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Reflections on Teaching in a Catholic High School: A Qualitative Case Study

Daniel Blout

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REFLECTIONS ON TEACHING IN A CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL:
A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

By

Daniel L. Blout

submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program for Educational Leaders

School of Education

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SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
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Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)

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A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

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Abstract

This qualitative study participates in this ongoing scholarly conversation regarding the value of Catholic schools in the life ministry of the Catholic Church. By examining the understanding that lay teachers have of their responsibility to the Catholic identity and the faith formation of students in Catholic schools as articulated in the literature of leadership of the Catholic Church, this study examines some of the ways that lay teachers help maintain the Catholic identity of the school and how these teachers engage in the religious mission of Catholic schools. This qualitative study was purposely designed to engage and invite the 58 Catholic high school teachers of two Diocesan Catholic high schools in southwestern Pennsylvania to express their inner thoughts, feelings, and ideas regarding the various aspects of their “ministry”. By documenting the reflections and insights of these Catholic high school teachers this study brings to light some of the ways that they experience and understand their vocation of “ministry” within the complex educational practice of teaching within the unique setting of a Catholic high school. Self-reflecting essays and audio-recorded data from two focus groups were analyzed with a particular focus on identifying the various aspects of the spiritual life of these lay teachers. The data is presented in the form of a journal organized around four spiritual dimensions: The Call, The Mission, The Community, and The Spirit. Each dimension is introduced and concluded with a scriptural or inspirational quote identified by the teachers as being significant to their life as a teacher in a Catholic school. The journal forms a rich description of the ways the spiritual life of a lay Catholic high school teacher

manifests itself in the ministry of teaching. Its four dimensions serve as a basic model of the spiritual life and ministry of a lay Catholic high school teacher.

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TRIBUTE

This dissertation is dedicated
In Loving Memory of my mother
Ann Lorraine O'Hara Zamiska Blout
Who entered into Eternal Life on
Sunday, December 3, 1989.

And

In honor of my father
Stanley Walter Blout
Who continues to be a source of
courage, strength, and determination
as he faces the limitations
brought upon him by his 92 years of life
and the effects of a stroke.

God blessed me with
Life, Faith, Wisdom, Hope, and Love
through their creative and nurturing love as my parents.

To the lay teachers in Catholic schools
whose ministry sustains their school's
Catholic identity, community, and culture.

In particular, the faculty of
Geibel Catholic High School and
Greensburg Central Catholic High School,
with whom I share
The Call, The Mission, The Community, and The Ministry
of Catholic education
in the Diocese of Greensburg.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Central Theme

In the fall of 1965 my formal educational journey began as a first grader enrolled in All Saints Catholic Grade School in Masontown, Pennsylvania, a small town with a population of about 4,000 located in rural Southwestern Pennsylvania. The primary occupation of the region involved coal mining. My older brother and two older sisters graduated from All Saints Catholic, later known as Father Kolb High School. My youngest sister was a junior in Father Kolb High School. My parents, like most Catholic parents of the time, planned for me to spend the next twelve years of my education in this Catholic school.

These plans quickly changed in the summer of 1966 when the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary from Scranton, Pennsylvania decided that they would no longer staff the school. My parents decided to send me to the local public school when they found out that the teachers of the school would no longer be religious sisters but rather teachers from the local area without any particular religious training. However, my sister did graduate from Father Kolb High School in the spring of 1967.

I did not see the inside of a Catholic school again until I entered college at Gannon University in Erie, Pennsylvania, as a freshman in the fall of 1978. From there I responded to a religious vocation to the diocesan priesthood. I continued with my seminarian formation at St. Vincent Seminary, in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, and was ordained as a priest of the Diocese of Greensburg in May 1986. Somewhat ironically, I

have been involved in the ministry of Catholic schools for the last eleven years of my ordained ministry. In my current assignment as President of both Greensburg Central Catholic and Geibel Catholic High Schools I have the responsibility of maintaining and promoting the Catholic mission of our school.

I can still hear my mother say, “Why should we spend money for the same thing that we can get for free?” She believed that without the religious sisters teaching in the Catholic school it would be no longer “Catholic”; therefore, no different than the public school. Her change of attitude about the identity of Catholic schools during the mass exodus of the religious sisters and brothers from these schools was common among Catholic families. As O’Brien (1987) observed “since lay teachers do not live in communities which constantly reinforce religious practices and ideals, and since a majority of them received their degrees from non-Catholic colleges and universities, the whole religious purpose of Catholic schools came into question”.

During my years of ministry in Catholic schools I have often reflected on their unique “Catholic” quality. I have heard and read many remarks, both flattering and unflattering about Catholic schools - voices that sing the praises of Catholic schools as special places where there is genuine concern for the students and where Catholic values are taught and voices of their staunchest of critics who decry how they have become “elitist” and “snobbish” in nature. These remarks have led me to reflect upon some fundamental questions regarding the nature of Catholic schools. Have Catholic schools lost their sense of mission and purpose now that religious women and men no longer constitute a significant proportion of the teaching staff? Are Catholic schools

successfully navigating the major trend toward a predominant lay teaching staff and remaining faithful to their two-fold purpose of learning and believing?

Stating the Problem

According to a study project of the National Catholic Educational Association (1985) in 1962 lay teachers constituted only 30 percent of the Catholic high school teachers in the United States. By 1983, the percentage of lay teachers staffing Catholic high schools had increased to nearly 77 percent. At the dawn of the Third Millennium the ratio of lay to religious/clergy teaching is 12:1 (McDonald, 2000). This averages out to be approximately 1.5 religious and clergy available for each Catholic school. If this trend continues by early in the twenty-first century a significant proportion of Catholic schools will operate with an entirely lay teaching staff (Schaub, 2000). Although there are no national estimates of proportion of non-Catholic faculty teaching in Catholic schools, some suspect that this percentage may also be rising (Schaub). As Jacobs (2000) states: "The baton is passing from the hands of the religious – those who built and sustained this legacy for nearly two centuries – to the hands of the laity – those entrusted with its future."

Because of significant increase in the number of laity who staff Catholic schools the religious aspect of the Catholic school mission is not as apparent. Provost and Walf (1994) reflected on the difficult issue of Catholic identity for Catholic institutions maintaining that the "practical measures, such as the visible presence of clergy or religious, are becoming less reliable as laity take on a rightful and increasingly visible role in church life". According to Cook (2000): "Now that the laity staff Catholic schools

almost entirely, by default they must assume responsibility for the Catholic identity of these schools. Catholic schools are experiencing an identity crisis of sorts."

Purpose of the study

Now that laity constitute over 93 percent of the teaching staff (McDonald, 2000) in Catholic schools, it is imperative to examine their level of understanding and commitment to the religious and spiritual dimension mission of the school. Shimabukuro (1998) has identified five repetitive themes that occur throughout Catholic Church documents since the Second Vatican Council that form a "model" of the *ideal* Catholic schools educator:

- Community Building
- Lifelong Spiritual Growth
- Lifelong Professional Development
- Students' Spiritual Formation
- Students' Human Development

These themes serve to frame this investigation of lay educators in Catholic schools in all curricular areas who have, according to the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1997) have, "prime responsibility for creating (this) unique Christian school climate".

This qualitative study participates in this ongoing scholarly conversation regarding the value of Catholic schools in the life ministry of the Catholic Church. By examining the understanding that lay teachers have of their responsibility to the Catholic identity and the faith formation of students in Catholic schools as articulated in the literature of leadership of the Catholic Church this study will:

1. Examine some of the ways that lay teachers help maintain the Catholic identity of the school.
2. Examine how these teachers engage in the religious mission of Catholic schools.
3. Record for the leadership of the Catholic Church the lay educators' descriptions of their ministry of teaching in a Catholic school.

Need for the study

Prominent Catholic education researchers McLaughlin, O'Keefe, & O'Keefe (1996) remark: "One of the most central features of the contemporary Catholic school is a concern with its precise identity." The way that Catholic schools define themselves with regard to these issues will play a significant role in their future success. According to Sister Lourdes Sheehan (2000), Secretary for Education of the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops: "It's vital for Catholic educational leaders to maintain the school's Catholic identity in a context that often includes non-Catholic students and a complete commitment to the Catholic mission and values on the part of the faculty and staff is an integral step in maintaining the Catholic identity."

The importance of such a study goes beyond the need for Catholic educational leaders to assure a clear Catholic identity and fidelity to the school's mission. This study will provide evidence to validate a key factor regarding the future viability of Catholic schools. The future viability of Catholic schools rests on their effectiveness since they

are institutions that rely on parents to voluntarily choose to enroll their children and Church leaders to effect policy to financially support them.

In order for parents to continue to voluntarily choose to send their children to Catholic schools they need to be convinced of their effectiveness in terms of academic excellence and spiritual and moral development to keep Catholic schools viable. The research of Bryk, Lee, & Holland (1993) presents empirical evidence on Catholic school organization and its effectiveness on academic achievement. Their study presents an argument that there are three major forces that shape the operations of individual Catholic schools and contribute to their overall effectiveness: (1) a constrained academic structure, (2) a communal school organization, and (3) an inspirational ideology.

As convincing as Bryk, et. al's research may be regarding academic effectiveness of Catholic schools, it does not address the effectiveness of spiritual and moral development of Catholic education. Parents need to be convinced of the Catholic school's commitment to the religious aspect of its mission. This is especially true when a Catholic school is situated in an area when the local public schools are perceived as having an equal or even superior academic program. Parents need a justification for making the decision and financial commitment to send their children to a Catholic school. A strong commitment to faith formation and development on the behalf of the faculty can help warrant such a choice.

The leadership of the Catholic Church needs to be assured that lay teachers in Catholic schools regard their role as ministry. Leadership in the Catholic Church is faced with the reality of the financial burden of operating Catholic schools. Research indicates

that the sentiments of bishops and priests remain supportive of Catholic schools (Convey, 2000). However, the same research indicates a trend for priests to be less agreeable than in the past regarding Catholic schools with regard to: strengthening parish unity; having an impact on adult religious behavior; parish schools being the best model for Catholic schools; and graduates of Catholic schools being better practicing Catholics than graduates of public schools.

Research about the level of commitment of lay teachers in Catholic schools to the school's Catholic identity, mission, and ministry is needed in order to respond to these issues. It is not sufficient to theorize their Catholic mission or identity without empirical data to support such claims. Cook (2000) shares his frustration resulting from his extensive reading of the literature on the subject of Catholic identity. He maintains that most of the literature created a rhetorical cycle of theory beginning and ending with the thesis: "Catholic identity is a critical issue that needs to be addressed." This study is intended to help bridge the gap from the theoretical vision of Catholic identity to the practical experiential life of the lay teacher in a Catholic high school. It will seek to connect the Catholic identity and mission of the Catholic school with the practice of ministry of the lay teacher. This study will provide much needed empirical evidence to support an argument about the value and effectiveness of Catholic education to the mission of the Church.

