



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011**

Religious Studies A (4050)

Unit 4: Roman Catholicism: Ethics 405004

Report on the Examination

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Unit 4: Roman Catholicism: Ethics

General Comments

The response from candidates in this second examination of this unit was overall most pleasing. It was clear that the candidates, greatly increased in number this year, had generally been well taught. Their responses often showed enthusiasm and a genuine involvement with the topics covered by the specification. Both teachers and the candidates themselves are to be commended for this. There were few questions that were left unattempted.

As was noted in the report on the 2010 examination, AO1 questions which required recall of a body of facts or of biblical material were usually well dealt with. There were some exceptions to this, the Just War theory and the Rite of Anointing of the Sick being examples, where some candidates seemed not to have covered these topics. The AO1 skills of description, explanation and analysis were well deployed by candidates across the ability range. More careful reading of questions would enable candidates to focus on explanation rather than description when this is what the question asks for. The instruction, 'do not retell the parable,' was sometimes ignored and time wasted and focus lost in lengthy narrative at the expense of actual explanation of the teaching of the parable.

AO2 questions require candidates to use evidence and reasoned argument to support personal opinions and evaluate differing points of view. This was often well done, with genuine and sometimes passionate opinions expressed, but marks were missed by some candidates who wrote fluently, with conviction and at length, but who ignored the important instruction to refer to Christian or Roman Catholic teaching and belief in their answer. Without this specifically religious content it is not possible to achieve more than Level 3. Across the whole paper this could result in significant loss of marks by candidates who were very often clearly able and articulate. The issues addressed in this unit are not always easy for the average 16 year old, and candidates would benefit from practice in how to express opinions logically and support these opinions by explicit reference to Christian teaching.

While some candidates used the specialist vocabulary of Religious Studies accurately and appropriately, others failed to do so, confusing 'rites' with 'rights' for example, and being unable to spell key words such as Christian correctly. Once again, marking was made more difficult by poor handwriting or the use of pens which were not black as the instructions require them to be.

Part A

Question A1 Christian Vocation

Most were able to gain marks in part (a), provided that they had covered this part of the specification. Some blurred contemplative and apostolic orders. Some excellent responses drew upon the vows made by contemplatives to enhance their answers.

3-mark AO2 questions were generally well answered, and part (b) was often well argued, especially by those who considered what 'real life' might be.

Most candidates knew the parable in part (c) and explained succinctly what it teaches. Some believed that it was connected to a more current version of talent and there was some exhortation for people to 'follow their dream'.

There were many excellent answers to part (d). Some candidates answered at great length and with a degree of vehemence. Some well worn stereotypes emerged to support opinion, particularly that opposed to the suggestion.

Question A2 Christian Marriage

Part (a) was well answered by almost all candidates. In part (b) most were able to identify and explain the beliefs about Christian marriage very competently. Because many had strongly felt opinions about part (c) responses were most interesting to read. The best answers drew upon the forgiving and loving nature of Christ to support views and so avoided more secular reasoning. There was also strong defence of the beliefs expressed in the marriage vows, which had been part of the previous question. A few thought that the question was about marriage after the death of a spouse.

Question A3 Respect for Human Life

Roman Catholic teaching is well known in part (a), but candidates need to be clear that abortion because of rape or to safeguard the life of the mother is not part of Church teaching. There were some excellent answers to part (b), with facts well marshalled. Not surprisingly many chose to argue part (c) with reference to abortion. Many candidates, however, developed their answers with broader reference to the taking of life in other ways such as in euthanasia or in warfare.

Question A4 Christian Reconciliation and Christian Values

Part (a) was a very well answered question, with many gaining full marks either by the quality of explanation of a few causes of crime or by being able to identify and comment on many causes in less depth. Part (b) showed that there are still some candidates who do not know the Ten Commandments, and there are those apparently not clear that 'crime' and 'sin' are not always the same thing. In part (c), as with other AO2 answers, the better candidates were able to apply religious reasoning to their argument rather than the simply sociological arguments that many relied upon. Some excellent responses drew upon an impressive range of specifically religious authorities to support their reasoning. .

Part B

Questions B5 Christian Response to Global Issues

In part (a) the differences between rich and poor countries were well known and described by candidates of all abilities. There was a little romanticising of life in poor countries by some as being somehow closer to God and free from crime. Many wrote at great length on this question, and pertinent points were made such as the differences in what malnutrition means for rich and for poor.

In part (b) the majority agreed that ending poverty is the most important duty. Some argued well with good references to religious sources, while others failed to make use of the parables which were probably known to them. The alternative duties were not always thought through, with spreading God's word being a frequently used example of what Christians should be involved in as opposed to the ending of poverty. A surprising number seemed to believe that ending poverty would interfere with God's plan for the world. Some failed to make a connection between love of one's neighbour and easing that neighbour's poverty.

Those who knew the Just War theory were able to do well in part (c). Some of those who clearly did not know it improvised inventively. Many appeared to believe that some sort of matching of weaponry by consultation between the adversaries prior to war is a part of the

theory. However, other candidates' explanation and discussion of the theory was of a high order.

Most were in favour of the destruction of nuclear weapons and were able to substantiate their views with sound religious evidence in part (d). Once more, marks were missed by work which contained virtually no religious content.

Questions B6 Christian Healing and Christian Reconciliation

Part (a) asked about rites celebrated as a person is dying. A surprising number wrote about those celebrated after death. Careful reading of the question would have avoided this. Candidates who knew the rite did well; those who did not improvised with such notions as special meals and days out. Some read 'rites' as 'rights' with interesting consequences for their answers.

Part (b) was answered reasonably well by candidates of all abilities and some responses were most interesting to read. There were a small number who thought that belief in reincarnation is part of Christian teaching.

The Parable of the Forgiving Father in part (c) was mostly well known, and there were some excellent answers to this question. The actions of the people in the parable were used to illustrate the teaching about forgiveness and not merely narrated.

In part (d) the teaching explained in part (c) was well applied by some and totally ignored by others to the detriment of their argument. Contemporary examples were well used, and the conclusions reached were genuine whether for or against the statement.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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