t spend a lot of time with each other [about] our journeys. Because even as I said earlier, the idea of remaining on the vine, I’m so easily distracted by the things that I didn’t do [in the atrium] to make things happen...If I just try to remember why I’m there, and the way you [Eileen] describe how we are with the children -- we’re all on the vine together. And I love your image, Francesca, of the gently pecking on the egg and maybe that’s what we’re doing with the children too - - letting the light shine in. And so to be able to have to take that moment and to try to centre myself again, before I start [with the children]...So I think for me this really...gives me the hope and the energy to take another step on the journey.

Ruth: "To stay on our journey."

Being here is very empowering, in that -- as you [Wendy] say -- we’re speaking the same language. We’re communicating together, and...one of the most positive things was speaking together [as catechists] after the atrium classes and sharing, like we are doing here. So I think it would be wonderful if we could continue to do it. And in some way we need to do it in order to keep the energy, and to keep positive, and to stay on our journey, on the road together.

Mary: "Common thread, common root."

That’s sort of what I feel too...but [it is] to actually hear that, and to communicate that to each other, and to realize that it’s been a very important part of all of our lives...I think it would be nice perhaps, now that we’re not meeting together every week like we did, to find a different format. It would be nice perhaps to perhaps try to continue to communicate and to share with each other. The group reflection day was important to put words and expression to something so very important to us, yet not easily understood by those not involved in the catechesis. It was good, reaffirming, to be understood and to share our experiences with their common thread, our feelings with their common root."
Domenica: "Another step in our relationship."

I feel like I'm privileged to be in this group, just from the fact that everyone seems to be being very bold, being very intimate with their spirituality in telling how they're touched... In doing so, I think we affirm the catechesis, we affirm ourselves; and hearing someone else from the group, or maybe we get some insights into another section, or another idea... That's another step in our relationship with each other.

Wendy: "To share... on an ongoing basis."

During the course, one of the things that meant a lot to me was the sense of unity among us as catechists. Being in the room together, I really felt the presence of the Holy Spirit... I very much enjoy the fellowship with other people who are involved in this work... I think as a group, we shared something here that we don't share with others... I think it's very good for us to continue to share it all on an ongoing basis. We are able to relate to each other here. We have a certain companionship... we share an understanding of each other's perspectives, and that comes from what we've learned... You know it's like it becomes a language. It's like your own prayer; in a way we have a language by which we understand [each other]... I listen to someone else and I know we are connected, and then I go back to the atrium... You can't measure these things, but you can give them. And I think it's just part of the life God has given us.

Forceful in these excerpts is the fact that participating as a member of a small community, gathered explicitly to share faith and praxis, affirmed the role of community as a source of growth and sustenance for the individuals personally, and also as a crucial element in empowering catechists to continue along the "road" of ministry. As a summation, these two aspects are noted in synthetic form in Table 2.

Vatican Council II described the Church as the People of God, "established by Christ as a communion of life." Hence this catechesis, as in every form of ministry, is composed of persons on a pilgrim way who belong to the People of God. The latter phases of the research heightened in a particular manner the importance of not overlooking the obvious. That
is to say, while we are each called to be as pilgrims on life's path, we are not to journey alone, nor live in isolation, but rather as pilgrims together. Further, if the GSC has a eucharistic spirituality as its foundation, as Sofia Cavalletti puts forward, and if the call to mission is constitutive in living the eucharistic life, as Henri Nouwen claims, then community is vital to the exercise of the charism of catechist.
|   | **Growth in Community:**  
|   | **Shared Faith and Praxis** | **Towards Ministry:**  
|   | **Future Orientation** |
| E. | ● Valuable from a personal point of view.  
|   | ● More dialogue on how people see things with the children. | Go to another level; taking this now to the children and how we are with children; seems a natural progression. |
| F. | ● Intimate moment...we need to stay connected within that  
|   | ● Understanding what you're doing; speaking the same language. | But also to go back and be real with other people and the kids and the programme. |
| K. | ● The support this kind of sharing brings  
|   | ● How and what we're doing with children. | Gives me hope and energy to take another step on the journey. |
| R. | ● Empowering...we're communicating  
|   | ● Speaking the same language; sharing like we are here. | Need to continue (sharing) to keep energy to stay on our journey, on the road together. |
| M. | ● We feel similarly, to hear that, to communicate that.  
|   | ● It's [atrium/children] a very important part of our lives. | Try to continue to communicate and to share that with each other. |
| D. | ● Intimate with our spirituality.  
|   | ● Affirm ourselves; get insights and ideas. | That's another step in our relationship. |
| W. | ● Unity and fellowship. I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit.  
|   | ● To talk about the work; sharing, understanding of perspective and language. | Continue to share on an ongoing basis. |
PART III: THE GOOD SHEPHERD CATECHESIS AS A "WAY"

Written as this is from the distance of many months following the completion of the study, what comes into relief is the discovery of a new perspective of the GSC *in se*. From this vantage point, the GSC is seen in a global view. In setting out to explore the participants’ world, initially the concern was to study "in what way" this catechesis may serve as a means of preparing and empowering adults to accompany children on their spiritual journey in a mutually formative manner. On looking back, what comes forth from the study is an awareness of and appreciation for this catechesis as *a way* in itself. In fact, the term *way* is a leitmotif that became increasingly discernible in the accounts of the participants with the passage of time.

During the retrospective period of analyzing the entire study’s data, each of the participants seemed to present a different facet of the GSC. Their experience, therefore, allowed for varying and valuable views of this ministry, much as a prism’s light is refracted in different hues. These are represented here in the participants’ own words. Each excerpt is introduced with a descriptive title that indicates the author’s interpretation of the participant’s perspective of the GSC. The excerpts, presented without commentary, are followed by Table 3. It synthesizes in a schematic form two principal aspects in these accounts: 1) the GSC as a way; and 2) the vital role children assume in it.

**Eileen:** *A way of...being.*

I think of that *remaining*, that just *being*...Really that seems to be what sets this apart from other religious education programs or teaching, that we are together on this vine with the children; it’s not just "teaching". And it’s almost a prerequisite that we have this experience of the [true vine] before we can make these announcements to the children. Because it’s not so much the words...
we’re using, it’s how we’re making the announcement...After so many years, you hear it more and more, "This has touched me, this has affected me", from new people just being introduced or hearing it for the first time—this phenomenon of this being. This isn’t surprising for us, but if you look at [other] kinds of education programs, anything that deals with children, you usually don’t take that step [of personal involvement], it’s usually only, "Yeah, I can see how this would work with the children.

Francesca: A way of prayer.

Basically I ended up coming up with a prayer at the end of the summer: it was God, breathing new life into us every minute, every day, every breath you take...because it’s something you can do anywhere, and at any minute, and at any time. In joy, or in stress, or in anything, you can do this. I think it’s kind of like giving birth, as you do these different breathing things. It’s really had an impact and I’ve seen things happen in my own life which were really great, that I know wouldn’t have happened otherwise. Even things like with my own parents or different struggles, that before I would have said, "Oh, this is going to be awful!" and I just go: "Create anew in me God, this instant, this minute." Or else as I was going through situations: "Create this new in me", and then breathe it in and let it out and it was wonderful...That’s what I will always remember from that moment...this prayer that I was able to do that suited me and my breathing.

Kate: A way of struggle...and fire.

The process of sharing our vision, hopes, experiences and struggles in this ministry helps me to clarify what I am doing and why. It also provides the support I personally need to continue.

There is something about when we commit ourselves. If it’s too easy, we tend not to put as much effort into it as well. I mean, I think back on "how the heck did I take the [summer] courses [1986 and 1987]?" Those summers I had two very young babies and I went full time for three weeks. How could I do that? Part of it is a willingness, that’s a huge part of it, as much as ability. If you’re really caught on fire by what it is, it’s amazing what one can do. Sometimes today I think, "Where is that fire?"...I need to be brought back to those moments of joy and fire. And that’s so important if I’m going to stay in the work.

Ruth: A way of being with children.

The atrium, the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd has changed my life. I notice it especially with my children, and with other children, and it’s in the way of
the presentation, the way you present things, the way you speak with the children, the way you respect each moment, and what is happening. The way you let that moment happen.

Mary: *Another way to find God.*

I do feel very differently about it than I do anything else I've been involved in. I do feel much more that it [GSC] has become a part of me, and in some way that I would always carry this with me...There would always be something in me that would want to try to find that, or develop that, or be a part of that. I do feel that it's very special, and it has become a part of my life in a deeper way than I would have thought. It just sort of happened without me realizing it. But it's true! I think in my own life, my relationship with God came through times of unhappiness, and searching, and struggle; and on one hand, we hear so many people [who] seem to feel that that's almost the only way people find God. And I just think that anyone can try to show this way to others. I just think that this is another way to find God. It's not the way of pain, it's not the way of suffering, it's just the natural way of sort of starting at the beginning. I think it's a beautiful way.

Domenica: *A way of joy.*

I'd like to say that when I started the catechesis I felt like I was that 3 year-old child sitting in that chair listening. That isn't to make me feel smaller, but to dignify how I felt about being there. I like the focusing, as we did it as an activity. I think I focused because I'd go home the next day and talk to [friend]. So I was internalizing it...I think that the Spirit was flowing to the children, and from the child in me, and I wanted to share that same feeling with a good friend. And internalizing it as I verbalized it to her, I guess it sparked something. But I saw the peace and joy, not only in the children, but in many other catechists that were there [in the atrium], and I wanted that peace and joy in my heart.

Wendy: *A way of growth.*

When I first discovered the catechesis, it was like falling in love for me. And now I find myself [more] practical...reality has changed for me. I think when I look at myself, it's like I started a new relationship with God, and in this relationship, somehow I felt a great sense of love...Somewhere along the line, I feel myself settling down somehow inside...whereas before I was "à la carte". I love it! Something is happening to me, and I'm just beginning this past year to really experience it. I think what's happened is, as I watch these children grow, and go through their motions, of going from three years old to making First Reconciliation and First Communion, [I am] seeing that life changes. I
think one of the reasons for me this work is so real is because it isn’t all in the head; it’s something that we do with our hands, with all of our senses...So it’s really been interesting. Yes: fall in love, and be in awe, but also use your judgement, use all of your senses. Because basically, I’m a dreamer type of person. It’s really developed my relationship with children in a way that I never even knew existed...it’s something I believe I can’t even completely articulate, but I have a different viewpoint and a different way of relating to children.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference to: Image of the Good Shepherd Catechesis</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eileen</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A different way of looking at children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being, just remaining and we are with the children in this way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Francesca</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Different rhythms and stages...because everything changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I got a gift...this prayer that I was able to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kate</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being in this way is good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• That’s what we’re doing with the children—letting the light shine in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ruth</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The way you present things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The way you speak with the children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The way you respect each moment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The way you let the moment happen.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Anyone can try to show this way to others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Another way to find God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The natural way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A beautiful way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domenica</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Spirit flowing...to the children and from the child in me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Peace and joy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It’s a kind of cycle. You touch me, I touch you, and we’re touching God together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wendy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• First the catechesis was like falling in love; now I’m settling down inside.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It’s something we do with our hands, with all of our senses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A different way of relating to children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONCLUSION: THE "WAYLESSNESS" OF THE GSC

The soul that walks where the wind of the Spirit blows...walks in waylessness, unknowing.\(^{20}\)

Employing the term way in reference to the common image used by the participants, is not to denote the GSC as a clearly marked path. The GSC remains still a rather unchartered way. This was brought to the fore during the University of St. Michael’s celebration for the CP certificands, which took place the week following the closure of the pastoral project.

At that time, Dr. Mimi Marrocco, in greeting the certificands, among whom were all participants of this study, remarked on their perseverance in completing that level of the formation process (CP). She addressed them as “pioneers” because, as she pointed out, inasmuch as the GSC is still being translated into the Canadian context—literally and metaphorically—they were making the path as they walked it.\(^{21}\)

In closing, this chapter explored three different facets of this ministry. In Part I, wherein the participants’ imaging of the pastoral research was offered, the GSC emerged as a parable way. In Part II, which presented the participants’ summary in terms of participating in together as a small community (research group), the GSC appeared as a pilgrim way. And in Part III, which offered each participant’s representation of the pastoral experience in an overall fashion, the GSC is seen as a pioneer way: "We [are] walking our way through it as we [are] doing it" (Francesca).
As a concluding word, these aspects of the GSC may be recapitulated, in an overarching sense, as a paschal way. That the paschal mystery is at the heart of all these stories is exemplified in the following excerpts by Francesca. In the struggle, God's "waylessness of grace",\textsuperscript{22} leads to a renewed commitment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>April 1995</th>
<th>Sure it's fine to [proclaim] things to the children! Hmmm, great!!&quot; But then when you hear it yourself. &quot;Remain on the vine&quot;. I'm going, &quot;I really sometimes didn't want to remain on the vine! I just want to go. When you actually take this catechesis and walk through it in your moments in your life, through your ups and downs and your crises, it's like a true test. And I know where the struggle's coming from--it's me...I mean these maxims could basically shape my life if I took them seriously.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 1995</td>
<td>Out of this, I hadn't intended to develop a prayer style for me...I think it's kind of like giving birth...&quot;Create anew in me God.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1996</td>
<td>The reality is...[I] guess you go through different stages. In the catechesis you go through different rhythms...We're the ones who got really involved and committed. You go through that process, go through great lengths and you do it...It's not, &quot;Here it is on a silver platter.&quot; There is a sense of mission.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ENDNOTES

1. That is, the pastoral research met the four objectives of the study (Appendix A, thesis proposal, section 2).

2. The metaphor of music, alluded to at the start (Chapter 1) and graphed (Chapter 4, Figure 1) is an apt way to describe this retrospective (representing the crescendo in a musical composition).

