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## What is the Lived Experience of Laywomen Who Serve as Catholic Elementary School Principals in their Roles as Faith Leaders?

Jamie Faser Arthur  
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doi: <https://doi.org/10.57709/2308707>

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## ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, WHAT IS THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF LAYWOMEN WHO SERVE AS CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN THEIR ROLES AS FAITH LEADERS?, by JAMIE F. ARTHUR, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chair, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all the standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty. The Dean of the College of Education concurs.

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## ABSTRACT

### WHAT IS THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF LAYWOMEN WHO SERVE AS CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN THEIR ROLES AS FAITH LEADERS?

by  
Jamie F. Arthur

Catholic schools in the United States have experienced daunting challenges since Vatican II (1962-1965) with a 45% decrease in number attributed to decisions made by Church leaders. Traditionally led by religious, the National Catholic Education Association (2010) reported 97% of Catholic schools are now staffed by lay people. This research details the importance of Catholic schools to the evangelizing mission of the Church, defines the role of laity, and acknowledges a lack of programs that support lay Catholic principals. Past studies provide a snapshot of trends, list expected competencies, and compare their positions to public school counterparts. The literature review indicates little attention has focused on lived experiences of lay Catholic principals. This study presents the stories of six female Catholic principals in an effort to provide a greater understanding of the responsibilities associated with their roles.

Using narrative case study design, this research reveals aspects of their lives, careers, and families as it pertains to their experiences as Catholic principals. Six major themes emerged from the analysis of data: (1) the unwavering link between the Catholic Church and school; (2) the call for leadership that deepens the faith of their constituencies; (3) the importance of building community as a dimension of the principal's role as faith leader; (4) the requisite for principals to model faith in action; (5) the need for spiritual and professional development to support principals as faith leaders; and, (6) the negotiation of tensions in their personal and professional lives.

Results provide a richer understanding of the complexity associated with lay leadership and informs the reader of areas in need of further research to assure the future of Catholic education in the United States. Specifically, findings suggest Church leadership structure programs that adequately prepare lay Catholic principals for their roles, perform studies focused on the multifaceted roles associated with Catholic school leadership, and create opportunities for spiritual and professional development for those who currently serve in these positions. The study confirms priests as the link between the Catholic Church and school, and suggests their preparation, as well as desire to oversee a Catholic school, as critical.

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THEIR ROLES AS FAITH LEADERS?

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A Dissertation

Presented in Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
Educational Policy Studies  
in  
the Department of Educational Policy Studies  
in  
the College of Education  
Georgia State University

Atlanta, GA  
2011



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The completion of the doctoral program and writing of this dissertation has been an academically challenging experience but one that has provided personal growth, development, and a deeper passion for the pursuit of truth and knowledge. Without the support and guidance of many, this degree would not have been completed and to them I owe my deepest gratitude.

First and foremost, it is my greatest pleasure to thank my advisor Dr. Sheryl Gowen. Your excitement for my subject, encouragement, wisdom, and commitment to high standards motivated and inspired me. I am honored and grateful you chose to be my supervisor and mentor.

I owe my deepest gratitude to my professional colleagues, especially Monsignor Edward J. Dillon, Mr. Gareth Genner, and Dr. Linda Anthony whose encouragement and support over the last seven years has enabled me to not only complete my doctoral program, but allowed me to serve as a Catholic school administrator and develop a deeper understanding of and passion for the philosophy and mission of Catholic education.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the lay Catholic principals who participated in my study. I would like to acknowledge and thank each of them for their willingness to share their stories as well as having faith in me to accurately portray their experiences as lay Catholic principals.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family for their love and encouragement. For my mother and father who instilled in me a passion for learning, strong work ethic, and desire to be the best on whatever path I chose. For my children whose understanding and support throughout each stage of the doctorate program and dissertation offered constant reassurance, understanding, and empathy. For my brothers and sisters who have always believed in me and whose acts of kindness have supported me in so many tangible and intangible ways.

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## List of Abbreviations

ACCU	Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
ACE	Alliance for Catholic Education
ACRE	Assessment of Catechesis and Religious Education
ACLP	American Catholic Leadership Program
CACE	Chief Administrators of Catholic Education
CUSCC	Consortium of United States Catholic Conference
DRSM	Developmental Research Sequence Methodology
NCEA	National Catholic Education Association
NCGEL	National Catholic Graduate Educational Leadership
SPICE	Selected Programs for Improving Catholic Education
UCCE	University Consortium for Catholic Education
USCCB	United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

I think I have always taken Catholic schools for granted because I grew up Catholic in St. Louis, MO where Catholic schools were everywhere. Women in black habits taught and, I believed, lived at the school. I went to school and on weekends, attended Mass at my parish or at one of the different Catholic Churches located in surrounding neighborhoods. I remember the St. Louis Cathedral as a magnificent church where we attended Sunday Mass at least once a month.

My mother volunteered in many capacities at the Catholic school I attended so I often saw her during the school day. The community events, spaghetti dinners, the Friday fish fries during Lent, picnics, auctions, plays, and sports were where we spent our nights and weekends. As a child, I was part of the post-Vatican II transition of the Catholic Church during which I experienced religious sisters who no longer wore veils, Latin Masses spoken in the vernacular, and the introduction of laywomen as teachers. These changes were unsettling to me as well as generations of traditional Catholics.

Just prior to my junior year in high school, our family moved to Atlanta. With only one Catholic high school available, it was not a surprise there were no openings and I was enrolled in a public school. The transition was difficult; I had always worn a uniform, prayed before classes, and attended a single-sex high school. In Atlanta, our parish was one of the multi-functional Churches of the post Vatican II era and doubled as a gymnasium during the week. On the weekends, a member of the Church community would roll the altar out and set up chairs. This was quite a contrast to the beautiful,

traditional Catholic churches I had grown to love in St. Louis. Regardless, my family remained faithful to our new parish where I attended Sunday Mass, assisted my father in teaching Sunday school, and participated in the Catholic youth group activities.

As I reflect on my childhood, I see how Catholic education and the Catholic Church contributed to my formation as an adult Catholic. When I married and started my own family, I thought Catholic education was the only option for my children. However, the closest Catholic school was over forty miles away and the commute deemed impossible. It was at this time I realized Catholic education was not accessible to everyone.

This reality now permeates my life. As a twenty-four year employee of the Catholic school system, I now realize the viability of the future of Catholic schools in the U.S. could be in question, with closings tied to a lack of financial resources and blamed either on parent's inability to pay the rising cost of tuition or the unwillingness of personnel to accept lower salaries. Societal and cultural shifts have also played a role in the perceived value Catholic schools offer. Nearly fifty years after a major exodus of men and women from religious life, many still blame schools closing on the absence of religious administrators and teachers.

In most cases, Catholic schools have become an option for only for those who can afford the tuition. Operational budgets, funded primarily by tuition, increased drastically after the nuns and priests left their administrative and teaching positions and lay people assumed these roles. Salaries and benefits for employees in Catholic schools range from 70% to 80% of the overall operating budget and often are not in parity with their public



and private school counterparts. Due to financial constraints, Catholic schools find it difficult to offer many of the extracurricular programs requested by families. What Catholic schools do offer is the value of a Catholic, Christian education that manifests itself through nurturing, faith-filled communities. In my years of experience in Catholic schools and from my observations, these are the key characteristics that keep Catholic education strong and viable.

Most important are the people who lead the school. During my first years of teaching in a Catholic school, my principal was a member of the religious order Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart. When I interviewed for the position she said to me, “When someone walks into your classroom, they should know by how it looks and feels that it is a Catholic classroom.” While I didn’t quite understand the feeling part, I understood teaching in a Catholic school would be different than what I was previously accustomed to in the public school system. As I gained experience, I realized what she was referring to were the intangible aspects of Catholic education: Catholicity integrated into all aspects of the program, a mutual respect within the community, child-centeredness, and actions linked to virtuous behavior.

I now look back at the twelve years I spent as a teacher, coupled with my childhood formation and involvement within the Catholic Church, to see how this prepared me to assume the role of a Catholic school principal. I realize the unique responsibilities that come with overseeing the spiritual aspects of Catholic education, as well as how personal experiences have contributed to my development. Often when I encounter other Catholic school principals, I wonder if their journey and perception of

their roles is similar to mine. Given that the percentage of Catholic administrators is minute in comparison to the overall population of school administrators in the country, I want to know how and why they ended up in Catholic schools.

As I considered my own administration, specifically in regard to the spiritual dimension associated with it, I became increasingly concerned about the preparation of other personnel who serve in this role. Guerra (2000) links the responsibility of identifying, developing, training, and supporting a new generation of leaders, as key to the future of Catholic education. When and how do prospective lay Catholic administrators get the necessary professional and spiritual formation to assume the role?

If one of the primary purposes of Catholic education is to evangelize members of the Church, how will future members and leaders be formed? Are Catholic schools closing because they are not valued or because they lack Catholic authenticity and leadership? I have often wondered if the efforts of the religious women who built the Catholic educational system would be fruitless if schools continued to close. The rich history of Catholic education and the tenacious religious orders of women who founded Catholic schools in the U.S. provides insight into these questions.

### ***History of Women in Catholic Education from 1870 to 1965***

From the early 1800s, America was a nation of opportunity with its rapid industrial and population growth. Unprecedented religious freedom spurred many immigrants as they arrived into a predominately Protestant nation. Working in the ghettos with the poor, Catholic religious orders of women sought to teach the children of those seeking a better life, and constituted the first group of educated women who held

leadership positions in Catholic education. During this period, at a time when it was often considered illegal to teach minority populations, religious sisters started schools from Pittsburgh to Chicago, south to New Orleans, and west to San Francisco, finding success through their simplicity, faith, and desire to serve God. By the time it reached its peak number in the late 1950s, the Catholic parochial school system educated over eleven percent of all students in America due in great deal to the determination and tenacity of the Catholic sisters (Fialka, 2004).

Progress of a developing nation during the second half of the nineteenth century occurred due to post-Civil War reconstruction, organization of labor, exponential growth in urban areas, and a revolution in economics. Efforts to address the influx of immigrants into the U.S. from 1830 to 1920, with an estimated 4.7 million Irish Catholics, led to extraordinary growth within the Catholic Church. Compulsory school attendance laws enacted in 1910 requiring children under fourteen years old to be enrolled in school increased school attendance of U.S. children to 72%. By 1918, every state required students to complete elementary school. Until the second half of the nineteenth century when states took more control over the distribution of funding and standardization of rules, early American schools were established by Protestant colonies and dominated with programs characterized by their religiosity. In an effort to counter the Protestantism within the schools, the Third Plenary Council (1884) decreed that wherever possible, Catholic schools were to be opened and Catholic parents were to enroll their children. Immigration, compulsory attendance laws, and the council's mandate to educate children

in the Catholic faith led to the expansion of parochial schools during this period (Augenstein, Kauffman, & Wister, 2003).

As the educational system in the U.S. was undergoing remarkable changes, so too was the role of women in response to societal and cultural shifts. One of the most serious threats to the Catholic Church was the reform movement associated with the suffrage amendment. The belief was that any deviation from the standards set by the Church could destroy the Christian family by removing women from their primary role in the home. As Catholic women began to question the traditional values of the Church, and opportunities to work outside the home grew, there were fewer obstacles keeping women from leaving the home. During this period, Catholic laywomen made great advances in altering historical consciousness within their homes, the Church, and society, paving the way for women to enter professional careers at the turn of the century (Kennelly, 1989).

Women who pursued a profession in education had limited opportunities to prepare themselves for teaching positions. During this period, teachers in Catholic schools were primarily trained by members of the religious orders of women through apprenticeships, lectures, summer school, and institutes. Discrimination against women seeking advanced degrees was prevalent unless candidates attended a women's college or university or sought degrees in fields associated with home economics. However, as women became more educated, their independence increased, and so did their involvement in social, political, economic, and intellectual arenas.

Catholic laywomen who had begun working within the Church formed organizations for support and solidarity. The National Catholic Education Association

(NCEA), founded in 1904, was by far the largest organization linked to education. The NCEA governed schools and was responsible for monitoring Catholic educational institutions by addressing socio-political issues, setting standards, and establishing accrediting agencies. Annual meetings and workshops brought together teachers and administrators, providing women the opportunity to share issues associated with gender, wages, and working conditions facing them in the workplace (Augenstein, et al, 2003).

During the early twentieth century, the Catholic Church grew in power and so did its schools. The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* of 1925 provided all parents with the option to send their children to the non-public schools of their choice. To encourage enrollment, Pope Pius XI (1929) presented the encyclical titled *Divini Illius Magistri: The Christian Education of Youth* outlining the importance of a Christian education, the rights of the child, and duties of the family and state.

Catholic schools from post-World War I to post-World War II grew steadily. Teacher preparation programs under the direction of religious orders continued to increase the number and quality of professional teachers. The number of laywomen in Catholic schools grew as the opportunities to attend college preparatory programs focusing on teaching became available. Religious orders of women, responsible for overseeing Catholic schools, worked tirelessly with little compensation. Salaries for religious as late as 1950 amounted to only forty-five dollars per month, with some earning less, and others paid nothing at all (Fialka, 2004).

From 1900 to the mid-1950s, Catholic elementary schools had grown from 3,500 to over 12,000 (NCEA, 2010) and the need for teachers became critical. The reliance on

underpaid religious to staff Catholic schools for over a century no longer filled teaching vacancies. Concerns about the nature of Catholic schools, administrators, and teachers prompted a year-long study conducted at the University of Notre Dame. Its results noted the differences and added responsibilities for those who served as principals and teachers from their counterparts in the public schools, and summarized the unique role of the Catholic school administrator (Fichter, 1958). The American Bishops' pastoral letter titled *The Child: Citizen of Two Worlds* (1950) restated the mission, necessity, and importance of Catholic education (Salvatore, 2007). In this document, noting the importance of the spiritual development of the child, the Bishops write, "In recent decades, striking advances have been made in meeting the child's physical, emotional, and social needs, but his moral and religious needs have not been met with the same solicitude and understanding" (USCCB, 1950, #3).

Shifts in religious and moral attitudes throughout the nation were deeply felt within the Catholic Church in the United States throughout the 1950s. A commitment to secularism, doubts surrounding the supernatural or that which is holy, and confusion surrounding political, social, ecclesiastical, and inability of educational institutions to correct the concerns of the country are reasons cited by Yale historian S. E. Ahlstrom (1972) in his book *A Religious History of the American People*.

To address these and other contemporary issues within the context of the modern culture and society, Pope John XXIII convened twenty-five hundred bishops from around the world to meet in Rome at the Vatican. With nearly one hundred years since its last

council, this was an opportunity to bring all areas of the Church into modernity of the twentieth century (Buetow, 2002).

***What was the Second Vatican Council?***

By 1960, Church historians wrote of a disconnect between the conservative Church hierarchy and the progressive nature of younger clergy and educated laity. Advances in the intellectual, scientific, and social arenas of the twentieth century established cause for Church leadership to come together in what was called the Second Vatican Council. Pope Paul VI (1965) writes in *Gaudium Et Spes (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)*:

Today, the human race is involved in a new stage of history. Profound and rapid changes are spreading by degrees around the whole world. Triggered by the intelligence and creative energies of man, these changes recoil upon him, upon his decisions and desires, both individual and collective, and upon his manner of thinking and acting with respect to things and to people. Hence we can already speak of a true cultural and social transformation, one which has repercussions on man's religious life as well (#4).

Goals of the Council included the desire to bring openness to Catholic thinking, update the Church's teaching surrounding contemporary issues, address the authoritative perception of the hierarchy, and restore unity among all Christians. No longer did the Church want to be closed, judgmental, or an institution of condemnation. This break from the Church's traditional, historical structure created a call for due process, collegiality, and increased engagement of Church members (Reher, 1981; Thomas, 1999, O'Malley, 2008).

### ***What were in the intended changes of Vatican II?***

It was the intent of the Council to alter philosophical beliefs, support a more integrative, inclusive way of thinking, and create ways faith could permeate all aspects of learning. No longer would the Catholic Church alienate itself from other religions and agnostics. Rather, it would enter into dialogue with academic disciplines inclusive of natural and human sciences. In an effort to address social issues, the hierarchy stressed the practical side of religion with virtues lived and faith permeated into Catholic communities. Church leaders acknowledged the need for laity to have the opportunity to participate more fully in the liturgy and leadership of the Church. Outcomes from decisions made during the Council allowed both men and women to serve as lectors, Eucharistic ministers, altar servers, and lead scripture studies (Buetow, 1988).

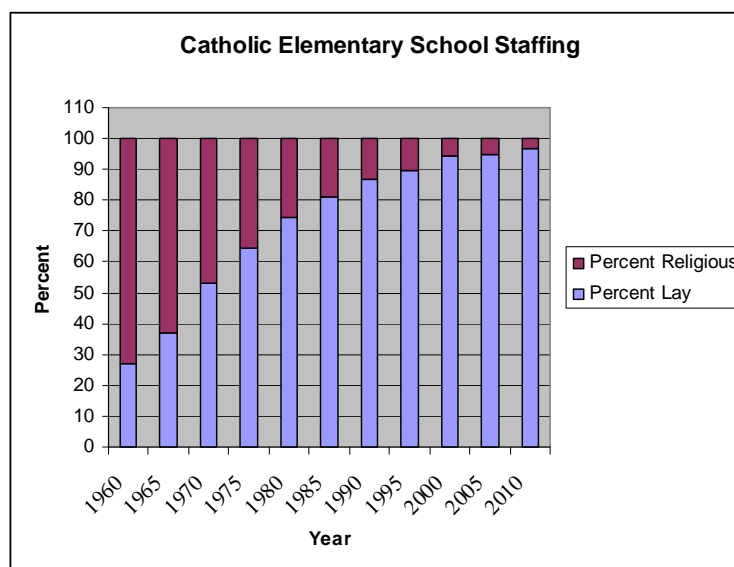
The Church rejected its previous stance against modernism with a plan to usher in an era of intellectualism. In regard to education, Pope Paul VI's documents *A Declaration on Religious Freedom* (1965) and *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (1965) gave evidence of a changing Church. Both stressed a break from traditional Church doctrine by acknowledging freedom of conscience, religious pluralism, and duty of laity in the Church to participate and made their views known (Hitchcock & O'Brien, 1985). *The Declaration on Christian Education: Gravissimum Educationis* (1965), proclaimed by Pope Paul, VI, outlined the roles and responsibilities of those associated with Catholic education.



***What were the unintended consequences to Catholic education?***

No one could have predicted the effect that Vatican II would have on Catholic schools. In 1965 indicate there were 13,292 schools serving 5.6 million students with religious orders positioned in nearly 100% of administrative positions and 58% religious as full-time professional staff (Guerra, 1991). However, 2009-2010 figures show a sharp decline with only 7,248 Catholic schools, 2.2 million students, and only 3% religious orders serving as full-time professional staff (NCEA, 2010).

Table 1.1: *Transition in Staffing from Religious to Lay during the period of 1965 to 2010*



(Sources: Hunt, Joseph, & Nuzzi, 2001; Convey, 1992; NCEA, 2010)

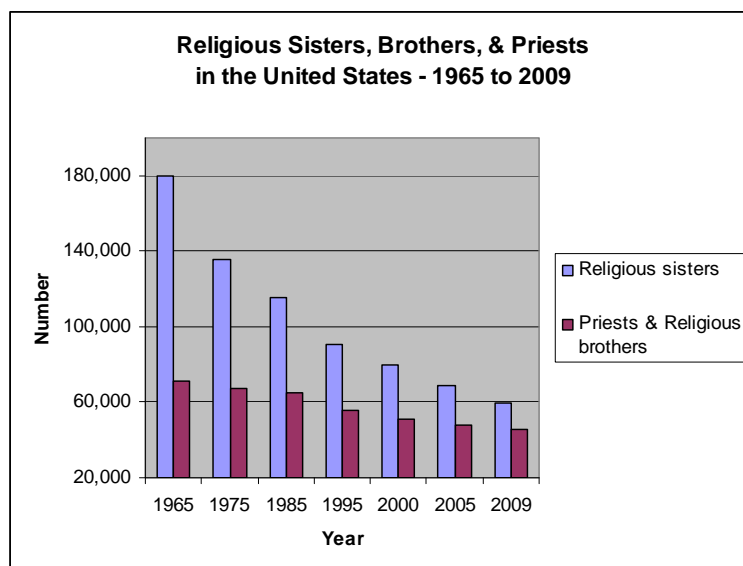
With the closing of nearly 50% of its schools and 97% fewer religious serving the remaining ones, the Catholic Church faced a dilemma as to how to keep schools open. The rising percentage of lay staff in Catholic schools forced Church leaders to consider how to provide competitive salaries and benefits for faculty and administrators. Ironically, efforts by the Vatican to bring the Church together by making it more

inclusive and responsive to social conditions of the twentieth century yielded consequences that put the future of Catholic schools in jeopardy.

### ***Post Vatican II, A Church in Transition***

In retrospect, the renewal intended for the Catholic Church led to confusion with twenty-first century Catholics. The turbulent years following the Council is acknowledged by Pope Benedict XVI, and evidenced by the exodus of thousands of priests and religious women (Table 1.2) , a decline in participation by laity, various interpretations of Church teachings, and concern for the future of the Church (O'Malley, 2008).

Table 1.2: *Number of Religious Sisters, Priests, and Brothers in the United States during the period of 1965 to 2009*



(USCCB, 2005)

### ***Laywomen as Catholic School Leaders***

One reason linked to the closing of Catholic schools is the departure of women from religious life, leaving schools without leadership and staff. Historically, religious

orders of women were responsible for the network of Catholic schools that grew until the mid-1960s. In his book *Sisters*, Fialka (2004) details the tension and confusion among religious orders of women as a result of decisions made during Vatican II. Fialka discusses the network of religious women who served the Church through ministries in Catholic education and health care and discusses the impact and extent of the decline in their orders from 179,974 members in 1968 to 65,000 in 2004.

Women laity began to emerge as principals, coupled with the prerequisite for them to have the spiritual foundation needed to assure Catholic identity in the schools. In the absence of administrators to oversee ecclesial spirituality (that which is directed by the Catholic Church and integrated into all aspects of its schools) questions arose as to whether Catholic schools might become private schools that teach religion classes one period a day. Catholic schools call for a balanced program where Catholicity is integrated into all aspects and thereby providing a framework for an authentic and active Catholic culture. Researchers confirm the need for Catholic school administrators to not only be adept in areas associated with education and management, but have a foundation in an added dimension of leadership that requires them to preserve Catholic identity, develop Catholic culture, foster faith development, build community, and assure the philosophy of Catholic education is implemented (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Wallace, 1998, 2000; Hunt, Oldenski, & Wallace, 2000).

Catholic school principal retention figures are comparable to public school principals, with data revealing that up to 68% of principals leave their positions within five years (Durow & Brock, 2004; Fuller & Young, 2009). D'Arbon, Duignan, Duncan,

& Goodwin (2001) confirm the shortage of Catholic school principals and link a lack of retention to bureaucracy, gender bias, faith commitment, scrutiny by Church officials, and the impact of the position on their personal lives.

Research exploring Catholic school culture stresses the importance of the formation and development of those who will serve as spiritual/faith leaders. Heft (1991) notes that the sharp increase in the number of lay principals who oversee Catholic schools has created the need to prepare leaders “who are capable of institutionalizing Catholic traditions and doctrinal emphasis” (p.5).

As the twentieth century came to a close, preparation programs for school leaders remained the subject of research among Catholic universities and scholars. Both published and unpublished dissertations relating to lay principals note nearly 70% of Catholic school principals find their preparation inadequate (Wallace, 1995) and only 50% perceive their faith formation as good to very good (Hines, 1999). The urgency for programs to prepare Catholic school leaders is documented in Schuttloffel’s (2003) study, *Report on the Future of Catholic School Leadership*. Data collected through a survey of superintendents, diocesan officials, and school directors created by the Chief Administrators of Catholic Education (CACE) indicate a severe shortage of Catholic school administrative personnel, with 50% of superintendents responding they started the school year without a principal in at least one of their schools. Principals responded that they were in positions for which they did not have proper formation to be the spiritual leader of their school. The report claims 56% of novice principals who were recruited and

93% of public school hired felt they lacked knowledge related to the dimension associated with theological and spiritual leadership.

The Action Institute (2010), a non-profit international research and educational organization under the direction of Catholic college presidents and Catholic scholars, developed a survey to assess authenticity in Catholic schools. Questions referring to Catholic identity focus on the number of times Mass and the Sacraments are offered, the availability of faith formation and retreat opportunities for students and teachers, the use of religion texts suggested and approved by the Vatican, and the school's requirement for service. Trends noted by the Action Institute indicate the dilution of Catholic teachings within schools, financial difficulties, turnover of students and teachers, and lagging academic standards.

### **Rationale for the Study**

Past studies of Catholic principals are primarily quantitative and provide a snapshot of trends (Yeager, Benson, Guerra, and Manno, 1985; NCEA, 2010), differences in their roles from public school administrators (Bryk, 1996; Carr, 1995; Howe, 1995), characteristics of the principal (Hawkins, 1993), the role in decision-making (Bryk, et.al., 1993), aspects of governance (Bryk, 1996), and role of the principal (Bryk, et.al., 1993; Buetow, 1970; 1988; Petersen, 1991). Minimal research has been directed toward the lived experience of laywomen in becoming and serving as Catholic school administrators. Reasons given for the dearth of information cite individual research studies – curriculum, spirituality, moral climate, instruction, and organization – that encompass the all-pervasive roles of Catholic school administrators (Travis, 2001). The most recent

research, *Leaders Reshaping Catholic Schools*, (Nuzzi, Holter, & Frabutt, 2009), focuses on aspects of leadership in Catholic schools but does not approach it from the perspective of those who serve in these roles.

Notably deficient in the literature on women as lay Catholic principals is research that investigates the experience of becoming and being a Catholic school administrator. Past studies present checklists of competencies, skills, and trends, and continue to note the need for development of programs that train principals in areas that reinforce the philosophical and theological beliefs of the Church. Conducting a study where women are able to speak of the nature of their experience in the role of faith leader could fill the gap between what has been done quantitatively and the competency based or theologically oriented studies. Data extrapolated from interviews with Catholic school administrators would be valuable in providing a foundation for the development of programs to prepare future leaders of Catholic schools.

