

**SUPPORTING SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF TEACHERS IN
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**

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Dedication

To my children, who embrace all life's adventures with enthusiasm
and so encourage me to do the same.

And to Mark, who understands my need to question and wonder
and who shows me how to celebrate life.

Abstract

This study, based on survey and interview data, seeks to understand how and why teachers in Catholic schools can be supported in their own spiritual development. The research describes and suggests ways to support and nurture spiritual formation for those who accept the vocation of teaching in Catholic schools.

Employing survey and interview methods, this inquiry is philosophically rooted in four Lonergan precepts of human consciousness. Be attentive; be intelligent; be reasonable; be responsible. The study begins with an *attentiveness* to the researcher's personal experience followed by an attending to the literature relevant to that lived situation. The formation of an *intelligent* inquiry into the questions arising from the named experiences deepens into a *reasonable* and *responsible* summary of the knowledge gained through the research.

Teachers from a small urban/rural Catholic school district were surveyed. Of the 267 surveys distributed, 112 were completed and returned (42%). From those surveyed, five volunteers were selected to be interviewed, responding to nine questions regarding spiritual formation and the factors contributing to it.

Recommendations that may nurture the spiritual development of teachers in Catholic schools are put forth in the concluding chapter of the thesis. These include recognizing teaching as ministry and supporting it as such; remaining attentive to the life questions of those in the vocation of teaching; leadership through example and witness; and nurturing the building of rich, authentic relationships in the school community.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Being Attentive

When I first began teaching in this region's Catholic schools, I was a recent graduate, just twenty-one years old. I had also attended the Lethbridge Catholic school system for all of my years of primary and secondary schooling. My Catholic faith had always been important to me so that prayer and weekly attendance at Mass were very much a part of my life. However, I was not fully prepared for what teaching in this system meant on a daily basis. The teacher's guide that accompanied the Religion course for my grade one class offered many suggestions for teaching basic Catholic doctrine and Christian life principles. It was quickly clear to me that teaching Religion was not like teaching the other subjects. I had to speak from the heart. The children asked questions about heaven and God that I could either not respond to because of lack of understanding or that I was afraid to respond to for fear of not giving the *right* answer. Although I had thought that I was prepared to do this, it was far different from helping at Sunday school. I began to wonder more about my faith. Most of what I did that first year came from youth, exuberance, and a strong belief in the Gospel of Jesus. I could not have articulated a need for more depth and more reflection about my spirituality at that time. Rarely am I able to identify and seek out what I need in an intentional and timely fashion. More often, I stumble into people, books, places, events or ideas that lead me along the path of personal discovery and reflection.

That first year was no exception. Three events happened that led me unconsciously on a path to a deeper spirituality. The parish priest asked for my help with

an evening Bible study course. That course offered me more insight and deeper knowledge about my faith. I did not realize that at the time. I was just doing what a *good* first year teacher in a Catholic school would do.

At the same time, the district presented an in-service for all grade one teachers about the Religion program. Once a month, we gathered for an afternoon to share ideas, pray, and ask questions. As the rookie, it opened my eyes to so many more questions and possibilities for what I could do with children in the area of spirituality but also what I could do for me. This in-service was not optional and had it been so, I probably would not have attended because of the overwhelming workload that year. The district paid for my substitute teacher and I was expected to be there monthly. The district's planning and expectations were the indirect catalyst for me to begin thinking about my spirituality and my teaching as a combination that could not be separated.

The third experience that occurred that first year which led me to creating a greater space for spiritual things in my life was the expectation that I plan prayer celebrations and liturgies for my students. Attending these same liturgies and celebrations as a student within the school district was the only training I had for developing and organizing these events of worship. There was much trial and error, much reading of scripture and searching of prayer books, much worrying about whether I was doing it right. I found older, more experienced mentors within the school to help me.

Through the experiences of that first year of teaching, I deepened what Parker Palmer refers to as a pilgrim journey to vocation (Palmer, 2000).

individual search to find vocation... likened to a pilgrim on a journey....
there are trials and darkness but it is a transformative journey to a sacred

center. The story of my journey is no more or less important than anyone else's. It is simply the best source of data I have on a subject where generalizations often fail but truth may be found in the details. (pp. 18-19)

It is through the details of personal experience that I intend to bring a new sense of how teachers create their way of knowing the world, that is, their spirituality, and what it is in their lives that nurtures the spiritual core and challenges it. From my experience, I now know that I needed some space to discover things on my own but that the mentors in my life formed a solid group where I was accepted and respected in all my youth and naiveté. The structure of the monthly meetings also ensured that a space and time for spiritual ideas and questions would be honoured. My lived experience, therefore, offers two very clear implications for supporting and nurturing spiritual formation within teachers: 1. create space and time for teachers to *seek* in a structured and formal setting, 2. mentors are essential.

Purpose of the Study

The spiritual formation of teachers raises many different questions about spirituality and professional development. For the purposes of this thesis, I wish to examine the basic demographic data of teachers within Holy Spirit School District such as gender, years of teaching experience, and religious background. I also seek to understand what it is these teachers believe about their own spirituality and the implications this has for the mentoring and spiritual formation of educators within Catholic schools, who are given a very direct mandate to pass on the Catholic faith to students. The expectation from church, parents, and administration far surpasses the dissemination of religious knowledge and doctrine. If Catholic schools are to be life-

giving spaces where students are able to seek, ask their important life questions and live in relationship to God and to others, then it is paramount that the teachers who are to be their guides address these same issues and be offered the support and mentoring required to live deeply reflective lives. That mentoring will encourage teachers to share their wisdom and ways of knowing the world with the children they teach.

Glossary of Terms

One need only go to any local bookstore to discover that the terms religion, spirituality, authentic living, and vocation have a myriad of meanings depending on where you find yourself in the store. The Self-help section, the Psychology section, and the Religions of the World section all treat these terms differently and with good reason. The recent explosion of reading material designed to help guide the disgruntled and somewhat “lost” souls who have abandoned traditional religions indicates that a distinction between what is religious practice and what is deep questioning from the soul is becoming more and more apparent. Because there are such diverse meanings implied with these terms, it is paramount that I clearly outline how the words *religion*, *spirituality*, *soul*, *authentic*, and *vocation* will be used in this thesis.

Spirituality

The Oxford English Dictionary, Volume XVI (1989) defines spirituality as the quality of being spiritual and that is further defined as that which pertains to the spirit. Spirit is “ the animating or vital principle in [humans] that gives life to the physical organism, in contrast to its purely material elements; the breath of life ” (p. 258). It is about what is within a person that provides the ability to do more than physically exist.

Spirituality is a way of making sense of the world within four key relationships: our relationship with self, with others, with nature, and with God. (Riechers, 2002). It is the quality of these relationships that defines us. Spirituality is 'how' we are in the world. Maria Harris (1988) quite succinctly describes spirituality as:

our way of being in the world, our way of doing whatever we do, in the light of being touched, held, delighted by and rooted in the Mystery of Divinity.... whether that Divinity is called God, Goddess, Holy Wisdom, the Unnamable or simply, "Thou." (p. 12)

Soul

While spirituality in this thesis is primarily relational and referring to the 'how' one is in the world, 'soul' is rooted in the 'who' one is. It is the energy of one's being where thought, intuition, wonder and emotion are not divided. It is the energy within which one finds the sense of self. Separate from the body, but manifested through the body in this world, the soul is the true self and it is unique to each human being. How the nature of that soul is breathed into the world becomes the individual's expression of spirituality in daily living.

Religion

A person's religious faith traditions and creed are most often an articulation of one's spirituality. Once again, the Oxford English Dictionary, Volume XIII (1989) assists in clarifying the distinction between *spirituality* and *religion*. "Religion is the action or conduct indicating a belief in, reverence for, and desire to please a divine ruling power" (p. 568). The practices, behaviour and worship that arise from this belief can then be defined as one's *religion*.

One's way of being in the world, one's relationships, and one's fundamental beliefs about God may be expressed through an organized creed and set of practices that a community or group subscribes to. When this happens, religion becomes a very accurate and authentic representation of one's spirituality. For many, the congruence between spirituality and religious practice is not so evident. Religious practices may be followed out of tradition, habit, expectation or comfort but not necessarily be intentionally spiritual in nature.

Authentic

This term refers to something that is "genuine, real, actual, " and is further distinguished by being "reliable, trustworthy and of established credit." The Oxford English Dictionary, Volume I (1989) offers these definitions but an additional phrase is particularly applicable to this study when speaking of *authentic living*. The dictionary refers to *authentic* as "belonging to [oneself], own, proper" (p. 795). When one can publicly live in accordance to one's beliefs and when one's actions demonstrate those beliefs, then it can be said that he or she is living *authentically*.

Vocation

Generally, this term refers to a calling by God for a person to fill a certain position in life (Oxford, 1989, p. 723). But how do we hear God's voice? What are the signs that we are truly fulfilling God's call for our lives? That calling is more accurately identified by Palmer (2000) when he cites Buechner as defining vocation as "the place where your deep gladness meets the world's deep need" (p. 16). One's desire and passion in life drives the discovery of vocation in its deepest sense. Palmer (2000) further

suggests that in listening for that voice or calling from God, one must be stubbornly insistent on listening to one's own life.

Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am. I must listen for the truths and values at the heart of my own identity, not the standards by which I must live, but the standards by which I cannot help but live if I am living my own life. (p. 4)

Understanding at a deeper level is necessary to truly touch on the *breath of life* in a person. That is what this research is about: It strives to illuminate what resides in the teacher's soul. It aims to make clear how it is we come to know the world in a deep way that allows us to find purpose and live fully. Ted Aoki (1990) offers that this way of knowing is what makes an educated person:

An educated person, first and foremost, understands that one's ways of knowing, thinking and doing flow from who one is... a being in relation with others... dwelling aright in thoughtful living with others.... ever open to the call of what it is to be deeply human. (p. 42)

Rationale

This question of what it is to live fully and how teachers interpret that for themselves is extremely important for us in the Catholic school system today. During the past two years, the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association and our central administration have spent much energy in sharing the message from a document entitled, *Build Bethlehem Everywhere* by Fr. E. Riechers (2002). The document was written at the request of the Canadian Catholic School Trustees' Association in conjunction with the Canadian Council of Bishops. Its purpose, as outlined in the introduction to the

publication is to “describe simply and clearly the identity and mission of Catholic schools in Canada.” What follows is a radical call to vocation and commitment for the teachers in our Catholic schools. The mission identified is not one of “transferral of religious data” (Riechers, 2002), nor is it considered accomplished “when answers are memorized, forms are followed and obedience is exacted. At best this would lead to knowledge about the consequences of faith, and at worst it would be a mindless religious regurgitation” (p. 15).

In order to meet the call to vocation that Fr. Riechers outlines, teachers must spend time in asking their life questions and in searching deeply for the sense of their own spiritual way of knowing the world. It is impossible to live the life of a faith witness to children unless we are able to discover the truths of faith within our own lives. This is not easy work and our Catholic school administration needs to seek ways to support our teachers in living these lives of commitment and vocation.

It is important to find ways to meet our teachers’ spiritual needs as a response to the *Build Bethlehem Everywhere* document but it is particularly urgent at this time in our Catholic school history. The Church is attempting to weather the crisis of a severe shortage of both priests and women in religious orders. That shortage is felt within our church parishes but also within our schools. The number of priests and nuns, which once formed a strong core of teaching professionals within our school districts, has dwindled drastically within the last twenty years. These dedicated people were supported within their particular religious orders to lead lives that were rooted in spiritual disciplines of prayer, meditation, scripture, worship, life in community, and vocations of service. As such, our schools always had a core of teachers who served as mentors to assist the lay

teaching staff in developing their own inner lives. That resource is no longer there. We now need to rely on the lay teaching staff to find mentors among themselves, to ask their questions, and to nurture one another.

Throughout my own schooling, I encountered nine priests and/or nuns who taught me. Some were excellent teachers who had a passion for their subject material, some were quite ordinary in their skills and techniques as educators but all were clearly authentic in their purpose for living. The Gospel of Jesus was central to their way of knowing the world and that witness served as an anchor within the schools. When my own children, now grown, attended this same school system, they met one teaching nun and one teaching priest along the way. Just two years ago, the last member of a religious order has left our school district. We have an entirely lay staff. I say this not to lament the situation but to bring to light the need to support the laity in the vocation of teaching. We need to address the reality that the responsibility for carrying out the mandate of our Catholic schools rests with a teaching laity who, for the most part, have been formed in spiritual matters as children within their families, church, and schools. As adults, they may or may not seek ongoing spiritual formation informally or formally.

This research study can help us understand the spiritual concerns of our teachers. It could enable us to discover the ways that help them engage in spiritual lives within their very demanding personal and professional worlds. It may also highlight the challenges that teachers encounter causing them to sometimes disengage from spiritual disciplines. Those who find ways to make teaching their life's work also find ways to live deeply reflective inner lives. It is essential, therefore, that we ask these teachers what it is they do that enables them to share their way of knowing the world with the children they

teach. And it is equally important to ask how we can support them in this work that continually calls us to be “more than is presently known” (Huebner, 1999).

Exploring how our teachers engage or disengage from their own spiritual questions, will help us develop a clear vision of what we need to offer these teachers in order to assist them in the difficult mission of *Build Bethlehem Everywhere*. This support is professional development that addresses the fundamental dilemma of what it means to teach and to pass on to students an understanding of how one’s way of knowing the world is essential to live well. It will give far greater meaning to the term “professional learning communities” because it will be the integrity and authenticity of the community that is addressed and not the superficial manipulation of staff to achieve external agendas created by government and administration. Questions of purpose and vision will be illumined:

- How do we encourage and assist teachers in examining their own spirituality?
- How do we help teachers connect to others who are also engaged in the work of the spirit within our Catholic schools?
- How do we nurture the development of communities in our schools that pray, remember, accept, welcome, mourn, and celebrate what it is to be deeply human within God’s creation?
- What strengthens and encourages teachers spiritually?
- Where do teachers find their sources for spiritual nourishment and renewal?

These are questions of community and of living. They will help us move forward with the confidence that teaching is about relationship and relationship is about the spirit, that which is the *breath of life*. What we can do to foster the spiritual within our teachers will, in turn, foster the desire in our children to seek the spiritual in their own lives, therefore, enabling them to live more fully in an increasing complex world.

Globalization and humankind's response to this phenomenon present a challenge for all schools to address--public or Catholic. David Smith (2003), in his article "Curriculum and Teaching Face Globalization", outlines the neo-liberalist and economic base for globalization that may be "acting to form a new kind of imaginal understanding within human consciousness" (p. 35). Free-trade agreements, loss of national identity, loss of indigenous languages, technology, neo-liberal principles of competitiveness, fundamentalism and choice, and a human capital resource model for education all impact our ways of knowing the world. There can be, as a response to these enormous and yet often subtle changes in our lives, a tendency to shrink from examining the influence of these forces upon our *being*. Diligence is required if teachers are to deconstruct what globalization means for them personally. They need support in finding ways of being in the world that are just, ethical, and relevant to the spiritual, *the breath of life*, in their communities and in the world. Only with a deep sense of what it means to be human in the complexity of the twenty-first century can teachers move into mentoring and nurturing that same sense of purpose and human dignity within their students.

Coming to that deeper understanding of living in community with others and with learning in a way that connects us to the larger world requires that we attend to the spiritual. Smith (2003), in his description of the phenomenon of learning to play a

musical instrument, speaks also to what it means to learn in a manner where knowledge is not divorced from one's way of being in the world--where learning is truly connected to the soul.

To every student, beginner or experienced, come occasional moments of sensing deeply that what is at work in the playing can be ascribed to neither the instrument nor the practitioner nor the musical score alone. Instead, a mysterious unity has been achieved when all three seem to participate in a reality, a truth, even, that transcends any of the individual aspects. It truly is a moment of peace, a moment of letting go—of ego, culture, worry, or otherness. It becomes an entry into quiet wonder—a sense that as a human being one participates in a most amazing and wonderful mystery. (p. 48)

It is to that amazing place that teachers in Catholic schools are called to lead students. How do we lead teachers to find that place within themselves and their school communities?

The Importance of the Lived Experience

The nature of spirituality, as defined in the opening paragraphs of this document, insists upon methods of research that validate the unique lived experience of the participants. Since spirituality is primarily a *way of being in the world*, participants' personal experiences can offer insights that cannot be discovered using more traditional surveys. The language that participants use to articulate their own sense of spirituality enables the researcher to uncover deeper truth about perceptions of spirituality within the

individuals. What is offered and what is not offered in interview and narrative becomes the foundation for the work of getting at the core of the spirit.

As a researcher, my own lived experience of twenty-two years teaching with this school district brings both a rich wealth of personal understanding about spirituality and the vocation of teaching as well as the bias of being a part of that same group that are to be participants in this research. By sharing with the reader some of my own experiences and the significance of those experiences in light of the formation of my sense of spirituality, I intend to illumine that bias.

At the same time, I will demonstrate that although my way of knowing the world may be unique, when combined with the lived experiences of my colleagues, it offers a collective understanding of what it means to live the vocation of teaching within a Catholic school district. That understanding can enable us to move forward in providing our teachers with what they need to continue seeking purpose and living life fully. It is that sense of purpose that is required to fulfill our Catholic school mission and mandate as outlined in *Build Bethlehem Everywhere* (Riechers, 2002).

When I interviewed teachers, I found stories similar to my own teaching recollections and I found as well, some uniquely different paths to deepened spirituality. My own story leads me to believe that beginning teachers need a lot of structure in place to assist them in creating a space for the spiritual in their daily professional and personal living. It is my lived experience that there needs to be an intentionality about spiritual formation that begins with administration and that is carefully structured to guide new teachers. That is my bias. The data gathered from other teachers is necessary to bring greater perspective and deeper understanding to the question.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

As I began to research what others had to say about making a place for the spiritual within our classrooms and within ourselves as educators, it became clear that the absence of attention to the spirit in academic circles has been noticed by a number of researchers. They are concerned that schooling is becoming divorced from the core of what really matters. ‘Education’ is doled out in neat packets that fail to recognize the ways in which we need to help children connect to their lives and that fail to help them understand their ways of knowing the world. Nel Noddings (1993), in *Educating for Intelligent Belief or Unbelief*, as cited by Neiman (2000), draws attention to the need to address the spiritual in our educational systems.

Throughout most of human history, questions about the existence and nature of God, about the meaning of life, about the role of religion in society... have been recognized as paramount in any examined life and are therefore central to education. (p. 217)

Noddings (1993) emphasizes that the teacher is required to develop an attentiveness to the spiritual in their students and assist them in addressing their own personal seeking for the eternal.

Thomas Groome (1998), in *Educating for Life*, speaks about teaching as a “relational encounter” which touches souls and is “intended to influence who each other becomes” (p. 98). He further states that each of us has a point of view on the world and that becomes our “operative cosmology” (p. 120). For educators, that cosmology should

be one that sees God in all things and so enables us to bring to our students, an attentiveness to the spiritual in our ordinary daily living.

Ted Aoki (1990), in his article *Inspiriting the Curriculum*, recognizes the yearning to connect our bodies, mind, and spirit in our knowing the world. The tension created by having to “serve” the curriculum and yet remaining true to the call to make education about becoming more deeply human is what we live as educators. That tension becomes even more complex when we add in the requirement of serving the institution. We need to comply with what the school community asks of us, what administrators require of us and what government insists upon and at the same time, recognize that education is truly about learning to live fully within the human family. Teachers rarely speak of this tension and perhaps often do not recognize it within themselves. The call from the institution is to deliver a common curriculum that ensures uniformity across the province and, to an increasing extent, across the nation. As Aoki notes, the interpretive powers of teachers and students together cannot be nurtured when, “ a curriculum demand for sameness may diminish and extinguish the salience of the lived situation of people in classrooms and communities” (p. 41).

In speaking about that ‘lived situation’, we begin the dialogue of spirituality. How we speak about what is within our souls and how the articulation of deeply held beliefs and purpose resonates within our classrooms is not an easy conversation. The language of spirituality is difficult. Maria Harris (1988) in her work, *Women and Teaching*, helps us begin the discussion. Her definition of spirituality as quoted in the opening to this thesis, suggests that each of us is held, touched, and rooted in divinity. She then lays out a metaphor of deepening spirituality. It is a dance that becomes more

intricate as we learn the steps. The complexity and intimacy of the life dance vary as we become more aware of our own relationship to this divine partner. There are several steps but we always begin with silence followed by a response to the silence through prayer, reflection, and deepening awareness. From this point, the dance becomes a remembering and a hearing of the voices of suffering and of freedom. A seeking of justice follows as the individual struggles to make heard the voices that are not. In seeking this justice, there is creative expression and a new knowing and understanding. From here, this new birth and new depth of understanding are then intertwined and the dance is renewed and becomes more complex (p. 55). This metaphor of dance serves to separate the spiritual from the 'religious.' A discussion of religion would be about certain traditions and doctrine that are adhered to as part of one's 'dance' but the dance is far more than religious packaging. It is much more difficult to speak of the dance and the divine partner and the intimacy within that relationship than to discuss religion. That awkwardness in sharing what stirs one's soul is where this study begins.... the awkwardness between teacher and student and then the awkwardness between teacher and researcher of spirituality in education.

