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Forming and Supporting Lay Catholic Elementary School Principals as Spiritual Leaders

Erin C.O. Barisano
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Forming and Supporting

Lay Catholic Elementary School Principals as Spiritual Leaders

by

Erin C. O. Barisano

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,

Loyola Marymount University,

in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

2017

Forming and Supporting

Lay Catholic Elementary School Principals as Spiritual Leaders
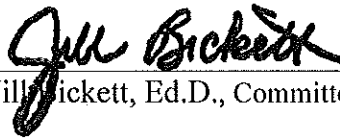
Loyola Marymount University
School of Education
Los Angeles, CA 90045

This dissertation written by Erin Barisano, under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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Date

Dissertation Committee

_____
Jill Bickett, Ed.D., Committee Member

_____
Karen Huchting, Ph.D., Committee Member

_____
Rebecca Herr Stephenson, Ph.D., Committee Member

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challenges. Thank you for encouraging me to chase my dreams. You are my rock and I am so grateful for your love.

To my dear children, Sophie and Casey. You are the air that I breathe and the dreams that I dream. You have been so patient w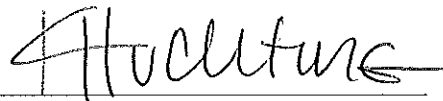ith me these past three years. I want you to know that you make me want to be a better person and make this world a better place. While it will be a privilege to be called "Doctor," the greatest honor of my life is being called "Mom." I love you!

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To my participants in this study. This is your story. Thank you for serving as spiritual leaders to your school communities. May God continue to guide and bless you in the work you do.

DEDICATION

To my parents, Hank and Emily Ochoa

Everything I am, I owe to you.

To my husband, Bart, and our children, Sophie and Casey

You make me want to be the best version of myself.

This work is a testament of your love and support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Forming and Supporting

Lay Catholic Elementary School Principals as Spiritual Leaders

by

Erin C. O. Barisano

The role of a Catholic school principal is complex and includes promoting Catholic faith and spirituality throughout the school community. The additional job requirements of spiritual leadership are intentional formation for prospective and novice principals and efforts to sustain spirituality for experienced principals. This qualitative study explored the perceptions held by experienced lay elementary principals of their role as spiritual leader as well as how prepared they felt to serve in this role. Additionally, the study explored suggestions for sustaining principals in their role as spiritual leader. Participants were six lay Catholic elementary principals working in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Data were collected in the form of written reflections, interviews, and a focus group. There were three rounds of written reflections and interviews. A focus group was conducted after the three rounds of data collection. Initial analysis was conducted by identifying emerging themes for each research question. The Four Pillars of Jesuit Leadership Framework was used to discuss the findings. Findings indicated the need for

formation and training programs for lay Catholic elementary school principals specifically

focused on their role as spiritual leader. Additionally, principals need more supports and

opportunities to renew themselves to continue serving as spiritual leaders. These findings support

the need for the archdiocese to take responsibility for training and forming lay principals as this

responsibility is beyond the scope of the Department of Catholic Schools.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I have spent the majority of my life in Catholic schools. As a student, I attended Catholic school from the elementary level to high school, from college to graduate school, and now to my current work as a doctoral student. I have taught in Catholic school, served as a principal of a Catholic school, and currently work as an assistant superintendent in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. My educational experiences have been deeply shaped and influenced by my personal beliefs as a Catholic.

When I was growing up, being Catholic was just a normal part of my life. My family was Catholic and so were my classmates and friends. We attended Mass every Sunday and prayed the Rosary in the living room. My parents instilled Catholic values in all aspects of my existence, and I will be forever grateful to them for their love of their faith and family. I chose to attend a Catholic university and my experiences both in and out of the classroom deepened my faith life. I was exposed to different people, situations, and experiences, some of which challenged me, but my strong faith served as a moral compass to me.

After college, I entered the business world and was exposed to life outside of Catholic school. I had wonderful experiences, met exciting people, and travelled the world. My world was broadened, and I continued to practice my faith by praying regularly, attending Mass, and participating in retreats. As I was no longer a student on a Catholic college campus, I had to intentionally seek out opportunities to feed my faith life, and I realized that I missed working, studying, and living in a community of faith. After five years of working in international marketing, I had the opportunity to teach second grade at the Catholic elementary school from

which I had graduated. My mom was the school secretary, so the principal had seen me grow up over the years and decided to give me a chance in the classroom. Although I had not been trained as a teacher, I think I always knew I would end up working in a Catholic school. I loved teaching, and I knew I had landed exactly where God called me to be. I continued to grow in my faith and considered it a privilege to help form the spirituality of my students.

After eight years of teaching, I decided to move out of the classroom and try my hand at school administration. I had nearly completed my master's degree in education with a focus on Catholic school leadership, so I felt I had good foundational knowledge of what it meant to be a Catholic school principal. Through my classroom experience, I had grown and developed as an instructional leader, and my business experience served me well as a managerial leader. However, I began to realize that I had no formal training or support as a spiritual leader. Because of my Catholic upbringing, strong faith life, and personal experiences, I was able to navigate the complexity of serving as the spiritual leader of my school community, but I always felt that I was navigating on my own. As I reflect on my experiences as a spiritual leader, I wish I had had more guidance, formation, and support from other principals and the archdiocese. I relied on my own experiences and spirituality to guide an entire community, but with intentional support, I would have been more confident and competent in my role as spiritual leader.

Thus, this study was born from my personal experiences and struggles as a Catholic school principal—namely, as a spiritual leader. I felt compelled to explore this topic more deeply in an effort to form and support Catholic elementary school principals as spiritual leaders.

Purpose and Background to the Problem

The role of a Catholic school principal is similar to that of a public school principal in several ways, but there is one distinctly different aspect: promoting Catholic faith and spirituality throughout the school community (Wallace, 2000). While Catholic schools share many of the organizational and operational structures with their public and private school counterparts, Catholic schools have the unique purpose within the overall mission of the Catholic Church to evangelize to all of its stakeholders: staff, students, parents, and community members (United States Catholic Conference, 1988). The professed purpose of Catholic schools is to support parents as they transmit the faith to the next generation of believers (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, 1982; United States Catholic Conference).

Because this overarching religious purpose is embedded in the daily operations of the school, the job expectations of a Catholic school principal are complex. Specifically, the Catholic school principal is responsible for the religious formation of the students and the quality of the school's overall participation in the educational mission of the Catholic Church (Rieckhoff, 2014). This is no small responsibility, and it is clearly an additional job requirement for the Catholic school principal that differentiates Catholic school leadership from other types of school leadership (Nuzzi, Holter & Frabutt, 2013). The additional job requirement of spiritual leadership is additional intentional formation for prospective and novice principals and efforts to sustain spirituality for experienced principals.

Problem Statement

According to Belmont and Cranston (2009), Catholic school principals are more effective as spiritual leaders when their own spirituality is formed and supported. While the Catholic

school system exists to develop and nurture the faith of young people, it fails to realize and address the spiritual formation of its leadership (Belmonte & Cranston). The role of spiritual leadership has been acknowledged by the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops as one of the three major roles of the Catholic school principal (Ciriello, 1994). From my own experience as a principal and assistant superintendent, most of the professional development for both novice and experienced principals focuses on developing the principal's knowledge and skills in the areas of managerial and instructional leadership. When energy, time, and resources are focused on developing more competent managerial and instructional leaders, little is left over to focus on forming and supporting stronger spiritual leaders. If this issue is not addressed, Catholic school leaders may become stagnant in their own spiritual development, which, in turn, will affect the climate of their school communities (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Black, 2010).

Further, a survey conducted by the Chief Administrators of Catholic Education (CACE), a department of NCEA reported that only 23% of Catholic school principals completed a Catholic leadership program, while 71% completed a secular educational administration program. When asked what critical knowledge novice principals lacked, 37% of respondents reported that novice principals lacked knowledge in spiritual leadership. This indicates that there are many novice principals who may have recently left the classroom and were not experienced in the area of spiritual leadership. Finally, when examining new principals recruited from public schools, a majority (64%) demonstrates a lack of spiritual leadership and theological knowledge. Both of these areas were not required or emphasized in their previous role as public school principal, but are key features of Catholic school leadership (Schuttloffel, 2003). Although there are formation programs at various levels (e.g. higher education, diocesan, and NCEA), research

indicates that spiritual formation is a component that is lacking in many of these programs (Rieckhoff, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions held by experienced, nonvowed religious elementary principals of their role as spiritual leader of the school community. Additionally, the purpose was to interrogate spiritual leadership through the stories of my participants. As such, the study examined the principals' understandings of their role as spiritual leaders as well as how prepared they felt to serve in this role. Additionally, the study explored suggestions for sustaining principals in their role as spiritual leader.

Definition of Spiritual Leadership

In the context of Catholic schools, the role of spiritual leader focuses on four distinct areas: (a) nurturing the faith development of faculty and staff through opportunities for spiritual growth, (b) ensuring quality Catholic religious instruction of students, (c) providing opportunities for the school community to celebrate faith, and (d) supporting and fostering consistent practices of Christian service (Ciriello, 1994). Drahmann's (1994) description of the Catholic school principal as the spiritual leader aligns with the responsibilities outlined by Ciriello. It focuses on leading the school community in prayer while providing spiritual growth opportunities for faculty, students, and others to integrate Catholic social principles into the curriculum. Additionally, the spiritual leader should be grounded in the history, philosophy, and catechism of the Catholic Church and be able to articulate the Catholic vision for the school (Drahmann; Rieckhoff, 2014).

According to Brownbridge (2009), the role of spiritual leader is "a role of sacred trust and service in which the principal participates in building the Catholic community by nurturing the faith and the spiritual growth of students and staff" (p. 4). Brownbridge created an instrument intended to serve as a vehicle of professional growth for Catholic school principals at both the elementary and the secondary school levels. This instrument was based on the rationale that spiritual leadership is not separate and distinct from managerial and educational leadership. He asserted that the leadership of a Catholic school principal is fundamentally service oriented with a goal to develop a school culture of intellectual, spiritual, and personal development (Brownbridge).

According to Hater (1981), the competence of a Catholic elementary principal as a spiritual leader can be observed by the priorities that principal sets for the religion curriculum, liturgy, hiring of teachers, and the ongoing religious formation of the faculty and students. Additional policies and practices that contribute to the community of faith include student discipline, admission, teacher and staff evaluation, and professional development (Wallace, 2000). These daily leadership responsibilities are opportunities for the Catholic elementary school principal to infuse Catholic teaching, values, and identity into the lived reality of the school. This finding indicates that spiritual leadership in Catholic elementary schools includes a broad spectrum of responsibilities and cannot be delineated as distinct from their other leadership roles.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several important reasons. First, there is limited research on spiritual leadership in Catholic schools. While some of the research in this area explains spiritual

formation programs for principals, there is little research on sustaining principals as spiritual

leaders (Cook & Durow, 2008; Drahmann, 1994; Earl, 2005; Rieckhoff, 2014). Secondly, as a

ministry of the Church, spiritual leadership is central, rather than peripheral to the identity of

Catholic schools (Muccigrosso, 1996). This study supports this very important ministry of the

Catholic Church in order to lead schools and form young people in the faith. Finally, few

resources exist that formally train or support principals as spiritual leaders of their communities

(Rieckhoff). Because spiritual leadership is a key role that Catholic school principals are

expected to perform, findings from this study support them in better fulfilling this role.

Conceptual Framework

Spiritual leadership is complex and can be examined through a variety of lenses. Because

this study focused on Catholic school principals, it was necessary to use a framework rooted in

the Catholic faith. I used the Four Pillars of Leadership used by Jesuits as described by Lowney

(2003) in *Heroic Leadership* for my conceptual framework. These four unique values are:

- self-awareness

- ingenuity

- love

- heroism

These pillars naturally align with the role of principal as spiritual leader. A strong spiritual leader

must be self-aware and understand his/her strengths, weaknesses, and core values. A strong

spiritual leader must possess ingenuity and embrace innovation to change and adapt to the

constant challenges within the Catholic Church and secular world. Further, as a spiritual leader,

the Catholic school principal is driven by love in all things. Finally, a strong spiritual leader

inspires and motivates others through everyday acts of heroism (Lowney). These four pillars offered a lens through which to analyze, align, and present my data.

Research Design and Methodology

I used a qualitative design for this research study. Participants were six lay Catholic elementary principals working at schools in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. I used a purposeful sample of six principals, all of whom had at least two years of experience. Data were collected in the form of written reflections, interviews, and a focus group. Participants completed three written reflections over the course of three months. Approximately two weeks after participants submitted each written reflection, I conducted an individual interview with each participant for a total of three sets of interviews. The focus group was comprised of five participants, as the sixth participant was unable to attend. It was conducted approximately two weeks after the conclusion of the final individual interview. Research questions guided the reflective writing prompts, interviews, and focus group discussion prompts. Individual interviews and the focus group were audio recorded and data were transcribed. I conducted the initial analysis by identifying emerging themes for each research question and then used the Four Pillars of Jesuit Leadership Framework to discuss the findings.

Limitations

Although this study was carefully planned and aligned to the research questions, there were still limitations. First, there was a limited period in which to analyze the data. This time constraint limited my ability to fully discover the understanding and perceptions of spiritual leadership. In addition, because I engaged only six principals in this study, their perceptions and understandings may not apply to the larger group of elementary principals throughout the

Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Finally, since I work as an assistant superintendent for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, the principals who participated in the study might have felt a sense of coercion, which could have led to a lack of authenticity in their responses. While I was transparent with the participants in informing them that their participation in the study had no effect on their employment, this may still exist as a potential limitation.

Delimitations

Because I set limits on the scope of my study as well as on the participants themselves, this study also had delimitations. Only lay Catholic elementary school principals were selected because this study specifically focused on their perception and understanding of their role as spiritual leaders. Additionally, I set participant criteria to be considered to participate in this study, which limited the number of qualified participants. Participants had to meet the following criteria:

- Must be lay elementary principal in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles
- Must have two or more years of experience as principal
- Must not work at schools that I oversee as the assistant superintendent

Finally, although the role of the Catholic school principals includes instructional leadership, managerial leadership, and spiritual leadership, the scope of this study focused specifically on spiritual leadership.

Definition of Terms

The following list of definitions came from the United State Conference of Catholic Bishops ("USCCB," n.d.).

Archdiocese: The chief diocese of an ecclesiastical province. It is governed by an archbishop ("USCCB," n.d.).

Canon law: A code of ecclesiastical laws governing the Catholic Church ("USCCB,"n.d.).

Catholic social teaching: Catholic social teaching is based on the Church's understanding of human life and human dignity. It is believed that every human being is created in the image of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ, and therefore is invaluable and worthy of respect as a member of the human family. There are seven themes of Catholic social teaching: (a) dignity of the human person; (b) call to family, community, and participation; (c) rights and responsibilities; (d) preferential option for the poor and vulnerable; (e) dignity of work and the rights of workers; (f) solidarity; and (g) care for God's creation ("USCCB," n.d.).

Diocese: The ordinary territorial division of the church headed by a bishop. The chief diocese of a group of dioceses is called an archdiocese ("USCCB," n.d.).

Layperson: In canon law, anyone not ordained a deacon, priest, or bishop is a layperson. In this legal sense, women religious (sisters) and unordained men religious (brothers) are laity. In the documents of the Second Vatican Council, however, the laity are those who are neither ordained nor members of a religious order. The Vatican II sense is the one usually intended in discussions of lay people and their role in the church ("USCCB," n.d.).

Pastoral region: A grouping of an archdiocese, called the *metropolitan see*, and the dioceses under it, called *suffragan sees*. The *Code of Canon Law* spells out certain limited obligations and authority that the metropolitan archbishop has with respect to the dioceses within his province ("USCCB," n.d.).

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The national membership organization of the Catholic bishops of the United States, through which they act collegially on pastoral, liturgical, and public policy matters affecting the Catholic Church in the United States. ("USCCB," n.d.)

Summary/Organization of the Study

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature and the conceptual framework referred to as the Four Pillars of Jesuit Leadership. Chapter 3 describes the research questions and the methodology used to carry out the study. Chapter 4 presents the results of the reflective writing, interviews, and focus group, organized by research questions and emerging themes in this qualitative work. Chapter 5 discusses the significance of the findings, provides implications, and makes recommendations in the areas of forming and sustaining lay elementary principals as spiritual leaders.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to examine how lay Catholic elementary school principals are formed and supported in their role as spiritual leaders of their schools. This literature review begins with an overview of a conceptual framework referred to as the Four Pillars of Jesuit Leadership. It then briefly examines the history of Catholic schools in America and distinguishes how the role of the elementary Catholic school principal is different from that of public school principal. This research explores information on the unique roles and expectations for elementary Catholic school principals in three distinct areas: educational leader, managerial leader, and spiritual leader. The topic of spiritual leadership is further defined by focusing on spiritual leadership in the life of Catholic schools and explores the topics of mission-centered leadership and vocation, Catholic identity and culture, servant leadership, and contemplative leadership. Further, my review examines existing Catholic school leadership formation programs in higher education and at the diocesan level. Following this, I describe support systems and programs that are currently available to sustain principals in their role as spiritual leaders in Catholic schools. Finally, I discuss challenges to spiritual leadership, including developing spirituality in others, negotiating the pastor-principal relationship, and ministering to younger parents and teachers.

Conceptual Framework

In examining the role of Catholic school principal as the spiritual leader of the school, according to Nuzzi (2000), one must lead as Jesus led. This view of leadership aligns with the lens of the Four Pillars of Jesuit Leadership: self-awareness, ingenuity, love, and heroism

(Lowney, 2003). This section examines the four pillars as a conceptual framework for better understanding the role of spiritual leadership for Catholic school principals.

Self-Awareness

In his book *Heroic Leadership,* Lowney (2003) wrote, "Leaders thrive by understanding who they are and what they value, by becoming aware of unhealthy blind spots or weaknesses that can derail them, and by cultivating the habit of continuous self-reflection and learning" (p. 27). The principle of self-awareness recognizes that leaders must know themselves, including their strengths and weaknesses, in order to motivate and inspire others (Lowney). Self-awareness is ongoing; it is never a finished product. In the Jesuit tradition, self-awareness is nurtured through daily reflection and continuous learning (Fleming, 2008). For Catholic school principals, self-awareness is a necessary component of effective leadership (Shimabukuro, 2008).

A qualitative study conducted by Drago-Severson (2012) examined the principles of self-awareness and reflective practice. The purpose of the study was to examine how a group of principals renewed themselves and prevented burnout. The article focused on how 25 principals supported their own renewal and their yearning to engage in reflective practice with colleagues as a support to their own revitalization, growth, and learning. Findings indicated that both Catholic and public school principals employed a variety of strategies for self-renewal in light of the complex nature of their leadership work. Furthermore, these principals expressed a desire to engage in ongoing reflective practice with colleagues to support their own development, sustainability, and renewal (Drago-Severson).

In her book *Redeeming Administration: 12 Spiritual Habits for Catholic Leaders,* Ann Garrido (2013) identified reflective practice as an important spiritual habit for Church and school leaders. She explained that even though leaders are expected to continuously look forward with a vision, reflective practice has the potential to foster real growth in both the leader and the organization. Furthermore, practicing reflection over a period of time changes the way leaders think and approach problems, feeding the vision that has been established (Garrido).

No one can make another person self-aware, so reflective practice is a personal commitment to leadership. As stated by Lowney (2003), "All leadership begins with self-leadership, and self-leadership begins with knowing oneself" (p. 98).

Ingenuity

The second pillar of Jesuit leadership is ingenuity, which is viewed as the ability to explore new ideas, approaches, and cultures and adapt to change with confidence (Lowney, 2003). Ingenuity stems from the Jesuit approach to an ever-changing world. It is rooted in one's own core belief and values, knowing what is negotiable, and what is not. Ingenuity is fully realized when leaders recognize the freedom to pursue opportunities that are linked to a profound trust and optimism. In the Catholic tradition, this trust and optimism is rooted in God (Lowney).

A publication by Goldschmidt and Walsh (2011) examined innovative approaches to governance models and funding strategies for Catholic schools. Historically, Catholic elementary schools were parish schools with the governance and financial responsibility resting with the pastor. Since 1960, there has been a shift in financial responsibility from the parish to the school. The shift comes with additional financial challenges for Catholic schools such as the increased cost of running schools working with parishes that lack adequate resources to support a school.

These challenges are compounded in urban centers where families are unable to pay increasing tuition costs. The Catholic school decline is most often linked to a financial crisis. In addition, Catholics appear to be decreasingly likely to view schools as a vital ministry of the church (Goldschmidt & Walsh).

In response to these challenges, Goldschmidt and Walsh (2011) examined the innovative governance models and funding strategies currently in use by urban Catholic elementary schools. Resonating with the Jesuit pillar of ingenuity, these schools have been able to explore new ideas and approaches and adapt to challenges with confidence. At least eight major governance models for urban Catholic elementary schools were identified in the report in contrast to the historical model in which a single school was governed and financed by one parish. Some innovative governance models include interparochial schools (sponsored by multiple parishes) and diocesan schools (a principal reports to the superintendent rather than to the pastor). Other examples of innovation included networks of schools, a cluster of schools aligning into a K–12 system, and a school co-owned by a parish, a diocese and a university (Goldschmidt & Walsh). Additionally, innovative funding strategies have been implemented in response to the financial challenges facing Catholic elementary schools. Some of these innovations include scholarship drives, development programs, patron programs, shared resources among schools, endowment programs, and collaborative partnerships with colleges and universities, community organizations, and other schools (Goldschmidt & Walsh). While the effectiveness of these programs and strategies was not examined in the report, this offers clear evidence that in response to one of the most serious crises in Catholic education in the modern era, the Catholic community has used ingenuity to combat the problems that have arisen. Catholic schools are

approaching their challenges with collaboration and innovation, and attempting to adapt to the changing landscape of Catholic education in the 21st century.

