EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS' DAILY WORK WHICH NOURISH AND SUSTAIN THE SPIRITUALITY OF LAY TEACHERS IN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

The hierarchy of the Catholic Church has stated that formation of lay teachers is essential for the personal sanctification of the teacher and the apostolic mission of the Church (CCE, 1982, #65) and that "formation must be broadened and kept up to date, on the same level as, and in harmony with, human formation as a whole (CCE, 1982, #62). The research reported in this thesis: (1) explores Catholic Church documents and other literature in order to gain insights into the spirituality of teachers who teach in Catholic schools; (2) identifies experiences of teachers' daily work in Catholic high schools that nurture and sustain teacher spirituality; (3) explores how the insights revealed can inform the practices of formation for lay teachers in Catholic schools.

The demonstrated success of a teacher formation known as *The Courage to Teach* invited exploration to gain understanding of the principles and practices of formation that could prove helpful for developing formation practices within Australian Catholic Education.

The research reported in this thesis included teachers reflecting upon their daily experiences of work and identifying, what one called, "moments of grace" that nourished and sustain teachers' spirits. These experiences were identified as teachers' experiences of community and their experiences of making a difference.

For Catholic schools to continue to have authenticity, the ongoing formation of lay teachers is essential. This does not mean, as others have said, "adding more water to an already overfull cup" by including formation as one more thing for teachers to do. It means making space and providing the opportunity for teachers to discover the 'moments of grace' that providentially fill their day. In conversation

with Catholic Scripture and Tradition, these moments of grace will nurture and sustain the vocations of lay teachers in Catholic schools, so that lay teachers will both flourish and "teach with authority" (Mk. 1:22).

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

How the everyday experiences of lay teachers' daily work in Catholic high schools might impact upon, and contribute to, the ongoing development and renewal of the teachers' vocation is the subject of this research. Formation is a term used by Palmer (1992, 1998, 2004a, 2004b) to describe the ongoing process of teachers' vocational and spiritual renewal. American experience of teacher formation, from a program known as *The Courage To Teach*, holds that formation "is rooted in the belief that good teaching flows from the identity and integrity of the teacher [and] invites educators to claim their own wholeness and vocational clarity" by making connections between teachers' spirits and their work (Intrator & Scribner, 2003, p. 213; also Jackson & Jackson, 2002, p. 305; 2004, p. 213). For the purposes of this research, formation is understood as the ongoing nurturing and sustaining the spirituality of lay teachers in Catholic high schools. Spirituality, that "which gives meaning to life and allows us to participate in the larger whole" (Shea, 2005, p. 97), and formation are significant for a number of reasons. Lay teachers do most of the work of teaching, leading and administration in Catholic schools (CCE, 1982; Pope John Paul II, 2001; Prest, 2000) and this work must be done with authenticity and integrity (CCE, 1982 #65, 79). Further, the Catholic Church has recognised that teaching in Catholic schools is a vocation integral to the mission of the church (CCE, 1977, 1982, 1998; Pope John Paul II, 2001). In addition, educational theorists and researchers have found that teachers' spirituality has considerable impact on teaching, learning, students and teachers themselves (Carotta, 1999; Durka, 2002; Grace, 2002; Groome, 1998; Harris, 1987; Intrator, 2003; Intrator & Scribner, 2000; Kessler, 2000;

McMahon, 2003; Michalec, 2002; Miller, 1996, 2000; Nash, 2002; Palmer, 1983, 1992, 1998, 1999).

Recently researchers and writers have identified ongoing formation as most significant for the sustenance, nurturance and renewal of teachers' vocation (Carotta, 1999; Durka, 2002; Groome, 1998; Livsey & Palmer, 1999; McMahon, 2003; Miller, 2000; Palmer, 1998; Simone, 2004). As well as having the benefits of sustaining vocation, formation is seen as as significant in avoiding burnout in the teaching profession.

Statement of the Problem

The formation of lay teachers in Catholic schools requires thoughtful consideration and conscious action (CCE, 1982, #62, 65, 78 & 79). In other words, formation needs to be worthwhile and deliberate, not haphazard, or left up to chance. Importantly, it needs to seen as relevant to teachers' work and lives to be valued by them (Fowler, 2000, p. 21; Palmer, 2002, p. 314; Underhill, 1922, pp. 196-199). When teachers' lives are constantly busy, if not over-busy, finding the enthusiasm for something else for teachers to attend to, is like trying to pour more "water into an already overfull cup" (Jarvis, 2002). Ironically, the vocation to teach is often "challenged, and even sabotaged, by the very system wherein teachers work" (Simone, 2004, p. 18). More than philosophically desirable at an institutional or intellectual level, formation needs to be understood as relevant and desirable because it makes a difference to teachers as they live out their days in everyday classrooms. The experiences of one program of teacher formation, "The Courage to Teach" (CTT) has demonstrated that in-service teacher formation benefits teachers themselves, their colleagues and their students (Intrator & Scribner, 2000). This

demonstrates that while teacher spirituality is personal, it is not a private matter (Durka, 2002, p. 77, Palmer, 1998, p. 15).

There is unlikely to be what Finn calls a "one size fits all spirituality" for teachers (1990, pp. 260-261). What is needed is the identification and interpretation of experiences from the common fabric of teachers' everyday work that have the potential to nurture and sustain the spirituality of lay teachers in Catholic high schools. While there is great diversity in the nature and circumstances of teachers' work, what Palmer called "the inner landscape of teacher's life" is the common striving to "join self and subject and students in the fabric of life" (Palmer, 1998, p. 11). He went on to say that apart from the "how to do it"; teacher formation is about something usually considered "alien to academic culture" (p. 12). It is about teachers engaging their inner lives together as colleagues (Palmer, 1998, p. 12; 2004, p. 59). As Rahner poetically put it, this means recognising and embracing the reality that "we come to understand that here, in this life, all symphonies remain unfinished" (in Rolheiser, 2001, p. 11). As well as the obvious fulfilment of the personal dimension of teachers' vocation, teachers' daily work in Catholic schools, is what Pope John Paul II called, "inculturation of the Christian faith grounded in the mystery of the Incarnation" (2001, pp. 46-49). This means that nurturing and sustaining teachers' vocation has communal or apostolic, as well as personal dimensions for lay teachers in Catholic high schools.

Bringing Educational Theory to Inform Lay Teacher Formation.

The CCE (1982, #62) stated that "religious formation must be broadened and be kept up to date, on the same level as, and in harmony with, human formation as a whole". This means that the Church encourages the incorporation of what is recognised as best practice in the wider area of formation, for the formation of lay

teachers in Catholic schools.   Theories and practices from outside the immediate sphere of Catholic education may have something to offer and could be of use to Catholic education authorities. This means that insights from educational theorists, outside Catholic education, are worthy of exploration in faithfulness to encouraging the formation of lay teachers in Catholic schools. As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, the exploration of programs such as *The Courage to Teach* (CTT) is not undertaken in order to adapt them to Australian Catholic schools. Reasons why programs such as CTT are successful and effective are linked to their emergence and development in their own environment. The environment, as well as the underlying operating assumptions, of American public schools is different to the environment, and underlying operating assumptions of Australian Catholic schools. However, while it is important for issues of identity and integrity to recognise that Australian Catholic schools and American public schools are different contexts, the principles and practices of successful formation programs outside Catholic education have something to offer authorities contemplating formation of lay teachers in Catholic schools. The demonstrated success of programs, such as CTT, can suggest how the formation of lay teachers in Catholic schools can be "kept up to date, on the same level as, and in harmony with, human formation as a whole" (CCE, 1982, #62).

The Research Questions.

With attention to Catholic Church documents, the literature dealing with teaching as vocation, teacher spirituality and formation, the following questions were formulated to guide this research:

1. What do Catholic Church documents and the literature on teachers and teaching say about the spirituality of teachers who teach in Catholic schools?

2. What experiences of teachers' daily work in Catholic high schools nurture and sustain lay teachers' spirituality?

3. How might insights into what nurtures and sustains teachers' spirituality, inform practices of lay teacher formation?

Definition of Terms

Terms like formation, spirituality and the like, are understood very differently according to the context, culture and experiences of those who use and hear the words. For the purposes of this research, the following definitions are provided in order to lend consistency to their usage.

Formation: The ongoing nurturing and sustaining the spirituality of lay teachers in Catholic high schools by the professional development of teachers encouraging the ongoing engagement of the teacher's spirituality and their work.

Spirituality: The innate urge and response to the yearning to know "life to the full" (Jn.10.10) integrating faith, work and personal history in relationship with self and others (Pope John Paul II, 1994, #2684). It is that "which gives meaning to life and allows us to participate in the larger whole" (Shea, 2005, p. 97).

Spirituality of Teaching: Engaging the specific gifts, graces or charisms available to those called to be teachers (Eph. 4:11).

Teacher Identity: The true self of the one who teaches[1] .

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[1] This term was explored at length by Merton (2002) and Palmer (1998, p. 13). While the term, true self, can be taken at face value, it is engaged continuously in this thesis to discern its depth of meaning and significance for teachers' spirituality.

Teacher Integrity: The integration of one's inner life and one's experiences so that one is able to make the outward connections on which good teaching depends.

Vocation: The calling of an individual on a journey of encounter with God through that individual's engagement in the ongoing work of creation (Pope John Paul II, 1994, #898).

Background

Since the 1970's, the number of people in religious orders has declined considerably and the number attending Catholic schools in the archdiocese of Brisbane has increased significantly. Accordingly, documents such as "*Christifideles Laici*" by Pope John Paul II (1988) have called on the laity to expand their role in the leadership and ministry of the church. Specifically, Catholic Church authorities have responded to this situation by recognising that the vocation of lay teachers in Catholic schools is integral to the apostolic mission of the Catholic Church (CCE, 1977, 1982, 1998; Pope John Paul II, 2001). In these documents, Catholic Church authorities have recognised that teachers in Catholic schools need ongoing formation (CCE, 1982, #65) and see that this formation is essential for the authenticity of Catholic Schools (CCE, 1982, #79).

Formation of lay teachers is a relatively new concept. In the past formation was something that concerned members of the religious orders. Individuals committing to life in religious community were required to conform "to a theological, ecclesiastical and pastoral status quo" valued for its "supporting order of the church" (Arbuckle, 1996, p. 1).   However as the teachers in Catholic schools are almost ubiquitously lay teachers, Catholic Church authorities have seen that the formation of

lay teachers in Catholic schools is "indispensable" (CCE, 1982, #79) and must be "kept up to date, and on the same level as, and in harmony with human formation as a whole" (CCE, 1982, #62) so that lay teachers are able to "carry out their task with the competence and efficacy that is expected of them" (CCE, 1988 #97).   As Fowler puts this, "communal fidelity" happens through the "vocations of its members" and therefore the community "needs to offer a spirituality of vocation that can nerve" individuals in "discerning the shape of their calling in light of their gifts, the needs of the world, and the structures of opportunity and creativity that confront them" (2000, p. 118).   In other words, ongoing formation of lay teachers is essential to keep Catholic schools authentically Catholic, and the Catholic community has the responsibility for the provision of opportunities for formation (CCE, 1982, #79).

Lay Vocation and Formation

Paver observed (2005) that lay ministry and leadership is not simply an issue because of the decline in numbers of clergy and religious. The vocation of ministry and leadership of the laity is "supported at the highest levels" of the Catholic Church because of a "deepening of the understanding of the role and ministry of lay people within the church, at theological, canonical and practical levels". On-going formation is mandated by Canon Law, "particularly when the role requires a person to act as a representative in a certain area" such as "the education of the young" (Paver, 2005, Lay Ministry section).

Cognisant that the concept of the formation of lay teachers is a relatively recent realisation, due attention needs to be given to the nature of vocation of the laity. In most cases, the vocation of a lay teacher comes combined with the vocation to be a spouse and parent. As recognised by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,

lay spirituality arises out of the integration of faith in each individual's particular, environment, work and history (Pope John Paul II, 1994, #2684). This means that one's family and relationships are to be integrated with, not separated from, their work. The self who teaches is the same self who is likely to be a spouse and parent. Living integrated, not divided, lives brings authenticity to teachers' work (Palmer, 1998, pp. 163-7).

Unlike the religious who assumed responsibility for Catholic education in the past, for most, the lay vocation to teach in a Catholic school cannot be separated from the vocation to be a spouse and a parent. This means that lay formation might not resemble monastic formation because the circumstances of the laity's "particular environment, work and history" (Pope John Paul, 1994, #2684) are not monastic but grounded in everyday life, family and work. It also means that because of the added dimensions of the lay vocation, formation is both more complex and necessary than for religious whose lives were uncomplicated with family obligation and responsibility. Pope John Paul II reiterated the reality of the family as "the domestic church" and insisted that the mission of the church depends "heavily on the quality of family life" (2001, #45). Rather than seeing family life as an impediment to the lay vocation, Pope John Paul II recognised that it was because of the laity's immersion in family life, that lay vocation was particularly effective. It is because the laity "live and work close to ordinary people they have made, and continue to make a truly indispensable contribution to the life and mission of the church" (2001, # 15). In this light, it is not surprising that during this research, individuals when reflecting on their everyday work experiences made connections with their family lives indicating how one informed the other.

With these perspectives on the complexity of lay vocation it seems likely that modifying or adapting practices of monastic formation may not suffice in encouraging the formation of lay teachers in Catholic high schools. As Palmer observes, lay "people who try to live by monastic norms sometimes fall so short… that they end up feeling guilty of leading "unspiritual" lives (1990, p. 2). Lay formation needs to be situated in the context of lay people's lives and work (Pope John Paul II, 1994, #2684). It also means that specifically lay formation is vital so that "lay people also play their part by consecrating the world to God" as they come "to a deeper sense of their indispensable role in the church's evangelising mission" as lay people (Pope John Paul II, 2001, #19, #43). The lay vocation of teaching in a Catholic high school is both, personal, communal and ongoing, beyond the initial "epiphany of recruitment" (Mahan, 2002, p. 20) which first draws individuals into teaching. This ongoing dimension of vocation indicates that formation needs to be informed by insight and understanding of the life long process of faith development or conversion (Fowler, 1981, 2000; Levinson, 1996; Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978; Lonergan, 1971, 1992; Wulff, 1991).

Fowler recognised that it is the community that "needs to offer a spirituality of vocation… helping them in discerning the shape of their calling in the light of their gifts, needs of the world, and the structures of opportunity and creativity that confront them" (2000, p. 118). He saw that the community needs first to recognise the need for formation and then respond by providing opportunity for formation. In the case of teachers teaching in Catholic high schools, this may mean re-visioning in such a way that everyday experiences of teachers work are recognised as sacramental (Groome, 1998, p. 21), because they feed the soul (Durka, 2002, p. 80).

The recognition that formation is about re-visioning, or learning to see differently, the everyday experiences of teachers work, is in fact learning to see reality revealing its significance. As the philosopher Martin Buber observed,

> No encounter with a being or a thing in the course of our life lacks a hidden significance. The people we live with, or meet with, the animals that help us with our farm work, the soil we till, the materials we shape, the tools we use, they all contain a mysterious spiritual substance which depends on us for helping it towards its pure form, its perfection (in Leder, 2004, p. 117).

Teachers' everyday experiences of their work, when seen from a perspective that is not separate from their spiritual life is recognised, by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, as means to "penetrate and perfect the temporal order" (Pope Paul VI, 1965, #5). In other words, the work of lay teachers participates in the renewal of the world in which they live.

In a time and culture where some have recognised a post-religious spirituality emerging (Caputo, 2001; Elkins, 1998; Hays, 1984; Tacey, 2003; Webster, 2002), teacher spirituality has significance that is not limited to the religious dimension of the Catholic school. Many recognise that teaching itself is an "inherently spiritual endeavour" (Michalec, 2002, p. 5; also: Carotta, 1999; Del Prete, 2002; Durka, 2002; Groome, 1998; Intrator, 2003; Manno, 1999; McMahon, 2003; Miller, 1996, 2000; Palmer, 1983, 1998). They have argued that the inner or spiritual self of the teacher needs ongoing formation for the sake of good teaching and learning.

Recent research into teacher spirituality in the USA (Carotta, 1999; Conti, 2002; Intrator & Scribner, 2000; McMahon, 2003; Simone, 2004) has made valuable contributions to understanding the spirituality of teachers and how it is nurtured and

sustained. In particular, teacher identity, teacher integrity and teacher vocation were all identified as benefiting from formation.

Locally, in Queensland, Webster's work (2002), in aiming to set up an existential framework of spirituality, is thought provoking for its implications for teachers, but it is more focused on the potential of education for the "human flourishing" of the students (p. 9) and the necessity of spirituality for human wholeness of students as future citizens (p. 11 & 62). Although he saw that for the archdiocese of Brisbane "the personal aspect of the teacher is recognised as being an essential element to the overall effectiveness of education" (p. 36), he was not specifically thinking of Catholic education. He argued that spirituality is something that "can be portrayed as being 'broader' and 'deeper' than the religious realm". However, he went on to acknowledge that "the majority of literature on spirituality and spiritual development in education continues to be written by scholars with a theological or religious background" (p. 27).   When considering the ongoing nurturing and sustaining of the spirituality of teachers in Catholic high schools, the 'breadth' and 'depth' of the Catholic tradition, what Groome calls "our family heirloom" (1998, pp. 215-265), is something which teachers in Catholics schools can be "ever drawing life" (p. 217) because "educators… have a crucial function as care-full stewards and mediators of tradition" (p. 231). Groome argued that the tradition has "authority" because of its compulsion to "remain vital, living and evolving – never allowing it to exercise a stranglehold on the present" (p. 239).   He saw Gadamer's "hermeneutical approach – constantly reinterpreting tradition in light of what we bring to it from the present" (p. 244) as the basis upon which teachers can teach with authority (Mt. 7:9). It also suggests a way forward in discerning what

nurtures and sustains teacher spirituality, being conscious of the conversation between the experiences of the present and the tradition.

While teachers' work has received some attention, Australian research studies into the spirituality of teachers are few and the spirituality of teachers in Catholic schools has received surprisingly little attention (Prest, 2000). While there is a growing corpus of research into how experiences of teachers' daily work is stressful and can contribute to teacher burnout (Adams, 1999; Friedman, 2000; Graziano, 2005; Jarvis, 2002; Larchick, 1999-2000; Michaelson & Harvey, 2000; Petroziello, 2000) and, although writers and researchers acknowledge that the spirituality of teachers is significant, to date little attention has been given to which experiences of teachers' work nurture and sustain teachers' spirituality. As teachers' daily work in Catholic schools is integral to teachers' vocation, the goals of Catholic education and the mission of the Catholic Church, research into teachers' spirituality and its relationship with teachers' work, is both warranted and overdue. Conti's research into *The Spiritual Life of Teachers* (2002) drew on a variety of modes of formation operating in the USA. He urged further research into the connection between spirituality and teaching after finding that teachers' spirituality influences the effectiveness of what happens in their classrooms (p. 230). To this end a program of teacher formation in the USA known as *The Courage To Teach* (CTT) was explored.

The Courage to Teach – A Model for teacher formation

There is considerable evidence from around the world that high quality in-service teacher professional development results in increased quality of life in the classroom (Beare, 2001; MacDonald, 1999; Ramsey, 2000; Reynolds & Packer, 1992; Rowe, 2002; Rowe, Holmes-Smith, & Hill, 1993; Slavin, 1997; Tymms, 1993).

However, Palmer has observed that only too rarely, is the inner life of the teacher taken seriously as a matter of professional development (1998, 2004). As Livsey observed in *The Courage To Teach: A Guide for Reflection and Renewal* (1999), Parker Palmer's approach is different because most in-service professional development of teachers deals with "what" teachers do, or "how" teachers do their work, and occasionally, with the "why" of teachers work. Too rarely is the "who" question, "Who is the self that teaches?" recognised and treated as important for good teaching (p. 2).

Formation of teachers in Catholic schools in the archdiocese of Brisbane varies, in nature and content, considerably from school to school. In many cases, the principal or assistant principal arranges for a presenter or facilitator, one day a year, to in-service staff in spirituality. This day is the minimum requirement necessary to keep teacher accreditation current in the archdiocese. Accreditation to teach in a Catholic school in the archdiocese requires that teachers take part in twenty hours of spirituality/faith development in-service every four years, or forty hours of professional development if a teacher is a teacher of religious education. Having personally taken responsibility for the provision of this type of in-service professional development in three Catholic high schools across the state of Queensland, the researcher was drawn to explore the possibility that genuine formation might be more than providing one day's staff in-service each year.

Seeking understanding of best practices that might possibly be implemented in archdiocesan Catholic Schools led the researcher to make contact with Parker J. Palmer in 2001 and to begin to explore the principles and practices of teacher formation he described in *The Courage To Teach* (1998). After visiting with Palmer in 2002, the researcher contacted *The Center for Teacher Formation* in Bainbridge

Island, near Seattle. The researcher began to explore the Center's involvement with teacher formation with Center co-director Marcy Jackson. The Center for Teacher Formation is supported by the Fetzer Institute, a philanthropic non-profit organisation based in Kalamazoo, Michigan. On four occasions between June 2002 and September 2004, the researcher travelled to the USA to investigate, and personally became immersed, in opportunities for teacher formation including, *The Courage to Teach* (CTT). This included participating in a week long *Courage to Teach, Principles & Practices Retreat* in Washington DC and week long *Courage to Teach Gateway Retreat* at Kalamazoo. The researcher continued to explore the phenomenon of teacher formation by visiting with Palmer in Madison, Wisconsin, for a second time in 2004. Further exploration led to visiting with James Fowler and Brian Mahan in Atlanta, Georgia in 2005.

Palmer said that, "teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness, for better or worse". Palmer observed that as teachers teach, they project the condition of their souls onto their students, their subject and their way of being together (1998, p. 2). He has argued that "good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher" (1998, p. 10) and he also recognised that the conditions many teachers find themselves in cause them "to lose heart as the years go by" (1998, p. 17). He claimed that it is possible to renew one's vocation to teach, by once again hearing "the voice of the teacher within, the voice that invites" teachers to honour their true selves (1998, p. 29). In *A Hidden Wholeness* (2004), Palmer sheds light on the formation experiences known as *Circles of Trust* that have been employed as part of *The Courage to Teach* (CTT) program. This program has evolved beyond working solely with public school

teachers to include the formation of individuals working in healthcare, law and other service oriented professions.

The CTT program began with a two-year pilot through a series of three-day quarterly retreats run in Michigan in 1994-1996. Since then CTT has spread and operates in twenty-two USA states and in Canada. CTT has also evolved into a variety of operating models and has extended to include service professionals beyond the field of education. A typical retreat has had between twenty and thirty participants and be facilitated by two directors. "Where training asks if the person has the right knowledge and technique, [CTT] formation asks after the state of the person's soul" (Palmer, 1992, p. 1). CTT formation is about wholeness in the belief "that good teaching flows from the identity and the integrity of the teacher" (Intrator & Scribner, 2000, p. iii). The CTT objectives are summarised by Intrator & Scribner (2000) as,

> renewing heart mind and spirit through the exploration of the inner landscape of the teacher's life; reconnecting to one's identity and integrity; identifying and honouring gifts and strengths and honouring limits; creating a context for careful listening and deep connection that also honours diversity in person and profession; helping educators create safe spaces and trusting relationships in schools, with their students and colleagues, and within their communities; and exploring the connection between attending to the inner dimension of teachers and teaching and the renewal of public education (p. 5).

Independent evaluations of CTT, such as Intrator and Scribner (2000), McMahon (2003) and Simone (2004), empirically validate the approach of exploring teacher spirituality in the context of their lives and everyday work. Teachers in Catholic high schools in the archdiocese of Brisbane can also benefit from this process because it

addresses the formation of teachers done in community (2004, p. 57) with the express purpose of "rejoining soul and role" (2004, p. 21). It begins with making "spaces within us and between us that welcome the wisdom of the soul" (2004, p. 49). In Rolheiser's view, when the dominant secular social condition is one of "pathological over-busyness" care of the soul of the teacher puts "fire in our veins, keeps us energised, vibrant, living with zest and full of hope as we sense that life is, ultimately, beautiful and worth living" and keeps "us fixed together" with a sense of "who we are, where we came from, where we are going and what sense there is in all of this" (1999, pp.9-15). In other words, formation makes tangible the reality of "life to the full" (Jn. 10:10) as teachers daily live out their vocation. Formation may begin with simply reflecting on the everyday experiences of teachers' work done in community with colleagues.

Towards an understanding of teacher formation beginning with the everyday experiences of teachers' work

As one long serving teacher put it when reflecting on their experiences of daily work in a Catholic high school, it is possible to know an,

> awareness of Spirit - a part of me becomes aware of other people, and other things which is more than, just their body, and just their mind. In other words, if I become aware of the spiritual dimension of other people, and other things, then that fills me with joy" (FG.1:1, 2004, para 77).

When Rolheiser asked, "How do we fulfil our God-given vocations?" and answered, "By being part of God's on-going incarnation" (1999, p. 70), he pointed to the significance of experiences of teachers' everyday work in the nurturing and sustaining of teacher spirituality. By reflecting on everyday experiences of teachers' work, recognising, naming and contemplating them, teachers can recognise that "the present

is sacred and the ordinary is holy" (Carotta, 2003, p. 23). It is not surprising that with such insights teachers can find themselves filled with joy.

It is important to clarify at this point, that the purpose of this research is not to construct an Australian Catholic adaptation of CTT. While the ideas of Palmer and the insights and experiences of CTT are valuable, the purpose of this research was to identify which experiences of teachers' daily work in Catholic high schools nurtured and sustained lay teacher spirituality. Identified and articulated, these insights along with Catholic Scripture and Tradition, can inform the practices of teacher formation in a way that is authentically Australian, and authentically Catholic. CTT evolved naturally out of an environment inhabited by teachers in American public schools. The culture, assumptions, structures and environment inhabited by teachers in the Catholic high schools of the archdiocese of Brisbane, is different from that which teachers are embedded in American public schools. While many of these differences are subtle, their significance cannot be underestimated because in the end "we need only to be in the world as our true selves, with open hearts and open minds" (Palmer, 1998, p. 183).

The identity and integrity of teachers whose vocation it is to teach in Catholic high schools in the archdiocese of Brisbane will continue to be informed by Australian circumstances and culture, and by Catholic theology and tradition. In the end, it is possible that the formation of teachers in Brisbane's Catholic schools may resemble CTT in some ways. After all, the word "Catholic" does mean universal or all embracing. However, the formation or nurturing and sustaining of the spirituality and vocation to teach in a Catholic high school, part of the mission of the Catholic Church, needs to be consciously and unambiguously Catholic (CCE, 1982, #62, 65, 79).

It is opportune to recognise formation as essential to the authenticity of Catholic schools (CCE, 1998, #3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11 & 14). Groome (2002, p. 182) urged teachers to consider St. Mark's statement that unlike the scribes, Jesus taught with authority (1:22). Teachers in Catholic schools can benefit from the demonstrated success and insights of CTT for the formation of teachers and teach with the authority. This is because this approach to formation is rooted in the teachers own identity and integrity, in their environments of their own schools, and community enriched by the Catholic Tradition. This is consistent with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* which understands spirituality as the integration of an individuals' faith with their history, work and environment (Pope John Paul II, 1994, #2684). This research offers insight and direction for the professional development and formation of teachers in Catholic schools. It can assist in the provision of meaningful professional development experiences because these can be rooted in, or flow from, teachers' daily experiences of work and faith, acknowledging the one who teaches, in their individual circumstances and context. This makes formation relevant and effective for the "personal salvation" of the teacher and the "apostolic mission of the church" (CCE 1982, #65) as well as spirited teaching in Catholic high schools.

Flowing from the everyday experiences of teachers' work, formation has transformative potential because reflecting on experiences of everyday work in light of their vocation, comes with the potential to revision and reshape how teachers see those everyday experiences. As Palmer said, it is to recognise the "hidden wholeness" (2004, p.4). This in turn shapes the way teachers see their classrooms they re-enter on a daily basis. Simone (2004) observed that teachers faced with professional development were likely to implement only what they absolutely had to and "once their classroom door swings shut they tend to return to their own ways" (p.

20) unless as her research showed, teachers were encouraged to do the inner work of negotiating the personal and structural landscapes of school (p. 3). In Catholic high schools, it makes sense and seems only natural that this inner work is done in the light of the Scripture and with the support of the Catholic tradition and community. In this way, "unlike the scribes" teachers in Catholic high schools will teach as ones "having authority" (Mk. 1:22).

An Overview of the Research Reported in this Thesis

The research reported in this thesis is presented in seven chapters. Chapter one consists of an introduction to the problem being studied, an explanation of the purpose of the research, the specific aims of the research, an introduction to the *Courage to Teach* as one model of teacher formation in successful operation in the USA and discussion of the significance of formation for the vocation of lay teachers in Catholic schools.

Chapter two presents a review of the literature which narrows down Catholic spirituality, from within the broader field of spirituality, and explores how this articulation is relevant for the work of lay teachers in Catholic schools and how insights of Catholic spirituality might contribute to the formation of lay teachers in Catholic schools and the mission of the church.

Chapter three explains and justifies the research design employed in exploring the aims of this research, including the rationale for choosing hermeneutics as the orientation of the theoretical perspective, interpretivism, that philosophically guides this research. This chapter discusses the approach of multiple-case study, the selection of the participants, an overview of the data collection and analysis, the role of the researcher and discussion of the ethical considerations of this study.

Chapter four presents the findings arising from the teacher focus groups. Identification, of which experiences of teachers' daily work nurture and sustain teachers' spirituality, is presented with some explanation and clarification and minimal discussion. In Chapter five, the themes and threads emerging in Chapter four, are explored from other perspectives namely: the perspective of archdiocesan Catholic education leadership; the perspective of a retired teacher from the USA with formation experience; the perspective of two international authorities with expertise in spirituality and vocation; and finally from the perspective of individuals in archdiocesan Catholic high schools with recognised responsibility for leadership in their school community's spirituality.

In Chapter six, the insights from chapter's four and five, are bought into a circular hermeneutic, or dialogue, with Catholic Scripture and Tradition in search of the *verbum interius,* or inner word arising from the synergy of this chorus of voices. Analysis and interpretation of the emerging *verbum interius*, provides insights into the everyday experiences of teachers' work that is useful in informing practices of formation of lay teachers in Catholic high schools, that are helpful both for the personal sanctification of lay teachers and also for the apostolic mission of the church. Discussion of these findings, conclusions, and recommendations are presented in Chapter seven.

Chapter 2

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The aims of the research reported in this thesis were threefold. These were to explore Catholic Church documents and other literature in order to gain insights into the spirituality of teachers who teach in Catholic schools; to identify experiences of teachers' daily work in Catholic high schools that nurture and sustain their spirituality; and to discern how these insights might inform the ongoing formation of lay teachers in Catholic high schools. The purpose of this chapter is to present a review of the literature, which has acted as a starting place from which these aims were pursued. To gain a grasp of teacher spirituality and what this means for lay teachers in Catholic schools, an understanding of spirituality in general, and in particular Catholic spirituality, was needed. This also required exploration of the concepts of teachers' work, teachers' vocation, ongoing teacher formation, as well as how and where these fields interrelated and contributed to the personal sanctification and apostolic mission of teachers working in Catholic high schools (CCE, 1982, #65). How the bodies of literature coalesced around these concepts and related to each other for the purposes of this research is represented in the figure 2.1. According to Palmer (1998) experiences of teachers' work provides a common "landscape" for teachers to explore and engage their spirituality. In this thesis, Catholic spirituality is recognised as essential for the authenticity, identity and integrity of Catholic high schools (CCE, 1977; 1982). Therefore, Catholic spirituality, rather than spirituality in general is the main concern in this research. Insights and findings from writers and researchers indicate that formation, which is defined in chapter 1 of this thesis as the ongoing

nurturing and sustaining of the vocation of teachers in Catholic high schools, engages teachers' spirituality, and sustains and renews teachers' vocation, impacting significantly on the quality of teachers' daily work (Carotta, 1999; Intrator & Scribner, 2000; Jackson & Jackson, 2002; McMahon, 2003; Palmer, 1998; Simone, 2004). Figure 2.1 acknowledges this interrelationship between formation, teaching as vocation, and teachers' work within the perspective of Catholic spirituality. In Catholic high schools "formation must be oriented toward both personal sanctification and apostolic mission, for these are two inseparable elements in a Christian vocation" (CCE, 1982, #65). Figure 2.1 displays how teacher formation, teachers' vocation, and teachers' work, all contribute to the personal sanctification and apostolic mission of teachers teaching in Catholic high schools.
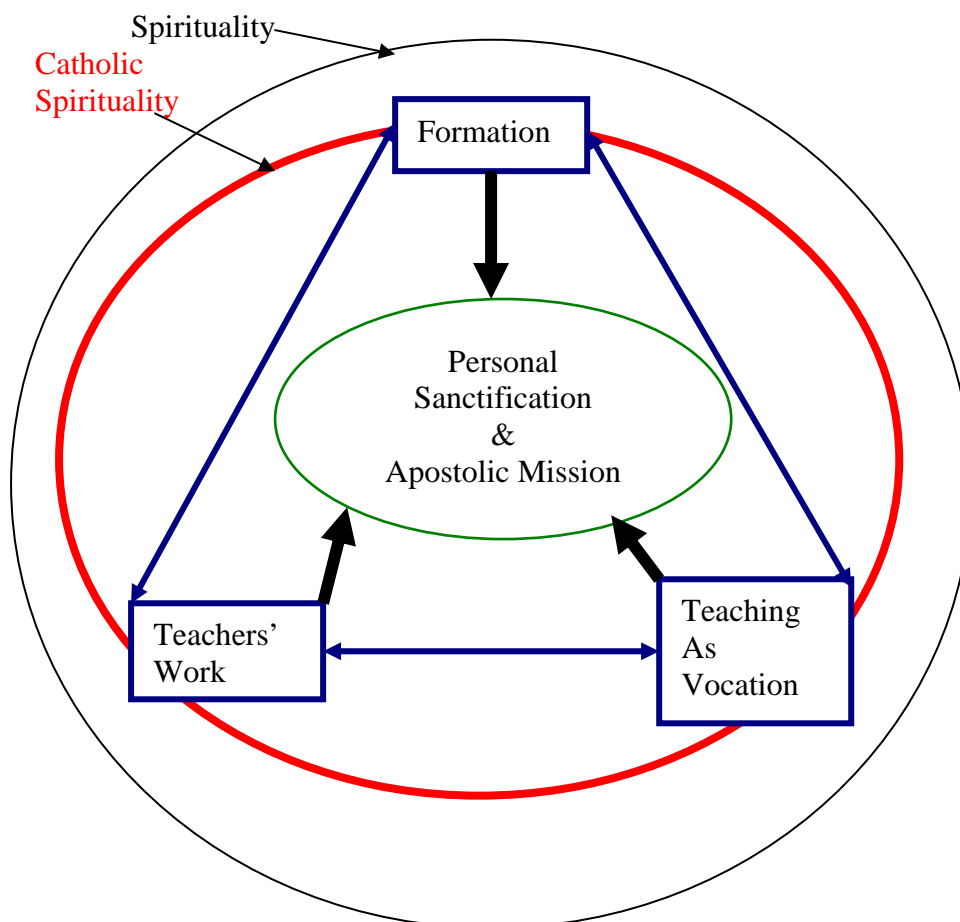
Figure 2.1. The categories of literature and their interrelationships as developed in this chapter.