3. Chapter 1 referred to the fact that the practical research "opened a perspective". These unexpected perspectives are highlighted here, especially in Part III.


5. Brother Ignatius invited the participants "to find an image or symbol that connects with what we are feeling; to find and to speak that image that is characteristic of me in my life at this moment." (Transcript from Phase Two). Kate’s image in this section alludes to the prayer from the book of Wisdom with which Br. Ignatius began the afternoon session of Phase Two (see Appendix M).

6. "Potentially transformative" is repeated in order to indicate that "transformation" is used here not merely as an educational term (e.g., transformational learning). Rather, as Gerald May writes in "To Bear the Beams of Love: Contemplation and Personal Growth", it "incorporate[s] the radically transforming possibilities of grace" (p. 26). In other words, it is meant to indicate that: "All human education can only provide subject matter...but it cannot force acceptance or imitation...Nature and the subject’s freedom of will impose limits on spiritual formation. But there is one Educator for whom these limits do not exist: God, who has given nature, can transform it..." Edith Stein, "Spirituality of the Christian Woman", Essays on Woman, p. 99; author’s emphasis.

7. To use Anne Morrow Lindbergh’s phrase, this movement may be seen as a turning inward: "Woman must be the pioneer in this turning inward for strength. In a sense she has always been the pioneer...And from looking inward she gained an inner strength..." Gift from the Sea, pp. 55-6.

8. This movement may be seen as one of responsiveness, about which Helen Luke notes: "It is exceedingly hard for us to realize, in the climate of Western society, that the woman who quietly responds with intense interest and love to people, to ideas, and to things, is as deeply and truly creative as one who always seeks to lead, to act, to achieve." Woman: Earth and Spirit, p. 3; author’s emphasis.
9. This integrative appropriation is appreciated in the light of writings such as Roberta Bondi’s *Memories of God* (Chapter 2: "Being Reasonable"), and the aforementioned essay by Edith Stein (Chapter III) in *Essays on Woman*. For instance: "For the soul perceives its own being in the stirrings of the emotions...Through the emotions, it comes to know what it is and how it is...They condition that struggle to develop herself to a wholeness and to help others to a corresponding development, which we have found earlier to be characteristic of woman’s soul." (p. 96).

10. Therefore, these interior movements suggest what Robert Morneau calls "the stirring of the Spirit of God": "These stirrings (nudges, impulses, urges, movements, proddings, whispers) cannot be apprehended amidst noise and frenetic activity...Only the grace of tender faith enables us to leap into the mystery...As that grace is offered and accepted we catch the movements of our God." *Mantras From a Poet: Jessica Powers*, p. 77.

11. The close link in these images between adult and children is clarified in Thomas Francoeur’s insight: "It is an image and experience of "humaning-forth", effectively, in self-growth and in the ability to promote growth in others..." *The Educator: A Spiritual Journey*, p. 95.

12. Table 1 highlights the presence of children in the participants’ images, and various biblical references contained therein. As well, other biblical associations are included (e.g., Francesca); this represents a liberty I have taken in considering the accounts as a whole.

13. As mentioned earlier (e.g., Chapter 7) this was a growing realization on my part, leading to a deeper appreciation of this guideline: "The Christian community in which the catechists live and work will also contribute to their formation, for no true apostolic education can take place outside of it..." *Guide For Catechists*, No. 28.

14. This highlights Nouwen’s conviction: "We have a mission to fulfill...but first we have to listen to what others have to say. Then our stories can be told and bring joy...The community of faith is the place where many stories about the way of Jesus are being told." *With Burning Hearts*, p. 85.


17. Sofia Cavalletti: "[the] Eucharist is a pivot in the religious experience of the child and, if this is true, the Eucharist is also the pivot of the spiritual life of the catechist. If we dare speak about a spirituality of the catechists of the Good Shepherd, we must speak about a eucharistic spirituality." *The Characteristics of the Catechists of the Good Shepherd*, GSC Newsletter 1986, p. 4.
18. Ibid., p. 86: "The Eucharist is always mission." See also p. 87: "The movement flowing from the Eucharist is the movement from communion to community to ministry. Our experience of communion first sends us to our brothers and sisters to share with them our stories and build with them a body of love. Then, as community, we can move in all directions and reach out to all people."


21. The celebration for the certificands took place at USMC the week following this project's final phase, January 27, 1996.


"...Each soul bears
this trackless solitude.

...The Spirit lights the way for her."
APPENDIX A: THESIS PROPOSAL

Adults in Ministry With Children: Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

A D.Min. Thesis Proposal Submitted to the D.Min Programme Committee Toronto School of Theology

Patricia Coulter, Catholic Office of Religious Education, Archdiocese of Toronto

APRIL 1995

Faculty Advisor: Vivian Ligo, Ph.D.
Faculty Advisor: Attila Mikloshazy, D.D., S.T.D.
C.L.G. Representative: Rev. Ralph Eibner
M.B.G. Representative: Mrs. Ellen Marchildon
1. Background and Context

Personal background: remote and recent

My search to learn about spirituality and children was set in motion by two events associated with children. In the same year, 1967, my first niece Felicity was born, and Elaine, a 9 year old friend of mine and my family, died of leukemia. Through close contact with Felicity and Elaine I became aware of the spiritual potential of children and my own inadequacy in knowing how to foster this potential. These two events eventually led me to train and practice in early childhood education (the Montessori method) which, though satisfying, did not specifically address children’s spiritual development. At that time (1975-1977) the only centre offering pastoral training with a Montessori orientation was in Italy. The approach to the religious formation of children I learned there, recently identified by the name the Good Shepherd Catechesis¹, has been the core of my ministerial commitment up to the present. Returning home to Toronto in 1977, I became involved in various aspects of the GSC. First I was involved in an academic setting; the initial atrium experiment was in the then St. Basil’s theology faculty building. In 1981 I was invited to establish an atrium in St. Philip Neri parish.

As interest in this catechesis started to spread, I was asked, in 1987, to assume responsibility as coordinator in support of parish centres opening at the initiative of parents: St. Benedict parish (1986); Holy Name parish (1987); St. Norbert parish (1990). In 1991 this became a full-time position under the aegis of the archdiocesan religious education office, with the mandate to develop adult education courses (as GSC formation director), chiefly for those serving in these centres. In dialogue with St. Michael’s continuing education department, it seemed appropriate to design a systematic catechetical training programme and centre. Thus, in 1991, the Good Shepherd Catechesis Certificate Programme² was born, beginning with an introductory level course for those preparing for ministry with young children under the age of six. Since its inception, two groups (23 persons) have received this first level training, and two new atrium centres have opened. In Blessed Trinity and Our Lady of Sorrows parishes.

¹ Henceforward referred to as GSC, the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd represents an approach to the religious formation of children (between the ages of 3-12 approximately) as well as adults. The GSC was established over 40 years ago in Rome by Sofia Cavalletti, whose field is biblical scholarship, and Gianna Gobbi, a colleague of Dr. Maria Montessori. This approach has spread to many countries in Europe, as well as North and South America, and taken root in a diverse range of social milieux, and different faith traditions. For instance, the atrium, a characteristic feature of the GSC, is referred to in the Episcopalian tradition as "worship centre". Atrium refers to the space where the GSC takes place; it recalls the forecourt in early Christian basilicas where the catechumens gathered before being welcomed into the full eucharistic assembly.

² Henceforward referred to as the CP, the GSC certificate is co-sponsored by the Catholic Office of Religious Education (Toronto archdiocese), and the University of St. Michael’s College. Approved by St. Michael’s Senate in 1992, it is one of four certificate programmes, along with youth ministry, health care leadership, and ecology education leadership programmes. The training centre at St. Michael’s — the only one in Canada — is presently being established.
In light of this growth, a pressing need has emerged: the request for further training from catechists in these parish centres who are presently responsible for the sacramental catechesis for older children (i.e. preparing to celebrate the sacraments of First Reconciliation and Eucharist). At first glance this may appear a straightforward, uncomplicated pastoral demand. Rather, responding to the request of these catechists is a challenging and complex prospect. In fact, this is what drew me into the D. Min. programme. For this reason I have chosen it as the focus of my research, and the participants in my action in ministry will be drawn from this particular group. To clarify why this is the case, I will indicate some of the factors that relate to how the GSC is situated in its overall (Canadian) and specific (Roman Catholic) context. Then, to put a more personal face on this ministry, in the following section I will sketch some factors relating to my own perception of the GSC as an approach to preparing adults for ministry with older children six to nine years of age.

• Ministry context

The GSC is in the process of being transplanted into the Canadian context. In order for it to take root and grow in this soil, the GSC faces an ongoing need to be translated, both in the metaphorical and literal meaning of that word. On the metaphorical level, it is new to the Canadian scene. Neither long-established, as in Italy, for example, nor widespread, as in Mexico for instance, this ministry is not well known, and carries with it the challenges inherent in that condition. On the literal level, there are English texts to aid those in ministry with young children. There are not, as yet, English texts to assist those in ministry with children beyond the age of six.3

The GSC is new in the Roman Catholic milieu as well. It offers an alternate approach to sacramental catechesis that is different, for instance, from the catechetical series generally used in our school system4. As such, it is not considered to be in the mainstream, and can easily be perceived as a threat to traditional sacramental programmes. This has tended to relegate the GSC almost exclusively to parish settings, where it lives an insecure and even precarious existence. Given that an atrium opens only with the pastor's approval, and given the practice of moving pastors regularly, there is a real risk that an atrium may be closed with the change of pastor. This has happened twice in our diocese recently.

As well, there are only four atrium centres, with relatively few children attending. In an ecclesial atmosphere that can be inclined to regard a ministry's worth by enrollment numbers, the GSC represents a marginalized ministry at present. In addition, the GSC promotes serious training in an area of ministry that usually asks little, if any, professional

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3 One of the ways the D.Min. has helped me to ready myself to meet this pastoral need was to afford me the opportunity and assistance needed to translate Cavalletti's liturgy text, a fundamental resource required as background for these catechists in ministry with older children.

4 In the case of Reconciliation and Eucharist, it is a practice in the GSC to provide the children with a period of retreat time surrounding the celebration of these sacraments, lasting from one to three full days.
preparation (at the parish level). It also entails a high level of commitment in terms of preparing a space (atrium) and materials (biblical and liturgical) which are not available in pre-packaged form. This means extra tasks for catechists, as they must make or arrange to have these made. To such catechists is added the burden — which the GSC shares with other predominately lay movements — of being seen as having merely volunteer status in their parish community.

· Description of research interest

There are other objective and subjective factors contributing to what I see as the personal challenges in this research action. I will indicate those that arise from the nature of the GSC itself. Then I will indicate those that arise from my own experience and understanding of being in this ministry with adults and children.

In terms of the objective factors, because the GSC is experimental in nature, it continues to be tested as to its validity. Whereas the curriculum has been tested widely as it relates to young children under the age of six, this is not the case for children over six years of age. The GSC is also in process of evolution. A practical ramification of its evolving character is that it is yet to be formally systematized. Therefore, I have neither a pre-set model nor handbook for the training of adults. Since the GSC is a dynamic rather than a static approach in terms of its content and methodology for adults, there is a crucial need to evaluate its adequacy in light of preparing adults for ministry with older children. That is, we are making the path as we walk it.

In terms of the subjective factors, recent experience of the CP has given rise to new necessities and untried possibilities in terms of using the GSC as a means of preparing these catechists for ministry with older children. I will identify three instances to exemplify what I mean by this, in as much as they are effectively shaping my research action.

First, I see this aspect of my research as more than an adult education enterprise, in that the word "education" can be interpreted to mean an informational exchange. However, I also see this as an adult formation experience. "Formation", in relation to preparing adults for ministry with children, implies for me a two-way or mutual learning: adult to child, child to adult. By highlighting the adult-child interrelationship, the equation changes from: adult teaches = child learns, to: adult teaches and learns = child teaches and learns. That is, implicit in my approach to the religious formation of children and adults alike is to see the GSC as a ministry with, rather than a ministry to or for. Thus my perspective on this ministry is to view it as a process of religious formation and spiritual growth. Second, the GSC is an explicit means of preparing the adult to give to the child. For instance, one form of the catechist’s service is to proclaim God’s Word (bible) and help children to live it actively (liturgy). But this implies a readiness on the adult’s part to receive from the children. For example, it calls the catechist to enter a stance of listening with the children to God’s Word. Third, the GSC is an explicit means of empowering adults to guide children on their spiritual journey; for example, by preparing adults to offer various biblical and liturgical themes to children. Yet
this also implies a willingness on the adult’s part to be guided by children. What this means is that, in doing catechesis, the adult comes prepared, not with a rigid or fixed plan, but rather with an openness to respond to the child’s way of being in relationship with God. Implicit in this, therefore, is that the adult is prepared to monitor the needs and responses of a particular child or group of children.

On a still more subjective level this research interest represents a series of "firsts" for me. It is a "first" in respect to the fact that, although I have facilitated two groups at the first level (for young children), this will be the first time preparing catechists already in ministry with older children (second level). It is also a "first" in respect to the fact that this is the first time I will be relating to these catechists in a dual role, or wearing two hats, so to speak. As facilitator, it is important for me to know if this offers a professionally and practically effective way of preparing them for their ministry. But as coordinator of their atrium communities, it is also essential for me to know if this experience nourishes them on a personal level, so as to encourage them to persevere in their exacting ministry.