Love

The third Pillar of Jesuit Leadership is love. Love-driven leadership is the vision to see each person's talent, potential, and dignity. Love-driven leadership takes courage, passion, and commitment to unlock that potential which results in loyalty that energizes individuals and entire organizations (Lowney, 2003).

Leaders who are driven by faith are driven by love (Fleming, 2008). Love is at the heart of the mission of the Church, as is evidenced by the Gospel. When religious leaders talk about what motivates their activities, they usually connect their acts of love of neighbor with love of God, which is at the root of the life of faith (Massaro, 2008). When Catholic school teachers and leaders were asked why they chose to teach in a Catholic school, the reasons most frequently given focused on love: love for teaching, love for working with the young, and commitment to Catholic education and ministry (Convey, 1992).

Christian love is not a feeling; it is a consistent choice (Garrido, 2013). John 1:4 tells us, "God is love," and "those who live in love live in God and God in them." For Catholic school leaders, daily life is filled with opportunities to practice this kind of love, and hence to know God. The nature of the work of the school principal involves a great deal of behind-the-scenes work. This work urges one to love without expecting any emotional gratification in return (Garrido). If Catholic school principals are to lead as Jesus led, then love must drive their leadership (Nuzzi, 2000).

Heroism

The final pillar of Jesuit leadership is heroism. According to Lowney (2003), "Heroic leadership is motivating oneself to above-and-beyond performance by focusing on the richest potential in every moment" (p. 209). In the Jesuit tradition, this is characterized by the motto of *magis,* which is the restless drive to look for something more in every opportunity, coupled with the faith that one will find it.

The history of Catholic schools in America reflects both heroism and *magis*, this restless drive, to establish a school system embedded in Catholic faith and values. The first Catholic schools were established in Louisiana and Florida in the early 17th century. Many of these early Catholic schools were predominantly staffed by lay people and joined by religious orders (Hunt, 2000). The teaching religious often sacrificed to the point of heroism (Buetow, 1985). One example of this early heroism is the Ursuline nuns. The Ursuline nuns came from France to New Orleans in 1727 (Buetow). After travelling three months on the turbulent Atlantic Ocean, they landed at the mouth of the Mississippi River and continued their tedious journey through mosquito- and snake-infested bayous and swamps to the town. Their heroism led them to institute a convent and school, both of which still exist today (Buetow).

Throughout the 18th century, the number of Catholic schools expanded, and religious orders and communities continued operating Catholic schools in many states, despite numerous political, religious, cultural, and managerial obstacles (Hunt, 2000). The influx of Catholic immigrants throughout the 19th century helped to strengthen the Catholic school system in America. Priests and nuns viewed this influx as an opportunity to build parishes and schools, so Catholic schools became a safe haven for the immigrant children who were poor and oftentimes

ostracized or turned away from the public schools (Hunt). The heroism and vision of these early

Catholic school leaders led to the creation of a school system that currently educates nearly two

million students (McDonald & Schultz, 2016).

Catholic schools continue to celebrate heroes that have influenced the education system

in America. At a recent National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) Convention, the story

of Sister Immaculata Knox was shared. Sister Immaculata is a Sister of Mercy from Ireland who

arrived in Brevard County, Florida, in 1961 with the instructions to open an elementary school

(Dodson, 2010). Sister Immaculata and two other nuns worked diligently to open Ascension

Catholic School shortly after they arrived. Heroism and love led Sister Immaculata to venture

where others would hesitate to even enter—teaching classes of up to 86 kindergartners, rooms of

50 first graders, seventh- and eighth-grade art classes and religious education every year

throughout her career (Dodson). Her story is one of many stories of nuns and sisters who

exhibited heroism and *magis* in their ministry.

Self-awareness, ingenuity, love, and heroism are principles in forming a way of living,

not merely four leadership techniques. According to Lowney (2003), the four principles reinforce

one another in an integrated life. These four principles create a comprehensive conceptual

framework for better understanding the role of spiritual leadership for Catholic school principals.

The next section of this review will offer a brief overview of the history of Catholic

schools in America from the 17th century to present.

Historical Context: Catholic Schools in America

Catholic schools were established in the United States in the early 17th century (Hunt et

al., 2000). From its inception nearly 400 years ago, the professed purpose of Catholic schools has

been to support parents as they transmit the faith to the next generation of believers (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, 1982). Throughout the 18th century, the number of Catholic schools in America expanded, and religious orders and communities operated Catholic schools in many states (Hunt).

By the turn of the 20th century, the Catholic school system was a major force, with an estimated 3,500 Catholic elementary and secondary schools. Increasing in population at a staggering rate, this number nearly doubled by 1920, to 6,551 Catholic schools throughout the country. Throughout the 1900s, the Catholic school population continued to grow, reaching its peak in the mid-1960s at roughly 5.2 million Catholic school students. However, the 1970s and 1980s experienced a steep decline in both the number of schools and students and by 1990, there were approximately 2.5 million students in 8,719 schools, a decrease of almost three million students in 25 years. Today, due to various factors, the total enrollment of Catholic school students is 1.9 million. The National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) has cited changing demographics as a major reason for the drop in enrollment (McDonald & Schultz, 2016). Financial issues and a shift in values has also played a role in declining enrollment (Hunt, 2000). Given the earlier decree by the U.S. Bishops at the Third Plenary Council (1884) that required all Catholic churches to establish an elementary school on their grounds, many of today's Catholic schools are located in urban areas that no longer support a large Catholic population. Conversely, many suburbs have a Catholic population but there is no Catholic school to support such education (McDonald & Schultz).

The next section will offer an overview of the leadership responsibilities of elementary school principals, in particular, the role of Catholic elementary school principals focused on the role of spiritual leadership.

Role of the Elementary Principal

Leadership Responsibilities

The role of the elementary principal has expanded dramatically in recent years. Schools have been affected by changing demographics, economic downturns, and public policies resulting in higher demands for the principal (De Leon, 2006; Glass & Franceschini, 2007). In addition to the daily operations of the school, principals face a variety of stressful challenges on a regular basis. These include meeting state and federal mandates, criticism from parents and the public, large amounts of paperwork, funding cuts, increased accountability, student-related issues, and frustrated teachers (Cushing, Kerrins, & Johnstone, 2003; De Leon, 2006; Whitaker, 1995). Along with supporting teachers and helping students achieve at the highest levels, elementary school principals must know how to market their schools in the complex and ever-changing education landscape that now consists of neighborhood schools, charter schools, and schools of choice. They must also analyze complex data sets generated by the large number of assessments and other accountability measures now required in schools. Moreover, they need to know how to understand budgets and justify spending (Superville, 2015). Coupled with these responsibilities, principals must be skilled organizational leaders with a vision for success (Fullan, 2009, 2014). As organizational leaders, principals need to have the same kinds of skill sets that effective managers in other professions possess, which is the ability to create a compelling vision, lead high-performing teams, think like problem-solvers, put strategic plans in

place, and execute those plans (Superville). Further, while both elementary and secondary principals face similar challenges, elementary principals typically do not have assistant principals, so they must be all things to all people (Doud & Keller, 1998).

With the ever-increasing list of demands on an elementary principal, it is no wonder that the job has been described as the worst of both worlds (Fullan, 2009). On one hand, principals are expected to run a smooth school and be responsive to teachers, parents, and students. On the other hand, principals are expected to respond to increasingly disconnected demands while showing better test results and creating a cohesive learning environment (Fullan, 2009, 2014).

Although the role of the elementary school principal is stressful and demanding, the payoffs can be great. Research shows that a successful principal makes a positive difference in student and staff achievement, parent involvement, and overall program success (Edmonds, 1979; Sergiovanni, 1995). Fullan (2014) also stated that the principal is the second most important factor next to the teacher in influencing student learning. Larson (1989) claimed that the effectiveness of the principal is the one consistent factor of high-achieving schools. Ubben, Hughes, and Norris (2004) summarized research, which stressed the magnitude of the principal's role and found that the principal was the key element in school success.

The job of a Catholic school principal includes all of these complex duties described above plus the duties of leading with a Catholic lens and serving as the spiritual leader of the school (Wallace, 2000). The next section describes the leadership responsibilities of the Catholic school principal in greater depth.

Leadership Responsibilities of the Catholic School Principal

Catholic elementary school principals have also experienced changes over the past 50 years. When most elementary and secondary Catholic schools were established, they were led and staffed by women religious who lived in the convent next to the church. These women were dedicated to the mission of the Church and devoted their lives to their ministry. Since most of these schools were financially supported by their local parish, little attention was paid to the managerial or financial aspect of running a school (Helbling, 1993). Also, because there was an overabundance of Catholic children attending these schools, the principal did not have to focus her energies on recruitment and enrollment.

The current responsibilities for Catholic school principals differ greatly from those of their predecessors. The United States Catholic Conference defines the Catholic school principal role across three major areas: educational leader, managerial leader, and spiritual leader (Ciriello, 1994). As educational leader, the principal guides the vision, fosters leadership in others, and oversees all aspects of curriculum and instruction to provide educational achievement. The role of managerial leader focuses on personnel and institutional management (Ciriello). However, while Catholic school principals share many of the educational and managerial responsibilities with principals of other non-Catholic schools, they have the responsibility of serving as the spiritual leader of the school (Rieckhoff, 2014). The role of spiritual leader is complex with a variety of explicit and implicit responsibilities embedded. The next section will examine the role of the Catholic elementary principal as the spiritual leader of the school.

Spiritual Leadership in the Life of Catholic Schools

Because spiritual leadership is a required responsibility for Catholic school elementary principals, it is important to examine how it is a lived reality in the daily life of Catholic elementary schools. The next section will examine four themes that emerged from the literature that align with Catholic school spiritual leadership: mission-centered leadership and vocation; connection to Catholic identity and culture; servant leadership; and contemplative leadership practices.

Mission-Centered Leadership/Vocation

The religious mission of the Catholic school is its defining characteristic. As such, it permeates all aspects of Catholic school life (Carr, 2000). Wallace (1998) explained that, to fulfill the spiritual leadership role, principals must provide experiences that reinforce the primary Catholic mission of the school. This comment indicates that the Catholic mission should be integrated into all areas of school life. Furthermore, according to Cappel (1989), principals in Catholic schools are "called" and are, in fact, spiritual persons who become Catholic school principals and not the other way around.

In a 2014 mixed-methods study conducted by Rieckhoff, findings indicated that a Catholic school principal's description of one's faith life and its development factored into the role he/she played as a leader. In this study, two distinct groups of spiritual leaders emerged. One group of principals viewed themselves as spiritual leaders who were principals. These principals were spiritual people who felt called to be principals. The role of spiritual leader guided their work, and served as a lens through which all leadership decisions were made (Rieckhoff). One

principal in Rieckhoff's study described her work as a calling, a vocation that shaped all aspects of her work as a principal.

> Some of my friends think I'm crazy for working in a Catholic school because they see the price differences or they kind of see the wide range of responsibilities that fall under Catholic school principal and they don't really understand. And I think it all comes back to my faith and seeing this as an extension of my faith and where God has called me to be. (p. 39)

The second group of principals viewed themselves as school leaders, with the role of spiritual leader as one of their many other duties and responsibilities. These principals described the ways in which they felt ill prepared to lead in the area of faith and Catholic mission. While these principals expressed a desire to support others' faith life and development, they did not feel called or equipped to do so. One principal described her struggles this way:

> I have learned that I need to meet people where they are as a faith leader and to help them grow in their faith. Some people struggle with this and I need to recognize that they have different faith development. I will ask myself: How can I give people opportunities to explore their faith more? We aren't all coming from a place of deep faith. (p. 40)

These contrasting perceptions of the Catholic elementary school principal's role as spiritual leader illustrate the struggle that some principals experience in influencing other's faith life.

Further, in a quantitative survey conducted by Carr (2000), spiritual leader self-efficacy and mission-related motivation were examined in Catholic elementary school principals. Findings indicated that principals who were motivated by Catholic mission had a higher level of

satisfaction as spiritual leaders. Furthermore, principals with a combined mission-related motivation orientation and a high sense of spiritual self-efficacy had high levels of spiritual leadership satisfaction. These findings are consistent with Rieckhoff's (2014) findings in that principals who bring a developed sense of spirituality to their leadership role feel more effective in their role as spiritual leaders.

Catholic Identity and Culture

Creating and nurturing Catholic identity and culture is vital to the mission of Catholic schools in the United States (Ozar & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2012). According to the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools (2012), Catholic identity should be "rooted in Gospel values, centered on the Eucharist, and committed to faith formation, academic excellence, and service" (Ozar & Weitzel-O'Neill, p. 5). Furthermore, the Western Catholic Educational Association defines Catholic identity as "The distinctive religious dimension found in Catholic schools which emphasizes message, community, service and worship centered in Eucharist as found in the Catholic tradition" (Improving Student Learning, 2012, p. 7).

According to Carr (2000), one of the critical issues facing Catholic schools is the retention of Catholic identity. One of the main reasons this concern has surfaced is the increase of lay leadership at Catholic elementary and secondary schools. The leadership transition from religious to lay principals raises the question: Can Catholic identity be sustained by lay principals who have little or no training in theology, scripture, and the Church's educational mission (Carr)?

Belmonte and Cranston (2009) conducted a qualitative study to examine how lay principals perceived their role in carrying out the mission of Catholic schools and how these same principals promoted and ensured the school's Catholic identity and culture to others. A multiple case study approach was utilized, and the study was conducted in an interpretivist framework. Six lay principals participated, and interviews were formally conducted over an 8-month period. Findings indicated that Catholic school principals played an integral role in building a Catholic culture and ensuring Catholic identity at their schools. Also, successful Catholic school leadership was highly influenced by the cultural and spiritual capital that individuals brought to the school. Drawing on their own cultural and spiritual capital, principals felt that they nurtured the Catholic identity of their schools through their daily actions. The principals described these actions as those associated with encouragement, role modeling, upholding values, and articulating the Catholic faith. In short, they felt they were the symbolic and cultural leaders of their schools. Additionally, principals believed that they formally influenced their school's Catholic identity in ways that were integrated into the organizational life of the school, such as staff meetings, formalized prayer experiences, and parent meetings. Furthermore, they believed that they informally shaped Catholic identity through their personality and disposition (Belmonte & Cranston).

One of the essential elements of Catholic identity in Catholic schools is Catholic social teaching. In 1998, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) developed a statement on the importance of integrating Catholic social teachings into Catholic school programs as a means of retaining Catholic identity in schools. This statement was issued in response to a report of the Task Force on Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic Education,

which was created in 1995 by USCCB Committee on Education, Committee on Domestic

Policy, and Committee on International Policy (USCCB, 1995). Findings from the task force

revealed that "far too many Catholics are not familiar with the basic content of Catholic social

teaching. More fundamentally, many Catholics do not adequately understand that the social

teaching of the Church is an essential part of Catholic faith" (USCCB, 1995, p. 1). Because of

these findings, the USCCB issued a statement on the essential element of Catholic social

teachings in a school's Catholic identity.

> Therefore, we emphasize that the values of the Church's social teaching must not be
>
> treated as tangential or optional. They must be a core part of teaching and formation.
>
> Without our social teaching, schools, catechetical programs, and other formation
>
> programs would be offering an incomplete presentation of our Catholic tradition. This
>
> would fall short of our mission and would be a serious loss for those in our educational
>
> and catechetical programs.

It is at the urging of the USCCB that Catholic teachers and administrators have created

additional resources and programs to ensure a comprehensive understanding of Catholic social

teaching as a fundamental element of the mission and Catholic identity of schools (USCCB,

1998).

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership has emerged as a leadership practice for Catholic school principals in

much of the Catholic leadership research (Banke, Maldonado & Lacey, 2012; Black, 2010;

Spears, 1998). Servant leadership is a philosophy introduced in 1970 by Robert Greenleaf in his

book entitled *The Servant as Leader*. According to Dr. Glenda Lee Black, servant leaders

27

emphasize serving others before themselves, assume a nonfocal position within teams, and provide resources and support without expectation or acknowledgement. From Greenleaf's perspective, the intent of servant leaders is to transform those served to grow personally and professionally, become more autonomous, and increase the likelihood of becoming servants themselves (Greenleaf, 1970). This view of leadership closely reflects the Church's teachings and embodies the characteristics one would expect Catholic school principals to follow. The principles of servant leadership include (a) listening, (b) empathy, (c) healing, (d) awareness, (e) persuasion, (f) conceptualization, (g) foresight, (h) stewardship, (i) commitment to the growth of people, and (j) building community.

Black's (2010) mixed-method research attempted to determine how well individuals in a Catholic school had been implementing the principles of servant leadership and the effect this perception had on school climate. This study utilized a mixed-method approach by administering two validated quantitative instruments. First, Laub's Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA) measured the perceived servant leadership in the schools. Second, Hoy, Tarter, and Kottkamp's Revised Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ-RE) measured the school's climate. These instruments were administered to a randomly selected sample of 231 full-time teacher leaders and 15 principals working in Catholic schools in Ontario, Canada. Once the quantitative data were analyzed, focus group interviews were conducted with 10% of the sample (Black).

The data indicated that there was a significant positive relationship between the perceptions of servant leadership practices and perceptions of school climate. The researchers indicated that when servant leadership is perceived to be present, the principal's and teacher's

perceptions of the school climate are positive. These finding have some important implications for Catholic school principals as spiritual leaders. First, Catholic school principals can play a vital role in influencing the school's climate by adopting the theory of servant leadership. Furthermore, the tenants of servant leadership as outlined by Spears (1998) align with the Catholic doctrine and traditions inspired by Jesus Christ, Christian teachings, and the Catholic community (Black, 2010).

Another study that focused on servant leadership as spiritual leadership was conducted by Banke et al. (2012). This phenomenological study examined the spiritual experiences of Christian school leaders as framed in the philosophy of servant leadership. A purposeful, sample of 12 Christian school leaders was selected (Banke et al.). While recognizing that the experiences of Christian school leaders may differ from those of Catholic school principals, I believe the findings in this study remain relevant to this review.

This study indicated that the participants' personal experiences affected their roles as spiritual leaders of their schools. Findings indicated that participants believed that spiritual leadership was an active, personal process for each individual. Emergent themes from this research included building relationship with others, exhibiting personal growth, providing for the needs and opportunities of others, promoting personal and spiritual growth in others, having a personal relationship with God, exhibiting humility, being real and accessible, and serving as a supporter of all the members of the community. Learning from and reflecting on their various experiences assisted these Christian school leaders in growing as spiritual leaders. Furthermore, findings indicated that there is a need for ongoing discussions regarding personal experiences as they relate to spiritual development (Banke et al., 2012).

Contemplative Practice

Another type of leadership practice that emerged in the literature on Catholic school leadership was contemplative leadership practice. Contemplative practice is based on personal reflection grounded in metacognition. It encourages Catholic school leaders to reflect on their own thinking regarding their decision-making processes and outcomes, and it places an emphasis on the principles upon which decisions are made. In a Catholic school, those principles are gospel values, Catholic theology, and Church tradition (Schuttloffel, 2013).

For Catholic school principals, contemplative leadership practice is based on the belief that a leader's character is shaped by personal experiences, communities, and beliefs, and it is a necessary quality for making decisions that contribute to a school's Catholic identity (Schuttloffel, 2013). In a theoretical article entitled *Pedagogy Grounded in Christian Spirituality* by Gini Shimabukuro (2008), a contemplative stance is noted as one of the five graces of teachers who are spiritual leaders. This grace involves an ongoing reflection of one's personal vocation, which designates the essence of our being and expresses itself in everything that we do. This personal vocation becomes the benchmark for discernment for every decision in life (Shimabukuro).

Contemplative leadership and personal vocation. Schuttloffel (1999) tested the idea of personal vocation and contemplative leadership practice as necessary to a school's Catholic identity in a study in which she explored Catholic school leadership practice in Australia, England, and the Netherlands. This study was a follow-up to a previous publication by Schuttloffel entitled *Character and the Contemplative Principal* (Schuttloffel), which examined contemplative practices of Catholic school principals in the United States. The purpose of the

study was to determine if contemplative practice was distinctly American, or if the doctrine and tradition of the universal Catholic Church provided the framework for contemplative practice for Catholic school principals regardless of national culture (Schuttloffel, 2013).

Three common themes emerged from the data. The first, the impact of life story, indicated that school principals tended to create a Catholic culture within their schools that reflected their own personal Catholic identity. The data indicated that a person's individual Catholic identity, which is shaped by that person's story, experiences, and community, had a direct impact on the type of Catholic culture created at a school. The second theme that emerged was viewing leadership as a vocation within educational ministry. This revealed that contemplative school principals intentionally created a faith learning community permeated with a Catholic culture that communicated gospel values, a Catholic worldview, and the Catholic intellectual tradition. Principals from the three countries remarked that contemplative practice was aligned with a vocational view of Catholic education as a ministry of the larger Church. The third theme that surfaced was recognizing the importance of relationships. Relationship building was key to any leadership role, but contemplative leaders recognized that relationships were foundational to building community. Principals spoke of the importance of quality relationships with all members of the community including students, teachers, parents, parishioners, and community members. These principals saw a clear relationship between building school community and developing Catholic culture (Schuttloffel, 2013).

Further, this study offers unique comparative insights to Catholic educational leadership across four nations. Interview data indicated that national culture influences, informs, and shapes school leadership. With this in mind, contemplative school principals can be more aware of how

their national culture influences their leadership and identity. For Catholic school principals, this identity must remain specifically Catholic regardless of national culture. Additionally, this study offers insight into the complex nature of preparing future Catholic school leaders. The skills and knowledge necessary for thoughtful reflection must be developed and sustained through the creation of a community for professional and faith learning and sharing. Furthermore, the authors urged that Catholic higher education be challenged to build communities of faith within their educational experiences that build character values for Catholic school leaders and promote moral living that forms individuals for faith leadership (Schuttloffel, 2013).