One of the purposes of this research was to uncover insights into the phenomena noted in Figure 2.1, and their interconnections. These insights will be helpful in guiding practices of formation so that they flow with authenticity out of Catholic spirituality. To do this it is necessary to articulate Catholic Spirituality and distinguish it from broader understandings of spirituality in general. This is important for the sake of the identity and integrity of the Catholic tradition and community, as well as ultimately for the formation of the teacher as part of the unfolding Catholic tradition. It is for the maintenance of this identity and integrity that the teaching magisterium of the Catholic Church encourages formation (CCE, 1997, #78; 1982, #62, 79). The magisterium has stated that formation has direct benefit and consequence for the "personal sanctification" of the teacher and the "apostolic mission" of the church (CCE, 1982, #65). It recognised that personal sanctification and apostolic mission are developmental (Pope Paul VI, 1965, #29), and therefore has required that formation be continually "broadened and be kept up to date, on the same level as, and in harmony with, human formation as a whole" (CCE, 1982, #62). As Shea put it, "adulthood is essentially a religious issue" and adult development and spiritual development cannot be separated (2005, p. 131). This thesis is concerned with everyday experiences of teachers' work and how these experiences can inform formation practices and sustain teachers' vocation to teach in Catholic high schools. In fulfilling their vocation, teachers in Catholic high schools engage their call to personal sanctification and apostolic mission. Guided by Catholic tradition and teaching, formation will ensure that Catholic schools remain authentic (CCE, 1982, #79).

Overview of Literature

Pope John Paul II (2001, #33) recognised that "for the lay people involved, teaching is more than a profession; it is a vocation". This vocation[2] is engaged through the circumstances of teachers' daily work in Catholic high schools. This work is recognised by the magisterium of the Catholic Church as a ministry of great importance (CCE, 1977; 1982; 1988; Pope John Paul II, 2001). Consequently, the magisterium has recognised that on-going formation of teachers is necessary for the personal sanctification of the teacher and the apostolic mission in which those teachers are engaged by virtue of their work of teaching in Catholic high schools (CCE, 1982, #65). As defined in chapter 1, a spirituality of teaching is concerned with engaging the specific gifts, graces or charisms of those with a vocation to teach in Catholic high schools.

Recognising and attending to a specific spirituality of teaching, and attending to teachers' spirituality, means attending to formation in specific awareness of what the magisterium is asking of lay teachers in Catholic schools (1982, #62). Significantly, Groome (2002, p. 271) points out, that whereas in the past, people were likely to think of themselves as religious but not necessarily spiritual, as spirituality was thought to be something of interest for monastics, today people are more likely to think of themselves as being spiritual but not necessarily religious. While he recognises that the dichotomous separation of thinking of oneself as either religious or spiritual reflects "only half the story", his point is that entertaining and engaging spirituality is a current and popular concern. This means that the broader topic of spirituality is of interest in this thesis. Groome's insight also explains why for so many the topic of spirituality has gained considerable general interest in recent times (Caputo, 2001;

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[2] Vocation is defined in chapter 1 as the calling of an individual on a journey of encounter with God through that individual's engagement in the ongoing work of creation.

Elkins, 1998; Hays, 1984; Moore, 1992, 2002; Palmer, 2000, 2004a; Rolheiser, 1999; Tacey, 2000, 2003). Despite, or because of this wide ranging interest, understanding of what spirituality actually is diverges widely and is generally highly subjective (Ranson, 2002, pp. 11-18). Spirituality is usually thought to be essential for giving life meaning, holistic growth and remaining human (Frankl, 1959, p. 93). Spirituality is that dimension of living in which people are aware of the sacred (Kushner, 1998, p. 12). Significant human endeavours such as work and education provide specific contexts for experiencing, articulating and understanding spirituality.

Considering the significance of work in people's lives, it is not surprising, in this environment of popular interest in spirituality, that a spirituality of work has gained some attention (Carrol, 1998; Goodier, 2002; Koester, 2002; Mahan, 2002; Palmer, 2000, 2004a; Parks Daloz, Keen, Keen, & Daloz Parks, 1996; Sellner, 1993; Whitehead, 1995). The world of work cannot be separated from the inner life (Moxley, 2000, p. 130). Drawing on a 1974 US study, which was replicated in Australia in the 1990's, Carrol (1998, p. 18) argued that work was a daily exercise in finding meaning, and that most individuals yearned that their work give them something "more". "Yearning" for something "more" emerges through the literature as a consistent marker of spirituality (Carrol, 1998; Conn, 1998; Lonergan, 1971, 1992; Merton, 1955/1983, 2002, 2003a; Palmer, 2000, 2004a; Parks Daloz et al., 1996).

As education is an avenue where individuals are encouraged to seek more, whether this more be knowledge, wisdom or meaning, it is not surprising that increasingly attention is turning towards spirituality in education (Del Prete, 2002; Denton & Ashton, 2004; Groome, 1998; Kessler, 2000; Martin, 2003; Miller, 1996, 2000; Moxley, 2000; Nash, 2002; Scherer, 1998; Webster, 2002). Within this field

of literature there is a growing body of research and writing dealing specifically with the personhood of teachers and their work (Carotta, 2003; Conti, 2002; Durka, 2002; Groome, 1998; Harris, 1987; Intrator, 2003; Maynes, 2002; McMahon, 2003; Miller, 2000; Palmer, 1983, 1992, 1998, 1999; Simone, 2004). This research was of specific interest to this thesis, which aimed to explore experiences of teachers' daily work in relation to teachers' spirituality. This in turn might be useful in informing the practices of formation of lay teachers in Catholic high schools.

Ironically, while some researchers have the opinion that "the majority of the literature on spirituality and spiritual development in education continues to be written by scholars with a theological or religious background" (Webster, 2002, p. 27), and while writers including Durka (2002), Grace (2002), Groome (1998) and Harris (1987) are recognised as significant contributors to the enterprise of Catholic education, there is surprisingly little research dealing with the spirituality of teachers teaching in Catholic schools (Conti, 2002) and less empirical research written from within an Australian Catholic school context (Prest, 2000). The research reported in this thesis adds to and fills out this literature because it explores the spiritual significance of everyday experiences of teachers in Catholic high schools in the archdiocese of Brisbane.

Earlier Australian research by Tinsey (1998) found that meanings ascribed to concepts such as "the religious dimension", or "mission" were likely to be held differently by teachers and their parish priests. Recognising that teachers are no longer likely to be members of religious orders, Tinsey thought that attention to teachers' "vocation, needs to give due reference to the religious mission of the school, while recognising the lay status of teachers" (p. 88). He argued that, "mission and religious mission can be articulated in language that wins the moral support of all staff

no matter what their religious affiliation or religious practice" (p. 88). In saying this, he seemed to be suggesting the possibility of teachers coming to terms with their own spirituality in the context of their identity as a teacher, with attention to their vocation to teach in a Catholic school. This is "formation" according to the Congregation for Catholic Education, because it concerns both the "personal sanctification" of the teacher and "the apostolic mission" of the church (1982, #65). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* also defines spirituality in this way, because it refers to the integration of the individual's particular environment, work and history (Pope John Paul II, 1994, #2684).

An understanding of how experiences of teachers' daily work nurture and sustain teachers' spirituality, is useful in attending to the ongoing formation of teachers working in the Catholic high schools. Recent research has found that when grounded in the reality of teachers' daily experiences, formation is seen to be something practical and relevant, rather than as something theoretical or ethereal (Carotta, 1999; Intrator & Scribner, 2000; McMahon, 2003; Simone, 2004). This increases the likelihood of teacher engagement with opportunities for formation, which in turn, offers the opportunity for impact on both the vocation of the teacher, and the daily work of the teacher (Intrator & Scribner, 2000; Palmer, 2004a). The benefits of this are an increased congruence between teachers' soul and role (Palmer, 1998, 2000, 2004a, 2004b). This leads to the possibility of ongoing growth, or transformation, both of the individual and the community. (Carotta, 2003; Cole & Knowles, 2000; Durka, 2002; Ecclestone, 1996; Intrator & Scribner, 2000; McMahon, 2003; Palmer, 1992, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2004a; Parks, Keen, Keen & Daloz 1996). In accord with the Scriptures (Lk. 13:20-21) Pope John Paul argued that this transformation or growth of the laity was the "way the church becomes the yeast that

leavens the entire loaf of the temporal order" (2001, #43). This ongoing process is also recognised as conversion (Finn, 1990, p. 23; Fowler, 1981, p. 34; Gillespie, 1991, p. 3; Johnston, 2001, p. 39; Lonergan, 1971, pp. 130-1; 1992, p. 764).   The research reported in this thesis articulates how in the words of the *Congregation for Catholic Education*, formation makes tangibly possible the "personal sanctification" of the teacher and "apostolic mission" of the church (CCE, 1982, #65). Also, and not insignificantly, from the perspective of good stewardship, or responsible use of resources, it justifies the priority as well as the money and resources that need to be allocated for staff spiritual professional development. The first challenge in all of this is in how to approach the amorphous topic of spirituality.

Spirituality

        While there is great public interest in the area of spirituality (Caputo, 2001; Carrol, 1998; Eberle, 2003; Elkins, 1998; Hays, 1984; Johnston, 2001; Leder, 2004; Martin, 2003; May, 2000; Moxley, 2000; Ranson, 2002; Rolheiser, 2001; Tacey, 2002, 2003; Webster, 2002; Wheatley, 2002), the search for and experience of, the spiritual is not confined to organised religion, as was the case in the past (Caputo, 2001; Elkins, 1998; Freeman, 2002; Martin, 2003; Tacey, 1995, 2000, 2002, 2003; Treston, 2000). Some writers have refered to this phenomenon as "secular sanctity" (Hays, 1984, p.11), "religion-without-religion" (Caputo, 2001, pp. 109-112) or as "beyond religion" (Elkins, 1998, pp. 9-10). Consequently, there are myriad of definitions attempting to define spirituality (Downey, 1993, p. viii; Freeman, 2002, p. 15; Treston, 2000, p. 17). As Rolheiser aptly put it, we live in "an age which is rich in everything except clarity" (1999, p. ix).

With definitions ranging from the wholly secular to the wholly religious (May, 2000, p. 151), clarifying the concept of spirituality begins with recognising that spirituality concerns something 'other', something more than the physical world (Noffke, 1993, pp. 908-910). Spirituality is about a "more" (Rolheiser, 1999, pp. 3-5) in life that an individual longs to "be" (Lonergan, 1971, p. 212; also May, 2000, p. 103). Even if one is not conscious of what exactly the "more" for which one yearns is, it is thought to be both desirable and attainable (Lonergan, 1992, pp. 543-4). The source of this longing, or the drive of this restlessness seeking something more, was recognised by Plato and Aristotle as the *diamon* (Hillman, 1996). Today this is usually recognised as the soul or the "true self" (Conn, 1998; Del Prete, 2002; Hillman, 1996; Lonergan, 1971; Mahan, 2002; Merton, 1949, 1955/1983, 1994, 2002, 2003a; Moore, 2002; Tacey, 2002).

Jung claimed that because of its complexity, the soul "cannot be approached through a mere psychology" (1963, p. 418). This is a crucial point for this thesis because it is a reminder that the soul is longing for spiritual nourishment not psychological therapy or self-help. The term, psychology, is derived from the Greek word *psyche*, but while the word, *psyche* means "soul", *cura anima* or "care of the soul" is not the same as the practice of psychology (Freeman, 2002, p. 26; Groome, 2002, p. 272; Moore, 1992, p. 5; O'Donohue, 1997, p. 28; Rolheiser, 1999, p. 15).

This point is significant for this thesis for two reasons. Firstly, a significant consequence of many teachers' experiences of their daily work is the malady of burnout (Carotta, 1999; Intrator, 2003; Intrator & Scribner, 2000; McMahon, 2003; Simone, 2004) and this condition has traditionally been called "loss of soul" (Fowler, 2000, p. 119; Koester, 2002, p. 1050). Secondly, the alternative to "burning out" is the condition recognised as "human flourishing", (Fowler, 2000, p. 119; Livsey &

Palmer, 1999 p. 17; Webster, 2002, p. 9) a state described since Plato and Aristotle as *eudiamonia*. Having the shared aetiology with the *diamon* of the Greek philosophers, *eudiamonia*, or human flourishing, is the good that is experienced when life's purpose is oriented by the longings of the soul (Hillman, 1996; Webster, 2002) or the "true self" (Merton, 1949, 1955/1983, 2002, 2003a; Palmer, 2000, 2004a). In other words, human flourishing is living authentically (Lonergan, 1971, 1992; Webster, 2002), or living with integrity out of one's true identity (Palmer, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2004a).

Clarifying these concepts for the purpose of this thesis helps to overcome recurring confusion between everyday usage of terms such as soul and spirit. Burton-Russell (1997, p. 24) explained that the cause of this confusion dates back to antiquity and to a common recurring inconsistency in the use of these terms. In particular, the terms *psyche, sarx, pneuma* and *soma* need clarification. The term *psyche* means, soul or "life principle", but also means a "spirit able to exist outside the body". The Greek, *pneuma*, similarly to the Hebrew word for spirit *Ruach*, or the Latin word *spiritus*, means "breath" (Leder, 2004, p. 29), but it also means that which animates or gives life to a body. The *soma* is a body animated by a spirit or soul and the *sarx* is the unanimated body. Burton Russell explains that the end result of this inconsistency in usage is that the modern understanding of "self" tends to include both meanings of *psyche* and *pneuma* (Burton Russell, 1997, p. 24) i.e. soul and spirit.

This understanding of spirituality as the longing for human flourishing, or authenticity, resonates with Tillich's spiritual question, "What would it look like if we were whole?" (in Keen, 1992, p. 7). The acknowledgement that one seeks to be whole also acknowledges that one's present state is somehow less than whole. This is not a phenomenon confined to the modern western world; it is an intrinsically human condition. For example, in Buddhism this phenomenon is known as *duhhka,*

sometimes translated as "unsatisfactoriness" and sometimes translated as "suffering" (Kung, Van Ess, Von Stietencron, & Bechert, 1993, p. 297; Smart, 1989, p. 61). This basic restlessness of spirit is the foundational aspect of Buddhism's central teachings, "The Four Noble Truths" (Smart, 1989, p. 61). It also points to the fact that longing or "yearning" for "more" is a spiritual restlessness that requires spiritual nourishment, or as Jung argued, more than can be provided by "mere psychology" (1963, p. 418).

Significantly for this thesis, it appears that to address the spirituality of teachers in Catholic high schools, formation needs to be authentically Catholic, for the sake of the identity and integrity of Catholic education (CCE, 1997, #78; 1982, #79; 1988, #97). As Palmer constantly points out, the identity of the teacher "is more fundamental to good teaching than technique" (Palmer, 1998, p. 12; 2004a; 2004b, pp. 108-9), and he also stresses the need for integrity or not living divided, or compartmentalised lives (Palmer, 1998, pp. 164-166; 2000, p. 47; 2004a; 2004b, p. 3-11). This means that the formation of teachers in Catholic schools can only be authentic when the identity and integrity of the teacher is addressed in the context of the identity and integrity of the Catholic tradition.

Catholic Spirituality

Groome (2002, p. xix) has argued that identity as "that which holds together a continuous sense of our human "being" as a person or as a community… identity is *who* we are and *how* we live". The paradox of community is that the "being as a person" is not dichotomous with being "as a community" (Palmer, 2004a, pp. 51-69) because community flows out of personal identity and integrity into the world of relationships (Palmer, 1998, p. 90). Identity is not static but "ever maturing into new horizons" (Groome, 2002, p. xix) as individuals and as community. The integrity of

one affects the integrity of the other. As has been demonstrated earlier in this chapter and central to this thesis is that formation is about how to authentically nurture and sustain who teachers are as individuals and as community.

Catholic high schools are part of the Catholic community. As such they are deeply embedded in Catholic tradition and Catholic community. That community and tradition is there to nurture the spirituality of people (Groome, 2002, p. 272). Lonergan (1971, p. 104) saw that the way to authenticity, human flourishing, or "life to the full" (Jn. 10:10), was "through self-transcendence". Paradoxically Lonergan, like Merton (in Del Prete, 2002, pp. 165-9) , saw that to become one's authentic or true self requires that one transcend one's present self. This illustrates a concept found in the Gospel of Matthew, "to lose one's life is to save it" (Mt. 16:25). This transcendence can be seen as a spiritual journey recognising the 'true self' as something continually emerging. St. Augustine, borrowing from Homer, Virgil and Plotinus, used the metaphor of journey, or *peregrinatio*, to make sense of spirituality as a journey of transformation through life with all its concerns (Martin, 2003, pp. 25-27). This journey, or "inner mystery of conversion" is the result of "grace" interacting with both the inner and outer worlds of the individual (Lonergan, 1992, p. 764). According to St Augustine, the events of life revealed the "experience of unanticipated and transformative grace" (Martin, 2003, p. 22). The research reported in this thesis explored everyday experiences of teachers' work for their potential to reveal such moments of grace and how their transformative potential might inform the formation of lay teachers in Catholic high schools.

Teacher formation, or the ongoing nurturing and sustaining of teachers' spirituality, attends to the inner life of the teacher: the teachers' identity and integrity (Palmer, 1998, 2004a). In the context of the dynamic of the teacher's everyday

experiences, these experiences have the potential to reveal moments of "unanticipated and transformative grace" (2003, p. 22) that give the journey, *pereginatio,* meaning and direction (2003, pp. 37-39). Formation needs to be ongoing because as the philosopher Hoffer explained, regardless of their movement, human beings remain in a state of "incurable unfinishedness" (Hoffer, 1973, p. 1). As a consequence of this "unfinishedness", or the sense that something is missing, people continue to search for some awareness of happiness (Gillespie, 1991, p. 131), human flourishing, or *eudiamonia* (Conn, 1998; Hillman, 1996; Palmer, 2000) because of the "powerful longings of the human spirit" (Tacey, 2000, p. ix). As Rahner explained, "in the torment of everything attainable we come to understand that here, in this life, all symphonies are unfinished" (in Rolheiser, 2001, p. 11). For this reason formation needs to be "ongoing" (CCE, 1982, #62). Palmer (1998), Carotta (1999), Intrator & Scribner (2000), McMahon (2003) and Simone (2004) all find teachers' everyday experiences of work as the opportunity to engage in the ongoing task of formation. As Groome (2002, p. 272) said, "Catholicism doesn't have a spirituality, it *is* a spirituality". In this he was saying that there is no aspect of life, not even the mundane everyday experiences of work which do not have spiritual significance. Catholic spirituality is,

> allowing my God–consciousness to permeate every nook and cranny of daily living, being alert to God's presence in the world and within my own person, discerning and responding according to God's reign of love and freedom, peace and justice, holiness and wholeness of life for all (Groome, 2002, p. 275).

In sum, it is central to this thesis that Catholic spirituality is not theoretical; it is incarnated in everyday experiences. Therefore the nature of authentic Catholic

spirituality will continue to be explored in subsequent sections of this chapter. At this point teachers' work needs attention because Harris (1987, p. 77) points out, there is a tendency to think too small. Teachers are likely to underestimate the significance of their work because of a tendency "to think in terms unworthy of us; we think too narrowly; we do not dare a vocation to the universe. But teaching at its best is such a vocation, a calling to recreate the planet." The formation of teachers must deal with teachers' work because what teachers do, doesn't just "make a difference. It makes *the* difference" and "the empirical data" for that "is compelling" (Intrator, 2002, p. xxx).

Teachers' Work

In a Catholic world-view work is a vehicle in which individuals are in relationship with God and each other, and therefore it is intrinsically spiritual (O'Murchu, 1988, p. 66; Roof, 1993, p. 252; Tacey, 2000, p. 242; Zohar, 1990, p. 206). Teaching is the work that Plato described as the "turning of the soul" of learners (in Groome, 1998, p. 37). Groome recognised that in the art of teaching, the soul is "turned toward the good, the true and the beautiful" the ultimate outcome of which is the ideal of "true happiness" (p. 37). The Greek word which refers to Plato's concept of happiness is *eudiamonia*, which also means human flourishing (Hillman, 1996, p. 83, 260). Mindful that the meaning of "education" is literally "to lead out" (Moore, 2000, p. vii), the "where" to which the teacher seeks to lead is human flourishing. When Nouwen observed that it is an illusion for someone to think that they can lead others along a path they themselves do not travel (1979, p. 72), he reminded teachers that the engagement of the inner life of the teacher is essential for good teaching (Durka, 2002; Harris, 1987; Intrator & Scribner, 2000; Maynes, 2002;

McMahon, 2003; Miller, 2000; Palmer, 1983, 1992, 1998, 1999, 2004b; Prest, 2000; Simone, 2004), but also, and significant for this thesis, that formation is essential for the authenticity of the inner life of the teacher (Durka, 2002; Intrator & Scribner, 2000; Miller, 2000; Palmer, 1999, 2004a, 2004b; Paver, 2005; Schlon, 1988; Simone, 2004).

Significantly for this research, reflecting on experiences of teachers' daily work is the place to begin when addressing nurturing and sustaining teachers' vocation to teach in a Catholic high school, because as popular writer Thomas More observed, "spirituality is seeded, germinates, sprouts and blossoms in the mundane. It is found in the smallest of daily activities" (1992, p. 219). Within these "smallest activities" of teachers' everyday work, it is possible to glimpse what St. Augustine called *gratia vitae socialis*, or the grace of common life (Martin, 2003, p. 89), the "unanticipated and transformative grace" (p. 22) enabling "the best teacher" to "daily grow and make progress by learning even better things" (p. 136). Heschel argued that God is hiding in the world and that people's task was to reveal God's presence by their deeds (1983, p. 87). This means that the task of the teacher is to let the divine be revealed from within their daily experiences of teaching. When Rohr observed that, "we're already totally in the presence of God. What's absent is awareness" (1999, p. 28), he was indicating that bringing awareness to everyday experiences is likely to reveal moments of grace with the potential to nurture and sustain teachers' spirituality. Researchers assert that this type of reflective practice has significant benefits for the teacher, the student and the act of teaching (Carotta, 1999; Clouder, 2000; Cole & Knowles, 2000; Ecclestone, 1996; Livsey & Palmer, 1999; Maynes, 2002; McMahon, 2003; Osterman, 1990; Schlon, 1988; Simone, 2004).

The great irony of this is that perhaps the biggest single factor that works against teachers attending to their inner life is the experience, constant stress and constant business of everyday school life (Carotta, 2003, p. 12; Palmer, 1998, p. 36; Rolheiser, 1999, p. 31; Simone, 2004, p. 18). Researching teacher stress, Jarvis (2002) concluded that teachers' lives are constantly busy or over-busy, and that finding enthusiasm for one more thing for teachers to do, in this case to attend to their inner lives, was like trying to pour more "water into an already overfull cup". However, it is significant for the research reported in this thesis, that in these circumstances of teachers' everyday work receive attention. The experiences of teachers' everyday work are central to teachers' spirituality. As Ashton (2004) claims,

> choosing to integrate everyday experience into a more meaningful whole is what spirituality is all about…our highest self is not a transcendent ideal but rather an experiential reality, one that can be enacted in the mundane world of the everyday…our spiritual practice can be enacted in the simple tasks that constitute everyday living (pp. 56-57).

In addition to its ability to make formation relevant to teachers, attention to teachers' spirituality from the perspective of teachers' everyday work is an authentic way to approach teachers' spirituality. What can be revealed from the experiences of teachers' daily work and how this might be useful for teacher formation of lay teachers in Catholic schools were aims of the research reported in this thesis.

Everyday experiences of Teachers' Work.

While teachers' work is made up of good days and bad days, Palmer has argued that the challenge is in how a teacher can successfully negotiate all of the days

with grace, guarding their owns spirits and serving their students as well (1998, p. 1). This point is important because a significant number of individuals who become teachers burn out (Carotta, 1999; Durka, 2002; Friedman, 2000; Graziano, 2005; McMahon, 2003). McMahon's research (2003, p. 23) identified "intensification", defined as the increasing demands of continual "addition of tasks, including administrative and assessment tasks" resulting in teachers being "chronically and persistently overloaded". This is a significant challenge for teachers as these researchers identify intensification as the most consistent contributing factor to teacher burnout. Simone's (2004) research recognised that as well as burnout, there is the more insidious problem of "rusting out". This is the less overt losing of enthusiasm and energy for teaching and the passive withdrawal of the self of the teacher (pp. 30-31). McMahon (2003) described specific causes of this such as environmental factors, lack of time, workload, student factors, lack of administrative support, unsupportive parents, lack of collegial support, role conflict and role ambiguity, educational reform, economic factors, societal factors and individual factors such as personality, age, gender, grade level taught, locus of control, life changes. She also saw truth in Palmer's conviction that teacher formation is the key to inviting teachers to "reclaim their own wholeness and vocational clarity" through making "connections between the renewal of a teacher's spirit and the revitalization of education" (p. 58). The crucial question Palmer (1998, p. 17) identified is "How can we take heart in teaching once more so that we can, as good teachers always do, give heart to our students?" Both Simone (2004) and McMahon (2003) recognised that ongoing teacher formation results in change "both in and out of school" (Simone, 2004, p. 373). Simone concluded by saying that "if even a small group of like-minded professional development advocates came together on these ideas, the results

might be quite revolutionary" (p. 416). McMahon (2003, p. 215) claimed that "rekindling the spirit to teach is the task of teachers, school leaders and communities in order to provide quality education for children" and that "sustaining the 'fire' in teaching appears to be quite a simple equation. Her solution was to reduce the factors that deplete teachers while increasing the factors that renew and inspire them". She went on to say that, "teacher formation experiences are [one] way to keep the flame burning" (p. 220). Like Carotta's (1999) and Intrator & Scribner's (2000) earlier findings McMahon (2003) and Simone (2004) found that the quality of the teacher's role in everyday classrooms came down to the nourishment given to the teacher's soul, spirit or inner self. This research contributes to these insights and opens the possibilities of how this can be done with teachers who teach in Catholic high schools.

Research has indicated that it is not some "thing" or technique but the spirit, soul or inner self that makes a teacher a good teacher (Carotta, 2003; Intrator & Scribner, 2000; McMahon, 2003; Palmer, 1992; Prest, 2000). Palmer observed that some teachers lecture endlessly, others hardly speak. Some stay close to the syllabus and others get lost in their imagination. "Some teach with a carrot and others with a stick" (1998, p. 10). He went on to say that, "we must do something alien to academic culture: we must talk to each other about our inner lives" (p. 12). As the daily experiences of teachers' work is the context common to all teachers teaching in Catholic high schools, these experiences present themselves as the starting point for this conversation.

Simone (1994, p. 17) observed that although "self-inquiry is not self-serving", but critical in sustaining authentic teacher-student relationships and connections with others, schools "do not account for the personal or emotional needs of teachers".

Schools "are not designed as places where adults can count on feeling personally nurtured in their own identity-making", and this situation is the "primary reason that school reforms fail". They fail because what is missing is appreciation of "the everyday lives of teachers, their practices, their beliefs, and sources of frustration and satisfaction" (p. 19). When asked during this research, why teachers did not talk about the "who" that teaches, one of the participants in the research reported in this thesis poignantly summed up the general feeling of participants saying that "*we all have lives out of school*" (FG.1.3, 2004, para 179). As Palmer has argued, the present situation, encourages teachers to live divided lives (Palmer, 1998, p. 163-6; 2004b, p. 17-21) and they fail to see how they conspire in their own deformation (2004b, p. 34). The research reported in this thesis offers an opportunity to break this pattern. However, it is recognised that this opportunity is "something alien to academic culture" (Palmer, 1998, p. 12).

There is significant research to demonstrate that everyday experiences of teachers work are the source of burnout (Adams, 1999; Bernard, 1990; Carotta, 1999; Friedman, 2000; Graziano, 2005; Jarvis, 2002; McMahon, 2003; Michaelson & Harvey, 2000; Rogers, 1992; Simone, 2004). Less obvious, but as significant, is the realisation that the everyday work experiences nourish and sustain teacher spirituality (Carotta, 1999; Durka, 2002; Ecclestone, 1996; Intrator, 2002, 2003; Intrator & Scribner, 2000, 2003; Palmer, 1992, 1999, 2004a, 2004b; Simone, 2004). Whether their experiences of every day work burn out a teacher, or encourage and nourish their spirit to teach, depends on whether teachers' inner and outer worlds are integrated (Carotta, 1999; Intrator, 2002; Intrator & Scribner, 2000, 2003; Jarvis, 2002; Michaelson & Harvey, 2000; Palmer, 2004a; Simone, 2004). This is a significant point for the research presented in this thesis. It suggests how findings and insights

into the significance daily experiences of teachers' work have application in teacher formation. These experiences appear to be significant in teachers knowing and experiencing their teaching as a job, or as a vocation. As the poet Rilke wrote, "the point is, to live everything" (1984, p. 34). This means not to miss out on the potential contained in the everyday experiences of teachers' work to nurture and sustain their vocation as lay teachers in Catholic schools.

Teaching as a Vocation

Carotta's (1999) research titled, *Sustaining a Vocation to Teaching,* collected a range of definitions of the term *vocation* and saw that these tended to try to articulate the common threads involving "commitment to others and to personal fulfilment" (p. 24) and that "vocation is characterised as a journey… venturing inside oneself as well as venturing out into the complex world" (p. 25). Her research, similarly to the research of McMahon (2003) and Simone (2004), indicated that encouraging practices of reflection on the teachers' vocation to teach, in turn nurtured and sustained teacher spirituality.

The significance of the practice of reflection for the vitality of the vocation, was alluded to by Mahan (2002, p. 10-11) when he observed that, "vocation speaks of a life that is unscripted" (also Fowler, 1981, p. 34; Johnston, 2001, p. 18). Recognising that this "journey", or *pereginatio,* is "unscripted" indicates that teachers' reflection on their vocation is necessary because as Mahan sees (p. 13), "we are inspired but we don't know what to do about it". As Rolheiser (1999, p. 40) said, "our struggle is not with sincerity but direction. Our hearts are good, but it is our minds and feet that do not know the way to go". Mahan also argued that, "vocation speaks of a gracious discovery or an interior consonance between our deepest desires

and hopes and our unique gifts, as they are summoned forth by the needs of others and realised in the response to that summons" (2002, pp. 10-11). Mahan indicated that the consonances between a teacher's inner and outer lives are the result of "gracious discovery", or the discovery of moments of grace. As Kushner pointed out (1998, p. 105) "in life… unlike literature, we cannot discern the hand of God". Therefore teachers need to reflect on their experiences of teaching because the sacred, or moments of grace, "can only be met in the present but [are] comprehended in the past" (p. 155). Significantly for the research reported in this thesis, reflection, engagement and probing the lived experiences of teachers' vocation has the potential to yield the "gracious discoveries" required to nurture and sustain that vocation. Mahan explained that one may engage in one's vocation because of an "epiphany of recruitment" (2002, p. 20) but it is easy to lose sight of the vocation and to live "a lie constructed by our strategic inattention" (p. 73) because "we just don't know how to care for ourselves and others at the same time" due to "a deep structural tendency within our culture to perceive benevolence and self affirmation as mutually exclusive" (p. 114). The *Congregation for Catholic Education* (1982, #65) does not see that it should be it this way because it insisted that "formation must be oriented toward both personal sanctification and apostolic mission, for these are two inseparable elements in a Christian vocation." The inseparability of personal sanctification and apostolic mission provides further insight into understanding how identity and integrity of the teacher is inseparable from the identity and integrity of Catholic education as discussed earlier.

Personal Sanctification.