The GSC is commonly perceived as a ministry with children. Fascinating as this would be to investigate for its own sake, it would of necessity take me too far afield. For the purposes of my study, I want to explore the GSC from the less common perspective of the adult. In order to keep my research action within manageable boundaries, only the adult will be placed in the foreground of this study. However, as children are a vital part in the adult’s ministry, they will be present in a secondary or background position. Therefore, while the adult will be my primary focus, the presence of children will appear in this research action, although seen through the lens of the adult participants.

2. Research Problem and Related Questions

Problem statement

I want to study in what way the Good Shepherd Catechesis serves as a means of empowering adults to accompany children on their spiritual journey in a mutually formative manner, so that the adult is prepared to nurture, and to be nurtured by, the spiritual lives of children.

Related questions

In this study I am looking for an inside view into how the participants experience the GSC as a way of being in ministry with children, in its explicit and implicit dimensions (referred to in the previous section). On the explicit plane, if there is something distinctive about the GSC’s awareness of the child’s spiritual geography, as it were, do the participants feel enabled to enter into the child’s religious world? Do the adults feel empowered to nurture the older child’s religious potential? On the implicit plane, if there is something unique about the child’s spirituality, is there a way of helping the participants to become co-learners and co-listeners with children? More concretely, is there a way of preparing the participants to
become attentive to the child's needs and responses? If so, does this attentiveness have a formative influence on the participants themselves? Finally, I want to learn if these participants, in order to be sustained in their present ministry, need to be touched at the level of their own faith journey and lived experience. And, if so, I want to know if the presence of children, both directly (through the atrium experience), and indirectly (through the adult seminars), helps to engage the participants at this level.

- **Objectives**

Given the preceding questions, in this study I propose to:

1. provide a means whereby the participants can articulate their experience of being in ministry with children around the age of 6 to 9 years;

2. glean from this experience an understanding of what empowers the participants to nurture the older child's religious potential;

3. explore the ways in which children may, in turn, be a nurturing influence in the adult's spiritual life;

4. identify components essential to a formative pastoral preparation for adults in the GSC ministry with children of this age.

- **3. Theoretical Framework and Assumptions**

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**Theoretical Framework**

The GSC is the over-arching pastoral framework, containing three basic components - - the theological, pedagogical, and methodological — undergirded by certain educational and catechetical foundations.

Educational Base: Reference is made to the Montessori method insofar as its principles served as the pedagogical basis upon which to experiment and develop this orientation to childhood catechesis. Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952), one of Italy's first women medical doctors, moved from the field of medicine into education. The aim of her psycho-pedagogical method was above all to educate the human potential of children. Montessori's innovative work also included a brief foray into the area of religious education. The first children's atrium was founded in 1915 in Barcelona according to her guidelines. Montessori's method, in my interpretation, already contains a spirituality of education. For example, she was

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insistent upon the spiritual preparation of adults for their tasks as educators. Part of this "inward preparation" concentrated on "the way we regard a child". The ability to observe children ("observation" is how Dr. Montessori termed this skill) had a key role in her concept of the adult's spiritual training.

Catechetical Base: As alluded to earlier, the persons most responsible for the GSC, Cavalletti and Gobbi, availed themselves of Montessori's philosophical and practical insights in the educational sphere, as well as the contributions of others who undertook religious education initiatives deriving from Montessori's work. Cavalletti's purpose is to educate the religious potential of children. The principal way she advocates to go about doing this is the "method of signs": leading children to the bible and liturgy, as primary sources of God's self-revelation, involves initiating children into the fundamental Christian symbols, both scriptural (parables, for instance) and liturgical (sacraments, for example).

Cavalletti's approach, in my interpretation, contains a spirituality of childhood. For example, Cavalletti is intent on the need for a spiritual preparation of the adult in which interaction with children plays a crucial role. Cavalletti also assumes the importance of observing children. This means close and careful attention to the child's religious needs and capacities: Observation for her, therefore, is a significant factor in nourishing the religious potential within children.

Pastoral Base

Catechesis: The word catechesis is heavy with historical associations. It is the perception of some people within and outside the Roman Catholic tradition that this word is weighted with negative connotations. Catechesis (and its related terms "catechetics", and "catechism") conveys an over-emphasis on doctrine, sometimes to the point of "indoctrination". This is not what I intend by using this word. I believe it can be rescued from such restrictive, parochial connotations to become an ecumenically-friendly word, so to speak. I use catechesis as an inclusive term that subsumes in itself all the various aspects of evangelization as well as of religious education. As a pastoral ministry, catechesis involves all those who live the Christian life, including children and adults. The GSC is inserted into a long history of the church as faith community, and shares in the recent direction of Roman

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6 See Chapter 4, "The Spiritual Training of a Teacher" in The Child In The Church by Maria Montessori and others.

7 Ibid., p. 45.

8 Cavalletti's chapter (10) in The Child In The Church, an early presentation of the beginnings of their work, clearly notes this contribution. See p. 132 particularly.


10 John Westerhoff, Who Are We?: The Quest For a Religious Education, p. 268.

11 Ibid., Westerhoff makes an eloquent case for this in his section entitled "Catechesis" concluding this book (pp. 268-277).
Catholic catechesis. For instance, the five stages Rummery notes in the modern development of catechesis -- "traditional, pedagogical, kerygmatic, life-centered and situational, and group centered" -- are reflected in the GSC. It also has qualities unique to itself, particularly in relation to the person of the child: "The child, and in particular the child's religious life, is at the center of our interests and commitment as catechists." This is why I refer to the GSC as an approach to religious formation rather than a model of religious education. I use the word "approach" in the way Thomas Groome highlights it: "Shared praxis has potential for many functions of Christian ministry because it is more an approach, or "way of being with people", than a pedagogical method" (author's italics).

The People of God: As a laywoman, the role and empowerment of all baptized Christians is an important issue for me. It is also an important issue in relation to the GSC as a pastoral ministry in the Church today. For example, all the participants in the second level of the CP, from whom my sampling is drawn, are laypersons. I view this as a sign of the restoration of the status and dignity of the laity which the Second Vatican Council has encouraged in the Roman Catholic tradition. I see the GSC as one particular way of living the Christian covenant established in baptism and exercising the call to service (diakonia) inherent in it: "the identity and mission of those specially chosen for ministry along with all of the faithful have a common ground in their participation in the mission of both Word and Spirit through baptism" (italics mine). In the context of the CP, I see the GSC as an expression of the ministry of the laity that develops both the contribution and the charism of the catechist in the building of God's reign and the body of Christ (Church). I agree with Westerhoff that "there is no more important pastoral ministry than that of the catechist".

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15 George Schner, *Education For Ministry: Reform and Renewal In Theological Education*, p. 56.

16 Westerhoff, *Building God's People In a Materialistic Society*, p. 130.
Theological Base

Theology of Childhood: Through course readings, of Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan especially, I have realized that ministry with children involves a theology of childhood. By way of example, I will single out an insight from each author and one example of its pastoral implications in preparing adults for ministry with older children.

In the case of Lonergan, I am struck by the way he situates his discussion on "religious development" in terms of the dynamic of "being in love": "As the question of God is implicit in all our questioning, so being in love with God is the basic fulfilment of our conscious intentionality." Practically speaking, then, the adult's service in the religious formation of children has to do with helping them be in love with God. In the case of Rahner, a question he poses in "Ideas for a Theology of Childhood" is particularly thought-provoking for me: "In the intention of the Creator and Redeemer of children what meaning does childhood have, and what task does it lay upon us for the perfecting and saving of humanity?" Practically speaking, this has made me recognize the importance not only of helping catechists to be informed about children, but to be informed by children as well.

Spirituality of Childlikeness: Such insights as these influence the way I view ministry with adults, because now I see it in the context of spirituality. I am referring to the fundamental dimension of spirituality, i.e. "the first and most basic level is that of a person's lived experience, that is, the real or existential level." The synoptic passages that highlight the insistence of Jesus on letting the children come to him (Mt. 19:13-15; Mk. 10:13-16; Lk. 18:15-17), and on receiving the kingdom like a child (Mt. 18:1-6; Mk. 9:33-37; Lk. 9:46-48) indicate to me that children have something to teach, namely, childlikeness. I am beginning to see how the invitation of Jesus to "change and become like children" (Mt. 18:3) is an aspect of the ongoing call to conversion in Christian life. This, in turn, affects how I now look at the pastoral task of preparing myself and others for ministry with children. Up to the present my major concern has centered on the question: How do I help myself and others to help form (teach) children in terms of their religious growth? But now it appears just as important, or even more so, to ask: How do I help myself and others to be willing to learn from children?

17 Bernard Lonergan, Method In Theology, p. 105.
20 Robert Kegan's writing about the concept of being "recruitable" has helped to clarify the significance of this question for me (see Chapter I in The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development).
Assumptions

Although I expect to have a section in my thesis proper where these will be further developed, I will highlight here what I consider to be the basic assumptions operative in my research action. Since the focus of my action in ministry is preparing adults for a specific ministry -- catechesis with children, I will include two categories in this section, one pertaining to adults, the other to children. Each of these will have two subsets in order to include both educational and theological presuppositions.

About Children

Educational: In learning about the Christian mystery and message, children need adults to minister to their spiritual needs and abilities. Children's experience of the sacramental life is assisted when there is a) a prepared environment (atrium) in which to live it; b) a selection of materials designed to nourish their meditation and prayer; c) a community of adults and children with whom to share their faith journey. Children need to be given direct, age-appropriate access to the primary means of God's self-disclosure through the Word (scripture) and liturgy (sacraments), so as to be fully initiated into the eucharistic life of the believing community (Church).

Theological: From my experience of being in ministry with children between the ages of 6-9, I am convinced there is a capacity for God already present within them. This innate capacity needs to be awakened so that they can better experience and enjoy God's presence in their lives. I think there are certain biblical and liturgical themes which facilitate this awakening process in children. My experience also tells me that the GSC offers a positive way of initiating children into the eucharistic life. Finally, I believe that children of this age have something valuable to offer adults in the area of the spiritual life.

About Adults

Educational: I bring to the task of designing this adult formation seminar (CP) the following presuppositions, the validity of which I will be testing in my research action. 1) I understand adults learn theoretically as well as experientially. My input (educational theory, biblical and liturgical content) will be related to the catechist's interaction with children in the atrium setting. I am assuming, therefore, that this will have a positive influence in their interaction with children. 2) The D. Min. programme has accentuated for me the importance of integration in adult learning. This integrative element, between the theoretical and practical components of the seminar, will be addressed in an intentional manner in the action in ministry (phase one). From my experience of the D. Min. programme, I have also seen how well andragogy thrives in an atmosphere of collaboration. Thus my action in ministry will be conducted according to a collaborative model of adult learning.

Theological: Praxis has recently come to assume special importance for me as a dynamic in the preparation of adults for ministry; that is, not simply the practice itself, but the reflection on the doing. So one of the chief areas I will be exploring is how to assist adults
in a reflective way of being in ministry with children. I am also assuming that ministry implies a commitment to continued conversion. For the purposes of my research action, I will explore a method to assist adults to become attentive in their relationship and interchange with children. I assume, therefore, that mutuality is an essential quality in ministry with children. This, in turn, presupposes that there is a correlation between the experience of ministry as mutual, and the way it becomes a formative influence in one’s lived faith experience.

4. Action in Ministry

Action in ministry

The seven participants I have asked to join my action in ministry are drawn from the Toronto parish atrium centres. All the participants have previous experience in the GSC, and are presently engaged in atrium centres, serving children between the ages of 6-9 years. Three participants are from St. Benedict parish atrium in which there are two groups totalling 34, 6-9 aged children, 12 of whom will be celebrating these sacraments. Three participants are from Holy Name parish atrium in which there are two groups, totalling 20, 6-9 aged children, 11 of whom are celebrating these sacraments. One participant comes from Our Lady of Sorrows parish atrium in which there are two groups, totalling 13, 6-9 aged children, 11 of whom will be celebrating these sacraments.

My role throughout the action in ministry will be as participant and observer, with the exception of phase one, in which I will also act as instructor and facilitator. I envision my action in ministry as containing three phases, in which I propose to: a) design a series of seminars for adults which would incorporate a process of self-reflection in response to their study of specific themes; b) design a process for the adults to observe the children with whom they are ministering in the atrium setting; c) conduct a process whereby the adults could process and share their self-reflections and observations; d) validate what I have heard from the adults’ feedback, and evaluate my initial assumptions in light of what the adults have experienced.

5. Research Methodology

Methodological process

The principal focus of my action in ministry is to invite the participants to reflect on their experience of being in ministry with older children. Since all the participants have been involved in the GSC (ranging from three to ten years), they bring a wealth of experience to this research study. In my action in ministry I will be using the qualitative approach to research methodology.

Before beginning the action in ministry, there will be a pre-initiation phase. This phase, which will conclude prior to the action in ministry, will address the following three areas. 1) Selection of the subjects: This involves inviting and interviewing the participants drawn from three of the four Toronto parish centres (i.e. the atrium centres where children 6-9 years are attending). 2) Presentation of research tool(s): I will introduce the participants to the concept
of the journal they will be using during the research action. It is important to note here that I will be discussing the theory underpinning this journal technique (eg. the implicit value the GSC ascribes to observing children). 3) Development of theory: The participants will be introduced to some fundamental aspects that are basic to the GSC orientation for older children; for instance, Montessori's pedagogical principles relating to older children.

The following is an outline of the three phases I envisage for the action in ministry.

