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Developing a continuum of experiences for Catholic faith formation

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DEVELOPING A CONTINUUM OF EXPERIENCES FOR FAITH FORMATION IN THE CATHOLIC TRADITION

Introduction: The Pioneering Work of Maria Montessori

It is now more than a century since the “Montessori Miracle” was first reported from the slums of the San Lorenzo quarter in Rome in 1907. “Here flourished unchecked all the evils of subletting, overcrowding, promiscuous immorality and other crimes.”¹ Among a group of children who were considered beyond help by contemporary educational authorities, a young female medical doctor, Maria Montessori, had achieved results that captured the imagination of the world. The background is described in Montessori’s own words in a comprehensive biography written in 1957 by E. M. Standing.²

I set to work... like a peasant woman who, having set aside a good store of seed corn, has found a fertile field in which she may freely sow it. But I was wrong. I had hardly turned over the clods of my field, when I found gold instead of wheat: the clods concealed a precious treasure. I was not the peasant I had thought myself. Rather, I was like foolish Aladdin, who, without knowing it, had in his hand a key that would open hidden treasures.³

In his biography, Standing cites a variety of contemporary sources expressing amazement at the results achieved. Typical of these was one provided by a delegate sent to investigate the phenomenon from the London County Council, Mrs Hutchison. She returned with a report so enthusiastic that one of the Council, Sir Edward Garnett remarked: “Gentlemen, this is not a report, it is a rhapsody!”⁴

Essentially, Montessori’s discovery was based on careful observation of children’s behaviour and a serious attempt to match the needs of each child with their particular developmental stage. She described these stages as “sensitive periods”. She explained the term using the example of the Prothesia butterfly, whose egg is laid on the bark where the branch joins the trunk of a tree. The caterpillar, immediately after it hatches, is “light sensitive” and this characteris-

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¹ E. M. Standing, *Maria Montessori. Her Life and Work* (New York: Plume Books, 1998), p. 36.

² See id., pp. 35-53.

³ Id., p. 37.

⁴ Quoted in id., p. 54.

tic drives it towards the soft shoots at the end of the branch; these leaves are the only ones that it is strong enough to eat at this stage of development. As it grows, the light sensitivity fades and at the same time, the caterpillar becomes capable of eating the tougher leaves found anywhere on the tree. Montessori's observations lead her to believe that human development has similar characteristics. She claimed that human development unfolds in a series of temporary stages each with its own essential tasks which the human organism is "pre-wired" to achieve. During the sensitive period, these tasks can be undertaken with minimal effort since they connect with underlying drives – *exigencies*. Much of Montessori's life was spent in identifying exactly what these sensitive periods were. Her educational method consisted in trying to match students with educational materials that met their current developmental need. In other words, Montessori attempted to work *with* human nature rather than *against* it, and in so doing secured the easy cooperation of her students. Montessori perceived that *success* was a potent motivator for human beings of all ages.

Detailed accounts of the sensitive periods abound in the now enormous corpus of Montessori literature, but briefly, she identified four major "planes of development" each of about six years. During each one, development is intense in the first half and is then consolidated in the remaining three years, leading into the next plane, with each one serving as a cumulative foundation for what follows. The first of these planes (0-6 years) is characterised by an "absorbent mind" which becomes more and more conscious of its environment. It is a sensitive period for language, sensate development and order. The focus at this level is on concrete realities and a drive towards independent action. In the second plane (6-12 years) a new drive replaces the earlier one – a reasoning mind in search of answers and supported by a strong imaginative and creative capacity able to suggest possible explanations linking together the data that has been gathered. Independent action at this age shifts from a desire to act independently ("let me do it myself") to a need for mental independence ("let me think for myself"). Whereas in the first phase of this stage, children seek to create "big picture" answers with over-arching theories, in the second phase, they become interested in testing their own "theories" with additional information to decide whether or not it works. It is at this time too that they become interested in the world and the people outside of themselves. The third plane (12-18 years) sees a strong development of what began in the last phase of the plane before – a focus on critical thinking and re-evaluation; a time for finding their own place in the world. This is a somewhat turbulent transitional stage in which the student is seeking to commit to ideals that have inspired him or her and a desire to "let me stand on my own; let me be myself". The fourth plane (18-24 years) sees an attempt to integrate all that has gone before and to become truly independent and to find one's place in the world.

In Montessori's view, once a sensitive period has passed, it never returns; the chance to learn something with ease is gone for good. For example, the sensitive period for the acquisition of languages was said to occur before the age of six years. This did not mean that languages could not be learned after this time but the task would be difficult and laborious by comparison. These views have been largely vindicated by modern scholarship on a number of levels. There would be few neuroscientists today who would dispute Montessori's understanding of *sensitive periods*. The 1999 *Early Years Report* produced by the Canadian province of Ontario brought together all of the known research on early human development, indicating that most of the physical developments in early childhood take place during predictable "windows" after which the moment for "brain wiring" passes.

New knowledge has changed our understanding of brain development and complements what has been learned about the early years from developmental psychology. We know now that early experiences and stimulating, positive interactions with adults and other children are far more important for brain development than previously realized.⁵

In her award winning 2005 book *Montessori, The Science Behind the Genius*, Stanford University psychology professor, Angeline Lillard, conducted an investigation into the key Montessori principles. After nearly a century of practice and implementation, Lillard found that the key findings had not only stood the test of time, but are now supported by an impressive array of scientific evidence indicating their effectiveness.

The delegates of Oxford University Press asked me to write a balanced assessment of Montessori, pointing out where the evidence is not supportive as well as where it is. I have done my best to do this, but there is a real problem. Their assumption, like my original one, was that Montessori must have aspects that are supported by research, and aspects that are not. Yet her major ideas... are supported by a strong body of evidence in developmental psychology.⁶

As early as 1929, Montessori had begun writing on the Religious Education of children with her book, *The Child in the Church*.⁷ Her emphasis on the need for sensate experience as an indispensable starting point for education of any kind recalled the foundational axioms of St Thomas Aquinas: "Nothing in the intellect that was not first in the senses,"⁸ and again "Knowledge is in the

⁵ See M. McCain, J. Mustard, *Early Years Study: Reversing the Brain Drain. Final Report* (Toronto: Children's Secretariat, 1999), pp. 27-28.

⁶ Angeline Stoll Lillard, *Montessori. The Science Behind the Genius* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. ix-x.

⁷ See Maria Montessori, *The Child in the Church. Essays on the Religious Education of Children and the Training of Character* (London: Sands, 1929).