The inner work of personal formation is not something esoteric and removed from everyday life or confined to the interior self (Rolheiser, 1999, p. 6). It is lived

out in the everyday of individual's lives (Fowler, 2000, p. 67; Groome, 1998, p. 330). The personal is not exclusive or private, because as Palmer observed (1998, p. 2), "good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher". He said that when teachers teach, they project the condition of their "soul" onto their students, subject matter and their way of being together. Personal sanctification is coming to experience the "soul's spiritual life in God" and knowing it as the "inmost self" (Merton, 2003a, p. 84). For Merton, sanctification happens as individuals most closely align themselves with God (p. 99). To attend to personal sanctification, is to see that each person needs to attend to their own personal call to holiness, and that this cannot be ignored (Lonergan, 1971, p. 103). For Lonergan, attending to personal sanctification, "changes the criterion of one's decisions and choices from satisfactions to values" and as a consequence individuals move towards authenticity, or human flourishing (1971, p. 240).

Merton saw personal sanctification as the process of engaging, being "called to share with God the work of creating the truth of our identity (1949, p. 32). Giving priority to personal sanctification is not self-indulgent, because as Merton said, "if I can understand something of myself and something of others, I can begin to share with them the work of building the foundations for spiritual unity" (1966, p. 82). Spiritual unity, "the prayer of Jesus 'that they may be one'", is something that should be "kept ringing in the ears of Christians everywhere". Working towards unity is the call of every one who is baptized (Johnston, 2001, pp. 205-6). As almost all the baptized live their lives as lay people, it is evident that coming to an appreciation of lay spirituality is central to the research reported in this thesis.

Lay spirituality.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Pope John Paul II, 1994, #898) stated that the "special vocation" of the laity is "engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will." Life as a member of the laity is the normative mode of existence within the Catholic Church. The laity "are in the front line of Church life". The Church depends on lay people to animate, or en-spirit, human society (Pope John Paul II, 1994, #899). "They have not only the right but also the responsibility to reflect on their place in the work to the Church" (Lakeland, 2003, p. 44). The ongoing challenge according to Lakeland is "how to balance the life of a layperson, placed as he or she is between involvement in the liturgical life of the worshipping community and involvement in the secular world, with responsibilities to family, society, culture and polis" (p. 145). This statement recognises that while lay people working in Catholic education, are working towards the mission of the church, they not only live in "society, culture and the polis" but also, for the majority, in the sacrament of marriage. Family life is central for most lay people. This is not insignificant and cannot be left out when considering the wholeness, or holiness, to which Lonergan sees that lay people are called (1971, p. 103). The Catholic Church makes it clear that the family is to be considered the "domestic church" and image of "the ineffable *communio* of the Most Holy Trinity", always in need of the concentrated pastoral care of the Church (Pope John Paul II, 2001, #45). In acknowledging the realities and difficulties of family life, the Church has insisted that "special care needs to be given to these parents and their children by clergy, Catholic schools and catechists" (Pope John Paul II, 2001, #45). More than seeking a "balance" as Lakeland (2003, p. 145) argued, the insights of Groome (1998), Merton (2003), Palmer (2004, 1998) and the research of Simone (2004), McMahon (2003)

and Carotta (1999) all seem to suggest that integration of family, life and work is the path to spiritual formation (Pope John Paul II, 1994, #2684). The research reported in this thesis recognises that the vocations of being a spouse, parent and teacher cannot be separated or compartmentalised (Pope Paul VI, 1965, #4). As Palmer has said "as adults we must achieve a complex integration that spans the contradictions between inner and outer reality that supports both personal integrity and the common good" and it is this ultimate common good for which the Church strives (Pope Paul VI, 1965, #29). This is a "conversion to love… becoming fully human and fully authentic", something which is "the indispensable condition for world peace …also for good theology (Johnston, 2001, pp. 214-5).

Lakeland observed that "the more broadly the mission of the church is construed, the more heavily the responsibility for the mission falls to lay people" (2003, p. 255). This makes it necessary to turn to the apostolic mission of the Catholic Church.

Apostolic Mission

"The mission of the church is primarily conducted by lay people acting in the Spirit on their own initiative as baptized Christians". However, "the success of that mission is a collective responsibility, not just that of lay people" (Lakeland, 2003, pp. 255-6).

Importantly for this thesis, teaching is recognised as a vocation of "mission and true apostolate" by the *Congregation for Catholic Education* (1977, 1982, 1998). In a "Catholic school, the prime responsibility for creating this unique Christian school climate rests with teachers and individuals and as a community". "It depends chiefly on them whether the Catholic school achieves its' purpose" (CCE, 1998, #19).

The laity's involvement in Catholic education is "service of the Gospel, and a way of sanctification for both teachers and students" (Pope John Paul II, 2001, #33). This is "not a private initiative, but an expression of the reality of the church… open to all those who appreciate and share in its qualified educational project (CCE, 1998, #16)". The Catholic school, as Harris (1987, p. 28) claimed, is a place of work "where a community of people come together as a community of hope". Teachers are "agents in the divine-human covenant [and] have a responsible part to play. Engagement in the apostolic mission affirms that "life is meaningful first and foremost by divine design, and then because God's Spirit continues to work in and through the world (Groome, 2002, p. 82). Awareness of this, as Merton saw, "leads to a greater capacity to love and serve" (in Del Prete, 2002, p. 186).

The research reported in this thesis is significant because the mission of the Catholic Church, continuing the mission of Christ, in the environment of education "in accordance with the principles of the Gospel" requires ongoing formation of teachers in Catholic schools (CCE, 1977, #78). This is necessary for the "specific awareness of what is being asked" of teachers (CCE, 1982, #62), sustaining the vocation of teachers (#65) and staying true to the mission (#79). What this means for the formation of teachers in Catholic schools needs further consideration.

Formation of Teachers

Formation of teachers is essential because "teaching is a calling that requires constant renewal of mind, heart and spirit" (Jackson & Jackson, 2002, p. 285). It is concerned with finding congruence between the inner life and the outer life of the teacher "integrating heart, spirit and community into the fabric of school life" (Kessler, 2002, p. 145). It is realising that "the quality of our schools" depends on

"our efforts on keeping teachers wide awake and fully alive" (Intrator, 2002, p. 156).

Formation is the process of encouraging the living of an "undivided life" (Palmer, 1998, p. 168) where soul and role are joined in life giving synergy that enables the true self and the community to both flourish as a result (Palmer, 2004). This concept is important for this thesis because the concept of formation opens the possibility to see ordinary everyday experiences "charged with depth and significance", thereby knowing a reality that "changes us unutterably" as a consequence of being "bought deeper into the present moment, rooted more firmly in the wonder of ordinary life" (Freeman, 2002, p. 138). As Hays said, it is possible to develop a

> new way of seeing. We need a new vision of the sacred as the vibrant dimension hidden within the secular… it means we look for the sacred in those things we call commonplace. This will not be an easy task, since we have no tradition which allows us to experience all of life as a central part of the Divine Mystery (1984, p. 11).

The research reported in this thesis contributes to addressing the gap Hays sees here. As he said, 'seeing' in this light, teachers come to know the reality of "God hiding in the world" (Heschel, 1983, p. 87). In engaging in the vocation to teach in a Catholic high school, flourishing is experienced in "recognising that we are constituted by the address and calling of God and responding so as to become partners in God's work in the world" (Fowler, 2000, p. 75). In this, teachers' authentic identity and integrity are revealed (Palmer, 1998, p. 13; 2004b, p. 33).

This is why formation, or the nurturing and sustaining the spirituality of teachers in Catholic high schools, is strongly encouraged by the Catholic Church. The magisterium of the Catholic Church has recognised the significance and importance both for individual teachers and for the apostolic mission of the church

(CCE, 1977, 1982, 1998; Paver, 2005; Pope John Paul II, 2001, Prest, 2000). The research reported in this thesis addresses, as Fowler (2000, p. 118) has explained it, the need for the Christian community to offer a "spirituality of vocation" that can assist teachers "in discerning the shape of their callings in light of their gifts, the needs of the world, and the structures of opportunity and creativity that confront them". He recognised that when this is done, not only are the vocations of the individuals nurtured and sustained but that these individuals in turn become witnesses or signs to others of "the faithfulness and power of a providential God who invites, helps to shape, and invests in active partnership with those who genuinely seek to respond to their callings (p. 118)." In other words, by facilitating the formation of teachers, the vocations of others, particularly their students, are also encouraged as a consequence. This means that the research reported in this thesis has value well beyond the professional development of teachers.

The Formation Process.

Whereas most professional development is directed to the "what" teachers do, the "how" teachers teach and occasionally the "why" of what teachers do, formation attends to the "who question – who is the self that teaches?" (Palmer, 1998, p. 4). This insight guides the research reported in this thesis because it is concerned with "soul-work done in community" (Palmer, 2004, p. 57). Formation recognises that teaching is a "calling", a "vocation". It is about the renewal that follows by attending to the identity and integrity of the teacher (Intrator & Scribner, 2000, p. vi). Formation is at once both a personal and a communal exploration of the inner landscape of teachers' lives by going back to the 'deep well' of the teachers' calling (Jackson & Jackson, 2002, p. 288). Paradoxically, formation happens with teachers

exploring their inner landscapes in the solitude of community (Palmer, 1992, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2004a, 2004b).

It is important to recognise that formation is an ongoing process (Palmer, 1992, 1998, 2000, 2004a), which is also sometimes called conversion (Conn, 1998; Fowler, 1981, 2000; Gillespie, 1991; Lonergan, 1971, 1992; Ranson, 2002; Rolheiser, 1999, 2001). This means that formation can not be a "one off" in-service, or a once a year retreat day. Formation is not about "training", it is about personal transformation and wholeness (Palmer, 1998, 2004b). It is about developing a reflective practice, in community, that will inform teachers' lives, including their work, because "it is only when we go down, drawing deep from the well of personal experience, that we tap into the living water that supplies all of our lives" (Palmer, 2004, p. 124). It is those personal experiences of teachers in Catholic high schools that are reported and analysed in this thesis.

Reflective Practice.

Catholic spirituality must be understood in the context of the Scripture, tradition and teachings of the Catholic Church. It is in this context that individuals come to the revelation that their lives are not accidents, that they have meaning (Whitehead, 1995, p. 244). This is something that "arises from the deepest core of human being. It permeates who we are" (Groome, 1998, p. 323). This requires an ongoing hermeneutic between the Tradition and the present circumstances. As Rolheiser said (2001, p. 47) "to touch your roots is to be nurtured by them, to drink strength from them, and to be steadied and given solid direction". To bring teachers' lives to the Tradition, and to bring the Tradition to their lives, is a process that enriches both the individual and the Tradition (Groome, 1998, p. 244).

Although it is recognised that reflecting on their work is essential for teacher performance and judgement (Tripp, 1993, p. 12), research indicates that the constant busyness of school life conspires against this happening much of the time (Carotta, 1999; McMahon, 2003; Simone, 2004). While constant busyness looks productive, Merton (2003, p. 5) recognised that this was an illusion, and that constant busyness was actually narcissistic and counter-productive. Thinking in deep, personal and systematic ways about one's spiritual perspective as a teacher in a Catholic school is something that teachers rarely get a chance to do (Cole & Knowles, 2000; Maynes, 2002). However, research has indicated that reflection on teachers' work, nurtures and sustains the vocations of teachers, when specifically attending to the "who" that teaches (Carotta, 1999; Intrator & Scribner, 2000; Jackson & Jackson, 2002; McMahon, 2003; Simone, 2004). The research reported in this thesis indicates the significance of reflection on the everyday experiences of teachers' work for the nurturing and sustaining of the vocations of lay teachers in Catholic schools.

Conclusion to the Review of Literature

The purpose of the research reported in this thesis was to identify and interpret which experiences of teachers' every day work nurture and sustain teachers' spirituality and how this might inform teacher formation with respect given to the direction of Church documents. This meant that the topic of spirituality needed some clarification. Coming to an understanding of a spirituality of work, particularly a spirituality of teaching, is of specific interest for the research reported in this thesis. As the magisterium of the Catholic Church has instructed that formation is necessary for teachers in Catholic schools, articulating Catholic spirituality is essential for the authenticity of Catholic education and the identity and integrity of teachers with a

vocation to work in Catholic high schools (CCE, 1997, 1982, 1988). The Catholic Church recognises that for teachers working in Catholic high schools, their work is more than a job it is their vocation (Pope John Paul II, 2001, #33). Teachers' work is where their vocation in incarnated on a daily basis. The literature demonstrates that the reality of these experiences affect teachers' spirituality and have the potential to cause teachers to burn out or to rust out[3] (Intrator & Scribner, 2000; McMahon, 2003; Palmer, 1998; Simone, 2004). However, the daily experiences of teachers' daily work also have the potential to reveal moments of grace capable of nourishing and sustaining teachers' spirituality (Carotta, 1999; Intrator & Scribner, 2000; Jackson & Jackson, 2002; McMahon, 2003; Miller, 2000; Palmer, 1998; Simone, 2004). The research reported in this thesis argues that the experiences of teachers' daily work is where Catholic spirituality is relevant for teachers working in Catholic high schools. Importantly for the research reported in this thesis, teaching is a vocation recognised as having great importance for the apostolic mission of the Catholic Church (CCE, 1997; 1982; 1988; Pope John Paul II, 2001). The Catholic Church directs that teachers need to be provided with opportunities for ongoing formation for the sake of their personal sanctification, or spiritual growth, as well as the apostolic mission in which they are engaged (CCE, 1977; 1982; 1988). The research undertaken towards this thesis indicates that formation needs to be set in the context of teachers' everyday work and tuned in to the reality of their needs as lay people to nurture and sustain their spirituality and avoid burnout and rusting out (Carotta, 1999; Intrator & Scribner, 2000; McMahon, 2003; Palmer, 1998, 2000, 2004a; Simone, 2004). In this way teachers' identity and integrity is encouraged in fulfilment of their vocational call (Palmer, 1983, 1992, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2004a, 2004b). Drawing on the depth of the

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[3] The term "rust out" or "rusting out" has been established as a clinical term from the research of Simone (2004) and is described on p. 37 of this thesis.

Catholic tradition, identity, integrity and vocation are encouraged to flourish with authenticity for both the teacher and the Catholic community (CCE, 1977; 1982; 1988).

Formation needs to be worthwhile, and the research reported in this thesis indicates that it is perceived as worthwhile when attending to the inner landscapes of the "who" that teaches (Carotta, 1999; McMahon, 2003; Palmer, 1998, 2004a; Simone, 2004), in Catholic high schools. Formation needs to be ongoing (CCE, 1982; 1988; Palmer, 2004a). Wide ranging popular interest in spirituality provides an historical opportunity to build formation practices. These may begin with the enculturation of reflective practices (Clouder, 2000; Intrator & Scribner, 2003; Palmer, 2004a, 2004b), which provide the opportunity to recognise moments of grace (Fowler, 2000; Martin, 2003; Palmer, 2004a) that have the potential to nourish teacher spirituality, especially when enlightened by Catholic Tradition and Scripture (Durka, 2002; Groome, 1998, 2002; Prest, 2000). This will enable teachers to both flourish and "teach with authority" (Mk. 1:22) and at the same time ensure the authenticity, identity and integrity of education in Catholic high schools.

Significantly for the research reported in this thesis, the literature covered in this chapter argues that formation grounded in the experiences of teachers' daily work has the demonstrated potential to nourish teachers' spirituality; nurture and sustain teachers' vocation to teach in a Catholic school; protect against burning out and rusting out; enhance teachers, and thereby the community's authenticity, identity and integrity, and flourishing; and enhance the quality of teachers' work and relationships with students and peers. As Merton wrote there is "an invisible fecundity, a dimmed light, a meek namelessness, a hidden wholeness. This mysterious Unity and Integrity is Wisdom" (Merton, 2003b, p. 179). Formation is the opportunity for teachers

working in Catholic high schools to see this hidden wholeness emerge from the experiences of their daily work.

With the conceptual foundation of the research established, the epistemological foundations, theoretical perspectives, methodology and methods that gave rise to the research design are outlined in the following chapter. This gives a detailed account of how the research was conducted and the methods that were used to analyse the data.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

Introduction

The aims of the research reported in this thesis were threefold. These were to explore Catholic Church documents and other literature in order to gain insights into the spirituality of teachers teaching in Catholic schools; to identify experiences of teachers' daily work in Catholic high schools that nurture and sustain their spirituality; and to discern how these insights might inform the ongoing formation of lay teachers in Catholic high schools. The purpose of this chapter is to explain and justify the research design used in exploring which experiences of teachers' daily work in Catholic high schools nurture and sustain teacher spirituality.   Teacher spirituality is integral to the authenticity of Catholic Schools (CCE, 1982, #79; Pope John Paul II, 2001, #33). Teacher's work is often difficult and stressful but remains hopeful as long as teachers have a "vocabulary of hope and faith that can serve as an antidote to what feels like a relentless critique" of what they do (Intrator, 2003, p. 7). The identification of, and insight into, these experiences that nurture and sustain teacher spirituality, will assist in the development of ongoing teacher formation.

There are many possible ways to explore teacher spirituality. A decision about which approach is best, is made by looking for the closest "goodness of fit" from the possibilities available (Candy, 1989, p. 10). Hill and Hood (1999) have collected 205 psychometric measurement scales for use in research and analysis of spirituality. However, spirituality is not readily quantifiable, because of its inherent ineffability (Lonergan, 1992, p. 542).   The challenge for researchers is how to capture the richness of "something that is known" in experiences (1Jn. 1:1-2) but not so easily articulated. Hill and Hood alluded to this when they said: "how measures of

spirituality might relate to religion conceptually and theoretically is an intriguing issue" (1999, p. 5). In this case of considering how the everyday experiences of teachers contribute to the nurturing and sustaining of teacher spirituality, a qualitative approach is more appropriate because it provides the opportunity to describe and reflect upon these experiences and aims to elicit meaning (Merriam 2002, p. 11). This orientation accepts individual differences in the constructions of meaning because of teachers' individual experiences in their daily work (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 113).

Following Crotty (1998), Creswell (2003, pp. 4-5) lists four questions in sequence to establish the framework for research as, a) What Epistemology? b) What Theoretical Perspective? c) What Methodology? d) What Methods? Accordingly the framework for this research is summarised in table 3.1,

Table 3.1. Summary of Research Framework

a.	What Epistemology? (How do we know what we know?)	Constructionism
b.	What Theoretical Perspective? (What philosophical stance?)	Interpretivism • Hermeneutics
c.	What Methodology? (What Strategy or Plan?)	Multiple-Case Study
d.	What Methods? (In what ways were the data gathered?)	Semi-structured Interviews; Focus Groups

Epistemology: Constructionism

The philosophical position known as *Constructionism* allows for multiple meanings to emerge (Crotty, 1998). Acknowledgment that the subjective meanings teachers place on their experiences are varied and multiple, necessarily leads the researcher to look for complexity of views that are negotiated both socially and historically through interaction with others (Creswell, 2003, p. 8). As Palmer observed (2004a, p. 101) the same experiences can hold very different meanings for different people. Constructionism also allows for this reality to evolve or change over time as sophistication improves (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 113). This means that the teachers in this research can "perceive and so construe the world in ways that are often similar but not necessarily the same" (Bassey, 1999, p. 43). This makes it possible to come to some understanding of what nurtures teachers' spirituality while not holding that there is one valid way to do so (Holloway, 1999). For these reasons Constructionism best fits this research. How teachers make sense of the reality they construct through their experiences can be understood from the perspective of interpretivism.

Theoretical Perspective: Interpretivism

As the central purpose of the research reported in this thesis is to understand how the everyday experiences of teachers' work nourish teachers' spirituality, the personal work of the lay teachers in Catholic high schools is of specific interest. The research design must be able to guide the researcher in understanding how teachers in Catholic high schools make sense of their

spirituality and how this influences their teaching. This is what as known as an "interpretive" approach (Maxwell, 2005, p. 22).

Interpretivism is a perspective, within constructionist epistemology, which seeks to understand the complex of values, attitudes and beliefs that influence peoples' actions (Candy, 1989). Because individuals construct their reality from their experiences and social interaction (Deacon, Pickering, Goldong & Murdock, 1999, p. 7), this research aims for some insight into teacher spirituality, as part of the teachers' reality, constructed from their work and daily interactions. In particular, this research seeks to discern from within the experiences that are the reality of teachers' daily work, and how teacher spirituality is nurtured and sustained. Interpretivism is the chosen perspective, or angle, from among the many from which this phenomenon can be viewed. Each perspective has its own benefits and shortcomings. Seeing things from one angle gives a perspective that is not available from other angles.

The researcher invited the teachers participating in this research to reflect on, and describe, experiences of daily work that nourished and sustained their spirituality. As Candy (1989, p. 3) pointed out, this "can only be understood from the standpoint of the individual actors", in other words, the teachers themselves. An interpretative approach allowed the researcher to get a sense of the meaning teachers constructed from the events and experiences of their daily work (Crotty, 1998).

Within this paradigm several approaches are possible. Sarantokas (1998) identified that the approaches of phenomenology, hermeneutics and symbolic interactionism, all direct the researcher to place singular importance to the meanings people construct socially, of their world, and to enter the

reality of the participants. Hermeneutics oriented this research because it is recognised as the "science or art of interpretation" (Grodin, 1994, p. 1). Interpreting the significance of lay teachers' everyday experiences of their work for their spirituality was a central aim of the research reported in this thesis.

Hermeneutics.

"Educational experience is always hermeneutical experience. Put another way, learning always involves interpretation. …its implications are not trivial" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 39). The hermeneutic, or interpretation, is significant in this case of Catholic high school teachers, because teachers' work of teaching, cannot be separated from the spiritual work of the Catholic Church (CCE, 1977, #65). "Critically informed faith concerns itself with truth claims that disclose the possibility of meaning". This is due to the interior meaning, *verbum interius,* which lies behind every explicit meaning (Grodin, 1994, p. 15). According to Grodin (1994, pp. 32-33), this *verbum interius,* or inner word of the heart or soul, is an understanding that both Gadamer and Heidegger have gleaned from St. Augustine.

This *inner word* is not literal language but that of "spiritual" words (Grodin, 1994, p. 38) which lie behind the words expressed, hence the need for interpretation. One cannot hear these words but can "have them in view when they understand spoken language", especially in dialogue (Grodin, 1994, pp. 37-8; 119). Hermeneutics is "interpretation" that "tries to penetrate the uttered expression to see the spirit contained within it". Hermeneutics is "making sense" and communicating (Gallagher, 1992, p. 13; Grodin, 1994, p. 21) in a way useful for this research because the *verbum interius* always embodies

something spiritual. The *verbum interius* sought in this instance is "that which gives meaning to life and allows us to participate in the larger whole (Shea, 2005, p. 97). However because of its non-corporeal nature, "what is said does not entirely reveal what is thought or intended" (Grodin, 1994, p. 46). This means that penetration into the *verbum interius* of another can never be definitively assured (Grodin, 1994, p. 123).

This leads the researcher to further question and discuss in conversation with "background knowledge in one way or another, by consulting lexicons, introductions, or other reference works" (Grodin, 1994, p. 54). For lay teachers in Catholic high schools, this includes the Catholic Tradition and Scripture. This backwards and forwards engagement is known as a *circular hermeneutic* (Grodin, 1994, p. 97). It is ideal for discerning teachers' spirituality from within a dialogue that explores their daily work in conversation (Gallagher, 1992, p. 58) with spiritual and theological insights. Because "all work on the soul takes the form of a circle" (Moore, 1992, p. 13) this process not only provides a precise theoretical framework but also indicates the significance of spoken language in dialogue with Catholic Tradition and Scripture, as an essential methodology of collecting data.

The researcher, in conversation with the teacher participants in this research, took the position of an insider familiar with the subject matter (Gallagher, 1992, p. 36; Lincoln, 1997, p. 39; Settlemaier & Taylor, 2002; Tolich & Davidson, 1999). It was the researcher who had a unique opportunity to interpret, or translate the conversations, through engagement and interchange with the participants with reference to the spirituality literature (Gallagher, 1992, pp. 36-37). According to Gadamer (in Teevan, 2005, p. 23),

this is not so much 'subjective' but more like "participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated". To understand the text, the researcher must be able to relate to it (Treevan, 2005, p. 35). This leads to an understanding of the spiritual significance of experiences of teachers' daily work, revealed in the experience of the process of "dialogical encounter with the very tradition" that shapes the identity of education in a Catholic school, because of the tradition from which it comes (Risser, 1997, p. 142).   Put simply, it is necessary to view teachers' work in Catholic schools, in the context of the religious tradition of the Catholic Church.   Likewise the circular hermeneutic means that in turn, the tradition is itself understood through an understanding of teachers' individual experiences (Treevan, 2005, p. 31). As Gadamer observed, this understanding, or *Verstehen,* is ongoing and never fully comes to completeness (Gallagher, 1992 pp. 58-59). Hermeneutics seeks understanding, rather than an answer (Risser, 1997, p. 206). The understanding sought by the research reported in this thesis, was sought in exploring the layers of a multi-case study.

Research Methodology: Case Study

The case study approach has been used for the research reported in this thesis. The generic term 'case study' has a range of meanings for the investigation of an individual group or phenomenon (Bassey, 1999, p. 27). Yin (2003) stated that case studies are particularly helpful in examining the how and why aspects of real life phenomena. What nurtures teacher spirituality is a phenomenon with both individual and group dimensions. Therefore case study is a useful method for this particular instance.

This case study involved identifying and interpreting everyday teacher experiences that nourished and sustained teacher spirituality by collecting data from groups of teachers from Catholic high schools in the archdiocese of Brisbane. It set out to tell the story of teachers' daily work in detailed description leading to an understanding of how teachers' work and spirituality are interconnected in ways that might provide insights into or "challenge existing propositions" or "develop new theoretical positions" (Sturman, 1997, p. 62). As such this case study is what Stake (Stake, 1995, p. 3) called *"instrumental"* and Bassey (1999, p. 62) called "*theory seeking*". While each participant had knowledge of daily experiences of work in a Catholic high school from their own individual and unique perspective, participants also shared the common experience of being a teacher in the context of their community, the Catholic school. In this way, the singularity of individual experience is in some way typical of something more general (Bassey, 1999, p. 62).

This case study was a "specific, complex functioning thing". The reflections of teachers reflecting on their daily experiences of work involved the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis and led to an end product that is "richly descriptive" (Merriam, 2002, p. 179). This study is rich with personal reflections providing detailed descriptions of daily experiences of teachers working in Catholic high schools in the archdiocese of Brisbane. These reflections are personal. They have been shared during conversations of peers participating in focus groups, facilitated by the researcher and also in one on one semi-structured interviews with the researcher. Case study was the appropriate facility for the researcher to

observe, record, document, analyse and interpret teachers' reflections on daily experiences of work in order to gain a deep understanding of the experience of the teacher participants. Case study afforded the opportunity to describe in detail experiences of teachers' daily work that nourished teachers' spirituality. This case study is a multiple-case study (Punch, 2005, p. 144; Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.30; Yin 2002, p.52) because it included participants in focus groups in two different locations meeting in two different semesters. It also included participants who could offer different perspectives from different vantage points. While teachers could give their perspective from their everyday experiences of what nurtured and sustained teacher spirituality, others including archdiocesan Catholic education office authorities, international experts and individuals having responsibility for spirituality leadership in their schools, could also offer insight into what nourishes the spirituality of lay teachers in Catholic schools. Data from this variety of sources of these different layers increased the richness of the case study.

While bounded and defined by the parameters of this research, this case study is typical of something more general that can be of use in the development of policy and practice of formation, or the nourishing of the spirituality of lay teachers in Catholic high schools and thereby nurturing and sustaining their vocation as lay teachers in and beyond the archdiocese of Brisbane.

Data Gathering Strategies: Methods

There is considerable agreement that many data gathering techniques are compatible with case study. Bassey (2001), Creswell (2003), Denzin &

Lincoln (2003), Merriam (2002) and Wolcott (2001) all consider documentary analysis, questionnaire, reflective journal, focus group interview and semi-structured interview to be consistent with Case Study. Combining a number of strategies allows the weaknesses of one approach to be compensated for by the strengths of another approach (Marshall & Rossman, 1994, p. 99) while also allowing the "the different data sources to validate and cross-check findings" (Merriam, 1998, p. 136). Following Bassey's advice to let the research questions determine how the data needs to be collected (2001, p. 81), the data was collected from thick data obtained in semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews of teachers telling their stories of their experiences of daily work in Catholic high schools; from archdiocesan Catholic education office authorities; from international experts; and from individuals with responsibility for spirituality leadership in their school communities. This selection was appropriate for this research because the various perspectives helped reveal a fuller picture of an enigmatic phenomenon, spirituality, which as the literature review of this thesis has revealed, is notoriously difficult to articulate and appreciate. The variety and sequence of data gathering strategies employed are outlined in table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2. Stages and Strategies of Data Gathering

Time Frame	Participant	Data Gathering Strategy	Step	Action
July, 2004	Archdiocesan Catholic Education authorities	Semi-structured interviews	1a 1b	Explore issues; Analyse for trends/issues
September to November, 2004	Lay teachers from an archdiocesan all-girls school	Focus group interviews	2a 2b 2c	Explore issues; Analyse for further trends/issues; Follow up focus group interviews;
September 2004	Retired teacher and formation facilitator in the USA	Semi-structured interview	3a 3b	Explore issues; Analyse for trends
March 2005	International experts	Semi-structured interviews	4a 4b	Explore issues; Analyse for trends
March to April, 2005	Lay teachers from an archdiocesan co-ed school	Focus group interviews	5a 5b	Explore issues; Analyse for trends
April to May, 2005	Individuals with responsibility for spirituality leadership in their school community	Semi-structured interviews	6a 6b	Explore issues; Analyse for trends
February, 2004 to January, 2006	Researcher	Reflective Journal	3a 3b	Record feelings and insights as they occur in chronological order Reflect and refine insights with time

Interviews.

Merriam (1998) identified the interview as a valuable research tool for the case study. The interview was useful for this type of research because it is a "purposive conversation" between the researcher and the interviewee for the purposes of getting desired information (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998, p. 93).

This means that the researcher can engage the interviewee in conversation, person to person (Merriam, 1998) in order to identify which experiences of daily work nurture and sustain teacher spirituality.

"Our lives are understood when we narrate them" (Freeman, 2002, p. 19). Moore recognised that telling stories is good for the soul and "helps us see the themes that circle in our lives, the deep themes" (1992, p. 13). In encouraging stories from teachers' ordinary everyday work, inviting them to attend to, and contemplate, the ordinary everyday experiences of teachers' work, individuals can "reverence the ordinary" and "notice the Mystery" (Groome, 1998, p. 352). The data gathered for this research is from teachers, talking singularly: one on one with the researcher and talking together in focus groups, telling the stories of their everyday experiences because "teachers can forget the significance and value of what they do" (Groome, 1998, p. 35). These teachers' stories, while individual point to the *verbum interius* behind the group experience.

Focus Groups.

Focus Group Interviews were useful in exploring insights that arose from earlier stages of investigation, or from new insights or trends that emerged (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 104). As both these focus groups met a number of times, data from one session or group had the potential to inform or enlighten data from another session or group. In this way, individual stories of experience lead to discerning common patterns. The researcher was able to develop, from the interaction of the participants, a picture of how teachers conceptualise which experiences of their daily work nourished and sustained teachers' spirituality, by hearing their collective remembering of events which

had not been constructed by the researcher (Wilson, 1997, p. 215). By meeting a number of times, group trust was built up and the teachers were able to explore their stories more deeply as different aspects of their daily work were introduced for discussion. Individuals had the chance to clarify perceptions in the sharing of them with others and the group synergy was able to lead to depth and insight that is not possible with other types of interviews (Anderson, 1990, p. 241). The focus group was an ideal mechanism to provide insights into what teachers think about their spirituality in the context of their daily work, and also how and why they think the way they do (Wilson, 1997, p. 213). One particular strength was that questions were kept "deceptively simple" in order to "promote participants' self-disclosure through creation of a permissive environment" - the focus group (Marshall and Rossman, 1994, p. 84). The difficulty with focus groups can be that the researcher "has less control over a group interview than an individual one", time can be lost as dead-end issues are discussed and data can be "difficult to analyse as the context is essential to the understanding of the participants' comments" (Marshall and Rossman, 1994 p. 85). These difficulties were largely avoided by the researcher monitoring the groups' conversation and asking clarifying questions in ways that maintained the momentum of the focus group discussion, and at the same time, gave the freedom for the conversation to lead where it would.

The focus groups each met on three occasions for one hour. Using the interview guide in shown in Appendix 1, the focus groups had some initial stimulus to help group members begin their conversation. The benefit of focus groups are their synergy and potential to take on a life of their own (Anderson,

1990). This meant that the researcher was open to letting the focus group lead and direct the direction of investigation once initially stimulated. Each session had the potential to inform the researcher of the starting point for the following session. Because the focus group interviews were recorded and transcribed as soon as possible following the focus group meeting, the context of the participants comments remained fresh for the researcher.

Analysing these conversations the researcher sought the *verbum interius* in an attempt to understand how teachers' spirituality is nurtured. This process began with asking teachers to recall some instance, or experience, that they thought they would remember, or that made their work as a teacher significant to them. Initially, this did not overtly involve teachers reflecting upon spirituality or using spiritual language. As Caputo (2001), Durka (2002), Groome (1998), Harris (1987), Livsey & Palmer (1999), Merton (2003) and Moore (2000) all claim that for those who can "see", nothing is profane. When Shea states that "spirituality can be defined as that which gives meaning to life and allows us to participate in the larger whole" (2005, p. 97), he provides a means of identifying experiences as spiritual regardless of whether or not individuals are conscious of why these are significant for them. These ordinary conversations about teachers' work carried significant insights into the spiritual, and these are presented and discussed in Chapter six of this thesis.