Results could give insight into structuring degree programs, continuing education, professional development, and creating opportunities for spiritual development. Information gathered might assist in determining ways to provide for retention of women who serve as Catholic school principals, and a revisiting of policies and procedures associated with their roles. Those seeking an administrative position in Catholic schools might find comfort in hearing the voice of fellow administrators as they identify common issues and challenges related to assuming positions in Catholic school leadership, adding to the current research of women who serve in these positions.

For nearly fifty years, the Church has acknowledged, through encyclicals, pastoral letters, and other Church documents, its reliance on laity to fill leadership positions in Catholic schools as well as the lack of preparation programs offered by Catholic institutions. With the available resources and wisdom of women who effectively serve as principals of the schools, the sharing of their experiences is an opportunity to learn more from those who serve Catholic education and the Church through this profession. A by-product could be the revision and establishment of programs in post-secondary Catholic institutions, diocesan offices of Catholic education, and local parishes to prepare and support laity in their roles as administrators. This type of investigation could bring awareness to aspects of their personal lives that have gone unnoticed in hopes of informing others and creating in them a desire to take action.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to explore the lived experiences of women who serve as lay Catholic principals to understand how they perceive their roles as faith leaders. I chose Catholic elementary schools for this study as they serve students ages five through thirteen, the period when moral development and formation occur. According to Kohlberg (1968; 1976), children through the age of thirteen pass through the first two essential stages of moral development. Catholic elementary schools enroll children from the ages of five through thirteen providing to them programs that integrate value education, religious instruction, and curriculum for character and moral development. Secondly, in solidifying moral development and reasoning, it is during the elementary years that students receive two of the seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church, First

Penance and First Communion. In their roles as principals, lay leaders are responsible for the spiritual formation and religious development that prepares students for these Sacraments and, ultimately, to become faith-filled adults. Exploring the lived experiences of women who are lay Catholic principals will allow participants to reflect on their roles and understanding of the position, especially aspects associated with that of a faith leader.

### **Research Questions**

A qualitative approach will be used to address the following question: *What is the lived experience of laywomen who serve as Catholic school principals in their roles as faith leaders?* Guiding questions to support the research include:

1. What factors are perceived to have contributed to their lives, education, and careers in preparation to become lay Catholic school principals?
2. How do participants perceive their relationship with the Catholic Church in their roles as lay Catholic school principals?
3. How do participants perceive opportunities for the development and support of lay Catholic principals in their roles as faith leaders?
4. What factors are perceived to have contributed to the way participants negotiate the tensions that arise in their roles as lay Catholic principals?

### **Definition of Terms**

*Archdiocese; Diocese* – “The territory over which a bishop exercises ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The Pope alone, ultimately, erects dioceses, changes their limits, divides, unites, or suppresses them” (Hardon, 2000).



*Catholic Church; Church* – These terms refer to the Roman Catholic Church are used interchangeably throughout the study.

*Catholic School; School* – These terms, used interchangeably throughout the study, refer to Catholic elementary schools that serve students in grades kindergarten through eighth grade. Catholic schools operate within two separate sets of law, civil law and Church law, also referred to as The Code of Canon Law.

*Code of Canon Law* – “Civil laws differ from state to state; canon law provides a common frame of reference for all Catholic schools as such church law is binding in all church institutions” (Schafer, 2004). The Code of Canon Law (1983) is a set of rules and regulations that provides a framework for the hierarchical governance of the Catholic Church.

*Congregation for Catholic Education* – Established by Pope Paul VI in 1967, the Congregation has jurisdiction over: “(1) seminaries and houses of formation for religious and members of secular institutes; (2) all universities and faculties of higher education under Catholic auspices; and (3) all schools and institutes of education dependent on ecclesiastical authority” (Hardon, 2000).

*Ecclesiastic; Ecclesial* – “Pertaining to the Church as an organized body, with stress on its juridical and institutional structure” (Hardon, 2000).

*Lay; Laity* – “A member or members of the Catholic Church who are not associated with a religious order, are active in the Catholic Church, and support it in all of its ministries” (Hardon, 2000).

*Mass* – “The Sacrifice of the Eucharist as the central act of worship of the Catholic Church. The ‘Mass’ is a late form of *missio* (sending), from which the faithful are sent to put into practice what they have learned and use the graces they have received in the Eucharistic liturgy” (Hardon, 2000).

*Papal Encyclicals* – “A papal document treating of matters related to the general welfare of the Church, sent by the Pope to the bishops and used especially in modern times to express the mind of the Pope to the people” (Hardon, 2000). Encyclicals often contain pronouncements on faith and morals that express the teachings of the Church.

*Parish* – “In a diocese, a definite territorial division that has been assigned its own church, a determined group of the faithful, and its own distinct pastor who is charged with the care of souls” (Hardon, 2000).

*Pastoral Letter* – “Official documents sent by a bishop to the clergy only or to all the faithful of a diocese...Pastoral letters may deal with any subject affecting the faith, practice, or worship of the people” (Hardon, 2000).

*Pope* – “Title of the visible head of the Catholic Church. He is called Pope because his authority is supreme and because it is to be exercised in a paternal way, after the example of Christ” (Hardon, 2000).

*Principal; Administrator* - Refers to those who oversee the operation of Catholic schools and serve as head of school. These terms are used interchangeably throughout the study.

*Priest* – “An authorized mediator who offers a true sacrifice in acknowledgment of God's supreme dominion over human beings...Within the Church, men are specially ordained

as priests to consecrate and offer the body and blood of Christ in the Mass... All priests and bishops trace their ordination to the Apostles” (Hardon, 2000).

*Sisters; Nuns; or Religious Orders of Women* – “A popular term for religious women, whether cloistered nuns or members of congregations under simple vows. The title corresponds to brothers in mens' religious institutes and signifies that they are all members of the same spiritual family, share possessions in common, and live together in Christ like charity” (Hardon, 2000). In the study, these are used interchangeably with the term religious substituted for religious orders or women.

*Retreats* – “Withdrawal for a period of time from one's usual surroundings and occupation to a place of solitude for meditation, self-examination, and prayer, in order to make certain necessary decisions in one's spiritual life”(Hardon, 2000).

*Sacraments* – “A sensible sign, instituted by Jesus Christ, by which invisible grace and inward sanctification are communicated to the soul” (Hardon, 2000). There are seven Sacraments instituted by the Catholic Church, with First Communion, First Penance, and possibly Confirmation received during the elementary school years. The other Sacraments are Baptism, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Marriage.

*Spirituality* – In the context of this study, spirituality is the manifestation of the Catholic faith through personal living. In regard to Catholic institutions, it is the integration of Catholicity into the day-to-day operations.

*United States Conference of Catholic Bishops* – The leadership of the Catholic Church in the United States who exercise authority over issues confronting the Church, foster

communication with other nations under the leadership of the Pope, and offer assistance to bishops of the local Church (USCCB, 2010).

### **Organization of the Study**

The study is presented in seven chapters, a reference section, and appendixes. Chapter 1 introduces the study and presents the research problem using literature, research, and a historical preview that supports the rationale and need for the study. Chapter 2 includes a review of literature on the purpose of Catholic education, Catholic school identity, the Catholic Church's teaching on education, principals as faith leaders, and aspects of preparing laity to become Catholic school administrators. The design, methodology, data sources and collection, analysis, and trustworthiness of the study are discussed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 introduces the participants and, using their narratives, details their lives from childhood to present. Chapter 5 provides a description of the Catholic elementary school and creates the setting for their experiences to unfold. Chapter 6 presents the voices of lay Catholic women as they describe their roles as Catholic school principals. The final chapter discusses the findings, and makes recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### The Purpose of Catholic Education

The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, in the document *The Catholic School* (1977) explains, “Evangelization is, therefore, the mission of the Church; that is she must proclaim the good news of salvation to all, generate new creatures in Christ through Baptism, and train them to live knowingly as children of God” (#7). A review of documents from the Second Vatican Council through the twenty-first century reiterates the role of Catholic schools in the evangelizing mission of the Church.

They are the privileged environments in which Christian education is carried out . . . Catholic schools are at once places of evangelization, of complete formation, of enculturation, of apprenticeship in a lively dialogue between young people of different religions and social backgrounds (USCCB, 2005, #11).

Citing research conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (1988) and reported by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB, 1990, pp. 4-5):

Graduates of Catholic schools are more closely bonded to the Church, more deeply committed to adult religious practices, happier, and more supportive of religious perspectives on women and have more confidence in other people, more benign images of God, and a greater awareness of the responsibility for moral decision making. They give in a committed fashion more contributions to the Catholic Church (National Opinion Research Center 1988 General Social Survey).

The Bishops’ statement regarding religious outcomes of Catholic schools is supported by the research of John Convey (1992). In his book, *Catholic Schools Make a Difference: Twenty-Five Years of Research*, Convey indicates that students who attend Catholic schools are more likely as adults to attend Mass, belong to parish organizations, receive

the Sacraments, participate in prayer life, and financially support their parishes.

### **Identity of Catholic Schools**

Maintaining Catholic identity is the mission of Catholic education and integrated into all aspects of a Catholic school.

It is from its Catholic identity that the school derives its original characteristics and its structure as a genuine instrument of the Church, a place of real and specific pastoral ministry. The Catholic school participates in the evangelizing mission of the Church and is the privileged environment in which Christian education is carried out. The ecclesial nature of the Catholic school, therefore, is written in the very heart of its identity as a teaching institution. It is a true and proper ecclesial entity by reason and its educational activity. Thus it must strongly be emphasized that this ecclesial dimension is not a mere adjunct, but it is a proper and specific attribute, a distinctive characteristic which penetrates and informs every moment of its education activity, a fundamental part of its very identity and the focus of its missions (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997, #11).

The vocation and ministry of the Catholic school leader calls upon those associated with it to immerse themselves in the philosophy, values, and practice of Catholic Church teaching needed to fulfill the Church's mission to preserve and perpetuate Catholic identity (Augenstein, et.al., 2003; Buetow, 1985; 2002; Hunt et.al., 2000). In the absence of members of the religious to oversee ecclesial spirituality, questions arise as to whether Catholic schools might become private schools with religion classes. A recent address by Pope Benedict XVI (2008) to Catholic educators reiterates the importance of those serving in Catholic schools.

Teachers and administrators, whether in universities or schools, have the duty and privilege to ensure that students receive instruction in Catholic doctrine and practice. This requires that public witness to the way of Christ, as found in the Gospel and upheld by the Church's Magisterium, shapes all aspects of an institution's life, both inside and outside the classroom. Divergence from this vision weakens Catholic identity and, far from advancing freedom, inevitably leads to confusion, whether moral, intellectual, or spiritual.

This message, consistent throughout the history of Catholic education, defines the importance of the role Catholic school administrators assume in their positions and is explicated from the many documents that address Catholic education dating from the late-1960s to the present.

**The Catholic Church's Teaching on Education**  
*(Timeline included in Appendix A)*

With the renewal that has taken place in the Catholic Church, a survey of Papal documents post-Vatican II to present details the importance of Catholic schools in the U.S. and addresses the role of laity and their preparation for educational leadership. *Gravissimum Educationis* (1965) outlines the role of Catholic schools in achieving the Church's mission, and notes that those who interact with students require integral formation where "knowledge is illuminated by faith." Teachers need to be trained in both secular and religious knowledge as their role is "an apostolate most suited to and necessary for our time and at once a true service offered to society" (#8). By 1972, bishops acknowledge the importance of laity in their letter *To Teach as Jesus Did*, and discuss educational ministry, its themes, and encourage collaboration and planning in developing educational programs. Ten years later, the document *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (1982) explores challenges of lay Catholic educators and cites the Church's awareness of the difficulties associated with their mission. One section includes the details surrounding the proper formation process, encompassing cultural, psychological, and pedagogical aspects that are necessary for lay men and women to meet the various levels and needs of students with whom they interact. *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (1988) presents guidelines for Catholic

schools, acknowledges the movement of laity into educational positions, and encourages the development of a formation program necessary to ensure that administrators obtain comparable training to what the religious had. In 1990, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (1990) presented *In Support of Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools*. This pastoral letter acknowledges the great contribution Catholic schools have made in the U.S. and notes challenges hindering their growth and development. As the twentieth century came to a close, the document from the Congregation of Catholic Education entitled *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1997) acknowledges the socio-political and cultural forces present in the world. Members of the Congregation call for a renewal in Catholic education, challenge those who work within this context to create models that address programs, and characterize the school as;

...a place of integral education of the human person through a clear educational project of which Christ is the foundation; its ecclesial and cultural identity; its mission of education as works of love; its service to society; the traits which should characterize the educating community (#4).

One final document by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (2005), *Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium*, discusses the crisis in Catholic education, noting the expressed need to prepare laity to serve its schools.

The preparation and ongoing formation of new administrators and teachers is vital if our schools are to remain truly Catholic in all aspects of school life. Catholic school personnel should be grounded in a faith-based Catholic culture, have strong bonds to Christ and the Church, and be witnesses to the faith in both their words and actions (p.9).

These documents indicate the realization of and necessity for the Catholic Church, its post-secondary institutions, and Catholic educational associations and organizations to



evaluate, create, and implement programs needed to prepare current and future Catholic school leaders for the task of being a both a principal and faith leader.

### **Catholic School Leaders**

To keep Catholic schools viable, the Church called upon lay people to fill the deficit in administrative positions abandoned by the religious women. As early as the late 1960s, questions as to how to prepare laywomen to lead schools of the Catholic Church surfaced within Church hierarchy. The mission of Catholic education challenges those in Catholic school leadership to immerse themselves in the practice of Catholic Church teaching. Religious orders, steeped in formation of the Catholic faith through their years of preparation for and reinforced by living in communal life, were ideal as faith leaders and administrators of Catholic schools. The level of training religious orders were privileged to receive would never be available to laity, including even those who are products of Catholic education.

Documents from the Vatican and Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education dating from the late-1960s to the present outline the importance of the Church's mission, acknowledge the waning presence of religious in schools, express the need for laity to assume roles in educational leadership, and state the challenges associated with the proper preparation of school leaders in the areas of theology, philosophy, and Church history (Wallace, 1998; 2000; Hunt, et.al., 2000). The necessity for the Catholic Church, its post-secondary institutions, and Catholic educational associations to create and implement programs for its future leaders is noted. Within the document *Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary & Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium*

(2005), the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops calls upon Catholic colleges and universities to work with diocesan leaders to create a framework for graduate programs in post-secondary institutions and stresses the importance of administrative preparation.

We must provide a sufficient number of programs of the highest quality to recruit and prepare our future diocesan and local school administrators and teachers so that they are knowledgeable in matters of our faith, are professionally prepared, and are committed to the Church. These programs will require even more active involvement and cooperation by our Catholic colleges and universities in collaboration with the diocesan educational leadership. Ongoing faith formation and professional development programs must also be available so that administrators and teachers in Catholic schools can continue to grow in their ministry of education. These programs will introduce new and effective initiatives, educational models, and approaches, while always maintaining a sound Catholic identity in our schools. This is especially important when new Catholic school administrators and teachers come from private and state colleges and universities or from careers in the public school system (USCCB, 2005, p.10).

Within the fifty years following Vatican II, research both internal and external to the Church, documents the importance of the education and formation of Catholic school administrators. In the absence of ordained religious, and to ensure the transmission of Catholic culture and beliefs, the success of the Catholic school is dependent on its spiritual leader. (Manno, 1985; Buetow, 1988, Hunt, et.al., 2000).

### **Principals as Faith Leaders in Catholic Schools**

The role of spiritual leadership is an added dimension to the all-pervasive role of being a school administrator. Bryk, Lee, & Holland (1993) write of the importance of the Catholic principal in faith formation.

Although much of the work of Catholic school principals is similar to that of their public school counterparts, we conclude that the nature of school leadership has a distinctive character here. Both public and Catholic school principals value academic excellence and student's educational attainment. For principals in

Catholic schools, however, there is also an important spiritual dimension to leadership that is apt to be absent from the concerns of public school administrators. This spirituality is manifest in the language of community that principals use to describe their school and in their actions as they work to achieve the goal of community (p.156).

This is the difference between the administrator of a public school and that of a Catholic school. Ciriello's study titled, *The Principal as Spiritual Leader* (1994), outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Catholic school principal, with three categories emerging: spiritual, managerial, and instructional. In addition to the duties of the public school administrator, Catholic school principals are called upon to be spiritual leaders, creating additional responsibilities beyond those of principals who serve in secular institutions.

In light of the religious mission that animates Catholic schooling, principals in Catholic schools bear a significant leadership responsibility - a moral responsibility – not borne by their colleagues in non-Catholic schools. Specifically, Catholic educational leaders act to insure that students learn what it means to be Catholic both morally and intellectually (Schuttloffel, 1999, p. 22).

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) expresses the importance of the role of Catholic school principals in a pastoral letter, and states that Catholic schools continue to be “the most effective means available to the Church for the education of children and young people who are the future of the Church” (*To Teach as Jesus Did*, 1972, no. 118). The void of those formed as religious mandates laity to become the faith leaders, integrating Church doctrine and tenets throughout all aspects of the Catholic school. Critical background knowledge needed to administrate the philosophy of Catholic education includes Catholic Church history, law, and teachings found within the magisterial documents (Manno, 1985; Buetow, 1988, Cook, 2001).

With the future of the Catholic Church reliant on laity, who is willing to step into the position of a Catholic school principal and its all-pervasive role? On Catholic school principals, Guerra (1991) writes;

Unlike their public school counterparts they [Catholic school principals] have a wider variety of leadership responsibilities, including instructional leadership, managerial leadership, and spiritual leadership. In practice extraordinary things are expected from [them]... it is clear that Catholic school principals provide very effective leadership... but their average tenure is about five years... the Catholic educational community needs to mount a concerted effort to identify, encourage, and train some of their talented lay teachers and others to form the next generation of principals (p.25).

The Church recognizes the challenges associated with replacing religious in schools and acknowledges the importance of formation of laity as educational administrators.

Documents dating as far back as the 1960s are evidence of the Church's awareness of the issues, but these do not offer any solution for remedy.

### **Preparation for Catholic School Principals to Assume the Role of Faith Leaders**

There is a deficit in research as to how Catholic principals were formed during the two decades following Vatican II. It was not until the late 1960s that the NCEA began gathering statistics and publishing reports about trends in Catholic education, its staffing, and enrollment. In partnership with the NCEA, Bruno Manno conducted a study to identify the skills and requirements to be included in the formation of Catholic school principals. Published in 1985, *Those Who Would be Principals: Their Recruitment, Preparation, and Evaluation*, identified and organized the values, qualities, and competencies expected of educational leaders in Catholic schools. Timely in its production, the research is known for its use by Church leaders to ease the transition in Catholic school leadership from religious to laity.

That same year, to address the concerns of prospective administrators who were not able to attend Catholic colleges and universities, the Consortium of United States Catholic Conference (CUSCC), the NCEA, Chief Administrators of Catholic Education (CACE), and the National Catholic Graduate Educational Leadership (NCGEL) met to further the work in developing preparations programs. Their final report summarizes a list of forty-five competencies key to the role of a Catholic school principal, sorting these into the three sections: managerial, educational, and spiritual. Published as *The Formation and Development of Catholic School Leaders* (1996), the work consists of three volumes and details aspects of each area.

In response to the USCCB (1980) document titled *Catholic Higher Education and the Pastoral Ministry of the Church*, post-secondary educational institutions were urged to provide formation programs for educators. As a result two organizations were founded: the American Catholic Leadership Program (ACLP) and the University Consortium for Catholic Education (UCCE). From its inception in 1983, the ACLP has grown and provided licensure and degrees in twenty-five states. The ACLP website (2009) states the purpose of this alliance is to:

1. Promote degree programs that offer education for Catholic school leaders through cooperative efforts of the members
2. Promote the belief that leaders of Catholic educational institutions are best served through regular studies in degree programs designed for that specific purpose
3. Support members through collaboration

4. Share information and resources
5. Model cooperation

Another organization founded in the 1980s was the University Consortium for Catholic Education (UCCE), which created an additional resource for college graduates in training and preparation for leadership positions in Catholic elementary and high schools. A current examination of the UCCE website indicates growth in the number of participating schools and programs. In the past academic year (2008), fifteen member universities throughout the United States are credited with placement of four hundred teachers in Catholic schools and the continued development of Catholic school leaders (UCCE, 2009).

In 1991, five key themes from the speeches presented at the *National Congress for Catholic Schools for the Twenty-First Century* pertained to Catholic schools, their future, Catholic identity, and leadership. Ristau (1991) writes;

There is a general agreement that Catholic schools do a very good job; nonetheless, in many localities they are an endangered species. One dimension that contributes to the Catholic school situation is that there is a lack of leadership...in Catholic education, and the prospect of having strong leaders for Catholic schools for the future seems dim unless action is taken. Although effective changes are occurring in some places, remedies have not been widely offered. The possibility of developing dynamic leadership in the American Church calls for further study and discussion (pp. 5-6).

In the section on schools, Ristau highlights the need for Catholic teachers and administrators, preparation programs, and a support system. She describes college and university programs as “shaky at best” (p.15), seminars and workshops as insufficient, and notes a lack of mentoring programs within dioceses of the Church, often placing principals in positions without any training. On strengthening leadership programs for

Catholic school administrators, Rogus (1991) suggests the NCEA work in collaboration with colleges and universities to establish and disseminate guidelines for programs, encourage those who demonstrate leadership potential to enroll in a preparation program; create summer programs for leaders under the guidance of the NCEA, and distribute in-service materials. Both authors agree with the need to conduct additional research to provide insight into the recruitment and preparation of Catholic school principals.

One effort made in 1996 to remedy the lack Catholic principal formation was the founding of a program called *Selected Programs for Improving Catholic Education* (SPICE), whose efforts to fill the void in Catholic educational programs resulted in the publishing of *Catholic Teacher Recruitment and Formation: Conversations in Excellence 2001*. SPICE continues to provide resources to share with Catholic schools and institutions throughout the country for improving the training of educational leaders in Catholic schools. Examples of the types of programs include *Enhancing Catholic School Identity*, a comprehensive two year program for lay principals to develop spiritual leaders for Catholic schools, and the *Masters of Arts in Catholic School Leadership*, with the goal to inform aspiring leaders as to how to integrate Catholic philosophy into educational principles and practice. A third, *The Catholic School Leadership Program*, creates an opportunity to identify and develop potential leaders (Cimino, Haney & O'Keefe, 2001).

John Waztke's article (2005) *Alternative Teacher Education and Professional Preparedness: A Study of Parochial and Public School Contexts* expresses concern for the lack of attention to programs that prepare lay to enter the field of Catholic education:

Over the past forty years, Catholic colleges and universities have frequently neglected their responsibilities to Catholic elementary and secondary schools. As staff has shifted from religious to lay in K-12 schools, a parallel process of abandonment and secularization has taken place in teacher education programs at Catholic colleges and universities (p. 463).

That same year, the document, *Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary & Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium* (2005), the call by the USCCB for Catholic colleges and universities to work with diocesan leaders, brought about an effort to create a framework for graduate programs in post-secondary institutions. The USCCB stresses the importance of administrative preparation in the following passage.

We must provide a sufficient number of programs of the highest quality to recruit and prepare our future diocesan and local school administrators and teachers so that they are knowledgeable in matters of our faith, are professionally prepared, and are committed to the Church. These programs will require even more active involvement and cooperation by our Catholic colleges and universities in collaboration with the diocesan educational leadership. Ongoing faith formation and professional development programs must also be available so that administrators and teachers in Catholic schools can continue to grow in their ministry of education. These programs will introduce new and effective initiatives, educational models, and approaches, while always maintaining a sound Catholic identity in our schools. This is especially important when new Catholic school administrators and teachers come from private and state colleges and universities or from careers in the public school system (USCCB, 2005, p.10).

For nearly fifty years, research internal and external to the Church documents the need for Catholic schools to integrate Catholic philosophy and faith, preserve Catholic identity, form faith/spiritual leaders, noting the role post-secondary institutions play in this process.

### **Studies on Effectiveness of Educational Leadership Programs in the United States**

Weaknesses in preparation programs for educational leaders are not isolated to the Catholic Church. Arthur Levine's report, *Educating School Leaders* (2005), presents a detailed analysis of educational leadership programs throughout post-secondary



institutions in the United States. A summary of the problematic areas cites the lack of consistency and rigor in curricular design, low admission and graduation standards, weak faculty, inadequate instruction connected to practical experience, award of inappropriate degrees meaning different things to different universities, and poor quality of research associated with educational administration. Levine (2005) notes, “The findings of this report were very disappointing. Collectively, educational administration programs are the weakest of all the programs at the nation’s education schools” (p. 13). In tracing the history of development of school leadership programs, great debate arises over how to remedy the need to educate future school administrators. Recommendations for educational leadership programs include eliminating all incentives that would promote low-quality programs, setting and enforcing minimum standards of quality, and redesigning the curriculum.

During 2008, the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU), in collaboration with the NCEA, conducted a survey of Catholic post-secondary institutions to determine what degrees, certificates, and in-service programs were being offered, track enrollment, and examine content of programs designed for teachers, principals, and staff of Catholic elementary and secondary schools. Of the 110 schools responding, the findings indicate: 14.3% report enrollment in an undergraduate teaching program with Catholic elements; 35% report enrollment in a graduate teaching or administrative program with Catholic elements; 15% report participation in religious education training programs; 34% report participation in continuing education or workshops with Catholic elements; 12% report receiving other parish or education based training, and 18% report

not participating in any type of Catholic training program (Yanikoski, 2008). The survey included participating schools, types of programs offered, and a link to the ACCU website where searches can be specified according to interest. However, the report lacks the valuable information found in the Levine study on quality of programs.

Similar to Levine's findings, much of the research surrounding leadership programs for Catholic colleges and universities centers on quantity: "... [It] neglects to ask important questions; it is overwhelmingly engaged in non-empirical research; and it is disconnected from practice" (Levine, 2005, p.44). The prospect of conducting a study similar to Levine's would require the involvement of an entity such as the NCEA, in collaboration with the Catholic Church, and would be of great value in providing consistency among programs for those who want to develop the knowledge, skills, and formation needed to be an effective Catholic school principal.

