

O’Keeffe, Thomas, 1997, *Aspects of the Religious Development of Male Adolescents in a Catholic Second Level School. A comparative study*

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

This study explores some aspects of the religious development of Senior Students (N = 126) in *Coláiste Chríost Rí*, Cork - a Catholic voluntary second-level boys’ school in the Irish Republic in the ownership and trusteeship of the Presentation Brothers - and compares these results with the findings of similar studies carried out among Year 12 students in Australian Catholic high schools in 1972, 1982 and 1990

In Chapter 1 - **Introduction** - the meaning of *Religion*, and - by extension - *Religious Development* are explored briefly. The emphasis here is on religion as *meaning* and as *search for meaning*.

Chapter **2-The Contexts of Religious Development** - is a review of the literature on the cluster of contexts that influence the religious development of the students in what is essentially an open interactive social organisation with porous boundaries.

Chapter 3 -**The Design and Method of the Study** - outlines the Instruments used in the study. These comprise a 70-item Student questionnaire, and 26-item Parent and Teacher questionnaires. It also includes discussion on, and explanation of Factor Analysis, Responses, Interpretation of Statistics and Scoring, Aggregation of Responses, the Mean or Average of Responses, the Administration of the Questionnaires and the level of Response to the Questionnaires.

Chapter **4- Aspects of the Religious Development of the Students** - deals with the actual investigation of the influences on the students’ religious development, their religious practice and attitudes, their religious values, and their moral and social justice values. In all, thirty- three Tables of statistics and comparisons, and four Figures are presented, and comment and analysis are provided.

Chapter 5 - **Conclusions, Reflections and Implications** - acknowledging the sudden and rapid decline in the religious development indicators investigated and documented in Chapter 4, identifies religious indifference and apathy as the major emerging challenge to religious belief and development in the current Irish cultural context. In discussing this challenge and its possible causal factors, the particular Irish historical context, economic influences and the import of modernity are explored. And in the light of inculturation, Catholic education is seen as counter-cultural in the ‘battle’ for sensibility, or in the liberation of the imagination from the tyranny of ambient cultural images in readiness for faith. The faith experience, engendered by the transformed vision in the liberated imagination, is seen as developing out of a pastoral triangle of community, prayer and the service of others.