As outlined above, a focus group of teachers was set up in Semester Two, 2004 and a second focus group was set up in Semester One, 2005. These groups were each invited to meet on three separate occasions at two-week intervals. At each meeting the participants were encouraged to focus on their day-to-day teaching experiences, and to tell their stories of which experiences

of their daily work nurtured and sustained their spirituality. This process was inspired by the process experienced first hand by the researcher during participation in a *Courage to Teach Principles and Practices Retreat* for public school teachers in Washington DC in February, 2003 and the *Courage to Teach Gateway Retreat* in Kalamazoo, USA in September 2004. The philosophy of the CTT has been described in Chapter two of this thesis. The process nurtures teachers' spirituality by focusing on teachers' stories and encouraging teachers, in small and larger groups, to remember and articulate the call of their vocation to teach (Jackson & Jackson, 2005, p. 186; Palmer, 1998, p. 67).

Following invitations for teachers to participate in focus groups, verbal feedback was sought from the non-participating schools. All indicated that teachers were already fully committed to meetings and co-curricular activities after school. This was not inconsistent with one finding discussed in the literature review (Chapter two), that teachers work is constantly over-busy (Larchick, 1999-2000; Jarvis 2002).

Booth et. al. (2003, p. 30) advised researchers to "press on" in the face of unforeseen difficulties and problems, so an invitation to participate in individual semi-structured interviews was extended to individuals in three Religious Institute, or order owned schools. These individuals were able to provide a useful perspective from their positions as lay teachers with recognised responsibility of their school communities for spirituality leadership. In effect, the data from these semi-structured interviews provided triangulation of insights that emerged from the focus groups.

Semi Structured Interviews.

The open-ended and deceptively simple technique of the semi-structured interview was useful in collecting perceptions of which experiences of teachers' daily work nourished and sustained teachers' spirituality (Merriam, 1998, pp. 74-75). It was also in tune with a hermeneutic approach because "language structures our interpretations in a way that we usually remain unaware of" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 114). These interviews provided data rich with insight into the trends and themes that emerged from teacher focus groups.

Interviews were also recorded with people recognised has having particular expertise or responsibility for leadership in the area of spirituality such as, the archdiocesan Director of Religious Education and the Principal Religious Education Officer for the archdiocese; a retired teacher with experience of facilitation of formation retreats in the USA; and two international experts with recognised scholarship in the area of spirituality and vocation.

Semi-structured interviews were recorded electronically and notes were made by the researcher during each interview. Data were transcribed by the researcher for analysis, so that emerging themes could be presented to the interviewees for further discussion during subsequent interviews.

Reflective Journal.

In a "day-by-day journal of the researcher" a record of growing understanding of the problem was kept by the researcher with entries recording "who was seen, when, where and why" as well as "speculative notes of ideas

about the research" that occurred to the researcher (Bassey, 1999, p. 70). As well as providing the researcher with the opportunity to process the flow of raw data as it emerges, this journal also is useful in providing and audit trail for anyone with subsequent interest in this research.

Research Methods: Data Analysis

The aim of this research was to "ferret out the essence, or basic structure of a phenomenon" (Merriam, 1998, p. 158) namely, what experiences of teachers daily work, nourished teachers' spirituality in Catholic High Schools. The chosen research design defined how the researcher analysed the data. This process was not a sequential linear process, but an activity that is both iterative and *simultaneous* with the data collection (Creswell, 1998, p. 143). The rigor of this qualitative research is derived from "the researcher's presence, the nature of the interaction between the researcher and the participants, the triangulation of data, the interpretation of perceptions and rich thick description" (Merriam, 1998, p. 151). This method best fits the research because,

> Human knowing is cyclic and cumulative. It is cyclic inasmuch as cognitional process advances from experience through inquiry and reflection to judgement, only to revert to experience and recommence its ascent to another judgement. It is cumulative, not only in memories store of experiences and understanding's clustering of insights, but also in the coalescence of judgements into the context named knowledge or mentality. (Lonergan, 1992, p. 399)

The circular hermeneutic (after Gallagher, 1992, p. 106) of this is demonstrated in figure 3.1 below:
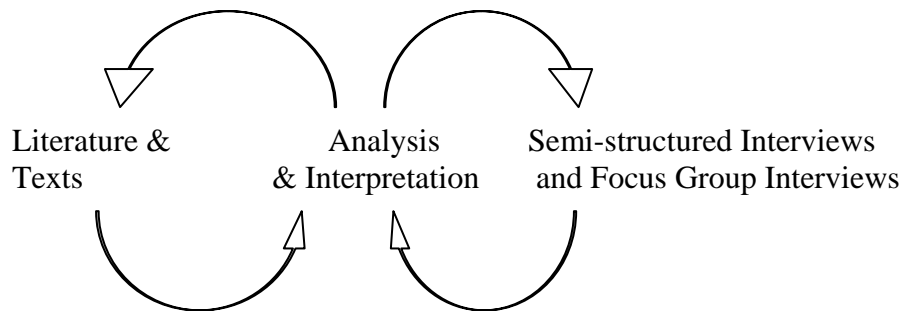
Figure 3.1. The Hermeneutic of Simultaneous and Iterative Data Collection and Analysis Process

Figure 3.1 details the back and forward process from text, data analysis and focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews. This demonstrates how this process of data collection and analysis is understood as *iterative* (Dey, 1993, p. 53) or *interactive* (Merriam, 1998, p. 152). The data "lays the basis for analysis" (Dey, 1993, p. 30; Merriam, 1998, p. 178) and gives some insight into the circular interaction, or hermeneutic, of data collection and analysis. Highlighting the fact that this is a circular rather than linear process, this figure indicates the iterative and simultaneous occurrence of data collection and analysis that nevertheless began with collecting data and finally involved making meaning, or interpreting the data, in response to the question: "Which experiences of teachers' work in Catholic high schools nurture and sustain lay teachers' spirituality?" The data itself consisted of rich thick description, something Denzin (1994, p. 505) described as that which "gives the context of the experience, states the intentions and meanings that organise the experience, and reveals the experience as a process". In other words, the data in rich thick

description and gives the reader an experience which is almost as good as being present at the time of data collection.

As stated above, this research was conducted as a multiple-case study. It is multi-layered. To appreciate this and the sequence in which the research unfolded, it is possible to take another view of the circular hermeneutic displayed in Figure 3.1 above. Figure 3.2 below, displays this dynamic from an angle or perspective that illustrates the steps of data collection and analysis.

Literature
& Texts
(Scriptures etc)

Analysis &
Interpretation

Semi-Structured
Interviews with
Archdiocesan Authorities

Focus Group 1
Interviews

Semi-structured Interview:
Retired Teacher and
Experienced Formation
Facilitator

Semi-structured interviews:
International Experts

Focus Group 2
Interviews

Semi-structured Interviews:
Individuals with
responsibility for
spirituality in their school

Final Report

Figure 3.2 Sequential process of the Circular Hermeneutic engaged in data collection and analysis from the initial literature search to the final report.

Figure 3.2 displays the hermeneutic of data collection and analysis beginning with the themes and threads emerging from the literature, to the interviews, to their analysis as an ongoing conversation. The initial literature search shed light on the conversations recorded in the interviews. Themes and

threads emerging from the interviews opened up insights into the literature, which in turn led to interpretation of the interview conversations, and so on.

Once collected and transcribed the data was summarised or stripped of unnecessary detail to reveal the central characteristics (Dey, 1993, p. 39) of phenomena nurturing teacher spirituality. The data was then classified so that it was possible for "meaningful comparisons" to be made "between different bits of data". This was "largely an intuitive process, but it is also systematically informed by [this] study's purpose, the investigator's orientation and knowledge, and the meanings made explicit by the participants themselves" (Merriam, 1998, p. 179). This is not a mysterious process but "part and parcel of the processes of practical reasoning in everyday life" only approached more systematically and rigorously (Dey, 1993, p. 40; also Gallagher, 1992, p. 86). The emerging themes and threads "connected" so that ideas could be systematically developed and theory was generated (Dey, 1993, p. 52). In this study themes emerged from the categorisation of data that indicated how the spirituality of lay teachers in Catholic high schools in the archdiocese of Brisbane is nourished so as to have the potential for practical application in the ongoing provision of teacher professional development, or formation, by the authorities concerned.

Research Participants

The aim of this research reported in this thesis was to identify which experiences of teachers' daily work in Catholic high schools, nurture and sustain teacher spirituality. Therefore, the key participants sought for this

research were teachers teaching in Catholic high schools in the archdiocese of Brisbane.

Aware that it is not possible to "study everyone and everything" and bearing in mind that as well as sampling people, the researcher is also "sampling settings, events and processes" that influence those people (Maxwell, 2005, p. 87), it is important to note that the Catholic high schools of the archdiocese of Brisbane are not uniform. There are single sex and co-ed schools. Some schools are systemic and administered by the Brisbane Catholic Education Office. Others are administered by religious orders. There are currently 48 Catholic high schools in the archdiocese of Brisbane. The organisation of these high schools within the diocese is illustrated in figure 3.3 below.
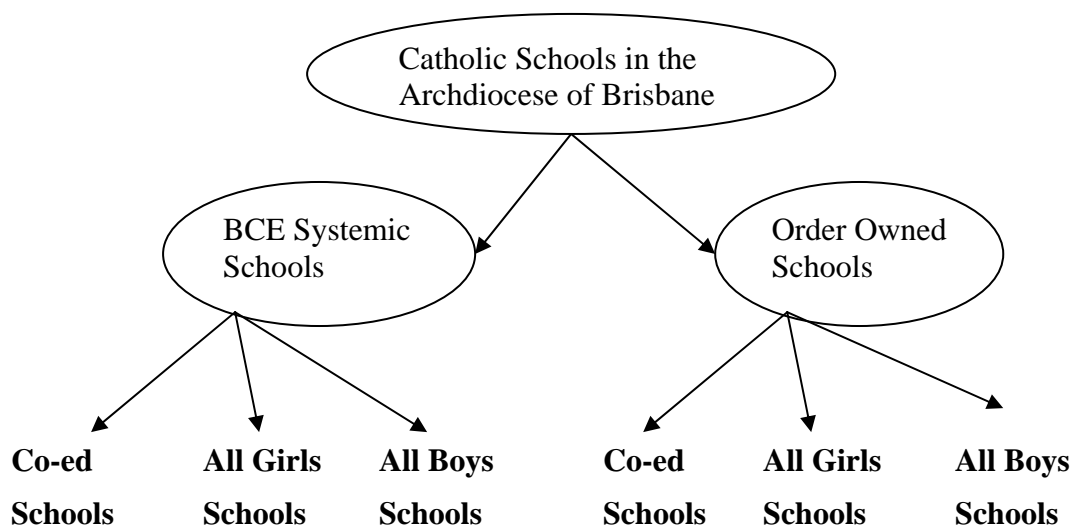
Figure 3.3. Organisation of Catholic High Schools in the Archdiocese of Brisbane

Both the systemic schools and the order owned schools operate under the umbrella organisation of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission. While Order owned (Religious Institute) schools operate independently,

Brisbane Catholic Education, through various processes, including *Accreditation*[4] of teachers to teach in a Catholic School and a review process called *Visitation*[5], collaborates in the operation of all Catholic schools in the diocese.

As Merriam (2002, p. 179) says, "the selection depends on what you want to learn and the significance that knowledge might have for extending theory or improving practice". In the selection of participants from a cross-section of schools the researcher sought to collect data useful in planning in-service professional development in a variety of situations including, systemic and order-owned schools, whether they be all-boys' schools, all-girls' schools and co-ed schools. The selection of participants for this research was made initially by calling for volunteers to participate in focus groups at their school. Following this the researcher invited individual teachers, with recognised responsibility for spirituality leadership in their school community, to take part in semi-structured interviews. The schools selected for individual invitation, were selected so as to include teachers from a variety of archdiocesan schools, Religious Institute Schools, single-sex schools, and co-ed Schools.

The *Archdiocesan Director of Religious Education* and the *Principal Religious Education Officer* were also invited to participate in semi-structured interviews because of their recognised responsibility for leadership and expertise in the area of teacher spiritual formation. These practitioners have extensive expert knowledge of the schools and teaching staffs. Both of these

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[4] Accreditation is the name of the process whereby the archdiocese of Brisbane, through Brisbane Catholic Education, certify teachers to teach in a Catholic school.

[5] Visitation is the name of the process whereby the school undergoes a self-review of the religious education and faith formation aspects of the school in conjunction with Brisbane Catholic Education.

individuals indicated a desire to encourage this research from its outset. The collection of data is summarised in the table below,

Table 3.3. Summary of Data Collection

Participants	Type of Data Collection
Systemic Co-ed School	Three consecutive Focus Group Interviews
Systemic All-girls School	Three consecutive Focus Group Interviews
Order owned All-Boys School	Semi-structured Interview
Order owned All-girls School	Semi-structured Interviews
Participants with specific expert knowledge: • BCE Director of Religious Education • BCE Principal R.E. Officer • A Leader and facilitator of *The Courage to Teach* Retreat Progam USA • Professor James Fowler • Dr. Brian Mahan	 Semi-structured Interview Semi-structured Interview Semi-structured Interview Semi-structured Interview Semi-structured Interview

Role of The Researcher

As is usual in qualitative studies, "the researcher is the instrument of the research" and as such, the relationships with the participants in this study are constantly "changing and complex". Therefore, decisions made were informed by the range of the researcher's experiences (Maxwell, 2005, p. 83). In other words, inquiry is always influenced by the values of the researcher (Candy, 1989, p. 4). The researcher brought to this study a first hand understanding of being a teacher in a Catholic high school. This shared background with participants gave a perspective a non-teacher might not be

able to achieve. It is recognised that the particular expertise and insight of the researcher was likely to be of value in conducting research (Patton, 1990; Merriam, 1998). This researcher also has a past history with, and is currently engaged with, teachers across Australia, and also in the USA, in delivering professional development in teacher spiritual formation. This gave the researcher an expertise in the area of teachers' spirituality that was useful in discerning which experiences of teachers' daily work nourished and sustained teachers' spirituality. This research was "participatory in the sense of working collaboratively with research participants to generate knowledge that is useful to the participants as well as the researcher" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 84). This meant that the researcher's background and experience placed the researcher in the position to collaborate with the participants in drawing out useful insights in the everyday experiences of their work. The researcher's voice is present in the research reported in this thesis because the researcher was in a position to see things someone without these first hand background experiences, may not appreciate. Awareness of the presence of the researcher's voice, also enabled the researcher to faithfully discern and identify other voices present in the data.

The Voices in the Data.

The voices present in the data are identified and explored fully in Chapter four of this thesis in the context of the presentation of the data. As acknowledged above, it is recognised that the voice of the researcher is legitimately present in the research reported in this thesis (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 23; Janesick, 2003, p. 56; Richardson, 2003, p. 197). Also present are the voices of the participants, the voice of the magisterium of the Catholic

Church (CCE, 1977, 1982, 1988), and the voice of Catholic Tradition and Scripture (Groome, 2000, p. 15). By maintaining vigilance, the researcher constantly strove to discern and represent these voices faithfully. Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg & Bertch (2003) have argued that while each person's voice is individual and distinct, it is also "polymorphic". It is embedded in culture and in relationship. Accordingly, the "authenticity" (Lonergan, 1971, p. 292) of this research comes from "genuine attention, genuine reasonableness [and] genuine responsibility" (Lonergan, 1971, p. 265) in the discernment and faithful articulation of these voices within the polymorphic voices of the participants.

Establishment of Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the data collected was dependant on the skill of the researcher (Patton, 1990, p. 14) in describing the perspectives of the focus group participants. This data was further strengthened by its presentation to participants for corroboration (Denzin, 1997), and also for verification by academics and colleagues. Thus an understanding of what nurtures and sustains teacher spirituality in Catholic schools from the perspective of the participants was achievable due to the multiple sources of evidence collected and transcribed the creation of a case study data base and the maintenance of the chain of evidence.

Multiple Sources of Evidence.

The strength of this data is built by the triangulation achieved from comparison of the data from teachers in different schools and situations as displayed in figure 3.2 of this chapter (Patton, 1990; Stake, 1994).

Creating a Case Study Data Base.

All data collected will be maintained in a database and available to provide a strong audit trail so that an independent observer may be able to follow the same trail of evidence and come to comparable conclusions (Yin, 1989). An audit trail exists as a clear chain beginning with the collection of data through to the findings of this case study so that any external observer can systematically check this research stage by stage (Bassey, 1999, pp. 61 & 77).

Ethical Issues

Before the research project was begun, ethical clearance was gained from the Australian Catholic University (ACU) and all research was carried out within in the research guidelines of Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE).

As this researcher engaged in a "circular hermeneutic" to interpret the data collected, the personal biases of the researcher were constantly self-monitored as well as supervisor-monitored so that data was not contaminated. Bassey's (2000, p. 74) advice to the researcher of respect for persons, respect for truth and respect for democracy guided the researcher in collecting and processing data.

As required by research ethics committees of the ACU and BCE, participants were given material to read regarding their involvement in this study in order to receive their consent. Before data collection commenced, each participant was advised verbally and in writing that they were free to withdraw from this study at any time they wished and also that confidentiality would be maintained. Except where permission was specifically sought

otherwise, anonymity was maintained by the use of pseudonyms. Individuals publicly recognised with expertise or responsibility for areas of interest to the research reported in this thesis gave permission to be cited either by name or by title.

Ethics approval for this research was obtained from the ACU according to the Guidelines of the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) and this was made available to all participants. Copies of the ethics application and letter to the participants are provided in Appendix 2. Participants were offered access to transcribed accounts of all interviews in which they participated.

Conclusion

The research reported in this thesis set out to investigate three questions. These being:

1. What do Catholic Church documents and the literature on teachers and teaching say about the spirituality of teaching in Catholic Schools?

2. What experiences of daily teacher work in Catholic high schools nurture and sustain lay teachers' spirituality?

3. How can insights into what nurtures and sustains teacher spirituality, inform the formation practices of lay teachers in Catholic schools?

An overview of data collection strategies and time frame of the multiple-case study is given in table 3.4 below.

Table 3.4 An overview of the research design of this study.

Research Questions	Sources of Data	Time Frame
What do Catholic Church documents and the literature on teachers and teaching say about the spirituality of teaching in Catholic Schools?	Literature Review	January 2001 to December 2005
	Data Collection:	July 2004 to June 2005
		July 2004
What experiences of teachers' daily work in Catholic high schools, nurture and sustain lay teachers' spirituality?	First semi-structured Interviews with Director of Religious Education and Principal Religious Education Officer	
		September 2004 to November 2004
How can insights into what nurtures and sustains teacher inform practices of lay teacher formation in Catholic schools?	First Set of Focus Group Interviews	
		July 2004 to December 2004
	Initial Data analysis to identify themes	September, 2004
	Semi-structured Interview with a retired teacher and experienced formation program facilitator in the USA	
		March 2005-10-13
	Semi-structured interviews with international experts in the USA	March 2005 to June 2005
	Second set of Focus Group Interviews	
		April 2005 to May 2005
	Semi-structured Interviews with individuals with responsibility for school community spirituality leadership	March 2005 to July 2005
		January 2005 to September 2005
	Data analysis to identify themes	October 2005 to December 2005
	Continuation of Data Analysis Synthesis of results and reporting	

The purpose of this chapter has been to justify and explain the research design employed to explore which experiences of teachers' daily work in Catholic high schools, nurture and sustain lay teachers' spirituality. What this process revealed, the themes and threads that emerged, are the subject of the following chapters of this thesis. Chapter four presents the data obtained from teacher focus groups. Chapter five presents the data obtained from other perspectives, including those of the archdiocesan authorities and international experts with specific experience or insight into aspects of formation. In Chapter six all these voices are brought into conversation is a process of analysis and discussion which lead to the conclusion of the research reported in Chapter seven of this thesis.

CHAPTER 4

THE RESULTS – THE TEACHERS' FOCUS GROUPS

Introduction

The aims of the research reported in this thesis were threefold. These were to explore Catholic Church documents and other literature in order to gain insights into the spirituality of teachers teaching in Catholic schools; to identify experiences of teachers' daily work in Catholic high schools that nurture and sustain their spirituality; and to discern how these insights might inform the ongoing formation of lay teachers in Catholic high schools. The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the focus groups interviewed for the research reported in this thesis. This data will be presented with some description, explanation and discussion. Other data collected is presented in the following chapter of this thesis. Further analysis and discussion of these results is reported in Chapter six of this thesis in dialogue with Catholic Tradition and Scripture. While a detailed account of data collection was given in Chapter three of this thesis, a brief summary of how the data was obtained is presented below.

The data for the research reported in this thesis came from fourteen interviews, each approximately one hour long. These interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. As significant stakeholders in Catholic education of the archdiocese of Brisbane, the Director of Religious Education and the Principal Religious Education Officer for the diocese were interviewed at the initial stage of data collection. The first focus group of teachers were interviewed in three consecutive meetings in Semester two, 2004. In September, 2004, the researcher participated in *The Courage To Teach Gateway Retreat,* in the USA. This built upon the first-hand experience the researcher had gained from participation in a five day

Courage to Teach, Principles and Practices Retreat at College Park, Maryland, USA, in February 2003. *The Courage to Teach* (CTT) is a recognised successful teacher formation program inspired by the writings of Parker J. Palmer (Intrator, 2002; Jackson & Jackson, 2002; McMahon, 2003; Palmer, 1992; Simone, 2004). During this time, a semi-structured interview was recorded with one of the formation program's facilitators. This individual is also a retired teacher. In February 2005, interviews were recorded in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, with two internationally recognised experts, James Fowler and Brian Mahan. Both of these scholars have contributed to, and maintain current research interests in, the areas of vocation and spirituality. These discussions were "open yet bounded" as described by Palmer (1998, p.78; also 2004, p. 83, 91) as necessary for encouraging "soulful" conversation exploring the inner landscape of teachers' lives (1998, p.76; also 2004, p.53). This meant that the insights from all the previous interviews guided the conversations (Appendix 5), while at the same time the conversations were allowed scope to unfold in their own way. A second focus group of teachers was interviewed in Semester one, 2005 over three consecutive meetings. Following the conclusion of the second focus group, three teachers with recognised responsibility for spiritual leadership in their school community, were interviewed. The experience and expertise of these interviewees was then bought to further probe and clarify the insights surfaced by the focus groups. The above collection makes up this multiple-case study. In this way a view of the phenomenon of teacher spirituality from several perspectives was obtained.

This multi-layered approach to data gathering is consistent with the circular hermeneutic described in Chapter three of this thesis and summarised by Figure 4.1 in that chapter, and revisited below:

Figure 4.1. Hermeneutic of Simultaneous and Iterative Data Collection and Analysis
    process

Literature &   Analysis   Semi-structures Interviews
Texts   & Interpretation   and Focus Group Interviews
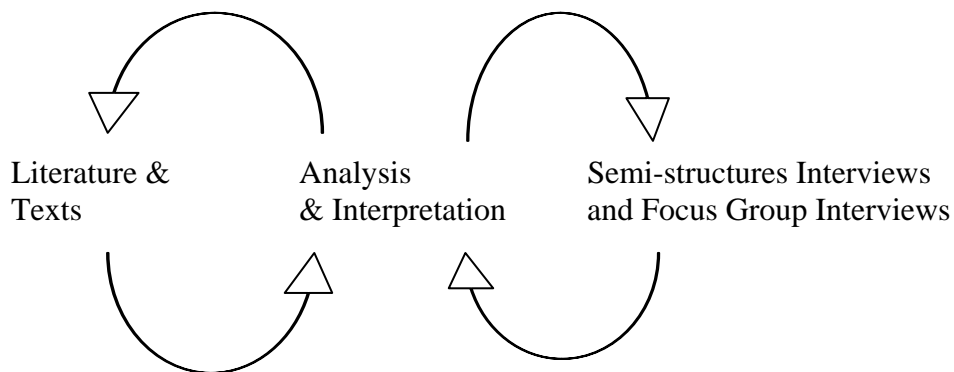
This figure shows how the analysis and interpretation of the data was carried out in
conversation with the literature and texts. These included the Scriptures and Teaching
of the Catholic Church. This in turn led to further analysis and interpretation which
then gave further insight into the interviews and so on. This circular hermeneutic
meant that the voices of the literature, particularly that of the Catholic Scripture and
Tradition, could be heard in conversation with the voices of the participants.

The Voices

        The Catholic Church sees that the Catholic school has "ecclesial identity
because it is part of the evangelising mission of the church" (Pope John Paul II, 2001,
#33). This means that Catholic high schools operate with certain assumptions not
expected in secular schools and that these assumptions of ecclesial identity must be
"animated" in the persons of the teachers (CCE, 1997, #78) and it is expected that lay
teachers will have a specific awareness of these assumptions of ecclesial identity
(CCE, 1982, #62).   Therefore in the faithful representation of the voices of the
participants in the research, it is recognised that while "each person's voice is
distinct" (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertch, 2003, p. 159) each voice is also
"polymorphic" (p. 157) as it is "embodied, in culture, and in relationship" with

themselves and with others (p.157). The voices of the teachers in this research both draw from and contribute to the voice of the Catholic Church. Paradoxically, the voices of the teachers contributing to the data for this research were their own unique voices, and at the same time, the voices of the Church community. A cultural characteristic of lay teachers in Catholic schools is that they recognise this aspect of their experience of school life that might not be expected in secular schools. Put simply, lay teachers in Catholic schools assume that they are free to use religious language to talk about their everyday experiences as represented by the following teacher, who said,

> I find in my own life, it's really great not to have to apologise for that when you are at work …that you can talk about God… that you can talk about how you get through life …from your religion and faith and that sort of stuff and not have to apologise for it… it's quite freeing… (FG.2:2, 2005, para 114).

This means that when the participants in this research spoke of the everyday experiences of their work, they could assume that phrases and concepts like "moments of grace" (FG.2:1, 2005, para 119), "Gospel message" (FG.1:2, 2004. para 119), "faith tradition" (I3, 2005, para 5) etc, were culturally normative and understood by the researcher. In fact, to be as faithful as possible to the voices contributing to this research, their words needed to be considered in the light of these assumptions because their language was "affect-laden" with the "power to evoke" the "personal and communal" dimensions of "ordering one's world and orienting oneself within it" (Teevan, 2005, p. 93). The participants in this research were reflecting "on their lives from the perspective of faith and on faith from the perspective of their lives" (Groome, 2002, p. 12). In this context, it is reasonable to expect that the participants would use language and terms charged with religious or theological meaning because

as Groome says, they are "doing theology" (p. 12). The hermeneutic approach used for analysis and discussion in following chapters aims to interpret the *verbum interius* behind those words used.

Overview of Data

This chapter presents the data obtained from the teachers. What it means to be a lay teacher in a Catholic school is complex because the vocation of lay teacher defines the teachers' identity, the 'who' that teachers are, as well as the teachers' work: the 'what' that teachers do. One dimension cannot be considered without the other.   In the daily experiences of their work, the inner reality of who teachers are, and the outer world of their work, flow into each other endlessly co-creating themselves and the world they inhabit (Palmer, 1998, p. 5). The spirituality of lay teachers concerns "that which gives meaning to life and allows us to participate in the larger whole" (Shea, 2005, p. 97) because as Palmer said, their "reality is active and interactive, a vast web of mutual relationships" (1990, p. 52). This means that while the identity and integrity of the teacher are essential for good teaching (Palmer, 1998, p. 10) they also shape the reality of Catholic education (Pope John Paul II, 2001, #33). The integrity of the teacher, hence the Catholic school, grows from a spirituality that "belongs to a reflecting self-in-mutuality" (Shea, 2005, p. 101). For the purposes of this research, teachers meeting in focus groups, and the individuals interviewed singularly, reflected on their self-in-mutuality, that is, they reflected on their daily experiences of work and those others with whom they are engaged. The results of these meetings were recorded, transcribed, sifted, sorted and coded revealing the following patterns. **Firstly**, these teachers had a sense of being a teacher, which was more than their work being a job. They acknowledged themselves as being guided by

a different set of values than society in general. These teachers believed that they made a difference in the lives of others. Sometimes they had an awareness of the difference they made, at other times they were convinced that their vocation was to "plant seeds" that may germinate in the future. Also significant to being a teacher was that the constant busyness of school life generally militated against any regular opportunity for teacher reflection. **Secondly**, teachers did acknowledge that reflection was important and detailed instances of how reflection allowed them to see what they recognised as moments of, what they called, "grace" in their day. They also saw that reflection allowed the opportunity to reframe and therefore transform stressful and negative situations that arose as part of their daily work. By participating in these focus groups, some teachers recognised what they identified as "moments of grace", that they might otherwise have not had occasion to notice or articulate. **Thirdly**, while experiences of being valued nourished and sustained them, teachers reported that school relationships, experiences of community, feeling supported, and feeling connected to peers, students and parents, also gave meaning and encouragement to their daily work. **Fourthly**, articulating the significance of being a 'lay' teacher was integral to articulating the significance of a 'Catholic" school, because in the archdiocese of Brisbane, almost all of the teachers and leadership of Catholic high schools are lay women and men. Participants in this research observed how home life and school life informed and formed each other. This has significant implications for the formation and the spiritual development of lay teachers in nurturing and sustaining the identity and integrity of lay teachers and the Catholic schools in which they teach.

The data from the teachers is examined separately in this chapter because this research is concerned with which experiences of teachers' daily work in Catholic high schools nurture and sustain lay teacher spirituality. The researcher was mindful, in

the first instance, not to have these insights influenced or coloured by what archdiocesan authorities or other stakeholders thought that this should be. Once surfaced by the teachers, other perspectives are explored in the following chapter of this thesis. The results of the conversations with teachers are presented in more detail below under the following headings: being a teacher, teacher reflection, teachers connecting, lay teachers.

Being a Teacher

Although each focus group began with the teachers pondering their teaching as a vocation, the word vocation was not explicitly mentioned in their responses to that invitation. As in the *pereginatio*, or spiritual journey described by St Augustine earlier in this thesis, the vocation of the teacher is one of becoming. Sometimes teachers used religious language like "the sacred ministry of education*"* (I2, 2005, para 122), or they recalled examples from their experiences of daily school life which they explained as, "The Holy Spirit works in mysterious ways" (FG.2:2, 2005, para 26). At other times teachers simply recalled their experiences of teaching as "moments of grace*"* (FG.1:1, 2004, para 119). These participants emphasised that they thought that teaching was concerned with relationships, with statements like "for me the vocation of teaching is relational" (I2, 2005, para 17). The significance of this statement was highlighted by one long serving teacher who said, "Well, our whole message from the Gospels is one of encouragement to love God and to serve God by… love of our neighbour…so it's the whole thing…" (FG.1:2, 2004, para 139).

Teachers observed the unfolding of what it meant to be a teacher in the following words, "… you come in as an expert if you like, trained in a particular field and what you find is that we don't need you for that… what we really need you for are these kids" (FG.2:1, 2005, para 94). This notion that teachers are there for the

benefit of their students as persons is not a dichotomous alternative to the teachers'
task of teaching their subject matter. It is part of the paradox of teaching. As another
teacher observed about the tension between what was tangible and what was
intangible,

> …sure to help kids to achieve at their best and to develop as individuals and
> you can have some sort of feedback when you have some raw scores at the
> end of the semester or something…but the real difference is the intangibles. It
> might just be you do something or…. (I2, 2005, para 73).

Later this teacher went further saying,

> … but it is our core business because we are educating the whole person and
> we come to the process as people ourselves and it is not just about
> commodification, it's something bigger about what's happening, the sacred
> ministry of education… (I2, 2005, para 122).

The insight from this teacher's perspective was that "we come to the process as
people ourselves" to educate "the whole person". As Palmer said, teachers' reality is
both active and interactive, a vast web of mutual relationships (1990, p. 152). One of
the focus group participants recognised this implicitly in her awareness of her grown
fondness for a group of students she had taught for two consecutive years. The
following dialogue occurred with one of her colleagues during their first focus group
meeting:

> Teacher A: I've got a year 12 religion class, and they're the lower level
> students and I had them in year 11 and year 12, and I know that
> I am going to be very upset when they finish at the end of this
> year because we've shared so much over the two years and just
> to be able to get them to think a little bit more about some of

the issues in life that they normally wouldn't consider at all... it's just been really good for me as well as for them, I think

Teacher B: You've made a difference to their life and they made a difference to …

Teacher A: Yea… um…I say that seriously because they have. I mean just because of the different lives they have, and the different backgrounds they have, and in teaching religion, particularly because it is not a board subject, you can sort of deviate from the subject matter and it's um… it's… it… it is worthwhile teaching religion, I think for our own growth as well… but at the same time I enjoy teaching maths so…(FG.1:1, 2004, para 211-215)

While there may be some expectation that teaching religion involves some engagement in the affective domain of the environment occupied by teacher and students, for this teacher, teaching religion and teaching maths did not seem to involved separate modes of teaching. Her type or mode of connection with her students was not subject specific, indicating that it was the students, not the subject matter that has become most significant to her. The reality of the work environment made up mostly of the teacher and the students can present its own challenges. One teacher observed,

Yea, that's how it is… I suppose that's the downside of teaching. As soon as you say you're going to be a teacher, you know that 90% of your working day is going to be spent by yourself with a group of kids. That's it. You're not going to have another adult there. You're not going to have adult communication and adult encouragement and… (FG.1:2, 2004, para 187)

Again a paradox of being a teacher is highlighted. While a teacher might be one of thirty-something individuals in a classroom for the day, in reality they are likely to operate as solitary agents. Palmer has argued that "teaching is perhaps the most privatised of all the public professions" (1998, p. 142). This is why he continues to insist that the question of "Who is the self that teaches?" is fundamental to the vocation of the teacher who most often alone is called to "serve our students more faithfully" (1998, p. 7). As Palmer went on to say, "good teachers join self and subject and students in the fabric of life" (1998, p. 11). This can be a daunting challenge as one teacher recalled,

> Yet sometimes it can be so hard… the personalities… it seems like they are testing you, which obviously they are, but there is obviously so much more …there's this big group that you've got to keep in perspective… sometimes it's a bit tricky you know and you've got to… (FG.2:1, 2005, para 25).

