

# Stress in the Roman Catholic Priesthood

*“Harvest for a Millennium”*

Una Doyle BA(Hons) MEd (Ed Psych)

University of Nottingham  
Hallward Library

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**“THE HARVEST IS RICH  
BUT THE LABOURERS  
... NEED SUPPORT ! ”**

**(adapted from Luke 10: V 2)**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis investigates the existence of stress in the Roman Catholic priesthood. A transactional model of stress is adopted as a heuristic for this investigation. Here, stress is seen as the relationship between features of the work environment, as appraised by clergy themselves, and various indicators of diminished well-being e.g. poorer self reported health, lower self-esteem and increased pessimism about the role and effectiveness of the priest in the future. This model also places considerable emphasis upon the possible role of perceived support in the overall aetiology – or amelioration – of stress.

Using this transactional model as a guide, seventeen work environment stressors were identified on the basis of qualitative and quantitative investigations with a total sample of 189 priests drawn from four dioceses. The qualitative investigation comprised twelve in-depth interviews with an opportunistic sample of clergy. The focus of these interviews was to determine the antecedents and consequences of stress as perceived by members of the clergy. On the basis of the interview data a bespoke questionnaire was developed for distribution to a broad sample of priests. The questionnaire measured both antecedents (work environment factors) and consequences (impacts on well-being as well as perceptions of the support available to priests both inside and outside the Church).

The data to be presented show that it is the contradictions that many priests have to deal with which are often pivotal in the aetiology of stress e.g. the implementation of Canon Law in an increasingly secular world. The multiplicity and diversity of roles that priests now have to fulfil – whether at Diocesan or parochial level, is also a key factor, as are the daily parish/diocesan administration duties that priests have to undertake and the increasingly ‘convenience stores mentality’ (as clergy see it) of the Church community. Very little support in dealing with these issues was perceived to be available to them by many priests within the sample.



The implications of these results are discussed both in terms of their correspondence with findings in general occupational stress research and in terms of a proposed rudimentary stress management programme that might be implemented to help manage stress within the Roman Catholic priesthood.

# CHAPTER ONE

## **Introduction - Does stress exist in the R.C. Priesthood?**

The Roman Catholic Church has survived for twenty centuries and fought some monumental battles in that period - usually with people who believed something else (Philpot, 1998). Paradoxically, we are now living at a time when there is a great deal of interest in God, but much disillusionment with the institutional churches. In this 21st Century, both the Roman Catholic Church and priesthood continue to produce contradictory responses from the media (Philpot, 1998). While the existing public perception of this very private and often inaccessible institution draws both intrigue and suspicion, equally others retain a sense of indifference towards it. To be ignored as irrelevant is therefore a new cultural experience, calling for a new set of responses. For many believers today there is little doubt that the Church stands at a precarious point at the turn of this millennium (Cozzens, 2000). This awareness has resulted in a greater interest in the role of the Catholic priest serving within this historical institution. Having accepted a lifetime 'vocation' within a universal 'church' as distinct from a 'job' within a large 'organisation', far from being ignored, priests are subjected to greater media interest and 'headline' speculation suggesting that both the Church and priesthood is experiencing a crisis:

<i>"Stressed clergy voice their pain"</i>	<i>(The Universe 8 June 1997)</i>
<i>"Priesthood in crisis as numbers still decline"</i>	<i>(The Catholic Times 2 May 1999)</i>
<i>"Catholic Church will lose half its priests in 10 years"</i>	<i>(The Independent 30 March 2001)</i>
<i>"Pope condemns paedophile priests"</i>	<i>(The Independent 24 April 2002)</i>
<i>"Turbulent priests - The Seven Catholic Seminaries serving England and Wales: 300 empty places"</i>	<i>(The Guardian 2 July 2002)</i>

The Roman Catholic priesthood therefore, offers a unique occupational group for psychological research. It brings together two seldom integrated research areas: contemporary psychological stress theory and the scientific study of the Roman Catholic priesthood. However, the priesthood cannot be separated from the Church and it is in this context, i.e. the Church as a hierarchical organisational institution that is a suitable starting point for



this thesis. Celebrating 2000 years as a worldwide institutional church accounting for 17.1% of the world population of 6.4 billion (*The Universe statistics 2004 - released in Feb 2006*) it offers an intriguing foundation on which to investigate stress in the Roman Catholic priesthood.

### **1:1 The Roman Catholic Church as an organisation and unique institution**

The Roman Catholic Church is recognised as the largest institution in the world (Stourton, 1998). and the only 'supra-national' institution. Unlike the United Nations or the European Union, seeking to unite people through their governments, the Catholic Church claims to be a family that transcends race, colour and nation and speaks to individuals without the mediation of their secular rulers.

Distinction is made here between the Roman Catholic Church having a social organisation, and being nothing more than an organisation (Leather, 1986) as it appears to be on the surface (Cadet, 1963). If however, the Church is an entity, which has an organisation, then the relationship uniting 'Church' and 'organisation' becomes more obscure and less inclined to define on an empirical basis. Arguably, the R.C. Church is the largest organisation worldwide with close to one billion adherents representing 17.1% of the world population as members. Quite simply, it is too big and too powerful to ignore (Sipe, 1995) and anyone touched by western civilisation has equally been touched by the influence of the Roman Catholic Church.

### **Identity of the R.C. Church as a World Wide Institution in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

In England, historically, the culture within this organisation took on the identity of a world wide club (Stourton, 1998). For nearly a century, the Catholic Church lived handsomely on its magnificent, inherited intellectual capacity. Loyalty from its members ran parallel within a lived existence of fear. Huddled together during centuries of persecution, English Catholics developed a strong sense of their own identity. Closely intertwined because of the codes of both religion and class compelling them to inter-marry, working class and immigrant populations practised the survival of



their faith alongside aristocratic and squire-archival families. Persecution bred tenacity, snobbery was blessed with sanctity and martyrdom, was an extraordinary powerful phenomenon (Stourton,1998). This continuity of identity within a community was reinforced with the reassurance that *your* Church had the answer to absolutely everything (Stourton, 1998).

The Church of pre Vatican II was recognised as an organisation which had long acted as a mechanism for transmitting authority downwards. Until 1962 the Roman Catholic Church institution maintained its origins of a Latin language and a style rooted in tradition dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation. Pope John XXIII as head of the R.C. Church on earth, decided to address the dual focus of returning to the source and origins of Christianity and, re-express it in the changing circumstances of a modern 1960's era. Acknowledging the signs of the times, he recognised that to live, and survive, meant to change. In retrospect, one Catholic writer described this earthquake as a revolution within the world's oldest institution (Stourton, 1998). It provided the first forum allowing decisions to flow in the other direction.

The content of the Church's opening ceremony of Vatican II Council reflected in the documents that emerged three years later, revealed the concept of not only a 'Roman' Church but an acceptance of the culture of India, of Africa, South America et al. As such the Roman Catholic Church evolved as a new mechanism universally described as 'enculturalisation'. Four decades later the Roman Catholic Church still experiences the disappointment and drama of an institution undergoing a mid life crisis. Change is still awaited (Stourton, 1998). The Church of 21<sup>st</sup> century continues to be viewed as an organisational institution (Ryan, 1997) and one which moves and acts in an institutional mode, whether we speak of the Church as universal, on a national level, a diocesan pastoral agenda, or even the parish structure. It continues to struggles with implementing the aspirations of Vatican II into the 21<sup>st</sup> Church where the role of the baptised members worldwide are now invited to share responsibility and ministry.



Perhaps this struggle is linked to the way that power, authority and obedience is still exercised within the Church Organisation today.

### **Power and Authority within the hierarchical institution of the R.C. Church**

The Roman Catholic Church today maintains its culture of a clearly defined hierarchy of offices, each having its own precise sphere of judicial authority. The way the Catholic Church is governed reflects both its history as a temporal power and its claim to divine inspiration. The pope, as head of the R.C. Church on earth, retains a unique place among world political leaders, heading the world's most smallest sovereign state, The Vatican. This allows him to be a bridge builder between the human sphere and the divine. Both roles encourage exchange and centralization of authority in the papal person as Europe's last absolute monarch.

The balance of power within the R.C. Church organisation has shifted back and forth for centuries. While the trend within the Church is still towards male domination and authoritarianism, centralization and celibacy was sporadic existing from the fourth century of Christianity but not marked or dominated in the earliest Christian churches. Historically too, the office of cardinal has no biblical foundation but arose from the way the Church developed as an institution. The role of a Cardinal is still to elect a Pope and run the Church in the interregnum period between popes, as well as being the Pope's special advisor. The Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome is the man in charge of ideas (Stourton, 1998).

Clearly, the way male power is exercised in the R.C. Church is a mysterious business suiting the body that hands on most of the levers of power, that it, the Roman Curia (Stourton, 1998) i.e. the imperial 'Civil Service'. For centuries, bureautic organisations have played a major role in the Roman Catholic Church (Weber, 1947) well illustrated by the administrative role of priesthood in the modern church, which has expropriated almost all of the old church beneficiaries once subject to private appropriation. This is illustrated too, by the conception of the



universal Episcopate, thought of as formally constituting a universal legal competence in religious matters (Leather, 1986). Similarly, the doctrine of Papal infallibility is thought of as involving universal competence but only one which functions *ex cathedra* in the sphere of the office, thus distinguishing the office and the private affairs of the incumbent. The same phenomena are found in large-scale capitalistic enterprise and the larger it is the greater their role (Leather, 1986).

While the R.C. Church exercised secular powers, its leaders would use secular means to consolidate their hold over their members. Surprisingly, even today the R.C. Church is both strong enough and rich enough to use its secular means of pressure on worldwide issues. However in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century, as the Roman Catholic Church's secular influences diminishes, the way it uses ideas to exercise authority becomes more important. Part of this is reflected in the role, power and authority of the Bishop and his relationship with his clergy.

### **The Role of the Diocesan Bishop and his relationship with his priests**

The role of the Diocesan Bishop is an interesting concept in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In terms of conduct a bishop as God's steward must be blameless, must not be arrogant or quick tempered. Thus by his readiness to listen and his trusting familiarity, a bishop can work to promote the whole pastoral work of the entire diocese. A bishop is required to have a fair grasp of the Word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teachings so that he may be able to both preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it. (St Paul Letter to Titus 1:79). In keeping with the pyramid model of the Church organisation, the way the Vatican still exercises power in its appointments of Bishops still reflects the way bishops themselves exercise power over their priests (Stourton, 1998).

A Bishop clearly has extraordinary authority over a priest's life through obedience to him, whilst fulfilling what many would describe as an unenviable role (Philpot, 1998). He should continually welcome his priests within a special love since they assume in part the bishops duties and



cares. They should be regarded as brothers and friends and the bishop should take their greatest interest in their welfare, both temporal and spiritual, continually sanctifying their priests. Bishops are asked to exercise the greatest care in the programme formation of their diocesan body of priests, be glad to listen to their priests' views and consult them, hold conferences with them about matters that concern the needs of pastoral work and the good of the diocese" (Vatican II Chp 1:63).

Yet those elected Bishop may constantly doubt their ability to fulfil their role as outlined in the Presidential address of Bishop Pilla, USA to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1996. Bishops were challenged to ask themselves about the extent to which they truly empowered priests in their ministry. Priests in turn were challenged about the extent to which they truly empower their bishop as leaders. This would provide a mutual sense of support and understanding within priesthood. Part of this support and understanding is based on the concept of obedience.

### **The Concept of Obedience both within and outside of the Organisation**

The Roman Catholic Priesthood is composed of a succession of response throughout life of 'officium laudis' or unceasing discovery of all that is true, good and beautiful. The concept of obedience plays an important part in the life a priest because he must respond obediently to his Bishop and adhere to Canon Law that is, the translation of theological ideas into practical reality. Priests themselves should reverence their persons in the authority of Christ the Supreme pastor and should be attached to their bishop with sincere charity and obedience, inspired through and by the spirit of co-operation on that sharing of the Episcopal mystery.

The subject of obedience today therefore, still meets with a real challenge from both within and outside the Church organisation. Religious obedience itself has quite an exceptional dignity (Haring, 1997) but in its absolute form, religious obedience is owed to God alone. Yet the meaning of faith and the authenticity of religious obedience confront a crisis when religious



authorities demand all too much submission to an obscure package of doctrine (Haring, 1997). Here clearly is a question surrounding historical potential abuse of power within the Church towards clergy themselves (Hedin, 1995).

Yet while many priests remain frustrated by the deafness of some bishops to issues arising from their experience of priesthood (Cozzens, 2000), others demonstrate a growing sympathy for the relentless challenges and pressures facing their own bishops. Their deference to the diocesan bishop remains appropriate while recognising that bishops have been tested by many of the same ordeals they themselves have undergone (Cozzens, 2000). Subsequently, the bishop-priest relationship seems stronger, more fraternal. Yet obedience still appears to be structured towards a mainly institutional and hierarchical dimension of ecclesial ministry (Philpot, 1998). More importantly, this environment is in danger of producing a sense of careerism which in turn has been termed ‘clericalism’. This is an interesting concept in contradiction to the Gospel values because it is notorious that certain jobs are put in the spotlight when the Papal Nuncio starts looking around (Philpot, 1998).

Certain clergy however, will continue to aspire to being a Bishop within the course of their priestly ‘career’ and are disappointed when these aspirations are not fulfilled. This culture of careerism was described as *Scarlet Fever* (Dolan, 2000) a direct reference to the colour of the clerical dress worn by a Cardinal and a condition which is deemed a dangerous virus in clerical life today. Yet ironically, if a small percentage of priests would like to preside from the Bishop, another small percentage would actually like to *be* a Bishop (Philpot, 1998). This presents another question which is centred around ambition in the priesthood. The priest at ordination will promise obedience to his Bishop and is publicly seen to be a man radically available to the Church (Power, 1998). However, this obedience is being heavily challenged not just within priesthood but the congregation themselves whose values and lifestyles are in direct



‘disobedience’ to Canon law. These very people make up the congregation from which future vocations are drawn including to priesthood itself.

Sadly, the modern Catholic while holding views that may put them at odds with the Church hierarchy - for example *Humane Vitae* - still retain a deep affection for some of the basic principles upon which the Church is founded: respect for authority, belief in an absolute truth and, a conviction of the universality of the Christian message. A change in the ruling on contraception today would undoubtedly bring back millions of Catholics into full communion with the Church and destroy at a stroke the principal source of the gap between teaching and practice that has had such a corrosive impact on the Church’s place in the daily lives of modern Catholics (Stourton, 1998). It would also restore the Church’s authority in the arena of sexual ethics and personal morality - something for which the need and the demand has become even more urgent as the bewildering choices offered to us by modern science (Stourton, 1998).

A further challenge to obedience today is the existence of the world wide web (Cornwell, 2001). The Internet makes for dangerous, subverting times for the Catholic Church which has traditionally addressed the faithful from a special timeless space at the Roman centre, which, claims the authority once it has spoken on a disputed issue or principle, to discourage further debate. Not one to operate on peer group discussion, (Cornwell, 2001), the Catholic Church now has to compete with participator-voyages surfing the internet where:

*"every commodity, pretension and opinion can be peddled, compared and contrasted, sampled, reshaped, interactively questioned, contradicted, book-marked and consigned to oblivion" (Cornwell, 2001)*

As this 21st Century begins and turns greater media attention towards the institution of the Roman Catholic Church, much speculation centres on changes, particularly as to the current Pope’s successor. As Catholics look forward to a new papacy, they seem to want a much more democratic pope who would permit them to elect their own bishops, more power and authority, decentralization to the bishops, - women priests and more



married priests (Stourton, 1998). Clearly, this is a pope who would be surrounded by lay advisors and in short would result in the kind of sweeping liberal agenda that is the stuff of Curial nightmares (Stourton, 1998). The next Pope, as head of this world wide institution, will have to work within a new set of rules because the Roman Catholic Church is wider than the western Church.

A newly elected Pope from outside of Europe would fulfil the promise of true universality so many felt at the opening of the Second Vatican Council which could have an electrifying effect by underlying the 'Catholic' element in Roman Catholicism. It would also strengthen the unifying force implied in the idea of a 'Roman' Church (Stourton, 1998). From the fourth century onwards the Church saw itself as the centre of the world and the world turned around the Church, so the world showed servitude to the Church. The Council (Vatican II) turned that on its head. At present, Rome is often seen to be imposing its discipline that carries echoes of the imperial associations of its past and, encourages rebellion. With a non European at the heart, Rome might appear as a symbol of a new relationship in which the Centre is the Servant of the wider Church, not its master (Stourton, 1998). A new Pope will find the Church under severe strain as an institution but equally a formidable engine for ideas. For an organisation that is often regarded as a by word for reaction spending so much of its energy trying to suppress dissent, the Catholic Church has shown remarkable intellectual fertility, offering both a risk and an opportunity given its size and history (Stourton, 1998).

### **The size of the population within the organisation today**

As an employer the Catholic Church employs over one and a half million personnel, including 900,000 nuns; (Sewell, 2001), over 405,891 priests (Annuario Pontificio 2006 quoting 2004 figures) and nearly 4,200 bishops (Sewell, 2001), but caution at this start of this millennium is recommended (Sewell, 2001) because the new mood is against taking any pleasure in the fact that this hierarchical institutional church survived the 20<sup>th</sup> Century more or less intact. But this statement differs to 1960 when conversions



stood at 12,000 in England and Wales (Sewell, 2001). Catholic marriages have declined by 60 per cent, Mass attendance halved since 1966 and Seminaries have closed down as the number of ordinations have halved. The numbers leaving the priesthood to marry have caused an even greater dearth of clergy (Sewell, 2001).

On a further negative note, we can argue that if we extrapolate these trajectories into the future, Catholicism will be more or less extinct in Britain by about 2030” (Sewell, 2001, quoting from *The Tablet* 19 June, 1999). This clearly has an affect on both candidates presenting themselves for the priesthood and the impact on existing priests and potential stress factors. In the early 1970’s there were 7,600 Roman Catholic priests in England and Wales. Today, there are now 5,700 (Sewell, (2001) . While 400 deacons have been newly recruited, the average age of a parish priest (55-59 years covering two thirds of priests) is alarming. Such ambiguity leads to misrepresentation in the media. Such data gives fuel to a media with an insatiable desire for information regarding the Roman catholic Church and priesthood in this 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Media perception of the Roman Catholic Church - *History versus Mystery***

At the start of this 21<sup>st</sup> century the public perception of the very private and often inaccessible organisation of the Roman Catholic Church is still met with intrigue. 2,000 years later the Roman Catholic Church still creates a cultural atmosphere of mystery, retaining a genius for the *mise en scene*, its special skill was to inspire awe, at the same time as convincing every soul it encountered, that each had a special place in its affections (Stourton, 1998) .

The RC Church uses the media in a positive way and the Church is fond of publishing documents. Media interest, at its height at Vatican II when the Church experienced its first real encounter with journalism, some 900 journalists arrived in Rome. The Vatican hopes of controlling the press proved in vain because nothing gets the journalistic juices going like



secrecy and the early sessions of the Council were as secret as the Church could make such an enormous gathering (Stourton, (1998).

While censorship was an automatic (RC) Church reflex, in the end those who tried to control the flow of information in democracies almost always lose. By Vatican II, the Church was becoming a democracy (Stourton, 1998) because the 20th century was about the passing of power at Vatican II (Kaiser, Time Magazine 1965). The moves which threatened to change authority in the Institution of the Roman Catholic Church came geographically through the changes in language and culture. Changes in the Liturgy, including language from Latin to English, saw a push for Liturgy that allowed more participation by the people rather than being 'performed' by a priest with the people as spectators. The latter, therefore encouraged the idea of Church as an institution (Stourton, 1998).

In contrast, changes by implication encouraged more participation in Liturgy. Yet ironically, and more subtly it also allowed changes in the way the Church itself was actually run. Secular commentators have seized on the 'priest famine' as proof that faith is heading for the exit as pressure increases on a decreased number of priests (Sewell, 2001). An alleged revolt against institutional religion; the impossible demands of priestly celibacy. The influence of Vatican II (Sewell, 2001) argues the parallel in the National Health Service and questions if we really need such broad brush theories to account for a shortfall of 900 priests over 30 years - or 63 per annum - when we experience an even more acute shortage of nurses? We do not after all, imagine that the nation has ceased to believe in the N.H.S. When statistics are available and implications of a shortage of priests and a fall in faith worshippers is observed, journalists and the media generally are quick to respond. In the latter years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the Roman Catholic Church - and more specifically the Roman Catholic priesthood - was the subject of several tabloid, broadsheet and Catholic press headlines. Yet clearly, the endorsement of married Anglican priests has caused considerable tension amongst many clergy today. Such stringent codes increase media curiosity and when contradictory behaviour



is evident and media interest increases, opinions are voiced both within the Church itself and from the media.

*“Catholic Bishops support end to celibacy” (The Sunday Times 13 August 1995)*

*“Sexuality in the Seminary” (The Tablet 12 May 2001)*

*"An epic of horror. The lurid litany of child sex abuse that has indicted an entire Church"*  
*(The Sunday Independent Eire 7 April 2002)*

*“Priests feel the strain of increasing workload”*  
*(The Catholic Times 15 September 2002)*

More recently, historic cases of child abuse by Catholic priests, nuns and religious orders have led to a negative self image and has directly affected the morale and self image of clergy. Following the Lord Nolan Committee and publication of The Nolan Report in 2001, *The Universe* (25 November 2001) stated that Lord Nolan’s Committee discovered that 21 out of 5,600 Catholic priests in England and Wales were convicted of child abuse between 1995 and 1999 .

Negative media coverage regarding the Catholic Church which focus on the corrosion of the Church’s institutional authority are said to be the result of ‘failings of its teachings on sex’ and is speeded up with every newspaper story about a paedophile priest, or, a bishop with a baby (Stourton, 1998). While the intention of the Roman Catholic Church as an institution is to use the media in a positive way, and that the Church is fond of publishing documents and holding seminars on the importance of the media - there is even something called ‘World Communications Sunday’(Sewell, 2001) . The decree of the means of social communication promulgated by Vatican II in December 1963 contains instructions for all Catholics working in the secular media as journalists and it will be for them to regulate economic, political or artistic values in the way that will not conflict with the common good (Sewell, 2001).

Realistically, this Decree can be read as imposing a series of obligations on Catholic journalists to approach their work with a sense of moral purpose but, the institution is so broadly drawn it make any form of concerted



action impossible (Sewell, 2001). Entering into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in the Catholic Church, the period of 1970 to 1989 following the Second Vatican Council was a period when priests saw the polarisations that surfaced the Council widen, as curial ecclesiologies underwent the priesthood's common ground (Cozzens, 2000). Priests, became accustomed to the lack of real dialogue. Many tried to make their lives work by reducing boundaries to their parish; large numbers resigned; some went through the motions, became cynical and bitter and the rest, held the conviction that eventually their confusion would be sorted by the liberating breath of the Holy Spirit (Cozzens, 2000). In short, there is little doubt in the minds of priests today that the Church stands at a precarious point at the turn of the millennium.

Reflecting on 2,000 years of history in The Roman Catholic Church as a hierarchical institutional organisation, by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, baptised Catholics accounted for 1 in 8 of the population in England and Wales (Sewell, 2001). Many find these raw figures startling (Sewell, 2001) for during the past fifty years or so Catholic have re-engineered themselves as a stealth minority undetectable by conventional social radar. Yet, the feeling persists, that in some ill defined way, Catholics are still not quite like ordinary people" (Sewell, 2001)

### **1:2 The Life and Role of a Roman Catholic Priest in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

The role of the Roman Catholic priest in the Church is clearly detailed in conciliar and post conciliar documents of 1965 section 63: The Decree on the Ministry and Life of a priest. It outlines the life of those ordained whose mission is to promote the service of Jesus Christ the Teacher, Priest and King. While all members of the church share in the service as one body, priests share this ministry in a distinct way.

The first task of a priest as co-worker of his Bishop is to preach the Gospel of God to all. This function was handed over in a subordinate degree so that priests might be appointed to be co-workers of the Episcopal order for the proper fulfilment of the apostolic mission entrusted to it by Christ. A



priest's ministry is thus exercised in various ways according to the needs of those he serves. Secondly, priests are ministers of the Sacraments and the Eucharist. When carrying out these sacred functions through Baptism, Reconciliation, and Anointing the sick they are united with the intentions of the charity of Christ especially at the Celebration of the Eucharist, the very centre of the praying community. Within this community priests are also called upon to be counsellors, educators and governors. Priests, consecrated by the anointing of the Holy Spirit are sent by Christ and made strong in the spirit by exercising the ministration of the Spirit and of Justice.

Pastoral charity demands that priests should always work within the bond of union with their Bishop and fellow priests. Living within the community they serve, priests are still set apart from that community because their very ministry makes a special claim on them not to conform to this world. In terms of remuneration however, while 'the labourer deserves his wages' (Luke 10:7) and that 'they who proclaim the Gospel should get their living by the Gospel' (1 Corinth 9:14) the faithful are bound to see the necessary provision made in terms of living and food and decent support for those serving the Lord.

### **The Mystery of Priesthood**

Priesthood has its own distinct form which having unfolded from the beginnings of Christian consciousness, continues to be true to its origins and for many continues to be a mystery. In the Catholic consciousness, the service of priestly ministry is not compatible with a 'worldly job' and is not at the disposal of any sort of 'theological genetic engineering' which would seek to shape the function of priesthood in relation to the role of secular caring professions or prophetic critics of society (Balthasar, 1960). For a priest or others to try and fully understand the mystery of priesthood is difficult if not impossible. In fact, the priest enters into a Christian mystery with an understanding which is never completed. Priesthood is not just something he does but what he is. (Faricy, 1997).



This role of priest extends beyond ministry as a priest cannot limit himself to being a priest mediator solely on the sanctuary. His life and ministry must be so in the fabric of his consecrated being as evident in a man taken from among men for his life to be one of mediation (Basil 1984). Priesthood is simply not merely an assigned task, but is a vocation, a call to be heard again and again (Pope John Paul II 1981). Priesthood involves sacrifice and spiritually the priest is grounded in an intimate relation with Jesus Christ: John 15: v 15-16: You did not choose me, no, I chose you.

Yet there is something deeper here that adds to the very mystery of priesthood. Crucially, the specifics of priesthood itself focus on the concept of reciprocity between the office and the personal identity of the priest (Balthasar, 1981). This very process of entering into a form of love of the Redeemer who sacrificed himself for all, that it becomes the form of a human life. The priest vowing himself to this way of life puts it on like a garment and must strive to adopt himself to its dimensions and requirements. The issue of a priest's identity in this way of life, grips the roots of his soul and both grounds him in his ecclesial role as presbyter and inspires him to enter into that mystery of who he is becoming; one called to this unique and extraordinary path of life (Cozzens, 2000). Disturbing this mystery disturbs the priest himself.

### **The Mystery lost and the consequences**

40 years after the Second Vatican Council, much confusion remains, particularly surrounding the role of priests in 21<sup>st</sup> century Church. While the vision of the Council of Vatican II became clearer the cultic pre-conciliar model of priesthood entered into a creative balance with the servant-leader model.(Cozzens 2000). As a result the clear identity of priesthood, the unquestioned status, the exalted privilege - features that helped priests deal with the sacrifices and crosses inherent to their vocation - began to blur. Almost two generations later the role and place of the priesthood in the social order of past life remains conflicted and ambiguous for a number of reasons. (Cozzens, 2000). This loss has in turn impacted heavily upon the identity of the Catholic priest today.



Firstly, the demise of the Sacred model of priesthood coupled with the substitution of the word 'presider' for 'priest' re Eucharistic leadership, has contributed to a loss of identity for many priests (Rausch, 1999). This is not to suggest that the priest is over the Church or prior to it, rather than a part of it (Rausch, (1999). Secondly, the vulnerability of priests became acute when the mystery decreased and visible presence increased during sacramental and liturgical ministry. As late as 1948 priests dealt with 'sacred matters' in a 'sacred language', vested in the mysteries of faith Pilarczyk (1986). Once anonymous and whispered, his whole persona was subsumed into the sacred ritual actions. This included facing the altar and standing with his back to the people during services.

Post Vatican II the priest had to face the congregation literally, leading to exposure and vulnerability, moving from 'the mystery of the rite' to the 'celebration of the gathered community' (Rausch, 1999). While not literally robed in garments from earlier centuries, priests are nonetheless robed psychologically and spiritually in tradition and behaviour, expectations and regulations from cultures infinitely removed from our current one. Sixty years later the Church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is vastly different from Pre Vatican II 1960 Sewell, (2001). Stripped of the status and privilege that allowed priests to ignore the personal signs of anxiety and loneliness, priests have been forced to address their human condition without the defences and rationalizations of previous clerical cultures. Inadequate support systems within the organisation left many in a state of uncertainty about the future. These changes in priesthood were a way of life from ancient times (Livingston, 1992) left a profound effect.

### **The demands of office on the person within the Priesthood today**

Priesthood is an objective ministry in the Church (Power, 1998) It is a call to live the cross both ecclesial and personally. Election to the sacred priesthood is the equivalent to being made a libation for the sacrifice and service of faith (Power, 1998). The institutional aspects of the R.C. Church are intended to enhance the order and function of priesthood, promoting the mission of Christ. This is sometimes seen as an ever increasing demand



on a diminishing number of clergy (Ryan, 1997). A priests' availability and compassion for his people, his readiness to share their lives, ministering to them with empathy and skills are all vital elements of ministry as Diocesan priests. While the biblical image of shepherds as prophets caring for his flock, (John 10:10) anyone who dares to respond to God's call as a priest-prophet in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will inevitably meet with contradiction and opposition (Ryan, 1997) . Such tasks are demanding and can be overwhelming at times. Priests are expected to both govern their people and labour in the spirit of humility, imitating Christ who came in the form of a servant-king 'not to be served but to serve' (Phil 2: 7-9). In turn celibacy and embracing poverty are still part of this readiness to devote self to this sacred ministry. The absolute demands of this office states Balthasar, (1981) weigh heavily on the person who is called. Pastoral love therefore takes on the form of the cross. Sometimes, the sheer size and complexity of it all seems to stifle the spirit of the priest and our enthusiasm for spontaneity and creativity in ministry.

Such struggle may lead a priest to reflect on his own faith to the extent of struggling with a faith crisis. This is a lonely struggle because what goes on the depths of a man's heart and soul is a place no other human being can truly enter (Doherty, 1992). This personal crisis often emerges in the life of a pastoral priest at midlife, when perhaps the earlier dreams and enthusiasm no longer can sustain the fidelity and pastoral zeal that ministry still asks. He may have discovered the truth about Christian priesthood that it keeps the wounds of the heart open and this discovery may lead him to want to resolve the pain of his existence without necessarily knowing that it is only in a stance of waiting that the purpose of God is revealed (Power, 1998). Many priests who suffer for, with and at the hands of the Church because of their dedicated sacrifice for their people and their exemplary representation of the Christian experiences and community (Sipe, 1995). Ironically, the fraternity of priesthood does not offer the support it purports to give. Many priests simply do not trust one another and even if their personal integrity was not at risk, their corporate integrity suffers as a consequence (Cozzens, 2000).



Yet the most judicious commentators in the field of the care of clergy who face issues of vocational, emotional life development crisis point to a deeply felt sense of lack or loss of identity and self esteem at the root of this contemporary phenomenon, (Power, 1998) Many spoke of the loneliness and desire for intimacy that seemed incompatible with the culture of celibacy (Cozzens 2000) Questioning what was missing in the lives of priests who wished to leave active ministry , and, in others, while not leaving, but who showed clear signs of unhappiness and rancour. It was the experience of a union, the intimacy of a holy communion with a few good friends; acknowledgement that by itself, without deep authentic human friendship, this intimacy with God made experiential though prayers, sacraments and devotional practices, left their spirits slightly out of balance. Priesthood of the 21st century has undoubtedly placed an increasing demand on a declining number of ageing clergy which leads to questions on whether stress exists in the R.C priesthood. A closer examination of the daily role of the priest in the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs further clarification. The reality of the daily role of a Roman Catholic priest within a hierarchical institution.

The role of the Catholic priest today has evolved into both a complex and an ambiguous role while remaining quite distinct: To preach the Gospel of God to all; To minister the Sacraments and the Eucharist. In practice the role has changed dramatically with the central focus for ministry in the parochial setting. Firstly, the traditional presbytery, once housing several priests and a resident housekeeper, giving a semblance of 'home' and providing advice and support has now been replaced with empty presbyteries and one priest ministering alone to two or three other parochial settings. Following the reduction in the number of priests has led to increased workloads for existing priests who are predominately an ageing population putting further strain on the health.

Secondly, the Catholic Church has received the impact of Information Technology as a 'mixed blessing. While expected to be 'on call' and simultaneously out visiting people, priests are subject to criticism from



others who expect him to be 'at home' when they call without appointments, or are connected to an answering machine when they telephone. This inter-role conflict has consistently been linked with psychological strain (Frome, Russell, Cooper, et al, 1992). Thirdly, for centuries priests have lived in a dual domestic work-home setting – now part of the 21st culture of virtual office at home. Increasingly however, the use of presbytery for meetings has created an open-house policy leaving little opportunity for priests to separate a private life and public work environment.

Additionally, the life as a curate has been cut short dramatically, now attains parish priest status in less than 5 years and assuming he remains in the priesthood. The reality of daily duties includes property maintenance of church premises, all aspects of business, finance, grant aid and management of human resources. This specialist work, for which priests are neither experienced nor trained, is growing. In offering a sense of independence, this autonomy is coupled with accountability, not only to his diocesan bishop, but also to the authority and power of a 2000 year old institution whose centre is in Rome and whose *modus operandi* may differ from his own. Priests once had the freedom and welcome from honorary families in a close knit community. Today, particularly through historic child abuse cases involving clergy people are reluctant to maintain this custom. Priests have lost both the innocence and trust once taken for granted. The absolute parental confidence has faded into a wary cordiality (Cozzens 2000) This loss of trust, unquestioned authority, role as moral leader, spiritual director and place in the hearts of parishioners has left priests abandoned, without trust and vulnerable.

Does the bureaucratic nature of the organisation help or hinder, empower or constrain or support or isolate our priests today? Parallels may be drawn between individuals and priest in the 21st century work environment. Where communication focuses on negative attributions about other personnel, cynicism regarding leadership and management of the organisation and attempts by employees to further their own interests at the expense of



other, feelings of mistrust and lack of support are generated, in *turn leading to increased strain*" (O'Driscoll and Cooper, 1994) On another level of strain a real and growing challenge to clergy is the role of collaborative ministry i.e. the role of all baptised members of the Church to play an active role in its life and ministry.

### **Collaborative Ministry v Priestly Role and Identity**

There is an ongoing struggle between the changing role of the ordained priests and the increasing role of the 'laity' of a post conciliar generation. Both have become unclear and may contribute to the conflict and confusion felt, rather than enhance support between priest and people (Ryan, 1997) Once clergy has a clear distinct role on ordination alongside the role of the lay person. Now priests are challenged as to what was theirs at ordination has shrunk, and what is ours as baptised Christians grows (Ryan, 1997).

Many demands, often contradictory, are increasingly placed on decreasing numbers of priests from both the hierarchically structured institution of the Roman Catholic Church and from the people they serve. Ryan, (1997) a Catholic priest in America feels that priests often find themselves caught between the two leaving priests caught in the middle of the conflict understanding of Church and priesthood that so often polarises our Catholic people today (Ryan, 1997). As a result priests become dismayed by the absence of tangible results in their ministry, find themselves discouraged by the recent bitter scandals of brother priests and, the strident harshness of public criticism of the Church and the priesthood. The experience difficult with what appears to be the rigidity or insensitivity of the official Church to the issues and concerns that fall heavily on the shoulders of people in their parishes (Ryan, 1997). Priest today have now moved from pedestal to participation; from classical preacher to contemporary mystagogue; from loan ranger style to collaborative ministry; from monastic spirituality to a secular spirituality; from saving souls to liberating people. Priests once had a clear parochial role outside of liturgy. They sat on the Committees of the social club, sometimes were



even negotiating deals with the brewery: they attended bingo nights and dances, supervised sports and youth activities and taught in the school. Most parishioners were extremely poor and many were only semi-literate - the priest also needed to be on hand to fill in official forms and draft job applications...he was a figure of authority as well and on occasions administered a clip round the ear to a local delinquent rather than involve the police.

Traditionalist now describe Catholics as 'cafeteria and salad bar' Catholics who pick and choose from a variety of wilting options to suit themselves (Cornwell, 2001). The grand model of Church in America is McDonald's described as self service, broad selection, cheap prices, eat fast and get out quick (Wheatland). Clearly there is no need for community and in turn has a negative effect on the very community the Church strives to build. When parishioners choose to use the Church as a 'convenience store' their expectation of the priest is focussing more on the role of a counsellor. The Church and its ministers are therefore reduced to being psychological healers only and far too many priests are turning themselves into amateur psychologists which he described as the world's most dangerous profession! (Cornwell, 2001).

The younger generation of active Catholics nevertheless still retain a voluntary attachment to sacramental and sacraments - the visible signs of God's presence in the world that are special to Catholicism (Cornwell, 2001). But the old outward and inward control systems, the guilt cycle that linked regular confession to the Eucharist, no longer have any bearing on their practice or even consciousness. This attitude has an impact of the clergy who serve them in ministry. At The Catholic Bishops' Conference in 1988 it was noted that among some priests there are a significant number who have settled for a part time priesthood. Many feel they have worked hard and long to implement or at least adjust to the practical consequences of Vatican II. They sense that much of that effort is now being blunted or even betrayed and they elect to drop out quietly.



Following the move towards collaborative ministry of all baptised members of the Church, with more lay participation, there is a disturbing narcissism, that is the focus of self more akin to the cult of a self-help therapy than to the traditions of the Catholic spirituality (Daly, (2001). The Catholic Church has entered a power struggle in which the egotistical providers of music and liturgy are taking over the true centre of real presence which should be the Eucharist (Sewell, 2001 quoting Daly, 2001). Whilst liturgical reform has been evidently successful in certain places and applied to certain rite, liturgists complain bitterly of the return and expansion of clerical participation (Sewell, 2001).

Perhaps, more seriously, is the increasing speed with which parish liturgy may become a celebration of the middle class values ( Kavanagh, 2001). This creates a narrow new elitism which tends to exclude others and which is ‘splintering the Church’ and the organic sacramentality of the Church. Idiosyncratic individuality flourishes (Kavanagh, 2001) become the plaything of the celebrants. The participatory element intended by the fathers of Vatican II fails, and the consequences we are left with, are empty churches. There is now a huge rift between the lay and the clerical Church on the score of the Church’s teaching, authority, education, policies, human and financial resources and decision making (Cornwell, (2001) . One Church writer questions whether as citizens we are required to be critical of authority where necessary, i.e. to have regards for our right, to stand up for them (Longley, 1999). As Catholics we somehow have to contrive to become completely different people: docile, passive, uncritical, with no power or influence, no right to information, no right to be consulted. Is it even possible to switch over like that, from active citizen to passive churchgoer? Does this not lead to a kind of Catholic infantilism where we have to cease to be adults because the only room for us in the Church is as children”? (Longley 1999).

The creativity in church ministry has much to do with staying alive in priestly work (Ryan, 1997). He acknowledges the current state, that is, the present image of the Priesthood today suggests it is undergoing a crisis.



Crucially, the R.C. Church is a unique organisation institution and the Ministry of its members is an unrehearsed area. It offers an opportunity to test out traditional models of occupational stress. Establishing the 'ground rules' for potential candidates gives an insight into the structure within this organisation. Thompson, (1973) studied the cultural perspective of religious organisation by addressing the symbols and types of rationality employed by religious bodies to evaluate their organisation. He stated that the distinction and uniqueness of the religious 'organisation' is an important area to study for three reasons:

1. Religious bodies have a strong ideological character in that they are concerned with the promulgation and propagation of certain values.
2. A Religious group is always fundamentally a cultural organisation in the sense that the end is partly or wholly addressed in the process of 'meeting with others', whilst in a utilitarian or instrumental organisation it is the 'product' that is directly significant.
3. Religious groups are probably unique in the extent to which their basic character causes them to favour rationality of symbolic appropriateness over one of a logic-experimental type, because in religious organisations, especially in those of the ecclesia and denominational types, extensive accommodation of such immediate goals and values is always occurring and inviting the charge of compromising with the secular from dissatisfied groups appealing to transcendental goals and values.

The above was part of the 1965 Vatican II document which addressed the demands and needs of society noting that the apparent fruitlessness of the work done, the bitter loneliness experienced by priests can bring them into the danger of feeling frustrated and priests were encouraged to carry out their work knowing they were never alone but supported by the almighty power of God. Demands come from another direction, that is change in the society which members of the congregation are drawn and vocations fed.

#### **Impact of these changes on the R. C. Church and Priesthood today**

But what of the history of changes in the Roman Catholic Church over this same period? Has this two thousand year old institution stood still while the society it ministers to changes almost beyond recognition around it?



Not necessarily so. Radical internal changes followed the Second Vatican Council in the 1960's were outlined in Chapter One but it is the consequences of these changes in both Church and society that have had the biggest impact on church members themselves. The real question today is whether the Church's teaching remains relevant and applicable to the demands of the 21st century society or whether it is now considered out of date? To fully appreciate this argument we need to consider the full impact of change in the Church. The 'change' in the thinking of the Church members and their questioning is not simply on the minds of scholars and commentators inside and outside of the Church. It also pervades the lived experiences of the parish priest who ministers to these members on a daily basis. Inevitably these changes are felt particularly by older priests who lived through the pre Vatican II era of the Church.

Firstly, they now address a different generation and culture of Catholics whose lifestyle is often at odds with church teaching. The new middle-class Catholicism is far more accommodated to, and less critical of, the prevailing secular culture than the folk-Catholicism that preceded it. Its liberal variant is sceptical of tradition, of Church authority, and is generally (sometimes subtly) anticlerical. There is a tendency to play down or disempower the social and economic content of Jesus' teaching, his direction about the dangers of money, wealth and possessions... seen as irrelevant or exaggerated. Middle-class spirituality is privatised and finds its expression in books, courses and retreats (Dalglish, 2001).

Secondly, there is increasing contradiction and frustration for the priest caught between the demands of a changing secular world and at times a backward looking organisation. Whilst many members of this generation still perceive faith in traditional terms of obligation, of what is allowed or forbidden, in practice they choose for themselves what to think and do according to their own criteria and lifestyle (Dalglish, 2001) suggesting that the Roman Catholic priesthood is now showing clear signs of stress. Social and economic conditions which underpinned the ghetto disappeared and Catholic felt increasingly under the influence of the world outside its



confines. At the turn of this third millennium, there is in Britain a large pool of Catholics from the age of forty downwards, who are extremely superficially Christianised –if at all; who have only a tentative connection with the life of the Church - or none at all; and who take their beliefs and values not from the Christian Gospel but from contemporary culture a culture dominated, via the media, advertising and the entertainment industry by the ideological assumption of the free-market (Dalglish, 2001).

Thirdly, priests are experiencing a growing sense of indifference towards Church from people reluctant to become involved. This is in contrast to the falling numbers of ordained clergy versus the invitation to all baptised to engage in active ministry in the church. Many show apathy or an expectation that 'Father' will continue to carry out each role. The role of ordained priest and one of the baptised members of the Church, has highlighted gaps in knowledge and experience as well as causing confusion and role ambiguity to both priests and people. Part of this frustration is the contrast between a priest who has spent 6+ years in residential seminary training for the priesthood and an adult who may have spent a short weekend learning a role. For those taking on active lay ministry it is becoming evident that clericalism is no longer a criticism addressed to clergy alone but to these new ministers.

Another aspect deemed to be a barrier to the exercise of a truly collaborative ministry is the laity itself (Connolly, 2001). The level of catechesis amongst Catholics is deemed pretty poor presenting difficulties to invite dialogue and shared ministry (Connolly, 2001). Equally, how does one start to '*work with*' the people when their expectations of priests has only ever been to '*work for*' Father? The pyramidal model is too ingrained in our psyches to be dismissed overnight. There is inevitable tension in an institutional church that one moment invites lay-participation and collaboration whilst at the same time asserts itself as hierarchical"

Fr Sean Connolly (2001).



For the individual priest ministering within this structure - who are themselves affected by these changes - these organisational and societal changes can have a negative impact on their health and well-being. This is particularly true if they are unable to exercise control over these changes because hierarchical, bureaucratic organisational structures may permit little participation by employees in decisions affecting their work. Inadequate communication, especially between managerial and non managerial personnel, can also contribute to employee strain. (Cooper, 2001).

What impact does this have on each priest in a culture where authority and power are still dominant features and career-mindedness may be rewarded with a role and status? How might the elements of this experience equate with job stress or strain? Clarity over the daily role of a priest needs to be examined and questioned further.

### **Selection of Candidates for seminary training for Priesthood**

Another area of growing concern is the selection, process and evaluation of the training offered to candidates who are considering the priesthood. Today decisions are supported with more information and documentation than was the case a generation ago (Cozzens, 2000). Letters of recommendation, psychiatric and psychological assessments, criminal records checks, standardized tests and a series of interviews make up the ordinary drill for admission to the priesthood today.

However, these are not exhaustive processes and the panel still struggle looking for signs of reality and mystery of grace as well as for indications that the candidate has the temperament and personal strength to meet the demands of priestly ministry (Cozzens, 2000). Like medics taking the Hippocratic Oath, for priesthood too they should healthy embrace the philosophy: *First, do no harm*. Yet for more than a decade, voices have been heard expressing concern about the growing number of 'gay' priests and seminarians (McBrien, 1987). Their call for serious reflection and candid discussion of the issue has largely gone unheard (Cozzens, 2000)



.Early in 1985 The National Conference of Diocesan Vocations Directors in Chicago USA published an 'Assessment of Applicants for Priesthood' questioning whether the applicant's sexual orientation should be public knowledge and, how this would affect ministry; if not, how would the applicant live with anxiety that it might *become* public? Did the applicant feel it would make a difference and was this realistic in the setting of a Catholic Diocese?

But amidst clergy are priests who remain confused about their sexual orientation and men who have so successfully denied their orientation, that, in spite of predominately same-sex fantasies, they insist that they are heterosexual (Cozzens, 2000). As a matter of practice, if not policy, (USA) many dioceses and religious congregations are open to ordaining gay men if they demonstrate commitment to celibate living. Usually, they are men who are nurturing, intelligent, talented and sensitive, excelling in liturgy and are homilists - all qualities especially suited to ministry (Cozzens, 2000). However, the vast majority keep their orientation to themselves (Cozzens, 2000) and, whilst close friends are other gay priests know, often parents and family are seldom informed. Perceptive parents and siblings may suspect but more let the matter rest. Most 'lay-people' react sympathetically, compassionately and respectfully to a priest who might be gay so long as he is a good hardworking priests, keeps his celibate promise and does not become part of what (Greeley, 1989) describes as 'the homosexual subculture'.

This however, introduces a whole new area surrounding secrecy and possibly deceit putting incredible pressure on a priest to live a life in ministry which is in contradiction to his sexual orientation. Among the effects of this psychological defence mechanism is the toleration of 'lavender' rectories and seminaries (Greely, 1989). A major question here is centred on what impact the 'homosexual sub-culture' (Greeley, 1989) have on the 'straight' priest and seminarian (Cozzens, 2000)? A seminarian or priest exposed to a predominantly or significant 'gay' environment commonly experienced chronic destabilisation, a common



symptom of which is self-doubt. This has huge implications on personal self-esteem because it produces an awkwardness and a loss of social confidence (Cozzens, 2000). A priest or seminarian gripped by self doubt defies his best efforts to understand, wrestles with his own sense of self, his own identity, leads to psychic confusion and has significant implications for both spiritual vitality and emotional balance.

While the homosexual seminarian may live with considerable fear that his orientation may prove to be in itself an obstacle to advancing towards ordination, in self contained communities, like seminaries, a 'gay' seminarian uses a great deal of energy normally challenged towards study and prayer which is then being channelled to managing and coping with his inner turmoil (Cozzens, 2000). If disproportionate numbers of gay seminarians and priests present formational and pastoral dilemma for the church, what 'proportionate' number of gay seminarians and priests should a diocese accept as their policy in terms of candidates for the priesthood committed to the celibate life (Cozzens, 2000)? And, how do they support a student who discovers his sexual orientation well into his years of study for the priesthood?

Another major question here is the emergence of a subculture within the seminary or religious order, based on sexual orientation which poses a serious challenge to the unity and integrity of the community (Radcliffe, 1998). What are the pastoral implications for the Church at large should it fail to address the issue of homosexuality and the priesthood (Cozzens, 2000)? Additionally, what impact will addressing the issue actually have on the large number of homosexual priests? Are heterosexual seminarians actually 'turned off' by the existence of a subculture and, more importantly, how many have actually left because of the presence and pressures of a significant number of gay men in the seminary and ordained clergy (McBrien, 1987). This produces a far more serious question as to what extent are seminary faculty members part of this sub-culture, which further questions the areas of sexual orientation within the hierarchical structures of the Roman Catholic Church worldwide.



One further question I personally feel should be explored is the selection, monitoring and evaluation process of a candidate in training for priesthood. The media have made references to a gay priesthood but surely the real question is how many candidates are targeting the seminaries specifically *because* of their alleged 'gay' culture offering opportunities that may not be available elsewhere? Guggenbuhl (1971) explored the shadow side, the unconscious dynamics that put those in the helping professions at risk to do more harm than good.

Taking archetypal roles i.e. doctor/patient; teacher/student; king/subject; priest/parishioner he stated that if we were to separate the superior role of the archetype, the dyad is broken and the negative aspects of each may take over and dominate the inner life of the soul. So, as a teacher is also at times the student, and the doctor at times the patient, if we place the priest archetype in the dyad cluster, the dialectical dimension of his identity becomes clear. Acknowledging the priest is ordained for priestly ministry, he still remains a member of the faithful also in need of ministry and community. In expanding this model we can also recognise the needs of Bishop/Priest. Cozzens, (2000) that although the priest is addressed as 'father' he is nonetheless 'son and brother'. Distinct roles are respected between priest and people allowing the inherent mutuality of the member of the local church to flourish.

There are some critical questions to be asked at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Cozzens, 2000). Firstly, the concept of a vocations 'crisis'. A staggering drop in the number of candidates studying for the priesthood has resulted in an 80% fall in North America and Western Europe. The full blame is placed upon the fall in the Catholic birth rate, social and economic success of Catholic people, clergy misconduct with minors and the question of male exclusiveness of candidates (Cozzens, 2000). One response by an American parent to the crisis expressed this view succinctly: 'A church that won't accept my daughter is not going to get my son'.



While the vocations ‘crisis’ includes the awareness of growing numbers of homosexual clergy and candidates, especially amongst seminarians and, its impact on heterosexual candidates and clergy is notable, there is also an authority crisis (Cozzens, 2000). Whilst many priests have lost a good deal of status and respect, bishops also have lost a great deal of credibility and by 1995, 40 American Bishops appealed to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops for more effective structures for dialogue with Rome (Cozzens, 2000).

An intellectual crisis has also been a consequence of the fall in vocations through the increased workload placed on the existing priests. Clergy have less time and psychic energy for literature, theology and scriptures (Cozzens, 2000) essential for priming the sacramental imagination so critical for effective preaching. If this suffers, little affirmation follows affecting the morale of the priest. But despite all this, there is optimism amongst clergy through hope, the strongest of which is the priests’ faith in the power of the Holy Spirit (Cozzens, 2000) that:

*“behind this changing face of the priesthood remains  
the saving face of Jesus the Christ”*

### **1:3 Defining Stress - What is Stress?**

For the purpose of this research the author has chosen the transactional model of stress to investigate stress exists in the Roman Catholic priesthood. Acknowledgement needs to be made that discrepancies in the definition of stress still exists, which makes stress both difficult to define and operationalise (Cooper, 2001). Defined as both an independent and a dependent variable (Cox, 1991) and as a ‘process’, further confusion over terminology is compounded by the broad application of the stress concept in medical, behavioural and science research. This is because each discipline has investigated stress from its own unique perspective (Cooper, 2001).

At the start of this 21<sup>st</sup> century the concept of stress has evolved into a transactional model (Cooper, 2001) which is applicable to both the



individual and the environment within which they work and live. While the author adopts this model for research purposes, the definition of stress itself needs to be constantly expanded and renewed to ensure it reflects the nature of the experience (Newton, 1995).

The word stress is said to derive from the Latin *stringere* to draw tight, and the terms 'distress and strain' are commonly used in association with the word stress (Cox, 1978). Stress is acknowledged as a perceptual phenomenon, arising from a comparison between the demands on the individual and their ability to cope. Contemporary views now suggest that stress is relational (Lazarus & Launier, 1978); the result of a transaction between the individual and their environment (Lazarus, 1991). While the latter view moves towards identifying the processes that link the individual to the environment, the way in which stress is defined has a fundamental impact on how research is conducted and how results are explained. Definitions must therefore capture the essence of the stress experience rather than simply reflect on rhetoric (Newton, 1995).

The Transactional model of stress endeavours to explore the essential nature of stressor-response-outcome relationships and to encapsulate an understanding of the dynamic stress process itself, i.e. not merely the statistical relationship between variables (Cooper et al, 2001). Transactional models are concerned with the dynamics of the psychological mechanisms of cognitive appraisal and coping that underpin a stressful encounter. Stress is therefore embedded in an ongoing process that involves individuals transacting with their environment, making appraisals of those encounters and attempting to cope with the issues that arise. The concept of stress, in particular the transactional model, is utilized as a lens through which that experience can be purposefully and fruitfully viewed. This model emphasizes the importance of the demands faced by the individual, constraints they operate under, support available and the symptoms of strain evident when various demands, constraints and supports, together with the individuals own ability are unbalanced. First, before applying these elements to an analysis of the experience of the



working life of the R.C. priesthood in order to answer the question *'Does stress exist in the Roman Catholic priesthood?'* we must unpack the principal constituent elements in contemporary stress theory.

### **Applying the Transactional Model of stress to the R.C. priesthood**

The transactional framework for modelling stress and the stress experience will be used in this thesis to examine stress in the R.C. priesthood. Acknowledgement is also made that the application of a transactional perspective to work settings is not without critics and is not free of methodological concerns (Brief and George, 1991). No one variable can be said to be 'stress' itself (Lazarus, 1991) because they are all part of the wider transactional process i.e. R.C. priesthood. Acknowledgement is made that in order to understand job related stress, clarification is required as to what is being measured and whose reality is being assessed. In short, do measures actually assess what they purport to assess (Cooper, 2001)?

In the transactional model two appraisal stages, primary and secondary, are the key to the stress coping process. Personal appraisal of stress at the primary stage is based on the individual realisation that something is at stake. In assessing potential harm, threat or challenge, the individual gives meaning to the encounter (Lazarus, 1966). The secondary process identifies the availability of coping resources to deal with perceived threat (Lazarus, 1991). Stress itself, while not a factor residing in the individual or environment is embedded in an ongoing process. The individual transacts with their environment, appraising those encounters and attempts to cope with issues arising (Dewe, Cox and Ferguson, 1993).

At the centre of the transactional model of stress (Cox, 1978) the concept that stress is a dynamic cognitive state, focussing on the psychological mechanisms of cognitive appraisal and coping, that underpin a stressful encounter. Any disruption in homeostasis, or, an imbalance, requires a resolution of that imbalance or restoration of homeostasis (Dewe et al, 1993). What distinguishes the transactional model approach from others is the emphasis on the 'process', 'measuring', 'adjustment' and 'coping' stages



as core defining elements (Cooper, 2001). This clearly defined cyclical system within a stress process has five recognisable stages. In presenting these 5 stages they will be simultaneously applied to priesthood to determine how priests respond to potential stress in their ministry.

**Stage One** represents the source of demand place upon the individual but the level of demand is determined by the individual's ability and personal interpretation of the situation. The transactional model distinguishes between internal and external demands, but demand itself is usually regarded as a factor of the person's external environment. The individual has both psychological and physical needs requiring fulfilment, which subsequently determines their behaviour.

For a parish priest he may have several demands placed upon him at many levels, from parishioners, diocesan roles and personal needs - all requiring an immediate response. One priest succinctly summarised these unrealistic expectations by highlighting the need for a shared strategy between priests and people working together (Ryan, 1997).

**Stage Two** In the second stage of this cyclical process, the individual's perception and cognitive appraisal of a potentially stressful encounter along with their ability to cope is addressed. Individuals may draw on previous experience or exposure, leading to reinforcement of action or coping methods, based on past success or failure. Stage two is very much the discerning process involving prioritising of tasks. Any imbalance between the perceived demand and the individual's perception of their capability to meet that demand, may result in stress.

For priests may served curacies of 20+ years before attaining parish priest This involved sharing domestic accommodation with fellow clergy and learning from role models of priesthood - whether positive or negative. Today the average curacy period is five years, presuming the priest has not left the priesthood by this stage. This need for support is reflected Vatican II documents emphasising that as far as possible, priests were not to be



sent alone into new territory, but at least in groups of two or three. Priests should pay careful attention to their spiritual life and their mental and bodily health; they should take the trouble to learn not only the language but the special psychological and social characteristics of the people they wish to serve in humility (*Chapter 3: V10 Vat II Docs*).

In contemporary society many clergy attain parish priest status in less than 8 years provided of course they remain in the priesthood that long! Usually they live alone responsible for both people and buildings, the latter proving more difficult because of the need to interaction with human beings in a diversity of settings. The 21st century has placed even greater demands on clergy where society lifestyle is often at odds with Canon Law ruling. This can lead to the parish priest making decisions which include consequences, with no personal support systems and leaving him with a distorted image of his own limitations. But the crucial question at this stage is how adequate is a priest's seminary training to develop the skills necessary to prepare for ministry in the 21st century? One former seminary Rector suggests we need to decide what priests are asked to do before making decision about rationalising their training (O'Keefe, 2002 – *The Guardian*).

In 2001 a Commission on Seminaries was set up by The Catholic Bishop's Conference of England and Wales. Their Report, which was published in Easter 2002, called for a radical shake-up and rationalisation. It met with a lively response from the media. It's findings have caused anger and confusion among some of the seminaries, as the emphasis appeared to be towards saving money and making cuts, rather than grasping the opportunity to clarify the type of priest training needs required (Elaine Williams - *The Guardian*). It further added that the Roman and Spanish Seminaries still used the Tridentine model of student living in a house of formation, going out to University. He raised the urgent need to create appropriate formation methods for future priests that fully acknowledged their gifts and talents within the context of their personal history, careers and lifelong faith journeys. One final question



posed around this report process was the proposal that seminaries failing to serve the needs of students, concluding ‘Is our Church rejecting true priestly vocations?’ (The Catholic Herald, 7 June 2002)

**Stage Three** of this cyclical process addresses the psycho physiological changes in emotion and behaviour that take place in the individual when exposed to potentially stressful situations. The production of actual demand, perceived demand, perceived ability and, actual ability results in pressure upon the individual. Needs, desires and immediate arousal levels all influence the way demand is perceived along with feelings of guilt and inadequacy felt when carrying out that role. Bishops should meet with their priests every 6 months in a group, then individually supported in between by their Spiritual Directors. In reality, many priests still report feeling isolated in their ministry and role. (Hoge, 2002).

**Stage Four** addresses the consequences of coping for the individual. The presence or absence of other influences, the subjective experience of stress response and, the coping behaviours, have a positive and negative effect on those exposed to stressful situations. While support offered can prove positive, helping increases self esteem, confirms value and is a source of personal identity. Negative support can be a distraction, irritation or unwanted arousal for the individual. As such many clergy have set up informal social support networks only to watch them disappear when clergy are relocated and forced to restart the support process. Lack of support, alongside other obstacles, such as indifference to faith and practice, the apparent fruitlessness of workload, bitter loneliness and subsequent frustration can build up.

This raises a further question about a priest's perception of 'offering it up' for the glory of God. If the organisation, in this case the R.C. Church fails to acknowledge and address the demands placed upon their priests, stress will occur along with intention to leave. For clergy who are said to be available at all times to all people, they may experience guilt or a sense of



failure that in addressing one demand it will prove to be at the expense of another.

**Stage Five** - This final stage addressed a state of stress and the effectiveness of coping response. A state of stress occurs when there is an imbalance between perceived demand and perceived ability to meet that demand (Cox, 1978). Many factors influence the outcome of intervention programmes (Beehr & O'Hara, 1987). A key factor in the development of organisation's intervention is the extent of commitment at all levels of staff to alleviate the impacting stressors. For organisations, including the Church, this involves open communication and dialogue, dismantling of organisational norms and expectations that promote strain, long hours, taking work home (Cooper, 2001). Many organisations today still blame the 'victims' i.e. the individual who is perceived to be under stress as a result of 'their' own problems (Dewe, 1997; Dollard & Winefield, 1996). Parallels can be drawn within a priest's life today outlined earlier. The transactional model embraces three important themes (Lazarus, 1982):

1. Stress as a dynamic cognitive state
2. Representing a disruption in homeostasis or imbalance
3. Giving rise to a requirement for resolution of that imbalance or restoration of the homeostasis

Stress therefore becomes not merely a factor that resides in the individual or the environment, rather it is embedded in an ongoing process that involves individuals transaction with their environments, making appraisal of those encounters and attempting to cope with the issues as they arise (Cooper, 2001).

### **Identifying sources of stress in church ministers**

While the primary focus in occupational stress research has been on refining our understanding of the relationship between stressors and stress responses, relatively few attempts have been made to examine the nature and structure of the different constructs involved in that relationship



(Dewe, 1987). For the purposes of this research the transactional model has been utilised as a lens through which stress in the R.C. priesthood can be investigated. Dewe, (1987) sought to identify both sources of stress and commonly used coping strategies in New Zealand minister of religion. This in turn highlighted that, while existing measurement scales provide a good measure of general perceptions, they are not useful for evaluating specific relationships. Many established measures tended to be focussed on specific concepts such as conflict or ambiguity but at the same time, generalize across occupational groups and organisations (Dewe, 1987). In measuring work/role stressors this may lead to overemphasis on the importance of specific role stressors at the expense of identifying others and possibly measuring irrelevant variables (Crump et al 1980).

Investigating the sources of role and work stressors and coping strategies reported by a sample of ordained ministers of the Protestant Church (Dewe, 1987 resulted in a questionnaire being mailed to all members (N=468) of the Church in New Zealand. Of the 280 who completed and returned the questionnaires, from a total of 468 dispatched, 92% were men and 90% were married. Three factors emerged from Dewe's (1987) research of stress among church clergy.

### **1. Parish Conflict and Church conservatism**

This first factor identified conflicts between the minister and the parishioners namely expectations and sometimes non acceptance of each others' attitudes and values. Conflicts between church teaching and personal belief; conflict with church conservatism, namely feelings that one was continually propping up a cumbersome institutional structure; and finally, conflict over administration issues and not meeting deadlines at work.

### **2. Difficulties involving parish commitment and development**

This second factor identified by Dewe (1987) included parishioner power and reluctance to grow. Self-development issues and feelings of inadequacy. The full pastoral needs of the people not being met; contact isolation, too little time to get to know people.



### **3. Emotional and time difficulties surrounding crisis work**

This third factor involved administration difficulties for clergy. This included clergy never having a set routine to meet demands. Emotional demands by people in desperate need, and time concerns, where important tasks were over-shadowed by urgent or unexpected administration duties. This concept of stress workload is also identified as a source of stress by Gilbert, (1987).

#### **Does stress exist among Church ministers?**

There is conflicting evidence from research in other countries questioning if ministers of religion suffer from high levels of job stress. While reports may differ; 75% of all clergy have suffered major stress and 33% have had serious thoughts about leaving their vocation (Blackmon, 1984). These reports, on clergy who are particularly likely to leave are between the ages of 30-49 years (McDonald, 1980). Yet it is clear that clergy who suffer, experience high levels of emotional exhaustion known as burnout related stress (Richmond, Rayburn and Rogers, 1985).

Burnout is believed to be particularly relevant to clergy because it is a problem which results from the effects of inter-personal demands in the care-giving profession including the clergy (Daniel and Rogers, 1981; and Doohan, 1982). Burnout may also have a spiritual dimension since it can result in a loss of idealism and energy, especially by those motivated by idealistic values of service and professional goals (Swogger, 1981). But, while clergy may *appear* to be in a profession which could be susceptible to burnout, are they really at risk of stress? Fletcher, (1989) and Daniel and Rogers, (1981) suggest there are four particular reasons for clergy to be at risk.

Firstly, individuals in ministry are neither sufficiently aware of their limitations nor their motivation for entering the ministry. Secondly, the personal profiles of ministers suggest religious tend to be more perfectionists, worrisome, introversive, socially inept and possibly isolated



and withdrawn (Dunn,1965). Thirdly, the Church does not provide in-service or graduate style training on dealing with interpersonal stress or its processes. Problems can occur if individuals cannot distinguish between dispositional problems and those which are a consequence of the situation. Finally, as an organisation the Church does not provide adequate support and advice or group based work opportunities. Clearly, the Church could be accused of 'structured punishment' of clergy because it expects their minister to do the impossible, called spiritually yet judged on organisational rather than spiritual criteria. Lauer (1973).

Further studies suggest clergy are exposed to less stress than the average person at work. In a study of 250 religious leaders including 50 Catholic priests, an additional 549 individuals were included to form a non religious normative comparison group. They used both a Religious and Stress Questionnaire and an Occupational Stressors and Stress Questionnaire (Rayburn, Richmond and Rogers, 1985) revealing parochial ministers showed greater stress in terms of work overload, highest role insufficiency, role ambiguity, responsibility and vocational strain. It also revealed that parochial clergy were second highest on religious groups in psychological, personal and physical strain. Overall results showed that the 250 religious leaders reported more personal resources to counteract the effects of occupational stress compared with the normative sample (Fletcher, 1989).

A later study on parochial clergy in the Church of England with 230 subjects revealed that 87% were married with 54% having dependent children (Fletcher's 1989). A further study revealed that clergy are simultaneously faced with a number of roles today (Smith, 1994). As carer, priests are both called to care for others, yet remain equal to others and also separate (Smith, 1994). Care without a designated helping role involves both vulnerability and insecurity on the part of the helper because of the demands of being available at all times to all people. As portrayers of the Gospel, that obligation to faith can be challenging in a secular world (Smith, 1994). However, the obligation to regularly communicate with other human beings proves demanding because each sets expectations



upon the other. While a minister's primary calling is spiritual, he is evaluated on organisational criteria, for example sacramental ministry (Lauder, 1973).

Different theological stances and individual personality may create different responses by individual ministers (Rudge, 1968). Primary sources of stress against ministers are intra-personal, which suggests that clergy indulge in '*habitual self-criticism...betraying low self-esteem*' (Eadie (1973). There is additional strain in accepting dependence on the omnipotent God, because humans prefer to be depended upon, rather than be dependent states Smith, (1994). Dependence on the Church for accommodation and domestic provision can be contrasted with the need for ministers to maintain a sense of self-worth. As vocations and the practice of ministry appear to advocate giving rather than receiving, guilt can be present when addressing the minister's own needs. A lack of attention to their personal needs, can lead ministers to a sense of loneliness and isolation (Smith, 1994). In conclusion, the preconditions of R.C. ministry make this research even more unique as a study focus in psychology because of the lack of research undertaken to date. In the R.C. priesthood in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, entry requirements for students still requests them to be male, single and celibate resulting in a greater focus on a decreasing number of individuals.

### **Individual perception and awareness of stress and health**

Stress is a subjective experience and the subsequent outcomes or symptoms of distress may be physical, psychological and/or behavioural. The role of stress in health remains a contentious issue contingent upon the way stress is defined and how the concept of health is viewed. Well-being is a dynamic state of mind characterised by reasonable harmony between a person's abilities, needs and expectations and environmental demands and opportunities and 'healthy work which does not threaten, but maintains or enhances the physical, psychological and social well-being of the worker (*The World Health Organisation, 1986*).



Medical and biological scientists can accept that heat, cold or ingestion of toxic substances can act as sources of stress resulting in illness, disease or death, because they are concrete and observable (Hinkle, 1987). When health is defined as *absence of disease and the presence of physical and psychological well being*, - and, acknowledging that cognitive appraisal is central to human behaviour in the stress situation - then the stress-ill health debate becomes more intense. The individual's first experience is the associated emotional changes *felt* by them often presented to a general practitioner as emotional or physiological changes, rather than as stress itself. These include palpitation, tension, fatigue and insomnia. The importance of emotions and their links between the psychological and physiological process needs to be acknowledged because a patient presenting symptoms to a general practitioner represents their subjective response to stressful situation i.e. that individual's *own* awareness of a reaction to an unpleasantly experienced situation.

### **Occupational Stress and the work environment**

Stress in the workplace is a major problem for employers in the United Kingdom. Self reported findings from The Health and Safety Executive's Labour Force Survey of 1990 revealed that work related stress, depression and anxiety was the second most commonly reported group of conditions - after muscular-skeletal disorders. The Report adds that of the 302,000 cases in Great Britain who report suffering from stress, a further 261,000 report that work-related stress caused or made their complaint worse, increasing their belief that they suffered from a stress related condition.

Work stress is recognised as a major occupational health problem (Griffiths, Cox 1998) and is a reaction when faced with excessive work pressures and limited resources - humanistic or material - to cope with these pressures. This affects the way people feel, think, behave and impacts on their physical and psychological health. The outcome effects on the organisation in human health, productivity and finance may be great: Work overload, lack of control, lack of support et al may lead to



work related stress and result in impaired health and well-being. Individuals experiencing work stress may suffer distress, become irritable, unable to relax, have difficulty in decision making. This can result in tiredness, anxiousness, insomnia and lead to psychiatric injury and unemployability (Cox, Griffiths 1998).

The nature of working environments strongly influence the quality of working life, work performance, safety and general health of individuals. Their total activities may lead include work related and non work related obligations (Cox, Griffiths, 1998) This is assuming the person is employed, and acknowledges the lack of appreciation for vocational professions where no boundary exists between 'work' and 'outside work' ie private life as mirrored in the vocation of R.C. priesthood.

The way in which an employee perceives the culture, customs and climate of that organisation is an important consideration when seeking to understand the potential impact of stress as a result of being in that organisation. As a consequences one may experience job satisfaction - or dissatisfaction, fear of redundancy or unemployment or unexpected relocation. When these feelings are experienced by workers this usually includes some kind of emotional value (Cox and Griffiths, 1998). The workers' subjective perception of organisational structures may not be the same as the objective (formal) organisational structures. It is not so much the content of work and nature of the tasks that prove the major source of stress, but rather, the context to work (Cox, 1998). For example, lack of support at work, particularly supervisory; aggravation from colleagues, lack of control over work and little participation in decision making (Cox and Griffiths 1998).

People vary in their need for control, while most like a considerable amount of control over important events which effect them, some people prefer others to take decisions on their behalf. While managers usually have more control over what they do, those whom they manage generally have less. Middle managers are therefore said to be a vulnerable group



from results on stress related claims, including bullying (Cox and Griffiths, 1998).