The leaders of Catholic schools believe that "... Catholic schools are deeply rooted in the life of the church, the body of Jesus Christ, who is the source of all life. Catholic schools draw their life's breath from their roots in the Catholic community and

they, in turn, breathe new life into the church" (Executive Summary, 1992). Lay teachers are the "roots" of this spiritual relationship between Catholic schools and the life of the Catholic community of faith. This study is needed to provide data regarding the faith, hope, and love flowing through the ministry of lay teachers in Catholic schools.

Research Questions

This study addresses two fundamental questions regarding the nature of Catholic schools identified by the researcher's experience in Catholic education.

How have some Catholic schools preserved and enhanced their sense of mission and purpose now that religious women and men no longer constitute a significant proportion of the teaching staff?

How are some Catholic schools successfully navigating the major trend toward a predominant lay teaching staff and remaining faithful to their two-fold purpose of learning and believing?

CHAPTER 2

SURVEY OF LITERATURE

Overview

Lay teachers in a Catholic high school have a special ministry rooted in the religious and spiritual mission of the Catholic school in which they teach. The nature of this special mission of the Catholic school and ministry lay teachers has been described in the official Roman Catholic Church documents issued since the Second Vatican Council on the universal level from Rome and to the national level from bishops in the United States. These documents detail the uniquely Catholic vision of the Catholic school and the essential qualities of its teachers. They also acknowledge the growing importance of the role of the lay teachers in ministry of Catholic schools.

Current research in the area of school identity, community, and culture reinforce the themes that emerge from the official Church documents. Some researchers point to the distinctive identity of Catholic schools as being related to the distinct characteristics of Catholicism and its religious mission and purpose. The research community reinforces the official Catholic Church documents by emphasizing the relationship between school community and culture, with effective schools and quality education.

This review of the related literature includes the official Catholic Church documents regarding Catholic Education issued after the Second Vatican Council in Rome and the United States and significant school research in the areas school identity, community, and culture.

Church Documents on Catholic Education following the Second Vatican Council
Rome

The Catholic School (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977) was the first Roman statement on Catholic education after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council. It highlighted the liberating quality of education stating that the Church regards education as “the development of man from within, freeing him from that conditioning which would prevent him from becoming a fully integrated human being (#29).

According to this document the aim of the Catholic school is “the total formation of the individual” (#36) and its task is “fundamentally a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life” (#37). Furthermore, the document specified distinctive qualities of teachers in a Catholic school. It specified that teachers in a Catholic school are transmitters of the Christian message, exemplars of the integration of culture and faith, imitators of Christ, and cooperators with the local bishop who mandates the school as an “apostolic undertaking” (#71). This document also maintained that the entire school community was responsible for the Catholic identity of the school and challenged everyone who is involved in Catholic schools to promote and celebrate the cause of Catholic education.

Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982), published 20 years after the opening of the Second Vatican Council,

was the second major statement on Catholic education to the universal Catholic Church. This document, as the title indicates, focused on the increasing importance of the role of the laity in Catholic schools. The Congregation, recognizing the decrease in the number of religious personnel to teach in Catholic schools, acknowledges a need for more lay Catholics to become teachers in Catholic schools and extends an invitation to become “witnesses to the Faith in what can only be described as a privileged environment for human formation” (#4). This document, like its predecessor *The Catholic School*, prescribes specific characteristics of a Catholic school lay educator:

The lay Catholic educator is a person who exercises a specific mission within the Church by living, in faith, a secular vocation in the communitarian structure of the school: with the best possible professional qualifications, with an apostolic intention inspired by faith, for the integral formation of the human person, in a communication of culture, in an exercise of that pedagogy which will give emphasis to direct and personal contact with students, giving spiritual inspiration to the educational community of which he or she is a member, as well as to the different persons related to the educational community. (#24)

Kealty (1994) describes this statement as presenting a very positive image of the teacher, emphasizing the professionalism and spirituality of the teacher. Furthermore, Kealty claims that this document “makes a significant contribution to the emerging concept of lay ministry.”

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988) emphasized the unique qualities and characteristics of Catholic schools. The statement acknowledges that Catholic schools share the same cultural educational goals and development of youth as any other school, but claims that what makes Catholic schools unique is “an attempt to generate a community climate that is

permeated by the gospel spirit of freedom and love” (#1). Ryan, Breenan, and Willmet, as quoted by Hanson (2001), summarize the message of this document regarding the distinctive religious dimension of a Catholic school as being “found in the educational climate, the personal development of each student, the relationship established between culture and the gospel, and the illumination of all knowledge with the light of faith.”

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School directs Catholic schools to develop an organic vision of a Christian school climate including such elements as persons, space, time, relationships, teaching, study, and various other activities. The document states that “from the first moment that a student sets foot in a Catholic school, he or she ought to have the impression of entering a new environment, one illumined by the light of faith, and having its own unique characteristics” (#25). The bishops use the metaphor of “school-home” to describe the Catholic school as an extension of the home (#27). Shimabukuro (1998) identifies three phrases in the document that enrich the “school-home” metaphor. The bishops elaborate that the school-home should promote a climate that is “humanly and spiritually rich” (#28), and that “reproduces, as far as possible, the warm and intimate atmosphere of family life: (#40), and exudes a “common spirit of trust and spontaneity” (#40).

The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997) reaffirms the importance of the pastoral ministry of those who work to build a sense of Christian community in Catholic schools. An entire section (#18-19) is devoted to the climate and culture of Catholic Education. Emphasizing the importance of the community dimension of the school it calls the educating community

as a whole to further the objective of a school as a place of complete formation through interpersonal relations.

The latest Roman document on Catholic education, *Consecrated Persons and their Mission in Schools: Reflections and Guidelines*, was released in 2002. The document reaffirms and expresses gratitude to the consecrated persons who dedicate their life to Catholic education. In the official introductory remarks of this document, Cardinal Grocholewski, the Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education, points out that this document was conceived as complementary to that on Catholic laity. The document speaks to the unique vocation that consecrated persons bring to Catholic schools because of their “experience of a relationship of God, based on prayer, the Eucharist, the sacrament of Reconciliation and the spirituality of communion that characterizes the life of religious communities (#24)”. The office of the Congregation for Catholic Education points out the various ways that the vocation of the religious life is in harmony with the mission of Catholic schools.

United States

To Teach as Jesus Did (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1972) acknowledged the importance of Catholic schools in the Church by stating “Catholic schools afford the fullest and best opportunity to realize the...purpose of Christian education among children and young people. The bishops develop the notion of forming “persons-in-community” (#13) and apply it to the reciprocal relationship between individuals and the Catholic school community.

This document identified three essential dimensions of a Catholic school: message, community, and service. The document, from articles 16-20, states that the mission of the Catholic Church is to continue to proclaim and to teach the “message” of God’s revelation. The bishops emphasize that such teaching occurs within the context of “community” stating that:

The Catholic school, far more than any other, must be a community whose aim is the transmission of values for living. Its work is seen as promoting a faith-relationship with Christ in Whom all values find fulfillment. But faith is principally assimilated through contact with people whose daily life bears witness to it. Christian faith, in fact, is born and grows inside a community (#53).

The third essential dimension of a Catholic school, “service”, flows naturally from the experience of community.

The experience of Christian community leads naturally to service. Christ gives His people different gifts not only for themselves but for others. Each must serve the other for the good of all. The Church is a servant community in which those who hunger are to be filled; the ignorant are to be taught; the homeless to receive shelter; the sick cared for; the distressed consoled; the oppressed set free – all so that men may more fully realize their human potential and more readily enjoy life with God now and eternally (#28).

Sharing the Light of Faith, National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1979) maintained the importance of Catholic schools “as a Christian educational community, the scope of its teaching, and the effort to integrate all learning with faith distinguish the catholic school from other forms of the Church’s ministry and give it special impact” (#232). This directory also emphasizes the “service” aspect of Catholic schools: “Catholic school students should be introduced gradually to the idea and practice of Christian service. In early years, efforts to instill a sense of mission and concern for other help lay a

foundation for later service projects...” (#232). Blecksmith (1996) points out that this document urged Catholic schools to recognize that they exist as an extension of the Church for the purpose of education of children and to give significance to the importance of religion and the sharing of faith. Furthermore, “Catholic school principals are required to foster community and spiritual leadership, stimulating Catholic educators to deepen their faith life and continue to progress in their personal journeys toward Christ”.

Cook (2000) summarizes key themes that emerge from these documents: “an atmosphere animated by a spirit of liberty and charity based on the Gospel, knowledge illumined by faith; the formation of a faith community; a Christian vision of the world, of life, of culture and of history; the integration of faith and reason; and, the formation of mature personalities.” These distinguishing themes clearly refer to the Catholic school’s unique religious mission.

The identity, culture, and community of a Catholic school

Identity

The term “Catholic” is used in a variety of ways and on different level. As Donovan (1997) suggests, all Christians apply the word “Catholic” to themselves and to their own community when they recite the Apostles’ Creed. In a more specific way, the term “Catholic” is used to refer to the worldwide Catholic Church, united through its bishops to the Bishop of Rome, the pope. As Donovan proposes, Catholicism is much more than a creed or a set of doctrines; it is a living community of faith with its own

distinctive rituals and structures, and its own patterns of individual and collective religious life.

Groome (1996) theorizes about the qualifying term “Catholic” as it refers to education and schools claiming a need for “conceptual clarity” for the integrity of Catholic education. He proposes that “the distinctiveness of Catholic education is prompted by the distinctive characteristics of Catholicism itself, and these characteristics should be reflected in the whole curriculum of Catholic schools.” Building on the American Baptist theologian Langdon Gilkey’s perspective of distinguishing features, Groome maintains that Catholicism has the following five *theological characteristics* and three *cardinal* characteristics.

Theological Characteristics:

1. Positive anthropology
2. Sacramentality of life.
3. Communal emphasis.
4. Commitment to tradition.
5. Appreciation of rationality and learning.

Cardinal Characteristics:

1. Commitment to “personhood” – an ontological concern.
2. Commitment to “basic justice: - a social concern.
3. Commitment to “catholicity” – a universal/inclusive concern.