⁸ St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, 12, 12; *De Veritate*, III.

knower according to the mode of the knower.⁹ Montessori's contribution to education generally and to religious education in particular was acknowledged by an official address given by Pope Paul VI in 1970...

Maria Montessori's method of religious pedagogy is an extension of her secular pedagogy; it is naturally founded on the latter and forms its crown, by enabling the child to develop its highest potentialities to the full and to bring its whole development to fulfillment in an harmonious way. Just as children's school life prepares them for their later lives, so their sacramental and liturgical initiation is the porch through which they are brought into the community of the children of God.¹⁰

Cavalletti, Gobbi and the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

In the application of Montessori principles to the field of religious education, however, it was left to another pivotal figure, Sofia Cavalletti, to give form and direction to the project. Cavalletti was an unlikely starter in the field that became her own. She never had any children of her own and had very little to do with them until her thirties. Nor had she received any formal instruction in educational theory. Cavalletti's professional training had been undertaken at La Sapienza University, in Rome, where she had undertaken Biblical Studies under Eugenio Zolli, the Jewish Catholic convert, who had been the chief Rabbi of Rome prior to World War II. In time, Cavalletti was to become a first rate scholar of the Scriptures and of the Hebrew language. She was somewhat bemused when asked to prepare a child for his First Communion in 1954, but reluctantly accepted the challenge. What astonished her was that the seven year old boy, Pablo, was profoundly moved by her presentation of the Creation narratives from Genesis; he did not want to leave, even after two hours.

This encounter alerted Cavalletti to the deep attraction children might feel towards the Scriptures if they were presented simply. Thereafter, she began collaborating with one who was to work with her for the rest of her life – Gianna Gobbi, a professor of Montessori education. Together, they developed what came to be known as the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, painstakingly creating materials that would serve the religious needs of children from the ages of three to twelve years. Taking the Montessori sensitive periods as their starting point and guided by the response of real children as their “reality check,” Cavalletti and Gobbi refined their understanding of the religious experiences that children needed at each stage of their development. In Gobbi's words:

⁹ St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II 1, 2.

¹⁰ Paul VI, *Speech to the Participants in the International Congress for the First Centenary of the Birth of Maria Montessori* (September 17, 1970), http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/speeches/1970/ (accessed June 8, 2012).

The content of the Christian message needs to vary according to the developmental stage of the child... the changing deep needs of the respective developmental period call for a different ‘face of God’ to be presented.¹¹

Cavalletti and Gobbi noticed that by the age of three years, children were not only capable of entering into a relationship with God, but they seemed eager to do so. The starting point for such children had already been indicated by Montessori herself. She had pointed to the opening lines of a poem by William Wordsworth as indicative of a timeless truth for all of humanity:

There was a time when meadow, grove and stream
 The earth and every common sight
 To me did seem appareled in celestial light
 The glory and the freshness of a dream...
 Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
 Shades of the prison-house begin to close
 Upon the growing boy,
 But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
 He sees it in his joy.¹²

A similar view was expressed by St Paul: “Ever since God created the world his everlasting power and deity – however invisible – have been there for the mind to see in the things that he has made.”¹³ St Thomas Aquinas, in more prosaic language, had provided a succinct analysis of the same truth: “There resides in every man a natural desire to know the cause of any effect he sees; and thence arises wonder in men.”¹⁴

Cavalletti discerned the central role of “wonder” in a child’s religious development and she realised that for young children (and indeed for every human being), wonder is evoked by an attentive gaze at reality. Consequently, the children were encouraged to begin their relationship with God by recognising, one by one, the gifts that He has given them in the created world. To meet this need, the Montessori “practical life” works were found to be ideal in promoting the “attentive gaze at reality”. Children were to engage in tasks such as flower arranging, slow dusting, leaf washing and the like. The experience of Montessori classrooms for over a hundred years has born witness to the effectiveness of this approach. It seems to be the basis not only of religious development, but of learning of any kind.

Yet, while it was certainly true that very young children needed to focus first and foremost on the objects of sense experience, they also had another pro-

¹¹ Gianna Gobbi, *Listening To God With Children* (Loveland OH: Treehaus Communications, 1998), p. 89.

¹² William Wordsworth, *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*, www.bartleby.com/101/536.html (accessed September 8, 2012).

¹³ Romans 1: 20.

¹⁴ St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, 12, 1.

found need – a *yearning* to be loved, cherished and protected. It quickly became obvious that this was the deepest desire of the heart of the three year old child and the one which provided a natural opening for more explicit religious experience. Various experiments were tried to see how the children would respond, but one of them stood out with such clarity that it eventually became the emblematic title of the whole project: the Good Shepherd. The children's response to this parable, told with simple concrete materials, seemed to meet a deep need in them in a way that no other story did. Children seemed to perceive through this the nature of God himself; *He* is the one who knows them by name, cares for them, protects them and loves them and their response to this love is to love in return. Time and again, Cavalletti and Gobbi confirmed another principle of human learning – that children understand much more than they can express; their understanding runs well ahead of their ability to put words around what they really know.

It was from these two starting points that the whole project took off. The careful observation of the needs of real children had identified the basic stages of learning, summed up in a simple axiom: first the body, then the heart, then the mind. As the twentieth century progressed, these two women (both highly educated and intelligent) evaluated new ideas in education, Biblical scholarship and theology. Cavalletti and Gobbi did not easily fall prey to a widely reported educational phenomenon, the “band wagon effect.” They were “action researchers” who tested their theories on real children. If their materials failed to engage their subjects, they were discarded and alternatives sought. Both Cavalletti and Gobbi wrote books and delivered courses to share the fruits of their research, each one of them bringing out a different aspect of the project. There are two core texts which provide closely argued and illustrated descriptions of their findings. *The Religious Potential of the Child* outlines Cavalletti's views about the child from three to six years of age, while the sequel, *The Religious Potential of the Child, Six to Twelve* describes the next level. Gobbi's book *Listening to God with Children* outlines the way in which classic Montessori theories – particularly her ideas on the planes of development and sensitive periods – have been applied to the context of children's religious development. Two further works of Cavalletti should be regarded as foundational to understanding the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. *Living Liturgy* is widely regarded as one of the most “accessible” books ever written on the subject. Finally, the complementary areas of Salvation History and the Scriptures are presented in *The History of the Kingdom of God: From Creation to Parousia*.