### **Current Efforts to Prepare Catholic School Principals**

The most recent effort to provide a program to those interested in educational leadership is the Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) Leadership Program at the University of Notre Dame. The ACE website (2009) states the purpose of its formation was "...in response to the growing shortage of qualified, committed Catholic school administrators," and lists both a certificate program and Master's degree in educational administration with academic, spiritual, and community oriented components. As of 2008, the ACE leadership program had placed eighty Catholic leaders in schools through the United States (ACE, 2009). As a beneficiary of and working with an ACE graduate at Holy Spirit Preparatory School, I can attest to the preparation of this principal, who is

adept in the areas of management, instruction, and spirituality. Similar to the UCCE and the ACLP, the founding of ACE provides an option for those pursuing a role in Catholic school leadership.

During an in-service for Catholic school principals I attended, the facilitator asked members of the archdiocese how they became a Catholic school principal. In response, 96% indicated that they were identified by other principals or clergy for their leadership skills while in the Catholic school system. The Office of Catholic Schools in Atlanta offers a year long program for teachers who have been identified as potential leaders. Founded three years ago, current principals facilitate and provide an overview of different aspects associated with Catholic school administration. Similar programs have been instituted throughout dioceses in the U.S. with the goal of providing and supporting faith formation to those who might have interest in leading a Catholic school.

Nearly fifty years after Vatican II, documents dating from 1965 to the present express concern as to who will oversee the administration of Catholic schools in the U.S. The literature review details the importance of maintaining Catholic identity, the role of Catholic schools in the evangelizing mission of the Church, and the expectation for Catholicity to be integrated into all aspects of the program. Critical to the authenticity of each Catholic school is an administrator who can not only fulfill the responsibilities associated with education and management, and unique to the Catholic school principal, is the ability and willingness to serve in the role of faith leader. Efforts on behalf of the Church to conduct research provide an overview of competencies and skills Catholic school principals require; however, their lived experiences are seldom explored.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

In the opening chapter, I presented the type of research methodology I opted to use in my study of lay Catholic principals in their roles as faith leaders. My interest takes into account the academic, spiritual, and social aspect of their positions. The participants' past experiences, beliefs, and values provide a unique lens through which to view their roles as Catholic school principals.

In the first section of this chapter, I provide the rationale for choosing qualitative research design and methodology. Subsequent sections outline the actual research, narrative case study design, in-depth interviewing, sampling, data collection, treatment of data, and narrative analysis. The chapter concludes with reliability, trustworthiness, and ethical consideration of my study.

#### **Research Design**

The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of Catholic lay principals in their roles as faith leaders. The research questions focused on different aspects of the participant's perception in their role as principal, and explored their academic, spiritual, and social realities.

Using a qualitative case study approach, my research sought to answer questions as they pertained to lay Catholic principals in their roles as faith leaders:

1. What factors are perceived to have contributed to their lives, education, and careers in preparation to become lay Catholic school principals?

2. How do participants perceive their relationship with the Catholic Church in their roles as lay Catholic school principals?
3. How do participants perceive opportunities for the development and support of lay Catholic principals in their roles as faith leaders?
4. What factors are perceived to have contributed to the way participants negotiate the tensions that arise in their roles as lay Catholic principals?

### **Overview of Qualitative Research**

The value of quantitative versus qualitative inquiry depends on the purpose of the investigation. The difference between natural science (how events occur and how or why objects behave), and human science (the meaning as to how humans exist in the world) presents a starting point that guides my research (van Manen, 1990). Quantitative studies use facts and data accumulated through experimental methods and are tested by hypotheses. Qualitative research seeks to understand a phenomenon, occurs in many different types of settings, takes many forms, and does not seek to answer a specific question (Patton, 1990; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Qualitative inquiry is a powerful way to not only gain insight into the experiences of individuals, but also how they perceive issues in their lives. According to Seidman (2006), for researchers who are interested in the life stories of others, human science is a way to gain insight into the way one experiences an event without classifying or categorizing it.

Creswell (2007) explains the ontological perspective of a qualitative study as, “They [the researchers] embrace the idea of multiple realities with the intent of reporting the different experiences and perspectives of their participants” (p.18). Mertens (2005)

divides all qualitative research into four categories: post-positivism, constructivist, transformative, and pragmatic, associating most types as constructivist.

In a fairly unremarkable sense, we are all constructivists if we believe that the mind is active in the construction of knowledge. Most of us would agree that knowing is not passive – a simple imprinting of sense data on the mind – but active; that is, the mind does something with those impressions, at the very least form abstraction or concepts. In this sense, constructivism means that human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as construct or make it (Schwandt, 2000, p.197).

As a qualitative researcher, my purpose is to gain an understanding of the conceptual world of participants and capture the construction of meaning in their lives. In describing qualitative researchers, Bogdan & Biklen (2007) write, “[They] believe that the qualitative research tradition produces an interpretation of reality that is useful in understanding the human condition. That is the logic in their claim to legitimacy” (p. 27). This philosophy acknowledges multiple realities in the construction of meaning. Lay Catholics in their administration of Catholic schools, that is, how they perceive their roles, is my phenomenon of interest; knowledge lies in their experiences.

Creswell (2007), Bogdan & Biklen (2007), Lincoln & Guba (1985), and Mertens (2005) outline different types of qualitative research (naturalistic, participant observation, ethnography, interpretive, case study) and list five characteristics common to each type.

1. Data collection is in a natural setting. The researcher goes to the participant’s setting and observes, describes, listens, and interprets the context in which the behavior occurs.
2. Data is descriptive and incorporates expressive language through interview transcripts, field notes, narratives, and videotapes. Data is aimed at discovering

meaning not only in the event but about the participants who experience them.

How data is interpreted by the researcher is important to understanding the experience.

3. The outcome of the study is not as important as the process in the course of the research. The participation of the researcher in the process allows for a more open-ended discovery process and enables knowledge to be built on rich descriptions.
4. An inductive approach (to data) that assists in “constructing a picture that takes shape as you collect and examine parts” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 6).
5. The aim of research is to discover meanings and therefore, it is important to capture participant perspectives, acknowledging that each experience is unique to the individual.

Bogdan & Biklen (2007) note, “The question is not whether a particular piece of research is or is not absolutely qualitative, rather it is an issue of degree” (p.4). Considering this framework, it is appropriate to use qualitative research as a way to begin to develop an understanding of the experiences of Catholic principals, exploring how they construct meaning through a narrative case study design.

### **Case Study**

The goal of my research is to understand the phenomena from the perspective of the participant. For this purpose, a case study design is appropriate to answer questions as they pertain to lay Catholic principals in their roles as faith leaders. In this section, I

provide a discussion of the case study design and meaning of narrative inquiry as explained by Clandinin and Connelly (1994; 2000).

As I researched different types of designs, I found case study methodology lacks a standard definition and direction as to when it is most appropriate to use. According to Denzin & Lincoln (1994), the concept of “case” remains subject to debate, and the term “study” ambiguous. Although case study research has expanded, Merriam (1998) writes “There is still much confusion as to what constitutes a case study, how it differs from other forms of qualitative research, and when is it most appropriate to use” (p. 19).

There are a variety of definitions offered by researchers. Merriam (1998) writes, “A qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (p. 27). Stake (1995) defines a case as, “a specific, a complex, functioning thing” (p. 2) and emphasizes the unit of study. Yin (1984) classifies a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context. Yin defines the usefulness of this method when boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and multiple sources of evidence are used (p. 23). On deciding whether a case study is appropriate, Stake (1995) writes, “...we need to pick cases which are easy to get to and hospitable to our inquiry, perhaps for which a prospective informant can be identified and with actors willing to comment on certain draft materials” (p. 4).

The goal of my research, to understand the experience of lay Catholic principals in their role as faith leaders, required gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data. In the study, I included in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis of printed



material relating to my topic that included Church documents, articles, and newspapers. For this investigation I selected Catholic elementary schools within an archdiocese in the southeastern United States, and invited lay Catholic principals to participate.

### **Narrative Case Study Design**

To understand the perspectives of the participants, I chose narrative inquiry. Clandinin & Connelly (1994; 2000) describe narratives as a way people tell of the experiences of their lives through the use of stories. One goal of narrative inquiry is to shed light on human experience and uncover meanings people assign to aspects of their lives. Clandinin & Connelly (1994) write, “Stories are the closest we can come to experience as we and others tell our experiences. A story has a sense of being full, a sense of coming out of a personal and social history” (p. 415). I believe stories are unique to the individual and a way to look into the world of human experience, with consideration given to each perspective. Narrative inquiry provides a tool to understand lay, Catholic principals’ experiences and is ideal for this study.

According to Clandinin & Connelly (2000), after collecting the data, narrative inquiry requires the researcher to:

1. Read the interview to get an idea of the overall structure and themes, then return to a specific part to develop its meaning. Consideration is given to the global meaning in light of the parts.
2. Perform multiple readings of the interview to determine voices, of self and with one another.
3. Develop patterns and a unity among the themes.

4. Refer to the literature so the researcher can maintain sensitivity to expressed meanings and contexts.

Clandinin and Connelly (1994) employ a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space to analyze data. They define these spaces as interaction (personal and social), continuity (past, present, and future), and situational (the notion of place). Inquiry into lay principals' experiences has all three dimensions and allows for a textual description to be created from the data.

A cautionary note given by the authors to researchers is awareness of presuppositions or interactions between participants when constructing the text. As a lay Catholic school administrator, I have served in the position of an elementary school principal, and acknowledge a fellowship and personal admiration for the women who participated in the study. As I reflect upon their narratives, my interpretation is guided by my concern for the lack of available administrators to lead Catholic schools, and how the next generation of lay Catholic faith leaders will be formed.

### **The Participants**

This study is designed to investigate experiences of lay, Catholic principals. After identifying an archdiocese in the southeastern United States that I could easily access, I visited the website of the diocese, identified the elementary schools, gathered information about each school, and collected email addresses needed to contact the principals. I compiled all information into a spreadsheet for ease in tracking and sorting. While having no preference towards gender, I discovered out of the eighteen available elementary schools, fourteen were administered by women. These figures support findings reported

by the NCEA (2010) that indicate 14% of total employees of Catholic elementary schools are male. I ultimately solicited only sixteen schools due to the principal of one of the schools being a member of a religious order and my having a professional relationship with the other. Out of the eleven principals who responded, all were women. The three male principals did not reply to my request for participation. Upon receiving emails from three principals stating they would need the permission of the superintendent of their diocese to approve their participation, I contacted the Office of Catholic Schools, secured the approval of the superintendent through an email, and then forwarded her email to all principals I had invited to participate.

My intention was to have a minimum of five participants, but no more than twelve, for the research. Using the concept of data saturation as a guideline, van Manen (1997) explains, for this type of qualitative study, the number of participants depends upon the data collected and can be determined by the point where a clearer understanding will not be found with additional interviews. When the point of data saturation is realized, the number of subjects needed to participate in the study is determined.

Participants in this study are classified as normal volunteers and were given information about the study through the initial email asking for their participation. Following the protocol established by the International Review Board (IRB), each participant signed the Informed Consent Form (Appendix F) prior to the first interview.

### **Data Sources**

Multiple sources of data were gathered for this study over a period of six months. I used Spradley's (1979) Developmental Research Sequence Methodology (DRSM) to

guide data collection and analysis. The interviews enabled me to have access to the world of the lay principals and allowed each to share their experiences. Visits to their schools and conversational interviews gave me insight into what is involved in their roles and assisted me in understanding how their activities and relationships structure their culture. Notes from observations during my visits to their respective schools provided a context for their stories and enriched the description of their experiences (Spradley, 1980).

Prior to the initial meeting, I sent a Participant Information Form (Appendix E) electronically to each principal selected for the study. I created this document to gather details of their biographical, educational, and professional histories. Participants were encouraged to share as much about themselves as desired in relation to their role in the Catholic Church or in Catholic education. A review of each participant's information provided a foundation for beginning the interviews.

Lincoln & Guba (1988) explain that the ability to obtain first-hand knowledge from participants in a study comes from working with, interviewing, and observing them. This closeness allows the investigator to minimize what they refer to as objective separateness that accompanies other forms of research. The conversational interview is crucial in gathering stories, and allows participants to describe their experiences in their own words. It is through conversation that we develop a richer and more meaningful understanding of the phenomenon being studied. To gain an in-depth perspective from the participants, the methods of data collection I used were structured, semi-structured, and open-ended interviews. Patton (1987) refers to the value of interviews in qualitative research:

Quotations reveal the respondents' levels of emotions, the way in which they have organized the world, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences, and their basic perceptions. The task for the qualitative evaluator is to provide a framework within which people can respond in a way that represents accurately and thoroughly their point of view about the program (p.11).

Interview questions explored the experiences of informants and elicited information about emerging themes. The first interview began with a grand tour question. *Could you take me through a typical school year and describe the responsibilities associated with your position as a Catholic school principal?* Responses by the participants guided additional questions and were addressed as we talked about their multifaceted roles. I had no preconceived notions about the outcome of the research. Immediately after each interview, I recorded observations to capture the appearance of the participants and their environment.

### **Data Collection**

Spradley's (1979) DRSM provides a framework for the collection of data, and incorporates analysis of data during the different stages. The steps include (1) entering the field and locating informants, (2) doing participant observation, (3) making a record, (4) asking descriptive questions, (5) analyzing the interviews, (6) creating domain analysis, (7) asking structural questions, (8) performing taxonomic analysis, (9) asking contrasting questions, (10) performing componential analysis, (11) doing a theme analysis, and (12) writing the findings. I chose to use DRSM as it offers an explicit, systematic, and rigorous approach to the collection and compilation of research data.

Using the protocol approved by the IRB, emails were sent to seventeen principals to explain the study, and ask for their participation. From my electronic mailing, I

received responses from eleven possible participants, all women, who expressed a desire to participate in the study. I selected participants that would allow for geographical diversity, based on their location and availability. Of the six women I selected to participate, all six completed the study.

The six female respondents were asked to allocate approximately ninety minutes to two hours for the initial interview, and one to one and a half hours for the follow-up interview. Interviews were held on-site in their respective schools. Only one principal asked to meet off-site at a mutually agreed upon location for her first interview. Prior to the interview, I sent the consent form (Appendix F) electronically to each subject, and brought a copy with me to the first meeting. Once I obtained a signature, I restated the purpose of the interview, explained the transcription process, and how the data would be used. Each interview, audio taped using a digital recorder, began with the grand tour question (Spradley, 1979). Throughout the interview participants were encouraged to ask questions and/or express concerns. Prior to leaving, I reiterated the confidentiality of the study, spoke with each participant about how they would receive a transcribed copy of the interview for review, and discussed the importance of the follow-up meeting. This summative explanation by the interviewer at the conclusion of each interview is recommended as a form of member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell, 1998).

Following each interview, I downloaded the audio file to my personal computer and backed it up on an external hard drive. During the transcription process, I used coded fictitious names rather than real names, which are reflected on all printed materials and study records. The analysis began after the transcriptions were complete. Following the

steps outlined in Spradley's (1979) DRSM, I studied the interviews and began creating structural questions that supported identified domains.

Six weeks after the first round of interviews, I began conducting the second interviews. Prior to meeting with the participants, an electronic file of the transcript was sent for review. At the beginning of each of the second interview, participating principals had the opportunity to clarify data, delete information, or add to the existing document. Follow-up questions related to data gathered during the first interview were used, with specific questions relating to domains identified or themes that were beginning to emerge. I transcribed the second interview, coded the data, and made note of any inconsistencies in the transcripts.

When I completed the transcription of the second interview, I sent an electronic message to each participant that included three files; their biographical information and separate files for the transcriptions of their first and second interviews. I asked each participant to review the data and confirm its accuracy, noting my availability for a third interview to fill in any gaps, check for accuracy, and clarify information. Again, these member checks provide credibility and encourage trust (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell, 1998).

To expand on the data collected from the interviews, I kept a journal to detail observations during my time at each school. I asked the participants to reflect upon and make notes either after our interviews, when reading their transcripts, or if they had any concerns regarding the process. Spradley (1980) states, "A reflexive journal includes a

record of the participant's experience, ideas, fears, mistakes, confusions, breakthroughs, and problems" (p. 71).

### **Coding of Data**

After completing the interviews, I listened to and reread the transcribed interviews, marking passages I thought were significant in relation to the role of faith leadership. I looked for the essential characteristics needed to oversee a Catholic elementary school. I paid close attention to statements that centered on how the Catholic faith played an integral role in their day to day responsibilities. Once I identified themes, I reread the passages within each category, examining their interrelationships. As I began to write my findings, I noticed how the categories were interconnected, each one in some way related to the others.

From the electronic copies of each transcript, I implemented thematic coding and used different highlighting colors to color code themes in the text. The color coded data was sorted and stored in electronic files with the theme noted as the file name. Once I had completed the coding of all interviews, I reviewed each folder to check for accuracy within the various folders. This assisted in organizing themes, linking data sources, and drawing conclusions.

### **Data Analysis**

Analysis of the data assists in understanding how the respondents' experiences contribute to and influence their position as lay Catholic principals in their roles as faith leaders. During the period of data collection, I used Spradley's (1979) DRSM as a way to understand the reality of the participants' narratives and explore the common experiences



they share as lay Catholic school administrators. This methodology provided a systematic way to study this group and gather data on how lay principals perceive their positions as faith leaders. The identification of cultural themes that influence their roles frames the case study. Spradley (1979) defines these themes as, “any cognitive principle, tacit or explicit, recurrent in a number of domains, and serving as a relationship among subsystems of cultural meaning” (p. 186).

After coding the data, and identifying themes, I used steps prescribed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) to guide the analysis of the data. It was important to reread the stories as told by the participants through transcriptions of the interviews. When I did not have clarity as to how or why something occurred, or needed an explanation for a notation I had made in the transcript (such as [pause] or [laughter]), I accessed the audio tape and listened to the voice of the participant. According to Clandinin and Connelly (1994; 2000) intended meaning is maintained when the stories of the participants remain the central focus of the research. I searched for unity among the themes, starting from a global perspective, narrowing it, and identifying the interrelatedness and connectivity of the data. As patterns emerged from the narrative information, I referred back to the literature review to ensure the extrapolated data had context and a foundation for meaning.

I compared the additional data sources I collected (Personal Information Forms, biographies, observatory notes, and interviews) to determine how and if one informed the other. Observational field notes provided a context for understanding other data collected and assisted in the construction of themes. I synthesized all data and created a narrative

around the themes to “bring theoretical ideas about the nature of human life as lived to bear on educational experiences as lived” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, p.3).

Throughout the analysis stage of the process, I used peer debriefing to explore alternative descriptions and increase the reliability of the study. These activities included conversations with other doctoral students working with studies of a qualitative design, professional colleagues, my advisor, and Catholic school administrators who were not participants in my study.

### **Trustworthiness**

The researcher must attend to “the way in which the data was collected, analyzed, and interpreted, and the way in which the findings are presented” (Merriam, 2001, pp. 199-200). The concept of validity, originally developed within a positivist paradigm, assumes the purpose of research is objective, provides measurable outcomes, and is separated from practice. Qualitative researchers argue that when outcomes seek to understand the nature of humans, validity is difficult to measure and ask, “Are these findings sufficiently authentic that I may trust myself in action on their implications?” (Lincoln and Guba, 2005, p. 205).

Harry Wolcott (1994) addressed the issue of validity stating, “validity does not seem a useful criterion for guiding or assessing qualitative research” (p. 337) and offered a process to better understand the social world in which humans live and construct reality. Wolcott’s nine steps include: (1) talk little, listen a lot; (2) record accurately; (3) begin writing early; (4) let readers see for themselves; (5) report fully; (6) be candid; (7) seek feedback; (8) try to achieve balance; and (9) write accurately (pp. 348-354). These

stages support Spradley's DRSM used in my research. Important to this methodology is for those being studied to have access to the interpretations of the researcher so they can confirm the accuracy. Interview transcripts detail extensive use of member checking throughout each phase of the research.

In addition, I used the following strategies: (1) to limit bias, I established my position in regard to assumptions, how participants were selected, and the process surrounding data collection; (2) I used crystallization of data and multiple methods of collection to strengthen the trustworthiness; and (3) I created an audit trail that would enable my findings to be authenticated (Merriam, 2001).

(1) **Researcher Bias:** I acknowledge my views and perceptions surrounding lay Catholic principals. This study comes out of my desire to make a difference in the lives of those who will be Catholic school principals in the future. I have served in various roles in Catholic education for twenty-four years, and felt a connection with the women who participated in my research. As I listened to their stories detailing their experiences and roles, I identified with their joys, spirituality, passion, challenges, and frustrations. I recognize that my views affect how the qualitative data is analyzed and interpreted. To minimize subjectivity, I asked related questions throughout each interview to clarify statements, search for deeper meaning, and limit a biased interpretation. In addition, at each stage, I asked participants to review transcripts and used member checking to assure I interpreted the data the same as the participants intended (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell, 1998).

**Selection Bias:** Qualitative researchers (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1988; Merriman, 2001) write about the possibility of distorted results when studies are conducted that have a small number of participants. Selection bias can occur when there is a flaw in the selection process and members are excluded that could have had an impact on the findings. The six lay Catholic principals selected to participate in this study represent experience in education spanning from seven to thirty-one years, with their tenure in the role of Catholic principal ranging from four to nine years. The Catholic schools they administrate provide geographical and socioeconomic diversity. Those not selected have comparable years of experience in both education and Catholic administration and represent varied communities. Catholic school principals are very committed to their jobs. Fraser and Brock (2006) report Catholic school principals describe their positions as vocations rather than professions, and note how their satisfaction is manifested through the contributions they make to their school communities and the Catholic Church. Given their years of work in Catholic school administration, the stories of each of the eleven respondents would have been presented through similar lenses that represents commitment to their schools and the Church and mitigates the possibility for selection bias in this study.

(2) **Crystallization of Data:** I used crystallization of data as it allows for multiple truths to be presented as opposed to triangulation which seeks a more definitive truth. Guba and Lincoln (1989) state, “Triangulation itself carries too positivist an implication, to wit, that there exist unchanging phenomena so that triangulation

can logically be a check” (p. 240). Crystallization presupposes that no truth exists and only through multiple and partial truths does the researcher co-construct meaning (Richardson, 2000). The use of narrative analysis allows for the construction of knowledge through the stories of participants which are situated, contingent, and provide for multiple points of views of the same experience. Themes that emerged, supported by examples found in the setting, the stories, and literature, assist the reader in developing an understanding and provide a rich description of my findings.

Other data sources included a Personal Inventory Form sent to each participant prior to the first interview. From January through April, interviews were scheduled, conducted, and transcribed. Observational field notes were gathered throughout the four months. In addition, each participant expanded on their biographies through the submission of their curriculum vitae, our conversations, or exchange of written information. The confirmation of findings is strengthened through these multiple sources of data collection (Merriam, 2001).

(3) ***Audit Trail:*** I have noted all data sources, how and when they were collected, and used Spradley’s (1979) DRSM methodology for extraction of themes and creating the framework for the research study. Merriam (2001) defines an audit trail as an account of “how the data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry” (p. 207). This trail includes interview transcripts, emails requesting participants review transcripts, spreadsheets with participant information, personal notes, observational notes,

and all correspondence between the participants and me. To authenticate this study, anyone with interest would be able to follow the process outlined in this study.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Throughout the study, my responsibility to the participants includes avoidance of harm, assurance of confidentiality, and feedback of results. I conducted my research in full compliance with and approval by the International Review Board.

(1) ***Avoidance of Harm***: I conducted my research with a minimal amount of risk.

The risk associated with participation is commensurate to that which they would experience in everyday life.

(2) ***Assurance of Confidentiality***: Protection from harm includes confidentiality and a guarantee that no participant could be identified from the research data or in published findings. All records have been kept private to the extent allowed by law. Information has only been shared with those who make sure my study is done correctly (Georgia State University Institutional Review Board and the Office for Human Research Protection). Information was collected through the use of a digital audio recorder during interviews. Tapes were transcribed using coded fictitious names for the principals rather than real names on all records. Each principal's school was assigned an invented name. All data gathered, including the electronic files of audio recordings, are saved on a travel drive and locked in a cabinet and on a firewall-protected computer at my home. The coded names to identify the research participant are stored separately from the data to

protect the privacy of the participants. Each participant's name and other facts that might point to the subjects will not appear when the study is presented or results published. The findings are summarized and reported in group form. All records will be destroyed after a period of five years.

(3) ***Feedback of Results:*** I am indebted to the participants for sharing their experiences. Their willingness to openly discuss their role as lay principals provided a wealth of information. Throughout the process, I carefully explained the process at each stage and answered questions regarding their participation. In an attempt to remove any misconceptions, prior to, during, and after the first interview, I asked for their feedback. Once the first interview was transcribed, I sent it to the participant, and used it as the basis for the beginning of the second interview. Their feedback allowed for clarity in the transcribed data, and at their request, I removed sections they did not want included. This process was repeated after the second interview. The combined reviews of the participants and my own contribute to an honest and factual reporting.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I have presented the rationale for selecting a narrative case study design. In the discussion of the methodology, the research questions were presented with an explanation of their appropriateness to the study. I continued the chapter with details of the participants, data collection, coding, and analysis procedures. The chapter concludes with a description of the reliability, trustworthiness, and ethical

considerations of the study. In Chapter 4, I introduce the participants using their stories to describe their lives and journey to becoming Catholic school principals.



## CHAPTER 4

### THE PARTICIPANTS

Chapter four introduces the participants as they describe their lives and experiences in Catholic schools from childhood to the present. This biographical information allows the reader to understand their journey in becoming a Catholic school principal and addresses the research question: *What factors are perceived to have contributed to their lives, education, and careers in preparation to become Catholic school principals?* Narratives principals share help the reader to appreciate their positions in Catholic schools, in the Catholic Church, and how they came to be in the role of a faith leader.

Six lay Catholic elementary school administrators participated in this study. All of the participants are women and identify themselves as “cradle Catholics.” Faith is deeply rooted in each administrator with childhood memories that reflect an understanding of the traditions and tenets of the Catholic Church which informs their thinking today. As they describe their journey to becoming Catholic school principals, each participant included a reference to Vatican II (1962-1965) and the transition of the Catholic Church post-Vatican II.

