“Anyone working in a Catholic ministry today knows that Catholic identity is a hot-button issue. Multiple complex factors within and beyond the ministry contribute to the current challenging reality. Since the late eighties, in several acclaimed books, Father Gerald Arbuckle has challenged believers to ground their ministries in the narratives of Jesus. Once again, he addresses contemporary ministry in a just-in-time fashion, presenting both a multifaceted descriptive account as well as practical prescriptive practices for the reader’s consideration. This book is a must for those serving as sponsors, senior leaders, mission leaders, or formators of tomorrow’s leaders in Catholic ministry. Eschewing a didactic methodology, social anthropologist Arbuckle utilizes a more inductive, narrative approach to draw forth a deep and lasting commitment to Church ministry.”

—Patricia Talone, RSM, PhD
Catholic Health Association of the United States

“This book brings together the accumulated wisdom and experience of Gerald Arbuckle’s pioneering work on ‘refounding’ and applies it to an urgent question of our time: preserving and furthering the Catholic identity of educational and healthcare institutions. It is a must-read for anyone concerned about the public face of the Catholic Church in an increasingly secularized, postmodern world.”

—Robert Schreiter
Author of The New Catholicity

“‘Chaos’ and ‘Refounding’ are the hallmark tropes of Gerald Arbuckle’s now huge literary corpus. With a magisterial command of contemporary theological literature, Arbuckle applies his anthropological insights to the ‘refounding’ (not ‘renewal’!) of Christian ministries, especially in education and health care, for our ‘chaotic’ times. If his proposals on Catholic identities (not ‘identity’!) are implemented, there will be a rebirth of Christian ministries appropriate for our postmodern age. Once again, the church owes Arbuckle a huge debt.”

—Dr. Peter C. Phan
The Ignacio Ellacuría Chair of Catholic Social Thought
Georgetown University
“With characteristic clarity, depth, and wisdom, Gerald Arbuckle offers reflections on refounding and Catholic identity, two important elements in today’s call to engage in a ‘new evangelization.’ For Arbuckle, the only real way to evangelize is to refound—to express who we are as Christians by a creative retelling of the Christian story. Readers who have been inspired and challenged by Arbuckle’s earlier books will not be disappointed when they read this one.”

—Stephen B. Bevans, SVD
Louis J. Luzbetak, SVD, Professor of Mission and Culture
Catholic Theological Union
Chicago, Illinois
Catholic Identity or Identities?

Refounding Ministries in Chaotic Times

Gerald A. Arbuckle, SM
To Maria Cunningham, RSC, and Therese Vassarotti: faith-filled and courageous refounders
By the same author

*The Chatham Islands in Perspective: A Socio-Economic Review*  
[Wellington: Hicks Smith, 1971]

*Strategies for Growth in Religious Life*  
[Alba House/St. Pauls Publications, 1987]

*Out of Chaos: Refounding Religious Congregations*  
[Paulist Press/Geoffrey Chapman, 1988]  
[Catholic Press Award]

*Earthing the Gospel: An Inculturation Handbook for Pastoral Workers*  
[Catholic Press Award]

*Grieving for Change: A Spirituality for Refounding Gospel Communities*  

*Refounding the Church: Dissent for Leadership*  
[Catholic Press Award]

*From Chaos to Mission: Refounding Religious Life Formation*  

*Healthcare Ministry: Refounding the Mission in Tumultuous Times*  
[Liturgical Press, 2000]  
[Catholic Press Award]

*Dealing with Bullies: A Gospel Response to the Social Disease of Adult Bullying*  
[St Pauls Publications, 2003]

*Confronting the Demon: A Gospel Response to Adult Bullying*  
[Liturgical Press, 2003]

*Violence, Society, and the Church: A Cultural Approach*  
[Liturgical Press, 2004]

*Crafting Catholic Identity in Postmodern Australia*  
[Catholic Health Australia, 2007]

*A ‘Preferential Option for the Poor’: Application to Catholic Health and Aged Care Ministries in Australia*  
[Catholic Health Australia, 2008]

*Laughing with God: Humor, Culture, and Transformation*  
[Liturgical Press, 2008]

*Culture, Inculturation, and Theologians: A Postmodern Critique*  
[Liturgical Press, 2010]

*Humanizing Healthcare Reforms*  
[Jessica Kingsley, 2013]
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It has been said that “a good book is the best of friends, the same today and for ever” [Martin Tupper 1810–1889]. My hope is that this book becomes “the best of friends” for many readers, but a “good book” depends not just on the author but on the collaboration of many people: Hans Christoffersen, editorial director at Liturgical Press, who kindly accepted the book for publication; the community at Campion Hall, Oxford University, where most of the research and writing of the book took place; my Marist superiors who so generously support my ministry of writing; Martin Laverty, CEO Catholic Health Australia, for permission to use material in chapters 7 and 8 that I had previously published; and the wonderful Margaret Zucker, who again patiently read and corrected my grammar, as well as at times offered wise comments on the text. To these people and many others with whom I discussed the insights of this book—my sincere thanks. These people, however, are in no way responsible for the book’s inadequacies.
Introduction

By your favor, O Lord, you had established me as a strong mountain; you hid your face; I was dismayed.
To you, O Lord, I cried . . . “What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the Pit!” . . . You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy. (Ps 30:6-9, 11)

Chaos can be a blessing! Surprised? Not if we read the Scriptures and find that chaos in its many synonyms is a dominant theme in both the Old and the New Testaments. The Israelite prophets and the psalmists often use the imagery of chaos in order to highlight the opposite, namely, the ongoing inventive and redemptive action of God.¹ God’s face is suddenly hidden, throwing the Israelites into a state of despair (Ps 30:7). Then through God’s compassionate action they discover new life in their experience of the chaos:

You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy (v. 11).

1. See Bernhard Anderson, Creation Versus Chaos: The Reinterpretation of Mythical Symbolism in the Bible (New York: Association Press, 1967), 132. Biblically, “chaos” and its many synonyms such as “the Pit,” “grave,” “wilderness” mean a state of utter confusion and fear, totally lacking in organization or predictability; it is the antithesis of cosmos. Walter Brueggemann writes that “the Bible is much more preoccupied with the threat of chaos than it is with sin and guilt. . . . The storm produces a more elemental, inchoate anxiety, a sense of helplessness. . . . It is bottomless in size and beyond measure in force” (Inscribing the Text [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004], 51).
We certainly need a better knowledge of this truth today. The late Cardinal Carlo Martini is right. In “affluent Europe and in America” we are a tired church. The church is no longer perceived as “a strong mountain” (v. 6). We wrestle with scandals; trust in episcopal authority is disintegrating; people are leaving the church; priestly and religious vocations are in rapid decline; restorationist reactions to the chaos add daily to our sadness. Especially in the Western world the church had been a mighty self-contained fortress, “established . . . as a strong mountain” (Ps 30:7) of power and prestige, secure in a never-ending supply of vocations, schools, colleges, universities, hospitals. Suddenly God’s face is hidden. We are dismayed. We have lost our way in the darkness!

The Scriptures invite us to relearn, though painfully, two fundamentally constructive lessons about our experience of this darkness.

- The first biblical lesson we need to learn is that in the chaos we can rediscover that we are humanly powerless without God’s abiding help. Consider the theme of chaos in the book of Job, a remarkable text about the human struggle for meaning within an often messed up, wretched world (see Job 40:19). When Job suffers afflictions he returns to ponder the powerlessness of humankind. As God so beautifully explains to Job, when God’s face turns away from us and we encounter the fear-evoking force of darkness and uncertainty, then as creatures of God we come into contact with the chaos out of which we were made and the lessons it symbolizes. That is, we encounter afresh, if we freely choose to do so, the roots of our being, our own helplessness, and at the same time the saving, the re-creative and energizing power of God in Christ. We relearn to detach ourselves from an overconfidence in our abilities to act without God: “I am poor and needy; hasten to me, O God! You are my deliverer; O Lord, do not delay!” (Ps 70:5).

- The second, specific lesson from the Scriptures is that chaos calls us to reexamine how we live and teach our faith. In view of the chaos in the church and the postmodern world, rediscovering the roots of our Catholic identities requires us to relearn the art of storytelling that Jesus Christ modeled so effectively in his ministry. We require a creative quantum leap in our thinking and action, not modifications of the traditional methods of adult formation.

2. Carlo Cardinal Martini, reported by The Tablet [8 September 2012], 8.
That is, there is need for refounding, not renewal, of how we train and form members of our institutions in Gospel values that are the ultimate foundations of Catholic identities. Renewal confines itself to polishing up formation methods of the past. That is not enough today.

Refounding focuses on the radical rethinking of our pastoral approach in the light of our contemporary postmodern age. We need to let cherished structures and processes die when they no longer serve the mission of our institutions. This demands courageous and creative leadership born of inner detachment from the reassuring, but now irrelevant, pastoral status quo and a skilled understanding of the Scriptures (see chapters 4, 5, 7, and 8).