In the 400-year tradition of Catholic schools in America, the role of the principal has expanded from focusing on propagation of the faith to expertise in organizational management, curriculum and instruction, and spiritual leadership (Schuttloffel, 2012). While the knowledge and skills to be an effective manager and educational leader can be taught, how does one learn to be a spiritual leader? The next section of this review explains how Catholic school leadership training has changed due to the increase in lay leadership. It also examines leadership formation programs at various Catholic universities and dioceses for prospective and existing Catholic school principals.

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Catholic School Principal Formation Programs

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Historical Perspective

Prior to 1960, bishops relied on religious communities of men and women to train their members to assume leadership roles in educational ministries. A fully developed training network existed for prospective Catholic school principals involving novitiates, colleges, universities, and seminaries that exposed them to the values, culture, philosophy, and history of

Catholic schools (Helbling, 1993). Through this training, a great emphasis was placed on

developing the school principals in spiritual leadership. Over the past 60 years, the number of lay

Catholic principals has increased dramatically. While these lay men and women are faith-filled

Catholics who are familiar with the practices and traditions of the faith, few of them received

formal training or formation in the Catholic faith (Rieckhoff, 2013), thus creating a need for

formation and training programs aimed specifically at Catholic school principals.

Table 1

*Full-Time Equivalent Total Staff in U.S. Catholic Elementary
and Secondary Schools 1950-2016*

Year	% Religious	% Lay
1950	90.1	9.9
1960	73.8	26.2
1970	48.4	51.6
1980	29.0	71.0
1990	14.6	85.4
2000	7.0	93.0
2010	3.7	96.3
2016	2.8	97.2

During the last quarter of the 20th century, dramatic changes took place in the staffing of

Catholic schools. As shown in Table 1, the National Catholic Education Association (2016)

reported a shift from an almost entirely religious staff (sisters, brothers, priests, deacons) of

90.1% in 1950 to 48.4% in the 1970s to a primarily lay staff of 97% in 2016 (McDonald &

Schultz, 2016). In general, the changes have been attributed to the decline in the number of

women and men entering religious life, the large number of sisters who left their orders, and the

change in ministry directions for many congregations from schools to other forms of social and

pastoral ministries (McDonald & Schultz). When Catholic schools were staffed and led by

religious orders, these religious women and men were already formed in the Catholic faith as

part of their religious training; this is not the case for lay Catholic elementary principals (Helbling). Because Catholic elementary school principals are entrusted with the responsibility of nurturing the spiritual formation of their students and staff, the increase in lay teachers over the past 50 years indicates the need for intentional formation programs to train and nurture lay Catholic elementary principals in their role as spiritual leader (Earl, 2005).

Higher Education

Over the past 40 years, Catholic colleges and universities have been proactive in developing programs and resources to form and support Catholic school leaders. In 1980, the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops strongly encouraged Catholic institutions of higher education to provide creative educational programs for Catholic educators.

> Catholic institutions of higher education...are urged to provide Christian formation programs for educators who are evangelizers by call and covenant and mission. Only those who have been formed theologically and spiritually can respond adequately to the call of professional ministry in Christian education according to the vision of Jesus Christ and the Church. (p. 6)

Degree and certificate programs. This section describes degree and certificate programs offered by various Catholic universities across the nation. While I included a variety of universities that are representative of the types of programs offered in Catholic school leadership, the list is not exhaustive.

Fordham University and University of San Francisco. Responding to the need for specialized programs, Catholic universities began to study and implement degree programs designed to meet the needs of Catholic school administrators. In 1976, Fordham University and

the University of San Francisco were the first institutions of higher education to begin planning

such programs. Both universities have offered master's degree programs in Catholic school

leadership for over 30 years ("Fordham University," n.d.; Helbling, 1993; "University of San

Francisco," n.d.). Both of these programs have developed and expanded over the past 40 years to

remain relevant to the needs of Catholic school leaders ("Fordham University"; "University of

San Francisco"). The courses that are offered focus specifically on the skills and knowledge

required of Catholic school principals, including the history and philosophy of Catholic

education, Catholic school leadership, curriculum and instruction, and managerial leadership.

Although all of the courses are designed and taught through the lens of Catholic identity,

mission, and culture, each program offers only one course, which focuses on spirituality

("Fordham University"; "University of San Francisco.")

   Creighton University. Over the past 25 years, other Catholic universities have created

and implemented leadership formation programs specifically aimed at current and prospective

Catholic school principals. In a 2008 informational article, Cook and Durow described a task

force formed by members of Creighton University Education Department and the Archdiocese of

Omaha Catholic Schools Office in response to the U.S. Bishop's call for support for leadership

training for Catholic school leaders. The goals of the task force were to outline the specialized

knowledge and skill set required for effective Catholic school leaders and suggest possible

coursework, workshops, and other forms of professional development to form future leaders in

the Archdiocese of Omaha. A framework for developing Catholic school leaders was developed

and was used to inform the creation of a Catholic School Leadership Certificate program. The six

leadership domains included on the framework are faith leadership, mission leadership, strategic

leadership, educational leadership, community and political leadership, and organizational leadership. In the end, the university-archdiocesan collaboration was successful. Although the program is encouraged for Catholic school principals, it is not a requirement. The authors felt the optional nature of the program sent a mixed message that the Catholic school dimension of school leadership was less important than the secular dimensions of school leadership (Cook & Durow). Since this article was written, the Creighton Certificate in Catholic School Leadership program has been changed to a 12-unit program offered to prospective and current Catholic school leaders ("Creighton University.")

Loyola Marymount University. Loyola Marymount University (LMU) also offers a master's degree in Catholic School Administration. The course offerings are similar to those at other Catholic universities with an emphasis on mission-focused leadership, organizational leadership, and instructional leadership in Catholic schools ("Loyola Marymount University," n.d.). Additionally, LMU offers a Certificate in Catholic School Leadership, which is comprised of three courses that specifically address issues in Catholic schools. In an effort to expand its reach nationwide, LMU has collaborated with Catholic Extension to offer a graduate-level virtual online Certificate in Catholic School Administration program to novice and prospective leaders in Catholic schools in mission dioceses throughout the country ("Catholic Extension," n.d.). Catholic Extension is a mission foundation that brings Catholic resources and support to mission dioceses in the United States ("Catholic Extension"). Besides the coursework, students are guided spiritually through online spiritual direction within the framework of Ignatian Spirituality. The desired outcome is to develop a deeper understanding of one's own spirituality

and be able to connect that spirituality with professional practice (A. Sabatino, personal communication, April 13, 2015).

University of Dayton: St. Remy Initiative. In 2007, the St. Remy initiative began as a collaborative effort between the University of Dayton Center for Catholic Education and the Catholic School Office of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. The purpose of the program is to sustain and develop leadership for Catholic schools. It responds to the emerging need for lay administrators and teachers to carry out their ministry as educators who provide religious instruction and faith formation in Catholic schools ("Saint Remy Initiative," 2013). The program is designed for teams of three: the principal, an aspiring principal, and a teacher leader. The spiritual development component of the program offers participants opportunities to blend Catholic faith formation with self-discovery and school-improvement goals ("Saint Remy Initiative"). Although completion of the program does not result in a degree or certificate, graduate credits from the University of Dayton are offered.

Conferences and partnerships. Over the past decade, Catholic colleges and universities have heeded a call to action to better support Catholic school leadership formation. In October 2007, a group of nine Catholic colleges and universities came together in an informal partnership to explore and develop collaborative initiatives to support Catholic elementary and secondary schools. This group came to be known as The Catholic Higher Education Collaborative (CHEC). Each CHEC conference has a different focus related to key issues relevant to the future of Catholic schools, including leadership, academic excellence, Catholic identity, and affordability. The purpose of each conference is to explore ideas and offer concrete steps for Catholic colleges and universities to collaborate in supporting Catholic elementary and secondary schools (Boyle,

2010). In their second conference held at Loyola University, Chicago, the group gathered to explore how Catholic higher education can help develop and sustain leaders for Catholic schools. The desired outcome of the conference was to identify explicit actions to foster collaboration among Catholic institutions of higher education, diocesan offices of education, the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA), PreK–12 practitioners, and other shareholders. The conference was structured around four main presentations, which focused on various aspects of the overall theme. After each presentation, conference participants were invited to respond to the four different topics via a "table conversation." Feedback was summarized and a list of proposed initiatives were developed. A need that was identified was how Catholic universities could support PreK–12 schools in the role of leadership development. One of the major outcomes of this conference was the development of the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools (Boyle). These standards and benchmarks were published in March 2012, after a rigorous drafting, reviewing, and vetting process by a national task force. The National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools is intended to describe how mission-driven, program effective, well managed, and responsibly governed Catholic schools operate (Ozar & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2012).

A 2007 article by Schuttloffel further explored the need for partnerships between Catholic schools and Catholic institutions of higher education in the area of recruitment, formation, and retention of Catholic school leaders. The two main challenges that are addressed are public policy and Church leadership. Catholic school leadership faces numerous challenges due to powerful national education policy that shapes client expectations. Furthermore, the lack of leadership within the hierarchy of the Catholic Church has also challenged leadership at the

school level. This article approaches these leadership challenges on three fronts: recruitment,

formation, and retention. One of the major recommendations is a renewed sense of kinship

between Catholic schools and Catholic higher education to better form teachers and leaders for

Catholic schools (Schuttloffel, 2007).

Through degree programs and university partnerships, there exists support for forming

Catholic school leaders. With most of the coursework and conference outcomes focused on the

managerial and instructional components of leadership, however, a lack of focus on forming

Catholic school principals as spiritual leaders persists. The next section examines Catholic

school principal formation programs at the diocesan level.

Existing (Arch)diocesan Leadership Formation Programs

Overview. Besides formal higher education, the most commonly employed model to

train principals for large Catholic school systems is through an induction program (Rieckhoff,

2014). These programs take a variety of forms, but most often include new principals meeting on

a regular basis to review policies and procedures and discuss a broad range of topics (Rieckhoff).

In addition to diocesan programs, the NCEA hosts the Catholic School Leadership Institute every

summer. This three-day professional development opportunity is geared toward new and

prospective Catholic school administrators and focuses on the roles of the principal as spiritual

leader, managerial leader, and instructional leader ("NCEA").

Archdiocese of Los Angeles Leadership Formation Program. One example of a

leadership formation program was developed in Los Angeles. In 2013, the Archdiocese of Los

Angeles created its Elementary School Leadership Formation Program (LFP). The purpose of

this program is to recruit, form, develop, and sustain current and future school leaders within the

archdiocese (S. Abelein, personal communication, November 15, 2015). First-year elementary school principals are required to attend four days of summer onboarding to train and develop in the areas of managerial leadership, instructional leadership, and spiritual leadership. Four additional professional development days are scheduled throughout the school year to build upon the skills introduced during the summer onboarding. In the 2016–2017 school year, the number of additional professional development days was increased to eight days to offer more touch points. In the area of spiritual leadership, the goal for first-year principals is to ensure the Catholic mission and identity of the school, oversee the Catholic educational experience, and nurture the faith development of faculty, staff, students, and self (C. Garcia, personal communication, June 20, 2015). Attainment of these goals drives the training content and experiences for the spiritual leadership component of the Leadership Formation Program. In the 2016–2017 school year, topics relating to spiritual leadership included Catholic identity standards, ACRE testing, Catholic social teaching, and praying with the faculty (C. Garcia, personal communication, August 16, 2016).

Supports for Sustaining Spiritual Leadership

In addition to forming Catholic elementary school principals as spiritual leaders, it is equally important to examine ways to sustain spiritual leadership. There is a dearth of literature on the topic of sustaining spiritual leadership, and more research in this area would greatly benefit Catholic school principals. In Rieckhoff's (2014) study, Catholic elementary school principals specified goals for growing in the role of spiritual leader. These goals focused on celebrations of faith and modeling the role of faith leader to others (Rieckhoff). Furthermore, in Belmont and Cranston's (2009) study on the religious dimension of lay leadership in Catholic

40

schools, principals noted that attention to their ongoing formation was lacking. In particular, principals acknowledged that they had personal needs for their own development in faith, requiring continuing growth in faith and vision (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009).

Anecdotal information from the field of Catholic school leadership has indicated that, whereas some diocese offer retreats and other resources for principals, most principals are left on their own to grow and develop in the area of spiritual leadership.

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Challenges to Spiritual Leadership

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In reviewing the data from various studies, some challenges to being the spiritual leader of a school surfaced. This section discusses the challenges that emerged and leads into implications for further action in the area of spiritual leadership.

Developing Spirituality in Others

One challenge to spiritual leadership as reported by both Schuttloffel (2013) and Rieckhoff (2014) was developing the faith leadership of others. Because faith development is personal in nature, principals expressed difficulty in leading teachers who have differing faith experiences upon which their faith development has been built. Principals recognized that a Catholic upbringing did not always translate into teacher knowledge and understanding around how to teach and model faith development in students (Rieckhoff). Similarly, Schuttloffel reported that many teachers and leaders are less spiritually formed than in the past. This is due in part to the increase in the number of laypersons in these positions who have not had formal training in theology or spiritual formation. Additionally, the current generation of teachers, parents, and parishioners are products of a less dogmatic, more ecumenical religious education following Vatican II (Schuttloffel). This challenge is evidence that Catholic school principals

need more faith formation opportunities so that they can learn how to create a strong Catholic culture within their schools.

Pastor-Principal Relationships

Another major challenge of spiritual leadership that emerged was the pastor-principal relationship (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Durow & Brock, 2004; Rieckhoff, 2014). In many Catholic elementary schools, the pastor oversees the job of the principal. Because of this governance model, pastors and principals must develop a relationship based on a clear understanding of both roles in relation to the Catholic mission. The role of the principal is highly visible and represents the Catholic Church to many families, especially those families who are not engaged in parish life and Mass attendance. Therefore, the principal's role as spiritual leader needs to be embedded in the fabric of parish life, and communication of the Catholic mission must be consistent so a clear message is sent to the entire community. The pastor, in turn, must clearly articulate expectations to the principal and support the principal in carrying out the role of spiritual leader. This includes nurturing the principal's own faith life and faith identity (Rieckhoff). Challenges emerge when there is a lack of understanding of the roles of pastor and principal in relation to the Catholic mission or a lack of clarity about expectations of those roles. This may lead to a negative impact on the working relationship between pastor and principal and serve as a roadblock to building an authentic educational and faith community (Belmonte & Cranston).

Generation X and Millennials

Finally, the findings in Schuttloffel's (2013) study indicate a shared challenge for Catholic school principals across nations. The faith beliefs and practices of younger generations

of Catholics—sometimes referred to as Generation X or Millennials—are often quite different from those of older, more traditional generations of Catholics. The reality of this situation was expressed by many Catholic school principals as the teachers they hire and the parents within their schools have different faith beliefs and practices than traditional Catholics. The challenge of how to understand young people's experiences and expressions of their faith and support them in developing Catholic identity emerged from principals in all four nations. Schuttloffel acknowledged that more research in this area was needed to adequately inform Catholic school leaders.

Conclusion

This chapter offered an overview of the conceptual framework—the Four Pillars of Jesuit Leadership—and further examined the role of the Catholic elementary school principal as spiritual leader. The chapter surveyed the literature, which explored the topic of spiritual leadership in the life of Catholic elementary schools with a focus on mission-centered leadership and vocation, Catholic identity and culture, servant leadership, and contemplative leadership. The review included information on existing Catholic school leadership formation programs and discussed challenges to spiritual leadership. Chapter 3 will offer additional background information on the topic of spiritual leadership and explain the rationale and methodology for the study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

As discussed in Chapter 2, Catholic school principals share many of the managerial and educational responsibilities as principals of other non-Catholic schools, but they have the additional responsibility of serving as the spiritual leader of the school (Wallace, 2000). The job requirement of spiritual leadership requires more intentional formation for prospective and novice principals and additional efforts to sustain spirituality for experienced principals (Rieckhoff, 2014). Although Catholic school principals are expected to serve as the spiritual leaders of their school communities, few resources exist that formally train or support them to do so (Rieckhoff). With an increase in lay Catholic school leadership who are practicing Catholics but have not received formal training in the Catholic faith, this is a growing problem. In 2016, the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) (2016) reported that 97% of Catholic schools were staffed by lay people (McDonald & Schultz, 2016)

The United States Catholic Conference of Bishops defines the Catholic school principal role across three major areas: educational leader, managerial leader, and spiritual leader (Ciriello, 1994). The role of spiritual leader focuses on faith development, building the Christian community, and guiding the moral and ethical development of the entire school community. Additionally, the spiritual leader should be grounded in the history, philosophy, and catechism of the Catholic Church (Rieckhoff, 2014). Because of the complexity of the role of spiritual leadership, lay people without extensive theological and scriptural formation may struggle in this area (Carr, 2000). The increase of lay leadership of Catholic schools and the complexity of the

role of spiritual leadership support the need for intentional formation programs to train and nurture lay Catholic principals in their role as spiritual leader.

This qualitative study was designed to explore the perceptions held by experienced, nonvowed religious elementary principals of their role as spiritual leader of the school community. The study examined the principals' understandings of their role as spiritual leaders as well as how prepared they felt to serve in this role. Additionally, the study explored suggestions for sustaining principals in their role as spiritual leader. In an effort to triangulate the data, this qualitative study included three types of data collection: reflective writing, in-depth interviews, and a focus group. According to Flick (2014), triangulation should produce knowledge on different levels, which means insights that go beyond the knowledge made possible by one approach. This extension increases scope, depth, and consistency and puts findings on a more solid foundation (Flick).

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What is the lay Catholic elementary school principal's understanding of his/her role as spiritual leader of the school?

2. To what extent do lay Catholic elementary school principals feel prepared to serve as the spiritual leader of their schools?

3. What kinds of supports should diocesan offices offer to sustain principals in their role as spiritual leaders?

Rationale for Qualitative Approach

A qualitative approach was the most appropriate method to address the purpose of this study—namely, to explore the perceptions held by experienced, lay Catholic elementary principals of their role as spiritual leader of the school community. According to Flick (2014), qualitative research is relevant to the study of social relations. For understanding how elementary principals viewed their role as spiritual leader, I needed to understand their personal experiences with and preparation for that role (Flick). Qualitative research allows participants to express their own perspectives and knowledge about a particular topic. In this study, it was important that participants were given the opportunity to voice their own perspectives and offer their own reflections on spiritual leadership in order to gain a deeper understanding of the topic. Furthermore, qualitative methods give the researcher an opportunity to reflect on observations in the field, impressions, and feelings, which form part of the interpretation and understanding of the data (Flick). For a study on spiritual leadership, it was necessary to include many perspectives and interpretations in order to gain a deeper understanding of this complex and personal topic.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the role of spiritual leader focuses on four distinct areas: (a) nurturing the faith development of faculty and staff through opportunities for spiritual growth, (b) ensuring quality Catholic religious instruction of students, (c) providing opportunities for the school community to celebrate faith, and (d) supporting and fostering consistent practices of Christian service (Ciriello, 1994). According to Brownbridge (2009), the role of spiritual leader is "a role of sacred trust and service in which the principal participates in building the Catholic community by nurturing the faith and the spiritual growth of students and staff" (p. 4). These

descriptions of the role of spiritual leader indicate that, to better understand the complexity of spiritual leadership, one must be able to examine the personal experiences, reflections, discourse, and practices that concern it. Therefore, a qualitative approach including reflective writing, personal interviews, and a focus group was the most appropriate method to gain a deeper understanding of this complex topic. Participants had to be able to articulate their feelings about the nature of spiritual leadership, and the needs they had in this role; qualitative methodology allowed them to do this.

Method

Research Context

The following research context represents data gathered at the time this study was conducted, 2016–2017. The Archdiocese of Los Angeles is large in scope and includes three counties: Los Angeles, Ventura, and Santa Barbara. The total area covers 8,762 square miles and extends from the northern county line of Santa Barbara County to the southern county line of Los Angeles County. There are five Pastoral Regions in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles: Our Lady of the Angels, San Fernando, San Gabriel, San Pedro, and Santa Barbara. There are 287 parishes in the archdiocese and over 200 of those parishes have an elementary school. Each elementary school has a principal, for a total of 209 parish or diocesan elementary schools and principals ("Archdiocese of Los Angeles," n.d.). There is an even distribution of approximately 50 elementary schools in the four largest pastoral regions: Our Lady of the Angels, San Fernando, San Gabriel, and San Pedro, and only 17 elementary schools located in the Santa Barbara Pastoral Region ("Archdiocese of Los Angeles," n.d.). As reported in the 2016 school census, the total enrollment of elementary students in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles was 47,137, with an

average number of 223 students per school (K. Baxter, personal communication, November 1, 2016). The Los Angeles Catholic school system is one of the three largest school systems in California in either the public or private sector, serving approximately 80,000 young people in both elementary and high schools. More than one-third of the students come from families living below the poverty line, and nearly 70% are from ethnic minority households ("ADLA Newsroom," n.d.).

The participants represented four pastoral regions: Our Lady of the Angels, San Fernando, San Gabriel, and Santa Barbara. Their schools represent both urban and suburban schools within the archdiocese.

Participant Selection

Qualitative research uses various models for participant selection. According to Rudestam and Newton (2001), purposeful sampling is used to increase information about the topic being studied. Additionally, Berg (2004) explained, "When developing a purposive sample, researchers use their special knowledge or expertise about some group to select subjects who represent the population" (p. 36).

Since this study focused on lay Catholic elementary school principals, I used a purposeful stratified sample of six principals that met my criterion and had explicitly expressed interest in spiritual leadership. Only lay Catholic elementary school principals were selected.

Purposeful stratified sample. Because my goal was to gain a deeper understanding of principals' perceptions of their roles as spiritual leaders, I chose participants based on the following criteria.