The most stressful types of work are those in which there are extreme and unmanageable pressures, i.e. demands badly matched to abilities and resources, little opportunities to exercise any control and, inadequate support from colleagues, particular supervisors (Cox & Griffiths, 1998). "Lack of participation in work activity is associated with negative psychological mood and behaviour responses including escapist drinking and heavy smoking" (Caplan et al 1975) whereas increased opportunity to participate results in improved performance, lower staff turnover and improved levels of mental and physical well-being (Margolis et al, 1974).

Links were examined between social psychological characteristics of the workplace, which were labelled stressors and harmful psychological or physical outcomes or consequences, which he collectively labelled strains (Beehr, (1995). Looking at primary targets of treatment which involved referring to the type of variable most immediately affected by attempts to treat occupational stress (Beehr, 1995). This could include some aspect of the organisation or workplace or some aspects of the individual which would be focussed on in the treatment process. Therefore, in the treatment of hypertension, for example, medication may be used but, the cause of the resulting physical condition might not be necessarily addressed.

When attempting to measure the level of stress caution is recommended on the use of the word 'stress' within a questionnaire (Beehr, 1995). Since the definition of stress and its concepts are unclear, it is therefore difficult to ask a layperson to define stress. Two decades hence, some of these concepts will have become common knowledge, while others will have become yesterday's misunderstandings (Beehr, 1995).

### **Conflict between the individual and the working environment**

This research seeks to use contemporary stress theory as a heuristic for making sense of the experience of the R.C. priest ministering in the 21st



century. The fundamental focus, or concern, of the thesis is *not* stress theory per se, but an exploration of the experiences of the working life of the R.C. priest ministering in both a changing world and one that is increasingly seen as alienated from the values and beliefs of the R.C. Church. For many Catholic priests managing conflict is an inherent part of that daily working lives. Parallels can be drawn between conflict for clergy and conflict for individuals in the work environment, along with outcomes for their family, friends and personal health. Succinctly, three major forms of conflict were identified (Greenhaus and Beulell, 1985):

Firstly, Utilitarian Conflict (Lobel, 1991) arising when individuals have finite resources of time and energy and role demands which tax those resources. This utilitarian approach focuses upon the rewards and costs of investing time and energy into those specific roles. Life is depicted as a struggle between competing roles that have different rewards-to-cost ratio. For priests, their dual diocesan and parochial roles, in different locations, spending time away fulfilling these demands, leads to neither role being fulfilled adequately.

Secondly, is Behaviour-Based Conflict, identifying the potential for conflict between 'role norms' and 'role expectations'. Alongside competing factors for individual time and physical energy to fulfil roles, the attitudes, values and behaviours required in one may prove incompatible with others, causing tension for the individual. Drawing parallels with priesthood, a priest is expected to be in role at all time yet his human needs have to be addressed. Local support may be impossible due to regular moves or the inability to confide in others.

Thirdly, Strain Based Conflict involves emotional interference from one domain to another. Faced with job conditions, including work overload, poor inter-personal relations, job insecurity, lack of opportunities to exercise control and self-direction can all prove negative emotional consequences. For example reduced self-esteem, feelings of uncertainty, loss of a sense of competence which impinges upon family and friends



expressed through irritability and family crisis express in the work place. With unclear roles for lay ministry the priest may constantly question what he was ordained to do which may lead to questioning his very identity.

It is clear that for the individual priest, these organisation and societal changes are likely to have a negative impact on his health and well-being. This is particularly reflected in the rising level of work demands, role conflict and ambiguity experienced, the possible lack of responsiveness in a bureaucratic organisation or, the absolute authority that must still be accorded to Church hierarchy, all of which constitute potential stressors in any organisation (Sutherland and Cooper, 1990; Gray-Toft and Anderson, 1981; Dewe, 1987; Tyler and Cushway, 1992). In short, many priests are likely to encounter and experience many of the accepted 'sources of stress' in their daily work:

- Work overload - increased 'one-man' parishes and demands from parishioners.
- Staff shortage - a fall in the lack of men studying for the priesthood.
- Role ambiguity or dual roles - Role of Ordained priest versus Baptised members of the Church; Diocesan Roles and Parochial roles leading to more travelling away from the parish.
- Bureaucracy, poor communication - within a hierarchical institutional setting.
- Lack of resources - human and material - falling church goers and financial contributions.
- Concerns about the future and retirement - Who cares for the carers when they can no longer minister?
- Lack of participation in decision making.
- Social isolation through (a) no housekeepers (b) falling numbers of priests (c) fewer families offering 'home sanctuary' to a priest in modern society.
- An ageing congregation affecting the level of ministry requested from them and their level of contribution to the church.
- A sense of indifference from the current generation which had led to further questioning of both the role and vocation of the ordained priest and his ministry.

For a priest struggling to cope within this environment many questions arise. Specifically, what is unique about the concept of vocation as



opposed to a job? The impact of working from home as opposed from 'going out' into the workplace? Having more control over one's own career development versus being controlled by one of the last surviving hierarchical world wide institutions of the 21st Century? When attempting to measure the level of stress, caution is recommended on the use of the word 'stress' within questionnaires (Beehr, 1995).

### **Social Support**

People spending many hours of their life in the workplace, receive a greater or lesser part of their social support from this source. The work sphere, while providing opportunities to discuss personal job-related concerns, enriches the interaction by offering support reinforcement necessary for adjustment and attachment to the work environment (Unden (1996). But changes in the workplace in this 21st Century outlined earlier, have led to changes in the psychological contract for the individual (Cooper, 2001).

The impact of working from home, fragmentation of the workforce geographically, and isolation all reduce social support networks. For the Catholic priest today, the dual home-work base which increasingly becomes 'open-house' has been a significant part of his working life for decades. Social support networks are therefore crucial for diocesan priests who are actually called in the spirit of fraternity, to support one another:

*"When we let our brother priests know how much we care about them and appreciate the effectiveness of their ministry, we can enthuse them to minister even more effectively and with increasing satisfaction in their ministry as priests. Nothing can encourage us more than the approval of our peers" (Ryan, 1997)*

But, for many priests they live alone in isolation and are unable to adequately address their social support needs. The full impact on clergy has yet to be acknowledged:



*"The significant power by work support interaction indicated that work supports buffer the effects on powerlessness or psychosomatic symptoms" (Long, 1993)*

### **Sources of Support - availability and effectiveness**

Research into social support has obtained an individual's self or perceived report on both the amount of support available to them, and their utilization of various sources of support (Cooper, 2001). Using the Social Support Questionnaire (Chaplan, Cobb, French, Harrison, and Pinneau, 1975), Ganster, Fusilier & Mayes (1986) employees' perceptions of the amount of social support can be examined, based on three sources consistent with the stress-buffering hypothesis:

- Supervisors
- Colleagues
- Family/friends

Ganster et al (1986) predicted that the positive relationships between six identified job stressors, namely, role ambiguity, conflict, under load, lack of variety, skill under utilization and responsibility for others; strain variables (depression, somatic complaints, job dissatisfaction, and dissatisfaction in life overall) would be moderated by various sources of support. Significant direct links were found between lack of social support and all of the strain variables particularly job dissatisfaction. Of the various sources of support those in the workplace especially supervisory support, exhibited the strongest negative relationships with strain.

*"Perceived availability of social support was significantly correlated with reduced depression and somatic symptoms but displayed no interaction with job stressors, family stressors or work-family conflict" (Frone, Russell and Cooper (1995)).*

Subsequently, two critical issues regarding social support are raised;

- A conceptual fit may be necessary between a stressor and moderator before any person-environment interaction is observed. Therefore specific forms of support should be explored along with the potential relevance of that support for alleviation of the stressor in question. (Cooper, 2001).
- The importance of social support to the individual must be considered. Some people may place higher value than others on social support as a resource for counteracting the negative consequences of stressors. Very few studies have measured the



salience of support to individuals; rather it has been implicitly assumed that it is important to everyone. (Cooper, 2001).

The impact of different *sources* of support, in comparison to different *types* of support also needs consideration. The importance of examining the nature of support provided, rather than assuming common effects across various forms of support (Fenlason and Beehr, 1994). This differentiates between global measures of emotional and instrumental support, as well as assessing support from different sources, (supervisors, colleagues family/friends). Further distinctions of the types of support were non-work related, positive work related, and negative work related communication. In conclusion the three types of communication closely related to emotional rather than instrumental support are:

- We discuss things that are happening in our personal lives (non work related).
- We talk about how this organisation is a good place to work (positive work related)
- We talk about how we dislike some points of our work (negative work related). (Fenlason and Beehr, 1994)

But support had both a buffering and reverse buffering effect (La Rocco, House and French, 1980; Kaufman, and Beehr, 1986). Under certain circumstances higher levels of support exacerbated rather than alleviated the amount of strain experienced by workers:

*"Where support from others reaffirms the adverse nature of the work environment the person's negative attitudes and reactions (such as strain) are likely to be heightened rather than mitigated by increased levels of support"*

Findings therefore suggest that the impact of social support is neither simple nor unilinear (Cooper, 2001). Many studies have demonstrated a relationship between high levels of negative affectivity and less social support or greater interpersonal conflict. Firstly, when applied to social support, social exchange theory (Daniels and Guppy, 1997) indicates that individuals are more likely to donate social support to those who are perceived to be able to reciprocate support of the same magnitude in the



future (Buunk and Hoorens, 1992). This ability to reciprocate, often characterises supportive relationships (Berkowitz, 1968, House, 1981). In terms of social exchange individuals with poor effective well-being are less likely to donate it (Daniels and Guppy, 1997).

Secondly, the phenomenon of emotional contagion suggests that an individual's mood is partly determined by the moods of those with whom he/she interact (Parkinson, 1996). It is therefore predictable, that individuals will avoid prolonged supportive interaction with individuals with poor well-being in order to preserve their own positive moods (Guppy and Daniels, 1997). Those with poor well-being may receive some form of social support in response to problems, but those with good affective well-being may receive more costly social support. The latter involves greater interaction because they are perceived to have a greater ability to reciprocate and may include more positive moods in the donor (Schwarzer and Leppin). The influence of affective well-being on social support may depend on the type of social support being received in the Roman Catholic priesthood today. It is therefore possible that support may not be forthcoming to those priests with high negative or low mood. What then is the alternative support for them within the priesthood?

More broadly, there are deemed to be three forms of social support (Guppy and Daniels, 1997). Firstly, there is specific aid regarding specific problems which can take the form of emotional support, tangible behaviours to help the recipient eliminate or avoid the stressors and advise regarding the nature of the stressor or recipient. Secondly, there is support that fulfils need for affiliation, belonging, respect, social recognition, affection and nurturance (Aneshensel and Stone, 1982). This can be provided by information that the individual is cared for, esteemed and valued. Thirdly, there is negative support or 'being let down' which has often been ignored in research literature although this dimension of support may lead to the attenuation of psychological well-being (Brown, Andrew, Harris Alder and Bridge, 1986). Of all three forms of support, support that involves aid is likely to be the most costly for donors and involves the most social interaction (Daniels and Guppy, 1997).

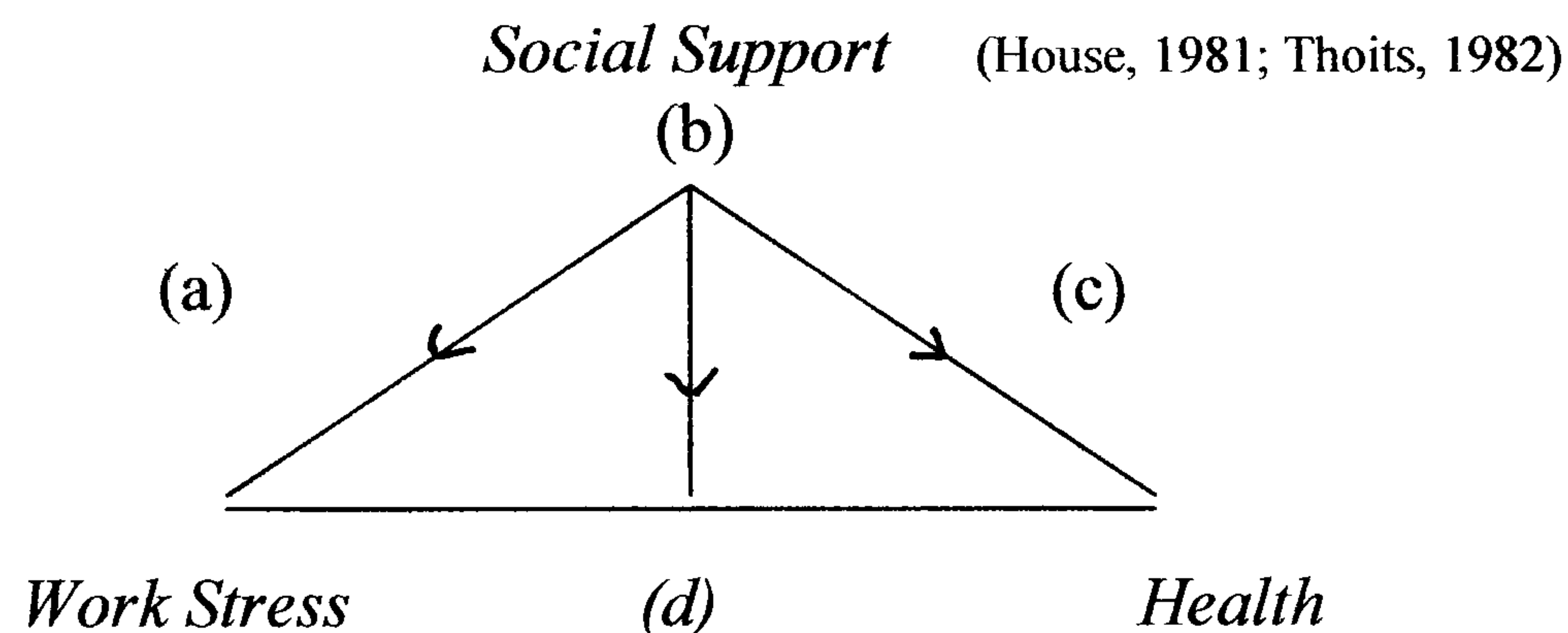


Goal setting and prioritisation simply involve deciding what one wants to accomplish each day. By implications, what is deemed the most important, i.e. the mechanics of time management dimension, involve the use of behaviours that are typically associated in time management programmes et al (Lakein, 1973). The preference for an organisational dimension involves having an organised methodical approach to work.

### **Potential effects of social support on work stress and health**

There is an assumption that social support is an important determinant or mediator of psychological health and well-being and some of the predictive validity data supports this. In the diagram below, three major points need highlighting, (Payne & Jones, 1987):

*Diagram of potential effect of social support on work, stress and health*



Social support has a direct effect on health (Arrow 'c') by providing emotional comfort which reduces the effects of symptoms. It promotes recovery possibly due to time provision of help and advice and therefore treats symptoms more effectively. This could also be interpreted as social support being a human need. If this is lacking it could cause psychological damage.

Social support directly reduces the stressors affecting the individual (arrow 'a'). Social support disturbs or mitigates the relationship between stressors and health (arrow 'd') i.e. a buffering hypothesis (arrow 'b'). The hypothesis assumes that there are no direct effects of social support on either health or stressors but the relationship between them has altered.

With buffering hypothesis, what is important here are the changes in the level of stable support normally available to the individual (Thoits (1982) In short, the higher the initial level of support, the greater the degree to which their level is maintained throughout a crisis period. In turn, the



less impact life changes will have upon the psychological state of the individual (Thoits, 1995).

Social support may need to be measured before any change in stressor, during the crisis itself, and, at some stage in the future in order to determine the effects of stress on the individual during a change in social support. There is currently no instrument which comprehensively measures the central components of social support with acceptable levels of reliability and validity (Leavy, 1983). Social support should ideally take place all the time for most people, and not just when they are stressed. However, social support can have a negative effect as well as a positive one for the recipient (Payne and Jones, 1987).

Social support does have beneficial outcomes (Cohen, 1985; Uchino, Cacioppo and Kiecott-Glaser, 1996; Thoerell and Karasek, 1996). Aggrevated evidence suggests that lack of support at work is associated with increased risk of cardiovascular disease. Sumi (1997) found a positive relationship between perceived social support and self reports of physical and psychological well-being among Japanese female college students. Finch et al (1989) discovered that scores on the Inventory of Social Supportive Behaviours were positively related to life satisfaction. Pennix et al, (1996) concluded that perceived social support appeared to be more important than structural and functional support in positively affecting the course of chronic disease. There are however different approaches to how social support should be conceptualised and operationalise. Historically, the list of measures included scales concerned with subjects' confidants and acquaintances, the availability of helpful 'others' in coping with certain work, family and financial problems (Medalie and Goldbourt, 1976).

Additionally, interpersonal assets and liabilities, individual's level of functioning in the community (Luborsky, et al, 1973), and perceived ability and adequacy of social support have all been measured. But perceived social support may not predict psychological well-being as



discovered in a study of 3000 adults (Erney et al, 1996). The whole question of accurate reporting of social support systems was challenged by Antoni, (1985) who concluded that self reporting of illness is subjective to forgetting, limited to a finite number of symptoms and, retrospective in nature. Whereas medical recording is both objective and professionally recorded. Various explanations have been provided for such inconsistency in social support (Manning and Fusilier, 1999) which include:

- Aspects of social support measured
- Methodological problems
- The self-report measures of symptomatology used in virtually all of the studies.

### **Questions to be added in contemporary research on social support**

Tardy (1985), in his review of suitable devices for measuring social support, concluded there was a need to clarify conceptual issues in order to clarify the decisions facing researchers (Daniels and Guppy, 1997). Measures of social support potentially encompass five inter-dependent primary elements: (Payne & Jones, 1985):

- **Direction** Is social support provided to others, or received from others/ both?
- **Disposition** ~ Is social support available - quality and quantity - or utilised?
- **Description/Evaluation** ~ Is the quality and nature of social support described and/or evaluated?
- **Content** ~ Does the content of the social support available, focus on emotional instrumental, informational or appraisal issues? (House, 1981).
- **Networking** ~ What are the sources of support - family, friends, co-workers?

However, Tardy (1985) assumes that:

1. All research on social support makes assumptions about these elements so that this provides a suitable theoretical and operational framework for decision making concerning social support studies.
2. Tardy (1985) identifies seven instruments which are capable of measuring these components, but only 5 of these scales are included (above). The Social Support Network (Fischer, 1982) is omitted from the discussion as no reliability estimates are reported for the scale while the Social support Vignettes instrument (Turner, 1981) is not discussed due to inherent uncertainty about disposition and content measure (Payne & Jones, 1987).



## **Content and Context of Work Related Stress**

In conclusion therefore, it is clear that many of the issues covered in Chapter One of this thesis translate into sources of stress identified in Cox's Model of Stress under both 'Content' and 'Context' of work related stress.

**Content of Work** addresses tasks, repetition, workload, pace and hours.

Issues pertaining to these in the R.C. Church and Priesthood were highlighted earlier namely:

- Powell's (1998) argument of adherence to the promise of obedience to one's Bishop. This describes how the priest is seen to be a man radically available to the Church.
- Stourton's (1998) description of the exercise of male power in the R.C. Church whose roots were questionable in the early Christian Church.
- Sewell, (2001) describes the secular commentators phrase 'priest famine' to understand the fall in ordination numbers versus the increasing workload on existing clergy.
- Bacik, (1989) highlights the pressures and tensions experienced by clergy when interacting with parishioners and their social dimensions of the Gospel in 21st Century.
- Balthasar, (1981) talks of the demands of priesthood weighing heavily on those called on through a 'vocation' which at times might prove overwhelming. (Ryan, 1997).

**Context of Work** addresses lack of control over work, role conflict and ambiguity.

- A bishop has the ambiguous role of both authoritarian and provider of pastoral and spiritual care of priests.
- The expansion of the role of the laity and additional demands on less numbers of ordained priests.
- The role of the pope allows the head to be a bridge-builder between the human sphere and the divine.
- The balance of power between Popes, cardinals and Bishops has shifted back and forth over the centuries.
- Lack of tangible results in ministry. Therefore all levels of clergy within the hierarchy are affected.
- Biblical connertations of expectation: 'Whilst living in this world...not of it'



## **Regarding the Role of the Organisation**

The R.C. Church is by far the largest organisation of any kind in the world with close to one billion adherents, representing 18% (1 in 6) of the earth's population and employing over 1.5 million personnel.

- Conversions at 12,000 in England and Wales in 1964 fell to 5000 in 1965. Catholic marriages have declines by 60%. Mass attendance halved since 1966.
- Seminaries training priests have closed and the number of ordained priests halved. Numbers of priests leaving the priesthood to marry causing an even greater dearth of clergy.
- Catholicism is said to be extinct by 2030 in Britain (The Tablet 19 June 1999). 7,600 R.C. priests in England and Wales in early 1970's yet by 2001 there are now 5,700 with an additional 400 permanent deacons.

### **Aspects of Social Support** highlighting concerns expressed earlier:

- Pilla, (1996) suggests that Bishops should ask themselves to what extent they truly empower their priests in their ministry.
- Priests are expected to always work within the bond of union with the Bishops and their fellow priests.
- Bishops should be glad to listen to their priests' views and consult with them
- Lack of social support resulting in 'the bitter loneliness experienced by priests' 60 years ago, priests were ultimately bound up in community life.



## Conclusion

The argument presented throughout this first chapter was that the Roman Catholic Church is a traditionally minded organisation embroiled in an environmental context of change. Five broad themes were discerned in the Church literature, each of which is capable of generating stress for the individual priest:

1. The conflict between Canon Law and the daily practical concerns of the laity.
2. Changes in parishioners' expectations and use of the Church
3. A questioning of the relevance and effectiveness of the Church's hierarchically derived power and authority, particularly its impact upon the motivation and morale of the individual priest.
4. Increasingly negative coverage of the church and the priesthood in the media.
5. The adequacy and effectiveness of seminary preparation and training for the priesthood.

Each theme will be briefly discussed in relation to its potential as a stressor for Roman Catholic priests today.

### **1. Conflict between Canon Law and concerns of the laity**

Of growing concern to commentators both within and outside of the Church is the relevance of Canon Law to daily life today. The Code of Canon Law, the interpretation of the teachings of Christ, is not a substitute for faith, grace, charisms and charity in the life of the Church and its faithful. Its purpose is rather to create such an order in the ecclesial society that, while assigning the primacy to love, grace and charisms, it simultaneously renders their organic development easier in the life of both the ecclesial society and the individual persons who belong to it (*Sacre Disciplinae Leges*).

As the Catholic Church's principal legislative document founded on the juridical-legislative heritage of revelation and tradition, the Code is to be regarded as an indispensable instrument to ensure order both in



individual and social life, and also in the Church's own activity. Thus it contains both the fundamental elements of the hierarchical and organic structure of the Church as willed by her Divine founder, or as based upon apostolic or most ancient tradition, and lays down certain rules and norms of behaviour.

Canon Law is open to change and the last change took place on 25 January 1983 i.e. 'the promulgation of the revised Code of Canon Law'. This decision was coupled with two further decisions by the Pontiff of Rome. Firstly, the intention to hold a synod of the Diocese of Rome and secondly, to convoke an ecumenical council- the latter more associated with the reform of Canon Law. The foundations of the changes were based on 25 January 1959 revisions, initiated by Pope John XXIII and which preceded the Council of Vatican II. While for centuries the Catholic Church has been accustomed to reform and renewal of laws of canonical discipline so that in constant fidelity to its divine founder, they may be better adapted to the saving mission entrusted to it (Apostolic Constitution – *Sacred Disciplinae Leges*).

Yet the Catholic Church is now being challenged, an unheard of situation less than half a century ago. While many now question the validity or relevance of the interpretation of Christ's teachings set against the context of life in the twenty-first century, preferring instead to rely upon their own individual conscience, judgement and decision-making. Cozzens (2002) acknowledges that when anxieties are awakened as a result of personal experience or tension with traditional teaching and the ongoing struggle for integrity and moral rectitude, there is a desire to turn to the 'official truth' proclaimed by Vatican offices and papal pronouncements. But 'official truth' also includes a broad spectrum of teachings, traditions, practices, disciplines and customs that fall outside the rubric of divine revelation. These are the very factors and variables that give rise to Catholic culture grounded in Gospel values. Yet whilst these non-dogmatic truths have been shaped and refined by the varied experiences of men and women they



“remain normative under the validation of authentic human experience”  
(Cozzens, 2002)

The double bind for the priest is that he is required both to live according to the rules of Canon Law himself and to convince his parishioners of its relevance to their lives also. The added impact of any ambiguity and contradiction in the priest's own lifestyle is therefore likely to damage his ability to reinforce Canon Law. Clearly, the priest often put on a pedestal, recognises that the price of any human failing on his part is scandal and shame. While people look to priests as men of faith it is scandalous that some priests have weakened in their faith to the extent of dismissing the truths of its Church leaving people confused and hurt (Dolan, 2001). The area of Church Teaching and Discipline causing most difficulty to many Catholics is concerned with moral issues.

Here the conflict between the teaching of the Church and the conscience of individual is at its greatest. The Church responded to the sexual liberation of the 1960's, with the Pope's *Humanae Vitae* encyclical regarding contraception. The conservatism of this encyclical was in direct contrast to the growing liberalism in 1960's society. Thousands of Catholics left the Church over this encyclical and it was often the most committed who led the way (Stourton, 1998). The issue here is not a questioning of the theological validity of Church Teaching and Discipline, but of its social application. This issue is twofold. Firstly, if as many commentators suggest, huge numbers of the laity are turning away from the church because they cannot resonate the Church's teachings to their daily lives, what impact does this have upon the priest who 'sits in the middle' i.e. whose job is to essentially mediate on behalf of the whole community and God?

For the priest's role the impact here is likely to be an increase in both role conflict and role ambiguity. Conflict results because the priest is almost inevitably drawn into a tension between pastoral care for his flock and obedience to the Bishop and the Church. This conflict is clearly recognised



and while the priest knows well the central role played by an informed and faithful conscience of the life of the Christian, sometimes the priest's own experience of ministry places him in conflict with Church teachings or discipline (Cozzens, 2000). The tension that follows is painful, so painful in fact that some priests adopt an attitude of unthinking obedience and loyalty simply to escape the discomfort of being in tension with the Church they love.

Ambiguity results because Canon Law provides a general framework and not a specific set of instructions concerning how to operationalise that framework within a given set of socio-economic conditions. Hence, as the rate of social change increases in modern society so too does the demand upon the individual priest to 'work out' the implications and applications of Canon Law to this new set of social conditions.

This latter point reinforces the fact that ambiguity, conflict and frustration experienced as a result of ministering to an increasingly disinterested community is likely to impact in part at least, upon the priest's own view of himself. This in turn alters his self-esteem, the value he puts upon his own ministry, and, even the strength of his own vocation (Cozzens, 2002). Clearly, whenever human experiences, supported by theological and pastoral reflection, stand in contrast to the Church teachings and practices, they require serious discussion and review.

Yet, the very nature of institutional life seems to resist this kind of process. Pressure is felt to embrace the 'official truth' that may denigrate and devalue the 'personal truth' of committed Christians who see a clear need for open discussion and discernment guided by the Spirit. Voices of experience are not heard, or, if heard, not taken seriously. Silence follows and clericalism spreads"(Cozzens, 2002). What is needed, is to understand that 'official truth' stands in dialectical tension with 'common truth' grounded in the experience of faithful believers striving to live in right relationships with God, each other and all creation (Cozzens, 2002).



## **2. Changes in parishioners' expectations and use of the church**

It is not just the priest who has been affected by the way the rate of social change is impacting upon the relationship between the person and God. So too have parishioners. The Church now faces an increased indifference towards it (Philpot, 1998). The two most discernible trends in parishioners' attitudes and behaviour towards the Church in the modern world have been either:

1. To turn away from the Church completely as evidenced in the declining numbers of Mass and other sacramental attendance or
2. The development of a consumerist mentality towards the Church i.e. claiming membership at a time of need or when something is wanted in return, for example, a church wedding or a place in a Catholic school.

Both of these trends increase the likely demand upon the priest. At the very least the priest is expected to take on an evangelical role. He is expected to 'preach the Word of God' to the community and to increase worship therein. This evangelical role is made harder in a society where there is increasing indifference and even hostility towards the church. In addition one might legitimately hypothesise that the outcome for the priest of ministering in a context of declining church interest and a growing consumerist mentality is a diminished sense of personal self worth which might frequently lead to feelings of loneliness, lowered self esteem and even alienation.

## **3. Church structure and authority**

The Catholic Church has survived 2,000 years of history and despite falling Mass attendance still boasts a membership of over one billion people (Cornwell, 2001). In other words 1:6 of the world's population are Catholic. Not surprisingly the Roman Catholic Church is deemed the largest organisation in the world (Cornwell, 2001). While there are historical landmarks of change in the Church's structure and organisation, e.g. Vatican II (Introduction to Vatican II Canon Law), some things have nevertheless remained constant and unquestioned. Foremost amongst these



is the Pope's infallibility on Church teaching together with the corresponding obedience that the priest owes to his Bishop and the Pope as the role descendants of St Peter and the apostles:

“The order of bishops is the successor to the College of the Apostles and and their role as teachers and pastors and in the apostolic college is perpetuated together with their Head, the Supreme Pontiff, and never apart from him ,they have supreme and full authority over the universal church, but this power cannot be exercised without the agreement of the Roman Pontiff" (Vat II docs 1965)

The infallibility of the Pope and the emphasis of the Church upon a unitary authority stand in marked contrast to the diversity of opinion and information available to modern society via technological means. The world –wide- web for example offers a means of interrogating and challenging any opinion or fact. The web is now seen as a site where ‘every commodity, pretension and opinion can be peddled, compared, and contrasted, sampled, reshaped, interactively questioned, contradicted, book-marked and consigned to oblivion’ (Cornwell, 2001).

Interestingly, the Church has on occasion embraced the web itself as a possible means of supporting stressed priests. The Catholic Herald (06 September 2002) for example carried the story of [www.thankyoufather.com](http://www.thankyoufather.com) a website set up in the USA to boost the morale of beleaguered priests. Headlined ‘Encouragement is only a click away’, parishioners are encouraged to click on the website and send a message of encouragement or thanks to their pastor! Again the picture is clear. The priest is a purveyor of absolute truth in a world of constant change, flux and questioning. Perhaps not surprisingly many priests view their church as standing at a precarious point in its history (Cozzens, 2000), not least because of the conflict between Church Law and the practical realities of social life. This challenge and contradiction are both potential sources of stress for the individual priest. There is however, growing confusion and contradiction for priests and parishioners alike (Cozzens, 2000). After Vatican II for example, the Catholic Church invited all members to play a more active role in their church ministry (Cornwell 2001).



In practice such collaborative ministry has brought about an increase in role conflict and confusion. A lay minister for example, may receive little or no training and take on duties that were once only undertaken by a priest who had spent 6 years in residential training in a seminary. Equally, lay people can take on the same role as an ordained permanent deacon. In reality many people are reluctant to take on any such roles and prefer instead to play only a passive role in their Church (Cornwell 2001).

Another source of confusion and conflict for the priest is the influx of Anglican married clergy who are converting to Catholicism and who can in theory at least arrive with their wives and children to practise as priests in the Catholic Church. Simultaneously, many of the 400 or so Permanent Deacons who now regularly minister to the community are themselves married with children. For many celibate Catholic priests who work alongside them this has created a degree of resentment on the grounds that married clergy and deacons experience 'the best of both worlds' i.e. both marriage and ministry (Stourton 1998). Critical too are those Catholic priests who have left the priesthood to marry (Stourton 1998).

#### **4. Media Portrayal**

Perhaps not surprisingly the generally perceived climate of unrest that prevails both inside and outside of the Church has become the target of many uncomplimentary media headlines. On the one hand a perhaps at least partially sympathetic media has recognised the increasing demands being made of a decreasing number of priests:

*'Priests feel strain of increasing workloads' (The Catholic Times 15 September 2002)*

*'Bishop's plea to end lonely existence of rural priests' (The Universe 15 September 2002)*

*'Is this the beginning of the end for the parish priest?' (The Catholic Times 20 Feb 2004)*

*'Roman Curia address media image' (The Catholic Herald 26 November 2004)*

On the other hand a more critical and intrusive media is quick to speculate, judge and comment on the possible links between the Church's all male culture, child abuse and homosexuality:



*‘Pope condemns paedophile priests’ (The Independent 24 April 2002)*

*‘Gay priests reveal secrets of Catholic boot camp’ (The Independent 30 March 2001)*

*‘Church pays hush money to sex victims – Cardinal accused of turning a blind eye to paedophile priests’ (The Times 20 November 2002)*

With the discovery of historic and current cases of child abuse, trust in the Roman Catholic Church has been severely shaken. Many now question the whole area of the Church’s teaching and recognition of sexuality as well as the way individuals are responded to, whether they are priests or members of the laity, when their own sexuality is revealed (Cozzens, 2002). While the seriousness of child abuse cases involving priests must in no way be undermined – and neither would any genuine priest wish it to be – many priests do see themselves as being ‘tarnished with the same brush’ as their offending colleagues: The crisis of clergy sexual abuse has taken an enormous toll upon the Catholic Church, harming victims and their families and shattering the faith of many others.

However, the crisis has also been devastating for the vast majority of priests who are not child molesters. Accused of nothing, they find their own lives dramatically transformed by the abusive behaviour of others and by the occasional failure of the Church they love, to detect, deter or to stop that abuse.” (Paulson 2002, The Boston Globe cited in Cozzens 2002). The general tenor of the media portrayal of the Church is arguably that of an organisation in crisis. Indicative of this are newspaper stories chronicling falling attendances both at Church and in the seminaries as well as the exit of clergy from the priesthood:

*‘Turbulent priests’ – ‘The seven Catholic seminaries that serve England and Wales now have 300 empty places. This critical shortage of candidates for the priesthood has led to an angry dispute in the Church’ (The Guardian 2 July 2002)*

They also draw attention to Vatican documents - issued periodically from The Department for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith – with attention seeking headlines:

*“Catholics must resist ‘modern morality’ says The Vatican”  
(The Daily Mail 17 January 2003)*



What impact this negative media portrayal has upon the motivation, morale, well-being, and self esteem of the individual priest is an open question. Certainly negative public and media expectations are known to be a major source of stress in many occupations and organisations (Cooper 1998). It is in part with exploring this impact that this thesis is concerned.

### ***5. Seminary Training and preparation***

In line with the conflict many priests experience between Church law and daily life, Catholic seminaries have seen a steady fall in student intake. 'The Universe', itself a Catholic newspaper, asks 'Are seminaries still the best way of forming a priesthood?' (26 May 2002). Additional comments were in other broadsheets:

*"We must first ask what it is we are asking our priests to do, before we make decisions about rationalising the training"*  
(*The Guardian: O'Keefe, 2 July 2002*)

Concerns about the effectiveness of seminary training focus upon a number of issues including the curriculum, the academic staff and the theological and ethical values espoused. Others lament the lack of monitoring of both the selection of trainees into a seminary and the progress of students therein (Rose, 2002). Reflecting on life in the seminary, there is heightened awareness at the existence on a growing homosexual subculture amongst both staff and students, which might actually serve to deter heterosexual students from applying (Cozzens, 2000). How many seminarians leave the seminary and abandon their vocation because of the gay subculture they were forced to endure, or because they had been propositioned, harassed or even molested (Cozzens, 2000)?

Further questions regarding the actual teaching and views espoused within the seminary system are voiced (Rose, 2002). They argue that those who were put in positions of trust, authority and educational responsibility often do not deserve the position. One priest, Fr Charles Fiore, quoted by Rose, (2002) questions why men and women who clearly do not understand and apparently do not believe the teachings of the Church are allowed to



educate, form and train seminarians who will be entrusted with the souls of the faithful? Whatever can rectors and bishops who permit the use of alien texts and alienated professors be thinking? No wonder good and faithful pastors are discouraged from sending young men to study for the priesthood when all too often the seminarians are subverted in their faith and perverted in their morals.(Fiore,2002).

In terms of the goals of this thesis the issue here has nothing to do with the ‘right or wrong’ of homosexuality, heterosexuality or any particular theological view. Rather it is simply to point to the increasing conflict and tension that many commentators upon the Church see not only between Church and people but also within the structure, organisation and institution of the Church itself. In short it is the psychosocial work environment of the priest, whether in training or in the parish, which is the concern here.

### **Stress, priesthood and the psychosocial work environment**

Psychosocial factors are concerned with the way in which work is designed, organised and managed (ILO 1986). Several taxonomies of psychosocial factors can be found in the literature, though most emphasise two broad categories: elements of the content of work e.g. *workload and work pace*, and elements of the context of work e.g. *relationships with colleagues and line managers* (Griffiths, 1998)). A number of psychosocial factors, some content and some context related, have been consistently linked with poor well-being and ill health including:

- *Having too much to do*
- *Long working hours*
- *Organisational change*
- *Lack of participation in decision making*
- *Isolated or solitary work*
- *Inadequate supervision and lack of support*
- *Unfair or unclear performance evaluation*
- *Unclear conflicting roles*
- *Continuously dealing with other people’s problems*
- *Lack of recognition and feedback (Griffiths, 1998)*



The central argument being put forward in this thesis is that the work environment for the Roman Catholic priest in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is characterised precisely by many of these psychosocial factors known to be damaging to health and well-being, whether it is the tension between Canon Law and daily living, discrepancies between individual priests in their application of Canon Law. Simply, the decline in the number of priests' or the sheer amount of change to which the Church has to respond, the merging picture is simple and consistent. The priest operates in a psychosocial work environment likely to lead to stress.

Many if not all of the psychosocial factors known to lead to stress are evident in the priest's work experience. It is with the description and delineation of this experience – and especially the identification of sources of stress within it – that this chapter is principally concerned. There are no specific hypotheses at this stage other than that the qualitative and quantitative exploration of the priest's work experience will yield themes or factors of job demand similar to those listed above. The central question remains: 'What do Roman Catholic priests find stressful about their ministry'?

In short, the argument presented throughout this Chapter One centred on three distinct issues;

- The Roman Catholic Church as an Organisation;
- The Role of Priests;
- The Stress Literature.

The important aspects of each will be summarised here in order to both clarify the problems and state the questions arising from the literature to be addressed in this thesis.

### *The Roman Catholic Church as an Organisation*

The Roman Catholic Church has clearly been recognised as the largest organisational institution in the World (Stourton, 1998) with close to 1 billion adherents - 18% (1:5) of the population world wide (Sipe 1998). It is simply too big to ignore. 2000 years of history created a culture



reinforcing the identity of a world wide club(Stourton, 1998) where members experienced the ambiguity of loyalty and fear; persecution, snobbery, sanctity and sense of own identity. Religion and social class ran parallel with a sense of security that *your* church had answer to absolutely everything (Stourton, 1998)

The era of the 1960's centred on the notion that to live was to change and Vatican II addressed the dual focus of returning to the source and origins of Christianity and re-express it in changing circumstances of modern 1960's era. Four decades on a mid life crisis has set in and the RC Church is still viewed as organisational institutional mode (Ryan 1997). The battle for power has shifted back and forth for two centuries, and the male power within this hierarchy remains a mystery, reinforced within the Roman Curia (Stourton 1998). The way the church is still governed reflects both its history and temporal power and its claim to divine inspiration with the Pope retaining a unique place among world political leaders. In short, the Roman Catholic Church remains strong enough and indeed rich enough to put pressure on world wide issues.

The concept of obedience appears to remain structured towards a mainly institutional and hierarchical dimension of ecclesial ministry (Philpot, 1998). A consequence of this may be the increasing culture of clericalism/careerism within the organisation which is in direct concept to the Gospel message and role priest in persona Christi 'to serve not to be served'. But this wider concept of obedience is also being challenge by the people living in a modern world who now question everything on the worldwide web, preferring to concede to personal conscience in moral issues.

Clearly the concept of obedience is meeting both a real challenge and contradiction to the Gospel values and Canon Law today. While religious obedience is owed to God alone, priests promise obedience at ordination to their Bishop. But often religious authorities demand too much submission to an obscure package (Haring 1997) leading to historical potential abuse



of power (Hedin 1995). This debate has been recognised by the media broadening the argument, along with coverage of historic child abuse cases and paternity suits involving clergy. Clearly the media now openly question whether the Church and priesthood is now in crisis. Clearly the RC church is a unique organisational institution and ministry of its members is an unresearched area offering the opportunity to test out traditional model of occupational stress.

*The Role of the RC priest within the organisational institution today.*

The role of priest is distinct and clearly defined; To preach the Gospel of God to all; To Minister the Sacraments and Eucharist; To Work within the bond of union with Bishop and fellow priests living in the community but set apart from the people.

Historically, the mystery of priesthood reinforced the clarity of role. Quite simply, priesthood was not compatible with a worldly job (Balthasar 1960). Crucially, the specifics of priesthood focus on the concept of reciprocity between office and personal identity of priest himself (Balthasar, 1960). The issue of priestly identity even today continues to call men to a unique way of life (Cozzens 2000) but 40 years post Vatican II this clear identity, unquestioned status and exalted privilege of priesthood is becoming blurred leaving clergy confused and ambiguous (Cozzens, 2000). This is due to three things. The demise of a sacred model of priesthood and the substitution of word president for priest in Eucharistic leadership (Rausch, 1999); Vulnerability of priests after loss of mystery of priesthood where they moved from the mystery of the rite to celebration of the gathering community (Rausch, 1999) leaving many priests exposed and vulnerable. The loss of privilege and status resulted in personal signs of loneliness and anxiety becoming visible. Priests were then forced to address their humanity within inadequate support system leading to huge loss in personal identity and self esteem (Power 1998). Ambiguous expectations of post Vat II people, labouring in humility and embracing celibacy, a loss of trust in fellow priests (Cozzens, 2000) where if not their personal integrity, then corporate identity suffered, with the revelations of



child abuse and negative media coverage leading to loss of trust by families in the community therefore loss of support systems for priests.

The domestic setting is now a dual work/home base with the 'family' i.e. priests, curates and housekeeper an historic memory. Today one priest may live alone with a choice of two/three parish house settings.

Information Technology has both helped and hindered the personal touch within pastoral care of the people. The growing areas of specialism for which a priest is approached now expects him to meet diversity of demands without adequate training or indeed retraining. The increasing need to maintain responsibility for plant and resources – human, material and financial multiples as parishes merge. Collaborative ministry has resulted in confusion. People are not adequately trained – a short weekend and expectation of roles compared to a priest's six years in seminary - coupled with ongoing apathy to engage in ministry because there is still the assumption 'Father' will still do everything. In addition there is a growing attitude of a convenience store mentality by the people contrasting with a lack of support and upkeep in the parish community.

We are experiencing a younger generation of under 45 year olds who have a voluntary attachment to sacraments versus choice of conscious and lifestyle which are proving at odds with Canon Law. This is reinforced with the influence of the world wide web challenging the Church teachings and rulings. Clearly any priest faced with the above would begin to question his role and may express symptoms of stress.

- In short priesthood is now addressing different generations and culture of Catholics whose lifestyle is at odds with Church teaching
- Increasing contradiction and frustration for priests caught between
- Demands from a changing and secular world versus backward looking organisational institution
- Growing sense of indifference towards the Church and falling number so vocations



- Lack of take up in collaborative ministry and low level of catechesis.
- How adequate is the training and seminary institution as place to prepare for role?

How does this resonate with occupational stress literature on other institutions of 21<sup>st</sup> century along with employees personal perception of stress experience?

The central argument being put forward in this thesis is that the working environment for RC priests in 21<sup>st</sup> century is characterised precisely by many of the psychosocial factors known to be damaging to health and well being.

The concept of stress has evolved into a transactional model of stress at the turn of this century (Cooper 2001) The model is applicable to both the individual and the environment and in which they both live and work. The transactional model of stress endeavours to explore the essential nature of stressor-response-outcome relationship and in so doing, encapsulate an understanding of the dynamic stress process itself; not merely the statistical relationship between variables (Cooper, et al 2001). The transactional model is concerned with the dynamics of the psychological mechanisms of cognitive appraisal and coping that underpin a stressful encounter.

For this thesis the transactional model is utilised here as a lens through which the experience of RC priests can be purposefully and fruitfully viewed. The model emphasises the importance of demands faced by the individual, constraints operated under, support available and symptoms of strain. Clearly, what distinguishes this approach is the emphasis on process, meaning and adjustment and coping stages as core defining elements (Cooper 2001). So this clearly defined cyclical system within a stress process has 5 stages which will be simultaneously applied to priesthood to define how priests respond to stress in their ministry.



Chapter two will now address the methodology employed to explore stress in the R.C. priesthood. Beginning with a route map of the major steps of investigation the chapter will also present the rationale for employing dual use of qualitative and quantitative methodology for this thesis.



## CHAPTER TWO

### Methodology

#### Introduction

Chapter two presents the methodology used for researching sources of stress in the R.C. priesthood. Presented below is a simple 'route plan' showing the major steps taken to carry out this research investing in the dual use of qualitative and quantitative methods.

**Invitation to visit Bishop of Diocese 'A'**  
*Spring 1996: Pilot interviews with 12 clergy*  
**Clergy invited to The University of Nottingham**  
Draft Questionnaire completed  
**Summons to The Chapter of Canons**  
*Easter 1996*  
**Distribution of Questionnaire to Diocese 'A'**  
*September 1996*  
**Invitation to visit Bishop of Diocese 'B'**  
**Presentation of proposed research questionnaire to**  
**The Council of Clergy in Diocese 'B'**  
Ongoing input of data into computer  
*Christmas 1996*  
**Distribution of Questionnaire to clergy in Diocese 'B'**  
Input of data for Diocese 'A' and 'B' completed  
*April 1997*  
**Draft results sent to Bishops of Diocese 'A' and Diocese 'B'**  
*May 1997*  
**Presentation of initial results to Diocese 'A'**  
at the Council of Clergy  
*November 1997*  
**Presentation of initial results from both Diocese at**  
**The Conference of Clergy in Diocese 'A'**  
**Invitation to visit Bishop of Diocese 'C'**  
*February 1998*  
Questionnaire sent to clergy in Diocese 'C'  
**Presentation of initial results of Diocese 'A' and**  
**Diocese 'B' to the Council of Clergy in Diocese 'B'**  
*April 1998*  
**Invitation to visit Bishop of Diocese 'D'**  
*Easter 1998*  
*Distribution of Questionnaire to clergy in Diocese 'D'*  
**Qualitative data from 4 Diocese sent to 4 Bishops**  
*November 1998*  
**Invitation to London to present initial findings to Bishops**



## **The importance of integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methodology**

### *Justification for the dual use of qualitative and quantitative methodology.*

Integrating both qualitative and quantitative methodology was deemed suitable firstly because the nature of the institution in which priest's served is a somewhat private and often 'closed' institution. Secondly, the inappropriateness of other measures within this 'work environment' were deemed unsuitable when considering the spiritual and ministerial aspects of vocational work. Each would be difficult to measure through one discipline alone. Thirdly, as a baptised and practising member of the Catholic Church, and as a female researcher in a completely male environment, I was researching an area which had restricted its membership to men alone. It was crucial therefore that each stage was carefully conducted using the most appropriate methodology.

In choosing to use both qualitative and quantitative methodology for this research consideration was given to their strengths and weaknesses when applied to a piece of scientific research. Equally, I was also sensitive to the nature of the institution within which the research took place and wanted to apply the most appropriate form of research methodology according to the needs of both the research itself and the institution. For this research the rationale for using qualitative methods were for:

- Identifying the gatekeepers and accessing the organisation.
- Conducting preliminary un/structured interviews with a focus group of clergy.
- Constructing a questionnaire and adding contextual rich free response questions.
- 

The rationale for using quantitative methods were:

- The statistical analysis of number based items in the questionnaire i.e. Likert-type rating scales and the General Well-being Questionnaire.

While acknowledging that the use of Qualitative data is an important method of research, particularly for this research, acknowledgment is made that the actual name is something of a misnomer (Cassell et al, 1994). Qualitative methodology is an umbrella term covering an array of



interpretive techniques seeking to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency of naturally occurring phenomenon in the social world (Van Maanen, 1979) . In the last decade a keener interest has emerged in the use of qualitative methods in research because while the methodological repertoire of psychology included qualitative methods, they have tended to be seen as appropriate for the pilot phase of a project (Henwood and Nicholson, 1995). Yet as 'stand alone' techniques there are clear areas of contribution which are now receiving recognition reinforcing the use for this research. In short, three specific issues enhanced the use of qualitative paradigm (Henwood and Pidgeon,1995). Firstly, an over-emphasis on theory testing can produce under emphasis on the systematic generation of new theory, a key principle of qualitative research. Secondly, qualitative approaches, which place emphasis on exploring the research participants' own situated experiences, offset the critique of much psychological research and that the significance of 'individual' experience is therefore neglected. Thirdly, positivism is grounded in the assumption that it is possible to accumulate sense data that allows us to neutrally apprehend an external and independently existing social/national reality.

The importance of considering both the role of the researcher and the researched cannot be overlooked because the subjects studies are 'participants' in the research endeavour i.e. not 'subjects' of it (Cassell and Symon, 1994). Given that researchers are part of the social world studied, they can never be truly objective so inevitably some subjectivity is present (Hammersley and Aikinson,1983) While assumptions have been made that qualitative methods do not involve numbers or their quantification of phenomena (Bryman,1988), such an approach enables the acceptance of the inherent subjectivity of the research endeavour. The focus for this research is in understanding the individual's life world providing a more holistic approach on the research area (Cassell et al 1994). Clearly, the key to the value of qualitative research methods applied to this thesis allows greater exploration of the 'meaning' of the priesthood to those who serve as priests. This 'meaning' in turn, provides the context for any statistical



exploration of stressor-strain relationship. Qualitative methodology allowed the humanistic side of the Roman Catholic priesthood to be explored in a way not possible nor appropriate with quantitative methodology. Firstly, it gives priests the opportunity to 'speak' confidentially and identify areas of potential stressors which were later highlighted in the quantitative data. Secondly, it reveals aspects of priesthood distinct to the Roman Catholic Church i.e. the concept of vocation that is neither tangible nor possible to analyse on a computer.

Thirdly, qualitative methodology grounds the questionnaire in the reality of the priesthood in the 21st Century by asking priests for a personal response whilst offering anonymity to both the priest and his diocese. Taking the phenomenon for investigation and applying it to this research "*Does stress exist amongst Roman Catholic priests?*", we can begin to look at potential stressors highlighted by clergy through the use of interview techniques. The next stage to consider would be to examine how the phenomenon has been defined and presented in the literature review and attempt to identify further the researchable aspects of the problem. Additionally, consideration that the phenomenon and associated issues needs to be redefined (Cassell & Symon, 1994). This includes considering what assumptions are being made in so framing these questions and, the nature of the organisational realities, that is, how organisational behaviour is arrived at, including the relationship between theory and method.

### **The use of Interviews in Qualitative methodology and for this thesis**

A further key feature of using qualitative research methods is the nature of the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee. The latter is both the 'researched subject' but also a 'participant' in the research. The goal of qualitative research interviews is to see the research topic from the perspective of the interviewee and understand how and why they come to have this particular perspective (King, 1998). Qualitative research interviews, unlike structured interviews/open response, are most suited to research investigation, (King, 19983) involving exploratory work and before quantitative studies are carried out. After quantitative methods are



explored further, qualitative data is required to validate the measures or findings. Qualitative research interviews also address the responses from the individuals on the meaning of a particular phenomenon and where the individual's perception of processes within a social unit can be studied prospectively. Four distinct steps to this process are: Defining the research questions; Creating the interview's guide; Recruiting participants; Carrying out practical issues in the interviews (King, 1998):

While acknowledging the possible needs of identifying common features, the notion of producing a cookbook of instructions is entirely at odds with the aims and flexibility of openness to the data, that is, at the heart of qualitative research (Hyner, 1985). A useful framework for summarising the various approaches to data analysis involves four distinct points (Miller and Crabtree, 1992). *Quasi Statistical* which seeks to turn the textual data into quantitative data which can be manipulated statistically using content analysis, via selecting single words, phrases or themes (Weber, (1947). Secondly, *Templates*, which categorise themes relevant to research questions via a codebook built on existing knowledge derived from the literature and content of the research questions (Crabtree and Miller (1992). Thirdly, *Editing* where the interpreter enters the text like an editor. The editing approach has its roots in the philosophical tradition of phenomenology which seeks to understand the experiences of individual life world (Husserl, 1931). Finally, *Immersion Crystallisation* involving analytical reflection by the researcher and intuitive crystallisation of meaning.

Despite the increased popularity and use of qualitative methods, there is relatively less information available about *how* to conduct qualitative data analysis (Symon and Cassell, 1994). This is because the distinction between data collection and data analysis is still unclear. The real mystique of qualitative inquiry lies in the process of *using* data rather than in the process of *gathering* data. (Symon and Cassell, 1994).



### **Quantitative Methods: Designing the Questionnaire for Clergy:**

Following the initial gathering of qualitative data from clergy by interviews, the main method used in data collection for this research was by questionnaire. Acknowledging the positive and negative aspects of quantitative data outlined in the literature, it is therefore important to firstly determine what the purpose of the questionnaire is and for whom it is intended, as this will influence both its content and styles (Oppenheim, 1996). Secondly, data obtained by means of interviews and questionnaires should always be regarded as confidential in the sense that no responses or findings should ever be published which could be traced back to particular individuals. In enlisting co-operation for a survey, respondents are usually given assurances to this effect and a guarantee of anonymity. This is often crucial in obtaining frank and revealing responses (Oppenheim, 1996).

The use of questionnaires avoided the problems of bias associated with other methods of data collection and acknowledgement is made that respondents who send in their questionnaires very late are roughly similar to non respondents (Oppenheim, 1996). It would therefore appear that interested people are more likely to respond earlier. This method enabled a number of formal tests of reliability and validity to be conducted on the data collected to check consistency in obtaining the same results again and validity to ensure that the question or item really measures what it is supposed to measure. In short, by purifying a test we can make it highly reliable Oppenheim, (1996).

Acknowledgement is also made that whilst the questionnaires were completed voluntarily, there is always the issue of self selection and the question why some respondents choose to complete the questionnaire and others do not. No testing could take place to determine the individuals understanding of it, nor if the individual, for whom it was intended, actually completed it. Furthermore, it has been suggested that the responses of the individual can be influenced by his/her own defences against anxiety (Lawrence, Cullen, Foster, Mayer, Wisner and De Wolf,



1982). The use of questionnaires for this research was appropriate for the following reasons. Firstly, it allowed a large number of Catholic priests' responses to be sampled over a wide geographical area. Secondly, it dealt with a church institution which had survived for almost 2,000 years. Very little research has been undertaken within both its hierarchical structures and amongst the clergy themselves despite claims of more 'openness' after Vatican II.

Thirdly, in order to approach this research in a sensitive non threatening way, a high priority was placed upon confidentiality and anonymity. The reassurance of using methodology that allowed this for both the individual priest and each Diocese involved in the research allowed subsequent dioceses to allow us access. For example, through professional training a priest may conduct himself in a manner where he is seen to be emotionally detached from the situation in order to deal with it professionally e.g. hospital Chaplain. It retrospect the use of questionnaire in this research was clearly the right method given the number of people responding who enclosed personal anonymous letters and additional information. It also gave many priests the opportunity to 'speak' confidentially providing invaluable qualitative data included in the appendix of this research:

*Thank you for taking the time to prepare it. I do hope in some way it might lead to some constructive changes in our life style" (Ref 026)*

*"Every success and blessing on your undertaking" (Ref 064)*

### **Gatekeepers**

In order to gain access to a group of R.C. clergy as potential pilot study for this research, step one involved seeking permission from the Bishop of Diocese 'A' via a visitation. This process is similar to that outlined by Hammersley and Aitkinson (1983) regarding gatekeepers. The first stage was to address the role of gatekeeper. In formal organisations initial access negotiations may be focussed on formal permission that can legitimately be granted - or withheld - by key personnel. Whether or not they grant entry to the setting, gatekeepers will generally and understandably be concerned as to the picture of the organisation that the



ethnographer will paint (Hammersely and Aitkinson, 1983). Gatekeepers may therefore attempt to exercise some degree of surveillance and control either by blocking off certain lines of enquiry or shepherding the fieldworker in one direction or another. In the Roman Catholic Church the person deemed to be in the role of gatekeeper in each Diocese is the Bishop. Each Bishop was approached individually before access to his Diocese could be discussed and permission to undertake the research granted, or withheld.

### **Interviewing Roman Catholic Priests to determine area of potential stressors for further investigation by questionnaire**

The initial starting point for this qualitative research began with a request for an interview with the Bishop of Diocese 'A'. Once permission to carry out the research in Diocese 'A' had been granted an opportunist sample of 12 Roman Catholic priests were interviewed as part of a pilot study. The selection criteria was based mainly on the Diocesan year book offering a cross section of ages and with the assistance on another priest suggestions were made as to those willing to take part. When this second draft was completed and sent for approval to the Bishop and Vicar Generals of Diocese 'A' along with each of the 12 priests, I received a summons to sit at The Chapter of Canons at The Cathedral to present my proposed research and discuss the ethics of the research. After assurances on the ethics, confidentiality and anonymity of both the priests and the diocese I was given permission to distribute the questionnaire to each priest in that diocese after Easter 1996. A total of four diocese were targeted as shown on the flow chart. The results are presented in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

### **QUALITATIVE STAGE Procedure for Interviewing priests**

Once permission to carry out the research in Diocese 'A' had been granted, an opportunist sample of 12 priests was interviewed. The criteria on which these priests were approached were essentially to provide a reasonable cross-section of age and time since ordination. The diocesan yearbook was used to identify these characteristics and the assistance of a priest friend sought in identifying fellow priests most likely to agree to interview. Each



priest was contacted by telephone in the first instance. The purpose of this telephone conversation was to introduce both the nature and purpose of the research and then to ask for the priest's participation in it. It was also explained to the priest that the research had the written support of his bishop.

All of the priests who were approached in this way agreed to take part. A date at their convenience was then arranged for the interview to take place. Each interview took place in the presbytery at the priest's parish and lasted between ninety minutes and two hours. A semi-structured interview format was followed in that an initial group of questions was used to stimulate discussion. These questions were derived both from a reading of the literature and from personal knowledge gained from working with priests over a number of years. The list of stimulus questions used in the interviews was as follows:

- Please describe your domestic setting
- Is your parish based in a rural or urban area?
- What has been the most positive experience of priesthood for you?
- What has been the most negative experience of priesthood for you?
- Are all clergy the same in their interpretation of Canon Law and its application to the daily lives of their parishioners?
- Does the church reinforce a certain type of personality in the priesthood?
- How would you describe the fraternity of the priesthood?
- How do you feel wearing clerical dress?
- How do people respond to you when you wear or do not wear clerical dress?
- Is celibacy a positive or a negative aspect of priesthood?
- Are you concerned about your retirement?

After permission to do so was given, I took brief notes during the course of each interview. Although the use of a tape recorder might have been advantageous at this stage, one was not used for two principal reasons. First, given the sensitivity of my subject and sample it was considered that a request to tape record might be too intrusive and therefore counter validity. Second, the priest's



confidence in the confidentiality of the research might be lessened by the knowledge that an audiotape of the conversation remained even after the interview closed.

### **Participants**

The ages of the priests who took part in the interviews ranged from 33 years to 70 years, with a mean age of 45 years ( $SD = 10.4$  years). The number of years since they had been ordained ranged from 6 years to 41 years, with a mean of 16 years ( $SD = 9.74$  years). Ten of the priests were parish priests and two were assistant priests (formerly known as curates). Each of the ten parish priests interviewed was the sole minister in the parish. Four of the parishes served largely rural communities, five served suburban communities and three were located in the inner-city. The parish population for those priests interviewed ranged from 460 to 4,000, with a mean of 1,480 ( $SD = 1079$ ). In short, the sample of the twelve priests interviewed represented a broad range of age, personal and parish experience.

### **Methodology for the Quantitative Stage of the research**

The rationale behind the use of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies in this thesis is that one should fertilize the other. From the outset it was planned that the principal use of the interview data was to inform the questions to be asked in the second, quantitative, stage of the research. The priests' responses to the questions asked in the interview therefore guided the design of the survey questionnaire, especially the stressor item bank to be used. Since this chapter is concerned only with the identification of possible stressors or hazards in the priest's psychosocial work environment, detailed description is limited here to those items included in this stressor item bank. In addition to the stressor item bank, however, the questionnaire also included:

1. A coping strategies questionnaire derived from Latack (1986)
2. A perceived support questionnaire based on Leather, Lawrence, Beale and Cox, 1998.
3. Rating scales designed to measure general well-being, self esteem, priests' confidence in their ability to effect their ministry, and their thoughts about leaving the priesthood.
4. A series of free response questions exploring the priest's views and opinions on:



- The meaning of the term ‘vocation’
  - What motivated their own vocation
  - Their expectations of priestly ministry at ordination
  - Necessary qualities in candidates to the priesthood
  - Fulfilling aspects of the priesthood
  - Perceived training needs for the priesthood in the modern world
  - Their understanding of Heaven
  - Their views on the implementation of a sabbatical
  - Sexuality and the Church
5. A variety of biographical details pertaining to the priest’s age, number of years since his ordination, the nature of his parish and living accommodation.
  6. A free response invitation for priests to outline any other issues that they thought relevant to the research or indeed any comments upon it.

Details of these additional measures will be provided as appropriate later in the thesis. A draft of the questionnaire was prepared in advance of the focus group meeting held at The University of Nottingham. One of the principal purposes of that meeting was for the seven priests present to act as an advisory group on the face and content validity of both the items selected from the interview material and their proposed response format. The final version of the questionnaire was initially mailed to all the priests in Diocese ‘A’.

Following successful access into the further 3 Dioceses the questionnaire was mailed to a total of 500 priests. A stamped addressed envelope was included for the return of the completed questionnaire directly to the researcher. Priests were assured that the questionnaire was confidential and that individual responses would not be made known to anyone within the Church. Indeed, on the advice of the advisory group, priests were not asked to identify either themselves or their parish in the questionnaire. It was believed that such anonymity would help improve the response rate. In each Diocese the distribution of the questionnaire was preceded by an item in the *Ad Clerum* introducing the research, the questionnaire and its purpose and asking priests for their co-operation. Chapter Three will now present the areas identified from the pilot study along with the resulting questionnaire sections which were then mailed to clergy in four diocese for this research.



## CHAPTER THREE

### Introduction

#### **The findings of the initial Interviews with pilot study of 12 clergy**

The principle purpose of the interviews was to encourage the sample of priests to talk in depth, detail and richness as possible about their own experience of the priesthood. The goal in analysing the results of the interviews was to decipher any consistent themes that were common in the experience of the majority of priests. Deciding that this 'majority rule' had been met was both a quantitative and qualitative process. Quantitatively it was met when at least eight priests used identical or closely related terminology in reference to a particular topic. Qualitatively it was met when at least eight priests used different terminology to refer to a common theme. Checks were made during the course of the interview to clarify the consistency of the common theme. Utilising this dual analytical strategy, eight potential sources of stress emerged, each area subsequently labelled and summarised below. An illustration using one direct quotation from one of the sample of twelve priests was included for each area:

#### ***1. Domestic Accommodation***

This area of concern focussed on domestic arrangements for clergy and whether they shared a house or lived alone and if parishioners used the premises for meetings. Priests were asked to manage ecclesiastical property, using money acquired for a decent living with remaining funds used for Church or works of charity (Vat II Chpt III: 17 1965). The issue of 'open house' and feeling 'at home' is often a contradiction for clergy resulting in a potential source of stress.

Two priests voiced their concerns thus:

*"How 'at home' does a priest feel in his presbytery? Yes, now that would be a good question. What sort of relationship is there between a parish priest and a curate .. you move from isolation to suddenly sharing a house".*

*"I'm just the lodger here...the housekeeper and the parish priest know you will move on one day...Living alone is bad enough, but looking back on my days as a curate, its better than living with a b.....d"!*



## **2. Sacramental Duties and Ministry**

This second area relates to potential conflict between Canon Law theory and the practical application in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It is the fundamental matter of how the sacramental life of the Church can be applied in an increasingly secular world. The many and varied requests for ‘help’ from parishioners are often the ‘stimuli’ that bring such conflict into sharp relief, not least because parishioners’ requests and expectations are often ‘at odds’ with Canon Law:

*“Sometimes it’s obvious a couple are living together and their parents just want it (marriage) done properly. How can I honestly tell them, because they are breaking the law in not being free to marry?”*

*“When they (parents) come to get a child Baptised it’s only to get him into the Catholic School. But then I say ‘But you’re not even married yet, to one another!’”*

*“I spent 6 years in a seminary and came out trained, for a Church that doesn’t exist”*

## **3. The Role of R.C. Priesthood and the Media portrayal**

A third source of stress centred upon the social image of the priest in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in particular its portrayal through the media. For many priests the clergyman was increasingly the target of suspicion and negative comments, a trend fuelled by child abuse cases. In the view of a number of priests in the present sample their own ‘humanity’ is also ignored or denied:

*“People forget the human being, the human side of priesthood”*

*“I feel dirty when I hear about my fellow priests (child abuse). I’m scared to death taking Open Confession, scared to death to put my arms around a child in case it is misinterpreted. I just don’t allow a child inside the presbytery without another adult present”*

## **4. The R.C. Church and hierarchical structures**

A fourth source of stress was concerned with the hierarchical structure of senior management within the church and the positions of power held by a small number of senior clergy. This brought about both questioning of the absolute obedience a priest has to give and the possibility of a ‘career’ within the Church. During interview some priests raised these questions:



*“How far do you take obedience? ...you know when a bad appointment has been made and you’re just left to get on with a feeling of injustice which is inhumane.. We become engulfed into a system and suddenly we are agents of that system”*

*“One priest came to me and said “You’ve achieved x and c and you’re only ordained a short time. Next you’ll be Monsignor or Canon. But you could of course choose an alternative route. .. do something different .. on purpose”*

### **5. The Fraternity of Priesthood and potential contradiction in practice**

A fifth source of stress addressed the theoretical concept of fraternity of priesthood and lived experience by each priest. On his Ordination day a priest is welcomed into the fraternity of his fellow priests and should be supported by them in the years ahead through both the joyous and sorrowful occasions. For many priests the opposite may be true in times of crisis and they feel very much alone when the richness of support from fellow priests is missing. Yet whilst this issue was raised by several priests during interview, the lack of fraternity was voiced:

*“How common is the common bond of Priesthood”?*

*“You see, priests just don’t trust priests anymore. You tell them something and it’s all over the Diocese through the grapevine. If they’re not spreading the gossip they’re probably making it!”*

*“Yes I get lonely. People forget priests need friends... ‘Oh Father’s OK my friends say.. they think I’ve gone snobbish in this big house, like my parishioners, in their ivory towers cocooned from reality...I’m sorry to go on. Sometimes it is the only chance to speak out, to sound off... to open up”*

### **6. Clerical dress and self image**

A further area of concern for some clergy was the wearing of clerical dress, which was to them a form of identity and self-image. The priests interviewed met the reaction of the public to the priest wearing a ‘uniform’ with various responses:

*“My collar is a barrier, a big barrier. I used to be a nurse .. when I visit (patients) now and they see the collar they only tell me what the think ‘Father’ wants to hear...”*

*“My collar does not weigh upon my mind. Your dress as a priest is rejected... the label is associated with negative things. You are therefore ignored because of it. So where is the person in all of this ?”*



*“When I get into my car this collar is just taken off and flung onto the back seat .When I’m with a group and they ask me what they should call me... sometimes it’s OK to address me by my Christian name.. but sometimes I prefer ‘Father’. I need this collar as a way out many times; I need it”*

## **7. Celibacy**

The question of celibacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century was addressed and commented on by many priests during interviews. The concept of the Roman Catholic priesthood being reserved to male, single and celibate individuals and their acceptance of celibacy at Ordination met with various comments.

*“I never go on holiday on my own – that’s why I don’t take a day off. I can’t stand my own company”.*

*“There’s living alone and then there is loneliness... Yes, there was a difficulty with a woman in the parish. I had to ask for a move but it happened again in the next parish. I was better able to cope because I felt – here we go again”.*

## **8. Retirement, Financial Security and thoughts on leaving the priesthood**

Finally, concern was expressed during interviews about retirement and the lack of financial arrangements for clergy. This was prevalent from some of the young age group who had counter-parts in commerce and industry with company pension schemes. Additionally, feelings about leaving the priesthood were expressed.

*On my day off, I just go home to my parents and sleep. I’m sinking into a dark, deep pit and just trying to get out .. You said you worked in research into suicides at one time? (Yes) ..believe me, you’ve just arrived at the suicides..”*

*“I was disillusioned in the 1960’s and 30 years later...(pause)... I guess I’m still disillusioned.”*

*“I get frightened at the responsibility, the constant worry of finance. I built a Church which wouldn’t have been built without me. That’s an achievement – isn’t it? It’s taken x years to approach the parishioners for money for it. I keep thinking... well, let someone else do it now. I’m x years old – I’ve got x years or so before I retire. (Why do you stay?) I’d be without a job otherwise! ... I’m sorry, that must sound cynical to you”*



### *Measures –Design of Questionnaire measures*

This description of the questionnaire covers all of the measures to be used in this thesis although the present chapter will only be concerned with a subset of those measures.

#### *Stressor item bank*

As outlined in Chapter 2 the stressor items were grouped in 8 sub sections on the questionnaire, these sections reflecting a content-based analysis of the qualitative data that gave rise to them. The pilot group members came together to discuss the findings and extract succinct statements which reflected priesthood today and its potential sources of stress. Taking into account the views and guidance of this advisory group, these sub sections were headed:

1. *Parish and parishioners*
2. *Nature of workload*
3. *Implementing priestly ministry in the modern world*
4. *Personal reflections on role and effectiveness as a priest*
5. *Church structures and organisation*
6. *Clerical dress*
7. *Celibacy*
8. *Media portrayal of priesthood*

In addition the following sections were added to enrich the response from clergy around specific issues:

- Outcome Measures – presented later in this thesis.
- Qualitative Date – presented later in this thesis

Each of these sections is now described in turn.



**1. Parish and Parishioners.** This section comprised 10 items exploring both the priest's relationship with his parishioners and his views on the congruence between Church Law and his parishioners' needs. For each item the priests were given a statement made by a participant in the interviews and asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with that statement on a five point scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The 10 items were:

- ☐ There are things I would like to change in the way the parish is run, but I am reluctant for fear of upsetting parishioners
- ☐ I am often faced with problems which are real in the parish community that are not recognised by the Church
- ☐ Too many parishioners use the parish as a convenience store (to get a church wedding, Baptism etc.) but have no real commitment to the parish
- ☐ Most parish administration could be done by non clergy
- ☐ I feel at home in my presbytery
- ☐ More power in the parish lies with the people than with the priest
- ☐ *There is too much diocesan paperwork to which I am expected to respond*
- ☐ In my ministry I experience a real contradiction between the demands of Church Law and practical reality
- ☐ I would consider passing parishioners to other priests who would respond to parishioners needs and demands in a way that I would not
- ☐ Too few people in the parish contribute financially to its upkeep

**2. Nature of workload.** This section presented participants with nine issues or concerns that parishioners might approach them for guidance and help with.

