



Year 11
RELIGION AND LIFE
ATAR

Name _____

Topic: _____

Weighting: 25%

Research: _____ / 26

Essay: _____ / 25

Total Marks _____ / 50

Time allowed for this paper

Working time for paper: Five Periods (Research)

*Adjustment made due to COVID-19

Investigation Task

Using the following thesis statement develop four (4) focus questions, research your question and answer your question (in paragraph form) in the space provided.

THESIS STATEMENT

In Australia, the Christian religion responds to many different issues. Select one of the following issues and research the societal and religious views on this issue. You will be required to write an essay responding to the following question:

Compare the religious views and the societal views on one current issue in society.

Select one topic from the following list to research:

- **Child Safety – Breaking the Seal of Confession**
- Dangers of the digital world
- Racism – Australian context
- Environmental issues (select one)

You will require to have a thorough understanding of:

- The nature (key features) of the current issue
- Religious perspective
 - o **Why** religion responds (theology)
 - o **How** religion responds (actions)
- Societal perspective
 - o It is easiest to find a contrary view to the Church, but make sure you name it (ie: 'Pro-choice movement')
 - o Who holds this view and **why**
 - o **How** do they respond
- Comparison between the two viewpoints
 - o Discuss the areas of disagreement
 - o Discuss the areas of common ground

Part A: Research (26 marks)

In this section you will be marked on:

- Focus questions (2 marks)
- References (4 marks)
- Research notes (4 marks)
- "Therefore, my answer is" (4 marks for each)

Part B: Essay (25 marks)

The validation essay will be written in class during Term 3 Week 6.

You will not be able to use your research notes when writing the essay.

You should aim to write a five/six paragraph essay.

Part A will be submitted with the essay.

Focus Question 1:

What is the nature of the issue?

References:

- <https://theconversation.com/why-ending-the-secrecy-of-confession-is-so-controversial-for-the-catholic-church-112391>
- <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/should-the-seal-of-confession-be-abolished/10094596>
- http://www.perthcatholic.org.au/Our_Archdiocese-Archbishop-Latest_News-2019-Statement_on_the_Seal_of_Confession.htm
- <https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-laws-require-priests-to-break-the-seal-of-confession-1533303462>

Research:

- The process of the seal of confession is sacred
- Church has been able to uphold the aspects of confession, but many in society are wondering whether or not the procedure should be altered for the purpose of sustaining child safety
- The church is disputing this alteration, in hopes of aiming to respect and preserve its essence
- Confession is an *"inviolable communication between man and God"*
- Many in society are pushing for a reformation with the intention of increasing the safety of children and young people
- E.g. Victoria and Tasmania commenced bills expecting priests to report child abuse
- Choosing to initiate mandatory reporting will match the need to protect the vulnerable members of society

Therefore, my answer is:

The debate regarding the nature of the seal of confession has caused conflict between two sides: The Church and society. The Church has up until now been able to preserve the essence of the sacrament. But contemplation as to whether or not the confidentiality of confession should be sustained, (if confessions relating to child safety occur), has risen. This conflict has manifested the question: *"Should the Seal of Confession be Abolished?"*. The church has responded with the need to sustain church tradition, with many belonging to the religious ministry proclaiming that the seal of confession is unbreakable, as it is a sacred matter dealt between a priest and a penitent. The majority of society has refuted this statement. Many have argued against the church with the intention of protecting children from sexual abuse. Though this intent is estimable, it is still inclusive as to whether or not allowing the seal of confession to diminish will well and truly augment the safety of children.

Focus Question 2:

Why is the Church opposed to breaking the seal of confession?