This book argues that refounding pastoral instruction requires a return to the practice of storytelling, as modeled by Jesus in his use of parables. He knew that storytelling encouraged people to bridge the gap between the head and the heart, thus opening the way for the necessary creative, imaginative, and bold action. This is no time for complacency. Rather, it is a time that impels us to invest in boldly new pastoral initiatives. Then we will discover that our mourning can be turned “into dancing” and we can again become “clothed . . . with joy” (Ps 30:11). This second lesson is surely at the heart of Cardinal Martini’s testimony. He asks: how can the flame of love grow strong again in a church that has become tired? Focusing on the transformative power of the Scriptures for answers, he responds by asking further questions:

Where are the individuals with the generosity of the Good Samaritan? Who have the faith of the Roman centurion? Or the daring of Paul? Who are the faithful like Mary Magdalene? . . . [We need] unconventional people to take on leadership roles. Those who are close to the poor, who can galvanise young people by being willing to try new approaches. We need to be challenged by people who are fired by the spirit so that it can be spread far and wide.

Both lessons, but especially the second, are the themes of this book. Jesus knew that people take pleasure in storytelling and frequently attain

insight, energy, and support through doing so. In the politically and religiously chaotic world of his time he realized that as people listened to and retold his parables they would learn to create connections between their own life stories and the truths embedded in the parables. This would lead to the transformation of their lives. I was once present at a gathering of people belonging to a L'Arche community and witnessed members with significant learning disabilities miming the parable of the Good Samaritan. It was a deeply inspiring experience. Participants did precisely what Jesus had intended when he first recounted this parable. In the mime they were able to connect the experience of their own lives with that of the injured traveler and the Samaritan himself. For them the comforting and challenging message of Jesus Christ came alive in their actions.

The primary aim of this book, therefore, is to search for pastorally practical ways in which we can apply to our contemporary postmodern situation biblical insights that help us to move forward in faith, in particular by using the teaching method of storytelling that Jesus used so effectively.

**Challenge: How to Be Catholic Today?**

Pastors and religion educators in schools painfully know that old methods of evangelizing now rarely succeed. Equally, we recognize that previous systems of educating the staffs of our hospitals, universities, schools, and other institutions, who are the primary focus of this book, fail to affect their lives in any significant way. In this pluralistic age we employ in these institutions an increasing number of people with little or no faith background. We cannot expect to impose on them the beliefs of the Catholic Church such as the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus Christ, the sacraments, papal infallibility. However, our Catholic institutions, if they are to maintain their Catholic identities, have the right to require their staffs to behave in accordance with Gospel values and with the ethical and social principles of the Catholic Church. When staff members live by values such as compassion, respect for the dignity of the person, and

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5. For example, Pope Benedict XVI issued an apostolic letter, dated 11 November 2012, on “The Services of Charity.” The document set out new rules to strengthen the religious identity of Catholic charities and ensure that their activities conform to church teaching.
justice they are in fact giving concrete expression in their workplace to
the teachings of Christ, which are the foundation of Catholic identities.

The challenge is: How are these Gospel values to be instilled in a way
that people’s lives are transformed? How are individuals and institu-
tions to craft stories that weave together the narratives of Jesus Christ and
their own stories into a single, vibrant fabric? How are people in our
institutions, whether they are professedly Catholic or not, to become
so inspired by the story of Jesus Christ that they are moved to act indi-
vidually and communally with compassion and justice? 6 What qualities
do we need today in those called to teach our faith?

Traditional Pastoral Instruction: Weakness

Persons in authority such as teachers, politicians, and ecclesiastics
are always tempted to tell people who they are and how they should
behave. This didactic, top-down approach has been described with some
truth by educator Paulo Freire as the “banking theory of education.” 7
The psychologist Carl Rogers calls it the “jug to mug” theory of learn-
ing 8 because it stresses the transfer of knowledge through a one-way
communication. The recipient is likened to an empty mug expecting to
be filled with information from the jug, who is the teacher. If learning
does occur, it usually does so at the cognitive level only. People are not
expected to examine their emotional responses to the material imparted
to them. Nor are they expected to express any dissent, as it is taken
for granted that the information is objectively true because those in
authority confirm this. In fact, it is assumed that the more passive the
recipients the more effective will be the learning.

The didactic method was widely popular in the church in the cen-
turies following the Reformation. People were instructed from above,
often in minute detail, about what should identify Catholics from other
Christians (see chap. 6). The norms defining our Catholic identities were
viewed as rigidly static (see chaps. 1 and 2). Rome fostered a form of
scholastic philosophy, “neoscholasticism,” that provided the church with

6. See comments by Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley, Mighty Stories, Danger-
ous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine (San Francisco: Jossey-
Bass, 1998), 53.
8. See n. 13 below.
a very coherent and rigid intellectual framework affecting all aspects of its ministries. Theology became highly rational. It was so self-contained that its supporters saw no need to listen to, much less learn from, the experiences of people being taught, or from other philosophies, biblical studies, and the social sciences. The task of teachers and preachers was to pass on dogmatic statements to members of the church whose task was to assent without question. Theology was reduced to manuals, with scriptural texts uncritically used in support of preexisting theological conclusions. Vatican II rightly called us back to the inductive teaching methods of Jesus Christ (see chap. 5), but we were ill-prepared for this and now chaos is the result (see chaps. 2 and 3).

Although didactic teaching and discursive or analytic learning definitely have their importance, they should never be the primary method of forming identities. For example, there are times when people need to be told that certain behaviors are acceptable or unacceptable in our institutions. However, behavioral conformity through fear does not in the long run build a culture of trust, good morale, creativity, and work satisfaction. Likewise, Catholic identities today need to be implanted by persuasion and sustained, ultimately, by love. This inductive method of teaching and learning I call the process of “dynamic identification,” and it will be explained in chapter 1.

**Identities through Inductive Learning**

Dynamic inductive identification processes that intimately involve people in their learning begin with their experience, just as Jesus, the expert in adult teaching, demonstrated. He knew that abstract principles are easier to grasp when viewed through the lens of a well-chosen story. Inductive teaching aims to involve as many different dimensions of the learner as possible. Its purpose is to foster integrated learning at the spiritual, cognitive, imaginative, affective, and behavioral levels, so that people are inspired to make real attitudinal and behavioral changes in their lives because they recognize and accept for themselves the relevance and importance of these changes. One of the positive gifts of our postmodern age is the appreciation that imagination holds a critical role in learning and in storytelling. Imagination has a fundamental mediat-

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ing role in human experience and in inductive learning,\textsuperscript{10} and for this reason Jesus so vividly fostered the imagination of his listeners. Since imagination is the ability to picture intuitively “the world out beyond what we take as established given,”\textsuperscript{11} it is a quality that surely threatens the power of authoritarian instructors.

Inductive learning encourages critical thinkers, people who are willing to critique the world around them according to Gospel values. It is a collaborative process involving “all participants, teachers and learners alike, in a process of mutual vulnerability and risk taking, of personal challenge and learning.”\textsuperscript{12} Teachers need, of course, to be competent in their subject at the levels of theory and experience, but they should be prepared to use a flexible approach that is adaptive to the learner’s current knowledge and experience. As Thomas Groome writes: “Instead of a ‘jug to mug’ pedagogy, people in every generation need to come to their own cognition and recognition . . . of the truths and values discovered by those before us. . . . So . . . religious education must lead people to reflect on their own lives, as both a departure and a point of arrival in coming to ‘know’ their faith.”\textsuperscript{13}

Blessed John Henry Newman (1801–1890) found the neoscholastic method of teaching of his day arid, “rigorously abstract, ahistorical and deductivist.”\textsuperscript{14} For Newman, pastoral teaching and theological formation needed to be conducted in an inductive manner:

\begin{quote}
[D]eductions have no power of persuasion. The heart is commonly reached, not through the reason, but through the imagination, by means of direct impressions, by the testimony of facts and events, by history, by description. Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us. . . . Logic makes a sorry rhetoric with the multitude; first shoot round corners, and you may not despair of converting by a
\end{quote}


syllogism. . . . After all, man is not a reasoning animal; he is a seeing, feeling, contemplating, acting animal.\textsuperscript{15}

Theologian Nicholas Lash commented on Newman’s support of the inductive method: “The interrogative, tentative, inductive temper of his arguments and his lack of specialization are more likely today than they were in the 19th century to be appreciated as virtues in a theologian.” Lash is hopeful that contemporary Catholic theology “[has] by and large escaped from the aridities of neoscholasticism and has reestablished contact with the biblical and literary richness of patristic and medieval Christianity.”\textsuperscript{16} This inductive method so favored by Newman finds solid support in the ecclesiology of Vatican II, that is, an ecclesiology that calls the church to evangelize through dialogue by meeting people first at their points of need—their joys, hopes, and anguishes.\textsuperscript{17} This is called a “narrative ecclesiology” or an “ecclesiology from below.”\textsuperscript{18}

Blessed John Paul II also showed passionate concern for an inductive approach to theology and pastoral teaching: the “secret of [the church’s] educative power [is] not so much in doctrinal statements and pastoral approaches to vigilance, as in constantly looking to the Lord Jesus Christ. Each day the church looks to Christ with unfailing love, fully aware that the true and final answer to the problem [of identities] lies in him alone.”\textsuperscript{19} Encouraged by these words, we are to hold firm in returning to the inductive pedagogical method adopted by Jesus Christ to explain and build his kingdom of love, justice, and compassion.