Interestingly here, the teacher finished this observation with "you've got to…" and then stopped. It could be easy to assume this sentence was incomplete if one was looking for some "thing" that teachers did. However, as the emphasis was placed on the "you" in "you've got to", it is possible to see that in articulating this memory that the teacher had a moment of realisation. As Palmer has maintained, teaching is not about the 'things' teachers 'do', it is about the 'who' that they are (1998, p. 13). This point was highlighted by something said by a teacher when that same focus group met the next time. She said that someone said to her, "R, it is not what you teach, it's not what you do, it's not the content, it is who you are, they are going to remember who you are" (FG.2:2, 2005, para 193). This may be why others said things like "a lot of us use work as a way of expressing ourselves. We become our work, I think" (I3, 2005, para 57) and "…funny isn't it, it just becomes part of who you are" (I1, 2005,

para 129).   Another observed of a colleague, "she became very, very good with those kids" (FG.2:1, 2005, para 94).   What these teachers reveal here is that a teacher is what they "became", and they imply that what it is that they became, they became through their work. One teacher recalled,

> … when you first come out there is a strict order of things to do otherwise I'll lose control, and if I lose control, I am a bad teacher and everyone will see me lose control …and know I'm a bad teacher. I will know it, but they will know… (FG.2:2, 2005, para 207).

What this teacher was saying was that the initial assumptions he operated on were that strict order and control implied the affirmation that he was a good teacher. Anything else, and both he and "they will know" otherwise. This is what Palmer identified as the "pain of having my peculiar gift as a teacher crammed into the Procrustean bed of someone else's method and the standards prescribed by it" (1998, p. 11).   Palmer explained this as an insidious process by which teachers are devalued (1998, p. 12). This particular teacher went on to say,

> … it's only been the last 11, 12 years that I have really started to just let go and it is when you let go that you become vulnerable… you allow that to happen and the kids see "he's just a human being"… isn't that good … and away you go … so that's the freedom of teaching at the moment. (FG.2:2, 2005, para 207).

Significantly here, his insight was that letting go and becoming vulnerable not only allowed him to become the teacher he now is, but it also gave him his appreciation of "the freedom of teaching at the moment."   Palmer (1998, p. 37) explained that teaching is an exercise in vulnerability for teachers, but urged teachers to remember that vulnerability, fear of failing and not understanding and looking foolish, are the

fears of the students as well as for teachers. This teacher experienced "the freedom of teaching" because, by acknowledging and accepting his vulnerability, he prevented his fears from combining with his student's fears and multiplying. Again this wisdom of experience came as a consequence of this teacher's daily work. This insight in turn helped him cope with the complexity of teaching as another teacher explained,

> the learning community [is] where you have people at all different phases of that learning process, some are very advanced and some are starters and novices and some are disengaged while being physically driven, but it's that whole process of being in the same place and time…which is important. So a concrete example…it sounds…it sounds a bit hackneyed I suppose but it's the learning together, the discovering together. I certainly don't have a copyright on the knowledge that we're dealing with in the classroom and I'm really delighted when a student presents their learning, which in itself is a learning experience, it's opening a whole world to everyone, me included. (I2, 2005, para 250).

As Palmer observed (1998, p. 38) the fear of diversity is at the root of the fear of the live encounter and results in the practice of "the art of alienation, of living a divided life". Palmer argued that this in turn, can cause teachers to believe that they "possess the truth". This teacher does not indicate that he possesses the truth because he indicated that he sees himself included in "learning together". This teachers' acceptance of the diversity in his class, enabled and encouraged learning, for the teacher included. This is an experience of teachers' work where the teacher has come to know what Shea describes as their "self-in-mutuality", a characteristic of adult spirituality that "gives meaning to life and allows us to participate in the larger whole"

a spirituality of "wholeness" and "connectedness with others", a spirituality that speaks "to the whole of our experience" (2005, pp. 97-100).

When one teacher said half-jokingly, "you certainly don't stay in the job for the pay packet", he was alluding to the fact that teachers usually value something other than "conventional rewards" (Palmer, 1998, p. 183). To glean some insight into these alternative rewards of being a teacher, it is necessary to briefly examine the values that emerged in the participant's conversations.

Values.

There was little doubt from the participants that what was important was their students, "the whole person" (I2, 2005, para 122) and that "people who look only at curriculum, miss a lot" (FG.2:1, 2005, para 132). Several times teachers described their colleagues as "good", with statements like, "I mean good as in good people" (FG.2:2, 2005, para 61). Statements like "a school like this where it's expected that everybody be good" (FG.1:1, 2005, para 193) give some insight into the culture of the schools. When the teacher said, "a school like this", they were referring to the fact that the school is a Catholic school and their experience of this culture is that there is an expectation that people are good. This goodness was exemplified in the cultural values of the expectation of "politeness and pleasantness" in interpersonal dealings (FG.1:1, 2004, para 18); "forgiveness" (FG.1:1,2004, para 191); "courage" (FG.1:2, 2004, para 175); "justice" (FG.2:1, 2005, para 6); "respect" for students as evidenced by the openness and honesty of saying "I'm sorry" when teachers are mistaken (FG.2:1, 2005, para 136); and "hospitality, welcome… compassion" (I1, 2005, para 61).

These values were significant because they were experienced in small ways, like a student unexpectedly helping a teacher with her books (FG.1:1, 2004, para 5)

and also in more significant ways.   The following story continued to deeply move the teacher who told it,

we were trying to organise the kids to go and three couldn't afford to go…and so let's fundraise… and we mentioned that three weren't going and $112 each and really the staff…the support from the staff was phenomenal …they all got cars washed… and I'd come out of the staff room and on my key board would be an envelope with $50 and anonymous donation from a staff member and that just literally left me speechless…the effect that had on the kids… a lot was seen and a lot was unseen too…the desire on the staff to support the kids…and their real interest…that just leaves you…(FG.2:1, 2005, para 218).

The compassion of the staff members who were determined not to see less well off students disadvantaged was real because it was incarnated in their actions where they worked. Teachers gave more than they were required to. Their giving was tangible. Beyond good intentions, they gave from their own financial resources. This was actualised self-in-mutuality because teachers found themselves at one with the others with whom they were engaged in a mutuality of care and justice. Their actions honoured such virtues as hope and gratitude because they extended "out to the other" by participating in the larger whole (Shea, 2005, p. 101). Also what these teachers did made a difference to their students.

Making a Difference

There are many ways to make a difference as one teacher reflected,

… you have to get used as a teacher as I said, not to have all those marks in a book, there are other sort of marks that are really more important to all of these kids. The kids who are academic, we can help them and we can get the

marks but those other kids, marks are irrelevant entirely to them… it's the life skills they need…(FG.2:3, 2005, para 61).

As this teacher sees, for some students teachers make a difference by helping them to achieve academically. For other students, there are other ways in which teachers make a difference. When this teacher said not all the marks were in a book he did not seem to be fully conscious that he was talking about the mark he, personally, had made on his students, themselves. The experiences of making a difference, that came to mind first, were quite outstanding. One remarkable experience recalled by a teacher involved her needing to model courage in a situation where justice wasn't straightforward. While this focus group extract is lengthy, the richness and depth it reveals is significant and warrants its inclusion. As the teacher explained,

I think even possibly just speaking to another teacher if you know a student's upset about something, that they might have been treated wrongly or they're misjudged, or the way they did an assignment or they didn't hand it in on time or their teacher didn't listen or some reason… if you could speak to another teacher on their behalf… it could take a bit of courage with some teachers…

The teacher went on to elaborate,

I guess with a year 11 girl who still insists that she handed an assignment into a teacher and the teachers said that she didn't… and she has got some anxiety problems… she actually exploded and used a foul word to the teacher which was used very loudly outside the staff room too so everyone else heard it… and she was suspended for several days and treated as an outcast, I think… but because I know her story, I certainly spoke to the teacher and teachers involved… I certainly defended her in the staff room where other teachers were ridiculing her and saying… we don't need her around… she wasn't

prepared to go and speak to the counsellor at all but I persuaded her to go and

I sat with her through a long session until she was feeling quite free to talk to

the counsellor…

This incident was successfully resolved. As a result this student's standing had been

considerably enhanced. As the teacher went on to explain,

since then she has written letters of apology to the teachers who were

involved… she's being praised to the highest heavens now at staff meetings…

which amazes me… she has been out on work placement, she did a good job

there… I think that sometimes you do have to stand up and speak up for

somebody… it does take courage… like I said it takes courage to speak to one

teacher about a student and put their case forward, but when you got… there's

the whole staff room… all the people who were in there at lunch hour and

called for everything… but I feel that is what you do have to do if you feel that

the student is right … I guess that is one definite thing I have thought of since

our last meeting…. I guess that because of the praise she has now been

given… (FG.1:2, 2004, para 167).

In this situation this teacher's compassion for her student once again required that

action needed to be taken. Feeling compassion for her student wasn't enough. She

had to incarnate her compassion as action. As she said, "that is what you have to do if

you feel that the student is right". In doing so she realised that she needed courage to

act. This teacher's action obviously made a difference to the student who now was

being praised for her success at work experience. However when she said, "I think

that sometimes you have to stand up and speak for somebody" she was alluding to

spiritual integrity, as Shea (2005, p. 100) explained, "it is only in our own response to

the other that meaning is found; it is only in our response to the larger whole that our

spirituality holds, deepens and transforms the self as it relates in mutuality".   Also significant for the research reported in this thesis, this teachers' recollection and reflection on this incident was articulated because it happened as part of her daily experience of work between focus group meetings. When she said, "I guess that is one definite thing I have thought of since our last meeting" indicated to the researcher that instead of letting these events pass, she held onto them, and reflected on them as experiences to share with the focus group. If the focus group meeting was not scheduled, it seems likely that she would not have reflected on the significance of this incident once it was over. She also would not have had the opportunity to bring it to the dialogue with her colleagues. As Palmer warned (1998, p. 142) it is easy to get lost when exploring the "inner terrain". But in the community of collegial discourse, support and sustenance of the trials of teachers' work can lead to wisdom.   Palmer recognised that for teachers to grow, they have two opportunities, their "inner ground" and their "community of fellow teachers" (1998, p. 141). While the above example of one teacher making a difference was profound for her student, herself, and her colleagues with whom she shared this story, sometimes the way teachers made a difference was as subtle as planting seeds.

Sometimes teachers' faith in the value of their "planting seeds" was sustained by their experience, as typified in the following memory of a difficult year nine class taught by this long serving teacher,

It was a shocking group. The good thing was that I didn't see that group again until year 12…no that wasn't the good thing (laughter)…no, the good thing was I heard that by the time they were in year 12, I think I taught them in year 12, … they turned out as quite a good group…but as year 9's they were little

monsters, and the atmosphere in the room for a whole year was **terrible**.

(FG.1:1, 2004, para 71)

This teacher, in emphasising the word "terrible", indicated that the memory of the trauma of teaching this class had not left him. There was still a hint of surprise, when he said that "they turned out to be quite a good group" when he taught them again in year 12. His experience of his everyday work in this school went from an experience of struggle with a difficult group, to an experience of pleasant surprise three years later. The memory of that experience, thirty years later, a memory of journey from darkness to light, remained close to the surface. Perhaps this was why some teachers were able to generalise with statements like,

…and that whole developmental thing you observe when you are in a school and you say that I don't expect this change to happen overnight but I know that given time the kids are going to grow and we will grow with them. (FG.2:1, 2005, para 114).

In this recollection, this teacher said that what "you observe when you are in a school" leads to an expectation that change and growth will happen. She could say this because of her lived experience of her daily work and this experience of daily work enables her to hold expectations. These expectations were more significant than they might first seem. Like the previous teacher's recollection, she was not stuck in the experience of negativity because she knew that although growth may be difficult at times, she remained hopeful that it would happen. She also realised that these experiences enabled growth in her as well as her students when she said, "we will grow with them". As a result as teachers go about their daily work, they can be optimistic. Another teacher reflected,

you know sometimes you've taught a lesson and you've done something and you think "My God did it all go over their heads or what?" and you think, "I don't know" maybe tomorrow, maybe next year or sometime later in life it might sink in…yea, not wanting to control the situation I think…sort of…sometimes very liberating …freedom… …which I think it must be role-modelled… from the adults… (FG.2:3, 2005, para 95)

Like her colleagues, she had optimism or the faith that her planting of seeds was not in vain, even when no results from her efforts were presently apparent or obvious. Whereas the previous reflection revealed mutual growth of teacher and student, this teacher's reflection revealed that she valued having faith that she was planting seeds. This perspective gave her the freedom of not having to rely on measurable outputs as the only measure of the success of her efforts. This was a mutual freedom. Her modelling benefited not only her, but also her students.

The richness of these teachers' reflections in articulating the meaning of being a teacher, articulating values on which they operate, raising to awareness the significance of their making a difference and their daily planting of seeds, flowed out of teachers reflecting on the everyday experiences of their work in Catholic high schools. Teachers' reflection therefore needs to be considered specifically. While the findings of the literature review in chapter two of this thesis indicated that teacher reflection was significant both for the person of the teacher and the practice of the teacher, teacher reflection is of interest in this thesis because experiences of daily work need to be reflected upon by the teacher in order that they be bought to awareness and their value can be realised.

Teacher Reflection

Finding the time for reflection was constantly challenging because of the busyness of being a teacher as the following teacher exemplified,

> We are just so busy during the day, it's probably only if you have a spare in common with other people that you would actually… it falls down because most of the time you are working… (FG.1:2, 2004, para 183).

When asked when they had opportunity to reflect, teachers responded with statements like "if I wake up early in the morning" (FG.1:3, 2004, para 284) or with statements like,

> You wake up in the middle of the night and you're either thinking ahead or reviewing. I don't think that there's anybody who teaches and says they're a good teacher and doesn't do that. You're just on the go thinking "Okay, where is this going, where am I going to take this?" …or review what's happened, particularly if it didn't work, "what could I have done?" "What didn't I do?" …and that's when I find, that you learn, "Oh that was good" or "dealing with that kid was really great" (FG.2:3, 2005, para 134).

Experienced teachers saw value in taking opportunities for reflection for "reframing", or an opportunity of "how to see things differently… from a different perspective… being critically constructive" (I1, 2005, para 65). Another described this as an opportunity for "filtering" or deciding what they needed to hold on to and what they needed to let go of (I2, 2005, para 106). Towards the conclusion of the first focus group's initial meeting one teacher reflected,

> Something I have just kept thinking of is just how important it is to reflect on your experiences… to learn from it and also to grow from it… our time here

we've talked about all our good stuff and… our not so good stuff with our

staff …and I just think it's really important to take time out and

reflect…(FG.1:1, 2004, para 217).

It seems that the very opportunity this teacher had taken to reflect, as part of the focus group, led her to see the importance of reflection, with her peers, on her experiences of work. Stimulated by the reflections of the group of the good and "not so good stuff" as she participated in the focus group with her colleagues, she "just kept thinking of just how important it is to reflect" and saw reflection as an opportunity "to learn and also to grow". The significance of reflecting with colleagues was also recognised by a teacher during the initial meeting of the second focus group who said,

there's lots of moments everyday where you've got… just… we'd call it

grace, and I would, grace, and it just happens… but you gotta be ready to spot

it… (FG.2:1, 2005, para 122).

This teacher recognised "lots of moments everyday" and identified them as "grace" and also recognised this was a group perception by saying "we'd call it grace". While grace is a word charged with religious meaning, this teacher indicated that this meaning was held by the community of her colleagues in this Catholic high school, rather than simply a religious term of personal piety. When this teacher says, "you gotta be ready to spot it", she also saw the importance of taking the opportunity to reflect by her implication that in not being ready to spot it, the opportunity to see grace might easily be missed.

Moments of Grace.

Interestingly the word "grace", had come up earlier when a teacher said, " … you look at the growth… and I guess for me that's what spirituality in a school is all

about… moments of grace… watching kids like her…". When the researcher asked her why she said "moments of grace", she replied,

> There are lots of moments of grace, I think it's… I guess for me it is completely un-religious… it's nothing to do with being church or anything else. It is some moment when something touches my heart to such an extent that I want to cry or the beauty of it is just overwhelming, that kind of thing. (FG.2:1, 2005, para 115-119).

This was revealing because while she said that "there are lots of moments of grace", she classified them as unreligious. Paradoxically, religious language, "grace", is used but immediately it is used it is defined as unreligious. When she talked of her heart being touched and wanting to cry or being overwhelmed by beauty, she was articulating a deeply affective response that she experienced in instances of her daily work. There is more here than the obvious struggle to find words to cognitively fit affective experience. During the next focus group meeting, she said,

> I remember saying last week, I remember when one of those girls came in when I was having that conversation on anxiety, and I said that was a moment of grace and you asked my "why? What made that a moment of grace?" and I think that I wasn't expecting you to ask that question so I certainly didn't have any answer, so I blurted out something nonsensical really, and I think that the whole thing about that moment of grace is… it is not anything rational about it, you just know, it's a kind of awareness, a knowing and awareness that's a kind of an intuitive thing and if you sit down and analyse it later on you can say "yes, God was in that moment" but you're not sitting there while that students there thinking "O Yes, God's here, now this is God". The whole spirituality think is about, I think, our relationships with the other people we're

interacting with…and that mirrors somehow, reflects somehow, the relationship we have with God" (FG.2:2, 2005, para 30).

Something complex is revealed here. This teacher articulated what she meant the previous week when she used the word "grace". In doing so she had clarified her own position significantly. What she initially saw as unreligious, she now recognised that "God was in that moment". This "awareness" was still beyond full expression because as she acknowledged it is "a kind of intuitive thing" that is seen "if you sit down and analyse it later". Again the implication here, through her use of the word "if", was that not to take time to reflect, is to not see the moment of grace, a moment where God can be found, in a daily experience of work. In her first focus group meeting with peers, she identified an experience of her work as a moment of grace. She obviously continued to reflect on this until the next focus group meeting. By this time she was able to articulate and clarify significantly what had surfaced in reflection during the previous focus group meeting. Also of significance here was that this teacher was not asked for a theological explanation of what she said. She was simply asked a clarifying question. She had used a word, and when asked what she meant by that word, further reflection revealed significant meaning. However, not everything revealed was revealed in great seriousness.

Humour.

Perhaps the most noticeable aspect of teachers reflecting on their daily work was the emergence of humour. Teachers very frequently laughed together as they recalled the stories of their daily work. On some occasions teachers told funny stories, on other occasions laughter emerged as teachers found themselves reframing their experiences in the telling, and this put their experiences in a less serious light. As one teacher reflected on what could have easily been seen as a very frustrating situation with

students that had made little logical sense, he laughed and said, "it was just so funny… the blind leading the blind" (FG.2:1, 2005, para 85). Some teachers admired others on staff for their sense of humour and found this a support and also that this made them smile when they encountered each other (FG.1:1, 2004, para 53).

Humour was also acknowledged as a sign of being an experienced teacher as put by one teacher,

> In my earlier days as a teacher I used to take things a lot more seriously and … you know… don't you dare make fun of me… and a teacher and a student couldn't share a joke sort of thing… I don't know if it's just my nature or spirituality or what… but I think I have learned to change and I allow a little bit of humour into my classes… and I have more patience and even if it meant…eventually… having a joke and making fun of me… as long as we understood that there is a line, a limit… then I found that eventually, it was much easier to allow humour into situations, rather than trying to be serious the whole time. (FG.2:2, 2005, para 66)

This teacher saw that the cumulative experiences of teachers' work was to free them from over-seriousness and make them more patient. Humour made their work "much easier". Others saw humour as useful when difficult things had to be done (I1, 2005, para 49) and others recognised the value of humour being like a "big release valve" (I2, 2005, para 97) that relieved tension and was good for overall mental health. On a number of occasions humour was acknowledged as the means of "connecting" with both colleagues and students (FG.1:3, 2004, para 256; I1, 2005, para 57; I2, 2005, para 97; I3, 2005, para 49).

Teachers Connecting

Teachers connect with students, their families and their colleagues. One teacher typified this as being,

> constantly amazed at the stories that students were prepared to share…um…and then…otherwise that their families were prepared to share because they thought that I was somebody that they thought that I could talk to…could help them or look after the girl in whatever the situation was. I constantly felt privileged that they would allow me to be part of their lives, 'cause I don't think it is easy sometimes to divulge exactly what is going on in their household and expect that somebody would stand by their daughter (FG.1:1, 2004, para 14).

What this teacher reflected on was more than the sharing of information between home and school. She was "constantly amazed" by the intimate level of connection made by her students and their families. Experiencing this level of connection revealed her appreciation of the trust and faith her students and their parents had in her. Implied in this was the perception that as teacher, she was more than the vehicle to pass on knowledge to her students. She was perceived as "somebody" and that she "would stand by their daughter". The ability to connect with students enabled the teacher to guide the student, when needed, to help "them to make the right decisions" when they got into difficulties (FG.2:2: Section 9, Paragraph 169). As another teacher reflected,

> I think you become in-tune with others when you show a connectedness… so you go to tune into others and what they are feeling and what they are saying and that completes… the… what's the word? …the connection (FG.1:3, 2004, para 256)

Teachers saw that the ability to connect enabled a teacher to discern what their students were meaning even when the students themselves could not articulate it (FG.2:1, 2005, para 192). However, teachers were often unaware of the significance of their ability to connect with students. One teacher recalled a past student, who had a turbulent time at high school, coming back and visiting him at the school who said, "I really enjoyed the time with you" to which he responded, "You're kidding me". His past student then said, "no you at least had a relationship with me, you talked to me" (FG.2:1: Section 3, para 154). Connecting is about teachers relating to their students and their subject matter. How they connected defined the space in which these relationships arose. Connecting, however comes at a cost, as one teacher pointed out, "if you are not prepared to give some of yourself away, it is the wrong place" (FG.2:3, 2005, para 81) but as one teacher saw it, to connect with students was a prerequisite for going places with them. She said,

> …connecting with them at that human level and then I think you can go many other places with them. I think story…connecting with them through your own life experiences…a very significant way of connecting with them (I1, 2005, para 57).

Whether it is about being in the right place, the wrong place or, as she says above, going to "many other places with them" these teachers were using images of journey, or *peregrinatio,* not a lone journey, but a journey with companions who share experiences. These are the experiences that are teachers daily work that connect teachers to students through their "own life experiences". The significance of this was exemplified by a teacher who observed that,

We spend and incredible amount of time with our students and possibly more

time with them in a consistent period than many of their own families do, than

their parents… 'cause it's concentrated time (I2, 2005, para 25).

As he said later using a colloquialism to emphasise the reality, this is "where the

rubber hits the road". He saw this as a "good connection" (I2, 2005, para 33).

Perhaps this is why, when asked to reflect on their vocation and their daily

experiences of work, teachers invariably began by talking of relationships. Because of

the time teachers and students spend with each other is "concentrated time", the

teachers' relationships shaped the world in which they work.

Relationships.

Teachers' work relationships are not simply functional. During the first focus

group's initial discussion, a long serving teacher recognised that there was a spiritual

dimension to teachers' relationships when he said,

Well I think we've been talking a lot about relations with each other and the

kids we deal with and there's no doubt… the way to gauge spiritual…

progress has to be on the way we relate to the other people we meet in our life

(FG.1:1, 2004, para 183).

This teacher did not talk of experiences of daily work from an objective distance.

How he related, his relationships, were of spiritual consequence. To talk about

teaching, was to talk about relationships. Where relationships were not central,

teachers work was seen as being much more difficult as the following teacher

reflected,

…if we just go into the classroom just to teach and nothing else…the whole

future game…the whole profession becomes so much more difficult…if you

can have a conversation with a student about anything…doesn't matter what it

is… I have always found that it makes such a big difference just to talk to a student and let them see you as just another person, not a teacher, just another person… (FG.2:1, 2005, para 134)

Relationship, for this teacher, was crucial to teachers' work. For him, teaching was more than imparting knowledge and skills; it was relationship "person to person". Crucially the insight of this teacher was that while it was important for the teacher to see the student as a person, it was also important for the student to see the teacher as person. Another teacher summed this up in saying, "its relationship isn't it? …I don't know somehow …it's richer than the one way adult to child sort of thing" (FG.2:1, 2005, para 143). Some teachers saw that their relationships pointed to something more significant,

Suppose I think too that spirituality is all about relationships because …it sounds very rational as soon as I say it's because, doesn't it… that whole thing about relationship, you know how we don't have this direct relationship with God…as if we could see God and talk back and answer and that kind of thing and so I suppose the way I see things…the relationship with God is mirrored in the relationship with other people and that includes in this setting with staff and students and anybody who is part of this community. (FG.2:1, 2005, para 30).

This teacher saw the relationships in their daily experiences of work as a vehicle for experiencing their relationship with God. Put another way, their relationship with God was played out in their relationships experienced as part of their daily work. This was what made their experience of school, an experience of community.

Community.

Sometimes staffs consciously work at creating community as one teacher recalls,

> I think we've tried to …we've tried to…we've actually gone out and tried to create that harmony and bit of joke in the staff room as well… we um…I mean everyone's allowed to…sit and read the stars and make a comment out of the newspaper and…and put a magnet on the fridge…and you know…
> (FG.1:1, 2004, para 135)

Aware that community was constantly built and maintained, this staff had developed rituals such as reading and commenting to one another about the newspaper as they read it. They personalised, and made their environment inclusive, by placing fridge magnets on the staff room refrigerator. In this way they had put their personal mark on their shared space. Rituals like this may have been more significant than they first seemed. As one teacher observed, the range of people who make up community can be quite diverse. The challenge for them was to facilitate the connections so that all the people "fit in" (I1, 2005, para 37). When teachers make community, they have a learning community. As one teacher put it,

> the learning community where you have people at all different phases of that learning process, some are very advanced and some are starters and novices and some are disengaged while being physically driven, but it's that whole process of being in the same place and time…which is important (I2, 2005, para 25).

This teacher recognised that the learning community included the teacher and was open "to a whole new world" because of it. Also significant in this teacher's reflection was the recognition of diversity as an element of community. They did not see their role as teacher to impose uniformity, but to welcome and include diversity that opens

up a "whole world" to the teacher as well as the students. Sometimes the benefits of being in community were of benefit to individual students. One teacher recalled recent memories of a sports day and instances of,

> the kid with the brain injury, or the kid with cerebral palsy running around the oval in a race…miles behind everyone else but having a go… and all the kids on the sidelines just cheering them on and a couple of the kids getting out and running along and joining in with him…and that sort of stuff… even though a couple of the kids doing this run around the oval with cerebral palsy or whatever might have abused every kid in the school …at the time they see the courage and they encourage them to get up to have a go with them and support them (FG.2:1, 2005, para 128).

In this instance students with disabilities, which meant that they would not be successful in winning a race, were encouraged and supported by the community "just cheering them on" and by "a couple of kids getting out and running along with them". Such notions are counter-cultural in a culture that values winners and not losers. This experience affirmed that the individuals who were running were a valued part of the community. It also reinforced the obligation of the community to encourage and support those in need of it. Support for who they were, and not what they did, is how individuals knew that they intrinsically had value (I2, 2005, para 65). Where teachers experienced support as part of their daily work, they also felt that they were valued as members of the community.

Support.

In the previous section of this chapter, one teacher described how staff at her school in the spirit of community gave spontaneously and generously to make sure that financially less able students did not miss out in participating on a school camp.

This had an effect on the students concerned who, because of the selflessness of staff, received affirmation that as members of this community, they mattered. These actions of generosity in the school community are not limited to what staff can do for their students. Staff members also had opportunity to come to know that they were part of a community where individuals are supported as the following recollection revealed,

> one of the teacher aids who had just come on board… and we had a flood go through their place and all her stuff downstairs was gone and she didn't have insurance and L said "Well let's do something" so as a staff we get $550 together… took it to her as way of this might help…and that's the sort of stuff people are into here (FG.2:1, 2005, para 216).

This instance demonstrated that how teachers act towards other adults on staff is as significant as how they act towards their students. These teachers saw one of their own staff members in need and responded. As in other examples, cited above in the previous section of this chapter, compassion had to be enacted. As a result, support for those in need of it, was reinforced as part of this community's identity. As identity is a recurring theme in teachers' daily work, it is important to explore the lay dimension of teacher's identity further.

Lay Teachers

Lay teachers make up almost all of the teaching and non-teaching staff in Catholic high schools in the archdiocese of Brisbane. As observed in the literature review of this thesis, "for the lay people involved, teaching is more than a profession; it is a vocation" (Pope John Paul II, 2001, #33). Therefore, being a lay teacher in a Catholic school involves both identity and mission. What this means for teachers, affects the

teacher, the students, the school and ultimately, Catholic education. Teachers pondered maintaining the balance between family (lay) life and their vocation to work in a Catholic school, one said:

> I hate it when they are out of kilter. I think that is the most… I think it brings anxiety into both realms…especially if the conflict is over the work home balance, and that happens enormously…like you say… 'well it's my job', but it's more than job, you know? (I2, 2005, para 53).

What this teacher recognised is not that they have two lives, a lay or family life and a Catholic school life, but that their life contains both and one dimension can not be separated from the other. Coming to terms with what this means can be a challenge for those seeking integrity, or to live and work in a way that integrates both "soul & role" in a way that encourages good teaching (Palmer, 1998, p. 167). As one teacher put it, monastic spirituality is not what lay people need to foster their spirituality. He said,

> Lay spirituality is different to a monastic spirituality. We, by the fact that we don't live in communities, religious communities, we have all those other pressures of making sure that you've got enough money to buy the groceries…we bring a whole lot of other experiences that the friars on staff here don't have (I3, 2005, para 65).

These experiences of life, that lay people have, can inform and form teachers' daily experiences of their work. Teachers recalled how at times being a teacher in a Catholic school made a difference to their home life, and at other times their home life affected how they negotiated their teaching day. As one reflected,

> … there is a lot of similarities between here and home… and I had a struggle at home three years ago, four years ago, and very much the support I was

given here, got me through a lot of that, and so there's the to and the fro… and working here, at odd times when I need to come up, home gives me that support…yea… to have both in balance for myself at the moment is really good… so I don't think you could have one without the other (FG.2:3, 2005, para 33).

Lay life informs teachers' everyday work, which in turn informs lay life. For example, one teacher saw that her experiences of being a parent influenced the ways she saw things as a teacher when she said,

I think having your own children definitely changes who you are as a teacher. I'm a different teacher now than before I had children… totally different outlook (FG.2:3, 2005, para 111).

Another teacher recognised that being a teacher sometimes helped him with his own children and helped him recognise what not to say or do (FG.2:3, 2005, para 129). Yet another teacher saw that his experiences as a teacher helped him avoid pitfalls other parents had experienced with their children. He explained how he had become aware of how some parents did not take the opportunities to spend time with their children while they had the chance to, and as a result they were,

missing out on a lot… they very quickly get older and they don't want to be around mum and dad, they don't want to be in a scene with you (FG.2:3, 2005, para 149).

While individuals observed that since becoming parents they had different ideas on patience, compassion and how much homework should be given, one teacher recalled a life-changing event that happened in her family two weeks earlier. She was still in awe of this event as she recalled,

Well I've had the experience over the holidays… that made me a little bit more aware and a bit more spiritual I suppose… and it doesn't have to be a verbal communication between mother and daughter it can just be a look…. Of horror (laughter)… my daughter had a baby… and I was there with her through the whole lot… and the way she looked at me several times… I just was taken… absolutely… interesting… things that she probably would never have said... but the look said everything… that's a connection, a connection I have never had before (FG.1:2, 2004, para 89).

She said that she sensed that this new level of awareness was spiritual as she tried to describe a level of communication that was paradoxically ineffable. She said, "just a look" was able to communicate things that probably would never be said. Interestingly she mentioned that this new awareness was awareness of a "new connection, a connection I have never had before". Although she was aware that she had participated in a connection that was beyond words for her she went on to say,

I'm a little bit changed… little bit… a bit more sympathetic, I think… bit more aware of how kids feel I suppose that I probably wouldn't have had before… she's only a kid… a little bit different…. I don't know how yet… I'll have to keep discovering that but its sort of… it's changed me that experience… for the better I think… and being there has probably changed my daughter as well which is interesting… its hard to express though but it's a connection… and sometimes you don't realise the connections you have with kids at school until something happens and there's either a breakdown or a drama or something happening in their lives or in ours where there's a reinforcement of that connection… a strengthening of it… or a breaking of it…   …sometimes knowing that you've gone through it as well…makes that

connection stronger… you don't have to explain… does that make sense? You know a child experiencing a sickness of a parent or… break-up of a friendship or a sister leaving home or something like that and you have experienced that in your life there is a connection and you can … on a different level sort of understand… is that spiritual or is that a spiritual connection? …don't know… (FG.1:2, 2004, para 93).

