THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

The Spiritual Formation of the Catholic Teacher

A TREATISE

Submitted to the Faculty of the
School of Theology and Religious Studies
Of The Catholic University of America

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

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Washington, D.C.

2017
The Spiritual Formation of the Catholic Teacher

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Although the faith formation of Catholic teachers is recognized as an essential aspect of their training by both church documents and Catholic school boards, their spiritual formation is often overlooked. In order to be effective in transmitting the faith to their students, Catholic teachers also require on-going, life-long spiritual formation. Since there are no spiritual formation programs in the Catholic school boards of Ontario in which he works, the researcher attempts to design a spiritual formation program for Catholic teachers. Based on a survey of both contemporary and Catholic spirituality, the researcher maintains that a spiritual formation program begins with the concrete issues faced by the participants and then matches them with practices from the Catholic spiritual tradition. The researcher examined the challenges that characterize the lives of Catholic teachers, such as work/life balance, stress, low morale, and decision-making and determined that modern understandings of Sabbath keeping and Ignatian spirituality, among others, would especially benefit Catholic teachers.

The researcher then took twenty-five Catholic teachers through the spiritual formation program that he designed. The program consisted of eight sessions. In four of the sessions, the researcher presented various aspects of the Catholic spiritual tradition and provided the participants with spiritual practices to employ between sessions. These presentation sessions were interspersed with small faith-sharing group sessions where the participants discussed the materials in the program. After the eight sessions, the participants filled out two surveys, one immediately at the end of the program and the other four months after the program ended. The
surveys indicate that the Catholic teachers found the spiritual formation program extremely meaningful. Among the benefits of the program, the Catholic teachers discovered the importance of self-care and taking time to nurture their spiritual side. They appreciated being introduced to the various spiritual tools, such as the Ignatian Examen, to assist them in their spiritual formation. They found the faith-sharing groups beneficial, as they discovered that they are not alone in their professional struggles.
This treatise by Deacon Dominic Pullano fulfills the treatise requirement for the doctoral degree in Ministry approved by Rev. Raymond Studzinski, O.S.B., Ph.D., and by., Rev. Emanuel Magro, Ph.D., Reader.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I most grateful to my wife Gina for encouraging me to follow my dreams of completing a doctorate and for sustaining me throughout the entire D. Min. program. I wish to thank my children Alexandra and Daniel for their understanding when I was not as present as I should have been.

I am very appreciative of the Catholic teachers from the Durham Catholic District School Board who participated in my project: for my friends, who took time out of their busy schedules, to support my endeavors. I am grateful to David whose encouragement assisted me through the process. I would like to thank my two superintendents, Bob and Rosemary, who supported me along my journey as well.

Finally, I would like to thank Fr. Studzinski, Fr. Magro, and all my professors at the Catholic University of America for a wonderful learning experience.
TREATISE INTRODUCTION

The formation of adult Catholics has received much attention in ecclesial circles in more recent times.¹ In this postmodern age, adult faith formation has taken on a new urgency. Living in a post-Christian culture, adult Catholics require a more intentional form of faith formation and adult faith formation has become a central concern for the Catholic Church, at least in the west. This renewed interest in adult faith formation is illustrated in the document issued by the Bishops of the United States titled, “Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us.”² In this pastoral letter, the Bishops begin with the rather bold statement,

We, as the Catholic bishops of the United States, call the Church in our country to a renewed commitment to adult faith formation, positioning it at the heart of our catechetical vision and practice. (#6)³

In this letter, the Bishops suggest, not only that the ministry of adult faith formation should have a higher profile, but that adult faith formation should have a pivotal role in all catechetical endeavors. For the U.S. Bishops, adult faith formation should assume a new priority in the life of the church, as they state:

But to teach as Jesus did means calling and equipping all Christians of every age and stage of life to fulfill their baptismal call to holiness in family, Church, and society—their mission to evangelize and transform the world into a more caring and just society. Ongoing faith formation is essential to accomplish this mission; it does not end at confirmation or graduation but continues until one's death. Accordingly, we strongly reaffirm that, "without neglecting its commitment to children, catechesis needs to give more attention to adults than it has been accustomed to do." (#44)⁴

¹ For a brief history of contemporary adult faith formation and the current direction of this ministry, see Derek Evans and Janet Gear, “Beyond Critique and Lamentation: Towards an Integrated Approach to Adult Faith Formation,” Touchstone, vol. 22 no 2 (May 2004), 20-29.


³ Ibid., 2.

⁴ Ibid., 14.
As this pastoral exhortation affirms, regardless of the quality or quantity of formation that Catholics may receive as children or youth, adult Catholics require further formation specific for this stage of life. The formation that Catholics receive in their early years cannot be expected to sustain them throughout the adult life cycle. In the adult years, the Catholic Church must provide a more suitable, deeper level of faith formation to its adult members if they are to grow and develop in their faith. In more recent years, those involved with faith formation have come to the recognition that faith formation is a lifelong enterprise and that every stage of life requires its own unique format of faith formation.

If adult faith formation is vital to the mission of the Catholic Church, then, the formation of lay Catholic teachers can only be that much more essential. Certainly, those who are entrusted with the sacred task of sharing the faith of the church with their students require ongoing faith formation. In their document on laity and Catholic education, the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education make clear that

The concrete living out of a vocation as rich and profound as that of the lay Catholic in a school requires an appropriate formation, both on the professional plane and on the religious plane. Most especially, it requires the education to have a mature spiritual personality, expressed in a profound Christian life.\(^5\)

In their role as witnesses of the Gospel message, Catholic teachers require recurring support for their own faith development, if in-turn, they are going to have something meaningful and inspiring to share with their students over the span of their careers.\(^6\)

For the Catholic teachers who minister in the fairly extensive, publically-funded Catholic school system in the province of Ontario, they most certainly fall under this umbrella. They too


\(^6\) For the need for on-going formation for Catholic teachers, see ibid. 36-37.
require continued support with their own faith development. Currently, however, there exists only a limited number of faith formation programs for these Catholic teachers. In the province of Ontario, Catholic teachers are required to complete a few catechetical programs as part of their initial training. While in teacher’s college, teacher candidates can take what is termed a preservice religious education course, which specifically explores the art of teaching religion in a classroom setting. Within the first few years of their careers, Catholic teachers are also required to take an “additional qualification course in religion.” This course focuses on the content of the Catholic faith, its dogmas, doctrines, and moral teaching. Apart from these two programs, however, Catholic teachers receive very little else in ongoing faith formation in any formal setting. From time to time, board office personnel – as is the role of this researcher - may provide some optional events, such as retreats, for Catholic teachers. But in general, these sporadic activities do not meet the standards proposed by the U.S. Bishops of life-long, ongoing faith development.

As can be observed in the two formal programs described above, one area of neglect in the faith formation of Catholic teachers in Ontario concerns their spiritual life. While all adult Catholics require support in fostering their spiritual journey, as educational theorist Parker Palmer has maintained, it is even more crucial for those in the teaching profession. In his groundbreaking study *The Courage to Teach*, Parker Palmer makes the case, as the subtitle indicates, for the importance of “exploring the inner landscape of a teacher’s life.” Written for a secular audience, Palmer nevertheless argues that teachers must sustain their interior lives. This inner work is critical, according to Palmer, because effective teaching derives from the interior life of the educator. As Palmer claims, “knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my

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students and my subject.” For Palmer, teachers require more than just the latest educational theory and sound pedagogical techniques in order to perform their craft well. Effective teaching in the opinion of Palmer derives as well from a rich interior life. The premise of Palmer’s study is that “good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher.” In more religious parlance, it follows that nurturing the spiritual life of Catholic teachers is significant, not only because it positively impacts their ability to make the Gospel relevant and meaningful to their students, but it assists them in all other areas of their teaching ministry and in maintaining personal wellness.

In the context of Catholic education in Ontario, formal programs of spiritual development are currently lacking in the ongoing faith formation of its teachers. In fact, as theologian D. Willard has noted, “And while you might think that Christian organizations would have such spiritual formation as a central focus that simply turns out not to be true.” In this project, then, the researcher will attempt to fill this gap. In this study, the researcher will attempt to design a spiritual formation program specifically for Catholic teachers. As Catholic educator Gloria Durka suggests, “Those who regard teaching as a vocation, derive their identity from an inner motivation that allows them to shape their roles rather than merely occupy them.” Given the significance of the spiritual life for successful teaching, the researcher will strive to create a formal program of spiritual formation, which consists of more than just information about the faith. The aim of the

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8 Palmer, Courage, 3.

9 Ibid., 10.


spiritual formation program will be to provide Catholic teachers with practical tools, spiritual disciplines, and training sessions that will help them explore their inner landscape, as Palmer has phrased it, throughout their careers.¹² Again as the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education advises

The need for an adequate formation is often felt most acutely in religious and spiritual areas; all too frequently, lay Catholics have not had a religious formation that is equal to their general, cultural, and, most especially, professional formation.¹³

In order to design a spiritual formation program for Catholic teachers, this study will begin with an analysis of current understandings of spirituality. Both in religious arenas and in society at large, the notion of spirituality is quite popular. Spirituality is both commonplace today and has an assortment of different meanings. As Palmer indicates, ““Spirituality” is an elusive word with a variety of definitions –some compelling, some witty, some downright dangerous.”¹⁴ This study will examine the understanding of spirituality in all its contemporary manifestations and modern variations in order to arrive at a specifically Catholic understanding of spirituality. This Catholic conception of spirituality will act as one of the theoretical underpinnings for the spiritual formation program for Catholic teachers.

This study will then proceed to examine the teaching profession and the environment in which Catholic teachers work. As will become apparent, any spiritual formation program should concretely deal with the interior struggles of the participants. This study will describe the challenges that Catholic teachers face on a regular basis and that will inform the spiritual formation program.

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¹² For a discussion on the shape that a spiritual formation program might take, see Willard, 57.

