

**HAIL MARY AND HOLY WATER:  
A CASE STUDY OF FAITH PERMEATION IN EDUCATION**

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## Dedication

I dedicate this work to my husband. Mark, thank you for always being there with your support and encouragement. Thank you especially for your patience with the many hours I have spent working on my degree.

Thank you to my parents, my mother Anna, who is always proud of me, and in the memory of my father, Johnny. He always wanted me to excel in anything and everything and never wavered in his love for me.

To my brother Jeremy and sister Vanessa, your ambition and zeal for a utopian future have always inspired me. Your examples have challenged me never to take the easy path. Thank you for making me want to be a better person.

## Abstract

The term “Catholic school” may conjure up images of children praying with fervor to our hallowed Mother on aching knees, or being forgiven all sins with a wave and splash of holy water. The question is, what makes a school Catholic? How does faith permeate a school in terms of its documents, practices and the people involved? The purpose of this study is to investigate faith permeation in education. This case study examines how Catholicity is integrated into a small elementary school’s mission statement, policies, curriculum, and staff/community relationships. Evidence of faith permeation will be examined through an evaluation of school documents, a questionnaire of staff and interviews of three teachers and three parents. Through a reflective narrative account, it explores the history of Catholic education in Alberta and the guiding literature that has shaped one school’s perspective. I will unearth any evidence of faith permeation in the case study school, which will allow me to describe the purpose of Catholic education. This project attempts to address implications for the future of Catholic education in Alberta.

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## Chapter One: Research Question and Background

### *Introduction*

Catholic education is under attack. The attack comes from politicians who do not share Catholic spiritual beliefs. It takes the form of budget cuts and changing economic conditions. Finally, shifting Roman Catholic demographics are affecting the enrolments of Catholic schools. More than ever, there is a pressing need to define the purpose of faith in education amidst an assortment of non-denominational schools and an inevitable process of change. Educators need to be more than efficient purveyors of knowledge. They need to possess spiritual qualities such as vision, inspiration, love, wonder, and transcendence in order to be effective leaders in their schools.

Daily I am challenged to defend a school system that is dear to my heart. As the assistant principal at a small urban Catholic elementary school, I feel that I am in the trenches struggling with multiple issues. My main priority is to provide public education that serves the needs of all students in order to optimize their success in life, whatever path they choose. While trying to nurture their minds and souls, I am also waging a battle over many other issues. I deal with a public that feels Catholic schools should be assimilated into public non-denominational schools; a community that feels that teachers are under worked and overpaid; parents who try to enroll their children in our school, even though they do not share the same faith beliefs and have no intention of supporting the values of the school; and children who traditionally challenge all preconceived beliefs and the structure of organizations. Although I welcome students' exploration as an integral aspect of their development, I am weary of this war that I joined when I decided

to become a teacher in a Catholic school. With the many challenges I face, I begin to ask the larger questions about my beloved career. What is the purpose of faith in education? Is there a place for faith in the classroom? Such questions lead to an exploration of how religious practices and beliefs influence the culture of a Catholic school.

An urban myth regarding education in denominational schools sometimes alleges that Catholic schools' teaching of faith is all fire and brimstone, Hail Mary and holy water. What makes a Catholic school different from a non-denominational school? Is it prayer that differentiates them? Perhaps it is the spiritual formation of students and the way teachers use their gifts to facilitate students' transformation.

This project is a case study whose purpose is to show how Catholicity permeates an elementary school. It reviews the history of Catholic education in Alberta, literature opposed to faith formation in schools, and the guiding documents of one school district. Through an evaluation of school documents, this study explores faith formation as experienced by students during a normal school day while they are achieving Alberta Learning goals. Through the literature review, questionnaires and interviews, this study examines the ways in which a Catholic school is unique and the ways in which faith is integrated into subjects and teachable moments. It explores how faith permeates an elementary school in relation to the education of the whole child: intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual. The implications of this case study will be used to address growing concerns concerning the future of Catholic education in Alberta.

### *Background*

Schools share many similar characteristics. They teach the curriculum and use similar methods in order to facilitate students' learning. However, non-denominational

schools develop a student's potential in intellectual, emotional and physical terms.

Catholic education adds to these purposes faith formation. Thus Catholic schools choose to educate the whole child. The Alberta Catholic School Teachers' Association (ACSTA) document *Catholic Schools: Permeated by Faith* (1996) articulates the difference: "A Catholic School must be a place where all knowledge and relationships are transformed by questions of meaning, by the quest for meaning" (p. 2).

The history of Catholic education in Alberta has influenced and produced the system we know today. The founding of the first Calgary Catholic School in 1885 and the first Edmonton Catholic School in 1888 by the FCJ (Faithful Companion of Jesus) sisters included a dedication to provide excellent education with a focus on faith. As the Calgary Catholic School District website (2003) states, "The Calgary Catholic School District draws its purpose, mission, and vision from the five Pillars of the Learning Organization. The Pillars bring our faith together with learning, morality, and responsibility, providing a model on which to base our District and our lives." The Edmonton Catholic School District website (2003) proclaims "Edmonton Catholic Schools deliver the curriculum of Alberta Learning to students within a Christ-centered learning community."

Changing religious demographics and political affiliations will continue to affect the system. We need to educate people about the consequences of declining interest in Catholic schools, since a Catholic school cannot operate without its students. By defining what constitutes Catholic education, we may make a case for its remaining a vital part of our community. Humans by nature are guided through life by the hermeneutics of their experiences. Our core values, principles and beliefs are the driving force behind the choices we make, the passion that drives us, and the manner in which we live our lives. I

feel that it is only logical to make faith formation an integral aspect of education.

### *Goal*

The purpose of this research is to set aside assumptions and investigate the present reality of how Catholic faith permeates an elementary school. It will build a framework of reasons for juxtaposing faith and education and identify implications for the future of Catholic education in Canada. Specific individual responses will be collected and analyzed for indications of faith in the views and beliefs they express.

### *Research Question*

Before determining how Catholic faith permeates an elementary school, a basic question needs to be addressed. Does faith have a place in a classroom? Can a child's spirit be nurtured in education without it? Kessler believes that the two need to be united: "The body of the child will not grow if it is not fed; the mind will not flourish unless it is stimulated and guided. And the spirit will suffer if it is not nurtured." (2000, p. x)

A Catholic school is unique because it conveys the Catholic faith, sharing this role with the home and parish. Teachers and staff in Catholic schools model their faith every day, affecting every aspect of school life. How does Catholicity permeate a school community? This case study assesses one elementary school, investigating the day-to-day specifics of school procedures and activities. It addresses several questions: How is the physical environment enhanced in a school with specific faith beliefs? What are the standards of discipline and instances of student behaviour concerns? How do students, staff and the whole school use prayer? In what subjects and in what manner is Catholicism integrated? In what way do teachers at a Catholic school differ from their counterparts in other schools? Finally, what faith-based initiatives are present in the

school?

### *Definition of Terms*

Our personal experiences have shaped our understanding of many words associated with religion. Following are definitions of the several terms used in this study.

*Faith.* Faith refers to an intrinsic trust or belief in something that cannot be proved. Faith is the central aspect of Catholic education. The terms “faith” and “Catholicity” are used interchangeably in this study.

*Permeation of faith.* The expression “permeation of faith” or “Catholicity” implies that the two are integrated into everything, everywhere. For Mulligan (1999), “Catholicity means sacramental living, expressing our shared faith with a special emphasis on the communal dimension of discipleship” (p. 136). This study investigates how faith permeates all aspects of an elementary school.

*Catholicism.* Catholicism can be defined as a philosophy that has been revealed through the Gospel writings of the apostles of Jesus. Catholicism is a denominational religion that has a specific church, group of followers and set of beliefs.

*Non-denominational schools.* Educational institutions that are not affiliated to a specific religion, church or faith belief are referred to as non-denominational schools. Public education is education for all, without limits or restrictions. Catholic education is publicly or privately funded education that caters to a specific Catholic community.

### *Rationale*

The purpose of this research is to examine how faith permeates the daily operations of a small elementary school, defining what makes a school Catholic as viewed by those in the trenches: the staff and parents. This narrative account of one

Catholic school's mission statement, policies, curriculum, staff/community relationships, and staff/parent viewpoints is essential in building a framework to establish purpose for education, with or without a focus on faith. At a time when education is at a crossroads because it is being reassessed by many provinces in Canada, this study should provide useful perspectives concerning the future of education in Alberta.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

The literature regarding faith in education offers an insight into the history of denominational education in Alberta. There is also a plethora of literature that represents the guiding documents that speak to the formation of such schools. Finally there is also a body of research that defines the limits and problems of denominational education.

### *History of Catholic Education in Alberta*

In the early days of settlement, Alberta was referred to as part of the Northwest Territories. Missionaries operated the first schools prior to 1880. According to Matthews (1977), “Given the conditions under which the missionaries worked and the fact that proselytizing was their main objective, their accomplishments in teaching basic academic skills were [sic] credible” (p. 36). At first few missionaries came to the prairies.

However, as Carney (1992) notes:

Catholic missionary fortunes took a dramatic turn for the better when Provencher convinced the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a French Catholic missionary order, to send missionaries to his diocese. Between 1845 and 1861, 28 priests and brothers worked in residential missions from the Rockies to the Mackenzie River. (p. 22)

The missionaries taught First Nations, European and Métis students. One of the best-known missionaries, Father Albert Lacombe, established a permanent mission post at St. Albert in 1861 and in Fort Edmonton (Matthews, 1977). Father Scollen created a regular school in Fort Edmonton in 1862. Through the influence of the missionaries, the first schools in Alberta thus formed under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church.