McLaughlin (1996) approaches the distinctiveness of Catholic education from a broadly philosophical approach. He claims that, like Catholic beliefs in general and the personal beliefs of individual Catholics, Catholic educational principles have become less sharply distinguished from other beliefs. McLaughlin points out the importance of clarity

with regard to the distinctiveness of Catholic education for Catholic educational leaders, policy makers, and teachers as they face the complexities of judgment required in the contemporary world. For instance, is the major purpose of a Catholic school the formation of Catholic believers? Or can wider purposes be discerned consistent with, and perhaps required by, Catholic principles, which can articulate a role for the school in relation to pupils who are not Catholics? By referencing educational documents of the Catholic Church McLaughlin identifies three general features that distinguish Catholic education:

1. The embodiment of a view about the meaning of human persons and of human life.
2. An aspiration to holistic influence.
3. Religious and moral formation.

Bryk, A.S., Lee, V.E., & Holland, P.B. (1993) argue that there are three major forces that shape the distinctive identity of individual Catholic schools and contribute to their overall effectiveness: (1) a constrained academic structure, (2) a communal school organization, and (3) an inspirational ideology. These researchers point to the irony that although the ideal of the “common school” inspired the formation of American public education over one hundred years ago, it is now the Catholic school that focuses on fostering human cooperation in the pursuit of the common good.

Analyzing the significant Church documents on Catholic education Blecksmith (1996) developed a survey instrument to determine the extent to which the distinguishing characteristics of Catholic identity are present in a school. The responses were grouped into four areas that emerged from the documents: (1) perceptions of the religious

dimension of the Educational Climate, (2) the Personal Development of each Student, (3) the Relationship established between Culture and Gospel, and (4) the illumination of all knowledge with the light of faith. The survey of teachers and principals of Catholic grade schools in a Northern California diocese demonstrated a strong agreement regarding the hallmarks of Catholic identity within their schools.

In a study of Catholic elementary and secondary lay school teachers in the state of New York, Cimino (2001) uses a 10 question Likert-scale survey focusing on the sense of vocation among these teachers factoring in their religious preference, their years in teaching, whether they taught in a diocesan or congregation-owned school, and their intentions of remaining in Catholic schools. Cimino's quantitative study suggests that the sense of vocation is higher among lay teachers practicing their faith whether Catholic or non-Catholic, while it seems lower for those designated as non-practicing Catholics.

Cook (2000) believes that unique identity of Catholic schools in the future should embrace a three-pronged definition including Academic Excellence, Religious Mission, and Globalness/Multiculturalism. He develops the argument that such an identity is grounded in a "Gospel culture" integrating learning, formation and growth of the entire human being within a community. According to him, a well-developed community life is widely regarded as the distinguishing feature and the basis for the entire way of life of Catholic schools.

In her doctoral dissertation, Sister Linda Yankoski (2003) identified three significant studies on the religious identity and secularization of colleges and universities. Yankoski's review of literature noted studies by Marsden (1994), Burtchaell (1998), and

Benne (2001). Marsden's study pointed to the total secularization of seven Protestant universities. Burtchaell's study included seven different religious traditions including Catholicism and pointed out several factors that led to their secularization. Benne's study suggests that in order for a school of higher education to maintain a strong religious identity they must articulate and maintain a strong theological vision relevant to the life of the school and an ethos of practices, traditions, and values that shape the educational community. Although these studies focus on higher education, they are cited since the findings can be related in a broad sense to this study of Catholic secondary education.

The central issue of Catholic identity for Catholic schools is the topic of a pertinent work by Nuzzi (2002). He focuses on the question: "What does it mean in the third millennium of Christianity to call oneself Catholic?" from the perspective of theologians, educators, bishops, and the international Catholic community. In summary Nuzzi claims: "It is evident from the abundant writing on the question of Catholic identity that the issue is still very much an open question. The fact that there is such a scholarly interest in the question bodes well for Catholic institutions, for the constant examination of the question provides a vigilance that can often strengthen Catholic identity."

Community

Sergiovanni (1994) believes that schools need to create authentic community if they are to provide a quality education to every student they serve. Community being

defined by Sergiovanni as “collections of individuals who are bonded together by natural will and who are together binded to a set of shared ideas and ideals.”

Communities are collections of individuals who are bonded together by natural will and who are together bound to a set of shared ideas and ideals. This bonding and binding is tight enough to transform them from a collection of “I’s” into a collective “we”. As a “we,” members are part of a tightly knit web of meaningful relationships. This “we” usually shares a common place and over time comes to share common sentiments and traditions that are sustaining (Sergiovanni, 1996).

According to Sergiovanni, an authentic community creates a “lifeworld” which gives uniqueness and discretion to individual schools. He critiques the traditional view of schools as formal organizations with their inability to help students recover the loss of community. He contrasts life in organizations with life in communities by distinguishing the connections among people. In an organization the connections are based on contracts, whereas in community the connections are based on commitments.

Sergiovanni uses two words borrowed from the German social theorist of F. Tonnies to illustrate this distinction: *gemeinschaft* (community) and *gesellschaft* (society) as polar opposites. He weaves this theory throughout the book to highlight the human need to build community.

For Tonnies, *Gemeinschaft* (community) exists in three forms: by kinship, of place, and of mind. Using these three forms of community building Sergiovanni shows how the theory of *gemeinschaft* can be applied to schools. Sergiovanni also refers to the notion of community of memory developed by Belah and others (1985) as a fourth form of community. He maintains that the relationships among these four forms of community are mutually reinforcing in building community. Community moves toward *gesellschaft* when community values are replaced by contractual ones and the connections among

people become more contrived. Loneliness and isolation often accompany this shift. Sergiovanni points out that when students experience a loss of community they either create substitutes for this loss (i.e. gangs) or live without community with its negative psychological consequences (i.e. loneliness, isolation, and rejection). According to Sergiovanni schools must move from the *gesellschaft* side of the ledger to the *gemeinschaft* side.

The research of Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore compared the effects of public, private, and parochial education by measuring math and verbal achievement and dropout rates. They cite the community dimension of Catholic schools as the major reason for their success and for sharply lowering the likelihood of dropping out of school. Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore distinguish between “value” communities in which members share a common set of values and “functional” communities in which members not only share a common set of values but whose members are interrelated with each other both in and out of school. They argue that most Catholic schools succeed because they operate as functional communities that build “social capital” in youth.

The research of Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) leads them to identify specific features of the “communal” nature of Catholic schools. According to their findings Catholic schools have clear boundaries for membership in a set of traditions and mores that reflect its mission and purpose. Furthermore, they describe in a descriptive fashion the following shared aspects of community in a Catholic school:

- Shared organizational beliefs including an academic core for all, formation of personal character, and school mission.
- A set of shared activities including a core academic curriculum, extensive extracurricular involvement, and religious activities

- The formal organization of the community with distinctive aspects of the principal, the special role of the pastoral minister, and the extended teacher role.

The unique mission of Catholic schools is to simultaneously create both a learning and believing community. McDermott (1997) observes that the Catholic school is unique because it is a religious community within an academic community. He believes that to form community in a school is to model the method of Jesus. According to him: “Jesus, the teacher, had one main lesson to bring from the Father for all people to learn, namely to be one with one another as he is with the Father.”

Culture

The publication of *A Nation at Risk* (1983) – a dire report on the status of American education issued by the National Commission of Excellence in Education resulted in the school reform movements during the 1980’s. Educational research in the area of school improvement and educational reform became a primary political issue during this decade.

During 1989, his first year in office, former president George H. W. Bush met with the nation’s governors to developed a number of education goals for American schools to be attained by the 21st century:

- All children in America will start school ready to learn.
- The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.
- Students will leave grades four, eight, and 12 having demonstrated competency in English, math, science, history, and geography.
- American students will be first in the world in math and science.
- Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy.

- Every school will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.
- Every classroom will have a well-qualified teacher and collectively these teachers will reflect the demographics of the general population.

Deal and Peterson (1990) define school culture as “the character of a school as it reflects deep patterns of values, beliefs, and traditions that have been formed over the course of history” They believe that the reform movement has not enough given enough attention to the role of school culture in relationship to school effectiveness. Deal and Peterson work from the theoretical premise that school culture and the symbolic role of leaders in shaping the school’s culture lies at the heart of school achievement and student learning. They challenge the educational community to rethink the current trends in the school reform movement maintaining that too much emphasis has been placed on improving schools and student achievement through policies and mandates, and too little emphasis has been placed on how schools can be shaped from within.

Organizational literature and research is used as a foundation to demonstrate the importance of culture to achievement. Drawing on research of Kotter and Heskett (1992), Collins and Porras (1997), and Rutter (1979), Deal and Peterson argue that schools should become more like businesses, but not because of the usual reasons given. Their reason for believing schools should behave more like businesses is because *top businesses have developed a shared culture*. In addition to this research, the authors use other studies to argue that strong, positive, collaborative cultures have powerful effects on many features of schools. Deal and Peterson argue that school reforms that bring new technologies or higher standards will not succeed without being embedded in supportive, spirit-filled cultures.

Cook (2000) refers to school culture as the hidden or informal curriculum created by a culture of relationships. The central foundational Christian belief in the Trinity of God forms the basis of his assertion that the “education of the entire person – the hallmark of Catholic education – encompasses not only the relationship of the student’s heart, mind, and soul but also the student’s relationships with God and others.” With this in mind he defines Catholic school culture as...

... a ‘way of life’ rooted in Christ, a Gospel-based creed and code, and a Catholic vision that provides inspiration and identity, is shaped over time, and is passed from one generation to the next through devices that capture and stimulate the Catholic imagination such as symbols and traditions.

Summary

The official documents on education of the Roman Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council claim that the role of lay teachers in Catholic high schools extends beyond professionalism to ministry. Catholic high schools are an extension of the ministry of the Catholic Church and must maintain a clear Catholic identity and mission. Research reinforces the importance of maintaining such a clear identity that serves as the focus of the school’s community and culture. The Catholic faith community entrusts lay educators in Catholic high schools with the ministry of sustaining and building the school’s Catholic identity and culture. This study will examine how Catholic lay teachers fulfill this ministry by maintaining the Catholic identity and engaging in the religious mission of Catholic schools.

Definition of terms

Catholic identity: The distinctive qualities of an institution that reflect the Catholic religious tradition.

Catholic school culture: A ‘way of life’ rooted in Christ, a Gospel-based creed and code, and a Catholic vision that provides inspiration and identity, is shaped over time, and is passed from one generation to the next through devices that capture and stimulate the Catholic imagination such as symbols and traditions (Cook, 2000).

Community: A collection of individuals who are bonded together by natural will and who are together bonded to a set of shared ideas and ideals (Sergiovanni, 1994).

Consecrated person: Same as Vowed Religious.

Laity: Refers to all the Catholic faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church (Lumen Gentium, 31).

Lay Educator: A term is used to refer to an educator who possesses a vocation to Catholic education but is not a member of a vowed religious community or an ordained minister.