Parker Palmer

Parker Palmer's (1983), work *To Know as We are Known, A Spirituality of Education*, further illuminates the tension between knowing as we generally understand it and knowing as an act of love and embracing self and other.

...we have been schooled in a way of knowing that treats the world as an object to be dissected and manipulated, a way of knowing that gives us power over the world. (p. 2)

... the goal of knowledge arising from love is the reunification and reconstruction of broken selves and worlds. A knowledge born of compassion aims not at exploiting and manipulating creation but at reconciling the world to itself. The mind motivated by compassion reaches out to know as the heart reaches out to love. Here, the act of knowing is an act of love, the act of entering and embracing the reality of the other, of allowing the other to enter and embrace our own. In such knowing we know and are known as members of one community, and our knowing becomes a way of reweaving that community's bonds. (p. 8)

It is this deep knowing and building of community that approaches what I mean by spirituality. Palmer, like Harris, believes that there are some definite practices or steps to be followed to develop an ongoing deepening of spirituality. These include the study of sacred texts, practice of prayer and contemplation and the gathered life of the community (p. 17). He further outlines how to create a learning space for coming to this deep sense of knowing. The space needs to have the characteristics of openness and a letting go of the fearful tendency to fill this space with lectures and words. There needs to be clear boundaries and structure. Hospitality must be established so that the deep questions can be asked (p. 71). Within this learning space, the fruits of spiritual practice will then be made visible... humility, faith, reverence, love, openness to grace (p. 108).

Because this spiritual way of knowing is continuous and ever-deepening, Palmer suggests (p. 114), that as educators, we need to practice the following modes of spiritual formation:

1. studying in fields outside one's own which leads to an openness and makes insights stay fresh.
2. becoming a student to create a sense of displacement so that the world can be seen from a student's viewpoint.
3. silence.
4. solitude to produce detachment from our routines, roles and reliances.
5. prayer.

In attending to these practices of spiritual formation, the teacher will become more acutely aware of the need for similar practices appropriate with his/her students.

Education then becomes more an integrated way of knowing the self and the world and less an amassing of disjointed bits of knowledge. Thomas Merton's definition of the purpose of education, as quoted by Palmer (1983) then makes very clear sense.

The purpose of education is to show a person how to define himself authentically and spontaneously in relation to his world... not to impose a prefabricated definition of the world, still less an arbitrary definition of the individual himself. (p. 12)

That sense of authentic understanding of self is further illumined in Palmer's most recent work, *Let Your Life Speak* (2000) where he begins by reminding us that "from the first days in school, we are taught to listen to everything and everyone but ourselves, to take all our clues about living from the people and powers around us" (p. 5).

Palmer stresses that in learning to listen to one's own voice, one comes to a sense of vocation. It is what each of us needs to sort out for ourselves and it is based on the

goodness and grace that each person was given at birth. I do not become someone else when I respond to my calling... I become more fully me.

Such a notion of vocation then makes it clear that, as educators, we should be very concerned not only with our own voice but with teaching children how to authentically live their vocations. We are cautioned by Palmer of the pitfalls (pp. 10-30) in finding our callings by trying to conform to abstract moral codes and by misinterpreting self-care as a selfish act. He suggests that if we accept that each of us has an original selfhood given to us at birth by God, then it is never a selfish act to take care of that gift which is given in order that we might offer it to others. The vocation of the teacher becomes a lifework where one journeys to understand self and at the same time seeks to help students do the same for themselves. Once again, the metaphor of the dance is used but with Palmer it is the dance between the student and the teacher and the struggle that occurs when the student does not accept the invitation to dance.

My gift as a teacher is the ability to “dance” with my students, to teach and learn with them through dialogue and interaction. When my students are willing to dance with me, the result can be a thing of beauty. When they refuse to dance, when my gift is denied, things start to become messy: I get hurt and angry, I resent the students – whom I blame for my plight—and I start treating them defensively, in ways that make the dance even less likely to happen. But when I understand this liability as a trade-off for my strengths, something new and liberating arises within me. I no longer want to have my liability “fixed” by learning how to dance solo, for example, when no one wants to dance with me... for to do that would be

to compromise or even destroy my gift. Instead I want to learn how to respond more gracefully to students who refuse to dance, not projecting my limitation on them but embracing it as part of myself.

I will never be a good teacher for students who insist on remaining wallflowers throughout their careers... that is simply one of my limits. But perhaps I can develop enough self-understanding to keep inviting the wallflowers onto the floor, holding open the possibility that some of them might hear the music, accept the invitation, and join me in the dance of teaching and learning. (p. 52)

This passage from Palmer speaks to the constant struggle of the teacher to reach students. Teachers want to be all things to all people and often fall into the trap of what Palmer describes as 'functional atheism.' Educators often assume total responsibility for everything that rests with them.

This is the unconscious, unexamined conviction that if anything decent is going to happen here, we are the ones who must make it happen... a conviction held even by people who talk a good game about God. (p. 88)

To avoid this pitfall, which will ultimately lead to burn out as the teacher realizes that he/she cannot fix everything and everyone, educators need to continue steadfastly on the path of spiritual formation. It is not an easy path.

Mystery surrounds every deep experience of the human heart: the deeper we go into the heart's darkness or its light, the closer we get to the ultimate mystery of God. But our culture wants to turn mystery into

puzzles to be explained or problems to be solved, because maintaining the illusion that we can “straighten things out” makes us feel powerful. (p. 60)

The illusion that we can straighten things out often happens in our Catholic schools. Parents and church want us to create strong practicing Catholics of our students. Teachers feel disheartened when students are not following the moral code outlined for them. Palmer is clear that the antidote to such functional atheism is a faithful commitment to carrying on the inner work that is so important to living authentic spiritual lives. Living with the mystery rather than ‘straightening things out’ becomes the focus.

...we could lift up the value of inner work. That phrase should become commonplace in families, schools, and religious institutions..... involves skills such as journaling, reflective reading, spiritual friendship, meditation and prayer. We can teach our children something that their parents didn’t always know. If people skimp on their inner work, their outer work will suffer as well. (p. 91)

That inner work needs to be done both privately and within our community. The community can be a checkpoint to ensure that we are “setting each other straight” (p. 92) so that we do not allow ourselves to become deluded. Palmer refers to the Quaker model of a discernment team as a way to hold personal inner work on track. The team asks the individual questions around his/her deeper questions that enable the individual to find his/her own answers to the personal life questions.

Dwayne Huebner

Dwayne Huebner (1999) in *The Lure of the Transcendent*, calls teachers to “participate in the unfolding of this social world. They need to accept and embrace their

vulnerability in this vocation” (p. 379). The work of asking the deep life questions and living reflective lives is important if schools are to become places of knowing rather than places of knowledge. Huebner explains the difference.

Knowledge is the fallout from the knowing process. Knowledge is form separated from life. It stands by itself, removed from the vitality and dynamics of life, from the spirit... Knowledge needs to be put into the eternal cycle of openness, love and hope. (p. 351)

Schools can become places where stories, myths and religious traditions can connect personal experience to the experience of the historic community (Huebner, 1999). In these schools, there is then a way of “reweaving the fabric of our lives constantly as we bring new knowing and relationships into it” (p. 390). It is that continual reweaving that helps us stay open to growing in our understanding of self and others. “We are transcendent... we are more than we currently are... we aren’t complete” (p. 405). When, we, as educators, stay open to this transcendence and know the absolute importance of seeking, then our faith becomes “more and more a part of the complex evolving structures that involve us in the rest of the universe (p. 372).” We can create a clearing for God’s presence in our lives and acknowledge that it is by God’s grace that our faith deepens.

Huebner calls upon the consciousness of the teacher to guide the child to find this “clearing” for God, a place to remember and praise, and to seek God. Failure to do so will result in the child filling his/her own clearings with human concerns. The transcendence of becoming more is not fulfilled and the spirituality of the child is not deepened (p. 374).

While Huebner adds to the discussion of leading children to the spiritual, perhaps the most important contribution he makes is in outlining how we need to embark on such a task. There are disciplines to staying open and hopeful to new knowing that include worship, prayer, meditation, text study, disciplines of action in and withdrawal from the world (p. 347). Proceeding from these practices will come an examination of our relationships and our traditions. We need to ask the questions:

How is God present or absent?...How can we practice the presence of God?... What gets in the way of the great journey? The journey of the self or soul? What can I be? (pp. 392-409)

When teachers ask these questions of themselves, then they can pass on this same way of searching to their students. They will live lives more intimately connected to their inner relationship with the divine and to one another through their communities of work, celebration and worship (p. 392). Finally, Huebner says, “teaching needs to be grounded in a life. It is not a way of making a living, but a way of making a life” (p. 411).

Michael Morwood

The authors mentioned so far have discussed spirituality in terms separate from religious tradition or doctrine. They note that it is the questioning and the openness to a fuller way of knowing the world that marks the spiritual quest. Fr. Michael Morwood (1997) in *Tomorrow's Catholic, Understanding God and Jesus in a New Millennium*, brings the discussion directly to the Catholic context in the twenty-first century. He wrestles with many key dilemmas that face our teachers in the Catholic school system today. Morwood (1997) asserts that as our worldview changes in light of new scientific understanding, then so are we pushed to rethink how we image God. That re-imaging is

causing much upheaval in the church as its members dialogue about women's roles, sexuality, the priesthood, and interpretation of scripture. He challenges us with the question, "Is there another story we could try telling in the light of today's knowledge, which could make sense of God's presence in our lives" (p. 71). Morwood (1997) suggests that we need to go back to the life and teaching of Jesus directly to see what Jesus' calls us do. Jesus' preaching was connected with setting people free from fear and with changing "the way they imaged and thought about God and themselves" (p. 79).

Although Morwood's work doesn't speak specifically about teachers, he effectively points out the struggle for all adult Catholics today. In the past, our Catholic spirituality was packaged for us by the centuries of experience, interpretation, thought and reflections of our church leaders. "We inherited a Catholic worldview at an early age" (p. 97) but, in light of this quickly changing world, the call is now to wrestle with our spiritual questions in a more direct manner. As he states, "living with mystery and unanswered questions and taking personal authority for their own convictions is a new experience" (p. 83). We still seek guidance through our church but there comes a real danger when "we can have religion and loyalty and adherence to doctrines ... but not necessarily have a genuine Christian spirituality" (p. 105). For teachers, especially, such a superficial spirituality can leave children with a great clearing in their lives where God is not being introduced in a manner that invites depth of relationship and understanding. Morwood (1997) presents a scathing criticism of many of today's Catholics when he asserts that most are content with not asking the questions required to live authentic spiritual lives.

“Changes to thinking require a process of adult education beyond the ten minute homily on Sunday and most Catholics are simply not willing to give time to this...” (p. 70).

If education must include a fuller way of knowing the world and if teachers are to be responsible for leading children to this spiritual “clearing”, then, as Morwood (1997), says, Catholic teachers need to address their own imaging of God and take personal authority for their convictions.

Erik Riechers

It is exactly that challenging work that Fr. Erik Riechers (2002) sets before Canadian teachers in Catholic school systems. Riechers names what needs to be done and gives credence to the questions I ask in this thesis. His work, *Build Bethlehem Everywhere, A Statement on Catholic Education*, was a commissioned work on behalf of the Canadian School Trustees’ Association. It is designed to help Canadian Catholic School systems define themselves and it opens the central curriculum question of what knowledge is of most worth. It outlines the essentials of who we are as a Catholic identity. Since the document has been accepted by the church, school boards, and school administrations as a clearly articulated statement of the vision and mission of Catholic schools in Canada in the new millennium, it follows that a study of this document be an integral part of the review of the literature for this thesis.

Riechers (2002) boldly states what Catholic education is not. That is a good starting point as it builds on what Morwood (1997) has already outlined in saying that there is no room for a superficial faith or passing on of unexamined beliefs.

The task of Catholic education cannot be considered complete when answers are memorized, forms are followed and obedience is exacted. At

best this would lead to knowledge about the consequences of faith, and at worst, it would be a mindless religious regurgitation. (p. 15)

He cautions against talking about faith as separate from living.

... we reduce our talk about faith to speech about propositional truths, or codes of moral and religious behaviour. In the worst case, we end up speaking about faith as if it were the religious version of politically correct language about God. (p. 14)

In Riecher's admonition of what we are not to be, he reminds us that we are to be mission driven and not task-oriented (p. 6) and that our lives must be lived as not "flights from death but faith-filled movements towards it" (p. 7). Finally, Riechers states that "the transferal of religious data is not our objective" (p. 24).

When the Catholic school teacher is handed the curriculum approved by the Canadian Council of Bishops, it becomes much easier to pass on the religious data and lay out the moral codes and doctrine than to accept the challenge that Riechers (2002) proceeds to lay out in *Build Bethlehem Everywhere*. Catholic teachers are called to an overwhelming mission. As the reader begins to digest all that Riechers is proposing, it becomes clear that Catholic school teachers are expected to live deeply reflective lives that are witnesses to the teachings of Jesus in a concrete manner. These teachers are required to articulate a depth of understanding of their faith and be passionate in living that faith with their students.

Reichers (2002) states that, "the foundational purpose of a Catholic faith education is to continually remind a new generation of believers that faith is not a matter of comprehending God, but one of God apprehending us in love" (p. 14). Teachers are

challenged to fulfill this purpose by leading children to God, “to a God who is surprise, who is delightfully unpredicable in grace and presence, astonishingly creative and of a fascinating tenderness” (p. 2). But doing so requires a constant vigilance and attentiveness to the spiritual. “Teachers lead children to mystery by helping them to be alert when they find themselves nodding off because the seeking is more difficult than imagined” (p. 3).

The mission becomes even more difficult in the materialistic and individualistic culture of today. Riechers (2002) continues,

In the culture of materialism and acquisition, many young people come to believe that it is what they own, purchase or control that makes them lovable. The despair begins with the realization that it cannot be done ... we are commissioned to defend their lives as “ the Beloved.” (p. 7)

None of the above can begin to be real to students, however, if the teachers they encounter are not able to do more than “merely rumble through ritual routine” (p. 15).

Riechers (2002) calls educators to be primary witnesses of faith to the students.

The people of our generation prefer witnesses to teachers. Much of what is theologically articulate to us is in fact unintelligible to those who do not yet believe. Our children are not very likely to accept faith as truths imposed upon them from the outside. Authority does not reach that far any more, and never really should have in the past. (p. 15)

The mission of teachers in Catholic schools is to provide an experience of God in the lives of students and to create spaces where empathy and compassion are clearly visible as ways of living Christ’s message. And so, Riechers (2002) further suggests,

We show to them in eloquence of speech and eloquence of lifestyle how to give others every reason for wanting to stay in the hearts we open wide to them. If we want a person to enter into our heart's domain, we open wide the doors through kindness, consideration and compassion, attentive care and tender love. (p. 32)

Riechers (2002) leaves us with the final challenge. "We must create places where God can be encountered as the one who welcomes our weakness" (p. 41).

Build Bethlehem Everywhere does not leave room for educators who are not prepared to embrace their own life questions nor does it allow for the status quo within our Catholic schools. This thesis also seeks to discover how teachers are presently meeting Riecher's challenge and what it is that we need to do to support teachers in living as faith witnesses to the next generation.

Lonergan's Transcendental Precepts

Another major intellectual resource in thinking and working on this research is Bernard Lonergan. In the Canadian Catholic context of this thesis work, the Canadian Jesuit philosopher and theologian, Bernard Lonergan offers insight into the nature of knowing, human nature, society, and human consciousness. His insights provide the basis of how my inquiry into teachers' spirituality has unfolded. Lonergan's perspective, as seen through the analysis of Morelli and Morelli in *The Lonergan Reader* (1997), views the human condition as one that demands a constant attentiveness, a yearning to understand, a desire to seek truth and most importantly, a need to transcend oneself. In so doing, the human lives authentically and contributes to human progress. It is this authentic living that we are seeking within our Catholic schools. The process for doing so

can be simply stated: Be attentive. Be intelligent. Be reasonable. Be responsible. The fifth, ‘ Be in love,’ flows through the lives of those who attend to the first four precepts. The table below summarizes the precepts and the their underpinnings.

Table 1

Lonergan’s Transcendental Imperatives

Levels of Consciousness	Transcendental Activities	Transcendental Imperatives
The loving	Loving/ Caring	Be in Love
Responsible <i>(Is it of value?)</i>	Deciding	Be responsible
	Deliberating	
Rational <i>(Is it so?)</i>	Judging	Be reasonable
	Reflecting	
Intellectual <i>(What is it?)</i>	Understanding	Be intelligent
	Inquiring	
	Conceiving	
Empirical	Remembering	Be Attentive
	Perceiving	
	Sensing	

Adapted from Creamer (1996, p. 74)

The flow from empirical to loving consciousness recognizes the connectedness of humankind to a greater creation and creator. Within that movement, there remains openness to transcendental mystery. Such a process calls humans to a purpose that transcends mere survival of the species. Learning and understanding must be central to human living. Lonergan speaks of living “authentically”. That is,

A person is becoming authentic who is consistent in the struggle to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible.

(<http://www.lonergan.on.ca/glossary/glossary.htm>)

An understanding of the terms of attentiveness, intelligence, and reasonableness is also necessary to clarify how Lonergan perceives human nature and the task of humans in their living.

Attentiveness directs the subject to notice two kinds of data: that of sense and that of consciousness. The first grounds the subject in the world of immediacy, the world of sense. The second directs the subject to attend to the world of interiority, to notice what is happening as one processes sense data or the data of consciousness. Intelligence draws the subject into inquiry, and if not thwarted by bias, the questioning goes on unrestricted. Reasonableness calls for conclusions; it is the questioning of whether something is so as I understand it.

(<http://www.lonergan.on.ca/glossary/glossary.htm>)

Lonergan believes that knowledge and learning take root when the individual questions and examines the very nature of what it is he knows and how he knows it. It is an internal inquiry that begins with his first step of the process, “be attentive.” In *The Lonergan Reader*, Morelli (1997) outlines the line of questioning that Lonergan says is essential to knowledge creation.

What am I doing when I'm knowing? Why is doing that called knowing?

What do I know when I do that? What am I doing when I'm valuing? What ought I to do in light of the knowledge I've now acquired of my knowing

and my valuing? ... Self-appropriation is first and foremost a process of taking possession of oneself as a knower and a doer. (p. 18)

Lonergan, in Morelli (1997) is an advocate of using a method to organize this learning and knowing. He is critical of the term method and how it very often is played out,

but what most people understand by method is a recipe. Lonergan strongly rejected this common notion of method: "Method can be thought of as a set of recipes that can be observed by a block-head yet lead infallibly to astounding discoveries. Such a notion of method I consider sheer illusion." (p. 14)

He points out that 'method' used without intelligence and careful inquiry can lead to bizarre results that are neither valid nor reliable and certainly cannot be understood as knowledge and progress. His transcendental method includes clear steps of inquiry that require the individual to be ever vigilant in both the nature of his questioning and in the course of living that subsequent judgments take him.

...the level of experience, the level of understanding, the level of judgment, the level of decision. The transition from level to level is occasioned by an operator. We move from experiencing to understanding by asking questions; we move from understanding to judgment by asking critical questions; we move from judgment to decision and action by asking questions of the general form, 'Is it worthwhile?' (p. 22)

That question, “Is it worthwhile?” becomes a constant in the knower’s life. It is that which insists upon critical analysis and holds the knower always true to the four ‘be’s’.

Be attentive; Be intelligent; Be reasonable; Be responsible. The four-level structure with its immanent criteria is the foundational heuristic structure that is specified in the exercise of all special methods and is spontaneously employed in everyday practical and social living. (p. 22)

Our teachers must wrestle with these questions daily or choose to disengage from the spiritual and reflective living that their vocation calls forth.

Lonergan saw the twentieth century as a time marked with great disillusionment and a decline in societal progress. The Great Depression, the two wars and the rise of ideologies created even greater cultural conflict and a breakdown of the framework of meaning upon which society had based its values. A cultural crisis was underway and Lonergan saw that,

The previously authoritative meanings and values by which we defined ourselves and guided our living have lost their aura of prestige, but a new set of meanings and values and a new self-understanding have not emerged to replace them. (p. 16)

We thought that we understood ourselves through accepting an authoritative set of values and norms that were quickly disintegrating in light of the political, economical, technological, and intellectual upheaval of the times. Self-understanding and the transcendental method are Lonergan’s keys to once again creating a sound community and society that would reverse the spiral of decline that he believed to be occurring.

Lonergan believes that a person must attend to the internal freeing of the mind and soul to question and make sound judgments releasing one's potential to live fully.

If a person is to be a philosopher, his [*sic:Lonergan did not use gender inclusive language*] thinking as a whole cannot depend upon someone or something else. There has to be a basis within himself; he must have resources of his own to which he can appeal in the last resort. (p. 26)

Along with the freedom to experience, to understand, to judge, and to then decide, comes the great responsibility where our intelligence and reason do not simply serve our impulses and passions but enable us to then make judgments and decisions about the moral and ethical dilemmas we face. The most limiting factor in our freedom is often not our physical reality but the personal horizons we set concerning these dilemmas.