The gospel stories and parables are well adapted to people’s postmodern yearning to discover identities and the meaning of life through imaginative storytelling (see chaps. 2 and 4). Parables and biblical stories, for example, can become the refounding stories for people and institutions in search of Catholic identities today. With skilled educators,

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} John Paul II, \textit{Veritatis Splendor} (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993), 130.
people can rediscover for themselves the roots of their Catholic identities and be inspired to relate their values to contemporary postmodern issues. Just as Christ did not presume his listeners had prior knowledge of his teachings, so also today we are being called to evangelize people and institutions with little or no knowledge of Christ’s teachings. The wisdom writers of the Old Testament faced a world in many ways like our own because people wanted hope in the midst of meaninglessness and uncertainty. The sages did not respond with abstract and discursive language, but in colorful storytelling. Christ through his parables followed the example of these wise writers and so must we.\(^\text{20}\)

It is this inductive, non-discursive approach to learning that should be the primary response to the call of Benedict XVI for a New Evangelization (see chap. 3). Otherwise, no matter how inspiringly worded the deliberations of the Synod on New Evangelization may be, nothing pastorally innovative will eventuate. Sustained pastoral change ultimately is a “bottom-up” process because it engages people at each stage of their transformation. Pope Francis is today a master of inductive evangelization—an engaging Gospel storyteller.

**Identity or Identities?**

I have used the words “Catholic Identities” in the title of this book and throughout the text to reinforce the point that there are many ways of identifying what “Catholic” means. As the human person has many identities, so also do the church and its members (see chaps. 1 and 2). Thus Peter Steinfels has wisely reminded us that we should “stop thinking about Catholic identity as though this were something univocal. . . . There may be some overarching principles . . . but there is no single way of embodying them, and it might be wiser to speak of Catholic identities in the plural.”\(^\text{21}\) Contemporary restorationist forces in the church are actively seeking to reverse this positive trend toward the inductive method of teaching and formation (see chap. 6). Restorationists would like to reduce Catholic identities to “something univocal,” that is, to one single theme, namely, orthodoxy, meaning unquestioning conformity to Roman ways.

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However, if we isolate one expression of identity to the detriment of other identifying qualities we end up in fundamentalism with its oppressive and arrogant rigidity. No discussion or loyal dissent allowed! Then a culture of fear results. Fear gives way to distrust and internecine theological warfare. People fear to be pastorally creative lest they be reported to the local bishop or to Rome itself. Then the church fails “to be a symbol of God’s reign, God’s kingdom, where the love of God flows freely so that divisions can be healed and peace prevails.”22 It is a fact of life that the more there is trust and transparency in an institution, including the church, the healthier it is and the more it can blossom. People feel authorized to be creative. Conversely, the less trust exists, the sicker an institution becomes. If the level of trust becomes too low, the institution wilts and dies. Sadly, the levels of trust within the church today are dangerously low, so low that people are not encouraged “to show boldness”23 in creating innovative ways to preach the Gospel.

In this book, therefore, the term “Catholic identities” means the church-engaging-with-the-contemporary-world (chap. 3), that is, the mythology of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, engaging-with-the-world as mediating through such realities as the Scriptures, the church, magisterium, authentic tradition, theology, sacraments, liturgies, moral and social teachings, “culture champions” such as institutional founders, refounders, and all values-committed people (chap. 4). The process of engaging and mediating is expressed in an ever-changing variety of Catholic identities. In summary, “Catholic identities” refers to the engagement of the church with the contemporary world, and this will manifest itself in a constantly changing diversity of ways. The more people are trusted to live and preach the Gospel, the more vibrant and relevant will be these identities.

**Structure of the Book**

This work is written to assist a wide range of people in their various ministries, such as bishops, theologians, pastoral workers, and staff members in schools, healthcare, business organizations, and tertiary

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institutions. The book draws on several disciplines: for example, theology, Scripture, and history, but particularly cultural anthropology. Anthropology is about how people feel and communicate with one another and across cultures. It is often about revealing the cultural forces that motivate people and their institutions, though they are so often unaware of the existence of these forces and their ability to control behavior.24 This discipline has been called by anthropologist Raymond Firth “an inquisitive, challenging, uncomfortable discipline, questioning established positions . . . peering into underlying interests, if not destroying fictions and empty phrases . . . at least exposing them.”25

• Chapter 1, Catholic “Identity” or “Identities”? explains that individuals and institutions have multiple sociological identities. The identity that is operative at a particular time will depend very much on the context. Storytelling is the preferred way of discovering and negotiating identities.

• Chapter 2, The Catholic Story: Identities’ Crisis, describes from a cultural-anthropological perspective how the theological and cultural changes over the last fifty years have led to very different understandings of Catholic identities. Before 1965 the markers of Catholic identities in the centuries following the Reformation remained stable and universal; this is no longer the situation because of the combined impact of such factors as Vatican II, the rising social and economic status of Catholics, and postmodernity.26

• Chapter 3, Ministries: Crisis of Identities, looks closely at the breakdown of traditional Catholic identities in the particular ministries of healthcare and education. There is an urgent need to find ways to refound Catholic identities in these ministries. Traditional or didactic methods of teaching and learning are no longer effective.

• Chapter 4, Founding and Refounding Identities, emphasizes the important distinction between “renewal” and “refounding”: the

first deals with the symptoms of a problem; the second goes to the roots of a challenging issue. The qualities of refounders are described and illustrated with examples.

• Chapter 5, *Founding and Refounding Identities: Scriptural Experiences*, demonstrates why the Old Testament prophets are refounders of the Israelites’ identities as a nation. Also, the preferred method of Jesus Christ for founding and refounding faith-based identities among his followers is the inductive or narrative method, for example, in his use of parables or storytelling. This biblical narrative style is particularly adapted to inspire leaders with refounding qualities who can creatively respond to pastoral needs of people in our contemporary postmodern times.

• Chapter 6, *Catholic Normative Identities: A Critique*, highlights various normative theological models that traditionally shape Catholic identities. It has commonly been assumed that these definitions of identities can be imposed from above. Since this didactic or “top-down” pedagogy is ineffective in our postmodern age, the process of crafting identities needs to be based first on the inductive style of biblical storytelling. Pastors, religious educators, and people entrusted with the task of maintaining Catholic identities in our institutions urgently need to model this inductive approach.

• Chapter 7, *Healthcare and Welfare: Refounding Catholic Identities*, is a practical explanation of how the Good Samaritan parable, the foundational story of healthcare, socioeconomic development, and welfare ministries, can be used as the catalyst for people to craft their value-based Catholic identities.

• Chapter 8, *Crafting Catholic Identities in the Business World*, illustrates in practical ways why many of the parables of Jesus Christ offer opportunities for people to reflect on their moral obligations to act with justice and compassion.

• Chapter 9, *Adult Rural Education: Refounding Catholic Identities*, describes why a rural education project in a developing country is uniquely successful. The case study illustrates that devotion, a critical factor behind the project’s success, can be “taught” and “caught” when educators skillfully draw on lessons inherent in the popular religiosity of their trainees through a process of storytelling.
Personal Experience

When I first began to conduct workshops on the constituent elements of Catholic identities in Catholic healthcare facilities in North America and Australia I followed a normative or didactic approach: lectures, then discussion and questions. The approach was a failure. People were bored, uninterested, and very suspicious that I was “forcing religion on them.” Then in desperation I turned to an inductive approach, beginning always by inviting participants to identify issues of concern in their experience as staff members. In the light of what emerged I would choose and briefly explain a parable or a biblical story, then invite participants to identify values relevant to their experience in their healthcare ministry. In other words, participants in workshops in a sense set the agenda, based on their personal experiences of working in Catholic healthcare facilities. After reflecting on the values inherent in the parables, people discovered for themselves, for example, the need to understand and adhere to the ethical principles that should characterize Catholic healthcare institutions. The atmosphere in the workshops radically changed. True, I certainly covered far less material in this method, but the energy and learning of the participants increased immensely. No longer did participants complain that religion was being imposed on them [see chaps. 7 and 8].

I have previously written on the theme of refounding: Out of Chaos: Refounding Religious Congregations (1988); Earthing the Gospel: An Inculturation Handbook for Pastoral Workers (1990); Healthcare Ministry: Refounding the Mission in Tumultuous Times (2000); and Humanizing Healthcare Reforms (2012). This book updates and applies material originally contained in my Refounding the Church: Dissent for Leadership (1993) and Culture, Inculturation, and Theologians: A Postmodern Critique (2010). But unlike them, this book specifically focuses on the importance of refounding adult formation for Catholic ministries and the practical ways to achieve this by first returning to the Scriptures and the methods of teaching that Jesus Christ himself used with such authority and effectiveness.
Chapter One

Catholic “Identity” or “Identities”?