In 1885 the Faithful Companions of Jesus arrived in Calgary, invited by Father

Lacombe and given free rail travel by the Director of the Canadian Pacific Railway. McLennan (1995) describes the sisters of St. Mary's Convent schools as effective teachers: "Mother Mary Greene gave instruction in classics and math, meanwhile helping to establish a tradition of high qualifications and standards" (p. 17). In 1885 the Lacombe Catholic Separate School District No. 1 was formed. A few years later, Edmonton created its Separate School District.

The province of Alberta was created on September 1, 1905 with the passing of the Autonomy Bill. From this point, education became a provincial responsibility. As Tkach (1983) describes, "The Bill divided itself into four principal parts: (1) the number of the Provinces, (2) the ownership of Crown Lands, (3) the financial terms to be granted, and (4) the school system to be introduced or continued" (p. 89). Since they were pre-existing, the Bill allowed for separate schools. The Alberta School Act was passed in the same year, making the Minister of Education responsible for supervision of education in Alberta. Alberta adopted Ontario's Egerton Ryerson model of education in 1910 (Matsumoto, 2002, p. 13). Ryerson became the superintendent of the school system for Upper Canada in 1844. His system permitted the Catholic or Protestant minority within a public school system to have its own separate school. Although many have disagreed with this concept and have worked to eliminate the dual school systems, their attempts have largely been futile.

Throughout its history, education in Alberta has experienced many waves of reform. Hubert C. Newland, for example, acted as president of the fledgling Alberta Teachers Association from 1920 to 1922. According to the University of Alberta Office of Alumni Affairs (1991), Newland exemplified the progressive thinking of early

educators in Alberta:

Nowhere else in Canada was the vision of university education for all teachers pursued so steadfastly as in Alberta, where LaZerte, Hubert C. Newland, William Barnett and other visionaries led the way. As a result, teacher education became exclusively a university responsibility in Alberta sooner than it did in any other Canadian province: in 1945 the Alberta Department of Education closed its normal schools in Calgary and Edmonton and turned control of teacher education over to the University of Alberta. (1991)

In 1935, Newland adopted the progressive education model of American John Dewey (Matsumoto, 2002). Newland's reforms were preoccupied with administration and expanding the rural system, and ensured a high standard of training for all educators. Through all the innovations and reforms, Catholic education in Alberta survived and prospered.

Many innovations and experiments have followed in the evolution of Alberta's system of education. As Carney (1992) describes, the first territorial School Ordinance of 1884 gave Catholic schools co-equal status. This status was reconfirmed in the School Act of July 1988, which described two equal dimensions of public education in Alberta, one a public system open to all denominations, and the other a public Catholic school system offering a program of religious education.

#### *Historical Conceptions of Clerical Models in Education*

Missionaries representing different religious groups initiated public education in Alberta. Clerics in the early days enjoyed full power and control over all aspects of the school, teaching what and how they saw fit. Priests were omniscient figures who taught

the children, said the mass, and heard confessions.

Past conceptions of clerical models contrast sharply with those of today's Catholic school systems. In Canada the old model does always apply in publicly funded education. Unionized teachers who must adhere to provincial curriculum have replaced the austere priests of past years. The church has taken on a purely supportive role in educating students. However, historical misconceptions often characterize people's views of religious education. Perhaps their views have been distorted by movies that depict priests and nuns forcing obedient children to memorize Bible passages while they scrub floors. Memories of colonialism also may affect our perceptions of religion and school.

#### *Education and the Catholic Church*

The Roman Catholic Church has always viewed education as being part of its mandate to initiate people to the wonders of God. Consequently, the Church as part of its mission work created many formal schools and universities. Sutcliffe (1984) described the relationship of the Roman Catholic Church with education:

The phrase sometimes used to describe the relationship between the RC educational system and the state's is "critical solidarity." The church must be involved with human concerns and hence with education itself. This is the meaning of the word "solidarity" in this context. But human progress is not an inevitable process; it has to be judged in the light of faith. (p. 300)

In this view, education and the Church are intrinsically linked. Even today the Roman Catholic Church has a connection to many school boards in Canada, although their number is declining.

#### *Structure of Public Catholic Schools*

Religious education often implies “separate” education. In reality, Catholic education in Alberta constitutes a publicly funded school system of a Catholic nature. Weston’s (1951) description of the separate system is still accurate:

A Roman Catholic School operates under the directions of the Provincial Department of Education. They use the same textbooks and follow the same course of studies as other schools. But the right to provide for regular daily religious instruction is embodied in the Alberta School Act and applied to all schools. (p. 38)

Catholic schools are subject to the same regulations as other public schools in Alberta. Policies govern all aspects of school life, from teacher certification to number of minutes per subject in a school day, and are protected by the School Act of July 1988.

*Emphasis on Faith in Catholic Education*

You address me as “Teacher” and “Lord,” and fittingly enough, for that is what I am. But if I washed your feet – I who am Teacher and Lord – then you must wash each other’s feet. What I just did was to give you an example: as I have done, so you must do. (John 13: 13-15)

This quotation exemplifies the fact that as educators in a Catholic school we must follow Jesus’ example and care for each other, as He would have. The question that we must ask first is this: is there a place for faith in education? In *Build Bethlehem Everywhere*, the Canadian Catholic School Trustees’ Association (2002) argues that there is:

Catholic education refuses to divorce faith from life. We move from the comfortable anonymity of catechetical formulas to the frightening, exasperating and exhilarating sharing of our experiences of the God behind all our talk.

Children are waiting for a personal introduction to God. (p. 16)

Faith is the central feature that makes Catholic education distinctive. According to Catholic beliefs, faith and life are so inextricably linked that there is not a choice but a calling. To answer the call of education is not only to teach but also to delve further into the meaning of our existence. In human experience we are called to find reasons for life in the ordinary. Through an invitation to faith, Catholic schools introduce children to God and the meaning of life. The Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association (ACSTA) (1996) explains this relationship:

Catholic education is a very special partnership of the school, the home and the church. Together they seek to develop a student's whole person by integrating academic excellence with a lifestyle that embodies the life of Jesus Christ. (p. 1)

Catholic education attempts to create a distinct community that educates students in a climate permeated by Gospel values and guides students in their personal development: "In this learning environment, spiritual development complements intellectual development. The element of faith is integrated into every instruction plan in every program, to demonstrate its relationship to the world of human culture" (ACSTA, 1996, p. 1). There are boundless opportunities in a school day for educators to attempt to elucidate how faith touches all aspects of our lives. Faith can be explored through journal exercises in Language Arts, history discussions in Social Studies, symbolic representation in Art, and an examination of the world that God created in Science. The Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association (2002) explains the relationship in Catholic education between the school, the home and the church:

Parents are recognized as the primary educators of their children, and they choose

how their children will be formally educated. Teachers play a crucial role in leading students to an understanding of the world that is illuminated by "the light of faith," and administrators create the environment in which this understanding takes place. The Catholic community is involved through local parishes, which work closely with schools in areas such as sacramental preparation; individually, through the allocation of property taxes; and through the Church, represented by the local Bishop, who is responsible for approving the religious education program taught in the school. (p. 1)

The Congregation for Catholic Education (CCE) (1988) explains the religious dimension of education in a Catholic school: "[Catholic education] tries to relate all of human culture to the good news of salvation, so that the light of faith will illumine everything that the students will gradually come to learn about the world, about life, and about the human person" (p. 3). Furthermore, this religious dimension makes Catholic school education essentially different from secular education: "While the Catholic school is like any other school in the complex variety of events that make up the life of the school, there is one essential difference: it draws its inspiration and its strength from the Gospel in which it is rooted" (CCE, 1998, p. 22).

The Second Vatican Council defined Catholic education, according to the Congregation for Catholic Education (1988): "The Catholic school pursues cultural goals and the natural development of youth to the same degree as any other school. What makes the Catholic school distinctive is its attempt to generate a community climate in the school that is permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and love" (p. 1). Thus the personal development of each student is complemented by an education that is

developmental and spiritual in nature. The Second Vatican Council determined that its religious dimension distinguishes a Catholic school: “This is to be found in a) the education climate, b) the personal development of each student, c) the relationship established between culture and the Gospel, and d) the illumination of all knowledge with light of faith” (CCE, 1988, p. 3). Trafford (1993) further characterizes Catholic education:

Education is Catholic when it has the following characteristics: a) its aims and goals are framed within a religious context that is Catholic; b) the distinctive features of its educational curriculum are Catholic; and c) its delivery agents (i.e. parents, schools, parish) intentionally design this curriculum and learning process to ensure that this learning process takes place in a Catholic ethos. (p. 28)

Non-denominational and denominational schools provide education that is similar in nature and resources. The difference in a Catholic school is the addition of the element of faith development:

In this learning environment, spiritual development complements intellectual development. The element of faith is integrated into every instruction plan in every program, to demonstrate its relationship to the world of human culture.

(ACSTA, 1996, p. 1)

A Catholic school forms a unique partnership that unites the school with the Church and the community, resulting in a shared responsibility for the faith, intellectual and social development of the child. The Congregation for Catholic Education (1998) elaborates that it is the synthesis of culture and faith that is the Catholic school’s primary goal.