#### ***Barbara***

Barbara described herself as a cradle Catholic, born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri. She went to a Catholic school sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Crondolet from first through fifth grades, and reminisces about the strictness of the nuns.

she refers to as “the little thing, the little closet” (Taped Interview, April 1, 2011, line 52).

She spoke of the transition taking place in the Catholic Church at that time.

And even though I went to Catholic school, I went during a time right after Vatican II, and I think what I know as the Church is very different than what some of the people who are a little older than me remember. I can remember some of the pre-Vatican II stuff but not very much. Most of what I know in the Catholic Church is all Vatican II so I honestly don't remember. Not to say this is what Vatican II said but I think it was more in that feel good stage. The superintendent often refers to it as the rainbow religion time (Taped Interview, February 2, 2011, lines 77-80).

Barbara entered public education, completed high school, and went on to Southeast Missouri State University. After two years at the university, Barbara married and moved to the southeast where she has lived for thirty-one years. While her children were young, she went back to work, completed her bachelor's degree, and entered the business world. Barbara described herself as a career switcher, as she had been in business, went through a layoff, and decided to go into teaching. When her children entered the School of the Assumption, she accepted a teaching position there in the early-1990s, taught fifth grade for three years, then moved into the middle school for nine years. The principal, contemplating retirement, approached Barbara.

Long story short, she went through the process of saying she was going to retire. They went through the search committee; I interviewed never thinking I would get it because I did not have any experience in that area of education. Lo and behold, I got offered the position; but the way we did it, which I thought was great, that principal decided to stay on for one more year for a mentor for me. So she took a year of, sort of part time and phased herself out. So by the end of the year, pretty much, I was doing everything. And then I moved into the position the following year (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 12-17).

Barbara had already started working on a Master's in Leadership which she was awarded in 2006 and has completed her fourth year in the role of principal. Barbara noted, “the biggest thing for me was transitioning from teacher to administration” (Taped Interview,

April 1, 2011, lines 276-277) as well as becoming aware of the changing role of parents and their lack of support for teachers.

### *Cecilia*

Cecilia, born in Massachusetts, grew up in what she describes as a traditional Catholic family who were very involved in the Church. Her father was transferred to San Francisco and she did not attend Catholic elementary or high school because there was not one in the vicinity of where the family resided. Cecilia attended Mass, Sunday school classes, and was visible at parish events. When her family was transferred to South Carolina, Cecilia completed both an undergraduate and master's degree in business and accounting, and started working and teaching at the college-level. After moving to her current state, where she has lived for twenty-four years, Cecilia married, worked in the corporate world, and continued to teach. After her first child was born she left her position in corporate America and picked up night classes at the college. Cecilia described the need to balance career and being a mother. "I continued teaching college for a while because after my child was born, I could teach college at night. I actually left my position, my corporate position, and picked up more classes at night so I could be at home with him during the day" (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 47-49). In the early-1990s, when her child was older, she began her career in the Catholic school system, taught at two different Catholic elementary schools, and eventually became a curriculum coordinator. Cecilia has always been active in her parish (different from the one located at the school), serving on the advisory council, and parish council. She noted the long-term relationship with her pastor:

I had known him [the pastor] long before I met my husband. After we met, married, and bought a home. We were in an area where we attended another Catholic Church. When my son started attending Catholic school, we moved down the street from my current parish. The pastor is so wonderful (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 359-362).

When the position for principal opened at another Catholic elementary school, Cecilia visited and decided to apply for it.

The superintendent called me, my son was attending a private junior high, and I thought, I will go look at the school. I went down there, and I loved the school. The superintendent and I talked that evening; you could just feel the Catholicity and I just loved it (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 61-64).

In addition to the warmth of the community, she described the interview with the search committee as comfortable and consisting of two priests, members of the Advisory Council, and the superintendent. Regarding the interview Cecilia stated, “They asked a lot about my Catholic faith, how involved we were in the Church. Those mainly came from the priests” (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 80-83). Offered the position, Cecilia has been the principal at Presentation Academy for five years. She is completing her Master’s in education at the University of Dayton.

### ***Emily***

Born in the northeast, Emily grew up in the 1950s and 1960s, and described these decades as an interesting time in that “...doors are just beginning to open for women in other professions aside from the three [teaching, nursing, and being a mom and a housewife] that we talked about earlier” (Taped Interview, January 27, 2011, line 9). She went to several different Catholic elementary schools both in the United States and in Rome, Italy due to her father’s job, and told about the religious sisters who taught her:

I had probably one lay teacher in all of my elementary years. And we moved several times. We were always put into Catholic schools. The majority of the

educators were all religious. They were nuns so I had a variety of different organizations, different groups...I can only remember one lay teacher and she was my fifth grade teacher, but it was only for one-half year because the nun that was there was ill and she had to leave. That is what we were told (Taped Interview, March 31, 2011, lines 67-74).

In describing what she remembers about the religious order who taught her, Emily spoke about the many misperceptions of nuns in Catholic schools,

I hear stories about nuns who used to take rulers to boys' hands. I never once saw a single boy get hit. Either I was not paying attention, which I doubt, I just never saw it. I never saw them lose their temper or get violent, ever. It always surprises me when I hear people say things like that because I have never experienced that. Now, were they people who were loving and hugging and friendly? No, I didn't see that either. I saw very staid, stoic women who were focused on what had to be done in the classroom. But then you remember there were forty, fifty, sixty kids in the classroom so they really didn't have a lot of time to be cheerful and friendly. The few times I ever saw any of the nuns outside the classroom in a store they were very friendly, but it was rare, very rare that you would see them outside of that building...I don't personally remember being chastised except one time, and that is when I was in eighth grade and I was not making the capital letter M correctly. So Sister, who is probably about 1000 years old, you can never tell, she said, 'You go up there and practice those M's' so I did. I was really mad at her, but I was also eighth grade, thirteen, and everybody made me mad at that time (Taped Interview, March 31, 2011, lines 76-88).

Emily relayed all the good things associated with going to a Catholic school and stated, "One of my greatest memories of Catholic schools, and I went to several, is we always had some kind of religious processions during the year. I remember chanting Latin as we walked down the school with the community" (Taped Interview, January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011, lines 455-456).

Emily completed Catholic high school in New Jersey, attended a women's Catholic college in the northeast, majored in biology, and talked about the great admiration she had for her instructors who were religious sisters. She described them as, "Very well educated, very well educated. Most of them had their doctorates at the college

I went to; very strong in their fields and extraordinary and wanted you to get out of your comfort zone” (March 31, 2011, lines 284-286). Emily explained how these religious women were instrumental in the lives of the women they taught,

I had such visionary instructors. The surprising thing was that they were all nuns. But these were women in science instruction at the college-level who realized and saw trends for women in areas that no one else had considered and science was the big area. Not only was education opening up, many other fields were opening up too (Taped Interview, January 27, 2011, lines 27-31). They attended Mass with us and they were always present. I think that is when I realized nuns were really more of a person than just somebody in a long habit. It was also post-Vatican II so they were a little more liberal in their attire. Most of the nuns I had were older and were not the young ones who were entering the convent, although there were several of my classmates that entered the convent (Taped Interview, March 31, 2011, lines 294-298).

At the same time, she heeded her mother’s advice to consider education as a major “just to have a backup plan in case the other profession [associated with the biology major] doesn’t work out for you” (Taped Interview, January 27, 2011, line 37). Emily completed all the required methodology courses and student teaching, focusing on grades seven through twelve in the area of science, and realized she loved the field of education.

Upon graduation, she married, applied to several public school systems in the northeast, and took an offer in public junior high school in a very low socioeconomic area.

I can tell you I learned more about myself and how I teach, and how children learn, in those five years in public schools than I did anywhere else. And it was probably the best part of my education to be a great teacher, to be a good teacher, to be a solid teacher than I could say about anything else (Taped Interview, January 27, 2011, line 49).

Realizing the needs of the students, Emily pursued a Master’s degree in secondary guidance and counseling. She left education for several years due to her husband’s job, began to have children, but remained involved in education by “periodic substitute

teaching whenever it was available and convenient with little ones at home” (Taped Interview, January 27, 2011, lines 54-55). Emily described the many challenges associated with child-rearing, working, and completing her degree.

It was not until her family moved to the southeast that she realized the cost of sending her own children to Catholic schools and decided to teach in the school her children attended. Under the administration of the religious sisters, she worked at her first Catholic school for eight years, six as a middle school teacher, and then as a grade-level coordinator. The principal encouraged Emily to apply for the assistant principal’s position, which she agreed to as she had already started the add-on for leadership certification through a local college. During this year, the sitting principal was asked to leave her position, and Emily found herself as interim principal of the school with only five weeks of experience in administration. Emily described this time as “another learning lesson” (Taped Interview, January 27, 2011, line 67). A new principal was hired at the end of the year and Emily returned to the position of assistant principal. The following year she transferred to a Catholic high school with a desire to be part of a program other than elementary.

Regarding her years at the high school level, Emily attributed her upbringing in the Catholic faith as a driving force in working with high school students;

They had a lot of different types of opportunities to be part of the faith process at that school. I was in the discipline office and you know your faith really comes through in that office when you have a troubled child (Taped Interview, January 27, 2011, lines 108-111).

Emily discussed the emotional upheaval in high school students and credits her degree in guidance and counseling in conjunction with her faith in finding success in this role and

stated, “I think it is just in me but I think my counseling training probably has something to do with that too, but I think having been raised in the Catholic faith, and I firmly believe in the tenets of our faith, that that is the driving force behind it” (Taped Interview, January 27, 2011, lines 132-134).

After five years, the superintendent of Catholic schools approached Emily about applying for the position of principal at an archdiocesan elementary school. The previous principal, a member of a religious order, had left after two and half years, leaving the school under the supervision of an administrative team. After several requests from the superintendent, Emily agreed to go through the interview process, took the position, and has been at her current school for the last eight years.

Emily explained how her formation and training while attending Catholic schools informs her decision-making today.

My childhood, high school years, and college years were all within the context of the Catholic faith because it was all Catholic education, and that was such an ingrained part of my person. I don’t ever remember not making a decision that was not somehow influenced by my faith. It’s still that way today (Taped Interview, March 31, 2011, lines 51-54).

### ***Maria***

Born in Pennsylvania to a Catholic family, Maria attended Catholic school and was taught by the nuns until fifth grade. Her family moved to NJ and due to the cost of Catholic schools, her parents opted to enroll her in the public school system.

From way back we started out in Catholic school, my brother and I, and it was a marvelous experience. We had the nuns and they were very strict. You really learned the discipline, you learned the faith, you learned that going to Mass really counted for something and it made a difference in your life... I went up through fifth grade and we moved. The price was prohibitive for us so I went into a public school. I remember coming back the first day saying to my mother, ‘This is not



right, the way they talk to the teachers, what they do in there. You don't pray before your meal.' I mean it was a real rude awakening (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 20-23).

Maria's family were active in the Church and she spoke of attending Sunday school classes at their parish and remembered,

You know, you went once a week, and it was sort of you put on that hat for an hour, then you got to take it off, and go back to your regular life. It never seemed to integrate even though we were going to church and things of that nature. I just didn't enjoy it as much (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 39-42).

Maria obtained her undergraduate degree in education from a state university in Pennsylvania in the mid-1970s, married, and accepted her first teaching position at a Catholic school in Delaware. She noted the expressed disappointment of her father.

I remember my father saying to me, 'Why do you want to teach in a Catholic school?' And I said, 'I like that you can talk about God, I like the faith formation.' And I remember him saying, my salary was like \$5,700 for the entire year, 'After having four years of student loans, you can make more working at McDonalds that you can as a teacher.'...I was there for about five years and left in April to have a baby. It was a nice school, lower-level income, socioeconomic was very poor, and tuition was \$3.00 per week. That is why I was only making \$5,700 (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 43-48 & lines 83-84).

Maria stayed home to raise her children but worked in vacation Bible school at her parish during the summer months. The family moved to the southeast in the late-1980s and she felt a Catholic school to be the only option for her children.

So when we, my husband and I, started having children, I started looking for a Catholic school. As soon as we came down here, I started going to our current parish with my kids and absolutely loved the church. Then when they were school age, I found the closest school around, and so the decision was that we would send the kids there. Our public school was really right around the corner from us, two or three streets away. A nice public school, I guess, but it just wasn't an option for me. You know, I knew what I was given and I said to my husband I wanted my children to have that foundation (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 91-97).

Maria's journey into administration began as a volunteer in the school her children attended,

I started volunteering and I got to know the principal very well (a Sister), and Home and School president, vice-president and stuff like that. After that, they had an opening in kindergarten. They wanted somebody who had some experience with kindergarten and reading problems in kindergarten. So I really started out with the struggling readers. It was part-time, a lot of fun...From there, it just kind of, it's just grown. You know as somebody was needed when Sister was here, she never had a vice-principal. First I came along as part-time, then I came on full-time doing the resource, and then after that, she said, you know, I must have one of the personalities that makes decisions. Because then she said, 'When I am out of the building you are in charge.' And so it was like kind of informal and it got made formal, and I ended up in this seat (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 99-108).

After four years, the principal, a member of a religious order, asked Maria to be assistant principal which she did informally for three years. The year Sister left, a formal contract was offered to Maria for the position of assistant principal and she served in this capacity for next six years under two other principals. During this period, she was asked to consider the position of principal.

They had asked me at the time the two other principals came in, but my kids were at the junior and high school level and I just didn't want the responsibility while my children were still at home, so I just always said no to them (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 138-140).

Maria continued her role as assistant principal until she received a call.

The superintendent had me come to the office out of the blue one day. She said, 'Can you come down now?' I said all right and she met me and said, 'Your school no longer has a principal, would you like to be the principal?' I kind of said I have to think about it (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 191-193).

She agreed to assume the role of principal and for the past seven years has served in this position, giving her a total of nineteen years in the church-school community. Maria attends Mass at the parish where her school is located and noted;

But this is comfortable; its home for me. I feel more at home in this church than I do in any other church. So I thought there is no sense in going anywhere else. I have immersed myself, and Father kind of likes it when he sees me in Mass on the weekend (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 686-689).

Maria decided to begin work on a doctorate at Catholic University (C.U.) in Washington, D.C. which requires her to be in residency during the summer months. When asked why she opted to attend C.U. she responded, "I will be honest with you, I went to the state university first: I have my Master's and Ed Specialist from there. I went down there and I just wasn't interested in what they were selling to be honest" (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 630-631). Maria explained that after a meeting with the university staff, she felt the environment to be very impersonal. This was not the case with the staff of C.U. who contacted her on several occasions to discuss her degree and explain why they wanted her to be in their program. She also mentioned the cohort of principals from around the country that she would be able to network with during the five weeks she would spend there each summer.

### *Teresa*

Teresa was born into a Catholic family and is a product of public education from elementary school through college. She spoke about her Catholic upbringing:

I received the Sacraments as a little girl, you know because back then that is when you hit Confirmation, and First Eucharist and all. I was probably about six or seven and had my little veil on. I know I received Confirmation shortly thereafter (Taped Interview, March 7, 2011, lines 14-16).

Teresa attributed attending Catholic services during childhood as solidifying the foundation of her Catholic faith:

I think the seed was planted for me to be in a Catholic school when my mother took me to a Novena. I think they were doing the Divine Praises and I remember being so intrigued by the mystique of all that, and I think my mother must have

been going through a hard time in retrospect. I realized that she was receiving some type of consolation from being there and I think, I really think, that is where I became more interested in the Catholic Church and what it is all about (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 14-18).

Although she did not attend Catholic school, throughout her elementary years she was active in the Church, attending Mass, Sunday school classes, and vacation bible school, noting her fear of the nuns. She spoke of her experiences in the Church, changes that occurred post-Vatican II, and the emergence of lay people,

They [the nuns] were teaching at my parish church and were the primary educators. I remember my parents would send me to vacation bible school and it was all done by the sisters. And then by the time I was getting into high school and college, I think that was more when more of the lay people were coming in. That is when priests started really befriending, I think, the youth more. I remember going to a couple of youth group meetings when you got to know the priest, and he would reveal more of his personality. Whereas before, growing up pre-Vatican II, his back was to you, and you know, they went behind those curtains, and I always wondered what was behind the altar. I mean, you know, a huge mystique surrounded the Church, and very little understanding on my part. I mean, I just did what I was supposed to. Not being of a rebellious nature, I accepted everything and didn't question anything. I probably would classify myself as the child-like faith experience (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 33-43).

Teresa attended a state university in the southeast at the objection of her mother.

My mother was angry at me when I went to college, so think about how that influences me and my perception of the role of women. My mother thought when you graduated from high school your job was to find a man and get married and have children. But my grandfather, praise the Lord, had put away college funds and I went to college and remember paying \$150 a quarter for my classes and I was able to get a college degree (Taped Interview, March 7, 2011, lines 551-555).

It was during her college years she felt drawn back to the Catholic Church and reengaged with the parish she grew up in.

When I was in college, I was the first women president of the student government at my university, and I was involved in my sorority; I was just involved in a million things. And somehow I had the desire to teach Sunday school. I remember I contacted our parish Church because that is where we went when I was little,

and they partnered me with a sister. For two years I actually learned probably more about my faith that I had in my entire life (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 21-23).

After graduating, Teresa secured a position in the corporate world, met her husband, and moved to Alabama in the late-1970s. She had a difficult time finding a job as the businesses she applied to were not hiring females. She returned to a state university in Alabama, earned both a Bachelor's and Master's degree in secondary education and began her career in education. Teresa accepted a position midyear in a Catholic school teaching religion to grades seven through nine, and stated,

Wherever there was going to be an opening. I didn't have my heart set on Catholic school, public school, whatever, but fortunately, God had his heart set on me because there was a teacher who was pregnant in the middle of the year and they hired me and had me teaching religion (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 48-50).

At the request of the Irish pastor, who wanted those in Sunday school to have instruction consistent with those in the Catholic school, she began teaching weekend classes, "And so it was perfect. I was newly married, I didn't have outside obligations, and pretty much lived, breathed, ate, served, you know, teaching and just immersing myself in the Catholic tradition" (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 60-62).

After two years she resigned and began having children, but stayed involved at the school until her husband was transferred to Florida. Even though the public school was practically in their backyard, Teresa sent her children to a Catholic school, committed to the ideal of a child-centered, holistic education.

And so, I signed my children up for a Catholic school there even though it was a little bit of a sacrifice distance wise. And I was very involved. I started a parent's prayer group and I got to know the principal, and two days before school started, she had an unexpected opening and she called and asked me if I was interested in teaching (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 96-100).

She taught for two years at the school that her three children attended until her husband was transferred to the state where they now live. The Academy of the Ascension became the school for both her children, and where Teresa has served as a parent, teacher, and administrator for seventeen years. As a teacher, Teresa discussed the demands associated with balancing career, children, and family obligations:

I was teaching, I think I was the homeroom teacher for four years and then what happened was our principal was retiring, and at a faculty meeting, this was my twist of fate, I had three children at that time who were in high school, one was in elementary school, very busy life, barely making my obligations to meet my family, my work. And they took a vote on a member of the faculty to serve on the principal's selection committee, and I was devastated when I found out I was the one selected for it (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 117-122).

The search committee hired a religious sister to serve as principal, but during the process determined the school needed an assistant principal. In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Teresa was hired for this position. She was required to enroll in a leadership program at a local university, and juggled the demands of her new role. Teresa stated,

So the next year I was still teaching, I was the assistant principal, and God, thank you, because my children are grown and they both turned out fine. You know as a mother, you are always worried about, you know, making sure of your family network...It was a big juggling act (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 160-164).

Teresa earned her leadership certification, but when her husband's job transferred him to Florida, she resigned from her position to take care of her daughters, one a senior in high school, the other in fifth grade. Within six months, she realized they would not move, and heard of an opening at the Academy in fifth grade. After approaching the principal about returning to teaching, she was recommended to apply for the position of principal. Teresa discussed her interview with the pastor:

And again, you know it is just like it was providential, I remember us sitting down talking and the pastor asking me a lot of poignant questions at that time about my spirituality. But I was a parishioner here, he saw me come with my children. I developed a reputation with the families because I taught religion here and I was a very active religion teacher. I would have days of retreat, I would, um... you know, I started meditations for people. I think I had a reputation for being spiritual, and I was almost finished with my educational leadership training, so we decided to just go ahead and see what would happen (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 219-226).

Teresa has been at the Academy for a period of almost twenty years as a parent, and as a teacher for four years, an assistant principal for two years, and in the role of principal for nine years.

### *Vivienne*

Born and raised Catholic, Vivienne grew up in a suburb of Detroit, was active in her parish, and attended parochial school during her elementary education years. She remembers aspects of her childhood and involvement in the Catholic Church:

My faith has always spoken to me... I remember First Communion, the May Crowning. My mom converted; my sister was very sick as a young child so my dad and I went to Mass a lot... My parents were very involved in the Church: dad was an usher, mom worked as the lunchroom mom at the school. It was very typical. We did the Friday fish fry (Taped Interview, March 31, 2011, lines 65-69).

Her secondary years were spent in a single-sex Catholic high school until her family was transferred to the southeast where they found no availability at the one Catholic high school serving the area.

It was interesting that we got transferred down here in August and [St. Phillips] was the only high school at the time, but they didn't have any openings, so I got to go to public school. You know every Catholic school kid dreams to be able to go to a public school (Taped Interview, January 25, 2011, lines 13-16).

After finishing high school, she went to a university in a neighboring state, earned her Bachelor's in secondary education, and taught in a public school for six years.

Basically, it was a wonderful experience. I think if you want to be a good teacher, go to a school where it is hard to teach. You learn how to teach really quickly; either that or you quit. It was a long time. I loved it (Taped Interview, January 25, 2011, lines 69-71).

With the arrival of her first child, she opted to work part-time at the Catholic high school where she remained from 1983 to 2000. While in the Catholic high school, Vivienne obtained her Master's degree, took add-on courses for learning disabilities and administration, and dabbled in administrative duties by assisting with admissions, new teacher mentoring, and overseeing student organizations. When the archdiocese was ready to open another Catholic high school, they hired a principal who asked Vivienne to be the assistant principal.

I think the principal just knew me as a professional, but I had to go back and get the [administrative] add-on...I did those [courses] at a state university. Then I went over to another high school and did that for 18 months and this was not a good fit for me, and then we did Visitation Academy, and here we are thirty something years later (Taped Interview, January 25, 2011, lines 30-33).

When founding Visitation Academy, a thriving preschool through eighth grade Catholic school, Vivienne worried about being a lay leader of a Catholic school. In her conversation with the priest associated with the school she detailed her anxiety:

When we started Visitation Academy, I remember telling Father that one of my worries is that I didn't disappoint him because we were trying to build a Catholic school, and I am not religious, not a religious person, not trained to be a priest, and in some ways it is a burden...And he said, 'Oh Vivienne, you will never disappoint me.' And I said, 'Father it is a tremendous burden. I am asking to build something that I am not sure I understand' (January 25, 2011, lines 98-109).

Vivienne has thirty-one years of experience in Catholic education, the last seven overseeing the school she founded, Visitation Academy. She has thought about applying to a doctorate program to support her in the role of Catholic school administration and noted the only option as Catholic University in Washington, D.C.



What I have never been able to do is take some courses in leadership at a Catholic university. You know you we were talking about the doctorate... my family is from South Bend, and I could stay with my aunt who would be so easy, and I would love to go to a program through Notre Dame, but they don't have a doctoral program (Taped Interview, January 25, 2011, lines 35-41).

She explained the only other alternative for courses in Catholic school leadership was the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana.

### ***The Researcher***

I, too, am a cradle Catholic, the product of Catholic education through tenth grade, and transitioned from the corporate world into the field of education when my children were young. Born in St. Louis, Missouri, I was taught by members of the religious order of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Crondolet. I moved to Atlanta in my eleventh grade of high school, and entered the public school system because the one Catholic high school did not have any openings. The lack of Catholics in the greater Atlanta area during the late-1960s coupled with the decisions of Vatican II beginning to take effect, presented a Church that was far different from the one I experienced when I was growing up. However, I remained actively involved in the parish to which I belonged. After finishing my high school education, I went to the University of Georgia, earned a Bachelor degree in business administration, and began a career in the corporate world. After marrying, I had three children and continued to work part-time. In addition, I enrolled in a local college and started to take education courses. Within two years I was certified to teach, completed my Master's degree in education, and began teaching at a public high school. I moved back to Atlanta in the late-1980s and felt Catholic education the only option for my children. When I applied for a teaching position at a Catholic

elementary school, part of the understanding to my agreeing to the position was that my three children would attend. The principal, a member of the religious order of the Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart, hired me. She was one of the last remaining religious sisters in Catholic education in Atlanta. I taught and eventually began taking on administrative duties. During this time, I remained very involved with my parish, serving in many capacities from parish council to being in the choir. When a new elementary school was scheduled to open in 1996, I was approached to assist in the administrative areas of admissions, marketing, and development. I accepted the position and was under the supervision of a principal who was a member of the Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart: the last of the Grey Nuns to administer a school in the Archdiocese of Atlanta. I have remained at this school for fifteen years where I have served in various positions including elementary school principal. My twenty-four years in Catholic education as a teacher and administrator prompted my concern for others who serve as Catholic school administrators. This has been a personal journey in understanding the connections and experiences we share.

### ***Summary***

In this chapter the lives of the principals have been explored. These women share many common life experiences in becoming Catholic school principals as well as their roles and responsibilities. Information detailed in this chapter addresses the research question: *What factors are perceived to have contributed to their lives, education, and careers in preparation to become Catholic school principals?*

All women were born into traditional, Catholic families who were active in their parishes. Five of the six participants were either born in the northeast or midwest United States. Four of the six women attended Catholic elementary school from kindergarten to grade five; two of the six women attended Catholic school through grade ten; one woman completed her elementary, secondary, and college education in Catholic schools. Undergraduate degrees were completed by all six women with three majoring in education and the other three in business. Advanced degrees in education or courses related to becoming certified in education were sought by those who switched their career track. Five of the six women moved to the southeast due to their husband being transferred. All six participants prioritized Catholic education for their children and eventually became teachers in the Catholic elementary school their children attended. All but one of the women was identified by their acting principals as having leadership potential, and, in addition to their teaching responsibilities, given administrative duties. The participants range in experience as elementary school principals from four to nine years.