All the world’s a stage. And all the men and women merely players: They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts. (William Shakespeare, As You Like It)\(^1\)

Late have I loved you, beauty so ancient and so new: late have I loved you. (Augustine, Confessions)\(^2\)

This chapter explains that:

- in the postmodern world there is a proliferation of potential identities
- for individuals and institutions identification is a process of “engaging-with-contexts”
- this process is one of storytelling or the creation of narratives
- in narratives of identity people draw on individual and collective “myths”
- narratives can restrict, or even contradict, the original myths, as is the case with Catholic fundamentalism in the church
- in times of institutional chaos people of refounding qualities are needed to create relevant identities

1. William Shakespeare, As You Like It, II.vii.139.
Shakespeare is perceptively right again. Every person on the daily stage of life plays a multitude of roles, of “identities.” This introductory chapter explains theoretically why Shakespeare’s insights into the meaning of identity will always be relevant. We all know more or less what the word “identity” means, but settling on a precise definition is not so easy. We know that identity connotes two paradoxical realities: sameness and uniqueness. We share similar qualities with other human beings, but at the same time we know that each of us has unique characteristics that mark us as different. But what makes each one of us distinctively different? There is no simple answer.

Until recent times the popular modern view, a remnant of Enlightenment thinking, was that the self is an autonomous, stable, structural entity composed of factors and traits that “add up” to a total person without that person’s active involvement, and transcending her or his particular place in culture, language, and history. According to this view identity is something static, unchanging. That is not the case. Rather, identity is a process of “self-engaging-with-context.” As the context changes, so there is potentially a new identity, a new identifying role to play, that a person must acknowledge in some way or other. So it is more accurate to say that a person has many identities, not just one, because the context in which he or she lives is changing. For example, we behave differently with our peers and with children, in informal and formal situations, in our work environment and in our homely settings. Our identity is far from unitary; rather, we all have a multiplicity of identities, and often there are tensions, even conflicts, between our different identities. Madan Sarup is right: “identities, our

3. In this foundational chapter I summarize, but further develop, material I have previously published. See Gerald A. Arbuckle, Culture, Inculturation, and Theologians: A Postmodern Critique (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 1–18.


Catholic “Identity” or “Identities”? 

own and those of others, are fragmented, full of contradictions and ambiguities.”

It will be helpful to explain these points further. In traditional societies where change is very slow, people interact with the same people in their neighborhoods, workplaces, and at leisure. Identities are for the most part unchanging because the context remains generally stable. But it is very different for the average person in the Western postmodern world. No longer can we view a culture as a unifying, unchanging, and homogenizing force. The relationship between an individual and his or her culture is a dynamic and ambivalent one; individuals possess multiple, often contradictory and constantly changing, identities. That is, individuals have a multiplicity of potential identities because the context in which they are living, working, and recreating is continually changing. Identities become more compartmentalized and fragmented; within the space of one day most individuals must interact with a great variety of different people, depending on the context. In summary, who we are is primarily to be found in the way we live day by day within a particular cultural context or environment, not just in what we think or say about ourselves. Identity is always a process of “being” or “becoming,” never a final and settled issue.

Identification Processes: Clarification

Identification is the process whereby we understand “who we are and who other people are, and, reciprocally, other people’s understanding of themselves and of others (which includes us).” This process whereby we become aware that we are distinctly different from, or similar to, other people is achieved in either normative or dynamic ways (see fig. 1.1). Through the normative identification process we discover that we must conform to preset identities; society or institutions tell us how we must behave with little or no involvement on our part. The dynamic identification process, however, places the emphasis on individual decision making in choosing identities. Of course, if we opt to emphasize

dynamic identification we have to decide to accept or reject identities that have been normatively set by others.

<table>
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<th>Identification Processes</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Normative: conform to preset identities</td>
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<td>2. Dynamic: individual negotiates identities, e.g., storytelling</td>
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In our postmodern world individual identity is less and less a question of conforming to definite, set roles and more and more an issue of trying to make sense of who I am through monitoring my own actions, depending on the ever-changing social environment in which I find myself. It frequently involves a complicated process of decision making in the face of numerous social situations. It is as though I must constantly tell stories to myself to remind me of my identity in a particular context. Sociologist Anthony Giddens refers to this process as the “reflexive self,” that is, a process whereby “self-identity is constituted by the reflexive ordering of self-narratives.”


10. Psychoanalyst Roy Schaefer writes that “more generally the so-called self may be considered to be a set of narrative strategies or storylines each person follows in trying to develop an emotionally coherent account of his or her life among people. We organize our past and present experiences narratively.” *Retelling a Life: Narration and Dialogue in Psychoanalysis* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 34.

on their experiences in order to define their changing identities and create a sense of personal stability.

**Stories and Storytelling**

When someone asks me who I am, I tell a story, that is, I describe my present circumstances in light of my memories of the past and what I think is relevant to the questioner. Storytelling is a process of narrating “that enriches our understanding of the world and of the people who affect our lives.” Storytelling puts people’s minds and hearts in contact with the knowledge and feeling of being alive. Stories give people a foundation “for making strategic choices about actions and communication with others.”

Richard Jenkins describes the process of self-identification through storytelling as one of negotiation. Individuals create “an image of themselves—of self—for acceptance by others” and implicitly or explicitly negotiate with them to determine what is an acceptable identity in particular contexts. Sometimes identities are in constant tension: for example, the fact that a woman may be both a parent and a professional business person will create stress at times. She must negotiate with herself ways to control this stress. Self-identification is thus an increasingly complicated and contentious process because, owing to the ever-increasing speed of change both locally and globally, relationships and power must be forever negotiated. There is also a complex relationship between narrative, time, and memory, for we can amend and edit the remembered past to fit with our identities and the context at the present moment. For example, I may be an aging person but at times I will deny this and claim the physical identity of someone much younger.

In brief, identities are not fixed, immutable, or primordial. They are sociocultural in their origins and are thus at least potentially flexible, situational, and negotiable.\textsuperscript{16} We effectively negotiate our way through daily life by storytelling that explains who we are and what we are doing, and by having these stories grafted onto the stories that others recount.

**Institutional Identities**

Statements of identity—mission statements, for example—are ideal expressions of institutional identity. They set normative standards to measure behavior. This means they establish values and behavioral patterns that theoretically classify their uniqueness. Members are expected to act according to these standards, in ways that differentiate them from non-members; there will be clear boundaries that separate members from non-members. People become aware of their uniqueness when they stand at the boundaries of these institutions and discover that the values and behaviors of others are different from their own.\textsuperscript{17}

More accurately, however, an institutional identity, like personal identity, is an ongoing process of “engaging-with-context.” How an institution acts, not what it says about itself, realistically defines its identity. As the economic, social, and cultural contexts change, so an institution must constantly adjust its identity to this reality, demanding constant rethinking and renegotiating on the part of those in charge of institutions. The mere statement of institutional identity will achieve nothing by itself unless there is this constant process of actually engaging-with-context.

When the context is complex there will be many identities, some more important than others, depending on the context. For example, the primary role of hospitals until the 1960s was for the most part to care for people. Many diseases and injuries could not be cured. But with the arrival of miracle drugs the task of hospitals changed dramatically. Now hospitals became institutions primarily to cure people. Hospitals today symbolize this change in all kinds of ways, for example, through developing more and more specialized departments with their own particular identities and rituals, accompanied by new and expensive machinery with the precise purpose of curing patients in the shortest possible time. A hospital will


\textsuperscript{17} See Anthony P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (Chichester: Ellis Horwood, 1985).
go out of business if it fails to adjust its services, and therefore its set of identities, to the changing technologies of healthcare and the needs of patients. The same is true for schools or universities. Unless they are constantly adapting their curricula and teaching methods, their identities, to the changing times, they will have no future. They will slip into history. The truth is simply this: if institutions are not continually engaging and responding to new needs, they die. An institution cannot be expected to survive if it thinks it can hold on to exactly the same set of identities it had twenty years ago. The particular identity to be emphasized will depend on the specific situation in which the institution finds itself.

**Maintaining Institutional Identities: Key Insights**

We are now in a position to make four key points that will influence the remainder of this book:

1. Institutional identities, like individual identities, are socially constructed. They are shaped in particular cultural and historical contexts. Since these contexts are constantly changing, institutions themselves must be in continuous change and reconfiguration if they are to survive. Identities belong to the present and the future as much as to the profound influences of the past. Far from being eternally fixed in some unchanging realities of the past, identities are subject to the continuous play of history, culture, and power. To know an institution’s identity, therefore, and of course to be able to shape it, we must know the context in which it is operating, interacting, or engaging now.

2. Institutions that refuse to allow their identities to change in view of changing contexts cease to exist. This means that there can be no constructive change at all, even in the church, unless there is some form of dissent. A reasonable degree of diversity and dissent is essential for any organization if it is to have a future. People who invented automobiles were dissenters. Cars were at first considered to be dangerous and troublesome disturbers of the peace. Imagine what would have happened if they had been effectively marginalized from society. We would today still be riding horses! By “dissent” I mean simply the proposing of alternatives—and a system that is not continuously examining alternatives, that is, new expressions of identity, is not likely to evolve creatively.
Open organizations encourage people who propose alternative ways of doing things because they know that institutions age and produce deadwood. New ideas and ways of doing things may guarantee that life and vitality will continue. They are the seedlings out of which the future is born. However, as seedlings are very frail, so also new proposals for acting are fragile and can be quickly smothered long before they have had a chance to develop. Anthropologists frequently observe that once cultural patterns are established, they tend to endure. This is not only because people are more comfortable with the familiar. The power of vested interests is as often responsible for maintaining the cultural status quo as are ingrained habits or mere complacency. In contrast, creative or dissenting people are designed to give birth to what has never been in existence before. The alternatives they propose, along with their different identities, frighten people who take comfort in the predictable and/or sense that their vested interests are threatened.