48

There was a total of six participants for this qualitative study. All participants were lay elementary principals in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. The principals did not work at schools that I oversee as the assistant superintendent. They included:

- Two novice principals (2–5 years of experience)

- Two mid-career principals (6–10 years of experience)

- Two veteran principals (more than 10 years of experience)

At the time of this study, I am an assistant superintendent of elementary schools in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. There are 209 elementary schools in the archdiocese; however, I work with 28 principals of schools in the San Gabriel Valley of Los Angeles. I only recruited principals with whom I do not work so as to avoid any discomfort for the principals.

I used length of experience as the primary criterion for my purposeful stratified sample because research has shown that spiritual leadership is shaped by the life experiences that one brings to the job as well as the experiences principals have while performing the job (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009). The tiers and years of experience were determined based on my personal experience as a principal and assistant superintendent. I purposefully assigned novice principals as those who had completed at least two years as a principal as these principals no longer receive training in the Leadership Formation Program. Additionally, these six principals were chosen because they were part of a group of principals who had expressed an interest in the topic of spiritual leadership in both professional and personal conversations with me.

I began the purposeful selection process by reading the master list of elementary principals and deleting all principals who did not meet the participant criteria. This left me with approximately 100 nonreligious, elementary school principals who were not in their first or

second year as principal and whom I do not supervise, from which to choose. I separated the remaining list into the three categories: novice, midcareer, and veteran. My goal was to have at least two principals in each category. In each category, I labeled each principal as first choice or second choice based on personal preference. I called the six first-choice principals and explained the purpose and scope of the study including time commitment for reflective writing, interviews, and focus group. I asked each principal if s/he was interested in participating in the study. All six first-choice principals accepted the invitation to participate in this study. Overwhelmingly, principals expressed enthusiasm and keen interest in exploring the topic of spiritual leadership. I assured the principals that their participation would be confidential and would not affect the status of their employment in the archdiocese.

After all six participants were chosen and confirmed, I emailed each participant a request to supply me with their personal email account. As some of the information exchanged in this study was private and reflective in nature, I required that participants use a personal email account rather than their school email account. Using a personal email account was an effort to separate communication and reflective writings from their leadership roles and duties at school. I requested that participants use their personal email accounts throughout the study. I also used my personal email account to communicate with participants so they were assured that all communication between the researcher and participants would not affect their jobs as principals. Finally, to protect the identity of participants, pseudonyms were used.

Once I established personal email accounts, I emailed each participant a proposed timeline for the study and letter of informed consent for review. I scheduled an initial interview with each participant and scheduled subsequent interviews during the first interview.

The next section describes the participants and their backgrounds in detail.

Novice Principals

Alicia. Alicia had completed three years as a Catholic elementary school principal. Although she had taught for five years at the school prior to becoming the principal, education was her second career. She had formerly worked as an administrator in a law firm, but commented that it was an oppressive environment, and she was always drawn to education. Her urban school was located near downtown Los Angeles and enrollment at the time of this study was 158 students in grades TK–8. The majority of her students (70%) were Guatemalan or Salvadoran, 22% were Filipino, and the remaining 8% were Caucasian, Asian, or Nigerian. Alicia's school served immigrant families from the local neighborhood, many of whom did not speak English. Approximately 80% of students qualified for free or reduced lunch and over 50% of her students were classified as English language learners (ELL). The school received financial assistance in the form of archdiocesan subsidy, parish subsidy, and tuition assistance from the Catholic Education Foundation for a total of $125,000, which was approximately 21% of the annual operating budget. Before she became principal, there was a disconnect between the school and parish but Alicia had made a conscious effort over the previous three years to build the relationship between the school and the parish.

Beto. Beto had been a Catholic elementary school principal for five years. He taught at the school for eight years before becoming the principal. His urban school was located south of downtown Los Angeles with an enrollment—at the time of this study—of 323 students in grades TK-8. Ninety eight percent (98%) of his students were Latino and 2% were African American, which reflected the demographics of the neighborhood. Approximately 68% of his students were

English language learners (ELL) and 92% of them qualified for free or reduced lunch ("Catholic Data Dashboard"). The majority of families lived in the neighborhood or belonged to the parish. Beto's school received $370,000 in financial assistance from the archdiocese, parish, as well as tuition assistance from other foundations. This amount reflected approximately 33% of the annual operating budget ("Catholic Data Dashboard"). Beto considered his school a community school with strong ties to the parish.

Midcareer Principals

Claudia. Claudia had been a Catholic elementary school principal for six years. She began teaching straight out of college and taught at her school for eight years before she became the principal. Her urban school was located west of downtown Los Angeles with an enrollment of 110 students in grades TK–8 at the time of this study. The majority (75%) of her students were Latino with a small Korean population (8%). There were also Caucasian, Filipino, and African American students (17%). Sixty seven percent (67%) of her students qualified for free or reduced lunch and she reported that she did not serve any ELL students ("Catholic Data Dashboard"). The school received financial assistance in the form of archdiocesan subsidy and tuition assistance from the Catholic Education Foundation for a total of $70,000, which was 13% of the annual operating budget ("Catholic Data Dashboard"). The school did not receive a parish subsidy as the parish and school existed separately. Claudia explained that the school had strong ties to the local community and the students visited local businesses and convalescent hospitals throughout the year. According to her, "The community itself is very open. What I have to work on is the pastor and having a good relationship where the school is marketed within Mass or just speaking of it in conversation. It's a great school."

Dolores. Dolores had been a Catholic elementary school principal for nine years, two years at her current school and seven years at another school. She taught in Catholic schools for 25 years before she became a principal and commented, "I've been in Catholic schools for all my life." Her suburban school was located in a neighborhood approximately 30 miles east of Los Angeles and had a current enrollment of 100 students in grades TK–8 at the time of the study. Ninety-four percent (94%) of her students were Latino, and the remaining 6% were Filipino, Caucasian, or African American ("Catholic Data Dashboard"). She felt that this reality reflected the local community. She described most of her families as "struggling, lower income" who had difficulty paying tuition. Sixty seven percent (67%) of her students qualified for free and reduced lunch and a high percentage of students (74%) were English language learners (ELL). The school received $110,000 in financial assistance from the archdiocese and Catholic Education Foundation, which was approximately 25% of the annual operating budget ("Catholic Data Dashboard"). The school did not receive any financial support from the parish. Dolores explained that there was no relationship between the school and parish, which resulted in hurt feelings, hostility, and negativity. In her two years at the school, she had tried to build a relationship between the school and parish, but she felt that her efforts had fallen flat.

> I've always tried to extend an invitation to everything we do to the parish ministries, to the parish as a whole. They don't take us up on it so it's been rather difficult. The community doesn't really know about this school. So we have to work on building up the relationship.

Veteran Principals

      Emily. Emily had completed 12 years as a Catholic elementary school principal. While she had administrative experience at Catholic secondary schools and a private non-Catholic elementary school, this was the only Catholic elementary school in which she had served as principal. Her suburban school was located in Ventura County and—at the time of this study— had an enrollment of 280 students in preschool through grade eight. Approximately 75% of her students were Caucasian and 15% were Latino. The remaining percentage of students was a mix of Filipino/ Pacific Rim and Asian ("Catholic Data Dashboard"). She described most of her families as "upper middle class and comfortable." None of her students qualified for free or reduced lunch and she did not serve any ELL students. The relationship between the school and parish was strong. As Emily stated, "This is a wonderful, large, active parish and we're very blessed. They're very supportive of the school." Only a few students qualified for financial assistance from the Catholic Education Foundation, and the parish offered an annual subsidy if the school needed it; last year the school was able to decline the subsidy.

      Frank. Frank had served as a Catholic elementary school principal for 15 years. He had held the principal position for 12 years at his current school and three years at another archdiocesan elementary school. Prior to that, he was a principal at a nondenominational private elementary school. He began his teaching career in an archdiocesan secondary school and had taught abroad as well. Frank's school was located in a large suburb north of Los Angeles with a population of over 100,000 people. His school was one of three Catholic elementary schools in the city. At the time of this study, school enrollment was 315 students in grades TK–8. Enrollment trends had been consistent over the past five years with number of students ranging

from 300–325. Slightly less than 50% of his students were Caucasian and the other half were a mix of Latino (30%), Filipino (13%), Asian (3%), or multiracial (4%) ("Catholic Data Dashboard"). While the majority of his families were Catholic, there was a small population of Apostolic Armenians and Coptic Christians in the school. Frank described his school as "financially blessed" because of its steady enrollment. No students qualified for free or reduced lunch and only 3% of his students were classified as English language learners ("Catholic Data Dashboard"). Furthermore, only a few students qualified for financial aid through the Catholic Education Foundation. The school and the parish had a very healthy working relationship and Frank recognized the importance of working closely with his pastor to carry out the mission of the Church. As principal, he served on the pastoral team and collaborated with heads of other ministries. Regarding the parish and school, Frank remarked, "To me the parish school doesn't work on any level really, if there isn't a connection with the parish."

Table 2

Summary Description of Participants

Name	Years as Catholic School Principal	Location of School	School Enrollment	Student Demographics
Alicia	3	Urban	158	70% Latino 22% Filipino 8% Caucasian, Asian, Nigerian
Beto	5	Urban	323	98% Latino 2% African American
Claudia	6	Urban	110	75% Latino 8% Korean 17% Caucasian, Filipino, African American
Dolores	9	Suburban	100	94% Latino 6% Caucasian, Filipino, African American
Emily	12	Suburban	280	75% Caucasian 15% Latino
Frank	15	Suburban	315	50% Caucasian 30% Latino 13% Filipino, 3% Asian 4% Multiracial

As noted in Table 2, participants represented both urban and suburban schools, with enrollments ranging from 100 to 323 students at the time of the study. Participants' years of experiences ranged from three to 15 years. Student demographics varied at each school site.

Data Collection

I utilized three types of data collection in this qualitative study: reflective writing, in-depth interviews, and a focus group. The overall procedures for collecting data included: Round 1 Data Collection: online written reflection and follow-up individual interview; Round 2 Data Collection: online written reflection and follow-up individual interview; Round 3 Data Collection: online written reflection and final interview. Lastly, all participants were invited to a final focus group. All questions asked of participants were specifically related to their work as principals around their views of being a spiritual leader of the school. This section will explain the process for each approach.

Reflective Writing

Because self-awareness was a pillar in my conceptual framework, reflective writing was used to collect participants' reflections on spiritual leadership. Additionally, within education literature there is scholarly research regarding the notion that reflection on experience contributes to understanding and learning about practice (Boyd & Fales, 1983; Bulman & Schultz, 2004; Platzer, Snelling, & Blake, 1997). Scanlon, Care, and Udod (2002) stated that, "Reflection enables practitioners to tap into knowledge gained through experiences. The practitioner gains a deeper understanding of the meaning of the experience by bringing to consciousness tacit knowledge" (p. 137).

Approximately two weeks before each round of interviews, participants received an email with a Qualtrics link where they could respond and submit their written reflections. Using Qualtrics to gather their written reflections avoided the use of emails to submit data and increased confidentiality, as well as streamlined data collection. The purpose for the written reflection was to provide participants time to reflect on their work as framed by each research question, especially given their busy work schedules. Participants were given one week to respond to the writing prompt on Qualtrics. There was a total of three reflective writing opportunities throughout the study (Appendix A).

Interviews

Approximately one week after each reflective writing assignment, I interviewed each participant individually. In an effort to gain an in-depth understanding of each participant's perspectives, I utilized a responsive interviewing approach. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), responsive interviewing emphasizes the importance of building a relationship of trust between the interviewer and interviewee, which leads to a more open conversation. The aim is to develop a more robust picture from interviewees' points of view rather than simple, short answers (Rubin & Rubin). Because the purpose of the study was to gain insight into the perspectives and understanding of the principal's role as spiritual leader, I felt that an open conversation would lead to more complete data.

I conducted a total of three interviews for each participant. Interviews were semistructured, and the questions were aligned to each research question (Appendix B). Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes each. With the permission of the participants, interviews were audio recorded and recordings were transcribed. After all transcriptions were

complete, I conducted a member check with all participants by emailing them the transcripts of their interviews for review, which gave participants an opportunity to review the transcripts for accuracy and add or delete as they chose (Flick, 2014). All participants reviewed their transcripts and gave permission to use all transcribed information.

Focus Group

After three rounds of written reflection and individual interviews, I facilitated a focus group with the participants. Although all six participants accepted the invitation to participate, at the last minute, one participant was unable to participate in the focus group. The focus group took place at one of the principal's schools approximately two weeks after the final round of interviews. As mentioned by Flick (2014), focus groups can be applied as a stand-alone instrument, or used together with other methods for exploratory purposes and triangulation designs (Flick). Research questions and data from reflective writing and individual interviews guided the focus group discussion (Appendix C). The focus group lasted approximately two hours. As with the interviews, with the permission of the participants, the focus group discussion was audio recorded and transcribed. I conducted a member check with all participants by supplying them with transcripts of the focus group for review. The five focus group participants reviewed and gave permission to use all recorded material for this study.

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Data Collection and Management

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Since there were three sources of data for this study, collection and management proved to be an important part of organizing the information. I created a folder in my Google drive to organize the data in three separate folders, which I labeled *Reflections, Interviews,* and *Focus Group.* Within the reflections folder, I created subfolders, which I labeled *Reflection #1,*

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59

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Reflection #2, and *Reflection #3*. Since the reflective writing responses were posted in Qualtrics, I accessed them through my personal Qualtrics account. After each round of reflective writing, I created a Google doc for each participant and copied his or her responses onto a Google doc named for each participant. These documents were saved in the subfolder for each reflection.

I used a handheld digital recorder to record individual interviews. Similar to the process described for reflective writing, I created subfolders for each round of interviews, which were labeled *Interview #1, Interview #2,* and *Interview #3*. After each interview, recordings were saved in the appropriate folder, and each file was named for each participant. Audio files were emailed to a transcriber and transcriptions were emailed back in Word documents. These documents were saved in the appropriate subfolders for each round of interviews.

The final data source was the focus group. I managed this data similar to the data generated from interviews. The focus group recording was transcribed and edited for clarity. The digital file was stored in a folder on the Google drive, which was labeled *Focus Group*.

Data Analysis

Once the data were prepared for review, I began analyzing the various documents. I used a method proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) called thematic analysis. They defined thematic analysis as, "a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic" (p. 79).

Thematic analysis distinguishes between inductive thematic analysis, which develops codes and themes from data, and theoretical thematic analysis, which is driven more by the theoretical or conceptual framework (Braun & Clark, 2006). I utilized both approaches in my

analysis of the data. Data analysis followed this process:

- First, I read and reviewed the transcriptions multiple times to familiarize myself with the data.

- Then, I hand coded the data keeping in mind that statements could be coded in different themes simultaneously with a priori themes.

- I paid attention to emerging themes throughout my analysis.

- Relevant quotes and ideas were highlighted and color-coded.

- I created a Coding Glossary, which listed the emerging themes and a brief description of each theme.

- I created a table for each reflective writing and interview. The names of the participants were listed in the first column and emerging themes were listed across the top. I used the table to check the number of times each theme was mentioned in each reflective writing or interview.

The data analysis for this study began after the first set of reflective writings and continued throughout the interview and focus group activity.

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, the question of validity comes down to whether the researchers in fact see what they think they see (Flick, 2014). Additionally, many traditional researchers accept trustworthiness in place of internal and external validity for qualitative studies (Rudestam & Newton, 2001). For this study, I established trustworthiness in three ways. First, I used multiple data sources (i.e. reflective writing, personal interviews, and focus group) not only to triangulate the data, but also to provide an internal check against each other. Since the three data

sources were generated from the same research questions, it was anticipated that the data should validate one another. This proved to be true. Secondly, I conducted a member check with all participants by supplying them with transcripts of their interviews and focus group for review. This gave participants an opportunity to review the transcripts for accuracy and add or delete as they chose. While participants were given this opportunity, all of them gave permission to use the transcripts in their entirety for this study.

Finally, I established trustworthiness by openly stating my own positionality on the topic of spiritual leadership for elementary principals. As a former Catholic elementary principal, I did not recognize my struggles as a spiritual leader until I began to reflect on my experiences. Although I was grounded in my own faith life and viewed the role of spiritual leadership as my moral duty, I was left to navigate much of those responsibilities on my own. When I left the principal role and became an assistant superintendent, principals began opening up to me about their own struggles as spiritual leaders. They looked to me as a model and needed support in intentionally forming themselves as spiritual leaders. In a very real way, I became their voice. As an archdiocesan administrator, I feel a moral imperative to help form and support principals as spiritual leaders. I believe this study offers valuable insight into this topic so that formation programs and levels of support can be created at the diocesan level.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Study Background

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions held by experienced, nonvowed religious elementary principals about their role as spiritual leaders of the school communities. Because spiritual leadership is vital to the role of Catholic school principals, the additional knowledge and formation needed to fulfill that role differentiates Catholic school leadership from other types of school leadership (Nuzzi et al., 2013). The additional job requirement of spiritual leadership requires additional intentional formation for prospective and novice principals and additional efforts to sustain spirituality for experienced principals. This study reviewed and analyzed the principals' understandings of their role as spiritual leaders as well as how prepared they felt to serve in this role. The study also examined suggestions that can be implemented at the diocesan level to nurture and support principals in their role as spiritual leader.

Research Questions

1. What is the lay Catholic elementary school principal's understanding of his/her role as spiritual leader of the school?

2. To what extent do lay Catholic elementary school principals feel prepared to serve as the spiritual leader of their schools?

3. What kinds of supports should diocesan offices offer to sustain principals in their role as spiritual leaders?

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the six participants in this study. The overview is followed by the findings. The findings are organized into three separate sections, which are aligned to my research questions. Themes emerged from both the reflective writings and interviews and are arranged from most prevalent to least prevalent in each section. The chapter ends with a final summary of the findings.

Participant Profile

Participants in this study were lay elementary principals in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. They included:

- Two novice principals (2–5 years of experience)

- Two mid-career principals (6–10 years of experience)

- Two veteran principals (more than 10 years of experience)

It is important to note that these six principals were chosen because they had previously expressed an interest in the topic of spiritual leadership in both professional and personal conversations with me. Figure 1 offers an overview of the participants.

Figure 1. Overview of participants. This figure illustrates that participants represented various levels of experiences and different school realities, e.g. urban vs. suburban, enrollment, and financial stability.

Findings

Research Question 1

Because there was limited research on spiritual leadership in Catholic elementary schools, I wanted to begin by examining the principals' understandings of their role as spiritual leaders. Therefore, my first research question was:

1. What is the lay Catholic elementary school principal's understanding of his/her role as spiritual leader of the school?

To learn how principals understood their role as spiritual leaders, I offered some definitions to frame their thinking for their first reflective writing. Because spiritual leadership is such an amorphous concept, I felt that I needed to concretize the role by offering definitions found in the literature. The first definition came from Ciriello (1994) and stated the four distinct areas on which a Catholic school principal focuses as spiritual leader:

- nurturing the faith development of faculty and staff through opportunities for spiritual growth

- ensuring quality Catholic religious instruction of students

- providing opportunities for the school community to celebrate faith

- supporting and fostering consistent practices of Christian service

Additionally, according to Drahmann (1994) and Rieckhoff (2014), the spiritual leader should be grounded in the history, philosophy, and catechism of the Catholic Church and be able to articulate the Catholic vision for the school. Furthermore, Brownbridge (2009) explained that the role of spiritual leader is "a role of sacred trust and service in which the principal participates in building the Catholic community by nurturing the faith and the spiritual growth of students

66

and staff" (p. 4). Finally, Wallace (2000) concluded that spiritual leadership in Catholic elementary schools includes a broad spectrum of responsibilities, which is integrated into all aspects of school life and cannot be delineated as distinct from their other leadership roles.

Participants were asked to consider the definitions and to reflect on their own experiences to answer the first writing prompt.

Reflective Question 1: What is your understanding of your role as the spiritual leader of your school? Do you agree with the definition as presented in the literature? What would you add to that definition?

In addition to the reflective writing, I conducted the personal interviews with the participants. After their reflective writing was submitted, I met with each participant over the course of two weeks to gain a deeper understanding of their perceptions of their role as spiritual leaders of their schools. Before each interview, I read each principal's reflection and, while the reflections did not alter my interview questions, I found that some participants referred to their own reflections during the interviews. The scripted interview questions were aligned to the first research question and the emerging themes developed from our conversations. In general, most participants resonated with Ciriello's definition of spiritual leadership. However, four new themes emerged from the reflective writing and interviews: role modeling, centrality of the role of spiritual leadership, involvement in the parish community, and personal spirituality. The themes are presented in the following section.

Role modeling. All six participants signaled the importance of being a role model as a spiritual leader. According to the participants, being a role model encompassed modeling spirituality to students, parents, staff, and community members. Beto pointed out that this

important aspect was missing from the definitions offered in the research, and wrote, "The principal's responsibility as the spiritual leader is to be a model of faith through words and actions."

The principals recognized that they are called to be living witnesses of Christ and must lead by example. In her reflective writing, Dolores adamantly stated, "My primary responsibility is to be 'Jesus' to all who enter." She explained in her writing that while she knew that modeling Christ to parents and staff is what she was called to do, it was not always easy when faced with frustration, anger, or resentment. In trying to model Christ to others, she wrote, "When a parent is yelling at me in anger or a teacher is rolling their eyes, I look past the harsh actions, words and tone, look them straight in the eyes and 'Look for Jesus.' I know He is there, as even a parent or teacher filled with anger is a child of God."

According to the participants, being a witness of Christ was realized in many different ways, but the two primary explanations that were shared focused on modeling and leading Catholic prayers and incorporating Catholic traditions and practices into the life of the school.