¹³ *Lay Catholics in Schools*, 33.

program. Following the lead of some of Palmer’s colleagues, this study “…will begin with the personal challenges entailed in teaching and move from there to consider the head and heart in teaching, the journey and the inner self, and the role of faith and forgiveness in transformative teaching.”15 Once these challenges have been determined, this study will attempt to locate disciplines and tools from the Catholic spiritual traditions that may help Catholic teachers cope with these matters. In the third chapter, this study will rummage through the spiritual traditions of the Catholic Church and seek spiritual tools from this vast treasure trove that address the challenges faced by teachers. One particular form of Catholic spirituality that will be highlighted in this study is Ignatian Spirituality. The spiritual heritage of St. Ignatius, which will play a major role in developing one of the church’s foremost teaching orders, will be infused in the spiritual formation program for Catholic teachers.

With these pieces serving as a theoretical foundation for the spiritual formation program, the second part of this study will focus on the spiritual formation program itself. In this section of the study, there will be a description of the spiritual formation program that was piloted in the fall of 2015. Subsequently, there will be a detailed summary of the Catholic teachers who were invited to participate in this inaugural effort. Principally, however, the final section will examine the reactions of the participants to the spiritual formation program. As part of the process, the participants were asked to fill in various surveys. These surveys gauged their experience of the spiritual formation program. Through these surveys, the Catholic teachers were invited to assess the effectiveness of the program. In the final stage of the study, the researcher will share the results of the surveys and the impact that the spiritual formation program had on the spiritual journey of the participants.

CHAPTER 1: TOWARD A CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY

_Spirituality in Contemporary Western Culture_

In Western, postmodern society, the concept of spirituality has acquired a certain mystique and a prominent stature.¹ Many in North American society have recognized that the pursuit of wealth and material possessions do not necessarily bring meaning to one’s life. Instead, many have become more conscientious of nurturing the transcendent aspects of life.² As Alister McGrath suggests, “A resurgent cynicism concerning the value of material possessions has led to much greater attention being paid to the spiritual dimensions of life.”³ More and more, people in western society have come to appreciate that human beings possess a spiritual as well as a physical nature and the spiritual aspect of human beings needs to be cared for just as much as the physical. Many people today have also recognized that this spiritual dimension requires regular attention in order to develop and mature.⁴ In contemporary western culture, ways of cultivating human spirituality is a growth industry. Philip Sheldrake, a renowned scholar in the field of spirituality remarks:

Commentators on the contemporary phenomenon of ‘spirituality’ often suggest in different ways that the word somehow defines our era. Certainly, the widespread use of the concept is a striking feature of the present times.⁵

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⁵ Sheldrake, _Perplexed_, 5.
Spirituality, moreover, has found a large audience not simply in religious circles. It has also gained in popularity among many who adhere to no religious tradition at all. While the mainstream Christian denominations continue to lose members and are appealing less and less to a contemporary audience, at the same time esoteric expressions of spirituality seem to be gaining in popularity. This phenomenon is captured in the slogan “spiritual but not religious.” Increasingly, people are finding religious institutions repressive and irrelevant but are finding meaning in more individual, less regulated forms of spiritual practices. Often referred to as seekers, these people borrow from a variety of diverse traditions and their spirituality tends to be rather syncretistic. Many in North American society who have discovered the importance of tending to one’s spiritual side are being nourished from a variety of eclectic sources. Practices from eastern religions, such as yoga from Hinduism and mindfulness meditation from Buddhism, have found a home on western soil. As well, the richness of native spirituality has been rediscovered today.

Many of the contemporary spiritual trends that are not aligned to any religious traditions have been partially inspired by transpersonal psychology. Beginning in the 1960’s, the work of such transpersonal psychologists as William James, Abraham Maslow, and Viktor Frankl, began to find a wide audience among many who had found established religions wanting. Transpersonal psychologists were interested in human potential and emphasized spirituality and transcendental experiences in human development. These psychologists were interested in discovering what moved people from self-centered modes of existence to taking a more active interest in the world around them. They determined that spiritual experiences were particularly instrumental in

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7 For a discussion of Eastern religions in contemporary spirituality, see Downey, 9-10.
effecting positive change in human beings and a means to achieving full human consciousness. In particular, these psychologists maintained that “...a latent relation to transcendence (was) inherent in all people.”\(^8\) Transpersonal psychologists were clear that their interest in spirituality was not based on any one specific religion and this separation of spirituality from religion has had a tremendous appeal to many people ever since.\(^9\)

The popularity of spirituality can be observed by the large number of books that are published annually within this field. Even a cursory look at the titles found on the bookshelves of typical bookstores demonstrates the appeal of spiritual topics. In fact, spirituality is a fairly large slice of the publishing industry today.\(^10\) Titles range from popular treatments of spirituality to more academic explorations of the phenomenon. Prolific authors, such as Thomas Moore and Marianne Williamson, are often regarded as leading voices for a new generation of spiritual seekers. From time to time, books with spiritual themes even become international best sellers, as witnessed by Dan Brown’s *Da Vinci Code* and James Redfield’s, *Celestine Prophecy*. This relationship between publishing and spirituality, however, has been viewed with suspicion and met with some criticism and concern. Scholars have questioned the consumerism that has become a feature of much of seeker spirituality. They have argued that at times spirituality is treated as a commodity and there is an inconsistency in this buying and selling of transcendence.\(^11\)

Christian spiritual authors and texts have made a similar resurgence in recent decades. The twentieth century witnessed the autobiography of a Trappist monk, named Thomas Merton,
capture the imagination of a contemporary audience. From the silence of the monastery, Merton’s subsequent works would find a similar welcome. Merton’s popularity would usher in a new era of Christian spiritual authors and literature, which includes such giants as Henri Nouwen and Joan Chittister, to name only a few. Meanwhile, medieval texts of Christian mystics long forgotten, including Hildegard Von Bingen and Julian Of Norwich, have sparked a new interest among Christians and spiritual seekers alike. Christian spiritual classics titled *The Imitation of Christ* and *Cloud of Unknowing* have both withstanded the test of time to find a new audience, both inside and outside of Christian faith traditions.\(^{12}\)

Another indication of the large appeal of spirituality is observed in the social sciences. Various fields of study from psychology to health care, education to social work are trumpeting the advantages of a healthy spiritual life.\(^{13}\) In the social sciences, spirituality has found a niche in the wellness movement, where not only are physical wellbeing and mental health promoted, but spiritual welfare plays a significant role as well. In the health sciences, all aspects of the human person require regular care, including the spiritual side. A variety of studies on spirituality have discovered, for instance, that a healthy spiritual life reduces stress, which in turn reduces the risk of heart disease, among other health benefits. In medical studies, prayer has been shown to aid in the fight to overcome serious illnesses like cancer. In education, quiet meditation has proven to assist students to learn and teachers to be more effective in their work.\(^{14}\) Spirituality is no longer the exclusive purview of religious institutions but has “taped into the current interest in fitness,  

\(^{12}\) For a discussion of spiritual literature in the Catholic tradition, see Downey, 5-6.


\(^{14}\) For an examination of the role of spirituality in education, see Sheldrake, *Perplexed*, 8-9 and King, 103-112.
healthy living and holistic self-care” and spirituality has become a weapon in the arsenal of contemporary society’s preoccupation with wellness.15

Spirituality has also come into its own as an academic discipline. At the same time that spirituality is gaining in popularity within our postmodern world, the fields of religious studies and theology have also taken notice of spirituality. Scholars, from both the mainstream religious traditions and from no particular tradition, have taken up the challenge to augment our understanding of spirituality from an academic perspective. Much of the scholarly work on spirituality tends to be descriptive. Either scholars are trying to describe the phenomenon of spirituality generically or are outlining specific forms that spirituality has taken in the past or present, in western culture or around the world. Scholars strive to define what are the characteristic features of any spirituality or articulate the parameters of the many concrete forms that spirituality has taken in various cultures throughout the ages. In particular, contemporary studies in spirituality attempt to make sense of the modern appeal of spirituality and the multifaceted expression of that interest. The field of Christian spirituality has also come out from under the shadows of more traditional academic disciplines. Prior to the present day interest in spirituality, Christian academia paid little attention to spirituality per se and relegated it to a subsection of practical theology. Today, spirituality has emerged as a discipline in its own right even in Christian circles.16


In the contemporary context, then, the term spirituality can refer to four rather distinct phenomena. In the first instance, spirituality signifies a distinct aspect of the human person. Human beings are a rich mixture of physical, psychological and transcendent dimensions. Spirituality points to that non-physical aspect of human nature that tends towards finding meaning in life, where ideals to live one’s life are developed, and where harmony and serenity with one’s environment is sought. Spirituality is that aspect of the human person that seeks to forge meaningful relationships with others and bridge the distance between humanity and an ultimate divinity or the sacred.

Spirituality can also signify the experience of one’s spiritual nature. Spirituality is not only a human characteristic, it is a part of the human person that requires care and that needs to be nurtured. Spirituality, therefore, denotes how people relate to their spiritual makeup. Spirituality concerns how people have become conscious of their spiritual nature. It also indicates the practices that people use to enhance their spiritual nature. It is to people’s experience of their spiritual side and to their experience of growing closer to others and to an ultimate force to which spirituality can refer.

Third, spirituality denotes the articulation of experience. In various religious traditions in the past and present, adherents have described in written form either their own personal experience of transcendence or that of their entire group, such as Jesuit spirituality. Furthermore, authors have described the spiritual experience of major figures, such as founders of religious communities or movements. Even non-aligned spiritual seekers are now producing their own works on their involvement with the sacred, outlining the insights that they have gained from this participation. In this instance, spirituality connotes the written documents that have been produced on the topic.

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17 For a fuller explanation of “experience” in spirituality, see Downey, 91 and David Hay, “Experience,” Blackwell Companion, 419-441.
It can include the sacred scriptures of a religious tradition or manuals on prayer or other disciplines that instruct people on how to foster their spiritual nature.

In the final instance, spirituality concerns the scholarly study of this phenomenon. As mentioned earlier, the academic study of spirituality has now achieved a more prominent status. Scholars in this field can either examine the lived experience of individuals or groups as defined in the second level meaning of spirituality. This can require today a more social scientific methodology, especially, a psychological approach. Or it can indicate the study of the articulation of spirituality as described in the third level. Principally, these types of academic endeavors employ a textual approach and examine written documents on spiritual themes.