The goal of Catholic schools is to empower students to reach their full potential

not only intellectually but also spiritually. To prepare a student's mind, body, and soul is to address the whole child. Kessler (2000) poses this question: "Does a child's soul have a place in the classroom? [This problem] leads beyond yes or no. If we say 'no,' it leads to the untenable conclusion that modern schooling is soulless" (p. ix). By choosing a school entrenched in faith, parents are saying "yes" to the transcendence of their child. All human beings need an intrinsic belief system, principles that embody and express our core values. We need to address our deepest questions and act on our beliefs. As educators, we must put into practice the example that Jesus has given us. It is our job to assist students by nurturing them on their faith journey.

#### *Public Attitudes Towards Denominational Schools*

Economic arguments often arise during political discussions about education. Wouldn't it be more cost effective to have one public education system rather than two that operate in parallel? Although the British North America Act protected denominational schools, in that the Catholic or Protestant minority within a public school system was guaranteed its own separate school, the debates focus on whether denominational schools should still be publicly funded. One argument states, for example that "Private schools are just what the name implies – private, and no further public money should be advanced to support them" (Thiessen, 2001, p. 106). This position assumes that there is a difference between public values and private values. However both school systems in Alberta adhere to the same curriculum guidelines and regulations, although, one system chooses to offer a religious dimension in the curriculum. Both systems are equally committed to educating students to be global citizens who will contribute to the common good.

It does make sense economically to have only one system, in all fairness. Since the government provides full funding for Roman Catholic schools, wouldn't it be fair for them to fund schools for other religions as well? The security that Roman Catholic schools have dates from the early days of Catholic education in Canada. Other religious schools have not been as fortunate. Without the advantage of historically guaranteed government funding, private schools, although subsidized, do not receive full funding. The Government of Alberta has a plan for forming legal agreements with private sector organizations to provide public infrastructure to community services like education and healthcare. This plan may result in more opportunities for fringe schools to prosper.

Some suggest that separate, denominational schools are not equal to public schools. As Thiessen (2001) notes, "Charges of divisiveness and intolerance are probably the two most frequently made charges against religious schools and colleges" (p. 29). The argument is that separating children into different schools tends to increase social fragmentation, which would inevitably lead to problems with social cohesion in the future. However, also according to Thiessen, "A dual system in education has not fostered divisiveness and intolerance in Canadian society, and the Alberta Report of the Committee on Tolerance and Understanding was forced to concede this point" (p. 39). Educators in religious denominational schools must not be complacent, though, about the possibility of espousing only one narrow worldview. Catholic schools are charged with delivering the legally mandated Alberta curriculum, and although the curriculum may be discussed within the light of faith, Catholic educators, like all public educators, must guard against fundamentalism when examining other religions and historical facts. Students, instead, should be encouraged to respect religious beliefs that are contrary to

their own.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### *Unit of Analysis*

This research takes the form of a qualitative study. It is a case study of a small Catholic elementary school where I am employed as assistant principal. This study was completed in my second year at the school. The school has a population of approximately 240 students from kindergarten to grade six. It is located in a lower to middle-income community in a city in Alberta. The administrative team consists of one principal and one assistant principal. In addition there are approximately 15 staff members, including support staff and teachers.

I chose this site because of my good working relationship with all members of the school community. This relationship is advantageous, because an outsider might be viewed as an intrusion and a disruption until trust is built. The research was not disruptive because it was arranged at the convenience of the participants.

### *Approval of Study*

Permission to proceed was gained prior to the onset of this research. The University of Lethbridge approved my proposed study and application to use human subjects in my research. My school board also approved the proposed study. In compliance with both institutions, I have adhered to all their guidelines for conducting research. For reasons of privacy, confidentiality and Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP), I have maintained the anonymity of all participants and, as far as possible, the school, the school district, and school location. I have sole access to all data and research materials, which I will keep for the mandatory five years in a secure location and destroy appropriately in five years. All participants were invited to inquire

about the research at any time. Upon request, I shared the analysis with participants to allow an opportunity for them to obtain individual feedback relating to their data. No individual was obligated to participate in any way. There was no perceived harm or benefit in participation or non-participation. The research has been carried out in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, and with University of Lethbridge policies. I have also complied with all conditions required by my school board in completing this project. In addition, a letter was sent to the parents of the children at the school informing them about the project and requesting their consent (see Appendix A).

### *Internal Validity*

In order to preserve internal validity, this study triangulates sources of information regarding the ways in which faith permeates a school. The evidence of faith permeation in the school is analyzed in the context of its influence on education provided in the selected school. Information was gathered in the form of public school documents, questionnaire responses, and interviews. All staff at the school was sent a letter introducing them to the study and inviting them to complete a questionnaire (see Appendix B). Unstructured interviews of three teachers and three parents allowed the gathering of observational notes in a qualitative, narrative manner. The types of data collected were in accordance with Creswell's (1994) standards: "Data collection procedures in qualitative research involve four basic types: observations, interviews, documents, and visual images" (p. 149). This qualitative design allowed me to gather information of a descriptive nature, and on the basis of that information, to draw conclusions about the meaning and purpose of faith education.

Internal validity of this research was ensured in three ways. Triangulation of information allowed me to confirm the data being collected. Findings from the school documents, questionnaires and interviews were compared. Participants were asked to provide feedback to verify that the conclusions are accurate. Finally, I was directly involved with the participants in this study, thus minimizing the distance between the participants and the researcher.

### *School Documents*

In September 2003 I gathered and examined school documents, schedules and curriculum plans for evidence of faith permeation at my school. I analyzed primary material in the form of public documents, the information or documents given to members of the community when they enrolled a child in the school. The documents that I examined included the student handbook, Code of Conduct Policy, Homework Policy, School Vision, Teacher Handbook and Teacher Long Range Plans. I kept a journal noting the visual images that the school presented on an average day's 'walkabout' of the school. The visual images included posters, wall decorations, banners, physical layout of classrooms, and maintenance of environment, among others.

### *Questionnaires*

In October 2003 I distributed a questionnaire to all staff at the school (see Appendix C). Of a possible 15, nine staff members responded to the questionnaire: six teachers and three support staff. All completed and returned the questionnaire within a week. The questionnaire included ten questions designed to elicit responses showing how these individuals view the aspect of faith in their school as well as their religious beliefs. The first two questions pertained to their experiences working in Catholic and public

schools. The remaining eight questions asked them to describe whether and how they saw faith being part of their school day. Participants were asked to reflect in writing on each of the questions.

After collecting the responses, I read them to gain a general sense of the tone of the responses. I then analyzed the responses and looked for emerging themes. Responses to each question were separated into categories of similar answers. I then compared the different responses and made subgroups in each category. Using descriptive details taken from their comments, I interpreted responses. I created metaphors based on my interpretation of their responses. The metaphors allowed me to connect the different sources of information to each other. Then I drew conclusions or hypotheses about the emerging themes. As Creswell (1998) points out, “Hypotheses or propositions that specify relationship among categories of information also represent information” (p. 146).

### *Interviews*

After analyzing the questionnaires, I chose three parents and three teachers to interview. I selected three teachers who fit the criteria of possessing the median age, experience and gender of the school staff population. They included one male and two female teachers. Two of the three teachers interviewed were respondents to the questionnaire. I approached the third teacher because she fit the school’s demographics. Two of the teachers had taught outside the Catholic school board and one had not. The three parents who comprised the core group of the school council were invited to participate in the interviews, since they represented parents who were actively involved and had a vested interest in the school. Two of the three parents interviewed had become

Catholics as adults; all three had experienced education in schools outside the Catholic faith.

The interviews took place in November and December 2003 and were conducted in an office at the school by choice of all the participants, at times convenient to them. All interviews were recorded by audiotape with permission from the participants, who were given the option not to be recorded. They agreed that I would personally transcribe the interviews for the purposes of my research. The process of transcribing all the interviews familiarized me with details of the responses. I assessed the interview transcripts to determine if there was triangulation of the data gathered through the school documents, questionnaires and interviews. Together these sources of data provided a narrative description of the school, which is the basis of the case study.

#### *Method of Analysis*

I employed Creswell's (1998) method of analysis of the data. First I conducted a general review of the documents, questionnaires and interviews. During that process I jotted down reflective notes and general impressions. I then used Creswell's data analysis spiral in which "One enters the data images (e.g., photographs, videotapes) and exits with a narrative. In between, the research touches on several analyses and circles around and around" (p. 142). The data analysis spiral allowed me to describe, classify and interpret the information.

Forming categories was a relatively simple process. I looked for underlying themes, which formed the basis for my narrative. The use of metaphor allowed me to bridge the information in order to demonstrate like comparisons. I then compared each source of information: the school documents, the questionnaire and the interviews. As a

result of cross-referencing these sources with my conclusions, I was able to validate my findings. This information formed the basis of my narrative inquiry.

## Chapter Four: Findings and Conclusion

The task of making sense of the information gathered in this case study was overwhelming. I felt as if I was attempting to bake a loaf of bread with too many ingredients arranged in front of me. First I needed to find an appropriate recipe that would produce the desired result. I decided to produce a qualitative discourse in order to make sense of the accumulated data, the “ingredients” for my baking endeavors. Creswell’s (1998) data analysis spiral seemed the perfect “recipe” or methodology, as discussed above. Using the data analysis spiral, I examined each of the three sources of information separately and then assembled them for evaluation.