Our horizons limit our questioning and when our questions are limited, then so are the judgments and decisions we make. To expand our horizons of consciousness, however, often takes a conversion. Lonergan sees that as happening when our attentiveness leads us to care about things that previously went unnoticed in our lives. (Morelli & Morelli, 1997). When this occurs, our new attentiveness leads us to new questions, new understanding, altered judgments and decisions. That is the essence of freedom, as we delimit ourselves and then take those expanded horizons into our daily communal living.

This work is organized according to Lonergan's precepts and in its conclusions seeks to expand our understanding of the complex nature of teaching and living out one's spirituality. Further, it makes recommendations of how to take those expanded horizons back into the daily communal living of educators in Catholic schools. Chapter three

describes the integration of Lonergan's precepts into the methods in this research along with interview practices.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Employing Lonergan's Precepts

The intent of this research was to provide direction for administration in supporting teachers in their difficult vocations. By employing the Bernard Lonergan transcendental imperatives, I was able to adhere to a rigorous and thorough plan of inquiry. At each stage of this inquiry, as researcher, I followed the steps of Lonergan as outlined in Creamer (1996): Be attentive. Be intelligent. Be reasonable. Be responsible.

This chapter will outline how I attended to each of these steps and how, by being faithful to this process, I was able to maximize the validity and reliability of this study of spirituality and teaching.

On Being Attentive (Remembering, Perceiving, Sensing)

This study grew from an increasing awareness in my own teaching life of how my ways of knowing myself and the world around me daily made their way into my classroom. The professional skills associated with teaching were not separate from my relationships with the students. More importantly, in this Catholic school system, my own lived experience of faith, doubt, and spiritual struggle continually gravitated to the centre of how I 'am' with my students.

The thought, planning and organization of this research took place over one semester and included journaling about ideas and concerns as they arose. At the same time, I engaged in the reading that led to the literature review of the previous chapter. Although the initial reflections and questions were based on how my teaching lived up to, or did not live up to the Erik Riechers' (2002) document *Build Bethlehem Everywhere*,

the journaling assisted me in honing my thinking into an organized study. Since *Build Bethlehem Everywhere* was accepted as the focus document on which to model Catholic education, it was a logical and practical place to begin. By journaling and documenting my classroom experiences and my experiences with colleagues around spirituality and life questions, I was attentive to Wolcott's (1990) notions of qualitative research when he recommends, "Writing is a great way to discover what we are thinking as well as to discover the gaps in our thinking" (p. 21). As my journaling increasingly focused on my real questions, I was more able to articulate what it is I sought to explore. This is demonstrated by one excerpt from my journal.

I am back to what I want to look at... teachers in Catholic schools need to lead children to experience the divine. To do that, they need to be fully engaged in their own spiritual journey. All of us need help with that. Many of us stumble and wade through this very privately. Is it not the role of our Catholic school system to provide our teachers with the mentorship and guidance they need to continue on their faith journeys? The children's experience will be only as authentic and rich as the witnesses and faith models we place before them. (September 27, 2003)

As my journaling and reading progressed, I became increasingly aware of what this study would and would not be. The study was not to be about the subject of Religion in the Holy Spirit School District. It would not examine curriculum nor would it investigate the nature of the students who come to our classes. The main focus of this research would be about how teachers view their own spirituality, that is, their own way of knowing the world. How do they integrate and/ or separate their life questions with

their teaching? It needed to reach beyond a specific religious education question and seek understanding of a much deeper wondering--- If our Catholic schools afford us the freedom to make the spiritual an integral part of everything we do, then how are we fostering or hindering that process? If our Catholic schools ask us to be witnesses to our faith, then how are our teachers choosing to embrace or not embrace that challenge? Are we 'attentive' to who we are becoming and how are we limiting or delimiting our horizons? With this end in mind, bringing forward new insights regarding the spiritual formation of teachers in Catholic schools, I remained attentive to how best to get there.

First, I needed to recognize my own role as researcher within this study. I chose to use my own school district as the ground for this research. As an administrator, I witness the daily struggles of teachers striving to live out their professional and spiritual lives within the classroom. I knew that we called forth from these teachers more than a professional teaching obligation. We were asking these people to witness to their faith on a daily basis and to continually minister spiritually to the students and colleagues that were a part of their school communities. In my wonderings about how teachers were handling that and in my remembering of my own lived experience, I knew that I needed to be attentive to the unique nature of research that was founded in questions of life purpose, relationship with God, and understanding of spirituality. This was 'sacred ground' and the study required a process that honoured that.

Because I have been sharing this ground with my colleagues in the district for over twenty years and have built relationships of trust and good rapport with many, I believed that I would be able to ask questions that would unearth insights and more questions. If a teacher contributed to this study, then he or she would have to trust that his

or her sense of spirituality would be accepted without judgment. My long history of service within this district seemed to assist in building that rapport and trust. I was aware, however, that the many years of service and my position as an administrator could also be interpreted as loyalty to administrative and managerial concerns of the school system. A clear cover letter (see Appendix A) that introduced the goals of the project was delivered to the various school sites. Through this letter, I addressed the need to be attentive both to accurate clarification of purpose and to clarification of my desire to question and seek understanding *alongside* my colleagues.

Second, I needed to be attentive to the privacy of the participants. Although this is always integral to good research, it is especially so when exploring personal and strongly held faith beliefs. Whenever one speaks about personal issues of spirituality, there is a certain vulnerability that becomes evident. Volunteer participants placed great trust in me as a researcher. The purpose of this research was to seek direction for mentoring teachers in their spiritual formation. As such, great care to protect and demonstrate respect for the individuals involved was paramount to this study. I remained intentional and diligent in suspending judgment regarding participants' viewpoints and understandings of spirituality. In fact, there was a deliberate attentiveness to speaking about the need to accept both 'who we are' and 'as we are' in order to make informed decisions about how to support people in their ongoing spiritual growth.

Although data would remain anonymous, I was not sure that I could guarantee anonymity for all participants equally. Our school district is small and I needed to be sensitive to the possibility of personal identification occurring through a unique context

of a participant. Later in this chapter, the manner in which I addressed this issue will be outlined.

Finally, I needed to continue to be keenly aware of my own bias within this research. The questions that I wanted to ask were ones with which I had lived for quite some time before bringing them to this study. I had formulated my own ideas of why and how our administration should and could be supporting teachers' spiritual growth. It would be both easy and shortsighted to jump quickly at data that would readily confirm my own beliefs. To ensure that I allowed the research to be a 'searching' and not a 'reaffirming' of my views, it was important to adhere to the imperatives of Lonergan throughout every stage of the inquiry. The process is imbedded with the foundations for strong, logical and sound research. And so I moved from attentiveness to intelligent inquiry.

On Being Intelligent (Understanding, Inquiring, Conceiving)

As I continued my reading about my topic and about how to address my topic, I came upon a quotation cited in Kvale's (1996) book, *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*.

I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them. Will you become my teacher and help me understand? (Spradley, 1979) (p. 125)

To intelligently embark on a query that would allow me to do this, I designed a study that consisted of four parts. First, I developed my central question while engaging

in reading and journaling about the themes within that question. I also targeted some of my reading and thought towards the methods of qualitative research and how best to incorporate them into my study. Next, I conducted a pilot interview with a retired senior administrator from my school district. Then, I designed, distributed and administered a survey to all teaching staff of the district and finally, from those survey respondents, I engaged five volunteer participants from the district teaching staff in individual interviews about my questions. This section details how each of these research components contributed to an intelligent and thorough study.

Researcher Preparation

The process of reading, documenting, journaling and forming questions served to clarify my inquiry and provided the basis of the research design. As my understanding of Lonergan's precepts took hold, it not only came to be the framework upon which this study was built, it became my guide in determining what would come next. I moved from the stage of 'attentiveness' along towards the stage of 'responsibility' and back as my questioning and writing indicated. In so doing, the vision for this study unfolded and I was able to design the pieces that were integrated to form this thesis.

The Pilot Interview

The purpose of the pilot interview was to refine my technique as an interviewer, test the questions that I had planned for the study, and gather preliminary data and insights from a respected professional who has a long history within our school division. The initial questions (Appendix B) were designed according to guidelines that I had gleaned from my reading of Glesne (1999) and Kvale (1996). I began with questions about experience and behaviour. I avoided 'why' questions which may often generate

lists that do not offer depth. Questions were kept in the past or the present with the exception of the last questions which were designed to have the participant look into the future after having spent considerable time exploring 'what is and what was.'

I failed to take into consideration Glesne's (1999) advice about knowledge questions. She suggested that they are difficult to answer and may make one feel inadequate in attempts to respond (p. 71). My question, "How do you define the term spirituality for yourself?" proved to be an example of such a question. Although the pilot respondent was articulate and was quick to engage the question, we spoke afterwards about how others may feel about that question. The debriefing with the participant in the pilot interview assisted me in refining my questions. I was not ready to give up my exploration of personal definition of spirituality but I chose to come at it through the written survey of the teachers rather than the verbal interviews. This change would allow for people to sit with the question a while, ponder it, reflect, and answer with a greater depth and ease or choose to not respond. If I had proceeded with the question in the interviews, I may have placed people in an uneasy situation where they may have felt an expectation to respond in a theoretical or theological manner leaving them with a definite feeling of inadequacy.

The pilot interview was conducted July 20, 2004, from 1:30 to 3:30 in the home office of the participant. The office was cool and comfortable with chairs facing each other and the tape-recorder on the shelf next to us. The room was lined with bookcases filled with professional literature, much of it about Catholic spirituality. This atmosphere allowed me the freedom to refine my interviewing technique. I have known the interview participant for thirty-two years both personally and professionally. Because of our

longstanding professional relationship and friendship I trusted both the integrity with which he responded and the honesty with which he gave me feedback about both my questions and my study. There was an easy rapport. I very much felt honoured as one who had been granted a special time with an elder of the community. It was his wisdom that I sought, so I listened attentively while he spoke, confident the taperecorder would keep what I missed '*in vivo*.'

Throughout the interview, I was intentional about rephrasing and asking questions that would clarify, overlap and check for reliability. One of the weaknesses of interviews is that the interpretation can be misleading if the researcher chooses to infuse meaning from his or her own bias. I had become attentive to my own bias that teachers in Catholic schools were daily faced with the challenge to develop their spirituality while they engaged their students in that same challenge and that there was a responsibility of the administration to support and nurture teachers in meeting that challenge. I was aware that I needed to listen for the details and bits without jumping to the end too quickly in order to support my own thinking. I strived to practice an interviewer model, gleaned from my study of interview research that would be persistent and consistent about checking for reliability. The following example from the pilot interview illustrates my intentional efforts to practice that strategy.

M: I think what I am hearing you say is that there is a dilemma, sort of a tension between that wanting to let go of that intellectual part and trust that this is a gift and accept, yet still continuing, that the mind doesn't quit.

P: Yeah, that's right. I heard, you know, it is that thing we were joking about over there. It is that matter of questions all the time which I can't put down.

I also chose to personally transcribe this audio-taped interview. My intention in doing so was to practice the technique and, at the same time, to make a decision about whether to personally transcribe the interviews that I had planned for this study. I found in transcribing the interview, I was afforded an opportunity to engage with the interviewee in an unexpected light. Although the written transcript, twenty pages in length, later provided me with an objective manner of coding and thematically analyzing the contents of the interview, the process of transcription allowed me to hear, over and over, the words, the intonation, the silences, the laughter and the nuances that could never be fully implicated in a written transcript no matter how accurate and precise. My personal association with the interview through the transcription process enabled me to be confident that the context, the rapport, the trust and ultimately, the integrity of the interview were maintained. I chose to personally transcribe all of the subsequent interviews. That choice, once again, offered me a space to be with this qualitative data in a way that gave rise to new wonderings and possibilities for thematizing along the way.

What I wanted to keep foremost in my mind was that oral language and written language are, in fact, two very distinct 'languages' and knowing one does not necessarily imply that you can understand the other. My objective was to report as accurately as possible the meaning of what was said. I planned to leave out the "mmm" and other verbal utterances that often take place within a conversation but I also was careful to

attend to the inflection and changes in voice that may indicate passionate feeling about a particular response.

As previously stated, I had hoped that the pilot interview would help me gain some initial insights regarding my questions that would later shape my survey and interviews. It did. The participant readily engaged in the discussion and it was reaffirming that my questions were indeed the questions of others with whom I worked. This interview emphasized an intellectual approach to spirituality. The participant questioned, read and reflected often on the role of Catholic schools and about his own spirituality. I wondered if the teachers that I would later survey would embrace such an intellectual approach. As a result, I included a question in my survey about the spiritual reading and authors that have inspired the participants to think more deeply about their own spiritual journeys (Appendix C).

The theme of hope was mentioned in my original notes about categories for analysis of interviews but through this initial interview, the idea of giving this abstract term, and perhaps others, an operational manifestation began to form. To the extent that these spiritual concepts were made operational, one would be tapping into the essence of what our work is in the schools. It is the idea of manifesting certain behaviours that takes spirituality out of “the realm of the abstract.” The interview participant indicated this to me through the following excerpt.

P: We tried to operationalize hope. We tried to give it some tangible expression. These are the manifestations of hopefulness ... I think we developed five or six major categories. All the behaviours which were related to that. For example, a behaviour of hope is an expectation for

things better. And another manifestation of hope is to keep on trying, never to give up. ... another manifestation of hope is to look at mistakes as a way to learn. So there are a half dozen, a half dozen of those things and it took spirituality out of the realm of the abstract and made it practical. Something that would affect your behaviour.

The participant also indicated a need to keep the political messiness of teaching separate from the vocation or spiritual calling to teach.

P: If our objective is to bring hope then we have to be guarded against any behaviour which will nullify that. There are some really serious ones. As I remember, some things that come are the resentments of decisions made by the board or administration, it gets all encapsulated in that dreadful sentence “ and I thought this was a Catholic school!”

M: So someone, I can see you saying, the obstacles when you combine that political nature of the beast with that vocation of teaching and aren't able to separate the two, that doors start closing.

P: Yeah, yes. Yes, which she was able to do. That's going on, but it is not going to bother me in the classroom.

This bit of conversation prompted me to keep in mind the politics of the teaching situation when analyzing the survey and interview responses.

The next two statements are evidence of how the participant tested his spirituality against the larger theological core that is the Catholic tradition. Although he questions, he seeks answers from the past, from the great thinkers, from the richness that is the tradition in the Catholic Church. According to Lonergan, this is how we maintain a

faithfulness to being both reasonable and responsible in our decision making about our own spiritual pillars.

P: Pope John's encyclical ...in which he says, he quotes St. Augustine as saying that there can be no conflict between faith and reason.

(Blaise Pascal) He was a French philosopher. A Jantsenist. He was a Catholic but a Jantsenist and asked why he believed in religion, he said because it was useful. What? Well.. that's terrible. That's not why I believe in religion. I believe in religion because it is good. But I thought some more about that. Well, why ELSE would we believe in it if it weren't useful. ...The notions of community and imparting hopefulness and all those things. So that was a very good revelation.

I needed to find a way to understand how teachers were wrestling with their questions. Were they using the tradition and writings of the Catholic church and theologians or were they finding their answers in other places?

The final valuable insight gleaned from this pilot interview was an affirmation of Kvale's (1996) advice to remember that the professional interview was not an opportunity for a philosophical discourse with a colleague (p. 20). I needed to be particularly vigilant in not getting caught up in the conversation rather than listening to the participant. There was great temptation to stray from my research questions and engage in a stimulating discussion where I was not listening but offering input.

The Survey

Although I initially intended to use interview as my sole method in this research, I later reconsidered based on the following considerations.

1. If I was to make recommendations about how we could foster personal spiritual development of our teachers, then I needed to base those recommendations on more than interviews with a handful of teachers.
2. I needed to create a 'snapshot' of who we were in our school division. Were we experienced teachers or not? Were we male or female? Living in family relationships or single? Catholic or not? Had we formally studied our faith? In creating a context of who we were, the later recommendations for spiritual formation would arise from a sound, representative, and reasonable foundation that was sensitive to the unique situations of our teaching population.
3. By gathering as much information from as many participants as possible, I would ensure that the later in-depth interview responses could be checked for reliability against the larger context of our division. That is, if the interview participants were affirming at a deeper level what had already been said in the survey, then it would follow that their responses could be trusted to be representative of our community of teachers. Also, if the information gathered in the survey posed new questions or conflicts, I could refine my interview questions to add further depth and insight without relying simply on my own interpretation and understanding of what was initially recorded from the survey.

With the above considerations in focus, I proceeded to design a survey that would lead me to my end goal of making useful and practical recommendations for spiritual formation of teachers within our school district. As I was creating the survey, I had kept journal notes to guide me in my thinking and deliberation. The following excerpt from my journal demonstrates the questioning that was at the centre of the survey design process.

How do teachers develop spiritually? What implications does gender have for designing professional support for spiritual development within the district?
 Do people with different levels of experience look for different disciplines to explore spirituality? Are there some trends that would help us design courses, recommend books, create retreats for specific categories?
 Do people who are living in family relationships (married or as parents) make sense of the world differently? If so, are we accommodating that?
 How importantly does Catholic tradition play in our teachers' spirituality?
 Are different groups more likely to feel at ease with giving witness to their faith ... praying with students, sharing faith in their relationships with them, discussing spiritual issues? Implications: how do we help people feel that confidence?
 What are our teachers reading..... new age, self-help, Catholic theologians, Christian writers???? Does gender or experience play a role here?

(September 19, 2004)

In designing the survey (Appendix C), I relied on my previous graduate work done in the nature of educational research. In referring to Ted Palys (1997), *Research*

Decisions: Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives, I was able to attend to guidelines for arranging the questions, selecting the type of questions, choosing appropriate wording, and planning for maximum participation by not designing an instrument that would be time intensive. The survey consisted of four sections. The first six questions were multiple-choice. They provided the data about gender, experience, faith background, family status and formal religious education training. These questions were intentionally placed at the beginning of the survey to provide a non-threatening manner in which to initially engage the participants.

The second section asked participants to circle all of the spiritual disciplines listed that they found helpful in their own spiritual growth. There was a space for “other” in order to accommodate all responses. I chose to generate an initial list in order to help participants begin thinking along lines that they may not have thought if the question had simply been an open-ended short answer question. That list was based upon the spiritual disciplines as outlined in Palmer (1983, 2000) and Huebner (1999). Questions about ways of growing spiritually were deliberately non-denominational in character. For example, “communal worship” is present in all religions. Had I said “ participation in the Mass” I would have been narrowing my search to specifically Catholic spiritual disciplines. I wanted to be as all encompassing as possible to acknowledge the varied spiritual ways within the surveyed population. I also did not want to lead the participants to choose specifically Catholic practices such as praying the rosary, confessions or the Eucharist. Participants might check those off because it would be the ‘right thing to do’ if you teach in a Catholic school.

By remaining much more ecumenical in my descriptions and by offering space to fill in one's own specific answers, I could encourage a more honest representation of how people engage in their spiritual journeys. Then, if I noticed that the Eucharist was added in the "other" section, I would know that these participants had thought carefully about the question and that the Eucharist is so important to them that they made special mention of it. One weakness in this strategy, however, is that participants may have interpreted that because they had checked off "communal worship" and they are Catholic, it would naturally be assumed that receiving the sacrament of the Eucharist was a part of that spiritual discipline rather than naming it separately in the "other" category. Only three of the one hundred twelve respondents did name "sacraments" in their list of spiritual disciplines.

Section three was designed using a four point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Two themes were being addressed here. The first was how teachers were feeling about engaging their students in specific religious discussion and teaching. The second was how teachers were feeling about their own level of understanding of their faith. While I could have asked the latter question in a different section within the survey, I wanted to ask it immediately following the questions involving students. This would provide the context in which I wanted participants to reflect upon their faith. That is, in light of their teaching and witnessing to children.

The survey concluded with four open-ended questions. The first question concerning the term 'spirituality' supplied an internal check of the validity of this study. I knew what I believed spirituality to be but when using this language with the respondents, it was important to know if that same sense of spirituality was present

among the surveyed population. Validity for a qualitative study requires that the data being gathered in fact addresses the question being asked. If what I had defined as spirituality in this research was very different from what the respondents defined spirituality to be, then conclusions drawn from the survey responses would be very much weakened. My own definition of spirituality was gathered through life experience and outside research and reading. This first question allowed me to check whether, internally in this population, that same definition held true. Evidence of recurring themes, key words and concerns would indicate support for a unified understanding of the term.

Questions two and three of section four, which asked people to identify challenges and suggestions for support, were directly probing for specific recommendations. They were placed near the end of the survey so that participants had already been reflecting about possibilities along the way.

And finally, I ended the survey by asking teachers to list books and/ or authors that inspired them spiritually. This question was prompted by my pilot interview. Reading was a key avenue for spiritual growth for the participant and he was reading largely Vatican documents and Catholic theologians. I wondered whether that would be true for a lot of our teachers. If it was true, then that would be a significant finding to explore in making recommendations for spiritual formation of teachers. What they were reading would be important in drawing conclusions as well.

My initial draft of the survey was piloted with four of my colleagues who do not teach in this school district and a former superintendent of another Catholic school district in Alberta. They completed the survey and offered feedback. As a result, wording

was edited, placement, and visual balance were attended to and I made the final decisions about which questions to include.

The Interviews

From the beginning stages of this study, it was clear that the interview would need to be the central method employed. Kvale (1996) reaffirmed my decision.