• **Phase One:** Conditional upon the approval of this proposal, the first phase will begin late this April, and last for 6-8 weeks approximately (mid to late June). Phase one will be composed of two parts.

  In one part the participants will be attending 6-8 weekly seminars, each 2 hours in length. In these seminars I will present certain biblical and liturgical themes, for instance, relating to sacramental catechesis. Following each seminar session, the participants will then spend some time reflecting on these themes by means of a reflective journal exercise. In the other part, the participants will be engaged in ministry with children, 15-20 hours in an atrium setting approximately. They will be using themes, underpinned by the theory, presented in the adult seminar. The participants will be invited to observe, and reflect upon, the children with whom they are ministering by means of two observation journal exercises.

• **Phase Two:** Phase two will take place in September. I will invite the participants to come together for a day, so as to elicit from them what they have experienced in the adult seminar and children's sessions. This session will be audio taped and transcribed. For this communal moment, which will be about 5 hours in length, I will invite someone from outside the research group to act as facilitator, for theoretical and practical reasons. Theoretically, it is important that I am enabled to be with the participants as a reflective listener with them. Practically, it is important that this moment focus the reflections on their experience, rather than an assessment of the seminar as such.

• **Phase Three:** The final phase will take place in November or December, the exact time will be negotiated with the participants. This will be a one-day communal moment about 5 hours in length. This phase will allow me the opportunity to validate what I have received from the participants in their written and oral accounts. As well, it will allow an opportunity for the participants to assess the action in ministry process as a whole. During this phase I will invite someone outside the action in ministry group to be present to serve as reflector with me.

• **Data: collection, analysis, interpretation and evaluation**

  Collection: I anticipate four sources of data, two in written form, two in oral form. 1) Journal Keeping: I will invite the participants to keep a journal of their experience in both the adult seminar component, and the children's catechetical sessions component of phase one. I will collect these journals at the end of phase one. I will be providing broad questions by way of guiding their record keeping in this journal. One question is designed to stir their reflections on our seminars (see appendix A). Two questions are designed to encourage them to attend to their ministry with children in the atrium setting (see appendices B and C). 2)
Group Journal Sharing: the second source of data I will be collecting will come from phase two, in which I will invite the participants to share their journal experience in a communal context. This group processing of the feedback on the part of the participants will be audio-taped and transcribed. 3) Presentation of Feedback: the third source of data will come from phase three, in which I will be presenting to the participants what I have received from their written and oral accounts. Since I foresee an exchange among us, more data from the participants may be forthcoming. 4) Participants' Assessment: the fourth source of data will also come from phase three, in which I plan to offer the participants an opportunity to assess the overall action in ministry. For this I will draw up some kind of evaluation sheet for the participants to fill out. I will be enlisting the aid of my ministry base group in preparing these evaluation questions.

A key methodological concern is to find a broad-based, multi-dimensional framework within which to research the data issuing from this study. My basic stance as a researcher is this: what I will be seeing (written chronicle) and hearing (oral narrative) reveals a personal profile of a brief segment in one's whole ministerial journey. Investigating such a personal story requires a holistic approach. It also requires a willingness to be surprised and to "be open to possibilities [I] have not yet imagined." Using the journey metaphor, then, I will indicate how I envisage the phases and specific tasks involved in dealing with the data.

Analysis: analyzing the data will center on venturing into, from different entry points, and familiarizing myself with the territory described in the material. This means exploring all images and feelings, issues and attitudes, statements and themes, that is, whatever the subject deems significant. Then, in order to identify the thematic content embedded in the experience, I plan to use three points of entry: 1) the cognitive dimension (eg. learnings in the seminar); 2) the dimension of praxis (eg. with children); and 3) the affective dimension (eg. personal felt response to the preceding).

Interpretation: In the interpretive phase I will be investigating and isolating the particular contours of the terrain. It is essential that the interpretation be inclusive, encompassing the theoretical, experiential and reflective levels. To allow for this, the three following vantage points or perspectives may be employed in interpreting the data (see appendix D for a diagrammatic illustration of these). 1) One perspective, provided by Henri Nouwen, looks at the adult's Christian journey in light of the dynamics of communion, community, and ministry. 2) Another perspective, provided by the GSC and George Schner, looks at the adult's educational or formational journey in light of its theological,

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methodological and pedagogical aspects. 3) A third perspective, provided by Simone Weil, looks at the adult’s inner faith journey in light of such dynamics as attentiveness and contemplation\textsuperscript{25}. It is important to mention that, in terms of the children’s presence emerging as a factor in the data, my interpretive stance will be influenced by S. Cavalletti’s orientation. For example, Cavalletti notes three “constants” in the children’s reactions to certain themes (eg. peace, a deep way of knowing, etc.). When these are observed, then the theme is seen to respond to a vital religious need in the child.\textsuperscript{26}

Evaluation: For the evaluation, I will re-visit the landscape in order to ascertain and synthesize what I see as its principal features. In evaluating this study I will be attending to insights it might generate especially in terms of the following: 1) initiating adults into a way of being in ministry with older children (pastoral formation); 2) nourishing the adult’s spiritual life (personal, faith formation); 3) developing and refining future formation programmes (CP); 4) helping my integration of, and commitment to this ministry.

Ethical Concern: I will discuss with the participants their preference as to how their experience, personal and interpersonal, with the children and each other, will be represented in written form (that is, the anonymity issue). I will obtain their consent relating to reporting about their written (journals, evaluation) and verbal accounts (group sharing in phases two and three), as well as their permission to tape the group session (in phase two). Any materials of others, used as part of the seminar sessions, that are included in my written account will be done with their permission (eg. Cavalletti’s unpublished writings).

6. Risks and Limitation of the Study

- Limits

The most evident limitation to this research study relates to its time framework. This time period was chosen because of the opportunity it offers, that is, a window into the period leading up to and following the children’s celebration of the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. However, phase one’s necessarily limited number of weeks can only offer the adults an initial experimentation in their use of the research tools, as well as a brief insight into the possible influence that children may have on their personal and ministerial lives.

A second limitation relates to the exclusively Roman Catholic sampling involved in this study. The selection of subjects is intentional, since I am researching how to help catechists of children who belong to the Roman Catholic tradition. However, it is important to mention


\textsuperscript{26} Cavalletti, \textit{The Religious Potential of the Child}, p. 170.
that this catechesis has a distinctly ecumenical spirit, as instanced in the writings of Rev. Jerome Berryman.27

The third limitation relates to the thematic content of the adult seminar (my input). For the purpose of this research action, it has been necessary to restrict myself to a number of biblical and liturgical themes involved in this catechesis for older children. These themes have been extracted from a rich curriculum for children 6-9 years of age. That is, they represent only a small portion of a much larger curriculum (themes from scripture and liturgy, and their associated materials for children).

- Risks

One risk arises in the very use of the research tools I am inviting the participants to use in relation to their self-reflections and observation of children, both of which require a delicacy of approach. For example, inviting the adult’s personal response to the seminar component of phase one presupposes a certain level of trust, which I assume to be present. And introducing a new element -- observation of children in the practice component of phase one -- may generate a self-consciousness in the adult’s rapport with children, as well as a possible preoccupation about detecting observable responses in children. Therefore, I will be sensitive to these risks as I present the tools involved in this journalling process.

Another risk arises from my role in this process. On one hand, insofar as I am the seminar facilitator, as well as formation director, I am not truly a peer member of this collaborative learning group and could be seen as an authority. On the other hand, insofar as I am coordinator of this catechesis, I bring a level of subjectivity to this action. To offset the natural dynamics related to this (both group dynamics as well as my own personal potential for bias), I will invite a person from my ministry base group to help me monitor and critique my attitudes and interactions with the research group (during all of the phases of the action in ministry).

7. Contributions of the Study

- Personally: This research study is timely, as this year marks 20 years’ involvement in the GSC. I am grateful for this chance to look back across these years of mentoring with the foundresses of this approach, and to look ahead to the challenges of handing on what I deem to be a heritage, not only for myself but for others too.

- Professionally: As mentioned in the section related to my research interest, many issues and concerns have emerged in the course of beginning a systematic formation process for adults. The opportunity to explore these with others who are committed to the Church and to children, with actual experience in the same ministry, is both a need and a privilege for me. At the

same time I hope this experience will contribute to building up the sense of community among the catechists who are serving in the different atrium centres.

- *Wider Church context:* One of the most recurrent questions I have revolves around this issue: Does this catechesis have a contribution to make beyond its present limited sphere? If so, how can the values it holds be communicated to others? To be able to investigate the validity of the GSC as a way of being in ministry with older children is a necessary step towards answering these questions, and possibly towards sharing the fruit of these findings with others within and outside this ministry’s context.

- *Societal context:* Undergirding this research action is a conviction, upheld by the participants and the families whom they serve, of the importance of children in the Christian community, but also in society as a whole. Inasmuch as this study will touch upon, albeit in an indirect way, a spirituality based on the Christian value and virtue of childlikeness, it could have wide-ranging social implications.
ADULT SEMINAR: REFLECTIONS

DATE __________________

What topic/theme was presented in this seminar?

In what way was I touched by it? And why?
CHILDREN'S SESSION: OBSERVATIONS

DATE ______________________

In attending to the children, what did you notice...see...hear...and so forth?
Take ten minutes to make a note to yourself of what this time with the children has said to you.
### Possible Interpretive Vantage Points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formational / Educational Perspective</th>
<th>Attentiveness Perspective</th>
<th>Spiritual Life Perspective</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>represented by the GSC</td>
<td>represented by G. Schner</td>
<td>represented by H. Nouwen</td>
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<tr>
<td>theological (e.g. biblical and liturgical themes)</td>
<td>the faculty, effort and habit of attention</td>
<td>movement from communion</td>
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<td>methodological (e.g. parable method and materials)</td>
<td>practical</td>
<td>attentive looking to community</td>
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<tr>
<td>pedagogical (e.g. God-child-adult inter-relationships)</td>
<td>devotional</td>
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28 Becoming acquainted with the research literature has alerted me to the danger, as Ian Dey writes in *Qualitative Data Analysis: A User-Friendly Guide for Social Scientists*, "of committing ourselves prematurely to a particular perspective and so foreclosing options..." (pp. 6-7). Therefore I am putting forward various perspectives, suggested to me by recent readings, simply as possible vantage points from which to view and interpret this study's material.

Dear

As a person involved in catechesis with children, I know you have experienced both the gifts and challenges this entails. And as one who is presently participating in our Certificate programme for those working with 6-9 aged children, I know you are really committed to this ministry.

I have been grateful for the opportunity — from the start of the Good Shepherd Certificate programme in 1991 — to reflect on the catechesis we do with young children under the age of six. You have participated in and contributed to that experience.

Now we are entering a new frontier: the religious world of older children. Since this is new ground, it provides a wonderful occasion to reflect on what it is that does nourish the older child's relationship with God, and how we can help to foster it. Also, because this is a first-time venture, it is important for me to know what helps the adult in this ministry of catechesis with older children.

In fact, this is the reason I undertook the Doctor of Ministry Programme in the Summer of 1993. Now, as part of that programme, I am putting together a seminar and reflective process for adults, whereby we can explore these questions together, namely: What good news does the older child hunger to hear? How can we share this with them?

In order to do this, I hope to gather a small group of persons who already have the background in this catechesis, and who are involved in ministry with older children (6-9 years or so). Since you are engaged both in an atrium with children of this age, and in the adult formation programme, your participation in this seminar would be most valuable to me, and I think to yourself and the others as well.

So I am inviting you to consider taking part in this seminar and reflective process. To help you in your discernment about committing yourself to be part of this, at our meeting on January 16, 1995 at 7:00 p.m. in Teefy Hall we will discuss the details about this group experience and address any questions you may have.

I am looking forward to seeing you then.

Sincerely,

Patricia Coulter.
Research Project

The aim of this research project is to study adults involved in the ministry of the Good Shepherd Catechesis with children (six to nine years of age) in a parish-based atrium centre.

Method

The researcher, Patricia M. Coulter, will facilitate an eight-part series of adult formation seminars relating to catechesis with children of this age in parish atrium centres in the Roman Catholic diocese of Toronto. The research project will also include a group reflection day, as well as a personal and group evaluative process.

Participant Commitment

Co-researchers will agree to participate both in the adult seminar sessions and in an atrium setting with children, and to reflect on their experience in written form by means of the journal questions provided. In addition, co-researchers will agree to participate in a group reflection day, and a group evaluation day.

Researcher Commitment

The research data collected in the form of written material, tapes, and transcripts of the group meetings, will be confidential. This material will serve as the foundation of the findings written in a Doctor of Ministry thesis at the Toronto School of Theology; it will be reported in a manner that safeguards the identity of the participants, and any others to whom they may refer in their written and oral accounts.

I agree to participate in the research project as outlined above.

NAME: 

________________________________________________________________________

SIGNATURE: 

________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX D: PERSONAL PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

NAME ____________________________________________________________

MARITAL STATUS/FAMILY STATUS (eg. children, ages of children)

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

OCCUPATIONAL BACKGROUND

ACTIVITIES OTHER THAN FAMILY AND MINISTERIAL COMMITMENTS
(eg. employment, community/volunteer work, committees, etc.)

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN INVOLVED IN THE CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD?