Ministry: A term that refers to a person’s response to God’s love by serving others.

Mission: The core values of an institution that give it identity, inspiration and destiny (adapted from Cook, 2000).

School culture: The character of a school as it reflects deep patterns of values, beliefs, and traditions that have been formed over the course of history (Deal & Peterson, 1990).

Second Vatican Council: An ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic Church convened and presided over by Pope John XXIII from 1963 through 1965. An ecumenical council consisting of the entire college of bishops in union with the pope has supreme and full authority over the universal church (Lumen Gentium, 22).

Spiritual formation: The process of developing one’s spiritual life in relationship to self, others, and God.

Vocation: A term that refers to a person’s spiritual motivation or religious “calling” for ministry and service that originates from God.

Vowed religious: A person who has professed religious vows to a religious community approved by the Church.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Design

The official Catholic Church documents and current research on education identify and elaborate upon the ideal qualities that lay teachers in a Catholic school are to possess in their vocation of educational ministry. The scholarly discussion of the vocation of lay teachers in Catholic schools has been limited to the realm of the conceptual. This study is designed to move the scholarly discussion beyond the conceptual regarding the topic of the ministry of the lay Catholic teacher. By documenting the reflections and insights of lay Catholic high school teachers this study will bring to light some of the ways that they experience and understand their vocation of “ministry” within the complex educational practice of teaching within the unique setting of a Catholic high school.

As a Roman Catholic priest of the Diocese of Greensburg, Pennsylvania, who has devoted seventeen years to scholarly study and the practice of Catholic education as a teacher, administrator, and a doctoral student, my experience of ministry in Catholic schools has been most meaningful and interesting. I have taught religion class for five years in two Catholic grade schools and have served in two Catholic high schools during the past twelve years in the capacity of teacher, campus minister, vice-principal and president. During these years, I have had the pleasure of working with many lay teachers as colleagues in the ministry of Catholic schools. These men and women have impressed

and humbled me with their understanding, commitment, and insight into the mission and identity of Catholic schools. They possess a wealth of wisdom and insight regarding the hopes, joys, struggles, and sorrows they experience as lay teachers in the Catholic school system.

This study is my initial attempt at a researcher to collect and analyze empirical qualitative data from my lay colleagues in Catholic education regarding their perspective as a teacher in a Catholic school. It intentionally leverages my skills as a scholar in the areas of Catholic education and ordained minister of the Catholic Church and brings these skills into the data and analysis of the inner life of lay Catholic high school teachers. These skills include the ability to create an open and trusting environment that increases the participant's willingness to share their inner thoughts, to engage the participants in faith sharing, and to reflect and analyze the data with a spiritual vision.

My observational practice as a qualitative researcher is grounded in the metaphor of the lantern and in the spirit of the Greek mythological figure Diogenes as identified and described by Shank (2002). Shank uses the metaphor of the lantern carried by Diogenes, who wandered the earth searching for an honest man, to describe the experience of qualitative researchers who refuse to acknowledge that qualitative research must abandon the concept of truth. Similarly, during the process of this qualitative study, I carry the lantern of faith searching the minds, hearts, and souls of my colleagues seeking to bring to light the meaning and purpose of their lives as lay teachers in a Catholic education.

This qualitative study was purposely designed to engage and invite the 58 Catholic high school teachers of two Diocesan Catholic high schools in southwestern Pennsylvania to express their inner thoughts, feelings, and ideas regarding the various aspects of their “ministry”. Neither high school was founded by a religious order whose members would bring a specific communal charism to the school’s mission and culture. The case study focuses on the secondary level because of the tendency for religious education to be segmented into a specific segment in the secondary school curriculum. This tendency creates a particular challenge for the educational practice of ministry in secondary Catholic schools. This population provides for an adequate amount of perspective from teachers of various religious formation backgrounds, academic and professional training, and curriculum specialty areas.

Methodology

During the fall 2002, I wrote to the superintendent of Catholic schools for the diocese in which this study takes place (Appendix D). After receiving permission from the superintendent, I then contacted the building principal of both schools in order to explain the nature and intent of the research, to discuss the particular requirements of the school and teachers, and to make arrangements for an initial visit to the school to meet with the entire faculty before the end of the calendar year 2002.

The initial data was collected during December 2002. All teachers were asked to complete short self-reflecting essay responses of at least 100 words to the following two questions:

1. Why did you decide to become a teacher?
2. What is it like to teach in a Catholic school?

These questions were intentionally crafted in a manner to invite personal reflection about their experience as a teacher in a Catholic school without directly referring to the spiritual aspect of their role as a teacher in a Catholic school.

Respondents were given the option to remain anonymous or to identify themselves as willing to participate in an individual audio taped interview and/or focus group and/or keep a journal for five consecutive days. Notably, all the teachers signed their responses indicating their willingness to participate further in the study. This gave a clear indication of a high level of interest and trust from the participants in the study.

During the spring of 2003, I identified a ranked list of 10 teachers from each high school to serve as participants in an audio taped focus group based on the initial data. The criteria for selecting and ranking these teachers was to select individuals whose written responses to the initial two questions contain pieces of data that indicated the best potential to provide depth and understanding for further inquiry into the themes of this study. Krueger (1994) maintains that a focus group is typically composed of 6 to 10 participants, but can range from as few as 4 to as many as 12. This ranked list equaled the typically maximum number of participants for a focus group, while leaving room to compensate for some participants who might have lost interest in participating or had a conflict with the appointed date and time of the focus group session.

The primary purpose for the initial written self-reflecting essays was to identify the best potential participants for the two focus groups. These responses contain a wealth of information in their own right. They are available as a future source of inquiry into

other aspects of teaching in a Catholic school. Further analysis of the written essays might include codification and/or other types of qualitative data analysis as suggested by Ryan and Bernard (2000).

In June 2003, I conducted two audio taped focus groups comprised of six teachers at one school and seven teachers at the other. I believed that two focus groups were adequate for my study considering the topic and my direct accessibility to these particular groups of faculty, even though scholars Krueger (1998) and Morgan (1998) maintain that typically focus groups are usually conducted in a series of three to five.

Of the thirteen focus group participants eight were female and five were male. The experience of teaching in a Catholic high school for the participants ranged from one to twenty-eight years with the average being 9.3 years. Participants represented the following areas of faculty: Social Studies, Science, Foreign Language, Fine Arts, English, Technology, Guidance, and Librarian.

Krueger (1998) suggests the use of an introductory question to introduce the general topic of discussion and/or provide members of the focus group with an opportunity to connect with the overall topic. Therefore, each participant received a memo (Appendix D) asking them to prepare in advance for the focus group by coming to the focus group prepared to answer the following question: “What one scriptural passage or other inspirational quote best speaks to you as a teacher in a Catholic High school and why?” This question served two purposes:

1. To focus the participant’s reflection on their role of “ministry” in a Catholic school in preparation for the focus group.
2. To serve as an introductory catalyst for the focus group discussion.

I guided the conversation along with the following prompts that served as what Krueger (1998) calls “key questions” that are clear, simple, and open-ended questions that allow the participants to determine the nature of the answer while challenging them to reflect back on their personal experiences:

What joyful experiences have you had as a teacher in a Catholic High School?
What sacrifices/struggles have you had as a teacher in a Catholic High School?
How do you reconcile these contrasting experiences?

How do you experience God as a Catholic School Teacher?

The focus groups began by asking each participant to share the particular passage they prepared followed by the reason why the passage related to them as a teacher in a Catholic high school. Starting at the beginning of the alphabet, using consecutive first letters, and alternating between male and female names, I assigned a pseudonym for each of the thirteen focus group participants.

Table 1 lists the pseudonyms for each participant with his or her corresponding inspirational passage. The first seven participants are from Group One (**A**lice – **G**loria) and the last six participants are from Group Two (**H**enry – **M**ary). Some participants could not narrow down their initial response to just one passage and shared two passages. Both passages are included in Table 1.

Table 1

Pseudonyms Assigned to Focus Group Participants with Corresponding Scriptural

Passage or Inspirational Quote

Participant	Passage
Alice	Jesus the Good Shepherd (John 10:12-15)
Bob	“Education is Lighting a Fire” (W.B. Yeats) “I have learned most from my students” (The Talmud)
Christine	“Every child has an equal opportunity to reach his or her potential.” (St. John Fisher)
Donald	“... how you make them feel that they will carry with them the rest of their lives.” (Unknown)
Elizabeth	“Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is God’s will that prevails.” (Proverbs 19:21) “I will instruct you and counsel you and I will guide you and lead you.” (Psalm 32:8-9)
Frank	“Here I am, Lord” (Christian Song) “A candle loses nothing of its light by lighting another candle.” (Christopher’s Motto)
Gloria	“... faith, if it is alone and includes no actions then it is dead.” (James 2:14)
Henry	The Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:4-8)

(table continues)

Participant	Passage
Ivy	Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi
Jack	“... set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity.” (1 Timothy 1:12)
Kelly	The Second Story of Creation (Genesis 2:4a – 25)
Lou	“...we, who are many, are one body in Christ.” (Romans 12:5)
Mary	“... be obedient ... to Christ, not only when being watched.” (Ephesians 6:6) “The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ.” (Philippians 4:7)

Data Analysis

The self-reflecting essays and audio-recorded data from the two focus groups were analyzed with a particular focus on identifying the various aspects of the spiritual life of these lay teachers. Many prominent and significant aspects of the spiritual life of lay teachers in a Catholic high school surfaced during the analysis process. These teachers indicated that there was something special and profound about how they came to be teachers and what they do as educators in a Catholic high school. The participants revealed their inner thoughts, feelings, and ideas about the nature of teaching in a Catholic high school and how it relates to their life of faith.

As I critically listened to and prayerfully reflected upon the data a couple of themes began to emerge. Looking over the list of inspirational passages presented and the direction of the conversation of the two focus groups, I identified four broad areas of spiritual focus. I have tried to capture and communicate the essence of what these teachers revealed by means of a journal organized around these four broad spiritual dimensions: The Call, The Mission, The Community, and The Spirit. These four dimensions serve as a basic model of the spiritual life and ministry of a lay Catholic high school teacher.

The majority of the journal came from the audio taped focus group data and a majority of the data was included. I have also included at least one journal entry from each participant in a focus group. A few of the journal entries came from the initial written responses. These are indicated in the journal by an asterisk (*).

The journal forms a very rich description of the ways the spiritual life of a lay Catholic high school teacher manifests itself in the ministry of teaching. The individual entries are labeled with the assigned pseudonym that respects the anonymity of its origin while allowing the reader to follow a particular individual respondent throughout the journal.