Interviews are particularly suited for studying people's understanding of the meanings in their lived world, describing their experiences and self-understanding, and clarifying and elaborating their own perspective on their lived world. (p. 105)

My questions about how teachers define spirituality, live their life questions, and bring their lived experience to the classroom needed to be answered by listening carefully to what these teachers said through structured but open-ended interviews. However, I needed to be intelligent about how to bring participants to reveal what I was seeking. Glesne (1999) describes the interview process as "getting words to fly" (p. 67). In order to do that, I needed to choose participants who were keenly interested in the study, draft questions that were carefully articulated to address my research concerns and conduct the interviews in a manner that promoted the greatest level of engagement from participants.

I used the principles of maximum variation sampling in choosing five volunteer participants for the interviews. When I distributed the teacher survey, I also included a separate form for participants to fill out if they wished to be interviewed about this study. (Appendix C). Twenty-seven out of the one hundred twelve respondents returned the volunteer interview participant forms. After examining the completed forms, I decided

upon five interviewees that would ensure a wide variation concerning teaching experience, background, and gender.

Because these people had already indicated keen interest by taking the time to complete the volunteer form and return it to me, I knew that I was seeking out those who were already attentive to the spiritual horizon. Those who have thought about their vocations, their own spiritual development and the impact they have on their students would offer deep insights about how our school district might better meet the spiritual needs of its teachers. The bias evident, of course, is that I would be speaking to only those who had very strong convictions and deeply held beliefs about spirituality and what that meant for their teaching. That acknowledged, I maintain that these are exactly the participants that could lead me to new insights about supporting teaching as a spiritual vocation. Table 2 below describes the people who would make this research worthwhile to the community of Catholic education. Names used are pseudonyms.

Table 2

Background Data of Interview Participants

	Gender	Years Teaching	Teaching Role	Faith Background
Jeremiah	Male	Over fifteen	Elementary/ Principal	Catholic
Sarah	Female	Three	High School	Catholic and other Christian churches
Daniel	Male	Ten to fifteen	Elementary/Junior High	Catholic
Ruth	Female	Five	Elementary	Non-Catholic, Christian
Isaiah	Male	Ten to fifteen	High School	Catholic

There were three stages to the drafting of the interview questions. The first draft created was my initial pilot interview (Appendix B) while the revised draft of the survey and interview questions was formulated over several months (Appendix D). After completing the pilot interview, I made notes for revisiting these questions at a later date. Then, following the teacher survey, I made some preliminary observations from the data received and continued to make notes and questions. There were three alterations made to the final interview blueprint based on these notes. The first was to strike the question about defining the term 'spirituality.' Participants had already done that for me in the survey. Also, earlier, during the pilot interview, the interviewee had indicated that this was a hard question to jump into orally. It was one of those knowledge questions which could leave participants scrambling for a response at the very least or more destructively, leave them feeling inadequate.

The second edit came after noticing that a large number of survey participants (one third) had indicated that lack of time was their number one challenge or frustration in developing spiritually. I wanted to check the reliability of that data by directly addressing it with these five interviewees. I had my own ideas about how that might be interpreted but was seeking to verify that in another context.

The survey data also indicated that while 91% of respondents felt that they should share their personal spiritual beliefs with their students, 44% of these respondents felt that they should not talk about their "struggles" in their faith journey with students. I wondered about that seeming discrepancy and decided to ask the interviewees how they would consider that data.

On Being Reasonable (Judging, Reflecting)

The previous section of this chapter considered the intelligent development of the study--- my understanding, my questioning and ultimately my conceiving of the research plan. These next paragraphs address how I remained faithful to the Lonergan precept of being reasonable in my inquiry. That is to say, the judgments I made in carrying out the survey and choices during interviews that allowed me to be true to the inquiry.

Clear communication with all participants was essential. This began with obtaining permission from my superintendent to conduct this study within the district. (Appendix E). Next, I presented a short summary of the nature of my inquiry to the division's District Religious Education Committee. This committee consists of a representative from each of the schools within the district. The role of the committee is to nurture the Catholic culture within the schools. I believed that the support of this committee would help ensure a positive response from the teaching staff within the school district. These people proved to be wonderful supporters of my research. They agreed to personally distribute and collect the surveys for me. They also encouraged teachers to fill them out and reminded them often throughout the three-week period that the surveys were in the schools. This committee was ultimately the reason that 42% of the teaching staff replied to the survey.

In being true to an inquiry of a spiritual nature, I needed to reflect on how best to administer the survey. Although, an online technologically efficient survey would have saved me time and money, I decided to proceed with a paper and pencil questionnaire. Responding to questions about spirituality requires thought, deliberation, and time. I believed that the computer screen did not lend itself to these processes. This survey

needed to be in participants' hand so that they might spend time with it. It needed to invite them to engage with the questions. By seeking the support of the District Religious Education Committee, I was able to manage my way through this slower, less efficient but ultimately more effective process.

I made decisions about how to analyze the data by being true to what I know about myself as a learner and by adhering to the research principle of 'keeping the end in mind.' I was collecting only data that would lead me to my purpose of supporting the spiritual formation of teachers in Catholic schools and I needed to represent that data as visually as possible to accommodate my own style of learning.

The first part of the survey was analyzed using SPSS software. This program enabled me to generate a variety of tables and graphs that would visually assist me in looking for the patterns that would inform my research questions. For example, one purpose of the survey was to establish a 'snapshot' of who we are in our district. The tables generated, provided me with a quick summary that of the 42% of the teaching staff who replied to the survey, 49% had taught more than fifteen years, 78.6% were married and 82% were parents. This let me know who was giving me the data and for whom I would be making recommendations in my final chapter. I was careful to restrict my analysis of the numerical data to providing the context for the open-ended response and the later qualitative data from the interviews. The appropriate tables and charts are included in Appendix F.

The qualitative data from the open-ended responses in the survey was analyzed by reading for recurring key words and concepts. All of the responses from one question were gathered. I used various coloured highlighters to note the recurring words or

phrases. I then counted the number of times the particular coded word or phrase was used in the total responses. This process revealed a number of themes and patterns. In the question that asked what the term 'spirituality' meant to the respondent, the word 'relationship' appeared in forty-two of the one hundred twelve responses. Other key themes revealed were 'faith' and 'community.' Each group of responses were read several times until I was satisfied that no further themes were coming forward.

I used the responses from the question regarding inspirational books and/or authors to create lists that would assist me in making recommendations in my concluding chapter. I divided the lists into categories of specifically Catholic writers, non-Catholic Christian writers, and others.

The written transcriptions of the five interviews were analyzed in a more in-depth manner. I read each transcript over four times and colour coded differently with each read through. Each time, I was searching for one of Lonergan's precepts. On the first read, I coded any unit of meaning that was indicative of the interviewee being attentive to surroundings, profession, colleagues, students, spirituality or self. Each subsequent read, focused on another of the precepts--- being intelligent, being reasonable, being responsible. I then had a very visual display of how the participants were processing their own lived experience of teaching and spirituality. This process facilitated the search for patterns and trends among these categories. Table 3 on the next page includes excerpts from the interviews and illustrates my coding practice. By categorizing according to Lonergan's precepts, I was able to look for patterns across all the participants' responses and could be attentive to insights that were not visible when each unit of meaning

remained locked within the context of the interview. The matrix format also assisted in visually forming connections between responses. Names used are pseudonyms.

Table 3

Loneragan Precepts Applied to Interview Transcripts

	Sarah	Jeremiah
Attentive	I try to find something that inspires them.	You can have someone under stress, or someone who is in retirement mode, or someone who is burnt out...
Intelligent	I look around at creation and I think there has to be something that created this. There is just way too much beauty and order...	If you can define how important relationship is then you can begin working on that as well as the other aspects of curriculum.
Reasonable	Vulnerability is scary even with just other adults so why would you hand over a vulnerable thing to students and then on top of that, spirituality is that much more vulnerable.	...to get that and provide that for teachers, I think you have to understand that faith is a journey so it is not a definite point we reach.
Responsible	Spirituality is present, celebrated and made number one priority...a sense of being accountable to one another too.	...we have to provide the environment that allows them to crave relationship. ...give them the opportunity to experiment with that relationship.

Finally, I read the transcripts again while seeking units of meaning that reflected the following predetermined themes related to my core questions.

- a. *Relationships*- How do the participants speak about relationships in their lives and how do their stories of these relationships shed light on their understanding of spirituality for themselves and their students?
- b. *Language of spirituality*- Do participants use terms such as grace, journey, vocation, discernment, calling, intuition, soul? How do they use them?
- c. *Spiritual Disciplines*- In what ways do participants use scripture, prayer, worship, meditation, spiritual readings and music to grow spiritually?
- d. *Traditional Church*- How does Catholic doctrine and tradition factor into participants' understanding of their own spirituality?
- e. *Obstacles/ frustrations*- What are the things that stand in the way of moving forward spiritually? What causes participants to disengage from the spiritual?
- f. *Signs of hope*- What are the things that bring hope to participants in their vocation of teaching? What encourages and strengthens them?

Again, these units of meaning were placed in matrices that would allow me to visually notice significant patterns or discrepancies among participants. At this stage of reflecting upon the data and coding it so that new insights are revealed, I needed to keep the question "Is it so?" constantly on my mind. It is this driving question that Lonergan attributes to the stage of being reasonable and it is this question that caused me to employ a variety of coding instruments to make sense of the data. I then needed to look for patterns and themes once more as I set the interviews against the broader teacher survey responses. Because I was engaging in qualitative research that sought a hermeneutic

understanding and interpretation of data, I needed to be particularly vigilant in not taking short cut routes to conclusions.

On Being Responsible (Deciding, Deliberating)

Lonergan's precept of being responsible refers to both how I maintained the integrity of the study through my conclusions and recommendations as well as how I handled the question, "if this study is of value, then how have I maintained the dignity of the participants?" This includes the ethical issues of privacy, explanation of possibility of harm or benefit, and accountability to my school district. I will discuss these issues first and then conclude with the process I used to formulate my conclusions for this research.

Privacy and Confidentiality

The privacy of those taking part in the teacher survey was assured. An envelope was supplied with each survey so that each teacher could anonymously hand in the completed questionnaire sealed in the envelope. Each school representative used inter-school mail to then pass in the completed surveys. I immediately removed any school identifying data from the mail.

This same level of privacy could not be assured for the interview participants. A consent letter (Appendix G), approved by the Research and Ethics Committee of the University of Lethbridge, outlining my intended use of the audio-tapes and transcripts was distributed to all five of the volunteer interview participants. I specifically pointed out the section that indicates the possibility of recognition within the thesis because of the small nature of our school district. At this point, I also verbally stressed that I would take every precaution to not use any clearly identifying data and that I would also take great care to avoid anything from the transcript that could be seen as damaging or detrimental

to the participant. I took this as an enormous responsibility. Although I did not want to avoid controversy at the expense of the research, I was not prepared to sacrifice a participant's reputation, position or privacy. The main purpose was to supply positive ideas and recommendations for spiritual formation of teachers and that could not come at the expense of revealing someone's private vulnerable life experience. Participants expressed appreciation for my concern about this but did not seem in any way worried.

As indicated in Appendix G, participants had the option of hearing the audio-tapes. When the first participant indicated he would rather read the transcription, I altered the informant letter to indicate that option. Four of the five participants chose to do so and all were satisfied with the transcriptions as shown to them.

All five chose to be referred to by pseudonyms and all were aware of how their input may be used in the thesis or further presentations and writings. I also included a date by which the participants could choose to withdraw their consent. I need to say that I was humbled by the extraordinary depth of the interviews in the telling of their personal experience and even more by the participants' trust in me as a researcher. This was not something I expected.

All of the participants were given my contact number as well as the numbers for the Human Subjects chair and my supervisor, Leah Fowler. Consent letters also indicated that research outcomes would be made available in my thesis that would be located in the University of Lethbridge Library. After publication of the thesis, I would also share findings with central office of my school district and any interested persons through an information session where I would present key findings.

I also have stored my original data and audio-tapes in my home for the standard five year period following the publishing of the thesis. Only myself, as researcher, and my supervisor have access to the original data.

Forming Conclusions

The recommendations for supporting the spiritual formation of teachers within our school district were made while again being attentive to the four Lonergan stages of analysis.

First, I was attentive to how the pieces of data fit together. I needed to be mindful that my recommendations could be based only on the forty two percent of the teaching staff who replied and I needed to remember who those people were in terms of age, life experience and background. This was not a place to make generalizations for a larger population.

Second, I needed to be intelligent in how I aligned the data and envisage a breadth of possibilities for this data. It could best be described as a telescopic look at a population. The larger snapshot picture layered with more detail and texture from this same population through the survey and finally focusing in on the deep, below the surface examination through the five interviews. The matrices, graphs, tables and excerpts assisted me in making conclusions about how these people were attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible in their vocations of teaching.

The final step to verify how I was being both reasonable and responsible in this process was to view all of the findings in the light of the document *Build Bethlehem Everywhere* by Riechers (2002). It is this document that is considered to be the blueprint for Catholic education in Canada and has been embraced by our school district as the

vision for our mission in education. Examining who we are in light of that document provided the basis for the recommendations about spiritual mentoring and formation for teachers in the final summation of this thesis. These recommendations were made according to the Lonergan imperative, “Be responsible.” I, therefore, placed the microcosmic findings against the macrocosmic vision for Catholic education to ask: Are we there? Do we want to get there? How do we strive to get there? How do we do that in a manner that honours the nature of the spiritual journey and the difficult call to teach.

CHAPTER 4

THE DATA

Being Reasonable

In this chapter, I first examine the data gathered from the teacher survey for this study. This includes an analysis of the participants' personal understanding of spirituality and how that fits or does not fit with my own working definition of the term for the purposes of this research. I then use the quantitative data from the survey to create the 'snapshot' picture of who we are in this district. In addition, I analyze the open-ended questions regarding frustrations, challenges, hopes, and inspiring authors according to patterns of recurring key words and themes.

The final section of the chapter focuses on the detailed analyses of the five transcribed interviews. The interpretations made are necessarily placed against the data gathered from the wider surveyed population. It is essential that the particular context is not lost when examining the details because, in order for recommendations arising from this analysis to be useful, they need to be relevant for the larger group of teachers and not just the interviewees.

Defining Spirituality

Of the 112 respondents, 100 responded to the question, "What does the term 'spirituality' mean to you?" This excellent response rate (89%) might be attributed to the careful placement of the question within the survey after the simpler multiple-choice questions. It may also indicate that, in choosing to respond to the survey at all, these teachers had already made a conscious effort to be reflecting upon the nature of

spirituality in their lives. The responses were coded and tallied using key words that were repeated in a number of responses. The results of that coding are listed below in Table 4.

Table 4

Recurring Key Words in Definitions of Spirituality

Key word	Number of times identified
Relationship/connected	42 (29 specifically named connection or relationship to 'God')
Beliefs/ faith	33
Community/ others	17
Love	11
Prayer	10
Seeking meaning/ questions	8
Peace/ contentment	5

Forty- two percent (42) of respondents to this question identified their own spirituality as being primarily focused on relationship. It is the way that they connect to the world, themselves and God. Although, only 69% (29) of those respondents specifically named 'God' in that relationship, there were other references to 'higher power', 'spirit', or 'something bigger.' Other relationships named were those with family, self, creation, or others. It is noted that another 17% of respondents sited 'community' or 'others' as being central to their spirituality. These key words are closely related to 'relationship' which was a key theme in responses.

This data serves as an internal validity check to the study. My intended outcome was to gather information to answer the question and perhaps generate recommendations

that would support the development of spirituality among our teaching staff. It was important that, in order to be responsible in my conclusions, the surveyed population was responding to my questions through a lens that reflected the definition of spirituality employed in this research. That definition as outlined in the introduction to this thesis centers on relationship (see p. 4).

The second major theme running through the responses was that of faith or beliefs. Thirty- three percent used either of these words in their personal definitions of spirituality. Once again, this was highlighted in the introductory chapter of this thesis. “A person’s religious faith traditions and creed are often an articulation of one’s spirituality.”

In making recommendations from this data, I need to be attentive that the surveyed population has identified relationships, faith, and community as being paramount to developing their spirituality. These needs are succinctly expressed in the following quotations from the respondents.

- Our souls crave to be in relationship and it is in that relationship from every breath we take that we live out our spirituality through the service of others. (n=52)
- Relationship is the foundation of what we do. (n=8)
- Faith, some vantage point to see the world through, a belief in a greater presence. (n=38)
- Personal faith journey, questioning, learning, growing, sharing, evoking connection, humanity from others/ for others. (n=57)

Creating a Snapshot of the Surveyed Population

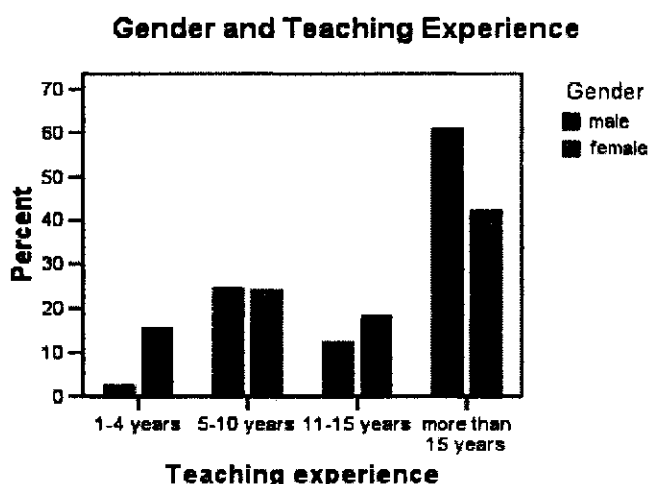
The intent in gathering the quantitative data from the survey was to create a picture of who we are in our school district. Valid recommendations would need to respond to the needs of the population. In order to create the picture, I have included a number of bar graphs to illustrate who we are in terms of gender, experience, faith background, family status and the personally identified ways in which we explore our spirituality. Interpretative statements about the data accompany these graphs. The statistics used to support the data discussion are included in the form of frequency tables in Appendix F.

Before beginning any discussion of the data, it should be stated that of the 42% (112) of the district's teaching staff who replied to the survey, 49% (55) had taught more than fifteen years, 78.6% (88) were married and 82% (92) were parents. This group represents a great deal of life experience and relationship experience. With so many living their lives as parents and spouses, relationship undoubtedly impacts how they make their way in the world. In addition, the years of experience in teaching children tells me that I have come to a rich source.

Figure 1, on the next page, indicates the distribution of male and female survey respondents according to their years of teaching experience. The frequency tables (appendix F) indicate that 63.4% (71) of the total respondents were female and 36.6% (41) were male. The above chart, however, demonstrates that over 60% of the total male responses were in the 'more than fifteen years' category. Very few men in their first four years of teaching responded to this survey. That category accounted for approximately 18% of the female total response but only about 3% of the male response. Only 10.7% of

the respondents, male or female, identified themselves as belonging to the 'one to four years' category.

Figure 1

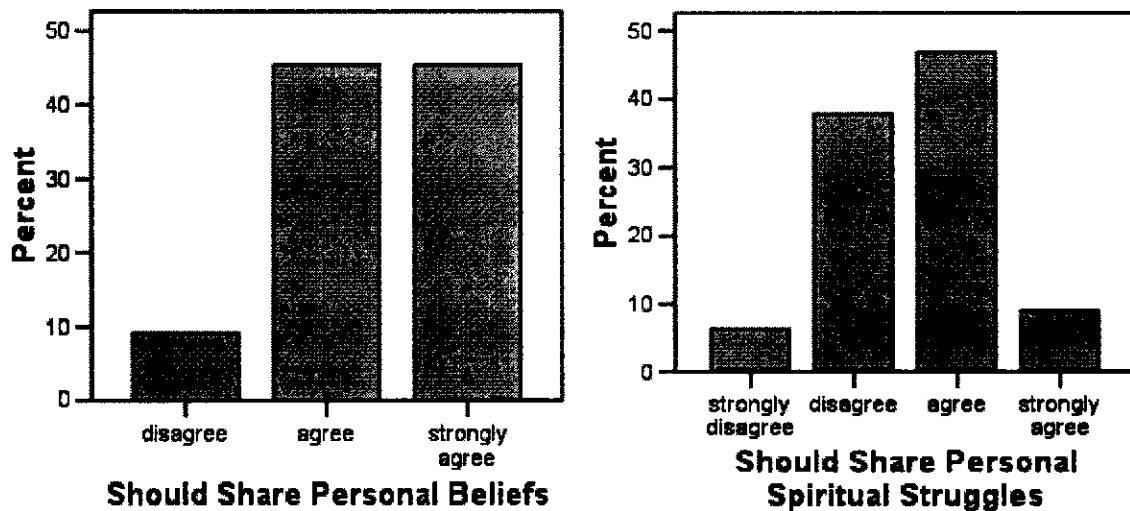


Response to Survey According to Gender and Teaching Experience

65.2% of the total response came from teachers who had at least eleven years of teaching experience. Those two groups, however, accounted for over 70% of the total male response but 60% of the female response. This study speaks to the needs of those who responded.... very experienced teachers and more than half of them female. The selection of individual interview participants reflected all groups but I did choose three men with more than ten years experience as that was the primary respondent group in the experienced category.