DESCRIBE YOUR PAST INVOLVEMENT IN THE GOOD SHEPHERD CATECHESIS (UP TO THIS YEAR)  (eg. observing in an atrium; assisting or leading group; setting up an atrium, etc.)
DESCRIPTION OF YOUR PRESENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE GOOD SHEPHERD CATECHESIS (THIS YEAR)

- Groups of Children
  - children 3-6 years of age
  - children 6-9 years of age

- Capacity of Involvement
  - observing
  - assisting
  - leading
  - other

- Profile of Children in the 6-9 year age group
  - number of children
  - number of children celebrating the sacraments of First Eucharist and Reconciliation

WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO THE CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD?
(please use an additional sheet, if required)
APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT EVALUATION

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to our research project. In preparation for our final gathering on Sunday, January 21, 1996, I ask you to respond to the enclosed evaluation and to bring the completed form with you.

The evaluative questions are designed to address your involvement in the action in ministry. The first three questions relate to the specific components of the research project:

- Question 1: adult seminar sessions (April-June, 1995);
- Question 2: children’s sessions in the atrium (as above);
- Question 3: group reflection day (September 30, 1995).

The final two questions relate to the overall research process:

- Question 4: the action in ministry project as a whole;
- Question 5: my role as facilitator in this process.

Please take the time necessary to reflect on your personal participation in the action in ministry, without—as yet—discussing your responses with the other co-researchers. Our final meeting in Teefy Hall will offer you the opportunity for group discussion about this evaluation.

I invite you to be as specific as possible in responding to these evaluative questions. You will notice that there is a space for your comments following each question. As well, extra pages have been added should they be needed. When using these, please be sure to indicate the number and letter of the question to which you are referring.

I encourage you to contact me if you have any questions about this evaluation form.
1: ADULT SEMINAR SESSIONS

How instructive were the seminars in terms of the:

1 A) Theology

Comments

1 B) Methodology

Comments

1 C) Pedagogy

Comments

1 D) Reflective Activity

How effective was the journal question in enabling you to give voice to your experience of the adult seminar sessions?

Comments

2: CHILDREN’S SESSIONS (ATRIUM)

In light of your work with children, how applicable were the seminars in terms of the:

2 A) Content (biblical/liturgical themes)

Comments

2 B) Method (presentation of materials)

Comments

2 C) Observation Activity (in atrium)
How effective was the journal question in guiding you to observe the children in the atrium?

Comments

2 D) Reflection Activity

How effective was the journal question in guiding you to reflect on your experience with children?

Comments

3: GROUP REFLECTION DAY

How effective was the group reflection day in terms of:

3 A) Inviting you to speak about your experience of this action in ministry? 1 2 3 4

Comments

3 B) Enabling you to enter into each other’s experience of this action in ministry? 1 2 3 4

Comments

4: ASSESSMENT OF PROCESS

In light of the action in ministry process as a whole, what suggestions for improvement would you offer in terms of designing a future adult formation programme for those in ministry with children 6-9 years of age?

5: ASSESSMENT OF FACILITATOR

In light of the action in ministry process as a whole, what suggestions for improvement would you offer in terms of furthering my own skills in facilitating a future adult formation programme?
APPENDIX F: CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

What has been described in this book is based on an approach to the religious formation of children, commonly referred to as the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. This Appendix offers a brief introduction to this approach that has been developing for many years, and provides a context in which to view the Appendix that follows.

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd had a mustard seed beginning. The soil it found was in the meeting of two persons, Sofia Cavalletti and Gianna Gobbi. It is more than their story, since the seed and its growth belong to God and many others had a hand in its sowing. It is told here simply as background for your reading of the following program for children and guidelines for catechists (Appendix B).

Sofia’s path seemed directed towards an university career. Proficient in languages, modern and ancient, she obtained her doctorate in Hebrew and Semitic languages, with a diploma of specialization in Philology and Semitic culture and history.

This choice of studies was determined partly by Dr. Eugenio Zolli, Sofia’s first Hebrew teacher during her undergraduate days. His coming into the Catholic Church (recorded in his autobiography Before the Dawn, Sheed and Ward), combined with his Judaic roots (he had been the chief rabbi of Rome until 1945), were formative factors both in their friendship and studies that followed. Hebrew scholarship became a shared work, continuing up to the time of Zolli’s death. It has occupied an important position in Sofia’s life ever since: with contributions to various editions of the Bible, translating and annotating original biblical texts, and extensive writings on post-biblical Hebraic tradition and ecumenical matters. In later years she was to receive appointments to various ecumenical committees, including the Vatican commission on Jewish-Christian relations and the Italian Ecumenical Commission, the first of its kind to invite lay members to participate in the Italian Episcopal Conference.

Gianna also had a mentor who was to affect the direction of her life, Dr. Maria Montessori, Italy’s famous educator of children. While still in her teens, Gianna had already started her apprenticeship in Montessori’s approach to education. Her studies led her to choose early childhood education as her basis, working with children as young as two years of age.

In 1951, after many years’ experience with children and one year before Dr. Montessori’s death, Gianna was invited to assist Montessori in her teacher training course. Her involvement in the training of teachers continued; by 1960 this included the specialized work of forming adults to care for children from birth to three years of age (“Assistants to Infancy”). Eventually Gianna’s work in this field would extend beyond Italy, leading her to direct adult formation courses in Mexico and in the United States.

This information is not intended to center attention on Sofia and Gianna and their respective fields of expertise. Instead, their attitude is that the message matters most, not the messengers; their conviction is that the adult’s presence in God’s relationship with the child is
as an “unprofitable servant” (Luke 17:10). Being part of this mystery would become a source of wonder and being close to children would always have the impact of gift. So much so that, thirty-five years afterwards, they would write in a letter to their Canadian co-workers:

It happens that in being with children we will sense the presence of a force, mysterious and silent, which does not belong to us, and we will treasure it as an inestimable privilege to be granted at times to “see” it working within the child. As Elijah did, on Mount Horeb, when he heard the “tiny, whispering sound,” at moments like this we too will want to “cover our face” in beholding the presence of God (1 Kings 19:13).  

Nonetheless, their backgrounds do indicate two pillars underpinning the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. One is the strong theological foundation, with its reverence for the Bible and the liturgy as direct sources of God’s self-communication to us. The other is the solid pedagogical foundation, with its respect for the person and the potential of the child. The first rests on the belief that God, who is Love, seeks to love us and for our love, and that the human heart hungers to receive and return this love. The second pillar rests on the belief that since God’s love is unconditional, including the condition of chronological age, even the very young child is invited into this covenant relationship.

It is true, then, that their backgrounds do indicate these foundations. Yet this does not account for what was to follow as an outgrowth. When their paths came together, the unexpected was awaiting them. They were to see for themselves that God not only communicates with the young child, but that in the child God finds a partner especially responsive to the overture of love. No less surprising, they discovered that young children are not only able to enter into this relationship, but that they have a special capacity to experience and enjoy the presence of God.

To return to the sequence of our story, their meeting was due to a mutual friend, Adele Costa Gnocchi (herself a well-known Montessorian), who saw in Sofia and Gianna something which perhaps neither was aware of in themselves. Maybe Adele knew that each had experiences which appeared to ready them, indirectly, for what was soon to follow. Gianna’s years of day-to-day presence to children brought her to the realization that the child truly is made in the image of God. This awareness was transformative: “I was born in the child,” as she expresses it. For Sofia it was a single incident that sounded a deep chord within. A friend, who had a six-year-old son, asked Sofia if she would give him some help in the religious sphere. Without any teaching aids or experience with children, she agreed at least to meet with him. When they did, she opened the Bible to the first page and together they began listening to the Word and speaking about it. The child’s response was altogether unexpected; even after two hours he was still happy to be there. “Why,” she reflected afterwards, “is he so happy?” In each of their lives, it appears, the ground was prepared for something more.

It was at this point that they met. Adele was instrumental in God’s “plan” of love (Ephesians 1:9ff.) for it was she who sent Gianna and Sofia their first group of children. In accepting her invitation they had set foot in the direction of what was to become—unknown to them—a lifetime dedication. However, at that time they were aware only of their own seeming limitations. But in welcoming those first four children they had been touched by joy: “If our work did not end after a brief number of meetings, as we planned, we owe it to the response, full of enthusiasm, solemn joy, serenity and depth of these four children.”

So it was that, in the springtime of 1954, the Good Shepherd Formation Centre, as it is called today, came to be born.

How to serve the religious needs of young children? Drawing on Montessori’s experiments in the field of religious education, they arranged an atrium for them. This environment was

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1 “And a little child shall lead them...”. Trans. Patricia Coulter. The Catechesis of The Good Shepherd Newsletter, Number 7 (English) Winter 1990, p. 6. (Contact: The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, Box 1084, Oak Park, IL 60304, for inquiries about the Newsletter.)

prepared with furnishings and activities adapted to young children, in order to allow them to be and do in their own way and rhythm. Gradually other rooms were prepared for children six to twelve years of age as well and arranged according to their developmental needs.

Another challenge had to be faced: How could the Christian message be communicated so that even the very young child could hear and receive it? Once again they benefitted from Montessori’s insights, knowing that, if the child was to be helped to approach and experience the presence of God, the message had to be materialized, so to speak, in some concrete form. Therefore they set about making materials which would provide the child with a first-hand, personal contact with the heart of Christian revelation. By involving the use of the children’s senses and offering them opportunities for movement, the materials served as tangible instruments for the child’s encounter with God. In fact, in the child’s hands they take on something of the quality of a “sacramental,” according to an Italian moral theologian who has been long involved in the catechesis.\(^3\)

Gradually a series of catechetical materials was developed. It was the children who guided this process. Through careful observation of their reactions, it was seen that some biblical or liturgical theme would draw forth a peaceful attitude in the child and an interest in using a certain material again and again. When a theme or material evoked this quality of response, they knew a vital need had been nurtured in the child. When a material proved its value to engage the child’s desire and ability for prayer and meditation it was kept, otherwise it was discarded. To this day, this process continues.

As time went on, they realized that the themes that most nourished the child also happened to be the most crucial to the Christian message. The children did more than direct the selection process; they actually guided them to the choice of the essential elements of revelation. Only what is essential to the heart of the mystery appeared to satisfy the child’s hunger, as, for instance, in the parable of the Good Shepherd. As Sofia suggests in the first chapter of this work, because of the deep resonance it called forth in them, it was the children who chose the Good Shepherd parable. Their choice echoes that of the first Christians, as can be seen in the catacombs of Rome. There it is the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd which is the most prevalent of all the symbolic representations used to depict Christ.

During these experimental years, a growing community of adults gathered around the children. In 1963, they joined together with others, such as Dr. Silvana Montanaro, to found an association dedicated to serving the religious formation of the child.\(^4\) It soon started becoming an international network, linking children and adults from many countries.

This created enduring bonds and opened avenues of communication among different cultures and traditions. By 1975 the seed had spread to North America, with a series of adult seminars—directed to the formation of catechists—following in rapid succession in the United States, Mexico and Canada. This new growth offered rich possibilities for dialogue. One example of this took place during their visit to Mexico. Up to that point this catechetical approach as yet had no name. During a conversation with a Mexican bishop, he referred to this work as the “Catechesis of the Good Shepherd,” the name it has been known by ever since.

The catechesis began to take root in these and other countries such as Argentina and Colombia, in a variety of home, parish and school settings. Thus, an invaluable testing ground had appeared on an international scale. In exchanging experiences, it was found that certain themes of the Christian message evoked the same positive response in children of similar age, regardless of their cultural or class background. What emerged then was a nucleus of core themes, and it is these that are outlined in the following section.

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\(^4\) “Associazione Maria Montessori Per La Formazione Religiosa Del Bambino.”
### APPENDIX G: PHASE I: SEMINAR CONTENT
(CERTIFICATE PROGRAMME)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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| 1. April 24, 1995 | The true vine parable (Jn 15): biblical exegesis: I.  
Presentation of this parable to children: I.  
The evangelical maxims of Jesus and moral formation. |
| 2. May 1, 1995   | True vine parable: biblical exegesis: II.  
Evangelical maxims: II.  
Reconciliation: rite; presentation to children: I. |
Reconciliation: rite; presentation to children: II.  
Eucharist and Reconciliation: celebrating with children: I. |
First Reconciliation in the context of children's retreat: II.  
Presentation of material: "Synthesis of the Mass". |
Presentation of material for children: "Epiclesis" and "The Mystery of Faith". |
Presentation of material: "Gestures of Gift": the offering, breaking of the bread, exchange of peace. |
| 7. June 12, 1995 | Background to the material "The History of the Kingdom of God: The Unity of the Kingdom".  
Presentation of the timeline for children: I. |
Group discussion/evaluation. |

Patricia: I have to learn to read the group more because it’s hard for me to know when it’s something where they want to stop and absorb...

Christine: I do get a sense that there is so much that we’re packing into so little time. I don’t know if you’re going to meet everyone’s needs. We’re also catechists of different years’ experience, so that’s very difficult. There’s almost the feeling that if I write it all down, then I can look at it and digest it slowly. There isn’t time to digest it in there [seminar].

Patricia: What I’m trying to figure out is, I want this moment to have something formative about it. Even though they can’t really absorb...but at the same time, you have a certain amount to cover. I’m thinking in terms of the amount of material that I have to cover. Doing this also as a research project, one of the things that I’m really attentive to is to build in a mechanism that will help these processes of integration, of reflection, of a collaborative spirit. I think there’s been a real change in me...If you help to provide an opportunity to get inside the thinking of it, the attitude of it, to me that’s the creative source. That’s an assumption I’m working on.