### *School Documents*

The school at which this case study was conducted appeared well organized, with all the appropriate documents in place. The school’s statement of purpose asserts that it is “committed to building in our students the capacity to make positive choices. Our purpose is the creation of a positive learning environment in which students strive for their personal best within the context of our Catholic faith” (Elementary School X, *School Handbook 2003-2004*, p. 1).

The school handbook is found in the school agenda, which every student carries. It contains important information, such as school hours, and various documents, including a statement of the rights and responsibilities of students. These all stem from a central theme, that “I have the right and responsibility to learn in a Catholic atmosphere.” Others include the right to a safe environment, the right to a clean environment, and the right to be respected. The agenda includes many policies to be discussed below. The

calendar is listed in their agenda, showing parent-teacher interviews and holidays. The agenda also information on the Code of Conduct policy, School Rules, Homework Policy, Communication, and Volunteers.

The staff handbook follows a similar format. It includes the District's mission statement and clearly outlines all expectations of staff related to operating an effective school. The handbook describes the responsibilities of administration, teachers and support staff. An entire page promotes positive communication with the members of the school community, detailing how information will be distributed in the school and what is to occur between home and school. At first glance the number of staff expectations appears overwhelming. However, many are simple common sense, and they act as reminders that all staff are bound to a Code of Professional Conduct. The staff handbook goes over the procedures for staff absences. The expectations for teacher planning seem appropriate for any school. Teachers must carefully plan using the Alberta Program of Studies and many other documents that are designed to ensure curriculum accountability. The handbook reviews supervision responsibilities required to operate a safe school, as well as the school's Emergency Procedures. It outlines important phone numbers and the responsibilities of all team members. There is a protocol designed by the school administration team for events such as school evacuations, fire drills, intruders on premises, and bomb threats.

Next, teachers' Long Range Plans were reviewed for evidence of permeation of faith. All teachers are required to submit Long Range Plans to the school's administration. The plans reflect the Alberta Learning Programs of Study and the District-developed Program Assessment Instruments. Judging from the plans, all

classrooms allocated the appropriate amount of time for the teaching of Religion.

Unfortunately, the plans were too general in nature to demonstrate the religious connections in the different subjects. Integrations of a general nature were listed among subjects such as Language Arts and Social Studies.

A number of policies have been designed by the school administration team to guide the actions of everyone involved in the school. The first is the Code of Conduct policy, which outlines rules and consequences and identifies the school's vision, "To ensure quality teaching and learning within a safe, caring, and respectful environment" (Elementary School X, *Code of Conduct*, 2003, p. 1). This vision statement outlines the core purpose and plan of the school, to build a caring community. Its words appear often in school policies and programs.

Nonetheless it is important to note that though there are some examples of faith in the documents, it is not overwhelming. Many of the documents are published by or under the guideline of Alberta Learning for all types of schools. The purpose of the handbooks and policies are simply to outline information. They dictate guidelines for expectations and behaviour.

There are many implicit references of faith in the school documents even though they are not of an overt nature. One example would be the school logo of the patron saint's symbol entwined with a cross. This logo adorns every document and is symbolic in its representation of the school. Secondly, the documents reflect the school guidelines in light of their Catholic values. An example of this is the Code of Conduct. Though not blatantly religious in its wording, the reasons for students to adhere to the Code of Conduct are the expectations of operating a community built on the values of faith and

responsibility. Faith permeates the school documents in a gentle and not overwhelming manner.

### *School Programs*

Many special programs make this school unique; most seem to fall under the umbrella of one program, the Community of Caring: “As a Community of Caring school, we will seek to integrate throughout the daily life of the school the five core values of Respect, Responsibility, Caring, Trust and Family, placed within the context of the Gospel values” (Elementary School X, *Code of Conduct*, 2003, p.1). Each year the school staff chooses a particular value to introduce to the student community. For the school year 2003-04, they chose Family as the permeating value that would connect and give meaning to all of our activities. The staff felt that there were overwhelming reasons and support for this selection. Family is the first and most important group that a child belongs to. We come to school and become deeply connected with our classroom family. Big Family Groups (BFGs) are multiage groups of all students from Kindergarten to Grade 6. In our BFGs we are able to form relationships that transcend age and classroom barriers.

In the Roots of Empathy program, students develop their intrinsic understanding of the importance of caring for one another, as observed through the monthly visit of a mother and child to one of our classrooms. The students learn what empathy is through the relationship and interaction between a mother and child. This program helps students to develop the compassion needed to build meaningful relationships with each other.

Families and Schools Together (F&ST) is another important program that invites everyone to come to the table as a family. Teachers and administrators volunteer their

time for eight consecutive Thursday nights. The program is designed as a collaborative community effort to empower parents and strengthen the connection between families and schools. Families from the school community either nominate themselves or are asked if they would like to be involved. Families and school staff come together for dinner and share in activities designed to build and strengthen communication among all participants. The Families and Schools Together program contributes to the Community of Caring. It brings individual spirits together in a united community, answering the hopes for belonging that reside in our hearts and souls.

The school administration and teachers realize that many problems that have little to do with teaching and learning still affect student learning. A child cannot learn if he/she is experiencing a problem at home or with peers. In September 2003 the school traded support staff hours for a school support worker, who seems to have had a huge impact on student behaviour. The support worker counsels students who are experiencing difficulties in their lives. The support worker also began a program called the Secret Service (SS), which helps to promote the values of the Community of Caring. The Secret Service is an anti-bullying club that hopes to have all students enrolled by the end of the year. Instead of waiting until there is a bullying problem, this program tries to 'catch' students being kind and caring to one another. It has already been very successful in the school and can be credited for a reduction in the number of incidents involving bullying.

In this school, students also have many opportunities to be involved in service learning. One of its key values is involvement of students in service to the community:

Service learning is an educational approach that seeks to combine community service projects with academic disciplines in order to demonstrate to students

their inter-relatedness, while challenging students to grow morally and intellectually. Through service, students learn that they have much to offer. Service also benefits the community and helps community members to value the contributions of young people. (Community of Caring, 2003)

The Community of Caring philosophy accepts that a young person's choices and behaviour are affected by many influences in the environment. The program's purpose and philosophy are expressed as follows:

Through a total community approach, this program creates a caring, respectful, school environment that supports students as they develop positive values... The entire culture of the school becomes one of reinforcement and support. The school, parents, and community work together. As the integration of values-based decision-making becomes complete, students accept responsibility for themselves and their future. They grow toward adulthood with a clear sense of purpose, motivated by an understanding of community good, not self-centered individualism. (Community of Caring, 2003)

The advantages of service learning are many:

Students who participate in service learning programs are more likely to stay in school. These students also need less disciplinary action. Serving the community or others in need leads to improved learning and higher self-esteem. The Community of Caring encourages involvement in service learning projects that reach beyond the student's individual experience. Participation helps students understand their value to others and the community, that they can contribute in a positive way to others around them. (Community of Caring, *Implementing*

*community service projects, p. 1)*

The school focused on implementing service projects during its first year as a Community of Caring school. In the previous school year (2002-2003), children from every grade participated in service projects. The Grade Six students acted as the school's AMA safety patrols, shepherding children safely across a busy intersection. The Grade Five and Six students volunteered as Reading Buddies. They attended a formal training session where the Division I teachers led them through strategies for assisting struggling readers. The Grade Five and Six students were then matched up with Division I students who would benefit from additional reading activities. Grade Five and Six students were also trained to be playground supervisors. They were not responsible for disciplining their peers but for assisting Division I students in playing safely outside. Students in Grades Three and Four helped to orchestrate the recycling program. The youngest members of the school community in Kindergarten to Grade Two were enlisted as 'caretakers' of the school, and helped keep the hallways neat. These programs encourage students to feel pride in and ownership of their school.

Student Council consists of a group of students who are in the Secret Service (SS). They meet to decide what the themes will be during special lunch days. They also help contribute to the planning of different school events. A new initiative they have begun is the creation of a school newspaper, completely written and published by the students. This newspaper highlights school events and student achievements. These students help influence others in a heartening and caring manner.

Positive student achievement is highlighted in many ways. Membership in the Secret Service affords students many privileges, such as special BFG activities and treats.

When a student is observed demonstrating an act of kindness in keeping with the Community of Caring values, the student is awarded a Good Conduct Certificate. The student's name is also entered in a monthly draw for posters and books. At the end of the year, students are nominated for many awards, which recognize academic achievement, effort, improvement, Good Samaritanism, and good attendance. Students who receive sacraments also receive a special award and are recognized in the school newsletter.

The Community of Caring program is not a specific Roman Catholic initiative. It was founded by Eunice Kennedy Shriver and is a project of the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation in the United States of America. An organization does not have to be a certain faith to use the Community of Caring philosophy. Since the core values can relate to any religion, it is used in a variety of organizations and schools. The school board of the school in case study decided to make the program part of its long-term plan. They took the values and added one value to tie in Catholicity. The value of faith was added to key values of respect, responsibility, trust, caring and family. For the Catholic school, it is the value of faith that gives purpose to the other values. At the end of 2005, all schools in the city will be Community of Caring schools.