These nine areas were:

- ☐ Bereavement
- ☐ Marriage (e.g. preparation or breakdown)
- ☐ Children (e.g. where there is a breakdown in the parents' relationship)
- ☐ Issues in the extended family (e.g. concerns over non practising members of the Catholic faith)
- ☐ Unemployment and poverty
- ☐ Church teaching and sacramental matters
- ☐ Education and school access policies



- ❑ Sick calls and hospital visits
- ❑ Requests for financial charity

For each of the nine items priests were asked to indicate how often parishioners approached them on this topic. They were asked to respond using a five point rating scale where 0 = Never and 4 = All the time.

### **3. Implementing priestly ministry in the modern world.**

This section comprised five items directly tapping priests' perceptions of the difficulties involved in ministering effectively in the modern day and age. Each item comprised a specific difficulty identified during the qualitative stage of the research and participants were asked to rate how difficult they found that aspect on a five point scale ranging from 1= Not at all difficult to 5 = Could not be more difficult.

The five items were:

- Preparing a couple for marriage when so many marriages fail
- Stopping the exit of young people from Church services
- Implementing Church Law on reconciliation
- Stopping adults from falling away from active worship
- Preparing adequately for the Celebration of the Eucharist

### **4. Personal reflections on role and effectiveness as a priest.**

This section comprised 14 questions exploring both the priest's own appraisal and evaluation of his ministry together with his reflections on matters to do with running a parish. Each item comprised a statement given by one of the priests who took part in the initial interviews. Participants were asked to indicate the frequency with which they would agree with the statement provided on a five point scale from 0 = Never to 4 = All the time. The statements given were:

- ❑ Lack of clarity on parish geographical boundaries concerns me
- ❑ People use the Church for convenience, without financial support or commitment
- ❑ I feel inadequately trained to address the problems presented by parishioners



- ☐ I feel partly responsible for decreasing Mass attendance in my parish
- ☐ Maintenance and repair of plant and buildings takes up too much of my time
- ☐ I feel my gifts are currently underused
- ☐ I regularly evaluate my work
- ☐ I become annoyed if people call without an appointment
- ☐ I am concerned about my personal prayer life
- ☐ I feel valued and listened to by my superiors
- ☐ I wonder if my parish could survive without me
- ☐ I wonder what I was ordained to do
- ☐ Cynicism is a coping mechanism for many priests
- ☐ The Church encourages dependency amongst its clergy

### **5. Church structures and organisation.**

This section comprised eight questions relating to the characteristics of the Church as a formal work organisation. Again priests were presented with a statement given by another member of the clergy in the interview stage and asked to rate their strength of agreement or disagreement with it. Responses were marked on a 5 point scale from 1= Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. The statements given were:

- ☐ There is a competitive element between individual clergy
- ☐ There is a recognised hierarchical system which reinforces a type of character or behaviour in priesthood
- ☐ The Church hierarchy encourages career-mindedness amongst clergy
- ☐ Emphasis on the work of a priest is based on performance of sacramental duties
- ☐ There is a recognised inconsistency between priests in the Diocese in their stance on marital status and access to Baptism
- ☐ There is a recognised inconsistency between priests in the Diocese in their stance on marital status and access to Catholic schools
- ☐ The shortage of priests in the Diocese concerns me
- ☐ The 'head waiters' are given parochial responsibilities too early

**6. Clerical dress.** This section presented participants with three statements taken from the earlier interviews. Each statement expressed a view concerning the possible comfort and value associated with clerical dress. Participants were asked to rate how frequently they felt the same way as the view expressed in the



given statement using a five point response scale where 0 = Never and 4 = All the time. The three statements given were:

- ☐ I feel comfortable wearing clerical dress amongst my fellow clergy
- ☐ Clerical dress has a positive effect on my relationship with people in general
- ☐ Clerical dress has a negative effect on my self image in public places

**7. Celibacy.** Here again participants were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with seven statements originating from the earlier interviews with a separate group of priests. A five point response format was used where 1 = Strongly disagree and 5 = Strongly agree. The seven statements to which the priests were asked to respond were:

- ☐ A celibate life is easy to lead
- ☐ Celibacy is easy to cope with
- ☐ Celibacy is a valuable aspect of my life
- ☐ The Church's ruling on celibacy is necessary for clergy
- ☐ The arrival of married clergy from other denominations provides a valuable argument against celibacy
- ☐ Celibacy is worth keeping because ultimately it is most Christ like
- ☐ Celibacy is worth keeping because it is most fulfilling

### **8. Media portrayal of priesthood.**

Two items were used here to gauge priest's perceptions of the validity of media portrayal of the priesthood. A seven point rating scale was used where 1 = Accurate and 7 = Inaccurate. The two items used were:

- ☐ How accurate is the media portrayal of the work of a Catholic priest?
- ☐ How balanced a picture do you think the media portrayal of the priesthood is?

## **Methodology**

### *Participants*

The demographic details of the 189 priests responding to the survey questionnaire were outlined in chapter 2 and so will not be repeated here.

### *Procedure*

This chapter offers additional statistical analysis of the data that resulted from the survey questionnaire distributed to the 4 participating Diocese. Specifically, it explores empirical association between the identified sources of stress and a variety of indicators of strain



## *Measures*

*Sources of Stress* There were 17 stressor factors empirically determined and described earlier. In summary they are:

1. *Contradiction – personal decision-making process for clergy between requests from parishioners and Canon Law (rules) of the Church for ministers.*
2. *Convenience store - parishioners expectations as ‘service users’ at their convenience*
3. *Parishioner power – priest’s perception of power of parishioners and impact on his role*
4. *Pastoral care of parishioners – priest’s duty towards the care of his people*
5. *Sacraments and Church Rules – difficulties a priest encounters when parishioners request access to sacraments while not observing Church Law*
6. *Charity – priest dealing with individual requests for financial assistance, support*
7. *Implementing ministry – difficulties for priests between implementing Canon Law and reality of lifestyles in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century society*
8. *Self Appraisal – priest’s ability and opportunity to reflect on his work performance*
9. *Parish maintenance – increasing role of priest to maintain Church property and Income*
10. *Unfulfilment and cynicism – priest’s personal reflection on personal and public life*
11. *Self-evaluation - priest’s personal evaluation of his performance in ministry*
12. *Hierarchical – Difficulties the priest encounters within the Church structures, interaction with senior management, career-mindedness and pressure of competition amongst priests*
13. *Inconsistencies in practice – the difficulties of working with other clergy whose ministerial practices may differ causing ambiguity to both priests and people*
14. *Clerical Dress – the ease with which clergy wear clerical dress in public*
15. *Celibacy – the value a priest’s places on celibacy today*
16. *Celibacy – the ease or difficulty reported by clergy maintaining a celibate lifestyle*
17. *Media Portrayal – How valid is their portrayal of priesthood and its effect on clergy*

## ***Outcome Measures***

The health and well-being utilised in this Chapter comprised of 9 measures chosen or developed on the basis of either (a) qualitative data regarding the impact of stress gathered from priests themselves at interview during the qualitative stage of the research or (b) published research evidence on the known impact of occupational stress i.e. literature review on the church and occupational and organisational psychology.

### *9 Outcome Measures of Indices of strain/harm*

#### **1. Loneliness**

This measure comprised a single item exploring the experience of loneliness amongst priests. Each priest was asked to rate their strength of agreement with this statement using a 5 point scale where 1= Strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree. The item, a verbatim quote given by a priest during interview, was:

“Priesthood is synonymous with loneliness”



With just one item the possible scale range was from 1 to 5, with a high score indicating greater experienced loneliness.

## *2. Thoughts on Leaving – intention to quit*

This measure comprised 3 items exploring the degree to which a priest had actively thought about the possibility of his leaving the priesthood. Each item comprised a direct quote given by a fellow priest during the interview stage. The three items given were:

- “On the anniversary of my Ordination, I wonder if I will still be in the priesthood the following year”
- “I wonder why I still remain when others have left the Priesthood”
- “I have thought about leaving the Priesthood”

For each item the priest was then asked to respond using a 5-point scale where 0 = ‘Never think about leaving’ to 4 = ‘Think about leaving all the time’. The possible scale range was, therefore, from 0 to 12, with a high score indicating a greater intention to quit. Cronbach’s Alpha = .7481

## *3. Self esteem*

Self esteem was measured using 12 items, 10 of which were directly drawn from Rosenberg (1965) scale. On the basis of the advice given by the priests attending the pilot focus group, 2 additional items were added to capture the guilt Catholic priests often feel when saying ‘No’ to the demands of their parish/parishioners. These 12 items comprised the following:

- I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal to others
- Generally, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure (*reversed item score*)
- I feel that I have a number of good qualities
- I am able to do things as well as most people
- I feel I do not have much to be proud of (*reversed item score*)
- I take a positive attitude toward myself
- On the whole I am satisfied with myself
- I wish I could have more respect for myself (*reversed item score*)
- I certainly feel useless at times (*reversed item score*)
- At times I think I am no good at all (*reversed item score*)
- I feel guilty about saying ‘No’ to others (*reversed item score*)
- I feel guilty taking time off for myself (*reversed item score*)

(*Reversed item score: Priests who disagreed with the statement thus indicating they held a positive self image*). Cronbach’s Alpha = .8449



For all 12 items, participants were asked to respond using a 5 point scale where 5 = Strongly agree and 1= Strongly disagree. As indicated, a number of these items were reversed. A high score indicates high self esteem with potential scale range of 12-60.

#### *4. Concerns over retirement*

This measure comprised 3 items exploring a priest's concerns over his retirement. The 3 items addressed issues of accommodation, financial aspects and responsibility for planning. Of the vast amount of convents and religious nursing homes once depended upon to cater for retired clergy, many now house an increasingly ageing population of nuns themselves, or simple close from lack of financial resources and the financially enforced sale of land. Concern is therefore growing over the number of retired clergy and the lack of available provision for them in the Catholic Church. This concern mirrors/parallels the general trend in industrial society wherein employees are encouraged to make personal provision for pension, against a social context of the lack of extended family and dispersed populations. Priests are increasingly becoming concerned over the provision made for them. The items used here were:

- "I am concerned about my retirement"
- "I should be personally responsible for my retirement arrangements"
- "Financial and residential aspects of retirement will be addressed in good time for me by the Diocese"

Again, each item was a verbatim quote given by a priest during interview. Priests indicated the strength of their agreement with each item using a 5 point scale where 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. With 3 items the possible scale range was from 3-15, with a high score indicating a greater concern over retirement. Mean inter-item correlation .2986 this three item measure of 'Concerns over retirement' shows acceptable reliability. Because coefficient alpha is affected by scale length (Ferguson & Daniel, 1995) the mean inter-item correlation is a more appropriate estimate of the reliability of small scales with values in the range of .1 to .5 being acceptable (Cox and Ferguson, 1994).



## 5. General Well-being Questionnaire

The definition of health has been no less a subject for debate than that of stress. The World Health Organisation (WHO) (1946) offered a dynamic and positive definition of health in terms of psychological and social – as well as physical – well-being. Cox and colleagues (1983) attempted to map sub-optimum health using self-reported symptoms of general malaise. Initially, a compilation of general non-specific symptoms of illness was produced from existing health questionnaires and diagnostic texts. In a series of factor analytical studies on British subjects two clusters of symptoms or factors were identified Cox et al (1983, 1984). The first factor (GWF1) was defined by symptoms relating to tiredness, emotional liability and cognitive confusion colloquially termed ‘worn-out’. Such symptoms may have implications for personal problem solving. Cronbach’s Alpha = .7830.

The second factor (GWF2) was defined by symptoms relating to worry and fear, tension and physical signs of anxiety colloquially termed ‘uptight and tense’. The General Well-Being Questionnaire (GWBQ), which derived from these factor analysis studies, was therefore deemed appropriate and included in this research on stress in the Roman Catholic priesthood. The 24 items, which comprise the GWBQ were checked for suitability for use in the Catholic Church. As a result question 3 was removed:

*“Have you every experienced loss of sexual interest or pleasure”*

To include this would have seriously jeopardised the research because it would imply – or acknowledge awareness – that some priests were sexually active. For other priests completing the questionnaire, this item would potentially have proved offensive. In anticipation of this and to allow the questionnaire to be sanctioned by the Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church for use in their diocese, I voluntarily removed question number 3. The GWBQ therefore comprised 23 instead of 24 questions, i.e.:

1. Have you been bothered by your heart thumping?
2. Have you become bored easily?
3. Have you become easily annoyed/irritated?
4. Have you had to clear your throat?



5. Been scared when alone?
6. Has your thinking got mixed up when you had to do things quickly?
7. When you have been upset or excited has your skin broken out into a rash?
8. Have you shaken or trembled?
9. Have you done things on impulse?
10. Have people thought that you are nervous?
11. Have you been forgetful?
12. Have things got on your nerves and worn you out?
13. Have unfamiliar places or people made you afraid?
14. Have you tired easily?
15. Has your face got flushed?
16. Have you experienced numbness or tingling in your arms or legs?
17. Have you had difficulty in falling or staying asleep?
18. Have you been tense or jittery?
19. Have your feelings been hurt easily?
20. Have you had any pains in your heart or chest?
21. Have you been troubled by stammering?
22. Has it been hard for you to make your mind up?
23. Have you worn yourself out worrying about your health?

Priests indicated their response by using the five point scale where 0 = 'Never experienced this symptom' and 4 = 'Experienced this symptom all the time'.

The possible scale range was 0 to 12 with a high score indicating a greater concern for health by the priest himself.

## 6. Confidence in Pastoral Matters

This measure sought to discover how confident priests felt when addressing pastoral matters. These were elements of ministry which responded to the needs of parishioners concerning bereavement/counselling; marital preparation and breakdown; children including abuse and neglect; family concerns for relatives; poverty, social care and unemployment. Priests were asked to respond on a 7 point scale ranging from 1 = 'Not at all confident' to 7 = 'Completely confident' in dealing with this pastoral matter. The possible scale range was therefore 5-35 with a high score indicating complete confidence in dealing with pastoral ministry. Cronbach's Alpha is .8339.

## 7. Confidence in sacramental ministry

This measure sought to discover how confident the priest felt when dealing with sacramental ministry. For each of 5 core sacraments i.e. Baptism, Confession, Communion, Confirmation, Marriage. Priests were asked to



Confession, Communion, Confirmation, Marriage. Priests were asked to rate their confidence in administering that sacrament using a 7 point scale ranging from 1 = 'Not at all confidence' to 7 = 'Completely confident. The possible scale range was therefore 5-35 with a high score indicating complete confidence in dealing with sacramental ministry. Cronbach's Alpha = .8533

#### *8. Positive Outlook*

This measure sought to discover if priests had a positive outlook on life. This included the present and the future. Priests were asked to respond on a 5 point scale ranging from 5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree. The possible scale range was therefore 3-15 with a high score indicating a positive outlook. Mean inter-item correlation .2718 Because co-efficient is effected by scale length (Ferguson and Daniel, 1995) the mean inter-item correlation is a more appropriate estimate of the reliability of small scales with values in the range of .1 to .5 being acceptable (Cox and Ferguson, 1994).

### ***Social Support for Clergy***

#### *Hypothesis: Participants, Design and Procedures*

Details of the participants, design and procedures are exactly as reported in earlier chapters this thesis. These results are presented later in chapter four because they follow a logical order regarding the impact of an intervention measure on stress for priests.

#### *Measures*

##### *Sources of Support (SOS) for clergy*

This section of the questionnaire looked at both the amount and type of support a priest perceived to be available to them. Three distinct sources of support were identified:

(a)The Dean; (b) Fellow Clergy; (c) Family and friends.

For each source priests were asked to rate the amount of four types of support that might be on offer using a 5 point scale ranging from 0 (None at all) 1 (Very little) 2 (Some) 3 (Quite a lot) 4 (A great deal). The four types of support identified were:



- Advice, Information and Guidance
- Practical help
- Encouragement, listening and understanding
- An opportunity to take time out and get away from it all

In total, therefore, perceived social support was measured by twelve items (three sources x four types).

The questionnaire was viewed by the Chapter of Canons in Diocese 'A' before Distributed to each of the four dioceses in outlined in the route map in chapter two of this thesis. Chapter four will now present the findings from this source.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### *RESULTS - Introduction*

The final version of the questionnaire was initially mailed to all Roman Catholic priests in four dioceses as outlined earlier in Chapter three of this thesis. A stamped addressed envelope was included for the return of the completed questionnaire directly to the researcher.

#### *Participants returning the questionnaire*

A total of 189 completed questionnaires were returned from the 4 Dioceses giving an overall response rate of 38%. The response rate in each Diocese was: Diocese 'A' 38 % Diocese 'B' 33 % Diocese 'C' 42 % Diocese 'D' 44 %. Interestingly the response rate was higher in the two smaller Dioceses ('C' and 'D') and lowest in the largest Diocese ('B'). The age of the clergy who returned the questionnaires ranged from between 25-29 years to over 80 years. The modal age range was 60-64 years which is indicative of the ageing clergy characteristic of the UK as a whole (Ref Chapter 1). Indeed 61% of the priests in the sample were aged over 50 years. In keeping with this age distribution of the participating priests, 50% of the sample had been ordained for a minimum of 25 years. The range for time since ordination varied from less than 5 years to over 50 years. 26% of the clergy had undergone 3 or more moves during their priesthood while 66% had experienced between 4 and 7 moves. The remaining 8% had experienced over 9 moves. 50% of the participating clergy were situated in suburban parishes, 25% in inner city parishes with the remaining 25% working either in rural parishes or on assignments outside of the Diocese, for example abroad, in seminary or in academic institutions.

#### *Results presented from responses to sections within the Questionnaire*

The questionnaire consisted of 8 sections outlined in chapter three and headed below:

- *Parish and parishioners*
- *Nature of workload*
- *Implementing priestly ministry in the modern world*
- *Personal reflections on role and effectiveness as a priest*
- *Church structures and organisation*
- *Clerical dress*
- *Celibacy*
- *Media portrayal of priesthood*



### *Results of Questionnaire - Delineating sources of stress*

The items within sections one to eight of the questionnaire were first subjected to principal components analysis (PCA) in order to determine the existence of any underpinning factors. A separate analysis was conducted for each section of the 8 sections in the questionnaire. A single exploratory factor analysis was considered, but with a subject:item ratio of 189:58 i.e. 3.26:1 this is below the recommended 10:1 ratio (Nunnally 1978). The fact that the focus group of clergy had examined the draft questionnaire in detail and subjected each item to considerable scrutiny helps to justify this procedure. i.e. conducting 8 separate principal component analyses rather than a single overall analysis. In effect, this focus group might be said to represent an expert group whose role was to ensure the content validity of the questionnaire. Each of the eight analyses utilised the same method of rotation and extraction rule, namely varimax rotation with Kaiser I rule of extraction. In keeping with recommended guidelines the following rules were applied in each principal component analysis:

- *The threshold for item factor loadings was set at .4 to encourage concentration of meaning within a single factor.*
- *Cross-loading items were deleted as were any items with either an anti-image correlation below .5, or a final communality of below .3, and the analysis re-run until a final solution was found.*

Factor naming is a highly subjective exercise. In order to counter this subjectivity, the twelve priests who were interviewed in the qualitative stage were invited to offer meaningful labels for each of the factors identified in the successive principal components analyses. Specifically, each priest was sent a list of the items constituting each factor together with a covering letter asking them simply to suggest an appropriate label that – in their view – best captured the overall meaning of those items considered together. Four additional priests were included at this stage, either because of their personally expressed interest in the research or the pivotal roles they played in the Diocesan structures.

Upon receipt of the written replies from these priests, the method used was to choose either a consistent phrase in the replies or, where no such single phrase existed, to determine the ‘common denominator’ in the range of the labels the priests offered. Table 1 presents the results of the principal component analysis of the ten stressor bank items contained in section one of the questionnaire ‘Parish and Parishioners’.



**TABLE 1: PCA of ‘Parish and parishioners’ stressor items**

<i>Factor Loadings</i>			
<i>Item</i>	<i>Factor 1</i>	<i>Factor 2</i>	<i>Factor 3</i>
<i>In my ministry I experience a real contradiction between the demands of Church Law and practical reality</i>	.843		
<i>I am often faced with problems which are real in the parish community that are not recognised by the Church</i>	.801		
<i>Most parish administration could be done by non clergy</i>	.639		
<i>Too many parishioners use the parish as a convenience store (to get a church wedding, Baptism etc.) but have no real commitment to the parish</i>		.896	
<i>Too few people in the parish contribute financially to its upkeep</i>		.893	
<i>More power in the parish lies with the people than with the priest</i>			.797
<i>There are things I would like to change in the way the parish is run, but I am reluctant for fear of upsetting parishioners</i>			.774
<i>% of variance explained</i>	<i>31%</i>	<i>21%</i>	<i>17%</i>

NOTE: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy = .568. Bartlett’s test of Sphericity = 216.241, N=189,  $p < .001$ . Subject to variable ratio = 18.9:1 on first solution, and 27:1 on final solution. Discarded items were: *I feel at home in my presbytery; there is too much diocesan paperwork to which I am expected to respond; I would consider passing parishioners to other priests who would respond to parishioners needs and demands in a way that I would not.*

Table 1 shows that a three-factor solution resulted accounting for 69% of the variance. Factor 1 comprises two items explicitly relating to a perceived contradiction between Church Law and practical reality, together with a single item referencing parish administration. This factor is labelled ‘contradiction’. Factor 2 has to do with the expression of a particular ‘instrumental’ attitude towards the parish by parishioners and is termed ‘convenience store mentality’. Factor 3 also comprised two items, the common meaning in which has to do with the priests’ perception of the power now held by parishioners and is



accordingly labelled ‘parishioner power’. Findings were reinforced through qualitative data. Table 2 presents the results of the principal component analysis of the nine stressor bank items contained in section two of the questionnaire ‘Audit of workload’.

**TABLE 2: PCA of ‘Audit of workload’ stressor items**

<i>Factor Loadings</i>			
<i>Item</i>	<i>Factor 1</i>	<i>Factor 2</i>	<i>Factor 3</i>
<i>Children (e.g. where there is a breakdown in the parent’s relationship)</i>	<i>.774</i>		
<i>Bereavement</i>	<i>.760</i>		
<i>Marriage (e.g. preparation or breakdown)</i>	<i>.669</i>		
<i>Issues in the extended family (e.g. concerns over non practising members of the Catholic faith)</i>	<i>.506</i>		
<i>Church teaching and sacramental matters</i>		<i>.810</i>	
<i>Sick calls and hospital visits</i>		<i>.774</i>	
<i>Education and school access policies</i>		<i>.446</i>	
<i>Requests for financial charity</i>			<i>-.798</i>
<i>Unemployment and poverty</i>			<i>.788</i>
<i>% of variance explained</i>	<i>33%</i>	<i>13%</i>	<i>12%</i>

NOTE: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy = .740. Bartlett’s test of Sphericity = 289.570, N=189, *p* < .001. Subject to variable ratio = 21:1 No items were discarded.

Table 2 shows that the ‘audit of workload’ stressor items were reduced to a three factor solution accounting for a total of 58% of the variance. Factor 1 encompasses those priestly duties pertaining to the everyday care of his parishioners and is labelled ‘pastoral care’. Many of the concerns were from grandparents regarding their grandchildren not practising the faith because of their own adult children.



Factor 2 also pertains to the priests’ care of his parishioners, e.g. sick calls and hospital visits, but, importantly, also incorporates the key notion of Church rules and sacramental matters. This factor is labelled ‘Sacraments and Church Rules’. 21<sup>st</sup> century issues are often in conflict with Church teaching which impact on the individual’s practice and lifestyle. One priest replied as follows:

*“It does seem that many people are voting with their feet. Thankfully, people are much more open about sexuality and more at ease with sexual feelings...The Church must find ways of recognising and listening to people’s experiences – long term sexual partnerships outside marriage –heterosexual but also homosexual can be healing and sources of maturation; they can also be damaging. Second marriages likewise. People find it hard to understand the logic of annulment. The whole area needs rethinking allowing us to start from experience and work to norms rather than vice-versa (which appears to be the present case)” (Questionnaire Ref 104)*

The third factor comprises two items underpinned by the notion of social and financial charity and is therefore labelled ‘Charity’.

Table 3 presents the results of the principal component analysis of the five stressor bank items contained in section three of the questionnaire ‘Implementing Ministry’.

**TABLE 3: PCA of ‘Implementing Ministry’ stressor items**

<i>Item</i>	<i>Factor 1</i>
<i>Stopping adults from falling away from active worship</i>	<i>.788</i>
<i>Stopping the exit of young people from Church services</i>	<i>.751</i>
<i>Implementing Church Law on reconciliation</i>	<i>.651</i>
<i>Preparing a couple for marriage when so many marriages fail</i>	<i>.642</i>
<i>Preparing adequately for the Celebration of the Eucharist</i>	<i>.489</i>
<i>% of variance explained</i>	<i>45%</i>

NOTE: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy = .668. Bartlett’s test of Sphericity = 166.221, N=189, p < .001. Subject to variable ratio = 37.8:1. No items were discarded.

Table 3 shows the principal components analysis of the ‘Implementing Ministry in the Modern World’ stressor items to result in a single factor accounting for 45% of the variance. All of the items contained in this factor relate to the priest’s perceived efficacy in performing his ministry. This factor is labelled



‘implementing ministry’. One priest addressed this in his questionnaire response:

*“So often the Church in the area of sexuality seems so obsessed with its teaching that there seems little concern for the suffering it causes or the damage done to the Church – e.g. Many communities denied the Mass because of a human law of celibacy for priests. Many people living good lives denied Holy Communion because of a particular interpretation of law. Many theologians denied the opportunity to freely discuss and investigate certain areas of the Church’s teaching. Many former priests and religious treated very harshly by the Church. Many priests and religious highly motivated initially ending up frustrated and unfulfilled and often venting this on their congregation. I could go on! Needless to say, you will have noted the negativity – generally I feel this is justified. There is so much that is very good in the Church’s teaching but much in the implementation of this that has done serious harm to many people in a most important area of their lives. In my view, the Church needs to say a big ‘Mea Culpa’ and make a fresh start” (Questionnaire Ref 036)*

Table 4 presents the results of the principal component analysis of the fourteen stressor bank items contained in section three of the questionnaire ‘Personal Reflections on Role’

**TABLE 4: PCA of ‘Personal reflections on role’ stressor items**

Item	Factor Loadings			
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
<i>I feel inadequately trained to address the problems presented by parishioners</i>	.709			
<i>I feel partly responsible for decreasing Mass attendance in my parish</i>	.673			
<i>I become annoyed if people call without an appointment</i>	.510			
<i>I am concerned about my personal prayer life</i>	.502			
<i>People use the Church for convenience, without financial support or commitment</i>		.733		
<i>Lack of clarity on parish geographical boundaries concerns me</i>		.687		
<i>Maintenance and repair of plant and buildings takes up too much of my time</i>		.622		
<i>I feel my gifts are currently underused</i>			.704	
<i>Cynicism is a coping mechanism for many priests</i>			.666	
<i>I regularly evaluate my work</i>				.721
<i>I feel valued and listened to by my superiors</i>				.597
% of variance explained	20%	12%	11%	10%

NOTE: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy = .624. Bartlett’s test of Sphericity = 142.362, N=189, p < .001. Subject to variable ratio = 13.5:1 on initial solution and 17.18:1



*on final solution. Three items were discarded: I wonder if my parish could survive without me; I wonder what I was ordained to do; The Church encourages dependency amongst its clergy*

Table 4 shows the results of the exploratory factor analysis for the ‘Personal reflections on role’ stressor items. Here a four-factor solution resulted accounting for 53% of the variance. Factor 1 is labelled ‘personal failing’ on the grounds that each of the four items within it have to do with a sense of disquiet on the priest’s part, either in relation to inadequate training to address today’s problems; his judgement of the effectiveness of his own ministry or in relation to his own humanity and spiritual life. One priest wrote about his experiences of priesthood in the first 5 years after Ordination: One priest wrote:

*“It’s not just a question of what training should offer or need offering, but how? Are single sex, entirely clerical institutions, physically apart from the rest of society (ie seminaries)? What message of priesthood do they send?”*  
(Questionnaire Ref 007)

The common meaning underpinning the items comprising Factor 2 is a sense of the difficulty that can be encountered simply in managing the physical attributes of a parish e.g. plant, property and the geographical area covered by the parish. This factor is labelled ‘parish maintenance and geography’. Factor 3 is labelled ‘unfulfilment and cynicism’, comprising as it does a single item on each of these issues. Factor 4 also comprises two items, both of which address the topic of appraisal, either by self or by superiors. This factor is labelled ‘self-evaluation’. One priest’s reply via a questionnaire on this subject stated:

*“I enjoy my work but I demand high standards from myself and others. I get irritated if I cannot deliver. My concern is for the people of this Parish and I have no interest now in the diocese because of lack of Management and leadership”*

Table 5 presents the results of the principal component analysis of the eight stressor bank items contained in section five of the questionnaire ‘Church structures and Organisation’.



**TABLE 5: PCA of ‘Church structures and organisation’ stressor items**

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2
<i>The Church hierarchy encourages career-mindedness amongst clergy</i>	.822	
<i>There is a recognised hierarchical system which reinforces a type of character or behaviour in priesthood</i>	.748	
<i>There is a competitive element between individual clergy</i>	.732	
<i>There is a recognised inconsistency between priests in the Diocese in their stance on marital status and access to Baptism</i>		.915
<i>There is a recognised inconsistency between priests in the Diocese in their stance on marital status and access to Catholic schools</i>		.911
<i>% of variance explained</i>	48%	24%

*NOTE: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy = .658. Bartlett’s test of Sphericity = 234.517, N=189,  $p < .001$ . Subject to variable ratio = 23.63 on initial solution and 37.8 on final solution. Three items were discarded: emphasis on the work of a priest is based on performance of sacramental duties; the shortage of priests in the Diocese concerns me; the ‘head waiters’ are given parochial responsibilities too early*

Table 5 shows a two factor solution to result from the principal components analysis of the ‘Church structures and organisation’ stressor items. Cumulatively, these two factors account for 72% of the variance. Factor 1 has to do with the perceived structure and culture within the Church and is labelled ‘hierarchy’. One priest wrote:

*“Plugging holes, filling gaps and crisis management is, in the main the way most Dioceses operate. Show me a different one and I’ll ask for a transfer tomorrow” (Questionnaire Ref 175)*

*“In my case, I’m not sure why (my) present move was made. This is too often the case. The Bishop and/or Dean are rarely open enough in their relationship with clergy” (Ref Questionnaire 176 )*

Factor 2 comprises two items targeting a single issue, that of possible inconsistencies between priests in their ministerial practice. This factor is labelled ‘inconsistencies’. Table 6 presents the results of the principal component analysis of the three-stressor bank items contained in section three of the questionnaire ‘Clerical Dress’.

**TABLE 6: PCA of ‘Clerical Dress’ stressor items**

Item	Factor 1
<i>Clerical dress has a positive effect on my relationship with people in general</i>	.827
<i>I feel comfortable wearing clerical dress amongst my fellow clergy</i>	.799
<i>Clerical dress has a negative effect on my self image in public places</i>	-.671
<i>% of variance explained</i>	59%



NOTE: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy = .619. Bartlett’s test of Sphericity = 80.812, N=189,  $p < .001$ . Subject to variable ratio = 63:1 No items were discarded.

Table 6 shows the items constituting the single factor solution to the ‘clerical dress’ stressor items. Given that the three items constituting this factor carry a positive meaning with respect to clerical dress (NB the item ‘Clerical dress has a negative effect on my self image in public places’ loads negatively on the factor) this factor was labelled ‘enabling’. One priest at interview described his feelings on clerical dress:

*“One Sunday when my fellow priest was saying Mass I slipped into the back to greet the parishioners after Mass. A child saw me without my collar and she ran up to meet me and said “Oh Father! Are you still a priest?” (Interview notes)*

Table 7 presents the results of the principal component analysis of the eight-stressor bank items contained in section seven of the questionnaire, ‘Celibacy’.

**TABLE 7: PCA of ‘Celibacy’ stressor items**

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2
<i>Celibacy is worth keeping because it is most fulfilling</i>	.822	
<i>Celibacy is worth keeping because ultimately it is most Christ like</i>	.804	
<i>The Church’s ruling on celibacy is necessary for clergy</i>	.693	
<i>Celibacy is a valuable aspect of my life</i>	.691	
<i>The arrival of married clergy from other denominations provides a valuable argument against celibacy</i>	-.654	
<i>A celibate life is easy to lead</i>		.903
<i>Celibacy is easy to cope with</i>		.894
<i>% of variance explained</i>	52%	15%

NOTE: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy = .814. Bartlett’s test of Sphericity = 507.835, N=189,  $p < .001$ . Subject to variable ratio = 27:1 No items were deleted.

Table 7 shows a two factor solution accounting for 67% of the variance. Factor 1, labelled ‘value’ comprises five items each of which signifies a positive evaluation being put on celibacy (NB the item ‘the arrival of married clergy from other denominations provides a valuable argument against celibacy’ is reverse scored). Factor 2 comprises two items having to do not with the value of celibacy but the ease with which a celibate life can be followed. This factor is accordingly called ‘ease’.



*Three priests in particular outlined three different views:*

*“I believe that the priesthood is best served, generally, speaking when the option of marriage is there. Within marriage there is the situation where most people develop their abilities and general potential to the maximum. Sexuality, properly employed covers all aspects of a person’s life” (Questionnaire ref 153)*

*“The sexuality area – celibacy in my case – was and is my choice. The Church has its discipline surely but I was free to choose. I will not pretend it is always easy – times when I wonder if family life would be attractive. But it was my own choice and I saw it as important as part of the call and its ‘sign value’. There are big plus points too and married people also make huge sacrifices and practice self discipline. The Church needs both” (Questionnaire Ref 118)*

*“The struggle to admit being ‘gay’ took up many years of my priesthood. So much pain and heartache. While the Church fails to value ‘gay clergy’ we are not able to minister openly to those brothers and sisters in the Church who are gay. This lie is a denial of human respect and dignity. Even the seminary systems failed to provide any help to those who were afraid of setting off on the journey of discovery as sexual persons. One only hopes it will change for others. I was sent to a psychiatrist – to see what could be done!” (Questionnaire ref 090)*

Since the final section of the questionnaire dealing with media perceptions of the clergy contained only two items, principal components analysis was not appropriate. A Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used instead to test the strength of relationship between these two items. With  $r = .747$  (187 df)  $p < .001$  it can be seen that these two items do indeed reliably relate to each other.

### ***Extent to which clergy find these stressors problematic***

Having identified those aspects of their ministry and role that clergy might have difficulty with, the next step is to gauge the number of priests who find moderate or high levels of difficult or demand with each aspect. Accordingly, Table 8 provides descriptive statistics for each potential source of stress. Since the stressor item bank used in this research is unique i.e. was designed explicitly as a part of this research, there are no norms against which the current sample can be compared. To ease interpretation therefore, the scale range is given in Table 8. A crude but useful way of then ranking potential sources of stress is to



identify those areas where the difficulty or demand associated with a specific factor is above the mid point. However, given that the questionnaire data was collected in four separate dioceses Table 8 also summarises the results of a one-way ANOVA between subjects analysis of variance utilised to determine whether these identified problems are applicable across all clergy or alternatively are the product of local circumstances in a specific diocese.

**Table 8 Descriptive Statistics (Mean, SD, Scale range) for stressor item factors, including scale (alpha) reliability between subjects one-way ANOVA results investigating inter-diocesan differences.**

<i>Source of stress</i>	<i>Alpha</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>ANOVA (df = 3,186)</i>
<i>Contradiction</i>		3-15	11.09	2.21	<i>F = .257 ns</i>
<i>Convenience Store Mentality</i>		2-10	6.84	1.99	<i>F = .846 ns</i>
<i>Parishioner power</i>		2-10	5.17	1.59	<i>F = .318 ns</i>
<i>Pastoral care</i>		0-16	8.13	2.23	<i>F = .630 ns</i>
<i>Sacraments and church rules</i>		0-12	8.33	1.99	<i>F = .876 ns</i>
<i>Charity</i>		0-8	3.75	1.37	<i>F = .471 ns</i>
<i>Implementing ministry</i>		5-25	15.25	3.37	<i>F = .328 ns</i>
<i>Personal failing</i>		0-16	6.61	2.00	<i>F = .344 ns</i>
<i>Parish maintenance and geography</i>		0-12	5.25	2.05	<i>F = .796 ns</i>
<i>Unfulfilment and cynicism</i>		0-8	3.98	1.38	<i>F = 1.702 ns</i>
<i>Self evaluation</i>		0-8	2.87	1.51	<i>F = 2.064 ns</i>
<i>Hierarchy</i>		3-15	9.50	2.35	<i>F = 1.244 ns</i>
<i>Inconsistencies</i>		2-10	6.94	1.95	<i>F = .755 ns</i>
<i>Enabling</i>		0-12	7.27	1.73	<i>F = .689 ns</i>
<i>Value</i>		5-25	14.84	4.71	<i>F = 1.989 ns</i>
<i>Ease</i>		2-10	4.20	1.73	<i>F = .077 ns</i>
<i>Media portrayal</i>		2-14	10.88	2.43	<i>F = 1.119 ns</i>

What is clear from the final column in Table 8 is that the sources of stress identified by means of this combined qualitative and quantitative methodology are generic across all of the four dioceses from which the sample of priests were drawn. There are no statistically significant differences between any of the dioceses on any of the 17 sources of stress identified. For this reason means and standard deviations are only given for the sample as a whole and not on a diocese-by-diocese basis.

In terms of the relative difficulty that each of these potential sources of stress causes, it is clear from the data in Table 8 that scale scores are typically at or around the mid point for 14 out of the 17 identified stressor factors. This would suggest that as a general rule each of these 14 potential sources of stress



represents only a mild to moderate stressor. It is important to remember here, of course, that what applies, as ‘a general rule’ tends to obscure the experience of the individual priest. Thus while the body of priests as a whole might not find a particular issue stressful, a measurable minority may indeed struggle with that same issue. Indeed subsequent analysis of frequency data showed that for each of these ‘moderate sources of stress’ between 11-13% of the priests scored in excess of 1 SD above the mean, thereby indicating that for at least 1:10 of the priests each of these 14 issues represented a more problematic aspect of their life and work than might be concluded on the basis of considering mean scores alone. There are three noticeable exceptions where the data in Table 8 point to obviously more difficult areas for the priests as a whole:

- The difficulty caused by contradiction between Church Law and the practical reality of life in the parish.
- Implementing Church rules on sacramental matters and educational access.
- Dealing with what is seen as an inaccurate and invalid media portrayal of the Church and priesthood

For each of these three items the mean score is markedly above the scale mean indicating the greater level of demand associated with each.

### *Reflection on the findings*

Following the results from clergy completing the questionnaire comparisons between the research findings above and those from current literature can be reflected upon here. This chapter initially sought to identify the sources of stress in the Roman Catholic priesthood. An integration of qualitative and quantitative methodologies was utilised to achieve this. First, a series of twelve pilot interviews were conducted with an opportunistic sample of priests. The aim was to allow priests to ‘speak for themselves’ regarding the potential sources of demand or difficulty in their life and ministry. This interview material was content analysed to discover common themes pertaining to sources of stress in ministry.



*8 key themes were identified by priests as potential sources of stress in their life and ministry:*

- Domestic Accommodation arrangements for clergy; whether they shared a house and if parishioners used the premises for meetings.
- Sacramental duties and ministry and the increasing awareness of potential conflict between Canon law theory and its practical application to everyday life by parishioners
- The Role of priesthood and media portrayal centred upon the social image of priesthood today
- The Roman Catholic Church and Hierarchical structures was concerned with both structures and the senior management and, positions of power held by a small number of senior clergy. The wider question of obedience was also part of the context.
- Fraternity of priesthood and the potential contradiction experienced by priests in practice
- Clerical dress and self- image focussed on the wearing of clerical dress and its impact on the priest including the response by both the public and fellow clergy.
- Celibacy, addressing the concept that whilst moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> century the Roman Catholic priesthood was still reserved to male, single and celibate individuals.
- Retirement and thoughts on leaving the priesthood addressed all aspects of intention to leave.

These themes were then ‘transcribed’ into a set of stressor-bank questions for use in a survey questionnaire. Where possible the items in this questionnaire were a direct quote from one of the interviewed priests. Alternatively the items were written by the researcher but based as closely as possible on the words of one of the priests. This questionnaire also contained measures of strain, in keeping with stress audit methodology (Cooper 2001). However since this chapter is only concerned with sources of stress, not its effects, this discussion will only focus on the former. An a priori decision was also made to treat questions on media portrayal of the priesthood separately from those on the role of the priest. Thus the 8 areas at the interview stage became 9 sections in the questionnaire. With the exception of the media questions, all other stressor item sections of the questionnaire were subjected to Exploratory Factor Analysis to determine any underpinning structure and meaning. The relatedness of the media



questions was determined simply by Pearson's Correlation Co-Efficient. In total some 17 potential sources of stress were identified using this methodology. In summary they are:

1. Contradiction – in what a priest has to do and what a priest is asked to do
2. Convenience store mentality of many parishioners
3. Parishioner power perceived by the priest and the consequences on his role
4. Pastoral care of parishioners including requests for guidance on daily life concerns
5. Sacraments and Church Rules – gaining access to sacraments and guidance
6. Charity involving the number of requests for help, support and finance
7. Implementing ministry in the modern world of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
8. Personal failing and reflection of the priest on his role and performance
9. Parish maintenance and geography
10. Unfulfilment and cynicism (personal) of the priest
11. Self-evaluation by the priest himself
12. Hierarchy including Church structures, senior management, career-mindedness and competition amongst priests
13. Inconsistencies in practice by individual priests when carrying out their ministry
14. Enabling factors of wearing clerical dress
15. Value factors of celibacy for the priest
16. Ease felt with maintaining celibacy today
17. Validity of the media portrayal of Church and priesthood in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

The question to be asked here is how do these 17 factors drawn from a sample of 189 priest responses, relate to both:

1. Views of the Roman Catholic priesthood espoused by both clerical and secular (priests and laity) writers alike
2. The literature in occupational and organisational psychology relating to stress?"

Clearly, some of the findings resonated the views espoused by Church writers and contemporary literature. Taking some of these major sources of stress for Roman Catholic priests identified through exploratory factor analysis, comparisons can be made with the views of some writers in and outside the Church.

### **Contradiction**

Contradiction is said to play an increasing role in the daily life of a Catholic priest. He is ministering to a 21<sup>st</sup> century society where Canon Law – the Church 'rules' – and practical application are viewed as increasingly incompatible for the lifestyles of many parishioners. While opponents of this view would argue that the Church is providing stability for people in a world of rapid change, equally, some priests may be sympathetic to parishioners' lifestyles because they too are experiencing the same struggles within their own family members and even their own



relationships creating a personal turmoil of expectations and lived reality for priesthood. Ryan (1997) succinctly summarises this:

*“We priests find ourselves caught in the middle of the conflicting understandings of Church and priesthood that so often polarizes our Catholic people today. We also wrestle with our own weakness, loneliness and isolation.. can be dismayed by the absence of tangible results in our own ministries ... find ourselves discouraged by the recent bitter scandals of brother priests and the strident harshness of public criticism of the Church and the priesthood. We may have our own difficulties with what appears to be the rigidity or insensitivity of the official Church to the issues and concerns that fall heavily on the shoulders of people in our parishes”*

The additional contradiction of collaborative ministry adds to this sources of stress. While the laity are now invited to play a more active role, in reality, people express either apathy or indifference towards the church or take control in their collaborative roles to the extent that clergy – a fellow parishioners – feel threatened by their perceived power. This, along with the contradiction that the priest himself trained for 6+ years in a residential seminary whilst the laity may have completed a weekend course, adds to the personal turmoil and creates role conflict and ambiguity. Three priests, all writers, clearly identify with this situation:

*“The clear identity of priesthood, the unquestioned status, the exalted privilege – features that helped priests deal with the sacrifices and crosses inherent to their vocation – began to blur .. almost two generations later the role and place of the priesthood in the social order of past life remains conflicted and ambiguous”*(Cozzens, 2000)

*“I am about to embark on a lifetime of saying Mass and hearing confessions; of anointing the sick and burying the dead; of marrying lovers and sleeping in an empty bed; of baptising babies and brooding over children I never had. It's a way of life that many people misunderstand; my parents think I am a saint, my friends think I'm mad and the world couldn't care less. Ahead of me is a lifetime of obedience to a bishop who might not remember my name, or bother to consult me about my appointment. A lifetime of praying the Office hour by hour, despite the ringing of the phone, the over-running school-governors' meeting...Already the fears for my future begin to well up in me. How will I cope? But there has to be more to it than this; it has to be deeper. Priesthood is a mystery and the challenge is to live out the mystery as best I can”*  
(Fr P McDermott 2001)

*“When I was first ordained, what I could do as an ordained priest, and what a lay person could not do, included a number of functions that today we take for granted to be done by lay people. As a priest in administration rather than in a parish, I have been challenged as to what is ‘mine’ as an ordained priest has shrunk, and what is ‘ours’ as baptised Christians has grown”* (Ryan, 1997)



## Convenience Store Mentality

A second major source of stress for priests is the increasing mentality of parishioners to use the Church as a convenience store. This includes choosing to worship at whichever Church is convenient to their homes – or diaries – for that weekend; an increased expectation that the priest is available ‘on demand’; a lack of engaging in commitment to both the financial and community aspects of the local parish; a preference to choosing their own response to moral issues rather than relying on the Church for guidance.

Sewell (2001) reflects on this changing attitude of worshippers who are exercising private judgement in disciplinary matters rather than abiding by the Church regulation. This has led to a younger generation who question aspects of moral teaching emerging into a ‘pick and mix’ Catholicism where they use the Church as a convenience store when needed (Sewell, 2001). Cornwell (2000) quotes one Church minister, Archbishop Weakland (USA) as saying that ‘the grand model of the Church in the United States today is *McDonald’s*. Self-service, broad selection, cheap prices, eat fast and get out quick. There is no need for community. This ‘convenience store mentality’ of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is being applied to faith itself:

*“It (faith) became rather like going into the supermarket and you pick up your basket and go round the shelves picking the bits of moral theology that appeal to you. It is a sort of self-access form of religion and we felt it should be a seamless garment where what we experience in the world was not at odds with our experience of the Church” (Stourton, 1998)*

Many Catholics now accept what is consonant with their own experience and reject whatever strikes them as unnecessary hidebound or just plain silly (Sewell, 2001). So the priest is often struggling to serve the needs of 3 generations within a family i.e. Grandparents concerned about their grandchildren’s faith when their adult children, as parents, do not practise. The difference between generations of Catholics in their practice belief and support of the Church is expressed by many contemporary writers leading to further contradiction:



*“The new middle-class Catholicism is far more accommodated to and less critical of the prevailing secular culture than the folk-Catholicism that preceded it ... There is a tendency to play down or disempower the social content of Jesus’ teaching, his direction about the dangers of money, wealth and possessions .. seen as irrelevant or exaggerated. Middle-class spirituality is privatised and finds its expression in books, courses and retreats” (Dalglish, 2001)*

Additionally, the outside influence of society now plays a leading role in reinforcing the decision making process undertaken by parishioners. Where once the Pope’s word was infallible, now the world wide web challenges and it has become a place where every commodity, pretension and opinion can be peddled, compared and contrasted, sampled, reshaped, interactively questioned, contradicted, book-marked and consigned to oblivion (Sewell 2001)

### **Hierarchical Organisation, Power Authority and Control**

So what of the whole area of ‘Church’ as a hierarchical organised institution constituting power, authority and roles in its 2000 year history? Firstly, the sheer size of the organisation cannot be ignored. The Roman Catholic Church is the largest institution in the world (Stourton, 1998) and it is the only ‘supra-national’ institution because, unlike the United Nations or the European Union, which seeks to unite people through their governments, the Church claims to be a family that transcends race, colour and nation and speak to individuals without the mediation of their secular rules’ (Stourton, 1998). Alongside its sheer size and power its 2000 years of power, authority and hierarchy have been built up and reinforced predominantly within the Vatican City of Rome:

*“The order of bishops is the successor to the College of the Apostles and their role as teachers and pastors and in the apostolic college is perpetuated, together with their Head, the Supreme Pontiff, and never apart from him, they have supreme and full authority over the universal church, but this power cannot be exercised without the agreement of the Roman Pontiff” (Vat II Docs 1965)*

Dolan (2000), another Catholic priest and writer, in addressing the concept of control and power in the Church, describes the prevailing culture which reinforces this notion of clerical ambition, a condition he terms as ‘Scarlet



Fever'. This direct reference to the colour of clerical dress worn by Cardinals – is he feels, a disease evident in the Catholic Church. Cozzens (2002) also addresses this notion of ambition evident amongst Catholic priests in the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

*“But truth be told, a large number of priests and seminarians would like nothing better than to be named Bishop .. There are of course few human rewards in the priesthood – limited opportunities for promotion, occasional small salary increases, little public acclaim other than perhaps being made a Monsignor. In the clerical world which is fundamentally still a feudal world, a priest needs to capture the eye of his bishop if he is to find what the British refer to as a ‘preferment’ and because ambition like sex, is thought in Church circles to be unseemingly, its urgent longings must be carefully guarded and disguised..in this climate the ambitious priest is keenly sensitive to the effect an imprudent word might have on his ecclesial career” (Cozzens, 2002).*

In contrast, Dolan (2000) cites some Bishops are actively deterring students from being sent to Rome to study, feeling that having tasted the lifestyle and experienced the culture i.e. “smelling the incense in St Peter’s and shopping at Gammerelli’s (world renowned clerical outfitters) it can lead to disillusionment when assigned to an ordinary parish life back home. Within this hierarchical structure Cozzens (2002) speaks of a growing awareness of a clerical culture but notes that this unhealthy ambition is but one of the faces of priesthood and it is a symptom of a system that is sick and in need of healing. Repressed ambition eventually erupts in behaviours and attitudes that demoralize and scandalise the faithful and “will remain in the Church as long as its present structures are assumed to be above review and renewal”

Connolly (1991) speaks clearly about the priest’s role within this, which he defines as clericalism:

*“Clericalism cuts across every boundary .. it’s a mind-set by which we, either consciously or subconsciously believe ourselves to be of a higher caste .. we use our dog-collars to get preferential treatment .. give one another silly titles .. clericalism at its worse is a cult of status”*

Within this hierarchical organisation of the Church this culture affects and is affected by those within – both its ministers and those who are served. Because of its 2000-year-old history and tradition there are some who would prefer to revive and sustain the old customs to the point of



flamboyancy. Cozzens (2002) raises an awareness that, even as early as seminarian life, this culture is cultivated which has an impact on a priest's very identity and behaviour. At times, states Cozzens (2002) the behaviours are manifestly 'camp'. One hears of closed gatherings of seminarians displaying in speech and dress their distinctive identity and the distinction between their lives and those of the laity:

*"It is odd to observe twenty-somethings trying to act like fifty-somethings. Yet such behaviour is found in among a small percentage of seminarians today who gather to drink good scotch, smoke cigars and discuss liturgy ( or more often, liturgy abuse). Cassock and French cuffs are preferred. A casual observer might wonder if they are out of touch with reality"*

(James F. Garneau 2001 cited in Cozzens, 2002)

Yet Garneau (2001) concludes that in all of this there is a hunger for something finer than the best scotch – a hunger for a priestly culture. Dolan (2002) reiterates this accurately in his writings on priesthood. He warns of the danger of a priest losing faith, which can lead to distraction through material things. Without faith 'there is no meaning, no drive, no reason'. The sacraments are empty, for we don't believe in them, preaching is boring, for we don't believe what we are saying and we futilely seek meaning in bottles, boys, or women, or golf clubs ..or promotion' This 'climate' states Dolan, (2000) has all the hallmarks of leading to a fall and he warns that without faith one day the crisis in priesthood will come – if not already.

While clerical culture can be problematic and more ambitious, it mirrors the world in which clergy live, work and play. Yet beyond this priestly culture is a wider regarded and distinct idea of clericalism. Cozzens, (2002) describes this as dysfunctional, haughty, crippling in spiritual and emotional maturity of the priest, bishop or deacon caught in its web. If we use Charles Handy's image of the organisational culture as a web and implement this image one wonders what its impact will be on the organisation as a whole? Clericalism is the conscious or unconscious concern to 'promote the particular interests of the clergy and to protect the privileges and power that have traditionally been conceded to those in a clerical state' (Cozzens, 2002) which include attitudes and behaviours.



Today a further question being raised in Church circles is whether clericalism is restricted to priests or has it already spread to the laity involved in collaborative ministry who are displaying the very same attitudes and behaviours for the same rewards mentioned above?

### **Media**

The organisational structure is also affected/ affects media image and personal image of priesthood as a human being. Firstly, for centuries clergy were held up as the moral ‘example’ that the ordinary person had to aspire towards. But as far back as the 14<sup>th</sup> century Chaucer in The Canterbury tales cautioned on how a fall from such a pedestal would affect those very people whom they were leading:

*“For, it the priest be foul, in whom we trust  
What wonder if the layman yield to lust?”  
(Chaucer: The Canterbury Tales circa 1386)*

However, often, in trying to protect the Catholic Church, the hierarchical institution resorts to secrecy. This was clearly evident during Vatican II which led to further speculation from the media and as Stourton (1998) concluded that nothing gets the journalistic juices going like secrecy and the early sessions of the Council were as secret as the Church could make such an enormous gathering. Secrecy leads to mystique and keeping that persona or image to the public and despite 2,000 years of change the image of Catholic remains the same and that in some ill-defined way, Catholics are still not quite like ordinary people (Sewell, 2001).

### *Results - Linking Stress and Health*

*Establishing the existence of a measurable relationship between hazards and harm to demonstrate the existence of stress in the R.C. Priesthood*

Seventeen sources of work demand, or pressure, were identified in the ministry of a sample of 189 R.C. priests. The empirical association between the 17 identified sources of work demand and several indicators of health and well-being is explored. This is in accord with risk-assessment procedures, where the imperative is to demonstrate the relationship between hazards (or stressors) and harm (or strain) (Cox and Griffiths,



1998). In short, the seventeen factors empirically derived in Chapter 3 constitute the psychosocial hazards or stressors present in R.C. ministry. In this Chapter, the evidence that these hazards/ stressors are associated with harm/strain is explored. The existence of a measurable relationship between these hazards/stressors and harm/strain is what ultimately demonstrates the existence of stress in the priesthood.

Although it has survived for over 2,000 year's, the point was emphasised earlier that many commentators now see the Church as facing particularly turbulent times, both in terms of the broader social changes taking place in society and with respect to its response to those changes (Livingston, 1992; Hedin, 1995; Haring, 1997; Ryan, 1997; Philpot, 1998; Power, 1998; Stourton, 1998; Sipe, 1995; Rausch, 1999; Cozzens, 2000; Dolan, 2000; Sewell, 2001; Dinter, 2003); Philibert, 2004. The R.C. priest is doubly affected by this turbulence. On the one hand, he is ministering in a sea of social change from which the church community - and indeed future vocations are drawn - while on the other, many of the Church's own organisational structures and procedures are being called into question or even overhauled. Even a cursory recognition of these facts brings the possibility of stress in the R.C. priesthood to the fore.

From the transactional perspective presented earlier (Cox 1978; Cooper, 2001) stress is seen as an ongoing process involving individuals transacting with their environment. Central to this transaction is the appraisal of both the demands of the environment and their ability to meet those demands, or to cope. A valid and important question to ask, therefore is, how do R.C. priests appraise the demands of their contemporary ministry and what effects do these appraised demands, or psychosocial hazards/stressors, have upon their health and well-being? Where Chapter 4 sought to identify the principal factors in the appraised demands of R.C. ministry, the current chapter examines the extent to which these appraised demands impact negatively upon well-being.



**Symptoms of harm/stress found in three modalities: Physical, psychological and Behavioural**

According to contemporary stress theory, symptoms of harm/strain can be found in three modalities: physical, psychological and behavioural responses (Friend et al, 1984; Jackson and Schuler, 1985; Kahn and Byosiere, 1992; Jex and Beehr, 1991). Put simply, stress affects people’s physical health, their psychological health and their behaviour. Not surprisingly, therefore, stress is seen as being damaging to both the individual and the organisation (Karasek & Theorell, 1982; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Kahn and Byosier, 1992; Westman and Eden, 1997; O’Driscoll and Beehr, 1984; Warr, 1994; Newton, 1989; Narayanon, Merton and Spector, 1999). In terms of indicators of strain utilized in this research, reliance had to be made upon self-report measures. While some have questioned the reliability and status of self-report measures (Crump et al, 1980; Rayburn, Richmond and Rogers, 1985; Hinklee, 1987; Dewe, 1987; Griffiths and Cox, 1998; Cooper, 2001), the need for utmost confidentiality and anonymity insisted upon by the Bishops and senior clergy in each of the four Diocese meant that no other forms of data collection were possible. In order to improve the strength of any findings, however, self-report measures of each of the three modalities identified above were used:

<u>MODALITY</u>	<u>INDICATOR</u>
Physical Health	General Well-being
	}Self-Esteem
Psychological Health	- }Positive Outlook
	}Confidence in Ministry
	Thoughts on Retirement
Behavioural Health	Intention to Leave

Since this thesis is couched within the terms of contemporary stress theory, so the common sources of stress identified within occupational stress research offer a useful point of reference against which to compare the 17-stressor factors identified earlier in this thesis. Table One presents 5 of the principal categories of occupational stress as identified by Cooper and



Eaker (1988), together with some of the major elements of organisational factors, which fall under each category. The right-hand column attempts to link the 17 identified stressors in R.C. priests with these common categories of stressor as determined by occupational researchers. What matters here, is not so much the one-to-one correspondence between discrete elements in the table, but the simple fact that many of the identified stressors for R.C. clergy resemble in part at least the same sources of stress as those found in many other occupational settings. This is not to suggest that a vocation to the priesthood is reducible to a simple occupation, but that occupational factors are present and important in influencing the vocational experience.

**Table 1 – Links between the 5 principal categories of occupational stress and 8 of the identified stressors for clergy**

CATEGORY OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESSOR	MANIFESTATION OF IMPACT OF PRIESTHOOD
<b>Intrinsic to Job</b> Working conditions Long hours New Technology	Parish maintenance and financial upkeep of Church Convenience store mentality of parishioners Hierarchical Church structure, management and competitiveness
<b>Role in Organisation</b> Ambiguity  Conflict  Responsibility	Inconsistency in Practice between clergy; Pressure of dealing with Parishioner Power Contradiction in what a priest is asked to do /expected to do  Pastoral Care, Parish Maintenance and financial upkeep of Church Hierarchical Church structure, management and competitiveness
<b>Relationship at Work</b>  With supervisors  With colleagues  With subordinates	Hierarchical Church structure, management and competitiveness Hierarchical Church structure. Conflict between priests/people expectations/roles Pressure of dealing with parishioner power; Conflict priest/people
<b>Career Development</b> Progress Retirement	Hierarchical Church structure Inconsistency in Practice between clergy, Contradiction in what a priest is asked to do/expected of
<b>Organisational Structure</b>  Climate   Communication Culture   Home-work interface	Hierarchical Church structure. Conflict between priests/people expectations/roles Hierarchical Church structure  Contradiction in what a priest is asked to do/expected of Pastoral Care, Convenience store mentality of parishioners  Pressure of dealing with Parishioner Power



By considering the applicability of each of these five major occupational stress categories to the experience of the R.C. clergy, we can obtain a clearer picture of the often growing and changing demands upon the individual priest and their likely impact upon him.

#### *Factors intrinsic to the Job*

One of the chief occupational stressors identified by Cooper and Eaker (1988) was factors intrinsic to a job, namely such issues as hours of work, working conditions and new technology. Long hours of work are reported to affect employee's health, with overwork being linked to coronary heart disease. The relationship between workload and lack of control with symptoms of stress related ill health (Dewe, 1987; Cox and Griffiths, 1998; Cooper, 2001; French and Caplan, 1972; Cox, 1980) was reviewed earlier in this thesis (Chapter 2).

Three of the stressors identified in the priesthood are clearly related to this 'intrinsic to job' category, namely, 'convenience store mentality', 'parish maintenance' and 'hierarchical structural organisation'. Priests are increasingly asked to cover one or more parishes due to downsizing and lack of clergy, which inevitably increases their workload. In addition to ministering to a larger congregation, this also brings with it an increase in administration e.g. the need to look after more property, buildings and premises. But, crucially, it is the level of responsibility and demand for pastoral care that increases most as a priest ministers to more parishioners over a wider geography. This workload is undertaken from the presbytery – a dual based work-home-public access building – where 'service users' expect a 24-hour service. The diversity of work and intensity of demands that are a daily routine for many priests are not always easy to cope or come to terms with. As one priest quoted by Doherty (1992) explains: "When one is trying to respond to the many cases which may occur at anytime, it is not always easy to distinguish between the important, the urgent, the necessary. Time and experience help the young priest to discern and be able to make decisions which he can stand over but of



course the person who calls at the door always has the most urgent task for the priest” (Doherty, 1992)

This relentless demand to ‘perform’, to ‘serve’ and to ‘respond to needs’ is clearly wearing, but at the same time it can become something of a perverse statement of a priest’s importance. One priest’s experience of 5 years in ministry explained succinctly that there is a tendency to be seen as the action man. This tendency to become busier and busier is simply the individual’s inability to say ‘No!’. For many priests it is simply a question of personal vanity (Connolly, 2001)

For some priests, the introduction of new technology often replaces roles previously given to domestic personnel, i.e. house-keepers. However, while answer machines and mobile telephones might allow the priest more mobility away from the presbytery, and the diocesan website can reach more people than face to face interaction can, others feel the human contact is missing at the local level.

#### *Role in organisation*

Role ambiguity and role conflict are known sources of stress in many occupational settings. Role ambiguity arises when an employee does not receive a clear understanding of his/her work objectives, nor of their co-workers’ roles and responsibilities. Coupled with bad supervision, appraisal and evaluation, this results in ambiguity because the employee is unsure how they fit into the wider organisational framework. Role conflict occurs when someone is ‘answerable’ (in some way) to competing or opposing requests/instructions. Promotion, transfer, a new manager or changes in the existing structure of the organisation can all impact further on these factors (Ivancevich and Matteson, 1980). Responsibility for people adds to this stress because unlike responsibility for plant and buildings, interaction requires interpersonal skills for each encounter (Ivancevich and Matteson, 1980).



Role ambiguity and conflict result in a depressed mood, lowered self-esteem, life dissatisfaction, low motivation and intention to leave (Cooper, 2001), as well as cardiovascular ill-health (Ivancevich and Matteson, 1980). Inter-role conflict – i.e. multiple roles carried out by one individual with different responsibilities and titles – has consistently been linked with psychological strain (Frome, Russell, Cooper et al, 1992). The impact of both conflicting demands and multiple roles for employees in their job/career and family life were explored in chapter two of this thesis (Greenhaus, Bevell, 1985; Lobel, 1991). Successive studies have linked role conflict and ambiguity to sources of stress (Gray, Toft and Anderson, 1981; Sutherland and Cooper, 1990; Tyler and Cushway, 1992). Given the diversity of priestly duties, it is not surprising that the issue of role, especially role ambiguity and conflict, is a feature of 6 of the stress factors identified in priesthood in this research namely, ‘Inconsistency in practice’ ‘parishioner power’ ‘contradiction’ ‘pastoral care’ parish maintenance’ and hierarchy’.

The concept of role, or issues deriving from the roles priests have to fulfil, are implicit in each of these stressors. Role conflict exists amongst both clergy and ‘lay’ ministers in the Church today. All three areas reported above i.e. role conflict and ambiguity, workload, and organisational change have already been recognised as work related stressors in the Church. Hoge (2002) for example, emphasizes that the communities priests serve today are complex, increasingly multicultural and multiethnic due to changing immigration patterns set off by the globalisation process and the availability of accessible travel. Priests are accordingly required to fill an expanding repertoire of multiple roles to an ever more diverse flock.

For many priests today the community to which they minister is a transient one. This brings additional responsibilities, conflict and ambiguity to the role. Indeed, responsibility, conflict and ambiguity might be said to be part of the priest’s role as he tries to ‘make sense of the mess to bring the light of the Gospel to the concrete structures of the current world’ (Hoge, 2002). Mainstream stressors reported elsewhere by priests were overwork and



over-responsibility (Hoge, 2001). This left young priests overwhelmed, inadequately supervised and requiring several specific skills in which they believed themselves deficient, e.g. administration, finance, staff relationships and conflict resolution. This finding impacts directly onto the third chief stress factor in organisations i.e. relationships at work.

#### *Relationships at work*

Other people and our encounters with them can be sources of both support and stress (Makin, Cox and Cooper, 1988). In the world of work, our dealings with bosses, peers and subordinates all affect us and can be stressful (Seyle, 1974), as can our dealings with customers, clients and those we serve in some other way. Sometimes, difficulties with colleagues at work are the result of differences in interests or a conflict over resources (Sherif, Sherif, 1954), while at other times they are the result of personality clashes (French and Caplan, 1972). So too in the R.C. priesthood where the same organisational and social-psychological dynamics apply.

The R.C. Church, it should be remembered, remains a hierarchical organisation founded upon absolute authority and –from its ministers – unquestioned obedience. This applies as much to the Diocesan Bishop as it does to Christ, the ultimate CEO! Within this hierarchy there are inevitably disputes and differences between the organisational members, its priests, over matters such as policy, practice and direction. Equally, not all priests can rise to the level of dean, canon or bishop. There is competition for ‘promotion’ as in any other organisation. So too is there social comparison between priests and parishes in terms of resources, e.g. the money given in weekly collections and available for parish maintenance and upkeep. Where there is competition for resources, so relational conflict is usually not far behind (Sherif and Sherif, 1954).

Therefore, what of the relationship between priest and congregation? The increase in collaborative ministry – in theory the laity taking on more roles – almost inevitably blurs the boundary between the priest’s role and the people’s role. We have yet to appreciate fully the revolutionary changes in



our understanding of Eucharist brought about by Vatican II (Cozzens, 1998). Clearly the people were spectators watching an action performed on their behalf. Today the leadership priests exercise in the Church must be collaborative through planning with the other faithful and with them build Christian communities (Cozzens, 1998).

Working relationships can offer an important source of affirmation and self-esteem. The lack of such affirmation can greatly increase the level of strain for R.C. priests via a characteristic lack of affirmation (Philpot, 1998): Today the diocesan priest has to learn to live without affirmation. There are few bouquets handed out from Bishop's House, people on the whole are not as excited by their recent ordination and priests gradually realise they are being taken for granted (Philpot, 1998). This does not mean 'not appreciated' but you are perceived as a priest amongst other priests. For priests there is the additional role strain of being a 'keeper of secrets' both inside and outside of the confessional: The diocesan priest is the custodian of other people's secrets, knowing things in a privileged way about parishioners and his brother priests. Secrets can be a heavy load to bear and this can be where loneliness bites (Philpot, 1998)

Loneliness, a perceived lack of social support, holding others' secrets and dealing with one's own shortcomings all combine with lack of performance appraisal to reduce a priest's sense of self evaluation, and esteem. Difficulties in relationships are at the core of this malaise, not least the frequent conflict between clergy and their parishioners in items of what the latter might reasonably expect of the former and what the former is there to deliver. This conflict between ministers and the parishioners was a major source of stress for Dewe's (1987) sample of New Zealand Church of England and R.C. clergy, as was the emotional labour involved in 'being there' for parishioners in their time of need or crisis. The same negative impacts of 'relationship problems' can be reasonably expected to occur in R.C. priests.



## *Career Development*

In the world of work, labour market and organisational changes have radically altered many peoples experience of their 'career', i.e. the sequence of employment-related positions, roles, activities and experiences they encounter (Arnold, Cooper and Robertson, 1998). While the vocation to the priesthood is not reducible purely to the employment-based relationship significant by the concept of a career, priests nevertheless still have a 'career' within the organisation that is the Roman Catholic Church. It is therefore entirely valid to consider how changes in society and the Church itself have impacted upon priests' subjective experiences of the job they do and their assessment of their own success or failure, effectiveness or ineffectiveness in their role. Allied to this is their view of the adequacy of the training and education they receive both in preparation for becoming a priests and in the years that follow ordination. What, too, of the experience they anticipate upon retirement from active ministry?

Amongst the principal trends identified in many occupational careers as a result of changing labour markets conditions are:

- An increasing workload for individuals, both in terms of the hours worked and the intensity of effort required per hour;
- A need to adapt and adjust to almost perpetual organisation change;
- The need to constantly learn new skills or update others as a result of both technological advances and national and global social change;
- The need for increasing occupational - and geographical - 'mobility';
- Growing concern about the adequacy of provisions made for retirement

(Arnold, Cooper and Robertson 1998)

As has already been discussed throughout this thesis, each of these trends can be seen as clearly in the experience of the priesthood as in any other 'career'. From the recognised 'shortage' of priests, through the organisational changes brought about by Vatican II, to the growing need to merge smaller parishes into larger ones, the experience of the priest's career is changing and often in a way that is likely to generate stress. This was described succinctly by one American priest and writer: 'As a job description, it is impossible'(Philbert, 2004)- which leads to further questions of how you train a priest adequately to meet these demands. The



frustration of having reached a career ceiling for example, or of simply having too much to do to be effective, is as real for a priest as it is for any other modern day employee. Even opting to retire can be stressful in itself, especially if the job is highly socially defined, whereupon retirement can leave the previous job incumbent 'role-less; as well as having to deal with the actual transition into retirement (i.e. the economic, social and geographical transitions involved).

As has already been emphasized repeatedly in this thesis, priests are having to cope with both an increasing workload and major organisational change, each of which can have a major negative impact on physical and mental health (Tombaugh and White 1990, Cascio 1993, Schaufeli et al, 1995). Few, if any, priests are given parishes to run before they have amassed the necessary experience required to fill the role effectively. Increasingly, priests often feel challenged and confronted by many amongst their parishioners, while simultaneously questioning the effectiveness of any help and support available to them from elsewhere within the Church. As one respondent in my sample explained in qualitative comments added to his questionnaire: "(my previous parish)..it was very hard to get any support from the people there. 85% were unemployed and one child in the school was paying for school lunch because only one of the fathers was officially 'at work'. In such parishes I feel too much is expected of priests and one often is left on their own after asking for help from the Bishop and Vicar Generals and the Dean. I feel that they would not know how to cope themselves as none of them were ever in such deprived areas. There should be much more support financially and otherwise for priests in UPA parishes" (Ref 091)

Not surprisingly, such isolation, inability to meet expectations and lack of support sometimes lead priests to thoughts of leaving and retirement, although other important factors are implicated as well. Greeley et al (1970) identified two main reasons for clergy resigning from Church ministry. Firstly, an inability to live within the present structure of the



Church and secondly, a desire to marry. Hodge (1999) found that clergy had a more positive outlook yet faced three kinds of stress related problems:

- Overwork and over responsibility leaving priests feeling overwhelmed
- Living arrangements – assigned rather than chosen
- Unhappiness at their diocesan structures

Hoge (2001) also suggests three principal stressors to be prominent in priests' reasons for resigning:

1. Living a celibate life and the loneliness that goes with being forever single;
2. The difficulties priests have in establishing a private living space;
3. Overly heavy handed authority structures within the Church.