Christine: I think that’s excellent because even what you did during those last few minutes...what you said was, "This is what I did." You talked about it, then you said, "This is how I did it." So what you did for me is you said, "Here is all of the stuff. Now it’s yours. Because you’re saying: "Trust your own background. You have those kinds of decisions." I think that’s a very important part of this formation, a very important part of the next step. You’re saying, "Be free with this! Be comfortable with it!" That is absolutely essential.
APPENDIX I

'ATRIUM REFLECTION: TRUE VINE PARABLE AND RECONCILIATION

P. Began [the presentation of the rite of reconciliation] by returning to the vine for a moment because all the children seemed to be enjoying that aspect so much.

P. "What is it that keeps the sap flowing through the vine?" C. said, "God's love". P. "And is there something else? Is there anything we can do to keep the branches healthy?" C. suggested: "When we love someone and let them love us; when we pray." M. said, "When we do good deeds; when we try."

P. "What helps us try?" M. said, "Faith". C. said "sacraments". P. "You mean you receive a gift" to help you?" Then C. read something that she had written before the presentation: "That when we go to confession, we are able to bear even more fruit."

P. "Jesus said, 'You may ask what you will and you shall get it.' What do we ask for?" C. said, "We get the courage to do something, to fight something." She gave the example: "We could ask for a car, but God wouldn't give us that, but we could ask for courage." M. gave a computer metaphor: "It's like when you are looking for something in your computer, and you go to different spaces (directories). If you were looking for things about God you would go to the space that says LOVE. Then you would find the things God would give you."

A. said, "The vine began with Adam and Eve, but they ate the apple, so there was sin and it died. Then there was Noah, and it grew a little, but when Jesus came something new happened - the vine had fruit, because of the JOY." M. said, "Where there is love, God is there." A. said, "Isn't it God goes where there is no love?" C. said, "God won't give you the courage to hurt the hurters, but he'll give the hurters love." M. and A. spoke of love.

We stopped at this point, and decided to let the children work and we agreed to meet before it was time to go home. The children were very intent upon their work. A. made a timeline of the vine, and the vine after Jesus was very large, with many grapes and said, "The vine is full of love." C. wishes to make a "speech" about the strength God gives us. M. worked at making a creation booklet. C. did more work on her vine picture and story. H. continued adding pages to her vine booklet. One very striking one showed lightening all around the vine, but not touching it. She said that "nothing can hurt the vine."
So moving to me personally—a window into their relationship with themselves, others, and even God! This handling of the data from the second phase is: typing out the two levels of summary—on the individual and the group, in the quiet of early morning. Since these are reflections, I can best enter into their world only in a similarly reflective state, so as to receive them in the spirit in which they were given both in written and spoken form.

Overall impact: the sense of their own willingness to be reflective, and their own capacity to sustain that: 1) not only across two months (April-June), but 2) also to re-enter, on the spot, into that same level in a group situation (September reflection day).

As to 1): seeing the stirrings within them, of mind and heart, as they go through the process in the seminar and atrium. To see the changes in these motions both across a single, two-hour session, and from the start to this point in the process. Francesca "wants to run" at the start; now she is open to "remaining, staying". Kate: her questioning, unflinching mind that can probe atrocities, also finds hope and wonder in the biblical view of history. Her struggle with the many demands of "this catechesis", causing discouragement, yet she moves through wonder—even inspiration: "What creatures we are! Why did God make us so?" to new hope and courage to "take another step."

As to 2): listening again to the tapes highlights the depth and quality of their reflectiveness. Hearing the long spaces of rich silence between speakers (even up to two minutes!); spaces of silence as one speaks (unhurried, inwardly present); the slowness and measure in speaking their words; and even the tone of voice (quiet, calm) showing the quality of reflection. Makes me think of the meditative moments with the children, where the silences in-between words bespeak something rich happening within.
APPENDIX K

JOURNAL REFLECTIONS: ADULT SEMINAR SESSIONS

PERSONAL SUMMARY ANALYSIS

EILEEN: PERSONAL SUMMARY

Reconciliation and Eucharist

•Does her own theological reflection on relationship.
•Notes Mongillo’s comments on reconciliation and relationship lecture; notes when "need and longing" for relationship with God is not here, it signals danger to and death of relationship with God.
•Passage here: moves to a recognition of the "need for moments of encounter"; this need must be experienced and longed for when there is a separation [intimating the need for the sacrament of reconciliation].

True Vine and Maxims

Reflection on "revelation" (from true vine parable) that touched her, namely, on "being and doing", and her reflection follows intuitive leaps:

Difficulty of "being" for adults, but not children [child as model]-->adults legitimize through "doing" for "their own value"; connects this with parable of Pharisee and Publican--> raises question: Is this the fruit that glorifies the Father? Her response: "not without remaining".
•Then works toward some resolution and attempts to answer her own question: "We need to learn from children"; they have it and we "receive gift to experience this ("remaining/"being") when with children". [Child as source and teacher.]

True Vine Sequence & First Communion & Reconciliation

[Like the former, this shows a sort of "intuitive leap" in reflection]:

Parable method with adults-->"hear in doses"--"waters soil", "no pooling"--to roots-->children need same method: "slow/essential"-->a frustration for us", but "necessary for them".

Above leaps lead to insight about:

Being with children: 1) trust them: to "make, create, celebrate"
                2) leads to/"relinquish our role"--gives them dignity (children);
                3) above is our "unspoken gift to them".

[Note: Eileen unfolds own inner dialogue that is both informed by her experience with children, which acts as a sort of authority for her to test out new ideas, and is related to future work with children.]
EILEEN: PERSONAL SUMMARY

Synthesis of the Mass

Movements:

1. From presence of group—("I enjoyed the dialogue");
2. To methodology: "rich experience comes from "breaking down" components (for us); to enjoy, meditate on, see the "potential of each moment";
3. To child: "child draws us to this" (enjoy, meditate, etc.); child draws us to most important ("to explore, give thanks, enjoy"); [Presence of child here as a guide to deeper levels of experience];
4. To catechist: reflection on "differences among us" as catechists and difference in "sharing with children and others/adults";
5. Practical insights from above: we need balance between "material/method" and between individual "styles" of catechist;
6. Arrives at paradox: "It matters less" (than we think, i.e. re styles, etc.) and yet is "Can be very effective" (either negatively or positively).

[Note: Eileen shows her background as instructor of new catechists in Certificate Programme.]

Gestures of the Gift

*Eileen carries on her own self-dialogue about what is happening in the group present, beginning with the question raised re "children and the unleavened bread" (in materials of epiclesis and offering).  
*Process: a) she states the question raised (it is a fine point of detail) and b) then answers it, to and for herself only; c) then wonders "Why did she give that response?" At which point she goes to d) her own experience with children and to theology (i.e. Last Supper, and what children have/not noticed about this) = her two sources of authority). All this represents her own inward response; calls it her "discovery".
### Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thursday Evening of Retreat - 3 pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N. comes for &quot;muffin&quot;; called by name; entry into place/time of retreat; change in N. &quot;He feels specialness&quot;. Her daughter A. prefers retreat to zoo. Children doing reconciliation folders. [Focuses on one child and change in one child; and on ceremony of entering into retreat.]</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Friday of Retreat: 4 pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrates sequence of day's activities and celebration; and listing of children's choices of readings.</td>
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</table>

**Narration:** Journals for reconciliation (trouble reading); maxims (children agreed that it is difficult to do them); reception of Bibles ("universal joy"); children planning liturgy of the Word ("eager ideas"); exciting/disappointing (re reading of prayers rather than from the Bible); meditation on reconciliation (reaction of children); children choose readings; lists of readings and their reactions; mixed reactions from children; happy re readings; uncomfortable and shy about reading prayers [the same response children had in writing them in the morning].

### Reflections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflections (Entry Parallels Observation Entry)</th>
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<tr>
<th>Friday of Retreat: 1 page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children felt they needed most help with first maxim: &quot;Love your enemies&quot;. Children eager to use Bibles; meditation on reconciliation: &quot;attentive, but did not ask a single question&quot;. [I wonder why?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OBSERVATIONS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saturday of Retreat: 4 pages</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequence of day; narration of its overall unfolding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare candles; Fr. B—children restless. &quot;How many hear?&quot; Her role as guide: going to reconciliation &quot;knowing what they wanted to say&quot;; come back from it &quot;happy&quot; [her comment re &quot;practice&quot;]—aware of lack there; and gentle humour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty after lunch with &quot;Tasting bread and wine&quot;—faces children make [Note: I get idea of what is being done in different atriums]. Communal celebration: &quot;They were children of the light...&quot;Parents had tears in eyes&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sunday of Retreat: 2 pages</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children are so happy—&quot;Few faces&quot;—at arrival and receiving gowns; Good Shepherd meditation; children, &quot;hold breath&quot;; and true vine—&quot;branches green&quot;; &quot;Well-behaved, lovely order.&quot; Parents welcomed back to atrium; children take everything home, flowers, candle, etc. Her daughter A— &quot;You tell me never to rush in the atrium.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Last Atrium Session: 2 pages</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Sense of group and individual differences.] Two girls in &quot;spiritually heightened state&quot;: senses &quot;influence of retreat&quot;: &quot;Joyous, radiant glow&quot; [Note: One girl ill; other one's parents objected]. Contrasted with T. &quot;at his worst&quot;. Planning prayers for closing Mass. [Note: But that's what they didn't like doing before!] Prayer responses: contract between O., &quot;shining like an angel&quot; and T. who &quot;can't sit still.&quot; Experiences &quot;diversity&quot; between children: &quot;visible&quot; in some, &quot;invisible in others&quot; [impact of this on her].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBSERVATIONS</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Undated—Retreat in General: 1 page</td>
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"First retreat, incredible experience"; feel "added significance of previous years, that culminate in joy of sacrament; excitement of new experiences" [Note: this event of retreat has such impact that it has a sort of light which shines back in time across the years in the 3-6 atrium, both for children and for her].
APPENDIX M: PHASE II: AGENDA

OUTLINE BY BROTHER IGNATIUS

Saturday, September 30, 1995

1. Introduction of Brother Ignatius by Patricia

2. Gathering Prayer: reading from Wisdom of Solomon 7: 22-8:1
   Solomon's prayer for Wisdom 9:1-6; 9-11

3. Introduction of the 'process'
   - today is about two things: listening and sharing
   - listening to each other--this is not a day for discussion but to hear what the other person is saying--being attentive with our ears, our hearts and our minds
   - the second dimension of today is sharing
   - it has been several months since you finished your journals. Today we went to take time to 'bridge' that time; to share what has happened since then--have we had new experiences? new insights?
   - therefore to be truly present to these two 'wisdom' moments we will follow these few guidelines
     - each person will have an opportunity to speak for 5-10 minutes
     - there is no cross-talking; no discussion on what anyone says
     - there may be moments of silence; and that's O.K.

4. Introduction to the First Moment - Patricia
   - taping; confidentiality; feeling at ease

5. First Moment [morning session]: Brother Ignatius
   I invite you now to reflect on this time of the last few months since you finished your journal.
   - what has been your experience? New awarenesses, joys, frustrations, surprises?

   Each person has from 5-10 minutes. If you don't mind, if you go over the ten minutes, I'll ask you to conclude.

   Feel free to begin whenever you are comfortable; there is no special order.

6. Second Moment [afternoon session]: Brother Ignatius
This moment is an opportunity to move more fully, deeper into your experience now, and to bring it more completely into dialogue with your deeper self—the place where you converse with God; the place where "Wisdom" dwells—by reflecting in terms of:

- "my experience was/is like"...using whatever means you wish:
  - thoughts - feelings - images - metaphors, hopes and desires.
  - in other words: what is your deepest self saying at this moment?

7. A summing up—asking people if there is something more they wished to speak of—are people comfortable that they have said everything they wanted to say today? (still no cross-talking).

8. Closing prayer: To take the words that we have spoken today and formulate them into a prayer of praise, of hope.

Reading of Matthew - "The Beatitudes"
APPENDIX N: PHASE III: AGENDA

TEEFY HALL, JANUARY 21, 1996

1. Gathering Prayer: Morning prayer (*Liturgy of the Hours*).
2. Introduction of the Process: Purpose of the day is to offer a group the opportunity to assess the action in ministry as a whole (Phases I and III). Phase III has two different moments; rationale as follows:
   1) written evaluation: personal reflection on one's own, guided by Evaluation Form [mailed].
   2) oral evaluation: shared group reflection today to comment together; hear each other.
3. Practicalities:
   Taping: not necessary unless you want to note something not previously caught in your written evaluation.
   Br. Ignatius: to facilitate the discussion among participants.
   Patricia: present as listener to what you want to offer.

SUMMARY

Participants: All present except for Ruth [ill] and Eileen [newborn baby].

- Group arrived early, eager to speak; with the sense that it was good to have gathered again, and to bring closure to research process. Remarks like "being in a group may trigger something" [Kate]; "doing it alone was one thing; I knew it would be different in the group". [Wendy]

- Group serious about task of evaluation; all had spent time doing personal writing/form [in depth]. They wanted to dialogue on what they had written there. Openness to hear others; and the expectation that that would set off more ideas in oneself. Although they had not met as a group since Phase II in September, there was an expectancy that this group moment would be positive. This shows level of trust arrived at in Phase II [see Br. Ignatius' comments about change and growth in the personally and as a group in the space of 4 months] even though there had not been a gathering of the group in-between the two phases.
APPENDIX O

(EVALUATION:) PERSONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL:

DECEMBER 1995

(Read to group at conclusion of Phase III gathering)

At a distance of eight months. Then it was Easter Monday (initial gathering with group of 7); now it is the second week in Advent.