Students participate in prayer in their classrooms at least twice a day. Especially during holy times in the year, there are reflections that students have the opportunity to relate to their lives. The reflections take the form of class prayer reflections, journal questions and class discussion on faith formation issues. This allows students to constantly broaden their understanding of the purpose of religion. For example, during the liturgical season of Lent, there may be a daily reflection passage that students take turns reading. Then students may discuss why Jesus acted as He did and how the other

people around him must have felt. They then may write a journal entry reflecting on their response to feelings of that day's passage. Monthly liturgies bring the whole school together as one community bound together in faith. Students participate in the parts of the mass or liturgy that they have learned in their classroom. Every class participates in the facilitation of a school liturgy, taking an active part in the celebration and leading their school in prayer. Staff comes together in prayer at least twice a month. Every meeting opens with a prayer led by a member of the staff.

### *School Furnishings and Decor*

The visual images around the school create a rich and welcoming atmosphere. Walking in, one sees a life-size mural depicting the school's patron saint welcoming a group of smiling children. On the wall by the front office is the District Mission Statement, declaring that the school "is a learning organization that empowers students to reach their full potential, to meet the challenges of life, to serve their community and to journey in faith with God, through Christ, in the Spirit" (Calgary Catholic School District, 2003). Also prominently illustrated is the District's philosophy of learning, represented as a wheel with spokes. The center of the wheel is Catholicity, to which all things seem to connect. There is a display cabinet that houses the school banner, trophies, Bible, chalice and other religious artifacts. A wooden sculpture of the patron saint welcomes visitors. A stained glass window representing the cross and a framed picture of the bishop adorn the office walls. Enhancing the front hallway are religious banners of rich fabric textures that are changed to coordinate with the liturgical calendar.

The school hallways are adorned with many different student-made signs proclaiming messages about Families and Schools Together, the Secret Service, or the

benefits of good hygiene. In the gym a gigantic bulletin board lists every family name in the school Community of Caring. Other bulletin boards highlight student work, birthdays and intramural events.

Every classroom has the standard desks, chalkboards and books. Each classroom is decorated cheerfully and is organized to promote an effective environment for student learning. A crucifix and prayer table is located in every room. The Community of Caring values of Respect, Responsibility, Caring, Trust, Family and the combining element of Faith are proudly displayed either around the prayer table or at the front of each room. The concrete symbols reinforce the integration of the faith life throughout the everyday school life within the school community.

The physical layout of the school is very much like a courtyard, with hallways forming the perimeter circle, classrooms springing off the sides, and the library in the center. A similar plan was used to build many schools during the decade of this school's construction.

### *Questionnaire Responses*

Nine staff responded to the questionnaire out of a possible fifteen. Those who chose to participate did so seriously. Three of the nine participants had previously worked in the public system.

The first two questions (see Appendix C) attempted to identify the background of the participants. All were raised exclusively in the Catholic traditions and faith. They reported a common element in their reasons for choosing to work in a Catholic school. All said that they wanted an environment where they could live out their faith in their occupation and felt that working in the separate school system was a testament of their

faith. The few who had experienced non-Catholic schools commented on the difference between working in a Catholic and in a non-Catholic school as a reason why they chose a Catholic school. For example, one replied, "I did my practicums in the public system. I grew up going to school in the Catholic system. During my practicums I missed the religious aspect -- no Jesus' birth, no Jesus' death/resurrection. This made me decide that I wanted to work in a Catholic School." Those who had experienced teaching in a non-Catholic school often lived in a small town where there was no other alternative. After growing up in the faith, they viewed the ability to practice their faith at work as an asset.

The next three questions asked participants to reflect on how they viewed faith as part of the average school day. All responses mentioned that Religion classes offered a better understanding of Christian values. Participants felt that the discussion was very important in assisting students to make sense of their faith. As one participant noted, "I see Religion class as central to a child's faith formation, as it provides the knowledge base which grounds a child along his/her faith journey."

The questionnaire responses reflected participants' belief in the importance of prayer as an opportunity for students to come together as a faith community. Prayer during the morning, at noon, and at the end of the day allows us to step back during our busy lives and "refocus our energies on what is important to us and to thank God for the blessing he has given to us." All responses agreed on the importance of prayer in the school day. As one stated, "Prayer is an excellent opportunity for students to grow closer to God by sharing praise and prayer requests. Students learn to support one another by calling on the power of God on a daily basis."

The notion of faith being taught outside of Religion class is very important to this

study, for anything taught in isolation is seldom valued or remembered. Participants felt that the 'teachable moment' allowed them to connect with students where they were along their faith journey. One commented, "All subject matter can be viewed through the lens of faith, e.g. environmental stewardship, social justice, a moral approach to political decision making." It seems that there are many times during the day that staff feel free to talk about God to students. As one teacher put it, "God's creative power and love is present throughout all aspects of our lives and cannot be confined to one subject or period in the day." Teachers seem to weave a common thread of faith throughout discussion in other subjects or topics.

All participants felt that school documents such as the Code of Conduct and Student Handbook established a basis for behaviour and reflected the school's Catholic values. They felt that such documents model the value of faith and respect, which are so important to our religion. One teacher pointed out that the documents come from a Christian perspective as the (cross) logo symbolizes: "School documents reinforce in writing what is expected from a child. It reminds them to be mindful of their actions. Just as we are watching them, God is watching all of us." Such reminders encourage students to take responsibility for their own behaviour and learning. Parental involvement is also encouraged, since both student and parent must sign all documents. More than one staff member acknowledged that the documents were intended to raise the bar of expectation. As one commented, "Students are encouraged to value the sacredness of each individual and to use their God-given gifts to their highest potential."

The school staff expressed pride in the number of school initiatives and felt that initiatives like Community of Caring, Roots of Empathy, and Families and Schools

Together expressed their collective faith. One participant commented at length:

These school initiatives encourage the development of core values. Faith, caring, responsibility, respect, and trust -- the fundamentals of the Community of Caring program -- are also some of the major elements of what we are taught as Catholics to be the fundamentals of the Church. School initiatives have been chosen to build on these elements and to provide a source for these elements where they may have been lacking outside the school community.

Participants felt that such projects were the best example of faith permeation, where belief and practice become one: "Students are given opportunities to demonstrate these values through service learning projects which encourage them to use their gifts and talents to support and enrich the whole school community." The pleasure that staff felt about their school's programs was evident in every response.

Defining student behaviour and discipline seemed to be difficult for staff. They differed over the degree of discipline needed to produce positive student behaviour. Most felt that faith was an excellent vehicle for teaching good behaviour. Through the example of Jesus, the Master Teacher, and The Golden Rule ("Do unto others as you would have them do unto you") they felt that students were given an appropriate and meaningful model. One teacher stated that, based on his experiences teaching in both public and Catholic schools, he felt that faith is responsible for the more positive student interactions among the children of God.

Staff interactions were viewed as similar to student interactions. Respondents found it difficult to determine if they were different in their relationships with others than staff in other schools, or if being polite and respectful to others is a general expectation in

the workplace. Many participants made general comments, such as this: “Staff interactions should model our faith in Jesus Christ so that we can be an instrument of God’s light shining through us to others.” A few pointed out examples indicating a positive climate: Bouquets of Praise on the weekly memo, staff birthday celebrations, pats on the back from administration, and friendly greetings over morning coffee in the staff room. Two felt strongly that the Catholic associations positively influenced staff interactions. One made this comment:

While respect, caring and trust are present among the adult community, it has been my experience from past associations that staff members who are practicing their faith treat their co-workers differently than those who are not. It is hard to establish a personal relationship with a person who does not believe in God or has no personal faith. To the non-believers, this is just a job; to the believing and practicing Catholic it is the opportunity to change a life and mold a mind through example.

This comment demonstrates a touch of intolerance for individuals who are non-Catholic. Working in a situation that excludes other religions may make staff intolerant to views that go against their Catholic beliefs. Perhaps there should be more opportunities for staff to explore their belief systems to conclude where this intolerance is born. Hiring staff of varying religious backgrounds may provide more opportunity for staff and students to establish positive relationships with people of a different faith. However, overall there seemed to be a general consensus that the school maintained a positive climate for interactions among staff, students and parents.

### *Interviews*

The teacher and parent interviews offered a great deal of insight into the belief systems of those involved in the case study school. I was able to develop an understanding of the reasons why individuals choose and support a Catholic school. All the interviews were approximately fifteen minutes in duration and covered seven questions (see Appendix D for teacher interview questions, and Appendix E for parent interview questions).

*Teacher interviews.* The three teachers interviewed were selected very carefully, as described above. They were selected to reflect the gender ratios at the school. One teacher was selected for having taught outside the Catholic school board. All three represent the median age and experience of the school staff population. All the teacher participants were raised in very traditional Catholic families. For the most part, they attended Catholic schools, went to weekly mass, and participated in family faith traditions such as the rosary and religious celebrations.

All three teacher participants made a conscious decision to be involved in the Catholic school system. The reasons for the two teachers who had experience teaching outside the separate system were clear. They simply could not work in an environment where they were not free to discuss their faith and celebrate religious holidays. As one explained:

During Christmas we couldn't talk about Jesus. Well, I grew up with Jesus! What was that Santa Claus thing? Then in my next practicum it was Easter with the whole bunny rabbit thing. At that point I thought, no I don't want to teach in a public school because I miss that (faith), having grown up with it all my life.

The teacher couldn't fathom teaching in a system that focused more on the material,

commercial aspects of holidays than the religious view: “There were things that you couldn’t say, things you couldn’t talk about, and I felt that there were gaps. My Catholic faith and values were important to me when I was talking in a classroom situation.” One teacher had chosen not to work in a public school because of her beliefs:

I am a really strong supporter of the separate school board because I believe that our faith in God is something that should permeate our entire life and is not something that should just exist in the boundaries of the church. It should be part of our everyday life.