Authentic dissenters respect the past but carefully distinguish between values that must never change and how these values are to be expressed because the context has altered. A good example is the confusion among many Catholics about the meaning of Tradition and how it differs from traditions. Tradition with a capital “T” connotes the unalterable living out of the Gospel message given by Jesus Christ to the apostles and their successors, but traditions with a small “t” are “those changeable customs, laws, and practices which the Church had adopted over the centuries in order to facilitate and further [its] mission.”18 For example, Tradition tells us that Mary is the Mother of God and we venerate her for this reason. Over the centuries people have developed different ways to express this veneration, such as the rosary, processions, and pilgrimages, but these are not integral to Tradition. Times have radically changed. Most people today no longer have the leisure time for long devotions. Authentic dissenters call us to find new ways, that is, new identities, for expressing veneration of Mary. In brief, Tradition is not synonymous with traditions.

In summary, every institution, the church included, faces a joint task: it must engender a degree of conformity to the existing order of

boundaries, but at the same time it must allow for those “heretics” of each age, the people with apparently outlandish ideas and customs, who have often become the pastoral innovative heroes of the next.

3. For an institution to maintain its identity, it requires four qualities. First, it must have a founding story that defines how it is to engage or negotiate through narratives with its surrounding contexts; thus, a healthcare institution will interact with its surrounding social, political, and economic context in a way that is significantly different from that of an engineering firm. Second, the institution will have clearly defined symbolic and ritual markers that identify its unique story and its cultural boundaries. People become aware of their culture when they stand at its boundaries; if the boundaries are not clear, people become confused about their identities. Third, it will foster responsible dissenters who are prepared to propose new narratives of thinking and acting in view of changing circumstances and needs. Fourth, the institution will have formal and informal educational programs that ensure its members remain in touch with the founding story.

4. As contemporary societies encourage people to decide for themselves whether or not they wish to have a religious identity, faith-based institutions must be increasingly concerned to construct and maintain their religious identity.19

**Identities: Myths and Narratives**

The process of acquiring identities will now be more deeply examined. Given that contemporary identities are increasingly fragmented, blurred, and unstable, the key question is: how are people at the personal, group, institutional, and cultural levels to attain reassuring identities?

Identities are clarified in one of two ways, didactically or inductively. As explained in the Introduction, when the didactic approach is used, people are told who they are; this is the “mug” and “jug” approach in which learning occurs, if at all, almost entirely at the intellectual level. The recipient of a preset identity is like an empty mug waiting to receive information poured into them from the source of knowledge, the

jug. That is, only people at the top of the hierarchy of power determine identities, which are then imposed on others. This is a passive method of learning in which people are not required to examine their own emotional and intellectual responses to identities handed down from above. Those who object to this imposition of identities feel smothered by an avalanche of information and decrees from above and may angrily struggle to dissent, but often without success.

On the other hand, in the experiential or inductive approach people negotiate for themselves and others who they are and who they are not. Through storytelling, individuals write and rewrite the story of their selves and the many worlds in which they live. As individuals construct stories from experience, so also groups of all kinds, such as business organizations, communities, governments, and nations, assemble preferred narratives that feelingly tell them who they are at this moment in time, where they have come from, what is good or bad, and how they are to organize themselves and maintain their sense of unique identity in a changing world.

In reflexive storytelling or narratives people and groups draw on myths. Myths are stories handed down from the past that explain to people the origins of natural and social realities and interrelationships; they are stories that claim to reveal in an imaginative and symbolic way fundamental truths about the world and human life, they are efforts to explain what usually is beyond empirical observation and to some degree outside human experience. They speak of reality and experience other than in the physical world. Myths help us to articulate the deepest issues of our lives. Myth and history do not contradict each other because each relates to facts from its own standpoint; history observes facts from the “outer physical side, myth from the inner spiritual side.”

Myths can evoke deep emotional responses and a sense of mystery in those who accept them, simply because they develop out of the very depths of human experience. No matter how seriously we seek to deepen our grasp of the meaning of myths, they will remain somewhat ambiguous and mysterious because they attempt to articulate what cannot be fully articulated. Myths remain the revelations of mysteries rather than clever illustrations or didactic entertainments on the part of mere human persons.


The use of symbols and mythical language is crucial for the evoking of mystery. Avery Dulles, SJ, has written: “Unlike historical or abstract truth mystery cannot be described or positively defined. It can only be evoked.”

Example

The Lincoln Memorial is located at the end of the National Mall in Washington, DC. At the heart of this strikingly beautiful memorial is a massive statue of Lincoln, who led the nation through its greatest constitutional, military, and moral crisis—the Civil War. The monument is deliberately designed to inspire mythological mystery or awe in the hearts of visitors. Words alone can never adequately describe the qualities of this man and the debt the nation owes him. Visitors leave the monument with the feeling that there is something wonderfully mysterious about Abraham Lincoln and the values of liberty and justice he stood for.

Myths . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Narratives
Stories that make sense of the past. Stories that apply myths to present contexts.

Figure 1.2 Myths and narratives

Myth and narrative are two sides of the one coin [see fig. 1.2]. Although myths and narratives are stories, there is a significant difference. Myths make our lives intelligible in the past, but the retelling of these stories in light of present needs is what we call narrative. Narrative is the actual recounting of the myth, but within changing times. In the process of retelling, the myth itself is altered or modified according to the circumstances of time and place. That is, in narratives myths from the past are applied to what concerns people today and in the process the myths are enlarged, altered, or even discarded. The founding myth of

23. See Arbuckle, Culture, Inculturation, and Theologians, 72.
modernity, for example, asserts that the individual is perfectible through his or her own efforts; governments must not interfere. This myth, the foundation of capitalism, was challenged in the period of the Great Depression and again with the recent global economic downturn. Thus the myth of capitalism has had to be significantly modified by a new narrative in the United States. Now we have a narrative that tells Americans that the federal government has a right to intervene directly at times in national monetary policies to protect the employment and health of people, even if this means reducing the freedom of the wealthiest. Politically, however, Republicans (more so than Democrats) would severely restrict any narrative that encourages federal government intervention in monetary matters (and even in health issues).

Every narrative has a plot or purpose that shapes its structure. That is, not only must a narrative be more than one event following another, but some form of meaningful connection between them is necessary. The connection is provided by the plot of the narrative; the raconteur chooses how to do this, depending on the audience.24 The plot is the vehicle whereby the overall purpose of the narrative is achieved. As Paul Ricoeur writes: “By plot I mean the intelligible whole that governs a succession of events in any story. . . . A story is made out of events to the extent that plot makes events into a story.”25

Narratives are therefore:

- about creating identity in the here and now, all the while drawing on myths of the past;
- stories that recount in a variety of ways, such as images, music, and gestures, but particularly language, a series of temporal events so that a meaningful succession is depicted, which is the plot;
- everywhere, to be found in all forms of human communication, so much so that human beings can be called “narrating animals.”


The following are examples of the ways in which narratives create identities. Though each narrative is described as a separate entity in practice, there is often an overlap so that each may contain elements of other narratives.

**Narratives of Deception**

In the aftermath of the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941 over 120,000 Japanese Americans, the large majority of whom were United States citizens and included second and third generations, were relocated and interned. A false racist narrative was constructed to legitimize this. A similar deceiving narrative was developed by the Bush Administration to justify the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

**Narratives of Cultural Romanticism and Amnesia**

Narratives of cultural romanticism idealize a cultural past. Historical imperfections and injustices are ignored or deliberately denied. Cultural romanticism is alive and well in the Catholic Church, especially when people accept and encourage creeping centralized infallibility. The church has never made mistakes, it is said, and the pope’s pronouncements have been, and must be, always right. Romanticists ignore the enormous mistakes of the past (and present). For example, until the nineteenth century church documents often justified slavery. As recent as 1866 the Holy Office declared that “slavery itself . . . is not at all contrary to the natural and divine law.” Rome finally, in 1890, accepted the fact that there can be no such thing as just slavery, though the British government had outlawed slavery in all its colonies in 1838.

Also, it is sometimes said that the church by its founding mythology is not a democracy—it has never been and will never be one, and so Rome can justifiably ignore the values of participative or consultative leadership. Here, there has been a myth drift. Not only is this contrary to the spirit of Vatican II, but it ignores the original practice of the church for a significant period of history. Historian Leonard Swidler concludes that the choice of bishops by clergy and people remained effective until the twelfth century. John Carroll, the first bishop of the United States,


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was chosen with Rome’s approval by the priests of the country. As late as the beginning of the twentieth century fewer than half of the world’s bishops were directly chosen by the pope.28

Narratives of Fundamentalism

Political and/or religious fundamentalism is apt to occur in almost every society or organization in reaction to a breakdown of order following rapid change. People yearn for simplistic, clear-cut identities in the midst of this confusion. There are no gray areas of uncertainty, only absolute answers. Fundamentalism is organized anger that groups of people feel because they sense that history has gone awry and their task is to restore it to “normality” as defined by themselves.29 For example, the Know Nothing political movement in the United States in the early 1850s was characterized by political xenophobia, anti-Catholic sentiment, and occasional violence against groups. It was a reaction to anti-slavery agitation and the increasing presence of Catholic immigrants from Ireland and Germany. Supporters felt that the founding mythology of the Constitution was being violated and they were going to restore it to its original purpose. Abraham Lincoln condemned them: “When Know-Nothings get control, [the founding document] will read ‘all men are created equal, except Negroes, and foreigners, and Catholics.’”30 The contemporary Tea Party movement is a further example of an American narrative fundamentalism. It emerged from the Tea Party protests that occurred in 2009 against the government’s bank bailouts and healthcare reform proposals. It campaigns against government spending, is opposed to tax increases, and presses for the reduction of the national debt. Adherents loudly and angrily assert that the country must return to an authentic interpretation of the Constitution, which means for them that the rights of the individual must have precedence over the common good.