The journal is a recording of the discourse that I was privileged to observe during my qualitative journey into the minds, hearts, and souls of my lay colleagues in Catholic education. Accessing the deepest areas of their lives as teachers and journaling them was a very powerful and meaningful experience for me as a researcher. The experience of carrying the lantern of faith into the inner life of others compelled me to share my own

inner thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and reflections on the same four dimensions of the ministry of teaching in a Catholic school: The Call, The Mission, The Community, and The Spirit. Hopefully, your experience of reading this study will prompt a similar response within you the reader.

CHAPTER 4

JOURNAL

Introduction

This spiritual journal serves an analysis of the data gathered during the study. I chose to portray the data in this manner to respect its spiritual nature with its accompanying depth, intimacy, and personal value. The entries are organized into four spiritual dimensions that emerged during my critical analysis and prayerful reflection on the data: The Call, The Mission, The Community, and The Spirit. Taken as a whole, the spiritual journal can be considered a collective spiritual reflection of a faculty of lay teachers in Catholic high schools. It creates a portrait of sorts of their inner life. Each dimension is introduced and concluded with a scriptural or inspirational quote identified by the teachers as being significant to their life as a teacher in a Catholic school.

A reminder that participants **Alice – Gloria** are from Group One and that participants **Henry – Mary** are from Group Two. An asterisk (“*”) symbolizes that the entry is from the initial written responses.

“Many are the plans in one’s heart, but it is God’s will that prevails.” (Proverbs 19: 21)

Every person of mature faith comes to realize the profound truth of this proverb. Every person of mature faith comes to realize that God’s will prevails ultimately in our life and our world. Coming to this point in one’s spiritual journey is as unique and personal as are the plans, hopes, and dreams in one’s heart. Lay teachers in a Catholic

high school in their ministry must possess such a mature faith that understands how God's will has brought them to this point in their life.

This journal begins by sharing the various ways that lay teachers in Catholic high school have come to realize the profound truth of this proverb as it relates to their life's vocation as a teacher. The entries reveal that the spiritual path to this vocation can be filled with twists, surprises, and conversions that include inspirational teachers, coaches, and family members.

The Call

Elizabeth - "I tend to be a very structured person but what amazes me is the fact that my life has taken many twists and turns. I have to have my life going this way and whatever and, you know, I think that my life has gone in so many different ways. I started out in education, spent ten years there and said, 'I will never ever, ever teach ever again.' I left everything and walked into a business and spent almost 20 years there. When I left, I knew exactly what I wanted to do -- go back to teaching. But, I wanted to pick and choose and I definitely wanted to go to a private school, preferably a Christian or religious-based school. I think it's really interesting that, you know, that is exactly it! I could plan my life all I wanted but God was definitely going to push me in the direction that I needed to go. I truly believe that I am doing exactly what I am supposed to be doing at this point in time. As much as I want to say, 'Okay God, I don't really want to be doing this,' I just know that this is what I need to be doing."

Bob - "I fell into this job accidentally. I had no intention on being here. I got called in to come and fill in as a substitute teacher for six weeks back in 1970. The next thing you know when the regular teacher came back, they lightened her load and kept me the rest of the year. They hired me full-time for the next year. I had no intention of staying long term here. It's like it was always meant to be and I've always been very happy. I've seen lots of people who left half our staff would leave in the 70's. You would learn all the names and then half the people would be gone at the end. It was usually the young, single ones or the people who were starting families and whatever. Half the staff left. People who taught here back in the 1970's until they could get something in the public school. They left - they just left. They stayed until they got a public school job. I just wasn't interested; I liked it so well. I enjoyed my job here so well, I love who I worked with, I loved the department and I learned so much just starting to work here that I never wanted to leave."

* - "When I was around 22 years old, a teacher whom I had admired during high school asked me if I wanted to start coaching football. At the time I was a delivery person for a fast food restaurant. Once I started coaching I realized how much I liked to help the young kids with learning. This experience as a coach helped me to make my decision on becoming a teacher and to have a meaningful future."

* - "I helped coach gymnastics in while I was in high school. I realized how rewarding teaching could be through coaching. I started coaching when I was 17, and found that I had a knack for it! Coaching sports was very easy for me, so I naturally gravitated towards teaching as a career. It seemed very natural and satisfying. You

cannot explain the feeling you get, when you see your students or players achieve something as a result of your guidance. There is no better feeling than that as a professional!”

Bob - “I was inspired by many of my teachers while I was in school. I can still list every grade school teacher that I was taught by and I can remember a large number of my high school teachers. Many of my teachers have had a lasting impact on my life in the way they taught and encouraged me. I particularly loved biology in 10th grade and when I decided to teach, it was biology that I choose.”

* - “I became a teacher because it is in my blood. My sister was always a role model for me when growing up, and she is a teacher. Because of my great respect and admiration for her, I always considered the teaching profession to be an admirable one. In grade school, my teacher asked me to help tutor students who were having difficulty grasping the concepts. I enjoyed helping the students. In high school I became an after school tutor. In college, I had many people come to me regularly because they found my instruction clear and concise. My college professor encouraged me to become a teacher.”

Gloria - “My high school teachers and guidance counselor had more of an influence on my choice than my family. I became a teacher because I always admired teachers. My high school English teacher was my idol, and I wanted to do what she did. I became a teacher because of the respect I had for several of my teachers in school who were a positive role model for me.”

Elizabeth - “I feel like I am a Catholic high school teacher because I am supposed to be - but I am not going to be left alone, everyone is going to help me. That’s one thing

I love about it. I love the teachers. Everyone helps you -- they guide you. It's just been wonderful. Really, I thank God for two things: The first is that he brought me back 'home,' which was so wonderful after being gone for twenty years. The second was to bring me 'here.' I just feel so blessed that I am here. I grew up Protestant. I have a religious background in the Lutheran Church and the Methodist Church but not in the Catholic Church. So it wasn't until after I got married -- married Catholic, and started to learn more about the Catholic Church that I felt drawn to (it) and went through the R.C.I.A. program. Catholics talk a lot about a 'calling' -- God 'calling' us, and 'journey' -- taking 'journey.' So when I look back over my life, when I was (studying) at Clarion University if you would have told me I would have ended up teaching at a Catholic school, I probably would have laughed and said 'Forget that, the pay is lousy, the nuns are mean.' All of the Protestant stereotype of Catholic -- you have to eat fish on Friday, all of that -- I grew up with. I would have said, "Forget that." So lo and behold, I married somebody who is Catholic, which was a real interesting choice for my family. So that if we get around to: Have I been "led" here? Have I been "called" here? I taught in the public school up until the time that I got married. Teaching positions were dime-a-dozen in the 70's. It wasn't until we moved to this area and my children went to school in Catholic school -- and my brother teaches in the public school! So with all of that background, when I think about why I am here, there are two things: one is the song, the refrain is 'Here I am Lord, I hear you calling in the night.' So I feel somehow I have been 'called' here. I have been 'led' here; I've been 'called' here. This is where I am supposed to be right now."

“I will instruct you and counsel you and I will guide you and lead you.” (Psalm 32: 8-9)

The Mission

“I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.” (John 10: 14)

Alice - “I really feel like I belong in a special way to the students and they belong to me. And even when I see them at the mall or the movies, I say to a friend that’s one of my students, that’s one of my sophomores. I really feel like if something happened to them or if they misbehaved in public, I would be hard pressed to not correct them or console them. I just feel very connected to them and hope they feel that way to me.”

Henry - “Teaching in a Catholic school really is a kind of vocation where you really are using your faith as a kind of touchstone to everything about you -- your attitude, what you value in life, how you handle the good things in your life as well as adversity and conflict. I think how you focus on what you teach; I think that faith is definitely a part of that. Being in a Catholic school, that really is the center of what our mission is to teach the journey in faith.”

Gloria - “I also feel that, you know, that one of the most important things with young people being able to watch how they deal with things, see where they can call upon their faith as their faith is growing. Sometimes it comes as a big encouragement to me too in my stage in life. And I think they watch their teachers too. You cannot teach effectively and not be dealing with values and morality and philosophies. I think that in a Catholic school that is what is really an important leverage that you have that you can talk about those things. There is not a writer or president or kind of leader in the world

that, you know, isn't calling on his or her own faith and to be able to talk about it, and also on how it would measure up and how it compares or how it contrasts to what we think and what we should obviously hold as our faith. And I think too that people watch you and hopefully in our attitudes in how we handle justice, fairness, love and respect for other people. Students sometimes go through the most valuable lessons we are teaching. They can read and they can interpret but I think that they are also watching too and hoping that you are an example of what you are teaching."

Frank - "I recall a time when the teachers and students were aware of a faculty member who was diagnosed with breast cancer and was undergoing chemotherapy and radiation treatments. This was before the school year actually began, which would have been around August and school had a couple weeks to go yet. And when school began, several faculty members decided that during the six weeks of therapy that this individual had to go through, they did not want her worrying about meals and they organized and assigned that every faculty member contribute a food item from an entrée to salad to desert or whatever. And for six weeks the faculty basically provided meals for this individual and her family. For much of the faculty, and for many of them, this person whom they didn't even meet yet, and all were willing to do this. And the comment made at the faculty In-service was 'Isn't this what we're all about?' And when the school year began and the students, of course, could smell the food and knew something was going on after school, asked one teacher what are you doing? Are you having a meeting or a party or whatever? One teacher did say to the student what we were doing. And they

asked, 'Is there something we can do?' We want to do something for that teacher too. Let her know that maybe we don't know her yet but we are concerned about her.'

Gloria – “Just the joy of watching how your actions set an example and a tone and again that those students – that's compassion. The roots of compassion means to suffer with somebody and I think that's just such a mark of maturity that you can see beyond your own little world. I think at our school and teaching in a Catholic school there is a lot of compassion in school and it's not, and I don't know how else to say it, but it's not a 'secular' compassion. It's compassion because it's example of what we're supposed to be following. We're all saying that we're here and followers of Christ and you said about Christ being the teacher and that vocation there would be, I think that's one of the things we're supposed to be demonstrating.”

* - “My passion for teaching was the result of my early experience with “passionate” teachers. From my grade school years, my goal has clearly been to pursue a career in teaching. I chose education because of my passion for learning. Because I excelled in my subject area, I truly enjoyed the subject. Teaching enables me to share this joy.”

Ivy - “I think for me the joy comes when I see a student create something that he or she didn't think they would be able to do. That they make a painting or a piece of sculpture or a piece of pottery and they are just astounded that they did it and that they did it so well. That just makes me so happy. This year I had one boy who went crazy on the pottery wheel and ended up making about five-dozen pieces of pottery. They kept getting better and better all year and he gave a lot of it away and was unbelievable

thrilled. The same way with some people who worked on paintings – they just shocked themselves and were so happy and so proud of themselves and I was proud of them, too.”