The effect of Cavalletti and Gobbi's work has been extraordinary. Repeating the experience of the 1907 “Montessori Miracle”, the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd has now won over passionate supporters on every continent who have devoted much of their own time and resources to its ongoing imple-

mentation and promotion. A world-wide “action research” community has taken shape and the work continues to expand through National Associations of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd approach has now come to embrace all of the major themes required for an integrated education in the Catholic Faith: Scripture, Liturgy and Sacraments, Prayer, Moral Formation, Practical life activities, profound doctrinal understandings and Salvation History. All of these are brought together primarily under a unifying force described by Cavalletti as *Mystagogy* – the liturgical catechesis which draws human beings to participate in the mystery of Christ as revealed in the Scriptures and Tradition.

One of the most striking and commonly reported phenomena of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is that even very young children seem to be able to arrive at profound theological understandings for themselves – without being told. Time and again, in every culture in which it is tried, catechists have reported that children respond profoundly to the mystical meanings that they deduced for themselves from the concrete materials they have used. This in turn has enhanced and vivified their reading of the Scriptures, their participation in the Liturgy, and their prayer life. There is a particularly poignant story told in *The Religious Potential of the Child* about a simple sets of materials – cruets for pouring water and wine into a chalice. Allegorically, the wine represents Jesus and the water represents us. Cavalletti tells the story this way...

We will never forget seven-year-old Massimo, who continued to repeat this exercise for so long a period of time. The catechist, thinking that he was doing it out of laziness, came up to him several times to introduce him to some other work; but Massimo’s facial expression was intent and rapt and he was trying to explain the meaning of what he was doing as he repeated the various actions... Finally – it was almost at the end of the year – he managed to say: “A few drops of water and a lot of wine, because we must lose ourselves in Jesus”... In the end Massimo had known how to express it with words worthy of a mystic.¹⁵

Many similar stories and accounts of children’s profound yet simple theological discoveries are chronicled in the *Journals of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd*, made available through the United States National Association of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, headquartered in Chicago. A comprehensive set of materials which has proven very effective in the Catholic formation of young people has now been worked and is in constant use. It only remains to be spread to the wider Church. Yet, there remains a pastoral problem to be addressed. While it may be clear that religious formation is at its optimum when it follows the natural developmental sensitive periods, in many if not most cases, this is not possible. By the time the process of catechesis begins, the sensitive

¹⁵ Sofia Cavalletti, *The Religious Potential of the Child* (Chicago: Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Publications, 1992), p. 92.

period has already passed. This is necessarily the case for adult converts. What is to be done in this situation? Perhaps an analogy already referred to will provide the best answer. Is it possible to learn a language after the sensitive period is over? Of course, but it is just more difficult.

It seems that the sequence by which we learn has striking similarities to the one that unfolds in natural human development. It seems that the sequence by which we learn in a given circumstance has striking formal similarities with the sequence which unfolds across the developmental span. Essentially, there remain four basic stages. First, it is necessary to "gather data" – just as the youngest child with an absorbent mind engages in the process of data gathering. Once the data is gathered, the learner must look for connections and try to discern a pattern – a "big picture" to explain the data. This is the typical task of the 6-9 year old child. The third stage sees the learner testing the big picture that has been created by applying all existing data, and seeking out new data to see whether or not it too fits into the pattern. If it does not, the "big picture" must be modified or replaced. The 9-12 year old children are generally involved in this process as their major focus of interest. Finally, the learner must personalise the information and theories developed. How is this relevant to "me" – does it have an application that "I" find relevant? This is the approach of the typical need of the adolescent.

The four stages of learning, namely, data gathering, creating a "big picture", testing the "big picture" and finally personalizing, can be pursued at any age. The sequence is normally to be the same. In terms of religious development, the starting point that a very young child with an absorbent mind needs is the same as the one needed for an adult with no experience. Just as the young child must gather and name the data of the faith; just as this same child must come to know of the care, love and protection of God – so too must neophytes of any age begin. A child of ten who has no religious experience still needs to move back to the foundational experience of God's love before proceeding. The same is true of the adolescent or the adult. Even if the sensitive periods are missed, the same basic experiences follow one another in more or less the same order. What are these learning experiences? This area is not fully developed and any answer must still be experimental and tentative. The continuum offered in the appendix, based on what Cavalletti and Gobbi have described in their books, is proposed as a model. At this point, it can only be considered experimental, since it has been specifically designed to meet the needs of actual sensitive periods.

A Continuum of Religious Experiences?

The work of Maria Montessori in the field of human development has stood the test of time, and more recently its major principles have been inde-

pendently supported by a large body of research, as noted extensively in the work of Lillard.¹⁶ Similar claims can be made for the application of these principles to the field of Religious education as they have been applied by Sofia Cavalletti, Gianna Gobbi and a large “action research” community throughout the world. The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd has been specifically developed to meet the needs of the developmental sensitive periods and appears to be a very effective tool for this purpose. Nevertheless, given the way in which these developmental periods appear to serve as models for learning generally, aside from any considerations of age or sensitive period, the works developed by Cavalletti, Gobbi and their collaborators may also hold the key to the development of a continuum of religious experiences. This is not the same thing as producing a comprehensive summary of Christian teaching, such as an approved catechism – which serves a different function. A catechism uses compressed propositional language to ensure that what is taught is faithful to the teaching of the Church – but these statements do not in themselves *exhaust* the mystery of God.

What is offered by the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is quite different – it is an invitation to enter into an ongoing relationship with the mystery of God, made accessible through simple concrete materials of the liturgy and the mysterious words of the Scriptures. It is an approach which invites participants to go more deeply into the mystery. Perhaps a simple example of this can be found in the difference between a scientific and a poetic description of the same reality. With scientific precision, we might say that the temperature was minus ten degrees. This would accurately convey a truth, much like a catechism answer, but it does not invite further reflection. By contrast, one might quote the poem of John Keats, “The Eve of St Agnes”:

St Agnes' Eve – Ah, bitter chill it was!
 The owl, for all his feathers was a-cold;
 The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass
 And silent was the flock in woolly fold:
 Numb were the beadsmen's fingers while he told
 His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
 Like pious incense from a censer old,
 Seemed taking flight from heaven, without a death...¹⁷

In this poetic description, a series of concrete images invites us to enter personally into the picture and to keep reflecting on the meaning... much like the parables in the Scriptures and the seasonal celebrations presented through the liturgy. Each time we return to these images and stories, they are likely to

¹⁶ Angeline Stoll Lillard, *Montessori. The Science Behind the Genius* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)

¹⁷ John Keats, *The Eve of St Agnes*, <http://www.bartleby.com/126/39.html> ((accessed September 8, 2012).

evoke different insights and emotions within us. In this way, the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is different from religious instruction since it calls for each participant to enter personally into the mystery.