She recognised that this experience of her family life had changed her and made her "more sympathetic… a bit more aware of how kids feel". When she said that she had to keep on discerning what this ultimately meant for her and her spirituality, she had recognised something was still to fully unfold. It was almost as if she recognised that this experience of birth was bringing to birth something in her that was not quite there yet. At this point this teacher was cognitively extending her new awareness, or "knowing", to other life experiences that might give her insight into her students and how their worlds shaped them. As she was wondering about events that occur every day in everyday family life, things like breakdown dramas, sickness, friendship traumas and separation, she was realising a connection to her students and her empathy for them. The birth of this teacher's granddaughter had ripple effects on they way she related to the students she taught. When she reflected and pondered whether this experience of hers was spiritual, the researcher recalled one of the interviewees who insisted that in his school, "your qualification to be involved in the spirituality of this place is that you are a human person and you're breathing" (I2, 2005, para 77). When one teacher reflected that, "there's lots of moments everyday where you've just got… just… we'd call it grace, and I would… grace, it just happens… but you gotta be ready to spot it" (FG.2:1, 2005, para 122), he was

indicating his conviction that reflections as rich as those cited here require further reflection and analysis.

In the following chapter (Chapter five) of this thesis, the data provided by the other participants in this research is presented. These participants provide a range of perspectives on how teacher spirituality is nourished, each from their own distinctive vantage point. In Chapter six, the insights from chapter's four and five, are bought into a circular hermeneutic, or dialogue, with Catholic Scripture and Tradition in search of the *verbum interius,* or inner word arising from the synergy of this chorus of voices.

CHAPTER 5

THE RESULTS – OTHER VIEWS AND PERSPECTIVES OF TEACHERS'
SPIRITUALITY FROM A VARIETY OF VANTAGE POINTS

Introduction

The aims of the research reported in this thesis were threefold. These were to explore Catholic Church documents and other literature in order to gain insights into the spirituality of teachers, who teach in Catholic schools; to identify which experiences of teachers' daily work in Catholic high schools nurture and sustain teachers' spirituality; and to discern how these insights might inform the ongoing formation of lay teachers in Catholic high schools. The purpose of this chapter is to present the data obtained from perspectives other than those reported in chapter four of this thesis, that is, the data obtained form participants other than the teachers participating in focus groups. This data was gathered in semi-structured interviews with archdiocesan Catholic education authorities; from the data from a semi-structured interview with a person with experience of a teacher formation program in the USA; from the data from semi-structured interviews with international experts James Fowler and Brian Mahan of Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia on February 17, 2005; and from the data from semi-structured interviews with individuals currently serving in Queensland high schools who have responsibilities for leadership in their community's spirituality. As in the previous chapter, the data presented here is displayed with some discussion. Further analysis and interpretation of the data presented in this and previous chapters of this thesis, is given in chapter six of this thesis.

As outlined previously in this thesis, the ecclesial identity of the Catholic school means that Catholic schooling operates with certain assumptions not assumed in secular schools. The hierarchy of the Catholic Church expects that these assumptions of ecclesial identity are "animated" in the persons working for Catholic education (CCE, 1997, #78). The Church also expects that the laity working for Catholic education have a specific awareness of these assumptions (CCE, 1982, #62). Therefore the faithful representation of the voices of the archdiocesan authorities, and the individuals with responsibility for spiritual leadership in their schools, the voice of the Catholic Church Tradition, its' teachings and Scriptures, is present in the "polymorphic" voices of these participants because they are immersed, "embodied, in culture, and in relationship" (Gilligan, Spence, Weinberg & Bertch, 2003, pp. 157-159) with themselves and with others, and in an encompassing relationship with the Catholic church. These individuals spoke with their own voice which paradoxically is the voice of the Church community. They operate daily on the assumption that they work for the Catholic Church and speak freely in the language of the Catholic Church when discussing the everyday work of teachers in Catholic schools.

The data in this chapter is presented in the following sequence: the archdiocesan authorities, the experience of a formation program facilitator in the USA, the international experts, James Fowler and Brian Mahan, and the individuals with responsibilities for spiritual leadership in their schools.

The Archdiocesan Authorities

Both the Director of Religious Education and the Principal Religious Education Officer[6] of the archdiocese were convinced that teacher formation was a priority for teachers in the archdiocese's Catholic schools. Formation was also acknowledged as being a complex issue by statements such as:

> Gender is significant. The majority are female in Primary schools. It is about 50/50 in High Schools. More and more are part-time teachers. You start to wonder if teaching is their primary passion with the multiplicity of demands on a person (A1, 2004, para 7).

In this statement, it was acknowledged that gender may be a factor to be considered in teacher formation. It was also acknowledged that there was no longer a uniform work model for teachers, with various combinations of full-time and part-time work becoming standard practice. Also recognised here was the "multiplicity of demands on a person". This makes the point that formation of the teacher is formation of the person who is not disconnected from other aspects of life. In this context of diversity, how individual teachers view their vocation and how they appreciate their work as part of their vocation invites some clarification. This raises further questions when approaching formation. As observed by the archdiocese's Principal Religious Education Officer,

> It is vital to have ongoing formation. It is difficult for schools to come to terms with because people's spiritual formation is in the context of their lives. The question is how do we get into the area in a way that is comprehensive and ongoing? How do we translate formation into context? (A2, 2004, para 23)

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[6] As described more fully in Chapter 3 of this thesis, these individuals were purposively selected for interview because of their leadership roles, and responsibilities for maintaining the identity and integrity of Catholic education in the archdiocese.

What was intuited here was that formation must occur in the context of teachers' lives, not separate from them. This participant also stressed that formation needed to be ongoing, indicating that formation was more than a one-off or occasional in-service opportunity.

Both these archdiocesan authorities acknowledged that the most obvious difficulty of approaching formation was the constant busyness of school life. Insightful comments acknowledging that teachers should be able to reflect were balanced with the recognition of the difficulty in them doing so. They reflected that teachers ideally should be,

> …able to reflect on themselves, on their practice, on possibilities….able to reflect and see who and where they have grown. It isn't something that can be taught in one year but regularly reflect on where I get the energy, the commitment, reflect on the pain etc. Schools tend not to be reflective places because of all the demands…the over demands and as a result teachers are not reflective but isolated, but in a community we are able to reflect together. (A2, 2004, para 7)

It is of interest that formation was seen as something to be engaged in by individuals, rather than to "be taught". As Palmer said, "eventually the how-to question is worth asking. But understanding my identity was the first and crucial step" (1998, p. 71). The acknowledged difficulty for formation is that "schools tend not to be reflective places because of all the demands". However, the paradox here was that formation is intuitively seen here as something to be done "in a community", when teachers "are able to reflect together" even though the reality that "teachers are not reflective but isolated". The surfacing of this paradox means that it is not surprising that when

thinking about formation of teachers, that the challenge of all the demands on teachers and their busyness, led to deeper, more fundamental questions such as:

Do we time-table for it? Is it the right question? Where in life do we find time for reflection? I wonder… do we need to look at the year and find the time for reflection? Everyone has busy home lives. Could we find a place, make a 10 minute space before or after lunch, a time of "examen"? This could be fertile. We could all be …becoming robots without knowing it? … What are we modelling? …How do we value busyness? …Or, do we ask what we are about? We are conscious of including time for sport, but we are uncomfortable with silence (A1, 2004, para 23).

As Palmer argued, formation is about "how can educational institutions sustain and deepen the selfhood from which good teaching comes (1998, p. 4)". These questions of finding a "time" and a "place", in turn led on to questioning what teachers are "modelling" if they are not engaged in formation. Consequently, this raised questions of what is valued, and illuminated corollary questions of what is valued unconsciously by the unquestioned assumptions of the constant busyness that makes up teachers' days. Becoming conscious of what time is made available for, and what no time is available for, is ultimately essential because "teaching and learning require a higher degree of awareness that we ordinarily posses" (Palmer, 1998, p. 73). The awareness required by lay teachers in Catholic schools is unambiguously "to be witnesses of Christ in the classroom" (CCE, 1977, #78).

International Expertise

As the Church hierarchy insists that formation practices must be broadened and kept up to date with the best available (CCE, 1982, #62), it was helpful for the

research reported in this thesis to draw on the overseas experience of formation. As part of the researcher's investigation of the *Courage to Teach* formation program, a program facilitator, herself a retired teacher, was interviewed at the conclusion of a CTT retreat. Later, two international scholars with recognised expertise in spirituality and vocation were interviewed as part of the data collection for the research reported in this thesis. Professor James Fowler (1981, 2000) and Dr. Brian Mahan (2002) both have developed scholarship and insights into areas significant for the research reported in this thesis.

A Retired Teacher in the USA with Experience of Teacher Formation.

A teacher in the USA who has retired from teaching and who is experienced in the teacher formation program CTT, recalled how she became interested in teacher formation following the transformation she saw in the daily teaching practices of a colleague. She saw her colleague, who had a reputation for being very tough, step out of that persona and begin to engage her students more authentically from her true self. This inspired this participant to engage in teacher formation for herself. She summed up the program's effects in saying, "we grew to understand this mystery of teaching from the heart. We grew to understand this notion of "You teach who you are" (F, 2004, para 13). She went on to explain that she saw this phenomenon repeated with her continued involvement and participation in facilitating CTT teacher formation programs,

> They report the change. They say that …um…instead of going in with the attitude of…um… "you will sit and I will teach you"…that there is more of an interplay. They are better listeners to the needs of the children…and I don't know how to explain it…they are more receptive to being in an interplay with their students, meeting their needs but…but coming at it from more of a

selfhood than just a theoretical base, just the curriculum…I mean the curriculum gets taught, but its just approached in a different way. They're coming to their students in a more authentic here's…here I am…as a human being. One of the examples I will give is that when you think back on your education, and you think back on a teacher who made a tremendous impact on you life and you think about who that person is, you may or may not remember the curriculum (F, 2004, para 17).

As Palmer said, "'Who is the self that teaches?' is the question at the heart" of a teacher's vocation (1998, p. 7). When this participant saw the result of this formation program as teachers coming to their students more authentically, as human beings, she was saying that the teachers' self, rather than the teachers' role was able to authentically encounter the students in the classroom. While this sounds simple, it was the actual realisation that "teachers teach who they are" that meant no longer having their "peculiar gift as a teacher crammed into the Procrustean bed of someone else's method and the standards prescribed by it" (Palmer, 1998, p. 11). She went on to say,

And that's the secret. And if people can recognise that within themselves, and know the value of who they bring into the classroom, they can understand that. Then they understand what a true education relationship is. (F, 2004, para 21)

She observed that if teachers could "know the value of who they bring into the classroom… then they understand what a true education relationship says". Groome also pointed out, that the real authority of teachers is the integrity of their own lives (1998, p. 39). What this teacher observed was that reflecting on their inner lives, their true selves, as a community, is the key to formation. As Groome explained this, more than presenting their views, teachers needed to "probe how or from where" they were

looking (1998, p. 120). He went on to explain this as the art of hermeneutics, or the "art of interpreting and translating life" (1998, p. 123). This teacher's experience of formation practices was that individuals engaged in formation were able to interpret their lives more authentically and this translated into action in their classrooms. How these experiences could be understood as a process, required drawing on insights into the understanding of adult spiritual development and vocation. The scholar James Fowler, is recognised as having such expertise (Downey, 1993; Groome, 1998; Mahan, 2002; Shea, 2005; Wulff, 1991).

James Fowler.

How individuals come to awareness of their vocation, what this means to them and their communities and how this has spiritual significance, was explored further with Professor James Fowler, Charles Howard Candler Professor of Theology, Chandler School of Theology, Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Fowler is well known for his contribution to the understanding of faith development (1981). Of specific interest to the research reported in this thesis is his work, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian* (2000). In the conclusion of that text Fowler wrote,

> The Christian community, if it intends to call and support young men and women in negotiating their ways toward vocation, will need to provide images and communal encouragement to resist both the panic and the seductions of the spirit that comes from a society that mainly knows about specialness only in terms of destiny (p. 118).

Fowler's belief that the community constantly needs to encourage vocation seemed to the researcher like the argument for formation. His observation that doing this is counter-cultural by the norms of society indicated why this is something distinctive to the identity of Catholic education. It resonated with Pope John Paul II's imperative

that Christianity's mission was to shape society and that "integral formation of the human person" was what will shape society (2001, #32). Fowler reinforced the necessity of formation when he said,

> the Christian community needs to offer a spirituality of vocation that can nerve young women and men against panic and seduction, on the one hand, and stand with them discerning the shape of their callings in the light of their gifts, the needs of the world, and the structures of opportunity and creativity that confront them, on the other hand (2000, p. 118).

When Fowler said above that "the community needs to offer a spirituality of vocation", the researcher took it to imply that lay teachers in Catholic schools needed to be offered opportunities to nurture their vocational spirituality. Doing this reveals Providence in the daily work of teachers which Fowler said was "…the most neglected doctrine in contemporary theology" (JF, 2005, para 8). He explained that providence was experienced as "meaning, purpose, value and acknowledgement of their life as gift, vocation as gift" (JF, 2005, para 24). In other words, nurturing teacher spirituality in the context of their daily work had the potential to reveal meaning and purpose, as well as deepening the sense of vocation.

Discussing the focus group finding that teachers were energised and gratified when they experienced connection with either peers, students, or their families, Fowler observed that,

> It is an incredible kind of intimacy that happens to enrich students and sometimes their families who are very open and very vulnerable and the teacher receives and carries and nurtures in a way that can't happen unless there is a deep personal trust and I think that is one of the most rewarding professional and personal dimensions of any vocation (JF, 2005, para 28).

In this statement, he identified that "intimacy" nurtures and sustains teachers and observed that, intimacy is "built on trust". On the surface this seems obvious. However, it is easy to overlook the significance of establishing and maintaining an environment of trust in a constantly busy school. This is important because as Fowler said, people are "very vulnerable" at this point. Where individuals feel vulnerable, they need encouragement to engage. Without encouragement, "one of the most rewarding professional and personal dimensions" of teachers work may be an unrealised opportunity of potential. When the conversation focused on 'vocation', Fowler said that "vocation is really where the Christian faith is lived" (JF, 2005, para 68). How lay teachers live out their vocation to teach in a Catholic high school is how their faith is lived out. Fowler saw that lay spirituality was different to monastic spirituality (JF, 2005, para 64) and that the church needed,

> to catch a new vision of what committed lay leadership can bring to the education of the families of the next generations. We need to make that a priority, because it is distinctive to public education, very distinctive (JF, 2005 para 72).

While Palmer (1998), Miller (2000), Nash (2002) and Denton & Ashton (2004) have all explored an emerging understanding of a spirituality of teachers from a public school perspective, this writing is useful and not inconsistent with Catholic spirituality. However, what Fowler observed in this conversation was that the distinctive identity of Catholic education makes Catholic education significant; and that lay leadership reveals that identity for "the next generations". This was important at this time because,

> the structures of business, commerce and government are more and more driven by short term profit, and that this uses people in ways, it leads to short

term thinking in public policy. It nurtures what I call the politics of possessive individualism and people are anxious to accumulate and protect and make money for their own nest. So it is the short term economy and the short term thinking that has to be addressed it seems to me. I don't think that can be done apart from a spirituality (JF, 2005, para 76).

The antidote to this "possessive individualism" was what Fowler explained as "paradoxically, a systematic practical theology, thinking through Christian doctrine in close proximity to reflective human experience" (JF, 2005, para 76). For lay teachers in Catholic schools, this would mean engaging the Scripture and the Tradition in contemplation of their everyday experiences as encouraged by Pope John Paul II (2001, #57). Fowler argued that the present time is a time of openness to such a venture,

I think there is a growing sense that quality of life is broader than that, and there is a kind of wilderness urge, to go out into the woods, that's where you find true spirituality, but to work on a spirituality of vocation, and a vocation to family life, a vocation of citizenship, those sorts of things, seems to be a hungering for what the images are (JF, 2005, para 81).

Importantly, Fowler had recognised that a true spirituality of vocation includes family life as well as work. Again, one of the distinctive qualities of lay spirituality of vocation was that it is multi-layered. One layer, family, cannot be isolated from another layer, work. As the conversation turned to grace, Fowler remarked,

the older I get the more that I realise that grace is at the heart of creation. Grace is the gift of life, it's the gift of spirit, it's the… human quality that draws most directly on the holy. It's really the antidote to self-absorbed, self-striving; it's what fills the void in our hearts that must be filled. Whether it's

the grace of a committed marriage or whether it's the grace of a teacher who

sees something in a child that the child could never recognise for themselves,

or whether it's the moment when a person with a lot of responsibility or power

recognises that it doesn't have to be used for his or her self-aggrandisement…

it can be used to do enormous good. It is that moment of turning from self-

absorption to trust… trust and giving… seems to me the anxiety we're talking

about with this short term thinking is precisely the lack of trust in grace… (JF,

2005, para 95).

Observing above that grace is the "gift of life" that "draws most directly on the holy"

Fowler saw that an ordinary experience of teachers' work, the seeing some potential

in a child, is a manifestation of grace. This point is significant, especially in light of

the teacher reported in the previous chapter of this thesis, who identified a moment

from her teaching as a moment of grace (FG.2:1, 2005, para 122). Fowler pondered

further the meaning of grace,

Phenomenologicaly it's a force… it's a gentle and persistent force… it

happens between persons and groups and it's transformative. Sometimes in

tough situations, when a leader surprises everyone by not thinking

pragmatically or thinking under the duress of this must be done… but sees the

larger values and re-frames it, that's grace (JF, 2005, para 105).

If, as Fowler argued, grace is a force, and one example of what that force enables is

"reframing". This needed further explanation. Grace was seen as a "freedom" (JF,

2005, para 109) and reframing meant that individuals could realise that there were

things that they were not responsible for (JF, 2005, para 119) and this had the

potential to enable people to be less anxious and controlling (JF, 2005, para 123).

How these insights might be helpful in teacher formation was explored and Fowler observed that rather than seize on one thing, or an answer, formation,

> needs to be a gestalt, needs to be a pattern to have a meaning…so my hunch would be to invite people to do some guided reflections in which they move deeply into their own heart of their hearts and listen to, or sense, what seems most important in life, what is most significant in life…help them to begin to name that, to discover that…if they don't have a sense of that then it becomes a sort of existential invitation to say well what grows you, what concerns you…what kind of tugs at your energies and your consciousness and start a process helping them to attend to that and not be so quick… a spirituality of attending and observing and feeling… the question is what was lost or never invited into that…an exploration of emptiness…(JF, 2005, para 155).

Reflection is raising awareness and articulating moments of grace that nourished teachers' spirituality. Attending to the inner life by processing this, in conversation with Scripture and Tradition to nurture a spirituality of "attending and observing and feeling", may be helpful for teacher formation. When questioned about "emptiness", Fowler saw this as the possibility of opening to God, something counter-cultural and not understood by a society dominated by the norms of capitalism (JF, 2005, para 159). However, the norms of capitalism and formation of lay teachers in Catholic schools may not be irrevocably opposed. They may be opposite poles of a paradox that comes from living fully in modern society and working faithfully in a Catholic school. If so, then holding the tension between these two creatively may reveal crucial insights for teacher formation. For this reason, the research of Brian Mahan was of interest for the research reported in this thesis.

Brian Mahan.

Dr. Brian Mahan is a Catholic layperson and teaches at the Chandler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia. He has researched and written about vocation, in particular *Forgetting Ourselves On Purpose* (2002). Of interest to the research reported in this thesis was Mahan's pondering of how vocation moved beyond the initial "epiphany of recruitment" to something ongoing including the resistance to the vocational call and discernment of which of the many voices calling is the authentic voice of vocation. While these perspectives were of obvious use in considering teacher formation, Mahan's refrain that vocation, like life, is unscripted (2002, p. 11), added the perspective of co-operation or participation as co-creator when he said that, "not that if you take this risk you are forcing God's hand or anything, but you can be assured that you don't have to plan the whole thing out" (M, 2005, para 60). What Mahan pointed to is the difference between an unhealthy co-dependency (Au, 1999, pp. 46-55) and the faithful openness to pursuing the authentic call of one's vocation. As Palmer (1998, p. 30) put it, people cannot pursue a vocation because it is noble, they need to pursue it because it is *their* vocation. He said "a vocation that is not mine, no matter how externally valued, does violence to the self" (1998, p. 30). However Mahan argued that faithfulness to vocation was at the root of human yearning. Through contemplation and reflection teachers have the potential to reframe or, as he said connect the moments, and notice the presence of grace (M, 2005, para 103). He argued that the teacher's self is of crucial importance because,

> the first context we need to be aware of is ourselves and our own gifts and admit what they are, and admit limitations and so forth. I find resistance to that. You might say the first context is the material, the subject matter, and in

a way sure, but still the way, the lens through which that will be seen (M, 2005, para 105).

While he saw that the teacher's self was important, he also had recognised resistance to contemplation and reflection on the self, by teachers. He observed,

> What I have found with our faculty is there is a fear of being egocentric, there is a fear of narcissism… and you almost have to go back a step and say "you know, understanding what your gift is to the classroom is quite the opposite of egocentricism… but it is a tough sell. Talking about the self is very difficult for scholars in particular (M, 2005, para 116).

Once again a paradox emerged. Mahan argued that the self needs to be the focus of reflection, but reflecting on the self is resisted because it is perceived as being narcissistic. He observed that when bringing to light this inhibition he also saw that "it is always virtue language again, that is used to avoid the kind of insight" (M, 2005, para 128). By not being "self-seeking", one may think they are being more spiritual, but as he said, it is deceptively simple to exchange material self-seeking for spiritual self-seeking. He explained that spiritual self-seeking was not the answer for material self-seeking (M, 2005, para 160). He said that, "all you got is what you got, and all you are working with, is what ever is there" (M, para 164). This point is significant for formation. The temptation with professional development in-service is always to employ some model or technique, or to bring in expertise from elsewhere. The fact that what was needed in teacher formation is already within the teacher was also a recurring point made by Palmer (1998, 2004).

Individuals with responsibility for Spirituality in Catholic high schools

A variety of models and structures operate in the day to day functioning of Queensland's Catholic high schools. In each community an individual on the staff apart from the principal will be seen to have responsibility for spirituality, or may less formally be assumed to be the one whose role description encompasses spirituality. Persons with these roles may have the title Religious Education Coordinator, Assistant Principal Religious Education, Dean of Faith Development, Chaplain, Dean of Mission or some other variation. During the conduct of the research reported in this thesis, three such individuals were interviewed. These individuals fulfilled roles titled, Religious Education Coordinator, Dean of Faith Development and Chaplain. Significantly for this research these three individuals were also teachers and spent a significant part of their day teaching in classrooms. Their views were considered important because of their working at the interface between the ideals of the organisation and the daily reality of the teachers' work in classrooms. They straddled the gap between the vision and the theory, and the pragmatic reality of teachers' daily work. Three individuals from Religious Institute schools were interviewed for this research. Each had a different title, but each had a job description that included a requirement or expectation for leadership, or encouragement of community spirituality. These individuals were interviewed last. An interview guide was prepared (Appendix four) which contained a summary of points, from the focus groups and previous interviews, for discussion. These individuals were asked to consider how they saw and understood the patterns that were emerging. It is challenging to convey, within the constraints of a research thesis, the passion with which these individuals embraced their work. The researcher could not fail to remark on the enthusiasm and dedication these participants displayed. There was little doubt

from their energy for these conversations that these individuals had a sense of vocation that made their commitment to their work personal and fully engaging. The interviews began by asking the participants to reflect on what nourished them and kept them committed to their vocation of teaching in a Catholic school. Two indicated that it was the relationships, and the third began by saying it was by participating in liturgy as community. He said,

> …because you get to celebrate with community, you draw strength from the community you come from… you bring those things I think, to your job…I think the day you stop enjoying and bringing those things to your job, particularly in a place like this, is the day you should walk out the door…because I would see that it would become too much of a battle…and that transcends through to your work and through to the kids (I3, 2005, para 5).

When this participant described drawing from, and bringing to community, he was implying relationship between himself and the community. The other participants named this more directly when they said, "I think it is relationships with students but also the relationships with the staff" (I1, 2005, para 5) and, "teaching is relational" (I2, 2005, para 17), when asked what teaching was all about. This relational quality of teaching was central to their day to day experience (I1, 2005, para 57; I2, 2005, para 25; I3, 2005, para 17). This point was significant because for these teachers their work became "a way of expressing themselves" (I3, 2005, para 59) or as another put it, it became "part of who you are" (I1, 2005, para 129). Relating to, or connecting with students, parents and peers, teachers knew that they made a difference, or knew that they were appreciated and valued (I1, 2005, para 37; I2, 2005, para 17; I3, 2005, para 29). Relationship was significant, because awareness of it meant that teachers

appreciated that they were valued for themselves (I1, 2005, para 65) rather than for what they can produce (I2, 2005, para 17). Paradoxically, what these teachers had to 'do' crowded and dominated their busy days. "So much is required" (I1, 2005, para 33) and there seems to be "a lot more all the time" (I3, 2005, para 61). They yearned for some "space" to "maintain a sense of balance" (I1, 2005, para 25; I2, 2005, para 146; I3, 2005, para 57). One suggested that the opportunity to experience space for reflection on spirituality was so rare, yet so important, that it should be timetabled as a whole community professional practice (I3, 2005, para 146).

These individuals all thought that the values of their community were important for community identity and integrity (I1, 2005, para 61; I2, 2005, para 130) and one saw this as so fundamental, that it was important that these cultural values be named (I3, 2005, para 21) to keep this identity in the forefront of the community's consciousness. Another recurring aspect of appreciating the nature of community were the references made to diversity (I1, 2005, para 13; I2, 2005, para 25; I3, 2005, para 73). The richness of this diversity was seen as one aspect of the complexity the laity brought to Catholic education (I1, 2005, para 29; I2, 2005, para 53; I3, 2005, para 65). These experiences confirmed Moore's (1992, p. 219) assertion that the ordinary, everyday experiences had the potential to reveal the sacred to those who take the time to see. As one participant exemplified,

> sometimes people just see spirituality as being so serious…and I don't think
> it's about being so serious all the time…there may be times that you are, but I
> think for me, spirituality is tied up in the ordinary everyday experiences of life
> and some of those can be quite serious moments, it can also be some quite
> humorous moments, it can be engaging over a cup of coffee, a good joke, it
> can be whatever else is happening in peoples' lives and you can go from

humour to quite serious things with certain people very quickly because of that sense of connectedness…yea I think it's humour, it's seriousness, it's fun, it's …hurt, it's all those different emotions, different experiences of life…for me, the ordinary everyday experiences of life has really gelled for me in terms of where spirituality is at (I1, 2005, para 53).

Other participants agreed that spirituality was about life and all its aspects (I2, 2005, para 77; I3, 2005, para 41), while one participant named "work intensification" as an obstacle to appreciating the good that was there.

As outlined in this chapter, participants from a variety of backgrounds contributed to widening and clarifying the perspective of formation, the ongoing nurturing of teachers' spirituality. Education authorities of the archdiocese of Brisbane maintained that formation was a priority and that it required attention. The experience of teacher formation programs, such as CTT, was that formation transforms teachers and brings new life to their teaching. Mahan's insight that something was needed to sustain vocation beyond the initial "epiphany of recruitment" and his understanding of the necessity of looking at resistance to formation was significant. Fowler's insight was that a gestalt inviting an exploration that in turn would nerve others in fulfilling their vocation. There was concurrence that reflection was significant for formation. It offered the possibility of bringing to awareness 'moments of grace' or what Fowler recognised as "Providence" in the ordinary everyday experiences of teachers' work and this was crucial for nurturing and sustaining teacher spirituality. However, the constant busyness, and increasing work intensification, militated against teachers having time for reflection. Significantly archdiocesan Catholic Education Office authorities questioned the status quo, by asking what teachers modelled, by insidiously being caught up in the constant

crowded busyness of daily work. Those with responsibility for spirituality in their school communities saw their relationship with their work as a matter of identity, acknowledging that their work contributed to their understanding of who they were. They yearned for greater balance and integrity in and among the different dimensions of their lives. Formation offered the potential for balance and integrity, but also for awareness of moments of grace, or Providence that recognises teachers' vocation as a gift, bringing with it meaning and purpose. Paradoxically, formation was at once crucial for the teacher in a Catholic school and the community of the Catholic Church. The community continues to need models of vocation. Teachers need the community to encourage and nourish the spirituality of that nurtures and sustains their calling.

In the following chapter (Chapter six) of this thesis, the voices from this chapter will be brought into conversation with the voices of the teachers whose responses were reported in the previous chapter (Chapter four). The synergy from this conversation, held in the context of the Catholic culture of a Catholic high school, will lead to a clarifying of the *verbum interius*, or inner word, underlying these conversations. This is necessary because as Palmer observed, "we humans have a curious conceit that just because we have said something, we understand it" (1998, p. 155). In discerning the experiences of teachers' daily work in Catholic high schools which nourish and sustain lay teachers' spirituality, it is possible that the participants in the research reported in this thesis may have revealed more than they realised.

CHAPTER 6

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The aims of the research reported in this thesis were threefold. These were to explore Catholic Church documents and other literature in order to gain insights into the spirituality of teachers, teaching in Catholic schools; to identify experiences of teachers' daily work in Catholic high schools that nurture and sustain their spirituality; and to discern how these insights might inform the ongoing formation of lay teachers in Catholic high schools. The purpose of this chapter is to further analyse and discuss the data reported in chapters four and five of this thesis, namely the experiences of teachers' work that nurture and sustain their spirituality, and to bring these experiences into dialogue with the Scripture and Tradition of the Catholic Church.

The reasons for placing the data into interplay with Scripture and Tradition are firstly, to complete the "circular hermeneutic" which reveals the *verbum interius*, or inner word, behind these voices (Grodin, 1994, p. 15); and secondly, to interpret and present the data in ways that ground it in its context, that is the mission of Catholic education as informed by Scripture and Tradition. Thus, this chapter completes the circular engagement with the literature, including Scripture and Church teaching with the everyday experiences of teachers' work in conversation with diocesan Catholic education authorities, school leaders and outside experts.

Why bring the experiences of Lay teachers' work in Catholic Schools into conversation with Scripture and Tradition?

The research reported in this thesis has a specific context: Catholic education. As such, its findings may not be relevant to secular education. The research aims were specifically concerned with Catholic education and the discussion contained in this chapter rests on certain assumptions and adopts language that is integral to this context. This does not mean that the reporting of the "conversation" or interplay, between teachers' experiences of work, and the Scripture and Tradition of the Catholic Church, that is the focus of this chapter is not objective. Lonergan (1971, p. 238) contended that "the myth of objectivity" was the mistaken belief that "we see what is there, and don't see what is not there". The problem with this view, Lonergan maintained, was that "the world of immediacy and the world of meaning" was overlooked.

There is a Catholic worldview in which certain assumptions may be so deeply ingrained that they are not easily articulated, or they may be unconsciously held. In Lonergan's terms, it cannot be assumed that one will "see what is there" (1971, p.238). Acknowledging and articulating the assumptions of the Catholic worldview is necessary to appreciate the meaning it constructs, and consequently to understand how individuals immersed in it, construct their reality from their experiences and social interaction in Catholic schools.

The epistemology of constructionism allows for multiple meanings (Crotty, 1998) and the theoretical perspective of interpretivism acknowledges that individuals construct reality from experiences and social interaction. Interpretivism also provides a perspective, for the exploration of phenomena, such as teacher spirituality (Deacon, Pickering, Goldong & Murdock, 1999, p. 7). Engaging Scripture in hearing these

voices provides an opportunity "to come into the truth of one's history corporately and individually, to recover one's life, to acquire moral agency in the world" (O'Connor, 2002, p. 83). For Lonergan (1971, p. 265), the world of meaning arises "not by the sense experience of an individual but by the external and internal experience of a cultural community." It is "mediated by meaning and motivated by values" where "objectivity is simply the consequence of authentic subjectivity, of genuine attention, genuine intelligence, genuine reasonableness [and] genuine responsibility" (Lonergan, 1971, p. 265). While authenticity and objectivity are not exclusive, authenticity (1971, p. 292), not objectivity, is the imperative for lay teachers in Catholic schools.

For Catholic education, it is clear that the world of meaning arises from Scripture and Tradition "in conversation as a faith community and guided by its magisterium" (Groome, 2000, p. 15). This acknowledges the ecclesial identity of the Catholic school (Pope John Paul II, 2001, #33), and its vision which is essential for authentic identity (Durka, 2002, p. 15). For Groome, "vision refers to the meaning and the ethic" and it is Catholic, because of the "emphasis on the study of Scripture" (1998, p. 254).

The hierarchy of the Catholic Church is quite clear in its expectations of the vision expected of lay teachers (CCE, 1997, #78; 1982, #62; #65). The expectation is that the "Christian vision of the world and of education" (CCE, 1982, #78) is a "specific awareness" (CCE, 1997, #78) oriented towards "the personal sanctification and apostolic mission, for these are two inseparable elements in a Christian vocation" (CCE, 1982, #65). Because of vision, Durka (2002) saw teachers having

> authority that is both personal and social. We personally earn it, and it is
>
> given to us by the broader community. Authority rests on the legitimate

consent of those who willingly render obedience to another in order to accomplish a worthwhile end (p. 50).

What Durka revealed was that the authority of a teacher in a Catholic school flows from the Catholic community, guided by the magisterium. It is personally earned by teachers who animate the community's vision (CCE, 1997, #78). This means firstly, as Senge et al (2004, p. 202) caution, that people's experiences must not become their "blind spot". They warned that in "their everyday lives" people should not take their experiences for granted. Accordingly, seeking the *verbum interius* behind the conversations reported in this thesis began with the everyday experiences of teachers' daily work. A second starting point was the realisation that "we cannot see what is 'out there' by merely looking around. Everything depends on the lenses through which we view the world" (Palmer, 1998, p. 26); Palmer raised the need for what Lonergan called "authentic subjectivity" (1971, p. 265). Groome (2002, p. 16) insisted that Scripture and Tradition were the lenses for authenticity, within the Catholic Tradition. Therefore, the Scripture and Tradition of the Catholic Church are the appropriate lenses through which lay teachers in Catholic schools view their world.

