

**Kitching, Maura, 1998, *Catholic Education in Contemporary Irish Society: Challenges and Opportunities***

### **ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION**

This study sets out to examine critically the position of Catholic education in contemporary Irish society. This involves an evaluation of the social, cultural and religious influences affecting it. While the study will be placed within an historical context, the main focus will be an assessment of contemporary conditions and effects. The significance of the latter for the future development of Catholic education in Ireland will also be considered.

**Chapter 1** identifies the distinctive qualities of Catholic education and acknowledges the challenge and responsibility for educators. Engagement with young people in the search for meaning and direction in life is seen as an opportunity as well as a responsibility for the Catholic teacher and the wider faith community.

**Chapter 2** situates Catholic education in its historical, cultural, social and religious context. While the institution of the school and its importance in relation to this are prioritised, influences outside of school life are also acknowledged and seen as making a vital contribution to the educational process.

**Chapter 3** interprets Catholic education as an holistic, integrative process. Religious development and faith formation are involved in all areas of life and in a cross-curricular manner in the Catholic school. Side by side with this is the overt attention to formal Religious education in the school curriculum, the application of faith to praxis and the inculcation of a value system in accordance with the teaching and ministry of Jesus Christ.

**Chapter 4** acknowledges the scope and challenge of Religious education in contemporary Ireland and examines attitudes and responses of young people in this context.

**Chapter 5** encapsulates the enterprise of Catholic education in the concept of Journey and Story. Encountering Jesus, with all that this implies, draws people on to an alternative way - a life of apparent paradox. Journeying with him is not easy, but it gives meaning to life and liberates the person.