In the appendix which follows, a continuum of Religious experiences has been proposed for inducting participants gradually into the experience of Catholic faith. It has been designed with Montessori sensitive periods in mind and incorporates the insights of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd approach. The continuum follows the stages of human religious development and builds on these successively. Nevertheless, there is a pastoral problem confronting religious educators and catechists in their work. What if someone has “missed the sensitive period” and was not exposed to the appropriate experience at the optimal time? It is the contention of this author that religious experiences tend to proceed in a particular sequence, where some experiences serve as a foundation for what must follow. For example, while it may be true that the ideal moment for experiencing the protecting love of God comes in early childhood, it remains the indispensable foundation for a Christian life at any age. It is therefore suggested that those who are being inducted into the Church need to proceed in essentially the same order as developing children, irrespective of age. The continuum is experimental and can only develop if it is applied and amended according to the findings of actual experience. It is offered here for that purpose – not to be frozen in time and practice, but to be used and developed as more of the mystery of human persons and their relationship with God is understood.

APPENDIX

Continuum of Foundational Religious Experiences Towards a K-12 Perspective

Stage 1 – Data Gathering: *Exploring The Parts One By One.*

Stage 2 – Synthesising: *Looking For Patterns And Discerning The “Big Picture”.*

Stage 3 – Analysing: *How Do The Parts Contribute To The “Big Picture”?*

Stage 4 – Personalising: *How Do I Fit Into This Picture?*

Scripture: Life of Christ

Stage 1 - Data Gathering <i>Exploring the things in my world.</i>	Stage 2 – Synthesising <i>Looking for patterns and the „Big Picture”</i>	Stage 3 – Analysing <i>How the parts fit into the whole picture</i>
Infancy Narratives <p><i>God has a plan to bring people to enjoy true happiness. He has sent us Jesus, his son, so that through him – his teaching and his help – we can have true happiness. The infancy narratives in the Bible</i></p>	Infancy Narratives <p><i>We learn a little more about Jesus' early life in the infancy narratives. This helps us to deepen our knowledge of God's plan and about who Jesus is.</i></p>	Infancy Narratives <p><i>We continue to ponder the early life of Jesus by reflecting on key prophecies which foretold his birth.</i></p>

<i>help us begin to understand who Jesus is.</i> Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38) Visitation (Luke 1:26-38) Birth of Jesus (Luke 2:1-12) Visit of the Magi (Matthew 2:1-12) Presentation in the Temple (Luke 2:22-34, 36-40)	The Flight into Egypt (Matthew 2:13-15) Art Synthesis of the Infancy Narratives... Find a variety of art works depicting the early life of Jesus and allow the students to interact with them. Synthesise these by arranging them in the correct sequence.	The Great Light. (Isaiah 9:1) Emmanuel. (Isaiah 7:14) Bethlehem. (Micah 5:2) The Child. (Isaiah 9:5-6) The Star and the Sceptre (Numbers 24:17)
Paschal Narratives <i>In God's Kingdom, our lives have a meaning. Our life is followed by death, but this is not an end but the beginning of a new and more wonderful life. Jesus shows this through his own life death and resurrection.</i> The events of Holy Thursday (Mark 14:12-17, 22-24, 26) (Mention the crucifixion, but not in detail.) The Empty Tomb (Matthew 27:57-66; 28:1-10)	Paschal Narratives <i>We continue to explore God's plan and what Jesus did to bring this into reality.</i> The Last Supper – Eucharist focus (Mark 14:22-25) Resurrection Account (Matthew 28:108) The Ascension (Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:6-11) Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13) Art Synthesis of the Paschal Narratives	Paschal Narratives <i>We continue to explore God's plan and what Jesus did to bring this into reality by pondering the suffering of the crucifixion, which Jesus undertook on our behalf.</i> The Crucifixion (Mark 15:1-39) Revise Art Synthesis of Paschal Narratives during Lent.
Biblical Geography <i>We know that Jesus was a real person, who lived at a particular time and place. He was not just a story-book character.</i> Locate the land of Israel on the globe. Look at the terrain of Israel, and Jerusalem either on a model or by using google maps.	Biblical Geography <i>We know that Jesus was a real person, who lived at a particular time and place. We can learn a lot about the place where Jesus lived from the Bible and by researching what these places look like now.</i> Do a detailed study of the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem, locating places mentioned in the Bible.	Biblical Geography <i>We know that Jesus was a real person, who lived at a particular time and place. There have been changes through time in the place where Jesus lived.</i> Do a research project on the history of the land of Israel in different time periods.

Scripture: Parables

Stage 1 - Data Gathering Exploring the things in my world.	Stage 2 – Synthesising Looking for patterns and the „Big Picture”	Stage 3 – Analysing How the parts fit into the whole picture
Parables of the Grace and Love of God <i>God loves and cares for me</i> Parable of the Good Shepherd (John 10:2-5)	Parables of the Grace and Love of God <i>God gives his life for me</i> The Found Sheep (Luke 15:4-6) The Good Shepherd: Wolf (John 10:11-14) Psalm 23:1-4 The Vine John (15:1-5)	Parables of the Grace and Love of God
Kingdom Parables <i>The mystery of the Kingdom of God is like the mystery of life, and Jesus draws our attention to this through parables. God's Kingdom starts small and grows. It is of great value like the treasure, and it</i>	Kingdom Parables <i>We continue pondering the mystery of the Kingdom of God, growing within us.</i> The Growing Seed (Matthew	Kingdom Parables <i>Return to ponder the mystery of the Kingdom of God – seeing what it means at a new stage of our lives. .</i>

<i>changes everything around it like the leaven.</i> The Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31-32) The Pearl of Great Price (Matthew 13:45-46) The Hidden Treasure (Matthew 13:44) The Leaven (Matthew 13:33)	4:26-28) Using an art synthesis, draw all of the earlier parables together, and reflect on what they teach	
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Scripture: The Bible and Salvation History