This response echoed the reasons that the two other teachers felt were pivotal for choosing to work at a Catholic school. Ultimately selection of a Catholic school to work in was a matter of preference.

The teacher interviewees all felt that there should be a special partnership between the school, home and church in the area of student faith formation. They felt that a child’s understanding of religion and spirituality must develop in a community permeated with the same beliefs. One explained:

I think that it is our job as a school to help students learn things like prayers and the sacraments, but it is not our job alone. It is our job to do so in union with the parents... There should be a balance between parents talking about it at home, not just the prayers, but the values and taking them to church to further their (the child’s) understanding.

Teachers felt that they were a part of a faith community working toward the whole development of a child. One teacher pointed out that faith development does essentially belong in the family and that it is parents’ primary role to instill that faith. It is

teachers' role to educate the child in the concepts of their religion. The one teacher who had not experienced a public school articulated another role of educators, to be exemplars of what we wish students to become: "As educators we are not only role models but (we) also encourage students in their faith walk, and help them develop as Catholics, and are by their side on their journey."

The responses differed on what the unique characteristics are that make a school Catholic. One teacher felt that what makes Catholic schools distinctive is that teachers can talk about and draw from Jesus' example, relating situations from the Bible. Another felt that it is our common Catholic background that allows us to operate in an environment that is comfortable, without fear of saying the wrong thing. The last teacher commented:

I think obviously the thing that makes us unique is that we submit ourselves to a higher authority than government. We submit ourselves to the authority of God and we let that authority live out through our lives, and we reinforce it to our children through our faith.

These respondents felt that their faith influenced how they interact with others. They noted that since they all come from the same background, then they have a common upbringing that allows a degree of openness in discussions and relationships. Two teachers commented on the expectations of individual behaviour to put faith into action and live out the teachings of the Bible. As one stated, "I guess that if you believe that Jesus is in everyone and that he created all of us to be the best we are, then it helps us see the potential of the children in the classroom -- you know, that everyone is struggling to do their best."

Integration of faith into the school day seemed an easy task for the interviewees. They felt that it was as simple as modeling their values in the classroom and taking opportunities wherever they may be to relate situations to the Catholic faith. One mentioned an example, the Roots of Empathy program. When dealing with a situation on the playground, a teacher can refer back to the program and remind students of what they discussed and experienced during the project: “This is easy because religion is so easily integrated into most subjects: Language Arts, Social Studies, Health. The concepts and interactions within the classroom are all related through a Catholic point of view.”

The teacher interviews contained one recurring theme: the level of pride that the teachers feel in working in a school that allows them to practice their faith and encourage the spirit of students. They seemed to feel that they were not simply part of a preconceived program, but were actually influencing tomorrow’s society by molding the faith formation of their students.

The final question of the interview asked whether the written and unwritten codes of conduct benefit or infringe on individuals teaching in Catholic schools. This question referred to rules such as the requirement that teachers sign a declaration of faith before being permitted to work in a Catholic school, and the unspoken rule that one should not live ‘common-law’ before being married in the church. All the participants supported the implicitly Catholic written and unwritten rules. One commented at length:

I think they are important because we are Catholic and we submit ourselves to a higher authority, God. It is important that we follow His commands, and that includes these codes of conduct that are set out. It is important for us to follow His word and just listen to where God would have us go in our life.

The teacher felt it important that teachers are held accountable for their actions and the example that they set for their students.

One teacher mentioned that it was also important to maintain a certain amount of privacy in relationships with students: “It is not like I would tell my students that I had a fight last night with my husband, which is personal. I’ve never personally heard of anyone losing their job over an unspoken violation.” The fine line between personal and public information seemed to be blurred in this issue. It appears that it could be a matter of debate whether teacher rights are infringed upon or protected by unspoken rules.

*Parent interviews.* The three parents were representatives from the school council. They are active and highly visible volunteers and members of our school community. Two females and one male volunteered to participate in the interviews. Two of them were not raised in a Catholic home but had spouses who were. Both of these individuals became Catholic through the Church’s Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) program. The other participant was raised in a Catholic home and in an entirely Catholic community. Their experiences made for many interesting comparisons.

For all participants, choosing a Catholic school was a very conscious decision. They wanted an environment that reinforced the values that were being taught at home. One explained: “It is nice to get your morals reaffirmed. You need [the school] to reaffirm those morals strongly because they are nowhere else in society, definitely not on television.” This parent felt that society as a whole was deteriorating. She felt that on the news, in the community, on television, and in people’s interactions with others there were not the same standards of decency and respect that she had experienced as a child. The consensus among the parent participants was that the Catholic system would be better.

One expressed her opinion as follows: “The Catholic system is more disciplined. My kids will tell you that the Catholic system cares more about the kids. They tend to work with them more, even the kids who are challenged or need additional help.”

Again, the parents credited the school’s values with making a Catholic school unique. They considered the morals and spirituality that a Catholic school conveys to its students the very reason for its existence. One parent commented in these terms: “I really believe in forgiveness, understanding, caring, compassion, and I see it in the kids. I make the assumption that it comes from two areas, from the family and from the school.” One parent voiced a concern that the Catholic system was becoming more like the public system. She felt that many parents who are not devoted to the Catholic faith enroll their children in a Catholic school because they feel that Catholic education is the better system. This parent felt that Catholic schools are moving away from being God-centered schools as a result.

The parents’ response was a resounding “yes” to the question whether the faith aspect of Catholic schooling has affected their children’s moral growth. The parents felt that their children were being very positively influenced. They based their opinions on what they saw the children bringing home as assignments and what the children talked about in their school day. One parent commented:

I know that all of my children consider the concept of “What would Jesus do?” in all their decisions. The more we talk about that in the home, or the school, or the church, the more they hear their friends talk about it, the more they will have it in their life. Having faith in their life makes them more of a person.

One parent stated that the influence of faith on the family’s child was essential, and that if

it wasn't there, then Catholic schools should not exist. The parents felt that teachers were appropriate people to teach their children about the faith. They felt that it did not take a bishop or pope to do so, just an individual committed to the spiritual aspect of their children.

The parents interviewed felt that sacramental preparation was an example of the collaboration among between school, home and church. They felt that the school needed to educate students about the sacraments, but that it is the parents' role to take their children to the church for sacramental preparation. As one explained, "I think that the school needs to support the sacraments, but it is still a church bound sacrament that cannot be done at the school." One parent noted that it is important for the school to acknowledge the milestones that students reach in their faith journey: "The other thing that we do in the school is recognize the children who receive the sacraments like Holy Communion and Confirmation. Recognition is very good."

The last question asked the parent participants to reflect on the peer groups that their child comes into contact with in a Catholic school. I was generally surprised that all the parents were greatly concerned about this topic. For example, one said, "I am somewhat concerned because we have a mixed bag in any school, even the Catholic system." Parents spoke of peer pressure and minor bullying that can happen at any time. In the week before the interviews, there had been a weeklong Community of Caring program at the school. Two parents commented that the program was an excellent example of how to combat bullying. One remarked, "This drama thing that happened last week about peer pressure and bullying that [child's name] was involved with was beautiful stuff. I think that we forget how they feel peer pressure, how they feel the

bullying aspect.” One parent articulated her concern that not many of her child’s peers are seen at church. She felt disappointed that they were not developing their relationship with God. At the same time, she noted, “It also gives me hope that in the Catholic system our children can be a light for other children and bring them into the church.”

### *Conclusion*

It seems that there are many steps in this endeavour of raising and educating children, just as there are in preparing a fine loaf of bread. First are the students, the vital ingredients of the recipe. Parents, teachers, and schools all contribute to the process, influencing the final result. Of course, parents are the true source from which their children were created, much like the wheat growing in the field before it is harvested and milled into flour. Parents have the most influence in any child’s life. The school and its teachers help to shape and create the masterpiece, moulding the ingredients that were entrusted to them step by step into the desired loaf of bread. Finally, to continue the analogy, there is a master baker with a grand plan overseeing the work. The master baker is the element of faith in God. The permeation of religion in Catholic education seems to produce a truly unique product, just as a fine and committed team of cooks produce fine loaves of bread.

## Chapter Five: Discussion and Recommendations

### *Limitations of the Study*

The advantages of using a qualitative design have been discussed in Chapter Three. However, some limitations to this case study must be acknowledged. First, this is a case study of only one comparatively small elementary school. A comparison of many Catholic schools to public schools in one city might have afforded more concrete conclusions regarding the presence of faith in Catholic schools. Locating this study at a Catholic elementary school has also involved some expected biases. All individuals participating in the study are at the school by some degree of choice and consequently agree with many aspects of Catholic education.

Working at the school, I have the advantage of firsthand experience with the participants. However, my role as both researcher and administrator may have affected participants' responses, and I may have seemed intrusive. As much as possible, throughout the study, I emphasized that participation was voluntary, both in discussions and in the letters requesting consent.

My access to and familiarity with school documents, programs and décor facilitated the process of gathering data about the language of the school. Making observations about the school's language based on its documents, programs and décor helped me to formulate the issues on which I based further questioning through questionnaires and interviews. However, the materials examined may have been unintentionally incomplete or inaccurate.