The Study of Spirituality

Even this cursory description of contemporary spirituality clearly illustrates that this field has become extremely broad. Spirituality encompasses diverse religions from various time periods and cultures throughout the world. It includes a unique modern resurgence that has distanced itself from any specific religious tradition. A number of health professions, from psychology to medicine, have incorporated spirituality into their normal operating procedures. It involves a mountain of primary and secondary literature that crosses a number of academic disciplines. Needless to say, no one study can purport to deal with the complexity that is contemporary spirituality. Neither will this study, therefore, attempt to grapple with this vast expanse of

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19 For a description of the study of spirituality, see Sheldrake, Explorations, p. 12-13; Sheldrake, Perplexed, p. 21-37.

spirituality. This study will have a much more modest focus. While the above description of contemporary spirituality is useful and necessary to situate this study, it’s scope is much more circumspect. This current study will function within certain parameters.

First, this study of spirituality will not have a generic focus but will examine Catholic spirituality exclusively. Moreover, this study will concentrate on Catholic spirituality for more than just pragmatic reasons. The parameters of this study have also been restricted to Catholic spirituality for theoretical considerations. Many scholars of the topic have tried to produce generic definitions of spirituality. The aforementioned Philip Sheldrake defines spirituality as, “…the deepest values and sense of meaning by which people seek to live.”21 Another foremost scholar in the field of spirituality, Sandra Schneider delineates the phenomenon as:

Spirituality is the actualization of the basic human capacity for transcendence and will be defined for the purposes of this essay as the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the horizon of ultimate value one perceives.22

But these definitions may prove to be more of a disservice to the phenomenon of spirituality than an aid to its comprehension. Any survey of the field of spirituality portrays such a diversity that any simple, generic description of spirituality can only fail to incorporate all that spirituality encompasses today. This researcher is more partial to the argument that any spirituality is rooted in the culture and times in which it is originally produced. Given the unique circumstances in which any spirituality originates, it will always retain unique features not necessarily shared by any other spiritual tradition. Therefore, spirituality needs to be studied in its specific historical contexts not in broad overall terms. Danish scholar Elizabeth Hense remarks, for example:

21 Sheldrake, Perplexed, p.8. See also p. 8-9 for a fuller generic description of spirituality.

This raises the question whether spirituality can be studied as an independent phenomenon at all, or whether meaningful research is only possible if it focuses on a concrete cultural manifestation of spirituality. She will argue the latter point in her essay. In a similar vein, Cunningham and Egan will propose:

Spirituality quite rightly refers to our religious experiences, but that experience is always rooted in a particularity: Jewish, or Islamic, or Christian, or something else.

In this study, the researcher will adopt a similar stance. He will focus on Catholic spirituality, not only because it is more manageable, but primarily because spiritualties should be analyzed in their distinct expressions.

While it will assume throughout that human beings possess a spiritual nature (first level meaning), this study, moreover, will concentrate primarily on the experience of spirituality (second level meaning). The spiritual aspects of human beings, like most other human aspects, develop and mature. Human beings can either ignore their spiritual nature, as many do with their physical health, or tend to their spirituality. In order to develop, human beings need to actively foster their spiritual nature or it will simply stagnate. This study will concentrate on the issue of tending to the spirit, again from the perspective of Catholic spirituality. It will examine how spiritual development occurs and what formation programs might be available to assist Catholics in their spiritual growth. It will strive to ascertain how Catholics, particularly Catholic teachers, might more profitably interact with the spiritual aspect of their lives. This study will concentrate specifically on the issue of formation. It will examine how the Catholic community has attempted to nurture the spiritual dimensions of its adherents in the past. But more to the point, I will focus on whether formation programs can be developed that can assist Catholic teachers have a more

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23 Hense, 9.

24 Cunningham and Egan, 6.
fruitful interaction with their spiritual nature. In this process, I will use literature that may treat this issue of spiritual formation (third level meaning) and I hope this study to be a rigorous academic analysis of spiritual formation (fourth level meaning). Nonetheless, this study will deal with the formal development of the spiritual dimension of Catholic educators.

Consequently, since this study will involve Catholic spirituality and spiritual formation, the researcher will now outline what he understands by Catholic spirituality and follow it with a discussion of the current state of spiritual formation in the Catholic tradition.

_A Catholic Spirituality_

*When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”*  
(Matthew 22:34-40)

In the response that Jesus gives to the lawyer in the passage above, not only is it a summary of “all the law and the prophets,” this researcher will suggest that it is also an apt synopsis of a Catholic spirituality. In his reply, Jesus also highlights the essential features of a Catholic spirituality. In the simplest terms, Catholic spirituality concerns one’s relationship with God, God’s people and oneself. As Michael Downey observes:

As a consequence, the spiritual quest has everything to do with being in right relationship with God and living out the sense of the sacred in relationship with others in the believing community and the wider human community.  

As Colleen Griffith also comments:

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25 For similar attempts to delineate the salient features of a contemporary Catholic Spirituality, see Downey, 145-146; Griffith, 12; and Sheldrake, Explorations, 11-12.

26 Downey, 30.
(Catholic Spirituality) presumes the human capacity for relational life with God in Christ, made possible by God’s own initiative and human receiving of God’s self-giving. And it is communal through and through.27

A Catholic spirituality thus can be characterized as having everything to do with relationships between God, self and other. A fuller description of Catholic spirituality, then, would consist of an examination of the four key terms in this concise definition: God, person, other, and relationship. In order to delineate a Catholic spirituality, I will begin by analyzing the nature of “God.” I will then look at what constitutes a “person” (i.e. Christian anthropology28). Subsequently, I will reflect on the nature of the “other.” Finally, I will examine the idea of “relationship.”

Furthermore, from the reflections on these four terms, I shall discuss their implications for an authentic Catholic spirituality. After each description of the four terms, I will indicate the relevance of the nature of God, self, and others to living a Catholic spirituality. In these sections, as will become readily apparent, I will suggest that Catholic spirituality is governed by the notion of love. Froehlich so eloquently states, “But love has always been, and will always be, at the heart of a Christianity which proclaims that God is Love. Christian spirituality will always have to do with love…”29 A specifically Catholic spirituality then would primarily involve the fostering of loving relationships. In this treatise, I will maintain that Catholic spirituality concerns the call of the follower of Christ to develop a closer walk with God, a healthier appreciation of self, and a forging of trust with others. As Downey suggests:

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27 Griffith, 12.


29 Froehlich, 166.
Women’s perspectives have consistently served as a reminder of the relational matrix of all human life and Christian life, and therefore of the singular importance of relationships as a governing category of the Christian spiritual life.\(^{30}\)

In this study, I will strive to establish that Catholic spirituality concerns the divinely established process by which the followers of Christ may become the loving people that they were created to be.\(^{31}\)

**GOD:** The Christian tradition has two key insights into the nature of God. While God is one being, still God is a community of three persons. God is Trinitarian in nature, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.\(^{32}\) Another fundamental aspect about the nature of God revealed in the Christian scriptures is that “God is Love.” (1John 4:8) The characteristic that defines God more than any other, and from which all other divine traits flow, is that love is the essential fabric of divinity. Moreover, these two insights are complementary. Love explains how God can be one being in three persons. It is in the very nature of love for there to be three elements. First, there is the one who loves, the one who receives that love, and the love itself that is shared between giver and receiver. This threefold pattern is found within the divine life as well. God the Father is the one who loves. The Son receives this divine affection and the Holy Spirit is the mutuality between Father and Son. In simplest terms, God can be understood in the Christian faith as a community of love.

God the Father, then, is the one who loves. It is in the very nature of the Father to pour out love lavishly and this gushing of love is fruitful. It resulted in one great act of creation, as Sheldrake depicts, “… the divine life overflows into an eternal dynamism of creativity.”\(^{33}\) God so wanted to

\(^{30}\) Downey, 95.

\(^{31}\) For a discussion on the relational nature of Catholic spirituality, see Griffith, 4.


be able to share his love with other beings that God created the universe where human beings would be among the crowning achievements of that creation. Human beings were created with the ability to love and receive love, even with God. God the Father created human beings in order for them to share in the community of love of the triune God.

Human beings, however, would reject that offer of love, preferring a more selfish, self-centered existence. God the Father, however, whose attachment to humanity never wavers, sent the Son to restore this relationship between divinity and humanity. The Son was incarnated into the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth and he came to demonstrate to the world not only the abundance of love that God has for humanity but also the nature of true love. The mission of Jesus was not only to proclaim God’s unceasing love for humanity but was also to demonstrate it in action through one great act of sacrifice. Jesus gave himself up on the cross to save humanity and to restore the relationship between God and God’s creation. In this one great act of sacrifice, Jesus reveals the extent of God’s love for humanity but more importantly reveals that love is sacrificial in nature. Love consists of giving oneself completely to another in imitation of Jesus who sacrificed his life for human beings on the cross.34

Before returning to the Father after his resurrection, Jesus promised his disciples that he would send them a permanent manifestation of God’s love. Jesus would send them the Holy Spirit who would come to reside within their spirit. For as long as human beings inhabit the earth, Jesus sends to all those who wish to follow him a share in the very divine life of love in the person of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit makes his home within the followers of Jesus and, therefore, God is as close to his devotees than anyone can be.35 This Spirit that lives within Christians allows them to

34 Downey, 108.
concretely experience Divine love and share this love with others. It is the grace from the Holy Spirit operating within the human spiritual dimension that enables Christians to become less selfish and more selfless, in imitation of Jesus. This Spirit also brings together into community all those Christians who make God’s love the focal point of their lives.