Bob - “There is a saying: ‘A candle loses nothing of its light by lighting another candle.’ So we have the light, we have the knowledge. Whatever it is that we have that we bring about as teachers to school every day, then we want to light the fires; we want to light the other candles. I remember when in Bible school -- Sunday school, hiding your light under a bushel. No, I am going to let it shine. I think we need to let it shine. We need to try to get our students to let it shine. Let them be different. Let them realize their own individuality.

Christine - “I just feel being a teacher - and also being a parent and being a single parent at that, I recall being a chaperone at a dance in the gym and I said to myself just looking around it scares me to raise my daughter. It really scares me; I get afraid everyday of what she’s going to be faced with and teachers we know you have no control over that. You can say “raise them right” but when they are out there and there is that sense of comfort that comes over me knowing that she will go to school here and the people that you trust will be teaching her. You trust a lot in your child because you know that if anything – if it’s going to be done right, it’s going to be here in this place. Not only academically – because academically I think that we are very strong. It is not just the academics – it is everything else they get out of here. I think for a parent, as a teacher here, to say my child will go nowhere else but here it is a huge compliment to everybody that you work with because we are in it together.

“So it is with faith, if it is alone and includes no actions then it is dead. But someone will say one person has faith, another has actions. My answer is, show me how anyone can have faith without actions. I will show you my faith by my actions.” (James 2:14)

The Community

For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members of one another. (Romans 12:5)

Lou - “I just thought that passage as saying that each of our kids that come into our classroom has different gifts and it’s our job to kind of find those gifts and to develop them, nourish them. We can’t slight one over another because they are better academically or not as good academically. We have to kind of find what their good is and bring it out in them to the best of our ability. I think it happens a lot. Down through the years I have always seen them included.

Bob - “Kids can sense a phony. The slowest student you have can sense a phony. They can sense incompetence and they can sense contradiction and hypocrisy. And I think that is the biggest thing, there’s a joy here and I think they would be the first to tell you they have a way of making it known to you when they do things out of you. Obviously this isn’t paradise, but there are certainly kids we have difficulty with but overall, I think even in those situations, when they look at you as being fair, they look at the school community as being a place where they are accepted and it is a fair

environment. That speaks volumes. What better joy is there than to be in an environment where there is fairness and compassion.”

Frank - “I recall the first year that the school held a student Bachelor/Bachelorette Auction. Someone could win a chance to dance with a particular student at the Homecoming Dance. We had the bag where students were buying tickets at lunch and it was the first time we had done it. We were going through some things when about Wednesday or Thursday of that week when the girls who had been selling the tickets brought them back to me. They said, we checked to make sure that everybody had a ticket. Because these were pretty much fairly popular students to begin with that had been asked to be willing to auction themselves off, so to speak, and to dance with somebody that may or may not be a real popular kid. You know, they were committed to come to the dance and dance with this person but just to check to make sure that somebody had put a ticket in the bag.”

Donald - “We have had kids with handicaps, we have kids with all kinds of problems and I have never really seen out-and-out discrimination against any of them. Even this year, when I asked one of the girls who had transferred into our school after she was here for a couple of weeks, ‘how do you like it here?’ She said, ‘Oh, it is like night and day.’ She was so thrilled because she said she was going to work on one of the play productions. She said that at her other school unless you were in that group, there was no way you could come in and do anything. She was going to be involved in the play and she was thrilled and everybody was so nice to her and so accepting and whatever. That says something right there when a student comes up to you and tells that she finds the

other students so willing to let an outsider in, somebody who is brand new. I don't think this particular person went to grade school with these kids either. We have some that leave and then come back. I think she was totally new and, you know she just glowed when she was telling me that she was so thrilled and so happy. It made me feel good too. It brings joy to you to hear that kind of thing because that's what we are trying to get them to understand that's what it's all about here."

Frank - "Another incident that I recall is when one year after the Christmas dance, we had had a real big Christmas dance. It was really crowded so we were starting to talk about: Do we need to split this up? Do we need to go to a larger venue, some place that could handle more students comfortably, something with a bigger dance floor? We made some suggestions -- do we do a freshman/ sophomore, junior/senior dance with two separate dances? Do we do a sophomore/junior/senior dance and have a Christmas party for the freshman? And there were seniors that spoke up when we were talking about it and they said: no, this is the one formal dance we have that everybody can attend because the freshman can't go to the prom, not many sophomores go to the prom and they wanted to keep it one thing which the school did before Christmas before Christmas vacation. We looked around and found some place larger that could handle larger numbers. They recognized, they did not want to shut out freshman or make them feel put out. We can have a really nice party; they didn't want to do that. So they see it and they recognize it.

Gloria - "I think the biggest story that I have seen in this community is the level of maturity that our kids have. When I say 'maturity' I mean not so much in what we consider to be the more secular kinds of things. I think in their faith, their ability to show

compassion, their concern to want to make other people feel good about themselves. We help them to feel good about themselves; find things that they can shine in, be honest in the things they don't but they can accept that because we are finding something else that obviously we value them as a person, not just what they wear and what they drive to school, or, you know, that kind of thing, or who their friends are. And I think that's why they don't seek out for the most part wanting to; you know, defame or destroy somebody else because I think they don't feel that's a thing done to them. And I think that one of the reasons that people are here, I mean I am sure even you and parents certainly are the ones making the decisions for students to be here. I honestly think if our kids did not feel that there is a reason to be here and there is something different, especially many of our transfers that come from maybe a year or two in another school, why they like our school. They may not be able to articulate in the way we are talking about it but I think it goes back to there is something they see here and something about the way they feel when they are here. And I think that's the same way we are. You know, I know how I feel when I am here. I always thought of like you do other jobs and you look at the clock and you think, 'Oh Lord it has to be later than that.' Teaching isn't like that. It's September and the next day it's June, you know, not quite but almost that. And I think that speaks volumes as far as meaning like, you know, that obviously your days and your time must be well spent. There has to be some kind of joy that you are not giving it a specific way all the way through. But I think that we are here and teaching is so important to us, I think that one of the most important things to see is the kids as they grow here. They are not egocentric, they are more concerned and they can show compassion without being

ridiculed for it. All of you giving testimony here about how many specific situations you've seen the kids do that. And even though I almost come to expect it of them because I guess I'm spoiled here, it still is a big joy to see them do that and even though this wasn't essential, I think the kids, it's our actions. They are watching us constantly and I think that they learn the biggest lessons we are teaching are the things we aren't even aware of."

Christine - "I read a saying by St. John Fisher one time and it caught me because I think it speaks for 'why' -- not why I am a teacher, but why I am a teacher in a Catholic school. We must see that every child has equal opportunity not to be grateful but to become different to realize the potential that he or she possesses. I think that if educators are true in every aspect that we should want to do just that. I think that teaching in Catholic school, we have more of an opportunity -- we are allowed to "be." It is not the equality of "every kid gets the same," we are allowed to tend to the individual students as needed. We have that freedom within our own classroom and our building to do that. I remember when I was teaching in a public school, I had a statue of Mary on my desk and I went to say, "God bless you" to a student and I caught myself. That was really hard for me that day. I just couldn't say that because it might offend somebody. I just think we have the freedom and the opportunity to do so much more spiritually, morally and educationally in our school. Our students should hopefully become "different" not "equal" because every student learns in different ways, different speed and everybody's potential and gifts might be realized.

Kelly - "I have learned so much from working with other people here. I have learned tremendous quantities of information; and my students -- there are so many things I've learned just from working with the students. It's just amazing how much more in-depth you learn your subject when you are working with the kids and hearing their questions. Then you have to explore a little bit and you learn so much from them -- from their perspective on things.

"Much have I learned from my teachers, more from my colleagues but most from my students". (The Talmud)

The Spirit

Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire. (W.B. Yeats)

Bob - "My role as a teacher is not just filling in the facts and information. I am hoping that they carry it out and use it in their everyday life. I hope they want to continue learning and not just say: 'Ok, I am through with this class - I can forget about it; I never have to come back to it.' If that's the lighting of the fire, I just hope I have lit some fires through my career."

Alice - "This doesn't happen to me everyday, maybe once or twice a week - really. At night when I am planning my lesson, sometimes it's a lesson that I did last year but I'm kind of looking at it again, I'll have an insight or feeling or an awareness that I never had about that material before and I just think it's so cool. I feel like I learned or grew and I get so excited about that lesson. It's that lesson the next day you

feel different than a regular lesson or something that when I didn't that feeling. It's a kind of a feeling like God's running things. That's a really private moment. Usually it only happens when I have the TV off – when I am really absorbed in the material that I am going to go over and not thinking about how I am going to teach it but just thinking about the material. I'll tell the kids I had one of those moments yesterday and they'll know what I mean because I explained it to them earlier in the year.”

Donald – “I just want to say one more thing. There are those days and it's like you don't know what happened that day where you just have that awesome day in your classroom. And the whole day, maybe every class, where there's more rapport than there ever is and at the end of the day you walk out and you think ‘Wow, what a day I had with all my students! What was different today? What happened? And like I could be doing something different in every class and you can't put your finger on it. It was like somebody from above was guiding you all day and guiding the kids all day in their interactions. Like there was something beyond which you were doing because I have left here – you know it happens maybe a couple times a year, doesn't happen that often. This is really like a day when you just feel like it's overwhelming and it's not because you had an assembly; it's not because of this. There's something extra there like there was a guiding hand on top of you that day and everything just went. You know, you just feel like ‘wow’. But I've had those kinds of days, not that often but there are those days when it happens.”

Jack - “I can remember one day one of the students that was in my study hall on a regular basis over the lunch period study hall said to me, ‘When I get married I want my

marriage to be like yours.’ I don’t know if this happened at the Homecoming Dance or the Christmas Dance, one of the dances that Student Council had done, at the end of the dance my husband danced with me and the two of us danced the last slow dance. The student just said, ‘I just thought that was the neatest thing that you and your husband still dance and that you are still together. When I get married that’s the kind of marriage I want to have.’ It just kind of blew me away to have a student say that to me. Another cherished moment that I recall is when our religion department does an assignment for the seniors. Students are assigned to interview somebody that is married. They have a list of questions they have to ask about being married and when a student came to me and remarked to me: ‘I knew right away who I was going to ask.’ That was a graced experience.”