Impressions on handling the data to date: very challenging to step out of my role, as catechist to adults, with its security (i.e. the content to convey), and its props (e.g., various written, material resources for them), and the safety all these imply. Challenging to step into their world: to invite them to speak honestly about what all this is (GSC-CP) for them in reality; and to ask myself, "What is it that makes them walk this demanding journey?"

It is a risk. One makes oneself vulnerable. No longer is it, "Did I get all the content in" (teacher concern)? "Was the format adequate in imparting the vision and means of the GSC (co-ordinator concern)? Did they get it—in terms of "mastering" the subject matter (formation director concern)?

All these are legitimate concerns. But now it is to open oneself to look, listen and see how it is being received. Now it is to question, is it meeting their needs? Will it sustain them to go on? Will it encourage them to grow?

Discovery: the same attitude I hope to encourage in them towards children is what they are inviting me to develop with them—teachability, willingness to learn, to be open and to be nurtured by them.
APPENDIX P: PHASE III

EXCERPTS: REFLECTIONS BY BROTHER IGNATIUS

JANUARY 21, 1996

(Following the evaluative session with research group)

Br. Ignatius’ Impressions:

I was amazed at how together they were, focused on what was essential. For example, the whole reflection on journaling that Domenica brought up; it was so rich and very deep. The sharing immediately was very deep...I spoke to Domenica at the break. I was saying to her: that was a wonderful modelling of what exactly this is all about—the child becomes the 'formator' together with the catechists; they're [the children] the teachers...Mary captured something that I've heard before from people from the 'outside'. "Oh, what is this thing? Why can't you buy the materials in a store? What’s so special about this?" Mary captured that sense: you enter into a mystery; it’s a journey—you don’t know what it is until you enter into it...Also I was deeply impressed with their reflections on how they prepare for the day [with the children], to make a presentation themselves...to internalize [it]...Commitment. That’s exactly what it is, isn’t it? All those people around the table. It’s a life commitment, a faith commitment...We just have this one little piece of our lives that we kind of walk together with each other, but it’s our whole story that we share with each other when we come. So the bonding is in that storytelling, isn’t it? So much of what I heard this morning I think of in terms of my own work in formation. It’s so much the same, you know. It’s an investment of one’s life in the process of transformation. That’s what it is, really. As Wendy said, "We’re never the same afterwards; always we’re changed by it." I could see how they care for each other. Actually I was watching Kate’s face as Mary was speaking. I said [to myself], she’s totally present to what Mary was saying. You know how one can kind of look but not really be there. I could sense that she has that total sense of being there. Maybe she’s like that with everyone. I don’t know...My sense was that there had been a definite shifting in their lives, from September when I saw them. What I felt was that it [Phases I and II] seemed a little more integrated in them. Just in the way in which they spoke, there was the sense that they had reflected back on it, and they had put it together in their hearts. So it wasn’t something outside of themselves, or something they were searching for yet. I noticed that in Wendy especially. She really felt comfortable with this group, and therefore she was able to speak in a way I didn’t hear her speak in September [Phase II]—that kind of openness and freedom and sensibility, and risking to share her insights and ideas. Could she have done that in September? I don’t think so...You asked me about writing the thesis—how and where to focus. It’s putting together the truth of their stories, as being really what you want to say—that the catechists are transformed by this process. It does happen. They are taught by the children. This is what’s happened. It’s simple, but it’s not simplistic. It’s really quite profound. Like this morning’s storytelling. It was immensely profound. So to hold that and to write about that.
APPENDIX Q: PHASE III: GENERAL ANALYSIS

The dialogical process had unexpected developments relating to the following aspects.

1) **Group Dynamics:**

*more comfortable and at ease than in Phase II [cumulative affect];*

*they came in the expectation that the sharing and listening would add to their own reflections and experience: Wendy: "being in group"; Domenica: "because I knew I was coming today"; Kate: ..."may trigger something I didn’t think of [by myself]";*

*they set the agenda, and took the initiative as to how it would be done, but without previous discussion; reveals that the level of bondedness [Domenica’s word] had deepened.

2) **Individuality:**

* appeared to be more "themselves", and willing to risk self-disclosure, even on potentially problematic issues;*

* greater growth in freedom to express self, and tackle sensitive issues around GSC-CP course; my role; their own suggestions: e.g., Wendy says she’s "vague" in what she says, yet she goes on at length and is more talkative and confident in putting forward ideas [e.g., to have video made]. Francesca: less talkative than usual ["had already said it all" in the form], but poses problems that appear to her, with directness and honesty, i.e. free to critique; be critically reflective.

3) **Personal Preferences/Styles as Gift to the Group:**

* just as individuality is more marked in this Phase [which has the potential for divisiveness because of difference in personality types and learning styles] so too is the sense that these very differences ignited dialogue and deepened the discussion [goes into levels not addressed in their evaluation forms].

* For example: Wendy calls herself a "dreamer" but after she speaks it seems to call forth the contribution of the "realists". Francesca who wants to deal with practicalities ("I am practical"). This happens twice in the course of the discussion: that is, Wendy’s insights on a more intuitive level calls forth the
[balancing] response of the "realists". Wendy seems to say "why not?", the realist Francesca, "but how?"

4) **Contribution Towards Shaping the Future of GSC-CP Together:**

- because of the above factors (the different "types", styles, experiences in work), there is room for everyone—all gifts are needed to have a full picture of what the next step should be for GSC-CP. That is, to have those who have a vision, and those who sense the practicalities needed to make it concrete.

- therefore a number of different levels were spontaneously addressed by the group, that have application as to how to put together another Level Two course for the Certificate Programme.
APPENDIX R: PHASE III: SPECIFIC ANALYSIS

1. Phase II was directed by Br. Ignatius; the shift occurred more or less due to that direction (intentional levels). Whereas Phase III had no such direction, it was left open, and up to them. What happened, therefore, occurred from them, in a sort of spontaneous evolution.

2. The dialogue shifted through these levels; with a sort of synthesis of the whole emerging, in three dimensions.

Three Movements in Group Dialogue

(Personal) 1) Initial Commentary (on research as a whole)
Domenica - "amazed how deep her reflections/journal were"
Mary - importance of journaling
Domenica - sharing journals about children
Kate - "reflections important...more than "academic"
Wendy - her commentary marked passage to next level.

Practical) 2) Particulars and Problematics
Francesca - "practicalities"
Domenica - "bonding"/journalling
Mary - methodology; materials
Kate - mode of presenting; album pages
Mary - album page; practical aids
Wendy - her "video/technology" idea marked passage to next level.

(Professional) 3) GSC as a Ministry
Mary - "scepticism" of others re GSC; "mystery"/a different ministry
Domenica - "commitment"; "precious"
Francesca - demands heavy; sense of mission
Kate - ...calls forth...how to keep "fire" within?
APPENDIX S: PHASE III

PARTICIPANT EVALUATION FORM: RESPONSES:

JANUARY 21, 1996

1. ADULT SEMINAR SESSIONS

How instructive were the seminars in terms of the a) theology; b) methodology; c) pedagogy? (Rating: 1=lowest 4=highest)?

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<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
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<th>PEDAGOGY</th>
<th>REFLECTIVE ACTIVITY</th>
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COMMENTS

1A) Theology:

Francesca: "Inspiring, very instructive, yet not overwhelming."
Mary: "Inspiring."
Domenica: "Resource book of Sofia's - Living Liturgy - was very clear, concise and easy to read."

1B) Methodology:

Eileen: "This is due mainly to amount of material and amount of time to 'cover it'."
Mary: "Just wished for more."
1C) **Pedagogy:**

**Eileen:** "I felt I gained a great deal of knowledge in regard to the older child."

**Francesca:** "I found the information given very helpful and relevant to the needs of the child and supportive to the catechists."

**Mary:** "Excellent - the depth with which this was covered made a lasting impression."

**Wendy:** "...especially the Montessori content. The more I learn the more I want to know (so beautiful and fascinating)."

1D) **Reflective Activity:**

(How effective was the journal question in enabling you to give voice to your experience of the adult seminar sessions?)

**Eileen:** "I found this extremely beneficial as a way of making concrete all that I had absorbed at that moment."

**Francesca:** "It was simple yet the more I thought of it during the class I seemed to spring-board off to my own logic, idea in my head."

**Kate:** "The question was effective in that it allowed, encouraged me to reflect on the session. The scope was limitless—the question allowed me to go off in any direction on thoughts or feelings that were sparked by the session."

**Mary:** "It was good but at that point (end of class) I was also tired. Pedagogy and theology - excellent. Just felt we ran out of time for methodology."

**Domenica:** "Upon re-reading my reflections, I was glad that the topic was identified (titled) and I seemed to have filled the page with points that touched me or that stood out as I listened, observed and reacted. The journalling, itself, helped to internalize the message(s)."

**Wendy:** "Journalling was, for me, the best part of this experience. I often express deep ideas far better on paper than orally. The journalling I have done has allowed me to re-enter into the moment of the entire catechesis, whether it was with the children, or in my own personal moments. The journalling has also enabled me to retain my experiences greater to memory. I feel that journalling and recording the catechetical experience is critical to me, and an important service to the children. As I learn more about the child’s spiritual journey, I will be better able to serve them, and to record experiences is I believe critical to that."
2. CHILDREN’S SESSIONS (ATRIUM)

In light of your work with children, how applicable were the seminars in terms of a) content; b) method; c) observation activity; d) reflection activity? (Rating: 1=lowest 4=highest):

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<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>CONTENT</th>
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COMMENTS:

A) Content:

**Eileen:** "Although we may not have been following the same themes, the content was truly enriching as it is not isolated to that particular 'presentation'. In other words, all of it came into the experience with the children."

**Francesca:** "The children seemed very drawn and content with what we presented. I'm not sure if time allowed we would have done more, i.e. Prodigal Son, etc., to help them go even deeper. I would say it seems the least that we would do and the most they could handle for the time given. Even doing ‘the least’ exhausted us and takes all our energy. These themes seem very essential yet I wonder what more could we do given the time and the opportunity!"

**Mary:** "Good background resources."

2B) Method:

**Eileen:** "It was very important for me to hear and see the method and I enjoyed the input of experienced catechists. We were able to put the presentation, etc. into realistic terms."
Francesca: "Worked well, almost too predictable."
Mary: "This is the portion of the material that is referred to after the course again and again."

2C) Observation Activity:
(How effective was the journal question in guiding you to observe the children in the atrium?)

Eileen: "I found this difficult to do during the session, and yet I feel it was a helpful question and an important exercise."
Francesca: "It helped to slow me down, to watch, to listen. I found it difficult to remember to do it all the time."
Kate: "The journal question/page forced me to write things down which in turn compelled me to observe more closely. It was very distracting for the children in the Atrium when I was writing. I also found it somewhat frustrating to take down observations without any particular premise. Does one then write down anything and everything each child says and does (obviously not—but this was the sense of frustration I felt)? Perhaps had I been able to observe behaviours that supported the theories of children we had studied...but in the limited time we were in the Atrium, this wasn’t often the case...or perhaps it was hard to distance myself from the role of catechist to be a good observer."
Mary: "This was very significant in helping to strengthen this skill."
Domenica: "It directed us to be sensitive to the children’s needs and to what they have focused into."

2D) Reflection Activity:
(How effective was the journal question in guiding you to reflect on your experience with children?)

Eileen: "This helped me to discipline myself to do something that even though I know is crucial, can be forgotten in the daily business of 'doing' after the session has concluded."
Francesca: "This I enjoyed the most. It took me beyond the actual experience jumping into the future...jumping into and creating a prayer, sustaining me emotionally and inspiring me spiritually. The experience with the children was similar to other retreat times. This was richer for me...after the retreat was over."
Kate: "While I find it impossible to reflect on a session by session basis of what my time with the children means to me—I think it is possible to do over a longer time period—like what a 'semester' or year of working with the children has meant to me. Even this reflection, however, for me personally would be greatly assisted by more directed questions or by a group discussion which would trigger my own responses."
Mary: "This was another important exercise that I would recommend be part of a future course."
Domenica: "Watching the children being in peace and joy brought much joy to me. I admired their focus on Jesus and it stirred/moved me that they were so ready to receive him in the Eucharist."

3. GROUP REFLECTION DAY

How effective was the process/group reflection day in... (Rating: 1=lowest 4=highest)

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<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
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COMMENTS

3A) Inviting you to speak about your experience of this action in ministry?

Eileen: "Although we began slowly, there was a gradual 'opening' and a comfortable environment was created. I enjoyed the sharing."

Francesca: "The time together seemed like a mini debriefing. We all seemed to have lots of time to speak and we all felt safe to be ourselves. When the group works together this way I feel satisfied."

Kate: "The process of sharing our vision, hopes, experiences and struggles in this ministry helps me to clarify what I am doing and why. It also provides the support I personally need to continue."

Mary: "The group reflection day was important to put words and expression to something so very important to us yet not easily understood by those not involved in the catechesis."

Domenica: "We all seemed to be uncertain at first of what to say or in which direction to go. The tape recorder was intimidating and distracting. I'm a little hesitant to speak,
when not asked a direct question. I'm not fond of voluntarily speaking out unless it's a group discussion with group input."

3B) **Enabling you to enter into each other's experience of this action in ministry?**

Eileen: "Again, the openness that resulted was wonderful for our individual sharing. The moment was brief, but then, there never seems to be enough time when the work is so beautifully complex."

Francesca: "Time limits this kind of connection to enter into others' experiences because each individual can only verbalize so much, experiences so much (tears or laughter). It was good and gentle but I still don't know all of what they were thinking and feeling and I'm not really interested to beat it to death about one topic. It would be interesting to raise a new topic and see (test) the group's response now that we've shared a unique experience."