Leading prayer. All six participants agreed that prayer played an important role in the daily life of Catholic schools. Students prayed at the beginning and end of each day and at various times in between (e.g. before recess and lunch). Weekly assemblies began with prayer, and special prayer intentions were incorporated into the daily announcements. Prayer was so embedded into the daily life of a Catholic school that Claudia referred to the importance of "getting the students into a prayer routine" at the beginning of the school year. Most of the prayers that were mentioned were traditional Catholic prayers such as the Hail Mary, Angelus, and Our Father, but some principals modeled through leading spontaneous prayer at assemblies.

During our focus group, which was held at Frank's school, students' voices came on the intercom at noon to lead the traditional Catholic prayer the Angelus. Frank shared that this practice was done every day and was a part of their school's culture.

When asked what it meant to be a spiritual leader of a school, Beto replied, "A spiritual leader should be able to model what it should look like. One way is obviously through prayer." To model the importance of prayer to his faculty, he put a weekly prayer reflection in his teachers' boxes every Monday. He had been doing this for four years, and it had become a normal part of their week. When he visited classrooms throughout the week, he saw the prayers on teachers' desks with their own notations on them. Some teachers had even thanked him for the prayers because they were able to connect them to their own experiences. He shared that while this had been a positive practice, he would like to expand this routine and actually meet with his faculty on Monday mornings to pray together rather than simply leave the prayer in their boxes.

Beto went on to explain that prayer was used as an instrument to establish a Professional Learning Community:

> One of the things we've had in the last couple of years is an environment of collaboration because it's all new to us. Two years ago was the first time we started meeting weekly so it's all new to us, before we would meet every other week. Prayer has helped tie that in a lot easier than just meeting and going over norms, but before we do, we go over a prayer and a reflection.

Emily also recognized the importance of leading prayer with her staff. She recalled her path to Catholic school leadership and the importance of preparing and leading prayer for her

teachers. "The leading of prayer was probably the first thing that hit me that I was going to have to do better and get all those things together." She admitted that, at times, she had struggled with leading prayer. "You have to be outgoing enough to be able to step up and lead the prayer. I underestimated that, it's huge. To be seen as a person of faith so you're not phony, you're authentic. That's sometimes difficult." Finally, the participants recognized that they must be able to model and lead prayer for parents. This was sometimes a challenge when parents were uncomfortable with prayer or did not value it. Frank told of the transformation of his community through prayer.

> We gather every morning at 8:00 with the entire school, and when we first started hardly any of the parents were there. Now we have almost 100 parents, and we pray together, we talk. I try to help the kids understand maybe something bad that happened or we pray over people. We've had parents going in for surgery and we pray over them, so it's those types of things that get people to say, 'St. Nicholas is a great school with great academics'…but they're here for a different reason.

In addition to leading and modeling prayer, all participants recognized the importance of being a role model by teaching and incorporating Catholic traditions and practices into the daily life of the school.

Catholic practices and traditions. According to the principals in this study, Catholic practices and traditions referred to practicing and participating in the traditions of the Church, specifically attending Mass, praying the rosary, and celebrating feast days of the Church. Throughout the interviews and in the focus group, it became clear that most of these traditions were deeply rooted in the personal spirituality of these principals as they drew on their own

experiences as Catholic school students. Similar to modeling prayer, all six participants

expressed that modeling and incorporating Catholic practices and traditions into the daily life of

the school was an important component to being a spiritual leader.

According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2011), "The celebration

of Mass, as the action of Christ and of the People of God arrayed hierarchically, is the center of

the whole of Christian life for the Church both universal and local, as well as for each of the

faithful individually" (USCCB, 2011). The principals in this study recognized the importance of

the Mass as the cornerstone of the Catholic faith and ensured that they modeled this to their

students. When asked to describe a typical week in their life as a spiritual leader, five of the six

participants mentioned attending Mass with their students. As Beto explained, "For our students,

going to Mass is a fundamental thing that we do as a community." As an extension of this,

Dolores explained the importance of teaching children to not only participate in Mass, but also to

lead various parts of the Mass.

> I have a children's liturgy here and when I can completely empower these little people to
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> help serve Mass from every piece of that Mass, and I have that choir and they cantor that
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> Mass, these are things were said that cannot be done. That's powerful! I look at these
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> kids and I clearly recognize the church belongs to them. They are the future of the
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> church, these little ones. So if I can get them to get excited about Mass and understand
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> why we celebrate Mass and to love the songs that they'll be singing for the rest of their
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> lives, I think we've done okay.

While she believed that the Mass can be a transformative experience for the children, she had

struggled to convince other adults of this. She explained that some priests had questioned why

she cared so much when the children did not know or care what was going on in the Mass. "I butted heads with them because they don't believe young children should bring up the bread and wine. Young children should not lector. I used to challenge them and say, 'Show me where it says that in Canon Law.' And they couldn't."

In addition to celebrating the Mass, other Catholic traditions that were mentioned included praying the rosary, celebrating feast days, and observing the liturgical seasons such as Advent and Lent. The participants expressed a deep connection to these traditions and recognized that many of the traditions were no longer practiced in Catholic homes. As spiritual leaders, they felt a moral obligation to ensure that Catholic practices and traditions were a lived reality at their schools and spent much time incorporating them into the weekly and monthly school calendar. This sentiment not only emerged from the interviews, but was also stated during the focus group. As Frank reflected on his own experiences as a Catholic school student, he recalled the importance of being true to the traditions and practices of the Church.

Sometimes I think we try to change too much and get away from the original message. Innovation and all that is good, but when it comes to Catholic identity and being a spiritual leader, there are certain things that remain that we have to continue.

The next theme, Centrality of the Role of Spiritual Leadership, is an extension of being a role model. The principals who identified the clear understanding of the role of spiritual leadership recognized that this role was incorporated into all aspects of leadership, including being a role model.

Centrality of the role of spiritual leadership. Four of the participants expressed a deep understanding of their role as spiritual leader and how that role was integrated into all aspects of

their leadership. This understanding of the role supported Wallace's (2000) definition of spiritual leadership in that the role of spiritual leadership was not separate from—but integrated into—other leadership roles and responsibilities of the Catholic elementary principal. To illustrate this, Claudia expressed the importance of having a spiritual positionality as a Catholic school leader and allowing that spiritual positionality to enhance all other leadership functions. Additionally, two principals recognized the importance of integrating spiritual leadership into their roles as instructional leaders by focusing on selecting and hiring Catholic teachers and supporting them in their faith formation. Beto stated, "The principal also holds the primary responsibility to ensure quality Catholic religious instruction of students. This can be done through the hiring of faculty and staff that are in harmony with the teachings of the Church, proper resources that support teacher implementation of religion standards, and resources for students."

In the opening paragraph of his first reflective writing, Frank emphatically expressed that the role of spiritual leader was central to every aspect of leadership for a Catholic school principal.

> The spiritual role of the principal, in my opinion, is the most important role a principal has, and it must guide and influence every other of the many jobs and duties of an elementary school principal. It goes very deep, and is the foundation for everything the principal does from the moment she/he turns the key to the gate, to when they get in the car to leave.

From this theme flowed the additional theme of Involvement in the Parish Community. Those principals who had a deep understanding of the centrality of the role of spiritual leadership

recognized that the role was multifaceted and included a connection to the larger parish community.

Involvement in the parish community. As described by the participants, the parish community referred to the relationship between Catholic elementary schools and the parish to which it belonged. It also referred to the relationship between the leaders of the school and parish, namely the principal and pastor. In both the reflective writing and interviews, five of the six participants recognized the importance of the school as a part of the larger parish community. Three of the participants had positive experiences with their pastors and the parish community while two of the principals had negative experiences and expressed a desire for a stronger relationship between the pastor and principal.

The participants who experienced a positive parish-school relationship acknowledged the importance of a healthy and respectful relationship between the school and parish. Frank reflected on how blessed he felt working with pastors who included him in parish leadership by inviting him to serve on the pastoral council. He felt his involvement on the pastoral council helped build community between the parish and school as he was able to give input on pastoral issues that affected the larger community while other members offered input on school issues. He recognized the importance of working closely with his pastor.

> It is almost impossible for the principal to be an effective spiritual leader, who participates in the building up of the parish, unless the pastor and principal are on the same page, and the principal includes the pastor in the life of the school and the pastor does likewise with the principal at the parish.

Emily echoed this sentiment as she explained that the whole community benefited when the pastor and principal collaborated. She said, "The principal must partner with the pastor in faith formation and religious instruction, not only for faculty and students, but also for families." Alicia also supported the importance of the connection between the school and parish in her role as spiritual leader. She wrote, "A true spiritual leader does not have boundaries of only leading the school but also being involved with all parish activities and know each ministry and its purpose in order to set an example." She felt so strongly about building a positive relationship between the school and parish that she started the Morning Glory Coffee Club on Friday mornings, which was an opportunity for parents and parishioners to enjoy coffee, food, and fellowship before and after Friday morning Mass. She even explained that many of the school parents attended Mass on Friday and stayed for breakfast so the coffee club had resulted in transformation and evangelization. These three principals believed that their involvement with the parish and collaboration with their pastors were vital components of their work as spiritual leaders.

Of the principals who had negative experiences with their pastors and parish communities, there was a strong desire to rebuild the relationship. Even though their experiences were challenging, they saw the value in building a united community of faith and recognized that both the school and parish would benefit from such a community. These principals described the relationship between parish and school as negative, separate, and hostile. Dolores stated, "The parish doesn't understand that the school is a ministry of the parish. So they don't want to help the school, they want no part of the school, that's why they don't support us during events." Claudia expressed a similar perspective, "What I have to work on is the pastor and me having a

good relationship where the school is marketed within Mass or just speaking of it." Although both principals expressed frustration over the negative relationship between the school and parish, they also expressed hope for building a stronger relationship in the future.

The final theme that emerged from the first research question was the importance of fostering one's personal spirituality in order to be an effective spiritual leader. This personal spirituality focused on one's relationship with Jesus, one's spiritual journey and personal faith practices.

Personal spirituality. According to the principals in this study, personal spirituality referred to one's own spiritual life. In the reflective writing and personal interviews, all six participants acknowledged that in order to be an effective spiritual leader, they must focus on developing their own spirituality. This view was expressed in the focus group as well. According to the participants, spirituality was difficult to define but can be realized through a personal relationship with Jesus. Participants' personal relationships with Jesus were fostered in various ways including Eucharist, prayer, reflection and meditation, journaling, spiritual reading, and participating in parish life. Principals felt that as spiritual leaders and people of faith, they must spend time with Christ to cultivate a relationship with Him and grow in their faith. As Frank simply stated, "In order to be a good spiritual leader you have to have a personal relationship with Jesus." He expanded on this during the focus group.

I give the analogy of the airplane, when they announce something they always say about the oxygen mask…put it on you first, then help others. You have to help yourself before you can help anybody else. We have a herculean task as principals. The job of the elementary principal has grown larger rhythmically over the years, there's so many

76

different aspects of it now. We have to acknowledge that and no, it's not easy; it's a very

challenging and difficult vocation to be an elementary school principal. And without

taking care of our spiritual life, you'll either burn out or fall apart.

This sentiment was reiterated in various ways by the other participants. Dolores explained that

the more time she spent fostering her relationship with Jesus, the more she recognized Christ's

presence within everyone she met including students, teachers, and parents. This deepening of

her faith changed her relationship with both parents and teachers and enabled her to be a more

effective spiritual leader.

While some participants felt fed by Eucharist and their spiritual lives, others felt that

having faith was challenging and faith crisis occurred. Emily explained that, as a spiritual leader,

it was important to be comfortable in her personal faith journey even when it was challenging. In

the focus group, she stated, "For us to be all those things in all those different areas, we need to

be fed." Likewise, Claudia likened her faith journey to a process, stating, "Having faith isn't

always easy." Even in admitting their struggles, these principals were confident that their own

spiritual journeys would lead them to a deeper relationship with Christ, which would enable

them to better serve their communities.

Conclusion. When asked to reflect on their understanding of their role as the spiritual

leaders of their schools, the principals focused on four different areas: being a role model, having

a clear understanding of the centrality of the role of spiritual leader, developing a relationship

with the parish community, and fostering their own spirituality. The theme of being a role model

emerged in both the reflective writings and interviews and focused on leading prayer and

teaching Catholic traditions. Likewise, the theme of developing a relationship with the parish

community emerged in both the reflective writings and interviews, which indicated the principals' understanding of the role of parish elementary schools in the larger Church. The principals who expressed a deep understanding of their role as spiritual leaders recognized the importance of integrating spiritual leadership into all aspects of their leadership roles. Finally, the principals recognized that they must spend time fostering their own spirituality and relationship with Jesus in order to be effective spiritual leaders of their schools.

The next section explores the second research question, which focused on how prepared the principals felt to serve as the spiritual leaders of their schools.

Research Question 2

The second research question explored the principal's preparation to become spiritual leaders and specifically asked how prepared they felt to serve in that role. The second research question was:

To what extent do lay Catholic elementary school principals feel prepared to serve as the spiritual leader of their schools?

To learn how prepared principals felt to serve as spiritual leaders of their schools, participants were given the following writing prompt.

How prepared do you feel to serve as the spiritual leader of your school? How did your preparation and/or experiences help guide you?

Five principals completed the reflective writing assignment; the sixth principal, Claudia, was unable to complete the assignment due to scheduling conflicts. Additionally, the second round of interviews helped me gain a more comprehensive understanding of the preparation and formation process for each participant. The interview questions were aligned to the second

research question and the themes that emerged from the reflective writing were evident in the interviews. The four themes that emerged were level of preparation, formation programs, impact of life experiences, and leadership as a journey.

Level of preparation. All participants recognized that they were on a spiritual journey and their ability to serve as a spiritual leader was constantly developing. Of the five participants, one did not directly answer the question regarding preparation, two answered that they did not feel prepared, one felt prepared, and one felt well prepared. The two principals who did not feel prepared to serve as spiritual leaders when they began their jobs were the two veteran principals, Frank and Emily. As Frank reflected on his role, he wrote, "I didn't start out feeling prepared. Like anything, we grow, study, learn and reflect which makes us better spiritual leaders." Similarly, Emily wrote that serving as the spiritual leader of the school was the most daunting responsibility of the job because she was not formally trained in theology or liturgy. Both principals recognized that they had grown in their level of confidence and knowledge of the Catholic faith during their journeys. This growth was a result of experience, reflection, prayer, catechetical certification, and spiritual reading.

The two principals who felt either prepared or well prepared to serve as spiritual leaders were the novice principals, Alicia and Beto. Alicia wrote that she felt prepared to serve as a spiritual leader because she had been a catechist at her parish for over 30 years. She believed that the experience of teaching the faith to children prepared her to serve as a spiritual leader to others. Beto wrote that even though he only had five years of principal experience, he felt well prepared to serve as a spiritual leader. He credited his level of preparedness to the coursework embedded in his master's degree in Catholic School Leadership from a Catholic university. Even

though both principals expressed that they felt prepared to serve the role of spiritual leader, they acknowledged that they were on a journey that was shaped by personal experiences and prayer. As Beto wrote, "Although I have grown significantly in this area since my first year as principal, it is an area that is ongoing and will continue to develop in the course of my career."

One of the ways in which the participants prepared for their role as spiritual leader was through formation programs. The following section explains their experiences.

Formation programs. According to the participants, formation programs referred to university courses or programs as well as archdiocesan principal formation programs. Catechetical certification was also included in this theme. Five of the six participants participated in some kind of formation program before they became principals and all five participants found value in these programs. The sixth principal, Dolores, did not have a master's degree and thought that she would not be able to compete in interviews with candidates who had formal training. However, when she was hired as a principal the search committee told her, "You have a passionate spirit that no college can teach you." When I asked Dolores to describe her formal training to serve as spiritual leader of her school, she simply replied, "Have I had formal training? My training has been my life." She firmly believed that her life experiences had served as the training she needed to be a spiritual leader.

Of the five principals who participated in a formation program, only one participated in a program specifically geared towards Catholic school leadership. Beto earned his master's degree in Catholic School Administration from a Catholic university. According to him, the program offered him valuable tools to serve as an effective spiritual leader.

A couple years after I finished the program, I became a principal and I was able to draw

on my catechist course for my first week in faculty meetings. The university did a really

good job, as close enough to the papal documents and also to good basic Catechesis and

what it takes to be a Catechist.

Frank also believed his college coursework had influenced the way he approached

spiritual leadership. He explained that he had a double major in college and one of his majors

was religious studies. He firmly believed that his knowledge of theology and Catholic doctrine as

taught to him in college had a strong influence on his leadership. Frank explained, "Not all of our

principals need a degree in Religious Studies, but certainly the more study that you have, the

better. All of that preparation helps."

Both Emily and Alicia considered Catechetical Certification as formal training to serve

as spiritual leaders. Emily said that when she became a Catholic school principal, she realized for

the first time that her background in the Catholic Church and her own religious training was old

and dated, and she did not feel equipped to handle questions in faith and doctrine—not to

mention serve as a spiritual leader to her school community. She felt that being certified as a

Catechist through the Archdiocese of Los Angeles offered her good knowledge and tools to grow

as a spiritual leader. Likewise, Alicia served as a catechist in her parish for over 20 years before

becoming a Catholic school principal. She felt that teaching catechism had kept her close to

Jesus and when she became a Catholic schoolteacher, she was thrilled to be able to teach religion

every day because it was an "extension of her natural self." Although Alicia appreciated the

value of catechetical certification, she mentioned that her latest recertification opportunity with

other principals did not feed her spiritually, and she looked forward to other opportunities to be formed.

Another way in which the participants were prepared for their role of spiritual leader was through their life experiences. The next section explores this theme and the subthemes that emerged from it.

Life experiences. In this study, the principals described life experiences as their Catholic upbringing, Catholic school experiences, and path to leadership that had shaped the individual participant's spirituality. All six principals shared stories and experiences about their path to leadership and how they were formed by their Catholic upbringing. Because each subtheme included rich descriptions by the participants, each one is explored separately.

Catholic upbringing. During the second round of interviews, all participants expressed that their Catholic upbringing had a profound influence on their faith formation and preparation for their role as spiritual leaders. Each participant spoke of being raised in a faith-filled Catholic family that attended Mass, prayed together, and practiced Catholic traditions. The principals expressed that these foundational experiences at a young age taught them how to practice and model their faith for others. Although the participants shared the same Catholic faith, the stories of their upbringing were unique. Alicia recalled immigrating to the United States from Cuba when she was three years old. Her first memories of prayer were of secrecy and confusion. "I remember praying inside the closet every night. We even had to whisper. I was three years old, my brother was eight and my mom would keep me quiet because people could get 10-15 years in prison for that." When she came to America and attended her first Catholic Mass, she screamed and ran out for fear of being arrested. Once her mother explained that they were in a free

country, she opened the window and yelled, "I love you Jesus! I love you God!" As she explained, being able to practice her faith in a free country led her to want to lead others in the faith.

Similarly, Dolores wrote, "My childhood days were filled with a Catholic faith that was visible in our home, visible in the discipline, visible in prayer, visible in expectations…visible in Catholic values and morals which served as our daily compass." She continued to explain that her Catholic upbringing helped form her as a spiritual leader.

Claudia talked at length about the influence her parents had on her faith formation and preparation for spiritual leadership. She said, "I grew up with such a spiritual family and that has made me who I am as a person. They are really good people and hardworking people and that is what I have in me." She remembered the importance of prayer in her upbringing and how her parents were strong role models. Through their example, she was able to recognize the importance of being a role model to her students and community as a spiritual leader. Beto also recognized the impact his parents had on his formation as a spiritual leader. He shared that his parents instilled in him a respect of the Mass and attending Mass with his eight siblings had a great impact on him. He commented, "I think it all goes back to my parents. My parents were definitely the reason why I love my faith and why I've made the decision as a Catholic to raise my kids in the Catholic faith as well."

Frank also reflected on his Catholic upbringing in a small town in New Jersey. He recognized that the everyday practices and traditions were shared not only in his family, but also in the homes of most of his friends. Therefore, his Catholic upbringing was embedded in all aspects of his life.

It wasn't anything deep. We didn't have bible study but we did certain basic things: we prayed before meals, we said the rosary on trips, we had an Advent wreath, and we had a Nativity scene outside. They all seem like simple things but they were very profound because they meant a lot.

Frank indicated that being surrounded by this Catholic culture had a deep impact on him throughout his life, and he now found himself drawing on his childhood experiences as a spiritual leader.

The next subtheme is Catholic school. This sub-theme overlapped with Catholic upbringing, but also had some distinctly separate details.

Catholic school. In this study, Catholic school referred to the participants' own educational experiences at Catholic school and how those experiences influenced their personal faith formation. This subtheme referred to all levels of Catholic school (i.e. elementary, secondary, and college). Of the six participants, all of them attended Catholic school at some level. Each of these participants shared their thoughts on how Catholic school shaped them as people of faith and spiritual leaders. As spiritual leaders, they explained that they drew on their own experiences from Catholic school and, in some cases, had tried to recreate the same experiences for their students. The principals who attended Catholic elementary school recognized that in their experience, what was taught in school was an extension of what was taught at home. Both Dolores and Frank told similar stories of their childhood in Catholic elementary schools and the seamless connection between school and home. As Dolores explained, "We knew right from wrong, we knew the rules of the Church, what was expected of us, and we knew the consequences of God. So when we started Catholic school the Sisters just

solidified what we knew to be true." Frank echoed a similar thought in his interview, "Everything we learned in school was transferred to home and vice versa. So everything just kind of flowed together." Both principals acknowledged that this was no longer the reality for many of their students which led to a disconnect between home life and school life.

Two participants reflected on their experiences at Catholic colleges and universities and how their gained knowledge had guided their formation as spiritual leaders. Beto did not attend Catholic elementary or high school, but decided to attend a Catholic university for his master's degree in Catholic School Administration. He believed this training was pivotal in helping him become a stronger spiritual leader. Throughout the program, he learned about the history of Catholic schools and the importance of Catholic identity. During our interview, he reflected on the impact of the program.