References:

- <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-06-17/what-is-confession-and-is-the-change-important/9874752>
- <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-08-31/catholic-response-to-royal-commission-child-sex-abuse/10183020>
- <https://www.thejournal.ie/readme/confession-child-abuse-catholic-church-1437021-Apr2014/>
- <https://www.smh.com.au/opinion/frank-brennan-why-i-will-break-the-law-rather-than-the-seal-of-confession-20170815-gxw7it.html>

Research:

- Brought the attention that a confessor is urged to speak privately with the priest once the confession is over
- Priest will help/advise individual to confess/turn themselves in
- Church encourages people to own up to their crimes and hand themselves in

- Religious figures have argued for the nature of the seal of confession
- Fr Chris Hayden: *"Priests will be in a position of encouraging people to take a step towards healing, or to contact the authorities"*
- Reporting abuse will compromise and deter people from confessing
- Many of the confessions are anonymous, meaning it would be useless to report a crime if no name or identification was supplied by the confessor
- It's rare that a perpetrator will admit to sexual abuse

- Catholic church has argued that reporting confessions would be a *"violation of freedom of religious belief and worship"*
- Reforming the rules and allowing crimes to be reported will become counterproductive for the purpose of the religious ritual, *"impinges on religious liberties"*
- It is stated by the church's canon law that *"it is absolutely wrong for a confessor in any way to betray the penitent, for any reason whatsoever"*

"This is because it is contrary to our faith and inimical to religious liberty," (Australian Catholic Bishops Conference - ACBC - and Catholic Religious Australia -CRA)

Therefore, my answer is:

Through the perspective of the Church, choosing to lift the seal of confession is perceived as a violation of "*religious liberty*". This response is provoked through the need to respect Church tradition. Reforming the rules and allowing crimes to be reported would become counterproductive for the purpose of the religious ritual, and "*[impinge] on religious liberties*". And it is stated by the church's canon law that "*it is absolutely wrong for a confessor in any way to betray the penitent, for any reason whatsoever*". Many religious figures have argued that diminishing the seal of confession would not be conducive in increasing child safety. And with most of the confessions being anonymous, reporting a crime would be rendered useless if no name or identification is supplied. It would instead compromise and deter sexual predators from confessing, therefore decreasing the opportunity of Priests from "*encouraging people to take a step towards healing, or to contact the authorities*". This furthermore reinforces the difference the Church holds towards breaking the seal of confession.

Focus Question 3:

What is societies perspective on breaking the seal of confession?

References:

- <https://www.thejournal.ie/readme/confession-child-abuse-catholic-church-1437021-Apr2014/>
- <https://cruxnow.com/church-in-oceania/2020/01/australian-archbishop-rejects-breaking-seal-of-confession-for-abusers/>
- <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/should-the-seal-of-confession-be-abolished/10094596>
- <https://theconversation.com/childrens-rights-versus-freedom-of-religion-the-sanctity-of-the-confessional-seal-10725>
- <https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/am/church-and-states-legislation-to-break-confession-seal/10190680>

Research:

- Media has argued that the *“culture of secrecy and deference”* within the church will cause damage to the welfare of the children involved
- Laws have been proposed which state that priests are obliged to report child sex abuse if any knowledge of one has been unearthed
- This is said to increase the protection on past victims, and hopefully reduce the number of cases that occur
- Choosing to not report a confessed crime can result in criminal conviction
- Useless since in a majority of circumstances the confessors do not produce enough information to identify them or the victim, also this proposed law contradicts the freedom of religion rightly bestowed upon priests
- The royal commission into child sexual abuse proclaimed that a person of the religious ministry choosing to speak out about sexual abuse shouldn't be exempted, the church denied this.
- ACT has implemented changes to the law regarding sexual abuse acclaims
- Priests in Canberra are required to break the seal of confession if someone admits to child abuse (catholic church will not support this)
- The opposing side of society believes that abolishing the seal of confession would discourage individuals from confessing
- This would eradicate an opportunity for sex abusers to be persuaded into turning themselves in

“Breaking the seal of confession will protect children”

“Most sacred aspect...is the protection of children”

“prioritizing traditions over child safety”