Figure 2 indicates, that although respondents feel very strongly (90%) that they should be sharing their personal spiritual beliefs with their students, they are not so sure about sharing their personal struggles in their spiritual journeys, with about 46% registering some opposition to this.

Figure 2



(note: no respondents chose "strongly disagree")

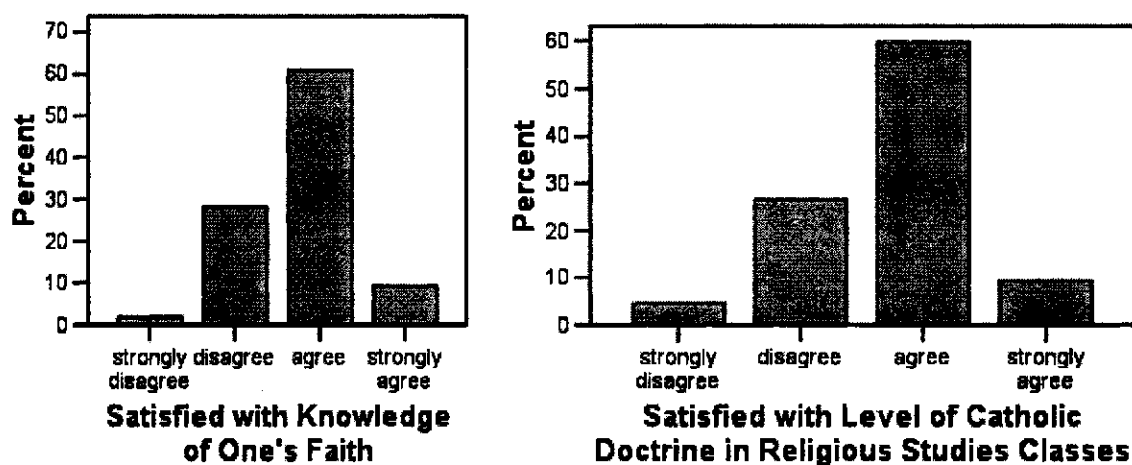
Comparison of Beliefs about Sharing Personal Faith and Spiritual Struggles

This may have several interpretations. It could be that teachers who are with young students see no need or point in sharing complex life experiences about spiritual matters. It may also be an indicator that the vulnerability and trust issues in exposing one's own struggles may be guarded against by many teachers. This is a question I took back to the five interview participants to check for reliability and to gain more insight about what might be causes for this discrepancy.

Figure 3 illustrates the data about our own satisfaction with faith 'knowledge.' The question about teachers' knowledge was not specific to the Catholic faith but the one directed about what was taught in Religious studies classes named Catholicism. This was to respect that we have some teachers in our district who are not Catholic but have a faith tradition that articulates their spirituality. The students, however, no matter what their

faith tradition, have the Catholic faith as the focal point of their Religion classes in our schools. That said, teachers are quite satisfied with what they know about their faith (70%). Teachers are also satisfied that students are exposed to an appropriate level of faith knowledge about Catholicism (70%). Knowledge at the 'head' level does not appear to be a difficulty for our staff.

Figure 3



Satisfaction Levels with Faith Knowledge and Catholic Doctrine

Another statistic, the percentage of respondents who have taken Religious courses either through their church, the district or post-secondary institutions also supports this. Sixty-three percent of those responding to the survey have taken courses. As people gained more teaching experience, they were more likely to have taken such courses. As the experience levels increased, so did the numbers replying to this survey and the numbers who had taken courses with 38 out of 55 respondents (69%) replying "yes" in the more than fifteen years category. This raises the questions of who might best benefit from coursework to support their spiritual inquiries and if that can be established, then how might the coursework best be structured. These questions led me to run a cross-

tabulation on gender, teaching experience and religious courses. Table 5 indicates that generally it is the more experienced teachers who participate in courses and women are more likely than men to take courses at all levels of experience.

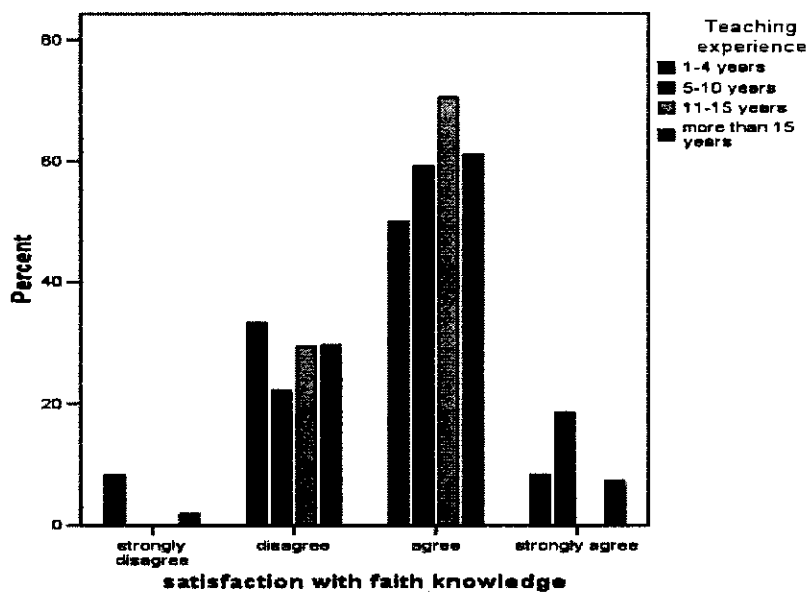
Table 5

Religious Courses			Teaching Experience				Total
			1-4 yrs.	5-10 yrs.	11-15 yrs.	More than 15 yrs	
No	Gender	M	1	5	2	9	17
		F	6	6	4	8	24
	Total		7	11	6	17	41
Yes	Gender	M	0	5	3	16	24
		F	5	11	9	22	47
	Total		5	16	12	38	71

This data then gave rise to the question of how satisfied each group was with their faith knowledge. Figure 4 illustrates that the least level of satisfaction was with the least experienced group of teachers (about 40% registering either disagree or strongly disagree). It must be noted, however, that the sample size in this category was considerably less as well. The five to ten year group were very satisfied with 78% registering either agree or strongly agree. The more experienced teachers in the ‘eleven to fifteen year and ‘more than fifteen year’ categories were approximately 67% satisfied with their level of faith knowledge. Interpretation of these statistics can be misleading since the sample of the inexperienced teachers is so small (12 teachers). That small sample size may be due to the simple fact that the average age of our teaching staff is over forty years old. It may also indicate that, as mentioned in the methodology chapter

of this thesis, the study is representing only the ideas of those who responded and those who took time to respond would necessarily be those who have already become attentive to the spiritual horizons within their teaching.

Figure 4



Participants' Teaching Experience and Satisfaction with Faith Knowledge

The final angle to this snapshot picture of who we are in our school district comes from an examination of how our teachers say they attend to their own spirituality. I have provided two graphs (Figures 5 and 6) that illustrate the patterns among our teachers according to gender and then, according to years of experience in teaching. The categories of spiritual practice were derived from my understanding of Palmer (1983) and Huebner (1999) and the spiritual practices that they named, as well as other categories that emerged through my reading and through my own life experience.

People's understanding of what these categories mean impacts the interpretation of the data as I did not provide extended definitions of each on the survey. For example,

prayer may mean silence and contemplation for one, rote recital of traditional prayers for another, and the naming of concerns and petitions for yet another. I believed that in gathering the data, it was not so important to isolate the variance in understanding but to ascertain the general categories that resonated with the respondents.

Some commonalities exist across all categories. Prayer and worship are integral to the respondents' spirituality. I have already identified the ambiguity around prayer. The 'worship' category was named as 'communal worship' on the survey so as to clarify that this referred to a gathering of the faithful within the community and not personal and private.

Journaling, in whatever ways that was interpreted, was not considered a key element of respondents' spiritual practice although more females than males listed this on their survey responses. Fellowship and service, two terms that are used frequently in all Christian faiths, factored highly for both males and females as did 'nature'. Again, this term may have many different meanings to people varying from an appreciation of nature to gardening, to active exploration of nature through sports or even photography. Reading and music were significantly more important to the female respondents than to the males. Finally, while prayer and worship were indeed highly ranked across all levels of teaching experience, service was particularly important to the 'eleven to fifteen year' teachers and scripture with the least experienced group of teachers. Again, it is important to keep in mind the small numbers of teachers participating in this latter category.

All of this information together helps to create the context for the more detailed interviews to follow. Each bit of this information separately may illuminate particular

findings as the interview data is layered against the bigger picture. Figures 5 and 6, on the next pages, relate this information in graph form .

Figure 5

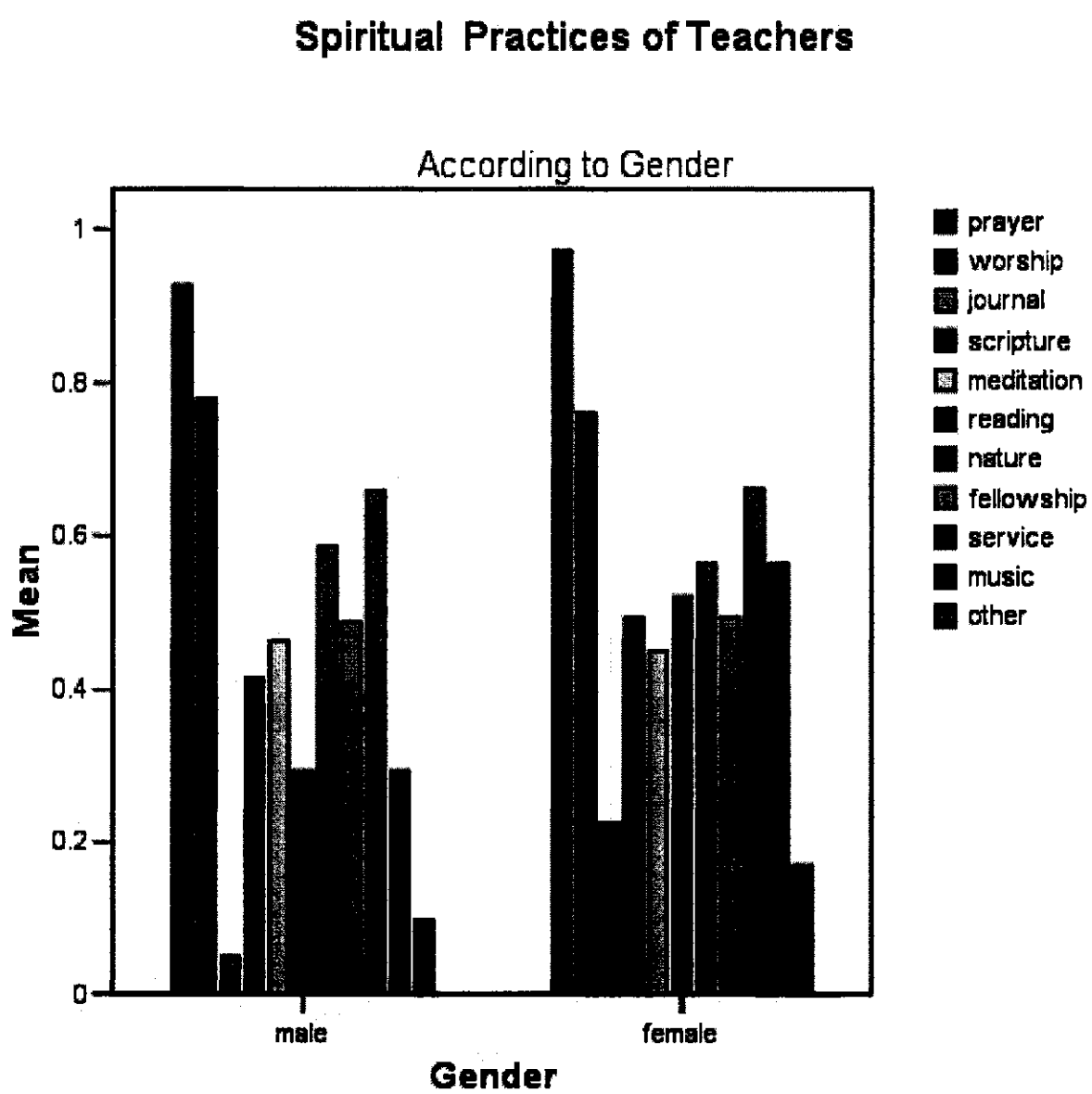
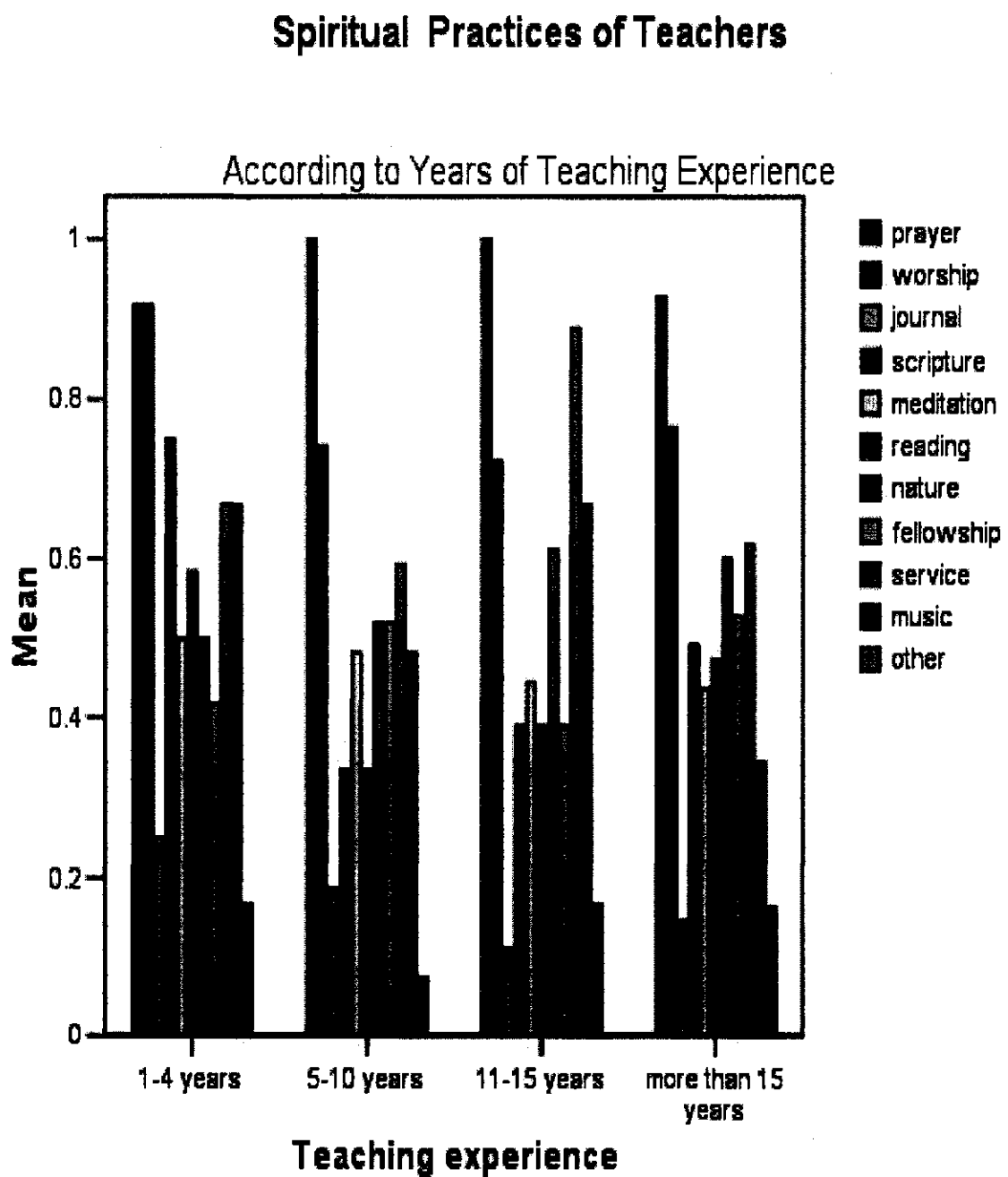


Figure 6



The question about spiritual disciplines included a space for respondents to record anything that was not included in the choices that the survey offered. Seventeen teachers added their own personal spiritual disciplines in this space. The chart below lists the responses and the frequency with which they were stated. Spiritual development is not a “one size fits all” endeavour so it is important to be attentive to even singular responses.

Table 6

<u>Other Spiritual Disciplines Named by Respondents</u>	
<u>Spiritual Disciplines “other”</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Spiritual direction	1
Sacrament of reconciliation	1
Mass	1
Alpha course	1
Retreats	1
Native ceremonies	1
Time with family	3
Daily rosary	1
The sacraments	1
Long runs	1
Yoga	1
Courses (scripture and religion)	3
Church sponsored missions	1
Humour	1
Memories and photographs	1
My children preparing for sacraments	1
Preparing liturgical celebrations for children	1
SPICE (Catholic teachers’ conference)	1
Religious literature and television	1

Challenges and Frustrations For Teachers in Catholic Schools

Out of the 112 respondents, 101 (90%) replied to the question, “ What is your greatest challenge in developing your own spirituality while teaching in a Catholic school?”

Time

Overwhelmingly, teachers indicated that time was their greatest stumbling block in deepening their spiritual lives. Thirty-four respondents used the word 'time' in their responses to this question. Some expressed their frustrations articulately and with expanded ideas.

Time to adequately reflect and exercise faith when we live in a society that is very rushed and full of things that need to be done.(n=30)

Time to connect with peers and students. In the course of a typical day, there is precious little time for meaningful conversation, to build friendships and nurture deeper relationships amongst peers. (n=83)

Others were more abrupt.

Time constraints, curriculum demands.(n=46)

While still others responded with the single word 'time.'

When the surveyed population so bluntly addresses this issue, it is important to be especially attentive to the interpretation. As described in the previous chapter, I brought the issue directly to the interview participants for closer examination and this question will be revisited in that discussion. At this time, however, I am able to discuss possible interpretations and the subsequent ramifications for later recommendations.

In order to interpret this finding more clearly, I needed to recall my own lived experience as a classroom teacher. It is no secret that teaching is considered a very stressful profession and the rate of burnout is ever increasing, as are the demands on these educators. Respondents may have been consciously or subconsciously making it clear that, although they considered spirituality an important dimension to their profession,

they would not be open to further impingements on their time. If this study was seeking to ‘add’ something to their day, then there would be resistance. My analysis of what this might mean for later recommendations comes from this excerpt from my own thesis journal and speaks to my method of remaining attentive.

As I begin to deal with the data from the surveys, it strikes me that time is the primary concern in developing and growing spiritually and I am reminded of an incident in my life several years ago, a moment only, but profound nonetheless in its power to touch me. As I rushed home from a full time teaching day, two kids in tow, both arguing with one another in the backseat of the van about some meaningless point, I was losing patience and thinking only of the supper that needed preparing and the homework that needed completing... both mine and theirs! Entering the kitchen, dropping my keys on the counter, and my coat on the nearest chair, I didn’t even miss a beat as I took out the cooking supplies to begin dinner. The kids had settled their argument and were now on to the never ending, “ I’m hungry,” chorus.

Amid this frazzle, comes my mother-in-law who lived in a suite attached to our home. Her daily routine included watching for my vehicle to arrive at home, waiting a few minutes to allow me to get myself together, and then she would head over to sit down in the kitchen and tell me about her day. Today was not so different except in the topic of discussion. As I listened to her recite her day, she could tell that I was preoccupied even more than usual and *she* listened to *me*. I unloaded all

of my proceedings for the day and the agenda in my mind of what was still in store before I could finally plop myself into bed. I commented that I needed more time. More time so that I could slow down and not feel so rushed. More time to reflect and rest. More time to enjoy my children and my family. More time. That would solve all my frustration. Then she, in her wisdom of 78 years, smiled across the counter at my whirling dervish spinning in the kitchen and simply stated, “ All I have is time. It goes so slowly. I don’t have enough things to fill the long hours of the day.” And we both knew that for that instant we would have gladly exchanged places.

What both of us were not doing, however, was being present in the moment that was given to each of us. My mother-in-law filled her long days by waiting anxiously for my return from work. She craved the social relationship, the noise of the children and the feeling of being part of a family. She tried to occupy her time but didn’t really live in that time. And I, in my ridiculous multi-tasking, was so busy thinking about when I would be free enough to relax, that I missed the enjoyment of my children, the savouring of the wonder smells of cooking in my kitchen, the warmth in my family, and the feeling of gratitude for abundant blessings. I too was not truly living in the time that was given to me.

When do we find time? How do we make time? Where do we steal minutes in order to focus on the important things? Now, years later, my children grown, I am finding that I have more and more time to do just

that. But do I indeed take these opportunities? It is ever on my mind that I need to be attentive to the moment. As Lonergan suggests, it is the state of attentiveness that creates the occasion for spiritual growth. That growth is not coming from the hours of silent prayer and contemplation that we put forth. It is not accomplished in forced efforts of will on our part to become enlightened. We do not force a transcendence of our humanity through “waiting” for the time to appear. We transcend our humanity and are afforded glimpses of divinity by attending to the business of living our humanity fully. In our attentiveness to the moment, we observe, we feel, we touch, we listen, we gather “data” from what we are present to in that instant. As soon as we fill that instant with the wishing it away or moving our minds ahead to the next moment, we have lost what the moment can offer us.