I still remember the first class when the professor said, "You are the primary Catechist at your school." That's when it hit me. At the time I was teaching Math and Science and I realized that even as a teacher I had to teach Catechism even though I was not teaching Religion formally. That sticks with me to this day. I consider myself a Catechist first, then principal, and teacher.

Frank told of his college experiences with the Irish Christian Brothers at Iona College in New York. He received a BA in Religious Studies from Iona College, which he believed made him a much stronger spiritual leader. He explained that although not all principals need to have a degree in religion or theology, a deeper knowledge of the Catholic faith leads to a deeper ability serve as a spiritual leader. Quite simply he stated, "You need to have an understanding of what you're leading."

85

The final subtheme in this section of life experiences is path to leadership. Because these personal experiences were interwoven with Catholic upbringing and Catholic school, some of the comments and content overlapped with the previous sub-themes.

Path to leadership. When asked to describe how they became a Catholic elementary school principal, five of the participants told of how they were tapped on the shoulder and encouraged by a former principal. For these five principals, the influence of other educational and spiritual leaders guided them on their paths to becoming Catholic elementary principals even when they had not planned on becoming principals themselves. Claudia told of being tapped on the shoulder by her former principal when she was in her eighth year of teaching. When her principal knew she was going to retire, she asked Claudia to apply for the job. Claudia's initial reaction was, "Me? Why? I wasn't ready. I loved teaching. It was my passion." After some reflection, she decided to follow her principal's advice and applied for the job. She admitted that she never wanted to become a principal and even though she knew she was a hard worker, she did not know what the position entailed.

> I felt that it was more about curriculum. I felt that it was more about dealing with teachers and different issues. I didn't know the business portion of it. I didn't know even the spiritual portion of it. I just knew one part of it, if that makes sense, or of what I thought a principal did.

Dolores told of a similar experience and actually being groomed to become a principal early in her career. During her first year of teaching, her principal, Sr. Valencia, pulled her aside and told her that she needed to become a principal. Dolores told her it was too early in her career because she really needed to spend serious time as a teacher in all grade levels. She spent the

next 23 years as a teacher in both Catholic and public schools becoming an expert in curriculum and instruction and participating in a number of teacher leadership opportunities. She described her final teaching assignment as "very difficult" because she experienced many problems with her principal. According to her, the principal was absent much of the time and the community was laden with anger. She stated, "What I saw was poor leadership. Even though at the time I don't think I completely recognized what it was, but what it started doing for me, it started to teach me how to be a leader." Out of this difficult experience came Dolores's desire to become a principal. She said that she was influenced by the Sisters of the Love of God, who taught her, and eventually became her colleagues, as well as a lay principal who recognized leadership qualities in her and encouraged her to become a principal.

Beto's story is similar to that of Claudia and Dolores. He, too, was tapped on the shoulder by a former principal who in conversation simply said, "I think you'd make a good principal." Until then he had never considered school administration, but he trusted and respected his principal, so the seed had been planted. As he explained, "I believed her and I trusted that what she was saying made sense. If she saw something in me, it might mean something. So I took it very seriously." Beto eventually earned his master's degree in Catholic School Administration and took over the principal position at the school where he had been teaching.

The next theme focuses on the spiritual journey of the participants as they continue to develop as spiritual leaders.

Leadership as a journey. In this study, all of the participants recognized that they were on a journey, and their personal faith was constantly evolving. All six participants identified with the journey and referred to their own personal formation in this way. On this journey,

participants shared the joys and challenges of spiritual leadership and how they overcame challenges to continue their own personal journeys. Dolores shared her emotional and personal account of surviving a near-death experience. Her story took place on a Sunday afternoon. She was at a school event surrounded by parents, teachers, and children when she suffered from cardiac arrest; her heart suddenly stopped beating. In the few minutes that her heart stopped beating, Dolores had a spiritual encounter in which she came to realize the enormous task she was called to do as a Catholic school principal. She said that her near-death experience was a constant reminder that she had work to do, and she was definitely sent to do something. Not all principals had such a dramatic life-altering experience, but the simple joys of spiritual leadership helped shaped their journeys.

Highlights of spiritual leadership. When asked to describe the highlights of spiritual leadership, four of the principals responded that the children were a source of joy for them. Emily described it as "wonderful moments with the students." Alicia told the story of how two of her students wanted desperately to be baptized because they were ready to be closer to Christ. She said that now these two children "basically lead the school in prayer because of their heightened spirituality." Claudia felt that being at her school for 14 years was a blessing because she was able to see the children grow up and become successful young men and women who came back to visit the school. After telling the story of a young man who returned from college to visit her she said, "I hope he remembers me as someone who was focused on the faith."

Besides experiencing joy from the students, four of the six principals mentioned that making a difference in the lives of others was one of the joys of spiritual leadership. Beto told the story of how he decided to accept an eighth-grade girl who had been suspended from the

local public school because of her behavior. He decided to give her a chance and he was thrilled at the outcome.

> She came in, she excelled, and she did well. It took her awhile to get used to the academics piece but she was so respectful, so appreciative of being in our school and she was only here for one year and cried more than any of our other eighth graders. She kept telling me, "Thank you for saying yes!"

Beto felt honored that he was able to influence her life in such a positive way simply by being compassionate and offering her a chance. Frank also shared that it brought him joy to see his staff falling in love with Christ. Through his leadership, the staff had become intentional about prayer, reflection, and building community. He even had some teachers who went through the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) and were baptized. As he expressed, "We have to get back to the joy of Catholicism."

While the principals spoke in general about the joys of spiritual leadership, they were more pointed in naming challenges to spiritual leadership.

Challenges of spiritual leadership. When I asked the principals to discuss the challenges of spiritual leadership, four themes emerged: being inundated by other leadership duties; developing teachers' spirituality; experiencing negativity from the pastor; and engaging parents who are non-Catholic or non-practicing Catholics.

Being inundated by other leadership duties. Four of the six participants explained that they had so many other duties as Catholic elementary school principals, there was often little or no time to focus on spiritual leadership. Claudia said that her challenge was being overwhelmed by everything else that she detached herself from her spiritual being and from God.

I have noticed that I have so many things going on in my work life that it has sometimes

drained my personal life and it's kind of like I have nothing to give. Then you kind of

detach yourself from God because you feel like you're so busy, and it's not like you're

mad or angry at God, because I have that strong faith, but it's more that I don't have time.

Claudia was not alone in her experience. Dolores reflected on her near-death experience and how

this affected her as a spiritual leader. She said that she was so fixated on saving her inner-city

school that she lost sight of her own health and spirituality. "I was so busy giving, giving, giving

that I never gave to myself." Emily also recognized that her other leadership responsibilities, and

the demand placed on principals from the archdiocese often took precedence over her role as

spiritual leader. As explained, "The archdiocese gives us so much to do, it always seems like

there's one more thing to fill out. And prayer and looking at our faith sometimes is easy to push

back. But the challenge is to try real hard not to do that." Frank, the most veteran principal in this

study, reflected on the roles of faith, excellence, and stewardship as a Catholic elementary school

principal. He believed the job was a lot easier when he first started 14 years ago because now

there were many more demands. He also commented that there was a huge difference between

elementary and high school principal responsibilities because secondary principals had more

support from vice-principals and department chairpersons. Quite simply, he stated that the

biggest challenge was "making sure you carve out the time for it [spiritual leadership]."

Developing teachers' spirituality. The second challenge identified by the participants

was developing teachers' spirituality. Four of the six participants commented that, while it was a

joy to help form students' spirituality, it was much more challenging to lead the teachers in the

faith. Dolores openly explained that when she interviewed new teachers she had an expectation

90

that they were grounded in the Catholic faith and were familiar with Church doctrine. She

realized that spirituality was personal for each teacher so she tried to work with teachers as

individuals rather than as a group. "One of my goals is to figure out where they are individually

and then see what they need as individuals." She felt that because she had a small school, this

individual approach strengthened the overall spirituality of her faculty. Emily, a veteran

principal, recognized that her younger teachers often had a different set of spiritual practices than

she had. As she explained, "They are not of my generation who used to live and breathe the

liturgical year." She acknowledged that some of them probably did not attend Mass every

Sunday and this changed the contexts of their conversations about teaching the children about the

expectations of being a Catholic. Frank spoke in general about the challenge of "getting the staff

onboard" with the practices and traditions of the Church. He believed that working closely with

the pastor helped the principal in overcoming this challenge, but depending on the culture, it

could take a long time.

 Experiencing negativity from the pastor. The next challenge identified by participants

was the relationship between the pastor and principal. Two principals had negative experiences

with their pastors, and these principals identified that negative relationship as a challenge to

spiritual leadership. Claudia shared that her experience with an unsupportive pastor shook her

faith a bit.

  It's kind of like when you have an authority figure that you look up to, or just an image of

  people that you look up to, and when it falls you question: Is the system cracked or am I

  working for a system that I don't want to be a part of?

Similarly, Dolores experienced negativity from the parishioners and parish staff because the pastor was unsupportive of the school and did not recognize the school as a ministry of the parish. While she acknowledged this as a challenge, she approached her situation as a teaching opportunity, as she expressed, "So we're having to teach, pretty much through Canon law, the role of the school in the life of the parish. And that's been very difficult." The negative relationship between the pastor and principal led to stressful discussions about finances and parish subsidy of the school. As Dolores explained, it took so much time to work through disagreements with the pastor that little time and energy was left to give to her own school community.

Engaging non-Catholic or nonpracticing Catholic parents. The final challenge identified by the participants was engaging parents who were non-Catholic or nonpracticing Catholics. The same four principals who found developing teachers' spirituality a challenge, also identified engaging parents as a challenge. When asked about the challenges she had experienced as a spiritual leader, Alicia told me that most of the challenges came from parents who were non-Catholic but whose children were baptized Catholic. She explained that there was a disconnect between the parent's understanding of the Catholic faith and what was being taught to their children. This disconnect sometimes led to conflict between the school and the family such as the parents not allowing their children to call the pastor Father. Alicia reassured her non-Catholic parents that while the school was open to people of all faiths, the Catholic faith was a lived reality at her school and the children were expected to know the prayers and participate in the daily life of the school. Dolores also explained the challenge of engaging parents who were

not practicing the Catholic faith. While she accepted this challenge wholeheartedly, she was realistic about the scope of her influence.

> I cannot force spirituality on anybody. I can provide the resource and if the resource is me and a story, then so be it. But the challenge of parents will always be there. I know that I cannot be there for all people. I cannot be a spiritual leader for every parent here because many times they want you to do many things in their lives. That I cannot do.

> Both veteran principals, Emily and Frank, also named engaging parents in the faith formation of their children as a challenge. When we were discussing challenges to spiritual leadership, Emily referred to the fact that more and more families did not attend Mass as the "huge elephant in the room." In her experience, most families thought they were passing on the Catholic faith by enrolling their children in Catholic school without extending the Catholic practices and traditions to their homes. Frank agreed with this as he identified his number one challenge as a spiritual leader as involving the parents to support the faith formation of their children.

Conclusion. This section explored the participants' preparation to become spiritual leaders and specifically examined how prepared they felt to serve in that role. The themes in this section were focused on the participants' personal experiences including how their Catholic upbringing and Catholic school experiences had influenced their path to leadership. While the participants expressed that they were shaped by their life experiences, some felt more prepared to serve as a spiritual leader than others did. Additionally, the various formation programs experienced by the principals were described and explored. Finally, the principals' spiritual journeys were examined in the context of the joys and challenges to spiritual leadership. While

the challenges were many, the participants continued to express a love for the work they were called to do.

Research Question 3

The final research question focused on the various supports and resources principals needed from their diocesan offices to sustain them in their role as spiritual leaders. As such, the third research question was:

What kinds of supports should diocesan offices offer to sustain principals in their role as spiritual leaders?

To gain insight into what principals needed to assist and strengthen themselves as spiritual leaders, participants were given the following writing prompt.

What kinds of support would you like the archdiocese to offer to sustain you specifically in your role as spiritual leader?

Additionally, the third round of interviews offered me greater insight into what principals needed to help sustain themselves as spiritual leaders. For these final questions participants voiced their opinions in three areas: (a) Existing resources offered by the archdiocese, (b) Suggested resources for principals, (c) Other resources. All six participants participated in the final reflective writing assignment and final round of interviews.

Existing resources offered by the archdiocese. When I asked the principals what supports the archdiocese offered to develop them as spiritual leaders, their answers focused on two areas: retreats and prayers at meetings. At the time of this study, the Department of Catholic Schools (DCS) offered one principal retreat each school year. Five of the six participants felt that this annual retreat was the main support offered by the archdiocese. The principal retreat was an

optional one-day spiritual retreat offered during the week. All five of these principals felt that the retreat was valuable and nurtured them as spiritual leaders. Beto offered his feedback on the most recent principal retreat.

> The spring retreat is the best opportunity because it gives you a chance to reflect on what the year looked like. And I think the fact that it's offered with other principals is just so powerful. Unless there is something else going on in my calendar, I'm going to attend the rest of my life as a principal. Chalk it up to one of my highlights, being able to share that moment with the DCS staff that was there and the principals that were sharing as well.

Claudia felt the principal retreat held in May 2016 was so inspirational that she wanted the archdiocese to offer an optional two day retreat as well. She wrote, "After the retreat I felt refreshed and new." Alicia also attended the retreat and felt that it was "spiritually fulfilling."

While five of the participants considered the prayer services at the principal meetings as a source of spiritual support, their answers reflected mixed opinions. Dolores felt that the supports offered by the archdiocese were "almost nonexistent." She went on to comment that, while she appreciated the prayer services at principal meetings, not enough time was spent in prayer as compared to other meeting topics. Frank also believed that while a good effort was made by the DCS staff to prepare and lead prayer at meetings, he commented that "faith and stewardship kind of get the short stick." Beto held a different opinion and considered the prayer services a type of "mini-retreat" in which he was given time to reflect, pray, and share with colleagues. To him, this was very valuable. Emily also expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to pray with colleagues noting, "It is a tough time to do it and it's a big crowd."

95

Besides the principal retreat and prayers at meetings, other supports identified by the participants included catechetical formation and additional resources (i.e., prayers, websites, reflections) that were emailed to principals throughout the year. Both participants who mentioned these supports felt a great appreciation for the efforts made by DCS.

Suggested resources for principals.

Formation for spiritual leaders. In an effort to determine what resources principals needed to be formed and sustained as spiritual leaders, I asked the participants to first reflect on their experiences and share what supports they wished they would have had to develop them as spiritual leaders. The scope of answers varied, which indicated that a one size fits all approach was not effective. The participants' responses are arranged by years of experience as their answers seemed to be influenced by the number of years they had been on the job.

Novice principals. Alicia, a novice principal, felt that it was important for new principals to receive more focused formation on scripture and Church doctrine. She also thought there was not enough emphasis placed on Religion standards and outcomes and she did not feel equipped to lead her faculty in this area. Beto, also a novice principal, thought that principal onboarding should begin with a spiritual retreat to set the tone for the new life of a principal. As he reflected, "I didn't have that as a first year principal, but I would have liked it."

Midcareer principals. The midcareer principals offered a variety of suggestions for formation for new principals. Dolores agreed with Alicia that there should be more focus on Religion standards for new principals. She felt this was an area that she had to figure out on her own. Claudia thought that a mentor principal would have been helpful, especially when trying to navigate the many responsibilities that a principal must bear.

96

Veteran principals. The two veteran principals, Emily and Frank, felt that the DCS had improved in this area and offered new principals more support than they experienced. As Emily shared, "The things that exist now such as reflections at principal meetings, retreats, and emailed resources were not around 12-13 years ago. I really felt like I was out here swinging in the wind my first couple of years." Frank shared that in his conversations with new principals, he was under the impression that there was more faith formation than he received.

Sustaining spiritual leadership. As a continuation of this theme, I asked the principals to identify supports they needed to sustain themselves as spiritual leaders. Once again, the participants expressed the importance of retreats. Additionally, the participants expressed a desire for more opportunities to engage with other principals on topics of spirituality. Finally, the participants indicated a desire for spiritual formation as well as personal support. The participants defined personal support as a spiritual director, their assistant superintendent, or a principal mentor.

Four of the six participants expressed additional principal retreats would help sustain them spiritually. Alicia said that she would love to have retreat opportunities offered more than once a year and would even appreciate a silent retreat because there was no time to think and reflect while being a principal. Claudia would also like to see more retreats and believed that more principals would participate if it was offered more than once a year. She wrote, "More optional day retreats or even overnight retreats would be greatly appreciated." Dolores agreed with this and said that "more timely" retreats would be appreciated. When I asked her to explain what she meant by this, she answered, "Mini-retreats once a month because I know we have the big one. I like something that's more immediate so we're not waiting for so long because the

load we carry is instantaneous from that day." She also suggested that developing a team of principals to prepare the retreats would serve as a forum for new ideas. Frank expanded on the idea of the annual principal retreat and would like to see the Department of Catholic Schools encourage each deanery to take a one-day retreat as well.

The next suggestion made by the participants was spiritual formation and training. In both the reflective writing and interviews, four of the six participants felt this was an area in which they needed additional support. Beto compared spiritual formation and training to other professional development opportunities. He felt that since professional development in curriculum and instruction made him a stronger instructional leader, then training in spirituality would help make him a stronger spiritual leader. As he explained, "I realized that if principals attended PD's where the intention was good spiritual leadership, where you had experts modeling what a good spiritual leader looks like, then we would able to identify it because there's something there that's tangible." Emily also desired training opportunities and likened this to "the training offered for parish leaders." She further reflected, "Since principals are called upon to lead prayer, direct religious instruction, counsel and serve as 'managers' for the faith formation in our schools, I would appreciate training to assist and guide me with those things."

Dolores felt that the archdiocese had not devoted enough time to forming principals as spiritual leaders.

> At a minimum, the same level of time and commitment should be dedicated to faith
> formation as is given to curriculum development. The Archdiocese of Los Angeles,
> Department of Catholic Schools, places tremendous importance on curriculum with
> professional development readily available. Often faith is lost as the emphasis for data

with the STAR standardized testing is clearly more important than forming stewards of the faith.

While Frank agreed that more spiritual formation was needed, he suggested that spiritual formation and training could be included in already-existing systems such as deanery meetings or principal meetings.

Another suggestion made by the participants was to have more opportunities to engage with other principals on topics pertaining to spiritual leadership. Four of the six participants felt that additional opportunities would help support them as spiritual leaders. These opportunities should be distinct from retreats and could be embedded into already-existing workshops or meetings. Beto felt strongly about this.

> I would like the archdiocese to continue to provide opportunities to engage in spiritual community with other principals. This opportunity does not necessarily need to be in the form of a retreat, but rather in any community setting. For example, many of my spiritual "breakthroughs" as a principal have come in the All Principals' Meetings.

Alicia was more specific and suggested that the archdiocese help form a spiritual group for principals to meet monthly to discuss different topics related to spiritual leadership.

Finally, principals expressed that they would like additional personal support. As defined by the participants, this personal support could be delivered by an assistant superintendent, principal mentor, or spiritual director. Three of the participants felt this kind of support would help sustain them as spiritual leaders. Claudia felt that the assistant superintendent should take on this role and offer more spiritual support.

Sometimes I feel like I only get a call from my assistant superintendent if there's a complaint or if I miss something or do something wrong. I feel like I need to hear that I'm doing a good job. I know that's a little bit selfish, but I need to hear it sometimes.

Beto suggested that spiritual support could come from a mentor principal who had a strong spirituality and would like to support other principals in their spirituality. He told me about his mentor principal who was a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur and how she supported his spirituality in a "gentle and nurturing way."

Dolores felt strongly that the archdiocese should assign spiritual directors to principals. She thought it would be beneficial if priests in the deanery would serve in this capacity. When I asked if she thought a layperson could serve in this capacity, she gave a thoughtful reply.

It would have to be the right layperson. I know for me personally, I would really have to have a sense of their strong faith; it would have to be a strong connection. Whereas a priest for me is almost automatic because of who they are and what they represent.

She also expressed that the archdiocesan leaders needed to do a better job at supporting their principals spiritually. She wrote, "Our Catholic faith is communal yet, as a principal there is no community; there is a tremendous gap between the Department of Catholic Schools personnel and those who are in the trenches doing the daily work." She further expressed that the archdiocese needed to be more present to the principals and offer words of support and gratitude so that principals were not left to struggle alone.

Other resources. To gain insight into how principals sustained themselves as spiritual leaders, I asked them to share what supports they got from outside the archdiocese, including support from other principals. Again, because the answers were varied, a central theme did not

emerge. However, the various sources of support included personal prayer, spiritual director, family, pastors, and other principals.

Alicia replied that she found support through personal prayer and reflection. This was shared in her interview and restated in the focus group. She did not feel that other principals were a source of support for her; instead, she felt that she was in "the outside of the circle" of her colleagues because of her keen interest in developing as a spiritual leader. She described the lack of spirituality in her deanery meetings.

> We do have opening prayer, but spirituality is not part of the agenda. I feel that I'm more spiritual, but then again you can't force it on everybody. It's not that I don't get along with any of them, I get along with all of them but spirituality is never a topic.

Beto felt blessed to have a spiritual director who helped him grow as a spiritual leader. He shared that his spiritual director had been instrumental in recognizing the power of the Holy Spirit in both his personal and professional life. Furthermore, he felt supported by the solidarity and presence of his fellow principals.

For Claudia, her family as well as physical activity brought her closer to God and helped her stay in touch with her own spirit. In describing her exercise routine, she said, "I feel like I have a really close connection with God, that my time doing that is kind of like talking to God. I'm struggling, this is what's going on, and it's physical and spiritual at the same time." While she believed that principals want to support one another, she felt they everyone was drowning, so they were all operating "in a little bubble."