My own journey to becoming principal parallels the lives of the women who participated in this study. I was born in the midwest U.S. to a traditional, Catholic family and attended Catholic school until grade ten. My undergraduate degree was in business; I pursued a Master's degree in education after deciding that teaching would be a way I could work in conjunction with parenting. Catholic education for my children was a priority and I taught in the Catholic elementary school my children attended. I was identified by my principal to have leadership qualities and given additional

responsibilities that were administrative, eventually leading to being named an elementary school principal.

The stories told by the women of their childhood, interactions within the Catholic Church and Catholic schools, education, career, years teaching in a Catholic elementary school, and how they assumed the position of principal, highlight common life experiences of the principals in the study. The next chapter is a contextual description of the Catholic elementary school and provides the framework for the environment in which participants function in their roles as lay Catholic administrators.

## CHAPTER 5

### A CONTEXTUAL DESCRIPTION OF THE CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

This chapter provides a contextual reference for the interpretation of the data collected from the lay Catholic principals who participated in my study. Knowledge of the setting of Catholic schools, philosophical beliefs, and their communities provide a framework for the research questions. Using the data collected, I can attest to consistency to the represented schools in the implementation of their programs and mirroring of each dimension outlined in this section.

The six Catholic elementary schools in the study are situated in various geographical locations and serve different socioeconomic populations. Observational field notes, print materials, conversations with office staff and parents, and interviews reflect the setting, reinforce the philosophy of Catholic education, and describe an appreciation for their communities.

#### *Elementary School Setting*

Upon arriving at each school, I made note of the facility, property, and decorations inherent to each campus. The physical plants, ranging in age from ten years to over fifty, were simple in design. Most of the buildings were more than fifty years old, but were well-kept, clean, and designed to meet the needs of an elementary school program. The presence of gardens in honor of the Blessed Mother, statues of the saints honoring the namesake of the school, benches commemorating a patron, and large crucifixes gave witness to the religious dimension of the schools. Banners printed with

the mission statement graced either an area outside the building or the lobby.

From a visual sweep of the lobby and halls, I took note of the many icons that openly displayed the uniqueness of a Catholic school. Statues of the Blessed Mother, portraits of saints, decorations celebrating Lent, crucifixes and crosses, Biblical verses hung as banners, and posters depicting service projects and/or fundraising dominated the lobby area as well as the hallways, offices, and meeting rooms. Newsletters, campaign materials, and printed reminders noted the different community events and informed constituencies of the many activities occurring throughout the school. The items I saw were replicated in each school I visited. The common traits within each environment were a key finding in determining which characteristics are essential to a Catholic school setting.

### *Intangible Aspects of the Catholic School*

Each principal downplayed the role of the visuals and spoke of the importance of an environment where the Catholic faith permeates all aspects of the program, and is lived through those in the school community. Three principals described intangible aspects of their schools and the importance they attach to these. According to Vivienne:

The physical way you would know is that you would see the crucifixes in the classrooms, you would see the altar where we have Mass, you would see the chapel with the tabernacle, you would see children praying, and you would see Bibles in the classroom. Those are all the obvious. What I would hope is that you would feel a sense of community, of warmth and love, and would hope you would see everyone being treated with respect and kindness (Taped Interview, January 26, 2011, 473-477).

Emily stated, “I would want people to come in and tour the school and immediately recognize the fact that we are more than just a crucifix in the lobby; it is how we speak to

people, how we treat people” (Taped Interview, January 27, 2011 lines 171-173). Emily discussed the balance between what you see and how you feel and links it to living faith-based values.

I think it has to be in what you value, and what you want to be visible to others with regard to your faith. And then, it all will just grow from there. You don't want it to be tripping over crosses in the hall, but you also don't want to be feeling like where am I either. You want it to be a subtle presence but one that you will feel when it is there (Taped Interview, January 27, 2011, line 664-670).

Maria stressed the importance of the interactions of each member of the school community to the spirit of the school.

I think the first thing that everybody looks for are the icons; the cross, the painting, things of that nature. But to me, the authenticity is how you treat the people. That is what I consider the authentic Catholic spirit here at school. When people say I can feel this place and I can feel how much these children are cared for and nurtured and how much the community reaches out to one another, I think that is it. Everybody here knows we are just one big family and we will take care of each other. There are ways you treat people. We are constantly saying to the kids, ‘see Christ in everyone you meet. If the kid over there is being nasty to you, well, there is an aspect of Christ in that kid; find it; what is it?’ I think that that is it. We have all the crosses, and prayer stations, but it is the spirit of what it is (Taped Interview, May 2, 2011; lines 183-191).

These comments were reinforced by my interaction with the different people I came into contact at each school and provided an in-depth understanding of the setting.

I purposefully arrived early at each school to gain insight into processes, people, and their interactions. At times, the principal was detained off campus, or a mix up in the time of the appointment occurred and allowed me time to observe the community and activities that occurred in the main office or reception area. I witnessed a caring, nurturing, and energizing environment at each school. Polite, receptive, and hospitable staff, parents, and students engaged me in conversation, apologized for my wait, offered refreshments, and supplied me with reading material that celebrated their schools and

community. Adults, either staff or parent volunteers, attended to the individual needs of the children who were sick, hurt, or in need of assurance that their errand was complete.

Once I was in the principal's office or the designated place to meet, I experienced collegiality, warmth, and respect from each administrator. Prior to beginning with the grand tour question, we chatted about aspects of the position, Catholic school leadership, and the importance of continuing our education. During the recorded interviews, participants were open, honest, and shared their experiences, trusting me to use their personal journeys to support my research and give voice to laywomen who serve as administrators in Catholic schools. Emotions throughout the interviews ranged from great levity to serious concern, with audio tapes filled with periods of uncontrolled laughter as well as prolonged silence. While I had allotted up to two hours for the initial interview, the time I spent with each principal often exceeded this with one meeting lasting approximately three hours and fifteen minutes. After transcribing the interviews and sending it to the participants for review prior to the second interview, three participants commented that they could not believe how much they had shared. I realized my own experience as a laywoman who has served in the position of a lay Catholic elementary school principal provided a framework for participants to share their stories. I understood what they were sharing as I had lived it myself.

### ***Philosophy of Catholic Education***

Data collected through interviews reinforced the philosophy of Catholic education presented in the literature review. The Catholic school principals who participated in this study acknowledged they are working in a privileged environment that is less restrictive



than their public school counterparts and one that allows members to function at spiritual, emotional, and compassionate levels. Through examples, each principal spoke on how the philosophy of Catholic education is central to their mission, the authenticity of their school's Catholic identity, and the role their programs play in the evangelization of Catholics.

### ***Catholic Identity***

The extent to which a school integrates the teachings of the Church into its programs is a determinant of the authenticity of its Catholic identity. According to Vivienne, "The one thing I preach here is I shouldn't be able to say to you because I do these five things that that makes us Catholic...It has to be in the water; it is everything we do" (Taped Interview, March 31, 2011, lines 277-279). Participants stressed that religion classes, while essential, are not an indicator of a school's Catholicity. Principals described different ways in which Catholicity manifests itself through programs and within their school communities. Cecilia spoke about what it means to be a Catholic school.

I can get on a soap box about this. I used to mention to parents, 'We are not a private school, we are a Catholic school. There is a big difference and we are a religious school; the Catholic piece comes first.' We do want academic excellence; but we are Catholic first. (Taped Interview, March 22, 2011, lines 298-301).

Emily elaborated on how the philosophy of Catholic education manifests itself in the formation of students:

I think it so important to understand that when we say we are a Catholic school, it doesn't mean we are down on our knees praying every second of the day but our actions reflect our belief in our faith and that is what we try to teach here...That is what I want people to understand about the Catholic philosophy of education. And then also to understand that, yes, academics are important because that builds the foundation for students to be able to leave here and make personal, critical

choices, and become independent learners, lifelong-learners and know what their strengths and weaknesses are (Taped Interview, January 31, 2011, lines 146-154).

As students develop, their actions are linked to the faith values associated with Catholic doctrine and teaching. Teresa explained the benefits associated with putting faith into action.

I have to believe one of our favorite quotes we say all the time, ‘Spread the Gospel, use words when necessary.’ I just think it’s just so much a part of who we are and why we are here...It is evident that people care so much for one another. It is evident that our faith is driving everything we are doing (Taped Interview, Teresa, February 1, 2011, lines 456-458).

The degree to which a Catholic school is in line with the Magisterium of the Catholic Church is an indicator of its Catholic identity. Catholic schools create an environment where Gospel values are lived within a vibrant faith community. According to Vivienne, the authenticity of Catholic identity is dependent on school leadership.

It cannot be faked. It is either authentic or it is not. You can’t pretend to be Catholic...I think the leadership is critical. (Taped Interview, January 26, 2011, lines 363-365).

By understanding the philosophy of the Catholic education and implementing programs that are in communion with the Catholic Church, schools serve as a ministry to the Church in developing its members and forming future leaders.

### ***Mission of Evangelization***

Participants discussed the role of Catholic schools in the evangelization mission of the Catholic Church. Maria described how the school is central in not only the formation of students, but in providing parents an opportunity to reengage with the Church.

I said our job is to get them [student] excited about going to Mass; our job is to drag their parents back to Mass on Sunday. These are the kids who will be your

leaders in thirty years so you have to allow us to do it in a kid like fashion. You have to understand we are laying the foundation for thirty years from now; we are not laying a foundation for tomorrow; you and I are not going to see the results because it is way out in the future. I don't think they get that. I don't think they read the research that says the kids that grow up in Catholic schools are the ones who will be the bedrock in your parishes and schools (Taped Interview, May 2, 140-147).

Principals acknowledged there are Catholic students who attend their schools that are not actively participating in their parishes or attending Mass on the weekends. Each principal discussed the expectation of parents for Catholic schools to oversee the spiritual development of their children. According to Vivienne, faith formation during the elementary years lays the foundation for adulthood.

One of the things that I think is important in a Catholic school is you have to accept the reality that probably less than half of these children are living the Catholic faith at home. That is just the world we live in. I think my responsibility to them is to provide them with as many opportunities as I can without compromising the academic program. So we have Mass every Monday, adoration, we celebrate all the sacraments...So what my hope is, is when you leave here, if you have done it for nine years, it is a part of your fiber, even if mom and dad aren't...I don't think there is any research on it, but I have to think in faith formation, ages four to thirteen are pretty critical... I think it is hard to come out and not be faith filled. Or at least, you know the path to get there when you decide to do it (Taped Interview, January 26, 2011, lines 332-342).

### **Essential Features of the Catholic School**

Interviews, materials I collected while visiting, and data from the websites of each school were used to determine characteristics common to the Catholic schools. Essential to the vitality of the schools in this study are their communities and service programs.

#### ***Community***

Participants each spoke about the importance of community to their school and told of parents, teachers, and administration working together to provide a safe, nurturing, and child-centered environment centered on Catholic values. Barbara described her

school; “I really think it’s a community. It’s a faith community, it’s a support community” (Taped Interview, April 1, 2011, lines 331). Support to the school is rooted in the cooperative effort of teachers and parents and built on mutual respect towards members of the school’s community. Maria explained how the children at her school benefit from this type of interaction.

This is a phenomenal community. First of all, the teachers are great. They really are here for the good of the kids. I think I set the tone in that it is very respectful here. We are here for the benefit of the children and I am constantly saying, ‘What is best for the children?’ That is our decision first and nothing else comes after that. It’s everybody working together. The parents have the same philosophy (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 369-373).

Cecilia stressed the importance for all constituencies to be engaged. “Community is the people that make it; it truly is a community school” (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, Lines 97-99).

### ***Service Programs***

Crucial to living out the Gospel message of the Church are the service programs found in Catholic schools. Emily stated, “Service is to live your faith. That is the point in us doing service projects, you live your faith. You can’t just talk the talk; you have to live it too” (Taped Interview, January 27, 2011, lines 274-275). According to Cecilia, “Because that is what we are all about, serving others, being faithful servants, and serving those in need, truly in need...I challenged the faculty this year; fieldtrips continue but tie into a service project” (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 137-140). Principals discussed the different types of service projects, the thought that goes into the selection of what type each grade participates in, and the value associated with helping others.

Barbara explained how service program enables students to live Gospel values and understand the importance of helping others;

The blessings that we have are so much greater than in some people we don't ever see. We don't know them, we don't see them. If we don't find some kind of connection, it becomes all about me and that is not what it is about. And you know, we tie it into the Gospel message. It is about what Jesus showed us...I really want them, and I think the teachers would agree, we just want them to understand that even if you cannot see those people, there is a ripple effect, and it all makes a difference no matter what you do. Making a difference in the way that you can and the age that you are and getting them to learn this is important in life (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 391-399).

According to Maria, Catholic schools prioritize service programs because they feel service essential to the formation of lifelong values:

It is not about how much we can amass in life, it is about what you choose to do with the gifts God has given you. It is a constant thing that we are always saying to the kids. You have been given so you give back (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 437-439).

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I have presented an overview of the setting of the Catholic schools where the participants serve as faith leaders. The contextual description, as relayed by the participants, provides a framework for answering the research questions. Transcribed data explains how the philosophy of Catholic education is interwoven into each of their programs and why Catholic identity and evangelization is central to the mission of Catholic schools. Strong communities based on faith and service programs are important components of all the schools.

These descriptions are written in narrative form to allow the reader to construct his or her own impression of what Catholic schools present to their students, families, and the Catholic Church. Statements by the participants provide a framework to answer the

research questions as to what factors contribute to lay administrators' roles in Catholic education, their relationship with the Catholic Church, opportunities for development and support as faith leaders, and how they negotiate tensions that arise in their roles. Using the description of the Catholic school setting as a framework, Chapter 6 gives voice to the stories of the participants of in their roles as Catholic school principals.

## CHAPTER 6

### VOICES OF LAY CATHOLIC ADMINISTRATORS

The purpose of this study is to explore the experience of lay Catholics who serve as elementary school administrators in the role of faith leader. The inquiry includes the exploration of these women's perception of the role they play in their schools and within the Catholic Church. The culture of the school and interplay within a Catholic setting is fundamental to the study. This research study explored how these administrators thought about and practiced leadership, and how their experiences add to the discourse surrounding lay leaders in Catholic schools. Through conversational interviews their insights were gathered from their experiences as Catholic school administrators. Informed by my own experience as a lay leader in Catholic education, and supported by Bogdan and Biklen (2007), the analysis is a result of the translation of information I gathered as the interviewer. Acknowledging readers bring their own experience to the reading of this work, each will leave with their own rich interpretation and understanding.

#### **Overall Theme**

The women in this study found their roles as lay leaders integral to the Catholic Church. They recognized an important aspect of building the Catholic Church is dependent upon their role as faith leaders within the context of Catholic schools. Their workspace also serves as a conduit for their faith, spiritual, and professional development. This overall theme provides a framework for the subthemes that became apparent during the course of the research.

Six major themes emerged from the analysis of the data. First, all participants expressed the unwavering link between the Catholic Church and Catholic school. Second, each participant stressed that central to her role was to provide leadership to grow and deepen the faith of students, staff, and parents. Third, participants expressed the importance of building community as a dimension of the principal's role as a faith leader. Fourth, participants recognized the need to model faith in action both in their leadership style and in how they live their faith. Fifth, participants voiced the need for spiritual and professional development to support lay Catholic school principals as faith leaders. Lastly, participants expressed how they negotiate the tensions in their personal and professional lives as they serve in the role of a Catholic school principal.

### **The Relationship between Church and School**

Schools in the diocese I studied have an intimate relationship with the Catholic Church. Although the school and the Catholic Church are two separate entities, they are in fact linked. The women in this study provided insight into the relationship. Barbara spoke of the partnership between Catholic schools and the Church.

I don't think in some instances it [the relationship] is, but it needs to be in partnership with the families and the Church to help form their children in their spirituality so they go out and they can carry the Gospel out to the world. Whatever way God leads them, it is a partnership. The Catholic school is here to build a partnership with the parents and the Church; like we all work together to help this child grow and develop in the best way they can (Taped Interview, April 1, 2011, lines 103-108).

In Teresa's opinion, there needs to be a supportive partnership but one that does not interfere with the operation of the school.

Contrary to popular belief, I think it critical for the school to be a parish ministry, but I think there also needs to be an appreciation from the parish, that even though



we are a parish ministry, we are also a business that has standards. In some ways, we are more like stakeholders. We are supporting the ministry needs of the parish. But I definitely think that is what the body of Christ is supposed to do, support one another. You know the parish is our mother, and we are here to help serve the parish but not to the detriment of the students' needs. And sometimes that can be a little bit of a fine line (Taped Interview, March 7, 2011, lines 453-459).

Parishes and Catholic schools often share resources which are allocated according to the prioritization of the pastor. Unless the pastor is engaged in the school and understands the needs of the school community, capital might be disproportionately distributed to the parish.

Both canonically and philosophically, the Church and school are institutions that carry out the teachings of the Catholic Church. However, Teresa added, "I mean in the end, Canon Law always trumps, as it should. I have no problem with that, but I do wish there could be a little bit more of a separation between the educational needs of the school and spiritual needs of the school community" (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 542-544).

Central to this theme of Church and school is the importance of the principal to create an environment where Catholic faith is taught and integrated into the lives of students. Participants emphasized the importance of Catholic schools in the evangelizing mission of the Church, discussing the fact that many Catholic families no longer attend Mass on Sundays. Principals spoke about their responsibility to provide the faith formation that has always been the responsibility of the Church. Vivienne stressed the school's role in the formation of young Catholics,

I recognize that not all of our children are being raised Catholic. They may say they are Catholic, but they are not being raised Catholic. I believe in my heart what Catholic education does is how the Catholic Church evangelizes; that is how

we create adult Catholics. We don't have a youth program like some of the other denominations because we have our schools. So that is why we have Mass every Monday; because if the child is in a home that doesn't go to Mass on Sunday, at twenty-one they will look back and know when they were in this school, they went to Mass each Monday. I am still planting that seed that we go to Mass; we go to adoration; we go to confession. All of the things that define who we are, the children have the opportunity to do those things here (Taped Interview, March 31, 2011, lines 72-79).

Principals each mentioned the shift from participation in the Church coinciding with societal changes in the family. According to Maria, stability within the school is founded on principles of the philosophy of Catholic education which stresses the dignity of each child.

I guess it is making sure that the kids are okay spiritually and emotionally. I know the education has to be there, but, sometimes when you see the kids and they come to us with so much baggage: divorces, and everything else, job losses, and all the other stuff, it is amazing the baggage and the pressure they have. And just helping them to understand that they are a child of God and they are okay the way they are. It doesn't matter if they have long legs or whatever it is. The biggest thing is that they are a child of God and they are okay. I think that is what I worry about the most, the other stuff we can catch up on, even the financial stuff. It will always run, but the kids are what I worry about. That is why we are here (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 694-701).

Barbara reinforced the school's role in providing a place where children can grow in a community that reinforces Catholic, Christian values:

Now, I don't know why or when that big shift occurred but I think it so sad because there are so many other things that take precedence over, let's go spend an hour together at Mass. I guess that is all out there: the research; the breakdown of the family; no dinners together. We are running here and there; we can't go to Mass together because we have this or that. I don't know what the answer is, but maybe this school is the answer right now. We can give the kids a sense of community: a sense of growing and developing and thinking beyond themselves. (Taped Interview, April 1, 2011, lines 124-131).

Vivienne discussed the importance of developing faith in students,

The phrase, *knowledge set in the context of faith creates a lifetime of wisdom* is an adaption of one of the documents from the Bishops. I think, to me, that says

everything because knowledge without faith is limiting, especially if you look at the world we live in right now. I am convinced that that is what is wrong with most of the world right now. We have lot of really smart people that have no faith making really bad decisions. I think if decisions were a little more faith-centered we would not be in the mess we are in (Taped Interview, January 25, 2011, lines 618-623).

According to the participants, key to instilling Catholic faith in students is the ability of schools to integrate faith into all aspects of their programs, a model that parish schools of religion cannot implement. Maria referred to Convey and Thompson's (1999) study analyzing the results of the Assessment of Catechesis and Religious Education (ACRE), an evaluation tool created by the NCEA to assess religious instruction and faith development.

This is a delicate spot because the book by Convey that just came out compares the ACRE data from Catholic school groups versus the PSR [parish school of religion] groups. The Catholic school groups shine on areas of their faith and doctrine where parish school of religion groups are so much lower. It makes sense as look at the amount of time they spend at each place...It is a program that the Church has to support but at the same time, I want to give that book out and say, 'look at what we are doing.' This is who we are and what we are about. Our kids know their stuff. I don't know that we always get recognized for that (Taped Interview, May 2, 2011, lines 150-154).

Cecilia reinforced why parents send their children to Catholic schools:

Because they want the Catholic faith, they want their children to grow in the Catholic faith, and they want academic excellence, and we can provide both. It is throughout the school day and I just can't say that enough. The preparation is a learning experience (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 302-305).

Fundamental to the relationship between Church and school is the role of the priest, the link between these two institutions. Principals in this study were clear about the structure of the Church as it relates to how priests are involved in Catholic education. Vivienne stated, "Catholic schools really are almost set up like a public school system. The difference is that you have the pastor; the pastor operates as head of school and if the

pastor so chooses, he has that authority” (Taped Interview, March 31, 2011, lines6-8).

Emily described the role of priests as “...[i]n a parish school you do have the pastors and you work closely with them and they are really the top management” (Taped Interview, January 27, 2011, lines 280-281). According to Maria, “They are truly canonically over the superintendent. If the priest wants to fire me, the superintendent does not have a say in it” (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 529-530). Participants acknowledged the link between the school and the priest and discussed how his role manifests itself in the context of their schools.

Barbara spoke about the importance of her school’s interaction with the priest,

If you are not in this position, you don’t really understand how important the role of the priest is. You would not know that and a lot of people don’t get that. He is very supportive of the school and I think that is important. The two of us together look at this because we share a campus, a facility manager, the business manager, employees as well (Taped Interview, April 1, 2011, lines 76-80).

Maria expressed the same sentiment,

I find it very comforting when I don’t understand something that I can go up the hill and say, ‘I don’t get it all. This is what you are supposed to be helping me with; talk to me about this aspect of it.’ And so I would never want it separate. It takes a lot of work to make it work; a lot of communication but it is well worth it. It is necessary. (Taped Interview, May 2, 2011; lines 43-46).

All but one of the six principals in the study had a wonderful relationship with the priests they interact with, and who are responsible for their schools: Cecilia stated, “We have a priest who is phenomenal; he is here, he has a presence at the school, enjoys visiting the school” (Taped Interview, February 1, 2001, lines 185-186). Barbara reinforced how the presence of priests provides support and a confidant to provide advice. “So thank God for the pastor because you have to have somebody you can

bounce things off. And, he is very good about that, and always willing to listen, and so good about the way he gives advice” (Taped Interview, February, 2, 2011, lines 487-490). Vivienne discussed the availability of priests and acknowledged the importance of their support,

The priests are amazing. They are a phone call away. So, whenever I am feeling insecure in the decision that I have to make, I can pick up the phone and call them. That’s huge if you are going to be a lay leader; you need to be confident that what you are doing is right. So what they do is give me that confidence (Taped Interview, January 25, 2011, lines 190-191).

Maria relayed how she relies on her pastor for counsel,

Anytime I am not on good footing, and I need somebody who can give me good advice, spiritually give me good advice, and as far as the Canons of the Church, and things of that nature, and then plain old common sense. He is phenomenal” (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 487-489).

Participants elaborated on the ministerial role of the priest and spoke about the importance of trust and mutual respect between the principal and the pastor.

In regard to priests, the principals raised the need for Church leadership to look at aspects of their formation as well as how they are assigned as pastors. Maria discussed their lack of training in the area of administration as it relates to Catholic education,

You know one of the things I learned at Catholic University (CU), there are a lot of priests who are there and they are doing their Canon Law degree. And so I get a chance to talk to them and they all say the same thing: we don’t know what to do with schools. We don’t know how far to walk with it; we don’t know how to step back; we don’t know if we are supposed to be looking at the books. We are just told, ‘you now have a school and have fun’ (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 523-527).

Without the proper formation, either in the seminary or from mentoring, priests enter parishes that have schools attached to them and are expected to oversee the operation.

In 2008, the NCEA published John Ippolito's study titled, *In Fulfillment of Their Mission: The Duties and Tasks of a Catholic Priest*. Ippolito worked with academic deans at eight theological schools in the U.S. to identify areas of responsibilities of Roman Catholic priests. The nine key areas of proficiency for priests leaving the seminary were presented in the research were:

1. Celebrates Liturgy and Sacraments
2. Provides Pastoral Care and Spiritual Guidance
3. Teaches the Faith
4. Leads Parish Administration
5. Practices a Ministry of Presence with Parish Groups
6. Participates in the Life of the Diocesan Church
7. Engages with Diverse Publics
8. Engages in Professional Development
9. Engages in Personal Development

These basic areas listed in Ippolito's study do not address the priest's role in Catholic education except in the broadest sense of the third and fourth competency. In the absence of the proper formation during their years in the seminary, priests approach their parish assignments without having the skills needed to manage schools. In these instances, Maria expressed it crucial for priests to identify and hire principals who have the capability and experience to oversee a Catholic school and establish regular communication needed to inform them of all areas of associated with the operation of the school.

Participants made recommendations that on a diocesan-level, prior to making assignments, Church leadership determine which priests are best suited to be pastors of parishes where schools are located. According to Maria, there are priests who lack the desire to oversee parish that has a school attached to it:

I think the first thing I would say is, ‘does he want a school?’ I think that is the biggest problem in that they put guys in these places that don’t like children per se; they don’t want to be around children. It is like a mismatch right off the bat. You are starting on a footing that is not a good foundation; somebody that really wants to be around children, likes children, and can see the beauty in children. (Taped Interview, May 2, 2011, lines 104-108).

Teresa elaborated on how priests need to be a good fit for the school,

It has to do with their buying into Catholic education. I think the superintendent recognizes that, and I think now that she has been here a long enough time, she knows the pastors and the priests, and who to recommend as to who might be a good fit to help shepherd a school (Taped Interview, March 7, 2011, lines 614-616).