Donald - “I remember a saying that left a deep impression on me and I don’t remember the source: ‘It’s not what you say or what you do that people remember, it’s how you make them feel that they will carry with them the rest of their lives.’ That is what lies behind a lot of the things I do. I know some people think the birthday cards in the morning are silly and do not belong in a high school. But, I think for the kids, and even the parents, I get so much feedback from them. ‘You don’t know how nice it was that you sent that little congratulations on the honor roll or the thank you card because they did this...’ - and that's just one part of it. We are able to build relationships. I love chaperoning the prom and seeing the kids there. It’s like going to the movies and knowing I might run into kids. I come to football games; I come to basketball games. I like chaperoning the dance. Not only has this school become my place of employment,

but it has become part of my family. My grandfather thinks grandma is here all the time. It's a relationship we build and how we feel when we are here and how the kids make up who we are. To me that's very special."

Bob - "I remember the first Gulf War back in 1991, when the neighboring Armory members were killed over in Kuwait. We had a prayer service and it was a very sad and mournful day and time and I think a lot of the teachers were nervous prior to the prayer service about how the kids were going to respond to this. We did have somewhat of a relationship at that time with some of those army men. Right before that, the year or so before, the sophomores had done Army Day and, unbeknownst to their moderator, they went across to the Armory and this was still in a time when military was just turned around, the whole attitude, and whatever. Unbeknownst to their moderators, they went over and they asked to borrow uniforms, you know, camouflage uniforms. Those guys were thrilled and gave them. These kids came head-to-toe, they borrowed boots, they borrowed ... I had no clue this was going on. I mean, they didn't tell the moderators they were going over to ask the military people. The kids did know some of the people from over there and when they were killed over there, we held a prayer service. What was unusual about it is that we were swamped with the media -- the national media were here. This was on CNN and, you know we had people coming in from the Armory, officers, and people from the military who had come in to counsel the families. We had a lot of guests in school and I have to say it was a very sad time but I was also very proud of our student body. It was just amazing at how our student body responded to that ceremony we had, the prayer service. There were people walking around -- I blame the media for

this – I think it’s wrong, cameras inches away from their faces and things. I find the media very disgusting in some of those kinds of cases. Maybe not everyone agrees but I think it’s wrong to do that. And our student body was tremendous during that time period. It was just a tremendous prayer service. It was a real uplifting time even though it was such a mournful time. It’s hard to put into words how it was because you felt very badly for the families and the men who were killed but, at the same time, there was a feeling of peace that was just overwhelming because of the way the kids were responding. Everybody in the community had come together and how everything went. It was just like you’re experiencing something very spiritual.”

Alice - “So far in my teaching career, the most difficult day I have ever had to be a teacher was September 12, 2001. I thought it was September 11 but until I went home at night and realized ‘Oh God, I have to go back tomorrow.’ I felt like saying I know as little about what’s happening at you do right now and they kind have expected us, their teachers to understand. I went home that night and I wondered ‘what am I going to do in school tomorrow?’ As their religion teacher there is no way I can just go on as though nothing happened. It’s like I needed to do something different and so I planned a prayer service that night for my juniors and my freshman. In some of the classes it went ok, and others it went better. My fourth period freshman class -- I was so humbled and in that moment I definitely felt as if I were the student and they were my teachers. I had them all sit in a circle and I read something from the Bible and we had a candle. I gave them some reflection time to write a prayer about what had happened yesterday and as they passed the candle, they had a chance to say the prayer silently or share out loud if they

wanted to. One or two kids just passed the candle but most of these 9th graders read their prayers and this was two weeks into their high school career but some were the most profound prayers I will never forget. There were twenty of them and as the candle went around, I just felt this struggle coming over me and I just thought, 'whoa! - now I have to switch roles.' It was absolutely beautiful, so pure and innocent, which was so different from what we were inundated with the day before. I will never forget how humbled I felt and blessed at the same time with those 22 freshmen. What a responsibility we have on a day like that. They look to us. We have eight hours and most of that day we have been going through all that and that's such a huge responsibility. We are so fortunate to have the freedom to be able to talk about religion in that in the way that we need to discuss it. You don't have to be afraid and walk on eggshells like, 'Oh, what if I say something and they go home and tell their parents we were talking about faith. The one thing that is so unique about us is that we can just talk about our faith. That responsibility doesn't become lighter but it becomes a little bit more manageable because we have the freedoms that we have to discuss things in the manner that will help them understand. There is no reason morally and ethically, and from a value standpoint, that you cannot make it 'ok' but you can make it lighter for them to bear.'"

Mary - "I feel such a sense of 'peace'. I have this peace about me that even though I'm going 50 miles an hour either literally on the highway or figuratively in the classroom, there's calmness - a peace. I believe it's from the Holy Spirit and that's what goes with me teaching no matter whether I am working a complicated problem on the board or whatever, it's always there in the background. My hardest month of the

calendar year is June. And the reason it is because you can't work with people and students the way we do on a day-to-day basis where you know so many things about them, not just from academia that you have and you are responsible for but you know them personally. You don't even necessarily have to have a conversation with them; it's the things that you observe. And to have that, you know, all that kind of communication and company, June is a very tough month for me to think that when you get up on Monday, school is out. You aren't going to see these people on a day-to-day basis, you won't even see them until school starts in the fall and, you know, when things happen during the day you think, oh if so-and-so would see this or hear this or whatever. Or, that reminded me of so-and-so. I hope so-and-so saw this on television on history channel. You don't have that chance to say that and it's hard, you know. You miss them, it's a very demanding kind of thing when you are here but when it's done in June it suddenly over – and I find that very difficult.”

“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ.” (Philippians 4:7)

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This study has been a rich spiritual experience for both the lay teachers who participated in it and for the researcher himself. The tone of the spiritual reflections of lay teachers in this study reflected a deep and abiding conviction and belief about the nature of their ministry. These reflections of ministry were given shape and form in previous chapter using four dimensions: The Call, The Mission, The Community, and The Spirit. I now offer these personal reflections regarding the ministry of lay teachers in a Catholic high school using these same four dimensions as a structure.

The Call

The Lord called to Samuel, who answered, "Here I am." (1 Samuel 3: 4)

For many people the subject of being "called by God" conjures up images of a strong and clear communication in the form a loud deep voice from the heavenly realms accompanied by the separation of the clouds, lightening bolts and other celestial signs. None of the teachers in this study described their call to teaching in a Catholic school in these terms. Their reflections about why they became teachers in a Catholic high school tell of a more subtle and indirect experience of being "called by God". These teachers have taken different paths for different reasons, but they have converged at the same point of ministry in a Catholic high school. Their descriptions of taking different paths,

experiencing unexpected and accidental turns, receiving inspiration and encouragement from important mentors and models, and just feeling right speak of a mysterious aspect to our life's calling and journey.

Their reflections resonate with my own spiritual journey on how God has brought me to this point in my own vocation that has converged on the same path as the teachers in this study. I can see bits and pieces of their experiences in my own life's journey. Like the teachers, there is no single moment in my life when I was "called by God". Rather, my calling to the vocation of priesthood and that of administrative ministry was more gradual over time requiring reflection and discernment.

Upon graduation from high school, I attended the United States Naval Academy for plebe summer with the intention of becoming a Naval officer. During this time of indoctrination my mother became very ill suffering a heart attack. This caused me a lot of stress and anxiety. I eventually came to the decision to leave the academy in early August. After returning home, I still wanted to attend some college that fall and explored a couple of options. I visited a couple of college campuses that offered me admission and decided to go to Gannon, a small private Catholic University, in Erie, Pennsylvania.

During my freshman year in college I was inspired and impressed by a priest who served as the men's residence hall chaplain. One day out of the blue he asked me whether or not I have ever considered becoming a priest. My initial response was, "Yes, if I could get married" – knowing that this was not possible. This encounter was the moment when the notion of the call to priesthood was planted in my mind, heart, and soul. However, it

took me some two years after that moment to finally decide to change my course of studies in the direction of diocesan priesthood and enter the seminary formation program.

Upon ordination to the diocesan priesthood it seems that God has directed my ministry to Catholic schools. My first assignment was to a parish associated with a Catholic grade and high school. I felt very comfortable teaching religion to middle and high school students during these years. Since then, I have been blessed with the opportunity to have my bishop assign me to serve as chaplain, teacher, and now administrator in a Catholic high school. During this time I have also have furthered my formal education in graduate studies in educational administration. My calling to this ministry has been a combination of a Bishop's assignment, personal interest and talent, personal initiative, and the grace of God.

Before I formed you in the womb I know you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you. (Jeremiah 1: 5)

The Mission

Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. (Mark 16:15)

The mission of teaching in a Catholic high school is a both a personal and corporate one. This mission is connected to one's personal experience of faith, to the specific mission of the school, and to the broader mission of the Catholic Church. In some mystical way, Jesus' commissioning of the disciples to proclaim the gospel and build the kingdom of God continues through the words and actions of teachers in a Catholic high school.

Exemplary lay teachers in a Catholic high school see a relationship between their teaching and this mission. Their teaching is enriched by their faith. They seek out opportunities to carry out this mission by engaging their students in growing, sharing, and witnessing to their faith. Such teachers understand the importance of service, caring, compassion, justice, and human dignity. They possess an inner “passion” for their teaching and connect it to their life of faith.

At this time of my life, I am blessed to share this a mission with the colleagues of this study who are lay teachers in a Catholic high school. My mission of diocesan priestly ministry has always been to provide a positive experience of the Catholic religion, church, and faith. This mission is a mixture of personal belief and conviction, pastoral service, leadership, and official ministerial assignment. I have always believed that this mission gives and receives life - a ministry that provides service to others, but also renews my life of faith.

There are numerous opportunities to provide ministry such as, presiding at mass and prayer services, preparing and sharing a homily, planning and organizing retreat experiences, celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation, providing care and prayerful support during times of illness and crises. These opportunities present challenges and are the work of ministry. They require much pastoral preparation, reflection, presence, and practice. However, these same opportunities provide a wealth of meaningful and spiritually enriching experiences that refresh my soul. Such moments are filled with grace and blessing. When my heart fills with joy during the marriage of an alumni that I taught or when I extend the forgiveness and peace of God to a student’s soul that removes

their shame and guilt, such moments are filled with God's grace and blessing. They renew my faith and mission.

I have dedicated my life to serving God's people as a diocesan priest and consider it a blessing to share in the ministry and mission of Catholic high schools with dedicated and faithful lay teachers. Together we are sharing our faith and are forming our students' life of faith. I hope and pray that these students will cherish God's gift of faith and will hear Gospel and its invitation to build God's kingdom of love, justice, and peace. There is a longing in my heart and soul that somehow through my words, actions, and interactions some of our students will hear the call of God to service and ministry in the Church. This would give me great joy and fulfillment.