Stage 1 - Data Gathering Exploring the things in my world.	Stage 2 – Synthesising Looking for patterns and the „Big Picture”	Stage 3 – Analysing How the parts fit into the whole picture
The Bible <i>The Bible is a special book – when it is read, it is God who is speaking to us through these words.</i>	The Bible <i>The Bible is a Book that has been written by people who were inspired by God to write what they did.</i> The Bible and the books that comprise it - an outline of the names of the different books of the Bible.	The Bible <i>The Bible is a Book that has been put together bit by bit to explain the way in which God's Plan has unfolded.</i>
Salvation History and the Plan of God	Salvation History and the Plan of God <i>The history of God's Plan is huge, and it is marked by his continued presence at every moment – but there are three key moments in this history: Creation, Redemption and Parousia.</i> Salvation history time line: identifying the major elements of this God's unfolding plan of loving goodness: Creation The Story of Abraham and Isaac Moses and the Exodus The Kings of Israel and the Prophets Birth of Jesus Death and Resurrection of Jesus The Heavenly Kingdom to come.	Salvation History and the Plan of God <i>The presence of God in history points to a plan whereby God reveals himself and his ways little by little. Typology is a study that helps us to see what parts of this plan point to things that are going to happen in the future.</i> The Prophets: Isaiah Jeremiah Daniel Ezekiel The Minor Prophets. The Bible and the Parousia – What does the Bible tell us about the world to come? The Plan of God – an extended timeline of the action of God in history, both sacred and secular Typologies: Creation, The Fall, The Flood Abraham, Moses

Moral Formation I

Stage 1 - Data Gathering Exploring the things in my world.	Stage 2 – Synthesising Looking for patterns and the „Big Picture”	Stage 3 – Analysing How the parts fit into the whole picture
Preparing the Body <i>In its earliest stages, moral formation is about developing self discipline so that we do those things that</i>	Preparing the Body <i>At every stage, moral formation remains concerned with developing self discipline so that we do</i>	Preparing the Body <i>At every stage, moral formation remains concerned with developing self discipline so</i>

<i>the mind and heart believe to be right. The focus should be on practical life activities – cleaning, washing, sweeping, tidying.</i> Routines for cleaning, washing, sweeping etc. Giving children the opportunity to develop self-discipline as they care for themselves and then the environment they occupy.	<i>those things that the mind and heart believe to be right.</i> More advanced ways of caring for oneself and the environment – suitable to the age and needs of individual children – should be sought.	<i>that we do those things that the mind and heart believe to be right.</i> Challenging moral efforts, including self-denial and prudent asceticism – fasting, abstinence, acts of charity etc. – should be encouraged, particularly in the seasons of Lent and Advent.
Preparing the Heart <i>When a person falls deeply in love, he/she will want to do what is right by the other person. Love is the basis of moral action, and should precede it.</i> The Parable of the Good Shepherd – emphasising love.	Preparing the Heart: Parables of Mercy <i>God considers each one of us to be very important to him. Jesus told these parables to help us recall this truth.</i> The Forgiving Father (Luke 15:11-24) The Lost Coin (Luke 15: 8-9)	Preparing the Heart: Parables of Mercy <i>Not only does God consider us to be very important – he loves other too and calls us to do the same.</i> The Debtors The Workers in the Vineyard
Preparing the Mind <i>Explicit moral instruction about the way to behave should be left to the next level. The basic message of love is the one which must be grasped.</i> Observation of moral behaviour and being acquainted with the stories of Jesus serves as an implicit preparation of the mind for moral activity.	Preparing the Mind <i>Explicit moral instruction should begin once it is clear that the child has understood the foundation of love. The starting point is a reflection on the Moral Maxims of Christ.</i> Begin Reflection on the moral maxims of Jesus – one by one – from the following list: Matthew 5:44; John 13:34; Luke 6:27; Matthew 6:6; Matthew 7:7; 1 Corinthians 6:19; Matthew 5:48; Matthew 5:37; Matthew 7:22; Matthew 7:12; Matthew 5:42; Matthew 5:44; The Summary of the Law; Luke 10:27. Matthew 18:21-22; John 13:34; Luke 6:27; Matthew 6:2.	Preparing the Mind <i>Further moral instruction can take place once the basics have been understood. The social dimension of morality such as the natural law and the Beatitudes can also begin at this time if the child is ready.</i> Additional Maxims of Jesus from the following list: Matthew 5:44b; Matthew 7:3; Matthew 5:40; Matthew 6:20a; Luke 9:62. The Cardinal Virtues The Eight Beatitudes The Ten Commandments

Moral Formation II

Stage 1 - Data Gathering Exploring the things in my world.	Stage 2 – Synthesising Looking for patterns and the „Big Picture”	Stage 3 – Analysing How the parts fit into the whole picture
	Preparing the Mind: Moral Parables <i>Belonging to the Kingdom of God comes with responsibilities. If we have been loved, we should respond by loving in return and by spreading the Good News of God's Kingdom.</i> The Good Samaritan (Lk 10:30-37) The Insistent Friend (Luke 11:5-8)	Preparing the Mind: Moral Parables <i>While God wants us to belong to his Kingdom, he will not force us. We are free by our own actions to be happy in his Kingdom or not to accept it.</i>

	The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14) The Sower (Matthew 13:3-8)	The Bridesmaids (Matthew 25:1-12); The Talents (Matthew 25:14-30); The Wedding Feast (Matthew 18:23-34)
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Prayer

Stage 1 - Data Gathering Exploring the things in my world.	Stage 2 – Synthesising Looking for patterns and the „Big Picture”	Stage 3 – Analysing How the parts fit into the whole picture
Prayer of Thanks and Petition <i>At its most basic level, prayer is about asking God for his gifts and thanking him for what we have received</i> Prayers of thanks. Prayers of petition. Short phrases from the Bible, especially psalms.	Language of Prayer <i>Prayer sustains our relationship with God. As well as asking and thanking God for his gifts, we offer him our praise and worship. Jesus gave us the model of how to pray. The Church offers us a language to frame our prayers.</i> Our Father; Hail Mary; Act of Contrition; Glory Be to the Father; Morning Offering	Ways of Praying <i>There are many different ways to pray, and God helps us to find the way that is best for us.</i> Rosary Creed Lectio Divina