Each participant relayed her concern over the shortage of priests and the impact their absence has on their school’s Catholic identity. According to Cecilia, “[the presence of religious] lends to our Catholic identity...The parents have expressed that they would like to see more presence; religious presence” (Taped Interview, March 22, 2011, lines 293-294). Teresa discussed how the lack of priests has affected Catholic identity in her school.

We are a faculty longing for the presence of priests here in the building...I just feel like we’re a vibrant school and we deserve to have some kind of spiritual food fed to us besides from the director of faith formation, besides from me...We can’t get priests to come here or they will say they are coming and they will cancel. And now I can’t even get priests to go on our retreats because they think it doesn’t reflect well so we have to go and seek [other] priests. And we can no longer have penance in our school day. Children have to go to their own parishes. We are losing a lot of our Catholic identity here (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 544-561).

Vivienne reminisced about the priests who used to visit her elementary school and stated,

Just their presence; I don't even know if this could happen, but to have the priests to be able to walk around the building in the morning and say good morning to the kids. Probably not very many of the pastors do that anyway you know (Taped Interview, January 25, 2011, lines 564-566).

Reasons participants gave for the lack of availability of priests were varied. According to Barbara, "I think it might be that he is pulled in so many directions. I just wonder if they are taxed because there is so much they have to do" (Taped Interview, April 1, 2011, lines 75-76). Teresa discussed the many roles priests have to fulfill:

Well, again, it's that stress. It is that anxiety. You're spreading them out so thin that they can't probably be as effective... The current pastor, I don't want to use the word defense, but I think he is much more involved in politics downtown like priest formation: I think he has quite a few titles. He has a lot of roles that he plays (Taped Interview, March 7, 2011, lines 604-611).

Participants each connected the presence of priests to the nurturing of religious vocations: "We need our priests. And just for them to be active in the school to show that vocations are important; vocations to the priesthood are good" (Maria, Taped Interview, May 2, 2011; lines 41-42). Results of a survey conducted by the Center for Applied Research of the Apostolate (CARA) found 47% of the priests in the ordination class of 2011 attended a Catholic elementary school. This figure supports the importance of Catholic schools in the formation of priests and religious to the Catholic Church. Maria mentioned her desire to have her students exposed to members of religious orders of sisters.

You know, we do the Vocations Day, they hear Sister talk; but I would love for them to walk up and down the hallway and just joyously celebrating the life that they have chosen. I wish we had nuns just so that they [the students] could, the kids could see it is a great life (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 665-668).



Data presented in this section confirm a distinct relationship between the Catholic Church and Catholic school, with the school serving as a faith community where Gospel values are integrated and lived throughout the program. Analysis assists in understanding the research question: *How do participants perceive their relationship with the Catholic Church in their roles as lay Catholic principals?* Narratives support the research that the Catholic school serves as an evangelization tool for the Church, supporting it as a ministry, and providing an environment where children can grow in a community of Catholic, Christian values. The impact of societal changes on the family and Church has resulted in decreased participation in parishes. Participants acknowledged the importance of the school to provide a program where students experience and grow in their faith.

Principals in the study described how priests serve as the primary link between the Church and Catholic school. Priests who oversee Catholic schools provide assurance that Catholic schools are in communion with the Church, a tenet that is central to an authentic Catholic identity. This section details how canonically, the priest serve as the authoritative figure over the school with principals stressing the importance of a good relationship based on respect, trust, and communication. As priests are assigned to be pastors of parishes with schools consideration needs to be given to their familiarity with how Catholic schools are operated as well their desire to shepherd one.

Participants stated concern over the lack of priestly presence in their schools. Acknowledging priests are spread too thin, principals attributed a decrease in Catholic identity and loss of vocations to their absence. As a direct result, principals spoke of how

they are required to assume the responsibilities associated with the faith development of their communities.

### **The Principal's Role in Providing Leadership to Grow and Deepen Faith**

In each school, participants emphasized faith development of their school communities as a major role associated with being a lay Catholic principal. In Emily's opinion, this is a shared responsibility.

I would almost have to start on a larger scale because not only do I make it the responsibility of everyone in this building, it is my responsibility to ensure that we live our faith and practice our faith, and make sure everyone else knows we are all about being Catholic in the school. But I also rely on everyone in this building to be part of that vision (Taped Interview, January 27, 2011, lines 299-302).

Most obvious are opportunities created by the principal for students, faculty, and parents to participate in religious activities through scheduled retreats, Bible studies, Masses, Penance services, Sacramental preparation, in-services, and workshops. Participants agreed that to adequately pass on the traditions of the Catholic faith, both faculty and parents need to be aware of and in touch with their own spirituality. According to Maria, in the absence of religious men and women, this falls under the responsibility of the Catholic school principal.

I think that the religion suffered because the nuns knew the religion so well and they just drilled it into you. I think lay people, unless they are comfortable with their own spirituality, they don't go outside the box. They just teach what is on that page in the religion book and they don't teach anymore. The nuns had a rich background; they could tell you about their order, the feast days, the holy days and things of that nature. We don't delve into that as much. I think that is one of the things we lost and we still see the repercussions of that because we have teachers who really don't know their religion as they should, the Church history. Then we have a whole generation of parents who just don't have a clue. That is another aspect as principals. We have to teach the teachers, teach the parents as well as teaching the children. I really think that was one of the biggest things that we lost (Taped Interview, May 2, 2011, lines 60-69).

The Catholic Church recognizes parents as the primary educator of their children. Emily discussed the importance of a supportive relationship with parents.

Our parents have been all over this because they want the children in a Catholic School; so many of them are reliving their personal experiences in their own schools that they will bring back some ideas that I always put out to the faculty. What would you think if we did this? (Taped Interview, January 27, 2011, lines 332-334).

Through Catholic schools a partnership is created with families.

Principals in this study stressed the significance of faith development for faculty and staff, as they are in direct contact with the students.

When I said I really think we need to develop it so they understand they have the ability to give it to the children, because to me, if I don't develop them, and their comfort level with their faith, they are never going to go outside the book. They are going to teach exactly what is in the book and they are not going to develop these children to have a relationship with God. So that is really where we have been trying to work with the faculty on stuff like that. (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 283-287).

In line with the philosophy of Catholic educations, Barbara discussed the need for faculty to integrate faith into all aspects of curriculum.

[On balancing religion and academics] My response to that is that we are a Catholic school and that is why we are here. You can always take something and build a lesson around it. You can build on some other subject, build a lesson around it, build some other subject around faith (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 206-208).

In the diocese where my research is situated, a program exists for catechetical certification of Catholic school faculty and administration. Cecilia explained the benefits associated with this program,

All faculty went through catechist certification. Several years ago, when we first started talking about that, we had priests come in and teach difference components of that. So everyone, regardless whether they taught religion or not, became certified catechists...I wanted everyone to learn more about the faith, our

faith. So everyone did that and I think that speaks to our school (Taped Interview, March 22, 2011, lines 307-312).

Emily described how lay principals prioritize faith development for faculty and staff by scheduling retreats, prayer services, and Christian book studies focused on developing and deepening a personal relationship with Christ.

But what we find most effective in this school is to work with each other and to talk about our faith and to have moments of quiet prayer. This year, especially, we have evolved into a very unique plan for our retreat. It's just the most fascinating thing and it really came out of conversations with the faculty and staff and other retreats. Wouldn't it be nice if we try this and so we have done this? Our retreat is not only experiential; it is also going to be a physical representation of what we believe in our Catholic faith. (Taped Interview, January 27, 2011, lines 234-238).

Maria explored ways to make retreats more meaningful for her staff:

One of the things that we looked at was what do I think the teachers need and what are they yearning for? What we found was that just some of the basics of their personal prayer life...As we would do different retreats, we would try things out and see where they were trying to take us. What they were giving us back as feedback. So really, that is how it has developed. Father helped me tremendously (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 274-278).

To reinforce the concept of the faith dimension associated with staff development, three principals explained how annual themes which were integrated throughout the school year. Emily gave the example, "We are going to build Bethlehem everywhere and live our faith with others and model our beliefs in the Catholic faith" (Taped Interview, January 27, 2011, lines 241-242).

Principals in the study stressed the importance of hiring faculty who understand the mission and philosophy of Catholic education. Maria explained how a personal interview is required and crucial in both the principal understanding the applicant, and applicant understanding the role of the Catholic school teacher.

When they come in for an interview, the first question we ask is about them being Catholic. What does it mean to be Catholic, what is your faith life like? And then, in the interview, I always talk about what our community is and here is what it is all about. I am very honest because I say to them it is a two-way street. I don't want to spend all my time interviewing you if I am going to get rid of you in three months; that is counterproductive. So I think it is a big part of the interview. I think they have to understand that I say to them, our faith comes first. I don't care what you are teaching, we will shut the whole day down to do a day of religion and you have to be okay with that. If you are not, this is not the place to teach because I am not going to change it for you. So I think they walk in knowing what our expectations are, that it is a faith community first (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 550-559).

With the teachers having a day-to-day impact on the students, their formation and spiritual development were of concern to each of the participants.

Constituencies central to Catholic schools are the parents, faculty, and staff. The Catholic Church recognizes parents as the primary educator of their children, with the school entering into a partnership with each family. Faculty and staff hired must be knowledgeable of and willing to support the philosophy of Catholic education. The faith development of the faculty, staff, students, and parents is the responsibility of the Catholic school principal. It is through these partnerships, principal to faculty, faculty to students, and school to family, that a faith community is nurtured and grown.

These attributes of a faith community inform the research question: *How do participants perceive opportunities for the development and support of lay Catholic principals in their roles as faith leaders?*

The principals are responsible for creating, growing, and nurturing a community based on faith values. At the same time, they are a recipient of their own development and support through the community they build. The dimension of faith leadership outlined in this section was evident and a key characteristic in all the schools I visited.

### **Building Community as a Dimension of the Principal's Role as a Faith Leader**

*The sense of family is fundamental to everything we do. (Teresa, March 7, 2011, line 87)*

Principals in the study described a supportive environment, modeled on Gospel values, and one of acceptance, respect, and service to others. As participants told stories of their schools, the words school-community became synonymous with school-family.

Maria explained the importance of building relationships based on Christian values:

But to me, the authenticity is how you treat the people. That is what I consider the authentic Catholic spirit here at school. When people say I can feel this place and I can feel how much these children are cared for and nurtured and how much the community reaches out to one another. I think that is it. Everybody here knows we are just one big family and we will take care of each other. There are ways you treat people. We are constantly saying to the kids; see Christ in everyone you meet (Taped Interview, May 2, 2011, lines 184-189).

Fundamental to the way members are treated is acceptance and respect. Vivienne stated, "What I would hope is that you would feel a sense of community of warmth and love and would hope you would see everyone being treated with respect and kindness" (Taped Interview, January 25, 2011, lines 485-486).

Interviews with the principals, coupled with school newsletters, gave evidence of the many different types of community events hosted at each of their schools. Under the direction of the principal, parent volunteers contribute their time and talent to provide hospitality and support to enrich programs associated with Catholic education. On the unwavering support she receives, Teresa commented, "We have a lot of pieces in place so that we are not just saying we are community, we are living it. And it is amazing we can find the volunteers to do it because most of our families, both [parents] work. I mean, people are taking off from work to do these types of support" (Taped Interview, March 7,

2011, lines 281-283). According to Barbara, for many, being part of a Catholic school community lasts a lifetime.

A lot of them won't move from the community. I am seeing that as I have students graduate and they come back so they still see each other. Even the children who were here and the parish school of religion students might end up at the Catholic high school or public school. They are still going to come back together. That is something that was important to us; to keep the idea that we are a cohesive community (Taped Interview, April 1, 2011, lines 90-93).

Unlike their public school counterparts, an added dimension of Catholic school administration is the principal's role in ministering to members of their communities. Participants discussed how their constituencies rely on each other when faced with personal tragedy, sickness, and death, and consider this an aspect of building a faith community. Vivienne gave an example of a parent in her school community.

... the reason I am a little bit late, one of our parents is going through a horrible situation. And I just took her to lunch, no one in the school knows it, nobody needs to know it, but I think is that what separates me from the principal at a local public high school; those quiet, unknown moments of how we treat the people in our community. From our teachers to our parents to our children and if we are teaching them consistent with our faith, then we have a faith community. It is not how many times we pray (Taped Interview, January 25, 2011, lines 111-116).

Underlying the participants' interactions with their community are sensitivity, confidentiality, respect, and faith.

Central to the philosophy of Catholic education is service to others. Participants spoke about importance of service in building community both within and outside of the school. Throughout the interviews and informational handouts, service emerged as an essential part of each program. Examples given ranged from making sandwiches for the homeless to adopting grandparents at the local nursing home. All participants in the study

have active service programs and outreach projects at their schools. Cecilia explained why service is at the core of her school's program,

Service projects we have targeted this year are for families truly in need. I challenged the faculty this year; continue on with fieldtrip plans but tie in a service project (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 138-140).

Often there are designated personnel, parents, or committees assigned to implement the service component. However, Emily noted the importance of leadership in creating opportunities and implementing programs that involve students, faculty, and parents:

It is an expectation that a principal in this role would know, to be able to provide opportunities to live what they are doing. No, it would never be written down, but it would certainly be in the expectations. I have never seen it in writing. And for the faculty, this came out of my head, if the kids do it, we should be doing it too so that is why we are doing it. And regards to the parents, the parents are the ones who help us set up our service projects for the students because that is part of our spiritual life committee which is huge in this school. It is probably the most functional and most obvious group of parents that we have in this community (Taped Interview, January 27, 2011, lines 506-510).

In line with Church teaching, the impact of these programs has the potential to lay a foundation for a lifetime of service to others. Barbara explained how this is tied to Catholic teachings,

I want the children to understand, it is not just about right here; the bigger thing is what is out there. The blessings that we have are so much greater than in some people we don't even see. We don't know them, we don't see them. If we don't find some kind of connection, it becomes it's all about me. And that is not what it is about. And you know, we tie it into the gospel message...Making a difference in the way that you can and the age that you are and getting them to learn this is important in life (Taped Interview, February 2, 2011, lines 390-399).

Maria elaborated on how the Catholic school community continues to impact her own daughter's life today.

I was talking to my daughter last night and she had said to me that she met a girl when she was in eighth grade. This was thirteen years ago. I said isn't that interesting. Has she changed much? She got on Facebook; she said she friended



her on Facebook, and the whole eighth grade class was this girl's friend. I said she is twenty-six; I mean how many people keep in touch with people in elementary school? I think that is how special the school is (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 410-414).

These communities of Catholics, founded in the elementary school years, provide an avenue for the Catholic Church to build and retain its membership.

The warmth of the Catholic school, acceptance and respect offered to each child and family, and creation of community that feels more like extended family are characteristics of Catholic schools that emerged from the data. The cohesiveness of the community is nurtured through the interpersonal relationships of members of the school community. It is due to the closeness of the school constituencies, that in times of tragedy, principals often assume a ministerial role, relying on their faith to guide students, parents, faculty, and staff through the difficulties facing their community.

Central to the philosophy of Catholic education is service to others. Principals design, support, and implement programs that teach their constituencies to live the Gospel message of helping those who are in need, laying a foundation for a lifetime of service to others. These programs are supported by the entire school community, working together in an environment which is based on faith values that informs the research question: *How do participants perceive opportunities for the development and support of lay Catholic principals in their roles as faith leaders?* The dependency on the principals by the community for support and direction not only enables the building of community, but also sustains participants in their roles as faith leaders.

### **Ideals of the Catholic School Principal**

The leadership traits of the participants had three common characteristics: a belief in holistic education, modeling one's faith to others, and being a servant leader. Regardless of the type of school they administered, principals relayed almost identical stories as to how they led their programs.

#### ***Holistic Education***

The ideal of holistic education, central to the philosophy of Catholic education, is deeply rooted in the principals who participated in this study. Without putting a name to it, participants explained how a holistic, child-centered education is endemic to their schools and reflects the dignity of each child. Documents in the literature review, *Gravissimum Educationis* (1965), *The Catholic School* (1977), and *Lay Catholics: Witnesses to Faith* (1982) detail the philosophy of Christian anthropology and how this philosophy informs the mission of Catholic schools in the education of the whole person - academically, emotionally, physically, and spiritually - while nurturing and protecting the dignity of each child. Steeped in the values of the Church, participants discussed how Catholic schools are charged with the development of the human person. Vivienne spoke on the dignity of each child,

And then if you take it to the spiritual piece, I believe that every child is a gift from God, and I believe that God blessed every child with certain gifts, and if we are going to be Catholic educators, I am not just teaching ABC's and 1,2,3's. I have to look; Catholic education is about looking at the whole child, so I have to find those gifts (Taped Interview, January 26, 2011, lines 155-161).

Maria noted the challenge to address all areas associated with development,

And then we'll take it academically and say God doesn't ask the children to be perfect. How can we move them spiritually, academically, emotionally because they do not have to be perfect? We try to take that one thing and push it to the

faculty and then apply it to the children and how do they use that to move the kids (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 298-301).

Teresa remembered her own experience in Catholic schools,

And when I went to the Catholic school, I saw their faith had the same weight as academics and the arts complemented all that. They also supported the parents emotionally and spiritually, so to me it was the whole package. That is what I refer to as the whole child (Teresa, Taped Interview, March 7, 2011, lines 51-55).

Principals who participated in the study described their schools as safe and nurturing environments and emphasized the role faculty play in creating a setting where education of all aspects of the child can occur. Vivienne clarified a safe environment has to do with a child's ability to take risks,

I think the best teachers create an environment where the children are willing to risk learning and you can't risk unless you feel safe. And that is the whole trust piece. I can take that risk and maybe get the wrong answer and you are not going to ostracize or make me feel bad. And you are going to celebrate me when I do right. And if I am the child who struggles academically you have found another aspect of me to celebrate so I still trust you. I would think that would be the case in any school. Now there may not be that, it might be a more secular view, and then it may not be finding a little bit of Jesus in them, it might be finding the good in the person. (Vivienne, Taped Interview, January 25, 2011, lines 656-662).

Emily elaborated on how the environment must also feel safe to the entire community,

That mom who just left who was here earlier said we feel so safe and secure here. That is exactly what I want to hear. So when I hear that, that to me is what you want. To know people are feeling about your school because, it is working, to have a place for the families, for the teachers, and those precious children that walk through those doors every day. You want it to be the real deal (Emily, Taped Interview, January 27, 2011, lines 397-401).

Principals felt this type of atmosphere to be a by-product of openness and trust.

According to Vivienne, "Teaching is leading and you can't lead if you don't have trust, and you can't trust if you don't have kindness" (Taped Interview, January 25, 2011, lines 651-652). The teachers play an important role in providing this type of setting.

A recurring phrase participants mentioned in regard to Catholic school teachers is “having heart.” Three principals used the word “heart” as they spoke of the quality they deemed crucial to faculty and staff in Catholic schools. I used the quotes of three principals to relay their sentiments on the value of “having heart.”

I always say, I am not the Wizard of Oz; I cannot give you a heart. My experience is that the one thing that causes a teacher to fail is not having the right heart for the children. And I cannot give that to you. I can train you, but I cannot love you, I can't give it to you... He said the only constant that he can find that defines a good teacher is discipline. To me, discipline has to do with what I am calling heart; how you interact with the kids (Vivienne, Taped Interview, January 25, 2011, lines 65-74).

But I think because of their experience, having been in this school and watching others lead, knowing there is a theme, they all teach religion, and every one of them teaches religion to their own students so they have a religion curriculum available to them. I just think that is where it comes from. It comes from the heart (Emily, Taped Interview, January 27, 2011, lines 354-357).

I don't think you can teach someone how to have heart. You either have it or you don't. You can teach somebody how to do financials; how to do payroll; you can teach somebody how to manage to the point where you are inside the ball park with HR issues but you can't teach somebody how to have heart (Maria, Taped Interview, May 2, 2011, lines 93-97).

Regarding faculty and staff, all principals referred to this intangible quality as being difficult to discern, unable to be evaluated during the interview process, nor achieved through training. However, according to the participants, “having a heart” is an essential attribute of the Catholic school teacher and principal.

### ***Modeling Their Faith***

Participants spoke of the importance of leading through example and in modeling behavior that centers on Catholic values. Principals felt both students and teachers were impacted by their daily examples as administrators and as spiritual women. Emily described how her faith manifests itself when setting expectations for her faculty.

I hope I lead with reverence. I hope I model what I expect of everybody else...Don't make people guess what you are doing. Visibly pray and be proud of it because if you go into public school or anywhere else, you can't do that. I think you will see more of that physical, visible presence of prayer and Catholicity here and that is something I really encourage the teachers and students to be proud of (Taped Interview, March 31, 2011, lines 240-245).

Participants spoke of their interaction with students and teachers, noting how their own actions are central in administrating their schools. Cecilia explained the importance of leading by example.

It is not the weekly Masses, that's wonderful that we can offer that, but you really model by example in everything you do. From the time I walk in the building I try to be in the front when the children come in just to greet them. And, really maintain that when I am in the classrooms and in working with our younger teachers. We are just blessed with phenomenal faculty...So, really just by leading by example, being caring, and sensitive to others, and service (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 119-132).

In regard to teachers, Emily explained the importance in helping teachers understand the power they have in their classrooms.

You are the expert in your field. You don't need parents telling you should be doing this or doing that; most of the time it is because it is what they want their children to experience but they are not experiencing the process or how education really works. You are the expert. I think just kind of reminding them of the amount of power that they actually have that they can put to good use. I said your students will learn from you; they will watch you, be experts, and that is what you want (Taped Interview, March 31, 2011, lines 395-401).

Teresa told the story of accompanying a class on retreat to a monastery during her first year as principal. The religious monk who gave the homily left an indelible impression on the impact she would have as the leader of a Catholic school.

And I got out of his message, if we are going to impact people, and bring them to God; we need to show God's loving characteristics. And that was a pretty big eye opener in my principal career. You know, realizing the power we have to shape and influence people (Taped Interview, February, 1, 2011, lines 81-84).

Emily mentioned students who told her they can still hear her voice when away from the school and credits her for keeping them out of trouble. She attributed this to being a living example of Christian values and stated "...because kids really watch us. They may not say much about us unless they are annoyed for some reason or another, but I think they watch how we are, and they watch how we speak and live our faith; how we model it in everything we do" (Taped Interview, January 27, 2011, lines 83-85).

### *Servant Leadership*

Participants in the study used words and phrases such as sharing, empowering, helping others reach their potential, collaboration, and serving others in referring to how they lead their schools. These all describe the characteristics of the servant leader (Sergiovanni, 1992) which is based on service to others with its core belief in moral authority. Moral authority draws strength from values and places emphasis on serving ideals deemed important by the school. Incorporating members of the school to share responsibility, servant leaders are more concerned about whether the needs of their students and the community are being met rather than being the one giving the directives (Sergiovanni, 2007).

Principles of servant leadership are tied to the philosophy of Catholic education as it is founded on values associated with Catholic virtues and teachings. Maria explained the importance of servant leadership to Catholic education,

I think it is the whole philosophy of Catholic schools. You are given so you give back. I think he [Sergiovanni] coined that term beautifully servant leadership, because you have to be a servant before you can be a leader because now when you think about it, you really see the difference between those who are a leader and those who are servant leaders. There is a difference. (Taped Interview, May 2, 2011, lines 50-57).

Throughout the interviews, participants spoke of ways they involve all members of the school community to take a role in aspects of leadership. Maria discussed how her leadership impacts others in the school community: “I love the concept of servant leadership; you are a servant first in order to lead. Because I think it sets the tone throughout the whole school. People see that you are here to help; you are not here to just dictate and drive from top down” (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 602-605).

Teresa described her desire to empower her community.

I wanted to engage people; I wanted to provide enrichment for this whole child approach; and I wanted to empower people. When you empower somebody, you really take what is there, the gifts and talents God has given them, and you let them go and make a difference in the world (Taped Interview, March 7, 2011, lines 357- 60).

Emily’s stressed how collaboration assists in the development of teachers.

I would say I am the type of leader that certainly is an open door leader. My faculty and staff can come in at any point in time to have a conversation with me about anything and that could be good news, bad news, whatever it is. I believe in creating leaders in everybody here. I am not an over the back person. Anyone who is hired into their role, I believe in their expertise in that role, and I tell them that you are the expert in this job and that we are here to collaborate and work together on what we are doing (Taped Interview, March 31, 2011, lines 178-183).

The success of shared responsibility of constituencies is dependent on school members understanding the ideology associated with servant leadership. Often principals who incorporate these principles into their administration are misunderstood and perceived as weak, giving up power, indecisive, and lack the respect of their peers.

(Sergiovanni,2007). Teresa discussed these misperceptions in her own administration:

Some people need that strong leader for confidence. I think of some parents that I know just do not care for me and I know it’s because they don’t admire the servant leadership; the servant leadership model. But there is nothing I can do about that so I have learned to accept that (Taped Interview, March 7, 2011, lines 524-627).

Regardless of any negativity associated with servant leadership, principals in the study acknowledged they are not able to please all members of the communities all the time and accept this as part of the position.

This section details three characteristics associated with Catholic school leadership: (1) holistic education, (2) modeling one's faith to others, and (3) servant leadership. Participants interwove all three qualities into their day-to-day administrative responsibilities, using faith as a foundation to guide them as lay leaders. The principals in this study desire to serve their schools and communities with faculty, staff, and parents sharing in the responsibilities associated with leadership. Their reliance on these three qualities informs the research question as to ways in which lay Catholic principals negotiate the tensions that arise in their leadership roles.

### **Development and Support of Lay Catholic School Principals**

Essential to being a principal in any school, secular or religious, are the areas of education and management. Participants in the study spoke about their journey into the role of principal, their degrees or certification in educational leadership, and taking add-on courses or completing advanced degrees that would meet the criteria for their positions. Colleges and universities they attended offered prescribed programs that prepared them to enter the field of educational administration. Participants each elaborated on the added dimension of faith leadership, their lack of training, and how their own spiritual development was experiential and self-directed. Maria reflected on her own experience in Catholic education.