**LOVE OF GOD:**

Since God is love, the heart of a Catholic spirituality focuses on the means by which human beings can develop a loving relationship with their God. The question remains, however, how can finite, material beings relate to an infinite, immaterial Creator? In the Catholic tradition, what makes such an encounter possible is the gift of the Holy Spirit. The relationship between God and his followers begins with an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, initially given in the sacraments of baptism and confirmation. As Jesus promised, to those who knock, God comes to live within them through the third person of the Trinity. This indwelling of the Holy Spirit joins to the spirit of Christians so that a connection can be made between creatures and their Creator. The Holy Spirit that dwells within Christians does not, however, operate independently from the will of the believers. The Spirit respects their liberty, as God has always respected the freedom of his children to make their own choices. Rather, Christians must learn to activate the Spirit and cooperate with the grace that lies within them. Some may never learn to collaborate with the Spirit. Yet, the initial stage of an effective spiritual life for Catholics consists of opening themselves to the Spirit. Ultimately, Christian spirituality is life in the Spirit.36

In the Catholic tradition, there are two prominent instruments by which to activate and collaborate with the Holy Spirit and thus grow in one’s relationship with God. Often referred to as

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36 For discussions on the importance of God’s indwelling and the Holy Spirit in Catholic Spirituality, see Hinsdale, 45-46; Strynowski, 13-14; Downey, 35-40; and Sheldrake, *Explorations*, 6.
spiritual practices, Sheldrake defines these practices as “…those regular, disciplined activities related to the quest for spiritual development.” Specifically, Christians can relate to God through various kinds of individual prayer and several forms of communal worship. The primary purpose of prayer and liturgy is to strengthen one’s bond with God. One way that relationships are built is by spending time with each another. Both prayer and liturgy afford the follower of Christ sacred time to be in God’s presence. As the relationship matures through prayer and liturgy, Catholics are able to bask ever more in the lavish love that God offers them. With respect to prayer, Parker Palmer intriguingly proposes that “prayer means opening myself to the fact that as I reach for that connecting center, the center is reaching for me…In prayer, I begin to realize that I not only know but am known.”

In the Catholic tradition, there are any number of popular devotions and more sophisticated methods of meditation with scripture and contemplation. God has left Catholics various instruments that will assist them to strengthen their relationship with Him. Catholic spiritually partially consists of a personal or collective search for those tools that best work for an individual or a community. Catholics cultivate their relationship with God with forms of prayer or worship that best suit their temperament. But regardless of which prayer practices suits a follower of Jesus

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37 For discussions on the integral nature of spiritual practices in Catholic spirituality, see Griffith, 4-7.

38 Sheldrake, Perplexed, p. 62.

39 For an explanation of prayer in the spiritual life, see Sheldrake, Perplexed, p. 63-71.

40 Palmer, To Know as We Are Known, 11.


better, the goal of all prayer is to experience the give and take of love between Creator and creature. Similarly, there are several sacramental and liturgical moments in the life of the Catholic Church, with the Eucharist being the source and summit of the Catholic life. Still, an important goal of communal worship is to contact with the divine presence and to grow in one’s ability to enter into the community of divine love.

The Incarnation, moreover, opens up to Christians a whole set of other possible practices with which they can relate to God. Jesus’s Incarnation was not merely a reality that lasted only thirty something years. Rather the Incarnation is an indication that divinity and creation can coexist and collaborate. More particularly, this bond between Creator and creation will endure as long as the material universe exists. The significance of the Incarnation for Christian spirituality is that Catholics can also encounter God’s presence in the mundane events of their lives. The great implication of the Incarnation for spirituality is that God is present to his children in the very bone and marrow of their daily routines. The task for the followers of Jesus is to discern how God is present in the stuff of their lives, and draw closer to the God who supports them in their daily activities. The challenge for Catholics is to bring their experiences of the sacred in times of formal prayer and liturgy back into their regular routine. Christian spirituality is about noticing the sacramentality of all life.

Finally, the relationship that develops between God and Catholics does not remain exclusive. Attempts to relate with God are not to leave Catholics obsessively focused internally, pejoratively referred to as “naval-gazing.” Rather love for God mirrors and imitates the fruitful nature of the Father’s love. Within that interaction with the God whose love overflows into creative action, God calls Christians out of themselves for some special role or ministry in this world.

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43 For an examination of the connections between spirituality and daily life, see Sheldrake, Explorations, 5-6 and Downey, 33-34.
part of this loving relationship God invites Catholics to witness to this love through a vocation.\textsuperscript{44} Love for God develops into special callings by which Catholics are able to express their love for God in concrete actions and lifestyles in the world. In Catholic spirituality, the closer one draws to God the more one feels pulled to live one’s life for God through a special vocation, such as marriage, religious life, or any other number of callings. Catholic spirituality is vocational.

PERSON: In describing the phenomenon of Catholic spirituality, I would maintain that the human subject requires particular attention. To formulate a comprehensive theory of Catholic spirituality, one must develop a Catholic anthropology and carefully examine the nature of the human person. This point is borne out in Fr. Ron Rolheiser’s book on Catholic spirituality.\textsuperscript{45} Rolheiser, who is a Jungian psychologist, begins his examination of Catholic spirituality with a psychological depiction of the human condition in contemporary North American society.\textsuperscript{46} The basic premise of his study is that Catholic spirituality today should essentially be a vehicle for overcoming the psychological malaise of our time with which even followers of Christ are afflicted. Any Catholic spirituality, then, must take into account the internal challenges and struggles that human beings must overcome, whether psychologically or morally, in order to nurture a meaningful spiritual existence.\textsuperscript{47}

I mention Rolheiser’s study because it demonstrates that psychology can produce great insights, not only into the nature of the human person, but into the structure of a Catholic spirituality as well. Psychology has a great deal to add to both a Catholic anthropology and in turn

\textsuperscript{44} For the vocational nature of Catholic Spirituality, see Strynkowski, 18-19.


\textsuperscript{46} Rolheiser, \textit{Holy Longing}, 3-20.

\textsuperscript{47} For the importance of psychology in the spiritual quest, see Downey, 99-107 and Collins, 16-34.
to a more developed sense of Catholic spirituality. In fact, it is no coincidence that many of the foremost authors of Catholic spirituality of our time, such as Ron Rolheiser, Henri Nouwen, and Richard Rohr, are trained psychologists and their popularity is partially based – or so I would contend - on informing their understanding of Catholic spirituality with insights from psychology. Since the spiritual dimension of human beings is intricately interwoven with their psychological state, psychology can add much to the spiritual formation process. In his comparative study of spirituality and psychology, Collins affirms that “psychology can throw a valuable light upon the nature and dynamics of human nature, the very nature that is perfected by the grace of God.”

In the Catholic tradition, the most fundamental characteristic of human beings is that they are created in God’s image. At the core, all people possess many of the qualities that would have their source in the divine life, such as consciousness, thought, and feeling. But above all, the notion that human beings are created in God’s image signifies that they are created for love. Human nature at its most basic level is intended to give and receive love. The gift of oneself to others and the reception of this gift of self from others are what ultimately bring meaning and purpose to human existence. For Catholics, life’s primary objective is to give and receive love as exemplified in the life of Jesus himself.

To be created in God’s image also entails that human beings are created with free will. God created human beings in such a way that they have their own consciousness and are independent of God. While our lives are only fulfilled when we live them in God’s love, as St. Augustine’s famous dictum insists, human beings always have other options. They can choose God or try to find fulfillment in other places. In the end, however, this slight of God will always prove to be

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48 Collins, 34.

unsatisfying because we are created for God’s love. Within human beings, there is always this tension between wanting the good that ultimately derives from God and following illusions that human beings have created for themselves. Rolheiser frames this tension in Jungian terms and speaks of desire, restlessness and energy.\(^{50}\) This restless energy and multiple desires can sometimes lead people to God’s love but, more often than not, they bring them on paths with terrible consequences.

Giving and receiving love, moreover, is a developmental task for human beings. While we are created for love, we are not born knowing how to love. Quite the contrary, humans come into existence as infants who are as selfish as possible, only conscious of their own immediate needs and wants – though curiously, bringing parents and other family members usually a profound sense of joy from their mere presence. For human beings, life is a process where they learn to let go of self-centered preoccupations and to give of themselves to causes greater than themselves and to the service of family and society. This developmental process is not always easy and people can get stuck at any of the various stages along the way. Life is fraught with obstacles that hinder human beings from developing into the self-giving individuals that they were created to be and that make life meaningful.\(^{51}\) Sadly, reaching the pinnacle of this developmental process and learning to love sacrificially is a skill that most people are unable to master fully in this life.\(^{52}\)

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\(^{52}\) The most noted study on the stages of faith development is the work of James W. Fowler. *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins Publishers, 1981. Fowler maintains that in his sixth and final stage people are able to overcome self-interest and throw themselves into causes greater than themselves, which sounds very similar to the sacrificial love that this study argues is the ultimate goal of a Catholic spirituality.
Another influence on the nature of human beings is that they are born into a specific time and place. They come into existence in specific families, communities, and cultures. These social constructs all share a common characteristic. Given that they are designed and implemented by human beings, these institutions are all flawed and less than ideal. Furthermore, these structures all leave their imprint on those who participate in them. Catholics, like all people, are shaped by their surroundings. Since these human constructs can be defective in various respects, the impact that these structures can have on the human psyche can be devastating. At times, the very social institutions that are intended to enhance the human condition, are the ones that end up doing the most harm. Parker Palmer has eloquently described this human predicament as follows:

In Genesis we are told that humankind was first formed “in the image of God,” the image of love. But as we move from myth to human history, the image of God within us becomes dim or forgotten, distorted or obscured. From the moment of birth other powers imprint our souls with images less than divine.  

LOVE OF SELF: A prevalent aspect of Catholic spirituality, therefore, concerns the relationship that Catholics have with themselves. In this facet of Catholic spirituality, the focus in theological terms is on sin, conversion, and redemption or in more psychological parlance, the emphasis is on well-being, human development and personal integration. In terms of the relationship with self, Catholic spirituality deals with the negative psychological effects and the spiritual consequences that the environment and life experiences have on Christ’s followers. The interior damage caused by the environment on Catholics hinders them from fulfilling their true purpose in this life of loving God, neighbor, and self and from knowing their true nature of being created in God’s image. Catholic spirituality concentrates, not only on the development of the human person, more

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53 Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known*, 17.
specifically it is interested in determining how life’s hurts have mitigated the ability of Catholics to love God, others, and especially oneself. As Rolheiser captures this dilemma:

To be human is to be fallible, wounded, dysfunctional, scarred, and living in a far from perfect world, family, church, body and history. Don’t look for somebody to blame, to sue, to be angry at. This is the human condition. Make friends with it. Grief, not rage, is the proper response. Chaos, not blame, is what is at issue. An older generation called it “original sin.”