Therefore, my answer is:

Society however holds distinct opinions to the matter. The difference that it possesses towards the subject is the result of wanting to sustain a safety among both children and young people. Media has argued that the *"culture of secrecy and deference"* within the church will cause damage to the welfare of the children involved, and that the church is *"prioritizing traditions over child safety"*. Australian state governments, such as Victoria's, response to these statements involves proposing laws which will expect Priests to report child sex abuse. This change will anticipate the amount of protection on victims augmenting, and hopefully a reduction of the number of cases occurring. However, this law proposal provokes challenges, as it contradicts with the freedom of religion rightly bestowed upon Priests and would result in their exemption. As a response to this, the royal commission has proclaimed that a person of the religious ministry choosing to report sexual abuse shouldn't be exempted, the church denies this. The opposing side of society holds an attitude which emulates the Church's perspective. It believes that abolishing the seal of confession would discourage individuals from confessing, and that it would eradicate an opportunity for sex abusers to be persuaded into turning themselves in.

Focus Question 4:

Compare the two perspectives, what similarities and differences do they share?

References:

- <https://accvic.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Child-Protection-Policy-2015.pdf>
- <https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/am/church-and-states-legislation-to-break-confession-seal/10190680>
- <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-08-31/catholic-response-to-royal-commission-child-sex-abuse/10183020>

Research:

- Breaking the seal of confession is a violation of “religious liberty”
- Compromise and avert people from confessing, this would diminish the opportunity for people to be encouraged to take a step towards healing
- “ACC (Australian Christian Churches) *is committed to protecting Children and Young People*”
- Does so by ensuring that children are provided with a “*safe and stable environment*”
- Many Australian state governments have passed laws which require Priests to report confessions relating to child sexual abuse.
- ACT has implemented changes to the law regarding sexual abuse acclaims
- Priests in Canberra are required to break the seal of confession if someone admits to child abuse (catholic church will not support this)

Therefore, my answer is:

Both society and the Church share the apparent need to protect the welfare and safety of both children and young people. The Australian Christian Churches (ACC) for example have initiated policies related to child safety, that ensure that children are provided with a “*safe and stable environment*”. Society has made similar contributions. Many Australian state governments have passed laws which require Priests to report confessions relating to child sex abuse. This decision to do so is what has transpired difference between the two sides. The church has questioned the effectiveness of these laws, and argued that passing such legislations would contradict with the freedom of religion, and impinge on religious liberty. Media has disputed this, and stated that the Church’s habit of secrecy will contribute to and compromise the safety of victims. From this, it can be deduced that both society and the Church share very few opinions, and a threshold of differences

Assessment Three*
Investigation Booklet Marking Key

Part A: Research

Description	Marks
Focus Questions	
Focus questions focus on key words and suggest an appropriate purpose for the research.	2
Some focus questions provide purpose for the research.	1
Sub-total	2
Resources	
Uses a wide range of resources/references and provides a clear bibliography which follows school protocols	4
Identifies appropriate resources/references and provides a bibliography	3
Some resources/references and provides a bibliography, although it is not wholly accurate and/or does not follow school protocols	2
Uses of some resources/references is evident but provides no bibliography	1
Sub-total	4
Note Taking	
Note-taking templates are thorough; the detail provided focuses on critical elements of the topic and develops an understanding of important information	4
Note-taking templates are used; the structure of notes focuses on the key words with connections made between some important information	3
Provides evidence of some note-taking. Key information is not fully addressed	2
Limited notes and/or no use of a note-taking template	1
Sub-total	4
Answer to Focus Questions	
<i>For each answer</i>	
Explains clearly and concisely valid points to answer focus question.	4 4 4 4
Provides some correct details to answer focus question.	3 3 3 3
Provides generalised comments around the focus question.	2 2 2 2
Response is limited or superficial	1 1 1 1
Sub-total	16
Overall total	26

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