Summary

This thesis explores multicultural and cultural complex experiences at Catholic arenas in Norwegian contexts. Including members from one hundred and eighty different nations the Catholic Church in Norway represents one of the most multicultural institutions in the country. The striking diversity among Catholics in Norway has so far been an unexplored field. The thesis is based on two years of fieldwork in Catholic congregations, on archive studies and on numerous semi-structured individual interviews.

The Catholic Church engages clerics from the migrants’ home country to organize services as well as lay activities meant for their ethnic groups in Norway. This special pastoral care represents a multicultural principle based group orientations: on the migrants’ ethnic and national belongings to their countries of origin. The issue of the pastoral care is to reproduce the migrants’ ethnic belongings in exile situations.

Multicultural critics strongly argue that migrant women from traditional societies reproduce traditional gender- and family-discourses in the receiving country. As women are excluded from priesthood in the Catholic Church, this may strengthen the traditional gender roles among Catholics. The thesis explores meetings and confrontations between different gender models practiced by Catholics: between traditional, gender orientations on one side and gender equality orientations on the other side.

The results of the group based Catholic, multicultural strategy are mono-cultural and socially segregated communities inside congregations in Norwegian towns. Newcomers to Norway are included in those national based groups and may for this reason live their social lives outside the Norwegian society for years. Gradually, however, the majority of their children are fully integrated in the majority culture in Norway.