Mary: "It was good - reaffirming - to be understood and to share our experiences with their common thread, our feelings with their common root."

Domenica: "Brother Ignatius had a wonderful, peaceful disposition which helped and encouraged us to speak up. As we got more comfortable about sharing the experience, others interjected and the tension was lessened."

4. **ASSESSMENT OF PROCESS**

*In light of the action in ministry process as a whole, what suggestions for improvement would you offer in terms of designing a future adult formation programme for those in ministry with children 6-9 years of age?*

Eileen:

"I would suggest that the participants become involved in the actual presentations. This can be done in such a way as to put everyone at ease, i.e. small groups. Another suggestion would be to tap into the existing experience of those within the group. This could take place in response to particular situations, questions, etc. I feel that when the participants are involved in discussion, for even part of the time, attention can be maintained. Realistically, it is late and people are tired."

Francesca:

"Since this is not my first time taking the 6-9 course I must look at it as how someone for the first time could hear this or have the courage to do a first Communion group all by themselves without an expert such as Patricia or other experienced catechists like myself around to give some help. I think it would be helpful for such a new person to 1) study this part of the 6-9 course as a complete unit; 2) the unit be focused so that the theology is given but the actual work with the children is not fragmented but done..."
just like a retreat for the children. Not being broken by talk and other information—do all that first then...model a retreat, summarized but following the whole process. No jumping around. And 3) it's hard to do this one night...for over a few months."

Kate:

"While I remember on warm sultry evenings it was nice to change topics in the course of an evening because it would perk me up a bit. Ideally I think it best to cover one topic before going on to others. My ideal session I think would be first to do the presentation to the class (with notes provided afterwards so participants can fully enter into the presentation). This would be followed by the theology and then some discussion on pedagogy. Assuming there has been an overview of the child from the age of 6-9 already, the pedagogy at this point might simply touch on how this particular presentation fits into the context of the 6-9 child and then some discussion on actual experiences (i.e. challenging and inspirational moments). I say this is my 'ideal' session—knowing full well that when we add in the 'time' constraint, the ideal cannot always be achieved."

Mary:

"For some reason I do not have a sense of being as prepared as I felt after the 3-6 course (perhaps because of having no previous experience with many of the 6-9 materials, the comparison is not fair). My suggestion would be to have more focus on materials and album pages. Also, a clearer overview of moments within materials and inter-relationship between materials. The materials, and themes are more interconnected at this age."

Domenica:

"The way the course was designed from September-April seemed different than April-June. April-June was more focused and holding to the agenda. September-December seemed to have been focusing from one thing to another. Too much time was given to the articles and that took away from presentation viewing, especially to people who had not seen a lot of the presentations, or were not able to prepare the meditations on presentations prior to this. Perhaps two classes on theory, two classes on presentations or one hour theory, one hour presentation. I think this would be less frustrating for those who are anxious to view presentations. April-June had a better balance between background theory (theology, pedagogy) and the practical."

Wendy:

"Visit other atriums besides the catechist’s 'home atrium' to observe different groups of children. Note differences in materials between atriums, hopefully to determine what
is best serving the child; to determine what materials children seem particularly drawn to, and also those which appear to go "unused" (and why). (Note the differences between atriums.) Catechists need to be encouraged to meet on a regular basis (both catechists who work in the same parish, as well as other catechists). I believe we need to discover the gifts that each catechist has, and we must encourage one another to use our gifts, overcome our shyness (if any); this is all to serve the children to our utmost ability. Perhaps a few extra sessions could be added. The study material is rich, extensive and deep in its content (by its very nature). Maybe some would find it helpful if we had a meeting where we brought any of our problems/concerns regarding the study material to the group for discussion. This would be the only item on the agenda.

ENT OF FACILITATION

it of the action in ministry process as a whole, what suggestions for it would you offer in terms of furthering my own skills in facilitating a!t formation programme?

teen:

"To follow, with the previous suggestion, you can allow for more discussion (I know that this depends on the participants contributing to the posed question or topic). I think that you can feel 'freer' to ask for assistance from other catechists for the presentations. This allows you to concentrate on the theology/theory."

Francesca:

"Since timing and scheduling limit what can be done it would be helpful for the participants to know what was going to happen and when and for how long. This means making a schedule...and sticking to it. The good thing about giving a schedule to the participants at the beginning of the course is that they can see where they're going and feel a sense of completeness along the way. Since each presentation can always go deeper and in that sense can never be complete, it would be helpful for participants to share in the plan. This would also help you prepare in advance rather than accommodate the flow (needs) of the class. Although this is very important when working with children, when adults come out on a one night a week basis for a course it is more practical to complete the course and allow the in depth growing to happen perhaps later (although I was glad to be amongst the first group to go through the 6-9 course it would be very difficult to repeat the process of training adults if each course was not completed. I'm not talking about Reconciliation/First Communion but rather the whole 6-9 programme).

I'm really just saying that:

1) a schedule be developed to do the whole 6-9 course as a unit.
2) the schedule should be handed out at the beginning of the course.
3) the schedule should be honoured during the course.
4) it would be ideal to modify the schedule for the next course if need be.
5) in all it will help develop a routine and a rhythm that will make the 'teacher' less stressed and the participants more satisfied.
*6) Removing some of the confusion or mystery about what is to be covered helps make this catechesis process a little less mysterious and much more accessible to people.
Bottom line...others might come forward to help teach the course if we can build confidence within the process."

**Kate:**

"You are such a wellspring of knowledge, insight and deep spirituality. You are also extremely sensitive to the needs of the individuals in the room. Sometimes I would venture to say, these gifts get in the way. I don’t think you need to check in with the class each time to explain in considerable detail what you are going to do—just do it. We are literally hungry for the knowledge you have to share. Stick to the essentials—while there is other information which is very interesting and valuable (i.e. the New Catholic Catechism, the articles by Berryman and Meehan), I don’t think the limited time we have, allows for their inclusion."

**Mary:**

"Most what is mentioned in #4."

**Domenica:**

"I always looked forward to coming together with the class. Obviously the whole class bonded, through fellowship and prayer. Reflecting and journaling was a wonderful way to internalize these feelings. Perhaps you may want to have your future students journal from lesson #1. I loved going back 6 months later and reading my reflections. It restored and helped me remember with joy, what touched me."

**Wendy:**

"Presentation of presentations—perhaps time could be saved if the written presentation is handed out beforehand. As it is now (but not in all cases) we spend our time writing as the presentation is given to us. I often found this stressful because I always worry that I will miss some of the finer points."
APPENDIX T: EVANGELICAL MAXIMS OF JESUS

You must love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul with all your mind and with all your strength.

Luke 10:27

Love your neighbor as yourself.

Luke 10:27

I give you a new commandment. Love one another as I have loved you.

John 13:24

Love your enemies.

Matthew 5:44

Do good to those who hate you.

Luke 6:27

When you pray, enter into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret.

Matthew 6:6

Ask and you will receive. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened.

Matthew 7:7

Be perfect just as your Heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 5:48
God, the Father, calls his children and to participate in the Eucharist.

As the beginning the bread and wine are prepared. A few drops of water are added to the wine.

The Father is asked to send the Holy Spirit to transform the gifts which have been prepared.

The priest repeats the words of Jesus at the Last Supper. The bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ who gives Himself to all people of all times.

To Christ's gift of Himself we respond:

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

—and we offer ourselves, together with the Risen Christ for the glory of the Father

Amen

The Father invites all His children to the Eucharistic Table.

—and they show they are brothers and sisters by exchanging a sign of peace.

united by the one broken bread

Amen
APPENDIX V: THE MYSTERY OF FAITH BOOKLET

(Good Shepherd Catechesis Newsletter, Spring, 1994, p. 15)

We realize that the presentation of "The Mystery of Faith" always goes well, yet our the children do not work with the material on their own. In fact, it misses a guide to the personal work.

I present you with such a guide here and request that you try it with your children. I look forward to hearing from you about how the use of this material goes with your children, and I send my hope that it will all be filled with joy! Sofia

Ages: 6-8

This is a booklet for the child's personal work. It should have an orange cover, and be sized 8 1/2 by 5 1/2 inches.

On the cover is to read "The Mystery of Faith."

Page 1

(Prepare the table, placing:
the table cloth, the Good Shepherd,
the paten, the chalice.)

The Good Shepherd calls us to his table and we encounter his presence in the Bread and the Wine.

Page 2

How is our encounter with him?

For example, how did the people who lived at the time of Jesus know him before the resurrection?

Would their encounter be more beautiful; or is ours more beautiful?

Page 3

What is it that they knew about the person of Jesus?

(Place on the table the picture of the Crucifixion of Jesus.)

Those people knew that Jesus suffered death the same as each person dies. Yet, they did not know...
The first aspect is the unity and globality of the history the Bible narrates. It is a history that includes all time and all creation. When the first page of the Bible tells of Adam, meaning the human being, it is speaking about the whole of humanity. When we turn again to the final book of the Bible, we read that God will make “all things new,” that there will be a cosmic chorus of praise to God composed of

“all the living things in creation—everything that lives in the air, and on the ground, and under the ground, and in the sea.” (Rev. 5:13)

Certainly it is not easy for children to embrace such a vast framework. They need, therefore, to be helped by means of tools which strike the imagination and provide incentives for activity so that gradually they will be able to absorb the message—the well-known function of the material.

La Fettuccia — The Time Line
To give an example, we will describe the first presentation we offer to children on this theme, one which is designed precisely to capture the child’s imagination. This material consists of a long (gross grain) ribbon 50 meters in length; each rib represents a time span of one thousand years (obviously the proportions are approximate).

The ribbon is in four colors. The first part is blue, representing the period when the inorganic world was formed. This is followed by a beige section, representing the period which begins with the appearance of vegetation on the earth. Further along the beige part of the ribbon, there are figures to mark the appearance of man—hominid and *Homo sapiens*. This latter figure is accompanied by the image of a hand to illustrate that we are referring to the human person who begins to transform the world by the work of his hands. The beige is followed by two ribs that are yellow—the color of light—representing approximately two thousand years from the time of the coming of Jesus Christ to the present.

The last segment of the ribbon is colored white, indicating the time from tomorrow onwards, that is, the page of history that is still yet to be written. This white segment ends with a yellow fringe. The fringe is to illustrate that we do not know when history will be concluded with the full establishment of the kingdom of God. Yellow, the color of light, is to illustrate that light will overpower darkness, the positive will overcome the negative.

What are we saying in this presentation?

If it is permissible to express it this way, we are giving the “measure” of God and the human creature: since the beginning of history God is always present in this age-old process of development, a process in which we are immersed and whose fulfillment we await; the human creature is small a great at the same time. What does the life of a single person represent compared to the vast sea of history? What does each represent in the immensity of a plan that embraces all time and space? And yet the human person is an integral part of that sea, a crucial collaborator in that plan. The great history is also my history. It is the history of each one of us. Each one of us is present in it and in some way contributes to it.

A vision of this kind corresponds, I believe, to a fundamental need in the child after six years of age because this is the age when the world begins to open up for the child. It is essential to help older children to orient themselves in this “ever expanding” horizon so that they know how to walk ahead, drawn forward by the grandeur of a reality in which they are conferred the dignity of a collaborator.
## APPENDIX X: SPIRITUALITY OF CHILDHOOD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORIENTATION</th>
<th>Montessori Approach</th>
<th>Good Shepherd Catechesis Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>an approach, not a “method”</td>
<td>“Parable Method”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>liturgical approach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VISION OF THE CHILD</th>
<th>Montessori Approach</th>
<th>Good Shepherd Catechesis Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>directives for growth within child</td>
<td>capacity of relationship with God within child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0-6 child: “spiritual embryo” (sensory-motor capacities)</td>
<td>0-6 child: “partner in the covenant” with God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-12 child: cosmic agent in creation (intellectual - social)</td>
<td>6-12 child: “collaborator”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VISION OF EDUCATION</th>
<th>Montessori Approach</th>
<th>Good Shepherd Catechesis Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inner directives need to be fostered and not hindered</td>
<td>inner hunger to be nourished and capacities awakened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>education is an “aid to life”</td>
<td>education as service to life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>education as “incarnational” process</td>
<td>religious formation as encounter with Love</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEANS OF DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>Montessori Approach</th>
<th>Good Shepherd Catechesis Approach</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(inner) “concentration”: as the sign that child’s potential is engaged</td>
<td>(inner) contemplation/enjoyment in relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(outer) materials: as leading from concrete to abstraction/acquisition of culture</td>
<td>(outer) materials: (biblical/liturgical) as a help to child’s meditation/prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>environment: to facilitate self-directed growth; all obstacles to growth removed</td>
<td>environment (atrium): foster spiritual formation and participation in life of Church</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROLE OF EDUCATOR</th>
<th>Montessori Approach</th>
<th>Good Shepherd Catechesis Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to educate child’s human potential</td>
<td>to educate child’s religious potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>guide child’s potentialities</td>
<td>servant of God - child relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>so as to respond to child’s silent request: “Help me to do it by myself.”</td>
<td>so as to respond to child’s silent request: “Help me to come close to God. Help me to be fully alive.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CALL TO EDUCATOR</th>
<th>Montessori Approach</th>
<th>Good Shepherd Catechesis Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>adult’s role requires “spiritual preparation”</td>
<td>adult’s role requires religious formation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>key: observation of children</td>
<td>key: observation of children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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