Sacraments: Sacramentality; Baptism

Stage 1 - Data Gathering Exploring the things in my world.	Stage 2 – Synthesising Looking for patterns and the „Big Picture”	Stage 3 – Analysing How the parts fit into the whole picture
Sacramentality <i>The ordinary is holy. We meet God through ordinary things that we can see, taste touch, smell and hear.</i> Practical life activities	Sacramentality <i>The ordinary is holy. We meet God through ordinary things that we can see, taste touch, smell and hear.</i> Draw attention to the presence of God in the ordinary Practical life Activities	Sacramentality <i>The ordinary is holy. We meet God through ordinary things that we can see, taste touch, smell and hear.</i> Draw attention to the presence of God in the ordinary Practical life Activities St Therese of Lisieux and the “Little Way”
Baptism – The Light and the White Garment <i>Jesus is the light of the world; his light cannot be extinguished and it even overcomes death itself. Through the sacrament of Baptism, we are given his light and his life.</i> The image of light in Baptism The meaning of the white garment	Baptism – The Rite <i>Each of the liturgical signs and gestures of Baptism has a meaning which connects us with the life, death and resurrection of Christ, and the life of the Church.</i> Reflection on essential moments of the Rite of Baptism	Baptism – The Rite <i>Each of the liturgical signs and gestures of Baptism has a meaning which connects us with the life, death and resurrection of Christ, and the life of the Church.</i> A deeper reflection on the Rite of Baptism, making connections with the Life of Christ and the Church
Baptism – The Water, the Gospel, the oil. <i>Through the water, the scriptures and the holy oil, we receive and take part in the life of Christ.</i>		

The image of water in Baptism The meaning of the holy oils The Scriptures as God's Word to us, received first in Baptism.		
Baptism – The Main Gestures of Baptism <i>Through the sacramental actions, we are drawn into the life of Christ.</i> The epiclesis (invoking the Holy Spirit) The pouring of the water The sign of the cross The anointing with oil		

Sacraments: Eucharist – Moments of the Mass

Stage 1 - Data Gathering Exploring the things in my world.	Stage 2 – Synthesising Looking for patterns and the „Big Picture”	Stage 3 – Analysing How the parts fit into the whole picture
Eucharist – Moments of the Mass <i>When we celebrate the Eucharist, we ask God the Father to send the Holy spirit to change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus.</i> The Epiclesis <i>We thank God for the gift of the risen Christ and we join him in offering ourselves to the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit</i> The Offering/ Doxology <i>We remember how God (represented by the wine) and humanity (represented by the water) have become inseparable in Jesus.</i> The Preparation of the Chalice <i>We remember that the Church is a communion – we are united to Christ and to each other and, bound by the peace of Christ</i> The Sign of Peace <i>The priest washes his hands to show that we all want to be made clean in heart – Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God.</i> The Lavabo (Washing of the Hands)	Eucharist – Linking the Moments of the Mass <i>The moments of the Mass form a particular order and a united whole. The Eucharist is the great prayer of the Church and the memorial of Christ's life, death and resurrection.</i> Basic Missal – Essential Moments of the Mass in Order Synthesis of the key moments of the Mass	Eucharist – Study of the Mass <i>In the Eucharist, Jesus offers to all the gift of redemption. The Eucharist is the thanksgiving sacrifice of Jesus, offered for the living and the dead.</i> Structure of the Mass – Sequencing Prayers of the Mass Detailed Exploration of the Essential Rite of the Mass

Sacraments: Eucharist – Paschal Mystery; Liturgical Vessels & Furniture

Stage 1 - Data Gathering Exploring the things in my world.	Stage 2 – Synthesising Looking for patterns and the „Big Picture”	Stage 3 – Analysing How the parts fit into the whole picture
Eucharist – Life, Death and Resurrection of Christ <i>The Eucharist is a celebration of the life</i>	Eucharist - Life, Death and Resurrection of Christ <i>In the Eucharist, Jesus feeds us</i>	Eucharist - Life, Death and Resurrection of Christ

<i>death and resurrection of Jesus.</i> See also Paschal and Infancy Narratives (above).	<i>with himself.</i> The Eucharistic Presence of the Good Shepherd. <i>At the last Supper, Jesus told us to celebrate the Eucharist as a memorial of him.</i> Origin of the Eucharist	<i>The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life in which Christ offers to all the gift of redemption.</i> Origin of the Liturgy of the Word – Synagogue The Eucharist as Memorial
Eucharist – Liturgical Vessels & Furniture <i>In the celebration of the Eucharist, we use special vessels, furniture. Each of these has its own purpose in unfolding to us the mystery of Christ.</i> I. Altar, altar cloth, crucifix, candles, sacristy; II. Chalice, corporal, paten, ciborium, purifier; III. Cruets (water and wine), finger bowl, finger towel; IV. Tabernacle, paschal candle, sanctuary lamp; V. Lectionary, lectern, Sacramentary & stand	Eucharist – Liturgical Vestments <i>In the celebration of the Eucharist, we use special vestments. Each of these has its own purpose in unfolding to us the mystery of Christ.</i> Alb, stole, chasuble, amice	

Sacraments: Confirmation

Stage 1 - Data Gathering Exploring the things in my world	Stage 2 – Synthesising Looking for patterns and the „Big Picture”	Stage 3 – Analysing How the parts fit into the whole picture
Confirmation <i>Indirect instruction incidentally.</i>	Confirmation <i>The Holy Spirit brings special gifts to empower his followers. These gifts are strengthened in the Sacrament of Confirmation.</i> Reflect on the Pentecost Story (Acts 2:1-4) Introduce the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit	Confirmation <i>Confirmation gives us special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action.</i> Pentecost Story (Acts 2:1-4) The articles, vestments and gestures of Confirmation Saints – models of the Christian life The Rite of Confirmation – essential components The Cardinal Virtues; Service Project The Gifts of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:2-3) The Fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22)

Sacraments of Healing: Reconciliation

Stage 1 - Data Gathering Exploring the things in my world.	Stage 2 – Synthesising Looking for patterns and the „Big Picture”	Stage 3 – Analysing How the parts fit into the whole picture
Reconciliation <i>Indirect instruction incidentally.</i>	Reconciliation <i>Jesus seeks out the lost sheep, and those who have sinned. Jesus gave the Church the power to forgive sins.</i> Key Moments in the Sacrament of Reconc-	Reconciliation <i>God wants us to turn back to him after we have sinned. This is called „Repentance”.</i> Detailed review of the Rite of

	<p>ciliation:</p> <p>1. Examination of Conscience; 2. Confession of Sins; 3. Absolution; 4. Penance</p> <p><i>Many scripture stories show that Jesus loved and forgave sinners who asked to be forgiven.</i></p> <p>Reflection on...</p> <p>Parables of Mercy; Moral Parables; Maxims of Jesus</p> <p>(See above)</p>	<p>Reconciliation</p> <p>Further reflection on...</p> <p>Parables of Mercy; Moral Parables; Maxims of Jesus</p> <p>(See above)</p>
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Sacraments of Healing: Anointing of the Sick