Within the Catholic Church fundamentalism is present in different forms in reaction to the changes introduced by Vatican II. Thomas

O’Meara, OP, defines Christian fundamentalism as “an interpretation of Christianity in which a charismatic leader locates with easy certitude in chosen words, doctrines and practices, the miraculous actions of a strict God saving an elite from an evil world.” This is an apt description of Catholic fundamentalism. Sects like Catholics United for the Faith (CUF) were formed to defend the church against “the evils of secular humanism,” “the loss of orthodoxy,” or “the liberalizing excesses that Vatican II inspired.” The Latin Mass movement gave some Catholics the nostalgic support they craved, and some moved into schism within the Lefebvre sect. Catholic fundamentalists are highly selective in what they see as pertaining to the church’s identity, insisting on accidentals, not the substance of issues, and they readily ignore papal teaching on social justice. They are especially insistent on “restoring” the hierarchical model of the church centered on Rome; they downplay collegiality and the emphasis given by Vatican II to the church as servant, people of God, mission, sacrament, and pilgrim. Catholic identity means for Catholic fundamentalists “adherence to orthodoxy,” that is, unquestioning obedience to the hierarchy. “Catholic identities” are to be interpreted in the singular as “Catholic identity”; other Catholic identities do not and cannot exist.

Narratives of Boundary Setting and Scapegoating

Every group, including the church, has the right to define its boundaries or what it considers to be its authentic symbols of identity and orthodoxy. But in boundary setting two principles must be kept always at the forefront: that what is stated to be orthodox must in fact be authentically orthodox; that the process of discerning what is or is not orthodox must follow the religious and secular norms of truth, transparency, and objectivity. Anthropologists, however, point out that in times of cultural disintegration, when cultural boundaries are seriously threatened or break down, scapegoating crazes commonly occur. Scapegoating (or witch-hunting) is the process of passionately searching for and eliminating agents believed to be causing harm to the cultural identity of individuals and groups, demanding that they adhere to traditional orthodox principles. By passing the blame for their afflictions on to others, people


are able conveniently to distract themselves from the real causes of chaos and the efforts they must make to remove them.33

Vatican II articulated a mythology of church that must guide the formulation of narratives of Catholic identities. However, there are two levels in the contemporary church at which the above two principles of boundary setting are not always being observed by people in practice, namely, at the grassroots and the hierarchical levels, especially in Rome. The mythology they adopt as the foundation of their narratives of identity is that of the pre-conciliar church. Both levels represent fearful groups in the church that seek the simplistic and instant order of a bygone ethnic Catholic culture (see chap. 3) and pursue a witch-hunt against those who do not agree with them. The more witch-hunters at the grassroots know that Rome favors restorationism, the more avidly they go about their work of scapegoating those assumed to be unorthodox members of the church. They undertake their task in a variety of ways, including direct communication to their bishops or Rome itself. Witch-hunting is far more serious at the church’s hierarchical level because it is deliberately planned and sanctioned from the top. Theologians are particularly the targets of this witch-hunting.34 What James Provost, then-professor of canon law at the Catholic University of America, wrote in 1989 is still very much true today: “The rejection of any type of ‘dissent’ from non-infallible positions has been severe, despite the exception made for many years in the case of Archbishop Lefebvre. There has been an on-going harassment of theologians . . . which often appears as an attempt to appease influential minorities.” While acknowledging issues of orthodoxy as a legitimate concern of papal authority, Provost commented that the way this authority is being used on occasion “has the appearance of a defensive effort to exercise centralized control—defensive against the ‘evil’ world in contrast to the Second Vatican Council’s views . . . defensive of a very limited school of theology.”35

33. See Arbuckle, Violence, Society, and the Church, 136–51.
The victims of the theologians’ “witchcraft” are thought by Rome to be the church itself and the integrity of papal authority. As in all orthodoxy crazes, respect for truth and human rights can suffer sadly, as the following description of the judicial process established by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) indicates. It remains substantially unchanged since it was inaugurated in 1971:36 the CDF is prosecutor, judge and jury; the person being investigated is not told of the inquiry until stage thirteen (of eighteen stages) and may never know the identity of his or her accusers; the defendant is unable to choose a defender or even know the latter’s identity, nor is there access to material relating to the allegations against the accused; no publicity is permitted concerning the proceedings and there is no right of appeal.37 Serious injustices can occur. There is constant recourse to secrecy by the CDF in the judicial process. Secrecy is a powerful instrument of control in narratives of witch-hunting and it is particularly characteristic of cultures that are strongly hierarchical. It is used by elites to hold on to their positions of power through the possession of special knowledge, and by non-elites to defend themselves against the intruding power of the elite. Egalitarian cultures, however, stress values of openness and publicity.38 It is not surprising, therefore, that the more Rome tries to

36. In 1997 the Holy See promulgated new procedural rules called “Regulations for the Examination of Doctrines” that modified previous norms governing the investigation of theologians. However, they do not substantially change the previous rules. As canonist Ladislas Örsy writes: “for anyone educated in the sensitivities of jurisprudence, [they] do not respond, as they were intended, to the demands of the present day. . . . They have their roots in past ages; they were not born from the vision of human dignity and the respect for honest conscience that is demanded the world over today. . . . They are not rooted in any divine precept.” Örsy, Receiving the Council: Theological and Canonical Insights and Debates (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 102–3. Theologian Elizabeth Johnson had not heard that the Committee on Doctrine of the United States Bishops Conference had investigated and severely criticized her book, Quest for the Living God, until the day before the publication of their document. She had never been invited to enter into a conversation with the committee. See Richard R. Gaillardetz, “The Elizabeth Johnson Dossier,” 177–275, in When the Magisterium Intervenes, 178.


restore the pre–Vatican II vertical hierarchical structures, the more it opts for greater secrecy.

There are times when secrecy is essential, for example, to protect the welfare of a person or group, but it must not be habitually used as a cloak for anything any organization does or wants to keep from public gaze. And the habit of secrecy often leads to a very unpleasant quality: the justification of infringing laws and human rights “for the sake of the common good.” Secrets give power of control over others, even more so when those who cultivate them are accountable to no public group; secrecy was used to intimidate victims of the Inquisition, and this can still occur. There is no Gospel reason to justify the present form of judicial process for investigating theologians, since the CDF is not publicly accountable to anyone. The church is not above the Gospel and it is imperative that we respect human rights everywhere, first and foremost within the church itself, otherwise the church contradicts what it is trying to preach.39

In 1991 theologians Richard McCormick and Richard McBrien, when analyzing the 1990 Vatican “Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian,” wrote that the document provided a further disturbing insight into how Rome is using secrecy to control and orientate the church back to its pre–Vatican II mythology and structures. Theological reflection, according to the “Instruction,” is to be the preserve of a select, safe few. This, concluded McCormick and McBrien, is contrary to Vatican II.40 The council recognized that all believers can contribute to theological reflection and progress when it expressed the hope that laypeople, not just clerics, be well informed in the sacred sciences. It stated: “But for the proper exercise of this role, the faithful, both clerical and lay, should be accorded a lawful freedom of inquiry, of thought, and of expression, tempered by humility and courage in whatever branch of study they have specialized.”41

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This encouragement to all within the church to ponder theologically is a consequence of the council’s respect for the church as the people of God; all by baptism journey with Christ, enjoy the presence of the Holy Spirit, and have the right to share that experience for the support and growth of the church. In the “Instruction,” however, this model of church is downplayed and replaced by the hierarchical or pyramidal pre-Vatican II theology. The consequence of this model reversal in the “Instruction” is to make theology a privatized discipline, that is, it is reduced to a Gnostic-like science or a secret to be shared by the hierarchical magisterium and a docile group of theologians. They must confine their writings to professional journals and avoid speaking to the media. But this is an impossible restriction in an age that specializes in mass-media communication because, as canonist Ladislas Örsy, SJ, wrote in 1990, professional theological gatherings are open to journalists, and religious news editors read theological publications. If theologians have any personal difficulties with church teaching, notes the “Instruction,” they must not discuss them openly and must go instead to magisterial authorities and be counseled by them, but there are no structures within the church to permit this type of informed dialogue to occur.42 In 2009 Örsy reiterated his concern that creative theologians were in constant danger of being silenced and emphasized the dangers this presented to the church’s future: “Creative thinkers are one of the greatest assets of our church: they let the internal riches of the evangelical message unfold.”43

The guidelines of the “Instruction” are a formula for theological mediocrity, arid pastoral reflection, and the stifling of any realistic effort to dialogue with today’s complex world and create vibrant Catholic identities. McCormick and McBrien quoted Avery Dulles SJ, who said that the effort to crush dissent “inhibits good theology from performing its critical task, and is detrimental to the atmosphere of freedom in the Church.”44

43. Ladislas Örsy, Receiving the Council, 103.
44. Avery Dulles, cited by McCormick and McBrien, “Theology as a Public Responsibility, 186–87. John Thiel, president of the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA), when commenting on the CDF’s criticism of Sister Margaret Farley’s 2006 book on sexual ethics, noted that the criticism “seemed to understand that the role of authentic Catholic theologians was simply to repeat what the magisterium teaches.” The board of CTSA stated that the role of
Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger [later Benedict XVI], then-prefect of the CDF, following publication of the “Instruction,” expressed the wish that it “will help create a climate of reduced tension in the Church.” The coercive power of Rome over the church worked effectively without the faithful questioning its correctness only so long as the latter were aware of only the pre–Vatican II model. With the council we know that there are alternative models of being church, and since people are now living according to these models, tensions between them and Rome have greatly intensified since the publication of the “Instruction” in 1990. In brief, the task now assigned to theologians is increasingly that of explaining the authoritative pronouncements of the official church. This is a return to pre–Vatican II practice.