Recognizing, then, that as part of the human condition, Catholics are “wounded, dysfunctional, and scarred,” Catholic spirituality offers a process for healing, reconciliation and personal improvement. In today’s church, Catholics are offered centuries of spiritual wisdom to grow in holiness and into the loving people they were created to be. Over the centuries, Catholics from various times and places have not only discovered forgiveness and healing for their internal struggles. They have also transmitted their insights about the process towards holiness and wholeness so that subsequent generations can benefit from them. The Catholic community has amassed over the years a great deal of spiritual proficiency in this area. These experiences of forming its members has given the Catholic Church a tremendous grasp on personal, human development and on the human capacity to heal and grow spiritually. These insights, moreover, can contribute greatly to the modern project of developing into mature members of Christ’s church.

Among the instruments and techniques that bring us closer to God, such as the Holy Spirit and prayer, these same tools may also assist in the journey of self-discovery and healing. The Holy Spirit that dwells within Catholics can also shed light on their interior darkness and on the nature of their brokenness. The Holy Spirit and spiritual practices help Catholics uncover the unique ways


55 For a study on health, wholeness and spiritual wellness, see Joe Paprocki, *Seven Keys to Spiritual Wellness: Enriching Your Faith by Strengthening the Health of Your Soul*, (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 2012).
in which their surroundings have impacted them. They assist Catholics to discern the aspects of their damaged personality that contribute to distancing them from God, self, and others. The Spirit working within Catholics and the effects of prayer can also act as sources of healing. After unearthing their brokenness, the next step in the process is to bring their hurt, broken selves before God in prayer. The Holy Spirit is a healing presence in the life of Catholics. Through grace, the Holy Spirit provides the faithful with the salvation that Jesus won for all humanity by dying on the cross. In prayer, Catholics can come to discover their original blessedness, that they are God’s children, created in God’s image, loved by God beyond all measure, graced with various talents and charisms and having much to offer a hurting world. Palmer suggests that since the image of God in humans is dimmed, religions “…have developed spiritual disciplines, daily practices by which we can resist these deformations of self and world…Through the disciplines of spiritual formation we seek to be re-formed in our original, created image.”

As I noted earlier, psychology has taken a keen interest in spirituality. Where religious spirituality and psychology intersect is specifically in this area of personal wellness. Both Catholic spirituality and psychology are equally interested in dealing with personal human struggles and wholeness. Psychology can not only inform a secular audience about human integration, Catholics can also benefit from the insights that psychology has discovered about the spiritual dimension of the human psyche. Downey explains that the connection between psychology and spirituality “…is rooted in the recognition that human and spiritual development are not opposing, competing dynamics, but are interrelated and complementary.” Psychology has been particularly instrumental in assisting Catholic spirituality to perceive sin as more than simply the breaking of

56 Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known*, 11.

57 Downey, 8.
moral rules and salvation as more than just atonement for these ethical indiscretions. Sin concerns human brokenness in whatever way it may materialize in a person’s life that derives from living in a less than perfect environment. Redemption includes a healing component, as Jesus demonstrated repeatedly in his earthly ministry, from what keeps human beings from living a less than whole and integrated life. Consequently, psychology has broadened the Catholic understanding of holiness to include health. To live the life to which God calls his disciples in imitation of Jesus, requires just as much mental and physical well-being as moral fortitude. Again Downey is instructive on this point when he suggests that

\[ ...there is a deeper awareness of the importance of overall health in the cultivation of holiness. There is a great deal of attention to diet and exercise, a balance of work and leisure, solitude and interaction with others in the spiritual life.^{58}\]

Furthermore, psychology has provided contemporary Catholic spirituality with tremendous insights into the spiritual implications of life’s heartaches and sufferings. Specifically, psychology can assist Catholics to discern the spiritual dimensions of the ordinary, daily grind. Catholic spirituality is not concerned only with sacred times, rituals, and spaces. The Incarnation teaches Catholics that their daily lives are as infused with divinity as when they go in front of the tabernacle. Consequently, the daily struggles and challenges that impact the lives of Catholics have their own spiritual components and consequences. Issues, such as workplace stress and family dysfunction, need to be unpacked to discern the spiritual damage that they may have been caused to the follower of Christ. Psychological insights into various, common afflictions that affect adult lay Catholics as much as anyone else, will help Catholics deal with their own internal brokenness which is part and parcel of the salvific process.\(^{59}\)

\(^{58}\) Ibid., 91.

OTHERS: Not only is any singular individual a child of God created in God’s image, all other people are similarly endowed with this distinction. Regardless of race, color, creed, gender, or sexual orientation, human beings are all created equal and form one family under God’s headship. Not only are human beings created to enjoy a reciprocal relationship with God. They are also intended to give and receive love from all the children of God whose image they bear. Life’s purpose is found in being as intimate as possible with God, wherever God may dwell, whether in oneself or others.

As mentioned earlier, human beings do not always recognize the God dwelling within them. Consequently, human beings can find it even more problematic at times to find the image of God in others. Since the ability to love is a developmental process, human beings are always dealing with others who can be at any stage along the process. Issues like creed, race and nationality do hinder some from extending compassion and support. Hence, relationships can often be conflictual and painful because many have not developed to the point of being able to offer themselves genuinely to another. Often times, relationships are entered into by individuals with mixed motives and hidden agendas, which can cause others great harm. Given that humans all struggle with their own selfish desires and unconscious tensions, many times they hurt the people they love the most and, vice versa, the people they love the most hurt them. The reality is that all people are born into environments where eventually they will experience the pain of imperfect love and ultimately broken relationships.

LOVE OF NEIGHBOR

The feature of Catholic spirituality that most distinguishes it from more contemporary expressions of spirituality involves love of neighbor. An often repeated critique of postmodern

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60 For those who critique non-religious expressions of spirituality for being too individualistic, see King, 11-14; Downey, 20.
spirituality is that it gives too much attention to private and individualistic concerns. Reformed theologian, Michael Raiter, has leveled the following criticism: “Many have recognized that a spirituality that is purely private and personal and has no consequent ‘face to the world’ is ultimately egocentric.” 61 For Catholics, however, their spiritual lives can never remain a continuous gaze heavenward nor stagnate into an obsessive inward preoccupation. A Catholic spirituality will inevitably proceed outward from love of God and self to a genuine concern for the other. A true love for God extends as well to all God’s daughters and sons. An appreciation for the divine spark in oneself allows Catholics to see that same spark in others. Downey claims that “the goal of the spiritual life entails perfection of one’s relationship with others, rather than an ever more pure goal of the mind’s eye on some eternal truth “out there” or in one’s interior life.” 62 An inescapable consequence of spiritual growth for Catholics is an ever-enlarging heart for all people that they encounter along their journey through life.

At its most basic level, love of neighbor concerns the people with which Catholics would interact on a regular basis; family, friends, coworkers, and acquaintances. Again, as Raiter remarks, “Given that we are made in the image of God, it follows that what is ultimate is personal relationships.” 63 Love of neighbor begins with forging meaningful relationships as part of a healthy regime. It includes maintaining these relationships, as well as, restoring strained relationships. In a Catholic spirituality, love for the people that are part of the fabric of one’s life stems from more than mere natural, human attraction. The Holy Spirit that brings Catholics closer to God and sheds light on their interior disposition also cooperates with their efforts to build

61 Raiter, Stirrings, 60.
62 Downey, 45
63 Raitter, 57.
meaningful relationships with others. The grace of the Holy Spirit collaborates with Catholics to love not only those who are easy to love but even those where no natural sympathies exist, as in the case of an enemy (cf. Matthew 5: 43-48).

While many of the relationships that Catholics will establish in the course of a lifetime will flourish, other relationships may prove to be more difficult. Many times friction can develop between even the closest of family members and friends. Given that human beings are flawed, they can, however unintended, offend the sensibilities of those with whom they are most attached. In a Catholic spirituality, love of neighbor not only refers to forming new, caring relationships. Love of neighbor also concerns coping with these damaged relationships. Much of Jesus’s teaching spoke of mercy (cf. Mt. 18: 20-22). Jesus realized that some of the heaviest burdens that humans would carry through life would be the result of broken relationships. Mending a broken heart would be a necessary skill for any of his followers to master. Catholics need to develop, again in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, an ability to forgive. Forgiveness concerns letting go of the pain and regrets of past relationships. If Catholics do not learn to forgive and deal with the anger and grudges against those who may have offended them in the past, it can negatively impact relationships in the present and, in extreme cases, can leave anyone very alone.\(^{64}\)

Love of neighbor also encompasses community. There is a communitarian nature to Catholic spirituality. Throughout history, human beings have constructed all manners of social structures. Humans are part of families, tribes, towns, cultures, and countries. Now while Catholics will also live in the various kinds of communities that exist in the time and place in which they are

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born, they are also called to be part of a distinctive community, the Body of Christ. A Catholic life is not concerned with solely individualistic pursuits, such as private prayer. Nor can a Catholic life be lived in isolation from other disciples of Jesus. For Catholics, participation in the life of the church is a natural outcome of nurturing their spiritual life. In a Catholic spirituality, joining together with those who have similar affinities for Jesus of Nazareth will emerge naturally. In this community of the Church, Catholics can pray together, discover the nuances of their faith, and grow together spiritually. But above all else, they can share their gifts and their talents to build up the body of Christ (cf. 1Corinthians 12). Becoming an active and contributing member of the church community is an essential feature of loving your neighbor.