Staff members were not coerced in any way to complete questionnaires or participate in interviews, and some individuals did not choose to complete the

questionnaire. Participation of all staff in responding to the questionnaire would have increased validity. In addition, the interviews involved only three teachers and three parents. A larger sample might have yielded a clearer picture of the overriding beliefs of teachers and parents. Interviews of students might have provided another useful perspective, since this study focuses on children's faith development at school. One final concern is that "[Interviewing] provides 'indirect' information filtered through the views of interviewees" (Creswell, 1994, p. 151). Interviewing allowed me control over the line of questioning but none over the participants' ability to articulate their perceptions effectively.

### *Discussion*

Does faith permeate all aspects of education at this small elementary school? The assembled data all contribute to answering this question. First, the school documents examined all begin with some reference to the school board's or the school's mission statement, emphasizing a very clear connection to the Catholic faith. The staff handbook includes a limited number of religious references and seems purely informational in its contents and purpose. School policies such as the Code of Conduct and the Homework Policy attempt to encourage students to do their best and emphasize the core values of the Community of Caring.

Expressions of faith are included to some extent in the school documents. Though this may not be a significant amount, it is enough. Faith permeation is not measured simply in number of key word occurrences or symbolic representation. It is an overlying mandate that comes directly from the school mission statement and District values. A recommendation for the future planning of the school in the case study would be for the

staff to examine the school mission statement every September when the school documents are revised. As the mission or vision for the school changes, so should the guiding documents. In the future faith permeation should be transparently evident in all documents of a Catholic school. Any individual reading a handbook or a Homework Policy should get a sense of the faith orientation of the school. Faith permeation should entrench the school documents so that there is never a cause to question a Catholic school's distinctiveness.

The school's programs overwhelmingly include evidence of the permeation of faith. Clearly, every school initiative was implemented to add to the school's Catholicity. The Community of Caring program has united the school in an endeavor to learn gospel values as a community. In its first year (2002-2003), the program focused on the value of respect, introducing many student service projects that taught respect of self, others and school. During the second year (2003-2004) the program's focus was on the value of family. Through Big Family Groups (BFG) students became part of a multi-age, Kindergarten to Grade Six grouping that participated in activities as a family. The Roots of Empathy program taught students the compassion that Jesus demonstrated by teaching and example. Finally, the Families & Schools Together (F&ST) program brings together families and school staff to develop meaningful and lasting relationships. The school programs provide superb examples of the permeation of faith.

The occurrence of prayer in the school also provides abundant evidence of faith permeation. All classes begin and end in prayer, as do all staff meetings and school council meetings. The monthly school liturgies emphasize the spiritual meaning of the holidays celebrated during the school year. Commercialism has no place in these

gatherings of the faith community.

The school may look like any other school at first glance, with its colourful array of pictures and murals. It is the nature of the décor that sets this school apart from a non-denominational school. Students made most of the posters as part of the Community of Caring program. A mural depicts a friendly patron saint welcoming children. The display cabinet houses not only trophies but also the school's religious banner, a Bible, and a cross. There is a wooden sculpture of the school's patron saint. In addition to the furnishings of any school classroom in Canada, each classroom also has a small wooden cross, representing the Catholic faith.

The questionnaire responses by the nine participating staff indicated strong support for Catholic education. No responses denied or criticized the presence of faith in their school. All respondents indicated that they wanted and consciously decided to work in a Catholic environment.

The questionnaire responses indicated positive support for faith permeating all aspects of the school community. Staff felt that religion class was essential for developing a knowledge base from which students can practice their faith with their families. Staff felt that, through prayer, students were able to form a connection to God that would support them in their life experiences. Responses about the integration of faith in all subject areas were less clearly articulated; respondents seemed to find it difficult to distinguish when one subject ceased and religious discussion began. They seemed to describe a seamless weave of subject content and faith interpretation. This speaks to the faith permeation in the school.

Respondents to the questionnaire seemed to associate school documents only

loosely with the element of faith. Staff believed that the underlying message of documents such as the Code of Conduct was that one should adhere to expectations in order to fulfill God's will. The documents could be interpreted with and without the light of faith. In their responses, staff lauded school initiatives such as the Community of Caring and Roots of Empathy as "the reason they work here." They felt that such programs reinforce the positive values of their faith. Respondents expressed the belief that student discipline is necessary for promoting school order, and that modeling positive behaviour in interactions with students and staff encourages good student behaviour.

The interviews with teachers yielded a clear picture of a staff who are impassioned and dedicated to Catholic education. The teachers interviewed felt that they were partners with the church and parents in developing the faith formation of every student. Staff believed that what makes a Catholic school unique is the element of faith, as expressed in prayer, school programs, and the classrooms. They felt privileged to work in a setting that acknowledges their faith beliefs and encourages their growth.

None of the three teachers interviewed felt that the written or unwritten codes of conduct that guide their actions in and outside of the workplace infringe on their private lives. In fact, they all supported these formal/informal regulations and expectations. For example, the teachers considered the letter that all teachers must obtain from their priest as an example of "practicing what you preach" with students. They felt that informal expectations, such as not living in a common-law arrangement, were reasonable because teachers are expected to be positive role models for impressionable youth.

Parent interviews were also very productive. The parents echoed the sentiments of

the teachers, indicating decisively that they chose Catholic education for their child and for themselves. Two had become Catholic as adults, after marrying spouses who were practicing Catholics. All parent interviewees emphasized that the element of faith in the school is the reason for a Catholic school to exist. They felt that the school supports their child's moral growth and provides people with the expertise to teach their child religion. The parents echoed the teachers in the belief that sacramental preparation should be a joint effort among the parents, teachers and church. They also expressed concerns about the type of peer interactions their child may have, especially concerns about bullying. It may take a joint effort among parents, teachers and the church to combat this problem, which is growing in all schools.

The convergence of data from the different sources that informed this case study makes certain points very clear. First, all those who are involved in Catholic education, including administrators, teachers, parents, and members of the clergy, are Catholic educators. As the CCSTA (2002) asserts in *Build Bethlehem Everywhere*: "The analysis of school documents and the responses from staff and parents speak to these beliefs. Catholic schools have a community of individuals who are committed to the spirit and enlightenment of knowing God" (p.10).

#### *Recommendations: The Future of Catholic Education*

Education is a work in progress. Catholic education is also a changing entity as it continues along the path towards meaning within an often superficial culture. Mulligan (1999) describes the goal of Catholic education:

The greatest contribution the Catholic school and Catholic educators can make is to offer certainty about what it is to be human and to be loved by God. This is

certainly transmitted through a value-laden curriculum and the lived values of Catholic educators, their joy, hope and tangible manifestation of belief in Jesus. (p. 198)

Catholic schools have a unique purpose and place in public education. As DiGiovanni (1991) states, “Catholic schools will have no difficulty in establishing criteria for the convictions they share -- they are rooted in the Good News of Jesus Christ” (p. 95).

One of the most striking implications of this study is the need for Catholics to work together as a faith community to ensure the future of Catholic education. Through parents’, teachers’, administrators’, and clergy’s devotion to the preservation of faith in education, Catholic schools will persevere through economic, political and society hardships. Mulligan (1999) cautions that, “The road ahead for Catholic education calls for a renewed sense of Catholic stewardship. Teachers, trustees, clergy and parents do not own Catholic education: it is theirs to administer” (p. 200). It is the responsibility of all stakeholders to collaborate in the effort to keep the place of faith in education. It has been said that it takes a whole village to raise a child. Similarly, it takes a whole faith-bound community to raise and educate a child in Catholicity. We need to work together.

Mulligan (1999) argued that Catholic education must have certain distinct characteristics:

The Catholic education project should be clear and distinctive, noticed for its promotion of justice and its contribution to the common good of the community.

Catholic schools witness most effectively when they bequeath to students both an

It is evident that the school involved in this case study is providing its students with exactly this type of education. Students experience a school day that is grounded in faith. They learn the sacredness of life through prayer, experience the meaningful integration of religion in all they do, and participate in school initiatives that strive to make them part of a caring community. Faith permeates all aspects of their lives, from home to school to church. Students in Catholic education are immersed in their spiritual life from baptism forward.

It will take a dedicated home, school, and church community to meet some of the challenges that will face Catholic education in the future. The changing demographics of the church population will radically affect Catholic schools. The decline in Catholic church congregations has already had an impact on Catholic schools. Currently, at least one parent must have a record of baptism in order to enroll a child in a Catholic school. However, many parents do not raise their children in the faith in which they were raised. Society is changing. Perhaps soon school-aged children will be enrolled in Catholic schools with only a grandparent's baptismal certificate. It will take a concerted effort by caring Catholics to ensure that Catholic education continues to ensure a place for every child. In 2002, the CCSTA argued that Catholic education should be more inclusive than exclusive: "Catholic Education strives to hear the human cry to belong. Today that cry has not fundamentally changed, save for the fact that it has grown louder and more anguished. The answer of Catholic schools is to shatter a world of exclusivity with an inclusive presence" (pp. 41-42). This quote speaks to encourage belonging of all individuals and use our shared faith to unite us. Even those who do not share the same faith can be invited to join in a shared faith journey regardless of religion.