In combination, Hoge (2001) argues these factors lead to feelings of severe loneliness and unappreciation, which, in turn, precipitate both a crisis in confidence and a crisis in commitment. Thus, he identifies four categories of priest who are actively or passively contemplating – or actually – leaving the priesthood: those who are 'in love'; those who have 'rejected celibacy'; those who are simply 'disillusioned' with the Church and the priesthood; and those who are rejected on the basis of their being members of the gay community.

### *Organisational Structure*

Being part of an organisation can present threats to the individual's sense of freedom and autonomy. Organisational workers often complain of a lack of sense of belonging, of inadequate opportunities to participate, of being excluded in communication and consultation (Cooper et al, 1995). Allowing more participation in decision-making produces higher job satisfaction (Coch and French, 1948), whilst non-participation leads to a range of negative outcomes including escapist drinking, smoking, low self-esteem and absenteeism or thoughts on leaving (Sauter, Hurrell and Cooper, 1989).

The Church, as a human organisation, remains subject to the dynamics common to other organisations and institutions. While, arguably, the Church is not the kind of institution than can be compared to the corporate giants of commerce and industry, it also has an astounding 2,000-year



history. Its shepherds and pastors, its curial offices and chancery staff experience the same pressures to stay the course taken by their predecessors as their corporate counterparts. It should not surprise us then that Church leaders tend to be conservative, cautious and grounded. Quite simply, it is the nature of things (Cozzens, 2002).

Conservatism and absolute authority are perhaps difficult to reconcile with participation, communication and open dialogue, the by-wards for organisational design conducive to employee health and well-being! Cozzens (2002) sees a new culture emerging within the priesthood, a culture of individual self-questioning and assessment: A new, if uncertain priestly culture is taking shape. Stripped of the status and privilege that allowed priests to ignore the personal signs of anxiety and loneliness that often touched their lives, priests have been forced to address their human conditions without the defences and rationalisation of previous clerical cultures, now free to own their humanity with a humility and freedom and has renewed their hope and confidence.

What remains to be answered is how much the Church truly recognises the plight of many of its clergy, not so much in terms of their spiritual vocation but their 'occupation health' Gill (2001) himself a medical doctor and minister reviewed Hoge's (2001) research and came to the conclusion: "In relation to their physical and mental health ... what struck me repeatedly during several readings of this report (research) is how much emotional stress and concomitant suffering these lives revealed. A wide variety of distressful emotions can easily be recognised as underlying a great number of replies."

Gill (2001) felt that while clergy life was not stress free, the stress itself was preventable. Much related to frustration of the significant needs or desires priests brought with them into early post ordination assignments. Revelations included chronic loneliness, not enough support from fellow priests, feeling overwhelmed, lack of privacy, difficulties living a celibate life, lack of leisure time, unrealistic demands, heavy handed treatment by



Church authorities, disagreement over Ecclesiology and ministry: “Priests with deep-seated needs of desires that are unmet with resulting painful emotions, are obviously going to find it difficult to enjoy the work they are doing, to relate warmly and sensitively to their parishioners and, to find comfort and peace in their dealings with God... The health of priests who experience prolonged sessions of loneliness is also threatened by the way their emotional state causes a lowered effectiveness of their body’s immune mechanism... Psychological depression too is considered to be, in many cases, an outcome of loneliness”(Gill, 2001).Based upon the close correspondence between the 17 stressors identified in the present sample of R.C. clergy (Chapter 4) and those characteristic stressors found in occupational stress research (Table 1) it is therefore hypothesized that these 17 stressor factors will have either/both an independent and cumulative negative impact upon individual well-being, Whether this is measured in terms of the priests’ self-reported physical health, their self-reported psychological health, or their self-reported behavioural intentions. Specifically, as the appraised demand of each/all of these 17 stressors increases, so indicators of physical, psychological and behavioural ‘strain or harm’ will also increase.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Since descriptive statistics for the 17 stressor factors were presented and discussed in Chapter 4, they will not be re-presented here. Table 2 therefore presents similar descriptive statistics (i.e. means and standard deviation) for the nine outcome measures only:

**Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for the outcome measures**

<b>Outcome Measures For Priests</b>	<b>Mean X</b>	<b>Standard Deviation SD</b>
Feeling Worn-out	19.47	5.56
Feeling Uptight	8.06	5.35
Self esteem	39.03	5.26
Priest’s Intention to leave	3.93	2.42
Priest’s Confidence in Pastoral Ministry	22.70	4.72
Confidence in Sacraments	15.62	2.83
Retirement + worry finance/ Accommodation and care	3.10	1.23
Loneliness	2.35	1.22



Zero order associations between stressors and indicators of strain

The relationship between each of the 17 identified sources of stress and each of the 9 outcome variables, or indicators of strain, was first explored by means of a one-tailed person product movement correlation. Table 3 summarises the results of this analysis:

**Table 3 Outcomes of stressors on health and well-being of R.C. Clergy**

	Well-being		Self-esteem	Attitude		Confidence		Retirement
	Wornout	Uptight	Esteem	Positive Outlook	Intention Leave	Confid Pastoral	Confid Sacrament	Retirement Worry
Contradiction in what priest asked/expected of	.285**	.193**	-.175*		.520**		-.137*	-.199**
Convenience store mentality of parishioners		.207**		-.143*				-.183**
Pressure of dealing with parishioner power	.133*	.140*	-.178*	-.157*		-.155*		
Pastoral care				.202**	.166*	.218**		
Sacramental rules regarding access for adults							.285**	
Charity		.214**	.134*					
Implementing ministry in 21 <sup>st</sup> century society	.156*	.148*	-.275**	-.227**	.192**	-.327**		-.218**
Priest's feelings of personal failing	.219**	.189**	-.452**	-.148*	.202**	-.330**		-.180**
Parish maintenance and financial upkeep of Church		.216**					.180**	-.133*
A sense of unfulfilment by the priest	.318**	.273**	-.195**		.329**			
Priest's own evaluation of performance			-.256**	-.236**		-.293**		
Hierarchical Church structure, pressure of competition between clergy	.133*				.229**			-.144*
Inconsistency in practice causing ambiguity			.145*	.177**	.233**			-.179
Clerical dress as an enabler						-.194**		-.200**
Value of celibacy today	-.171*				-.412**		.133*	.127*
Ease of living a celibate life					-.348**			

From Table 3 it can be seen that there is are modest empirical relationships between a number of stressor factors and a variety of the utilised indicators of strain. The outcomes are now presented in six distinct categories namely, Well-being (worn-out, uptight); Self-esteem; Positive outlook on the future (Future and Retirement/ financial worries); Intention to leave the priesthood; Confidence (Confidence in pastoral ministry and confidence in sacramental ministry); Loneliness.



### *Interpretation of Table 3*

Impact of Stressor factors on clergy health and well-being.

These stressors are categorised below in terms of how frequently they impact on index of well-being, either 'worn-out', or 'uptight' scores.

#### *Contradiction, Implementing Ministry and Personal Failing*

A total of 7 stressors impacted on 'wornout', while some 8 stressors impacted upon 'uptight'. While both relate to the well-being of individual priests it is interesting that 5 of these stressors impact jointly upon both 'worn-out' and 'uptight' namely Contradiction, Parishioner Power, Implementing Ministry, Personal Failing, and Unfulfilment. However, the level of impact of these five stressors on the well-being of the priest varies from .140 to .318 which indicates a relatively low to moderate impact. Therefore, the more contradiction, parishioner power, inconsistency in implementing ministry, feelings of personal failure and unfulfilment, the more the priest experienced feelings of being worn-out and uptight. Other stressors predicting feelings of being worn-out included having to deal with the demands of what is perceived as a hierarchical Church structure and doubts about the value of celibacy in priesthood. Also affecting feelings of uptight were the individual stressors of people using the Church as a convenience store, requests for charity and the parish maintenance – buildings and plant upkeep.

#### *Impact of Stressor factors on clergy self-esteem*

Contradiction, Parishioner Power, Charity, Implement ministry, Personal failing, Unfulfilment in Priesthood, Self evaluation, and Inconsistency in practice all had a negative impact upon self-esteem. Whilst 8 had a relatively low impact, interestingly the priest's feeling of personal failure correlated at -.452 indicating a moderate effect on his self-esteem.

#### *Impact of Stressor factors on clergy attitudes, positive outlook and intention to leave*

Some 7 stressors had an impact on a priest's positive outlook to life whilst 9 stressors affected the priest's intention to leave the priesthood. Of these, 4 had an impact on both variables, i.e. the more involvement a priest had in pastoral care of parishioners, implementation of ministry, his sense of



personal failure, and experience of inconsistency in practice, the more negatively his attitude to the future and his intention to leave was affected. The strength of these relations is, however, fairly modest.

The additional individual factors affecting positive outlook, namely, convenience store mentality of parishioners, parishioner power, and self-evaluation all had a low impact. Individual stressors also affecting intention to leave were contradiction, which had a moderate impact (.520); a sense of unfulfilment experienced by the priest, the continued existence of a hierarchical church structure, ease of celibacy, which all impacted at a low level, while their value of celibacy had a moderate impact.

*Impact of stressor factors on clergy confidence in pastoral and sacramental ministry*

Some 6 stressors impacted upon confidence in pastoral ministry namely, parish power, pastoral care, implementing ministry, personal failing, self evaluation, and clerical dress as an enabler. All had a low impact on the priests' confidence in carrying out pastoral ministry. A further 4 stressors had a low and negative impact upon the priest's confidence in sacramental ministry i.e. Contradiction, sacramental access and rules, parish maintenance and geography and financial upkeep, and the value of celibacy in 21<sup>st</sup> century.

*Impact of Stressor factors on clergy re retirement and financial worry*

There were some 9 stressors impacting upon thoughts on retirement for clergy namely, contradiction in priest's expectations, the convenience store mentality of parishioners, trying to implement ministry in 21<sup>st</sup> Century society; priests feeling of personal failing, parish maintenance, the hierarchical Church structures and competition between clergy, inconsistency in practice between fellow clergy, clerical dress and celibacy.

*Impact of Stressor factors on clergy and loneliness*

There were a further 5 stressors affecting loneliness for priests namely, contradiction, unfulfilment, hierarchical church structures and competitive element between clergy, the value of celibacy and the ease with which it is lived.



## Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

In order to (a) explore the cumulative impact of any significant stressors upon health and well-being, as well as their independent impact, and (b) control for the possible inter-relationship between stressor item factors, a series of 9 multiple linear regression (MLR) analyses were run. Specifically, a separate MLR was run for each of the possible outcome variables. The number of predictor variables entered in each MLR was determined by the number of significant zero order correlations found to exist for each specific outcome measure (as summarised in Table 2). For example, it can be seen from Table 2 that Worn-out correlated with 7 of the identified stressors, hence these 7 input variables were used to predict worn-out scores. Confidence in sacramental ministry, on the other hand, correlated with only 4 of the identified stressors and it was therefore only these 4 predictors that were subsequently entered in the MLR for 'confidence in sacramental ministry'. For each MLR the corresponding number of predictors was entered in a single step. The results of each MLR will now be considered in turn. With a sample size of 189 and a maximum of 9 stressors entered as predictors in a single analysis the ratio of participants to predictors is never less than 189:9 (21:1), which exceeds the minimum requirements advocated (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989).

### *Linking stress with strain*

Stress is evidenced by the strength of a relationship between sources of demand or pressure at work, often labelled stressors or psychosocial hazards, and symptoms of harm or strain. In this thesis 9 indicators of strain or harm were utilized: worn-out, uptight, self-esteem, positive outlook, confidence in pastoral ministry, confidence in sacramental ministry, worry about retirement (financial), loneliness and retirement. The strength of the positive relationship between the 17 identified stressors and each of the 9 indicators of strain, as indicated by these MLR results, therefore provides more substantive evidence of the stress experience of the priesthood than can be extrapolated from a simple zero-order correlation matrix.



*Table 1 Predicting 'Wornout' – Dependent Variable 'Wornout'*

	Beta	t-value	Sig	
Contradiction in what priest asked/expected of	.111	1.086	.279	
Pressure of dealing with parishioner power	.064	.739	.461	
Implementing ministry in 21 <sup>st</sup> Century society	-.008	-.091	.928	
Priest's feeling of personal failure	.159	1.571	.119	
A sense of unfulfilment by the priest	.260	3.002	<b>.003</b>	
Hierarchical Church structure/competition	.020	.228	.820	
Value of celibacy today	-.053	-.566	.573	
	R Sq .176	F 3.961	df 7 Sig .001	

From Table 1 it can be seen that while the cumulative impact of the 7 utilised predictors upon worn-out scores was a significant 17.6% of the variance in worn out scores, it was in fact only the sense of cynicism and unfulfilment that some priests reported which made a significant independent prediction of wornout. This is to say that as priests experience higher levels of unfulfilment and cynicism in their ministry so they report a greater number of symptoms of feeling worn-out.

*Table 2 Predicting 'Uptight' – Dependent Variable 'Uptight'*

	Beta	t-value	Sig	
Contradiction in what priest is asked/expected	-.031	-.337	.737	
Convenience store mentality of people	.060	.586	.559	
Pressure of dealing with parishioner power	.072	.822	.413	
Charity inc requests	.130	1.490	.139	
Implementing ministry in 21 <sup>st</sup> Century society	-.018	-.196	.845	
Priest's feelings of personal failure	.177	1.861	.065	
Parish maintenance and financial upkeep Church.	.060	.600	.550	
A sense of unfulfilment by the priest	.259	2.990	<b>.003</b>	
	R Sq .165	F 3.147	df 8 Sig .003	

As with 'worn-out' Table 2 shows that again it is only cynicism and unfulfilment that makes a significant independent prediction of uptight scores. This is to say that as priests experience higher levels of cynicism and unfulfilment, so they report a greater number of symptoms of feeling uptight. In passing, it might also be noticed that 'personal failure' makes a marginal, though not statistically significant, additional contribution to



uptight scores (Beta - .177, t=1.86 p=.065). Subsequently, as feelings of personal failure increase so too do symptoms of feeling uptight.

*Predicting Self-Esteem*

*Table 3 – Dependent Variable ‘Self Esteem’*

	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t-Value</i>	<i>Sig</i>	
Contradiction in what priest is asked/expected	-.013	-.153	.879	
Pressure of dealing with power of parishioners	.021	.264	.792	
Implementing ministry in 21 <sup>st</sup> century society	-.053	-.630	.530	
Priest's feeling of personal failure	-.412	-4.515	.000	
Priest's sense of unfulfilment	-.103	-1.316	.190	
Priest's own self-evaluation	-.144	-1.816	.072	
Inconsistency in practice between clergy	.185	2.377	.019	
	R Sq .300	F 7.819	df 7 Sig .000	

Cumulatively, the 7 sources of stress correlating with self-esteem in Table 2 were found to predict a statistically significant 30.0% of the variance in self-esteem scores However, as Table 3 shows it is both a sense of personal failing - and, marginally, ‘inconsistency in practice’ between clergy - which makes a significant independent prediction This (reversed score) shows that as priests

experience a greater sense of personal failure in their ministry, so their self-esteem diminishes.

*Predicting a Positive Attitude*

*Table 4 – Dependent Variable ‘Positive Attitude’*

	<i>Beta</i>	<i>T-value</i>	<i>Sig</i>
Convenience store mentality of parishioners	-.067	-.798	.426
Pressure of dealing with parishioner power	-.100	-1.189	.236
Pastoral care	.147	1.766	.080
CHARITY	.134	1.542	.125
Implementing ministry in 21 <sup>st</sup> Century society	-.207	-2.298	.023
Priest's feeling of personal failure	-.007	-.075	.940
Self evaluation by priest	-.248	-3.108	.002
Inconsistency in practice between clergy	.173	2.108	.037
	R Sq .232	F 4.828	df 8 Sig .000

Table 4 shows a total of three stressor factors making a significant independent prediction of a positive attitude. Firstly, ‘Implementing ministry,’ secondly, ‘Self evaluation’ and thirdly ‘inconsistency in practice’. These scores show that as priests experience more difficulty in



implementing their ministry, self evaluation in evaluating themselves and their contribution, and report greater inconsistency in practice by fellow clergy, so they develop a more negative attitude to their life and ministry.

*Predicting 'Confidence in pastoral ministry'*

*TABLE 5 – Dependent Variable 'Confidence in pastoral ministry'*

	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Sig</i>
Pressure of dealing with parishioner power	-.061	-.767	.444
Pastoral care	.221	2.864	<b>.005</b>
Implementing ministry in 21 <sup>st</sup> society	-.155	-1.775	.078
Priest's feeling of personal failure	-.202	-2.228	<b>.028</b>
Priest's self evaluation	-.186	-2.333	<b>.021</b>
Celibacy as an enabler	-.113	-1.467	.145
	R Sq .248	F 7.103	df 6 Sig .000

As can be seen from Table 5, cumulatively these 6 sources of stress account for a statistically significant 24.8% of the variance in confidence in pastoral ministry scores. Three of the stressor factors make a significant independent prediction. As priests minister in the field of pastoral care, their quality of care is affected by their experience of ministry, self evaluation of performance and quality of care. This may lead to them experiencing a sense of personal failure, which in turn will affect their confidence in experience of ministry. There is also a slightly marginal effect on implementing ministry in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century society, which additionally, will affect the priest's confidence.

*Predicting Intention to leave*

*Table 6 – Dependent variable 'Intention to leave'*

	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Sig</i>
Contradiction in what priest asked/expected of	.331	4.031	<b>.000</b>
Pastoral care	.045	.659	.511
Implementing ministry in 21 <sup>st</sup> Century society	.022	.292	.771
Priest's feelings of personal failure	.120	1.473	.143
A sense of unfulfilment by the priest	.182	2.531	<b>.013</b>
Hierarchical Church structures and competitiveness	.117	1.564	.120
Inconsistency in practice between clergy	.022	.311	.756
Value of celibacy today	-.085	-1.036	.302
Ease of living a celibate life	-.152	-1.970	<b>.051</b>
	R Sq .417	F 10.742	df 9 Sig .000



Table 6 shows that there are three significant predictors of intention to leave. This shows that as priests experience contradiction in the Church, a personal sense of unfulfilment and, their own ease or dis-ease when embracing celibacy, then their intention to leave or ‘quit’ increases.

*Predicting Confidence in sacramental ministry’*

*Table 7 – Dependent variable ‘Confidence in sacramental ministry’*

	Beta	t-value	Sig
Contradiction in what priest asked/expected of	-.179	-2.134	<b>.034</b>
Rules for access to sacraments	.269	3.462	<b>.001</b>
Maintenance of parish geography and financial upkeep	.086	1.072	.285
Value of celibate life today	.089	1.057	.292
	R Sq .138	F 6.228	df 4 Sig .000

Table 7 shows that there are just two significant predictors of confidence in sacramental ministry. This shows that as priests experience contradiction in what they are asked and what is expected of them and, in the inconsistent practice of access of sacraments between clergy, their confidence in sacramental ministry is affected and often reduced.

*Predicting Retirement*

*Table 8 – Dependent Variable ‘Retirement’*

	Beta	t-value	Sig
Contradiction in what priest is asked/expected of	-.107	-1.096	.275
Convenience store mentality of parishioners	-.021	-.204	.839
Implementing ministry in 21 <sup>st</sup> Century society	-.055	-.584	.561
Priest’s feeling of personal failing	-.053	-.544	.587
Parish maintenance, geography and financial upkeep	-.011	-.112	.911
Hierarchical Church structure and competitiveness	-.020	-.226	.822
Inconsistency in practice between clergy	-.146	-1.739	.084
Clerical dress as an enabler	-.233	-2.765	<b>.006</b>
Value of celibacy today	.217	2.420	<b>.017</b>
	R Sq .186	F 3.402	df 9 Sig .001

Table 8 shows that there are just two significant predictors of thoughts on retirement. This shows that as priests experience ways of addressing/accepting celibacy as an enabler and, the major sources of



stress as evidenced by the number of indicators of strain, which they predict.

*Predicting loneliness'*

*Table 9 – Dependent variable 'loneliness'*

	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Sig</i>
<i>Contradiction in what priest asked/expected of</i>	<i>.141</i>	<i>1.665</i>	<i>.098</i>
<i>A sense of unfulfilment by the priest</i>	<i>.075</i>	<i>.909</i>	<i>.365</i>
<i>Hierarchical Church structures and competitiveness</i>	<i>.044</i>	<i>.546</i>	<i>.586</i>
<i>Value of celibacy today</i>	<i>-.040</i>	<i>-.423</i>	<i>.673</i>
<i>Ease of living a celibate life</i>	<i>-.162</i>	<i>-1.827</i>	<i>.070</i>
	<i>R sq .099</i>	<i>f 3.512    df 5</i>	<i>Sig .005</i>

Table 9 shows that there are actually no significant independent predictions but interestingly, there is a marginal score for ‘celease’ (Beta=-.162, t=-1.827, p=.070) suggesting that priests are concerned about loneliness.

*Table D: Outcomes of stressors on health and well-being of R.C. Clergy*

	<i>Wornout</i>	<i>Uptight</i>	<i>Self-Esteem</i>	<i>Positive Outlook</i>	<i>Intention to Leave /</i>	<i>Confidence Pastoral</i>	<i>Confidence Sacraments /</i>	<i>Retirement Worry</i>	<i>Retirement Loneliness</i>
<i>Contradiction</i>									
<i>Convenience</i>									
<i>Parish Power</i>									
<i>Pastoral Care</i>				<i>m</i>		/			
<i>Sacrarules</i>						/			
<i>Charity</i>									
<i>Impleministry</i>				/		<i>m</i>			
<i>PersonFailing</i>		<i>m</i>	/			/			
<i>ParishMaint</i>									
<i>Unfulfilment</i>	/	/			/				
<i>SelfEvaluation</i>			<i>m</i>	/		/			
<i>HierarchOrgs</i>									
<i>Inconspractice</i>			/	/				<i>m</i>	
<i>CDressEnable</i>								/	
<i>CelibacValue</i>								/	
<i>CelibacEase</i>				/					/

Whilst convenience store, personal failing, self evaluation and inconsistency impact upon 2 outcomes each, a priest’s sense of unfulfilment affects 3 outcomes namely wornout, uptight and intention to leave the priesthood. Additionally, confidence in pastoral ministry is affected by 4 distinct stressors with marginal affect by a fifth stressor.



*Issues regarding stress and social support: The role of social support in contemporary stress theory*

Having identified 17 sources of stress for R.C. clergy this chapter sought to identify whether there was an association between these stressors and the health and well-being of priests. To demonstrate that there is a measurable relationship between hazard/stressor and harm/strain would ultimately demonstrate the existence of stress in the R.C. priesthood. Included in this argument is the question of the role of the organisation itself i.e. the Roman Catholic Church. At the start therefore some ten of the identified stressors for clergy were linked to identified sources of occupational stress in organisational institutions. As each of the identified sources of stress became more difficult for the priest to handle therefore so the predicted hypothesis manifested poorer physical and psychological health outcomes for clergy who increasingly had a negative behavioural affect on them.

The role of social support in contemporary stress theory will be explored here to determine whether support alleviates the negative impact of occupational stressors for individuals, and, its effect when applied to the Roman Catholic priesthood. Social support has long been a topic of study in social, health and occupational psychology. The basic premise surrounding this long-standing interest was that social support was a significant factor promoting good health and positive well-being. In the occupational context, social support was believed to alleviate stress at work (Schaufeli, 1995). While there is indeed some literature to suggest that social support does alleviate the negative impact of occupational stressors (eg. Rosen and Moghadam 1988, 1990;) there is also research which finds no effect, ambivalent effects and even negative effects (Beehr, 1995). Not surprisingly, some commentators suggest that the promise of social support as an 'all purpose cure' remains unfulfilled (Vaux, 1988).



Social support can take many forms (House 1981; Schaufeli 1995) e.g. 'lending a sympathetic ear', providing an opportunity to take 'time out', boosting another's confidence with positive regard, offering valuable information or even practical help. In short, people continue to assist each other in an astonishing variety of ways (Vaux 1988). However, the central problem within the construct of social support is its sheer breadth and diversity so defining a construct that can be operationalised in so many different ways is difficult. Even the mere existence of other people in institutional or structural relationship has been taken as evidence of support by some (Schaufeli, 1995). Perhaps, then, the contradictory research findings concerning the impact of social support are in some part at least due to the different ways in which the concept has been defined and operationalised (Jackson 1985; Leather et al 1998).

Fundamentally, of course, social support embodies the idea that people are not simply present when supporting others, but they are actually doing something (Schaufeli, 1995). Despite the earlier use of global, structural measures, many stress researchers now emphasise the need for clarity both in terms of specifying the source of any support and the actual nature of the support on offer (Schaufeli, 1995). There is clearly a need to know 'who does what' that actually helps. In the workplace the same person may at one point be a source of support and at another a source of stress. A supervisor, for example, might on one occasion offer helpful guidance on a work issue (source of support) but on another contribute to role or task overload by the demands he or she places on an employee. So too amongst R.C. clergy. The fellow priest who offers the companionship and opportunity for a round of golf, or some other shared leisure activity, might equally be the colleague who refuses a sacrament to a parishioner, who then turns to another priest for solace and guidance. Despite these various contradictions, difficulties and anomalies in the role of social support, the fact remains that it carries the potential at least for promoting human health and well-being (Szilagi & Holland, 1980; Sarason & Sarason, 1986; Beehr & McGrath, 1992; Leather et al, 1998).



## **Investigation into the impact of social support**

Guppy & Daniels (1997) suggest that certain conditions must be met if social support is to have an impact on an employee's health and well-being. First it must constitute specific aid for a specific problem, what is sometimes also known as the matching hypothesis (Beehr 1995, Rosen & Moghadam 1990; Leather et al, 1998). Second, it must fulfil a need for affiliation, belonging, social recognition and affection (Cineshensel & Stone 1982). Put simply, help that is unwanted is likely to prove unhelpful. Guppy & Daniels (1997) also draw attention to the idea of 'negative support', i.e. where one is 'let down' by colleagues, supervisors and others at work, with a consequent deleterious impact on well-being (Brown, Andres, Harris, Alder and Bridge, 1986).

Theoretically at least, social support can impact upon stress in three different ways (Marcelissen et al 1988; Beehr 1995; Leather et al, 1998)). First, its presence can help reduce the appraised level of demand in the work environment. What might seem like an insurmountable task alone may be a much reduced problem when assisted by others. This is to suggest that social support directly attenuates the strength of the stressor. Secondly, social support might simply be conducive to health and well-being in and of itself, i.e. without regard to the circumstances and problems faced. If indeed (wo)man is a social animal (Aranson 1988) then the presence of others might be directly conducive to health and well-being. Thirdly, social support might work in a contingent fashion, i.e. its beneficial effect being triggered by the presence of adverse circumstances. This is to suggest that social support buffers the association between stressors and strain.

What now remains to be explored in this thesis, therefore, is the extent to which any social support available to R.C. priests helps them cope with stress by means of; lessening the demands of the seventeen identified stressors; directly promoting and enhancing well-being; or attenuating the strength of any empirical relationship between the identified sources of stress and the nine utilized indicators of strain. As a precursor to this



exploration, we must first identify the precise nature, source and amount of support available to members of the R.C. clergy. This is an important issue, not least because several commentators on the R.C. Church bemoan the growing level of isolation for many of its clergy (Dolan, 2000; Cozzens, 2002; Hoge, 2002; Dinter, 2003; Grassi 2003). Falling numbers of clergy, growing parish sizes, the rarity of housekeepers and the growing separation that often divides the priest from all but a dedicated 'parish group minority' of his parishioners all contrive to create what some see as a lonely and solitary everyday experience for many priests (Dinter, 2003; Grassi, 2003).

Ironically, the solitary working conditions that have been a priest's life for several decades have become the focus of much contemporary research on other occupational groups as the impact of 'new forms of work' e.g. telephone and home-working are investigated (Cooper 2001). The possibility of home-working reducing social contact and social support networks – so often the focus of this contemporary research agenda – has been a feature of the priest's work world for years. If, as some suggest, social interaction and support at work can help counter both the powerlessness and psychosomatic symptoms that can accompany the experience of stress (Long 1993) then the presence of such support amongst priests might constitute an important means of protective stress management. Its absence, on the other hand, would indicate an obvious area of human as well as organisational concern.

By its very ethos, one would assume that the Catholic Church is the ultimate workplace in terms of the likely availability of social support. As Matthew (22 V 34-40), Mark (12 V 28-34) and Luke (10 V 25-28) all recount, when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they came together to try and trap him with a question, 'which is the greatest commandment? The whole 'Law of Moses', Jesus replied, depended on two commandments: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matthew 22 V37) and "Love your neighbour as you love yourself" (Matthew 22:39). This



emphasis upon neighbourliness was, Jesus said, 'the second most important commandment' (Matthew 22:38).

Given the emphasis upon 'loving one's neighbour', it might be anticipated that members of the clergy will have ready sources of support available to them. Indeed, the fraternity of the priesthood is visible and emphasised in ordination, e.g. at the point in the ordination ceremony where fellow priests physically embrace the newly ordained priest. It would seem plausible to assume, therefore, that the sources of social support available to members of the clergy would include: the Dean, Bishop and other senior clergy; fellow priests; parishioners and other members of the laity; and family and close friends. Ryan (1997) notes the especial importance of support from fellow priests: When we let our brother priests know how much we care about them and appreciate the effectiveness of their ministry, we can enthuse them to minister, increasing satisfaction in their ministry as priests. Nothing can encourage them more than the approval of our peers (Ryan, 1997).

The reality, of course, does not always match the ideal. Cozzens (2002) writes of the Church being 'in denial' i.e. taking a reactionary stance – as he sees it – to such contemporary issues as the ageing clergy, the vocations 'crisis', married priests, homosexuality, and the role of women in ministry. Others agree, e.g. Levinson 1993. Against this background of fundamental upheaval and change, a key research question is whether priests do feel supported, and, if so by whom? Does the advocacy of 'love thy neighbour' create strong social support networks for the clergy, or does the authoritarian and hierarchical organisation that is the R.C. Church seek to deny and repress any voices that question or contradict its teaching, as Cozzens (2002) and others suggest? From an organisational perspective, change is known to be a salient cause of stress, anxiety and diminished well-being (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Callan et al, 1994). Importantly, however, informational and practical support from within the organisation are known to facilitate adaptation to change and to lessen some of the symptoms of strain that can result from change e.g. anxiety, diminished



satisfaction, absenteeism and intention to leave (Payne 1979; Payne & Fletcher 1983). The goals of the current chapter are therefore to:-

- 1. Delineate the perceived sources of support available to R.C. clergy;
- 2. Assess the amount of support perceived to be available from each identified source;
- 3. Examine the potentially beneficial impact of each identified source of support in terms of:
  - a) Lessening perceived stressors
  - b) Improving well-being (i.e. diminishing strain)
  - c) Moderating, or buffering, the stressor-strain relationship

Results

In order to meet the first two objectives set for the current chapter, i.e. the identification and measurement of the amount of support perceived to be available, the twelve support items were subjected to a principal components analysis with varimax rotation in order to identify their underlying structure. Put simply, the question of interest was whether these twelve items would factor on the basis of type of support (irrespective of source) or on the basis of source (irrespective of type). Table 8 summarises the results of this principal components analysis.

Table 8 Sources of Support (SOS) for clergy

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
<b>SOS from the Dean</b>			
SOS 1 Advice Guide and Information	.909		
SOS 4 Practical Help	.903		
SOS 7 Encouragement/listen understanding	.887		
SOS 10 Opportunity to get away from it all	.640		
<b>SOS from Clergy</b>			
SOS 9 Encouragement/listen Understanding		.869	
SOS 6 Practical help		.858	
SOS 3 Advice guide info		.790	
SOS 12 Opportunity to get away from it all		.755	
<b>SOS Family &amp;Friends</b>			
SOS 8 Encouragement/listen understanding			.843
SOS 2 Advice Info Guide			.802
SOS 5 Practical help			.782
SOS 11 Opportunity to get away from it all			.721
% of variance	31.7%	23.1%	14.1%

Kaiser-Myer-Olkin Measure of sampling adequacy = .762

Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity = 966.625      N = 189    p < .001



Factors were extracted on the basis of Kaiser 1 criterion, 1 item-factor loadings of .4 minimum threshold plus minimum difference of .2 between factor loadings.

As can be seen from Table 8 the support items factored on the basis of source rather than type, specifically a three-factor solution resulted, accounting for 68.9% of the variance. Factor 1, accounting for 31.7% of the variance, comprised the 4 items specifically relating to the amount of support clergy received from their Dean. It should be acknowledged here of course that some of the priests completing the questionnaire were Deans themselves.

Factor 2 accounting for 23.1% of the variance comprised the four items specifically related to support from other clergy i.e. fellow priests or priest friends outside the diocese, often from seminary days. Factor 3 accounting for 14.1% of the variance comprised the four items specifically related to support received from family and friends. Clearly, the support items factored on the basis of source rather than type. Having identified the major sources of perceived support available to priests, the next question to answer is ‘how much support is perceived to be available from each source, whether in total or in terms of each identified type of support’. Table 9 summarises the amount of support priests judge to be available from each source, both in total and in terms of each specified type.

**Table 9: Descriptive statistics (mean & standard deviation) for type and total support available from each source (Dean, clergy, family and friends).**

Source and Type	Dean		Clergy		Family & Friends	
	Mean item score per scale	SD	Mean item score per scale	SD	Mean item score per scale	SD
Advice, information & guidance	1.65	1.13	2.61	0.91	2.65	1.04
Practical help	1.43	1.14	2.18	0.95	2.68	1.11
Encouragement, listening & understanding	1.66	1.20	2.60	0.99	2.99	0.92
Opportunity to take ‘time out’	1.14	1.13	1.97	1.18	2.71	1.10
Total support	5.88	3.90	9.33	3.20	11.02	3.4



In general terms, Table 9 shows that priests rate the amount of each type of support available from the dean as being little more than 'very little' and only nearing 'some' with statistical rounding. The average level of support available from fellow clergy is rated 'some' or slightly better, while from family and friends it is seen as being 'quite a lot'. Further investigating into the level of support for clergy has been through a series of paired-sample t-tests. Paired-sample t-tests showed that the dean provided an equal, albeit relatively low, amount of advice, information and guidance and encouragement, listening and understanding ( $t = -.210$ ,  $df = 188$ , ns). He provided significantly more advice, information and guidance than either practical help ( $t = 4.01$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .000$ ) or an opportunity to get away from it all ( $t = 5.48$ ;  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Similarly, the amount of encouragement, listening and understanding judged to be available from the dean was significantly greater than either the amount of practical help ( $t = 3.86$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .000$ ) or the opportunity to take time out ( $t = 5.49$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .000$ ). In turn, the dean was seen as more as a source of practical help than as a means of taking time out and getting away from it all ( $t = -3.17$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .002$ ).

Further paired-sample t-tests revealed a similar pattern in the amount of each type of support received from fellow clergy. Hence, while there was no difference between the amount of advice, information and guidance, and encouragement, listening and understanding to be had from fellow clergy ( $t = .75$ ,  $df = 188$ , ns) the amount of the former was deemed to be greater than either the amount of practical help on offer ( $t = 6.86$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .000$ ) or the opportunity to take time out ( $t = 7.30$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Similarly, the fellow clergy were seen as more of a source of encouragement, listening and understanding than either a source of practical help ( $t = -5.50$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .000$ ) or an opportunity to take time out ( $t = 7.54$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .000$ ). In addition, fellow clergy were seen as more of a source of practical help than an opportunity to take time out ( $p = 2.47$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .014$ ). A third set of paired-sample t-tests revealed a slightly different pattern in the amount of each type of support available from family and friends.



Specifically, family and friends were seen as providing an equal amount of advice, information and guidance as compared with practical help ( $t = -39$ ,  $df = 188$ , ns) and an opportunity to take time out and get away from it all ( $t = -.63$ ,  $df = 188$ , ns). What family give most is encouragement, listening and understanding. In fact, the level of this available from family and friends was significantly greater than any of the other types of support available from this source ( $t = -4.87$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .000$  for comparison with advice, information and guidance;  $t = -5.15$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .000$ ; for comparison with practical help;  $t = 3.85$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .000$  for comparison with an opportunity to take time out and get away from it all).

A final series of paired-samples t-tests were used to explore whether the amount of support available differed significantly between the three identified sources. For 'Advice, Information and Guidance', priests reported the amount to be available from family and friends to be significantly greater than the amount available from the dean ( $t = -8.74$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .000$ ) as was the amount available from fellow clergy ( $t = -10.37$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .000$ ). There was however, no significant difference in the amount of advice, information and guidance perceived to be available from family and friends, on the one hand, and clergy on the other ( $t = -.960$ ,  $df = 188$ , ns). With regard to the practical help that priests believe they could call upon, more was judged to be available from family and friends, than either the dean ( $t = -10.02$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .000$ ) or fellow clergy ( $t = -5.06$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .000$ ). However, fellow clergy were seen to offer significantly more practical help than the dean ( $t = -7.73$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .000$ ). The same pattern emerged for encouragement, listening and understanding, more of which was again seen as coming from family and friends than either the dean ( $t = -10.769$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .000$ ) or fellow clergy ( $t = -4.67$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .000$ ) between whom there was also a further significant difference ( $t = -8.79$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .000$ ).

In exactly the same way, family and friends provided more of an opportunity to take time out and get away from it all than either fellow clergy ( $t = -7.13$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .000$ ) or the dean ( $t = -13.12$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p =$



.000), fellow clergy offering more of such opportunities than the dean ( $t = -8.13$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .000$ ). In view of this consistent pattern of differences between the sources of support in terms of each type of support that might be offered, it is perhaps no surprise that the total amount of support judged to be available was significantly greater from family and friends than either fellow clergy ( $t = 4.19$ , or the dean ( $t = -10.01$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .000$ ).

Many priests would not be surprised at these results and some voiced their concerns in the questionnaire responses. For one priest, having the courage to admit he was struggling in a parish, his request for help met with a negative response:

*"I was there for x years. I became sick and was on my knees. I had lots of brokenness, a broken church and school.. one is often left on their own after asking for help from the Bishop and the Vicar General and Dean. I feel that they would not know how to cope themselves as any of them were never in such deprived areas. There should be much more support ... for priests" (Ref 091)*

However, if the Bishop, Vicar General and the Dean are all priests themselves, to whom do they turn, in confidence, for support and advice? Given the fraternity of priesthood, many are reluctant to actually approach fellow clergy for help. Indeed, the results of support perceived from fellow clergy was 'slightly better' but equally 'not a lot'. For many priests, their own vulnerability and fear of lack of confidentiality, deters them from approaching fellow priests, or helping those who may be struggling. This observation in itself questions the Gospel values 'Love one another'. Family and friends however, did provide 'quite a lot' of support, yet the amount of real support, addressing real issues for priests remains limited. Many clergy do not have the security of the traditional family background as a source of support. Clearly the perceived support offered to clergy is failing to address their real concerns as both ministers and as human beings. Having identified the amount of support available to priests, the key question becomes 'Does it help?' To reiterate the argument briefly, such help might take one of three forms:

1. Lessening the demand of a stressor
2. Improving well-being, irrespective of the impact of demand
3. Buffering the impact of the stressor of well-being



Since the 12 support items factored on the basis of source, not type of support, it is the aggregate amount of support available from each source which is used in the following analysis. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was used to explore the direct impact of support upon both the 17 identified stressor factors and the 9 outcome variables.

TABLE 10 Correlation of Support from Dean, Clergy and Family and Friends with sources of stress and symptoms of strain

	Dean	Clergy	Family and Friends
<i>Sources of Stress</i>			
Contradiction	-.091	-.062	.104
Convenience store	-.092	<b>-.214**</b>	<b>-.172*</b>
Parishioner power	-.078	.075	-.058
Pastoral Care	<b>.203**</b>	<b>.248**</b>	<b>.198**</b>
Sacramental Rules	<b>.206**</b>	<b>.232**</b>	.084
Charity	.065	.035	<b>-.133*</b>
Implement Ministry	-.013	<b>-.139*</b>	-.048
Personal failure	-.018	.044	-.053
Parish Maintenance	.051	-.025	-.103
Unfulfilled	-.100	<b>-.184**</b>	.092
Self Evaluation	.062	.023	-.095
Hierarchy Structure	.016	<b>-.217**</b>	.068
Inconsist in practice	.020	-.120	.097
Clerical Dress	-.046	.035	.034
Celibacy Value	.016	<b>.135*</b>	<b>-.342**</b>
Celibacy Ease	.056	.090	<b>-.213**</b>
Media Portrayal	.037	-.024	.035
<i>Symptoms of Strain</i>			
Worn-out	-.078	-.035	.122
Uptight	-.009	-.038	.034
Rosenberg 10q's + 2	.012	.064	.098
Pessimism	.007	<b>-.209**</b>	.008
Loneliness	-.063	-.084	<b>-.144*</b>
Intention to quit	-.066	-.045	.093
Concern over retirement	.099	.070	-.003
Confidence in pastoral ministry	.076	-.026	-.004
Confidence in sacraments	<b>.178*</b>	.037	-.084

Sig level 0.01 \*    Sig level 0.05 \*\*

From Table 10 it can be seen that there are at best only modest empirical relationships between the three identified sources of support and the seventeen identified sources of stress. In particular, support from the dean has a direct effect on only two of the seventeen sources of stress, ‘pastoral care’ and ‘sacramental rules’, the sign of both coefficients indicating that



an increase in perceived support correlates with an *increase* in either source of stress. Interestingly, support from fellow clergy has the same relationship with both of these sources of stress. So to support from family and friends, which increases as the demands of pastoral care increase.

Support from fellow clergy does however manifest a number of beneficial associations with the sources of stress. Specifically, such support correlates negatively with the demand of convenience store, implementing ministry, feeling unfulfilled and hierarchical structure. This is to say that an increased level of perceived support is associated with less perceived demand from each of these factors. In addition support from fellow clergy also correlates with finding greater value in celibacy. Support from family and friends shows a beneficial association with two sources of stress, convenience store and charity. In both cases an increased level of perceived support is related to less demand from these issues.

What is perhaps most striking from Table 10 is the fact that there are so few significant correlations between the identified sources of support and symptoms of strain or well-being. Specifically, support from each of the three sources has a low albeit beneficial impact upon a single and separate indicator of well-being. Thus, support from the Dean correlates positively with a priest's confidence in administering the sacraments, while greater support from fellow clergy is related to lower levels of pessimism. Finally, greater support from family and friends is related to less feelings of loneliness. In order to examine the role of social support as a potential moderator of stressor-strain relationships, a series of hierarchical multiple linear regression analyses were used. A separate analysis was conducted for each outcome variable. On the first step, only those stressor items that had previously been found to predict this particular outcome variable were entered, together with the three support factors. On the second step the three interaction terms were entered i.e. stressor(s) x support from the dean, stressor(s) x supports from the clergy, stressor(s) x support from family and friends. This is to accord with the procedures recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986). Tables 11 – 19 summarise the results of these



hierarchical regression analyses. Since the impact of the stressor factors on outcomes has been explored earlier using correlation and regression analysis their main effects, as shown in this series of analyses will not be discussed. Since the purpose here is to explore the potential moderating or buffering effect of social support, there were only a number of interaction terms which are of real interest presented overleaf in Tables 11-19. Tables 11-15 showed no buffering effect of perceived support on Worn-out (Table 11); Uptight (Table 12); Self Esteem (Table 13); Intention to Quit (Table 14). However, the potential buffering effect of perceived support on confidence in pastoral ministry for clergy (Table 15) showed that support from fellow clergy helped maintain confidence in ministry when the feeling of pastoral care became an issue. Additionally, support from family and friends helped maintain confidence in sacramental ministry when any dealings with sacramental rules became an issue.

The potential buffering effect of perceived support on confidence in sacramental ministry (Table 16) showed that support from family and friends helped maintain confidence in sacramental ministry when dealings with sacramental rules became an issue. However, while not significant, there is a marginal effect on support from family and friends when weakness in confidence in sacramental ministry is experienced regarding contradiction on issues in this area. Tables 17 and 18 showed no buffering effects on perceived support re concern over retirement (Table 17) and perceived support on pessimism (Table 18). The tables are now presented as follows:

**Potential buffering effects of perceived support on health and well-being**

**Table 11** The potential buffering effects of perceived support on worn-out.

	Beta	T	Sig	R	R <sup>2</sup> Δ	F CHA	Sig
Unfulfil	.301	4.225	.000				
Sup 1	-.056	-.747	.456				
Sup 2	.026	.346	.730				
Sup 3	.087	1.231	.220				
				.326	.106	5.481	.000
Unf xS1	.268	1.183	.238				
Unf xS2	.023	.105	.916				
Unf x S3	.081	.325	.746				
				.344	.012	.813	.488



**Table 12** The potential buffering effects of perceived support on up-tight

	Beta	T	Sig	R	R <sup>2</sup> Δ	F CHA	Sig
Unful	.267	3.680	.000				
Sup 1	.015	.200	.841				
Sup 2	.003	.036	.972				
Sup 3	.009	.122	.903				
				267	.071	3.525	.008
Unf xS1	.000	.000	1.000				
Unf x S2	.003	.013	.990				
Unf x S3	-.110	-.431	.667				
				269	.001	.071	.975

**Table 13** The potential buffering effects of perceived support on self-esteem

	Beta	T	Sig	R	R <sup>2</sup> Δ	F CHA	Sig
Persfail	-.360	-5.286	.000				
Inconsis	.150	2.185	.030				
“ Sup1	-.032	-.434	.664				
“ Sup 2	.094	1.264	.208				
“ Sup 3	.047	.674	.501				
				.396	.157	6.820	.000
PersfailS1	-.044	-.174	.862				
“ x S2	.150	.637	.525				
“ x S3	-.253	-1.306	.193				
Incons S1	-.064	-.220	.826				
“ xS2	.134	.539	.590				
“ x S3	.024	.085	.933				
				.416	.016	.585	.742

**Table 14** The potential buffering effects of perceived support on Intention to Quit

	Beta	T	Sig	R	R <sup>2</sup> Δ	FA	Sig
Contrad	.444	6.729	.000				
Unfulfil	.180	2.689	.008				
S1	-.014	-.201	.841				
S2	.016	.229	.819				
S3	.027	.416	.678				
				531	.282	14.347	.000
Contrx1	-.025	-.080	.936				
Contrx2	-.415	-1.645	.102				
Contrx3	.209	.834	.405				
Unfulx1	.272	1.278	.203				
Unfulx2	-.175	-.821	.413				
Unfulx3	.192	.830	.408				
				557	0.029	1.239	.288



**Table 15** The potential buffering effects of perceived support on confidence in pastoral ministry

	Beta	T	Sig	R	R <sup>2</sup> △	FA	Sig
Persfail	-.329	-4.911	.000				
SelfEval	-.184	-2.739	.007				
Pastcare	.236	3.358	.001				
Sup1	.056	.779	.437				
Sup 2	-.073	-1.005	.316				
Sup 3	-.070	-1.021	.308				
				.440	.193	7.277	.000
PersfailxS1	-.049	-.211	.833				
“ xS2	-.236	-1.064	.289				
“xS3	-.294	-1.508	.133				
SelfEval xS1	.075	.232	.817				
“ xS2	.300	1.086	.279				
“ xS3	.462	1.883	.061				
Pastcare xS1	-.115	-.513	.609				
“ xS2	.513	2.042	.043				
“xS3	-.040	-.181	.856				
				.500	.56	1.437	.176

**Table 16** The potential buffering effects of perceived support on confidence in sacramental ministry

	Beta	T	Sig	R	R <sup>2</sup> △	FCHA	Sig
Contrad	-.129	-1.822	.070				
Sacrules	.273	3.761	.000				
Sup 1	.125	1.657	.099				
Sup 2	-.064	-.841	.401				
Sup 3	-.083	-1.173	.242				
				.333	.111	4.570	.001
ContradxS1	.322	.948	.344				
“ xS2	.067	.248	.804				
“ Xs3	-.505	-1.808	.072				
SacrulesxS1	-.029	-.081	.935				
“ x S2	-.095	-.318	.751				
“x S3	.657	2.528	.012				
				.395	.045	1.573	.158

**Table 17** The potential buffering effects of perceived support on concern over retirement

	Beta	T	Sig	R	R <sup>2</sup> △	FCHA	Sig
Clerdres	-.176	-2.402	.017				
Celval	.181	2.295	.023				
S1	.075	.966	.335				
S2	.013	.166	.868				
S3	.060	.766	.445				
				.239	.057	2.213	.055
ClerdresxS1	-.212	-.696	.487				
“ xS2	.432	1.366	.174				
“ xS3	.125	.438	.662				



Celval xS1	-.044	-.217	.828				
“ x S2	.133	.529	.598				
“ x S3	.147	.623	.534	.274	.018	.582	.744

**Table 18** The potential buffering effects of perceived support on pessimism

	Beta	T	Sig	R	R <sup>2</sup> Δ	FA	Sig
Inconsis	.118	1.630	.105				
Impmin	.170	2.371	.019				
Selfeval	-.073	-1.025	.307				
Sup1	.078	1.031	.304				
Sup 2	-.190	-2.459	.015				
Sup 3	.022	.301	.764				
				.317	.101	3.392	.003
Inconsis x Sup 1	.184	.623	.534				
“ xS2	.044	.187	.852				
“XS3	-.032	-.107	.915				
Impmin x S1	.045	.204	.838				
“ xS2	-.168	-.739	.461				
“ xS3	-.058	-.280	.780				
Selev x1	-.033	-.141	.888				
“ xS2	-.339	-1.232	.220				
“xS3	-.059	-.248	.804				
				.351	.023	.497	.875

**Table 19** The potential buffering effects of perceived support on loneliness

	Beta	T	Sig	R	R2	FA	Sig
Celease	-.264	-3.262	.001				
Sup1	-.021	-.248	.804				
Sup 2	-.069	-.722	.472				
Sup 3	-.188	-2.296	.023				
				.317	.100	3.994	.004
Celease 1	-.075	-.163	.871				
“ xS2	-.455	-1.188	.237				
“XS3	.470	1.406	.162				
				.341	.016	.845	.471

### *Discussion*

The outcomes of stress and strain for the individual and as an employee within an organisation clearly draws parallels with priests ministering within the Church today in a rapidly changing 21<sup>st</sup> century society. The Roman Catholic Church, itself an employer, is therefore no exception to change, and in its 2,000 year history this hierarchical institution now employs some 900,000 personnel worldwide. With over one billion members i.e. 1:6 of the world population, it is the largest institution in the



world. Yet, incredibly, it continues to respond with inertia and resistance when asked to examine its very practices and structures (Cozzens, 2000). The very act of denial in mega organisations generally, results in future crisis (Levinson, 1993). For priests who minister within this contradiction many are struggling with such issues which compound their existing stress. With no obvious solution available to them, there are clearly serious implications to how this will affect their ministry to others?

The internal suffering a priest endures often goes unobserved (Sipe, 1995). Many priests suffer for, with and at the hands of the Church specifically because of their dedicated dual sacrifice - for their people and for their exemplary representation of the Christian experience and community (Sipe, 1995). Maintaining hope or a positive outlook – some might even suggest ‘faith’- can be a struggle because priesthood is a vocation, where the tangible immediate results are rarely visible or measurable (Philpot, 1998). This glimpse of humanity within the priest can have an ambiguous outcome for many clergy. The most judicious commentators in the field of care of the clergy who face issues of vocational emotional and life development crisis, point to a deeply felt sense of lack or loss of identity and self esteem at the root of this contemporary phenomena (Power, 1998). The real question here concerns the level and availability of the type of support for priests in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Church and priesthood.

But much of the support offered is ad hoc and often proves ineffective for clergy in buffering or addressing the effects of stressors themselves. Many clergy live alone in large presbyteries where the empty rooms match the hollow hopes of the remaining resident. This promotes solitary habits that isolate many priests from their own energy sources and reinforce their own social dysfunction (Dinter, 2003). Whilst some post-Ordination priests may gather periodically with colleagues, and this may become a support group, ‘the complaining, laughing, trading gossip and staying connected takes place, but as such these gathering can acutely accentuate the sadness of such a gathering. One American ex-priest puts this succinctly:

*“It seems we were all waiting for the same bus, which never arrived at our stop, week after week, month after month, year after year. Even after 30 years we*



*ended up with guarded and essentially private lives, seeking out close friends (and sometimes more) outside our clerical circle, sharing our common lot only within safe parameters ... Fear of gossip of being shamed if the old self-ideal no longer held true seemed to require us to build up reserves of defensiveness and kept us from getting beyond the old style of celibate male bonding that we originally had tried to reject” (Dinter, 2003)*

Implications of my data for RC Church and priesthood in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Could some priests be seeking palliative or concrete forms of support i.e. not human nature to buffer stress? One priest writer addresses this question:

*“Often clergy seek palliative or concrete forms of support if not human in nature i.e. material possessions or self-indulgence. Whilst cars are a major necessity for a priest and he uses them daily, they need to be dependable, durable and comfortable. But the greater the level of luxury the greater the scandal. Equally, vacations and travel are becoming problem areas. While all priests like all people need a vacation many give scandal by not only having ‘too many’ but ‘how luxurious and exotic’ they are (Dolan, 2000)*

In terms of real support for clergy therefore, surely there is a real need for support from someone who knows them well and who can warn them of the danger and encourage priests when they have ‘failed’? (Dolan 2000). But to whom can clergy turn, and in confidence? The need for a priest to talk openly is vital. Some commentators consider it a danger that a celibate man will shun all relationships and run away from all forms of intimacy and closeness (Doherty, 1992). What deters priests from seeking help from fellow priests?

Help from within the church and community was discussed earlier in this thesis. All priests need support but for newly ordained priests the transfer from seminary and placements into full time ministry in the priesthood can be overwhelming. While one of the most important options for newly ordained priests is participation in a priests’ support group, those not engaging in this opportunity clearly miss out because there are very few settings for serious and confidential discussion to take place about the challenge of being an effective priest (Hoge, 2002). In addition, how many priests, regardless of years in priesthood actually take up this offer of informal support? Sharing the paschal mystery through the priests’ support group can in itself be a source of healing, compassion, prayer and intimacy



(Hoge, 2002). Newly ordained priests are often swamped and overwhelmed both psychologically and spiritually (Hoge, 2002) which reverts back to questioning the preparation within the seminary for post ordination ministry.

Moreover, many feel there is a real fear of jealousy within the 'careerism culture' of the priesthood deterring them from seeking support. Whilst ordination itself, alters a man's very being, the real issue is the health of the clergy's group ideal, which depends less on the integrity of any of its members, than on maintaining the priesthood's special status in a world filled with corruption and moral compromise (Dinter, 2003) – or as one priest summarised 'The Canon Law of the hierarchy in matters of sexual activity: 'Don't' ask, Don't tell because frankness creates a disturbance in the Force Mystique''(Dinter, 2003). If help inside the Church is not proving supportive or indeed available the priest has also identified help offered from family and friends, both offering mixed results. While the diocesan priests belong concretely to a territory and a group of people, the diocese and the people also have a claim upon him. Equally, the priests accept that they belong in a particular way to a bishop and other priests with whom they serves and they belong to him i.e. 'family and fraternity' (Hoge 2002). But this assumes that priests actually knows what 'belonging' means.

Today he may have no previous personal history or harmonious unselfconscious fruitful experience of belonging. Many clergy do not have the security of the traditional family background as a source of support. Older priests, a common factor in priesthood today, have fewer surviving parents and siblings. Younger priests may not have experienced a traditional family life. When priests lose the support of family and friends e.g. death of a parent or close relative, the results can be devastating. Not having another base to relax and 'be himself' clergy are often unable to fill a void. Other people's families in the community once were a tremendous source of Christian love, support and normality for priests. Indeed one priest responding to the questionnaire said he belonged 'not to his fellow



priests, but to his people (Ref 184). Another priest echoed the importance of family friendships:

*“There is nothing wrong with having special friendships which in the end are mainly to keep the priest’s feet firmly on the ground ... It is also important the priest himself is seen as a whole and wholesome human being .. a wonderful friend, a valued honorary member of the family” (Ref 148)*

This ‘open house’ policy is rapidly declining particularly with the breakdown of family life and current culture of child protection and historic abuse by the Church members. But friendship for priests, in itself, has historically, had a questionable response from the Church hierarchically. Many clergy do not fully understand or appreciate the necessary place of close friendships in their lives (Hoge, 2002). This misconception is perhaps understandable given the Catholic historic culture of suspicion and mistrust that centred on Catholic thought associated with human sexuality. Indeed for centuries Catholics strove to live exemplary lives under Church rule and authority, acknowledging that in order to avoid sin ‘one had better not even get near a near occasions” (Dinter, 2003). If priests are especially close to some individuals, particularly when offered support, the Church reasons that it will be just a matter of time before he falls in love and leaves the priesthood to marry (Cozzens, 2000).

In this 21<sup>st</sup> century the question of both friendships and indeed celibacy, is further fuelled by the alleged existence of homosexual relationships in the priesthood and seminary. Additionally, the media coverage of clergy abusing children in the last century Cozzens, (2000) has fuelled a debate on celibacy and single life of priesthood. There is also ambiguity amongst same sex friendships in many walks of life but particularly in priesthood. While some clergy and laity will fail to understand a celibate’s need for close friendships, the healthiest relationships will have a public character to them. Precisely because celibate friendship is easily misunderstood it is generally easier for gay priests to experience a public, social dimension in a friendship with a man, than for a straight priest in a celibate relationship with a women (Cozzens, 2000).



Priests therefore experiment and like all human beings they also make mistakes – sometimes publicly (Hoge, 2002). Again, questions need to be asked regarding the level of support offered to clergy including coping with celibacy and the absence of personal intimacy. Often a celibate priest must be a loner by definition and he is always prone to become a mini-sun at the centre of his own system of orbiting satellites (Dinter, 2003). The priest may compensate for the loss of personal intimacy by radiating his needs outward. As surely as the sun's light is reflected off the moon, people willing to be a satellite gather and confirm the special role that 'Father' plays for them. Like stars of media sports and entertainment men at the centre of the circle where they receive undue attention have a problem when they are off stage, becoming so conditioned to performing, that they can't turn off the public smile, tone down the rhetoric or play a supporting role for anyone else. Out from behind the lecterns, a typical priest's life of crowded schedule makes growing in relationships which a genuine peer particularly difficult and offering no genuine emotional support to one another only a semblance of it (Dinter, 2003).

The recurring absence of real support for clergy is a real issue today. Indeed one wonders if the whole question of relationships suggests that the priest is either experiencing a vocation crisis or an intimacy crisis? Further struggle can encapsulate loneliness for the human being within the priest himself. One newly ordained priest described the acute loneliness within ministry on returning from a sick call late at night:

*I am tired, stressed and maybe emotional .. I return to my empty bed.  
No-one is there to ask me how it went .. to ask me how I feel .. to offer me  
the warmth love and affection that I probably need right at that moment”  
(Connolly, 2001)*

The nature of the role of priest is subject to many parochial moves. This involves the loss of support networks built up after several years, possibly compounding the stress experienced by priests and acutely unveiling the loneliness within the life of priesthood today. One priest described this succinctly:



*“As I am driving my last carload of possessions to a new rectory residence, I am forced to pull over to the side of the road because, thinking about the people I’m leaving behind, I begin to cry and cannot stop the tears. I have been reassigned to teach after only one year in the parish. I don’t know, on this bleak day, that I will thoroughly enjoy my 13 years of teaching. But in my heart I do know that I am a parish priest and ... the natural flow of high school students and their families will never allow for the same level of ministry and.. the same type of relationship to evolve as in parish life” (Grassi, 2003)*

This struggle and lack of intimacy leads to questioning his future in the priesthood and priestly life. One priest, responding to the questionnaire voiced his concerns which highlighted his personal struggle:

*“You haven’t asked if I see any future in the priesthood as it is. The answer is ‘No! I do not’ The diocese has little interest in the individual ... life will increasingly run around being more sacramental machines and I will leave when I can’t take this loneliness anymore. I now understand ... why a majority of my colleagues have switched off and do their own thing .. be assured the priesthood is crumbling. I’m trying to pick up the pieces of my disillusionment. More will become ill in the next 5 years. Thank you for your work” (Ref 117)*

This personal struggle for priests, often alone, can continue when he decides to leave. As a public figure, he has to cope with media attention and ironically suddenly everyone is interested in him. The question of leaving can also be precipitated through continual obedience without any real control over one’s life choices. As priests age they accommodate themselves to the discouraging reality of clerical life accommodating the arrival of a succession of bishops producing further decisions, parish changes and more moves along the hierarchical line (Dinter, 2003). In leaving the priest’s fear may be further increased when there are no thanks for decades of service, few funds to assist a soon-to-be unemployed priest, little formal outreach support and years of pension payments lost. Yet others leave soon after they are ordained which promotes further questions about the whole area of training. Equally it resonates with the culture and society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century described by Cornwell, (2001):

*“It was once a help and a consolation for priests to believe that they were not like the rest of us; nowadays they often find themselves walking alongside lay collaboration who resent the idea of privileged ministry and charisma. Priests feel that they have all the drawbacks of the religious life and none of its consolations”*



The very role of priests in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century is in direct contrast to less than 50 year ago. The increasing role of the 'laity' through collaborative ministry has yet to be clearly identified, trained for and encompassed into true partnership.

## Conclusion

The goal of this section was threefold:

- Delineate the perceived sources of support available to clergy;
- Assess the amount of support perceived to be available from each identified source
- Examine the potentially beneficial impact of each identified source of support in terms of:
  - Lessening perceived stressors
  - Improving well being (i.e. diminishing strain)
  - Moderating or buffering the stressor-strain relationship

The three sources of support identified for clergy, i.e. Dean; Fellow clergy; and Family and friends produced respectively 'very little'; 'some'; and 'quite a lot' of support. However, none served to moderate or ameliorate the negative impact of any of the sources of stress upon the 9 utilised indicators of strain. Clearly the perceived support offered to clergy is failing to address their real concerns and issues both as ministers and as human beings. Further the Dean and Fellow clergy are priests themselves also in need of support. To whom do they go?

If the Church as an employing organisation continues to respond with inertia and resistance when asked to examine its very practice and structures (Cozzens 2000), priests will continue to struggle. This situation, alongside the culture of 'sacrifice', 'offering it up' and 'have faith' (Sipe, 1995) is difficult because priesthood is not a job but a vocation, where tangible immediate results are rarely visible or measured (Philpot, 1998). Any glimpse of the humanity of priesthood within his pastoral and ministerial or sacramental role reveals the lack or loss of identity and self esteem for priests who are clearly struggling (Power, 1998). Newly ordained priests are often simply overwhelmed both psychologically and spiritually and leave (Hoge, 2002) which further questions both seminary training provision and the support available after ordination. While many priests give so much and experience the joy of priesthood, those struggling alongside them are reluctant to seek support based on the notion that such



requests are viewed as a sign of struggle or failure or indeed the nature of support offered does not address the real need of priests today. Church writers have explored these issues which were quoted earlier in this thesis. One priest and Church writer succinctly encompasses this notion:

*Real men don't ask for help. Real men don't admit weakness ... real men don't cry! But ... humble men do! So we are not afraid to get down on our knees and pray, to confide in friends, to open up to a spiritual director and seek support from others, even to seek assistance from professionals... (Dolan, 2000).*

How then does my data compare with the literature review and writers in both the Church and occupational psychology? At the start of this thesis, the observation was made that in order to study stress among R.C. priests, one could not ignore the hierarchical, organisational, male institution within which they ministered. Many institutions have a history of change which affects culture and tradition and part of these are changes which result from changes in the society, from which the workforce and service users are drawn. Equally it is from the church congregations, composed of society members, from which vocations and future ministers are drawn.

Earlier in this thesis the literature from both Church writers and psychology was extensively explored. Recent changes in the workplace have been known to lead to changes in the psychological contract for employees today (Cooper, 2001). Interacting with employees reinforces the individual's need for support for adjusting and attachment to the work environment (Uden, 1996). The power of support has been shown to affect levels of strain in employees (Szilagyi, Holland, 1980; Sarason, 1986, Beehr & McGrath, 1992). Also the utilisation of support is crucial in the relationship between the environmental factors and stress response (Caplan, 1974; Cobb, 1976). Support also provides a valuable response to help combat the negative effects on strain (Johnson & Hall, 1988). The nature and type of support is also important along with the amount available (Cooper, 2001). The impact of social support in any organisation can have a positive result if certain conditions are met (Guppy and Daniels, 1997). It must however, constitute specific aid for a specific problem (Beehr, 1995; Roses & Moghadom, 1990), and fulfil a need for affiliation,



belonging, social recognition and affectivity (Cineshensel and Stone, 1982).

Clearly, offering unwanted help proves unhelpful and negative support such as being let down by colleagues can result in a negative impact on individual (Brown, Andes, Harris, Alder and Bridge, 1986). It is clear from research findings that fundamentally, social support embodies the idea that people are not simply present when supporting others, but they are actually doing something (Schaufeli, 1995). Despite earlier use of global structural measures, many stress researchers now emphasise the need for clarity both in terms of specifying the sources of any support and the actual nature of the support on offer (Schaufeli, 1995). Put simply there is a need to know ‘who does what ‘ that actually helps. Given the results of my research data, what then are the implications for the R.C. Church and priesthood in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century? Chapter 5 will explore this further using additional qualitative data from clergy.



## CHAPTER 5

### Introduction

#### *The Principal findings from three sources of qualitative data*

The fieldwork for this research produced a rich collection of qualitative data highlighting issues that are potential sources of stress for clergy today. These issues resonate with results from the quantitative data, presented earlier in this thesis, emphasising the importance of the dual use of qualitative and quantitative methodology for this research investigation. Two data collection methods were adopted:

1. Interviews with priests
2. Optional open comments section within the questionnaire

A third unexpected source of qualitative data resulted from:

3. Personal anonymous letters written by priests and enclosed within the questionnaires.

The interviews (1) gave clergy an opportunity to talk openly about priesthood, outlining their concerns and hopes. The optional open comments section (2) gave clergy anonymity to speak out about real concerns, both within the priesthood and for those to whom they ministered. The personal letters (3) gave an additional opportunity for a richer, deeper and more honest insight into the struggles and ideals individual priests experienced at first hand.

The principal findings from these three sources complemented and mirrored one another. Collectively, they produced a rich set of qualitative data for analysis alongside the quantitative data explored in this thesis. Much of what was given freely was not asked for. It quite simply, gave priesthood a ‘voice’, producing an open, honest, private and very personal account of priesthood today by those ordained into ministry in the R.C. Church. When attempting to summarise data, select illustrative quotes, formulate themes and, produce a coherent story, the researcher needs to build up an understanding of the phenomena the research project has investigated (King, 1998). Equally, the account needs to do justice to the richness of the data, to avoid a very flat descriptive summary of the data



itself (King, 1998). A good starting point for this research was the interview topic guide, that is, the set of question areas used, because they produce the higher order codes and potential lower order codes. Once the initial higher codes are established the use of objective advice from fellow researchers can lead to a coherent set of higher and subsidiary lower order coding.

### *1. Interviews with priests*

Areas identified in the early interviewing stages of research can often determine the main themes (Crabtree and Miller, 1992; King, 1998). The interview data for this research was analysed as part of the pilot project with clergy themselves, outlined and discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

This produced eight key themes:

- Domestic accommodation arrangement for clergy; whether they shared a house and if parishioners used the premises for meetings
- Sacramental duties and ministry; the increasing awareness of potential conflict between Canon Law theory and its practical application to everyday life by parishioners
- The role of Priesthood and Media Portrayal centred upon the social image of priesthood today
- The Roman Catholic Church and Hierarchical structures was concerned with both structures and the senior management within it; positions of power held by a small number of senior clergy; the wider question of obedience was also part of the context
- Fraternity of priesthood and the potential contradiction experienced by priests in practice
- Clerical dress and self image focussed on the wearing of clerical dress and its impact on the priest including the response by both the public and fellow clergy
- Celibacy, addressing the concept that while moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century the Roman Catholic priesthood was still reserved to male, single and celibate individuals
- Retirement and thoughts on leaving the priesthood including loneliness and financial concerns, and additionally, thoughts on leaving and intention to 'quit'.

### *2. Optional open comment section*

In addition to the seven sections of the questionnaire, a subsequent optional section was added devised from the questions raised from clergy during interview. This allowed clergy to express their views anonymously under two major areas:

- Sexuality and the Church
- Any further comments



### *3. Personal anonymous letters from priests*

Several of the completed questionnaires were returned containing personal anonymous letters offering further insight into issues affecting clergy today. These gave personal first hand accounts of the struggles and joys of lived priesthood in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century church.

All the above qualitative data received through the three sources was gathered and recorded, and each questionnaire given a reference number. The initial areas that resulted were presented under in the final hierarchy codes that began at the interview stage with clergy. Informal conversation gave a wealth of insight into priesthood in my previous employment forming the basis of a conviction to start researching into this field of potential stress in clergy. The questions included at interview for this first set of qualitative collection of data for this thesis were:

- Do you have a dual work/domestic setting?
- Is your parish based in a rural or urban area?
- What have been the most positive/negative experience of your priesthood?
- Are all clergy similar in their interpretation of Canon Law and its application to the daily lives of their parishioner's lived experience?
- Does the Church reinforce a certain type of personality in the priesthood?
- How would you describe the fraternity of priesthood?
- How do you feel wearing clerical dress?
- How do people respond to you when you don't wear clerical dress?
- Is celibacy a positive or negative aspect of priesthood?
- Are you concerned about your retirement?

In analysing the results of interviews, the goal was simply to try and decipher any consistent themes that were common in the experience of the majority of priests. Checks were made during the interview with priests to clarify the consistency of common themes and terminology used. The qualitative data resonated with areas identified by clergy in the later questionnaire i.e the open sections and the enclosed personal, anonymous letters with their returns, which reinforced the final higher order codes.