In the Catholic spiritual tradition, the love of neighbor lastly consists of a unique compassion for the poor and marginalized or, as Catholic social thought has termed it, a “preferential option for the poor.” Social justice has become an integral aspect of Catholic spirituality and “any authentic spirituality has consequences for life in society.” More concretely, Catholics are called to express their concern for those in need in two very tangible manners. First, a charitable disposition is an essential outcome of a Catholic spirituality. Witnessing the plight of the poor should move Catholics to offer their support either with financial assistance or by volunteering their time in such organizations as soup kitchens or food banks. A concern for the poor, however, cannot end simply with charity. A Catholic spirituality also involves advocating on behalf of the poor. Catholics are called to examine the causes of poverty and become agents of change in the world, striving to reform or eliminate the human structures that are the cause of poverty in the first place. Love of God, self, and neighbor is most fully mature when Catholics can

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65 Downey, 96.
put aside their own interests to focus on the needs of the disenfranchised and strive to build God’s reign here on earth.\textsuperscript{66} In brief, as Downey comments,

Rightly ordered relationships are those built on mutuality, reciprocity, equality, care, compassion, justice, all with particular attention to the needs of the wounded and the weak, the last and the least.\textsuperscript{67}

In today’s age, it should be noted that God’s creation can be considered among the poor and marginalized. Today, the world has generally awoken to the potential havoc that climate change will wreak on our planet if nations do not join together to change current trends. Climate change has the potential to cause much devastation for the earth and all the creatures that inhabit it. Given that human activity and a lack of concern for the environment is the primary cause of our environment’s decay, now more than ever, a Catholic spirituality dictates that Catholics develop an ever deeper respect for God’s creation. Environmental justice is now a critical global issue and a necessary feature of a Catholic spiritual life.\textsuperscript{68}

**RELATIONSHIP:** When boiled down to its simplest elements, I would maintain that a Catholic spirituality is all about relationships. Relating constitutes an essential feature of Catholic living. If God is love and human beings are created for love, then relationships are at the very foundation of the Catholic spiritual tradition. Christian spirituality concerns forming relationships within the three key constituencies of God, self, and other. It is precisely within this web of loving relationships where Catholic spirituality finds its niche and distinctive character It also consists of growing in these relationships, and learning to deal with broken relationships. Michael Downey

\textsuperscript{66} For an examination of social justice and spirituality, see King, 176-195 and Michael Battle, “Liberation,” *Blackwell Companion*, 515-531.

\textsuperscript{67} Downey, 96.

describes the importance of relationships when he affirms, “Since the God of the Christian people, the Trinity is a communion of persons in loving relationship, it is important to see human relationality as a privileged locus for the encounter with God.”

But as noted earlier, relationships are not always easy to maintain. All three primary relationships - God, others, and self - are fraught with difficulty. While people can always be assured of a warm welcome from God, they are not always ready to reciprocate. The more human beings distance themselves from God, the emptier life becomes. The more unsatisfied they become of their circumstances, the more likely they are to make bad decisions and experience further heartbreak. Human beings are created in God’s image and have the greatest title that one can have, i.e. God’s children. Still, many do not know how special they are. Many do not recognize the exceptional talents that they possess and which make them unique. Most people today struggle with their self-image, have low self-esteem and are unaware of how much they have to offer the world. Lastly, while people share so many essential features in common, including God’s image, many prefer to concentrate on what separates them from others. Relationships with others are certainly the spice of life. But since people’s ability to love can be underdeveloped, relationships can be strained and painful. Each time people are hurt, the harder it becomes to build trust in future relationships. In short, human beings may have been created for relationships, yet sustaining relationships with God, others and self, can be quite complicated and requires a determined effort.

It is precisely due to the difficulty of forging these loving relationships that Catholics require some type of spiritual formation. Catholics require some form of training to assist them to negotiate through the landmines that any relationship can present. Catholics need to learn how to nurture their relationship with God, self and others, which goes well beyond being familiar with church teaching. Just as important, they require training in restoring relationships when they go
off the tracks. Programs of spiritual formation should be an essential component in the faith formation of adults. It is to designing such a spiritual formation program for Catholics that deals with loving relationships to which we now turn.

**Spiritual Formation**

Succinctly, Catholic spirituality involves growth in one’s relationship with God, self, and others. Hence, another integral feature of Catholic spirituality is the manner in which this growth occurs. Catholic spirituality also consists of formation and assisting Christ’s followers to develop and mature in these various relationships. As is common with any type of formation, spiritual formation begins with the assumption that people are not at an optimal level of development. Consequently, they require some methods or techniques in order to reach their full potential.

Willard defines spiritual formation as follows:

> It is appropriate to regard this inner dimension of the self as the “spiritual” side of the human being and then to think of “spiritual formation” as the process of reshaping or redeveloping it until it has, to a substantial degree, the character of the inner dimension of Jesus himself.⁶⁹

From the Catholic spirituality outlined above, spiritual formation would consist of the means by which Catholics grow from selfishness to love in each of the three main relationships that they have with God, self, and others. In the Catholic tradition, it is also generally acknowledged that most Catholics will not reach the ideal on this earth – only saints do – and thus spiritual formation is a dynamic that should continue throughout their lifetime.⁷⁰

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⁶⁹ Willard, 46.

Spiritual formation, however, has in general not been a top priority within the Catholic Church, as catechetical instruction, for instance, has been.\(^{71}\) In the introduction to a study on spiritual formation, the editors speculate that “… in-depth theological examination of what is involved in spiritual formation has remained less developed.”\(^{72}\) Not providing Catholics with an overabundance processes and tools in which to develop into the loving person that Jesus was is primarily the result of historical factors. In the past, spiritual formation occurred largely within the family, mostly by osmosis. Since Catholic family life has undergone a radical change in our postmodern culture, this form of spiritual formation can no longer be assumed and new methods of spiritual formation are desperately required. Protestant ministers D. Evans and J. Geer capture this modern predicament as follows:

> Increasingly, congregations understand themselves to be engaging a context in which adult faith formation can no longer be taken for granted or treated as a passive assumption. For many, this represents a major shift in approach that requires not only a great deal of effort but also asking some fundamental questions and, potentially, laying some new foundations.\(^{73}\)

The current state of spiritual formation for lay people in the Catholic Church is similar to the spiritual formation that is common in the postmodern spiritual context. As was noted, contemporary spirituality is a highly individualistic journey. Today, people simply experiment and try out any number of spiritual traditions and practices until they discover those that suit them.\(^{74}\)

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\(^{71}\) Note, for example, that a volume such as *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, edited by Michael Downey, Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993, has no entry on spiritual formation per se or spiritual formation programs.


\(^{74}\) For a discussion of this “shopping around” phenomenon, see Downey, 21.
Spiritual formation is equally a solitary endeavor, where guidance from others or community collaboration are discretionary. In any issue of a publication such as *Spirituality and Health*, not only are there many insightful articles on significant spiritual matters, the magazine is replete with advertisements of various kinds of spiritual formation options. Again, there are numerous spiritual books, websites and DVD series, promoting different spiritual traditions, that any seeker can utilize at their own leisure. Seekers can consult spiritual masters for assistance and various retreats are offered throughout North America. But again, without much guidance, seekers are free to pick and choose from this cornucopia of programs and practices that are available to them.

Today’s state of affairs among Catholic lay people who are interested in their spiritual development would appear to be rather similar. It too has taken on this characteristic of a private, individual activity. Most of the few programs for lay adults that do exist tend to focus on the knowledge of theology and morality that Catholic lay people may not have. But D. Evans and J. Gear are again instructive on this matter when they expound,

> While it is true that “faith asks the intellect for help”, and western minds are bent toward reason, we must be both able to explore the faith intellectually with adults in our communities and at the same time recognize that what they hunger for cannot be satisfied by the words and ideas that we use to describe the source and end of our spiritual longing.”

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75 At the time of writing, the most current issue is *Spirituality and Health*, vol. 20 no. 1 (January/February 2017) and is published by Spirituality & Health Media, LLC, in Traverse City, MI.

76 See, for example, ibid. 13, 15, 18, 21, 29 and 51.

77 In this particular issue, there is a special section dedicated to “The Best Healing Retreats of 2017.” See, Ibid., 1-32.

78 Of course, the number of Catholic lay people who are actually interested in their spiritual growth is a difficult determination to make.

79 See, for example, the entry by Christopher Bryant, “The Nature of Spiritual Development,” in *The Study of Spirituality*, edited by Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Edward Yarnold, S.J., (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1986), 565-567 where spiritual development is described as strictly a personal journey with no reference to either community or programmatic support.

80 Evans and Geer, 25.
Hence, Catholic lay people who may have some interest in their spiritual lives are often left to fend for themselves. The primary resources that are at their disposal for spiritual development are the large number of books that are annually published on the topic. As was noted, Catholic spiritual literature is also a growth industry. Many Catholic lay people with spiritual inclinations have any number of half-read volumes on their bookshelves, which raises the question of how effective this spiritual literature actually is. Without a prior grounding in the spiritual life, how beneficial can reading a book on one’s own truly be? Certainly, these books contain a great deal of spiritual wisdom which should be disseminated to a Catholic audience as broadly as possible. But is leafing through a book on one’s own the most effective means of transmitting these spiritual insights from this corpus of literature? Or is there a better method? In a similar fashion, prayer often is a private experience for Catholics. Relying on the prayers that they recited in a Sunday catechism class as a child, Catholics are often not introduced to more advanced forms of praying, especially how to pray in community. There is an urgency in the Catholic community to form people in prayer in contrast to simply giving them information about prayer. As a Eucharistic people, the Catholic Church must learn to prepare its members to pray as one voice.

While solitary study and prayer certainly has a place, spiritual formation, especially at the beginning of one’s journey, can be also accomplished in the framework of a program. One definite benefit of a spiritual formation program is that there would be a knowledgeable facilitator to provide spiritual resources at the level at which the participants may be and that are relevant to the lives of the participants. A facilitator would also be able to tackle any questions that may arise or provide support for any personal matters that may surface. Another positive aspect of a spiritual

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81 I hesitate at this point to include practices such as spiritual direction and retreats. While a small number of lay people do avail themselves of these formational opportunities, the overwhelming majority of lay people have not been exposed to these practices. They are still activities reserved primarily for priests and religious.
formation program is its communal nature.\footnote{For the communal nature of spiritual development, see Henri Nouwen, with Michael J. Christenen and Rebecca J. Laird. \textit{Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of the Spirit}, (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2010), xxvi – xxvii.} Having companions on one’s spiritual journey has definite advantages. In a spiritual formation program, Catholics can come together and share with each other their stories of successes and warn of the struggles that they have encountered along their spiritual journey. In a program, Catholics would be instructed not only in individual prayer, but also in how to pray in community, which is of particular significance for a Catholic audience. In brief, spiritual formation is not only a deeply personal experience but should also have a facilitated component and a communal quality.