"Gadamer has contended that one really grasps the meaning of a text only when one brings its implications to bear on contemporary living" (Lonergan, 1971, p. 169). In order to elucidate the research reported in this thesis, and in order to grasp the meaning of Scripture, for this context, Scripture must be brought to bear on the experiences of teachers' work in Catholic high schools. This means, as Groome (2002, p. 12) explains, "figuring out how to bring faith and life together", and this activity is "doing theology". He recommends that "people reflect on their lives from

the perspective of faith, and on faith from the perspective of their lives" (p. 12). As Lonergan (1971) explained it, this gives rise to a,

> theology that is neither *apriori* or *aposteriori,* but only the fruit of an ongoing process that has one foot in a transcultural base and the other on increasingly organised data…theology is an ongoing process…in which Christians understand themselves (p. 293).

For the teachers, understanding themselves, along with their unfolding vocation, was the result of encountering the *verbum interius*. This flowed from the process of lay teachers' doing theology, resulting from them contemplating their everyday experiences of work, together with the Scriptures and Tradition. As Groome argued, the Scriptures "must be constantly reread and reinterpreted in every age from the perspective of what God is revealing now in peoples lives and consciousness" (1998, p. 230). This is why Catholic education and Scripture form a partnership which remains "more of a contemporary promise than a past achievement" (Groome, 1998, p. 237). Taking into account Miller's contention (2000, p. 112) that teachers who are "promise keepers" have authenticity; authenticity for lay teachers in Catholic schools directly concerns their involvement in the partnership of Catholic education and Scripture. This is consistent with Palmer's view that authenticity relates to the teachers' identity and integrity (1998, p. 13). These insights of Groome, Miller and Palmer lead to the recognition that, for lay teachers in Catholic schools, engaging their experiences of work together with the Scripture and Tradition of the Catholic Church, has significance for their authority, and their identity and integrity.

In the following sections of this chapter, the "conversation" which has been discussed and justified here will be further explored using Palmer's criteria of identity and integrity. This, in turn, will lead to articulating insights into lay spirituality that

will assist in discerning ongoing practices of formation for lay teachers in Catholic schools.

Teachers' Identity

The experiences of teachers' work that were identified in previous chapters of this thesis, indicated that the teachers involved in the research perceived their work as affecting how they saw themselves as teachers. Statements such as, "She became very, very good with those kids" (FG.2:1, 2005, para 94), indicated that the interaction with the students, and the experiences of teaching, constructed what type of teacher, the teacher in question, had 'become'. In the hermeneutic between this recollection of experience, and the literature, the teacher identified above, one whose colleagues recognised as becoming "very good", was according to the literature presented in chapter two of this thesis, manifesting human flourishing (Fowler, 2000, p. 119; Livsey & Palmer, 1999, p. 17; Webster, 2002, p. 1050), or *eudiamonia* (Hillman 1996, p. 83, 260; Webster, 2002, p. 9). This experience of teacher's daily work revealed what Martin has called a moment of "unanticipated and transformative grace" (2003, p. 22). Martin argued that "grace" is what gives the spiritual journey, *peregrinatio*, meaning and direction (2003, pp. 37-39). As Groome said, Catholic spirituality is not theoretical; it is incarnated in everyday experiences (2002, p. 275). Everyday experiences from this teacher's work revealed grace encouraging *eudiamonia*, or human flourishing, and affected how she was seen – her identity. When Durka (2002, p. 50) said that a teachers' authority was earned, it can be inferred that the teacher in question earned her authority through her experiences of working with her pupils. When Lonergan said that authenticity is achieved in self-transcendence (1971, p. 104), he was describing how the teacher in question

flourished, or became the person she was, due to her relationship with her students. In order to become who she now was, she had to transcend what she previously was. As Shea (2005, p. 146) said, it was due to the relationship with some other that one "may find the freedom and the challenge [they] need to become an adult self, more actualising and more reflecting". The teacher in question taught with authority because she was herself. This self was the result of becoming (Shea, 2005, p. 3). She did not play her role from an objective, or safe distance (Palmer, 1998, p. 33). There is a paradox here that is enlightened further by Scripture (Lk. 17:33). Scripture reveals that the way to human flourishing, or life, is in losing oneself, or in self-transcendence. Therefore, those with a vocation to teach "come away a little changed" (Coffee, 2003, p. 126). They can say of their teaching, "funny isn't it? It just becomes who you are" (I1, 2005, para 129).

Teachers' experiences of their work changes them. As one participant recognised, "the kids are going to grow and we are going to grow with them" (FG.2:2, 2005, para 114). As a result, the relationships and the experiences of connecting with students, peers or student's families, were the most frequently recurring threads, or themes, emerging from the research reported in this thesis. These were the memories that teachers usually recalled first, when asked to reflect on their experiences of work in Catholic high schools. Teachers participating in this research believed that teacher spirituality was concerned with relationships (FG.2:1, 2005, para 30; I1, 2005, para 5; I2, 2005, para 17; I3, 2005, para 17). One long serving teacher went as far as identifying his teaching as a way to incarnate his "love of God" by his service to his students (FG.1:2, 2004, para 139). As Palmer (2004b, p. 1) has insisted, soul and role cannot be separated, or again, as Groome has said, "Catholic spirituality is not theoretical, it is incarnated in everyday experiences (2002, p. 275). In asserting this

he defined what makes Catholic education Catholic – its Catholic spirituality. As Durka (2002, p. 15) revealed, the teachers' vision, how teachers see, is of primary importance.

What has been argued here is that for lay teachers' in Catholic schools, their identity is the result of their "becoming". Their journey through their daily experiences of teaching, in the context of a Catholic school, can be recognised as a spiritual journey or *peregrinatio*. Therefore this journey can be informed by Scripture and Tradition. Lay teachers' experiences of teaching changes them revealing that their experiences of teaching contain "moments of unanticipated and transformative grace" (Martin, 2003, p. 22). Participants in the research reported in this thesis most often recognised that these moments of grace were found in their experiences of connecting with their students, their peers and their students' families. Because Catholic spirituality is "incarnated in everyday experiences" (Groome, 2002, p. 275), nurturing lay teachers' spirituality is vital for lay teachers' identity, and consequently their students' experience of Catholic education. Recognising moments of grace, gives their spiritual journey, *peregrinatio*, meaning and direction. Awareness of identity, and meaning and direction, in turn encourage lay teachers in Catholic schools to teach with integrity.

Teachers' Integrity

Palmer (1998, 2004 a, 2004b) has stated that integrity is crucial for good teaching. He said that integrity comes from a "complex, demanding, and lifelong process of self-discovery" (1998, p. 13) and out of the commitment "to live an undivided life" (1998, p. 168). Integrity is a necessity because,

a good teacher must stand where personal and public meet, dealing with the thundering flow of traffic at an intersection where 'weaving a web of connectedness' feels more like crossing a freeway on foot (1998, p. 17).

Palmer's point is that all teacher activity flows from teachers' inner lives. This makes integrity a spiritual issue. It also means that "teaching is a daily exercise in vulnerability" (Palmer, 1998, p. 17). Palmer has insisted that for the sake of integrity, teachers must discern what is integral to their true selfhood. Integrity, he said, "does not mean perfection. It means becoming more real" (1998, p. 13). It is important to clarify this point. Durka (2002, p. 51) argued that while teachers' moral obligations make teaching ever more demanding, she was struck by the "wonder of how often most of us are able to meet" these expectations. Integrity is not concerned with perfection, but it involves recognising that "young people are more likely to be affected by teachers who themselves are questioning, pondering and learning (Durka, 2002, p. 52). In other words, students are more likely to be affected by teachers attending to their own spiritual journey, *peregrinatio*, as a matter of importance. Groome (2002, p. 182) considered integrity the reason that Jesus "taught with authority". He observed that the Gospel account of Jesus' teaching (Mk. 1:22) had people "amazed" and that this not only made Jesus teach with authority, it made him unlike other teachers.

In one recollection during a focus group, a teacher said that she was constantly "amazed" at what students "and their families were prepared to share because they thought I was somebody" who could be a trusted "part of their lives" (FG.1:1, 2004, para 14). As with the account from Mark's Gospel (1:22), the experience of amazement was an indicator of a teacher's authority. When Durka (2002, p. 50) observed that teachers had their authority given to them by the community and also

that, authority is something that teachers must earn, she illuminated the nature of this teacher's authority. As Groome said (1998, p. 39) it is the integrity of teachers' own lives that is the source of their authority. This teacher had the communal authority of her position as teacher, but for the students and their families to be prepared to share intimate family situations with her, she must have earned their personal respect. Shea (2005, p. 100) argued that these qualities of "empathy, openness, unconditional love and compassion" are signs of spiritual integrity. This teacher's integrity was the source of her authority. As Palmer said, the teacher's integrity, their congruence of soul and role, determines the quality of the relationship between, teacher, student, subject, and their way of being together (1998, p. 2). Empathy, openness, unconditional love and compassion were more than abstract values for this teacher. Her relationships with students and their families revealed that she had authority because these values spoke of what her experiences with them revealed.

Palmer's observation (1998, p. 33) was that the word authority is derived from the same root as the word author. This means that a teacher's authority indicates that the teacher is speaking from their "true self" and not some other's script. This insight led to seeing other instances of teacher' empathy, openness, unconditional love and compassion. These experiences of teachers' work also indicate that teachers' authority flows from teachers' integrity. Teachers reported as significant experiences examples of spontaneous generosity of their peers personally and financially providing for disadvantaged students in attending school camps (FG.2:1, 2005, para 218), or in the donation of money to a new ancillary staff member whose belongings were unexpectedly lost in a flood (FG.2:1, 2005, para 216). The communal support for a student with palsy, running in a foot race (FG.2:1, 2005, para 128); and the supporting of a student in trouble (FG.1:2, 2004, para 167). Other instances of "connectedness"

(FG.1:3, 2004, para 265; I1, 2005, para 57; I2, 2005, para 25), were also significant examples of empathy, openness, unconditional love and compassion. These were the types of experiences that led the participants in the research reported in this thesis, to the realisation that "the kids are going to grow and we are going to grow with them" (FG.2:2, 2005, para 114).

According to Groome (2002, p. 178), if there is a particular Catholic interpretation of Christian faith, it is to include "good works" as integral. This means that practising empathy, openness, unconditional love and compassion, in daily encounters is necessary for integrity in the context of Catholic education.   In his interpretation of the parable of *The Last Judgement* (Mt. 25:34-40) Groome (2002, p. 241) recognised that the essential criteria of discipleship was in attending to the needs of the marginalized (also Shea, 2004, p. 326). Crucial for teachers is Palmer's (1998, p. 145) recognition that "students are marginalised people in our society".   This is why one participant in the research reported in this thesis struggled with what he named as "commodification" (I2, 2005, para 33), or the pressure to see the purpose of teachers' work in terms of measurable results. The conversation with Scripture and Tradition is a reminder that teachers' efforts are not solely judged by their quantifiable results or outputs. They are also judged by faithfulness in attending to others with empathy, openness, unconditional love and compassion (Groome, 1998, p. 147). In these cases of the everyday experiences of teachers' work, this means being empathetic, open and compassionate to students and families, or colleagues in need, supporting students struggling, and supporting students in trouble. The recurring line of Scripture, "but when did we see you?" (Mt. 25:37; 44) reveals that everyday experiences of interaction are not likely to be conscious actions of faithfulness or unfaithfulness. In this parable of the last judgement (Mt. 25:34-46) Groome (1998, p.

133) observed that neither the faithful, nor the unfaithful, recognised the significance of their actions at the time. This is likely to be the case in the everyday experiences of teachers' work as well. Groome said that the point of this recurring verse (Mt. 25:37; 44) for teachers, was to recognise that its message was not that one should see God then act, but that one should act for the marginalised "for their own sakes" (1998, p. 133). This illustration reveals how by bringing this Scripture to contemplation with the everyday experiences of teachers' work, teachers have the opportunity to see those experiences, and consequently future actions, differently. As Durka said (2002, p. 16), vision is significant because "doing flows from a way of seeing reality".

How lay teachers see reality is shaped and affected by their experiences outside their work, as well as their experiences of work. Because spirituality is about that which "provides meaning and relates to the larger whole" (Shea, 2005, p. 184) the phenomenon of lay life needs exploration. The identity of the teacher is a lay identity, and the integrity of the lay teacher depends on how the different aspects of life are in congruence.

A Lay Spirituality

The arguments contained in the first chapters of this thesis have justified the use of the term vocation in relation to teaching in Catholic schools. In the archdiocese of Brisbane, teaching is mostly a lay vocation. Therefore, that which nurtures the spirituality of lay teachers, sustains their vocation to teach in a Catholic school. Hence, the question arises: How is lay spirituality understood?

There was little doubt that for the participants taking part in the research reported in this thesis that teaching was much more than a job; it was their vocation. This is also the perspective of the Catholic Church (Pope John Paul 11, 2001, #33).

It relevant for the research reported in this thesis, to discern the difference between the vocation of a lay teacher and the vocation of a vowed or consecrated religious teacher.

The word lay, is derived from the Greek concept, *laos theou*, which means "people of God" (Donovan, 1990, p. 107). Being the "people of God" is both an issue of identity and an issue of mission. For the people participating in the research reported in this thesis, teaching was so interwoven with their identities that they reported that it became who they were (I3, para 57). However, for these lay teachers, teaching was not all of who they were. Being a teacher was a key to the meaning and purpose in their lives, but it was one key, and there were others. As recognised by the Catholic Church, for lay teachers being a spouse, parent, single (Pope John Paul II, 2001, #19) or otherwise engaged with the world (Pope John Paul II, 2001, #15), was also significant in defining who they were and what their life was about. In other words a complex of factors revealed the *verbum interius*. Recognising the great diversity in the range of personal circumstances of the participants taking part in the research reported in this thesis, the majority were both spouses and parents. This meant that for the majority of these teachers their identity as teacher was complemented by their identities as spouse and parent. Put simply, accepting the fact that lay teachers in Catholic schools are quite a diverse group, the call to be teacher, spouse and parent is what most will have in common.

The hierarchy of the Catholic Church recognises that modelling the vocation of family, especially towards the young, is "remaining faithful to the Gospel" for those it sees as planting the "seeds of the Gospel", (Pope Paul VI, 1965, #11). This means that if a teacher is a spouse or parent, they model for their students faithfulness of vocation by virtue that they are married, or that they are a parent, as well as by

being a teacher. Initially this point might appear obvious. However in a culture where "workaholic" behaviour is valued (Palmer, 2002; Rolheiser, 1999), faithfulness to vocation is modelled by a combination of aspects of teachers' lives. Vocation is not modelled by constant over-busyness (Rolheiser, 1999, p. 9). This point will be explored later in this chapter.

While clarifying the understanding of what it means to be lay is an issue of identity as described above, it is also an issue of mission (Pope Paul VI, 1965). This mission is "not entrusted to a few. It is given to all" (Donovan, 1990, p. 107). Accordingly, the Catholic Church has said that "formation", is the key, amongst other things, to "supporting families", as well as the encouraging "incentive" for the laity who are "gladly and gratefully" welcomed into their apostolate or mission (Pope Paul VI, 1965, #22). The laity is particularly effective in the apostolic mission of the church in the world precisely because of their immersion in the many aspects of life of the world (Pope John Paul II, 1994, #897). This gives the laity the opportunity to know and make known the centrality of God in everyday life (Pope John Paul II, 2001, #18). Scripture asserts that everyday lay life is characterised by everyday things such as the difficulties and struggles involved in raising children (Lk. 15:11-32); sweeping the house (Lk. 15:8-10); preparing food (Mt. 13:33) and working (Lk. 8:4-8). Therefore, there are no experiences in the everyday life of lay teachers that are "irrelevant to the spiritual life" (Pope Paul VI, 1965, # 4). Groome (2002, p. 284) agreed when he said that spirituality should be "lived in the market place of life". Therefore, there is a need to constantly articulate lay spirituality in order to inform the formation of lay teachers. Attending to the different dimensions of lay teachers' vocation, such as being a spouse and being a parent, will nurture and sustain the

spiritual life of lay teachers in Catholic schools. This will affect the identity of the lay teacher and the apostolic mission in which they are engaged.

Lay spirituality is not Monastic Spirituality.

Teachers participating in the research reported in this thesis recognised that lay spirituality was different from monastic spirituality (I3, para 65) and this difference is valued by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church (Pope John Paul II, 2001, #15, #19, #32). Lay teachers do not have separate lives at home and at work, but they have one life, rich in its complexity. When home and school life are incongruent, teachers are not at their best in the classroom (I2, para 53). However, when home life and work life are integrated, not separated, one dimension of life constantly has the potential to inform and enrich the other (FG.2:3, para 33). Lay life enriches the apostolic mission of the Catholic Church, and the church's apostolic mission enriches lay life. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* recognises that lay spirituality is concerned with developing a person's interior life cognisant that all aspects of their lives contribute as the means of growth, and that this growth occurs with the help of "grace" (Pope John Paul II, 1994, #1700).

Teachers participating in the research recognised that "there's lots of moments everyday where you've just got…grace" (FG.2:1, para 122). These are the experiences that have the potential to nourish and sustain teachers' spirituality. Recognising the moments of grace in the lives of lay teachers nurtures and sustains their vocation which is the mission of Catholic education. As Fowler said it is important,

> for the Church to catch a new vision of what committed lay leadership can
> bring to the education of the families of the next generations. We need to

make that a priority, because it is distinctive to public education, very distinctive" (JF, 2005, para 68)

What makes Catholic education distinctive to public education is its "apostolic mission" and this mission is in the hands of lay teachers in Catholic schools. The teachers participating in the research reported in this thesis had a sense of this. Their need was not for sincerity but for direction (Palmer, 2004a, pp. 1-2; Rolheiser, 1999, p. 40). Groome indicated (2001, p. 15), that direction is discerned from the engagement of Scripture and Tradition "in conversation as a faith community and guided by its magisterium". Lay teachers' spirituality arises by integrating their faith with their daily experiences of teaching in Catholic high schools, their particular environment, and their history (Pope John Paul II, 1994, #2684). This process leads to the insight that lay teachers' lives are not separate from the apostolic mission of the Catholic Church, rather they are the context out of which that mission is engaged.

Ongoing formation is necessary to nourish and sustain the vocation of lay teachers in Catholic schools because, as Scripture claims, the vocation is not static (Pope Paul VI, 1965, #29). Rolheiser (1999, p. 122) pointed to the example of St Peter who was warned that his calling would take him places he had not intended to go (Jn. 21:18). Likewise teachers participating in the research reported in this thesis said,

> you come in as an expert, if you life, trained in a particular field and what you find is that we don't need you for that…what we really need you for are these kids (FG.2:1, para 94).

This is the type of realisation that Mahan (2002, p. 10) called a "gracious discovery" and what Martin (2003, p. 22) indicated was the experience of "unanticipated and transformative grace" (Martin, 2003, p. 22). Martin continued (2002, p. 22) that these

experiences give meaning and direction to the *peregrinatio*, or spiritual journey of vocation. Groome (2002, p. xix) recognised that these experiences lead lay teachers towards self-transcendence or "ever maturing into new horizons". He went on to say that these experiences were the fruits of "the consonance between our deepest desires and hopes and our unique gifts" (Mahan, 2002, p. 11).

The lives of lay teachers are different from the lives of teachers who are consecrated or vowed religious. The hierarchy of the Catholic Church has recognised that this gives the laity an advantage in participating in the mission of the Church in the world. The recognition that moments of grace are contained within the everyday experiences of teachers' daily work, and also from the other aspects of the lives of lay teachers, can inform the formation of lay teachers in Catholic schools as they engage in this mission.   It follows from this that teachers need the time and opportunity to contemplate their experiences together in reflection upon Scripture and Tradition. In the constant busyness of teachers' work and lives, this sounds simpler than their reality usually enables.

Constant Busyness and Practising Reflection

Formation is essential for lay teachers in Catholic schools (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, #62, 65, 78 &79; Pope Paul VI, 1965, #28). The constant busyness, and over-busyness, of teachers' lives can divert them from following on from the initial vocational engagement, or "epiphany of recruitment" (Mahan, 2002, p. 20) that initially encouraged their vocation to teach in a Catholic school. Teachers participating in the research reported in this thesis recognised that reflection was important for them. They saw that it was important to reflect on "the good stuff" and "the not so good stuff" (FG.1:1, 2004, para 217). However, teachers participating in

this research said that their days were already so full that they did not get the time to reflect (FG.1:2, 2004, para 185). One participant claimed that his reflection time came in the middle of the night when he woke from his sleep thinking over the days events (FG.2:2, 2005, para 134). Another participant said she tried to find time in the morning to reflect, but this practice wasn't always successful (FG.1:3, 2004, para 284). Sometimes teachers said that they felt pressured to think of themselves last, and that doing otherwise was selfish, and this was a barrier to finding time to reflect (FG.1:3, 2004, para 22). So it is important to ask, "Is it important for lay teachers in Catholic schools to reflect on their daily experiences of work?"

Archdiocesan Catholic Education authorities participating in the research reported in this thesis thought that reflection was important (A1, 2004, para 19), but acknowledged that schools are not likely to be places suited to teachers' need to reflect (A2, 2004, para 7). This leads to the questions, "Why is it important for teachers to reflect?" and "What insights do Scripture and Tradition have to offer?"

Mindful that the word *educate* is derived from the Latin word, *educare*, to lead out, Kushner (1998, pp. 154-160) recalled an incident from the story of Moses, whose calling was to lead the chosen people out from slavery to the "Promised Land". In the Exodus account (33:18-23), Moses asked God if he could see the Divine Presence. God replied that this would be too much for Moses, but said that God would cover Moses' eyes and pass by and then uncover Moses eyes. This way Moses would see, or glimpse, where the sacred presence had been. Kushner argued that this meant that in one's reflection on experiences, one could have a glimpse, or recognition, of God's grace. In this research teachers recalled what they recognised and named as "moments of grace", when they reflected on their experiences of their work (FG.2:1, 2005, para 122). Groome (1998, p. 59) said that recognising the presence of this

grace in ordinary every day experience was an attribute of the sacramental nature of Catholic spirituality. These were incidents that lay teachers said nourished and sustained their spirituality (FG.2:2, 2005, para 24). Not having the time to look back, or reflect, it is more than likely that these "moments of grace" would not have been surfaced or recognised. Not being recognised for what they were, they would be robbed of their potential to nourish and sustain teacher spirituality.

Constant busyness crowds out the opportunity for reflection to nourish and sustain one's identity and integrity. Palmer identified the constant busyness that disallowed time to nurture the inner life of the teacher as "functional atheism" (2002, Out of the Shadow, Into the Light section). He argued that constant busyness paradoxically could be seen in the constant activity of "people who do not understand themselves as atheists, but whose behaviour belies their belief!" He observed that this, usually unconscious, behaviour led "to workaholic behaviours, to burn out, to stressed and strained and broken relationships, to unhealthy priorities" (2002, Out of the Shadow, Into the Light section). As the archdiocesan Director of Religious Education wrestled with this and asked, "What are we modelling?" and wondered if this meant that people were in danger of "becoming robots?" (A1, para 23), he saw that functional atheism, modelled by constant over-busyness has the result of de-humanising those who succumb to it. Research has confirmed that constant over-busyness or intensification leads to burnout (Friedman, 2000; Graziano, 2005; Jackson & Jackson, 2002; McMahon, 2003) and burnout is soul destroying (Koester, 2002). The antithesis of flourishing, it is damaging physically, psychologically, emotionally, as well as, spiritually (Friedman, 2000; Hayes, 2002; Jarvis, 2002; Larchick & Chance, 1999-2000; Long, 1995; McMahon, 2003; Michaelson & Harvey, 2000; Petroziello, 2000; Rogers, 1992). Research has also shown (Intrator &

Scribner, 2000; McMahon, 2003; Simone, 2004) that formation practices that encourage reflection nourish and sustain teachers' spirituality and offer the potential of making human flourishing the alternative to burnout for teachers. In this light, what teachers saw when looking back is revealing.

Seeing the good.

One focus group participant remarked, "Sometimes we're so busy, it's only when we take time to…for instance, on retreat, we think back and we say well that was good" (FG.1:3, 2004, para13). With this observation she confirmed Kushner's hypothesis, discussed above, that in looking back, one is able to see good or, glimpse grace.

Appreciating the good done by one's efforts motivates one to do more. As detailed in Chapter four of this thesis, 'making a difference' was something identified by teachers as significant for their work as teachers. As Palmer (1998, pp. 17-21) observed, conventional rewards such as recognition and affirmation are not usually afforded teachers. However, he went on to say that these conventional rewards, "pale as we experience the satisfaction" of authenticity of teaching out of true identity and integrity (1998, p. 183). This makes the practice of regular reflection, to see the good in teachers' work, especially important for lay teachers in Catholic schools.

One reason that teachers need regular opportunities to reflect to see the good in their work is because the results are not usually obvious. When Pope Paul VI (1965) wrote of the laity "planting the seeds of vocation", he was using a well known theme from Scripture[7]. Therefore, it was no coincidence that teachers participating in the research reported in this thesis several times referred to their work as 'planting seeds'. The symbolism of a sower sowing seeds is often recalled as an image that

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[7] The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible (1995) Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, list more than two hundred and eighty references to planting seed in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures.

Jesus used to talk about teaching (Mt. 13:1-9; Mt. 13:31-32; Lk. 8:4-8; Lk. 13:18-19). Following the recommendation in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994, #2684) to engage spirituality in the integration of faith in the particular environment, the symbol of seeds needs further exploration.

As regularly observed by teachers participating in the research reported in this thesis, seeds contain life with the potential to grow (Groome, 2003). Participants commented that "at school we plant a seed, and it might be that it will germinate here or it might germinate much later in their lives" (I1, 2005, para 109). While Jesus used the mustard seed as an example of the surprising potential of seeds (Mt. 13:31-32; Lk. 13:18-19), the Australian environment, the environment in which the teachers who participated in this research live and work, reveals other insights into the nature of seeds. The Eucalypt, which dominates the Australian landscape, includes *Eucalypt regnans,* the tallest flowering plant, and the tallest hardwood tree in the world. Paradoxically, its seed is so small, that it can be scattered large distances on the wind. Popular Australian sayings such as "from little things, big things grow" ring true because they are ingrained environmentally as well as culturally. Consequently the imagery of seeds reveals to lay teachers that from even the smallest acts or experiences, big things can grow,

Mindful that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that spirituality is concerned with integrating the circumstances of an individual's "environment, work and history" (#2684), bringing together experiences of teachers' work, in the context of their environment, in conversation with the Scriptures, new insights are forever possible. As Merton said, this has the potential to enable an "uninterrupted dialogue with God" (1961, p. 16). For example, many seeds of plants, such as Acacias, have a hard seed coat, and only after the trauma of a passing fire, hot enough to crack the

seed coat, can they germinate and grow. Counter-intuitive as this imagery and metaphor is, this experience of the Australian environment again gives rise to profound natural wisdom. The recollection of the teacher quoted in Chapter four of this thesis (FG.1:2, 2004, para 167) who found the courage to speak up for her student experiencing difficulty, was no doubt an instance where both teacher and student felt the 'heat' of the environment they found themselves in. The trauma of this situation stimulated both the teacher's courage, and the student's transformation. In this situation, the potential of human flourishing involved vulnerability and risk. Palmer warned that "cursed with the blessing of consciousness and choice…choosing wholeness may sound good but it is risky, and it makes us vulnerable in ways we would prefer to avoid" (2004, p. 9).

As one teacher remarked you cannot "guard your privacy so much and sit yourself behind walls" (FG. 2:3, para 81). By extension, in this instance the teacher revealed that as the seed coat which surrounds the seed must be cracked open, so too does the shell that surrounded the teacher, need to be cracked open. As Palmer insisted, it is the self of the teacher who teaches (1998, p. 7). The corollary of this is the teachers' understanding of "cracking the hard class" (Rogers, 1992, p. 82) in order to get through to and 'lead out' the best in the students. While one teacher recalled how eventually getting through to a student meant "allowing kids to grow" she also appreciated the paradox of her own personal growth through the same experience of difficulty when she said it is "somehow allowing ourselves to grow, even through the tough stuff with them" (FG.2:2, para 152). As teachers recalled difficult and traumatic experiences of their daily work, these revealed themselves as opportunities to grow in appreciation of the nature of their vocation to teach in a Catholic school with insights like, "funny isn't it, it just becomes part of who you are" (I1, para 129).

Traumatic or difficult experiences, encountered by teachers in their daily work, obviously bring the potential for stress and contribution to burnout. However they also appear to hold the potential to nourish and sustain teacher spirituality and, to be useful in informing practices of teacher formation. As Kessler (2002, p. 147) writes, with the right perspective, 'experiences of hurt and disappointment, failure, betrayal and anger" can "reveal themselves as guidance".

Palmer (2004, p. 181) recalled a Hasidic teaching story that explained that the words of Scripture sit on people's hearts until their hearts break, and that at that moment the words fall into peoples' hearts and take root. With this story he was illustrating how contemplatively bringing the texts and experiences of teachers' work together, leads to wisdom. As Merton wrote (1961, p. 16): "Every moment" of life "plants something" in the soul. "Each moment brings with it germs of spiritual vitality that come to rest imperceptibly in the minds and wills of" individuals. He continued to say that, "the ever changing reality in the midst of which we live should awaken us to the possibility of an uninterrupted dialogue with God". The possibility of such a dialogue warrants lay teachers in Catholic schools having the opportunity to reflect on their experiences of work in conjunction with the Scriptures and Tradition.

Conclusion

In this chapter participants' experiences of the daily work as lay teachers in Catholic high schools were engaged in a circular hermeneutic with the Catholic Scriptures and Tradition seeking the *verbum interius*, or inner word behind their conversations. As lay teachers, *laos theou*, or people of God, the voice of these teachers is the voice of the Church. Therefore, the Scriptures and Tradition of the Catholic Church were demonstrated as foundational in providing insights into the

moments of grace that nourished and sustained these teachers' spirituality. Scriptures and Tradition articulate the voice of the Church, and therefore they can articulate the voice of the laity. Reflecting on their everyday experiences of work as lay teachers in Catholic high schools, the *perergrinatio*, or spiritual journey of the unfolding and unscripted vocation to teach in a Catholic school, was seen to have meaning and direction. This meaning and direction is named by the Catholic Church as these teachers' "personal sanctification" and their "apostolic mission" (CCE, 1982, #65). Paradoxically, the identity and integrity of the teacher is inseparable from the identity and integrity of Catholic education. When lay teachers experience integration of their "soul and role", they teach with authority (Durka, 2002; Groome, 1998; Palmer, 1998, 2004a, 2004b). Formation offers teachers the opportunity to reflect and contemplate identity and how these encounters affect them (Carotta, 1999, 2003; McMahon, 2003; Palmer, 1992, 1998, 2004a; Simone, 2004). This opens the possibility for affirming and deepening their vocation, and commitment to it. In doing so this is providing a model of vocation to guide others as well (Fowler, 2000; Mahan, 2002)

The following and concluding chapter of this thesis, will present all of the conclusions resulting from the research reported in this and the previous chapters of this thesis, thus responding to the stated aims of the research. It will make recommendations that flow from the findings and point to further research that is suggested by this thesis.

CHAPTER 7

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The aims of the research reported in this thesis were threefold. These were to explore Catholic Church documents and other literature in order to gain insights into the spirituality of teachers teaching in Catholic schools; to identify experiences of teachers' daily work in Catholic high schools that nurture and sustain their spirituality; and to discern how these insights might inform the ongoing formation of lay teachers in Catholic high schools. The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the research in relation to its aims; to make recommendations for the formation of lay teachers in Catholic schools that emerge from these findings; to discuss the significance, applicability and limitations of this research, and to suggest topics for further research.

The Findings

Church Documents.

Normative church documents reviewed for the purpose of understanding teachers' spirituality revealed the following principles. (a) Teaching in a Catholic school is much more than a job, it is a vocation (CCE, 1977, #78; Pope John Paul II, 2001, #33). (b) Teachers need ongoing formation so that their work is done with an awareness of the ecclesial identity of the Catholic school (CCE, 1982, #62). (c) Formation of teachers is necessary for the "personal sanctification" of the teacher and the "apostolic mission" in which they are engaged (CCE, 1982, #65). Paradoxically, this means that while formation is concerned with the animation of the

teacher (CCE, 1977, #78), it also directly concerns the authenticity of the community (CCE, 1982, #79). These essential elements of personal sanctification and apostolic mission are inseparable and integral to the vocation to teach in a Catholic school (CCE, 1982, #65).

It is significant that formation needs to be ongoing. The personal sanctification of the teacher is ongoing and, the apostolic mission of the church is ongoing (Pope John Paul II, 1994, #863, #1700). This means that both personal sanctification and apostolic mission are becoming, emerging, unfolding or are in perpetual unfinishedness. Also significant is the church's recognition that the vocation to teach in Catholic schools has largely become a lay vocation (Pope John Paul II, 2001, #33). In perspective, the lay vocation is to be engaged in "temporal affairs" (Pope John Paul II, 1994, #898; 2001, #43). In other words, the lay vocation is immersed in the realities and experiences of everyday life in the world. This includes family life, which the Church has recognised as deserving priority in terms of its need for support and encouragement (Pope John Paul II, 2001, #19; Pope Paul VI, 1965, #11). Recognising that spirituality arises out of a context of environment and history (Pope John Paul II, 1994, #2684) lay teachers' spirituality arises from their context of family life, work and immersion in the world. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) defines Catholic spirituality as concerned with the integration of family life, work and experiences of everyday life with faith. This reveals that the formation of lay teachers in Catholic schools needs to be grounded in the reality of their lives and experiences.