As an administrator, I cannot realistically give the gift of time in any great amounts to teachers. The reality of their days, is that this is an extremely demanding profession where finding a moment to go to the bathroom becomes a near impossibility. No wonder it is time that these amazing people seek. To compassionately offer to take a supervision stint or cover a classroom for a period so that a teacher can attend to something else, is a relief but it does not give the time to read, reflect, ponder and pray.

Maybe we are looking more at what St. Paul says when he says, “pray without ceasing, in everything, give thanks.” It is the habit of being

attentive in every moment, of being so sure that in each moment we are loved, that we have been gifted with life and that we are gift to others that creates what Huebner (1999) refers to as the “clearing for God.” Maybe we need to get our hearts around a different sense of time. Not on a continuum but in a way of allowing a presence in our lives that allows us to be touched by divinity in our ordinary days. When Riechers talks about sacramentality and seeing God in all things, then he makes reference to how we need to model this for the children we teach. That is clearly our biggest obstacle. How is it overcome? Perhaps it is through our mentors... my mother-in-law’s observation that I was wishing my life away as was she, brought us both simultaneously to the recognition that we could not change the amount of “time” but we could change how we were present in that time. The question then arises as to how we make that personal shift in perspective. It is fundamental if we are to adhere to both Lonergan’s first precept “Be attentive” and Riechers’ “see God in all things.” (December 5, 2004)

Dealing with Difference

There were nine comments made that spoke about the non-Catholic influences in the division. Seven of these were directed specifically at the frustration of dealing with non-practicing students while one noted that the hiring of non-Catholic teachers was a challenge and the other spoke more generally about “people within the school who are not committed to Catholic education.” (n=34).

- Maintaining my own faith while trying to teach so many of little faith. Too few Catholics in class.(n=49)
- Lack of motivation/respect in students who have not had Catholic values instilled at home. This makes me feel like I am fighting an uphill battle. (n=66)

Related to this, eight different respondents named, in some way, that grappling with peoples' different beliefs and understandings about spirituality was a challenge.

- Fellow staff members often think differently about what spirituality is and can tend to judge each others' form of developing their spirituality. (n=112)
- Keeping an open mind, being willing to be “surprised” by God. Sometimes I put different meaning in what my colleagues describe as their faith life. (n=95)

The quotations above speak about difference as a challenge and are representative of six of the respondents' comments. Two, however, spoke much more directly about their colleagues who were “nominally practicing” or who were “Catholic conveniently.”

The final group of responses that deal with difference were those related to Catholic Church doctrine. Eight teachers identified that a key challenge to developing their spirituality was in their struggle with some of the church teachings. The following quotation is representative of this group of respondents.

I have a personal struggle between what the Catholic church dictates and my own personal belief. (n=93)

When speaking about difference, people have judged others in some instances but in many others, they have simply identified that in a work place environment where we are supposedly all on the same track, we see ourselves sometimes at odds with those around us. The tension and conflict this produces can be seen as an obstacle to spiritual development but if we continue to use the Lonergan method of analysis of human consciousness, it will push us into the next phase of being intelligent about our inquiry into spirituality. It is our differences that lead to questions which then lead to exploration of a deeper nature and ultimately help us expand our horizons and gain new insights about our way of being in the world with others.

Modelling

Five teachers identified that the challenge of modeling for others was a spiritual struggle. The expectations of self and others can cause friction and create roadblocks to the development of relationships. While three of the responses made broad reference about all district staff being role models and seeing others as role models, two specifically named the school board as a problem in this regard. It should be noted that the teachers' strike of 2002 is not that far in the past and the nature of the employee/trustee relationships was damaged. Once again, the quality of our relationships is central to our spirituality.

The most significant finding from this question was not the challenges named but that fourteen respondents could not identify a challenge to their spirituality from within

the school district. Four teachers referred to the challenge of living the gospel in today's society in general but not specific issues about their profession. The other ten cited either no challenge or identified their work and its environment as place that nurtures their spirituality.

- I feel that teaching in a Catholic school encourages my spiritual development as we spend time in prayer and reflection on a daily basis. The challenges to my own spirituality come from outside my school environment. (n=43)
- I think there is probably no better place to develop spirituality than amidst children... young people who are constantly questioning their own spirituality and forcing me to question my own enactment of my faith. As a staff we must affirm each other seeing the strengths and working on weaknesses. (n=99)

Offering Support

Seventy-nine percent (88) of the respondents replied to the question, "How could your school and central administrators best support you in your own spiritual development?" This response is significantly lower than the 90% (101) who replied to the question regarding challenges. To articulate specific means of supporting one's spiritual growth is decidedly more complex than naming a frustration and the responses indicate that complexity. The chart below indicates frequency of responses according to patterns noticed. The suggestions are not verbatim but combine similar responses under one category. For example, the category "provide resources" captures the essence of the

specific suggestions to provide information, supply meditation type reading, give journal questions and list books.

Table 7

Suggestions by Respondents for Supporting Spiritual Growth

Suggestions	Frequency of Response
Already doing enough	13
Offer courses	19 (3 said needed time to take the course)
Be models of Christianity	10
Provide resources	9
Continue to offer spiritual development day	8
Celebrate Mass more often as a community	5
Bible study	5
Retreat days	5 (two of these responses suggested time away for a private retreat day.)
Affirm what we do in our daily work	4
Bring priests to schools	2 (1 suggested a priest in residency program)

It is interesting to note the numbers and the nature of the responses from those who feel that administration either supports them adequately or that it is not administration's role to tend to their personal spiritual development.

- Our system does a good job in helping with my faith development. It is up to me to take advantage of the opportunities supplied. (n=17)

- That is my journey. I accept this mandate by virtue of who I am and through my teaching. (n=18)
- They are awesome. They value that I am a Christian. Don't look with a non-Catholic vs. Catholic attitude. They push us to be thinking about our spiritual development by asking us to include that in our personal growth plans. (n=69)

I struggle with the high number of respondents who suggested that coursework of some sort be offered to them (24%). At first examination, this would be a fairly easy recommendation to put in place but, as noted, three of those who responded in this manner indicated that time away from the classroom must be provided in order for them to study. Time was the main stumbling block to spiritual development identified by teachers in the challenges question so to look at simply adding course offerings without the larger context in consideration, would be short-sighted. Of course, offering time away from the classroom in order to take classes would mean considerable financial input from the school district funds. At this point in analyzing the data, I went back to the typed responses and circled the word "time" or "release from classroom". Fifteen respondents had included suggestions that required the gift of time.

Modeling of Christian action was repeated ten times in the responses. Teachers have indicated both through identifying their challenges and in their suggestions for support that strong role models are needed. They are looking to administration for that.

Provision of resources for spiritual development was the next most frequently offered suggestion. Once again, this would have financial impact on the district. Money will clearly play an important role in the making of recommendations.

Reading that Inspire Us

What began as a 'wondering' after my pilot interview about how teachers are intellectually pursuing their spirituality, transformed into an open-ended question on my survey that shed much light on what is feeding the spiritual minds of our teachers. Only 63 of the 112 respondents (56%) answered the request, "Please take a minute to write down any authors and/or book titles that you have found particularly inspiring or helpful for you in your personal spiritual growth." Reading is one of the key ways teachers make sense of their profession. Their curriculum, their guides to teaching, new and current practices, all of this requires a great deal of professional reading. Reading had also ranked fairly high in spiritual disciplines used by the respondents so I was surprised when only 56% replied. I wondered, once again, about the time issue... time to respond well and time to read.

I categorized the reading cited by those who did respond and some interesting patterns evolved. Table 8 indicates the titles and/or authors that respondents recommended for inspirational reading. The numbers following some of the entries indicate the number of respondents who had recorded the same response.

Table 8

Spiritual Reading Material Chosen by Respondents

Catholic	Christian, non-Catholic	Other
Bible 7	Rick Warren 3	Bolman and Deal (leadership)
Catholic Digest	Charles Swindoll 3	Hume (philosopher)
Sacredspace (website)	Dr. James Dobson 2	Kant (philosopher)
Living Faith 2	Robert Schuler	Bastien (Blackfoot ways of Knowing)
Catholic Update	Parker Palmer 3	Og Mandino (motivational)
Church Bulletin	Emmet Fox	B. T. Spalding (Eastern Religions)
Build Bethlehem Everywhere 5	Thomas Coffey (fiction)	J. Redfield (Celestine Prophecies)
Catholic Missal	Max Lucado 7	Richard Bach (Jonathan Livingston Seagull, Le Messie Recalcitrant) 2
Amy Wellborn	Laurie Beth Jones	A Higher Taste (Krishna)
Robert Ellsberg	C.S. Lewis 4	Dalai Lama
Edward Hayes	Francine Rivers (fiction)	Couples Daily Meditation Book (no author)
Henry Nouwen 3	Lee Strabel	Terry Fox story
Christopher West	Charles Stanley	Poetry of any sort

Catholic	Christian, non-Catholic	Other
St. Augustine 2	Michelle McKinney	B. Hoff (Tao of Pooh)
St. Ignatius	Robin Jones Gunn (fiction)	Ruth Anne Muir (Heart of a Teacher)
Jean Vanier 2	Walter Wangerin	Chicken Soup for the Soul 2
Thomas Aquinas 2	Michael Phillips (fiction)	Noah Gordon (The Last Jew)
Vatican II documents	Andrew Murray	William Shakespeare
Vatican II Encyclicals 2	Ellen Gunderson Traylor	Anne Hom (I am David)
Dumais (Sermon on the Mount)	Frank Peretti (fiction)	Mitch Alboum (Tuesdays with Morrie) 3
Megan McKenna	Donald Walsees (Conversations with God) 2	Charlene Costanzo (Twelve gifts of Birth)
Thomas Groome 2	Larry Crabb	Harold Kushner (When Bad things Happen to Good People)
Joseph Girzone (fiction)	Scott Peck	Robin Sharma (The Monk who sold his Ferrari)
Word Among Us 2		Don Miguel Ruiz (The 4 Agreements)
John Catoir	Elaine Pagels	William Blake

Catholic	Christian, non-Catholic	Other
Catholic Journals	Joyce Meyer	William Shakespeare
Ian Knox (Theology for teachers) 2	Philip Yancey ³	Neale Donald Walsch (Conversations with God)
W. P. Loewe (Christology)	Alpha Course (not a text but a several week course)	Wayne Dyer (Ten Secrets for Success)
Thomas Merton		
George Weigel (Biography of Pope John Paul II)		
Catechism of the Catholic Church		
Flannery O'connor		
Brother Lawrence		
Joyce Rupp 2		
Mother Teresa		
Bernard Lonergan		
Jean-Pierre de Caussade		
Thomas Moore (Care of the Soul, former Catholic monk)		
George Bernamos (The Diary of a Country Priest, fiction)		

Catholic	Christian, non-Catholic	Other
Julien Green (Each Man in His Darkness, fiction)		
Religion Teachers' Journal		
Guided Meditations Vol. I, II, III (not sure if these are from a Catholic source)		

Although there were fewer respondents to this question, there were a large number of authors and/or book titles offered. It must be noted that some of the respondents recorded as many as ten titles in their single response. Those who chose to answer are generally reading a great deal. The number of non-Catholic Christian pastors and ministers in this list is worthy of note as are the more general self-help and Eastern religion based writings. As well, the list of Catholic materials included a vast range from church bulletins to Vatican encyclicals to Catholic theologians and saints. The Bible was the most frequently cited inspirational spiritual reading (7 times). An important recommendation made by one respondent about the Bible and giving it the significant role it needs, is to present each new teacher in the district with the Catholic Bible when they accept a role within our district.

We live in an information age regarding people's spiritual search for meaning. As I created the lists of reading resources, I did a quick web search on each author or book title. Each website led to many other links which offered even more material on the same subjects or themes. There is an abundance of published material about spirituality

available and people are accessing a great variety of writing. Neiman (2000) cautions that without discernment, it is possible to “become easy prey for all sorts of celestine prophecies and chicken soups for the soul” (p. 217). Although the comment was made regarding teaching students about spiritual matters, it is not lost on us as adults who continue to sift through our life questions.

The Interviews

As outlined in the chapter on methodology, I initially coded the interviews according to Lonergan’s four precepts. Although I was seeking patterns, I was also attentive to the picture that these five interview participants collectively created concerning spirituality and teaching. I look at each of the four precepts and how they relate to the interview data, identify patterns from this data and the previously collected data from the survey, and finally analyze the interview data according to the themes of relationship, language of spirituality, obstacles, spiritual disciplines, traditional church and hopes.

Attentive

Each of the five interview participants (Jeremiah, Sarah, Ruth, Daniel, and Isaiah) used an analogy to highlight personal awareness about how they perceived the spiritual perspective in their lives. My interview questions were not designed to elicit these analogies and the analogies arose in the conversation at various points throughout the interviews. It is interesting that in all five cases the participants chose to use this method of verbal expression to speak about their spirituality and their understanding of how it plays out in their daily life. I will summarize each analogy and then highlight the key points about the participant’s awareness of spirituality thus illumined by the analogy.

“Jeremiah’s” analogy was a theme that ran through the entire interview. He spoke about relationship as being central to spirituality and then likened these relationships to pieces of a puzzle that needed to be fit together.

If we are pieces to the puzzle, if we are the body of Christ, we are given a piece of the body, our souls, we are all given that, our gifts, our character, that’s who we are..... we are unique and if you think of a piece of the puzzle and everybody being part of the body of Christ, everybody, everybody, not just Catholics. We’ve got everybody. ...If you have ever put a puzzle together, you start over here with six pieces that seem to fit and then in that corner over there, and eventually the picture comes together. Well, I believe that’s how relationships are. So this part is together, the rest is all in chaos and you can’t seem to find any that fit and then over there some fit for some reason and then here. (Interview transcript January 12, 2005)

As the interview unfolded, “Jeremiah” reminded me that in his role as teacher and administrator he saw that he needed to be always attentive to the relationships of students and staff and to help align people with where they could best use their gifts. Faith was played out in his daily life according to the relationships within it and the value that he placed upon these relationships. He was attentive to how he could be open to seeing how the pieces may or may not fit together.

“Isaiah” used an analogy of the Catholic Church as the “largest ballpark to pray in” in order to get across his point about the diversity that he sees as a strength within the church. His own spirituality is best deepened within the Catholic Church and its traditions

because of that diversity. He is attentive to certain struggles in his own seeking and that of others but, as he articulates,

As long as you are in the ballpark, that is the key thing. So I could be at the concession stand. I can be at the washroom. Or I'm maybe not watching the game but I am still in the game. Eventually, I have to leave those places and come to being either at bat or I have to be in the field.... There isn't one right way to be Catholic. We are diverse but we can come to the Eucharist. (Interview Transcript, January 14, 2005)

The ballpark analogy reaffirmed his remarks about "not just one right way", "respect the process," and being always diligent in taking "kids where they are."

As "Jeremiah" and "Isaiah" spoke about the need to be comfortable with relationships that don't always 'fit' and with a depth of seeking to understand the diversity in finding our spiritual ways, "Daniel" added an understanding of the ambiguity in both our profession and deepening spirituality. He referred to teaching as an "amazing vocation" where we struggle with the never being finished in our work and never knowing everything about our faith.

In this field, do we ever get it all done? You know, we don't pour basements for a living. We don't pour driveways for a living, where it is concrete... It is done. The house is built. On to the next one. We don't get that experience here. And I think you get some inner peace understanding that. Yeah, I am never going to get to the end of that to do list. (Interview Transcript, January 27, 2005)

“Daniel’s” concrete pouring analogy works to draw attention to the difficulty of teaching and living authentically in one’s beliefs. Because of the constant process, there lacks a completeness or sense of finishing that can be tabulated and celebrated. Daniel is attentive to the peace that he finds when he can accept the unfinishedness of self and work and learning and knowing.

“Ruth’s” faith is set in the belief that it needs to be lived, embraced and is very real and human. It is not about perfection but about “humanity and the fullness of what that humanity means.” For “Ruth,” she is attentive to the human frailties and vulnerabilities that sometimes cause us to turn from our spiritual development. Her analogy is about the pedestal that we, as teachers, sometimes find ourselves placed upon unwillingly.

... you also see it in the ministry and all those things, for people to be elevated on pedestals, right? And they are without sin or they don’t and then suddenly, when they are human, they crash and people are disappointed. Well, what did you expect? They are human beings. You know. And it is not that we should be watching and waiting for someone to mess up. (Interview Transcript, January 28, 2005)

Throughout her interview, “Ruth” makes reference to “what would Jesus do?” This is the guiding principle in her faith and is the focus of how she lives out her teaching life with her students and in her relationships with others. She does not set others on pedestals and expects to not be on one herself. Her faith is a “real walk. And letting them see this is a walk. It is not just a float. You can’t just float by. You have to put yourself into this too.”

The final interview participant, “Sarah,” used an analogy about fitting rocks and sand in a jar to express how she is attentive to ensuring that spiritual priorities remain a focus for her.

The pastor took the sand and he poured it into the jar and then he put the rocks on top and he said, “All of this stuff can’t fit into the jar. There is no way. But I am telling you that it is possible.” ... then he took the rocks out and he poured the sand out. He said, “There are two ways of doing this, if you fill it up with all the little stuff and the unimportant stuff first, it will not fit. If you put the rocks in second, it will be all filled up. But if you put the rocks, the priorities in your life in first, then the sand will fall and settle in around it” and that is a time management thing. I think if you put God first, the other things come. (Interview Transcript, January 22, 2005)

“Sarah’s” attentiveness was placed around living a life with her relationship to God at the centre. All other “stuff” came later.

Relationships, living with diversity, always seeking, accepting our humanity and all its failings and juggling all of these things within our daily human struggles... this is the picture the five participants together created of their spiritual horizons as teachers. It is important to consider these identified components of spirituality against the larger context of the surveyed population. Relationship was the central component to spirituality as identified by the survey respondents. Time was the primary stumbling block in their spiritual development. “Sarah’s” analogy of the jar with rocks and sand speaks to her manner of dealing with that obstacle. Respondents highlighted dealing with difference as another frustration in their spiritual lives. Three of the analogies indirectly spoke to this

issue... the puzzle pieces that don't fit, the process and never being finished and the accepting of others when they fall from the pedestal. The 'biggest ballpark' analogy names diversity as something to be embraced.

Intelligent

The ways in which the interview participants were intelligently seeking to deepen their spirituality illumined some patterns among them. All named prayer as being central to their lives. Three outlined how they seek to discern God's will for their lives. These included praying for wisdom, learning to put ego aside and using a discernment process to help know how to move forward. Scripture or the 'word of God' was named by all as integral to their faith. Eucharist, Mass, liturgy or worship was identified by all five participants. Four out of the five participants talked about the need to find 'balance', 'centre' or a way to 'live priorities.' Forgiveness was mentioned by two and questioning and reflecting by another two participants.

In summary, these people intelligently seek to make sense of their way in the world through prayer, questioning, reflection, scripture, the Eucharist or worship, finding a balance in living their priorities and rooting relationships in forgiveness.

Reasonable

In living out their faith, it was identified that authenticity was integral to what they do. All named this in some way ... being role models, witnesses, or revealing their own vulnerability and spiritual journeys to students. Their faith was about action and stepping beyond what could be deemed as 'safe.' Two participants made reference to the need for leadership within their work environments to help people in living this out. The leaders were seen as those who would recognize people's gifts and call upon them to be

used. All made mention of the journey or the process and not an end product as being the focus of their faith. Their faith is not an ‘add on’ but at the centre of who they are.

Responsible

The analysis of the transcript excerpts in this category offered a vision of how we might address the spiritual dimensions in our teaching environment in ways that are supportive of our diverse ways of being and knowing. The suggestions below are named from themes that emerged and not quantitatively tabulated. They are supported by the transcript quotes that accompany each suggestion.

- Create a positive environment that builds relationship.

People are still going to be drawn to relationship, to authentic relationship that’s based on truth, unconditional love...provide the environment that allows them to crave relationship. So that means they are going to have to see that kind of relationship. They are going to have to experience that kind of relationship. (Jeremiah, January 12, 2005)

- Teach students and teachers the process of discernment. When people can process their life experiences from the perspective of “where is God and where isn’t God in my life,” then they are freed to develop their inner life and set their outer actions in accord with that life.

Here’s the format to learn how to develop an informed conscience. First, you pray to God and ask Him what His will is going to be, hopefully in that context. Then you study the issue to get both sides of it. You just don’t find out the side that you really want to defend your argument and then you discuss it with the people who are concerned about it... all that in

order to come up with a term and then I have to act. And then it is only me who is going to be ultimately judged by God on that action or whether I didn't act, an error or omission... One of the key things in discernment is reflection, taking the time on a daily basis to say, "where was God, where wasn't God, and why didn't I see Him?" (Isaiah, January 14, 2005)

- Choose strong leaders with vision of Catholic community.

The principal seems to be in the position to really push the right buttons to get people in the right positions for their strength and gift areas. The principal is the one with the vision... some staffs are competent staffs in waiting, in limbo. (Daniel, January 27, 2005)

- Offer personal retreat time.