Theologian Father Charles Curran, evaluating in 2012 the ever-increasing censuring of theologians and anyone who questions Rome’s top-down decision making, concludes that Rome is now only interested in establishing and maintaining the boundaries of “a remnant church—a small and pure church that sees itself often in opposition to the world around it.” This model of the church, he argues, “is opposed to the best understanding of the Catholic church.” He continues: “The church embraces both saints and sinners, rich and poor, female and male, and political conservatives and liberals. Yes, there are limits to what it means to be a Catholic, but the ‘small “c” catholic’ understanding insists on the need to be as inclusive is possible.”

Theologians is far more than this. They must be prepared to “give voice to the experience and concerns of ordinary believers, raise questions about the persuasiveness of certain official Catholic positions, and offer alternative theological frameworks as potentially helpful contributions to the authentic development of doctrine.” Reported by Joshua J. McElee at www.ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/theological-society-backs-vatican-criticized-nun, accessed 11 June 2012.


46. Charles Curran, at www.ncronline.org/news/condemnation-just-love-not-surprise-day-and-age, accessed 7 June 2012. John L. Allen thinks that Benedict XVI no longer believes in the notion of a “remnant church,” that is, a church that is smaller in order to be more pure. To support his view Allen cites the pope’s commitment to a New Evangelization, which aims to draw lapsed Catholics back to the church in the Western world and to reach out to others who feel alienated by postmodernity. At www.ncronline.org/blogs/all-things-catholic/benedict-xvi-pope-ironies, accessed 1 May 2012.
Narratives of Disconnection

In narratives of disconnection leaders proclaim that policies of their institutions are true to their founding myths, but in fact this is not the case. For example, in 1948 the National Health Service (NHS) in Britain made healthcare a right, state-funded and free for all, and no longer something that could be bought or sold. The rich and the poor are to receive the same benefits free. Since the 1980s, however, successive governments have increasingly opened the NHS to market economics, which marginalizes the poor. But Ministers of Health continue to state that their policies are true to its founding myth.

An example of a similar disconnection is to be seen within the church. In 2000, Pope John Paul II wrote that in the conclusions of Vatican II “we find a sure compass by which to take our bearings.” That is, he insisted that the fundamental mythological theological shifts, such as collegiality, would be adhered to. However, that was not to be.

In 1991 the bishops of the United States approved a new Lectionary that favored the use of inclusive language, but approval was suddenly revoked by Rome in 1994. Texts retaining many of the most controversial uses of masculine vocabulary were reintroduced by a small group meeting in Rome. Its members had minimal experience of the American culture, no women were involved, and only one member had a graduate degree in Scripture.

Nathan Mitchell of Notre Dame University critiques this form of intervention: “Fueled by fear, fantasy and misinformation, stalwarts in the Roman dicasteries seem to feel they can bully both bishops and believers into submission [in liturgical matters].” Rome subsequently asked that members of the International Commission on

49. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter At the Beginning of the New Millennium (Sydney: St Pauls Publications, 2001), 75.
50. Bishop Fellay, superior general of the traditionalist Society of St Pius X, reportedly stated that accepting the council’s teaching is no longer “a prerequisite for the canonical solution” of the status of the society. At www.cathnews.com/article.aspx?aeid=31699, accessed 8 June 2012.
English in the Liturgy (ICEL), appointed by the episcopal conferences of English-speaking countries, require its nihil obstat—an action in defiance of the powers of local churches. In 2001 Rome issued a document, Liturgiam Authenticam, reaffirming a ban on gender-inclusive language, without consultation with the episcopal chairman of ICEL. The document asserts that Rome has the right to intervene in liturgical matters. This evoked strong reactions from commentators. For example, John Allen writes: “[The document] strikes at the heart of Vatican II ecclesiology by centralizing power in the curia and by insisting that local cultures adopt an essentially Roman style of worship.” And intervene it did, with a vengeance! Recently (2010) Rome imposed a new English translation of the Roman Missal on the English-speaking world. Not only is the language exclusive, but the translation slavishly follows the Latin style of long sentences broken up into numerous clauses. The language is often archaic and at times unintelligible.

**Narratives of Denial**

Narratives of denial are stories based on the manipulation of history and there is usually a conscious unwillingness to correct the narratives. The present Chinese government has made the Opium Wars (1839–1842 and 1856–1860) into a founding myth of the nation’s struggle for modernity. Chairman Mao deliberately blamed Western aggression at the time of the Opium Wars for China’s decline as an empire, and so emerged the narrative of China as victim. This still remains an important tool of government propaganda against the Western world. However, Westerners, though they have good reason to be ashamed of their treatment of China in the nineteenth century, “administered the final blows to an empire that was already on the brink.”

Patriarchy is a social system in which the male gender role represents the primary authority and power figure at the heart of all social relations, and in which fathers have authority over women, children, and property. Integral to patriarchy is the assumption that men must rule and maintain female subordination. Within the church the insistence that exclusive or patriarchal language still be used in the liturgy is a narrative that denies the findings of contemporary scriptural research, the facts of history, and the insights of contemporary social movements for gender equality.58

As regards gender equality in the New Testament, two traditions are represented. The first appears in writings attributed to St. Paul and affirms patriarchal values and women’s inferiority as accepted in the wider secular culture of the times (1 Cor 11:5-10; Eph 5:22; 1 Cor 14:34-35). The second tradition in other writings of St. Paul and in the gospels is often overlooked. This tradition emphasizes that an egalitarian emphasis in ministry was common in the early Christian communities (Gal 3:28; Rom 16:1-6).59 In the gospels Jesus also strongly stresses the egalitarian approach of love and ministerial service in words and actions, not the culture of patriarchy (John 20:11-18; Luke 18:1-8).60 Thus in pre-Pauline and Pauline Christian communities women appear to have acted in almost identical ways to men.61 As Maureen Fiedler records, “Women led eucharistic worship in house churches, preached the gospel, went on missionary journeys, and filled leadership functions in early Christian communities.”62 All this was to change with the Peace of Constantine (313 CE), and persecutions against Christians ceased. From then on the church’s leadership embraced the patriarchal values and structures of contemporary Roman culture. As regards the position of women, by Roman civil law a woman was under the control of her father before marriage and under her husband’s authority after marriage. A woman had no

legal protection; her status was that of physical and mental weakness. All this negatively affected the status and role of women in the church. Even some early fathers of the church in their theologizing about the role of women in the church uncritically absorbed the contemporary cultural views about the gender superiority of men. For example, Tertullian in the third century declaimed that women are dangerous to men: “You are the devil’s gateway . . . you are the deserter of the divine law.”63 Because women, according to the culture of the time, were considered in some way impure they had to be excluded from direct involvement in liturgies. The Synod of Laodicea in the fourth century declared: “Women are not allowed to approach the altar.”64 The Synod of Paris in 829 told women not to press around the altar or touch the sacred vessels.65

The distressing patriarchal influence is also obvious historically in the way in which women’s religious congregations evolved. From the fourth-century onward, restrictions on women ministering in the church intensified. But there is evidence of communities of consecrated virgins even before the time of St. Benedict (ca. 480–547). Some argue that they were formed as a protest against the exclusion of women by the increasing patriarchy in the church. However, after the time of St. Benedict women’s religious congregations emerged as counterparts to the men’s orders and were dependent on them in various ways. The patriarchal culture of church and society effectively stifled efforts by women to act alone in devising new forms of religious life. As the centuries passed the enclosure of religious sisters became stricter, and their habits and veils more copious. Extremely brave and prophetic women like St. Angela Merici (1474–1540), the founder of the Ursulines, and Mary Ward (1586–1646) attempted to dispense with the cloister and habit and become more directly engaged in ministry to people, but without immediate success. One of the faults of human cultures is the unquestioning assumption that contemporary values and customs had legitimacy in the distant past. Since the church has a culture, it must always be examining itself to see whether or not it has absorbed values that contradict Tradition. Patriarchal values still haunt our worship and behavioral patterns.