Three issues arise from this. Firstly, the formation of lay teachers is both necessary and a priority. Secondly, formation is concerned with the personal sanctification of lay teachers and their participation in the apostolic mission of the

church. Thirdly, as teaching in Catholic schools is a lay vocation, formation is concerned with the integration of faith with the work, life and history of lay teachers themselves. With the 'who', 'why' and 'what' of formation clarified, the Catholic Church sees that the 'how' of formation needs to be addressed incorporating the latest understandings and best practices available (CCE, 1982, #62). This requires incorporating insights contained in the wider literature concerning formation.

Other Literature.

Secondary literature surveyed in this thesis for the purpose of understanding teachers' spirituality revealed the following principles. (a) Spirituality is hard to define because of the wide-ranging perceptions of exactly what spirituality is (Downey, 1993). (b) However, there is much public interest in spirituality (Caputo, 2001; Eberle, 2003; Elkins, 1998; Moore, 1992, 2002; Palmer, 2000; Tacey, 2003). (c) As a result, many people who might not consider themselves religious may consider that spirituality is important to them (Caputo, 2001; Elkins, 1998; Groome, 2002; Hays, 1984; Tacey, 2000, 2003).   (d) One consequence of this situation is the articulation of spiritualities in different circumstances (Au & Cannon, 1999; M. Carotta, 2002; Carrol, 1998; Goodier, 2002; Hillman, 1996; Johnston, 2001; Koester, 2002; Starratt & Guare, 1995; Tacey, 2003; Wheatley, 2002).   Scholars such as Fowler (1981, 2000) and Shea (2005) have argued that spiritual development and adult development are inseparable. Spiritual growth and development is constantly ongoing, emerging, growing and becoming. This is the nature of the spiritual journey St. Augustine named "*peregrinatio*".

Out of this milieu of writings on spirituality, a spirituality of work and vocation is receiving growing attention (Carotta, 2003; Fowler, 2000; Goodier, 2002; Hays, 1984; Koester, 2002; Mahan, 2002; Parks Daloz, Keen, Keen, & Daloz Parks,

1996; Sellner, 1993). Of interest to the research reported in this thesis was how scholars are turning their attention specifically to the spirituality of teaching. Scholars such as Groome (1998), Durka (2002), Harris (1987) and others have had influences on teachers in Catholic schools. However, the insights and writings concerning teacher spirituality by others concerned with secular public education (Carotta, 1999; Cole & Knowles, 2000; Denton & Ashton, 2004; Intrator, 2003; Intrator & Scribner, 2003; Jackson & Jackson, 2002, 2005; Michalec, 2002; Miller, 2000; Palmer, 2002a, 2002b, 2004a, 2004b) are not without significance for Catholic education. The exploration of the "inner and outer landscapes of teachers' lives" (Palmer, 1998) affirm that "teaching is inherently spiritual" (Michalec, 2002). While the specific personal circumstances vary considerably from individual to individual, there is something that arises from the teachers' experiences of their work with students and subjects that resonate with the everyday experiences of all teachers (Palmer, 1998). Researchers also indicate that the experiences of teachers' daily work have the potential to constantly cause stress for teachers and lead them to 'burning out' or 'rusting out' (Adams, 1999; Bernard, 1990; Carotta, 1999; Collis, 2000; Friedman, 2000; Graziano, 2005; Jackson & Jackson, 2002; Jarvis, 2002; Larchick & Chance, 1999-2000; Long, 1995; McMahon, 2003; Michaelson & Harvey, 2000; Simone, 2004). The writing of Palmer (1992, 1998, 2004) and the experiences and practices of the *Centre for Teacher Formation* and the *Courage To Teach* formation program (Intrator, 2002; Intrator & Scribner, 2000; Jackson & Jackson, 2002, 2005; McMahon, 2003; Palmer, 2002b; Simone, 2004) have indicated that formation wards off teacher burnout and promotes flourishing by the encouragement of teachers to engage their vocation more deeply. What is of interest to this research is the paradox that experiences of teachers' daily work have the potential for both teacher burnout and

teacher flourishing. Formation has been recognised as a way to avoid teacher burn-out and to nurture and sustain the vocations of teachers. For lay teachers in Catholic schools, experiences of their daily work is where Catholic spirituality is incarnated (Groome, 2002, p. 275). While the constant busyness and over-busyness of teachers' daily lives militates against nourishing the inner lives of teachers, research has shown that reflection on these experiences nourishes and sustains their spirits (Carotta, 1999; Intrator & Scribner, 2000; Jackson & Jackson, 2002, 2005; McMahon, 2003; Simone, 2004).

The conclusion from the literature, and from the experiences of the *Courage To Teach* program of formation is that effective formation begins with facilitating opportunities for teachers to remember their vocational call and to reflect on their experiences of daily work. Insights from formation programs indicate that while this is personal it is not private, it is something best done in community (Intrator & Scribner, 2000; Jackson & Jackson, 2002, 2005; McMahon, 2003; Palmer, 1992, 1998, 2004a; Simone, 2004). For lay teachers in Catholic schools, community is situated in the context of the Catholic Church (Groome, 1998, 2002). The formation for lay teachers in Catholic schools requires the opportunity for teachers to reflect on their daily experiences of work and integrate these with faith in their particular environment of work and history (Pope John Paul II, 1994, #2684).

Table 7,1 summarises the key principles concerning teachers' spirituality that have emerged from the primary and secondary literature reviewed for this research.

Table 7.1 Key Principles concerning Teachers' Spirituality

1. Teaching in a Catholic school is a lay vocation involving the personal sanctification of the teacher and the apostolic mission of the church. Teaching is inherently spiritual.

2. Lay teachers in Catholic schools need ongoing spiritual formation because both the vocation of the lay teacher and the apostolic mission of the church are ongoing. This is a spiritual journey or *peregrinatio.*

3. The lay identity of the teacher is crucial to the effectiveness of the church's mission in the world.

4. Lay spirituality is different from monastic spirituality. Lay spirituality arises out of the integration of teachers' faith with their personal circumstances, work, environment and history[8].

5. The constant busyness of teachers' work militates against teachers' attending to attending to their inner lives.

6. Catholic spirituality is incarnated in Catholic schools in lay teachers' experience of their daily work.

7. Formation of teachers helps avoid burnout and nurtures and sustains teachers' vocation.

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[8] This understanding of spirituality is derived from the Catechism of the Catholic Church #2684. While this understanding of spirituality is obviously applicable to both the laity as well as the clergy and vowed religious, what is explored in this thesis is that the circumstances and environment of the laity also include, the probability that their vocation to teach coincides with their vocations to be spouse and parent.

Experiences of Teachers' Daily Work that Nourish and Sustain Teachers' Spirituality

Lay teachers participating in the research reported in this thesis conveyed a sense that being a teacher was more than a job to them. They indicated in conversations that they were sincere and committed to their students and to Catholic education. They revealed that they had a felt sense of the mission engaged by their work, but they indicated that the constant busyness and multiplicity of demands on them afforded little opportunity to reflect upon, and articulate what this meant. They showed a realistic appreciation and acceptance of the ambiguities and complexities of being a lay teacher in a Catholic school while expressing the conviction that being a teacher in a Catholic school required something "more" than simply being a teacher. What this "more" was, was not easily articulated. However, it was recognised in their seeing what they called "moments of grace" in their daily experiences of work. The more teachers shared their experiences in their focus group, the more their experiences resonated with one another. The more teachers reflected on their experiences of their work, the more it became apparent that being a teacher defined their identity, as opposed to merely describing what they did. Being a teacher was what participants had in common, regardless of the diversity of what and how they taught. They also conveyed an understanding that being a teacher was an ongoing process of growing or becoming. It was something that had to be lived for it to be known. Reflecting on being a teacher gave rise to insights into the self of the teacher. From fulfilment of, and faithfulness to, their vocation a "new" self that was constantly emerging (O'Donohue, 2004, pp. 138-9).

Some things stood out as nourishing teachers' spirits. These in turn indicated that they nurtured and sustained their vocations as teachers. These experiences can be grouped together as 'experiences of community' and 'experiences of making a

difference'. Experiences of community were significant. Experiences of connectedness to peers, students and student's families made teachers feel valued and appreciated. These experiences of connectedness were identified by Shea as "self-in-mutuality" (2005). These experiences are self-transcending, and encourage spiritual growth and development. Sometimes this is recognised as on-going conversion (Au & Cannon, 1999; Conn, 1998; Del Prete, 2002; Frankl, 1959; Groome, 2002; Hillman, 1996; Lonergan, 1971, 1992; Palmer, 2004a; Shea, 2005). This point is important because participants in this research paradoxically indicated that one of the barriers to spending time in reflection was the suspicion that to do so might be seen as self-indulgent or narcissistic. As the research reported in this thesis has indicated, attention to the self of the teacher is not self indulgent but essential in order to serve both students and subject well (Palmer, 1998, pp. 2-3).

Teachers participating in the research reported in this thesis had a strong conviction that their work made a difference. Sometimes this difference was seen in the results achieved or in the growth and development of their students. At other times when results were not visible, teachers had faith that they were 'planting seeds' that might come to fruition at some later time.

Teachers reported that they benefited from participating in this research. They indicated that with all the things to be done as part of their daily work, the one thing they didn't have time to do was to reflect and talk with each other about their teaching. Initially most individuals approached to participate in this research responded that they didn't think they had anything much to offer. However, once engaged in conversation individually, or in focus groups, recalling their daily experiences of work, the conversations flowed freely. Most of these conversations were accompanied with humour and laughter. At other times, teachers spoke of their

experiences with reverence and their peers listened with respect and solemnity. The everyday experiences of teachers' work were revealed as a rich source from which to nourish the spirits of teachers. Teachers' own stories of their experiences regularly surprised and delighted all present. As O'Donohue says (2005, p. 137) "a good story knows more than its teller".

Having established that ongoing formation is necessary for lay teachers in Catholic schools and that formation grounded in the experiences of teachers daily work is an appropriate starting place, the insights from the research reported in this thesis can inform the process of teacher formation in ways that make formation relevant for lay teachers, their daily work in Catholic schools and also for Catholic education employing authorities charged with the responsibility to ensure formation occurs.

Table 7.2 summarises the insights of the teachers regarding the experiences that nurtured their spirituality.

Table 7.2 Experiences of Teachers' Daily Work that Nurture Teacher' Spirituality

1. Experiences of Community:

- Experiences of feeling connected to peers, students and students' families;

- Experiences of feeling appreciated and valued.

2. Experiences of Making a Difference:

- Experiences of students' achievement;

- Experiences of students growth and development;

- Experiences affirming that teachers' work is often "planting seeds" that may come to fruition at some later time.

Recommendations for the Formation of Lay Teachers in Catholic Schools

Formation is not training. Whereas training is concerned with technique, formation of lay teachers in Catholic schools is concerned with the fulfilment of the vocation of the teacher and the authenticity of Catholic education. The inseparable elements of vocation are the personal sanctification of the lay teacher and the apostolic mission in which they are engaged. The ecclesial identity of the Catholic school, which is the lay teachers' work environment, means that formation must be grounded in the Tradition and Scripture of the Catholic Church. In this way formation encourages the emerging self-in-mutuality to be recognised and articulated in its appropriate context. Formation encourages increasing congruence between soul and role, recognised as flourishing, authenticity of the identity and integrity of the lay teacher and consequently Catholic education. In the process of nurturing and sustaining vocation, awareness is brought to the experiences of teachers' daily work. What is lived in the daily lives of lay teachers is what is experienced and known by students and students' families as the incarnation of Catholic Spirituality. This process is ongoing and is summarised in figure 7.1 below.
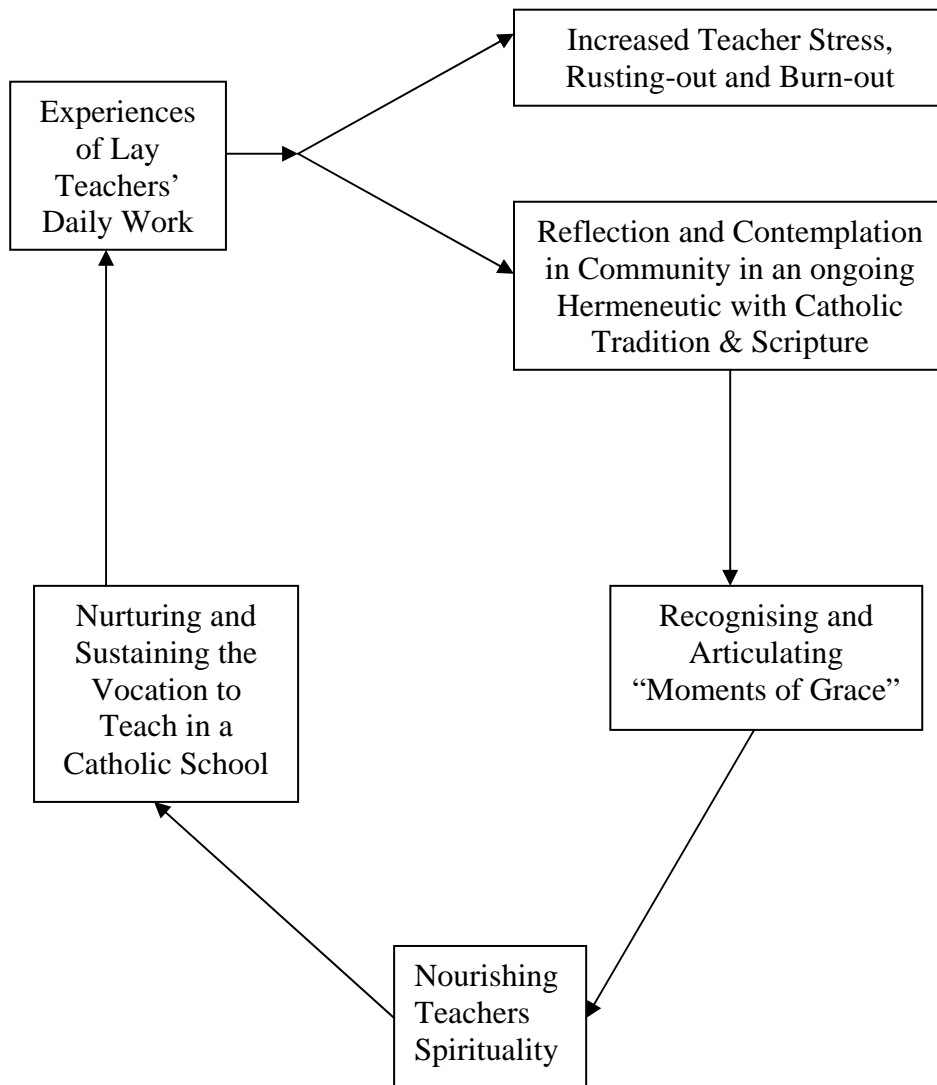
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                                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                                    │ Increased Teacher Stress, │
                          ┌────────▶│ Rusting-out and Burn-out  │
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│ Experiences  │─────────┤         ┌──────────────────────────┐
│ of Lay       │         │         │ Reflection and Contemplation │
│ Teachers'    │         └────────▶│ in Community in an ongoing   │
│ Daily Work   │                   │ Hermeneutic with Catholic    │
└──────────────┘                   │ Tradition & Scripture        │
       ▲                           └──────────────────────────┘
       │                                        │
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┌──────────────┐                   ┌──────────────────────────┐
│ Nurturing and│                   │ Recognising and          │
│ Sustaining the│                  │ Articulating             │
│ Vocation to  │                   │ "Moments of Grace"       │
│ Teach in a   │                   └──────────────────────────┘
│ Catholic School│                              │
└──────────────┘                                ▼
       ▲                    ┌──────────────┐
       └────────────────────│ Nourishing   │
                            │ Teachers     │
                            │ Spirituality │
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Figure 7.1 A Model of Ongoing Formation using Experiences of Lay
            Teachers' Daily Work as Source for Reflection and Contemplation.

It is acknowledged in figure 7.1, that teachers' work can cause teachers to
"lose heart" (Palmer, 1998, p. 17). The literature reviewed in Chapter two of this
thesis indicated that these experiences regularly led to increased stress and burnout
amongst teachers. As Mahan observed, "it is possible to lose vocation, because we
don't know how to care for ourselves and others at the same time" (2002, p. 20).
However, as indicated in figure 7.1, these experiences can be a source for reflection

and contemplation because as others have found even "the smallest of daily activities" can reveal the sacred if they are contemplated (Ashton, 2004, pp. 56-7; Kushner, 1998, p. 155; Moore, 1992, p. 219; Rohr, 1999, p. 28). Participants in this research, consistent with the findings of other researchers, found that reflecting on and sharing their experiences of their teaching with peers nourished their spirits (Carotta, 1999; Intrator, 2002; Intrator & Scribner, 2000, 2003; Jackson & Jackson, 2002, 2005; McMahon, 2003; Palmer, 2004b; Simone, 2004).   In the results reported in Chapter four of this thesis, participants named these experiences as "moments of grace". Other researchers have also recognised signs of grace or gracious discoveries as helpful in nourishing spirituality (Fowler, 2000, p. 59, p. 65; Lonergan, 1992, p. 764; Mahan, 2002, pp. 10-11; Martin, 2003, p. 22, p. 89; Palmer, 1998, p. 90). When lay teachers find that their experiences of work nourishes their spirits, their vocational call is renewed, nurtured, sustained and engaged more fully (Carotta, 1999, p. 25; Fowler, 2000, pp. 55-60; Mahan, 2002, p. 58; Martin, 2003, pp. 25-7; Palmer, 1998, p. 7 & 13). As stated previously, while this is personal, it is not private. As Fowler said, this is a developmental process where one moves from asking "Who am I?" to asking "Whose am I?" (2000, p. 75). Formation brings awareness or intentionality to lay teachers work in such a way that justifies Groome's assertion that Catholic spirituality is incarnational (2002, p. 272). As Palmer argued, teachers begin to act and teach honouring deepest truths and values rather than conforming to some institutional norm (1998, p. 171). Coming full cycle, formation begins with reflecting on and contemplating the experiences of teachers' daily work. This practice, done in community in the context of the Tradition and Scripture, has the potential to nourish teachers' spirits. This in turn nurtures and sustains teachers' vocation. As a result

awareness is brought to the daily work of lay teachers in Catholic schools as Catholic spirituality in incarnated in Catholic education.

Table 7.3 summarises key principles that may inform the ongoing formation of teachers' spirituality.

Table 7.3 Key Principles that may Inform the Ongoing Formation of Lay Teachers

1. Formation is not the same as training. Formation is concerned with the teachers' vocation to teach in a Catholic school.

2. Formation concerns the individual teacher but occurs in community;

3. Formation must be grounded in the Scripture and Tradition of the Catholic Church;

4. Experiences of teachers' daily work provide resources for teachers' reflection and contemplation because they can reveal moments of grace that can nourish and sustain teachers' spirituality.

5. Formation brings an awareness and intentionality to teachers' approach to their work incarnating Catholic spirituality in Catholic education.

The Significance of this Research, Its Limitations and Applicability

This study provided insights into teachers' daily work and explored how this affected teacher spirituality. To date little research into teachers' experiences of their work and how this affects their spirituality has been forthcoming and the research reported in this thesis has made an important contribution.

The research reported in this thesis concerns lay teachers in Catholic high schools. This research did not consider teachers working in public schools or non-

Catholic independent schools. The data gathered were gathered from lay teachers working in the Catholic high schools in the archdiocese of Brisbane. Although data were not gathered from lay teachers working in Catholic primary schools, the findings of this thesis are likely to be applicable to that situation as well.

The research reported in this thesis did not account for, or investigate, gender difference with respect to teacher spirituality. The researcher is aware that in Catholic schools there is a significant female majority among teachers. While Prest's (2000) study found no significant gender differences when investigating the spirituality of teachers in Victorian Catholic schools, this researcher intuits that gender differences may be significant for teacher formation, but this needs to the subject of further research.

This research has provided a starting point for Catholic education employing authorities to begin to take appropriate action in encouraging the formation of lay teachers in Catholic schools. It is ironic that the constant busyness of teachers' work militates against teachers attending to their own inner lives (Carotta, 1999; McMahon, 2003; Osterman, 1990; Schlon, 1988; Simone, 2004). This is especially paradoxical in Catholic schools which are more usually perceived as valuing the spiritual dimension. While it is recognised that by their busy demanding nature schools are usually not places likely to encourage teachers' spiritual nourishment and ongoing renewal, this researcher asks, "Why not?" While Catholic education employing authorities recognise that teacher formation is a priority, the lack of facilitation or opportunity to nourish teacher spirituality in any ongoing systematic, co-ordinated fashion is an oversight that is not in the ongoing interests of the identity and integrity of Catholic education. The hierarchy of the Catholic Church recommended to "promote the establishment of formation centres for teachers" (CCE, 1988, #97)

almost thirty years ago. No doubt, budget constraints will be raised as a challenge to establishing any significant ongoing coordinated programs of teacher formation. However, this begs the question of what the cost might be if the formation of lay teachers in Catholic schools is not addressed professionally.   In 1982, the *Congregation for Catholic Education* warned that without appropriate formation the Catholic "school will wander further and further away from its objectives" (#79).   In the archdiocese of Brisbane, the Catholic school system is growing while church attendances continue to decline. This makes the apostolic mission engaged by virtue of having a vocation to teach in a Catholic school even more dependant on the "specific awareness" (CCE, 1982, #62) of lay teachers. It would seem that the time is opportune to do something about the formation of lay teachers in Catholic schools. Lay teachers need to be encouraged to engage in formation and schools need to facilitate this. This thesis has presented the argument that what is needed to begin this process is time and space for teachers to reflect with their peers on the experiences of their daily experiences of their work. Done in ongoing hermeneutic or conversation with Catholic Tradition and Scripture, teachers have the opportunity to have their spirits nourished rather than burnt out.   In this finding alone, the research has demonstrated its significance.

Suggestions for Further Research

As outlined in the previous section gender difference may be significant when addressing the formation of lay teachers in Catholic schools. This requires further research that was not within the scope of this thesis. As well as this, within the climate of changing work practices and the increase in incidence of job-sharing and part-time permanent work in Catholic schools, it seems that the complexity of

teachers' lives and circumstances is increasing as a consequence. How these impact on teacher spirituality and what the implications are for formation need further investigation. Considering the need for the formation of lay teachers in Catholic schools, the gender make up of lay teachers in Catholic schools, the changing work situations of lay teachers in Catholic schools and the changing dynamic of student lives, it may be opportune to research the possibilities of increased flexibility in the standard teacher working week in order to find a better way to fit all the components together, rather than "continue to pour ever more water in an already overfull cup" (Jarvis, 2002).

The researcher found that humour was constantly present when teachers were interviewed individually and in focus group meetings. It did not seem that humour surfaced to make light of the matter being discussed, but the researcher found its constant presence remarkable. When questioned about this, school leaders indicated that humour was an essential part of community life. Other experts reflected that humour was one way of re-framing what otherwise might be quite stressful. However, the researcher was left with the impression that the relationship between teachers' work, spirituality and humour may be a trinity deserving of further investigation.

This research began by investigating the possibility that teachers' daily work had within it the potential to nourish teacher spirituality. Considering the significance of Catholic Education in the archdiocese of Brisbane and throughout Australia, the number of teachers participating in the research reported in this thesis was relatively small. Further investigation of teachers' work and spirituality, in a range of Catholic schools is warranted so that Catholic education will continue to make a significant difference in Australian society and culture.

Teachers' work is where their inner lives engage the outer world. Teaches' work is also where Catholic spirituality is incarnated and experienced in a Catholic school. For Catholic schools to continue to have authenticity, the ongoing formation of lay teachers is essential. This does not mean, as others have said, "adding more water to an already overfull cup" by including formation as one more thing for teachers to do. It means making space and providing the opportunity for teachers to discover the 'moments of grace' that providentially fill their day. In conversation with Catholic Scripture and Tradition, these moments of grace will nurture and sustain the unfolding vocations of lay teachers in Catholic schools, so that lay teachers will both flourish and "teach with authority" (Mk. 1:22). In the process it is likely that a framework will emerge that engages teachers' daily experiences of their work with Catholic Tradition, Scripture, theology and liturgy. Teachers' daily experiences of work are the point of convergence where teachers' faith can be integrated in the particular environment of the Catholic school. From this perspective, formation is both relevant and essential and warrants further attention.

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Appendix 1

Focus Group Interview Guide

1. Thank you for coming. I invite you now to ponder for me the idea of teaching as a vocation, that there is a call, something that draws us to it, something that draws us to working with kids, sometimes it is the subject matter, sometimes it is just working with kids, and sometimes people stumble into it while looking for something else and then discover that that is what they were born to do. That vocation of teaching, if you could just reflect on the ordinary daily experiences that you have in school, the classroom, the playground, is there anything that might just surface and you think, "that was a good one". Anything that you might look back on in retirement and think, "it was moments like those". Take some time, and when something surfaces, feel free to speak to the centre of the group.

2. What is it in your work that you have passion for?

3. What sorts of things give you encouragement, from day to day?

4. What have your work and your spirituality got to do with each other?

5. How do you as a lay teacher balance family responsibilities with the demands of work?

6. When do you get a chance to reflect on your experiences of work?

Appendix 2

Information Letter and Consent Form

✚ ACU National

INFORMATION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

TITLE OF PROJECT   AN INVESTIGATION INTO WHICH EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS
                    DAILY WORK, IN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOLS, NURTURE AND
                    SUSTAIN TEACHER SPIRITUALITY

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: DR. KATHLEEN ENGEBRETSON

RESEARCHER: MICHAEL DOWNEY

PROGRAMME: DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Dear (Teacher),

        The Catholic Church sees teaching in Catholic schools as a
vocation and ministry of great value. The Catechism of the Catholic
Church recognizes that specific spiritualities arise in the context
of each person's faith and work (#2684). Opportunities will be
provided for teachers to volunteer to reflect together on their
everyday experiences of teaching. It is my hope that this research
will provide insight into ongoing teacher spiritual formation and
professional development that will be helpful to teachers, schools
and Catholic Education.

        The risks, inconvenience and discomforts of involvement are
anticipated to be minimal.

        Confidentiality will be maintained during the study and in any
report of the study. All participants will be given a code and names
will not be retained with the data. Individual participants will not
be able to be identified in any reports of the study as all details,
or combination of details, allowing individuals to be identified will
be removed.

        Interviews or focus group meeting will last from one to one and
a half hours. Metings with teachers will be at their own school,
after school lessons are finished for the day. The focus group
meetings are planned to occur from June 2004 to July 2005.
Interviews will be digitally recorded for convenience and transcribed
after the interview has been completed.
        Initial research has indicated that reflection on daily
practice has benefits for teachers, their students and their
colleagues. Participation in this research will hopefully be both

personally and professionally rewarding for you. Data collected from focus groups will be analysed and published as part of my doctoral dissertation.

If at anytime during the research you wish to withdraw from participation, you are free to do so without having to justify or give a reason to do so.

All participants in this research can be assured of confidentiality. All participants will be ascribed a pseudonym and all data transcribed from tape will attributed to each person's pseudonym.

I am happy to answer any and all questions you may have concerning the procedures now or at any time in the future. Should you have any concerns, you are also welcome to contact my Principal Supervisor in person:

Dr Kathleen Engebretson
Senior Lecturer & State Coordinator
Telephone number: 03 9953392
School of Religious Education
Melbourne Campus (St. Patrick)
111 Victoria Parade
Fitzroy
Victoria 3065

Transcripts of your focus group meetings will be available for your verification of content. I am happy to feedback to you the final results and conclusions of the project. A copy of the completed thesis will also be lodged at the library of Brisbane Catholic Education.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian Catholic University.

In the event that you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during this study, or if you have any query that I or my supervisor have not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee below:

Chair, HREC
C/o Research Services
Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Campus
P.O. Box 456
Virginia   Qld   4014
Tel: 07-36237294
Fax: 07-36237328

Should you agree to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to me.

Regards,

Michael Downey   Dr. Kathleen Engebretson
Student Researcher   Supervisor

⊕ACU National

CONSENT FORM - RESEARCHER'S COPY

TITLE OF PROJECT: AN INVESTIGATION INTO WHICH
                        EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS' DAILY WORK IN
                        CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOLS, NURTURE AND SUSTAIN
                        TEACHER SPIRITUALITY

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR   DR. KATHLEEN ENGEBRETSON

CO-SUPERVISOR   DR. ROSS KEATING

REACHER   MICHAEL DOWNEY

I ……...…....……… (the participant) have read and understood the information
provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I have asked have been
answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realizing
that I can withdraw at any time. I agree to my conversation being
electronically recorded. I agree that the research data collected for the study
may be published in a form that does **not** identify me personally.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT:

SIGNATURE ……………………………………. DATE ………………………

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR ………………………………….

DATE ………………..

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER ……………………………………………

DATE ………………..

Appendix 3

Final Focus Group Meeting Stimulus & Feedback

Group Insights into what experiences in teachers' daily work nourish and sustain teacher spirituality (Group 1, 2004)

- Connectedness: colleagues, students, community
- Humour, Joy, Laughter
- Feeling fully alive/fully human
- Knowing I have made a difference
    - You just have to believe it
    - In advocating for others
- Knowing I am valued
    - Experiencing welcome
    - Acknowledgement for work, effort
    - Thank-you(s)
    - Just believing it, even with little evidence

In *The Work of Your Life*, Cathy Carotta says:
- *"The present is sacred and the ordinary is holy"*
- *"Moments of Grace can be experienced when someone reverences our work"*

X's comment about his spirituality connecting with his work:

> *"...Awareness of Spirit... a part of me becomes aware of other people and other things which is more than, just their body, and just their mind. In other words, if I become aware of a spiritual dimension of other people, and other things, then that fills me with joy"*

A recurring observation by Focus group members:

We don't talk about the "who" that teaches because:
> *"we all have lives outside of school"*

Why do we consider that attending to the self of the teacher is something "added on" after everything else – and not central, a priority?

Parker Palmer describes "Circles of Trust" as a group of people who sit quietly together and wait for the soul to show up. He refers to Thomas Merton's belief that "there is in all things a hidden wholeness". Palmer says that we year to be whole but dividedness often seems the easier choice. He says a "Circle of Trust" holds us in a space where we can make our own discernments in our own way and time. Whatever we do to care for the "true self" is in the long run, a gift to the world.

Recurring themes from reflecting as a group on everyday experiences at (Group 2, 2005)

- I am connected
    - Peers, Students, Parents
- I am appreciated/valued
    - Peers, Students, Parents
    - Thank-you's
- I make a difference
- I am supported

Themes, Patterns etc
- Humour
- Ability to "reframe"
- Welcome/inclusion/acceptance
- Relationship

Spirituality pointers
- "touches my heart"
- "seeing"
- "compassion"
- sense of providence – "all will be well", it will work out
- flourishing
- authenticity

"Choosing to integrate everyday experience into a more meaningful whole is what spirituality is all about…our highest self is not a transcendent ideal but rather an experiential reality, one that can be enacted in the mundane world of the everyday…our spiritual practice can be enacted in the simple tasks that constitute everyday living"

(Will Ashton "Tale of the Sorcerer's Apprentice" in Spirituality, Action & Pedagogy 2004, Peter Lang: New York)

Appendix 4

1. I invite you to ponder for me the idea of teaching as a vocation, that there is a call, something that draws us to it, something that draws us to working with kids, sometimes it is the subject matter, sometimes it is just working with kids, and sometimes people stumble into it while looking for something else and then discover that that is what they were born to do. That vocation of teaching, if you could just reflect on the ordinary daily experiences that you have in school, the classroom, the playground, is there anything that might just surface and you think, "that was a good one". Anything that you might look back on in retirement and think, "it was moments like those". Take some time, and when something surfaces, feel free to speak to the centre of the group.

2. If you were to retire tomorrow, which of your experiences of your work do you consider that you would regard as making your life's work worthwhile?

3. The following themes recurred continually in the focus groups, I have completed with groups of lay teachers. How do you respond to them?

    o I am connected
        - Peers, Students, Parents
    o I am appreciated/valued
        - Peers, Students, Parents
        - Thank-you's
    o I make a difference
    o I am supported

    Themes, Patterns etc
        - Humour
        - Ability to "reframe"
        - Welcome/inclusion/acceptance
        - Relationship

4. How would you respond to the following quote?

    "Choosing to integrate everyday experience into a more meaningful whole is what spirituality is all about…our highest self is not a transcendent ideal but rather an experiential reality, one that can be enacted in the mundane world of the everyday…our spiritual practice can be enacted in the simple tasks that constitute everyday living"

    (Will Ashton "Tale of the Sorcerer's Apprentice" in Spirituality, Action & Pedagogy 2004, Peter Lang: New York)

Appendix 5

Interview Guide for Fowler and Mahan

1. The following themes recurred continually in the focus groups, I have completed with groups of lay teachers. How do you respond to them?

   o I am connected
      - Peers, Students, Parents
   o I am appreciated/valued
      - Peers, Students, Parents
      - Receiving "Thank-You's"
   o I make a difference
   o I am supported

   Themes, Patterns etc
      - Humour
      - Ability to "reframe"
      - Welcome/inclusion/acceptance
      - Relationship

2. What re your insights into how this all connects with the following concepts:
   a. Formation
   b. Vocation
   c. Lay Spirituality