In response to how administration can support teachers in developing their spirituality, this response was given:

Want to babysit for me? (laughter) But for me, personal retreat time is huge...We also need to take or encourage people that if you need some spiritual retreat time, we can release you from your classroom for a day to go do that. (Ruth, January 28, 2005)

- Deepen knowledge of scripture.

There is something so powerful about scripture. It makes sense. We are a word-based culture. Our words are so important. God's word. (Sarah, January 22, 2005)

- Developing church as community.

Praying together, having that fellowship... the way church feels... the way people who have a heart for church... a sense of being accountable to one another. (Sarah, January 22, 2005)

If you want to understand the rules of the church you have to come on the basis of relationship...you have to find that in the church and where is the church? It is community. (Jeremiah, January 12, 2005)

The reality is that relationship with God now is what builds the kingdom here. (Isaiah, January 14, 2005)

Themes

By coding the transcripts according to themes that I had determined would assist me in gaining insights concerning spiritual formation and mentoring of teachers certain concepts were reinforced providing deeper understanding.

Relationship

Overwhelmingly, the theme of relationship has occurred throughout this study. It is the basis of most respondents' understanding of spirituality. It was a common thread in all of the interviews. The quotations included in this chapter make repeated reference to relationship, connectedness, and community. Without question, recommendations for supporting spiritual development of teachers need to be made in light of the enormous weight relationships, in all of their complexity, hold in our understanding of the spiritual within our lives.

Language of Spirituality

I began the analysis of this theme by looking for words that were repeatedly used in transcripts and indicated a certain 'talk' about spirituality. For example, the word 'journey' was used by three of the participants. Relationship, of course, was used by all. The term 'feeding my soul' was employed by two people. Two mentioned 'ministry' and one mentioned 'vocation' with respect to teaching. 'Witness' came up in two of the transcripts. While all of this indicated some commonalities in how we view spirituality, it was the use of analogy that was most remarkable.

Each participant found a way to express complex understandings of spirituality through this literary form. I need to wonder whether this was partly because these people are teachers and the use of analogy is an excellent teaching tool. But could it also indicate a more common human response to the struggle of making sense of the world when words don't easily explain the complexity of what we feel or understand to be truth? For all of these participants, Jesus and His teachings are at the foundation of their beliefs. Jesus taught using the literary form of the parable, very similar to analogy, differing only in the narrative accompanying the analogy. Jesus' use of parables (Matthew 13:1-52) enabled a deeper understanding of His message.

Spiritual Disciplines

The spiritual disciplines named by the five interview participants reaffirmed the patterns discovered through the earlier survey. Prayer and worship are central to their spiritual development. In the interviews, worship was more clearly identified as the Mass and the receiving of the Eucharist for all but the non-Catholic participant. Reading was

important to all of them with scripture, biographies of saints, fiction, and journals and bulletins named as being a part of their spiritual habits.

One participant (Isaiah) spoke at length about the process of discernment and how it is enabled through a spiritual director. Working with a spiritual director is central to his own deepening spirituality and he described both how the process works and how it has emerged in the modern Catholic church.

The diocese got together (the synod) and did it, came up with the needs. The number one need was spiritual, helping people in their own individual lives spiritually. Now, how that manifest itself was in a whole bunch of different ways but one of them was spiritual direction...it is a charism, meaning it is a gift from God, people who are better at it than others because you can learn the technique just like psychology, I guess, you can learn the technique but to really be a good spiritual director, you have to listen, and see where God is in that person's life. (Isaiah, January 14, 2005)

This participant then went on to explain how the director helps guide the person through happenings in one's life to ask "where God is and where God isn't. And then coming to terms with God is there but why am I not seeing God or what is the lesson I think God is teaching me..."

Although the survey respondents named fellowship as a key component of their spirituality, this interview shed light on a more formalized system of mentorship and fellowship. It includes a structure and trained personnel and does not rely on individuals stumbling upon the right friend or colleague with which to discuss

spiritual matters. The participant had felt so strongly about it that he proposed it be developed within our school system for our staff.

Challenges/frustrations

I had specifically asked the interview participants to help me understand the data from my survey that indicated 'time' as the major stumbling block for personal spiritual development. While each participant responded with some acknowledgement of a similar perception, all had in some way reconciled the issue of time in their own lives. The excerpts below illustrate their understanding of time and spirituality.

Faith is like me wanting to lose my twenty-five pounds. I have to go find time to do that and the problem is that I am never going to find time to do that because my lifestyle has led me to who I am right now. In order to change that aspect of my life, I would need to change my lifestyle. It then has to become a lived experience...So, the faith life is not something separate. If it is, then we are not really living it... (Jeremiah, January 12, 2005)

So, in our understanding of spirituality if... I think the teachers and kids would not see it as if, OK, I have this many boxes and I have to fit this many more... faith should never be an add on. It should be an integral part of what we are doing. (Isaiah, January 14, 2005)

As mentioned earlier, participants also talked about living priorities and being at peace with the understanding that we never get it all done. Generally, these five people have not *changed* their time issues but have altered how they *view* their time issues. Their

spiritual development is incorporated into their busy lives and is not separate from their living.

Traditional Church

While the survey respondents struggled at some level with Catholic doctrine, diverse ways of living one's spirituality and the sense of judgment by and of others concerning spiritual beliefs, this struggle was less evident among the interview participants. Much like the time issue, these people acknowledged certain personal struggles with 'church' but all had come to a level of peace concerning it.

If you want water, you have to go to the well. You can't go to the desert...if you want to understand the rules of the church you have to come on the basis of relationship and you have to find that in the church.

(Jeremiah, January 12, 2005)

This participant makes sure to keep relationship at the foundation of his spirituality rather than the rules. He can then explore the rules in light of the larger community of the church and it brings a deeper understanding within the context.

Another, who has experienced conflict with legalism within the church has come to terms with it in this manner.

...you have to get past that to get out of the routine and back into the ritual. And try to understand it. So, with that understanding that the church is the biggest ballpark to pray in, I think that has helped me to accept where I am with legalism...for all the warts and all the bad things that are in the church, there's a heck of a lot of good stuff so stop concentrating on

all the bad stuff and look beyond that to see where God is. (Isaiah, January 14, 2005)

This theme of faith being so much more than the list of doctrine of rules continues throughout the interviews.

...if you love God, you need to love His church. And what does loving His church look like? I realized just how very big God is and how very small we are...we are imperfect people. We worship imperfectly. We do everything imperfectly. (Sarah, January 22, 2005)

The non-Catholic participant acknowledged a level of conflict in trying to understand certain doctrine and practices but was able to deal with that.

If I want to be the kind of voice that I desire, if I want to have the kind of voice that I desire to have in the school district and be the kind of example that I want to be, then I am going, well, I will do what Jesus did. And Jesus would not have done anything to bring offence...(Ruth, January, 28, 2005)

While dealing with difference is a spiritual struggle for people, there is evidence that as people continue to develop their own spirituality, they also find ways to accept that difference rather than seeking ways to change the differences among them.

Hopes

What strengthens and encourages these people? What nurtures their spiritual core both in their teaching and in their personal lives? These interviews provided glimpses into how hope is 'operationalized' within their lives. In my pilot interview for this study, the interview participant noted how the task of naming what hope looked like in our

school district assisted teachers in making spirituality a behaviour rather than an abstract concept. It is with this purpose that I looked for the manifestations of hope within the interview transcripts of these participants who were committed to their teaching within our Catholic school system. They came to me with a willingness to share how they deepened their own spiritual understanding and how that impacted their teaching. That sharing revealed the 'hopeful' behaviours that caused them to continue on their journeys.

First, there was a recognition that teaching in this system allowed them both the freedom and the responsibility to explore their gifts and their way of being.

...when I am able to use my gifts, to me, that's a ten. When I am able to use my gifts to lead them. (Ruth, January 28, 2005)

For us, the key to teaching is to develop a relationship with the children based on truth, based on authenticity, based on unconditional love... It is something that flows naturally from us by the use of our gifts... what He wants is for us to use our gifts because that's where we find our strength, that's where we find our truth and that's where we know what to do.

(Jeremiah, January 12, 2005)

... I guess, this is what I am saying, that the role of the teacher is to find what inspires me and then somehow transfer that to see if it will spark something from them. (Sarah, January 22, 2005)

Next, there was reference to viewing their teaching as vocation and as an integral part of who they are. Their work is not distinct from their being.

...people have to come to terms with why they are a Catholic teacher ...I really think if we start thinking of it as a ministry which it is and the church says it is... (Isaiah, January 14, 2005)

...it was the Catholic formation side that helped me to who I am now which is who I think I am supposed to be. (Isaiah, January 14, 2005)

If I had only academics without my spirituality tied into that, then it is a house of cards. It is not going to cut it. And so the kids are going to see that. (Isaiah, January 14, 2005)

...we are so blessed, where we work, I mean, we are just called everyday to examine our faith or just be immersed in it. (Daniel, January 27, 2005)

Finally, a manifestation of hope is the ability to live with uncertainty and to consider the journey more than the destination.

It is the questions that we should be comfortable with, not the answers. Because as soon as you find an answer, what do you do? Find another question. (Isaiah, January 14, 2005)

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Being Responsible

The purpose of this research has been to gain insights around the question of supporting teachers in Catholic schools in developing their own spirituality. The publication written by Fr. Erik Riechers (2002), *Build Bethlehem Everywhere*, is a key document for the basis of this study. It is viewed as the most up to date mandate for Catholic education in Canada and describes the groundwork for what the Church is asking of its teachers. By setting what I learned about teachers and their spirituality against what our community is asking of them, I can responsibly make recommendations about how we might nurture and support these teachers in meeting the mandate. The gaps become apparent. The needs will be highlighted. The strategies for filling those gaps and meeting the needs arise from this discussion.

The previous chapter in this thesis examined the nature of teaching in an environment where the sharing of spiritual beliefs is expected. It was clear that teachers were feeling the overwhelming demands of their profession tugging them away from pursuing the reflective work needed to deepen spirituality. Time was the main issue. People were struggling with differences in their own beliefs, those of their colleagues, and those of the institution. They were working at remaining nonjudgmental but at the same time the frustration of not being united gave them worry. Riechers (2002) names this struggle succinctly when he states,

In all likelihood, all men and women engaged in Catholic Education have arrived in its vineyards with more worry and weariness than they wanted

to bring. We have come like the original cast of characters. We have come weak. And this is a source of sadness to us. (Conclusion I)

While that weariness and struggle give the appearance of weakness, Riechers (2002) maintains that this is exactly where we meet God. He uses the analogy of Bethlehem and the nativity narrative where the weakest were invited to the celebration of birth, where the Lord came in weakness and frailty as a baby, and where in all this imperfection and weakness, God welcomed us. It is Riechers' premise that, "we must create places where God can be encountered as the one who welcomes our weakness" (Conclusion III). The struggles our teachers feel are not to be dismissed but they also are not to be viewed as something to be 'fixed' as it is exactly here that the divine meets the ordinary. It is with this caution that I embark on making my recommendations. Riechers (2002) explains that in the searching to enter the mystery of the divine, people "often try to define the grace they seek like a consumer who rifles through the Christmas catalogue to determine, size, quality, quantity and colour" (p. 3) A far reaching, one size fits all mentality to strategies that would nurture spiritual development is not the answer here. In fact, there are no answers but increasing numbers of questions and small glimmers of how we might help teachers "build Bethlehem", that fragile place of welcome and weakness where God is met.

I have drawn four main conclusions from my work as I examined it in light of Riechers' (2002) document of spiritual curriculum. As I present each of these conclusions, I discuss how I have arrived at each conclusion and then name strategies that would assist in the spiritual formation and mentoring of our teachers. In some cases, the conclusion presents more questions than possible recommendations and those questions

will then be highlighted with the intent of seeking, along with the Catholic education community, and giving rise to further research in this area.

Teaching as Ministry

First, we need to recognize the ministry of teaching in our schools and respond to that recognition accordingly. This is not simply a profession. Teachers in public systems are provided with opportunities for professional development. They are expected to engage in meeting personal goals around professional development and they are affirmed in their efforts to increase their knowledge and expertise in the profession of teaching. Teachers in Catholic schools meet those same expectations and are afforded similar professional development opportunities. They gather as professional learning communities to better their practice.

More, however, is expected of teachers in a Catholic school system. While Riechers (2002) acknowledges that there is an imparting of the Catholic teachings, this is not done without personal witness and personal acceptance of the challenge to introduce children to God. Teaching here is a calling to live a life of faith and share that at an intimate level with our students.

How will we speak to the nations of our experience of God if we hardly ever do this among ourselves? How will we speak personally of the God who touches us if we are unaware of that experience? If among ourselves, we use rote formulas and anonymous jargon, how will we communicate the mystery in any other terms to the world.? (p. 17)

Riechers (2002) calls teachers to minister to the students which simultaneously includes acts of service and leadership where,

We show to them in eloquence of speech and eloquence of lifestyle how to give others every reason for wanting to stay in the hearts we open wide to them. If we want a person to enter into our heart's domain, we open wide the doors through kindness, consideration and compassion, attentive care and tender love. (p. 32)

These are demanding statements. This does not rest with doing a good job with teaching curriculum and imparting knowledge of a religion. It implies a vocational commitment to a ministry within the Catholic Church. Our teachers recognize that what they are doing is ministry. In their responses, the 42% who participated in this research speak of their vocation, their calling, their need to share personal spiritual beliefs and their difficulty in sharing their spiritual struggles. They recognize that they are role models and they look for their leaders to be role models. Prayer and worship are integral to their lives. The interview participants all spoke of their call to bring children to a place where they seek God. They want to accept children where they are and invite them to more. There is no question, these teachers see themselves as ministers and their lives as teachers as vocation rather than merely profession.

The Catholic Church says that teachers in Catholic schools are ministers. The *Vatican Council II : More Post Conciliar Documents* (1982) are clear in their definition of teaching within Catholic schools.

78. The witness and conduct of teachers are of primary importance in imparting a distinctive character to Catholic schools. It is, therefore, indispensable to ensure their continuing formation through some form of suitable pastoral provision. This must aim to animate them as witnesses of

Christ in the classroom and tackle the problems of their particular apostolate. (p. 625)

This official document of the Church dedicates an entire chapter to lay Catholics in schools (pp. 630-660). It emphasizes the importance of the work done in Catholic schools, affirms the ministerial nature of the work and calls the Church to support these teachers in their vocation. It does not name or image what that 'support' should look like.

My work has led me to offer four strategies for supporting this ministry. First, validate and affirm the calling to vocation through ritual and gift. As one of the respondents suggested, present each new teacher with a Catholic Bible. Teachers cited Bible study as a need to be met, scripture was important to about half the respondents in their own spiritual development and the Church recognizes scripture as the foundation of our faith. This would be a simple and profound statement to our teachers about the important role they play in the Church.

Second, recognize that personal time is precious in the deepening of spirituality and so offer a personal retreat day annually for each teacher. If teaching is indeed a ministry then it needs to be supported as one. Retreat is integral to our priests and members of religious orders who minister to the larger Church community. It should not be different for those in teaching. The nature of the retreat day could cause friction and dissension. Forced attendance at a specifically designed and organized retreat would not value the individual places where people are encountering God. For example, my research indicated that a high number of teachers found a place for spiritual growth in their connection to nature (over 60%). Some find reading and meditation important, many lean on service and fellowship for exploring their spirituality. To respect the diversity, the

various life experiences and the personal ways of coming to understand the world, this retreat day would have to be offered with a spirit of graciousness and trust. I am suggesting that it be written into contract and if an individual would like to use one day per year for personal retreat, that day be granted without question. This would further affirm the ministerial role of teachers. Many would use it well, some would ignore the offer and some, I am sure it could be argued, would abuse the offer and simply take the day as a 'day off.' To that possibility, I respectfully say that when time is cited as the most troubling obstacle to personal spiritual development, what a wonderful gift of a day to perhaps unload responsibilities, breath deeply and become attentive, even minimally, to the spiritual horizons in busy lives.

Third, offer the assistance of a spiritual director for teachers. In the previous chapter, I outlined how one interview participant believed that teaching both students and teachers the process of discernment was integral to faith formation. In his interview, he explained how this diocese had ascertained through a needs assessment that people were seeking spiritual direction. To have access to trained individuals who could assist teachers in answering the questions about where God is in their lives and about how to respond to God in their lives, particularly as teachers, would indicate further validation of teaching as ministry worthy of support and nurturing. Presently our priests and members of religious orders have spiritual directors available to them on a consistent basis. Such a program could be offered to teachers who wished to access it in much the same way our present Employee Assistance Program offers personal counseling to those who require it. It is free and is confidential and relies on the professionals within the community who can best meet the personal needs of the teacher.

Hilda Montalvo's (1998) exploration of spiritual direction helps to add flesh to this recommendation. "Spiritual direction is an intuitive creative art that has as its goal, helping others become authentic human beings, able to respond fully to God who calls them forth and gifts them with life" (p. 128). She connects spiritual direction with the Lonergan precepts and suggest that the process of "experiencing, naming, being reasonable, being responsible and being in love" (p. 128) serves the spiritual director in helping the directees in their spiritual formation. There is a caution, though, to not confuse spiritual direction with decision making. The role of the director is primarily to help the directee to become aware of God in his/her life where, "beauty becomes more valuable than productivity, depth becomes more beautiful than superficiality, *chronos* time becomes *kairos* time, the profane becomes sacred" (p. 134).

Fourth, feed them. Literally and figuratively. Teachers are finding support in the Mass. Some called for more Eucharistic celebrations as a teaching community. Almost all respondents cited worship as key to their spiritual development. I am suggesting that, if we are indeed to recognize teaching as a special ministry within the Church, then this group needs to be nourished as a unique group. This recommendation requires the cooperation of the larger Catholic community. Teachers attend weekly Mass in their respective parishes. Sermons and teaching are directed to that larger parish life and rarely speak directly to the specific struggles and demands of teaching in Catholic schools. If we were to offer a monthly Mass at one of the parishes that was dedicated to the ministry of teaching, there would be a place for people to come and be 'fed' with a sermon directed at teachers, with fellowship of other teachers, and with the validation of the entire Catholic community that teaching is a ministry worthy of special consideration.

This occasion could evolve into a social opportunity afterwards with a luncheon or breakfast and a time to enjoy the company of colleagues. Teachers are on the front lines with the next generation and they have clearly asked to be affirmed and valued for who they are and what they do. This monthly gathering would serve that purpose.

All of these recommendations have financial implications and I would not be responsible if I ignored that fact. Catholic schools are fully funded by the Alberta government but in education there is never enough money to meet all the needs of our students and staff. While some of the suggestions above may be easily accommodated, we need to open a dialogue within our larger Church community to address how the Church might join us in supporting the vocation of teaching in Catholic schools. Area priests, pastoral councils, the bishop and school boards working together will be able to continue to seek ways in which to affirm, validate and nurture those who teach.

Rooted in Relationship

My second conclusion is that what we do needs to be rooted in relationship. The respondents to this study repeatedly spoke of the quality of their relationships as central to their spirituality. It is their connectedness to others and to God that causes them to further embrace the spiritual in their lives and to share that with students. Riechers (2002) refers to relationship as being central to all that we do and further outlines “four great hungers of the human heart that awaken in us the desire to spiritual living” (p. 26). Three of these four hungers are directly related to relationship. The first speaks of a yearning for acceptance, companionship and recognition of value; the second of the need for forgiveness and healing; another discusses a yearning for community and finally, there is a desire to be renewed and a yearning for new life (p. 27-29). Our teachers understand

this, Riechers (2002) names these desires as that which is required for spiritual seeking.

The question is: How do we nurture that within our staff?

I put forth two recommendations to help address the yearning for relationship.

The monthly gathering as teachers to celebrate the Mass and enjoy the good company of colleagues addresses this desire for relationship.

Second, the creation of a book club where teachers can participate in discussion and break bread together while they engage in conversation helps to meet the need to build relationship. I would suggest that many of our teachers are reading a lot of spiritually inspiring books. They are doing so in isolation and they are searching wide for their materials. The list of books and authors cited in this study indicates this. From popular self-help, to fundamentalist Christian pastors, to fiction, to traditional Catholic theologians, our teachers are exploring spiritual horizons. By creating a book club where such material is examined as a group, teachers would have a place to state their opinions, ask their questions and most importantly, listen to the input of others, while sharing a relaxed meal with colleagues.

Dealing with difference was a problem for many of our teachers and as we find out more about why others think and believe what they do, relationships are strengthened and difference more readily embraced. Of course, the opportunity to enjoy a meal together creates the atmosphere for bridging difference and is one more way in which we can 'root' ourselves in relationship. It also supports the core of who we are as Catholic people in having the breaking of bread central to our faith experience.

Remaining Attentive to the Questions

The third conclusion of this thesis is that administration can support teachers in their spiritual formation by helping them remain attentive to their questions and to the mystery of their faith. Lonergan's precepts of human understanding guide us to the realization that until one is attentive to a situation, there is no further seeking or understanding attained. When time is the major issue for many of our teachers, it follows that the level of attentiveness to spiritual horizons suffers. Riechers (2002) states that teachers need to "instill in a new generation the true heart of spirituality, which does not just seek quick answers, but asks greater questions" (p. 30). It follows that teachers then need to be comfortable with that seeking themselves. The primary question, according to Riechers, comes from Jesus when He asks "Who do you say that I am?" Riechers (2002) further suggests that the answer to this question "does not want to know what great theologians wrote, but what we believe" (p. 21). Calling teachers to examine that question in their lives insists upon attentiveness. The findings in my research point towards recommendations already made as well as one additional possibility.