63. Tertullian, quoted in ibid., 114.
64. Synod of Laodicea, in ibid., 115.
Narratives of Mobilization

Narratives can mobilize others to act for progressive social and institutional change. Significant resistance movements of the twentieth century, such as civil rights, feminist, and ecological movements, developed because individuals congregated and told stories of injustices. They discovered commonalities in their stories that energized them to develop collective action.66 Within the church, for example, there has been a global reaction to the dismissal of Bishop William Morris in Australia; people have come together in various ways such as through the use of social media to share their concerns about the perceived inadequacies of the dismissal process, including the need for more transparency in the authority structures of the church.

Narratives of Refounding

Paul Ricoeur writes that a narrative can encourage people to “try new ideas, new values, new ways of being-in-the-world,”67 and consequently new identities. The reader’s world is suddenly questioned by the narrative. New and imaginative possibilities of being and acting are presented to them; what is found in the story’s plot has the radical ability to “disturb and rearrange”68 the reader’s own relation to life. Listeners or readers are drawn into the raconteur’s experiences; they are invited to enter the narrator’s perspective of life and to participate in profound individual and cultural changes. Examples of superb Christian narrators are St. Augustine (345–430) with his Confessions, and St. Teresa of Avila (1515–1582) with her autobiography; readers can feel disturbed enough by their stories to radically change their own lives. With the Confessions begins the tradition in the church in which people tell how their own journey in life interacts with the story of God’s ever-loving and forgiving presence. Then there is the subversive humor in J. R. R. Tolkien’s immensely popular narrative, The Lord of the Rings. The theme is the evil of the misuse of power and the eventual triumph of good. The unlikely main hero in the saga, Frodo Baggins,

is the symbolic antithesis of corrupting power. He is the embodiment of St. Paul’s famous biblical self-discovery of the founding myth of the incarnation (John 1:10-13), namely, that God chooses those who are foolish in the world’s assessment in order to shame the wise (1 Cor 1:27). The subversive and socially incongruous lesson of the narrative is clear: every individual, provided she or he is selfless, can resist evil and consequently be of help to others.69

A narrative of refounding is a story that radically encourages people “to try new ideas, new values, new ways of being-in-the-world.” Refounding is the process whereby people relive the founding mythology of a group and are so inspired by the experience that they imaginatively and creatively search for thoroughly new ways to relate it to contemporary life (see chap. 4). When Saint Mother Teresa told of her care of dying individuals she would return to the founding mythology of her faith—a story of Christ’s compassion for people on the margins of society. This motivated her to change her own life. Many observers have been so disturbed by her stories that they also felt impelled to alter their own lives and challenge society’s neglect of disadvantaged people.

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**Happy Feet: A Narrative of Refounding**

As I have said, people are often helped to create identities by listening to the stories of other people; they imaginatively identify with and learn from the experiences of other people or events. The film *Happy Feet* broke records worldwide at the box office, charming audiences with the comic story of Mumble, the tap-dancing penguin. Mumble had a terrible singing voice, so he was considered odd in his community. He felt lonely, isolated, misunderstood. Noah the Elder, the stern conformist leader of Emperor Land, finally expels little Mumble from the community, believing his unorthodox behavior is the cause of the lean fishing that threatens their livelihood. Mumble stumbles on another community of decidedly

un-Emperor-like-penguins, the friendly Adelie Amigos who happily enjoy his dancing gifts. And by Mumble’s creative, collaborative leadership and bravery the people are able to discover the fundamental cause of the famine, namely, excessive fishing by humans. Mumble begins to teach everyone that uniqueness and questioning the status quo are no burdens, but are gifts to be treasured. The myth that energizes the Mumble narrative is built on the need to respect the dignity of all and the message that diversity can be a communal blessing. But there is a second myth to energize audiences to challenge the status quo: the need to respect the environment. At the film’s end we see a group of researchers filming the colony of dancing emperor penguins. The message is clear: Mumble and his friends tell us to stop commercial overfishing of the Antarctic.

**Narratives of Grieving**

Narratives of grieving remain an essential precondition for the successful creation of new identities and are an integral part of every narrative of refounding. Grieving is a process whereby loss is formally acknowledged and allowed to slip into the past; then the future can be slowly and more or less confidently embraced with all its uncertainties, fears, and hopes. In both Old and New Testaments (see chap. 5) we see many examples of people who, once they begin to recount the story of their grief, are able to discover new hope, new visions of society, and new identities. For example, in the Lament Psalms the twofold dynamic of grieving is forcefully expressed. First, there is the public declaration before God of loss, with its crushing sadness, and then the energizing identification of what is surprisingly new and hopeful in the experience of individuals or the nation, however faint this might be. The public proclamation of grief can, however, be silenced; people may be too crushed to recount their sadness, or oppressive political powers fear that the public narratives of grief will threaten their own stability. Tyrannical governments particularly fear the

public display of grief at funerals of their victims, for it is there that the narratives of sadness can energize people to further resist tyranny. For example, following the massacre of students in 1989 by the Chinese military in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, the government prevented any media coverage of their funerals. Yet unarticulated grief remains like a powder keg waiting to be ignited into all kinds of individual and community-destroying behavior. Ovid, the first-century Roman poet, well described the reality of unnamed grief: “Suppressed grief suffocates.”

Today the church is overloaded with grief as a consequence of repeated loss. The departure of people in their thousands from the church, the closure of parishes often without consultation, sexual abuse scandals, questionable liturgical changes, the failure of Rome and bishops to consult, witch-hunting of theologians, lack of due process in ecclesiastical trials, discouragement of responsible dissent even to the point of public excommunication—these are some of the issues that have caused, and continue to cause, so much unresolved grief. Restorationists discourage or prevent narratives of grieving. Instead, they are reviving the narratives of the pre-conciliar church to block people from creating narratives that would vibrantly relate the council’s theology to contemporary pastoral issues. Little wonder that the church is increasingly seen as irrelevant in today’s secularizing and postmodern world.

Summary

• Identity is a process of “self-or-institution-engaging-with-context.” As the context changes, there is potentially a new identity. Strictly speaking, a person or institution has many identities and which one is chosen at a particular time will depend on the context.

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72. Ovid, *Tristia* V, Elegy 1, l. 63.
73. For example the dismissal of Bishop Bill Morris of the Toowoomba diocese, Australia, in 2011. He has never been told the names of his accusers or what he was formally accused of, nor has he seen the official Vatican visitor’s report. See Michael Kelly, “Rites and Wrongs,” *The Tablet* (21 January 2012): 4–5.
74. For example, the excommunication by Bishop Thomas Olmsted of Phoenix, Arizona, of St. Margaret McBride in 2010 for having made, according to reputable moralists, a justified decision to save the life of a pregnant woman. She was accused of permitting abortion. See Roberts, *The Emerging Catholic*, 151–53.
• An institution requires four qualities to maintain its identity: a founding story that defines how it is to engage with the context; clearly defined symbolic and ritual markers that identify its unique story; ability to encourage responsible dissenter who are prepared to propose and live out new narratives of thinking and acting, because no institution can survive and remain effective unless it fosters a space and freedom in which people can be creative; and formal and informal educational programs that ensure its members remain in touch with the founding story.

• Through self-narratives or storytelling, individuals and institutions are able to write and rewrite their identities; this is a process of negotiation through which they determine what they consider to be acceptable identities in particular contexts.

• Identities can be clarified either deductively or inductively; if deductively, identities are imposed from outside, with little or no involvement of recipients; if inductively, people are intimately and imaginatively involved in negotiating their identities.

• Myths are stories that make life intelligible in the past, and narratives are the retelling of these stories in light of present needs. One reason for the collapse of institutions is their inability to refound themselves through imaginative and creative narratives in light of radically new needs. There is a failure to accept that narratives successful in the past are no longer relevant because the context and needs of people have changed.

• Sometimes storytellers consciously or unconsciously refashion narratives in ways that contradict or modify their original founding myths. For example, fundamentalist narratives often are narrow reactions to the disruptive consequences of rapid social, economic, or political change. Identities are defined in simplistic and absolutist terms. Catholic fundamentalists, for example, reduce Catholic identities to a singular identity, namely, “orthodoxy,” that is, the unquestioning or uncritical obedience to hierarchical statements, even if these statements are contrary to Vatican II and Tradition itself.

• The church is both divine and human. As the esteemed theologian and historian Henri de Lubac wrote: “Like all human institutions, the Church has her exterior façade, her temporal aspect, often ponderous enough—chancelleries, code of law, courts. There is nothing ‘nebulous and disembodied’ about her—far from it. . . . [It is] no ‘misty entity.’”76 That is, the church is not a pure spirit. It does form a human culture that must constantly be critiqued by the values of authentic tradition and the Gospel. However embarrassing the findings, this critique of its mythologies and narratives must be undertaken with deep faith and humility. For example, the refusal to use inclusive language in our worship demands such a critical cultural and historical review.

• The following chapter further explains that before Vatican II Catholic identities were relatively static and imposed from two sources: internally by Rome and externally as a result of social and political discrimination against Catholics. Vatican II rightly undermined the mythology of the fortress church, but it left Catholics without satisfying narratives; in light of the resulting widespread confusion this has resulted in many different sociological definitions of Catholic identities.