That [faith leadership] is a scary thought to be perfectly honest. I have been a principal for seven years and in this community for nineteen years. But there is an



aspect, the aspect of the faith formation. You don't get taught this. You are put into this role, and you just kind of told do it and then you go okay (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 6-9).

Bibliographical information in chapter outlines the participants' years of experience in Catholic education that lead to their acceptance of the position of principal. During the interviews, each relayed concern over leading their school in the area of spirituality.

Vivienne shared a conversation she had with a priest prior to opening her school, "I don't have the training in theology and stuff. In some ways it is a tremendous [obligation]; what I shared with Father, the conversation we had. I will never forget this, I told him, Father, I worry that I am going to disappoint you" (Taped Interview, January 25, 2011, lines 104-105). Cecilia stated, "It is just having faith and praying that you are doing the right thing every day and making the right decisions" (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 393-394).

Prior to being offered the position, five out of six of the principals went through a series of interviews with a search committee. Participants reported on the structure of the committee and named at least one priest as a member and whose role it was to oversee the spiritual component of the interview process. As discussed earlier in chapter six, the priest serves as the link between the Catholic Church and school. Emily spoke about the experience:

And it is interesting because on that particular principal search committee, it was really the first time anyone had ever asked me about how my faith directed my decisions. That was the first time anyone had ever asked me that, even when I was interviewed for the high school position, it never entered, I mean I don't ever remember a question from that particular committee (Taped Interview, January 27, 2011, lines 151-155).

Maria, who did not go through the search committee process, described how she was offered the position.

The superintendent had me come down to her office out of the blue one day. She said can you come down now. I said all right, and she met me and said, ‘Your school no longer has a principal, would you like to be the principal?’ I kind of said I have to think about it (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 192-194).

Questions related to how each adapted to the role of principal were answered with “through experience.” When asked how one knows how to do everything a Catholic school principal does, Cecilia stated, “...there is not manual. There’s not. You draw on each other and the experiences of each other; where their faith experiences have led them, and just ideas from the faculty about what we can do” (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 313-315). Participants discussed how these experiences are crucial to learning the skills needed to oversee the educational, spiritual, and managerial dimensions of Catholic school administration. Vivienne discussed how experiences, not her degrees, have enabled her development in Catholic school leadership.

I don’t think you can lead what you don’t understand... That degree doesn’t give you the wisdom or knowledge. It goes back to what I said earlier. Every experience that I have, especially the bad ones, I reflect on how I could have done it differently and possibly have changed it. Each of those experiences and the reflection is what I learned from. So I can’t possibly lead until I learn (Taped Interview, March 31, 2011, lines 322-330).

All principals in the study were classroom teachers and identified by their administrators as potential leaders. Maria described concerns regarding her lack of preparation needed to assume the role of principal:

Leading in all aspects of leading, and the financial aspect, the spiritual aspect, make sure I was strong enough in all those areas. Coming from a teaching background, and learning disabilities background, you don’t get anything in the financial, spiritual, managerial aspects. I really hadn’t touched a whole lot of that

as assistant principal. And so, I just didn't know if I had the right stuff to be honest (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 198-202).

Participants expressed ease in leading the educational programs at their schools. Their degrees and years in the classroom provided adequate preparation to oversee curriculum. Principals spoke of the many opportunities to keep abreast of trends related to academia through conferences, periodicals, and in-services.

I do stay very well versed in the world of education because as the leader in this school, I feel like it is my responsibility to expose the faculty and staff to other trends that are maybe coming up, or to trends that are currently in place that we are practicing, so they can see the research is out there and available to them for whatever they are doing in the classroom for their instructional practice (Taped Interview, January 27, 2011, lines 564-567).

In the early years of their administrations, the most challenging area for four of the six principals was working through the financials, creating and balancing a budget, and prioritization of resources to areas of greatest need. Teresa stated, "That is interesting when you think about being a principal, there is so little on finance. When I became principal, that was probably my biggest challenge" (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 195-197). According to Emily, "But I think that is very experiential. You have to be able to experience that and be able to pick through it and be able to locate in your budget particular areas that are weak or strong or going to require a little bit more support" (Taped Interview, March 31, 2011, lines 380-382). Related to the budget, most important to all principals was keeping tuition at a rate where families could afford Catholic education.

Participants spoke about the variety of resources they use to support the areas of spirituality and faith leadership. Vivienne explained, "I spent a lot of time reading and researching what comes out of the Vatican as to what defines Catholic education"

(Taped Interview, January 25, 2011, lines 169-170). Principals discussed resources they rely on that provide current research on Catholic education and support the spiritual dimension of their leadership. Emily described a variety of sources available to support the faith dimension of Catholic school administration.

I get a lot of key newsletters from different Catholic colleges. And actually I can go to their website and just look and see what the trend is. I use the USCCB a lot. I always travel to them and see what they are thinking about and what they are promoting or what they are expecting. We have lots of Catholic periodicals here and I get a couple of them at home. I just make that my own mission to stay abreast of it. And quite frankly, so do the faculty and staff here because they will often bring me articles and show me things that they have read about or heard about and they have other connections that I don't have (Taped Interview, January 27, 2011, lines 614-621).

Principals in the study valued their association with the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA), are members of this organization attend the annual conference, receive the NCEA publication *Momentum*, and regularly visit the NCEA website for ideas, support, and networking opportunities.

Participants discussed the importance of making contact and sharing ideas with other Catholic school principals. Emily described how having other principals to call upon is a primary resource for her.

You network all the time, so for me, those are my resources. Those are the people I like to talk to. Those are the people who will send me links to other places that I can go and investigate a situation. I just feel like that is my responsibility as a faith leader, as an academic leader, as just a plain old ordinary principal in this building (Taped Interview, January 27, 2011, lines 630-633).

Principals in the study spoke about the value in being able to pick up the phone or email another administrator when discerning how to address issues unique to Catholic school leadership. Barbara stated, "Sometimes I think I am the only one [who has a particular issue] and you pick up the phone and you are hearing some great veteran principals who

say they deal with that too. It just helps to be able to network” (Taped Interview, April 1, 2011, lines 262-264). According to Maria:

I think that the biggest thing is the principals in this diocese. You know, I can pick up the phone at any time and just say, ‘What the devil am I suppose to do with this.’ I will be at the end of my rope when I need to scream, and they always have good advice...I know that I am not in this alone; there is always somebody behind me. The principals, most of them in the cohort at Catholic University; we are constantly chattering with each other during the year (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 646-651).

In discussing opportunities offered for preparing to become a Catholic school principal, participants noted the lack of any formalized programs that prepared them in the area of faith leadership. According to Vivienne, this manifests itself in the inconsistency of missions she has experienced in the Catholic schools she has been associated with.

I think a lot of that goes back as to who is leading it. I would say definitely there are some Catholic schools that I would perceive to be more spiritual than others. I can give you an example. I would say the principal at a nearby Catholic school, her goal was to make that school academically excellent and she achieved it. I would say another’s goal is to make it a strong, spiritual Catholic community and she achieved it. But that is not to say there is not spirituality at the one and there is not academic excellence at the other school...That is the one thing you see in the leadership (Taped Interview, March 31, 2011, lines 269-274).

Vivienne described the burden of lay leadership, and stated, “We have to provide the components of Catholic education that it was founded on the ideals. We are lay and there comes a burden with that” (Taped Interview, March 31, 2011, lines 454-455). Principals mentioned two universities having programs for those interested in either Catholic school teaching or administration: the University of Notre Dame in Southbend, IN and Catholic University in Washington, DC. However, principals relayed frustration with having to live out of state during the summer months while attempting to complete programs or

advanced degrees. After applying to the state university, Maria opted to enroll in the doctoral program at Catholic University. She explains,

I went down and talked to them about that degree but it kind of seemed like they could care less as to whether I came or didn't come. I just didn't like that. I don't know, I was just turned off from it. Then I heard about the program at Catholic University and started talking to them (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, 630-632).

When asked why it is important to have programs for Catholic school leaders, Vivienne stated, "One of the things I would hope to do is explore the privilege, joy, and responsibility of being a lay leader in a Catholic institution because I feel like it is all of the above" (Taped Interview, March 31, 2011, lines 116-117). This section addressed the research question: *How do participants perceive opportunities for the development and support of lay Catholic principals in their roles as faith leaders?*

Participants relayed stories of how they emerged from the classroom to become Catholic school principals. Each expressed concern over the responsibilities associated with the dimension of faith leadership. Those participants with an education degree noted their initial concern over management of the fiscal obligations of the school; this was not an issue for the three women who had a business background.

Women in this study indicated their learning has developed through researching, reading, the NCEA, attending conferences, and networking with other lay Catholic school principals. Most important to their learning and development are their lived experiences from their classrooms and in their roles as principals. Each of the principals discussed the lack of formalized programs and advanced degrees to support them as faith leaders.

### **Negotiating Tensions in the Lives of Lay Catholic Principals**

Participants were open to discussing tensions that accompany their positions. Issues related to personnel, finance, parents, and student success are not unique to Catholic schools. According to Vivienne, “I think probably any head of school finds it a 24/7 job. That is not unique to me in leading a Catholic school” (Taped Interview, March 31, 2011, line 147).

*The Handbook of Research on Catholic Education* (2001) cites three studies that compare Catholic and public school principals: 1) McGraw, 1981; 2) Mignacca, 1988; and 3) Petty, 1993. Their findings concluded there are more differences than similarities (p. 115) between the two types of administrators. The primary differentiations found were that public school administrators have less autonomy in the area of decision making in that they share their responsibilities with a variety of staff who oversee different assigned areas of the school. In contrast, Catholic school principals have sole responsibility for decision-making related to the areas of instruction, management, and spirituality, and only are only supported by either an assistant principal or administrative assistant. Participants in the study expressed how tensions arise when trying to balance these three areas when attempting to meet the various needs of the students, faculty, staff, and parents.

Ciriello’s study (1996) separates into three volumes the different areas of responsibilities necessary to assume the position of a Catholic school principal. Volume I, *The Role of the Principal as Educational Leader*, includes aspects of the principal’s role associated with of leadership, curriculum, and instruction. Volume II, *The Role of the*

*Principal as Spiritual Leader*, details the areas of faith development, building a Christian community, moral and ethical development, the history and philosophy of Catholic school, and provides an overview of Catholic Church directives as they pertain to Catholic schools. Volume III, *The Role of the Principal as Managerial Leader*, outlines duties associated with personnel management, finance, institutional development, Catholic school governance, school and parish coordination, and provides an overview of civil and canon law as it applies to Catholic schools. Stories participants relayed during the course of this research support Ciriello's findings and provide examples of how principals negotiate these areas through their lived experiences.

Principals in this study described their experience as time consuming, emotional, exhausting, and lonely. These sentiments reinforce John Daresh's (2001) research on the support and mentoring of principals. Daresh states, "Educators know that the world of the superintendent or principal, although exciting, challenging, and often personally rewarding, is also a world filled with considerable anxiety, frustration, self-doubt, and loneliness" (p. 2). Barbara discussed the long hours associated with the position of principal.

I used to work, I would even go home and work until 10:00, 10:30, 11:00 at night and I am not doing that anymore. I have grandchildren now and I want time with them. So I just cut myself off and say, okay, I have given it ten to twelve hours today and that is more than a lot of people give and I need to cut myself off. I think that is what we have to do (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 576-579).

Maria explained how time is a factor in balancing the different areas of leadership:

I don't know because when you spend time on one thing, you kind of have to let another thing drop. For budgeting time, I am not in the classrooms as much. So I will constantly say you have to get out of your chair today and into the



classrooms. When you get in the classrooms, something else did not get solved and so, it is constantly doing that dance. Have I seen this one, am I paying attention to the finances, am I managing people (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 445-449).

According to Vivienne, the emotional component is exhausting,

It is not the hours or the tasks; it is the emotions that are just exhausting... It's all the emotion and I don't know if I am unique in that but it is draining... In a day, on a scale of one to twenty, I can hit all twenty levels of those emotions three times. You know, I have mom in here crying because she had to call the police last night on dad and then I have the little first grader bringing me the birthday cupcake... Then I have the finance guy coming in because some teacher didn't code the bill right (Taped Interview, March 31, 2011, lines 300-304).

Teresa expressed how the role of principal is often taken for granted:

I almost get the feeling sometimes that people feel like all this just happens by accident. It is like, no, there is a plan. Maybe I don't know first going into it but there is a lot of data driven concerted effort going into doing this (Taped Interview, March 7, 2011, lines 488-492).

Participants in the study often feel they are not valued and lack respect from the different constituencies associated with their schools. Regarding parents, Vivienne linked these sentiments to a shift in what society values:

I don't know if people really appreciate teaching. Despite the fact that everybody went to school, not everybody can be a good teacher. I really do believe it is as much art as it is science and I believe it is a gift. I would say overall in a big holistic way, our parent community, most parent communities say they value their teacher but I think in our society there is a lack of respect. I would say I could count on one hand probably those crafts that are of equal value (Taped Interview, March 31, 2011, lines 201-207).

Barbara also spoke of the change in perspective from the parent community: "The one thing I see changing is the parents. You know, we are getting a lot of things lately where there is no support of the teachers" (Taped Interview, April 1, 2011, lines 277-278).

Managing faculty and staff is another area that participants attribute to creating tension. According to Maria, teachers do not have knowledge of the multifaceted role of associated with being a Catholic school administrator.

I think you have to be a very strong person in this job to understand what it is and what it isn't. You know, I always say I get the fact that I am your boss; I guess you are supposed to complain about your boss. I get all of that stuff but there are times that I would like them to walk in my shoes and find out when they say to me, you haven't been in my class lately. It is like, I am here until 7:00 pm and taking work home. There are not enough hours in a day to get this job done and if I could have been in your class today I would have (Taped Interview, May 2, 2011, lines 225-230).

Due to the confidentiality that surrounds personnel issues, participants described a strain in relations with their parent community when they cannot share information regarding employees. Cecilia stated the impact this has on her community,

Personnel issues are the hardest...But that's really tough and when the community comes to you, you can't share. I am confidential. Personnel matters are so confidential and so it is hard because people want to know and I think part of that is because we are a close community (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 392-398).

Common to the principals in the study is the loneliness they experience in their positions. Maria described the burden associated with being the primary conduit of information for all areas of the school.

It is really lonely at the top because you know all the pieces of the puzzle but you can't tell them all of the pieces. You know if there is an employee problem and the employee was liked or loved. The employee is out saying how awful and how we didn't do anything and you cannot say they didn't turn in their lesson plans, they haven't been on time. You can't do that. You just say, you have to trust me that I know what I am doing and I am following the rules, the policies and procedures. I guess that is what bothers me the most. When you spend so much time invested in the place and then people tend to question what you are doing. I think that is what hurts so much as well...That is why you sit in this chair; suck it up (Taped Interview, May 2, 2011, lines 230-239).

According to Vivienne, only those who serve in a similar position could emphasize with her.

Because it is lonely at the top, that is not just a cliché. There is a lot that goes through this office that I really don't have anyone I can turn to and talk to... It would be nice to have the relationship with people to pick up the phone and say this is what I am dealing with, what do you think?... Only another school administrator can truly understand the layers of emotion (Taped Interview, January 25, 2011, lines 262-272).

Participants explained that aside from the school community, their social life is isolated to their families. Teresa stated, "It's funny being principal, there is not much social life anyway" (Taped Interview, March 7, 2011, line 299). However, participants all agreed that outside of school it is hard to be friends with your faculty because you are their boss; and hard to be friends with parents because of the policies and procedures you have to enforce. Each principal in the study reminisced about the time spent in the classroom and their relationships with students, parents, and other faculty members. According to Maria, once you become part of the administration, these relationships are terminated.

It is very lonely at the top because you don't belong to anybody. When I worked in the resource room, I had a core group of kids who were kind of like my kids. They would come visit me; they were happy to see me because we had that relationship. You don't have that with anybody (Taped Interview, May 2, 2011; lines 225-245).

Principals that attend parishes not connected to their school find opportunities to socialize with other Catholics. Only Teresa mentioned tension in her position that she relates to gender.

I had to get rid of a lot of things I had been brought up with to fully understand what women could, should, and would be able to do in the Church. I guess in many ways I still struggle with that now. I wonder if a lot of my problems that I am having now would be a nonissue if there was a male principal. I never will know but I wonder (Taped Interview, March 7, 2011, lines 564-567).

Teresa acknowledged she accepts the structure and hierarchy of governance of Catholic schools.

Stories of the principals supported findings of the research study *The Principal, Keystone of a High-Achieving School: Attracting and Keeping the Leaders We Need* (2000). Three reasons cited by the Educational Research Service for the decrease in the number of women seeking the position of principal were: (1) insufficient compensation, (2) long work hours, and (3) loneliness and isolation attributed as a by-product of the amount of alone time principals spent performing administrative duties. The stress associated with isolation in their public school counterparts was comparable to the women in this study. Isolation is linked to an inability to socialize with faculty and staff due to the sensitivity of their positions and being away from their families because of day and evening commitments.

Attributes or virtues participants stated they relied on in addressing the tensions connected to their positions included flexibility, patience, and acceptance. According to Vivienne, flexibility is a crucial value in being an administrator:

I don't know about any other job because I have never done any other job, but holy smoke, is that my job. It is my ability to be Gumby. I can flex and bend any way you need me to. I thought, and as I think about administrators that are not that strong, they lack that ability to bend or respond to the different emotions that occur in a day (Taped Interview, March 31, 2011, lines 312-314).

Cecilia stressed the need to be patient:

So it is patience, it is prioritizing; patience with the school community, with parents, and listening to their concerns, patiently listening to their concerns, and addressing what you are able to, eventually all of it, but realizing you cannot fix all of it either. Coming to that realization is a big growth component (Taped Interview, March 22, 2011, lines 54-56).

According to Teresa, regardless of how hard you try, it is impossible to please all members in a school community.

There is a statistic and something close to 86% of the people you know will like you and the other 14% there is nothing you can do about it so you just have to accept. You have to do what you think is best, knowing that it's statistically against you to be able to be what everybody wants (Taped Interview, March 7, 2011, lines 529-533).

These qualities are important to the day-to-day operations of their schools and in addressing the needs of their communities. However, underlying each conversation and story was the foundation of their strength they described as personal faith. Teresa stated, "I really feel like while I am here, my spirituality is filled more than when I am outside these walls" (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 474-475).

Each participant stressed the importance of their personal prayer life. Vivienne suggested, "I don't think there is any way you can lead a Catholic school if you don't have a serious committed prayer life" (Taped Interview, January 25, 2011, lines 329-331). Principals agreed on how prayer is central to the administration of their schools. As Maria spoke about her spiritual life, it mirrored the description I had heard by each of the other participants.

When I come in the morning and I get here and it is quiet, I have my stack of books here, so I read the daily reading, I do a decade of the rosary and it centers me to say here's what we are about. It is not about the emails or phone calls. Then before I go home, I do the exact same thing. I go through the exact same reading again and say how did it apply today, what did I do well, and do another decade or two of the rosary (Taped Interview, February 9, 2011, lines 594-599).

During the school day, principals take time to reflect, make visits to the Church, and put themselves in the presence of God. According to Emily, "I will either read a reflection, sometimes I will close my eyes, and just think because there are moments in time that I

recognize that I just need ten quiet minutes” (Taped Interview, January 27, 2011, lines 552-554). Principals discussed the value in prioritizing a few minutes alone. Vivienne explained how prayer helps to negate the tensions associated in dealing with angry members of the school community.

I can't tell you how many rosaries I have said. I will go in the chapel and pray a rosary for the angry elf that was in my office this morning. Dear Lord, help guide me and figure out the best way to deal with them because right now I just want to smack them. You know what I mean? As an administrator, you are not allowed to be human. (Taped Interview, March 31, 2011, lines 348-351).

Maria discussed the importance of the Mass in her life:

I know we always had to go to Mass and as a kid I didn't enjoy it. But when I don't go to Mass, there is something amiss within myself; I am not centered or at ease or peace with myself...It seems like every time I go to Mass ,the homily, something happens...Like it was just written for me that day. (Taped Interview, May 2, 2011, lines 213-217).

Only fifty percent of the participants in the study attend Mass at the parish where their school is located and attributed this to feeling they need a separate space for their own worship. Barbara stated, “I have to be honest and say, when I took this job, there were principals that came to me and said, do not go to Church there. Give yourself the space of having your own spiritual life somewhere else” (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 586-588). According to Teresa, there is a downside to attending Mass at the parish of your school:

I think it is a little dicey when your pastor is also your boss and I have found it very interesting...we are sharing resources, we have limited resources, it just creates a little constructive tension as a friend would call it at times. I have never gone to my pastor for anything of a personal nature (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 487-496).

In addition to their faith lives, participants stressed the importance of exercise, laughter, and reading as ways to cope with the tensions that arise from their positions. Teresa conveyed how reading offers her peace and consolation.

I guess my source of consolation has been through reading. I don't read magazines; I do read my educational leadership that is like a Bible to me. Right now I am reading *Interior Castles* by St. Theresa Avila. It is funny reading what she wrote back in the 1500s and seeing the application in the year 2011 with all the technology we have. It is just amazing how some things are constant (Taped Interview, February 1, 2011, lines 508-512).

Throughout this section, tensions that arise in the lives of the participants detail aspects of the principal's position which is emotionally exhausting and time-consuming. Descriptions of the common tensions and ways in which the participants negotiate them assisted in informing the research question: *What factors are perceived to have contributed to the way participants negotiate the tensions that arise in their roles as lay Catholic principals?* Reasons why participants continue to serve in their positions support research which concludes the Catholic school's principal's desire to be part of a large community, a feeling they contribute to the school's effectiveness, their personal vision for the school, and a commitment to Catholic education and the mission of the Catholic Church (Fraser & Brock, 2006).

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I introduced themes that emerged from stories of the six women who participated in the study. I analyzed the findings from the data and organized it under the overarching research question that explores the lived experiences of lay Catholic women in their roles as faith leaders. Topics from the supporting questions provided a framework for this chapter. Coding procedures and narrative analysis used

during the process of interpreting the data presented themes that informed each topic. My conclusions and implications are found in the final chapter.



## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of six lay Catholic women in their roles as faith leaders within the context of Catholic elementary schools. The research examined how and what factors participants perceive are aspects of being a Catholic school principal in relation to the spiritual dimension of their profession. The guiding research questions of this study included:

1. What factors are perceived to have contributed to their lives, education, and careers in preparation to become lay Catholic school principals?
2. How do participants perceive their relationship with the Catholic Church in their roles as lay Catholic school principals?
3. How do participants perceive opportunities for the development and support of lay Catholic principals in their roles as faith leaders?
4. What factors are perceived to have contributed to the way participants negotiate the tensions that arise in their roles as lay Catholic principals?

The goal of the study was to understand the lived experience of laywomen who serve as Catholic, elementary school principals in their roles as faith leaders. The research design and methodology I chose allowed participants to tell of their experiences in their own words and unique point of view. This chapter provides a final discussion of the research questions, the results of the study, and implications for practice and future research.

## *Interpretation of Findings*

### *Research Question 1*

*What factors are perceived to have contributed to their lives, education, and careers in preparation to become lay Catholic school principals?*

The first research question focuses on factors that contribute to how lay Catholic administrators who participated in the study came to be in their positions in Catholic schools. Research on Catholic school leaders is primarily found through resources provided by the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) and is limited to quantitative data. Information provided by the NCEA does not detail aspects the process of and preparation to become a Catholic school principal. Themes that emerged from the data indicate the formation to be a Catholic school leader begins early in life, with each administrator in the study reminiscing about their childhood, the Catholic families they grew up in, and the impact of the religious sisters who were either part of their Catholic education or assisted in overseeing parish programs. Only two of the six women did not attend Catholic schools during their elementary years, but all participants regularly attended Mass and were active in parish programs.

The families of the participants valued education, with each principal completing a minimum of a Master's degree; only 50% majored in education. Three of the principals described themselves as career switchers, pursuing jobs in the Catholic elementary schools their children attended. Reasons given for doing so were to offset the tuition associated with attending Catholic schools and to be with their children throughout their elementary school years. All principals pursued additional education either to become certified to teach, earn a Master's degree, or add a specialty area to their degree.

Participants in the study each named a specific religious sister whose interaction left a lasting impact on her throughout her adult life. These religious women were collegiate instructors, assigned mentors, or administrative supervisors. Principals attributed to these women a deepening and understanding of their faith and growth in their spiritual lives.

Common to all the participants in the study was the way in which they eventually assumed the position of principal. All but one was identified by their supervisory principal as potential leaders, given additional responsibilities to develop their administrative potential (while still working as teachers), and eventually served as either an assistant principal or in another type leadership position. A primary factor that hindered the acceptance of the role of principal was their concern over the time commitment, always prioritizing their children and families.

The literature review reports on efforts by the Catholic Church, consortiums of Catholic colleges and universities, and diocesan programs to explore qualities essential to the position of Catholic school leadership. In regard to faith leadership, Bryk, Lee, & Holland (1993) discuss the importance of faith development for lay Catholics who desire to be a Catholic school principal. In their own words, participants in the study shed light on their own formation and attribute their development to their Catholic upbringing, Catholic education, religious women who mentored them, and their spiritual and professional growth that came as a natural by-product of working in Catholic schools.

***Research Question 2***  
***How do participants perceive their relationship with the Catholic Church in their roles as lay Catholic school principals?***

The link between the Catholic Church and the Catholic school is detailed in the literature review through references to documents of the Catholic Church (Schafer, 2004). The Congregation of Catholic Education (1997) describes the Catholic school as an instrument of the Church, one of ministry that supports its evangelization of members (#11). My analysis of the data that emerged from the study acknowledges this responsibility and assigns the lay principal the task of ensuring the philosophy, values, and practices of the Catholic Church are integrated throughout all aspects of the school.

According to the Code of Canon Law (803), “A Catholic school is understood to be one which is under the control of the competent ecclesiastical authority or of a public ecclesiastical juridical person, or one which in a written document is acknowledged as Catholic by the ecclesiastical authority” (Canon Law Society, 1938). Canon 806 clarifies that the local bishop has ultimate responsibility for the Catholic schools within his diocese:

The diocesan Bishop has the right to watch over and inspect the Catholic schools situated in his territory, even those established or directed by members of religious institutes. He has the right to issue directives concerning the general regulation of Catholic schools; these directives apply also to schools conducted by members of a religious institute, although they retain their autonomy in the internal management of their schools (Canon Law Society, 1983).