Right from the outset, it should be clarified that spiritual growth of any nature is always, as the Christian tradition has taught since the New Testament\footnote{See, for example, St. Paul’s instructions on the Holy Spirit in 1Corinthians 12-14 and Romans 8.}, the result of grace, an operation of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual growth derives from the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.\footnote{A theological implication of the importance of the Holy Spirit in the spiritual life is that the Catholic Church may need to develop a richer understanding of pneumatology at the level of Christology. For this critique, see Jeffrey P. Greenman, “Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective: Classic Issues, Contemporary Challenges,” \textit{Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective}, eds. Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 29.} Theologian J. Greenman explains that “spiritual formation in its best sense cannot be reduced to the results of human techniques or personal willpower, but is primarily a matter of God’s own initiative and God’s vital action.”\footnote{Ibid., 24.} Spiritual development is neither a process that any person can dictate or control. Nor is spiritual formation a dynamic that a parish community can instill in its members or a single program impart to its participants. Spiritual growth is the exclusive purview of the Holy Spirit and spiritual development occurs in people’s lives to the extent that they cooperate with the inspiration of the third person of the Trinity. It also bears repeating, like any
type of faith formation, spiritual formation is a life-long process. Greenman describes this process as follows:

Spiritual formation is our continuing response to the reality of God’s grace shaping us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in the community of faith, for the sake of the world.  

While spiritual growth is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit, still it does not follow that the Catholic community or programs do not have a role to play in spiritual formation. A community context and a programmatic initiative can create the fertile conditions whereby the Holy Spirit may work more effectively in the lives of Christ’s disciples. Programs may assist participants to be more attuned to the workings and stirrings of the Holy Spirit within them. The faith community has a responsibility to make its people aware that a new life in Christ is possible. Through its proclamation and witness of the Gospel, the community can encourage its members to seek a deeper relationship with the Triune God, be more attuned to their interiority, and be more caring of others. Methodist Pastor Sondra Higgins Matthaei maintains, “The role of the faith community is to provide experiences that offer persons opportunities for growing in communion with God through participation in the shared life of the community.”

Similarly, and more germane to this treatise, programs can also support the work of the Holy Spirit. Programs can offer dedicated moments where participants can delve more consciously into their own spiritual journey. Through spiritual formation programs, participants can be introduced to the treasures of the various spiritual traditions of the Catholic Church. They can be guided by facilitators who understand the contours of the spiritual terrain. Programs also allow

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86 Greenman, 24.

87 For others who understand spiritual formation in this vein, see D. Willard, 45-57; Evans and Gear, 27-29; and Howard, *Reflections on the Spiritual Life*, 12-13.

followers of Christ to journey together and support and motivate each other along the journey. In her article that speaks in favor of and provides a rationale for the importance of programming, Higgins Matthaei makes the astute observation that

Structures provide opportunities that deepen relationships with God and others. Structures has to do with organizing formative elements into an interrelated system for faith formation, and careful attention to structure provides a framework for an effective ecology of faith formation.\(^{89}\)

As this observation by Higgins Matthaei implies, a spiritual formation program brings together various components which are then structured in a specific pattern in order to meet the spiritual needs of the participants. When designing a spiritual formation program, the starting point for such an enterprise is where many contemporary formation programs begin, the lived experience of the participants. Thomas Groome, for instance, has developed a popular approach to religious education.\(^{90}\) Groome refers to his method of religious education as a “shared praxis approach”\(^{91}\) and has described it as “…a group of Christians sharing faith in dialogue their critical reflection on present action in the light of the Christian Story and its Vision toward the end of lived Christian faith.”\(^{92}\) In Groome’s model, the main function of religious education is to provide Christians with a safe environment in which to share their faith journey with other believers and to correlate their experiences with the Christian message that religious instructors proclaim within this communal setting. The goal of this model is to guide Christians into a fuller awareness of how to live their faith (i.e. praxis).

\(^{89}\) Higgins Matthaei, 63.


A contemporary spiritual formation program can follow the same movements as Groome’s catechetical approach. It begins with an exploration of the hopes and dreams, fears and struggles of the participants. Then the program correlates the personal experiences of the participants with the spiritual traditions of the Catholic Church. An essential component of any spiritual formation program is understanding the lives of the participants and utilizing their experiences as the foundation of the program. Any spiritual formation program, in order to make it relevant to those who partake in it, should build on, not solely their spiritual experiences, but all that they have undergone in life. Including the totality of people’s experiences honors the principal that God is present in all aspects of people’s lives and thus all aspects of life have a spiritual property. Evans and Gear propose that

…adult faith formation is taking seriously the significance of context. … the life setting that is shaping the limits, yearnings and potentials of those who seek a relationship with God through their church. Concrete analysis of actual life conditions is a necessary foundation for both defining our mission and guiding our ministry.”

Besides an exploration of the concrete experiences of the participants, another main ingredient of any spiritual formation program consists of the Catholic spiritual tradition. After coming to an awareness of the circumstances that impact the life of the participants, the next task is to locate within the Catholic spiritual tradition those elements that correlate with these experiences. Such a search is required because the Catholic spiritual tradition is far from a

\[\text{93 This sentence is an allusion to the introductory paragraph of one of the key documents of the Vatican Council II, Gaudium et Spes. See “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World” in Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, Study Edition. Ed. Austin Flannery, O.P., (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1987), 903-1001. The first part of this document strives to understand the modern world. The second part is the Church’s response to these new conditions. This document basically teaches that ministry today must originate from a deep appreciation of the lives of all people and particularly, the lives of those who ministers serve.}

\[\text{94 Evans and Gear, 22-23.}\]
monolithic structure. Within the Catholic Church, there are a number of genuine spiritual paths that lead to love of God, self, and neighbor. Throughout its history, a number of different spiritual schools have emerged within the Catholic Church, which in time are recognized as legitimate ways of being followers of Jesus Christ. Small communities have regularly formed around new insights into the Gospel. Some of these communities begin to grow, many at a rapid pace, which are then scrutinized by church officials. When given a formal endorsement, these spiritual schools become an option for living the Gospel message for all members of the community. These spiritual schools or traditions that espouse a unique way of following Christ have regularly developed into religious orders for both men and women. Much of the spiritual treasures of the Catholic Church are contained in the charisms and traditions of the religious orders, as illustrated by the Benedictine, Franciscan, and Jesuit spiritualities. As Catholic spirituality scholar L. Cunningham comments, “If that way of living seemed possible and desirable it became a way of living within the larger church community.”

Cunningham further argues that there are four central characteristics of any spiritual tradition. He maintains that each tradition has “a canon within the canon of Scripture.” For each spiritual tradition, there are certain scripture passages that provide inspiration and describe more precisely than others its prescribed way of life. In each spiritual tradition, there is also an “accumulation of a tradition.” In time, each school will create its own rules and regulations.

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96 Cunningham, 86.
Biographies of the founding members are written, as are stories of its later holier members. Theological treatises and devotional literature on their unique way of life are composed. In time, a large body of literature is created to “serve as a resource for keeping the school faithful to its original inspiration.” A third element of any spiritual tradition is a “pedagogy of prayer.” In any spiritual tradition, its adherents will be counselled to make prayer a regular part of their life and different prayer techniques will be offered them that are congruent with the founding principles. These prayer practices are over and above central expressions of Catholic prayer, such as attendance at the Eucharist. Lastly, “conversion of life” is the ultimate goal of any spiritual tradition. Everything that makes up the tradition is geared towards following Jesus more closely, perceiving oneself as God does, and having a deep empathy for all people, all with the support of the Holy Spirit.

Any of these four different features of the spiritual schools then could be fodder for a spiritual formation program. Gospel passages that speak to specific aspects of the spiritual life pertinent to the participants could be included in the program. The insights into the spiritual life that the literature of any of the schools has accumulated over time could also be integrated into a spiritual formation program. The various prayer techniques that are applicable to the participants might also be incorporated into a spiritual formation program. As is common in the various spiritual schools, the main objective of any program is to structure all these components in such a way as to promote growth in the participants in their love for God, self, and others. Given the breadth and depth of the Catholic spiritual tradition, any contemporary group of Catholics

97 Cunningham, 88.

98 For this description of the spiritual traditions, see ibid., 87-90.
interested in growing in their spiritual lives would have many sources from which to choose and is another reason for having a facilitator who can help them negotiate this vast landscape.

Apart from the spiritualties typically associated with the religious orders, there are a number of other, more contemporary resources for spiritual formation programs. As discussed, journeying with others is preferable to a strictly solitary regimen. A more recent practice of faith formation, at least in the Catholic Church, which would augment the communitarian nature of a spiritual formation program, is small faith-sharing groups. Beginning in Latin America and their struggles with poverty, small faith-sharing groups have become quite popular in most Catholic circles. Small faith-sharing groups would also have much to offer those who are striving to grow in their spiritual lives. When Catholics come together in a spirituality program, not only can they grow by being introduced to various elements of the Catholic spiritual tradition. They can also develop by being involved in a group process where they share with each other how they are appropriating the material that is being presented.\(^{99}\) Such sharing would have the benefits that Higgins Matthaei outlines from her own tradition:

> The importance of small groups within the Methodist movement was that they provided shared discernment, support, and accountability for faith formation. Wesley knew from his own experience that persons could not do this on their own. They must be in a community to support and sustain growth in communion.\(^{100}\)

Another more recent resource for spiritual formation is the work of the many respected spiritual authors in the Catholic Church, which have already been mentioned. Again, Thomas Merton initiated a certain style of spiritual writing that has appealed to a more highly educated Catholic audience. Many other authors have continued in this style, including such renowned

\(^{99}\) In a survey referenced in Evans and Gear, 22, in part what adults are looking for in a “spiritually nurturing community” is a safe place to tell their story.

\(^{100}\) Higgins Matthaei, 68.
figures as Henri Nouwen, Canadian Ronald Rolheiser, Richard Rohr, and Sr. Joan Chittister. To reiterate, digesting the spiritual insights with which their works abound might be more conducive in a group setting than by consuming the material on one’s own. In particular, these spiritual tomes can be examined in a book club fashion within a spiritual formation program.

