

The Oral History of Pre-Vatican II Catholic Melbourne

Project Supervisor: Dr Patrick McGrath

Tel: 0435660851

Email: Patrick.mcgrath@unimelb.edu.au

The goal of this oral history project is to capture the experiences of Catholics who came of age in the decades before the dramatic cultural and religious changes of the 1960s.

Participants would be interviewed about various aspects of Catholic life in Melbourne/Victoria, including spirituality, family life, education, relations with non-Catholics, and the dramatic changes introduced by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Participants will be asked to recall their past experiences and to reflect on the role of Catholicism in their early life.

The interviews will be recorded and preserved in a historical archive at the Academic Centre of St Mary's/Newman College in Parkville, VIC. This archive will be a valuable resource for the future study of religion and culture and will be available for future public use by students and researchers.

Respondents will consider such topics as:

- the impact of postwar social change, including rising standards of living, increased access to higher education, suburbanization, and new media (including television) on devotional practices and spiritual values
- the shifting relationship between Catholicism and ethnic and class-based collective identities in the postwar era
- the role of institutional Catholicism in public life, especially during and after the DLP-ALP split
- religious sectarianism and the shifting dynamics of Catholic-Protestant relations
- the impact of the Second Vatican Council on Catholic devotional practices, spiritual values and communal identities
- the secularization of Australian culture and society from the 1960s to the present

Interviews would typically be 90 minutes. Participants are welcome to schedule a second interview at their discretion.

The project is sponsored by the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, Newman College/St Mary's, and the University of Melbourne.

Ideally, participants: (1) were born before 1940

(2) spent significant time in Victoria between 1935 and 1965.

Our aim is to create a participant pool that reflects a diversity of Catholic life in mid-century Melbourne/Victoria and includes the voices of laity, women religious, and clergy.

Our goal is to interview 25 people at this stage of the project. If additional funding is available, we hope to complete 100-plus interviews over the next 2-3 years.

Interviews will take place at a location of the participant's choosing. Participants will have the option of having the interview take place in a conference room at Newman College in Parkville, VIC.

Why are we conducting this project?

The primary aim of this project is to document and preserve a crucial moment in Catholic Melbourne's past and raise awareness of the city's Catholic heritage. Such works of heritage

preservation, however, are more than backward-looking exercises in chronicling the past; they also provoke illuminating conversations about the future. In addition to creating a valuable resource for the future study of Catholic Melbourne, this project invites the Catholic communion of faithful to reflect on the spiritual journey of their predecessors and in the process confront core questions about the relationship between faith and culture and consider new pathways toward evangelization. In addition to drawing out the insights of prior generations, such reflection may also serve as a form of community-building that strengthens ties between diverse generations of Melburnian Catholics and reaffirms a shared vision of mission and faith.

Interested in participating?

If you know someone who would be interested in participating, please pass on this information as well as my contact information. I am more than happy to send additional information and to speak by phone with prospective participants.

All the best, Patrick McGrath