Firstly, the researcher initially coded the higher order codes data into 3 headings that appeared to structure with 3 further sub headings. Four people were later consulted as described in earlier chapters and which included an ordained priest. The researcher worked systematically through a full set of transcripts, identifying sections of the text which were relevant to the research aims and highlighted any inadequacies in the process as recommended (King, 1998). Having identified draft higher order codes these data cards were presented to four individuals for further analysis, The four individuals, i.e. a researcher, a psychologist, a seminarian and a Catholic priest were asked to identify themes and higher order code by labelling what they felt were the most appropriate categories and further sub themes within these. This led to the clarification of three distinct areas below:

***Three distinct areas identified from qualitative data***

	CONTRADICTION	
SEXUALITY	EXPECTATIONS	TRADITION V REALITY
Celibacy	Priest’s role in the priesthood	Values in a changing society and Church congregation
Sexual Orientation	Church’s expectation of priests People’s expectation of priests Priests’ own expectation of priest/hood	Behaviours within people’s lives and Church Law ruling

***Celibacy for clergy – promoting the positive aspects***

The first area for discussion centres on the issue of celibacy for priesthood today. The Catholic church’s stance on celibacy is very clear. Having quoted various documents earlier in this thesis ‘Presbyterorum Ordinus’ gives a succinct summarising statement:

*‘Through virginity or celibacy observed for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven, priests are consecrated to Christ in a new and distinguished way. They more easily hold fast to Him with undivided heart. They more freely devote themselves in Him and through Him to the service of God and men, They more readily minister to His kingdom and to the work of heavenly regeneration and thus become more apt to exercise paternity in Christ and do so as to a greater extent.( Presbyterorum Ordinus).*

Celibacy referred to the priest’s own lived experience within the Catholic priesthood today. The whole area of priestly celibacy continues to provoke



media interest and speculation but contradiction within the lived experience is becoming evident, both in the priesthood and within seminary life. The question now is whether celibacy is an outdated requirement for the secular priest or whether it is in fact proving an anchor for virtue in a 21<sup>st</sup> century world. However, if, as some of the qualitative data suggests, there is ambiguity about clergy being celibate, then what impact does this have on others priests who uphold celibacy? Equally, if the ‘lay’ members are indifferent to celibacy being a requirement for clergy, should the debate be opened? Commentators on the Church and priesthood have been equally open to discuss the issue stating that those pushing for opening priestly ordination to married men rely heavily on the assumption that dispensing with the Church’s discipline of clerical celibacy would greatly increase numbers and quality of men serving the church as priests, adding arguments for falling seminary numbers (Rose, 2002) such statement gain a quick response from the media:

*‘Today celibacy has become central in discussion about the sexual misconduct controversy. A sampling of talk show pundits and newspaper editorials suggests that, if celibacy were no longer required of priests, sexual improprieties would be virtually eliminated. That the media and the public, including many American Roman Catholics consider priestly celibacy problematic suggests that they do not really understand the basic concepts and value of celibacy’* (Sperry, 2003)

Needless to say, there is also considerable confusion about the relationship among sexual maturity, intimacy and celibacy, and designations such as ‘sexual celibate’ rather than clarify, seem to add to that confusion (Sperry, 2003). Accordingly, a major challenge facing the Church today, and particularly those in ministry formation, is to better understand and articulate the relationship between sexuality and celibacy as well as that among sexuality, celibacy and intimacy as stated by one respondent to the questionnaire:

*“Sexuality and personality are related. It takes times to work through this. It is part of growth and maturity – very persona. The discipline of celibacy must be underwritten with a lot of self awareness, accepted as a charism for the life of the Church; and a choice of freedom to be available for others; an opportunity for witness to the demands of Christ’s Gospel”* (Ref 172).



Clearly, celibacy is very much highly regarded by priests in this 21<sup>st</sup> century Church and those offering thoughts and experience were aware of its dignity and place in priesthood today. Clergy supporting a celibate priesthood emphasised the value of celibacy which was not to be lightly discarded. (174) Celibacy was as quoted by two priests:

*“.. deemed to be a positive and effective way for individuals to be fully alive and come to maturity (108)”*

It was therefore important that

*‘..celibacy was grounded in good self awareness, deep spirituality and a healthy attitude to ones sexuality (108).*

It would only be fulfilled if celibacy was embraced and lived willingly as evidenced through the personal letters from priests, and this fulfilment stemmed from acceptance by the individual that celibacy was an integral part of a priest’s vocation and ministry (personal letters). Celibacy offered great value and freedom making it easier for clergy to carry out their ministry (095) and offered a way of loving others (136)

*“Celibacy freed the priest to be totally and directly at the service of others” (174). “It was a sign of a priest’s destiny to eternal life (personal letters) Celibacy was part of the package of priesthood” (062).*

In conclusion, it was acknowledged by one priest, that “the problems of the Church would not be solved by simply abolishing the obligation of celibacy for priesthood” (158).

#### *Celibacy for clergy – questioning celibacy*

In contrast, some of the qualitative data received from clergy suggested that they clearly questioned and challenged the Church’s views on celibacy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century priesthood. This very acknowledgement of a problem, and questioning of Church policy, once considered disloyal, highlights the challenge the Church institution is facing today, both internally and externally. Responses from priests deemed celibacy:

*“ a very complex and contentious issues, something that had to be endured and lived with varying degrees of success and failure; It was often difficult and hard (interviews) and priests today still struggled with celibacy in the same way married people struggled with their vocation” (068).*



The extent to which this struggle affected clergy varied from one to another and sadly this research could only access those still in the priesthood and did not have the opportunity to give a voice to those who had left.

*For some this struggle(celebracy) meant giving up the priesthood and the Church losing some very good priests as a result. The whole area was fuelled with questions and argument for change (062).*

Yet priests respond in different ways and while some keep the rules others openly break them resulting in all members of the Church being affected by the consequences. Clearly, many priest struggle on and the good most priests do in a single day is often remarkable and overlooked. In contrast, the harm some do in darkness, remains subject to considerable secrecy and denial (Cozzens, 2002)

However, the Catholic Church stands firm on its policy and the importance of maintaining celibacy today, almost to the point of a warning. Celibacy is a cornerstone of the infrastructure of the Catholic ecclesiastical world. Tamper with its foundational role in the Latin rite, the rite of church, and the consequences will likely prove far reaching (Cozzens, 2002).

### *Celibacy and Church Law*

*“Celibacy was a Church Law and the rules had changed during the 2,000 years of Church history, then the law could change again” (174).*

Celibacy should be a vow not a law (134). Celibacy was not something that should be automatically linked with the secular priesthood (108) as the connection between priesthood and celibacy was too tightly related i.e. holiness did not equal celibacy (134). Priests questioned how celibacy made one Christ like:

*“Did that mean that a celibate priest in the western world was more ‘Christ like’ than a married priest in the Eastern Catholic Church, or a married priest from another denomination?” (personal letters)*

*“Married clergy could actually compliment celibate priesthood and bring additional richness into the Church and priesthood (104)*



The whole concept of a priest arguing against the Church Law was a statement in itself! Frustration at current situations between married Anglican ‘crossing over’ while “*celibate Catholic priests had to leave in order to marry*”(104) caused great concern. Further concern was expressed at the inconsistent way in which the discipline (celibacy) also brought the matter into disrepute and caused resentment among the presbyterate of the diocese who ‘have one law imposed on them and another law imposed on those married clergy from other denominations.

### *Celibacy and change*

The major problem expressed by some priests was how to introduce *any* policy of change on celibacy. Yet as the problem exists, it can no longer be ignored. Many married permanent Deacons viewed their married former Anglican counterparts with envy and embarrassment (186) when they too would dearly love to go on to Ordination. The whole area of celibacy in priesthood was described by one priest as ‘an anomalous situation’ (186). Other priest felt priesthood was best served when the option of marriage was there:

*“ Since the only real argument for celibacy was centred on the priests availability to his people (153) one could argue that other professionals coped, therefore in leaving the option of marriage out of priesthood - this being an opportunity for the deepest of relationships – it had subsequently made life more difficult for certain priests ”*

Priest’s felt their vocation could have been more fulfilled, if accompanied by vocation for marriage (100). There was a concluding plea from one priest:

*“ A call for the Church to change her current discipline and recognise that priesthood was not dependent on celibacy and would actually flourish and thrive well without celibacy being a prerequisite for Ordination ”(175).*

The concept of married priests therefore is still debated but in the context that “God who desires that all of the human family may dwell in loving communion and intimacy, certainly wills the spiritual and human fulfilment of the celibate priests, even when the discipline of the Church prohibits him from entering the sacrament of marriage”. Church writers have often expressed the Church’s view on such matters noting that the power and transcendent glory of married intimacy can never be minimised



or disparaged, yet half the world's population ..is not married" (Cozzens, 2000). Thus marriage for clergy is still debatable. Celibacy was however, disregarded by some priests, clearly seen as irrelevant (068) and no longer considered the 'sign' it used to be (115). When explained on a practical more efficient state, celibacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century was badly undersold" (136). Celibacy was no longer valued by fellow Catholics and The high proportion of candidates who were openly gay suggests an increasing gap between the people in the pew and their priests (personal letter). One priest succinctly summarised this:

*"I am constantly surprised to find how little meaning celibacy has for most laity. I would be perfectly happy to see a married clergy and often find married clergy of other denominations more committed more human than catholic clerics" (148).*

The underlying problems for most clergy was not 'sexuality' but the problem of living alone and of loneliness which can lead to sexual problems. One priest said: 'We need new initiatives in the Church which will help priests more with their sexuality/celibacy' (Ref 026) The value of celibacy was seen as a way of loving but when explained as a practical more efficient state, it was said to be 'badly undersold'(136) expressed succinctly by some priests: i.e. priests being celibate were free to 'love' people more in their availability but in practice this was debatable when considering other caring professions who combined professions and marriage e.g. doctors. This clear indication of homosexuality in the church was one of several quotes. More deeply, the culture or climate today caused other priests to struggle to live a celibate life as described by one priest:

*'In today's climate it is difficult to live as a celibate priest because of the pressures around you on television and the way people live their lives (091) but still I believe life can be happy with prayer and love of the people that we serve (091)*

In terms of priestly training the issue of not being able to marry is a serious one for students:

*"Students ... in accordance with the Holy and well established laws of their own Rite follow praiseworthy tradition of priestly celibacy ... a way of life in which they renounce the companionship of marriage for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven.." II Vatican Ecumenical Council Decree on Training for Priesthood (1966)*



Further pleas for marriage to be an option in priesthood continued to be voiced:

*'Married clergy would complement celibate clergy and bring additional richness (Ref 104).' 'Being married should not be a bar to ordination. Celibacy should be a vow not law. Those who fail to keep the vow should not be allowed to continue in the priesthood but should be dispensed without delay. After a time of penance they should be allowed to act as Deacons and then as priests' (Ref 134).*

*'The connection between priesthood and celibacy is too tight at present ... holiness does not equal celibacy' (Ref 134)*

Clearly this ongoing struggle with Church Law and lived reality for both priest's and people is highlighting the contradictory lifestyles lived within and outside of Church which highlight serious need for discussion in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century church and priesthood.

### **Contradiction: The Catholic Church and Sexuality/Sexual-Orientation**

The Catholic Church's Law and ruling on matters of sexuality are well documented and outlined earlier in this thesis. For the Catholic priest ministering within a 21<sup>st</sup> century church and society there can be contradiction when dealing with matters of sexuality, sexual orientation and celibacy. Each of these areas will be addressed in the light of qualitative data received from priests for this research raising questions as to whether the theoretical stance by the Church is in direct contradiction to the reality lived out today by both people and indeed priests.

#### *Priests response to The Church and Sexuality*

In the Catholic Church moral system, sin is closely linked to human sexuality and it is feared that open discussion of sexuality might lead to what has traditionally been understood as a manifestation of conscience (Cozzens, 2002) resulting in concern that one might publicly reveal the state of one's soul in such discussion i.e. admit to being in an occasion of sin (Cozzens, 2002). This view by writers in the Church resonates with a view put across by one priest responding to the questionnaire:

*Simply put, we have a major problem as a Church with the question of sexuality.. in its theocratic principles the Church is completely out of touch with the latter stages of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.. many harsh decisions – perhaps in good faith – are driven through a sort of unhealthy preoccupation with things sexual” (036)*

Priest responding to this research reported that:

*“The Catholic Church still possessed a great fear and misunderstanding of sexuality” (088); “... still retained a pelvic morality and a preoccupation – if*



*not unhealthy obsession with sex, sexual matters and the sexual behaviour of individuals” (177).*

One priest offered a succinct statement:

*“On too many occasions, matters of sexual morality were simply treated as black and white issues by the Church, rather than recognising the sheer complexity of the whole area of sexuality itself” (177).*

The presentation of the official Church Law regarding sexual relationships was deemed to come across as *“harsh, aloof and detached from people’s lived experiences”* (115). There was a growing contradiction between what the Church taught and the reality of people’s lives today which resulted in the Church being either ridiculed or simply ignored (177). One priests concluded:

*“It was crucial that the Church sought ways of recognising and listening to people’s lived experiences in order to address the situation of so many, who felt abandoned or rejected by the Church” (104).*

Another priest voiced his concerns over the role of the Church:

*‘The Church’ was seen as ‘those who are in positions of authority, particularly the Pope, his closest advisors and those individuals and organisations whose voice is loudest’ ... When the Church spoke on matters regarding the most personal aspects of people’s lives it should speak with care, sensitivity, and a profound understanding of human nature as it is lived and experienced, and of course with love (177)*

Many priests felt that a perceived starting point was to build respect for people regarding their sexual orientation, into a pastoral appreciation of personal situations, in order to include everyone in the sacramental life. This would value their contribution to the faith community irrespective of any *“perceived irregularities”* (144). Here again we see evidence through the voice of clergy themselves offering their experience of dealing with matters on sexuality and the consequences on ordinary people’s lives summarised by one priest:

*‘So often the Church in the area of sexuality seemed so obsessed with its teaching there seems little concern for the suffering it causes or the damage it has done ... and (recommended) the Church should offer a big ‘Mea Culpa’ and a fresh start’ (036).*



In contrast, many priests however were also sympathetic to the Church and its Law. It was clear “that the Catholic Church was undergoing a painful pilgrimage in its attempt to offer a coherent and yet pastorally sensitive account of human sexuality” (070). This coincided with a period when the media’s portrayal of all things sexual did little to deter people from experimentation and personal choices. In society, it was felt that sexuality had been given an importance which it did not deserve. It was subsequently universally abused by the media under the guise of ‘sex sells’ leading to various difficulties, and degrading the good human characteristics (174)

Some priests felt the Church’s teachings on sexuality was “*entirely right, bible based and practical*” (140). This resonated with church writers presenting Church teachings on the subject:

*“In the Catholic world, any deliberate, free expression of human sexuality, whether in thought, word or deed, outside of heterosexual marriage ... is judged to be immoral, and therefore sinful and not only sinful, but seriously sinful, because one’s very salvation is at stake” (Cozzens, 2002)*

Clear guidelines on sexuality were needed in life. In being approached for advice, some priests felt they should not ‘water down’ the rights or wrongs of sexual behaviour but refer with delicacy to Church teaching.

#### *The struggle for priests to find a compromise*

Priests recognised this era as a transition period and were trying to find a compromise between Law and experience and appreciate both sides. However, priests still had to deal with the contradiction between the Church law and the daily lives of people who came for support and advice. While for some Catholics sexuality is still a taboo subject causing guilt, others were more open about their own sexuality and at ease with being sexual beings.

One priest concluded:

*The whole situation left both clergy and people with muddle, struggle and compromise (171).*



Clergy concluded that people simply ‘voted with their feet’ (104) on matters of sexuality, i.e. if they did not agree or were not comfortable they simply walked out, or, took note of Church teaching but applied their own judgement or interpretation to suit their personal situation (177). For Catholic priests however, the solution was not so simple. Many were clearly embarrassed when faced with parochial situations on matters of sexuality, lacked guidance in dealing with them (012) and clearly remained confused. In short priests are human beings too facing the same struggles as their parishioners. One priest expressed his growing confusion in the field of ministry:

*“When I was learning about morals, every ‘thought, word and action’ in relation to sex outside of marriage was morally sinful hence the queues outside Confession on Saturday. Clearly, people have rejected all this by virtue of the fact that Confessional queues are a thing of the past but more and more people are receiving Communion” (036)*

#### *Church view of sexuality as a ‘problem’*

The personal struggle experienced by other clergy when dealing with their own sexuality highlighted a deeper crisis within priesthood itself. Priests after all are sexual beings like everyone else (175). As early in their student training and formation years in the seminary, priest felt there was a lack of discussion and grounding in sexuality which is highlighted by Church writers today:

*“Open discussions in seminaries and houses of formations about human sexuality, sexual orientation and sexual longing is guarded, even discouraged except in the most confidential of contexts – spiritual direction and the rite of reconciliation” (Cozzens, 2002)*

Two priests responding to the questionnaire, recalled their seminary experience with regret:

*‘The system’ failed to provide any help on their personal journey of discovery as sexual persons (090)*

The second recalling his attempts to explore his own sexuality concluded:

*“I was sent to a psychiatrist to see what could be done” (090)*

Another spoke of his seminary experience as being very negative, where issues of sexuality were relegated to Confessor/Spiritual Director and as ‘particular relations’ could be a barriers to Ordination, he was given 6 months ‘help’ in psychotherapy (175). Clearly, the very culture and type



of seminary training itself was deemed part of the problem voiced by one priest:

*“Are single sex, entirely clerical institutions, physically apart from the rest of society appropriate settings? What message of priesthood do they send?” (007)*

This question sends a clear message for both the training of priest today and ongoing formation of those ordained. One priest put it quite succinctly:

*Students (seminarians) today must be given adequate psychosexual development reflection to integrate their sexuality and to live celibacy conscious of their orientation in order to hold boundaries” (031)*

At a more basic level, clearly the underlying problem for some clergy was not sexuality in itself, but the real problem of living alone and one of loneliness, which in turn could lead to sexual problems (026). Priests felt a need for new initiatives in the Church which would help priests more with their own sexuality/celibacy (026). What saddened many priests was the inability of some clergy to have and encourage strong nonsexual friendships. This was largely because of earlier Church teachings on sex in general and the absurd phobia regarding ‘particular friendships’ (179).

#### *Sexuality as a major occupational stressor*

Priests today lead a very public life and ministry and any indication that their private life is not of an equally morally high standard leads to serious questioning of their role in the Church. For some priests, the pressure of maintaining a private life leads to greater emotional difficulties and strain:

*“Priests sexual acting being made public may cause problems, confusion, wonder, pity, shame or scorn .. by the media who provide a window on the secret world of sexuality (Sipe 1995)*

Many priests felt that the real issue was that they personally, had not come to terms with their own sexuality, sexual orientation, sexual drive, leaving them inhibited and defensive (012). *“Each priest must find a way of individually coming to terms with his own sexuality”* (168). Some priests stated their clergy friends did not know who they were sexually and were terrified by the possibility that they may be ‘discovered’ (179). Moreover, they “felt there was rather an immature attitude among priests towards sexuality”(179). If clergy have yet to discover who they are, and are



dealing with issues clearly in contradiction with Church teaching on sexual orientation this present a real problem for the Church. This was recognised by one Church writer (Gill, 2001) quoted in Hoge:

*“Priests with deep seated needs or desires that are unmet with resulting painful emotions are obviously going to find it difficult to enjoy the work they do, to relate warmly and sensitively to their parishioners and, to find comfort and peace in their dealings with God”*

Clearly, this is not the foundation on which to minister to others who seek help, advice and guidance on sexuality themselves. Other priests openly viewed the whole area of sexuality as private to them and as part of their own uniqueness in the world (068). Two priests expressed their views succinctly:

*Understanding one’s own sexuality took time to work through as part of a priest’s growth and maturity and was seen by many clergy as a personal journey (172).*

*Sexuality is an important and integral part of ones personality and an expression of personal relationship (019) requiring a more positive attitude from the Church.*

Sexuality, while being acknowledged as a gift from God, was not deemed fully alive if that gift was not valued and appreciated (064). Equally, the fact that the profile of priesthood today did not (a) attract heterosexuals i.e. still is reserved to male, single and celibate men therefore not open to women, and (b) attract social esteem (119) i.e. the increasing negative media image of priesthood portrayed in newspapers, television and media generally, caused concern among clergy. Priesthood was described as ‘at present not honest’ (119). These statements from clergy are thought provoking given the Church’s expectations of priest and priesthood. The contradiction inherent in sexuality is a major occupational stressor for priesthood and people, who both struggle to find a compromise within Canon Law ruling and lived reality of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church.

#### *Personal sexual orientation*

The Church gives clear direction on what it terms the ‘Pastoral care of homosexual persons’ (Sacred Congregations for Doctrinal Truth 1986)



*“The Catholic moral viewpoint (on homosexuality) is founded on human reason illumined by faith and is consciously motivated by the desire to do the will of God our Father. The Church ... is in a position to learn from scientific discovery but also to transcend the horizons of science and be confident that her more global vision do greater justice to the rich reality of the human person .. spiritually”*

It gives a more specific statement on sexual relations:

*“To chose someone of the same sex for one’s sexual activity is to annul the rich symbolism and meaning, goals of the Creators sexual designs. Homosexual activity is not a complementary union, able to transmit life”*

Yet more extensive replies came from priests looking into sexuality on a deeper personal level i.e. the number who wrote personally and anonymously about their current heterosexual and homosexual relationships as lived experiences in the Church today. This lived contradiction caused acute sadness, guilt, fear and frustration for many priests, not to mention those who had already left and were not part of the research. A need for the Church to acknowledge and review the whole situation was long overdue. One priest enclosing a personal letter stated:

*“I feel the Church fails to value gay clergy and other priests who are deterred from being able to minister openly to those brothers and sisters in the Church who are gay”.*

Some might question whether the existence of homophobia within the Church today is a deterrent for homosexual clergy, as outlined by one Church writer:

*“In a paradoxical way, defensive homosexuality keeps some priests bound to their vocation and celibacy. They cannot rationalize or split sexual behaviour from their consciousness; feel guilt at any sexual activity... (Sipe, 1995)*

This living a ‘lie’ may be deemed a denial of human respect and dignity. Further statements offered from clergy revealed how sexual orientation affected their personal life as a priest; how it impacted upon their behaviour i.e. engaging in relationship in ‘secrecy’:

*“Being a professed homosexual cleric in the Catholic Church in England would not meet with much acceptance at present” (017)*

*“Yes, I am gay and neither the Church, the Diocese, parishioners nor society would accept this of me. In fact I’d be hounded out” (117).*

*“As a gay man I find the Church’s attitude at present essentially homophobic and oppressive, a denial of the whole person (068)*

*“I am gay and find that difficult to reconcile with some aspects of Church teaching which can be seen as homophobic” (064).*



There are priests however, for whom personal sexuality is not a problem. One priest who was serving in the Royal navy said the issue of sexuality and priesthood had not affected his life. However, he acknowledged he accepted ‘what was freely available, often some form of friendship’ (166). Another described his sexuality as private, admitting he was ‘sexually active himself and thus in no position to be pharisaical in my treatment of others’ (068). Another said that “*celibacy was maintained by many priests out of a sense of duty and personal integrity*” (060).

Clearly, it was not easy to be open about one’s sexuality as a priest today. One priest viewed it as a denial of his right saying:

*“I will go to my grave regretting the fact I have been denied the right to have children and enjoy family life (067)*

Being ‘open’ in discussion about one’s sexuality was a major risk for other clergy. This contradiction creates pressure to perform in an occupational setting where such work environments can cause repressed mood, lowered self esteem, life dissatisfaction, low motivation and intention to leave| Cooper, (2001). One felt people had a low tolerance for priest’s practising homosexual lifestyles (136). The internal struggle, while maintaining a façade caused anxiety for other priests, one describing this as “*taking up so many years of his priesthood, ‘so much pain and heartache*” (090). Clearly, priests will always be public figures with a public expectation of their behaviour. Equally, by the very nature as priests they will be expected to lead exemplarily lives and should they ‘fail’ will be subject to far greater criticism than their fellow parishioners who indulge in the same behaviours. Yet the contradiction continues to be receiving attention in terms of discussion:

*“For more than a decade, voices have been heard expressing concern about the growing number of gay priests and seminarians (McBrien 1987) Their call for serious and candid discussion of the issue has largely gone unheard” (Cozzens, 2000)*

Yet contradiction also breeds denial: Amongst clergy are priests who remain confused about their sexual orientation and men who have successfully denied their orientation, that, in spirit of predominately same sex fantasies, they insist that they are heterosexual (Cozzens, 2000).



### *The problem of sexuality in the training of priests*

This introduces a whole new area surrounding secrecy and possible deceit putting incredible pressure on a priest to live a life of ministry which is in contradiction with his sexual orientation (Greely, 1989). If a disproportionate number of gay men are coming forward for priesthood, what number should be accepted for seminary training (Cozzens, 2000). Equally, who is accepted for seminary? One priest discussed the broader issues of selection in a personal letter enclosed in the questionnaire:

*"..In the laudable endeavour to interest young men in a vocation to the priesthood or religious life, there is today, in my opinion, too much of what I call the Lord Kitchner approach: 'Your Church Needs You!'. In other words an overemphasis on 'we need to fill the gaps in the ranks'. ..I prefer to start with 1 Cor 12 4:31 'There are a variety of gifts..' and to advise any applicant for the ministry that even if he is an octagonal peg, there is a grave shortage of pegs so shaped, and to assure him that he will not be rounded down to fit into a square hole. And whether he is octagonal, hexagonal or just plain square, it is the quality of the wood and not its shape which matters.'. Now these things are an allegory' (Gal:4:24)"*

Clearly, the diversity of the roles within priestly ministry require a diversity of qualities. The need for the Church to recognise that there is more than one 'type' of priest is a crucial factor in promoting vocations for the 21<sup>st</sup> century Church and priesthood.

### **Contradiction – Conflicting expectations within the R.C. Church and priesthood**

The Catholic Church's expectations of its priesthood is based on in 2000 years of history and tradition. Much of that expectation remains today and clearly has an impact on the lived reality of its priests and people. At the very basis is a common denominator taken from scripture suggesting that priests must be perfect, 'as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Pastores Dabo Vobis, 1992). And priests are deemed in this world but not of it' (Pastores Dabo Vobis, 1992). Yet 'the Church' also means 'the people' whose own expectations for a 21<sup>st</sup> Church and society may be in direct contrast with the traditional Church. Additionally, the media are quick to portray the Church and priesthood in a negative light if it fails to live up to their expectations.

For the priest himself there is further contradiction between his own expectation of priesthood and the diversity of priestly lived experience by



his fellow clergy. A working environment like this can have a negative impact upon physical and mental health (Tombaugh et al 1990; Cassio 1993; Dekker and Schaufei, 1995). Is it any wonder suggests one Catholic writer (Philibert, 2004) that priests remain confused about both their role and identity? Role conflict and ambiguity are known sources of stress in many occupational settings (Marshall, 1980; Gray, Toft and Anderson, 1981; Sutherland and Coopers, 1990; Tyler and Cushway, 1992;) Inter-role conflict is consistently linked with stress (Frome, Russell, Cooper et al, 1992) and outlined earlier in full in this thesis. Role ambiguity is a major stress factor (Cooper, 2001) and for priesthood over the centuries, the role has changed considerably, bringing further confusion. One ex-priest and writer captured this succinctly:

*“One seminary Rector once opined that if you wanted to teach, you should become a Jesuit; if you really cared about liturgy, there was the Benedictines; if you wanted to be a preacher, become a Dominican; but, if you were ready to follow orders, (and do nothing special? (sic) then you were meant to be a diocesan priests” Dinter, 2003*

#### *The Catholic Church's expectation of priesthood*

Priesthood has been described as a mystery (Faricy, 1997) and for many today, it remains a mystery. The whole role and identity of a Catholic priest is shrouded in mystery (Bernardin, 1995) and in today's society priesthood is seen as either an anomaly in a secular age, or an anchor for virtue and decency in a time of moral relativism (Cozzens, 2000). The role of priest in pre Vatican II history, outlined in chapter one of this thesis, was highly visible and solemnized, somewhat anonymous and whispered. His whole persona was subsumed into the sacred rituals and action (Rausch, 1999). Today priests are no longer literally robed in garments from earlier centuries, but they are still robed psychologically and spiritually in tradition, behaviour, expectation and regulation from cultures infinitely removed from the current one (Sewell, 2001). A priest today who 'vows' himself into this way of life puts it on like a garment and must strive to adopt himself to that dimension and requirement (Cozzens, 2000). But the service of priestly ministry today is not compatible with a worldly job, not at the disposal of any sort of theological genetic engineering which



would seek to shape the function of priesthood in relation to the role of secular caring profession or prophetic critics of society (Balthasar, 1960). Yet today, the Catholic priesthood has changed dramatically, which leads to a diversity of expectations resulting in confusion. The once clear identity, unquestioned status, exalted privilege of priests has become blurred leaving conflict and ambiguity (Cozzens, 2000). Priesthood has gone from pedestal to participation, from clinical preacher to contemporary mystagogue, from loan ranger style to collaborative ministry, from monastic spirituality to a secular spirituality; from saving souls to liberating people (Bacik 1990). In its place a new if uncertain priestly culture is taking shape (Cozzens 2002). Stripped of the status and privilege that allowed priests to ignore the personal signs of anxiety and loneliness priest have been forced to address their human condition without the defences and rationalizations of previous clerical cultures.

#### *People's expectations of priesthood*

For the Catholic priest working in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century society and 2000 year old hierarchical organisation institution, conflicting demands can emerge regarding his own expectations and those of whom he serves i.e. the Church and the people. Priests find themselves caught in the middle of the conflicting understanding of Church and priesthood that so often polarises Catholic congregations today (Ryan, 1997). Priests have to negotiate a complicated Church world of people who expect vastly different things of them (Philibert, 2004). Priests are stewards of God's mysteries, teaching them as merciful, revelation, celebrating them in the Liturgy, invoking them as healing and pardon and living them as the deepest meaning in their own lives.(Philibert, 2004).

In short, priests are called to evangelise, to offer an alternative, but the concept of invitation needs to respond to a 21<sup>st</sup> century church. Priests are expected to embrace all cultures including minorities and use inclusive language. Priests have been made purveyors of services 'we offer this – we offer that' (Philibert, 2004). Finding a balance between acting as authentic interpreter of Church teachings in a parish setting and offering



the compassionate word is a different journey. A sense of indifference has been felt and this calls for a new response. Religion for many today has become secondary importance 'marginalized, trivialised and privatised' (Philibert, 2004). When priests see their fellow clergy addressing similar issues in different ways, ambiguity arises. People are truly negotiating another type of priesthood which leaves the priest struggling to meet all demands from Church, people, other clergy and the media.

#### *Priests' own expectation of Priesthood*

So where does this leave the priest in terms of his own expectation of self and role in a 21<sup>st</sup> Church and society? Alongside the mystery of priest is also diversity i.e. diversity within the priesthood itself, in both the theological background and choices within pastoral ministry. Within the historic Church today one type of priest may dismiss and refuse to be part of a dialogue with 'laity' and another type of priest whose approach is different may choose to associate only with priests of like mind which creates contradiction to both the priest and to the people (Philibert, 2004).

Yet priests are supposed to be part of a common presbyterate under the local bishop, to minister together in communion for the sake of mutual appreciate and support (Philibert, 2004). The diversity of priesthood today in roles and expectations by clergy themselves causes confusion and contradiction and has been summarised by Philibert, (2004) as a diversity that is viewed as 'a blessing or a source of disunity amongst the presbyterate'. Priests today are increasingly caught in a dual ambiguity – their own personal hopes and other people's expectations of them as a priest (Philibert, 2004) Priesthood may be viewed as jack-of-all-trades ministry wherein as a job description it is impossible (Himes, 1999). Priesthood today is one of high idealism marked with almost indescribable demands (Philibert, 2004). The conflicting demands and expectations of Church, people and fellow priests themselves inevitably leave many clergy feeling trapped, overworked, frustrated and with little sense of time for themselves (Philibert, 2004) In short, a contemporary understanding of priesthood by writers in the Church can only be discovered in the context of the whole people of God (Philibert, 2004).



*“The tension priests experience within themselves and at the hands of others is itself a revelation of the tension in Jesus Christ’s identity, between the fully divine being who was before the world was made and the finite, tempted human being struggling to convey the message of ultimate truth”*

Most (priests) never realised how complicated the structure of a parish community could be. Unprepared for the work of administration – many feel the seminary left them ill-equipped for many roles - priests bluff their way for years through the bureaucratic details of finance and administration (Philibert, 2004). The diversity of training within certain seminaries and whether one had an academic route reflected in priests requests for furthering their ‘career’ in the Church. The Church often gave contradictory messages to those seeking advancement:

*“The days when a diocesan priest can be freed up for full time teaching or study or diocesan administration are coming to an end. Men who have such duties usually carry them out in addition to parish assignments.. if you have any secret desires for special consideration, extraordinary assignments, or any type of ministry outside of a parish? If so, you are setting yourself up for disappointment. Do you think that your education makes you too good for parish priesthood? Is there any kind of clerical ambition or careerism that will eventually make you restless serving in a parish? Better deal with it now”(Dolan, 2000)*

Still, something can be done to help priests lighten the load of their bureaucracy. There are workshops for learning about pastoral administration, a parish council, and priests also need rewards and commitment of friendships. Still, something can be done to help priests lighten the load of their bureaucracy. Many priests try to preserve and respond to impossible demands – often alone and isolated – which inevitably will affect their health and well-being. This resonates with the opinions of writers on the Church outlined by Gill (2001):

*“The health of priests who experience prolonged sessions of loneliness is also threatened by the way their emotional state carries a lowered effectiveness of their body’s immune mechanism...Clinical depression too is considered to be an outcome of loneliness”*



### *Impact on health and well-being of clergy*

This perseverance is partly due to the nature of priesthood i.e. priests are givers, sometimes termed ‘oblative personalities’ (Philibert, 2004) who find meaning and satisfaction in helping and healing offering themselves to ‘save and fix’ the conflicts and needs of others. The payoffs are the rewards, gratitude and admiration but givers often become workaholics because they cannot get enough affirmation, so never stop giving. The impact on health was voiced by several clergy through personal letter and qualitative data on questionnaire. Two priests spoke of symptoms induced:

*“I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown because of spending time trying to be something and someone I could never be ‘the ideal priest’(177)*

This was the result of living up to unrealistic and unreasonable expectations which the priest the church and indeed the parishioners placed upon him Another spoke of the struggle to minister:

*“I was in a tough inner city parish; became sick and was on my knees” (091)*

Other priests spoke of *“treatment for clinical depression” (100)* and *“acute loneliness” (177)* *“people forgot the human side of priesthood” (interview notes)* and the genuine fear of a priest approaching his retirement when they can no longer carry on the workload because of ill health. Some continued years after retirement because ‘they had no place to live and no financial support (034). Others were more direct in their feelings about the demands made upon them:

*“Life will increasingly run around being more sacramental machines and I will leave when I can’t take this loneliness anymore. I now understand why some of my fellow priests have switched off and do their own thing (117).*

This may suggest a feeling of loss of control for the priest over his life but this gives a deeper insight into an emerging culture within the Church which may prejudice the role of priest or what he is about. *‘Did priests have to be in charge or in control of everything?’ ‘Could a priest say ‘No’ and not feel guilty?’(interviews with clergy). ‘Was it about ‘being ‘ priest or performing a role?’ ‘Was a priest isolated within a generation?’ (interviews ).* There was a perceived difference between whether priests



lacked experienced or whether they lacked good experience (interviews) some priests were more philosophical Some admitted that while enjoying their work they had high expectations of self and others to the priest that they became irritable and they could not deliver (044)

Priests have to negotiate a complicated church world of people who expect vastly different things of them (Philibert 2004).. Priests are expected to embrace all cultures, including ethnic minorities, use inclusive language. Priests have been made purveyors of services ‘we offer this, we offer that’ (Philibert, 2004) Finding the balance, between acting as the authentic interpreter of Church teachings in a parish setting and, offering the compassionate world is a difficult journey. When priests see their fellow clergy addressing similar issues in different ways, ambiguity arises. People are truly negotiating another type of priesthood which leave the priest inevitably struggling to meet all demands, from Church, people and media along with fellow priest expectations and of course, their own. Is it any wonder concludes Philibert (2004) that priests can be *torn apart* trying to meet all these contradictory demands? Given the above, what level of service are they actually providing for others? Reactions by priests to the current crisis varied. One priest replying to my survey questionnaire expressed the following reactions:

*“You haven’t asked if I see any future in the priesthood as it is. The answer is no, I do not. The diocese has little interest in the individual. There will be no sabbaticals except for 3 months after 15 years, which is ludicrous. Life will increasingly run around being more sacrament machines and I will leave when I can’t take this loneliness anymore. I now understand after X years in priesthood why a majority of my colleagues have switched off and do their own thing...be assured the priesthood is crumbling. I’m trying to pick up the pieces of my disillusionment My present parish pries is my sixth one and he’s had (medical condition) More will become ill in the next five years...Thank you for your work” (Ref 117)*

Clearly we can see here that priests really are struggling and are often alone in that desperate struggle unaware that other clergy are undergoing the same experience. A sense of not being listened to, or cared for by the Church organisational structure clearly affects priests today. Part of the struggle is connected with the ambiguity over collaborative ministry and



indeed the historic ethic of volunteering in the church which is no longer possible for a very overworked congregation whose full time work and family commitments far exceed the 1950's two parent, mother at home generation. Indeed, while the people can no longer take priests for granted, equally and crucially priests can no longer take the people for granted. Falling numbers, attending services, closing parishes, fewer priests, older population all indicate a paradox of uncertainty and opportunity. Priests serve in the ministry both Church and people with conflicting demands, ambivalence in moral issues and behaviours. Priests themselves are part of these demands, living alone experiencing loneliness when conforming to a style of life and are often isolated when trying to maintain loyalty to the Church they love. Clearly what we are witnessing here is that there is evidence of problems of role ambiguity and an appeal here to the Church to clarify expectations rather than clergy becoming confused, exhausted and finally leaving.

***Contradiction: The R.C. Church as a Hierarchical, organisational institution***

The third area relates to the Church as a hierarchical organisational institution. The R.C. Church has survived for twenty centuries and as hierarchical, organisational institution, its membership is 1.2 billion, that is 17.2% of world population (*The Universe 2002 statistics released in 2004*). As such it employs over half a million personnel including 900,000 nuns, over 400,000 priests and nearly 4,200 bishops (Sewell, 2001). Four decades after Vatican II, outlined in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the Catholic Church still experiences the drama of an institution undergoing a mid-life crisis (Stourton,1998). Yet at the time of Vatican II, the Church having acted as a mechanism for transmitting authority downwards, provided the first forum, allowing decisions to flow in the other direction (Stourton, 1998) indicating more openness in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The hierarchical structures remain active today, Catholic priests are organised into a clearly defined hierarchy of offices, each having its own sphere of judicial authority. Indeed bureaucratic organisations have played a major role in the shaping of the R.C. Church (Weber, 1947). The role of



bishops carries the ambiguous task of both authoritarian and provider of pastoral care for his priests, obedience playing a major role in the power, authority and hierarchical, male culture. Those questioning this authority are still considered disloyal (Cozzens, 2002) . As recently as the 1950's the Catholic Church was supremely confident about trumpeting the truth it held and it was comforting to know that *your* church has the answers to absolutely everything (Stourton, 1998).

The biggest frustration for many clergy responding to this research questionnaire, was the way in which so many attempts to build the Church in the model of Vatican II were subtly disempowered. While many meetings and conferences were encouraged and supported nothing changed. Priests felt control and power were still closely held at the Centre and 'nothing has changed' betrayed too the Spirit that inspired the Council in an attempt to respond to the sign of the times (Ref 036). Others called for the Church to be de-centralised and that decisions should be made at local level not in Rome (Ref 072). While conflict was necessary during a period of transition, many felt the Church is still curtailed by a post Trent style of training and life. The Vatican, they felt was all too powerful and no institution can run itself in that way. Experimentation was essential along with open-mindedness but the Church and priesthood needed to get rid of clericalism (Ref 046). This resonates with Church writers of 21<sup>st</sup> Century:

*"As Catholics ... we somehow have to continue to become completely different people, docile, passive, uncritical, with no power or influence, no rights to information, to be consulted. Does this not lead to a kind of Catholic infantilism?" (Cornwell, 2001)*

For many clergy the real issues were not being discussed and they felt that most dioceses operated by merely 'plugging holes, filling gaps and crisis management .(Ref 175) One priest while expressing his irritation and not delivering was concerned for the parishioner stating his loss of faith in the diocese who 'lack management and leadership' (Ref 044) The long term effects of 'one off decisions' made by the Church could not be forgotten (Ref 101). The whole question of parish boundaries and geography added



to the workload. and it was impossible to create a community unless that community was preparing for the Sacraments together. In society generally, a culture of individualism increases and traditional neighbourhoods are no longer the real social groupings they once were (Philibert, 2004). The concept of community or simply ‘belonging’ is alien to many who are part of a transient population. Yet the irony, or indeed opportunity here, for the Catholic Church and its pastoral ministry, is that this situation is at the heart of its mission. Catholic faith is precisely about formation of community. Where did this leave the concept of parish? For one priest he questioned his very identity within the whole setting. *‘Who or what am I supposed to be/do?’* (Ref 139).

### *Church and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Society: Contradiction in practice*

The Roman Catholic Church mirrors so many grand institutions of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, who, having offered stability and social identity, now find themselves experiencing major conflict. In essence the Church should speak with care, sensitivity and a profound understanding of human nature as it is lived and experienced, and with love (Ref 177). Clearly, if these qualities are not found in the Church’s teaching and its expression, people will not listen to them. However, within this tradition versus lived reality of Church life, is a growing Church culture which is having a marked impact upon the individual members. Three distinct types of Church culture have been identified by Church writer Cozzens, (2003). These are Ecclesial Culture, Clerical Culture and Episcopal Culture.

### *The Ecclesial Culture*

The Ecclesial Culture within the Church refers directly to the values, behaviours and actions associated with the institutional Church in terms of diocese, religious orders and the Vatican. However, the dark side of ecclesial culture is characterised by denial, evasion, secrecy and status (Cozzens, 2003). In terms of behaviours, moral theology is one such area of great concern but the Church must allow debate and theological discussion on moral issues (098) especially concerning marriage and family life. Priests responding to this research questionnaire felt that the



Church must find ways of recognising and listening to people's lived experiences – particularly long term sexual partnerships outside marriage that make up so many couples today (104). The Catholic Church's teachings regarding sexual matters should be overwhelmingly positive, while recognising the need to be clear about the negative potential. It is blatantly obvious that this is not how the Catholic teaching is viewed by the population at large (019).

The presentation of the official Church in regard to marriage, Law, birth control and sexual relationships, which directly concern the moral and behavioural aspects of people's lived experience, come over as harsh, aloof and detached from that very experience (115). This resonates with the Church's perceived attitude towards sexuality because generally, the Church is said by many priests, to have a major problem with the question of sexuality. It is said to be so obsessed with its teachings, that there seems little concern for the suffering it causes or the damage done to the Church (036). Two priests expressed this in depth when responding to this research:

*“The biggest scandals in Church life concern attitudes to the divorced and remarried and to gays. To pick these situations as (alone) worthy of ex-communication is noxious. Also, I suspect that the very assumption of an ideal on one lifetime sexual partner, preceded by total sexual continence is so far from young people's experience as to see some form of legal fiction to them. Apart from the area of bio-ethics, I really think that the Church would be best served by a ten-year oratorium on utterances by the Magisterium about sexuality. As a rule of thumb, sexual matters should feature as frequently in Church teaching as they do in the four Gospels” (Ref 156)*

*“The Church's ruling on sexuality is of the Holy Spirits and cannot be substantially changed. We should hesitate to consider people guilty of grave sin when they are humble people who try to do God's will. There needs to be a move back to explicit teaching of right and wrong with due note of human weakness and God's Mercy”. (Ref 134)*

#### *Personal choice*

Subsequently, people's attitudes to these values will in turn affect their behaviour because in matters of personal sexual morality, experience states, say priests, that individuals will firstly, take note of what the Church



says then apply their own judgement to their own situation and needs (Ref 177). While there is a genuine desire for the Church to build a pastoral appreciation of personal situations and include everyone in sacramental life, acknowledging their contribution, irrespective of ‘perceived irregularities’ (Ref 144). Others feel that while they would welcome some change in the Church’s official discipline, they cannot see how the Church can approve of promiscuity or homosexual ‘marriages’ (Ref 062).

*“Most people today are said to practice contraception. The Church only advocates the rhythm method, but when they come to Church they receive Holy Communion! People that are living together also approach the altar for Holy Communion” (091)*

#### *Feelings of being abandoned or rejected*

Church ruling on divorce and re-marriage creates problems for people which leads them to believe they are abandoned by the church who need to accept where people are re sexuality, rather than wield the rule book (Ref 57). The teachings on divorce/re-marriage is a difficult area when trying to minister and support people placed outside the sacraments (Ref 065)

#### *Desire for change*

With regard to marriage problems for parishioners, priests would welcome change in the Church’s official discipline (Ref 62 *“Living together has now become the acceptable face of society. (018)* Priests are not receiving any definite help in determining how the Church should see these couples, or, respond when asked to baptise their offspring. Sexual freedom is now prominent at a much earlier age by both sexes (Ref 038). More people are ‘voting with their feet’. People are more open about sexuality and more at ease with being sexual beings.

#### *Priest’s sensitivity of people living in 21<sup>st</sup> century society*

People are equally *“deserving of respect and consideration regardless of their gender, marital status, orientation”* (Ref 144) and therefore, express a desire for pastoral appreciation of personal situations. Here, one is dealing with some of the most personal aspects of people’s lives and relationships. Crucially, *“the Church should speak with care, sensitivity*



*and a profound understanding of human nature as it is lived and experienced"* (Ref 177).

However, the Catholic Church is said to still fail in addressing real issues, leading to more contradiction. For many Catholics, sexuality is a taboo subject and still causes guilt, though many are now making up their own minds. (Ref 115). This was reinforced by one priest:

*"Moral Theology is an area of great concern. The Church must allow debate and theological discussion on moral issues especially with regard to marriage and family"* (098)

Clearly, there is a need for open debate and discussion about real life of the congregation and clergy today versus the Church Law and values derived from 2,000 years of this hierarchical, organisational institution. Simultaneously, others in the Church reinforce the traditional values and beliefs which are seen in the second area i.e. Clerical culture affecting both ordained and baptised members of the Church.

#### *Clerical Culture*

Clerical culture refers to the values, behaviours and actions associated not only with the ordained clergy but also in some non ordained individuals working at parish or diocesan level who identify strongly with clergy. Clerical culture itself, within the Church is characterised by privilege, separateness, status and entitlement with its attendant upside and downside, that is, fosters a sense of narcissistic succinctly put by two church writers from both a priest perspective and 'lay' baptised church member perspective, discussed earlier in this thesis:

*"Clericalism cuts across every boundary .. it's a mind-set by which we, either consciously or subconsciously believe ourselves to be of a higher caste.. we use our dog-collars to get preferential treatment .. give one another silly titles ... clericalism at its worse is a cult of status"* (Connolly, 1991)

This narcissistic entitlement and self absorption tends to keep priests emotionally immature and excessively dependent upon the approval of other superiors and parishioners (Cozzens, 2002). The role ambiguity and confusion that follows for clergy regarding their role is also part of the consequences

*"When I was first ordained, what I could do as an ordained priest, and what a lay*



*person could not do, included a number of functions that today we take for granted to be done by lay people. As a priest in administration rather than in a parish, I have been challenged as to what is 'mine' as an ordained priest has shrunk, and what is 'ours' as baptised Christians has grown" (Ryan, 1997)*

Clericalism is a dysfunctional form of this culture (Cozzens, 2003), notably for its authoritative style of ministerial leadership, a rigidly hierarchical worldview and a virtual identification of the holiness and grace of the Church with the clerical state thereby with the cleric himself.

### *Episcopal Culture*

This third culture is a variant of clerical culture reflected in the values and behaviours associated with bishops and cardinals. The upside of this culture is wisdom and humility but in contrast the downside is entitlement, arrogance and lack of both respect and accountability. Many negative aspects of this culture lead to a Church culture which fosters abusiveness (Cozzens, 2003). For those priests who feel they have been ignored in the career structure this causes undue resentment:

*"Some of the saddest priests are those who feel they have been overlooked. They have set their hearts on advancement in the Church and ecclesiastical honours" (Dolan, 2000)*

Such individuals suffer from what has been termed by one writer as "*Scarlet Fever*" a direct reference to the colour of clerical dress worn by a Cardinal and a condition which is deemed a dangerous virus in clerical life today (Dolan, 2000). Clearly, the traditional versus reality and lived experience of Church and parishioner life today is in serious need of discussion. The ongoing contradiction from both within and outside of the Church is clearly having an effect on its priests who are in the middle of both Church hierarchy and the people whom they simultaneously try to serve. The struggles of many priests who 'voiced' their experience of priesthood is all too clear from the qualitative data received and this in turn reinforces the key findings of the quantitative data from this research. In summarising these findings now in Chapter 6 of this thesis, the reality of priesthood today leaves further questions on both stress in the priesthood and more importantly the state of the Church as a hierarchical, organisational institution as it moves into this 21<sup>st</sup> Church and society.



## CHAPTER SIX

### *Introduction – Rationale for undertaking this research*

This thesis set out to investigate whether stress existed in the Roman Catholic priesthood. Crucially, it aimed to investigate stress from the priests' perspective, that is, their personal, lived experience. It also aimed to gain an understanding of why priests arrived at such perspectives, a key element of qualitative research (King, 1983). At the outset it was acknowledged that the R.C. priesthood could not be separated from its historical foundations, the R.C. Church as an organisational institution. The central argument to this thesis therefore, was that the working environment for Roman Catholic priests today is characterised precisely by many of the psychosocial factors recognised as damaging to health and well-being. This is reinforced from general research findings on health and well-being in contemporary organisations (Griffiths, 1998); stress research (Cox, 2001; Cooper 2002); Church literature; all of which has been discussed in depth earlier in this thesis.

Yet within the two entities, Church and priesthood, lies a paradox. On the one hand, the Roman Catholic Church exists as a 2,000 year old worldwide, institution with one billion members (Stourton, 1998), employing 1.5 million personnel (Sewell, 2001). Simultaneously, remaining private, causing intrigue and suspicion, the Church manages to retain a genius for the *mise en scene* (Stourton, 1998). This was evidenced in the recent conclave currently seeking to elect a new pope following the death of Pope John Paul II (April 2005) which caused worldwide media attention. Paradoxically, in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Roman Catholic Church is experiencing a growing sense of indifference towards it in the western world. Simultaneously, there is a growing interest in Church in South America and Africa. For the Church generally, to be ignored as irrelevant, is a new experience, calling for a new set of responses.



On the other hand, the R.C. priesthood within the Church is attracting quite the opposite response, that is, a growing media interest. Still reserved to male, single and celibate candidates, priesthood, once the epitome of sacred ritual and matters in a sacred language (Pilarczyk, 1986), is now experiencing turbulence. The clear identity, unquestioned status and exalted privilege has begun to blur (Cozzen, 2000). Priesthood itself has lost a great deal of its dignity and mystery (Rausch, 1999). Priests as human beings, have become more vulnerable and exposed when ministering to a congregation whose values are more akin with societal values rather than Church Law.

While many argue that outside of Europe the Church is growing, the Church of the western world is experiencing a loss in numbers. In a culture where individualism is increasing (Philibert, 2004) and less reliance is made generally on institutions for work, status and social needs, the Roman Catholic priest is caught in the middle of a dilemma. This has left the priest struggling to serve two masters; endeavouring to remain loyal and obedient to the Church he loves and serves, adhering to Canon Law, and, at the same time, empathising with his people living in a 21<sup>st</sup> century society.

The question of stress in the priesthood is also at the forefront of Church writers and media alike, and the media images of priesthood today therefore continues to be one of either an anomaly in a secular world or an anchor for virtue and decency in the modern world (Philpot, 1998). Additionally, the growing diversity of expectations of clergy by bishops, fellow priests, people and the media have left a confused priesthood and laity (Philibert, 2004). In short, even a cursory recognition of all these facts brings the possibility of stress in the R.C. priesthood to the fore. Examining the concept of stress in a male, single and celibate Roman Catholic priesthood offered a unique opportunity for investigating two seldom integrated research areas: contemporary psychological stress theory and the scientific study of the Roman Catholic priesthood. Very little research into R.C. clergy has been undertaken to date, the most recent was by Loudon (1997) involving 1482 returned questionnaires from



R.C. priests (42% response). Existing research however, has generally focussed on combining R.C. priests and male and female ministers of other Christian denomination, many of whom have dependent children (Blackmon, 1984). As a female researcher and a baptised and practising member of the Roman Catholic Church I was therefore attempting to access a male, hierarchical organisation to investigate a sensitive area, in an institution which has undergone little research in its 2000 year history.

I decided to use stress as a heuristic to investigate the quality of the working life of priests today. The rationale for employing the dual use of qualitative and quantitative methodology, was to allow cross fertilisation of a rich set of data extraction for scientific investigation, into the question of whether stress existed among Roman Catholic priests.

#### *The finding of my research data*

The purpose of individual interviews with clergy was to encourage priests to talk in detail and with richness about their personal experience of priesthood. The goal of then analysing this rich, qualitative data, was simply to try and decipher any consistent themes common in the experience of those ordained priests.

#### *The Interview Stage - Qualitative data from interviews with R.C. clergy*

The interview stage was the principle starting point for gathering data from a pilot group of clergy, to encourage them to talk openly and confidentially, in order to identify stressors in the Catholic priesthood. Perhaps the most interesting insights obtained from these initial responses, which laid the foundations for further investigation, were those related to three distinct areas:

- (a) priests domestic and personal concerns,
- (b) ministerial and spiritual aspects of pastoral work
- (c) impact for priests of the negative media portrayal of priesthood

The findings for each will be summarised as follows:

#### *(a) Domestic and personal concerns*

For decades, priests have operated in a dual domestic/work environment not dissimilar to the emerging 21<sup>st</sup> Century ethos of work~from~home



culture. The presbytery combines public access and private living, a combination which often leaves priests struggling through lack of privacy, isolation, being on call and leading a very public life within the community.

*(b) Ministerial/Spiritual Matters*

Within the daily ministry of clergy, there is a growing awareness of a perceived contradiction between Canon Law theory – the rules of the Roman Catholic Church – and the lived experience of its Church members. While the concept of contradiction is addressed later in this chapter, what is highlighted here is the impact this contradiction has on individual priests ministering within this environment. Finding themselves caught in the middle of a conflicting understanding of Church and priesthood, which so often polarises Catholic people today (Ryan, 1997), many priests were left struggling without support.

*(c) Media Interest*

Another area identified by clergy as a potential source of stress was the growing media interest within Catholic priesthood. Following a decade fuelled with revelation and allegation of clergy child abuse worldwide, these allegations and revelations place increasing pressures on innocent priests struggling to be true to their vocation and ministering to their congregation. A perceived lack of discussion by a growing culture of clericalism, power, authority and obedience within a 2000 year old Church institution clearly was having an effect on the practice of its members and the potential stressors it generated within priestly ministry. Each of the perceived sources of stress for clergy, revealed during interviews formed the basis of sections in a questionnaire distributed across four dioceses producing a response from nearly 200 ordained Catholic priests, a 38% response.

*Questionnaire Results Stage*

The quantitative data produced from clergy responses was statistically analysed, using a number of statistical techniques i.e. factor analysis, multiple linear regression, and one-way between subjects ANOVA. 17 distinct stressor factors for Roman Catholic clergy were identified. While



14 of these factors showed a typical mid point scoring representing only a mild to moderate stressor for clergy, a measurable minority of the sample i.e. 1:10 people found each of these 14 stressors problematic. It is important not to underestimate this result, because, not having access to clergy who left the priesthood, a sizeable number remaining are clearly struggling to maintain their vocation and daily ministry. In theological terms, this resonates with St Paul's analogy of the body. (*1 Corinth 12: v 12*) and how if one part struggles, the whole body is affected. Clearly, for clergy the entire fraternity along with the Church generally, will continue to struggle if matters are not acknowledged and addressed. More significantly, the three distinct remaining identified stressor factors for clergy did however prove more difficult for them as a whole:

- The difficulty caused by Contradiction between Canon law and the practical reality of parish life.
- Implementing Church rules on sacramental matter and educational access
- Dealing with what seems an inaccurate and invalid media portrayal of Church and priesthood

All three stressor factors as a whole had a mean score higher than the others. Here we have a common identified set of stressors for priests which is clearly causing them to struggle. At this point it is important to reflect and comment on the impact both of similar findings of the interviews and the questionnaire responses, in relation to those stressors identified in contemporary literature reviewed for this thesis, namely:

- R.C. priesthood espoused by both clerical and secular writers alike
- Literature in occupational and organisational psychology relating to stress

Succinctly put, five broad themes were discerned from the contemporary Church literature on clergy stressors, later resonating with additional research specifically on priesthood and stress. Extensively covered earlier in this thesis, a summary of the findings is given here to support my own results.



### *5 broad themes derived from Church literature on clergy stress*

1. Conflict between Canon Law and daily practical concerns of laity
2. Changes in parishioners' expectations and use of Church
3. Questioning of the relevance and effectiveness of the Church's hierarchically derived power, authority and impact upon the motivation and morale of individual priests.
4. Increasing negative coverage of Church and priesthood in media
5. Adequacy and effectiveness of seminary preparation and training for priesthood

Each of the findings, presented early in this thesis will be summarised below:

#### *1. Conflict between Canon Law and daily practical concerns of laity*

The Church views Canon Law as an interpretation of the teachings of Christ but there is growing conflict between Canon law and the lived reality of the people. This conflict today lies in the interpretation of Christ's teaching and its relevance in the context of this 21<sup>st</sup> Church and society which is a cause of stress for both priests and people.

The priest is also required both to live his own life according to this law, and, to convince his parishioners of its relevance in their lives. Caught in the middle he strives to be both loyal to his church and empathising with his people. Ministering within a sea of social changes and, witnessing his own Church organisational structures and procedures being called into question, both from within and outside the Church, this struggle puts further pressure and stress on the individual priest. The last review of the interpretation of Canon Law took place on 25 January 1983. There is however, still a genuine desire by the people to turn to the official truth, proclaimed by Vatican officials and Papal pronouncements (Philibert, 2004) especially in times of struggle or life crisis.

Clearly, when contradiction between Canon Law and lived reality becomes evident, then interpretation of the official truth is questioned by the people, resulting in some simply living by their own conscience. For the Catholic Church part of this contradiction is because Canon Law includes a broad spectrum of teachings, traditions, and practices, disciplines and customs, which clearly fall outside of the rubric of divine revelation. Yet while



pressure is felt to embrace the ‘official truth’, this in turn may denigrate and devalue the ‘personal truth’ of committed Christians who see a clear need for open discussion and discernment guided by the Spirit (Cozzens, 2002). If this debate is not forthcoming silence follows, and clericalism spreads. Understandably, there is now much disillusionment with the institutional Church and many commentators view the Church as facing particularly turbulent times, both in terms of broader societal changes, and, with respect to the Church’s response to those changes (Livingstone, 1992; Hedin, 1995; Haring, 1997; Ryan, 1997; Philpot, 1998; Power, 1998; Stourton, 1998; Sipe, 1998; Rausch, 1999; Cozzens, 2000; 2002; Dolan, 2000; Sewell, 2001; Dinter, 2003; Philibert, 2004). Clearly, there is a need to understand that ‘official truth’ stands in dialectional tensions with common truth, grounded in the experience of faithful believers striving to live in right relationships with God, each other and all creation (Cozzens, 2002). However, the very nature of the Church’s organisation, seems to resist and deter discussions based on a culture where such questioned would be considered disloyal.

It is not however, just priests but parishioners who have felt the impact of the rate of social change and its effect on relationships between God and his people (Philpot, 1998). The church congregations today, along with vocations to priesthood, are composed of a generation of the last 40+ years “generation X” who have experienced the shadows of institutional mismanagement, failed family life, championed individuals’ rights to express self, with the restrictions of compromising institutional affiliations, that is, family or society (Philibert, 2004). Many have difficulty in long terms commitment, postponing life-orientating decisions until later life. Others enter marriage, religious life, professions and careers with ‘provisional approaches’ or ‘contractual loopholes’ and commitments are ‘with conditions’ (Philpot, 1998). Some have developed a consumerist mentality, included in which is religion, making the Church institution and its ministers ‘purveyors of services’ (Philibert, 2004). Religion itself, in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, has simply become marginalized, trivialised and very much privatised (Philibert, 2004).



## *2. Changes in Parishioner expectations and use of Church*

The three most discerning trends in parishioner's attitudes and behaviours towards Church and the modern world have been to turn away from Church completely, evidenced in the declining Mass and Sacramental attendance in the western world, choose to attend but not adhere to its ruling e.g. on contraception, or to develop a consumerist mentality towards Church, that is, claim membership at a time of need or want, e.g. for weddings, funerals or a place in a Catholic school. This inevitably has a effect on priests ministering within the church community today, as these trends place demands on the priest, who ministers and evaluates in a declining Church, resulting in his diminished self worth, feeling lonely and lowered self esteem/alienation.

### *The double bind for priests*

Clearly, in terms of stress, there is a double bind here for priests. Firstly, there is a personal obligation and pressure to visibly live according to the rules of Canon Law himself and, to convince his parishioners of its relevance to their lives. Any ambiguity and contradiction in a priest's own life is likely to damage his ability to reinforce Canon Law. Yet many are living in contradiction in their personal lives or have witnessed first hand accounts of family members mirroring contradictory societal values in favour of the Church.

However, other priests themselves are less sympathetic with colleagues who 'break the rules' or are seen to 'fail' because it actually puts a different strain on them to keep the rules while dealing with a media who label all clergy with the same behaviour. A further stressor for clergy is not simply the questioning of theological validity of Church teaching and discipline – and indeed, priests are among those who question today – but its social application. Tension arises with Canon Law because of the ambiguity caused through it providing a general framework within a given set of socio-economic conditions. If, as commentators suggest, huge numbers of laity are turning away from the Catholic Church, what impact



does this have on the priest's own experience of his ministry or performance, when providing pastoral care to his people's lived reality ?

On the other hand, for some clergy the tension and stress become so painful that they are forced to adopt an attitude of 'unthinking obedience and loyalty' to simply escape the discomfort of being 'in tension' with the Church they love (Cozzens, 2000). Ministering to an increasingly disinterested Church community is likely to impact on the priests own view of self, affecting his self esteem and value placed on his own ministry, and indeed, the very strength of his own vocation is effected (Cozzens, 2002). Equally the growing division between clergy and people has been voiced by priests themselves.

All of these factors may often remain hidden to all but the priest himself, who struggles in isolation, unable to link into a support system in the community and unable to share with fellow clergy for fear of being labelled a failure, or because others are already struggling themselves and in no position to offer guidance.

### *3. Questioning the relevance and effectiveness of Church Hierarchy*

Clearly, the Catholic Church is not alone in facing a challenge to its institution. The turbulence felt within the Church institution today mirrors that of the disappearing grand institutions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century society that offered stability, direction and social identity including the traditional family unit. Institutional disloyalty is on the rise generally (Philibert, 2004) and we are living in a culture expressing a lack of trust and loyalty in institutions (Philibert, 2004), while showing visible signs of individualism which take precedence over the communal. Individuals no longer finding meaningful expression in organisations, including the Church, so leave or manipulate the organisation for person gain (Philibert, 2004). There is both growing confusion and contradiction within the Church, as evidenced among priests and people alike (Cozzens, 2000) While all baptised members are invited to play a role in Church ministry (Cornwell, 2001), in practice, collaborative ministry has resulted in role conflict and confusion.



Other's felt that 'Lay' ministers have little or no training to take on some of the roles once undertaken by ordained clergy who have spent 6 years in residential seminary. Many priests feel that the level of Catechesis generally among adult is considered poor (Connolly, 2001) creating a barrier to truly collaborative ministry in the laity. Tension has also arisen in this institutional structure, that one moment invites the laity to participate through collaborative ministry, while simultaneously asserting itself as hierarchical (Connolly, 2001). There is also a felt reluctance by the people to respond to the invitation or be responsible for a role in the Church. For many older Catholics, *'the pyramidal model of Church is too ingrained in one's psyche to be dismissed overnight'* (Connolly, 2001). In contrast there is a culture of apathy in some aspects of ministry where the 'laity' are happy to play a passive role expecting the priest to perform' (Cornwell, 2001) leaving priests questioning what percentage of their time is spent on duties which could be done by non ordained:

Confusion for clergy is compounded via the influx of Anglican married priests and 400 permanent deacons in England today, who are married with children, experiencing 'the best of both worlds' that is, marriage and ministry combined. Critical too, are the many Catholic priests who left the ministry precisely because they wished to marry (Stourton, 1998) many of whom now remain outside of the Church and the Sacraments. This sense of injustice, along with the whole issue of celibacy was repeatedly voiced by clergy responding to my research.

#### *4. Increasing negative coverage of Church and priesthood in the media*

Unrest and media headlines, speculation and questions on the whole area of church teaching do little to promote Church and priesthood today. Even in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century the Church continues to be in the public eye:

*"Roman Curia addresses media image" - "In common with most institutions these days, the Vatican is often perceived as an unfeeling bureaucracy of interfering officials ... there should be greater effort made on the part of the official to 'find out the real position of those who criticise' and to welcome more constructive criticism" (The Catholic Herald 26 Nov 2004 – E Pentin's Vatican Notebook- Fr Thomas Rohr).*



Not surprisingly, the general perceived climate of unrest that prevails both inside and outside the Church has become a target of many uncomplimentary media headlines. On the one hand at least, politically sympathetic media has recognised the increasing demands made on a decreasing numbers of priests. On the other hand, a more critical and intrusive media is quick to speculate, judge and combine comment on possible links between the Catholic Church's all male culture, child abuse, and homosexuality. With discussions of historical and current cases of child abuse worldwide, trust in the Roman Catholic Church has been severely shaken and this has led to many people questioning the whole area of Church teaching. Particular concerns have been expressed over issues surrounding the sexuality of individuals - whether priests or laity - and the way they are responded to once their sexuality is revealed (Cozzens, 2002). Such questioning reveals further contradiction in Church Law and lived reality presented earlier.

The ongoing crisis in the Church over child abuse has proved devastating for the vast majority of innocent priests who are not child molesters. Accused of nothing, they find their own lives dramatically transformed by the abusive behaviour of others and more seriously, "by the occasional failure of the Church they love, to detect, deter, or to stop the abuse" (Cozzens, 2002). Priests frequently expressed their lived reality of such a culture. The real issue for many clergy was why these men were allowed to become priests in the first place? Priests responding to this research put forward a variety of concerns regarding child abuse, particularly the growing culture of mistrust. This in itself is contrary to the pastoral ministry of clergy where human contact is vital in a compassionate environment e.g. reconciliation. Similar thoughts were voiced by other clergy. The general tenor of the media portrayal of the Church is arguably that of an organisation in crisis. Indicative are more newspaper stories, chronicling falling attendance both at Church and in the Seminaries, including the exit of clergy from the Catholic priesthood. This is portrayed in the next section identified in this research.



### *5. Adequacy and effectiveness of Seminary preparation and training for priesthood*

The impact of this negative media portrayal has upon the motivation, morale, well-being and self esteem of the individual priest is unknown. Certainly, negative public and media expectations are known to be a major source of stress in many occupations and organisations (Cooper, 1998). Equally, what media image of priesthood, particularly training in the Church is perpetuated.

#### *Expectations of priesthood in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church*

Clearly here, there is a question about the expectations placed upon priests from individual sources which has led to an increased diversity of demands placed upon a diminishing number of priests.

#### *The Church's and the Bishops' expectations of clergy*

Priests must firstly respond obediently to their Bishop, adhere to Canon Law, but this obedience appears today to be structured towards a mainly institutional and hierarchical dimension of ecclesial ministry (Power, 1998) causing some priest's to actually question this authority. This questioning is simply due to the nature of obedience which has quite an exceptional dignity (Haring, 1997) and, in its absolute form, we owe religious obedience to God alone. Many priests, by their own admission, lack real training for the diversity of roles and demands placed upon them today. Many failed to realised the complexity of the parochial community, spending years bluffing their way through bureaucratic details of finance and administration (Guiver, 2001). For priests it is often difficult to express this within the existing hierarchical structure.

#### *The media expectation of clergy*

Paradoxically, the media expectations portray a clear view of priesthood. On television, powerful images emerge including healing and interpreting of tragic life events when others cannot fulfil that role. Yet priests continue to be mindful of media expectations because of the suspicion aroused from clergy child abuse cases (Philibert, 2004) leaving priests



ministering within a culture of mistrust and even direct ridicule of their ministry mentioned earlier in this chapter.

### *Clergy expectations of priesthood*

Further expectations come from the priests themselves and fellow clergy. The old concept of priesthood has rapidly changed in the last decade alone, leaving priests struggling to find their identity and role. As a result, for many a new if uncertain priesthood is taking shape (Cozzens, 2002). While priestly ministry is not compatible with a worldly job, neither can any sort of theological, genetic engineering seek to shape the function of priesthood (Balthasar, 1981). Rather, priests are viewed as jack-of-all-trades, making a job description impossible.

Priests today have become the purveyors of services (Philibert, 2004) struggling to find a balance between acting as authentic interpreter of Church teachings and offering a compassionate work for those ‘outside’ of the Church (Cozzens, 2000). Priests have moved from pedestal to participation, from clinical preacher to contemporary mystagogue, lone ranger to collaborative ministry, from monastic spirituality to a secular spirituality and from saving souls to liberating people (Bacik, 1990). Priesthood today, continues to be seen as either an anomaly in a secular age or an anchor for virtue and decency in the modern world. In trying to meet all these diverse demands, priests who persevere in the priesthood and in their vocation may be termed ‘oblative personalities’ (Philibert, 2004). In short, a contemporary understanding of priesthood by writers in the Church can only be discerned in the context of the whole people of God (Guiver, 2001) but this diversity leads to further ambiguity.

### *Impact of diversity of expectation on the priest*

The dual pressure of a changing priesthood and conflicting demands and expectations from different sources has impacted heavily on priests today. Many feel trapped, overworked and frustrated, caught in the middle of conflicting demands of Church and priesthood that so often polarise Catholic congregations today (Ryan, 1997). Stripped of the status and



privilege that allowed priests to ignore the personal signs of anxiety and loneliness, priests are now forced to address their human conditions without the defences and rationalisations of previous clerical cultures, despite being part of a common presbyterate offering mutual appreciation and support (Philibert, 2004). This diversity is paradoxically a blessing or a source of disunity among the presbyterate (Philibert, 2004). The question here is what does contemporary research on stress among clergy reveal about priesthood in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church and society?

*Stress among clergy – does it actually exist?*

Very little research into clergy stress has been undertaken to date. Existing research has investigated both male and female ministers, often married with children. This accurately highlights the need and justification for undertaking my research into stress in the Roman Catholic priesthood, whose subjects are male, single and celibate and whose organisational institution has undergone little research in the last 2000 years. While existing research on other ministers of religion has produced conflicting evidence: 75% of all clergy, aged 30-49 years (McDonald, 1980), are said to have suffered major stress; 33% of these have had serious thoughts on leaving their vocation (Blackmon, 1984). Incidents of reported stress in clergy have labelled the symptoms of emotional exhaustion as burnout (Richmond, Rayburn, Rogers, 1988), a term recognised in care giving professions (Daniel and Rogers, 1981; Doohan, 1982). As burnout specifically related to a spiritual dimension can result in loss of idealism and energy, especially for those motivated by idealistic values of services and professional goals (Swogger, 1981), further research has identified to what extent priests would be considered ‘at risk’ of stress (Fletcher, 1989; Daniels and Rogers, 1981). These have presented the findings in four distinct categories:

Firstly, individuals in ministry are neither sufficiently aware of personal limitations nor their motivation for entering ministry. Secondly, the personal profiles of ministers suggest religious tend to be more perfectionist, worrisome, introverted, socially inept and possibly isolated



and withdrawn (Dunn 1965). Thirdly, the Church within which clergy minister does not provide adequate support, advice or group based work opportunities, no in-service or graduate style training on clergy with interpersonal stress or its processes (Lauer 1973). Finally, the Church could be accused therefore of 'structural punishment' of its clergy expecting them to do the impossible, i.e. called spiritually yet judged and evaluated on organisational rather than spiritual criteria (Lauer 1973). Clearly, the contradiction emerging here gives insight into the unique nature of the culture within which they work.