More and more individuals who have chosen to become Catholic are involving themselves in the school system. Catholicity is not always 'handed down' from one generation to the next. Many Catholic parents, teachers, and indeed clergy have become Catholic as adults. If Catholic schools, like the Catholic church, are inclusive and invite others to belong, then more children will be educated in the Catholic system. They too will grow to be contributing members of society. This is a new missionary endeavour fit for the twenty second century. No longer are we looking to priests and clergy or proselytizers to forcibly convert those who have their own faith beliefs. Today we are looking to Catholic schools to 'offer a light' to those who are looking for belonging and higher purpose. It will be in our students' permeation of faith in their life that encourages non-Catholics to step into the fold of Catholicism.

This case study has found evidence of faith in many aspects of the elementary school it examines. Faith is a rich tapestry of images. It includes parents who make a conscious decision to belong to the faith and have their child educated in their beliefs. It involves teachers who embark on careers that allow them to express and teach their religious beliefs and traditions. Faith permeates a school day peppered with prayer. Faith shines in a school community that comes together as a class, a staff, or a school to devote time to their spirituality. As one teacher commented, "Without prayer in our schools, I believe that we would soon become so involved in providing nourishment for the brain, that we would forget to nourish our souls." Catholic schools constantly offer nourishment to enrich students' souls and lives, including initiatives such as Community of Caring, Roots of Empathy, and Family & Schools Together. In this school, the words "Jesus" and "God" are not whispered but spoken loudly, proudly and with conviction.

Archbishop Oscar Romero wrote a prayer expressing the belief that faith in education is essential to the development of the whole student, body, mind and spirit:

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.

The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts; it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.

Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection.

No pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No program accomplishes the church's mission.

No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.

This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.

It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way,

an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own. (cited in Mulligan, 1999, p. 204-205)

Those involved in Catholic education are truly “prophets of a future not their own.”

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## Appendix A

### Letter Requesting Parental Consent

October 1, 2003

Dear Parents of (Elementary School X):

I would like to inform you of a second portion of the research project that I am undertaking, entitled "Hail Mary and Holy Water: A Case Study of Faith Permeation in Education."

This project is a case study that will triangulate evidence of how Catholicity transcends all things in an elementary school. It will examine whether a Catholic school is unique and will research how faith is integrated into subjects and teachable moments. The research data will be drawn from a literature review, questionnaires and interviews.

Individual interviews conducted with four teachers and four parents will allow me to gather observational notes in a qualitative, narrative manner. I will also make an audiotape recording that will later be transcribed. I would like to invite you to participate in an interview to address the topic of faith formation in schools. You have been selected because you fit the criteria of possessing the median age, experience and gender of the school staff population.

I will respect the privacy, confidentiality and F.O.I.P concerns of each individual by keeping all participants, the school, the school district and school location anonymous. I will have sole access to all data and research materials, which I will keep for the mandatory five years in a secure location. These materials will be destroyed by September 2008 using a paper shredder.

All participants are invited to inquire about the research at any time. Upon request I will share the analysis with you, providing an opportunity to obtain individual feedback relating to your data. You will also have the opportunity to view the conclusions prior to my submission of the final draft. You are in no way obligated to participate. There is no perceived harm or benefit in participation. At any time during this research, you have the right to withdraw. I ask you to provide me with a written and signed statement stating your intent to withdraw if you choose to do so.

The research is being carried out in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, and University of Lethbridge policies. If you have any questions in this regard, please contact any of the following:

1. Trudy Rutter: Home: (403) 228-3713. Work (403) 285-4000. Email: [trudy-ann.rutter@cssd.ab.ca](mailto:trudy-ann.rutter@cssd.ab.ca)
2. Office of Research Services, University of Lethbridge: (403) 329-2747
3. Project Supervisor, Dr. Brian Titley: (403) 329-2185

4. Faculty Human Subject Research Committee, University of Lethbridge, Dr. Cathy Campbell: (403) 329-2459

This study will draw conclusions after exploring how faith permeates an elementary school in relation to the education of the whole child: intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual. The implications of this case study will be used to address growing concerns concerning the future of Catholic education in Alberta. At this time, I do not plan to present publicly or to publish the results of the study but may do so in the future. A copy of this project will be placed in the University of Lethbridge Library, and I will have a personal copy upon my completion of this degree in May 2004. If you would like to view a copy of the completed project or to receive results from your questionnaire, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Trudy-Ann Rutter  
Assistant Principal  
(school name) Elementary

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Please return signed

I consent to participate in the teacher interview for the study entitled "Hail Mary and Holy Water: A Case Study of Faith Permeation in Education," as described in the letter dated October 1, 2003.

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Printed Name

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Signature

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Date

## Appendix B

### Letter Requesting Staff Consent

October 1, 2003

Dear Staff of (Elementary School X):

I would like to inform you of a research project that I will be initiating this school year, entitled "Hail Mary and Holy Water: A Case Study of Faith Permeation in Education." I would like to invite you to participate in my research.

This project is a case study that will triangulate evidence of how Catholicity transcends all things in an elementary school. It will examine whether a Catholic school is unique and will research how faith is integrated into subjects and teachable moments. The research data will be drawn from a literature review, questionnaires and interviews.

You are asked to complete and return the questionnaire, which is designed to gather your opinions and experiences regarding faith in school. I ask that you answer all of the questions. The information will be reported in general terms without specific reference to individual responses. The questionnaire will be administered to all staff who wish to participate between October 1-15, 2003.

I will respect the privacy, confidentiality and F.O.I.P concerns of each individual by keeping all participants, the school, the school district and school location anonymous. I will have sole access to all data and research materials, which I will keep for the mandatory five years in a secure location. These materials will be destroyed by September 2008 using a paper shredder.

All participants are invited to inquire about the research at any time. Upon request I will share the analysis with you, providing an opportunity to obtain individual feedback relating to your data. You will also have the opportunity to view the conclusions prior to my submission of the final draft. You are in no way obligated to participate. There is no perceived harm or benefit in participation. At any time during this research, you have the right to withdraw. I ask you to provide me with a written and signed statement stating your intent to withdraw if you choose to do so.

I will also interview four teachers in order to explore this issue further. The research is being carried out in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, and University of Lethbridge policies. If you have any questions in this regard, please contact any of the following:

1. Trudy Rutter: Home: (403) 228-3713. Work (403) 285-4000. Email:[trudy-ann.rutter@cssd.ab.ca](mailto:trudy-ann.rutter@cssd.ab.ca)
2. Office of Research Services, University of Lethbridge: (403) 329-2747

3. Project Supervisor, Dr. Brian Titley: (403) 329-2185
4. Faculty Human Subject Research Committee, University of Lethbridge, Dr. Cathy Campbell: (403) 329-2459

This study will draw conclusions after exploring how faith permeates an elementary school in relation to the education of the whole child: intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual. The implications of this case study will be used to address growing concerns concerning the future of Catholic education in Alberta. At this time, I do not plan to present publicly or to publish the results of the study but may do so in the future. A copy of this project will be placed in the University of Lethbridge Library, and I will have a personal copy upon my completion of this degree in May 2004. If you would like to view a copy of the completed project or to receive results from your questionnaire, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Trudy-Ann Rutter  
 Assistant Principal  
 (school name) Elementary

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Please return signed

I consent to participate by responding to the staff questionnaire for the study entitled "Hail Mary and Holy Water: A Case Study of Faith Permeation in Education," as described in the letter dated October 1, 2003.

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Printed Name

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Signature

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Date

Appendix C  
Staff Questionnaire

Instructions: Please take a moment to complete this questionnaire and place it in my mailbox in the envelope provided, by October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2003. As explained in the consent letter and form, the information that you provide will remain confidential. Thank you for your support.

1. Why did you choose to work in a Catholic school?

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2. Have you previously worked in a non-Catholic school?

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3. Permeation of faith implies that our beliefs are integrated into all aspects of our lives. In the area of school, how do you see faith as being a part of the average day?

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4. In Religion class

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5. Prayer

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6. Integration in other subjects

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7. School documents (e.g., Code of Conduct, Homework Policy)

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8. School initiatives (e.g., Community of Caring, Roots of Empathy, F.A.S.T)

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9. Student discipline and behaviour expectations

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10. Student interactions

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11. Staff interactions

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## Appendix D

### Teacher Interview Questions

1. Describe your own personal faith formation, how you were educated about Catholic values and religious traditions.
2. What made you decide to be involved with a Catholic school rather than a non-denominational one? What is your motivation for working in a Catholic school? Have you had any experiences in a public school?
3. What do you feel the school's responsibility is in the area of faith formation? What do you feel it should be in, for example, reading the Bible, learning prayers, sacramental preparation?
4. What unique characteristics do you feel make a school Catholic or justify its existence?
5. How does your faith influence how you interact with others in a school setting? Staff, students, parents?
6. How do integrate Catholicity into your regular teaching?
7. Certain codes of conduct are implicitly Catholic. Some are written and others are implied. How do you feel these codes of conduct benefit or infringe on your professional development?

## Appendix E

### Parent Interview Questions

1. Describe your own personal faith formation, how you were educated about Catholic values and religious traditions.
2. What made you decide to be involved with a Catholic school rather than a non-denominational one? Have you had any experiences in a public school?
3. What do you feel makes a Catholic school unique or justifies its existence?
4. Do you sense that the faith aspect of Catholic education has affected your child's moral growth?
5. Do you feel that a Catholic school provides people with a certain expertise in religious preparation? In reading the Bible, learning prayers, understanding rituals?
6. What role does the school play in your child's sacramental preparation? What do you think the school's role should be?
7. How do you feel about the peer groups with whom your child will come in contact in a Catholic school?