Stage 1 - Data Gathering Exploring the things in my world.	Stage 2 – Synthesising Looking for patterns and the „Big Picture”	Stage 3 – Analysing How the parts fit into the whole picture
Anointing of the Sick <i>Indirect instruction incidentally.</i>	Anointing of the Sick <i>Anointing of the Sick is for those who are frail, seriously sick or in danger of death.</i> Study of the essential elements of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.	Anointing of the Sick <i>Anointing of the Sick brings strength, reconciliation peace and the courage to endure suffering in a Christian manner.</i> Extended study of the meaning of the Rite of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

Sacraments at the Service of Communion: Marriage

Stage 1 - Data Gathering Exploring the things in my world	Stage 2 – Synthesising Looking for patterns and the „Big Picture”	Stage 3 – Analysing How the parts fit into the whole picture
Marriage <i>Indirect instruction incidentally.</i>	Marriage <i>Jesus' love for his people is the model of love for all married people. In marriage, a man and a woman give themselves to each other in love.</i> The essential elements of the rite of Marriage	Marriage <i>Marriage between a man and a woman is called a covenant. It is based on God's love, help and forgiveness.</i> A more detailed study of the Rite of Marriage The Trinity and Marriage – analogy of love

Sacraments at the Service of Communion: Holy Orders

Stage 1 - Data Gathering Exploring the things in my world.	Stage 2 – Synthesising Looking for patterns and the „Big Picture”	Stage 3 – Analysing How the parts fit into the whole picture
Holy Orders <i>Indirect instruction incidentally.</i>	Holy Orders Bishops and priests have been called by God to continue Christ's leadership in his Church. The essential elements of the rite of Holy Orders.	Holy Orders <i>Holy Orders gives sacred power to a priest: to teach, to sanctify and to lead the faithful.</i> A more detailed study of the Rite of Holy Orders

Liturgy: Seasons of the Church

Stage 1 - Data Gathering Exploring the things in my world.	Stage 2 – Synthesising Looking for patterns and the „Big Picture”	Stage 3 – Analysing How the parts fit into the whole picture
<p>Seasons of the Church</p> <p><i>The Life of the Church has its own seasons and fest days, which call us to reflect on key moments in the life of Christ and the saints who have served him throughout history. These reflections help us to enter more deeply into the mystery of Christ.</i></p> <p>Liturgical Calendar Wheel The Season of Lent The Advent Prophecies – The Light (Isaiah 9:1), The Names (Isaiah 9:5-6), The Young Woman (Isaiah 7:14), The Star and the Sceptre (Numbers 24:17)</p>	<p>Seasons of the Church</p> <p><i>The Life of the Church has its own seasons and feast days, which call us to reflect on key moments in the life of Christ and the saints who have served him throughout history. These reflections help us to enter more deeply into the mystery of Christ.</i></p> <p>Other Solemnities of the Church Solemnity of the Mother of God Corpus Christi All Saints All Souls</p>	<p>Seasons of the Church</p> <p><i>The Life of the Church has its own seasons and fest days, which call us to reflect on key moments in the life of Christ and the saints who have served him throughout history. These reflections help us to enter more deeply into the mystery of Christ.</i></p> <p>Saints of the Church: St Peter and Paul, St Augustine, St Mary MacKillop, St Francis, St Thomas Aquinas, St Therese of Lisieux, St Teresa of Calcutta, Saints according to local interest</p>

Personalising...

Stage 4 – Personalising: How do I fit into this picture?		
Developmental Aspect	Needs	Meeting the Needs
<p>1. A Social Age</p> <p>Peer relationships are crucial; peer group is their first priority.</p> <p>A focus on camaraderie, fellowship, companions, team-mates lies at the centre of the adolescent experience.</p> <p>Adolescents need friends to confide in - the absence of friends is</p>	<p>Adolescents need to build and feel part of a community</p> <p>They need to learn how to live with each other; those that they like and those that they dislike.</p> <p>They also need to learn to live with adults.</p>	<p>1. Allow students the opportunity of working together on differentiated aspects of the same project.</p> <p>2. Delve into the meaning and different levels of friendship.</p> <p>3. Jesus as the model of the true friend.</p> <p>4. Provide a sense of identity without imposing it. Adolescents need to belong, but in their own way.</p> <p>5. They will willingly work within existing Religious frameworks if they are given sound and convincing reasons</p> <p>6. Work with individuals and small groups rather than large numbers when introducing new and challenging activities.</p> <p>7. Allow serious input – ask for their advice on how to achieve the outcome you are seeking.</p>

Stage 4 – Personalising: How do I fit into this picture?		
Developmental Aspect	Needs	Meeting the Needs
<p>2. A Thinking and Critical Age.</p> <p>Adolescents are critical of themselves, and each other, but especially of adults.</p> <p>It is a time to object, to argue, and to analyze. It is a time when adolescents see the persuasiveness of opposing reasons.</p> <p>Adolescents have a powerful mind, but it is turned toward themselves and the group.</p>	<p>Adolescents need to be challenged.</p> <p>They need challenges because they come to know themselves.</p> <p>They must try many things; they must sample life</p>	<p>Apologetics – explain not only the <i>what</i> but also the <i>why</i> in Religious Education. Connect it with their existing sense of identity... How might you explain this to your peers who ask you about your beliefs?</p> <p>Don't discount or put off their questions – Catholic faith is rational; explain the good reasons to them, and</p>

<p>They need to know how they feel, what they want.</p> <p>They need to reach their own conclusions.</p> <p>The need to listen to each other.</p> <p>The young child demands, „Help me to do it myself.” The adolescent demands, „Help me to think for myself.”</p> <p>In early adolescence, this thinking is not detached; it is thinking connected with feelings. They are capable of very mature thought if it is framed within a personal context.</p> <p>They need adults to listen to their reasons. They will not co-operate well unless they agree.</p> <p>They need to be empowered to discuss, to find solutions.</p> <p>The purpose of this critical nature is that it is a time for examining, developing, and/or finding values.</p> <p>Adolescence is a moral and ethical age, at least in the sense that it is a time for developing one's own commitment to moral actions.</p>	<p>for themselves.</p>	<p>find out if you don't know. Don't dismiss them by telling them that they just have to believe.</p> <p>Don't discount the value of their Baptismal faith. If they are baptised they have of a supernatural gift of faith that enables them to believe... so appeal to this with expressions like “we believe”.</p> <p>Approach adolescents in a respectful and friendly manner, without trying to be like them. Affirm the good things you see and tell them of the potential you can see in them.</p> <p>Bring in inspiring speakers to challenge them to some ennobling work.</p> <p>Provide inspiring stories of the saints for them to read; or DVDs which inspire them to good things.</p> <p>Give them good models of ethical behaviour – challenging but reachable.</p>
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Stage 4 – Personalising: How do I fit into this picture?