#### *Findings from research into stress among clergy*

Research undertaken by Rayburn Richmond and Rogers, (1985) discovered clergy were considered less exposed to stress than average persons at work, and parochial ministers showed greater stress in terms of work overload, highest role insufficiency, role ambiguity, responsibility and vocational strain. However, clergy were second highest on religious groups in psychological, personal and physical strain but reported more personal resources to counteract the effects of occupational stress compared with a normative sample, (Fletcher 1989) 87% of this group being married and 54% having dependent children (Fletcher 1989 study).

Smith (1994) reported that Church ministers are faced with a number of simultaneous roles as 'carer'; e.g. to visit the sick and housebound, perform the necessary religious rituals, provide empathy, compassion and a listening ear in times of struggle and adversity, and play a full role in school governance and educational direction. This multitude of role demands, in which ministers often remain 'on call' for twenty-four hours a day can and does take its toll, not simply in terms of increasing exhaustion and burnout, but also personal (vocational) questioning and vulnerability on the minister's part. In short the paradox and contradiction that has to be overcome in bringing the lessons of the Gospels (e.g. faith, obedience, charity) before an increasingly materialistic, secular and irreligious world can lead ministers to question their fundamental value, worth and relevance, with serious damage being done to confidence and self-esteem as a result.



Smith (1994) found clergy indulged in habitual self criticism betraying low self esteem (Eadie 1973); There was additional strain for the minister in accepting dependence on the omnipotent God, because humans generally prefer to be depended upon rather than be dependent resulting in dual interlocked dependency. Smith (1994) found ministers were dependent on Church for accommodation and domestic provision in contrast with a need for ministers to maintain a sense of self worth. This resonated with the vocations ethos 'to give and not receive'; where ministers felt guilty, or were reluctant to address their own needs. A lack of attention to their personal needs could actually lead to ministers experiencing a sense of loneliness and isolation (Smith 1994). This places questions on the wider concept of humanity within the priesthood itself. Research by Dewe(1987) sought to identify the stressors for New Zealand ministers. There were 280 questionnaire responses in total from 468, of which 92% were men and of whom 90% were married. Three key facts emerged:

- Parish conflict and church conservatism
- Difference within individual parish commitment, and development of parishioner power and their perceived reluctance to grow
- Ministers not meeting peoples needs

Clearly contradiction within the ministry of priesthood is emerging which mirrors that of findings from my own research and church writers on the Roman Catholic Priesthood. The question is, how do these resonate with stress in occupational and organisational psychology research findings?

### *Stress, Priesthood and psychosocial work environment*

The findings from my research identified 17 stressor factors for clergy, many of which resonated with findings by Church writers. Equally, the findings of occupational and organisational psychological research needed to be addressed to determine parallels with stressors in the Catholic priesthood. Psychosocial factors are concerned with the way work is designed, organised and managed (ILO, 1986). Psychological research findings identified two broad categories namely content of work, that is workload; the work place and context of work, that is relationships with colleagues and Line managers (Cox, 1998). Further research identified 8



potential sources of stress within the workplace environment (Griffiths, 1998):

- 1. Working conditions
- 2. Long hours
- 3. New technology
- 4. Role ambiguity
- 5. Role conflict
- 6. Encounters with others
- 7. Lack of belonging
- 8. Lack of opportunities to participate

From the two broad categories above, a number of psychosocial factors, some ‘content’ and some ‘context’ related, were found to consistently link with poor well-being and health. The central argument here is that the work environment for the Roman Catholic priests today is actually characterised precisely by many of these psychosocial factors known to be damaging to health and well-being. From the findings of my research these factors may include tension, caused by contradiction between Canon law and daily living; discrepancies: between priests re practice in ministry; change within the Church organisation where real consultation is missing. Clearly, the picture emerging is one of priesthood operating in a psychosocial work environment not dissimilar to the secular world, which impacts upon his heath and well-being.If we merge these two broad categories of work related stress i.e. content and context (Cox, 1998) and the 8 potential sources of stress within these common themes (Griffiths, 1998), applied to my research findings, three distinct areas of potential stress for clergy emerge:

<i>Occupational /Organisational Stressors</i>	<i>Impact on Roman Catholic Clergy</i>
Structure/Organisation	Hierarchy, parishioner power, contradiction convenience store mentality, difficulties in 21 <sup>st</sup> society living
Pressure/Demand/	Pastoral Care, Sacramental access and Church Law. Charity and Finance,
Parish and	Personal, self evaluation, failing, unfulfilment, cynicism, negative media portrayal Person/Conditions/Performance



### *Implications of my research findings on clergy stress:*

#### *Structure/Organisation*

Psychologists suggest that hierarchical, bureaucratic organisations structures may permit little participation in work decisions by employees. Inadequate communication between managerial and non managerial personnel can also contribute to employee strain (Cooper, 2001). Current Church literature indicates a desire for the Roman Catholic Church to decentralise from Rome, particularly from voices heard in Central and South American leading to localised management and decision making. Yet control and autonomy, part of the role for priests today, is in conflict with centralised management and obedience to one's Dean and Bishop in the diocese. Many middle managers in industry are deemed vulnerable and may experience bullying (Cox and Griffiths, 1998). How much power, authority and autonomy does a priest actually have in practice?

#### *Pressure/Demand/Workload/Role Conflict*

Role conflict exists when an individual is torn by the conflicts and demands of other group members in the organisation (Cooper, 1992). This includes undertaking tasks not perceived as part of their job, or being involved with a job that conflicts with personal values or beliefs. For Catholic priests, stress may result from the contradiction and inconsistency experienced in his ministry and a difficult work environment. The increasing role of the laity leads to further questioning of the priest's own role and questioning of his very identity, as the boundaries become blurred. Lack of participation in work activity is known to be associated with negative mood and behaviour response portrayed in escapist drinking and heavy smoking (Caplan et al 1975). In contrast, increased opportunity to participate results in improved performance, lower staff turnover, and improved levels of mental and physical well-being (Margolis, et al 1974). The question here is clarifying the distinct role of the priest and the laity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century church, in an institution where open discussion for clergy is not a viable option.



Additional sources of stress related to workplace concern the lack of adequate information available to employees to carry out tasks, or, lack of clarity over the task at hand. Stress arising from under achievement of goals, or objectives can ultimately lead to job dissatisfaction, lack of self confidence, feeling of futility, lowered self esteem, depression, low motivation increase blood pressure and intention to leave (Kahn, et al 1964; French & Caplan, 1970; Margolis et al 1974). The implications for priesthood are clear. Catholic priests carrying out multiple roles are working alone, making autonomous decisions in a number of areas requiring specialism. Many of these may be for roles for which he is clearly not trained e.g. Parish accountancy and finance, grant application, child protection, income tax, health and safety, employment contracts et al. Many priests realise that lack of training and experience, or indeed questioning what their role should be, leads to further questions about self, as summarised by one priest ‘Who or what am I expected to do, or to be?’

#### *Personal Evaluation, Cynicism*

Where communication focuses on negative attributions about other personnel; cynicism regarding leadership and management of the organisations; attempts by employees to further their own interests at the expense of others; feeling and lack of support are generated; all these in turn lead to increased strain (O’Driscoll and Cooper, 1996). Well-being is a dynamic state of mind characterised by reasonable harmony between a person’s abilities, needs and expectations and environmental demands and opportunities and ‘health work’ which does not threaten, but maintains or enhances the physical, psychological and social well-being of the worker (WHO, 1986 definition of health).

#### *The impact of stressors on Health and well-being of Roman Catholic priests*

The transactional model of stress adopted for this research endeavours to explore the essential nature of the stressor-strain outcome relationship. Simultaneously, it aims to encapsulate an understanding of the dynamic stress process itself, which is not merely a statistical relationship between variables (Cooper, 2001) but the dynamics of the psychological



mechanisms of cognitive appraisal and coping that underpin the stressful encounter (Cox, 1998).

Stress is a subjective experience and in terms of indicators of stress utilized in this research, reliance has been made upon self reporting measures. While some have questioned the reliability and status of self reported measures (Crump et al, 1980; Rayburn, Richmond and Rogers, 1985; Hinklee, 1987; Dewe, 1987; Griffiths and Cox, 1998; Cooper, 2001) the need for utmost confidentiality and anonymity required for my research subjects deemed this the most suitable way of data collection. In order to improve the strength of my findings, self report measures were categorised into the three identified modalities of symptoms of harm and strain and may be presented in physical, psychological or behavioural terms. Stress at work is now recognised as a major occupational health problem (Griffiths, Cox 1978).

Stress is seen as damaging to both individual and the organisation (Karasek and Theorell 1982; Lazarus and Folkman 1984; Martin and Wall 1989; Kahn and Byosier 1990 Westman and Eden 1992; O’Driscoll and Beehr 1994; Warr 1994; Newton, Cooper and Jackson 1995; Cope and Cartwright 1997; Sparks et al 1997; Norayanon Merton and Spector 1999); Friend, et al 1984; Jackson and Schuler, 1985 Jex and Beehr, 1991)

*3 modalities identified above were used:*

<u>Modalities</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
Physical Health	General well-being
Psychological Health	Self esteem Positive outlook, confidence in ministry Thoughts on retirement
Behavioural health	Intention to leave

Since this thesis is couched within the terms of contemporary stress theory so the common sources of stress identified with occupational stress research offered a useful point of reference against which to compare the 17 stressors factors identified. Taking the principal categories of



occupational stress identified by Cooper and Eaker, (1988) together with some of the major elements of organisational factors which fall under each category; attempting to link my 17 stressors findings in RC priests with the 3 common categories of stress as determined by occupational researchers, discussed earlier in this thesis, which produced the following results:

*Links between the 5 principal categories in occupational and organisational stress and 8 of the stress factors identified from my data on R.C. clergy stress*

*1. Stressors intrinsic to job, namely – working conditions, long hours, new technology*

While long hours of work are reported to affect employees health and over work is linked to coronary heart disease (Brewlow and Buell, 1960) the relationship between workload and lack of control resonates with symptoms of stress related ill health (Dewe, 1987; Cox and Griffiths, 1998; Cooper, 2001; Friend and Caplan, 1974; Cox, 1980). Three of my identified stressors for clergy namely, convenience store mentality, parish maintenance, and hierarchical organisational structures were linked to factors intrinsic to the job stress. These findings indicate and reinforce the reality of stress in the working life of R.C. priesthood today:

- Priests are increasingly asked to cover one or more parishes due to downsizing and lack of parishioners, increasing clergy workloads
- Ministering within a larger geography increases the administration, maintenance of plant and buildings and crucially the level of driving, responsibility and demand for pastoral care over a wider geography.
- Diversity of workload, intensity of demand on priests, dual office/domestic setting, relentless expectation to ‘perform, serve and respond to need, introduction of new technology all add to stress in his working environment

*2. Role in the organisation*

The role of the individual in an organisation setting can encompass ambiguity, conflict and levels of responsibility. Role ambiguity, and conflict, bad supervision, appraisal and evaluation are known stress factors in occupational settings (Warsahaw, 1979; Ivancevich and Matterson, 1980) Frone, Russel, Cooper 1992; Cooper, 2001; Greenhaus, Bevell, 1985; Lobel, 1991; Marshall, 1980; Gray, Toft and Anderson, 1981; Sutherland & Cooper, 1990; Tyler and Cushway, 1992). Given the



diversity of priestly duties, not surprisingly the issue of role ambiguity and conflict is a feature of 6 of the 17 identified stress factors in my research findings for clergy, namely: inconsistency in practice, parishioner power, contradiction, pastoral care, parish maintenance and hierarchy authority and power. The diversity of the priest's role within the complexity of a multicultural community, can impact on each of these six areas.

Role conflict, ambiguity, workload and organisational changes have already been recognised as work related stressors in the Church (Hoge, 2002) because the communities served by priests in this 21<sup>st</sup> century are complex, increasingly multicultural and multiethnic, due to changing immigration patterns. Priests are requested to fill an expanding repertoire of multiple roles to an ever more diverse flock. Priests try to make sense of the mess to bring the light of the Gospel to the concrete structures of the current world (Hoge, 2002). In their pastoral care and parish maintenance, overworked clergy have increased responsibility (Hoge, 2001). Many young priests are simply overwhelmed, inadequately supervised, and require several specialisms to which they believe themselves deficient. Is it any wonder many have considered early retirement and intention to quit?

### *3.Relationships at work*

Our encounters with other people are known sources of both support and stress (Makin, Cox and Cooper, 1988). Equally, dealing with bosses, peers and subordinates and clients all affect us and can result in stress (Seyle, 1974; Shefir & Sherif, 1954; French and Caplan, 1972) These areas of stress resonate with Roman Catholic priesthood where the same organisational and social psychological dynamics apply. The Church for many is seen as a hierarchical institution, reinforcing absolute authority and unquestioned obedience. While policy, practice and direction can cause disputes or differences, equally the promotion of a culture of careerism is evident. This is in contrast to promoting collaborative ministry. The comparison between priests and people regarding resources i.e. human, material and financial, and for priests the lack of affirmation and self esteem; strain of keeper of secrets in and outside of the



Confessional; loneliness and perceived lack of support and difficult relationships all contribute to stress for priests today.

#### *4. Career Development*

In the work/labour market, organisational changes have radically altered people's experience of career (Arnold, Cooper, Robertson, 1998). While 'vocation' to priesthood is not reducible to 'employment' based relationship significant by the concept of a career, priests still have a career within an organisation, albeit a 2000 year old hierarchical, organisational institution. So inevitably, the impact of society and organisational changes will impact upon their vocation. In terms of the priests role 'as a job description, it is impossible' (Philibert, 2004). Priests have to cope with an increasing workload and major organisational change which can lead to a negative effect of physical and mental health (Tombaugh and White, 1990; Cascio, 1993; Dekker and Schaufeli, 1995; Two main reasons clergy resign from Church ministry are inability to live with the present structure of the Church and secondly, a desire to marry (Hodge, 1999). Both of these areas, i.e. overwork and over responsibility, leave many clergy simply overwhelmed. Living arrangements which are assigned and not chosen may add to their personal unhappiness within this diocesan structure (Hodge, 1999). In addition, three reasons for leaving as a result of stress itself were identified as living a celibate life and loneliness; difficulties in establishing private living space; overly heavy handed authority structures in the Church (Hoge, 2001). Many factors are part of career development within a secular works and life choice and clergy are aware of counterparts who are financially rewarded and secure through future pension and investment planning schemes.

#### *5. Organisational structures*

Being part of an organisation can present a threat to in the individuals sense of freedom and autonomy, lack of belonging and inadequate opportunities to participate, being excluded in communication and consultation (Cooper, et al 1995). Allowing to participate in decision making leads to higher job satisfaction (Coch and French 1948). The RC Church as a human organisation remains subject to the dynamics common



to other organisations and institutions and as such three areas identified in clergy are isolation, work overload, and thoughts on leaving the priesthood. What level of ministry are they offering to parishioners when psychologically they intend to leave? All these 5 areas and 8 factors identified collectively may produce a negative impact on the health and well being of clergy. The next section of my research looked directly at the impact in the structure of the transactional model of stress.

### *Outcomes of identified stressors on health and well being*

The empirical association between the 17 identified sources of stress and 9 indicators of health and well being was explored in accordance with risk-assessment procedures (Cox and Griffiths, 1998) to demonstrate the relationship between stressors and strain. The existence of a measurable relationship between these will ultimately demonstrate the existence of stress in the Roman Catholic priesthood. A total of 9 outcomes/ harm measures were identified as impacting on the health and well being of Roman Catholic priests. There was a modest empirical relationship between a number of stressor factors and a variety of utilised indicators of strain resulting in six distinct categories:

### *Clergy experiencing feelings of worn-out and uptight*

A total of 7 stressors impacted upon feelings of being worn-out while 8 stressors impacted upon feelings of being uptight, both related to the well being of individual priests. Interestingly 5 of these identified stressor factors, impacted jointly upon worn-out and uptight. The more priests perceived contradiction; experienced conflict between Church Law and lived reality of parishioners; perceived parishioners as powerful; perceived inconsistency between clergy and ministry, so to did their feeling of personal failure, and a sense of unfulfilment increase leaving priests worn-out and uptight.

### *Self esteem for clergy*

8 identified sources of stress for clergy had a relatively low impact upon the priest's feelings of personal failure indicating a moderate effect on their self esteem. Equally, 4 of the identified sources of stress did have an



impact upon the priest's positive outlook on life or intention to leave the priesthood. Clearly, the more involvement a priest had in pastoral care of parishioners, implementation of ministry, a sense of personal failure and experience of inconsistency in practice between ministers, the more negatively his attitude to the future and his intention to leave. Despite the strength of the relationships providing fairly modest this questions the quality of ministry he was providing to others, which further questions the whole area of appraisal, quality assurance and evaluation in their work and lives in the Church as an organisational institution.

#### *Clergy Confidence in pastoral ministry and sacraments*

There was actually a low impact by identified stressors for clergy on their confidence to ministry and the sacraments. Often clergy may actually cling to these aspects of priesthood, the very core of their ordination which may have a positive outcome on the health and well being.

#### *Clergy thoughts on retirement*

Results revealed that priests attitude to retirement depended on the impact of their feelings of personal failure, competition among clergy, the Church structures and responsibilities of parish maintenance. In order to explore further the cumulative impact of any significant stressors upon health and well being as well as their independent impact and, control for the possible inter-relationship between stressors factors, a series of 9 multiple linear regressions were run.

Crucially, this provided more substantiate evidence of the stress experience of the priesthood generally, than can be extrapolated from a simple zero order correlation matrix alone. From the cumulative impact of 7 utilised predictors upon worn-out, only the sense of cynicism and unfulfilment were reported by some clergy as making a significant independent prediction of worn out. Simply put, as priests experience higher levels of unfulfilment and cynicism in their ministry, so they report a greater number of symptoms of feeling worn out. Similar results produced a feeling of being uptight. While a sense of personal failure fore priests did give a marginal result it did not prove significant for the uptight scores. A



positive attitude revealed that priests experience more difficulty in implementing their ministry, self evaluation and greater reported inconsistency in practice by fellow clergy lead them to developing a more negative attitude to life and ministry in general. Yet, interestingly, at the very core, the personal care of the priest i.e. the care givers, may be affected by a personal sense of failure, in turn affecting their self confidence in experience of ministry. If priests continue to experience a growing sense of contradiction within the Church, a sense of unfulfilment and dis-ease with celibacy, intention to leave increases. Confidence in pastoral ministry is further affected by the diversity of expectation of the priest's role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Church.

#### *The impact of social support on stressors and outcomes for clergy*

How does social support act as a moderator between sources of stress for clergy and its impact on their health and well-being? The transactional model of stress used within my thesis explored the area of social support believed, in the occupational context, to alleviate stress at work (Schaufeli, 1995; Rosen and Moghadom, 1988;1990). While changes in the workplace of this 21<sup>st</sup> century have led to changes in the psychological contract for the individual worker (Cooper, 2001) the significant power of work support interaction indicates that work support buffers the effects of powerlessness or psychosomatic symptoms (Long 1993; Cooper, 2001). Perceived availability of social support has been significantly correlated with reduced depression and somatic symptoms (Frome, Russell and Cooper 1995).

The actual form of social support varied (House, 1981; Schaufeli, 1995; producing equally opposite arguments that social support in fact did not have an effect; had an ambivalent effect; or even a negative effect on the individual (Atkinson, et al, 1986; Beehr, 1995; Vaux, 1988). The contradiction is partly due to the way the concept of social support has been defined and operationalised (Jackson, 1985; Leather et al 1986).

However, the actual impact of social support on health and well-being focuses on, the individual receiving specific aid for a specific problem



(Beehr, 1995; Rosen and Moghaddom, 1990; Leather, et al, 1998); fulfils a need for affiliation, belonging, social recognition and affection (Cineshensel & Stone, 1982). On the other hands, negative support or being 'let down' proves unhelpful on the individual's well-being (Guppy and daniels, 1997; Brown, Andes, Harris, Alder and Bridge, 1986).

Using the transactional model of stress applied to the R.C. priesthood, this research aimed to address the extent to which the availability of social support to clergy helped them to cope with stress by means of:

1. Lessening the demands of 17 identified sources of stress
2. Directly promoting and enhancing well-being
3. Attenuating the strength of any empirical relationships between 17 identified sources of stress and 9 outcomes of individual strain

The question here is do priests actually *feel* supported and if so, *by whom*? Each priest was asked to rate 4 types of support identified among Dean, Fellow clergy, Family and friends regarding, Advice, Information and Guidance; Practical help; Encouragement, Listening and Understanding; An opportunity to take time out and get away from it all.

### *Results of social support available to R.C. clergy*

#### *Support from the Dean*

Very little or some support was identified as perceived by clergy. This was offered in the form of practical help, and a means of taking time out/getting away. Fellow clergy on the other hand, gave some or slightly better support in the form of a source of encouragement, listening and understanding, and practical help. Family and friends, however, were perceived to offer and give quite a lot of support and in the form of encouragement, listening and understanding and at a greater level overall. It was acknowledged that Deans were actually 'fellow priests' themselves who both gave and indeed needed support too.

In short, the results showed that families – provided the priest has one – gave greater advice, support and guidance significantly greater than support received from the Dean, but showed no significant difference in



support offered from fellow clergy. Family and friends offered more practical help than either the Dean or fellow clergy and in the form of encouragement listening and understanding. Family and friends also offered more opportunity to take time out and get away. However, and perhaps not surprisingly, while the total amount of support was significantly greater from family and friends, none of the overall support was completely significant in alleviating stress for clergy.

Many priests would not be surprised at these results which were voiced in qualitative data presented in chapter seven of this thesis. The real question is, did the support offered actually help them? Since the 12 support items factored on the basis of source not type of support, it is the aggregate amount of support available from each source which is used to explore the direct impact upon clergy.

There was only a modest empirical relationship between three identified source of support and the 17 identified sources of stress for priests presented in Table 10 of Chapter Six. Clergy support correlated negatively with the demand of convenience stores mentality of the parishioners, implementing ministry in 21<sup>st</sup> century society, the priest feeling unfulfilled and the impact of hierarchical power and structures in the Church. An increased level of perceived support is however associated with less perceived demand from each of those factors.

In addition, support from fellow clergy also correlates with findings of greater value for celibacy perhaps through reinforcing a fraternity of priesthood. Support from family and friends shows a beneficial association with two sources of stress, that is the convenience store mentality and the charitable aspects of ministry. In both cases, an increased level of perceived support is related to less demand from these issues. Strikingly, there are so few significant correlations between identified sources of support and symptoms of strain or well being to make any impact. Specifically, support from each of these three identified sources has a low albeit beneficial impact upon a single and separate indicator of well being.



Support from the Dean, correlates positively with a priest's confidence in administering the sacraments, while greater support from fellow clergy is related to lower levels of pessimism. In conclusion, the greater the support from family and friends, the less priest's report feeling lonely.

Examining the role of social support as a potential moderator of stressor-strain relationship, a series of hierarchical multiple linear regressions (MLR) were used. A separate analysis was conducted from each outcome variable presented in chapter four of this thesis.

The results presented showed that none of these interaction terms were in fact significant. This indicates that for the current sample of R.C. clergy, none of the three identified sources of support – Dean, Fellow clergy, Family and friends – served to moderate or ameliorate the negative impact of any of the sources of stress upon the 9 utilised indicators of strain.

### *Conclusion*

The ongoing outcomes of stress and strain for individuals and employees within an organisation clearly draw parallels with priests as evidenced in Church writings. However, if there is an lack of impact with social support the priests continue to struggle or leave. The real question is what is the role of the organisation in addressing such issues? The R.C. Church is an employer with 900,000 personnel and 1 billion members worldwide yet continues to respond with inertia and resistance when asked to examine its practice and structures (Cozzens, 2002). This very act of denial in mega institutions and organisations results in further crisis (Levinson, 1963). While internal sufferings endured by priests may go unobserved (Sipe, 1995) many suffer for, with and at the hands of the church because of their dedicated dual sacrifice for people and for exemplary representation of the Christian experience and community (Sipe, 1995). Tangible results are neither immediate or rarely visible or measurable (Philpot, 1998). Priests need faith to maintain an ongoing positive outlook.



The humanistic needs of clergy, voiced among the most judicious commentators in the field of care of clergy facing vocational and emotional issues, point to a deeply felt sense of lack or loss of identity and self esteem at the root of this contemporary phenomena (Power, 1998). Clergy living alone in presbyteries where the empty rooms match the hollow hopes of remaining residents, promote solitary habits that isolate many priests from their own energy sources and reinforce their own social dysfunction (Dinter, 2003). Priests often replace or fill the void with palliative or concrete forms of support to buffer stress (Dinter, 2003). Advice is limited and who indeed is responsible for offering it? There is a real need for support for clergy from someone they can trust who will warn them of the dangers and encourage them in their life and ministry (Dolan, 2000). A celibate man may shun relationships and run away from all forms of intimacy and closeness (Doherty, 1992) or fear of being labelled a failure among other clergy if he asks for help. Indeed, the maxim *'Don't ask Don't tell because frankness creates a disturbance in the Force Mystique'* was the advice given to one ex-priest (Dinter, 2003). Equally, others discourage seeking help: *"Real men don't ask for help ... real men don't cry"* (Dolan 2000).

While few clergy have the setting for serious and confidential discussions (Hoge, 2002) many fail to appreciate the place and necessity of close friendships (Hoge, 2002), may never have experienced close family networks, or are simply deterred from such friendship by the Church's history of suspicion (Cozzens, 2000; Dinter, 2003;) This ongoing struggle for intimacy may result in acute loneliness (Connolly, 2001). Constant geographical moves can uproot the priest from close community friendships and support systems forcing him to start all over again (Grassi, 2003). This personal struggle alone can contrast sharply with a growing media attention when he leaves the priesthood (Dinter, 2003). The support for clergy is vital and clearly needs to be acknowledged and addressed if the priesthood is to survive and grow. The final chapter of this thesis will now propose an organisational strategy for use in the R.C. Church organisation in this 21<sup>st</sup> century.



## CHAPTER 7

### *Introducing an organisational strategy for stress management intervention*

This chapter aims to present an organisational strategy for stress management in the RC Church and priesthood. Using a Tripartite Model of stress intervention the objective is to reduce or eliminate either the sources of stress for clergy, or the damaging consequences of exposure to these sources on their health and well-being.

The fundamental advantage of conducting a stress audit such as that reported in this thesis, is it enables both the organisation and individuals to understand their risk of and vulnerability to stress (Davies and Teasdale, 1994). Moreover, it enables the identification of effective action and intervention to better manage the risk of stress, either through directly tackling the sources or through better individual and organisational response to exposure. In short, simply undertaking a stress audit signifies awareness of the working environment which in turn informs action and evaluation to promote health at work.

### *Acknowledging problems and weaknesses of implementing a stress management programme*

The general practice of confining stress management programmes to larger organisations of 500+ employees (Wynn & Clarkin 1992) and using a reactive approach to a perceived problem by waiting for employees to become victims of stress, are both undesirable and costly from a legal and insurance perspective (Earnshaw & Cooper, 1994). The distressed victim of exposure to mismanaged stress is either 'at work' but behaving ineffectively/non productively; or absent, adding extra strain and pressure on remaining colleagues (Cooper, 2000). Reactive strategies simply acknowledge the individual is experiencing stress and offer help, while simultaneously conveying the message that the organisation will not fundamentally change to suit individual coping needs. Clearly, a stress management programme seeking to cure symptoms of exposure to stress



by teaching the individual to cope rather than tackle the stress problem at source is much less desirable (Ivancevich, 1980). Employers in the public and private sector are now more aware of the unacceptable costs of stress and the need to respond promptly. However, many organisations purchase intervention programmes e.g. stress awareness training, more as an act of faith than a carefully thought through decision. Some organisations for example fail to undertake a thorough needs analysis; hence they do not actually know if a programme is needed! Equally they seldom question who should attend and offer places on a voluntary basis where uptake is typically by the 'well-being conscious' employees (Conrad 1987).

Individuals choosing not to attend do so because it is voluntary. They may be in denial or unaware they suffer from stress (Brodsky, 1987), or do not want others to know they cannot cope. Many employees worry about the impact on personnel records, particularly if a company is downsizing or redundancy is imminent. Consequently this is an inadequate way of addressing the problem because, crucially, stress management only succeeds if tackled at the level of both the individual and employer simultaneously (DeFrank & Cooper, 1987).

Problems can still continue when courses are completed and individuals return to the working environment. Some employees may express evidence of changed behaviour, but many return to the comfort zone of old ways of operating. Quite often, intervention has little long lasting effects (Ganster et al 1982; Murphy 1988; Cooper and Sadri, 1991). Courses may only address the reaction level of participants and fail to transfer back to the workplace (Houtman & Kompier, 1995). Quite simply, organisations do not know if they get any return on their investment.

In conclusion, many stress management training packages are weak and ineffective if they focus purely upon reactions and responses to stress (Casey et al, 1993). In reality, they should seek to tackle stress, both by teaching and educating the individual to cope and by addressing the stress problem at source (Ivancevich et al, 1990).



This is the basic premise of the Tripartite Model, i.e. that effective stress management incorporates prevention, response and rehabilitation. The use of a Tripartite Model approach will be used to present a stress management intervention for the R.C. Church organisation and priesthood. This joint approach encourages both individuals and the organisations to work together to actively manage stress in the workplace at source (Cooper, 2000). Each stage will be presented before application to the R.C. Church.

### ***A Tripartite Model for Stress Management Intervention***

The tripartite model focuses on three distinct goals:

- A. **The Primary intervention** stage of identification and elimination or minimisation of stressful situations ~ stressor directed intervention.
- B. **The Secondary intervention** stage of teaching the individual to cope with stress ~ response directed intervention.
- C. **The Tertiary intervention** stage of helping victims of stress ~ symptom directed intervention.

The nature of the Tripartite Model allows the focus to be directed at the individual, team or organisation as a whole (Cooper, 2000).

#### ***A. Primary level intervention***

The primary stage is stressor directed and can be categorised into three distinct approaches for reducing or eliminating stress:

- A1 Changes in the macro environment: Organisational Culture, leaderships, physical work conditions, work overload, career development.
- A2 Changes in the micro environment: systems and task redesign, alternative work arrangements, role clarification and negotiation
- A3 Improved perception of worker control, opportunities for decision making

#### ***A1 Primary Intervention: Changes in the Macro environment***

Crucial in the reduction of stress at work is the need to build an open and supportive organisational climate ensuring that management style is compatible with the goals and aims of employees as well as the organisation (Cooper, 2000). This encourages a supportive culture and



positive interpersonal relationships among individuals and teams. Social support as a stress reduction strategy is well documented in this thesis. Equally, the need to assess the management style of the organisation, leadership and supervision is essential and ranks alongside issues of work overload, and working conditions as a potential stressor (Cooper, 2000). Re-analysis of staffing levels, improved real costing of the impact of downsizing and job redesign all affect work overload and related stress. An unpleasant environment or poor working conditions are known to affect health and well being (Kornhauser, 1965).

Limited potential for career development, perceived inequality and lack of job security can all create sources of stress leading to poor morale, psychological distress, disruptive performance or lowering of one's tolerance to further stressors (Cooper, 2000). Changes in the macro environment and the need to address staff development is part of organisational culture. In exchange for effort, skill, tenure and education, an employee expects a salary, recognition and advancement in their career development (Adams, 1965). Providing an honest job description at the outset, an opportunity for informed choice at the interview stage, and ongoing appraisal and supervision with qualified personnel all help reduce potential stressors associated with ambiguity in employment and career development.

### ***A2 Primary Intervention: Changes in the Micro environment***

Exposure to stressful working conditions may be reduced by redesigning work systems and practices (Ganster, 1995). In redesigning and enriching a job or role, improving skill variety, task identity and giving individuals significant autonomy and feedback, the employee has greater motivation and job satisfaction. Systems and task redesign focussing on job demands and job description/latitude avoid stress associated with boredom or lack of stimulus within the workplace. The micro focus as part of the Tripartite Model addresses five core dimensions which influence specific psychological states (Karasek, 1993) i.e. skills variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and task freedom (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).



The first three dimensions, 'skill variety', 'task identity' and 'task significance' all address job characteristics helping the individual understand how meaningfully they experience their job. The latter two dimensions, 'autonomy in the degree of freedom' and 'task feedback' allow individuals more control over their work and to receive feedback on individual and team projects. Decision making, individual job rotation, horizontal enlargement and vertical loading all allow employees to fully utilise unused potential. However, this opportunity which helps alleviate potential stressors is often missing in organisations because of the reluctance of new or established managers to delegate, fearing loss of their own autonomy, or the impact effect of issues of pay related performance, staffing levels and so on (Wall, 1981). Clearly the dignity of all employees must be upheld at all times (Douglas, 1996).

In short, a realistic and shared knowledge of the working environment, organisational technology, job and systems redesign will inevitably raise greater awareness and help employees to work together to alleviate stressors. However, introducing new technology itself can prove threatening to older staff at a time of pending redundancy, retirement, life change and low morale. Younger staff are from a generation who expect change and ongoing formation and training. Older members in contrast, may genuinely fear new technology. They may also question the need to approach a job in a new way after several decades of carrying out their work in the time honoured way.

The introduction of alternative work arrangements have significantly reduced absenteeism and may increase retention of staff in larger organisations (Cooper et al, 1995). The introduction of flexitime has seen a decrease in sickness/absenteeism (Pierce et al 1989; Dalton & Mersch, 1990). Alternative working arrangement however can prove unsuccessful unless supported by a first line manager (Powell & Mainero, 1999). The growing culture allowing career breaks and sabbaticals can enhance individual performance if recognised and supported by employers and in turn enrich the working environment rather than losing staff members.



Role negotiation and role classification can assist stress coping strategies by addressing role ambiguity and role conflict. Both are positive ways of overcoming problems leading to ineffective behaviours resulting in loss of power or influence (Harrison, 1972).

### ***A3 Primary Intervention – Changes in Perception of worker control***

The third part of the primary stage of intervention focuses on changes in workers perception of the level of control over their work. High levels of worker control are known to have a significant impact on health and well being and job satisfaction whereas lack of the above is known to create a stressful environment (Dwyer and Ganster, 1991; Ganster et al, 1986). A variety of strategies can be used to achieve better individual perception of control, including building semi-autonomous groups, health circles and creating a better balance between perceived levels of demand and worker control. Self managed teams create greater flexibility, a response to work demands (Peters and Waterman, 1982), and thereby help prevent job stress through job redesign (Terra, 1995).

Each of the three areas of the primary stage of intervention have addressed the reduction or elimination of stressors in the workplace for employees. The next stage is to address the application of this Primary Stage of the Tripartite Model to the R.C. Church organisation to make recommendation for the reduction or elimination of stressors in the R.C. priesthood.

### **Application of a Tripartite Model of Stress intervention to RC Church Organisation: Primary Stage – Stressor Reduction/Elimination**

In Chapter 4 of this thesis (Table 1) links were presented between the 5 principal categories of occupational stress and 8 identified stressors for R.C. priests emerging from my research. Taking these five principal categories, links can also be made with the three stages of intervention in the Primary stages of the Tripartite Model i.e. Macro and Micro stages which in turn impact upon the tertiary stage of individual perception of worker control.



Occupational Stressors	Impact RC Priesthood	Tripartite Model Primary Intervention
<b>Intrinsic to Job</b> Working conditions  Long hours  New Technology	Parish maintenance and financial upkeep of Church Convenience store mentality of parishioners Hierarchical Church structure, management and competitiveness	Primary MACRO  Primary MACRO  Primary MICRO
<b>Role in Organisation</b> Ambiguity  Conflict  Responsibility	Inconsistency in Practice between clergy; Pressure of dealing with Parishioner Power Contradiction in what a priest is asked to do /expected to do  Pastoral Care, Parish Maintenance and financial upkeep of Church Hierarchical Church structure, management and competitiveness	Primary MICRO  Primary MICRO  Primary MICRO
<b>Relationship at Work</b> With supervisors  With colleagues  With subordinates	Hierarchical Church structure, management and competitiveness Conflict between priests/people expectations/roles Pressure of dealing with parishioner power; Conflict priest/people	Primary MACRO  Primary MACRO  Primary MACRO
<b>Career Development</b>  Progress  Retirement	Hierarchical Church structure Inconsistency in Practice between clergy, Contradiction in what a priest is asked to do/expected of	Primary MACRO  Primary MACRO
<b>Organisational Structures</b>  Climate      Communication Culture      Home-work interface	Hierarchical Church structure. Conflict between priests/people expectations/roles Hierarchical Church structure  Contradiction in what a priest is asked to do/expected of Pastoral Care, Convenience store mentality of parishioners  Pressure of dealing with Parishioner Power	Primary MACRO      Primary MACRO    Primary MICRO



### ***Factors intrinsic to the Job- Macro***

The chief occupational stressors intrinsic to a job are issues related to hours of work, working conditions and new technology (Cooper and Eaker, 1988). Long hours of work are reported to affect employee's health, with overwork being linked to coronary heart disease (Breslaw & Buell, 1960). The relationship between workload and lack of control produce symptoms of stress related ill health (Dewe, 1987; Cox and Griffiths, 1998; Cooper, 2001; French and Caplan, 1972; Cox, 1980).

The working conditions identified for R.C. clergy did include long hours engaged in time spent on parish maintenance and financial upkeep of plant and buildings involving two or three individual parish communities. The additional convenience store mentality of parishioners who contributed little to parish life, but where expectations of priestly ministry was 'open all hours', served to reinforce demand on workload and hours and pressure to '*perform and serve*'.

In short, priests are frequently being asked to:

- Increase their workload in one or more parishes due to downsizing through fewer clergy.
- Minister to larger congregations of diverse need, creating an increase in administration and responsibility for more properties, buildings and people.
- Increase the level of responsibility and demand for pastoral care and additional diocesan roles over a wider geography thus increasing travel and role demands/conflict.
- Resume a dual based work-home-public presbytery where 'service users' expect a 24-hour service.
- Shoulder a relentless demand to 'perform, serve and respond to needs'.
- Cope with the introduction of new technology which often replaces roles previously given to domestic personnel i.e. house-keepers; install an answer machines and use of mobile telephones allowing the priest more mobility but less face to face interaction.

### ***Relationships at work***

Dealings with occupational managers, peers and subordinates are known to be stressful (Seyle, 1974; Makin, Cox and Cooper, 1988) particularly



dealings with clients and customers where there is conflict over resources (Sherif, 1954). For R.C. clergy the daily encounters with people of many professions, social groups, age and experience are part of their ministry. Working relationships can offer affirmation and self esteem yet lack of such can increase levels of stress for clergy (Philpot, 1998). At other times they are simply the result of personality clashes (French and Caplan, 1972). For priests in ministry, the additional role strain of being a 'keeper of secrets' inside and outside of the confessional can be a heavy load to bear impacted upon an element of personal loneliness (Philpot, 1998). So too in the R.C. priesthood where the same organisational and social-psychological dynamics apply.

The R.C. Church remains a hierarchical organisation founded upon absolute authority and, from its ministers, unquestioned obedience. Within this hierarchy there are inevitably differences between the organisational members over matters such as policy, practice and direction. Equally, not all priests can rise to the level of dean, canon or bishop. There is competition for 'promotion' as in any other organisation and social comparison between priests and parishes in terms of resources. Where there is competition for resources, so relational conflict is usually not far behind (Sherif and Sherif, 1954). Priests struggling with perception of control over their work in this environment may have the additional stressor of a multiplicity of demands and expectations from fellow priests, deacons and the 'laity' alongside the hierarchical structures of the Church itself. Difficulties in relationships are at the core of this malaise, not least the frequent conflict between the clergy and their parishioners including role ambiguity and collaborative ministry which was identified as a major source of stress for clergy (Dewe (1987) outlined earlier in this thesis.

### ***Career Development***

In the world of work, labour market and organisational changes have radically altered many peoples experience of their 'career', i.e. the sequence of employment-related positions, roles, activities and experiences



they encounter (Cooper et al, 2000). While the vocation to the priesthood is not reducible purely to the employment-based relationship, significant by the concept of a career, priests nevertheless still have a 'career' within the organisation that is the Roman Catholic Church.

Consideration needs to be given to how changes in society and the Church itself have impacted upon priests' subjective experiences of the job they do and their assessment of their own success or failure. Allied to this is their view of the adequacy of the training and education they receive at pre and post ordination and in comparison with friends in secular organisations with salary, pension and career opportunities. What, too, of the experience they anticipate upon retirement from active ministry? Among the principal trends identified in many occupational careers as a result of changing labour markets conditions are:

- An increasing workload for individuals, both in terms of the hours worked and the intensity of effort required per hour;
- A need to adapt and adjust to almost perpetual organisation change;
- The need to constantly learn new skills or update others as a result of both technological advances and national and global social change;
- The need for increasing occupational - and geographical - 'mobility';
- Growing concern about the adequacy of provisions made for retirement

Priests are having to cope with both an increasing workload and major organisational change, each of which can have a major negative impact on physical and mental health (Tombaugh and White 1990, Cascio 1993, Dekker and Schaufeli; 1995). Not surprisingly, such isolation, inability to meet expectations and lack of support sometimes lead priests to thoughts of leaving and retirement, although other important factors are implicated as well. Greeley et al (1970) identified two main reasons for clergy resigning from Church ministry. Firstly, an inability to live within the present structure of the Church and secondly, a desire to marry. Hodge (1999) found that clergy had a more positive outlook yet faced three kinds of stress related problems:



- Overwork and over responsibility leaving priests feeling overwhelmed
- Living arrangements – assigned rather than chosen
- Unhappiness at their diocesan structures

Hoge (2001) also suggests three principal stressors to be prominent in priests' reasons for resigning:

- Living a celibate life and the loneliness that goes with being single;
- The difficulties priests have in establishing a private living space;
- Overly heavy handed authority structures within the Church.

In conclusion these factors lead to feelings of severe loneliness, a sense of isolation and a lack of appreciation (Hoge, 2001) precipitating both a crisis in confidence and a crisis in commitment. In conclusion four categories of priests' views are presented which address their active or passive contemplation of leaving the priesthood:

1. Priests who are 'in love';
2. Priests who have 'rejected celibacy';
3. Priests who are simply 'disillusioned' with the Church and the priesthood;
4. Priests who are rejected on the basis of being members of a gay community.

### ***Organisational Structure***

Being part of an organisation can present threats to the individual's sense of freedom and autonomy (Cooper et al, 1995). Allowing more participation in decision-making produces higher job satisfaction (Coch and French, 1948), whilst non-participation leads to a range of negative outcomes including escapist drinking, smoking, low self-esteem and absenteeism or thoughts on leaving (Hurrell et al, 1988).

The Church, as a human organisation, remains subject to the dynamics common to other organisations and institutions. While, arguably, the



Church is not the kind of institution than can be compared to the corporate giants of commerce and industry, it also has an astounding 2,000-year history. Its shepherds and pastors, its curial offices and chancery staff experience the same pressures to stay the course taken by their predecessors as their corporate counterparts. It should not surprise us then that Church leaders tend to be conservative, cautious and grounded. Quite simply, it is the nature of things (Cozzens, 2002).

Conservatism and absolute authority are perhaps difficult to reconcile with participation, communication and open dialogue, the by-words for organisational design conducive to employee health and well-being. Cozzens (2002) sees a new culture emerging within the priesthood, a culture of individual self-questioning and assessment: A new, if uncertain priestly culture is taking shape. Crucially, what remains to be answered is how much the Church truly recognises the plight of many of its clergy, not so much in terms of their spiritual vocation but their 'occupation health' Gill (2001). Hoge's (2001) research conclusion: how much emotional stress and concomitant suffering these lives revealed. Gill (2001) felt that while clergy life was not stress free, the stress itself was preventable. Much related to frustration of the significant needs or desires of priests. Revelations included chronic loneliness, not enough support from fellow priests, feeling overwhelmed, lack of privacy, difficulties living a celibate life, lack of leisure time, unrealistic demands, heavy handed treatment by Church authorities, disagreement over Ecclesiology and ministry. Psychological depression is an outcome of loneliness (Gill, 2001).

The 17 stressors identified in the represent sample of clergy closely resemble those commonly found in occupational stress research. Not surprisingly, therefore the 17 stressors factors were found to have either an independent or cumulative negative impact upon various indicators of priests well-being (see chapter four). For example one or more was found to have negative factors in worn out, uptight, self esteem et al. Specifically, as the appraised demand of each/all of these 17 stressors increases, so



indicators of physical, psychological and behavioural ‘strain or harm’ will also increase.

### ***Role in organisation- Micro***

Role ambiguity, role conflict and role responsibility are known sources of stress (Cooper, 2000). Role ambiguity explored earlier arises when an employee does not receive a clear understanding of his/her work objectives, nor of their co-workers’ roles and responsibilities. Coupled with bad supervision, appraisal and evaluation, this results in role ambiguity (Warshaw, 1979) because the employee is unsure how they fit into the wider organisational framework. Role conflict can occur when someone is ‘answerable’ to opposing requests/instructions. Promotion, or a new manager or changes in the existing structure of the organisation can all impact further (Ivancevich and Matteson, 1980).

Responsibility for people was found to add to clergy stress because unlike responsibility for plant and buildings, interaction with people requires interpersonal skills for each encounter (Ivancevich and Matteson, 1980). Role ambiguity and conflict result in a depressed mood, lowered self-esteem, life dissatisfaction, low motivation and intention to leave (Cooper, 2001), as well as cardiovascular ill-health (Ivancevich and Matteson, 1980). Inter-role conflict has consistently been linked with psychological strain (Frone, Russell, Cooper et al, 1992). The impact of both conflicting demands and multiple roles for employees in their job/career and family life were explored in chapter four of this thesis (Greenhaus, Bevell, 1985; Lobel, 1991)

Successive studies have linked role conflict and ambiguity to sources of stress (Marshall, 1980; Gray, Toft and Anderson, 1981; Sutherland and Cooper, 1990; Tyler and Cushway, 1992). Given the diversity of priestly duties, the issue of role ambiguity and conflict, is one of 6 stress factors identified for priesthood namely, ‘Inconsistency in practice’ ‘parishioner power’ ‘contradiction’ ‘pastoral care’ parish maintenance’ and hierarchy’.



Three main areas i.e. role conflict and ambiguity, workload, and organisational change have already been recognised as work related stressors in the Church.) Hoge (2002).

Role conflict exists through communities priests serve today which are complex, increasingly multicultural and multiethnic due to changing immigration patterns set off by the globalisation process and the availability of accessible travel. Priests are accordingly required to fill an expanding repertoire of multiple roles to an ever more diverse flock. The community priests minister in is a transient one. This brings additional responsibilities, conflict and ambiguity to the role. Indeed, the responsibilities, conflict and ambiguity of the priests role in this setting tries to 'make sense of the mess to bring the light of the Gospel to the concrete structures of the current world' (Hoge, 2002).

Mainstream stressors for priests were overwork and over-responsibility (Hoge, 2001) leaving young priests overwhelmed, inadequately supervised and requiring several specific skills in which they believed themselves deficient, e.g. administration, finance, staff relationships and conflict resolution. This in turn impacted upon their home-work relationships when dealing with colleagues, friends, family and parishioners. Clearly, the application of a tripartite model of stress intervention to the R.C. Church and priesthood have attempted to eliminate or minimise identified stressors. Acknowledgement is made that certain stressors, as in all organisations, cannot be completely reduced or removed and the secondary level of stress intervention will therefore be addressed here.

### ***B. Secondary Level Intervention – Response focus***

Secondary level intervention acknowledges that the prevention of negative stress is not always possible (Ganster et al, 1982). Indeed, the impact of stressor outcomes on clergy health and well-being was succinctly discussed earlier in this thesis. In brief, contemporary stress theory



symptoms of stress affects people's physical, psychological health and their behaviour (Friend et al, 1984; Jackson and Schuler, 1985; Kahn and Byosiene, 1992; Jex and Beehr, 1991) which in turn is damaging to both the individual and the organisation (Karasek and Theorell, 1982; O'Driscoll & Beehr 1984.). The aim of secondary intervention concentrates on the prompt detection and management of potentially deleterious conditions. The objective is therefore to improve or modify the individual's response to perceived strain, avoiding a negative outcome by learning more effective coping techniques.

In short, secondary level intervention aims to train and educate individuals or groups to minimise the effects of exposure to stress by learning techniques to cope more effectively with stress. Four clear distinct categories have been identified to aid this process (Newman and Beehr, 1979):

- *Psychological :* Planning ahead, managing one's life, Self awareness and realistic aspiration
- *Physical:* Diet, Sleep, exercise, relaxation and anger management
- *Changing Behaviour:* Time off for leisure, changing stress inducing behaviours, building social supportive networks; being more assertive
- *Changing the Environment:* Changing to a less demanding job, changing organisations

In order to use these as a foundation for addressing coping skills for R.C. clergy acknowledgement is made here that a number of areas need to be explored beforehand. While effectively training skills help to reduce the adverse impact of stress at work, initial research into what the employee actually knows already, expects from the training, or has acknowledged as potential further training needs requires discussion. In addition, how the transmission of the training and education programme will be addressed to obtain the best results needs to be clarified. Simple programmes may



include role play or rehearsed scenarios with a learned outcome i.e. behaviour and response can aid an individual's coping response to a stressful encounter. More importantly, the organisation may need to prioritise a training budget as a visible investment in its workforce, reinforcing the dignity and worth of its employees.

Consideration need to be given to older employees who may feel threatened with new approaches or may be already vulnerable through nearing retirement or redundancy (Griffiths, 1997). The evaluation of the training itself needs to consider the trainees' reaction to the programme (Kirkpatrick, 1959) while measurement of the training or learning may be impossible. It may be difficult to monitor behaviour changes before and after the training or easy to make assumption about outcomes. It is useful therefore to consider the following skills training and the focus necessary for desired outcomes. In order to address the four categories for use i.e. psychological, physical, behavioural and environmental, clarity over the skills training and the focus needs careful consideration for a desired outcome. Five distinct areas for consideration in any skills training programme are presented below (Cooper, et al 2000):

- Interpersonal and social skills; Leadership skills
- Assertiveness
- Cognitive coping techniques
- Relaxation e.g. Meditation
- Time Management

In presenting a strategy for stress intervention for the R.C. Church and priesthood each of the five areas above will be addressed and presented as a proposed model for secondary intervention within the tripartite model.

### **Interpersonal and social skills; Leadership skills**

Focussing on interpersonal and social skills for stress intervention include a range of communication, listening and support training alongside conflict resolution and collaborative problem solving; conflict resolution and collaborative problem. These in turn incorporate leadership skills for individuals and teams. (Sutherland and Cooper, 1981) which reflect on



listening, 'body language' and ability to distinguish between assertiveness, aggression and abrasive behaviours (Heaney, et al, 1995). This training based programme teaches employees about the potential of support systems by building skills, mobilizing available team support, learning participatory problem solving approaches and the value of work team meetings.

Crucial here is that both management and employees work together, give constructive feedback, clarify misunderstandings and decision making and construct a clear outcome process. This in turn strengthens the individual's perception in ability to handle the job, address disagreements and work overload and enhance the work team climate (Heaney et al, 1995). It also exposes the manager or supervisor who may be excessively demanding or insensitive towards employees (Levinson, 1978) or those creating a stressful work environment, displaying egocentric personalities, decline to consult on decision making and avoid staff interaction, all of which would have a negative outcome on staff morale and problem solving (Sutherland and Cooper, 1990).

### **Assertiveness**

Dealing with other people as part of one's job can prove stressful. When addressing different situations, conveying unpopular decisions, handling irate clients, addressing unreasonable work demands and deadlines, working unsocial hours or saying 'No' without anxiety, anger and frustration. Assertive training helps the individual recognise their response to coping with a given situation. This includes recognising the different assertive and non assertive approaches and behaviours, concepts of rights and responsibilities, handing praise, negative feelings and criticism, relate bad news or make or refuse requests (Back, 1991). Early detection and prevention by recognisable personal behaviour can aid response and avoid negative outcomes on individual health and well-being.



### ***Cognitive coping techniques***

Occupational stress is now viewed as a transactional process whereby employees appraise and react to a potential source of stress. (Cooper, 2000). As individual cognitive style influences both appraisal of potentially stressful situations and coping strategy employed, the use of cognitive restructuring as a stress management technique aims to examine dysfunctional attitudes and irrational thoughts.

The process itself aims to improve the balance between demands upon the individuals and their perceived ability to cope by examining the potentially faulty thought processes that exist when the individual is confronted by a stressful event. In short, cognitive coping techniques aim to allow the individual to think about a stressful event – through role play; lessen the threat and challenge irrational thoughts; change reactional behaviour to the way circumstances are perceived. These may simply include the process of asking the individual to write down facts, thoughts and feelings associated with and focussing upon their emotional response; dispute and change any irrational thoughts by looking for supporting evidence; project the worst case scenario and an alternative pattern of thought. Individuals can be asked to question why they hold such irrational beliefs; why they jump to conclusions; ignore important details or exaggerate the negative aspects. For individuals and teams within an organisation this process is essential to avoid a negative outcome to stressful encounters. Individuals are instrumental in creating their own negative feelings through irrational beliefs which influence the individual perception of an event and their ability to cope (Beck 1987). Therefore issues of problem orientated coping is linked to positive mental health (Guppy and Weatherstone, 1997).

### **Relaxation, Meditation**

The effectiveness of meditation in reducing stress and the psychological benefits of relaxation allow a sense of personal control by reducing tension anxiety and enhance feeling of well being, reducing the physical response ie lowering heart rate and blood pressure. In addition to stress management training, many organisations have adopted health promotion programmes



to attempt to keep employees healthy and lower health risks (Cooper, 2000). Evidence suggests that health screening and wellness programmes are supported by employees through effectiveness, the means of reducing stress is less rigorously evaluated (Cooper and Williams, 1994).

Where stress management training and education have been combined with physical health model it has proved effective. Addressing issues related to smoking cessation, et al exercise programmes are recommended to protect employees from negative effects of undesirable occupational stressors (Ivancevich et al, 1990; Whatmore et al 1999). While uptake may be voluntary, and perhaps not always targeting those in most need, stress management intervention programmes develop an organisation's culture as one which recognises stress and the active response of participants by offering programmes as part of the wider portfolio of skills to optimise health for all.

### ***Time Management***

The concept of time management potentially gives employees a way of coping with demand (Richards, 1987) in order to develop a personal sense of time, think ahead and share goals. In order to further reduce this demand, the key results areas for groups to aim for include: prioritising/reschedule of work if necessary; acknowledging the increased demand of 21<sup>st</sup> century culture to do more in less time with fewer resources (Cooper 2001) leading to a major source of stress in contemporary organisations. The application of a Tripartite Model presented below addresses potential strategy for stress intervention within the R.C. Church organisation and priesthood.



Application of Tripartite Model of Stress at  
Secondary Level Intervention to  
The R.C. Church organisation and priesthood

Psychological	Plan Ahead Manage one's life Self awareness  Realistic aspirations	Time Management Time Management Cognitive Coping Technique Interpersonal Social Leadership Skills Assertiveness Training Cognitive Coping Techniques	Clarify Job description for clergy Appraisal, Supervision, Evaluation and Affirmation Formalise social support networks Post Ordination Training and Formation Spiritual Development, personal, social and human
Physical	Diet, Sleep, Exercise, Relaxation, Anger Management	Health and well-being awareness Meditation and relaxation Assertiveness training and Cognitive coping techniques	Health Awareness Opportunities for Health and well-being screening
Change Behaviour	Time off for leisure Change stress inducing behaviour Build social support network Assertiveness Train	Time management work/leisure Cognitive coping awareness and response behaviour	Sabbaticals with focus 'Rest, Travel, Educate Role play for dealing with stress Saying 'No' and not feeling guilty
Change Environment	Change to less demanding job/roles Change organisation	Time Management Assertiveness Cognitive coping techniques Relaxation and meditation	Clarify what role of clergy is in 21 <sup>st</sup> century Assess the extra roles eg Vicar General, Dean , Specialist: Area Episcopal Vicar Role of Seminary in teaching/educating students et al Who is educating/teaching /what ask priest to do /be?



In a shared learning environment i.e. the organisation and the individual working together and having acknowledged stress exists, will give a more positive outcome overall. This proposed application above will be discussed briefly here.

### *Psychological*

The introduction of a formal job description for clergy is long overdue despite some attempts and various outcomes they do not generally exist in practice. Yet the basic premise in ensuring the dignity of any employee in return for education, training and career aspiration needs to be a formal job description, opportunity for discussion, supervision and appraisal to allow affirmation, growth and maturity within the role of priesthood as well as the pastoral and spiritual nature of the vocation.

The most crucial contradiction is that priests are ministering spiritually yet judged on occupational outcomes. Encompassed within a proposed job description for clergy is the whole question of their role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Church. This needs a realistic time management exploration of the priestly expectations and what is humanly capable of achievement within a given day. The whole question of the organisation working together to address this along with the confusion of 'the role of the laity' i.e. non ordained within the structure of collaborative ministry, needs to be part of the equation and indeed discussion opportunity.

Secondly, the formation of social support networks are known to aid positive response to stressors in organisations. Many social support networks are set up informally and priests see them disappear overnight when they are moved to another geography where they have to start again, often alone. The whole concept of fraternity of priesthood also needs to be addressed and whether it actually is a hindrance rather than assumed help at a time of crisis where priests have declined to ask for help because of fear of being seen as not coping.

Finally, post ordination training and formation to address real need is essential to keep up to date with 21<sup>st</sup> century demands. Education,



formation training and specialism all need clear guidelines along with the huge question of seminary training and its suitability for today's priests. Spiritual, social and human development needs to be ongoing at pre and post ordination to suit the ongoing personal needs and maturity stages of the individual. Only through addressing formation and training within the role of clergy and their ministry can the building of a strong fraternity and organisational culture evolve which will allow issues to be recognised and addressed.

### ***Physical***

Providing health awareness opportunities for individuals to promote health and well being is crucial to organisational climate. Health screening and creating an environment of caring for the carers i.e. priests promotes a positive self worth among the clergy. Ironically, here we are in a spiritual environment with the opportunity to address meditation and development of a rich spiritual support exploration to aid whole being but is it actually being explored within this context?

### ***Changing Behaviour***

Priests should be given the opportunity to take time out and sabbaticals are currently being offered and encouraged more regularly today. Addressing all aspects of living alone, loneliness, fraternity, leisure and sabbatical opportunities can be incorporated here. For priests responding to this survey the three highest needs on sabbatical were 'to rest, to travel and to study'. Opportunities to address, examine and challenge personal response and behaviour to stressful situation can be shared with fellow priests. Role play can enhance response and recognised shared outcomes and learning and focus upon shared concerns. This encourages individuals to gain confidence in coping with situations which are often presented when alone. In terms of spiritual coping some may even question when prayer is a palliative form of coping.



### ***Change the environment***

Looking at the demands of a job in a given setting offers the opportunity to challenge the setting and see if changes can be incorporated. Even the simple yet complicated location of the parochial setting can offer huge diversity in demands on clergy in rural, suburban or inner city setting with a diversity of population eg. retired, family and school orientated or multi cultural or ecumenical inter faith community settings. The priest may be based at two or three parochial settings yet have conflicting additional demands of diocesan duties and specialist responsibilities that require further training needs and prioritising of time and travel. Simply having three parish responsibility across a wider geographical setting and diversity of parishioners can prove exhausting for some priests as the sole organiser and performer of service – whether by choice or circumstance - leading to a real crisis of identity asking who or what am I supposed to be or do?

The final response for many is to leave the organisation but for priests who have done this it can be a sense of failure and a real question of what else can I do now? At this point the third area of the tripartite Model of stress is presented i.e. The Tertiary level which is symptom directed i.e. addressing the needs of the victims of stress and their reintegration. The challenging question here is how many clergy who have left the priesthood are reintegrated into or lost within the ‘system’?

### ***C. Tertiary Level Intervention – symptom directed intervention***

Tertiary intervention is directed at those already exposed to the symptoms of stress and is a primary curative approach to stress management. Tertiary level of the tripartite model addresses the rehabilitation and recovery process of victims of stress and ill health. Having addressed the first two stages of the Tripartite Model i.e. Primary Intervention focussing on stressors and Secondary intervention which is response directed the third stage addresses the victims of stress and focuses on rehabilitation and reintegration of the individual within the organisation.



The tertiary stage offers the opportunity for basic counselling services, employees assistance programmes (EAP) which can help both individuals and their extended family who may all be affected from work related stressors. At the heart of the EAP is help for individuals suffering from work related problems, relationships at work difficulties, illness, worries redundancy or retirement. However, over 40 potential counselling issues were identified in research (Cooper, et al 1994), where counsellors expressed difficulties in dealing with symptoms presented rather than the cause of the stress because of the organisational responsibilities and contribution to the problem. Through direct contact with clients through telephone or visitation training the role of supervisors or managers can offer direct support.

Making stress a respectable topic for discussion in the workplace is the first step for organisations in this tertiary model because by creating a climate of trust, openness for individuals in order to exchange potentially sensitive information offers a starting point to address problems in-house or externally. For R.C. clergy sensitivity needs to be in place regarding the confidential nature of problems, the public profile of the priest and the nature of the vocational ministerial duties undertaken. Failure to offer professional help from within or outside any organisation will result in an increase in stress levels and impact upon individual health and well-being while creating further pressure for remaining colleagues.

The value of social support through a social network as a protection against environmental forces is well documented in this thesis. Social support from one's fellow workers and supervisors moderates the effects of job stress more effectively than support from family and friends (House et al, 1981). Social support can play a significant role in enhancing level of employee well-being (Cooper, 2000) . The transactional model of stress was used for this thesis to investigate stress in the R.C. priesthood looking at the role of social support for clergy. The findings concluded that there



was only a modest empirical relationship between the three identified sources of support for priests and the 17 identified sources of stress they encountered. The results showed that none of the interaction between priests and the dean, priests and fellow clergy and priests and family/friends were significant.

While support from each had a low albeit beneficial impact upon a single and separate indicator of well-being, none of the identified three sources served to moderate or ameliorate the negative impact of any of the sources of stress upon the 9 indicators of strain. The development of proposals for more formal structures to provide support should include access to occupational health and counselling and social support networks both in the workplace and socially. Education about the importance of social support networks and their value should also be promoted.

Support for line managers and supervisors or self managed teams for employees working in isolation would help to moderate stress-strain relationship by creating feeling of belonging and solidarity. A lack of social support is known to result in isolation, longer absenteeism, less effort at work (Lim, 1997).

### **Career Sabbaticals**

Opportunities to take a career sabbatical help individuals recover from the effects of exposure to stress. Organisations should try and encourage more employees to take sabbaticals which can be both rejuvenating and help plan the next stage of one's career. The length of sabbatical should not be restricted to length of service but given the high cost of replacing staff, appropriate time can enhance the individual and their post sabbatical performance on return from leave.

A summary of the above proposals is presented in the following matrix:



**Application of a Tripartite Model – Tertiary Level – to  
The R.C. Church and Priesthood**

Intervention for those already exposed to symptoms of stress – rehabilitation and recovery at tertiary stage	TertiaryLevel of Intervention
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make stress a responsible topic for discussion in the organisation</li> <li>2. Create a climate of trust and openness where individuals can exchange sensitive information</li> <li>3. Address sensitivity of clergy needs required via: Confidence nature of problem The public profile of the priest The nature of vocational ministerial duties undertaken</li> <li>4. Offer professional external help within or outside organization to deter future stress and the impact on colleagues</li> <li>5. Develop structures for social support network education and promote importance of social support</li> <li>6. Line management and supervision provision for isolated clergy</li> <li>7. Career sabbaticals help individual recover and post follow up future work</li> <li>8. Question/Address what exactly occurs in seminary and fall our rate unresolved issues carried over to priesthood</li> <li>9. Readdress the loss of clergy in less than 5 years at post ordination</li> <li>10. What are the expectations of priesthood in the 21<sup>st</sup> century versus reality?</li> </ol>	<p>Create a climate of trust</p> <p>Fraternity/grapevine</p> <p>A strategy- starting point to address problems</p> <p>Counselling? If it works, as often problems are bigger than the individual and level of help is unsatisfactory.</p>

**Conclusion**

Setting out some simple steps to present a strategy for dealing with stress in the R.C. Church and priesthood has been explored earlier using the Tripartite Model of stress intervention offering three distinct approaches; Primary intervention ~ stressor directed; Secondary intervention ~ response directed and Tertiary intervention ~symptom directed. Having undertaken a stress audit of the R.C. Priesthood for this research thesis using a Transactional Model of stress the findings presented 17 sources of



stress for priests and 9 outcomes on health and well-being. The aim of the Tripartite Model is to eliminate or reduce stressors, addressing coping response and in turn direct action towards dealing with victims of stress itself. Crucially, the above stages must be undertaken collectively with both the individuals, teams and organisation itself.

The final stage of this chapter is to present some simple steps as a strategy for dealing with stress in the R.C. Church and priesthood. It requires acknowledgement from the organisation that stress actually exists and that there is a willingness to embrace a solution to a clear problem. Using the Tripartite Model which is applied to organisations acknowledgement is made that while the R.C. Church has the status of a worldwide organisation and its priests undertake duties which are part of organisational roles, priesthood is not a job but a vocation and the distinct nature of that vocation sets the individual apart within his ministry to others.

However, the integration of elements of that role are part of the focus of all organisations when encountering difficulties and perhaps the deeper question lies in readdressing the whole question of what a priest is asked to do or to be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Church along with the role of others in that setting. Such questions can only be explored once the current climate and culture is reviewed. As part of that review the area of developing a strategy for dealing with stress within the priesthood has been researched and the recommended steps are presented here:

- **Primary Intervention Level**

*To identify and eliminate stressful situations for R.C. priests*

- Provide a means of regulating or limiting working hours. The introduction of or clarification of an existing job description for clergy alongside supervision, monitoring, evaluation and appraisal for continued support and future role identification.



- Create a more formal social support network or mentor system offering clergy the chance to talk openly in confidence and solve issues.
- A reanalysis (task analysis) of the secular/administrative /organisational duties of a priest. This in turn will have an impact on the seminary and post ordination training programme for clergy et al.

- **Secondary Intervention Level**

*To educate and train individuals response to stressful situations*

- Offer a sabbatical to rest, study and travel to enhance and enrich each priest
- Address coping mechanism as an organisation by introducing role play and scenarios with opportunities to discuss real issues and concerns identified by priests in their everyday working environment
- Introduce well-being and health screening opportunities for clergy including advice on diet, exercise and addressing human social and personal needs.
- Readdress diocesan roles where priests have simultaneous responsibilities to diocese and parish and neither role is given proper time, training and delivery
- Introduce specific training days on Stress Awareness, Assertive training and accountability training opportunities

- **Tertiary Intervention Level**

*To focus on the victims of stress and its impact on health and well being of the individual and their families*

- Offer an invitation to victims of stress and an opportunity to discuss the individual and collective experiences of clergy.
- Consider the role and responsibility of the Church organisation in seeking opportunities to address the current status and



circumstance of clergy who have left the priesthood along with student who have left the seminary mid-training.

- Open the dialogue of what services and ministry are expected from the Church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the individual role within it. The invitation for dialogue can be offered to those currently within the Church and others who remain outside of the structures.

In conclusion the above levels of intervention can be operated at a multilevel approach (Elkin and Riosch, 1990) which is delivered in three key stages of organisational stress management programmes.

Level 1	Awareness Introductory Workshops, Health Fairs, Speakers, Questionnaires, Stress Scales
Level 2	Employee directed strategies and programmes for individuals
Level 3	Organisational directed strategy programmes for organisations

The role of vocation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century church will continue to be explored and developed. The role of R.C. Clergy and the role of the Church as an organisation is equally in question at this time. Clarifying what we are asking from and expecting clergy to do alongside the other roles within the church needs real collective dialogue if progress is to be made.

The harvest is indeed rich, but its labourers need support.



## EPILOGUE

*“One day, all of us (Catholic priests) will find our way into the back of our Diocesan Year Books where the names of the dead appear in italics .... There are legends in there !!”*

*(Philpot 1998)*



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**A STUDY OF STRESS  
AMONGST  
ROMAN CATHOLIC  
DIOCESAN CLERGY**



TION ONE

TION ONE presents a number of aspects of priesthood. For each aspect please rate the nt to which each is characteristic of your experience of priesthood. Please circle the ropriate answer.

MESTIC ACCOMMODATION

live alone	YES/NO
share a presbytery with clergy	YES/NO
have a housekeeper	YES/NO
he housekeeper lives on the premises	YES/NO
shop and cater for myself	YES/NO
have a telephone answering machine	YES/NO
Do you/would you use one	YES/NO

MINISTRATION

ase circle the appropriate answer.

	<i>All the time</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
arishioners use the Presbytery for meetings	4	3	2	1	0
. I have secretarial support	4	3	2	1	0
: My driving exceeds 100 miles weekly	4	3	2	1	0
d. Requests to attend meetings are increasing	4	3	2	1	0
e. I take a day off every week	4	3	2	1	0

*ement/Thoughts on leaving the priesthood*

se circle the appropriate answer *Strongly Agree = 5 to Strongly Disagree = 1*

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Unsure</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
I am concerned about my retirement	5	4	3	2	1
I should be personally responsible for my retirement arrangements	5	4	3	2	1
Financial and residential aspects of retirement will be addressed in good time for me by the Diocese	5	4	3	2	1
On the Anniversary of my Ordination I wonder if I will still be in the Priesthood the following year	5	4	3	2	1
I have thought about leaving the Priesthood	5	4	3	2	1



***Parish and Parishioners.*** This section explores both the priest's relationship with his parishioners and his views on the congruence between Church Law and his parishioners' needs. Please circle the appropriate answer.

1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The 10 items were:

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Unsure</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
1. <i>There are things I would like to change in the way the parish is run, but I am reluctant for fear of upsetting parishioners</i>	1	2	3	4	5
2. <i>I am often faced with problems which are real in the parish community that are not recognised by the Church</i>	1	2	3	4	5
3. <i>Too many parishioners use the parish as a convenience store (to 'get' a church wedding, Baptism etc.) but have no real commitment to the parish</i>	1	2	3	4	5
4. <i>Most parish administration could be done by non clergy</i>	1	2	3	4	5
5. <i>I feel at home in my presbytery</i>	1	2	3	4	5
6. <i>More power in the parish lies with the people than with the priest</i>	1	2	3	4	5
7. <i>There is too much diocesan paperwork to which I am expected to respond</i>	1	2	3	4	5
8. <i>In my ministry I experience a real contradiction between the demands of Church Law and practical reality</i>	1	2	3	4	5
9. <i>I would consider passing parishioners to other priests who would respond to parishioners needs and demands in a way that I would not</i>	1	2	3	4	5
10. <i>Too few people in the parish contribute financially to its upkeep</i>	1	2	3	4	5



**Nature of workload.** This section presents issues or concerns and frequency with which parishioners approach priests. Please response using 0 = Never and 4 = All the time.