I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. (Luke 10: 21)

The Community

I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)

Quite often visitors to our school make the remark that there is something "special" about our school. This special quality that is powerful enough to be felt flows from the religious dimension of our school that naturally creates a community. We are more than a school – a place. We are a group of people connected to one another through our life of faith – a community of faith. Teachers, students, parents, administrators, and

staff share a common mission to form community and to experience community where love, respect, and hope dwells.

There is something life giving about being part of such a community. Each day is filled with moments and opportunities to interact with others in a fully human way. There is a sense of being familiar enough to be connected to one another while sharing a mutual respect for each other's role in the community as teacher, student, parent, administrator, or staff. There is a dynamic created among the members of our school community and an awareness of our shared commitment to fairness, integrity, care, and concern.

My life of priestly ministry has been thoroughly enriched by my service to the Catholic High School community. In particular, I have grown to respect and appreciate the work and efforts of our teachers as colleagues in the ministry of Catholic education. It has been my experience that they believe that their role and responsibility go beyond the classroom and the school day. For them, teaching is more than what they do – it is who they are. They take great pride in their duty as a teacher in a Catholic high school and realize that they are called to minister to the students, their families, and each other by their care and concern beyond the classroom and the school day.

The mission of a Catholic high school is rooted in the beliefs, values, and teachings of the Catholic Church, with its Sacred Scripture and Tradition. These serve to guide and direct the life of a Catholic high school. God's love reflected through the words and actions of its members is the center of our community of learning and believing. This is the heart and soul of our 'common unity' – a place in the center where

faith, hope and love prevail through all of our human efforts of forming and experiencing a Catholic high school. Catholic high schools are an extension of the ministry of the Catholic Church and must maintain a clear Catholic mission.

Do nothing out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but everyone for those of others.
(Philippians 2: 3-4)

The Spirit

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. (1 Corinthians 12: 4-7)

For Catholics the Holy Spirit is one person of the Triune God and is associated with creative power and wisdom. I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit many times throughout this study. Conducting the focus groups was as “awesome” experience for me, witnessing lay colleagues of mine in Catholic education share their faith from their heart and soul. Analyzing their conversation and watching the themes emerge was a sacred experience of the Holy Spirit.

On one level, it may seem that words of these teachers are no different than what would be expected from any good teacher – void of any religious grounding. However, the passion, power, and felt expression of the teachers during the focus group sessions pointed to a source of care, concern, and commitment that was beyond the capacity of the human heart. The tone and power of their reflections and stories recorded in this study

indicate the presence of the sacred and points to the presence of the Holy Spirit. The various aspects of their ministry surfaced through this study. Their words possess a clarity and transparency that allows for the revelation of the sacred - the Holy Spirit.

The mission of a Catholic school lies in the ideals and teachings of the Catholic Church, but only the deep and abiding faith of the lay men and women who serve as teachers assures that this mission is realized. Ultimately, all work of the Church is the work of the Holy Spirit whose presence is subtle and needs discernment. The lay teachers in this study who carry out the work of Catholic education shared countless aspects of how the Holy Spirit works through their ministry of teaching in a Catholic school.

This study examined the worthy nature of the call to serve as a lay teacher in a Catholic high school. It has made clearer the ways that these teachers truly minister to their students, their families, and to each other as a community of faith and participate in the mission of Catholic education. Lay teachers in Catholic schools share something that is not only very special, but is ultimately very sacred. They share the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit that works through them touching the minds, hearts and souls of those they teach while filling their own life of faith with grace and blessings.

I urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body, and one Spirit, as you were also

called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, on baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:1-6)

Implications and Recommendations

This study was intentionally designed to address two fundamental research questions regarding the nature of Catholic schools:

How have some Catholic schools preserved and enhanced their sense of mission and purpose now that religious women and men no longer constitute a significant proportion of the teaching staff?

How are some Catholic schools successfully navigating the major trend toward a predominant lay teaching staff and remaining faithful to their two-fold purpose of learning and believing?

These questions are significant to those who have a vested interest in the future of Catholic schools: Catholic educational leaders, current parents, and prospective parents. The viability of Catholic schools is related in a large part to the lay faculty who share the responsibility of the Catholic identity and culture of the school. Lay teachers in Catholic schools need to be concerned with more than just academic excellence. They must be engaged in the practice of ministry addressing the spiritual and moral developmental needs of their students and their families.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this study was that lay teachers in a Catholic high school graciously shared their inner life of faith with little or no prompting or direction. Even though many references have been made to the nature of ministry among lay teachers in a Catholic school in Church documents and research, no one ever examined the role of the ministry of teaching in a Catholic high school from the perspective of the lay teacher. This study documents the understanding that lay teachers

have of their role as ministers in a Catholic high school as it relates it to both their personal identity and the corporate Catholic identity of the school.

This study focused on lay teachers in two Catholic high schools and how they engaged in the practice of educational ministry. Their own thoughts and reflections testify to their commitment to the spiritual dimension of their vocation as lay teachers in a Catholic school. Their words convey an extraordinary concern for extending support, compassion, care, and concern for all members in the school community. There is a sense that there is a genuine spirit of faith that is at the center of their ministry as Catholic high school teachers.

This study will be helpful to principals and others persons responsible for the identification, screening, and hiring of teachers in a Catholic school. Interview questions can be crafted in a way to give potential teachers in a Catholic school an opportunity to express their thoughts and ideas about the role they will play in the Catholic mission of the school. The goal would be to hire teachers who demonstrate an understanding of their role in the school's learning and faith community.

Principals and Diocesan educational administrators can also use the results in this study to develop and promote professional development opportunities and programs that focus on the faith formation of lay teachers in Catholic schools. As educational leaders principals, and superintendents together with teachers in Catholic schools share the responsibility of sustaining and promoting the Catholic identity and religious mission of Catholic schools. The professional development and formation of lay teachers in

Catholic schools must include opportunities to reinforce the unique nature of their role as ministers who share in the overall mission and purpose of the Catholic school.

The current discussion in the research community on the topic of Catholic institutions in general and Catholic schools in particular will continue explore the issue of Catholic identity. This study brings qualitative data from the perspective of lay teachers in a Catholic high school in light of their ministry to that conversation. For researchers interested in the vocational aspect of teaching in a Catholic school efforts to look at the ministry of lay teachers in Catholic grade schools and Catholic institutions of higher education would enhance our understanding of this concept. Similar qualitative research studies focusing on teachers at these other educational levels would give a broader perspective on the nature of the lay ministry of teaching in a Catholic school.

As the Holy Spirit guides the future mission of the Catholic Church the theological implications of lay ministry in relationship to the ministry of vowed religious and the ordained ministry of deacons, priests, and bishops will continue to be clarified and resolved. Bishops and other ecclesiastical leaders of the Catholic Church concerned with Catholic education can use the data of this study as a rich source of data for further reflection regarding the nature, purpose, and direction of Catholic schools. Those responsible for writing official statements regarding Catholic education can see in the data of this study examples of how lay teachers understand their vocation of ministry in a Catholic school. The organizational structure of Catholic schools will continue to change because of the culture and demographic changes in which they exist. The hierarchy of the Catholic Church and Catholic educational leaders will continue to address issue the

ministry of lay teachers in relation to the direction, purpose, mission, and identity of Catholic schools.

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APPENDIX A

Human Subject Consent Form

Human Subject Consent Form

Name of Researcher – Daniel L. Blout
1001 Mount Pleasant Road, Greensburg, PA 15601
(work phone) 724.834.0310 ext. 210

Title of Study: Teaching as “ministry”: A Case Study.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study that will take place during the months of January through March 2002.

The purpose of the project is to complete work for the Doctor of Education Degree, Duquesne University, Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program for Educational Leadership, Pittsburgh, PA.

The methods to be used to collect data for this study are as follows:

1. All teachers in the school will be asked to voluntarily answer two short essay questions.
2. Upon completion of the essay questions, all respondents will be asked to volunteer to participate in a personal follow-up audio taped personal interview and to keep a journal for five consecutive days regarding their educational practice of ministry.
3. Seven teachers, representing the English, Science, Fine Arts, Math, Foreign Language, Social Studies, and Religion departments will be identified as participants to gather additional data.
4. The researcher will spend one week as an observer in the school to gather empirical data on the daily educational practice of ministry.

From the gathered empirical data, a case study will be created to portray the educational practice of ministry in a Catholic high school.

The researcher will meet the following terms and conditions:

1. Your real name or the name of the school will not be used at any point of information gathering, or in the written case study. Instead, all persons, places, and names of places will be given pseudonyms for all verbal and written records and reports.
2. If you grant permission for audio-taping, no audio-taping will be used for any purpose other than to conduct this study and will not be played for any reason other than to conduct this study.
3. Your participation in this research is voluntary, you have the right to withdraw at any time during this study, for any reason, and without prejudice, and the information collected and recorded and reports written will be turned over to you.
4. You will have the opportunity to review a copy of the draft report to read.
5. You will have the opportunity to review a copy of the final report that is submitted to Duquesne University.

Signatures:

I have read the terms and conditions of this study and agree to participate in the initial two-question essay. I give my express permission to be quoted directly.

Name of Respondent (please print)

Signature

Date

I agree to the terms and conditions of this study.

Researcher Signature

Date

APPENDIX B

Initial Data Collection – Question One

Initial Data Collection - Question One

Use this sheet to answer the following question (use both sides if necessary):

Why did you decide to become a teacher?

A small number of teachers are needed to participate in follow up methods for this study.

Provide your name only if you are willing and give permission to participate in an audio taped interview and/or focus group and/or to keep a journal for five consecutive days.

Name of Respondent (please print)

Signature

Date

APPENDIX C

Initial Data Collection – Question Two

Initial Data Collection - Question Two

Use this sheet to answer the following question (use both sides if necessary):

What is it like to be a teacher in a Catholic high school?

A small number of teachers are needed to participate in follow up methods for this study.

Provide your name only if you are willing and give permission to participate in an audio taped interview and/or focus group and/or to keep a journal for five consecutive days.

Name of Respondent (please print)

Signature

Date

APPENDIX D

Memo to Participants

MEMO

To: Participants in Focus Group
From: Father Daniel L. Blout
Date: May 20, 2003
RE: Duquesne Study Focus Group
cc: Principal

Thank you for volunteering to participate in a focus group session as a follow-up to my dissertation study data collection. As I mentioned in our conversation, the session will be from 10:45 until 12:30 in the school library on Monday, June 2, 2003.

In preparation for the focus group I ask that you come prepared to answer the following question:

What one scriptural passage or other inspirational quote best speaks to you as a teacher in Catholic High school and why?

This question will serve as the starting point of our focus group discussion.

I look forward to seeing you in the library on Monday, June 2, 2003 at 10:45. Light refreshments will be served.