In this study, named priests emerged as the figures that had ecclesiastical authority for each school. All principals acknowledged that the priests are crucial to ensuring Catholic identity is authentic and integrated into their school programs. Principals spoke of the relationship with the priest assigned to oversee their schools,

valuing the support and guidance he provides. The success of these relationships is dependent on communication, mutual respect, and trust. Only one principal did not feel she had a good relationship with her parish priest and cited a possible reason as being the many roles he is responsible for on a diocesan-level. Five of the six participants spoke of the willingness of priests to be available for Masses, celebration of Sacraments, and occasional visits to the school.

From the perspectives of the participants, the absence of priests and religious, both as administrators and teachers, in the schools is of great concern. Participants discussed how members of the clergy are limited in numbers and stretched too thin in trying to fulfill the many responsibilities assigned to them. The principals felt priests add value to the community and provide a model for young men as they discern their own vocation in life. Participants praised the religious women who played key roles in their lives, and stated ways in which they missed their presence in Catholic schools. The absence of religious women, credited for founding and building the Catholic school system, was cited as a possible reason for the decrease in women entering religious life (Fialka, 2004).

In regard to priests, participants stressed the need for the leadership of a diocese to discern closely the attributes of individual priests prior to assigning them to parishes that have schools attached. From the viewpoint of the principals, priests need be trained in areas associated with the operation of a school as part of their formation as well as have a desire to oversee a school.

The evangelization mission of the Catholic Church was confirmed as one of the primary purposes of Catholic schools. Participants in the study noted a decrease of students who go to Mass on Sunday or actively participate in the Catholic Church. As faith leaders, principals assume the responsibilities associated with faith development by coordinating the religion curriculum, overseeing Sacramental preparation, ensuring students regularly attend Mass and receive the Sacraments, and creating opportunities for service. The spiritual dimension of their leadership is not limited to the students; all members of the school depend on the principal to build a community based on faith. In regard to faith leadership, the ministerial nature of lay Catholic administrators parallels the role of the priests in their parishes.

An essential component of Catholic schools that supports the religious and moral development of their students is the service program. Each principal spoke of the many ways their communities participate in efforts to help those who are in need or marginalized by society. Participants prioritized service learning within their schools and linked participation to the development of life-long values.

Throughout the research on Catholic education, there was an emphasis on the importance of community to the Catholic school and Catholic Church. Archbishop Miller (2006) includes community as one of the five essential marks of Catholic schools. He discusses the importance of collegiality among all its members, cooperation between the school and the bishop, and virtuous interactions among school constituencies. Archbishop Miller's definition of community is put into practice and reinforced by the leadership of all participants in the study. Each principal described their school as a faith community.

Interaction among parents, teachers, students, and administrators are based on Gospel values, trust, and respect for the individual. Throughout their schools, participants spoke of the tangible existence of religious icons and an intangible presence that permeated a warm, safe, and nurturing environment.

### ***Research Question 3***

#### ***How do participants perceive opportunities for the development and support of lay Catholic principals in their roles as faith leaders?***

A review of the literature reveals the lack of formalized programs to develop and support lay Catholic school principals in their roles as faith leaders (Ristau, 1991; Rogus, 1991; Cimino, Haney, & O-Keefe, 2001). Participants referred to either the University of Notre Dame or Catholic University as the only two options for advanced degrees and/or summer programs that focus on Catholic school leadership.

My analysis of the data collected in this study indicates that Catholic schools actually serve as a conduit for faith experiences that not only support and develop the students, but also provide administrators with unique experiences that deepen their spirituality. By virtue of their position, Catholic school principals live their Catholicity, bridging their experiences to expressions of their faith. They use their leadership talents to bring members of their school community in closer communion with the Catholic Church, and at the same time, are the beneficiaries of their own actions. Through their description of the responsibilities related to the spiritual dimension of their leadership, faith was part of every aspect of their lives.

Principals, in their role as faith leaders, created opportunities for the spiritual growth and development of all constituencies associated with their communities.

Participants in the study gave examples of retreats, prayer services, Masses, and service projects they oversaw and facilitated. How did they know how to do this? Participants explained it is through self-directed reading and research of Catholic periodicals, newsletters, and websites. In this way, they served as their own resource for deepening their spirituality.

#### ***Research Question 4***

***What factors are perceived to have contributed to the way participants negotiate the tensions that arise in their roles as lay Catholic principals?***

Lay Catholics who serve as Catholic school principals have a wider variety of leadership obligations than their non-Catholic counterparts due to the spiritual dimension associated with their positions. Wallace (1998), Hunt & Wallace (2000), and Guerra (1991) discuss the importance of Catholic elementary school principals as spiritual leaders and detail the added responsibilities that accompany this position. In analyzing the data, tensions related to both their personal and professional lives were voiced by the participants.

As mothers, and when their children were young, negotiating the balance between career and family was ongoing. Women in the study positioned themselves into Catholic schools to be with their children in hopes of alleviating the stresses all mothers face as working parents. Each participant is a mother, and although they worked in the same school their children attended, they spoke of difficulties in regard to family life. In addition to their regular responsibilities, participants perceived the obligation to be involved in the school community outside of regular school hours as dominating their lives. Participants choosing to attend Sunday Mass at the parish where their school is



located described the job as principal as a seven days a week relationship with their schools.

All but one of the participants no longer has children living at home, allowing them to work additional hours into the evening. The principals acknowledged their administrative duties usually don't begin until after the school day ends because of the demands placed on them by students, faculty, and parents during the regular school hours. Most evenings and weekends are either spent attending school or Church functions and catching up on paperwork. The 24/7 description of their job is linked to loneliness and diminished social life beyond what their families provide.

The phrase "lonely at the top" was a resounding theme in the analysis of the data. Principals perceived themselves as the conduit for all information that passes through the school. In regard to personnel matters, required confidentiality often created tension in the parent community when decisions relating to teachers were made. For parents who are experiencing difficulty in their personal lives, the principals in the study often took on the role as counselor or minister. Parents saw them as a friend, confidant, or spiritual advisor. The confidential nature of information shared by members of the parent community was sometimes troublesome to the principals. In these instances, they sought advice and consolation from their priest.

Principals have observed a shift in cultural and societal values during the time period they have been involved in Catholic education. They linked these changes to waning support and lack of respect parents demonstrate towards both faculty and

administration. Participants felt this behavior has had an adverse effect on the virtues of respect, honesty, and trust they model in their leadership.

How do the lay Catholic women in this study negotiate these tensions? They referred to patience, flexibility, and acceptance as qualities (virtues) to help counteract the emotional and exhausting aspects of their positions. The phrase “offer it up” was common among the principals when discussing issues that were persistent and draining of their energy.

Outside of school, participants in the study found consolation and strength by reading for pleasure as well as reading literature that supports them in their spiritual and educational roles. Participants expressed the need to carve out time for physical exercise to counter the long hours spent behind their computers. Each spoke of their personal quiet time which they treasured and protected.

Most importantly, participants attributed their personal prayer and faith lives for being the source of strength that allowed them to provide the type of leadership expected of a lay Catholic principal. Each principal highlighted the importance of their prayer life; beginning and ending the day in silent prayer. Participants spoke of times during the day when they would leave their offices, walk either to a quiet place or to the church, and reflect, meditate, and pray. Regardless of where they attended weekend Masses, principals acknowledged their need to be nurtured through the Gospel message.

### **Implications for Practice and Future Research**

This study makes significant contributions to women who serve in the role of lay Catholic administrators as well as all who are involved in Catholic education. I did not

design the study to test a hypothesis or build upon theory. The choice to use qualitative research allowed for the voices of the participants to be heard. Research of literature surrounding lay Catholics in education, regardless of gender or level of administration, reflects the competencies associated with the managerial, educational, and spiritual dimensions of Catholic school leadership. By documenting the perceptions and beliefs of lay Catholic principals, this study sheds light on the participants' roles as faith leaders within the context of Catholic elementary schools. The sharing of their inner thoughts, feelings, and insights provides a rich description of their experience.

The results of the study emphasize the importance of and the need for the Catholic Church to develop programs that will support current and future lay Catholic administrators. Lay leaders of Catholic schools, unless a part of a Catholic school system and mentored by a Catholic school administrator, lack opportunities to be adequately prepared to assume the role of principal and faith leader. Catholic colleges and universities, which operate under the United States Congregation for Catholic Bishops (USCCB), should begin the process of evaluating current programs that prepare lay Catholics to be teachers and administrators. Degree programs should not only address the educational and managerial aspects of leadership but, most importantly, include training and development associated with the spiritual dimension.

Included in their programs for spiritual formation and development should be opportunities for service, retreats, prayer, and Mass, emphasizing the benefits and need for both current and potential Catholic school principals to develop faith communities. Courses similar to the ones priests are required to take in the area of pastoral ministry

should be adapted to prepare lay Catholic school leaders to be able to address the emotional and psychological needs of their school communities from a faith perspective. At minimum, Catholic colleges, universities, and dioceses within the U.S. should develop summer programs for Catholic school principals that center on the spiritual dimension of Catholic school leadership. Bringing together lay leaders at the end of a school year could provide an avenue for support, enrichment, faith development, and an opportunity to be around others who share their experiences.

Catholic school leadership at the diocesan-level should consider time studies on lay Catholic women who currently serve in these positions. Identifying ways they could be supported or have their responsibilities modified might reduce the number of hours each day Catholic school principals commit to the work week. Consideration should also be given by diocesan leaders to provide opportunities for Catholic school principals to come together in community. Through informal networks, participants in the study found comfort in sharing their experiences with other women who serve in similar positions.

Lastly, the findings in the study confirm clergy as the link between the Catholic Church and the Catholic school. Church leadership should explore ways to provide programs to prepare priests to oversee parishes that have a Catholic school as part of it. As Catholic schools serve an important role in the evangelization mission of the Church, to assure the availability of Catholic education to future generations, priests need to understand the financial and managerial aspects associated with operating a school. Opportunities should be created for priests to interact with Catholic school principals so that relationships can be established and communication strengthened.

In summary, by listening to the stories of the laywomen who participated in this study, I discovered that Catholic schools have the potential to create future leaders and nurture vocations to the religious life. This formation not only occurs in those that attend Catholic schools, but for those who work in them as well. In reality, the faith and spirituality of each Catholic school principal in the study developed within the context of the school in which she attended, taught, and administrated. The Catholic school itself served as a conduit for these women to eventually rise into the position of principal. What a legacy to the religious women who not only founded and built a nation of Catholic schools, but in doing so, created an environment that would cultivate future Catholic school leaders

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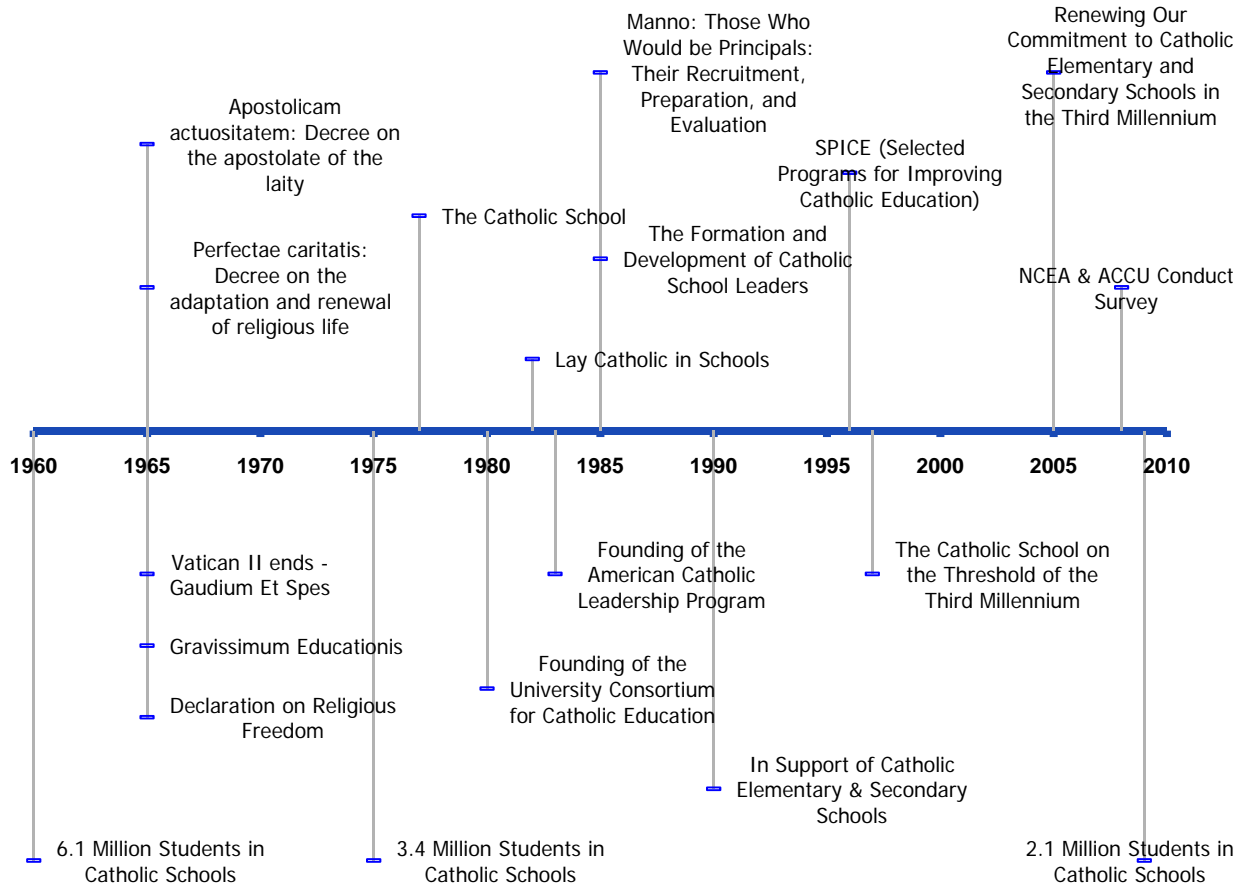
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# APPENDIXES

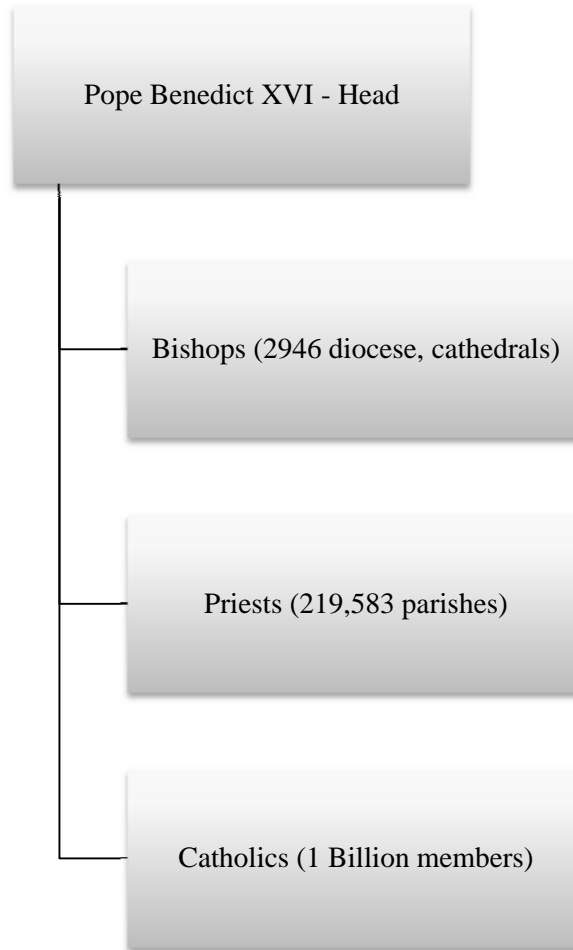
## APPENDIX A

### Timeline of Catholic Church Documents Related to Catholic Education



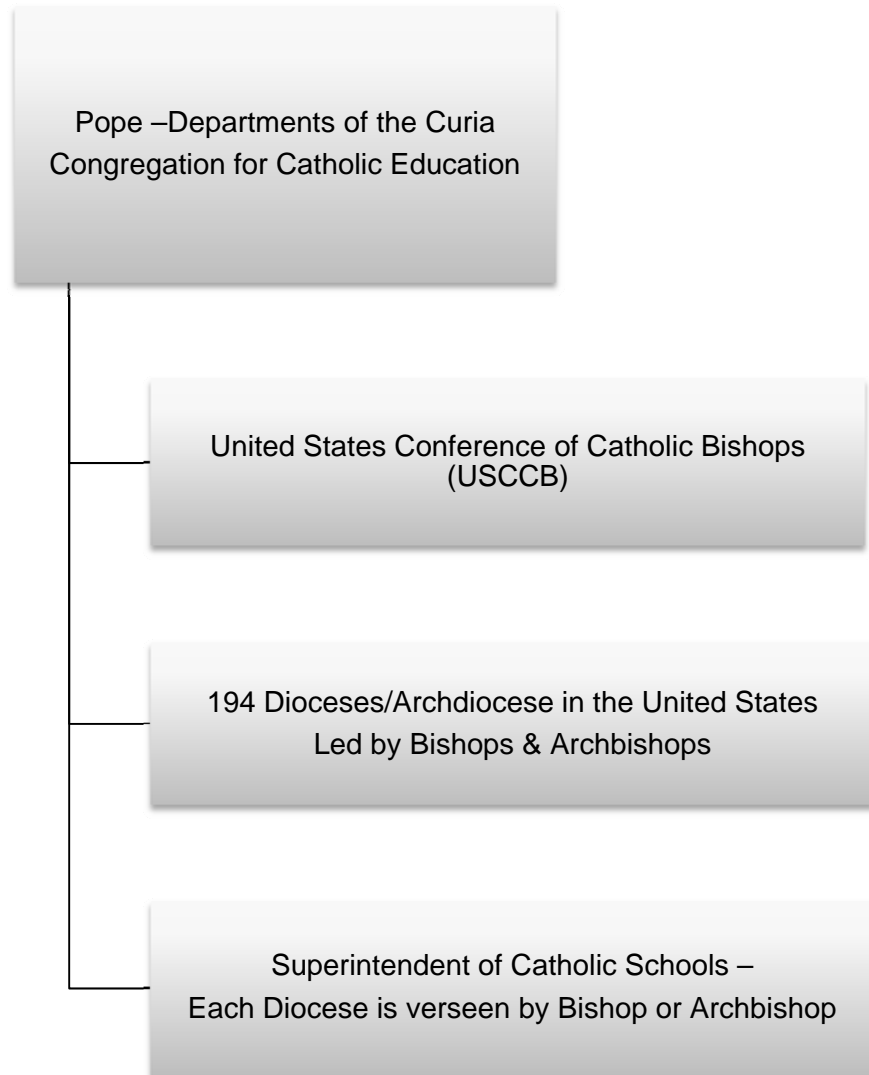
APPENDIX B

Structure and Population of the Catholic Church  
(USCCB, 2010)



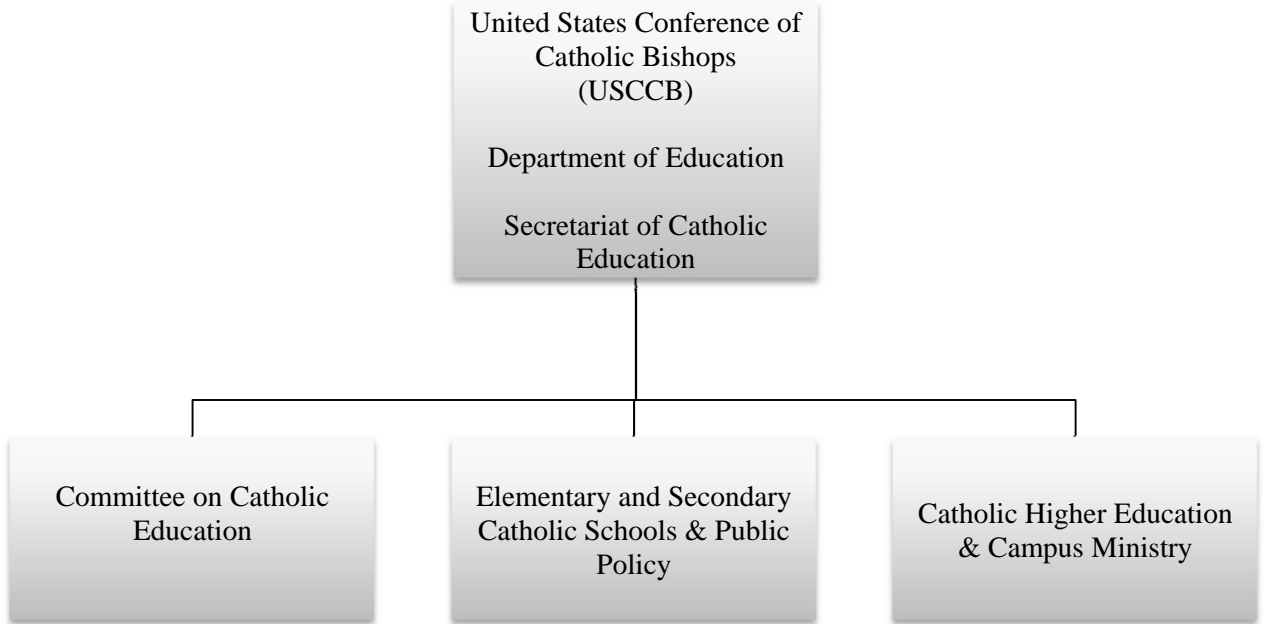
## APPENDIX C

### Hierarchy and Structure of Catholic Education in the United States (USCCB, 2010)



APPENDIX D

Governance of Catholic Schools by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
(USCCB, 2010)



## APPENDIX E

### Personal Information Form

Please fill out prior to our first interview. Include as much information that you feel comfortable in sharing.

1. Name:
  
2. Family Information:
  - Where were you born?
  - Where have you lived?
  - Religion of Family?
  - Sisters and Brothers?
  - Family Structure?
  
3. Educational Background:
  - Elementary
  - High School
  - College
  - Graduate
  - Post-graduate
  - Additional education
  
4. Years in Education
  
5. Years in Catholic Education
  
6. Administrative Preparation
  - Workshops
  - In-services
  
7. Ongoing Professional Development
  - Opportunities prior to assuming your position
  - Opportunities during the school year



## APPENDIX F

### Informed Consent Form

Georgia State University

Department of Education

I. Heading: An Investigation of Lay Catholic Elementary School Principals as Faith Leaders

Principal Investigator: Dr. Sheryl Gowen

Student Investigator: Jamie F. Arthur

Sponsor: Not Applicable

II. Introduction/Purpose:

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to investigate the experience of lay Catholic elementary school administrators in their role as principals and faith leaders. You are being asked to participate because you currently serve in the position of a principal of a Catholic school in the state of Georgia. Participation will require up to three interviews, each lasting between one and two hours and a review of the transcript of your interviews. All interviews will occur during the summer months at either your school or at a location mutually agreed upon.

III. Procedures:

If you decide to participate, the following information will help you to understand your role.

1. What would be required of you in the study?

The researcher is requesting your participation in up to three interviews which will take place in a mutually agreed upon area. The first interviews will last between one to two hours. The second interview will be to clarify any point in the initial interview and last up to an hour. A third interview will be scheduled if needed to fill in any gaps in the data. Interviews will be audio taped using an electronic digital recorder. A transcription of the interviews will be sent electronically to each participant for you to review.

2. Why might I participate in this study?

There are no direct benefits from participating in this study; however, studies which describe experiences may help inform and sensitize others to elements of this experience. This information can benefit those who work in the preparation of Catholic school principals, Superintendents of Catholic

Schools, and as well as those who currently serve as principals of Catholic Schools. If desired, the researcher will provide you with a copy of the results of this study.

3. What will be done with the information that I share during this study?

The results of interviews will be kept confidential and will be used solely for the purpose of the researcher's study. The audio recordings, travel drive, and computer discs used for transcription and the transcripts will be kept in a locked filing cabinet for a period of five years and then destroyed. Your name will be removed from all material and replaced by a coded name and number. Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary.

4. What types of questions will be asked during the interview that would inform about the experience of being a Catholic School Principal?

The researcher has designed the study as an open ended interview so that you can feel free to focus on issues that are personally meaningful in your experience. The goal of the researcher is to gain information about your experience of being a in the role of a Catholic school principal and faith leader.

IV. Risks:

In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life.

V. Benefits:

Participation in this study may not benefit you personally. Overall, the study is being conducted to gain information about the experience of Catholic school administrators in their roles as principals and faith leaders. There is a shortage of Catholic school principals in the United States. Themes that emerge could assist the Catholic Church in retention of current principals and/or in identifying potential administrators. Information obtained through this investigation could assist in the development of programs and degrees in post-secondary institutions needed to prepare principals for Catholic schools. Those who are Catholic school principals might find comfort in hearing of the experience of others who serve in a parallel position.

VI. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Participation in research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

VII. Confidentiality:

Records will be kept private to the extent allowed by law. Information can be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly (GSU Institutional Review Board and the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)). All data will be collected through the use of a digital audio recorder. Tapes will be transcribed and printed. We will use a coded fictitious name rather than your name on study records. The information you provide, along with the audio recordings, will be stored in a locked file cabinet and on a firewall protected computer in the home of the student investigator. The coded names to identify the research participant will be stored separately from the data to protect privacy of the participants. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. You will not be identified personally. All records will be destroyed after a period of five years.

VIII. Contact Persons:

Contact Dr. Sheryl Gowen, [sgowen@gsu.edu](mailto:sgowen@gsu.edu) or 404.413.8030, and/or Jamie Arthur [jarthur@holyspiritprep.org](mailto:jarthur@holyspiritprep.org) or 678-906-5412 if you have questions about this study. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Susan Vogtner in the Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3513 or [svogtner1@gsu.edu](mailto:svogtner1@gsu.edu).

IX. Signature with Copy of Consent Form to Subject:

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research and be audio recorded, please sign below.

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Participant

Date

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Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent

Date