Developmental Aspect	Needs	Meeting the Needs
<p>3. An Age of Boundless Energy</p> <p>Adolescents are constantly going, talking, moving, acting, working, playing, planning, etc.</p> <p>This energy can burn out of control, but if channelled, it can move mountains. It is an age where one has an astonishing capacity to work.</p> <p>This energy can burn out of control, but if channelled, it can move mountains. It is an age where one has an astonishing capacity to work.</p> <p>One purpose for this energy is to sustain the spirit of adventure.</p> <p>An odyssey is a good metaphor for this period of human development. Each adolescent is a young Odysseus; each is on a personal odyssey. Adventure brings challenge. The purpose of adventure is self-discovery.</p>	<p>Adolescents need challenging and meaningful work.</p> <p>They must come to know how ennobling work is, and they must be „admired” by adults for what they have achieved.</p> <p>Adolescents have a particular need to work with their hands; they need to build and create. The hand and the mind have a special connection in early adolescence.</p> <p>Adolescents need the land, they need the earth because the land is their sensorial and practical life environment.</p>	<p>Create opportunities for adolescents to undertake a challenging pilgrimage – World Youth Day is ideal if possible, otherwise a similar local challenging pilgrimage.</p> <p>Offer meaningful projects for adolescents to work on and plan together.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for them to engage with the natural environment... looking after a garden; undertaking a challenging hike; looking after an environmental project etc.</p>

Stage 4 – Personalising: How do I fit into this picture?		
Developmental Aspect	Needs	Meeting the Needs
<p>4. A period of developing maturity.</p> <p>It is the age of physical changes. It is a time of sexual discovery; what it means/feels like to be a man, what it means/feels like to be a woman.</p> <p>Clearly, boy/girl relationships are critical. Their challenge is a difficult one – to understand profoundly what is expected of them as adult men and women.</p>	<p>Adolescents need to develop a personal vision.</p> <p>This need is the commanding need of adolescence as a whole. They need to come to terms with their personal place in the world.</p> <p>We need this vision to sustain us, to nourish us throughout our life. It is this vision that defines our great tasks in life.</p>	<p>Discussions of this kind should avoid large groups. Even small groups will only be comfortable for them if they have chosen the members of the group for themselves. One-to-one is best.</p> <p>Chaplains who have a capacity for spiritual direction can be very helpful in these circumstances.</p> <p>Adult guides can be helpful, but only if they have a personal rapport with each individual.</p> <p>Guidance can be offered “safely” through the use of third person strategies – DVDs; discussions of issues and suitable articles etc. in which it is someone else being discussed.</p> <p>Efforts should be made to help the adolescent to perceive their own value in God’s eyes, as conveyed in these lines of Newman ...</p> <p><i>“God has created me to do him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission – I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good. I shall do His work. I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place while not intending it – if I do but keep His commandments. Therefore I will trust in Him. Whatever, wherever I am, I can never be thrown away, If I am sick in sickness, my sickness may serve Him; in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him; if I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him. He does nothing in vain. He knows what He is about. He may take away my friends. He may throw me among strangers. He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my future from me – still He knows what he is about.” Cardinal Newman</i></p>

Stage 4 – Personalising: How do I fit into this picture?		
Developmental Aspect	Needs	Meeting the Needs
<p>5. It is an intensely human age.</p> <p>Adolescents must confront and deal with human nature in a way unique in terms of development. They must for the first time deal with the dilemmas, and contradictions of life.</p> <p>It is an age that is <i>I – centred</i>, not just the individual, personal I, but the I as a human being.</p> <p>It is an age that is <i>I – centred</i>, not just the individual, personal I, but the I as a human being.</p> <p>The dramatic physical changes of early adolescence create a heightened self awareness. In this context Chaucer</p>	<p>Adolescents need to be empowered to make their own decisions.</p> <p>They need the chance to make decisions, plan activities, be leaders. They need to make mistakes.</p>	<p>Adolescents need opportunities to plan activities of their own. These need to begin within safe limits, and increasingly see the winding back of adult supervision until they are ready to take responsibility for their own decisions.</p> <p>They should be offered the opportunity of studying the nature of the human person - theological anthropology.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for adolescents to share their stories with each other – if they feel comfortable with this. This should never be forced, and ought to begin with simple and non-threatening “getting to know you” opportunities. They will select the time and the place of</p>

<p>Canterbury Tales might be considered a metaphor of adolescence.</p> <p>The adolescent is on an extended journey (an odyssey, a pilgrimage), and there is the intense sharing of their very human stories (tales).</p> <p>As a result of this sharing there is the possibility for a remarkable growth in understanding and empathy for their companions.</p> <p>Because early adolescence is such a special <i>human</i> time, the adolescent mediates human nature. In the adolescent the dreams, possibilities, and potential of life clash with the present and the past, with the real, with the might-have-beens, with compromises and with weakness.</p>		<p>deeper sharing with each other and with trusted adults.</p> <p>They need to have some background in the processes of moral decision making according to the wisdom of the Church.</p> <p>These opportunities can best be done informally in the context of a walk or a hike together, and should not be "stage-managed" by the teacher. It will happen spontaneously.</p> <p>Provide inspiring literature, and avoid dark and depressing themes unless the outcome represents a triumph of humanity over danger and adversity. Offer them beauty and hope; not despair and ugliness.</p>
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DEVELOPING A CONTINUUM OF EXPERIENCES FOR CATHOLIC FAITH FORMATION

SUMMARY

This paper summarizes the contribution of Montessori approaches to religious education, both by Maria Montessori herself and by the more recent work of Sofia Cavalletti, Gianna Gobbi and the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. It is acknowledged that this work has been pursued primarily in an attempt to match religious experiences with developmental sensitive periods. The question remains, however, of how the needs of those who have missed the ideal moment for the various aspects of their religious development can be accommodated. A case is made for seeing the typical stages of human development described by Montessori as a general sequential process for all learning, including religious. Consequently, the sequence of experiences used in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd might be able to serve the wider purpose of indicating an appropriate sequence for all religious learning.

KEYWORDS: religious faith, education, Maria Montessori, Sofia Cavalletti, Gianna Gobbi, the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.