Dolores commented that she sustained her own spirituality through spiritual readings, journaling, and personal retreats. She said that she was very private about her spirituality, but

found support from other principals who shared her passion and desire to grow in their own spirituality.

> I gravitate toward those who understand vocation, understand prayer, have a level of integrity and ethical behavior; really, it's a moral compass for me. So I become very selective. I'm very private and those I let into my inner circle, I equate into being disciples, really have to have an understanding of faith.

Emily did a lot of spiritual reading and was active in her parish; both of these activities helped sustain her spiritually. She found great support from other principals and appreciated the sharing of ideas at deanery meetings, although she admitted, "Prayer things are a little less frequently discussed than the nuts and bolts things."

Finally, Frank found support through his pastor as well as a wide network of other people. He strongly believed that developing a support system was vital to principals. He said, "You do need a support system. It's very difficult. I think it's one of the most challenging pieces of being a principal for spiritual leadership. So I think you do need a support system there to help you." He also commented on the importance of making time to pray. Each day when he arrived at school, he went to his office, turned on the light, sat at his desk, and prayed with his office door wide open. This was how he described it to me:

> When I come into the office, the first thing I do is start with prayer, so it's either a Scripture reading or a short reflection. The office is very visible, I'm not showing off that I'm doing that--I could really go to the Church and do that so nobody would see me, or lock myself in the bathroom. I'm not doing it to show off, but I'm doing it so people know that prayer is important to the leadership of the school.

He also found great support from other principals, especially those within his deanery. He joked that principal meetings were like support groups "because we're all going through the same things."

Conclusion. This final section was aligned to the third research question and offered the principals in this study an opportunity to express what they needed from their archdiocesan office to sustain themselves as spiritual leaders. In both the reflective writing and interviews, the principals overwhelmingly felt that additional retreat opportunities would be welcome and beneficial to all principals. In suggesting resources for both new and existing principals, spiritual retreats emerged as a theme as well as additional opportunities to engage with other principals on topics pertaining to spiritual leadership, spiritual formation, and personal support in the form of a spiritual director or assistant superintendent. All of the participants found support from outside the archdiocese. The various sources of support included personal prayer, spiritual director, family, pastors, and other principals.

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter began with a description of the six principal participants in this study. The findings were organized into three separate sections that were aligned to my research questions. In the first section, participants were asked to reflect on their understanding of their role as the spiritual leaders of their schools. Their answers focused on four different areas: being a role model, having a clear understanding of the centrality of the role of spiritual leader, developing a relationship with the parish community, and fostering their own spirituality. The participants felt strongly that being a role model was an important component to spiritual leadership as this theme emerged in both the reflective writings and interviews. Likewise, the theme of developing a

relationship with the parish community emerged in both the reflective writings and interviews, which indicated the principals' understanding of the role of parish elementary schools in the larger Church. In general, the participants recognized that they must spend time fostering their own spirituality in order to be effective spiritual leaders of their schools.

In the second section, the participants reflected on their preparation to become spiritual leaders and examined how prepared they felt to serve in that role. The principals shared their personal experiences including their Catholic upbringing and Catholic school experiences and discussed how these experiences influenced their path to leadership. While the participants expressed that they were shaped by their life experiences, some felt more prepared to serve as a spiritual leader than others did. This section also explored the joys and challenges to spiritual leadership as described by the participants.

The final section offered the participants an opportunity to reflect on what they needed from their archdiocesan office to sustain them in their role of spiritual leadership. The principals expressed the desire for additional retreat opportunities as well as additional opportunities to engage with other principals on topics pertaining to spiritual leadership. Participants also felt that spiritual formation and training would help sustain them as spiritual leaders.

While most of the principals recognized that the archdiocese offered an annual principal retreat and prayer services at principal meetings, participants expressed various opinions as to the effectiveness of these efforts. Participants discussed the need for additional spiritual formation and personal support in the form of a spiritual director or assistant superintendent. Finally, all of the participants recognized their need to find spiritual support from outside the archdiocese including personal prayer, spiritual director, family, pastors, and other principals.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Purpose of the Study

I truly felt the purpose of this study was fulfilled when I heard one of my participants reflect on his participation in this study on spiritual leadership. At the end of each interview, I asked the participants if there was anything else they wanted to share about the topic of spiritual leadership. Beto shared a powerful message that has stayed with me throughout the course of this study.

> People need to know that you are doing this work. I would've never thought this type of research could be conducted if it weren't for you choosing me to support you in this journey of yours. We say that we always have faith first, but as a principal we're told all the time, "You're the instructional leader; you're the steward of the school," or "You're the primary Catechist." But I think when you framed the term spiritual leader, that's when it hit me "I *am* a spiritual leader." That's a big responsibility. Thank you for framing it for me.

Thus, this dissertation told the story of six Catholic school principals who represented so many other Catholic school principals who answered the call to serve their Church in the way they knew how. My deepest desire for these principals is to support them in the ways that they need, and I feel it is my moral imperative to continue to work toward creating better training, formation, and resources for them. I will continue to be in discussion with the bishops about taking my recommendations for lay leadership training seriously, and, as I will note in the

recommendations later on, I plan to use this research as a springboard for a resource book on spiritual leadership for Catholic school principals.

Research Questions

1. What is the lay Catholic elementary school principal's understanding of his/her role as spiritual leader of the school?

2. To what extent do lay Catholic elementary school principals feel prepared to serve as the spiritual leader of their schools?

3. What kinds of supports should diocesan offices offer to sustain principals in their role as spiritual leaders?

The next section, the discussion of findings, is organized by the three research questions, and followed by recommendations based on my analysis, limitations, and recommendations for future research. The chapter ends with an epilogue in which I share a personal reflection about this study.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1

Updated definition of spiritual leadership. In the first research question, participants were asked to reflect on their understanding of their role as spiritual leaders of their schools. According to Ciriello (1994), in the context of Catholic schools, the role of spiritual leader focuses on four distinct areas: (a) nurturing the faith development of faculty and staff through opportunities for spiritual growth, (b) ensuring quality Catholic religious instruction of students, (c) providing opportunities for the school community to celebrate faith, and (d) supporting and fostering consistent practices of Christian service (Ciriello, 1994). This definition has been

widely accepted by Catholic school leaders over the past twenty years, and while participants initially agreed with the definition of spiritual leadership as presented in the literature, it became clear through the reflective writing and interviews that there were missing elements in the lived reality of these principals. Quite simply, the definition is incomplete because it only addresses part of the role of spiritual leadership. Findings from this study indicated that in the past 20 years, the scope of spiritual leadership had expanded and so, this discussion will identify what principals need in the scope of spiritual leadership and recommendations for how these needs might be addressed.

Findings from this study indicated that there are three additional areas to include in the role of spiritual leader. These are: (a) serving as a companion to parents in teaching and modeling the Catholic faith to their children, (b) participating in the life of the parish, and (c) practicing self-care to nurture their own spirituality. These additional areas reflect the realities that Catholic school principals face in today's world and will be further addressed in the recommendations section.

The next section discusses three additional findings from the first research question. These findings include opportunities to role model through Catholic social teaching, the importance of a healthy relationship between school and parish, and the need for spiritual renewal for principals.

Role modeling through Catholic social teaching. Findings from this study were similar to those found by Belmonte and Cranston (2009) in which principals felt that they nurtured the Catholic identity of their schools through their daily actions which included role modeling and practicing and teaching the Catholic faith (Belmonte & Cranston). While the participants felt that

role modeling was a vital component to spiritual leadership, they also expressed the challenges they faced in modeling the faith to others. These challenges were constant and included difficult parents, non-Catholic teachers, and negative experiences with their pastors. Because the challenges were daily, role modeling the faith had become more and more difficult to sustain at their school sites. The constant challenges led some of the participants to question how much longer they could continue to do this work.

Interestingly, while the participants focused on role modeling as realized by leading prayer and practicing Catholic traditions, there was no direct mention of modeling social justice through Catholic social teaching. Half of the participants mentioned the importance of modeling and instilling a sense service to their communities, but the acts of service were explained as acts of charity and mercy rather than social transformation. Since the topic of social justice did not specifically come through in the interviews, I asked the participants a pointed question during the focus group. Answers varied from modeling acts of kindness and mercy to donating food and blankets to the homeless. While these acts of charity are important and meaningful, they focus on a hierarchical notion that we are to give to others rather than be one with others. This indicated that the participants had a traditional view of Christian service, which focused more on acts of charity rather than social justice. It follows that Catholic school students may not be learning the true meaning of Catholic social teaching. Role modeling for the students without using the lens of Catholic social teachings does not fully expose Catholic school students to the Church's teachings on the life and dignity of the human person. Without this lens, students may grow up without a true understanding that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. Explicit training for principals in this area must be pursued.

This past year, I conducted a training module for 20 first-year principals, which focused on connecting Catholic social teaching to school service projects. While the new principals were appreciative for the insight and connection to service projects, they were also completely overwhelmed by the notion of Catholic social teaching. For many of them, this was the first time they had given any thought to framing service projects in Catholic social teaching. As new principals who have recently stepped out of the classroom, this experience further indicated that students were not learning about Catholic social teaching because teachers and principals were not fully educated on this topic themselves. In moving forward, all principals must be guided and instructed on how to integrate and model Catholic social teaching into the daily life of the school. These teachings will help shape students so that they may grow up with a true understanding that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This recommendation is in direct alignment to the statement by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (1998) as discussed in Chapter 2 (USCCB, 1998).

Parish community: A vital relationship. Through both the reflective writing and interviews, the principals clearly understood the role of the parish elementary school in the larger Church. The veteran principals, Emily and Frank, had positive working relationships with their pastors and lead schools that had healthy enrollments. These veteran principals had a clear understanding of the parish school in relation to the larger parish and felt supported by their pastors. The principals participated in different ministries within the parish and felt a true connection to the community. Although this was a very small sample, this finding indicates that when Catholic schools were supported by the entire parish, the school can benefit from a healthy culture in which it can become more viable and sustainable. It is also important to note that the

two veteran principals were the only two who felt more supported and more prepared to serve as spiritual leaders. The principals who had difficult relationships with their pastors struggled with low enrollment, unhealthy school climates, and limited resources. Their experiences directly supported findings from Belmonte and Cranston (2009) who explained that a negative working relationship between the pastor and principal can serve as an obstacle to building an authentic educational and faith community (Belmonte & Cranston). This reality did not only wear on the daily leadership capacities of these principals, but also on the school's financial viability. These principals felt worn out by the ongoing lack of support from their pastors and the entire parish community; it was a constant fight for them. In looking at the future of these struggling schools, there must be consideration of the parish leadership as well. Principals of Catholic elementary schools cannot be expected to successfully lead a school without the spiritual and practical support of the entire parish community, especially the pastor.

Spiritual renewal. In general, the participants recognized that they must spend time fostering their own spirituality in order to be effective spiritual leaders of their schools. In a recent homily to the elementary principals in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, the priest told the story of how seminarians are taught the Latin phrase *Nemo potest dare quod non habet,* which means, "You cannot give what you do not have." These words support my findings as the participants recognized the importance of feeding their own spirituality so that they would be able to foster and nurture spirituality in others. These findings were similar to those found by Drago-Severson (2012) in which both Catholic and public school principals employed a variety of strategies for self-renewal in light of the complex nature of their leadership work. Furthermore, these principals expressed a desire for engaging in ongoing reflective practice with

colleagues to support their own development, sustainability, and renewal (Drago-Severson, 2012). These findings also support the theme of Contemplative Practice as noted in my literature review which emphasizes personal reflection on gospel values and Church traditions in the decision-making process (Schuttloffel, 2013). While the participants acknowledged the importance of fostering their own spirituality, one of the biggest challenges to doing so was lack of time. Because of the many leadership responsibilities of these principals, they felt spiritually drained on some days and knew that they needed to refuel. If not addressed, these feelings could lead to burnout or ineffectiveness, which could be detrimental to the entire school community. This is further evidence that there must be more formation and renewal opportunities for principals throughout the year to sustain them as spiritual leaders.

Research Question 2

For the second research question, the participants reflected on their preparation to become spiritual leaders including how prepared they felt to serve in that role. Overall, the participants did not feel prepared to serve as spiritual leaders of their communities. While some felt more prepared than others, they all acknowledged that additional training, formation, and support would strengthen their knowledge and capacity to serve this role. Even with formation programs as identified by participants, there was still a feeling of inadequacy. While these principals were heroic in their efforts to lead their communities and were doing the best they can, they needed more. It was clear the participants embraced the principles of servant leadership as discussed in Chapter 2 in that they emphasized serving others before themselves and provided support to their school communities without expectation of acknowledgement (Black, 2010). For the most part, the principals based much of their spiritual leadership on their own experiences as

111

students and teachers. While their experiences and wisdom were valuable they were not always informed by data and research, so formation and training is essential.

The role of spiritual leadership. In general, the participants understood that spiritual leadership was meant to be central to all other leadership responsibilities. This understanding supported Wallace's (2000) definition of spiritual leadership in that the role of spiritual leadership is not separate from, but integrated into other leadership roles and responsibilities of the Catholic elementary principal. The understanding expressed by the participants that spiritual leadership is central to all other leadership responsibilities supported the theme of Mission-Centered Leadership as discussed in my literature review. As such, these findings were similar to those found by Rieckhoff (2014) in which Catholic school principals felt that their role of spiritual leader guided their work and served as a lens through which all leadership decisions were made (Rieckhoff). However, while the participants recognized and embraced the importance of integrating aspects of spiritual leadership into all of their leadership activities, they did not feel fully prepared to do so. They were aware that as spiritual leaders, they had a direct impact on the Catholic identity of their schools, but they were not fully equipped to carry out the role in its entirety. Without proper formation and training, principals may begin to separate spiritual leadership from their other leadership responsibilities, which could have an adverse effect on the Catholic identity of their schools as discussed by Belmonte and Cranston (2009).

Relationship with pastor. As lay leaders, it became clear that these principals were not prepared to negotiate their positionality within the parish community. For example, they were not prepared to have to fight with the pastor about what the school deserves as part of the overall ministry of the parish. This finding is supported by the literature that identified the pastor-

112

principal relationship as a major challenge of spiritual leadership (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Durow & Brock, 2004; Rieckhoff, 2014). As such, there must be training in spiritual leadership about how to negotiate with the primary spiritual leader at the site, namely the pastor. As a former principal and current assistant superintendent who works directly with principals, a negative relationship between the pastor and principal can lead to a level of stress that affects the entire school community. This, in turn, could result in ineffective leadership at both the school and parish.

During the Leadership Formation Program for first year principals within the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, new principals were guided on meeting with the pastor to discuss his preferences for school masses, meetings, and sacramental preparation. While this was an important first step in forming a relationship with the pastor, few tools were given to train principals to negotiate with the pastor in times of conflict or disengagement. This is a need.

Lack of time and training. One of the reasons these principals did not feel prepared to serve as spiritual leaders is that they simply did not get enough of anything. They did not get enough formation, time for personal reflection, or time for solidarity. They expressed a desire for more principal retreats because they were only offered once a year. During the monthly deanery meetings, the participants noted that most of the time was spent on instructional leadership and financial management, not on spiritual leadership. At the general principal meetings, the participants recalled that while there were group prayer services, there was not enough time to go deeper because there was so much business to cover. During the focus group, Frank explained the importance of support from other principals.

I always joke about the principal meeting at the Cathedral; it's so hard to get the

principals to come back from a break. Why? Because we feel support from one another.

If you're ever in the coffee line it's like a support group. And we're all talking about

things happening at school and it makes people feel good. So the support in that system is

very important.

Since principals found great solace in each other, creating opportunities for praying and sharing

should be a priority for the archdiocese. Archdiocesan leaders have not adequately created a

culture of spirituality for our principals. There was limited time on agendas for faith topics and

not enough time was given to principals to reflect, renew, and grow in their spirituality. This

sends a message to principals that spiritual leadership is secondary to instructional leadership and

financial management. Being a principal is a lonely job and there must be more opportunities for

principals to participate in solidarity with one another. These opportunities should not be driven

by business items, but by faith and spirituality. In the ever changing and challenging job of

Catholic elementary school principal, the burden of lack of time is evident.

Life experiences. While the participants recognized the importance of formal training, it

was clear that principals drew on their own life experiences in Catholic school and home to be

spiritual leaders. This finding was similar to those found by Schuttloffel (2013) who explored

contemplative practices of Catholic school principals in the universal Catholic Church. Her study

indicated that Catholic school principals tend to create a Catholic culture within their schools that

reflects their own personal Catholic identity. The data indicated that a person's individual

Catholic identity which is shaped by that person's story, experiences, and community, had a

direct impact on the type of Catholic culture created at a school (Schuttloffel, 2013). Findings

from this study corroborated these conclusions in that all participants drew on their life experiences to shape their individual approaches to spiritual leadership. This indicated that if these principals did not have a previous understanding of their experience of spiritual leaders as children, they would not be leaders themselves.

Catholic schools grow leaders. Because each participant attended Catholic school at some level and were shaped by their childhood experiences, it can be concluded that Catholic schools nurture and grow Catholic leaders. The participants recognized this responsibility of producing future Catholic leaders and they felt the pressure of creating such leaders. However, the principals were very much aware that even though they were shaped by their experiences in Catholic school and Catholic upbringing, most of their students were not being raised in the same Catholic culture in which they were raised. This means that the ground is shifting under them as the people of the Church are changing, and they, as spiritual leaders, have to meet their evolving needs. Participants recognized that while their Catholic upbringing and Catholic school experience gave them a solid foundation in their faith, the Church is changing and they cannot rely specifically on their own experiences. While their childhood and school experiences had a positive outcome in leading them to be leaders themselves, their traditional views and foundations in the Catholic Church have not fully adjusted to meet the contemporary challenges in the Church. Additional formation is necessary for these principals to grow and nurture their own spirituality so that they can successfully grow future Catholic leaders.

Challenges with non-Catholic parents. In an effort to more fully understand the participants' childhood experiences, I asked them who their role models were as spiritual leaders; every one of them told me it was their parents or grandparents. This finding has a variety of

implications. First, it can be concluded that early family experiences have a direct impact on shaping spirituality and leadership in one's life, and because their students do not always practice Catholic prayers and traditions at home, the participants felt a huge responsibility to ensure the students were getting this formation at school. This sometimes became a burden to the principals because one of the challenges they faced was lack of support from non-practicing or non-Catholic parents. Without the support or reinforcement from home, this challenge led principals to feel solely responsible for the children's faith formation. In my work with principals, I discovered that for those principals who did not have positive relationships with their pastors, the challenge of non-practicing or non-Catholic parents was further exacerbated. When problems arose with these parents because of a lack of understanding or support of the mission of Catholic schools, it was oftentimes difficult for principals to go to their pastor for support because he did not see the parents participating in Sunday Mass and, therefore, did not feel the need to engage with them. This lends itself to additional levels of conflict and burden for the principals. Therefore, in the changing landscape of our Catholic schools where the number of nonpracticing or non-Catholic families is increasing, it is imperative that Catholic school principals receive training and support themselves so that they can companion parents in teaching and modeling the Catholic faith to their children in a loving and meaningful way.

Research Question 3

The final research question offered the participants an opportunity to reflect on what they needed from their archdiocesan office to sustain them in their role of spiritual leadership. The principals expressed the desire for additional retreat opportunities as well as additional opportunities to engage with other principals on topics pertaining to spiritual leadership.

116

Participants also felt that spiritual formation and training would help sustain them as spiritual leaders.

Suggested resources. While most of the principals recognized that the archdiocese offered an annual principal retreat and prayer services at principal meetings, participants expressed a desire for additional spiritual formation and personal support in the form of a spiritual director or assistant superintendent dedicated to nurturing their faith lives. Overwhelmingly, the participants mentioned the important role the annual principal retreat plays in nurturing them as spiritual leaders, but they agreed that one retreat was just not enough. Participants suggested a variety of retreat options ranging from monthly mini-retreats to weekend overnight retreats. Additionally, participants expressed a deep desire for more formalized spiritual formation and training. Throughout this study, the principals came to realize that as professionals, they felt obligated to participate in professional development in instructional leadership and managerial leadership, but the thought of professional development or formation in spiritual leadership never crossed their minds. Most of them pursued this formation and nurturing on their own. This indicated that it had been taken for granted that Catholic school principals came with a certain level of spiritual formation when in reality, this was not the case. They were working hard to maintain Catholic identity in the way they knew how and many times they were struggling to fulfill the role of spiritual leadership with little guidance from the archdiocese.

Recommendations

In reference to the updated definition of spiritual leadership as presented earlier in the chapter, there is need for specific training in three distinct areas: (a) Serving as a companion to

parents in teaching and modeling the Catholic faith to their children, (b) Participating in the life

of the parish, and (c) Practicing self-care to nurture their own spirituality.

Serving as a Companion to Parents

One of the challenges to spiritual leadership as identified by the participants was

engaging parents who were non-Catholic or nonpracticing Catholics. This finding was similar to

those found by Schuttloffel (2013), which indicated that a shared challenge for Catholic school

principals across the nation was engaging parents who had different faith beliefs and practices

than traditional Catholics (Schuttloffel). While the mission of Catholic schools of supporting

parents as they transmit the faith to the next generation of believers has not changed, (Sacred

Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, 1982), the lived reality of Catholic schools does not

always reflect that mission. As such, when parents do not reinforce or support the teachings of

the Catholic Church at home, principals feel solely responsible for the children's faith formation.

Therefore, as the number of nonpracticing or non-Catholic families in Catholic schools is

increasing, Catholic school principals must be supported to face this changing reality. This will

offer them the guidance they need to meet parents where they are in their own spiritual journeys

and companion them in teaching and modeling the Catholic faith to their children so that they

may carry out the mission of the Church.

Participating in the Life of the Parish

As discussed earlier in the chapter, the principals in this study clearly understood the

role of the parish elementary school in the larger Church. Those principals who had strong ties to

the parish felt their strong relationship was beneficial to both the school and parish communities.