	<i>Never</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>All the time</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Bereavement	0	1	2	3	4
<input type="checkbox"/> Marriage (preparation/ breakdown)	0	1	2	3	4
<input type="checkbox"/> Children (e.g. where there is a breakdown in the parents' relationship)	0	1	2	3	4
<input type="checkbox"/> Issues in the extended family (e.g. concerns over non practising members of the Catholic faith)	0	1	2	3	4
<input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment and poverty	0	1	2	3	4
<input type="checkbox"/> Church teaching/ sacramental matters	0	1	2	3	4
<input type="checkbox"/> Education and school access policies	0	1	2	3	4
<input type="checkbox"/> Sick calls and hospital visits	0	1	2	3	4
<input type="checkbox"/> Requests for financial charity	0	1	2	3	4

*How confident do you feel when addressing each of the areas? Please circle the appropriate answer*

	<i>Completely Confident</i>				<i>Not at all confident</i>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Bereavement	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
<input type="checkbox"/> Marriage Prep/Breakdown	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
<input type="checkbox"/> Children (e.g. where there is a Breakdown in parents' relationship)	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
<input type="checkbox"/> Issues in the extended family (e.g. concerns over non practising members of the Catholic faith)	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
<input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment and poverty	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
<input type="checkbox"/> Church teaching/ sacramental matters	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
<input type="checkbox"/> Education and school access policies	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
<input type="checkbox"/> Sick calls and hospital visits	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
<input type="checkbox"/> Requests for financial charity	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	



**Implementing priestly ministry in the modern world.**

*This section comprises five items directly tapping priests’ perceptions of the difficulties involved in ministering effectively in the modern day and age. Please rate the level of difficulty difficult you experience 1= Not at all difficult to 5 = Could not be more difficult.*

	<i>Not at all difficult</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>Could not be more Difficult</i>
• <i>Preparing a couple for marriage when so many marriages fail</i>		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	
• <i>Stopping the exit of young people from Church services</i>		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	
• <i>Implementing Church Law on reconciliation</i>		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	
• <i>Stopping adults from falling away from Active worship</i>		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	
• <i>Preparing adequately for the Celebration of the Eucharist</i>		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	

**Personal reflections on role and effectiveness as a priest.**

*This section explores both the priest’s own appraisal and evaluation of his ministry together with his reflections on matters to do with running a parish. Please indicate the frequency with which they would agree with the statement provided 0 = Never to 4 = All the time*

	<i>Never</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4 All the time</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Lack of clarity on parish geographical Boundaries concerns me</i>		<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>People use the Church for convenience, Without financial support or commitment</i>		<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>I feel inadequately trained to address The problems presented by parishioners</i>		<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>I feel partly responsible for decreasing Mass attendance in my parish</i>		<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Maintenance and repair of plant and Buildings takes up too much of my time</i>		<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>I feel my gifts are currently underused</i>		<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>I regularly evaluate my work</i>		<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>I become annoyed if people call without An appointment</i>		<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>



<input type="checkbox"/> <i>I am concerned about my personal prayer life</i>	0	1	2	3	4
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>I feel valued and listened to by my superiors</i>	0	1	2	3	4
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>I wonder if my parish could survive without me</i>	0	1	2	3	4
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>I wonder what I was ordained to do</i>	0	1	2	3	4
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Cynicism is a coping mechanism for many priests</i>	0	1	2	3	4
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>The Church encourages dependency amongst its clergy</i>	0	1	2	3	4

### ***Church structures and organisation.***

*This section comprised eight questions relating to the characteristics of the Church as a formal work organisation. Please rate their strength of agreement or disagreement with the following statements from clergy ranging on a 5 point scale from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree.*

	Strongly Disagree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Agree
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>There is a competitive element between individual clergy</i>	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>There is a recognised hierarchical system which reinforces a type of character or behaviour in priesthood</i>	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>The Church hierarchy encourages career-mindedness amongst clergy</i>	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Emphasis on the work of a priest is based on performance of sacramental duties</i>	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>There is a recognised inconsistency between priests in the Diocese in their stance on marital status and access to Baptism</i>	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>There is a recognised inconsistency between priests in the Diocese in their stance on marital status and access to Catholic schools</i>	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>The shortage of priests in the Diocese concerns me</i>	5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>The 'head waiters' are given parochial responsibilities too early</i>	5	4	3	2	1



**Clerical dress** Each statement expresses a view concerning the possible comfort and value associated with clerical dress. Please rate how frequently you feel the same way as the view expressed in the given statement using a five point response scale where 0 = Never and 4 = All the time.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All the time
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>I feel comfortable wearing clerical dress amongst my fellow clergy</i>	0	1	2	3	4
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Clerical dress has a positive effect on my relationship with people in general</i>	0	1	2	3	4
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Clerical dress has a negative effect on my self image in public places</i>	0	1	2	3	4

**Celibacy** Please rate your agreement or disagreement with the following seven statements on celibacy using the five point response 1 = Strongly disagree and 5 = Strongly agree.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>A celibate life is easy to lead</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Celibacy is easy to cope with</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Celibacy is a valuable aspect of my life</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>The Church's ruling on celibacy is necessary for clergy</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>The arrival of married clergy from other denominations provides a valuable argument against celibacy</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Celibacy is worth keeping because ultimately it is most Christ like</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Celibacy is worth keeping because it is most fulfilling</i>	1	2	3	4	5

**Media portrayal of priesthood.**

This section relates to a priest's perceptions of the validity of media portrayal of the priesthood. Please indicate on the seven point rating scale your response 1 = Accurate and 7 = Inaccurate.

- ☐ *How accurate is the media portrayal of the work of a Catholic priest?*
- ☐ *How balanced a picture do you think the media portrayal of the priesthood is?*



# SELF ESTEEM Please circle the appropriate answer.

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Unsure</i>	<i>Dis Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
a. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal to others	5	4	3	2	1
b. Generally, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure	5	4	3	2	1
c. I feel that I have a number of good qualities	5	4	3	2	1
d. I am able to do things as well as most people	5	4	3	2	1
e. I feel I do not have much to be proud of	5	4	3	2	1
f. I take a positive attitude toward myself	5	4	3	2	1
g. On the whole I am satisfied with myself	5	4	3	2	1
	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Unsure</i>	<i>Dis- Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
h. I wish I could have more respect for myself	5	4	3	2	1
i. I certainly feel useless at times	5	4	3	2	1
j. At times I think I am no good at all	5	4	3	2	1
k. I feel guilty about saying 'No' to others	5	4	3	2	1
l. I feel guilty taking time off for myself	5	4	3	2	1



# GENERAL WELL BEING QUESTIONNAIRE

This section is concerned with how well you have been feeling. Please read each question and decide how often over the last SIX MONTHS you have experienced the various symptoms that are listed.

	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1 Have been bothered by your heart thumping?	4	3	2	1	0
2. Have you become bored easily?	4	3	2	1	0
3. Have you become easily annoyed?	4	3	2	1	0
4. Had your clear your throat?	4	3	2	1	0
5. Been scared when alone?	4	3	2	1	0
6 Has your thinking got mixed up when you had to do things quickly?	4	3	2	1	0
7. When you have been upset or excited has your skin broken out in a rash?	4	3	2	1	0
8 Have you shaken or trembled?	4	3	2	1	0
9 Have you done things on impulse?	4	3	2	1	0
10 Have people thought that you	4	3	2	1	0
11 Have you been forgetful?	4	3	2	1	0
12 Have things got on your nerves and worn you out?	4	3	2	1	0
13 Have unfamiliar places or people made you afraid?	4	3	2	1	0
14 Have you tired easily?	4	3	2	1	0
15 Has your face got flushed?	4	3	2	1	0
16 Have you experienced numbness or tingling in your arms or legs?	4	3	2	1	0
17 Have you had difficulty in falling asleep or staying asleep?	4	3	2	1	0
18 Have you been tense or jittery?	4	3	2	1	0
19 Have your feelings been hurt easily?	4	3	2	1	0
20 Have you had pains in your chest?	4	3	2	1	0
21 Have you been troubled by stammering?	4	3	2	1	0
22 Has I been hard for you to make your mind up?	4	3	2	1	0
23 Have you worn yourself out worrying about your health?	4	3	2	1	0



**COPING STRATEGIES - When faced with a problem how do you respond? Please circle the appropriate answer:-**

	<i>All the time</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Some times</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
1 Get together with my Dean to discuss the problem	4	3	2	1	0
2 Get together with my Bishop to discuss the problem	4	3	2	1	0
3 Talk with other priests	4	3	2	1	0
4 Talk with friends in the parish	4	3	2	1	0
5 Talk with friends outside the parish	4	3	2	1	0
6 Effectively plan time management	4	3	2	1	0
7 Plan and initiate a course of action to deal with the problem	4	3	2	1	0
8 Decide what I think should be done and explain it to the people affected	4	3	2	1	0
9 Request help from people who have the power to do something for me	4	3	2	1	0
10 Seek advice outside the Parish from those without power but who can advise me how to do what is expected	4	3	2	1	0
11 Try to see the positive side of the situation	4	3	2	1	0
12 Try to see how the situation could work to my advantage	4	3	2	1	0
13 Do my best to get out of the situation gracefully	4	3	2	1	0
14 Separate myself as much as possible from whatever created the situation	4	3	2	1	0
15 Tell myself the situation will resolve itself over time	4	3	2	1	0
16 Remind myself that work is not everything	4	3	2	1	0
17 Anticipate the negative consequences so I am prepared for the worst	4	3	2	1	0
18 Try not to get concerned about it	4	3	2	1	0



	<i>All the time</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Some times</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
19 Accept this situation because there is nothing I can do about it	4	3	2	1	0
20 Spend more time sleeping and napping	4	3	2	1	0
21 Day Dream	4	3	2	1	0
22 Take tranquilizers ,sedatives or other prescribed drugs	4	3	2	1	0
23 Smoke cigarettes, cigars or pipe	4	3	2	1	0
24 Do physical exercises, jog/run/ swim/golf	4	3	2	1	0
25 Watch television/video	4	3	2	1	0
26 Devote time to a hobby,leisure or social activity	4	3	2	1	0
27 Use some form of relaxation or meditation	4	3	2	1	0
28 Seek out the company of lay friends	4	3	2	1	0
29 Spend time in the company of your family	4	3	2	1	0
30 Take it out on family, friends or colleagues	4	3	2	1	0
31 Spend money	4	3	2	1	0
32 Go on holiday/short break	4	3	2	1	0
33 Go on a retreat	4	3	2	1	0
34 Make time and space to pray	4	3	2	1	0
35 Carry on and "offer it up"	4	3	2	1	0
36 Seek out a Spiritual Director	4	3	2	1	0
37 Seek spiritual uplift from reading the scriptures	4	3	2	1	0
38 Got into the Church and pray	4	3	2	1	0
39 Avail of reconciliation	4	3	2	1	0
40 Seek professional help/counselling	4	3	2	1	0
41 Use a support group for clergy	4	3	2	1	0



## PERSONALITY

section is concerned with how you feel generally.  
 se read each of the 20 items carefully. Each describe a different feeling  
 notion. Please circle the appropriate number to indicate the extent  
 generally feel this way, that is, how you feel on the average day,

	EXTREMELY	QUITE A BIT	MODERATELY	A LITTLE	NOT AT ALL
erested	5	4	3	2	1
stressed	5	4	3	2	1
ited	5	4	3	2	1
psset	5	4	3	2	1
Strong	5	4	3	2	1
Guilty	5	4	3	2	1
Scared	5	4	3	2	1
Hostile	5	4	3	2	1
Enthusiastic	5	4	3	2	1
Proud	5	4	3	2	1
Irritable	5	4	3	2	1
Alert	5	4	3	2	1
Ashamed	5	4	3	2	1
Inspired	5	4	3	2	1
Nervous	5	4	3	2	1
Determined	5	4	3	2	1
Attentive	5	4	3	2	1
Jittery	5	4	3	2	1
Active	5	4	3	2	1
Afraid	5	4	3	2	1



Are you currently smoking whilst completing this questionnaire? YES/NO  
Are you currently consuming alcohol whilst completing this questionnaire ? YES/NO

SOCIAL SUPPORT

This section looks at the amount and type of support that you receive - or may not receive - throughout your priesthood. Please rate the following in terms of HOW MUCH SUPPORT each provides:-  
(You should therefore place a number in each of the 12 boxes provided in the table)

0 - None at all    1 - Very little    2 - Some    3 - Quite a lot    4 - A great deal

TYPES OF SUPPORT	SOURCES OF SUPPORT		
	FROM YOUR DEAN	FROM INFORMAL CONTACTS AMONGST CLERGY	FROM FAMILY AND LAY FRIENDS
Advice, Information and Guidance.			
Practical help			
Encouragement, Listening and Understanding			
An opportunity to take time out and get away from it all			

Please circle the appropriate answer.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. I look to the future with hope and enthusiasm	5	4	3	2	1
b. It worries me to think about where I will be in 5 years	5	4	3	2	1
c. Things cannot be any better than they are now	5	4	3	2	1



DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

AGE ( / )      25-29 -              30-34 -              35-39 -              40-44 -  
                         45-49 -              50-54 -              55-59 -              60-64 -  
                         65-69 -              70-74 -              75-79 -              80+ -

NUMBER OF YEARS ORDAINED ( / )

LESS THAN 5 -              5-9 -              10-14 -              15-19 -              20-24 -  
                         25-29 -              30-34 -              35-39 -              40-44 -              45-49 -  
                         50-54 -              55-59 -              60-64 -              65-69 -              70+ -

I am a permanent Deacon \_              Number of Years \_

NUMBER OF PARISH MOVES AFTER ORDINATION INCLUDING  
YOUR PRESENT PARISH OR POST ( / )

1 \_      2 \_      3 \_      4 \_      5 \_      6 \_      7 \_      8 \_      9 \_      10 + \_

CURRENT PARISH OR WORK SETTING ( / )

Rural \_              Suburban \_              Inner City \_

Working outside of the Diocese \_



**OPEN QUESTIONS - Please use a continuation sheet if you wish to write more on any subject.**

- 1. How would you define the term vocation?**
- 2. What factors encouraged you to seek a vocation to the Priesthood?**
- 3. What areas of ministry did you expect to play a prominent part of daily life after Ordination?**
- 4. In addition to strength of vocation what other qualities are important for candidates today?**
- 5. In addition to theological training, what other major areas of training should be offered?**
- 6. What are the 3 most fulfilling aspects of your priesthood?**
- 7. What is your concept of Heaven?**
- 8. If offered a sabbatical, fully paid :-**  
**Would you take it ?    YES/NO**  
**How would you spend it?**



If you have any other comments on this Questionnaire, feel free to outline them below.



# SEXUALITY AND THE CHURCH

For some members of the clergy, the Church's ruling on sexuality is a source of concern with respect either to their own lives or those of their parishioners. For others, the Church's ruling causes no such concern and may even be a source of strength.

Direct questions which might be asked in the area of 'sexuality and the Church' are too easily open to bias, misinterpretation and misplaced innuendo. In an effort to avoid such errors, but acknowledging the importance of the issue for many members of the Church in general, the space below is provided as an opportunity for you to offer your own thoughts on the subject in an entirely free and unconstrained manner. Positive and negative discussion points are equally valid.

You are free to omit this section if you wish.

-----  
THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE



## INTERVIEWS WITH INDIVIDUAL CLERGY 1994-95

### *Precis of Notes taken at various interviews*

*"Do you mind if I smoke" ?*

*'My collar is a barrier, a big barrier. I used to be a nurse and there was a unique relationship and closeness between a nurse and his patient. Now when I visit and they see the collar, they only tell me what they think Father wants to hear. "*

**"..I'm just a lodger here. I don't even read the local newspapers. Sometimes you meet individuals and are bought into their community, but you know it's only short and they do have expectations of priests, which affects the way they treat you. The housekeeper and the parish priest know you will move on one day. Living alone is bad enough, but looking back on my days as a curate, it's better than living with a b.....d" !**

**"..How far do you take obedience? People talk about celibacy being hard, but at what point is obedience more of a problem than celibacy? You know when a bad appointment has been made and you're just left to get on with it with a feeling of injustice, which is inhumane. You're sent on to a new parish with another vision of Church still in your head psychologically and you can't just switch off what you'd planned for next year, or from your involvement with a wide section of communities, groups and organisations that you are suddenly no longer part of.**

**Your dress as a priest is rejected and there are expectations because you are working with young people. The label is associated with negative things. You are therefore ignored because of it. So *where* is the person in all this" ?**

**"I know a priest who is on the verge of leaving. No-one seems to care. There are many fellow priests who don't get involved. How can they stand by and see someone suffering and not help him. They don't seem to care.? (Perhaps, I replied they care too much but are too vulnerable and therefore afraid to become involved).**



*"Looking out into the congregation it's easier to see the gaps instead of the people present"*

*"The pressure of admin results in less contact with young people.*

*I have a fear of young people asking questions I am not comfortable with. I need to have confidence in myself but you walk into the classroom and forty pairs of eyes are upon you"*

*"I never go on holiday on my own - that's why I don't take a day off. I can't stand my own company."*

*"On my day off I just go home to my parents to sleep. I'm not really giving them anything - am I ? - then return to the presbytery and start again. I'm sinking, into a dark deep pit and just trying to get out. You said you worked in research into suicide before you came to this Diocese? (Yes) Believe me, you've just arrived at the suicides".*

*"You see, priests don't trust priests anymore. You tell them something and it's all over the Diocese through the grapevine."*

*"On my day off I just have to get out of the Diocese".*

*"I used to lie if the parishioners noticed my car was missing overnight. Now I just say I had to get away. My prayer life is poor. I hardly pray except spontaneously - Please God help me sleep tonight. I go to bed and my head is so full of what's on that desk - that paperwork - I just say Oh God, please, just let me sleep. I haven't been to Confession for over 18 months. The Bishops expects things of me. One priest came and said you've achieve x and x... and you're only ordained a short time. Next you'll be Monsignor or Canon but, you could of course choose an alternative route..do something different..on purpose.. The first night in my new parish I was shown to a bedroom and told to stay in my room. And I looked out of the window and then sat on the bed for 2 hours. I experienced the worst loneliness which will be with me for the rest of my life.*



*"My Church is too big. We need to bring back the centre of importance, the Eucharist... I think I've lost it. "*

"There was once a crises in the parish with a couple, one of whom had a relationship with another parishioner's wife. I had to make a decision. That decision split the parish completely into two sides."

(Priest on new clergy .." We start of full of enthusiasm and ideas and quickly become subdued. We become engulfed into a system and suddenly we're agents of that systems and structure"

"As one of the clergy, this is how I see priesthood. It's a bit like pieces of a jigsaw"

(On the subject of media coverage of clergy and child abuse)

"I feel dirty when I hear about my fellow priests...I'm scared to death taking Open Confession; scared to death to put my arms around a child in case it's misinterpreted. I just don't allow a child inside the presbytery without another adult present."

*"One Sunday a child of 7 or 8 was waiting in line for Communion. After she stood there for a while I said 'Are you OK' but she kept her head down. The Church was packed so when the last one came for communion I put my arm around her and briefly hugged her and she whispered something in my ear. 'Father, I just wanted a blessing' Later, I got told off from the parish priest who said I still had the Blessed Sacrament in my hands and I was hugging a woman!*

"Have you see our confession box lately? The whole of the inside is covered in glass now so there is no human contact whatsoever".

(On touch) "I'm just working up to a sermon on it..I'm just going to do it one day. Priests should be seen and allowed to give children a hug"

*(Hospital Chaplaincy)..."This is really where I belong. So much I can give. I was trained for this. I do cover for another parish at the hospital but it is not normally allowed by my parish priest.*



Recently, a child of 9 or 10 was on a ventilator after a road accident. I was there all day. I even spent time with the nurses, talking it through. At the end we all stood around the bed and held hands saying the 'Our Father' and at one point, I just broke down, and the Grandmother said to the child's mother 'It's affected him more than anyone ...' Then it got to me again later at a rock concert. I was just with friends....even there people look at you. I hate when I'm introduced as a priest! I'm ME! They look at you waiting to see what 'Father' will do, what 'Father' will say, what 'Father' will read.

When you talk to a priest and the subject of sex is introduced they spill out a string of words together as if it's all pouring out in one go one after the others, tumbling out after such repression.

.... Sometimes I work with one person and the following week they come to Mass. That is good, even though the parish priest says ' You should be spelling out the facts!!'

Friendships are important. One woman I know has a cup of coffee with me occasionally. You just don't know how refreshed I feel afterwards."

"Yes, I get lonely. People forget priests need friends....'Oh Father's OK' my friends say...they think I've gone snobbish in this big house, like the parishioners, in their ivory towers, cocooned from reality. I'm sorry to go on. Sometimes, it's the only chance to speak out, to sound off,..to open up.

I don't mix with the Eucharistic Ministers Team. Perhaps I isolate myself. We parish priests are very much into our territory, our boundaries, what is inside and what is outside. I don't know how to help the youth. I don't know, I just don't know. I get frightened at the responsibility, the constant worry of finance. I built a Church which wouldn't have been built without me. That's an achievement - isn't it? It's taken four years to approach the parishioners for money for it. I keep thinking - well, let someone else do it now. I'm X years old - I've x years or so before I retire. (Why do you stay?) "I'd be without a job otherwise! I'm sorry, that must sound cynical to you.

I had a meeting to ask for help. Then when I look down at the 'Action' column I see Father's name more than others and think well why bother because I only end up with more work. I didn't train for the priesthood to



do all the things I'm doing now that I did in civilian life. 90% of the negative is paperwork, finance and all these things on my desk. They should be done by parishioners and let me get on with what I was ordained to do.

"I spent 6 years in the Seminary and came out, trained for a Church that doesn't exist"!

*"I spent four years with a parish priest and now I'm on my own as a parish priest. If something doesn't work I can only blame myself. Even as recently as the 1980's it was 'Yes Father' we addressed each other as 'Father'. The parish priest asked me if I had any friends. They are all priests I hope - certainly not female' Now, nearly all of my friends are not priests.*

*Look at this postcard from Stroud. (Place of recuperation for sick/ill clergy of all ages). If you look closely at the cars in the car park you could read whose registration it is'.*

*(On Education) 'Whose responsibility is it for a child's education in faith. We assume the Catholic School is doing it. I really don't know what's going on in there, The parents assume we do it. We assume the family do it. Everyone, is passing the buck. No one takes on the responsibility. Some parents are not even able to lead a child in the basics of faith, the Hail Mary. When they come to get a child Baptised it's only to get him into the Catholic School. But then I say, 'You're not even married yet to one another'!*

*Sometimes, its obvious the couple are living together and their parents just want it done properly. How can I honestly tell them because they are breaking the Law in not being free to marry. Having seen the work of marriage tribunals I have to be really careful.*

*I get so much stuff in the post and a lot of it goes in the bin. The deaf Society, requests for funds, the youth, the newsletter for the parish ..so much stuff in the post".*

"Some priests can't - and won't - let go of the last 20 or 30 years. I was disillusioned in the 1960's and 30 years later, I guess I'm still disillusioned.



There's living alone and then there's loneliness..... yes there was a difficulty with a women in the parish. I had to ask for a move, but it happened again in the next parish. I was better able to cope because I felt- here we go again."

(Parish life/boundaries)

"We are dealing with and responsible for a geography that doesn't exist in people's heads"

"You will never create a community unless it is a community preparing for the Sacraments together, in the first place"

"The movement of the population is not replaced by Catholic . Asians, multicultural communities instead who are not dependent on the Catholic Church,Where then, is the parish?"

"Does the ideal parish situation exist"?

*"I can't really work with young people. I just don't know what to do. A 6th Form group was a challenge recently. Religion was compulsory but they didn't really want to be there. We spoke about the Eucharist . When I said why can't we use say Cheese and Wine instead of bread and wine one remarked sarcastically, 'Father, you can't transubstantiate cheese'*

*"I don't know what goes on in School's today. I can't even just walk into the primary school classroom and say a simple 'Hail Mary' with the children without first making an appointment."*

"People forget the human being, the human side of priesthood. I'm sick of going to dances and celebrations and men coming over to me saying 'Oh dance with the wife Father' I've started refusing now and staying with the group I came with. They think it's a big thing, they have this image of what a priest is."



*"(So tell me Father, what has been good in your priestly life in the last five years?) He closed his eyes, paused and thought for a moment. "No, I'm sorry I can't think of anything good. I know that it sounds negative ... no, I just can't"*

**"How common is the common bond of priesthood? How at home does a priest feel in the presbytery - yes, that would be a good question. Does a priest have to be in control of everything? Can he say No...,and not feel guilty? Is it about being a priest, or performing a role? Is a priest isolated within a generation? The responsibilities get to you. What sort of relationship is there between a parish priest and a curate. What about the deacons? What sort of relationship is there with a permanent deaconite. You move from isolation to suddenly sharing a house."**

**"The age of parish priests is younger. There is a difference between whether they lack experience or whether they lack good experience"**

*"One Sunday when my fellow priest was saying Mass I slipped into the back to greet the parishioners after Mass. A child saw me without my collar and she ran up to meet and said:*

*'Oh Father, are you still a priest?*

**"When I get into my car this collar is just taken off and flung into the back seat"**

*"When I'm with a group and they ask me what they should call me.. sometime it's OK to address me by my Christian name ... but sometimes I prefer Father. I need this collar as a way out many times. I need it"*

**"It's the people who are hurt the most by the Church who remain in it the longest"**

*"The youth must not be made to suffer because of the clergy"*

*"(Priest as he was looking out of the window - with the blinds closed -  
"I don't know what's out there in the parish - I just don't know do you.  
You have to work with what you have. "*



## RESPONSES BY R.C. CLERGY TO THE QUESTION

### 'SEXUALITY AND THE CHURCH'

*" The Church still possessess a great fear and misunderstanding of sexuality: too little thought is given to the fact that humans are sexual beings, and that, although unbridled activity may be destructive, sexual behaviour (gay and straight) outside marriage has enormous positive value if approached in an open manner.*

*As a gay man I find the Church's attitude, at present, essentially homophobic and oppressive - a denial of the whole person and the desire to seek fulfilment with other people.*

*I fear that the Church's sexual morality is based too heavily on Jordain and early Christian misgivings of the 'body' - a confusion of both primitive tribal mentality and neo-M (?) ideas: a re-examination of the position is well overdue and essential" (Ref 088)*

*"The Church is still in a painful pilgrimage in its attempts to offer a coherent and yet pastorally sensitive account of human sexuality. It journeys in hope, but it certainly hasn't yet arrived! It often gives the impression of being able to unscramble the scrambled egg - a fear which is impossible and a claim which is incredible." (Ref 070)*

*"I believe that the Church's ruling on contraception is altogether too biological and compartmentalised: giving insufficient attention to the personal aspects of sexual acts; and treating each act in isolation instead of in the context of the whole marriage.*

*And, it is incredible that masturbation is still classed as 'intrinsically disordered', it is quite a natural act, part of growing up and, for the unmarried, by vow or necessity, for male or female, a way of coping with being single.*

*I've read of a priest who succeeded for 10 years in controlling the urge to masturbate and then suffered a severe breakdown.*

*At the moment, I am trying to help a priest who, at 60, has never masturbated and is now devoid of feeling, scared of women and incapable of a human relationship with either his God, or a man or woman" (Ref 059)*

*"A person's sexuality is private to them and a part of their uniqueness in the world.*

*I am sexually active myself and thus in no position to be pharisaical in my treatment of parishioners/clergy" (Ref 068)*



"In relation to sexuality the church must be prepared to listen to the views of people. It is a source of concern among people. In relation to celibacy among the clergy it should be a free choice not an imposition" (Ref 072)

*" I work as an Army Chaplain. I do not believe the Church discipline regarding celibacy has any sign value in this environment. This may also be a problem elsewhere and I certainly now find it hinders me personally. It is maintained by so many priests including myself out of duty and personal integrity. While these are important aspects of life it is not the fulfilling ideal portrayed by the Church" (Ref 060)*

"Church's ruling on Divorce and re-marriage create problems for people which too easily lead them to believe they are abandoned by the church. There is a need for the church to accept where its people are in regards to sexuality rather than to wield the rule book. Church should be more proactive in showing the welcoming and accepting nature of Christ rather than the condemnatory and judgemental aspect of its history" (Ref 057)

*"I was created to use the gift of sexuality. The Church denies me that right. I will go to my grave regretting the fact I have been denied the right to have children and enjoy family life" (Ref 067)*

" In my experience sexual desire varies considerably, For some there is very little and perhaps they would be better not to marry. For some others the desire tends to rule their lives.

For most if not all the sexual desire is liable to increase if stimulated by thoughts, pictures or associations.

In general, prayer and control are essential for all - not least for those with religious vows". (Ref 078)

*"Our sexuality is a gift from God.*

*If I DO NOT value and appreciate MY OWN - how can I really value and appreciate the giftedness of the "opposite" sex.*

*The SEXUAL SIDE of OUR lives is SACRED - beautiful and good.*

*ABUSE or misuse of our sexuality DOES NOT lend to personal happiness - nor does such abuse or misuse reveal genuine love - but it does show up ones SELFISHNESS" (Ref 064)*

"Generally, the Church's ruling and policies are positive and developmental, provided one sees the rules and policies as those of a universal church, ie East and West of all cultures and characteristics.

Accordingly, such dilemmas as ruptured marriages, birth control not prevention and homosexuality (to cite but 3 of modern day living issues), are best addressed with a "pastoral solution" in the "internal forum"" (Ref 089)



*"When I was ordained Deacon, I accepted celibacy as part of the package, Although it hasn't always been easy, I don't see that the issue of priestly celibacy is a personal problem for me now.*

*For some priests, it has been or is a serious problem,; some very good priests have given up their ministry as a result. I would welcome change in the discipline, though I don't believe that it would solve all the problems. Because of tradition, I see change coming gradually, for example widening of the provision for married men to be ordained before permitting priest to marry.*

*With regard to marriage problems among parishioners, again I would welcome some change in the Church's official discipline. However, I can't see how the Church can approve of promiscuity or homosexual 'marriages'. Regardless of the issue of celibacy, chastity, even if unfashionable, would seem to be a basic essential"! (Ref 062)*

*" I think that the puritanical attitude to sex that was part of the Church I was brought up in is changing and we are finding it hard to cope with the way things have swung so far the other way. We are learning that the Church's natural reaction to cover up child abuse, deviant sex etc. was unjust in many cases. I am confident that the painful process of the present will, in the long term, be beneficial for the Church and ourselves as individuals" (Ref 058)*

*"The teaching on Divorce/Re-marriage is the most difficult area. Trying to minister/support people who are hereby placed outside the sacraments (when no annulment is possible) even in their eyes, and trying to encourage them in building on their new relationship for themselves and for their children. People in that situation, who wish to become Catholics! In the past women I have loved have been supportive, albeit reluctantly and encouraging to remain celibate at least intermittently, and a priest. Nowadays, more women seem to be more open to a sexual relationship without thought of implication to celibacy or priesthood for me, or in some cases are actively seeking to encourage priests to leave and marry" Ref 065)*

*"In respect to people's life, parishioners and friends. I disagree with the Church's teaching on homosexuality"(Ref 008)*

*"There is, among clergy, rather an immature attitude towards sexuality and a difficulty in being at ease in discussion. Many clergy have not "come to terms: with their own sexuality, sexual orientation, sexual drive, etc. This leaves them inhibited and defensive. Very fixed "male" attitudes are prevalent and priests often take cover behind Church Statements. These are often "accepted" rather than understood and there is a fear to express "advanced" or controversial thoughts? The concept of "sin" looms large, especially regarding pre-marital relationships/homosexual relationships/masturbation/etc." (Ref 012)*



"While celibacy has a value to give of a life dedicated to God and others, not all clergy find this easy. Many priests trained and were ordained before the full implications of the celibate life sank in. Some leave to solve these difficulties - others remain, reconciled or not to these tensions - often to negative effect on others and the churches image and reputation. Many priests however, have learned to value the call to celibacy and have been given the grace to persevere" (Ref 015)

*"Can't understand male homosexuals. Can females, in a way, because of their emotions.*

*The sexes are not, or should not be, objects for the release of tensions nor frustrations .*

*Again, it is too easy to say there is nothing wrong "having sex", There must be a real endearment to be committed to each other in a determined future.*

*Men and women must have respect for each other, and themselves.*

*They are not 'play-things'.*

*No-one would say I'm a fuddy-duddy"! (Ref 16)*

" a) Celibacy is an overrated virtue or condition.

It should not be required for the pastoral clergy.

b) Being a professed homosexual cleric in the Catholic Church in England would not meet with much acceptance at present."(Ref 017)

*"There seems to be an attitude within the Church that sexuality should be suppressed with celibacy. Obviously, sexual behaviour and/or the conduct of sexual acts are not practised but this is only part of sexuality and to deny the existence of sexuality in the make up of man and woman is wrong and can lead to much misery and indeed dangerous results." (Ref 041)*

"I feel that the underlying problem for most of us is not 'sexuality' but the problem of living alone and of loneliness which can lead to sexual problems. I think we need new initiatives in the church which will help priests more with their sexuality/celibacy. Perhaps support groups; perhaps a change of life styles to a community way of living" (Ref 026)

*"Sexual freedom is now prominent at a much earlier age by both sexes. Young children are more encouraged in practising sexual relationships than ever before. The prescribing (?) of contraceptives should not be practised without the consent of both parents. There is a large majority of Catholics now living together before marriage has been contemplated. I also believe that many use one form or more of contraceptive" (Ref 038)*



*"The Church's teaching on contraception continues to cause difficulty. It is ignored by many who continue to practice their faith in all other ways. It causes anxiety and soul searching for some. It is never mentioned in public by many clergy nor in marriage preparation. We have been left to our own devices and have left a confused laity. 'Living together' has become an 'acceptable face' in society. We are not receiving any definitive help in determining how the Church should see these couple or respond when asked to baptise the offspring.*

*On a priestly concern it should be said that the rule of celibacy is of questionable virtue. Though practical in economic terms it does not automatically produce a more dedicated and effective priest. We must judge this against some of the uplifting examples of our devotional and dedicated married couples. Time for a review "!" (Ref )*

- "1. Sexuality is an important and integral part of personality/expression of personal relationships. It is therefore an important and integral aspect of each person's salvation and of the community of God's people.*
- 2. It follows that sexuality will have both positive and negative force for salvation: it can be, and is, used both for good and for ill.*
- 3. It further follows that the Church's teaching regarding sexual matters should be overwhelmingly positive, while recognising the need to be clear about the negative potential. It is blatantly obvious that this is not how the Catholic teaching in this respect is viewed by the population at large.*
- 4. In particular, the difficulties faced by divorced and remarried people who wish to become Catholics - and, to a lesser extent, of divorced and remarried Catholics, or Catholics married to divorced people - can cause grave scandal" (Ref 019)*

*"I have found it embarrassing and difficult when people have approached me to seek guidance for this area of their lives.*

*Whereas most areas of the teachings of the Church are wellfounded in the words of Christ himself and other words of the Scriptures, on some areas (eg. family planning) we must take more on board the experience of those who are actually living the Sacrament of Marriage" (Ref 020)*

*"I am convinced that the Church's teaching in this area (vs popular distortions of same) are faithful to the Gospels and life-giving. The fact that the Church sticks to Christ's teaching - even when (in this area, as in others) its' challenging and, for some, unpoplar, is a vivid sign of apostolic courage" (Ref 023)*



- " 1. Students (*seminarians*) must be given adequate psychosexual development reflection to integrate their sexuality and to live celibacy conscious of their orientation in order to hold boundaries.
2. Celibacy should be optional.
3. Teaching on marriage and sexuality needs to learn from the experience of married people and more adequately recognise family development, teaching on contraception to be developed in the context of life situations.
4. Need to talk about and look at gay people in the church.
5. Adequate understanding of power/abuse of power must be reflected upon." (Ref 031)

" 'Ruling' - Does the Church only say ONE thing on sex (sexuality)? How can you ask about, money, emotions, relationships and not sex? Is it a taboo for the compilers of this document, or everyone? In the survey by M... ..... such issues are addressed. Perhaps the compliers need to think again, and study all the church says about sex and sexuality" (Ref 033)

"Top priority should be given to the EUCHARIST and making this 'available', whether by celibate males or married clergy, or women priests. This enrichment of the church's ordained ministry should be considered a higher priority than administrative control over this ministry." (Ref 042)

"Two areas - Homosexuality and people whose marriages have broken down cause great concern. It seems so hard when two people meet and fall in love to teach that they may never express their love sexually. Homosexuals (both male and female) I am convinced, have been born with those tendencies. People whose marriages have failed might meet someone else with whom they feel completely happy. A second chance would be wonderful." (Ref 043)

"The Church's 'Ruling' (your word) on sexuality was fully explained in seminary during our theology years. The priest who evades this teaching is a responsible adult and knows when he is in danger. He musn't blame others if/when he fails" (Ref 047)



"I don't quite understand what you mean. My understanding of sexuality is that it is an essential component of all human beings. If you mean the Church requirement of celibacy for priesthood, yes it can be a problem at times, but it must be seen in the complete context of life. There is more to life than sex. It is simply a component. In today's society it is the totality. I think the church's teaching on the whole concept of sexuality is very logical. It emphasises firstly, personal respect for other human beings. Society view is that sex is a commodity to which all must have access. This approach is egotistic, selfish and lacks respect for others." (Ref 034)

*"Celibacy is one of the options of 'life-style' within the Church - this is gospel centered. However, I have grave reservations on how it is implemented which devalues celibacy/marriage. You cannot have celibacy imposed by law. Your first choice is life-style, only then can you decide how you will live it out. Most students decide first to be a priest but then have to take on celibacy as part of the package deal. This is harmful and can be dangerous. Celibacy as now practised is a sign of law not of the Kingdom.*

*I have strong reservations on birth control. The commission as formed by John XXIII and Paul VI could find no solid reason to sustain the church's teaching (best 'experts' that would be (?) ) It seems to me the only reason for Humane Vitae was to preserve the need to search for new ways of dealing with the divorced. - Again I pray for open discussion." (Ref 046)*

"The great sadness today that open affectionateness is now deemed to be avoided. That one's conduct is open to critical eyes in ways never before dreamt of, thus creating a 'coldness' in relationships with people. But at the same time a growth of prayer and compassion for priests, encouragement and support in a way that gives healing and affirmation.

"Thanks be to God." (Ref 050)

*"There obviously needs to be, and I think there is, a development in theology concerning the whole area of sexuality. Like many - like the Church? - I am a bit at sea; but I am sure :*

- a) In general principle the teaching of the Church is right*
- b) re Celibacy, as for marriage, it is possible to make a life long commitment. In fact the celibate commitment may even be more feasible since it involves only one human person!*
- c) I have no difficult about the ministry of married priests but I accept the church's right to discern the discipline of priesthood and lay down conditions" (Ref 051)*



*"Simply put, we have major problems as a church with the question of sexuality. The Church's discipline re Celibacy and the priesthood is a root problem. We have an authority system - a power system - built around this law, which in human terms of management and economics may seem very successful, but in its theocratic principles is completely out of touch with the latter stages of the 20th Century. It is all male, celibate, often far removed from the daily reality of peoples lives - It is self perpetuating and as we know, those who challenge the system are shown little mercy or justice. It seems inevitable therefore, that many harsh decisions are driven (perhaps with good faith - charitable view - through a sort of unhealthy preoccupation with things sexual. Eg. When I was learning about morals 'every thought, word and action' in relation to sex outside of marriage was morally sinful hence the queues outside confessionals every Saturday. Clearly people have rejected all this by virtue of the fact that our confessional queues are a thing of the past, but more and more people are going to Communion.*

*In confession over the years, I have heard many sad stories of people's lives and marriages so damaged by a morbid association of sex and sin drilled into children by priests and nuns. Needless to mention in all of this women were particularly victimised. Our Lady was indeed so misused as a model for all, when the scriptural lady was strong and faith filled and a champion of the poor rather than the powerful - (viz the Magnificat). And we are still caught up in our obsession as our wonderful Church cannot find a pastoral solution to help those caught up in second marriages, even if they weren't Catholics, at the time and now wish to follow the Master and His church. Our only answer is annulment, a legalistic one, that for many people is neither possible nor advisable, and gives no guarantee that a just solution will emerge.*

*So often the Church, in the area of sexuality seems so obsessed with its teaching that there seems little concern for the suffering it causes or the damage done to the Church eg. many communities denied the Mass because of a human law of Celibacy for priests.*

*Many people living good lives, denied Holy Comunion because of a particular interpretation of law.*

*Many theologians denied the opportunity to freely discuss and investigate certain areas. of the Church's teaching.*

*Many former priests and religious treated very harshly by the Church.*

*Many priests and religious, highly motivated initially ending up frustrated and unfulfilled and often venting this on their congregations.*

*I could go on! Needless to say you will have noted the negativity. Generally, I feel this is justified. There is much that is very good in the Church's teaching but much in the implementation of this that has done serious harm to many people in a most important area of their lives. In my view, the Church needs to say a big 'Mea Culpa' and make a fresh start". (Ref 036)*



"The struggle to admit being 'gay' took up many years of my priesthood. So much pain and heartache.

While the Church fails to value 'gay clergy' we are not able to minister openly to those brothers and sisters in the Church who are gay. This lie is a denial of human respect and dignity.

Even the seminary system, failed to provide any help to those who were afraid of setting off on the journey of discovery as sexual persons.

One only hopes it will change for others. I was sent to a psychiatrist - to see what could be done" ! (Ref 090)

*"Most people today practice contraception. The church only advocates the rhythm method. When they come to church they receive Holy Comunion. People that are living together also approach the altar for Holy Communion.*

*I also think in today's climate it is difficult to live as a celibate priest because of all the pressure around you from T.V. and the way people are living their lives. I still believe that life can be happy with prayer and love of the people that we serve". (Ref 091)*

"Moral theology is an area of great concern. The church must allow debate and theological discussion on moral issues especially with regard to marriage and family. Those in irregular unions must be helped. Optional celibacy for the priesthood should be considered" (Ref 098)

*"I think that the Church's ruling on compulsory celibacy should change. I have seen too many marriage breakdowns to see marriage as a panacea for all a priest's problems - but I do feel that leaving married out, on this deepest of human relationships, ie. husband and parent, has made life more difficult and would have made me a better person. For all the problems, I am sure I could have fulfilled my 'vocation' for the priesthood better if it had been accompanied by vocation for marriage" (Ref 100)*

"I believe that life and experience proves the 'rightness' of the church's feeling in all these areas, even a birth-catholic; this does not mean that it is easy at one level or acceptable by society, although society still sees it as an ideal which is perhaps unrealistic but still worth striving for" (Ref 101)

*"I have no qualms about the Church's teaching on any subject. She teaches what Christ taught and is guided in the truth by the Holy Spirit. If the Church's teaching on all aspects of sexuality were accepted and known then there would be a more loving and loved community of peoples in the world. People who ignore God and make a mess of their lives need to be loved but cannot be helped without knowing their personal need to turn to God, repent and after forgiveness from and through the Church, to sin no more" (Ref 052)*



*"It does seem that many people are voting with their feet. Thankfully, people are much more open about sexuality and more at ease with being sexual beings. This Church must find ways of recognising and listening to people's experiences - long terms sexual partnerships outside marriage - heterosexual but also homosexual can be healing and sources of maturation; they can also be damaging. Second marriages likewise. People find it hard to understand the logic of annulment. This whole area needs rethinking allowing us to start from experience and work to norm, rather than vice -versa (which appears to be the present case).*

*Optional celibacy would not solve problems (but that is trite (?)) - married clergy would complement celibate clergy and bring an additional richness.*

*The ability to grow as a human being must be at the heart of things - I think celibacy has helped me to grow (I hope so) but it can also be a way of avoiding questions about who one is" (Ref 104)*

*"Why are we seen to be unaware of the day to day concerns of Catholic people" ? (Ref 105)*

*"I believe that celibacy can be and in many instances is, a positive and effective way for a person to be fully alive and come to maturity; but it has to be grounded on good self awareness, a deep spirituality and a healthy attitude to one's sexuality.*

*I am not sure that I agree that celibacy should automatically be linked with the secular priesthood." (Ref 108)*

*"A positive attitude to one's sexuality is important.*

*I would be married, if permitted, but have embraced celibacy and see the advantages in terms of availability to parishioners and relaxed friendships with women" Ref 109)*

*"Yes, I'm gay, and neither the Church, the Diocese, parishioners nor society would accept this of me. In fact, I'd be hounded out. I gain acceptance from some of my family, friends and a few fellow priests.*

*The Church being anti-gay is yet another example of the contradiction of Christ's compassion, who associated himself with 'outcasts' and 'sinners'. Some of the Church however, are not negatively 'pharisaical' Thank God" ! (Ref 117)*

*"For many Catholics sexuality is still a taboo subject and still causes guilt, though many are making up their own minds.*

*The presentation of the official church in regard to marriage Law, Birth Control and Sexual relationships comes over as harsh, aloof and detached from people's experience. The whole area of clerical celibacy needs to be faced - it is not the 'sign' it used to be"(Ref 115)*



*"The sexuality area - Celibacy in my case - was and is my choice. The Church has its discipline surely but I was free to choose.*

*I will not pretend it is always easy - times when the wonder of family life would be attractive.*

*Buit it was my own choice and I saw it as important as past of the call - and its "sign value". There are big plus points too and married people also make huge sacrifices and practice self discipline, The church needs both." (Ref 118)*

**"The idea of marriage and the priesthood would cause more problems to the priest whose loyalties would be divided. Which 'vocation' would come first? Wife and family or Church?**

**Relationships with both sexes are very important in the priest's life if he is to keep a balance and understand the psychological differences between men and women.**

**Prudence is THE VIRTUE to be observed in all relations, either with family members, parishioners and friends. Avoidance of scandal in a priest's life is paramount, There should be no secret sexual liaisons with anyone.**

**Realising the importance of difference expressions of love, there is nothing wrong in having special friendships which in the end are mainly to keep the priests feet on the ground with regard to the way families live and behave. It is also important so that the priest is sometimes seen as a WHOLE and WHOLESOME human being and one who can be a wonderful friend, accepted as a valued 'honorary member of the family'. The two-way interaction can be most valuable; it is an excellent way of relaxing and acting NORMALLY . This last remark I make because so many people regard with suspicion any man who is single, he is considered to be the exception and particularly among non-catholics, the priest's vocation is not fully understood nor accepted" (Ref 114)**

*"It is not just a question of what training should offer or needs offering, but how? Are single sex entirely clerical institutions physically apart from the rest of society? What message of priesthood do they send?" (Ref 007)*



*The Church's ruling on sexuality is of the Holy Spirits and cannot be substantially changed. We should hesitate to consider people guilty of grave sin when they are humble people who try to do God's will. There needs to be a move back to explicit teaching of right and wrong, with due note of human weakness and God's Mercy"*

*Being married should not be a bar to ordination. Celibacy should be a vow not law. Those who fail to keep the vow of celibacy should not be allowed to continue in the priesthood, but should be dispensed without delay. After a time of penance they should be allowed to act as deacons and then as priests.*

*The connection between priesthood and celibacy is too tight at present. Priests are certainly called to holiness and to be leaders in the holy people, but holiness does not equal celibacy. When people are deprived of the Eucharist, men should be ordained in sufficient numbers, married or not (Ref 134)*

*"I feel that people are inquisitive - how is it possible to live - apparently contentedly - as a celibate. In recent years I've wondered myself! There is struggle and difficulty but I do not doubt the value of the celibate life - when seen as a way of loving. When it is explained as a 'practical' more efficient state, I think it is badly 'undersold'.*

*I feel that people would have a low tolerance level for a priest who was practising a homosexual lifestyle - and I believe that the Church's teaching is widely accepted in this area. More acceptance of married priests in recent years. (Ref 136)*

*"Apart from some notable exceptions most of my (university) students do not appear to see much connection between sexuality and living a Christian life. Most make up their own mind on the basis of how they feel. Those who come to seek guidance are from the small number who look for reassurance that their understanding of church teaching is correct and this desire to be faithful to the ideal is worthwhile.*

*In short, the Church is facing a considerable crises of credibility when it comes to its teaching on sexuality..*



"The Church's theology on sexuality is essentially life-affirming and centuries ahead of popular (society) understanding. Unfortunately, this means that most people grasp only the understanding of the society of which they are a part. Our society, in the west, is inappropriately puritanical, or jansenist, in its approach to sexuality and its expression. It is also homophobic - it also limits understanding of sexuality to the biological (and sees related emotions in a biologically reductionist way). This limits psychological understanding of human sexuality. This influences those church members who make the rules, such as the College of Bishops who express the theology on their own prejudices than on a clearer understanding of the capacity of human experience of sexuality. Like many of the Church's ideals, eg. option for the poor; compassion, etc if only we attempted to follow them better and so give a positive influence upon our society to help it grow in a better direction. Instead the popular perception of Church and Sexuality is seen as negative and therefore 'out of touch' and 'behind' the rest of socceity. How far is that from the truth? I believe we have an important example to set as regards human sexuality and its expression across the various spectra - eg from homosexuality to heterosexuality; from marriage to celibacy etc. Thank you, for the opportunity, to complete this" (Ref 139)

*"I feel the Church's teaching on sexuality is entirely right, bible based and practical" (Ref 140)*

"I can see the logic behind the Church's position with regard to sexuality. However, I am not always sure how it relates to my own experience of priesthood, nor that of many parishioners" I suspect most catholics either ignore much of the Church's teaching in this area and many of these who do listen to the Church, see any expression of sexuality as unredeemed and often irredeemable aspects of human nature."

How can we say that Christ came to redeem the whole person not just the safe and nice bits? I think we need to, for the sake of both priests and people" (Ref 142)

*"Sexuality is an integral part of my being. I shoul be conscious of it and accept it. It influences my behaviour all the time in so far as I, a male, come into contact with women and men. Clear guidelines on sexuality are necessary in my own life and in advising others. The priests should clearly, but with delicacy refer to the Church's teaching on single life, married life and also be determined not to water down the right or wrong of sexual behaviour" (Ref 143)*



*'People are equally deserving of respect and consideration regardless of their gender, marital status, orientation. I would like the Church to build this into the pastoral appreciation of personal situation, and to include everyone in sacramental life, valuing their contribution to the faith community, irrespective of any perceived 'irregularity' (Ref 144)*

**'One's sexuality is always with one. The emphasis nowadays that it is a God given talent that one is free to use is far more healthy than the attitude in clergy formation formerly - that sex and sexuality was something never to be referred to. The positive approach enables people to discuss problems if they arise. (Ref 145)**

*'While I value the concept of celibacy as a sign of our destiny to eternal life where there will be no need for marriage or giving in marriage, I sometimes regret missing out on the intimacies of married and family life. At other times, when I see the bitterness in some marriages, I am thankful for the celibacy discipline of the church.*

*As regards other manifestations of sexuality such as homosexuality, I have had very little experience of people with such orientation, but feel that while condemning active expression of it, I could sympathise with and encourage people in that situation to accept themselves as they are and do their best to follow church teaching" (Ref 152)*

**"Priests will always struggle with celibacy in the same way that married people struggle with their vocation. However, it does not deny the faith of either way of life. The problems of the church will not be solved by abolishing the obligations of celibacy.**

**However, this is not to deny that married men may make good priests. Whether we have married, celibate priests, or both in the future, the church should still proclaim the teaching on sexuality with confidence. However, we must not ignore that we should find better ways of helping all of us to live 'healthy and holy' ways and to be fulfilled in God's gift of sexuality. (Ref 158)**



"I am constantly surprised to find how little meaning celibacy has for most laity. They would be perfectly happy to see a married clergy and often find married clergy of other denominations more committed, more 'human' than Catholic clergy.

The authorities of the Church refuse to have a realistic look at the purpose of the Sacrament of Order. Its purpose is to enable pastoral leaders of the christian community to carry out that task, both in terms of having the grace and power for the job and in giving sacramental life in the community. The present practice of the Church in refusing to ordain people who are in positions of pastoral leadership is depriving vast chunks of the Church of proper life. It ignores the greatest factor affecting our ministry which is the role of the Bishop! His knowledge (or lack of it) of his clergy, the parishes in the diocese and its people. Such knowledge can only be gained by spending time with them and in them.

The Community to which the priest belongs is not his fellow priests, it is his people. He should be an integral part of that community, not a visitor who comes to do a job of work for a time.

In a fairly small survey I did for ....., one of the greatest factors affecting the morale of clergy was the fact that having devoted time, prayer, energy into developing a community, another priest could be appointed who would destroy it in days, take back all authority to himself and destroy all initiative. There is a huge gulf which is not dependent on age, in vision as to what the Church is about, between clergy, and Bishops seem to wash their hands of it both in regard to clergy and the long suffering laity" (Ref 148)

*"For 30 years of priesthood, celibacy was not a problem - difficult yet, but not a problem. As one gets older the thought of spending the rest of one's life alone is more daunting - to be able to share with someone, to have the support of a wife would be a great help - the need for total intimacy with another seems to increase as one gets older. Maybe it's the need to be loved for what one 'is' rather than what one 'does'. (Ref 155)*



"The biggest scandals in Church life concern attitudes to the divorced and remarried and to gays. To pick these situations as (alone) worthy of ex-communication is noxious. Also, I suspect that the very assumption of an ideal on one lifetime sexual partner, preceded by total sexual continence is so far from young people's experience as to seem some form of legal fiction to them. Apart from the area of bio-ethics, I really think that the Church would be best served by a ten-year oratorium (?) on utterances by the Magisterium about sexuality. As a rule of thumb, sexual matters should feature as frequently in Church teaching as they do in the 4 Gospels. (Ref 156)

*For myself - I have come to terms with sexuality in general. It is a part of me as a male person - can't run away from that fact. Abstinence is a negative way of looking at my vocation. Acceptance of the law of the Church as it is I found quite positive.*

*For older adults - generally, a healthy regard - acknowledging failures - but not a problem.*

*For younger people - Some think that it is a huge joke and that the Christian faith is just negative. Peer group etc. is all important.*

*For children - This is a real sadness - too many have the wrong idea and most have such bad examples around them and media influence.*

"Human sexuality is part and parcel of our human condition. Celibacy is not always easy but I see it as a direct gift from God, though not essentially as part of the Church's rules on ordination.

What is sad is the inability of some clergy (and many Religious !) to have and encourage strong, non-sexual friendship, largely because of earlier Church teaching on sex in general and positive and absurd 'phobia' re "particular friendships"; the idea that to 'love' Jesus means you can't love anybody else and the idea that sexual thoughts can be:

a) driven away by 'struggling' b) are always 'grave matters'

c) would't be there if I tried harder or was more 'perfect'..

Some clergy do not know 'who' they are sexually; some are terrified when/if they find out 'who' they are. Some are quite immature in this aspect of self knowledge which, in my opinion is one of the reasons for sexual abuse of children, since they can only relate (in many ways) to people younger and as immature as themselves." (Ref 179)



"I believe that the Priesthood is best served, generally speaking, when the option of marriage is there. Within marriage there is the situation where most people develop their abilities and general potential to the maximum. Sexuality, properly employed, colours all aspects of a person's life.

To my mind, the only real argument against married clergy rests on the impact on a priest's availability to people. But other professions cope with this and a priest in the support of marriage might very well be more effective - happier, encouraged in looking outwards, supported physically, emotionally and spiritually. Much depends on the partner - as in every other aspect of life. I do not believe that the single state of Jesus implies it to be intrinsically more holy" (Ref 153)

*"I am at present, content in my celibacy. However, I am gay and find that difficult to reconcile with some aspects of church teaching which can be seen as homophobic. It is not easy to be open about one's sexuality as a priest. There is a tendency to place all the emphasis on this aspect of celibacy rather than another element of priestly life. I find it very difficult to advise others on the specifics of Catholic moral teaching. The overall theory is fine but it's application to individual situations is often difficult to do"* (Ref 164)

"Did not 'come into priesthood' until the age of x years in the Royal Navy. Sexuality not affected my life all that much. In the navy, accepted what was freely available, often some form of friendship. As a priest, not really effected as I could be by it" (Ref 166)

*"I believe sexuality is such a personal problem that each priest must find his won way to come to terms with it. In my own case, I am reasonably happy"* (Ref 168)

"After x years in the priesthood I am certain that for very great numbers of priests and lay folk - married and unmarried - their sexual dimension involves muddle, struggle and compromise. I am not convinced it can ever be otherwise - this side of the Fall. Changes, in Church law or in emphasis will not make the human condition notably different." (Ref 171)

*"Sexuality and Personality are related. It takes time to work through this. It is part of growth and maturity - very personal. The discipline of celibacy must be underwritten with a lot of self awareness; accepted as a charism for the life of the Church; and a choice of freedom to be available for others; an opportunity for witness to the demands of Christ's Gospel".* (Ref 172)



- "(1) More attention should be paid to the unselfish partner in a divorce case, the not so guilty partner.
- (2) A priest should be allowed to marry if he wants to ..before or after ordination.
- (3) If we can have 'convert' married catholic priests - why not married priests who have always been catholics?
- (4) We should allow priest friends who get married and want to be back in active ministry.
- (5) All priests should have better education and guidance on how to get on with women and how to keep a distance from them .. this is a tricky business" (Ref 173)

*"Priests are sexual beings like everyone else. Seminary experience was very negative. Issues around sexuality were relegated to Confessor/Spiritual Director. Particular relationships with same or opposite sex could be a barrier to Ordination Best help I ever got was six months in psychotherapy. I came to appreciate my deepest human needs for love , intimacy and sexual fulfilment. Celibacy meets none of these. I hope and pray that the Church will change her current discipline and recognise that priesthood is not dependent upon ceibacy and would flourish and thrive quite well without it being a pre-requisite for Ordination" (Ref 175)*

"I accept entirely the Church's teaching on sexuality. I think that in our society sexuality has been given an importance which it does not deserve. Clearly it is a vital component of human nature: clearly it influences decisions, conduct and attitudes very strongly. But it is only one of many factors in life: It is as ordinary as eating and drinking.

It is abused almost universally by the media. "Sex sells". This creates all sorts of difficulties for all sorts of people and degrades a perfectly good human characteristic.

As to the celibacy of clergy - it must be recognised that this is a matter only of Church Law. The rules have changed through the centuries. In the Eastern Catholic Church they differ from those in force in the Latin Church. They could be changed overnight.

I would, on the whole, maintain the rule of celibacy for the clergy, but I would not be at all worried if it were changed. It frees a priest to be totally and directly at the service of his parish: he can be 'married' to his parish (or whatever his work is). This is most valuable and not lightly to be discarded" (Ref 174)



"The biggest scandals in Church life concern attitudes to the divorced and remarried and to gays. To pick these situations as (alone) worthy of ex-communication is noxious. Also, I suspect that the very assumption of an ideal on one lifetime sexual partner, preceded by total sexual continence is so far from young people's experience as to seem some form of legal fiction to them. Apart from the area of bio-ethics, I really think that the Church would be best served by a ten-year oratorium (?) on utterances by the Magisterium about sexuality. As a rule of thumb, sexual matters should feature as frequently in Church teaching as they do in the 4 Gospels. (Ref 156)

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Celibacy.. This you will know is a very complex and contentious issue. For me personally, the promise of celibacy was a means to an end at ordination and thereafter something which has been endured and lived with varying degrees of success and failure. I have never been able to understand the reasoning or logic behind the Western Church's discipline in regard to celibacy. Clearly, it is not essential to the clerical state, there is no convincing argument from Scripture and no theological argument which, in my opinion, bears scrutiny in any depth.

Celibacy in the Western Church is a tradition and relatively speaking , not a long standing one at that. To try and make any more of it is, I think, dishonest. How does celibacy make a priest 'more Christ like"? Does this mean that a celibate priest in the Western World is "more Christ like"? than a married priest in the Eastern Catholic Church or a married priest who has come into the Church from another Christian denomination? The idea would be laughable if it were not for the fact that there are those in the Church who would answer these questions in the affirmative. Celibacy is only 'fulfilling' if it is embraced and lived willingly, and if it is something which an individual accepts as being an integral part of his or her vocation and ministry.

The inconsistent way in which the discipline also brings the matter into disrepute and causes resentment among the presbyterate of the diocese who have one law imposed on them and another law imposed on those married clergy from other denominations.

A law which is applied inconsistently is applied unjustly" (Ref 177)



Sexuality.. "I think that the Church has, what I call 'a pelvic morality'. In the Church there is a preoccupation, if not unhealthy obsession, with sex, sexual matters and the sexual behaviour of individuals. I say, "The Church" but really I am thinking of those who are in positions of authority, particularly, the Pope and his closest advisors and those individuals and organisations whose voice is loudest. Experience tells me that, when it comes to personal sexual morality, individuals will take note of what the Church says, and then apply their own judgement to their own situation and needs. Contraception is a prime example of this, The problem is that very often what the Church teaches does not appear to have a relationship with what is the reality of people's lives, consequently it is often ridiculed and more often ignored.

Too often, matters of sexual morality are treated as 'black and white' issues whereas in fact they are much more complex. Here, one is dealing with some of the most personal aspects of people's lives and relationships and if the Church is to say anything at all it should be said with care, sensitivity and a profound understanding of human nature as it is lived and experienced and of course, love. If these qualities are not found in the Church's teaching and the way it is expressed, people will not listen to it.

Having said that, I am sure that Mr and Mrs Average are not as obsessed and preoccupied with sexuality as the Church is. They have more important things to worry about and enjoy - their work and the next mortgage payment, their children's education, savings and providing for the future, their own and their family's health, the social issues which our society has to face daily, international concerns....These are the things which make up most people's lives and which preoccupy their thoughts and morality, not what they do on those occasions when they wish to express their love in a personal, and dare I say it, private way" (Ref 177)

*"I feel that optional celibacy should be the norm for the Catholic priesthood" (181)*



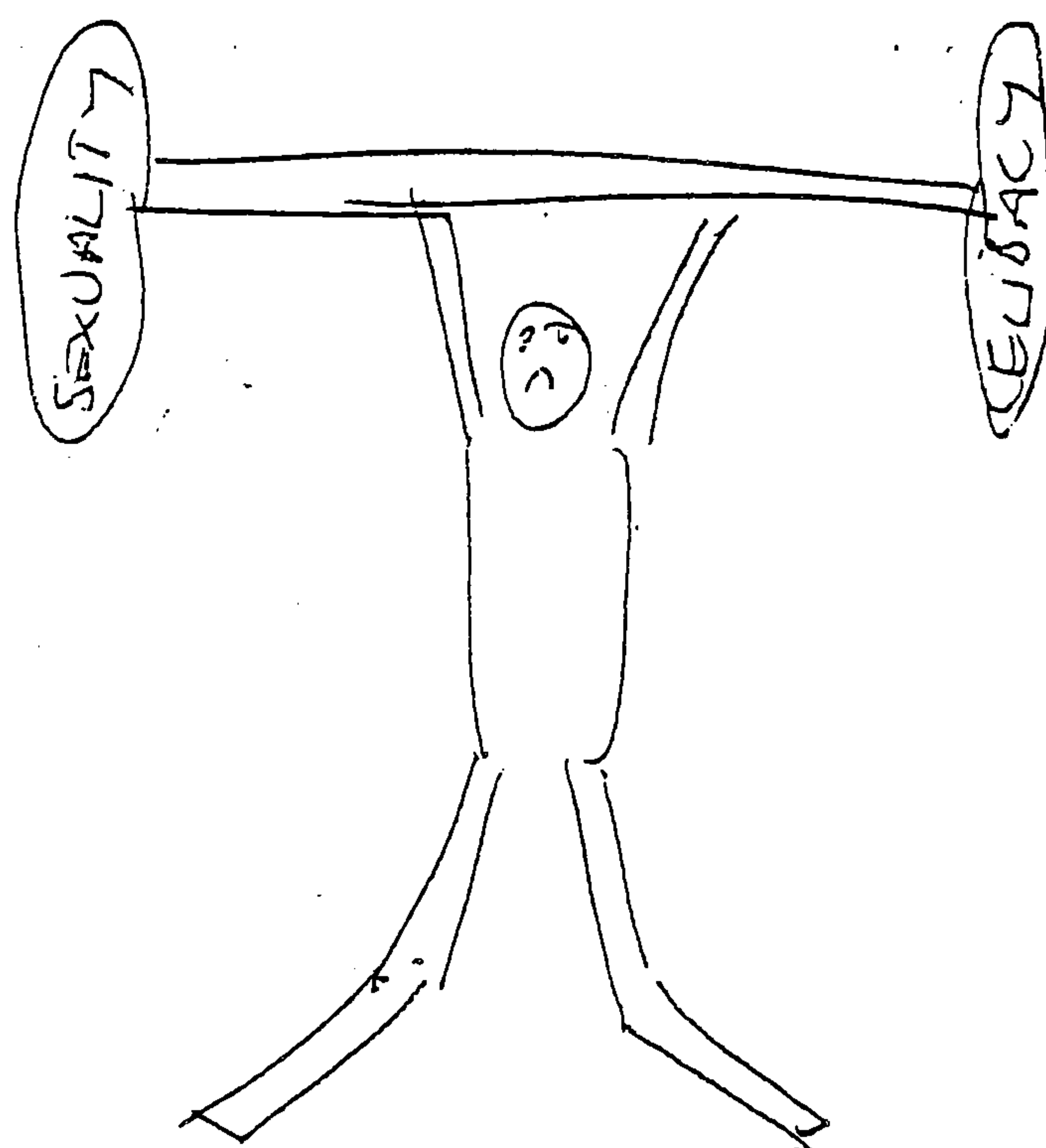
"I feel that optional celibacy should be the norm for the Catholic priesthood" (Ref 181)

*"I feel that a change in the celibacy rule would be helpful and benefit the church. At the same time new structures/practices of priests' work would need to be put in place."* (Ref 182)

"I now see asceticism as the hard side of loving. Eg. Staying up with an elderly parent who is dying. In these terms I do not see celibacy as an ascetic practice. I used to when I saw asceticism as doing something difficult for God. I cannot now see celibacy as a necessary element of the Diocesan Priesthood" (Ref 183)

*"There are many different kinds and levels of teaching on sexuality. Any teaching which opens the way to a deeper humanity and sense of fulfilment has validity. Not all teaching of the 'ideal' is achievable. Celibacy has much to commend it but it is not easy, or desirable for some. Fidelity is important but we live in a pluralist world where, in marriage, a couple may not share the same view. So I think we should commend chastity and fidelity, while recognising the need for encouragement, support and compassion."* (Ref 188)

"How it feels occasionally" →



How I would like it to feel"  
(Ref 056)

(REF 188)



RESPONSES BY R.C. CLERGY TO THE QUESTION  
*"Any other comments on this Questionnaire.."*

"Good Luck" ! (Ref 078)

*" Note : My Dean is my P.P.  
This will affect some answers" (Ref 075)*

*"Thank you for taking the time to prepare it. I do hope in some way it might lead to some constructive changes in our life style" (Ref 026)*

*"I found many of the questions difficult to answer. I may not have understood the question. I enjoy my work but I demand high standards from myself and others. I get irritated if I cannot deliver. My concern is for the people of this parish and I have no interest now in the diocese because of lack of management and leadership." (Ref 044)*

*"Very Good ... but does not allow for description of events which may be 'one off' but have long-term effects eg. severe crises caused by sudden illness or great disappointment. There was one decision made by the Diocese where a parish became non resident (served from somewhere else); I started that parish 18 years ago with the support of the diocese, and I feel that I should have been consulted or at least informed about it, since I personally feel that, although one should be detached from your previous parishioners and move on, we priests are human and have had to make a necessary commitment to a parish, which cannot just be forgotten as you move on" (Ref 101)*

*"You obviously have no idea what priesthood is about. We are not a guilt ridden hierarchically managed group of sheep! Despite its problems, priesthood can be very fulfilling" (Ref 067)*

*"Some questions are answered differently in 1960's - '70 - '80 - '90 ie my reason for becoming a priest in 1960 is very different to why I am a priest today. I have avoided answering in extremes (1 or 5) not because I'm dithering but because things are totally black and white"! (Ref 041)*



*"My greatest fear is the lack of provision made for priests when they can no longer carry out their normal work load. Priests usually carry on years after people in other jobs would have retired. This is because they have no place to live and no financial support, This is not entirely the responsibility of Bishops of Dioceses but also the laity. Many parishes could not exist if priests were not working for buttons. Many parishes are not viable yet we are supposed to carry on like the sub managers of I.C.I.*

*Today's young people entering jobs ask a few questions, (1) Salary? (2) Promotion Prospects ? (Pensions and Retirement Prospects ? For the priesthood the answer to all three is zero. Apart from a lack of faith in the community is it any wonder there is a lack of vocations"? (Ref 034)*

**" It is to be encouraged. We need to grow in an understanding of ordained ministry - we must move away from abstract theory and discover what is happening in practice. A part of our searching must involve those who are in the ordained ministry as well as involving 'the laity'.**

**We are still curtailed by post-Trent style of training and life. The vatican is too all powerful and no institution can run its institution in this manner. Experiment is essential - likewise open mindedness. We need to get rid of a clericalism from priesthood.**

**Perhaps a question or two on women's role within the church - This would effect our understanding of ordained ministry.(Ref 046)**

*""I have tried to respond to the Questionnaire as spontaneously as possible - my answers are the first to come into my head. They may at times seem contradictory. On the whole I think I can explain them.*

*While I agree it is a sensitive area, I am surprised that there is no direct questioning of sexuality. Celibacy is only one part of it; and so many questions are being raised at this time.*

*I am also a little surprised that there is no section on home back-ground and pre-Seminary education." (Ref 048)*

**"The booklet presupposes that you are a parish priest  
- what about questions relating to curates?**

**The structure they are in, freedom of contribution, time to themselves, and being able to set their own timetable.**

**No mention of relating to women either laity or religious sisters. How one works with them and their helpfulness or hinderance - let alone how one gets on with the Housekeeper if you have one!**

**You seem to be interested if I was smoking and drinking while completing this form but no mention of emotional stability, or what type of day I had that might affect the answers" (Ref 009)**



*"My situation is one of teaching theology in ..... with students and full time staff. I have worked for x years and continue by request. Questions relating to "Dean" or "Parish" (defined tightly) have been answered as relevantly as possible.*

*In this situation I am supported by good friends and colleagues, men and women. I realise I need to be intentional to avoid any build up of anger and anxiety. I have a tendency to overwork and not give myself sufficient time. Good self-knowledge." (Ref 031)*

*"Every success and blessing on your undertaking" (Ref 064)*

*"You must be used to reading through the 'hesitancies' of so many answers to questionnaires. Most questions could trigger a discussion"! (Ref 051)*

*"Possibly the biggest frustration for many clergy (clearly I speak for myself) - was the way in which so many attempts to build the Church in the model of Vatican 2 were subtly disempowered. Many meetings, conferences, etc. were encouraged and supported, but nothing changed - control and power were still closely held at the Centre. The words so often spoken after Vatican Council betrayed the fear and the lack of vision and understanding - the words "nothing has changed" perhaps betrayed too the Spirit that inspired the Council in its attempt to respond to the signs of the times" (Ref 036)*

*"The questionnaire to me seems to assume the priest as being someone who represents "the Church" to his parishioners (cf. the way you have defined "the Church" at the beginning of the questionnaire). If this is the way a priest sees himself or the way he is seen by others, then indeed he has a heavy burden to bear, which might be psychologically damaging.*

*For me, the Church is a people, individuals called by God to form a community to serve the world and the Kingdom of God. Priests, and indeed the "institutional and hierarchical structures" only make sense within the unity of that one people.*

*All of us in the Church should be working to deepen our sense of communion and unity, so that we all support each other in the vocation that God has given to each of us" ( Ref 020)*

*"On.....I shall be 50 years a Priest. I have enjoyed the life of a Priest. Congrats. on your exhaustive Questionnaire - I congratulate myself too at my age on taking time out to answer this" !! (Ref 032)*



" 1) *I feel strongly about the lack of clergy and as a result good married men should be ordained. Are we concerned more with celibacy than keeping the faith alive?*

2) *The Church should be de-centralised. Decisions should be made at local level not in Rome.*" (Ref 072)

"I thought a lot of the questions were irrelevant - eg:

- (a) Clerical dress -don't wear it.
- (b) Mass attendance - I couldn't give two hoots if no-one came to Mass. It is my involvement in the community that is valued.
- (c) Church Law - knowledge of the law is important so you know when you are ignoring it. Law is for help to people in their journey of faith - if it hinders them, it is an ass.
- (d) Celibacy is irrelevant - most clergy just get on with life as they feel comfortable. It is as important an issue as artificial birth control." (Ref 068)

*"Exit of adults from the Church - who wants to stop them"! (Ref 067)*

"I know my parish could survive without me" Ref

*"If it were shorter doubtless more would have completed it" (Ref 059)*

" In 'self-esteem' I get the feeling the questionnaires deviser regards pride as a positive indicator. I don't! While I recognise my own worth as God's creation, I know all I have is a gift - so how can I be proud (vs grateful) of what I can't take credit for?