The book club would serve as an excellent environment for teachers to ask their questions and heighten their awareness about how they seek. In structuring the club, it would be necessary to be mindful of the huge time commitments already restricting teachers. If teachers could access their professional development funds to provide them with a 'day in lieu' for every four evening book club sessions attended, we would have achieved the goal of not adding on to but creatively rearranging time commitments.

In my research, it was noted that all five interview participants related their spiritual understanding using analogy or metaphor. Jesus spoke and taught using the same

literary forms. Finding literature that presents concepts in this way and allowing the deep discussion of the significance of these ideas could further support teachers in intelligent inquiry leading them to reasonable and responsible action. One example is *Theology for Teachers* by Ian Knox (1999). This book was cited by two respondents as helpful spiritual reading for them. Upon closer examination, this work uses analogy and metaphor, scripture, Catholic church documents and guided reflection questions to assist people in becoming both more attentive to the spiritual and more knowledgeable about the Catholic faith.

The provision of a spiritual director for those interested would be a way to support teachers in their seeking. Teachers indicated that they are hesitant to sharing their personal faith struggles with students. A spiritual director could help in the process of working through struggles and guide teachers in ways to communicate that reflective journey with students.

A personal retreat day is another response to the individual searching that we are hoping to encourage. Once again, the affirmation that it is good to take time to reflect and pull away from the ordinary and the busyness of our lives will help teachers feel validated and valued for what they do.

Finally, teachers indicated that study is an important way for them to attend to their own spiritual development. Some asked for religious courses to be offered, others recommended Bible study in small groups and several indicated that the Bible was key to their spiritual reading. With this in mind, I am suggesting that courses continue to be offered for those interested, however, it must be noted that with time such an issue for so many, the number of participants would probably be small. Bible study groups would be

yet another way to attend to both the desire to understand more and the desire to create strong relationships. These groups could be arranged through central administration or from within school sites. They would need to creatively address the unique dynamics and age groups within the teaching population. Arrangements could be made for a specific group for younger teachers where, once again, they could forge relationships with others and find colleagues who were sharing their same struggles. Relationship and seeking would go hand in hand.

Leadership Through Witness

The fourth conclusion is that we need to offer leadership through witness and modeling. Teachers indicated that they expected Christian modeling from administration and school board. They became troubled when actions and words were in contradiction to core Catholic beliefs. While the five interview participants seemed to more easily reconcile discrepancies here with our human frailties and weakness, there still remained a hope that just as they were expected to be role models for their students, they would find role models in their leaders.

It is with this conclusion that I find more questions than recommendations. Relying on my own lived experience to reflect upon the concept of role models and leadership, I am reminded of how poor communication frequently sabotages the best of intentions. In the bureaucracy of the institution and the political nature of education in Alberta, the strain on relationships is heightened when misunderstandings and false perceptions are enabled through hurried and misdirected communication. As directives are filtered down through the ranks, original purpose and intent can be very misconstrued leaving broken relationships and mistrust in our midst. This is part of our humanity. It is

part of the 'weakness' where we encounter God that Riechers (2002) refers to in *Build Bethlehem Everywhere*. Nevertheless it remains a challenge and it is a place where leaders need to be attentive.

For leaders, I believe I can best express how we can be attentive through the story of Martha and Mary in the gospel. It provides a wonderful analogy for what we sometimes do in administration.

In the course of their journey he came to a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. She had a sister called Mary, who sat down at the Lord's feet and listened to him speaking. Now Martha who was distracted with all the serving said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself? Please tell her to help me." But the Lord answered: "Martha, Martha," he said, "you worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one. It is Mary who has chosen the better part; it is not to be taken from her."

(Luke 10: 38-42)

As leaders, the intense demands from external government sources as well as from within our division, tend to have us seek the quick answers and the immediate responses. It is easy to run from place to place and project to project managing to listen and attend to what is around us in only a minimal way. Staff senses when this is happening and their own need for affirmation and validation does not occur. So, how to sit at the feet of Jesus and attend to what is truly important becomes the question. The battle with time is central once again. To respond as role models, leaders need a place to connect with other leaders, retreat from busyness, and attend to their life questions.

The recommendations already stated could address some of these needs. I ask the question, “Are leaders feeling burdened by the expectations to accomplish professionally, witness spiritually and be examples for the Catholic teaching community?” Further research directed specifically at administrators would help us gain insights. Another study delving into the relationship between school board, administration, and teachers may uncover further understanding.

Summary

The discussion, conclusions and recommendations of this chapter are driven by the data gathered through the course of this research. There are no definitive courses of actions to take, only suggestions that might offer the support and nurturing of the spiritual within our teachers. Just as attending to the spiritual horizons in our own lives is a continual and deepening journey, so too is the research into how we can support others in this same journey. Ultimately, I have been seeking what it is we need to do to help the next generation transcend their humanity and find their way of knowing the world. It entails the passing on of knowledge but more importantly, the passing on of a process in order to ensure that the human experience does not become divorced from the spiritual yearning within us.

This is not easy work and none of it is efficient. We need to continually be attentive and uncover the bits and pieces that make up the human search for transcendence. Not unlike the painstakingly slow archaeological dig, care must be taken to respect and value what is being unearthed. People’s lives reveal truths but these truths cannot be applied in a uniform manner to all. All of my recommendations are responsible to the research, none of them are a definitive answer to how we support spiritual

formation within teachers in Catholic schools. I believe that in passing on a faith and a way of spiritually seeking, the caution extended by Jane Jacobs (2004) as she warns about how to pass on a culture applies. "Perhaps the greatest folly possible for a culture is to try to pass itself on by using principles of efficiency" (p. 160).

Again, none of this is or will be efficient. All of this is worthy of deeper questioning and seeking by those with whom I serve. I work with incredible people who are dedicated to children, overwhelmed by responsibility and daily accept the challenge of their vocation of teaching in Catholic schools.

The synthesis between culture and faith is not just a demand of culture, but also of faith. A faith which does not become culture is a faith which has not been....thoroughly received, not fully lived out."

John Paul II

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Appendix A

Cover Letter

November 1, 2004

Dear Colleagues:

I am presently working on a thesis research project as part of my graduate studies towards earning a Master of Education degree from the University of Lethbridge. The focus of my thesis is spirituality and education. I am particularly interested in our own context here at Holy Spirit School District #4. As a teacher in this division for over twenty years, I have continued to explore how my own understanding of spirituality is integrated with my teaching and more importantly, how my way of being in the world, impacts the students I teach. That interest has been further heightened by the introduction of the *Build Bethlehem Everywhere* document by Fr. Erik Riechers (2002). In 2003, when the document was first brought to our division and embraced by Catholic educators across the country, there was much discussion about the mission of Catholic schools and our place in it as teachers. I want to know what you think about your mission in our schools. How do you view spirituality? What do you believe is the role of the teacher in the spiritual mentoring of students? What can our district do to help you with your own life questions? These are important questions and you are the experts. It is not always easy to talk about things of the Spirit but it is absolutely integral to what we do.

The data I gather will be shared with staff in our district, published in my thesis and may be presented at conferences at a later date. It is hoped that we will be able to better understand what it is we need in order to grow as communities of faith. From the

data collected, I will make recommendations for how we can support and mentor teachers as we daily face the challenge of living authentic faith-filled lives with our students.

Please take the twenty minutes required to fill out the attached survey, place it in the accompanying envelope and return it to your DREC representative in the school. No names are required and no specific schools will be identified in the analysis and follow-up.

In addition to the survey, I am asking for volunteers who would like to be interviewed for this study. It is important that I have the opportunity to listen and take note of how you view spirituality and education. There are many facets to this issue and a wide range of participants would ensure that many voices are heard. If you would be able to spend an hour with me exploring what it means to be teaching in a Catholic school, please fill in the attached volunteer participant form and return it directly to me in the inter-school mail. I will choose participants who represent a diverse sample of who we are in Holy Spirit School District.

If you would like to discuss this study further, require clarification or would like more information before volunteering to be interviewed, please do not hesitate to call me at Father Leonard Van Tighem School (381-0953) or my home (328-6461). My thesis supervisor, Dr. Leah Fowler, may be reached at 329-2457 or leah.fowler@uleth.ca. Human Subjects Research committee within the Faculty of Education has approved this research. The chair of Human Subjects Research is Dr. Rick Mrazek and he can be reached at 329-2452 or mrazek@uleth.ca.

Thank you, in advance, for your support. What we do in Catholic schools is unique to our profession and this work will serve to bring new understanding to it.

Sincerely,

Mary Anne Derbyshire

Please complete this section only if you are interested in becoming an interview participant for the study.

I am interested in being interviewed as part of your research study. Although every effort will be made to protect my identity in the research report, I do understand that there is a possibility that complete anonymity on all accounts cannot be guaranteed.

My name is _____.

I teach mainly

- a) Elementary
- b) Junior High
- c) High School

I am

- a) Male
- b) Female

I have been teaching for

- a) 1-4 years
- b) 5-9 years
- c) 10-15 years
- d) over 15 years

I am

- a) Born and raised Catholic
- b) Convert to Catholicism
- c) Other

You may contact me at: Home (ph.) _____

Work (ph.) _____

e-mail: _____

Please return this completed form directly to me, separate from your completed survey, in the inter-school mail:

Mary Anne Derbyshire, Father Leonard Van Tighem School.

Appendix B

Pilot Interview Blueprint

Guiding Question	Theoretical Issue	Relevance	Interview Question
Introduction		To establish the context from which the participant speaks.	1. Tell me about your years with Holy Spirit School District and your role within it.
Focus	How do teachers' define spirituality?	To determine the range of understanding about the term.	2. This study is about spirituality and education. How do you define the term "spirituality" for yourself? 3. How do you relate that to your work in Catholic education?
Role of the teacher	Do teachers see themselves as spiritual mentors for students?	To determine teachers' understanding of vocation and /or witness of faith.	4. What do you consider to be the role of the teacher in the spiritual formation and guidance of students?
Lived experience of the teacher	How do key life experiences mold the teachers' understanding of spirituality?	To determine the impact of life experience on teaching in a Catholic school.	5. What has been the impact of your own personal life "milestones" on your teaching with your students?
Narrative	How does the retelling of a life-experience reveal key beliefs about spirituality?	To listen for the language of spirituality within a teacher's narrative.	6. Please tell me about one incident that really changed or solidified your beliefs and how that made its way into your classroom.

Spiritual Disciplines	How do teachers stay renewed and engaged in the spiritual?	To determine what teachers do to further their own spiritual development.	7. Just as people find different ways to improve physical fitness or their professional skills, people also find different ways to explore and deepen their spirituality. Tell me about how you do that for yourself?
Obstacles and frustrations	What conditions and experiences make it difficult for teachers to stay engaged with the spiritual?	To determine what are the negative factors impacting spiritual development.	8. Describe what you believe are the obstacles to spiritual growth in your personal life and in your life within Holy Spirit School District.
Hopes	How do teachers envision their futures?	To determine the teachers' visualization of their mission within Catholic education.	9. If a 1 names the worst possible scenario for you as a teacher within a Catholic school, and a 10 the best possible scenario, tell me about what that "10" would look like, sound like, feel like.
Conclusion		To allow for expansion of ideas and horizons.	10. As my final question, what would you like to add to this exploration of spirituality and teaching in a Catholic school district?

Appendix C

Teacher Survey

EDUCATORS IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS: WHO ARE WE?

IMPLICATIONS FOR SPIRITUAL MENTORING AND FORMATION

Please circle the letter that corresponds to your response to each of the following questions.

1. What is your gender?
 - a) Female
 - b) Male

2. Counting this current school year, how many years have you been teaching?
 - a) 1-4 years
 - b) 5-10 years
 - c) 11-15 years
 - d) more than 15 years

3. How would you best describe your own religious faith background?
 - a) Born and raised Catholic
 - b) Convert to Catholicism
 - c) Christian denomination other than Catholic
 - d) Other

4. What is your marital status?
 - a) Married
 - b) Unmarried

5. Are you a parent?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

6. In the years that you have been teaching, have you taken any courses in religious education through your church, school district, or a post-secondary institution?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

7. Individuals find many different ways to grow spiritually. **Please circle the letters of all responses that apply to you and your personal spiritual growth. Please add others in the lines provided.**

- a) Prayer
- b) Communal worship
- c) Journaling
- d) Scripture reflection
- e) Meditation
- f) Spiritual reading
- g) Connecting to nature
- h) Mentorship/ fellowship with others
- i) Service in community/church
- j) Music
- k) Other (please list)

Please circle the most appropriate response for each of the following statements.

8. I should share my personal spiritual beliefs with my students.

Strongly disagree *Disagree* *Agree* *Strongly agree*

9. I daily engage in prayer with my students.

Strongly disagree *Disagree* *Agree* *Strongly agree*

10. In our schools, students are taught adequately about Catholic doctrine and traditions.

Strongly disagree *Disagree* *Agree* *Strongly agree*

11. I sometimes talk with my students about the struggles of my own faith journey.

Strongly disagree *Disagree* *Agree* *Strongly agree*

12. I am satisfied with my present understanding of my faith.

Strongly disagree *Disagree* *Agree* *Strongly agree*

The remaining questions are open-ended and invite you to expand on some themes within the research question. Please feel free to jot down phrases, single words, or more developed responses as you wish.

13. What does the term 'spirituality' mean to you?

14. What is your greatest challenge in developing your own spirituality while teaching within a Catholic school?

15. How could your school and central administrators best support you in your own spiritual development?

16. Please take a minute to write down any authors and/or book titles that you have found particularly inspiring or helpful for you in your personal spiritual growth.

Thank you for your time and the many personal ideas you have shared about spirituality and teaching. Your participation in this survey is very much appreciated. Please place your completed survey in the envelope that accompanies this survey and return it to your school DREC representative. No names please. If you would be willing to speak with me in an interview situation, please complete the separate "interview" sheet and return it to me in the inter-school mail.

Mary Anne

Appendix D

Revised Interview Blueprint (January 3, 2005)

Guiding Question	Theoretical Issue	Relevance	Interview Question
Introduction		To establish the context from which the participant speaks.	1. Tell me about your years with Holy Spirit School District and your role within it.
Role of the teacher	Do teachers see themselves as spiritual mentors for students?	To determine teachers' understanding of vocation and /or witness of faith.	2. What do you consider to be the role of the teacher in the spiritual formation and guidance of students?
Personal spiritual journey	Do teachers share their personal spiritual lives with their students?	To clarify how teachers view the personal sharing of beliefs and faith struggles with students.	3. In my survey, I found 3 that 91% of respondents felt that they should share their personal spiritual beliefs with their students but 44% of these respondents felt that they should not talk about their "struggles" in their faith journey. I am wondering about what that is saying to us. How do you feel about these issues?
Obstacles and frustrations	The number one challenge to spiritual growth as	To determine what teachers are doing in order to	4. In my survey, close to 1/3 of the respondents sited "finding time" as

	identified in my survey was “finding time” to focus on spiritual disciplines.	overcome this obstacle of time.	the number one obstacle to developing their own spirituality. Speak to me a bit about how that rings true or not in your life.
Spiritual Disciplines (being intelligent)	How do teachers stay renewed and engaged in the spiritual?	To determine what teachers do to further their own spiritual development.	5. Just as people find different ways to improve physical fitness or their professional skills, people also find different ways to explore and deepen their spirituality. Tell me about how you do that for yourself?
Narrative of the lived experience (being attentive)	How does the retelling of a life-experience reveal key beliefs about spirituality?	To listen for the language of spirituality within a teacher’s narrative..... relationship, forgiveness, struggle, journey, hope, faith, doubt???	6. Thomas Groome, in his book, Educating For Life, speaks about “dangerous memories”. These are memories that linger with us, percolate, and then subtly or not so subtly, challenge us to take action or renew commitments... they upset complacency. What might be considered a “dangerous memory” in your life that

			challenged you to revisit beliefs and commitments.
Being Reasonable/Rational	Do teachers find ways to reconcile their conflicts and seek answers to their questions?	To find out what teachers do when they face conflict in their church and /or have questions they cannot answer.	7. Mystery and revelation are key elements in our faith. How do you resolve conflict between your own way of being and the church's and how do you seek answers to your questions?
Hopes	How do teachers envision their futures?	To determine the teachers' visualization of their mission within Catholic education.	7. If a 1 names the worst possible scenario for you as a teacher within a Catholic school, and a 10 the best possible scenario, tell me about what that "10" would look like, sound like, feel like.
Conclusion		To allow for expansion of ideas and horizons.	8. As my final question, what would you like to add to this exploration of spirituality and teaching in a Catholic school district?

Appendix E

Permission Letter to the Superintendent

Dear _____:

I am presently working on a thesis as part of my requirements for completion of my Masters' in Education degree from the University of Lethbridge. My title is *Educators in Catholic Schools: Who Are We? Implications for Spiritual Mentoring and Formation*. As a teacher and administrator in Holy Spirit Catholic Schools for over twenty years, I am very interested in researching both our teachers' understanding of spirituality and their understanding of their roles within our Catholic school system. I believe that we need to listen carefully to our teachers to uncover how we, as leaders, can assist our teaching staff in their own personal spiritual growth so that they may confidently guide the spiritual growth of their students. I also wish to examine how we are fulfilling our mandate as Catholic educators as outlined by Father Erik Riechers in his document *Build Bethlehem Everywhere*.

I would like to complete my research within Holy Spirit Schools. This would include surveying teaching staff and asking for five volunteer participants to be interviewed on this topic. The results of this study would be made available to staff of our school district. I plan on presenting findings to administration in a formal session where questions could be answered.

It is my hope that this research will offer insights as to how we might continue to support those who have accepted the challenge of the teaching ministry within Catholic

schools and how we might strengthen and celebrate the faith community that is Holy Spirit School District #4.

I am writing to ask you to grant permission for me to proceed with my research as outlined within the approved thesis proposal that I have attached to this letter. The Human Subjects Committee of the University of Lethbridge has approved this research proposal. You will find a copy of that approved document within this package.

My thesis supervisor, Dr. Leah Fowler, can be reached at 329-2457 or e-mail at leah.fowler@uleth.ca. The chair of Human Subjects Research, Dr. Rick Mrazek can be reached at 329-2452 or mrazek@uleth.ca. Please feel free to contact either with any questions or concerns. If you have any questions for me about my study, please contact me at 328-6461 or Father Leonard Van Tighem School, 381-0953. Also, I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you personally to discuss my work and how I believe it is exciting research for our school division. I look forward to speaking with you, _____.

Sincerely,

Mary Anne Derbyshire

Appendix F

Frequency Statistics

	Gender	Teaching experience	Faith background	Religious courses	Marital status	Parent
N Valid	112	112	112	112	112	112
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0

Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid male	41	36.6	36.6	36.6
female	71	63.4	63.4	100.0
Total	112	100.0	100.0	

Teaching experience

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1-4 years	12	10.7	10.7	10.7
5-10 years	27	24.1	24.1	34.8
11-15 years	18	16.1	16.1	50.9
more than 15 years	55	49.1	49.1	100.0
Total	112	100.0	100.0	

Faith background

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid born and raised Catholic	90	80.4	80.4	80.4
convert to Catholicism	13	11.6	11.6	92.0
Christian denomination other than Catholic	9	8.0	8.0	100.0
Total	112	100.0	100.0	

Religious courses

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid no	41	36.6	36.6	36.6
yes	71	63.4	63.4	100.0
Total	112	100.0	100.0	

Marital status

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid unmarri ed	24	21.4	21.4	21.4
married	88	78.6	78.6	100.0
Total	112	100.0	100.0	

Parent

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid No	20	17.9	17.9	17.9
yes	92	82.1	82.1	100.0
Total	112	100.0	100.0	

Appendix G

Consent Letter for Volunteer Informant

Date

I, _____ am a teacher in the Holy Spirit Roman Catholic School Division #4. In signing this consent form, I agree to volunteer in the Masters' of Education research project being conducted by Mary Anne Derbyshire between September 2004 and January 2005.

I understand that the research being conducted relates to teachers' understanding of spirituality and the need for spiritual mentoring and formation for teachers within a Catholic school system. I understand that excerpts from my written transcripts and tape-recorded verbal communications with the researcher will be studied and may be quoted in a masters' thesis and in future papers, journal articles and books to be written by the researcher.

I grant authorization for the use of the above information with the understanding that my anonymity and confidentiality will not be disclosed or referenced in any way in written or verbal context. I also understand that because of the small size of our school division, some information I may offer in the interview may inadvertently reduce the confidentiality of the transcript. I may choose to listen to the audio tape prior to the tapes being used for research. I understand that transcripts, both written and CD versions, will be secured in the privacy of the researcher's home and that any audio tapes of my

conversations with the researcher will be erased no later than five years following the date of the interview.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that it may be withdrawn without explanation at any point up to and including, the last day of February 2005.

I have been told that I have the right to hear the audio-tapes before they are used. I have decided that I:

want to hear the tapes

do not want to hear the tapes

I grant permission to use one of the following:

My first name only

Only a pseudonym

Signature

Date