

Cashman, Angelique, 2001, *Religious Education in the Primary School: Towards a Methodology to Meet the Needs of Children Today.*

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Irish Catholic primary schools have a long tradition of assisting in the handing on of the faith. Primary school teachers are entrusted with the task of nurturing the children's faith formation and preparing them for the sacraments of First Confession, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation. This task is seen, in principle, as a work of partnership in the parish, shared by parents, teachers, and clergy. The initiatives designed to foster parental and parish involvement in the children's religious education and sacramental preparation are outlined in this study. The survey, conducted with primary teachers involved in preparing children for Confirmation, investigates the perceptions of teachers with regard to the 'reality' of that partnership.

Irish society has changed in recent years. There is evidence of a growing secularisation of society and apathy towards and disassociation from the Catholic Church. Children are exposed to a large variety of cultural and media influences. These changes and influences impact on the teaching of religion.

The primary school, for many children, provides their first, and for some children their only, encounter with the faith story. The Catholic ethos permeating all expressions of the life of the school and the religious education programme used in the classroom are the tools employed to capture the children's interest and immerse them in their Catholic culture. The survey accompanying this study establishes whether or not Confirmation pupils and their teachers found their experiences attractive and engaging.