I'd regard 'satisfied with myself' as an indicator of poor spiritual health - we are called to perfection and self satisfaction is a curtailment of our hope that, at the end, God will bring us to the state He's called us to.

Q2 on p15 "seek a vocation" This phrase suggests the questioner is out of touch with the normal use of the word 'vocation' in Catholic theology.

I didn't seek a vocation. I acknowledged one" (Ref 023)



*"This seems to be an academic research project based on the concept of the priesthood as a form of employment in the world. Priesthood is a sharing in Christ's mission as a dispenser of sacraments and guardian of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Ordained ministry is just as much a holy way of life as single, married, religious way of life. Each is a vocation of noble institution by the Trinity.*

*Some questions therefore are unclear, some forms of answers seem confusing in their format. I have answered without much thought or time spent on them so you have a spontaneous survey from me. Some questions, perhaps most, have a parish priest in mind in their implication" (Ref 052)*

*"Not really identifying areas which cause stress for me" (Ref 061)*

*"I have grave doubt as to the value of this exercise as I think it encourages some priests to look at themselves too much. It reinforces the negative where it exists. - I accept that this is a bit more positive than some questionnaires that have gone in the bin. When you have multiple choice the answers can vary so much from day to day depending on so many circumstances." (Ref 058)*

*"Questionnaire - good idea if the 'victims' are honest and the evaluators interpret answers 'rightly' (Ref 016)*

*"I had a very tough inner city parish which has been closed down recently. I was there for x years and in that parish. I became sick and was on my knees. I had lots of brokenness and broken church, house and school. The Bishop sent in another four priests after me and it all ended badly with the closure of the parish.*

*If I was asked to fill in this survey in that area the answers would be far different. It was very hard to get any support from the people there. 85% of the people there were unemployed and one child in the school was paying for school lunch because only one of the fathers was officially at work. In these such parishes I feel too much is expected of priests and one often is left on their own after asking for help from the Bishop and the Vicar Generals and Dean. I feel that they would not know how to cope themselves as any of them were never in such deprived areas. There should be much more support financially and otherwise for priests in UPA parishes.*

*(Ref 091)*



"Questionnaire only gives part knowledge. There are many more questions on the subject. Too much can be read into them"  
(Ref 093)

*"Thank you for the interest. I will look forward to the Report. Perhaps my overall criticism is that the whole exercise is understandably negative but it doesn't give the opportunity (except here!) to state that despite the 'downside' the difficulties and the failures, it is a very happy life on the whole, with a tremendous amount of "job satisfaction" (Ref 094)*

"I don't think your section on celibacy does justice to my feelings about it.

Of course celibacy is hard, but I feel it has great value. I don't think it is "most Christ like" or "most fulfilling" because the sacrament of marriage is equally Christ like and fulfilling. I think maybe the universal discipline should be relaxed. But, personally, I find great joy in the call to celibacy. I enjoy the freedom to organise time or to move. I also firmly believe that it is easier to do this job as a celibate. Marriage is difficult enough and I feel it would add as many complications as blessings to my priesthood.

I don't, at the moment, think celibacy is valued by my fellow Catholics\* And I do find this demoralising. If the universal discipline were relaxed maybe it would be valued more.

(\*I don't care much what other people think). (Ref 095)

*"My only slight concern is that, being a lecturer in theology and an academic I don't quite fit into the pattern you assume in your questionnaire. I think it is important to tackle these things and I admire and hope to value from your work - it is important work. It is worth remembering though, that priesthood is a much richer notion than parochial ministry.*

*Good Luck with your research" (Ref 104)*

*"Questionnaire - good idea if the 'victims' are honest and the evaluators interpret answers 'rightly' (Ref 016)*

"I am not sure the questionnaire asks all the questions that need asking, the relationship between parish priest and curates for example,

I am receiving treatment for Clinical Depression, and have been for 18 months; thus not found it easy to complete this Questionnaire.

Having only recently moved parish, some questions difficult to answer and some answers were different to what they would have been a few months ago" (Ref 100)



*"I feel my comments may not be helpful as I rarely feel stressed.  
I think a certain amount of tensions/challenge is a good thing" (Ref 111)*

"....I was ordained on ..... so you are reading the reflections of a priest well into his seventieth year, now living in what most are pleased to term 'retirement', .....Of my X years of priesthood, 35 were passed in very large colleges, the other X living alone, half the time doing everything for myself. Happy either way.

Administration. Loathe it, and more than half my teaching life was wasted on it; but I should have felt guilty had I ever shied away from the burden. It is not that administration is hard; on the contrary, it is too easy, and therefore just boring. Before the Second Vatican Council, I used to spend all my time teaching, with no admin. The years following it seem to have consisted largely of long hours sitting in committee rooms discussing trivialities.

I had only X years in a parish....so my reflections are hardly worth having.

Since returning to ..... to devote myself full time to writing, I have never been so happy. I can live alone in comfort, provided that I have my books, and time to read, think and write. As for quitting the priestly life, I have never in all my life even thought of it; it would be like abandoning one's spouse, or like an officer's deserting in the middle of battle at Ypres. One has pledged one's word.

The military simile from 19.... permits me to end by saying that in the laudable endeavour to interest young men in a vocation to the priesthood or religious life, there is today, in my opinion, too much of what I call the Lord Kitchener approach: "Your Church Needs You"! In other words, there is an over emphasis on "we need to fill the gaps in the ranks". I should prefer to start every time from 1 Cor 12 4:31: "There are varieties of gifts, varieties of service, varieties of working..."and to advise any applicant for the ministry that even if he is an octagonal peg, there is a grave shortage of pegs so shaped, and to assure him that he will not be rounded down to fit into a square hole. And whether he is octagonal, hexagonal or just plain square, it is the quality of the wood, not its shape, which matters. I do not think any diocese will lose many vocations to the parochial ministry by admitting that one cannot run a NHS solely on the GP's and local surgeries, and the GP's would be the first to benefit from the consciousness that there are strong teams of cardiologists, radiologists and dermatologists on call all over the country. "Now these things are an allegory" (Gal 4:24) (Part quote from letter enclosed in a questionnaire)



*"Some of the sections eg Coping Strategies ar difficult to complete so I have not really done full justice " (Ref 114)*

"I feel the church has still got a lot to offer, but I am concerned that we are becoming more isolated. The difference between clergy lifestyle and the life of laypeople does really worry me.

I feel that the whole approach to ministry, and the way people's needs are served requires pro-active questioning and debate at all levels of the church. The old models have fulfilled their role, We as a whole church need to look again at the whole area of ministry and service." (Ref 115)

*"You haven't asked if I see any future in the priesthood as it is. The answer is no, I do not, The diocese has little interest in the individual. There will be no sabbaticals except for 3 months after 15 years, which is ludicrous.*

*Life will increasingly run around being more sacrament machines and I will leave when I can't take this loneliness anymore. I now understand, after x years of priesthood why a majority of my colleagues have switched off and do their own thing, including a lot of golf.*

*Be assured, the priesthood is crumbling. I'm trying to pick up the pieces of my disillusionment. In the x years full time parish ministry, as lay annointant-deacon-priest my present parish priest is my sixth one and he's had (...medical condition) More will become ill in the next five years. ....Thank You for your work" !( Ref 117)*

"I am not convinced this information will be of much use other than your academic goal. We are in danger of over analysis of every movement - end up looking at our navel -

The call of the gospel has a desired and powerful appeal in whatever context we work it out - priest or married etc.

It demands are not a joyride and Christ made that clear - we all need prayers and support on the way and if that is what you hope to provide then - Good Luck " !! (Ref 118)

*"Vocation - is a commitment to the work of the Gospel. Caring for people only to find that those in charge of the diocese couldn't give a d..n about their priests. OK, so long as you are fit to do your work, if not, go back to your family and disappear". (Additional notes on questionnaire)*

"Vocation - is a 'calling' by God through the Church. in practice, however, not so clear. Beacause one is a priest does not necessarily mean one has a vocation to the priesthood - the same with marriage. We need to be far less certain about who has a vocation - training and church law may at times effect 'a vocation'" (Additional notes on questionnaire).



"On the anniversary of my ordination..I wonder if I will still be alive the following year" (Ref 119)

*'This questionnaire does not address the fact that the profile of priesthood today does not :*

*(a) Attract heterosexuals*

*(b) Attract social esteem*

*Priesthood at present is not honest. Truth will set us free. Good luck with your survey, but ... will it be heard"? (Ref 119)*

"Don't let us become religious beaurocrats"!! (Ref 125)

*"This questionnaire did not take account o f the substantial minority of priests whose principal work or time commitment is on chaplaincy work - hospitals, schools, universities.*

*As a hospital chaplain myself 2/3 of my work is not in the parish. Some of the answers would have been affected if the questionnaire was not confined principally to parish work' (Ref 126)*

**"I'm told that this (geographical area) is one of the least church going area in the U.K. As I see it the faith is very thin. I consider this a much more difficult 'mission' that I had in Africa where there was great material poverty but greater spiritual riches among an unevangelised people. Hence it may be thought my answers to many questions not encouraging. There are though, some great little pockets of faith-full people, but not the thirst and desire to share our faith from others." (Ref 132)**

*"The present shortage of candidates for the priesthood has serious implications for the future. At present, the Church of England is failing to attract young men who are representative of their generation. The high proportion of candidates who are openly gay and the institution's acknowledgement and acceptance of this, suggests that there will be an increasing gap between the people in the pews and their priests during the early years of the next century. There are clear signs that the percentage of young priests whose sexual orientation is gay, is above the norm for society as a whole and, that the difference in percentage is considerable. This can only lead to the development of a priesthood which is even more 'out of touch' with the lives of the communities which it is supposed to serve. It will also ensure that priesthood continues to be rejected as a viable option by young men who cannot identify with the current ethos." (Ref 138)*



*"It worries me that such an exercise (questionnaire) could lead to a negative view of the priesthood. Often priests can give a negative view of themselves and their work. This is not to deny the burden but to see them in the light of our services to God and his people. We need to portray a much more positive image of ourselves. This is a big factor in the decline of attendance of young people at Mass and a shortage of vocations. We place too many burdens on ourselves with ridiculous expectations of what we can do. We forget to concentrate on what the Lord expects of us. The biggest problem many priests face is that they are constantly told of how they fail. We rarely celebrate success nor do we recognise God's goodness to us. Basically, we need to cheer up"! (Ref 158)*

*"A bit long! Hope mine is useful. Good Luck"! (Ref 153)*

*"I have re-read all my answers and I am sure that quite different answers would be equally accurate - so sorry"! (Ref 171)*

*"I hope your survey has some bearing on the future training of priests for the Catholic Church. Apart from the influx of disgruntled Anglicans seeking Communion with Rome, we are rapidly becoming an endangered species. Recent scandals of sexual abuse relating to priests has definitely tarnished our image even in the eyes of the most faithful and loyal. Rome's continued campaign to enforce celibacy does nothing to promote priesthood in the 20th Century or in the future. Many parishes are struggling - Sunday mass may suit some, but many of these who have kept away for a long time seek something less formal and more friendly in terms of worship. We provide nothing apart from Mass! Young people (15-25) are conspicuous by their absence. It does not bode well if they are the Church of tomorrow.*

*Plugging holes, filling gaps and crisis management is, in the main, the way most Dioceses operate. Show me a different one and I'll ask for a transfer in the morning"! (Ref 175)*

*"The major problem of Questionnaires is the difficulty of forming questions to cover sufficient variations and individuality. In my case, I'm not sure why the present move was made. This is too often the case. The Bishop and/or Dean are rarely open enough in their relationships with clergy. Because of another aid I have - where I meet people who are going through the same problem that I had and understand my problems/difficulties in daily living, the fact that I am a priest, is not usually a problem to them" (Ref 168)*



"I am a worker-priest working as a nurse specialist during the week and attached to a parish at the weekend. I have paid supervision for my work as a nurse. I am relatively free from unplanned demands from parishioners during the week. Most of my support comes from people at work or outside this diocese and parish structure. I'm sure the local clergy would be supportive but I rarely meet them as I am busy during deanery meetings etc. I do not feel especially stressed because I believe I am having a balanced working life. When I worked full time in the parish, stress and anxiety were more prominent" (Ref 164)

*"As I am not currently engaged in pastoral ministry many of the questions were not really relevant to my current situation. This should have been anticipated by those who prepared and/or distributed the questionnaire.*

*Further, my parochial pastoral experience of x years was as an assistant priest. I had a good relationship with my parish priest which is in part reflected in some of my responses. Others, I know, had less positive experiences and this itself was a cause of stress.*

*However, there is no 'space' for such information in this questionnaire - again a serious failing. I feel that the questionnaire is orientated towards parish priests and so it has either been badly designed or badly distributed - hence the results will, in my opinion, be seriously flawed" (Ref 160)*

"Questionnaires of this sort are inherently inadequate. They do not allow for all nuances which are essential for adequate answers. Take for instance the section 'Coping'. The answers will depend on the nature of the problem and how serious it is. Different problems are dealt with differently. Or take the section on 'celibacy' questions 'f' and 'g'. I think that celibacy should be kept but not for the reasons given in the question. In question 'e' the word valuable is misused.

However, I found that completing the questionnaire was interesting and useful. I remain, however, very doubtful whether a true picture of the state of the clergy can be gained from such an enquiry.

I refer you to two passages in St. Paul: Romans 8 v 31-39; Colossians 3: v 12-17 These passages sum up the theology and the practice of Christian life." (Ref 184)



"For me, the greatest source of stress is the reversal of the progression policies and initiations of the '60's and early '70's. In particular, I would mention the treatment of Cardinal X and Archbishop X.

I know other priests have found the change in practice and doctrine have gone too far. This too can cause much stress. Some of the priests in this group have felt that their status has been undermined by the promotion of the role of the laity.

As this question of changing doctrine and practice has not been covered in this questionnaire, I am willing to elaborate if need be. I enclose my name etc.. (Ref 183)

*"I am not a Diocesan priest so my experience may not be typical. I am a religious working in a diocesan parish setting but have spent most of my life abroad, in x countries.*

*You might need to make a distinction between diocesan priests and religious who work in parishes for a bishop. I suspect there are subtle differences in their experiences and training that might influence their responses. (Ref 181)*

'Apologies for the scribble - I'm on a bus journey"! (Ref 182)

*"In my previous career I had achieved all my expectations. From teenage years I had often considered the priesthood; a change in direction seemed appropriate hence I applied to the Bishop, was accepted and have since discovered that priesthood is right for me" (Ref 170)*



"The growing number of incidents of child abuse are staggering - it makes you feel ashamed and to have to apologise, when working in an area these events have been perpetrated in, albeit many years ago.

The question that has to be asked is: *"How, did these people get through the training system over a period of so many years" ?* One can only conclude that the system itself is flawed.

In the present climate, there is a real danger that homosexuals will be attracted to the clerical life; indeed you look around the colleges these days and you begin to have your doubts about certain individuals and their life styles. The chronic shortage of priests is a problem that is not quietly going to go away - it is going to get worse if the present situation persists. Even in this country, where we are far better off in the ratio between priests and people the strain is beginning to tell when one priest is having to minister in a parish that always had two or even three priests. So many in high-up positions in the Church don't seem to appreciate this. They have never had to queue up in the supermarket, cook their own meals, do their own laundry (in many instances) . That is all done for them.

The shortage of priests is a matter of such total importance that it has to be addressed by the whole Church .. emphasis on the word 'whole' and not just by a pre-selected and privileged minority. The deprivation of millions from regular Eucharistic contact in so very, very many parts of the world is nothing short of scandalous.

The major problem is how actually to introduce any policy of change, but perhaps because it is a problem, it cannot be ignored for a moment longer. Perhaps the presence of married former Anglican clergy in our ranks could provide a stronger pointer for the way ahead. Indeed, their presence is now a source of envy and embarrassment to so many married deacons, who would dearly love to go on to Ordination to the priesthood. I have heard it said that one deacon was advised by the local Church of England vicar to join the Church of England, get ordained and then revert to his catholic practice .. he could then be a married priest! Yes, we are in an anomalous situation" (Ref 186)



'The medical effects of stress are well documented. The psychological causes of stress in the individual related to personality types or traits, is also well known. The mechanisms for coping with these are less clear; but relaxation and mediations have been found to be useful alongside education to make people more aware of symptoms and how they behave/react to situations.

All of this is applicable whatever your situation or job, in life. So what is unique to stress and the R.C. Priest?

I offer the suggestion that one of the major causes of stress in the R.C. Priesthood is the rapid transition from 'one age to another' (ie a paradigm shift, of which the Second Vatican Council reforms are a part) and the 'crisis' that this has precipitated for both clergy and laity which both have to deal with examples include:-

1. Older priests and laity who no longer understand their place or role, in the Church; they are in conflict themselves (which is stressful for them and they react, causing conflict for others (more stress!).
2. Lack of real leadership in the Church. Top heavy with conservatives of the Myers- Briggs SJ type - no vision - NT types - a lot of neurotics holding onto defunct structures - another cause of stress - from both young and old.
3. Identity crisis of the priesthood - 'who, or what, am I supposed to be/to do'?
4. Falling numbers of practising catholics (in the west) due to total lack of communication of what faith is really about - was to 'rules and regulations in past' with little understanding which suited previous society but not this one's. Church slow to adapt and therefore survive - all the pressures which come from this etc.

Conclusion: Conflict is necessary during a period of transition; stress need not be.' (Ref 139)

*"I am quite happy to be a priest where ever the Bishop wants me to be, although now getting on in years. I sometimes dream of an easier smaller parish. Receiving a small army pension as well as the senior citizen one, I have no undue worries regarding modestly comfortable retirement, if that were to come about, although I would be happier, health and ability permitting, to continue in active ministry even as a curate. My own interests 'outside priesthood' such a walking in the countryside, music and reading make me a reasonably contented person in myself, but it is my life as a priest that I am happiest in and I feel I am doing what God is calling me to ' (Ref 152)*



"Thank you for including me in your survey and thank you for your concern regarding the well-being of the diocesan clergy. I hope that your work will be fruitful and that future generations of priests and deacons will benefit from it.

I have answered the questions in the light of my own x years experience as a priest with all that the experience has taught me. When I had been ordained x years I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown because I had spent that time trying to be something and someone I could never be - the ideal priest living up to the unrealistic and unreasonable expectations which I, the Church and the parishioners placed upon me. With the help and support of the bishop, my fellow priests and my family I had nine months away from active ministry during which time I attended X retreat/renewal centre at ..... and underwent counselling at .... This time had a profound effect on me as it gave me the opportunity to get to know my real self for the first time and, for the first time, relate my real self to my priesthood and ministry. I returned to active ministry with a totally different attitude, one which is positive, realistic and more understanding of myself and others.

Although it was a crisis time when it happened, I now look back and see it as one of the most positive moments in my life and priesthood and I sometimes think that every priest should have one! (Ref 177 - part of a letter enclosed with the Questionnaire)

*"I would be interested to know the conclusion" (Ref 188)*



## **DEFINITION OF VOCATION - Responses fro**

### **Personal Calling**

**What God wants one to do with ones life to attain Heaven**

**Encountering Gods presence in the call**

**Call, urge, desire to serve, arising out of healthy attitude to Church and faith**

**A calling (nagging feeling) that there is more to life than just material advancement and a desire to be at the service of God his people and the world.**

**The divine attraction within each person to be fully alive**

**A servant of the people but not a slave. One who seeks to do Gods will and puts it into practice in ones own life.**

**Responding to God's invitation to 'follow him' in whatever circumstances a person finds himself\herself - seeking and doing his will.**

**Serving the people of God in their spiritual needs.**

**Feeling 'chosen' - impelled towards the spiritual. Responding to a 'calling' Unable to refuse.**

**A calling from God.**

**A calling to serve others from God.**

**Willing to learn, to teach, to continue learning.**

**Calling to service of others who are needy.**

**A particular call from God**

**God's call to serve his people, the Body of Christ, entailing the requisite gifts of the Holy Spirit. c/f 1 Corin 12 4:**

**A call from God recognised as such by the local Church.**

**A calling from God to all the Baptised to use their nature and spiritual gifts in the service of God and the Church.**

**An attraction to continue Christ's Mission on earth. 'He went about doing good'**

**A commitment to use one's God given gifts.**

**A genuine calling to do something useful for yourself and others.**

**A call to share in the ministry of Christ.**

**An invitation to a way of life that involves living and serving at least one another.**

**Responding to God's Call**

**Responding to a felt call**



A willingness to offer oneself to the service of  
Church.

A call from God articulated by the Church

A call from God discerned in prayer.

A way of life through which a person can fulfil their potential calling as  
ordained by God.

A commitment to the work of the Gospel. Caring for people only to find  
that those in charge of diocese couldn't give a damn about their priests.

OK so long as you are fit to do your work. if not go back to your family and  
disappear.

Being of service to others in the mission of Jesus,.

A sense of being called to do a job. This sense is likely to be strongly  
influenced by some people close to you.

A call and willingness to serve.

Awareness that priesthood is the inevitable life-choice.

Gift

Answering the inspiration one receives if one listens and prays.

A calling from God to both men and women.

A response to what God thinks is best for me.!

'Calling' by God through the Church. In practice, however, not so clear.

Because one is a priest does not necessarily mean one has a vocation to the  
priesthood - the same with marriage. We need to be far less certain about  
who has a vocation- training and church law may at times effect 'a  
vocation'.

A calling to serve the Lord.

A call to ministry inspired by the Holy Spirit responded to by the person  
called carefully discerned over a protected period and confirmed and  
formalised in the call of the Bishop at Ordination.

If, priesthood, God's calling and enabling.

A personal response and continuing attempt to be what you feel God is  
asking of you and leading you to be.

A securing desire triggered by a developing involvement in parish work at  
any level and persevering through criticism and opposition.

A special calling from God which has a unique identity in priesthood.

Vocation - work that satisfies.

God's choice of me.

(End of Diocese A)



## DEFINITION OF VOCATION (Responses from Diocese 'B')

A call by God to his service.

Ongoing relationship with a God who cares.

Living out your dreams.

A call from Christ confirmed by the Church.

The conjunction of personal gifts, the views of friends and family and the inner compulsion leading to ministry.

A call from God.

Giving you time for the benefit of others.

Gift from God.

Calling by God to which we respond/choose.

Each one is called by God for a purpose. To recognise this call and live according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit - to love God AND our brothers and sisters.

Vocation is a calling by God and by the Church to work directly in the service of the kingdom by ministering especially to the spiritual needs of people.

A calling to embrace a particular way of life which involves serving the community.

To freely use our full potential to serve God and humanity.

That form of life where God is glorified our neighbour served, and we are fulfilled.

A calling by God mediated through circumstances.

A response to the deeper needs in people and society.

Time spent in service to others.

Something you feel you have to do and don't always want to do.

Personal call from God - who provides the gifts necessary.

Service

A call by God to serve him in the priesthood or religious life manifested through the Church and others.

Wanting to do something specific more than anything else.

A call to minister to people through preaching, leading, celebrating the sacraments and caring.

A privileged way of being able to express your love and concern for others.



A mystery.

A call from God to serve his Church.

A call from God to which I try to respond daily.

A sense of being drawn towards a particular pack - career or otherwise.

A spiritual calling to serve God actively and consistently in the ordained ministry.

Where one finds life's path for you.

Serving people and the Lord and offering the sacraments and Mass.

Being sure that one is doing what one is supposed to be doing in God's plan, and that one has a definite role in that plan.

A call from God.

..In general, to develop through training, the natural gifts and inclinations.

Baptised as fundamental and basic. Priesthood is a service.

Called to serve.

A calling from God that each single person has. Not to be simplistically equated with a job. It might be parenthood, caring for a sick parent etc.

A call to follow Jesus Christ.

A way of life dedicated to the care of others.

A feeling to being called to follow a particular way of life.

A call from God which is continuous but sometimes not heard if one isn't listening!

To serve the Lord.

A respond to God's call in our lives to the work God wants us to perform.

A call to become the person I am.

Ability of an individual to exert their ideals in a chosen profession Giving one's all to bettering that profession.

The sense that God is calling me to serve Him and His people in some way,

A calling from God, confirmed by the Church and discerned by the individual to serve God and his people.

A call to service.

Making the best use of your gifts and talents in the service of the Lord.

What seemed an appropriate future for me.

A way within Church life of following Christ. The consciousness of Christ,

Determining a particular way of living the Christian life.



Vocation is the work or occupation you follow indirectly through persons of influence in your life, from God to do something special.

A commitment to a job/role/way of life based on personal convictions.

A need to follow what you think God is calling you to do.

Conviction with inspiration.

Response to the Gospel Call.

(End of Diocese B)



## **DEFINITION OF VOCATION**

**(Responses by Diocese 'C')**

**To respond to a disciple**

**God's choice of me to help others**

**A personal conviction that God wants your service.**

**A response to an awareness of an opportunity to use ones talent/interest in the cause of some area of life - Marriage/social conditions/things of God.**

**A vocation is a call from God to live ones life in accordance with His terms.**

**A call to serve the people of God, in Man, the Sacraments and availability.**

**Seeking the reason for which God created you.**

**Following the call to be true to who I am. How I develop the expression of this, becomes my vocation in life.**

**A vocation is an inspiration to answer a call to service.**

**A special calling from God recognised by the community represented by the Bishop.**

**To be called by God to a particular way of life.**

**A God given call to ministry affirmed by the call of the church.**

**The calling of Jesus to become an apostle. This may be a matter of the Bishop inviting men to consider ordination.**

**A job where money does not matter but people and God do.**



A calling from God to us the talents given by Him in worship in the treatment of neighbours.

My vocation is to the the best I can with my life for my God and his people and who knows, I may be doing the best for me too!

Vocation is a way of life.

A personal call from God to a form of ministry, service.

A sense of calling to follow a particular way of life and ministry.

I do not know!

A call experienced from God, discerned through a faith community and developed through prayerful response to people, events and circumstances.

Being asked by God to show Christ in the world.

God's will for an individual.

Vocation is a way of life.

(End of Diocese C)



## DEFINITION OF VOCATION (D) *Resp h-m D. D'*

I define my vocation as a firm belief that God has chosen me to bring his love and life into the lives of his people, to proclaim the Gospel and build up the community of the Church. he has chosen me to do this in a particular way through the ministerial priesthood.

Seeing God's will for one or another

A call to a way of life and dedication based on faith.

Being the face of Christ and the Church for people.

A calling from God which is lived out through our own desires, decisions and neuroses.

A calling beyond our personal internal needs and wants.

Being called.

A call from God - in my case to serve him in the secular priesthood.

Service.

Growing awareness of peace with self and way of life.

A call from God to a particular form of service.

Purpose of being.

A Gift of Responsibility from God

As a calling to the Priesthood, realising all that it entails.

Strong will to follow Christ in priestly ministry.

A firm conviction that God, through the Church has led me into his service.

A deep persistent conviction that God wants me to take a definite direction in life coupled with realistic self knowledge.

Calling to do something worthwhile in all aspects of life.

Vocation is a call from God generally mediated through other humans , through circumstances and through a person's character and ability to serve God in a particular way. Everyone has a vocation.

Daily offering of oneself to God.

A calling from God

Living and working in a manner that gives personal satisfaction and contentment.

The ability to know what you want to do - and get out there and do it!

(End of Diocese D)



(additional notes Definition of Vocation)

"Service"

*"A realistic desire and aptitude to follow a way of life"*

"Dedication to a chosen way of life"

"Forming a community in Christ"

*"A call to service"*

*(End of Diocese D)*



## **THE THREE MOST FULFILLING ASPECTS OF YOUR PRIESTHOOD**

**(Responses from Diocese 'A')**

**Children, Chaplaincies, Masses**

**Mass; helping people to improve their self image; helping people in time of need eg. bereavement.**

**Care of the sick and lonely and housebound. Deep and lasting friendships with parishioners. Celebrations of God's love via the Sacraments.**

**Ministry to the sick, community development, motivating people.**

**Liturgy, Instructing, Visiting the sick and parishioners.**

**The vulnerability that such a variety of people entrust to me.**

**Parish work, building community, sacraments.**

**Celebrating Mass and the sacrament of reconciliation. Helping people in real need, Hospital work.**

**Variety of life, Satisfaction at dealing with people's problems, the daily challenge of the Gospel.**

**The Mass, The Sacraments, Prayer.**

**Liturgical expression, work fulfilment, Independent thought.**

**Friendship, salvation and eternal life.**

**Satisfaction, deepening of spirituality, learning all the time.**

**Contact/serving others, relationship with God, example of life.**

**Comments, pro and contra about my sermons, earning respect of confidence from people of all denominations, being told I'm approachable.**

**Ability to forgive, ability to encourage.**

**Prayer, sacramental life.**

**Preaching and Teaching, Counselling, Community development.**

**Celebrating the Sacraments, Working with young people, Knowing that a**

**Liturgy has been a successful celebration.**

**Celebrating the sacraments, especially Reconciliation. Visiting people,**

**Socialising with parishioners.**

**Celebrating the liturgies, Instructing in the Faith (RCIA) Involvement in schools (Governors duties).**

**Celebrating, acceptance by people in their lives, preaching.**

**The trust people have for me, a person and priest. The sharing of sacramental life with people, parish visitation.**

**Relationship with people, lay formations and training, good liturgy.**

**Community prayer, visiting homes, the Sacrament of Reconciliation.**



Service to others, sharing ministerial duties, contact with others through love of the Church.

Being with people, leading worship, celebrating baptisms.

Looking after the sick and dying, bereaved, preaching and administration of Sacraments.

Sharing other people's faith. Security in Christ's love and support, Partnership (finding the right person to work with). Support received, Encouragement given.

Peace of Soul; contentment.

Human friendships - priestly and lay; Growth in prayer and spiritual understanding (awareness), Work I have been able to do with Christians of other traditions.

Administration, sick visiting and organising.

Relationship with Christ, Love and loyalty of the people, Opportunity to comfort and support people with God's grace.

Being expected to and being allowed to live in a 'spiritual' environment.

Celebration of Eucharist, Being privileged to meet so many good people.

Christ's priesthood, shared with men in a complete aspect itself,

Preaching, Teaching, Leading others and providing a platform for their work.

Providing Mass and the Sacraments. Being used by people with problems.

Being able to devote ample time to prayer albeit a poor effort.

Mass, visiting, ministry of the Word.

Living in community, Being in tune with one of the new things being done by the Holy Spirit today. Personal prayer and retreat times.

Administering the Sacraments especially celebrating the Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Pastoral visitation and encouraging people who have lapsed. Visiting the sick. Teaching theology, Part of people's search for meaning. Good leadership of Liturgy.

The offering of the Mass. The help for sick and deceased. The comfort of knowing who you are.

RCIA School Work and Preaching.

To see the spirit moving in others, To feel needed by so many. To receive love, especially from the children.

The Mass. Administration of the Sacraments Instructing people in the faith. Prayer, Hospitality and Compassion.



**Celebration of Mass and Sacraments. Care of the sick at home or in hospital. Parish involvement in Sacramental Preparation of RCIA Having an irreplaceable gift for supporting , healing and advancing the unity of the baptised. Being part of the (not separate, nor superior) presbyterate. Being an official preacher of the Gospel.**

**The Sacraments.**

**The sense of being part of a live, life giving community.**

**Prayer.**

**Sacramental life, involvement in the lives of others.**

**Comforting the sick and bereaved, Attending the dying.**

**(End of Diocese A)**



## **THE THREE MOST FULFILLING ASPECTS OF YOUR PRIESTHOOD**

**(Responses from Diocese 'B')**

**Helping the dying, Preaching God's Word, friendships.**

**Family life, lay friendships and support, Priest friends.**

**Working with young people and drug awareness. Working in a team-clergy and lay. Experiencing much love from the community.**

**The Mass, care of the sick, the young in and out of school.**

**Care of the sick, dying, bereaved, Preaching, Effecting reconciliation.**

**Helping the sick, My hospital work, the trust placed in me.**

**Visiting homes and attending the sick.**

**Service of God and people. Prayer, Sacraments.**

**Liturgy, Being part of people's lives , Counselling and reconciliation.**

**Frankly, being available all the time. Recognising Christ in the 'hostile' and 'angry' people and seeing a positive response. Friendship and being valued.**

**Liturgical celebrations, being able to help people, talks and courses I give on the Bible etc also RCIA.**

**Celebrating Eucharist with the parish community. The satisfaction of knowing that I have helped someone. Good relationships with other priests.**

**My own area of special ministry - Army Chaplaincy. Strong friendships.**

**Sense of doing something which matters.**

**Presiding at Mass especially with small groups. Sharing my faith with those who do, and don't have a similar one. Visiting the sick and the dying.**

**Preaching, listening and schools.**

**To counsel, to comfort, to encourage.**

**Contact with people, Obtaining others trust. Variety of opportunity.**

**Involvement with people in important moments of their lives (eg Wedding, Funerals, Baptisms. Providing something of a leadership parishioners look to me for. Use of my natural practical talents for the physical up keep of church and presbytery and bringing others along with me. It seems that if you are prepared to roll up your sleeves and get stuck in, there is no shortage of people to get stuck in with you.**



Celebration of Mass - preaching, reconciliation, serving God through others, It's difficult to be specific, I enjoy the whole experience.  
 School chaplaincy, marriage counselling and Sacraments.  
 Preparing parents for Baptism , Comforting the bereaved, celebrating Mass  
 Prays in peace and quiet, Ministering to people. Freedom to serve.  
 Preaching/celebration of Sacraments. One-to-one counselling/spiritual direction. Sharing of people's important moments.  
 Visiting the sick, schools presiding.  
 Giving the sacraments, saying Mass, Helping people to be uplifted spiritually and psychologically.  
 people, my education, respect.  
 Celebrating Mass, Baptising, Being with the dying.  
 Presiding at the liturgy of Mass, Sacraments. Involvement in schools and colleges. The respect and trust and support of the parishioners.  
 Being with the people sharing special times, great trust placed in us.  
 Being able to help and care for people. Liturgical celebrations. Enjoyment of parish life.  
 Being with people, Enabling creative events including liturgies Sympathy and pastoral support.  
 That to date, I have been able to persevere. In doing so forms total fulfilment in the wonders of the Mass etc.  
 The people I served were and are phenomenal in faith etc.  
 Supporting those in need successfully. Preaching, releasing people from guilt.  
 Priesthood offers the possibility of the fully integrated life. Love and respect from parishioners (not all!).  
 Daily Mass, Still true after 31 years.  
 Sacraments, preaching, sick visiting.  
 Mass and Sacraments. Bringing children, adults to Jesus Christ.  
 Affirmation by parishioners.  
 Teaching, preaching, and listening and supporting students.  
 Saying Mass, Giving the Sacraments, leading others to Christ.  
 A good visiting record for sick and housebound. Good preparation for Mass and sacraments. Good leadership of spirituality in the community.  
 Visiting in the parish. School involvement. Developing lay involvement.



Adult education, Work with young people. Preaching , when I manage to preach well. Celebrating Mass, Helping people, Being with people in their needs.

Discernment/direction work. Working with parishioners. Celebrating with the parish.

Sacraments, involvements with people, happiness in my life as a priest. \*  
Celebration of liturgy, dealing with people, practical and parochial administration.

Unity in the parish, contentment and challenge of parishioners and so much genuine friendships freely extended to me.

Visiting the sick, children in school, sacraments.

Celebrating Mass. Visiting people in their homes, visiting the jail.

Liturgy, Marriage Tribunals.

People, People, People,.

Being needed. Being able to respond to that need. Being welcomed into family situations.,

The love from God, parishioners and living in the house of the Lord.

Self esteem, people's friendship, saying Mass - giving sacraments.

Celebrating Mass and sacraments, helping people to have hope and a vision.

Preaching, visiting and supporting staff.

Working with young people, Good celebration /liturgy. Friendship.

Mass. Visiting the sick. Friendship.

(End of Diocese B)



## **THE THREE MOST FULFILLING ASPECT**

**(Responses from Diocese 'C')**

**The support which some parishioners are prepared to give.**

**The openness of some parishioners.**

**The fact we are all in it together.**

**To be aware that through God's mercy you have helped others.**

**To know that through Christ, you can do wonderful things.**

**To realise that I have the consolation of the Truth.**

**Development of lay participation.**

**Development of parish community.**

**Blessed by the support of superiors initially parish priests etc.**

**Dedication to Mass - daily especially.**

**Good health.**

**Being able and empowered by virtue of the Sacrament of Priesthood  
to operate "in the person of Christ"**

**Being at home with God - taking part in the activity of the three Divine  
Persons of the Trinity by vesture of my ordination - The Divine Office.**

**Opportunity to be a comfort and a help to parishioners.**

**Contact with young people**

**Opportunity to pray and lead folk to God.**

**Growing in realisation of Jesus as The Way, The Truth, The Life.**

**Helping People to pray.**

**Helping ones people to feel less guilty.**

**Trying to make services more 'enjoyable'.**

**The Mass**

**Visiting People**

**Successful evangelisation and catechesis.**



Presiding at the Eucharist  
Community building  
Working for a PhD.

Mass/ Sacraments/Relationship with variety of people

Adult catechesis. Counselling, Presiding at Eucharist.

Eucharist (and Liturgy in general)  
People (Part of the parish family)  
and being ordinary (ie not 'clerical')

Mutual love of people  
Seeing people rejoicing in the Lord  
Healing ministry

His people. My parish.

Time easily made for prayer.  
Much time for scripture study in a small parish.  
Occassions and facilities for sacrament preparation in the parish.

Celebrating Mass.  
The trust of people.  
Burying the dead.

Sacraments. Reconciliation and School Chaplaincy.

Contact with parishioners  
Friendship with priests  
Experience of Ministry of Reconciliation - minister and penitent.

Meeting people, being a man of prayer for others, forming good  
relationships with others and between others.



Being able to take services well that help people.

Having a key role for people at important events eg. Weddings, funerals.  
(Apart from serving God) its a people-centered life.

Worship, hospital work, catechesis.

Trying to beleive that God is there.

Feeling a bit useful to others when they are down,

The church does have the face of Jesus in spite of various words and  
statements !!!

Preaching, Bereavement counselling, Catechesis.

Prayer, Presiding at the Eucharist, Preaching - but in its broadest sense, ie  
working with groups and individuals.

Working with groups, reconciliations, sacraments.

Preaching, Sacramental preparation and Liturgy.

Spiritual direction, celebrating sacraments and getting to know people.

Faith, Hope and Charity.

(End of Diocese C)



## THE THREE MOST FULFILLING ASPECTS OF YOUR PRIESTHOOD (D)

Daily contact  
Sacraments  
Sense of being useful

Seeing the development of faith in the whole parish  
People inspired to overcome difficulties in their lives  
The joy of achievements in own personal life

The liturgy  
Hospital and sick visits  
Parish, school and children

Preaching,  
Accompanying people at key stages of life,  
Changing people's perception and outlook

Preaching  
Young People  
Celebration of the Sacraments

Saying Mass  
Working with people  
Encouragement in study

Liturgy  
Teaching  
Reconciliation

Liturgy  
Helping people to worship  
Bereavement counselling groups

Being able to enable others to do and be  
Opening the scripture to self and others  
At home in community

Sunday Eucharist  
Marriage preparation courses\*  
Teaching on health care course\* (\*mainly to the individual)

Reconciliation  
Family Life  
Youth



Privilege to Celebrate Mass  
Meeting and helping others  
Privilege to Celebrate Sacraments

Sacramental life  
Meeting people  
Opens door

Mass  
Care of the sick  
Care of searching souls

To be with Our Lord in the Sacraments  
To give and receive the love and friendship of the Catholic Community  
To know that I am precisely located in the Body of Christ, his Church in History.

Celebrating Liturgy  
Counselling  
Teaching

Being with People  
Praying and reading  
Having not too many material worries

The Mass  
Preaching  
People

Fraternity among the clergy  
Families that make you feel human and at home  
Young people who believe in Church

Contact with people  
Offering of Mass  
Teaching

People  
Mass  
Being able to help

(End of Diocese D)



*Additioal notes on fulfilling aspects of priesthood)*

*Parish visitation, schools, Celebrating the Eucharist.*

Helping people in moments of crises

Having conveyed a deeper level in understanding our Divine Truth

Seeing community grow

*Contact with people (a great variety)*

*Being given opportunities where one can help others*

*Being available to walk with others on a spiritual journey.*

*Liturgy*

*Counselling*

*Dealing with People*

*Worship*

*Giving hope*

*(End of Diocese D)*

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## **QUALITIES IMPORTANT FOR CANDIDATES TODAY**

**(Responses from Diocese 'A')**

**Independence**

**Strength of character**

**To be able to do as they are told**

**Sense of humour, compassion, being a practical person.**

**Maturity, balance, commitment, strength of character, FAITH!**

**Sense of humour, openness, commitment, ability to listen, loyalty.**

**Self insight and self knowledge, Ability to critically evaluate contemporary culture and contemporary church culture.**

**Team builder, enabler, hard working, good listener, openness, bridgebuilder, co-ordinator, prayer life, spiritual guide.**

**A sense of humour, a capacity to listen, the ability to realise you're not perfect and never will be.**

**Ability to listen, a person of prayer, sense of humour, not to put oneself on a pedestal, to be interested and involved with people, (willingness to get hands dirty).**

**To preach with conviction.**

**Stamina, self esteem, personal (not parental ) vocation, experience of being 'wounded'.**

**General knowledge, common sense and domestic abilities.**

**Willingness to listen, good memory, punctuality, regular prayer life, healthy life style readiness to adapt.**

**Commitment and broad education for life.**

**Empathy - availability. Patience to listen and not think I have all the answers.**

**Being interested in this world and its secular concerns.**

**Capacity to be loving people. Capacity to be flexible and have a sense of listening and vision.**

**There can be no distinction between 'strength of vocation' and 'qualities important (for priesthood) cf 1 Cor 12 V4**

**Faith, hope Charity Intellegence Initiative, all expressed in a satisfactory prayer life.**

**Balance 'stickability' humility, a certain 'detachment' industriousness.**

**Openness to growth and change. Strength of character, Ability to work in a team,**

**Humanity, (normality)! humour, enthusiasm, love for people, sensitivity to people.**

**Education, communication skills, professional approach, good management.**

**Prayerful, openmindedness, willing to read and study, human, faith that is seen as 'good news' Humility with a willingness to serve and not be served. Reasonably sexually mature, ready to form relationships across the sexes.**

**Being human, listening, encouraging.**



Strength of character - the ability to 'stand up and be counted' - integrity, sincerity, high self esteem with wisdom and humility !

Optimism and prayerfulness.

Prayer life, personality, motivation.

Strong faith, Good health both mental and physical. Ability to adapt to type of parish you work in. Able to preach and speak well. Pleasant personality in order to get on with young, old, rich, poor people and able and less able people..

A real awareness of the Church they are going to work in so that they do not become detached from real life.

A very good understanding and sympathy of where people are at in today's modern world.

Compassion, brokenness of heart, strength of character, spirit of service.

Assuming the strong vocation; then faithfulness, total commitment, as many interests as possible, contented serenity, generosity of spirit and the ability to laugh at oneself.

Administrative ability, communication skills ability to relate and work with others, compassion, patience.

Healthy life style, willingness to give a lead, love of people.

Lively faith.

Strong prayer life - deep commitment and belief in Mass, the Sacraments and the vows taken.

Self knowledge, openness ability to adapt and grow, to listen to others, ability to mature as human beings, a certain openness and the spirit of prayerfulness, a certain academic ability.

Humility, kindness and service.

Prayer and humility.

Stamina

Prayer and Hope.

Spirituality, compassion, sincerity and conviction.

Administration, self motivation and flexibility.

Prayer.

Optimism, dedication, desire to serve.

A sense of humour, commitment, dedication , love of people, love of Church and God.

A strong sense of humour.



Humility confidence, prayerfulness, approachability, gentle candour, health, willingness to see own limitations and refer to people to more skilled helpers.

Openness caring, compassion listening skills.

I think the most important thing is to place the lowest possible value on personal popularity. This is the most frequent cause of dissolutionment.

(End of Diocese A)



## **QUALITIES IMPORTANT FOR CANDIDATES TODAY    DIOCESE 'B'**

**Balanced personality**

**Love of people.**

**Imagination, spontaneity, gentleness, vulnerability openness, being real.**

**Maturity and perseverance.**

**Social and communication skills.**

**Sense of humour, that you like yourself and to culturale inner strength by prayers and meditation.**

**Visiting families and dealing with young people.,**

**Health, good intention, knowledge, intelligence, courage and optimism.**

**Physical/emotional psych strength. Integrity self awareness.**

**The gift of prayer and recognising the presence and action of the Risen Christ in our World.**

**To be a prayerful person, to be compassionate, to be well educated, to be physically and emotionally strong.**

**Perseverance, sensitivity to the needs of others.**

**A sense of humour, respect for other beliefs and even non belief, total integrity and willingness to be appraised.**

**Psycho-sexual integrity, ability to relate to people especially women.**

**Intellegence, sense of humour.**

**Openness, ability to identify with the ordinary and the poor. Ability to life people's spirits from the oppressive lives they sometimes have to lead.**

**Independence of spirit.**

**Approachability, 'down to earthness', maturity.**

**Personal relationships; interpersonal skills, self knowledge and understanding, counselling skills, strong prayer life.**

**Prayer life, good personal relationship, ability to like oneself, patience, stand up for oneself, discernment, appraisal, contact with ones family,.**

**An openness of mind and a willingness to work with others without seeking to dominate.**

**Maturity and common sense.**

**Ability to relate to others in a good and wholesome way. Ability to live in time of transition. Ability to change. Being prayerful.**

**Perseverance, patience and compassion.**



*Qualities of candidates today continued....*

- **Courage to be able to respond to needs around us and to challenge Church authorities who often appear very small minded. A spirit of prophecy. To speak forth the truth at all times.**

**True humanness, people whose humanity is evident.**

**Common sense.**

**Fitness, mobility, understanding of changes in life style, knowledge of unemployment, and career difficulties.**

**Experience of ordinary life.**

**Humility**

**The ability to accept people as they are to affirm them and show them God's love for them is constant.**

**To have experienced at least one relationship.**

**Prayerfulness.**

**Deep faith and commitment. Awareness and discernment of the world we live in. Caring selfless love for people ability to develop friendship. Good open theology.**

**Patience and perseverance.**

**Faith in friendship of Jesus for his priests and his prayer for them.**

**Day to day commitment; ability to relate to others, a balanced outlook - a sense of humour is an asset!**

**Strength of vocation is exhibited in prayerful industrious, humility commitment, faith, serving the Lord. Faith is essential.**

**Lifestyle in order, Security, a desire to evangelise, openness, flexibility, good humour, tenable.**

**Adaptability with steadfastness.**

**Stickability, a sense of humour, a love for the church, warts and all!**

**Sense of humour; warmth of personality, personal relationship with Christ strengthened by prayer life and scripture reflection; experience of the secular life/world of work etc, openminded, willingness to learn new things.**

**Versatility, generosity, more concerned about the needs of his people than himself.**

**Maturity psychosexual development, common sense, ability to relate to women/men**

**The ability to mix with people to listen and learn and enjoy sports of different kinds.**

**Self knowledge, Openness, Willingness to adapt and to learn.**

**To be 'ordinary' human beings able to relate to others, To be able to find God and bring God into ordinary daily life.**

**Spirit of Prayer, support of family, Understanding and acceptance of the virtue of obedience and identity,**

**Must be happy with himself, able to relate easily and to delegate.**

**To value self as an important contributor to carrying out God's will in the world about us.**

- **Patience with current clericalism and clerical disarray.**



Experience of life in general ie how the world ticks. Therefore I favour later (more mature?) vocations. The ability to communicate at all levels. Knowledge of self - sexual orientation.

Determination and a willingness to should the cross.

Strength of character to be sure of yourself even though those around do not share out faith and out values.

Stickability, Deep faith.

Being a person of peace. Courage, good sense and good practical example.

Flexibility, openness and humanity.

Adaptability, humour, tolerance, open mindedness, some experience of relationships, love of people.

Flexibility, self knowledge, and honesty about hang ups, fears, weak points.

Deep trust in God. A collaborative vision of the Church,

A liking for people, a sense of God and a closeness to him.

Being open to others and to change.

(End of Diocese B)



## **QUALITIES IMPORTANT FOR CANDIDATES TODAY**      DIOCESE

**Openness and flexibility**

**Optimistic attitude, willingness to cultivate the friendship of others, especially priests.**

**Resilience, determination, sense of humour, balance.**

**'Put your hand to the plough and don't look back'**

**Maturity, humility, flexibility, an eagerness to learn, to be light hearted, to be able to enjoy life. To love a taste for the spiritual, to have the faith.**

**Sense of humour and a willingness to ask for help.**

**Love for and ability to work with people.**

**'A sense of proportion and a sense of humour'**

**Vision, holiness and probably a warped sense of humour.**

**Being in touch with their peers. Not being abnormal or marginalised in their peer group.**

**Patience, Endurance and a sense of humour.**

**Prayer, knowledge of scripture, history of the church, theology, human relationships.**

**Maturity (at least potential!?), common sense and a sense of humour.**

**Strong life of prayer, sexual stability, ability to relate easily with men, women and children.**



Determination, listening ability leadership, and managerial ability.

'A very firm basis in spirituality with a true appreciation of Christ's own purpose 'to serve'".

Candidates need a sense of hope and enthusiasm they can transmit to others. They need a deep consciousness of God! They must not be afraid of work!

Openness, friendliness, 'common man'

Maturity and sound integrity.

Self discipline, positive sense of humour and prayer.

'The ability to live a 'single ' life happily'

Ability to work with people, relating to secular institutions and 'world'; listening skills, counselling skills.

Compassion, resilience, Trust in God more than man.

'Odd question.. Human maturity and experience of people, profession/working life. Link of Gospel to social justice.

Ability to animate others with the word of God and be a leader and co-ordinator with people.,

Understanding, acceptance.

Prayer.

Realism, non materialistic, non egotistical, humanness, practical not academic, non-perfectionism.

Psychological stability.



**Strong life of prayer, sexual stability, ability to relate easily with men, women and children.**

**Determination, listening ability leadership, and managerial ability.  
'A very firm basis in spirituality with a true appreciation of Christ's own purpose 'to serve'".**

**Candidates need a sense of hope and enthusiasm they can transmit to others. They need a deep consciousness of God! They must not be afraid of work!**

**Openness, friendliness, 'common man'**

**Maturity and sound integrity.**

**Self discipline, positive sense of humour and prayer.**

**'The ability to live a 'single ' life happily'**

**Ability to work with people, relating to secular institutions and 'world'; listening skills, counselling skills.**

**Compassion, resilience, Trust in God more than man.**

**'Odd question.. Human maturity and experience of people, profession/working life. Link of Gospel to social justice.**

**Ability to animate others with the word of God and be a leader and co-ordinator with people.,  
Understanding, acceptance.**

**Prayer.**

**Realism, non materialistic, non egotistical, humanness, practical not academic, non-perfectionism.**

**Psychological stability.**

**(End of Diocese C)**



## QUALITIES IMPORTANT FOR CANDIDATES TODAY (D)

Good health; physical and psychological adaptability, tolerance, optimism

A commitment to a life programme and a strong faith.

Common sense, and a clear conviction that God has the world and its people in its care.

Flexibility, self-motivations, deep prayer life, that is a reflection on daily experiences, ability to survive the collapse of old structures.

Common sense, some previous work experience, a prayer life, dedication to the church.

Common sense, educational attainment

Humanity 'reality' sensitivity, devotion commitment.

Ability to work alone, the arts, computing etc.

Openness, loyalty, appetite for life, knowledge experience and balance.

Good psychological coping skills.

Humour

Ability to be alone

Adaptability and common sense.

Clear headedness, call to poverty.

Faith in God, Love for the Church, Intelligence and honesty, gentleness and love of justice.

A sense of fidelity and perseverance, not looking for soft options as corners to cut.

Intelligence - being up to date with lots of things.

Holiness, unselfishness, ability to deal with people, ability to communicate, sense of humour and proportion, ability to stand on one's own feet, ability to 'grin and bear it' ability to laugh at oneself.

Secular degree and work/job experience. Priesthood need to incorporate married men.

Personality - ability to relate to others

Mass Confession visiting - all that could be described as pastoral work

(End of Diocese D)



*(additional notes Qualities important for candidates today)*

*Skill, Training - management*

**Spiritual Direction**

**Personal Relationships and human development**

**Self reliance - a willingness to share.**

*Staying power and the ability to accept failure in life.*

*(end of Diocese D)*



## RESPONSE BY R.C. CLERGY TO THE QUESTION

*"What is your concept of Heaven"?*

"Vague"

*"1 Corinthians 12"*

"Goodness Now"

*"I haven't really got one"*

'Heaven is meeting the Master and saying nervously, 'Here I am - warts and all - but I did my best' It will be Heaven to see Him eyeball to eyeball"

"Sharing the joy and love of Our Lord in the company of all the Angels and Saints"

*"Fulfilment, peace, reunion with friends and family"*

*"Heaven is .. a place where Leicester City wins every game!  
Seriously, a place of love and harmony; of beauty, where everyone is loveable and loved"*

"Heaven... it would have to have a trout stream and a garden - with a golf course as a bonus, and an angel as a caddy"!

"To be where Christ is - perfectly happy and fulfilled"

*"Strawberries and Cream"! "A new heaven and a new earth"*

"It must be better than this life"

*"Being in complete union with God and knowing that I am loved by Him"*

"If I "was" before being conceived, I "will be" after I die. Mystery"!

"Equality and unity amongst all God's people - total and complete happiness, being with the Lord forever"

*"A happy union with God"*

"Spiritual union/re-union/the life question answered. Peace"

"..is a place here now, and the fulfilment and completion on the last day"



*"Total joy and happiness"*

*"Unity with God"*

*"Heaven is a fulfilled life"*

*"A community of persons in God"*

*"Communion with God, Father Son and Holy Spirit; in the communion of God's holy people."*

*"Heaven is a comfy armchair! Being with God and with others"*

*"Heaven is when I completely surrender to the all embracing heart of God"*

*"A lovely peaceful feeling that will never end"*

*"The beatific vision"*

*"Heaven is..a state where there are no questions to be answered- total oneness with God our Creator"*

*"To be totally fulfilled with God"*

*"The eternal relationship which I now have with God"*

*"Heaven is.. At one with myself, others, and the Lord"*

*"I don't really have a concept of Heaven . In so far as I would say anything , I would speak of peace and harmony"*

*"Ecstasy"*

*"Mind boggling happiness"*

*"A gathering of old friends and a lot of laughter" (Please excuse this scribble as I'm writing this from a hospital bed").*

*"Union with God"*

*"Seeing God face to face"*

*"Peace, and feeling utterly at home"*

*"Heaven is... an awareness that the work is complete and satisfaction that Christ is now fully vindicated in His promise to us"*



"Heaven is a golf course by day and a decent church organ by night - and someone to share it with - (and the cat)"!

*"Heaven is..Peace, no meetings, no worries, the incredible experience of knowing God and understanding his decisions"*

"A mystery - just a completion of love"

"Being free of Questionnaires, and their "composers" Watch Out"!

*"The fulfilment of all that has remained unfulfilled in my life so that I become all that God made me to be. The rest will be a bonus"*

"A union with God above all else. meeting up with relatives and friends"

*"Security of God, his love, joy in the company of saints, great and little. Freedom from human frailty"*

"Heaven... I suppose being overwhelmed by the perfection of all the hints God gives us here about himself"

*"The real presence of God"*

"One of total laziness and fulfilment"

*"Perfect fulfilment and therefore happiness in a life of endless variety with God"*

'100% happiness and a sense of satisfaction'

*'A state of being without pain, suffering, peace harmony and enjoyment'*

'At peace with God'

'God'

'Being a perfect listener with the perfect speaker'!

*'Knowing God fully. Total joy and fulfilment'*

'Peace - Contentment'

*'Reunion with people I have loved'*

'Union' "Home"



*'Our personal deepest experience of love brought to its perfection.  
Infinite variety; ever fresh, ever new'*

*'A far better place and state of being than here. A place where  
"understanding" will make sense of so much that does not make sense on  
this earth'*

*'To be with God forever'*

*'A place of reward for doing good'*

*"An eternal jacuzzi with friends" !*

*'A large part full of friends'*

*'The best of Company'*

*'Heaven is what it is to each person - for me, a great place, family, friends,  
love, laughter, sports etc.'*

*"I don't know; I await it. But what do I do for eternity"?*

*'Seeing Christ'*

*'The moment of silence between friends extended(?) for eternity'*

*"Peace - Joy - Friendship - Intimacy - Love - entering into fullness of life of  
the Trinity"*

*"Heaven will be enjoying a sense of complete well-being in the company  
of people who love me totally and whom I will love totally - God, the  
saints and all my friends. It will be an ongoing process of discovery of the  
depths of God's love (not static or passive)"*

*"Being in company with the people I love"*

*'A place where we are reunited with everyone and everything that has  
formed our life in a joyful way"*

*'An endless , unthreatened relationship of love with the Trinitarian God,  
family , friends, the faithful generally. No more keys"'*

*"I think of the joys of living and believe that it will be better than that  
"what no eye has seen""*



"Heaven is ..having done a good day"

*'A warm Summer's day watching cricket' !*

"I don't think I have one - I would rather leave it in God's hands possibly  
'being with friends with openness and intimacy"

*"Heaven is ... better than our best possible estimates. Our personal deepest  
experience of love brought to its perfection. Infinite variety, ever fresh,  
ever new"*

*"A place of reward for doing good"*

"An (eternal) everlasting state of tranquility and endless communion with  
our loved ones. ie the beatific vision and the communion of saints"

*"Endless intellectual inquiry including conversation with any character in  
history you would like to spend time with. Beautiful landscape, perfect  
weather - the perfect conditions for fellowship and conversation"*

"A state of total love"

*"A state of rest, joy and peace with God forever"*

"An experience akin to what we call love, but more so"

*"Everything that is best on earth multiplied, with perfect freedom, love  
and peace for everyone"*

"Growing in awe of Divine presence"

*"A deep understanding experience of love and joy"*

"Security of God, his love, joy in the company of saints great and little,  
freedom from human frailty"

*"A community of loving people filled with the love of God"*

"A state of total perfection"

*"One long banquet, sharing the company of close friends and family"*

"When all will be fulfilled"

"Peace, Joy and Praise"



*"Freedom from all suffering, friction, hurtful behaviour, harmony, peace unity, in the presence of God"*

Happiness and Joy

*God's utter compassionate love for all people*

*An absence of all worry and sickness. A complete submission to the Almighty Creator who gave me life. A realisation of what God does for each and every individual and of the infinite love experienced in the presence of God the father the Son and the holy Spirit.*

The completion of everything that is good, loving and beautiful.

Unity with God and neighbours.

*Being forever with God, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Angels and Saints and those I have known and loved and helped.*

Starting the Summer Holidays.

Total peace with my God and having done one's best.

*My concept of Heaven - what I was taught in Theology Class. fifty years ago; ie. Heaven will be the 'nunc staus' - the eternal now, as opposed to what we have at present, namely, the 'nunc flaens' - the following/passing now'.*

An eternal presence of God.

*Experiencing the now of perfect life and love.*

True and eternal happiness - our happiest moment in life lasting forever.

*Heaven.. whatever it means to be human in this earthly life (and we still have much to discover and learn) I beleive we will be completely free to express and develop in Heaven and onwards into the resurrected life.*

Life in God without the insituional church.

Peace and fulfilment.

*Light, joy and happiness in the presence of God and friends.*

The vision of God which I trust I will move closer to, and in whom I and all whom I have shared life with, will be fulfilled.  
As a place of peace, and meeting family, friends etc.



No concept - except state of final union with God source of all good.  
Inange of heaven - Having friends, family in perfect love in environment of beautiful countryside.

*Heaven.. My father greeting me with a pint of beamish stout. God explaining computers to me. A good chat with St Paul, my hero.*

'No eye has seen, no ear has heard.' But we will know all about it when the mortal coil has been shaken off. A kingdom of the Lord with peace and tranquility.

*"It's like going home, you don't want to leave it because it feels so right ... at long last"*

Infinite joy.

'All shall be well'

*'Heaven.. that's when the real fun beings'*

Perfect, never ending happiness, with God and those I have loved in this world.

*No more committee meetings, and paperwork An eternal union of peace with God.*

Heaven... Tell me! Doubt if it is a huge ampetheatre full of seats waiting to be occupied by bums!!'

*All becoming one in God - preferably in an English Pub.*

Fullness of life.

*Peace*

Total ectasy in prayer

Heaven ... life before sin came in.

Father, Son Spirit & Friends.

*Unity with God and the redeemed people*

Decent beer, good food, happy company. If there is to be hymn singing it had better be much better than the average Catholic parish!



*Inconceivable togetherness beyond our imaginings.*

*A trout stream and a fishing rod!*

Quite vague - essentially God's presence in the fulness of creation.

*Fulfilment - life with God*

Endless growth in love of God, knowledge of self in God; awareness of God's justice for others - rejoicing in good.

*Heaven...It changes constantly!*

No 'phones and no arguments

*Union with God and consequential peace and fulfilment*

No stress, worry ... praising th Lord forever.

*'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for those that love Him"*

The fullness of life shared in the life of God - Father, Son Spirit.

*Being with people I have known and loved in Christ.*

A whole day in perfect peace, nil phone, nil callers, nil problems!

*To wake up in the morning and not feel guilty about turning over!*

Being intensely in the presence of God and united with him completely,

*cf 1 Corninthians 2 Knowing and being content with God*

Everlasting communion with God and one's loved ones.

The removal of barriers between myself , God and others leading to total intimate communion.

Heaven..... to come "home" to the Father and experience total love for eternity.

*"Heaven ? Somehow it is perfect oneness with the Lord and his people, oneness which was originally intended and lost through sin. There would also need to be a good 18 hole golf course" !*



"Sea, mountains and joyful faces"

*"Eternal Rest and Peace"*

"No pain, sorry, suffering. Peace"

*"Classical music is as near as I can get"!*

"Don't think about it"

*"Quite heavenly really"*

"Vald'Iserre in powder snow"!

*"Difficult to say until we experience Heaven. An existence where there is no more pain and suffering, anxiety or tension. Total peace and harmony. Difficult to imagine in this life."*

"Eternally in the presence of God"?



## RESPONSE BY R.C. CLERGY TO THE QUESTION

*"If offered a sabbatical, fully paid, would you take it?"*

Yes - 133    No - 32    Unsure - 14    Left blank 10

## HOW WOULD YOU SPEND IT?

"Recovering from the shock of getting more than one third of the money! More seriously, living in Jerusalem"

*"Study to update myself. Maybe also spend some time in the Holy Land"*

"Pottering"

*"Travelling and studying the history of monastic life and architecture in France"*

"Study, relaxation and spiritual development"

*"Missionary work in South America (26 weeks)*

*Spiritual Renewal (6 weeks)*

*Intellectual and Practical input (14 weeks)*

*Vacation (6 weeks)"*

"I'm about to start a part time Masters in counselling. Otherwise I'd travel. Maybe learn some Spanish and spend time with the Basic Xtian Communities in South America. Maybe do 3/6 months in Jerusalem. Study in Belgium. What dreams!!"

*"Relaxing, holiday, time out, catching up on reality"*

"It is a purely theoretical question. We can hardly get a supply for an annual holiday - fat chance of a sabbatical"!!

"Studying, counselling, liturgy and scripture"

*"Retreat, vacation, further study (scripture, spirituality and counselling skills)"*

"Travel, Personal education, research - not necessarily Church focussed"

"A Doctorate Degree"

*"Catching up on Theology/Areas of interest"*



"Why do I need to go on a course when parishioners can be a source of learning"?

*"Studying scripture and its relevance today"*

"Reflection"

*"I would like to spend time in Israel following a course on scripture and visiting the various scriptural sights"*

"Directed private study of Theology"

*"Some time studying theological subjects and scripture.  
Travelling in a different continent/culture"*

"Resting first and then receiving input and experience of peace studies: ie conflict and reconciliation in relationships (with a view to ecumenism) and (if time) receiving input so as to discover "the best kept secret" of the Church's social teaching"

*"1. Certain amount of travel (India etc)*

*2, Course of Renewal*

*3. Go back to California Parish for progress and update on pastoral care of  
of people with AIDS"*

"I would do something academic on a practical issue with a view to publishing. For example how could the Eastern Orthodox tradition on divorce and remarriage lead to a development in the western tradition?"

*"Holiday/Refresher Course/Holiday"*

"Travel, Survey of musical standards within the diocese. Working in Lourdes"

*"Relaxation"*

"Study and Travel"

*"Holiday/Prayer, spirituality deepening, experience pastoral work in  
another part of the world"*

"I would take a month's holiday in my favourite place - Rome; to sleep, pray, read and browse. Then a 30 day retreat, preferably under guidance. And finally, an intensive Renewal Course to bring me up to date in the fields of Scripture, Theology and spirituality.....Even more finally, a few days away from civilisation to commune with nature"



*"Return to Seminary for a 3/6 month renewal course"*

"Refresher course, rest and travel"

"Personal and spiritual renewal"

*"I'd go to another country - English speaking - with light scripture studies and mild parish attachments"*

"Spiritual, pastoral and physical renewal"

*"I'm not sure. The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius attract me"*

"Re-creating the mind, body and soul"

*"Part spiritual retreat (lengthy) ; part re-discovering some of the theological training I received as a student and also getting abreast of present developments. Part a relaxing mental/physical break"*

"Fully paid - worldly concept.

Recharging spiritual batteries, guided self assesment of where I am where I am going"

*"By going back to University"*

"Rest and relaxation, An opportunity for further study to help with ministry (eg. scriptures - preaching)

*"Charting unknown territory and trying to supplement my incomplete education, with a view to enhancing my priesthood , without necessarily focussing on it.*

"6 weeks in Jerusalem at Our Lady of Sion Convent doing Scripture course by Ecole Biblique"

"30% Study; 30% Prayer; 40% Relaxation and Rest"

*"I would like to look at my priesthood in a new way; to deepen theological insights. Really, just to stop and take a deep breath"!!*

"I would spend it in a structured course of study with some other priests in an atmosphere of prayers "

"I have not given it great thought"

Work and study



*"Visiting other parts of the world, to experience Church life there, particularly 3rd World Countries. Taking part in a study/retreat course. Spending some time in complete relaxation in the West of Ireland"*

"Travel to experience Church in another culture and reflect on it. A mixture of praxis/reflection eg Philippines, Latin America

*"Rest and Study"*

"Doing theological research"

"In Rome on a Course for priests"

*"Write a book, relax and learn"*

"Study, reflection, retreat, a complete change"

*"A pastoral renewal course"*

"Physical and Spiritual refreshment"

*"Travelling to see other peoples attempts at ministry in the Church today"*

"Further studies"

*"Visit church in other countries, Scripture study"*

North America, pastoral counselling course(s) and south America pastoral experience.

*On a Scripture course*

At my age I would divide my time in reviewing past studies in theology and Scripture, and in reading literature especially poetry.

In a warm country with nice beaches

*Studying, writing and travel*

Some study, a bit of prayer and some time to do 'my thing'

*Visit to missions and theological spiritual course.*



Preparing to return to pastoral ministry.

*A little study - a long holiday.*

*Study and retreat (at least 30 days)*

*Prayer study and relaxation*

*No .. unless it were offered as early retirement!*

*Writing*

Getting to know people.. holiday , revisiting friends

At the age of 76 in a sympathetic community perhaps Pecus - study without having to achieve grades - with leisure for prayer and charismatic companions,

*Renewal in Scripture, Theology, especially as relevant to Liturgy.  
Spirituality/30 day retreat . Holiday*

*No...I feel past it!!*

Preparing for life after university chaplaincy.

*In further study perhaps on: -spirituality and the human condition,  
science and theology..the joint approach  
lonergan's expression of the universal experience etc.  
To gain a specialisation and set something up to offer certain experiences  
to others.*

In the study of sacred scripture in an environment which is most conducive to it under expert guidance.

*I'd go and study in Rome and the U.S.A.*

Gentle study and renewal

*Sacred, guided study programme*

*Creation spirituality based reflection.*

A 3 or 6 month residential course.



*Pastoral/Counselling Training.*

No..Not at my time of life (O.A.P.)

*Computer course, learning Urdu and staying at an Ashram in India*

In a treatment centre on a psychotherapy course.

*'Quickly"!*

A course and visiting churches in America.

*Studying and reflection Seeing another part of the world. Meeting different people.*

*"Too old to even think about it"!*

*How to operate a computer for a start!*

*Study/vacation.*

Visiting friends, experiencing other Catholic Churches, a bit of study.

Don't know. I never considered it.

6 months in Pallazola, the Summer house of the English College in Rome with a serious study of moral and dogmatic theology and liturgy. And 6 months working with the Columban Fathers in their South American Mission.

Study, prayer, travel, pilgrimage 'to significant locations'

No, not yet.

A scripture course.

*If offered, I would spend 3-6 months in Australia among family and to see the working of the Church there.*

*Experiencing the culture and worship of another country.*

*A mixture of further study and holiday alone and with friends and family.*



Scripture

"Preparing for retirement"

*"Some study - not too academic - but which would give me tools which would help my work. Time for relaxation"*

"In the Holy land"

*"Some study, rest etc."*

"Further theological studies, Modern History Degree"