Additionally, those principals who had a negative relationship with the parish community

continued to work hard at building a positive connection as they recognized the importance of such a relationship. Findings from this study indicated that when the parish and school existed separately, there was a disconnect in fulfilling the educational mission of the Church. This finding was similar to those found by Belmonte and Cranston (2009) which indicated that a disconnect between the school and parish, namely the principal and pastor, may serve as a roadblock to building an authentic educational and faith community (Belmonte & Cranston). Because the relationship between the school and parish is vital to the educational mission of the Church, and because so many principals struggle in fostering a positive relationship between school and parish, additional support in this area is necessary. For a healthy relationship to thrive, guidance must be offered not only to principals, but to pastors as well.

Practicing Self-Care

All of the participants in this study acknowledged that in order to be an effective spiritual leader, they must focus on developing their own spirituality. This can be fostered in many different ways, and according to the principals in this study, the desired outcome is to grow in deeper relationship with Christ. Because the job of a Catholic elementary principal has become increasingly complex over the past twenty-five years, self-care is an essential component of spiritual leadership. As the priest at the principal meeting reminded us during his homily, "You cannot give what you do not have."

My further recommendations are based on my analysis of the findings. The recommendations are aligned to the purpose of this study and, thus, are organized by formation and support from the Department of Catholic Schools and the Archdiocese.

Recommendations for Forming Principals as Spiritual Leaders

Department of Catholic schools. The participants offered many suggestions that can be implemented by the Department of Catholic Schools (DCS) to help form principals as spiritual leaders. One of the recommendations is to create a Spirituality Committee made up of principals and led by one or two assistant superintendents. The purpose of this committee would be to prepare spiritual resources and exercises for the elementary principals in the archdiocese. Each deanery would supply one member to the committee so the entire archdiocese would be represented. Under the leadership of the assistant superintendents, the committee would be trained and formed in various spiritual exercises. Themes might include lives of the saints, Ignatian spirituality, self-care, praying with parents, and Catholic social teachings, to name a few. The committee would meet monthly to pray and train together. Then the committee members would lead formation sessions at their local deanery meetings. This would ensure that there was time for spiritual development built into every deanery meeting. The goal is to create time for instruction, reflection, and sharing into an already scheduled meeting. It would be important that principals leave feeling refreshed rather than feeling that they have one more thing to do when they return to their schools, so intentional planning for these monthly formation sessions is vital.

Additionally, as the DCS continues to assess the effectiveness of the Leadership Formation Program for first year principals, it is recommended that there be more focus on faith formation rather than information sharing. While there have been improvements in this area in the past three years, more faith formation is needed in order to develop principals as spiritual leaders.

Finally, it is recommended that the Department of Catholic Schools collaborate with local Catholic universities to create classes and programs that specifically focus on spiritual leadership for Catholic school principals. While many Catholic universities currently offer formation programs for Catholic school leaders, spiritual formation is not always the focal point. Instead of focusing on degree and certificate programs, perhaps Catholic universities could offer more practical resources such as retreats, spiritual directors, and faith sharing groups. For principals who are already in the trenches, resources such as these would prove to be more relevant.

Archdiocese. While the DCS can teach and inform principals in areas of instructional leadership and operational management, the entire spiritual formation needs of the principals exceeds the purview of the Department of Catholic Schools. It is, then, recommended that spiritual formation of lay Catholic school leaders within the archdiocese be a priority. Since lay staffing and leadership in Catholic elementary schools have increased by over 25% in the past thirty years (McDonald & Schultz, 2016), the bishops need to consider how their lay Catholic school leaders are being formed and trained in the faith. The inaugural pastoral letter from the archbishop naming "Education in the Faith" as his first pastoral priority (Gomez, 2012) further supports this assertion. Currently, lay parish leaders (i.e. Pastoral Associates and Parish Life Directors, are supported by the Office of Parish Life). The Office provides a Formation Program designed to help develop and support the human, intellectual, spiritual and pastoral character of the candidate (Parish Life). Formation such as this would greatly benefit all Catholic elementary principals. It would behoove the archdiocese to share resources and training among departments to support all lay leaders within the Church including those leading Catholic schools. By providing spiritual training and formation for lay Catholic school leaders, the archbishop and

regional bishops would have greater assurance that the laity would be leading their school communities in communion with Church teachings. As stated by the USCCB in their document *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* (2005), "Lay people working in and for the Church require support and encouragement in the special task of evangelizing an increasingly incredulous world" (USCCB, 2005). Specific recommendations for forming principals as spiritual leaders include:

- Create a Spirituality Committee

- Increase the focus on spiritual formation in the Leadership Formation Program

- Collaborate with local Catholic universities to offer relevant resources for principals

- Make spiritual formation of lay Catholic elementary principals a priority

- Oversee and support collaboration between the Office of Parish Life and Department of Catholic Schools to develop a spiritual formation program for lay Catholic school principals

Recommendations for Supporting Principals as Spiritual Leaders

Department of Catholic schools. The participants overwhelmingly expressed their interest in more retreat opportunities, so regular mornings of prayer and reflections are a recommendation. These mornings could be offered on a monthly basis and would take place in a different pastoral region each month. With five pastoral regions across the archdiocese, each region would host two mornings of prayer throughout a 10-month period. An assistant superintendent would organize the meetings, but a planning committee made up of principals

would help create the prayer experiences for their colleagues. This would give voice to the principals who felt equipped to share their faith and knowledge with others.

A final recommendation for the Department of Catholic Schools is to create more opportunities for principals to spend time together and reflect on spiritual leadership. Throughout the study, it became clear that principals found solace in each other and felt nurtured when they had time to simply meet with one another to talk and reflect. As agendas for principal meetings are created by the DCS, it should be a priority to allow time for spiritual reflection and sharing. This will help create and nurture a culture of spirituality.

Archdiocese. As the participants shared their suggestions of what they needed to nurture them as spiritual leaders, it became clear that the types of support they need cannot be offered solely by the Department of Catholic Schools, but must be developed by the larger archdiocese. For instance, one of the suggestions that came from the principals was the need for spiritual directors. While this would be a beneficial resource for the principals, it is beyond the scope of the Department of Catholic Schools to supply this support system for its principals. Likewise, as the DCS leaders plan retreats or mornings of prayer to help support principals in their spiritual nourishment, it is recommended that additional support and resources be sought out from other departments within the archdiocese.

Specific recommendations for supporting principals as spiritual leaders include:

- Offer mornings of prayer and reflection
- Create more opportunities for principals to reflect on spiritual leadership
- Supply and facilitate spiritual directors for principals

- Increase collaboration between DCS and other departments to create resources and opportunities for principals

- Collaborate with regional Bishop's offices to guide spiritual leadership for Catholic school principals

The recommendations listed above are a starting point for action, but it must be understood that spiritual formation must be ongoing to meet the changing needs of the Catholic Church. To this end, I plan to use this research as a springboard for a resource book on spiritual leadership for Catholic school principals.

Limitations

As with all research utilizing qualitative data, findings were limited by the design of the study. While the findings clearly identified that lay Catholic elementary school principals need additional spiritual formation and support to fulfill their role of spiritual leader, some limitations to the research design should be considered. First, since there was a limited period in which to analyze the data, I do not feel that I was able to fully discover the deep understanding and perceptions of spiritual leadership. Secondly, since there were only six participants in the study, their perceptions and experiences may not directly apply to the larger group of elementary principals. Finally, since I work as an assistant superintendent for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, some of the participants seemed guarded at times as if they wanted to prove to me that they were competent in their leadership roles.

Future Research

In light of these limitations, future studies are needed to continue to explore the needs of Catholic school principals as spiritual leaders. The first suggestion for future research is to

engage a larger sample size in order to ensure that the findings are more likely to apply to a

larger group of principals. Additionally, an outside researcher who is not employed by the

archdiocese in an attempt to gather data that are more authentic could conduct a similar study.

Finally, it would be greatly beneficial to engage other dioceses in a discussion as to what they are

using to address the spiritual needs of their lay Catholic school principals. Suggestions for future

research include:

- Use a larger sample

- Utilize an outside person to conduct research so there are less limitations

- Engage other dioceses in this topic of research

- Survey archdiocesan principals to find out about their needs for spiritual leadership based
  on these findings

- Assess the effectiveness of the Leadership Formation Program by surveying fourth year
  principals to gain insight into what first year principals need as spiritual leaders

Conceptual Framework

In reviewing the findings of this study, I realized that my conceptual framework served

me well as I analyzed the data from the participants. In particular, I would like to call out how

specifically the data aligns to the Four Pillars of Leadership used by Jesuits as described by

Lowney (2003) in *Heroic Leadership.* The four unique values of love, heroism, self-awareness,

and ingenuity naturally aligned with the daily experiences of a principal as spiritual leader

(Lowney). As spiritual leaders, the participants were driven by love in their daily work. In facing

the joys and challenges of spiritual leadership, they exhibited heroism. As they reflected on what

they need to support them in their formation as spiritual leaders, it became clear that the

archdiocese must become more aware of the needs of their principals. Finally, their suggestions led to recommendations that embody ingenuity and innovation. These four pillars offered a lens through which to organize, analyze and discuss my data. As I examined the three research questions and wrote recommendations, findings from each question were aligned to the Pillars of Leadership used by Jesuits.

Love

The first research question aligned with the Jesuit pillar of love. Despite the challenges and struggles faced by the participants as spiritual leaders, they recognized their call to lead as an act of love. This supports Convey's (1992) findings that when Catholic school teachers and leaders were asked why they chose to teach in a Catholic school, the reasons most frequently given focused on love: love for teaching, love for working with the young, and commitment to Catholic education and ministry (Convey). This commitment to love, faith, and vocation was evident in the reflective writings and palpable during the interviews. Their love aligned completely with Nuzzi's (2000) assertion that if Catholic school principals are to lead as Jesus led, then love must drive their leadership (Nuzzi). The love exhibited by the participants stemmed from a deep sense of the Catholic faith that was instilled in them from childhood. As Beto simply explained, "My parents were definitely the reason why I love my faith." It is this love that fuels them even on their darkest days and fills their hearts with joy as they lead their students.

Heroism

According to Lowney (2003), "Heroic leadership is motivating oneself to above-and-beyond performance by focusing on the richest potential in every moment" (p. 209). These

principals were truly heroic in their approach to spiritual leadership, even though they did not feel completely prepared to fulfill this role as evidenced in their answers to my second research question. As I spent time with participants, my admiration for them grew deeper with each discussion. These principals embody heroism day in and day out as they deal with challenging parents, pastors, and teachers. They are truly heroic in their service to the Church as lay leaders trying to fulfill the educational mission, even when their message is countercultural. When I asked each of them to participate in this study, these principals were deeply interested to discuss, reflect, and explore the topic of spiritual leadership and deeply humbled that they were chosen to participate. This sense of humility is part of their heroic traits as these principals do not always view themselves as spiritual leaders; they simply do what they do as an answer to God's call. This is true heroism. Just as Sr. Immaculata worked diligently in 1961 to open a Catholic elementary school in rural Florida, so, too, do these principals work diligently day in and day out to lead their communities closer to Christ (Dodson, 2010).

Self-Awareness

Throughout this study, it became more and more evident that the participants were not receiving the support they needed to feed and fuel them as spiritual leaders. While the principals were acting heroically and motivated by love, in many ways they were left alone to nurture themselves as spiritual leaders. Because spiritual leadership is a job requirement for these principals, it is incumbent on the archdiocese to offer training, formation, and resources to them so that they can be equipped to carry out the tasks and responsibilities of spiritual leadership. The archdiocese has fallen short in this area.

In his book *Heroic Leadership,* Lowney (2003) wrote, "Leaders thrive by understanding who they are and what they value, by becoming aware of unhealthy blind spots or weaknesses that can derail them, and by cultivating the habit of continuous self-reflection and learning" (p. 27). The pillar of self-awareness must be practiced and modeled by archdiocesan leaders before principals can adopt this practice. Time for self-reflection and learning should be embedded into all trainings and meetings, not just retreats. As such, there has been a lack of awareness of the needs of the lay Catholic school principals as the face of the Catholic Church has shifted. While the number of lay principals has increased dramatically, archdiocesan leaders have failed to update or increase formation and training specifically geared towards lay leaders. Archdiocesan leaders must become more aware and open to the changing landscape of the Catholic Church and the needs of her lay leaders in this area.

Ingenuity

To meet the changing spiritual needs of lay Catholic elementary principals, the Catholic Church and her leaders must approach this issue with innovation and ingenuity. According to Lowney (2003), ingenuity is the ability to explore new ideas and adapt to change with confidence. It stems from the Jesuit approach to an ever-changing world (Lowney, 2003). The participants shared innovative and creative suggestions for diocesan support in the area of spiritual leadership including creating communities of faith, offering additional retreat opportunities, and engaging with a spiritual director. Ingenuity and innovation have been a necessary trait throughout the history of Catholic schools in America as both religious and lay leaders have adapted and created new approaches based on their changing realities. Catholic schools currently exist in a shifting educational, financial, and political landscape. These schools

have continued to carry out the mission of the Church for nearly 400 years and yet, there has been little or no progress in addressing spiritual formation of lay principals to ensure that they are equipped to serve the role of spiritual leaders of their schools. If lay Catholic school principals are expected to continue to lead schools that transmit the faith to the next generation (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, 1982), then the leaders of the Church, both lay and ordained, must make the spiritual formation of our Catholic school leaders a priority.

In 2016, The California Catholic Conference of Bishops released a statement entitled *Our Catholic Schools in California: A Stellar Past, a Robust Future.* In this statement, the bishops unanimously agreed on the importance of Catholic schools.

> Now, more than ever, we are convinced of the importance of Catholic schools and we are committed to forming new disciples of Jesus Christ, to passing on the faith we have received to the next generation, and to educating the whole person through quality education that integrates religious truths and values while respecting the integrity of each academic discipline. We are committed to further developing the Catholic identity and environment of our schools and to assuring parents of the sound teaching their children receive (pg. 3).

While this bold statement is a sign of hope for our Church by declaring the importance of Catholic schools in both our religious and civic communities, it does not specifically address the needs of Catholic school leaders. This is where ingenuity and innovation are needed.

Love, heroism, self-awareness, and ingenuity. These traits are not only pillars of leadership, but are also the character traits of Catholic school principals. The stories shared by

the participants were illuminated by these character traits and will continue to serve as a lens through which to address their needs as spiritual leaders.

Epilogue

This study was born from my personal experiences and struggles as a Catholic school principal, namely as a spiritual leader. As a former principal, I have walked in their shoes and I know their burdens. I have experienced their struggles and want to companion and support them as a spiritual leader myself. When I was a principal, I never realized the impact I had as a spiritual leader because no one ever asked me about it. There were no formal opportunities to talk about it and there were no principal retreats to participate with other principals. I was left to figure it out on my own. This study comes from my own experiences and the lack of support I experienced as a principal. As a lay leader in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, it is a call to justice to walk in solidarity with my fellow leaders and support them on their path to spiritual leadership. I have been given an opportunity to affect change for these principals, to be their voice, and to tell their stories. I feel a great responsibility to the participants who entrusted their stories to me; I hope that I was able to do them justice.

Throughout this experience, I have grown in knowledge of the history and purpose of Catholic schools and developed an even deeper appreciation for the central role the principal plays in the daily life of a Catholic school. While the principal wears many hats, I am convinced more than ever that the most important role that a Catholic school principal must fulfill is that of spiritual leader. As I got to know each participant better, I was inspired by their passion and deep commitment to their vocation. There was a genuine enthusiasm in engaging in this topic. It almost felt like there was a hunger to discuss an oft forgotten topic. These principals are so busy

with curriculum and management, but their time spent on this topic was important work of which they were anxious to be a part. A few weeks ago, I ran into one of my participants at a principal meeting and she told me how much she missed our talks on spiritual leadership. She shared that when she has bad days and questions how long she can keep doing this, she remembers our reflections and that keeps her going. This is important work that I lay at the feet of the archdiocesan leaders to appeal for support from the larger archdiocese in forming principals as spiritual leaders. These principals are so hungry and deserve to be fed and nourished.

As I reflect on this study, I continue to be awed by the heroic work these men and women do, day in and day out, out of love for their faith. I am honored to have companioned them on their journey and am humbled that they chose to join me on my journey. For this study truly has been a deeply spiritual journey that has led me closer to God and my Church, and I will be forever grateful to have walked this path.

Written Reflection Prompts

Definition of Spiritual Leadership

- In the context of Catholic schools, the role of spiritual leader focuses on four distinct areas:

  o nurturing the faith development of faculty and staff through opportunities for spiritual growth

  o ensuring quality Catholic religious instruction of students

  o providing opportunities for the school community to celebrate faith

  o supporting and fostering consistent practices of Christian service (Ciriello, 1994).

- Additionally, the spiritual leader should be grounded in the history, philosophy, and catechism of the Catholic Church and be able to articulate the Catholic vision for the school (Drahmann, 1994; Rieckhoff, 2014).

- According to Brownbridge (2009), the role of spiritual leader is "a role of sacred trust and service in which the principal participates in building the Catholic community by nurturing the faith and the spiritual growth of students and staff" (p. 4).

- Spiritual leadership in Catholic elementary schools includes a broad spectrum of responsibilities and cannot be delineated as distinct from their other leadership roles (Wallace, 2000).

Considering the definitions above and your own experiences, please reflect on the following writing prompts:

Reflective Question 1: What is your understanding of your role as the spiritual leader of your school? Do you agree with the definition as presented in the literature? What would you add to that definition?

Reflective Question 2: How prepared do you feel to serve as the spiritual leader of your school? What are your biggest challenges in your role as spiritual leader? How did your preparation and/or experiences help guide you?

Reflective Question 3: What kinds of support would you like the archdiocese to offer to sustain you specifically in your role as spiritual leader?

Interview Questions: Round 1

RQ1: What is the lay Catholic elementary school principal's understanding of his/her role as spiritual leader of the school?

1. How long have you been a Catholic elementary school principal?

2. How did you come to be a Catholic school principal?

3. Tell me about your school. (Prompts: Enrollment, student demographics, financial stability, relationship with parish and community, academic achievement)

4. What does it mean to be the spiritual leader?

5. As a principal, what does it mean to be a spiritual leader of your school?

6. How do you see Catholic leadership and spiritual leadership working together? (Prompt: Doctrine vs. practice)

7. What do you see as the attributes of being a spiritual leader of a Catholic school?

8. Describe a week in your life as the spiritual leader in your school. (Prompts: Catholic Schools Week, Holy Week, 1st week of school, etc.)

9. What are the challenges and highlights of spiritual leadership?

Interview Questions: Round 2

RQ2: To what extent do lay Catholic elementary school principals feel prepared to serve as the spiritual leader of their schools?

1. Describe your educational background.

2. What formal training have you had to serve the role of spiritual leader?

3. What life experiences have assisted you towards developing as a spiritual leader?

4. What spiritual experiences or programs have assisted you towards spiritual development as a Catholic school principal?

5. How have these experiences influenced your role as a spiritual leader? If not, why not?

6. What challenges do you face in your role as spiritual leader?

7. Give examples of spiritually oriented leadership at your school. What do you do?

     .   What would the children say? What would the parents say? What would the staff say?

8. How do you think you compare to other principals in your role of spiritual leadership? (Prompt: Do you think other principals do things you would like to do, but can't? Lack of resources, time, etc.)

Interview Questions: Round 3

RQ3: What kinds of supports should diocesan offices offer to sustain principals in their role as spiritual leaders?

1. What does the archdiocese currently offer to develop you as the spiritual leader of your school?

2. Looking back at your experiences as a principal, what supports do you wish you would have had to develop you as a spiritual leader?

3. What would be supportive for you as a spiritual leader? What do you need to sustain yourself as a spiritual leader? What do you need to grow?

4. What supports do you currently get from the archdiocese? What supports do you get from elsewhere?

5. How do principals support one another in their role as spiritual leader?

6. Is there anything I haven't asked that you would like to say on the topic of spiritual leadership?

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Prayer (Gospel Reflection)
3. Purpose:
    a. To revisit some of the questions from the individual interviews to gain more clarity or context
    b. To gain additional insight into the kinds of supports needed support you as spiritual leaders of elementary schools.
4. Norms:

    a. Get to know others
    b. Participate and encourage others to do so
    c. Speak for yourself and don't apologize; there are no right or wrong answers
    d. Presume positive intentions
    e. Limit side conversations; however, feel free to respond to someone else other than me
    f. Let others finish
    g. Ask follow up questions
    h. Share examples
    i. Focus on issues, not individuals
    j. Have fun!
    k. Confidentiality and trust

1. Tell me about this experience. How did it feel to talk about your spiritual journey to me? Have you been impacted in any way?
2. After reflecting, on the first reflective writing prompt: What is your understanding of your role as the spiritual leader of your school? Do you agree with the definition as presented in the literature? What would you add to that definition?

Many of you agreed. Some of you added a few things. Would you like to add anything?
3. Some of you said that it is important to be a role model. Who is your role model as spiritual leader?
4. It's the 21st century, do you think spirituality should look different today than it did 30 years ago? If yes, what should it look like?
5. RQ2: How prepared do you feel to serve as the spiritual leader of your school? Many of you answered this question by explaining how you were prepared to serve as a spiritual leader. But, what does it mean…How prepared to you feel to serve in this role. Self-asses (Very Well; Moderately Prepared; Unprepared) Why?
6. What do you think is the difference between a spiritual person versus a spiritual leader in the context of Catholic schools?
7. How does spirituality intersect with the Church's teachings on social justice?

8. What do spiritual leaders do when they experience a dark night? Can one prepare for that?
9. RQ3: Many of you expressed various ideas, but let's share again to see if there are things we can build upon? (Let them expand upon those ideas, e.g. retreats)

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