Finally, spiritual formation programs for Catholic audiences can also avail themselves of some of the material found in postmodern spirituality. While much of the modern spirituality which has stripped itself from its religious moorings is certainly suspect and not congruent with the general tone of Catholic spirituality. As Ursala King comments in her study of today’s global phenomenon of spirituality, “a spirituality exclusively focused on personal concerns such as finding inner peace, one’s true self, or a purpose in life – however valuable for an individual – can produce a rather escapist attitude.” Still there are some features of this hodgepodge of spiritual materials that can be suitable for a Catholic spiritual formation program. It should not be assumed that all insights and practices from this branch of spirituality is incompatible with Catholic spirituality, especially since some of it has been coopted and adapted from this very tradition. There is much in postmodern spirituality that can be commended and Catholics should not fear familiarizing themselves with some of the innovations made in this current. One aspect of postmodern spirituality that has a substantial affinity to the Catholic tradition is psychology. Psychology has made many inroads into the nature of the human spirit and how it functions. Catholic spirituality should not be reticent to engage these new insights from psychology, as it has much to inform us about one of the main areas of Catholic spirituality, love of self.

101 King, 11.

102 For an example of a Christian study that integrates spirituality and psychology, see Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: It’s Impossible to be Spiritually Mature While Remaining Emotionally Immature*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006).
Much like a recipe, these various components are then combined to create a spiritual formation program. Sessions in these programs should begin by discussing concrete issues which the participants are experiencing. These issues are examined from the perspective of the spiritual angle latent in all of human activity. The spiritual formation programs are designed to assist the participants to appreciate how God is working in every corner of their lives. Awareness of God’s presence in their lives is a particular goal of spiritual formation. Furthermore, in spiritual formation programs, participants become cognizant of the God who supports them through their trials and heals their wounds. Raiter defines spirituality formation as

…an experience that enables a person to cope with the here and now. It is more a therapy than a theology. It shares as much in common with psychology as it does metaphysics.103

Subsequently, material from the Catholic spiritual tradition is introduced that addresses these real life issues. The theological literature, biographies, and scriptural passages of the Catholic spiritual schools are then brought in as part of the process to provide the participants with ever deeper illumination into their spiritual lives. What is crucial for facilitators to keep in mind at this stage is pedagogy or how the material is presented. Spiritual formation is not similar to a religion class. It is not about passing on information. Rather a spiritual formation session should take on the mood akin to a retreat. The material is given to the participants in such a way that they can reflect on it, pray about it, and discern how the material relates to their lives. There should be time set aside in each session for participants to go off, either on their own or in a group, to process and integrate the spiritual resources that are offered in the program. The objective is to allow participants time to reflect on the material so that they will have an opportunity to experience the

103 Raiter, 55.
spiritual wisdom in their heart and not just their head.\textsuperscript{104} Or as Raiter has articulated this point, “Spirituality is not what you believe, but what you feel. It is born and is nurtured viscerally not intellectually.”\textsuperscript{105}

The process continues by supplying the participants with prayer tools and other spiritual disciplines. Participants can be supported in their life challenges with corresponding disciplines or practices that help them at one and the same time cope with their circumstances in a healthy manner and so develop spiritually, as well as in other parts of their lives. In discussing these practices, Willard states, “Discipline in the spiritual life is doing something in our power that enables us to do what we cannot do by direct effort – because in this way we meet the action of God (grace) with us, and the outcome is humanly inexplicable.”\textsuperscript{106} The practices of prayer in which participants of a spiritual formation program are initiated are projected to bring them in contact with the Holy Spirit dwelling within them so that the Holy Spirit might perform its work of healing, reconciliation, and conversion. As a conduit to grace, these practices help them grow in holiness and to conform their lives to the life of Christ.

Spiritual growth is neither an easy process nor is it a linear dynamic. For any progress that is made, any number of setbacks are also encountered. Dedicating time and attention to spiritual disciplines are often difficult due to the busyness and stress of daily life. Presented by these challenges to incorporate spiritual practices into their lives and to grow spiritually, Catholics have the possibility to turn to each other for support. In a spiritual formation program, the participants can share with each other, not only the struggles in their life, but the challenges of making spiritual

\textsuperscript{104} For spiritual development as a movement of the heart, see Nouwen, \textit{Spiritual Formation}, xv-xxx.

\textsuperscript{105} Raiter, 59.

\textsuperscript{106} Willard, 54.
practices a regular feature of daily life as well. In small faith-sharing groups especially, participants can discuss which spiritual practices have worked well for them and which need improvement. On some days, they can applaud each other’s successes and affirm each other’s advancements. On other days, participants can commiserate over their failures and console each other over their frustrations. In spiritual formation programs, participants have the backing of a community to spur them forward. As again Higgins Matthaei states,

Theologically, I believe that God created us to be in community with one another, and this emphasis on communion in community points to a deep mutual sharing in the life of another.\(^{107}\)

Having described in general terms the various components and processes involved in a spiritual formation program, let us now turn to a specific group, Catholic teachers, and design a spiritual formation program for their particular lived experiences.

\(^{107}\) Higgins Matthaei, 59.
CHAPTER 2: THE LIFE OF A CATHOLIC TEACHER

“Unexpectedly, this study suggests that spirituality is important for teachers and students. When defined as ‘one’s yearning to be connected’, it is effective for maintaining teacher efficacy, managing stress, and positively influencing educator and student relationships in some of the most violent educational environments.”

In the previous chapter, the nature of contemporary spiritual formation was discussed. It was suggested there that spiritual formation begins with the burning issues in the life of the participants. A spiritual formation program must be in tune with the common challenges that are faced by those for whom the program is intended. Since holiness and wholeness are interconnected, a spiritual formation program attempts to assist the participants to inspect the broken parts of their lives and determine those aspects of their interior selves that require healing. The everyday challenges that are obstacles to growing in love of God, self, and neighbor serve as the foundation of any spiritual formation program.

A spiritual formation program designed for Catholic teachers, therefore, will naturally begin with their lived realities. For it to be relevant to them, a spiritual formation program for Catholic teachers must deal with the concrete situations that teachers typically encounter. In a study on the spirituality of work, Vivian Ligo explains, “Configuring a spirituality of work begins with mapping the progression from the very concreteness of work itself toward its implied spirituality in view, enabling it to be explicitly espoused.” This treatise will follow this same sequence suggested by Ligo. In this section, the barrage of obstacles that practitioners in the teaching profession experience on a daily basis will be described. This section will explore what

1 A. Quinn Stanley, “Benefits of Teacher ‘Connections’ in Stressful Educational Settings.” International Journal of Children’s Spirituality, vol. 16, no. 1 (Feb. 2011), 58. This study examined how teachers cope with stress and the researcher was surprised to discover that teachers use a wide range of spiritual practices to combat workplace stress.

those challenges are that will be incorporated into a spiritual formation program for Catholic teachers. In the ensuing section, the resources that can be made available to Catholic teachers from the church’s spiritual traditions to assist them with these obstacles will be discussed. The collaborators of Parker Palmer, cited earlier, pose the following question:

Teaching is taxing work, and frequently the external demands outweigh the personal resources. How do we prepare future and existing teachers for the vicissitudes and travails of the profession – can we?\(^3\)

This study will make the case that a spiritual formation program can assist Catholic teachers with the “vicissitudes and travails of the profession,” which will now be reviewed.

\textit{A Pastoral Examination of the Teaching Profession}

In a brief article in \textit{Psychology Today}, it was reported that “…67\% of teachers surveyed described their jobs as “extremely stressful.” The reporter would then go on to make the logical inference that “…stressed teachers could hinder your child’s education.”\(^4\) Workplace stress has been studied since the mid-twentieth century and teaching has consistently ranked among the top of the most stressful professions.\(^5\) Moreover, teacher stress is not diminishing. In fact, “…job related stress in teachers is a growing problem and that more teachers are now experiencing stress than ever before.”\(^6\) In other words, teacher stress is a significant issue in education today with

\begin{itemize}
  \item \(^3\) Whitcomb et al, 268.
  \item \(^4\) Amy Wilson, “Teaching Teachers to De-Stress,” \textit{Psychology Today}, vol. 33, no. 4, (July/August 2000), 18.
\end{itemize}
potentially precarious results. Continued exposure to high levels of stress will adversely affect teacher health and well-being and hinder their ability to educate and positively impact the lives of their student. Not to mention, the impact that stress will have on the spiritual lives of teachers.

In any standard definition of stress, there is an interplay of two components. One aspect of stress involves the environment. All humans encounter situations within their lives which are challenging and which may generate concern. In such situations, human beings will assess the situation and ascertain whether or not they have the potential to meet any given challenge. Thus a second feature of stress is this determination that people make whether they can cope with the circumstances or not. As well, some stress can be beneficial and assist people to perform at optimal levels while too much stress may have debilitating effects on people.\footnote{For discussions on the nature of stress, see \textit{A Behavioural Approach to the Management of Stress: A Practical Guide to Techniques}. Eds. H.R. Beech, Laurence E. Burns, and B.F. Sheffield, (Chichester, G.B.: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 1982), 1-14.} One simple definition of stress is as follows:

This research suggests stress is best understood as the result of a complex of interactions or transactions, between people and their environments and that these interactions can have negative consequences when environmental stressors exceed the physical, psychological or ethical propensities of the individual.\footnote{Matthison and Freeman, 44.}

A large body of literature has also been produced with respect to teacher stress in particular. Beginning in the 1980’s, a number of quantitative studies have been conducted that attempt to account for teacher stress. This research, moreover, has gone through two distinct phases. Using a variety of survey instruments, these studies initially asked teachers to outline the aspects of their work that they found stressful. As a result of these studies, a long list of stressors has been identified, which will be discussed below. There are two features of these earlier studies that should be noted. One is that these studies are primarily based on self-reported information. The nature of
teacher stress that is delineated in these studies is constructed from the answers that teachers themselves provide in the surveys. As J. Blasé remarks, “The data presented here describe what teachers themselves believe to be the most important sources of work-related stress.”9 Second, these studies determined that teacher stress is multidimensional.10 Teachers do not experience only a few stressing situations but a variety of stressors. And it is this very complexity of stressors that make the occupational stress of teachers unique. Pervez and Hanif explain in their study, “The definitions of teachers’ stress reveal that the issue of teacher stress is one of a complex interaction of factors whose results may be the negative feelings that are associated with stress.”11

More recently a second set of qualitative studies have been conducted that focus less on the working environment of the teacher and more on teacher responses to these conditions.12 Again as Pervez and Hanif suggest, “…an important contributory factor in the experience of stress in teachers is not only the aspects of the job but also… (their) individual subjective perception of work experience.”13 In such studies, it is noted that some teachers are not only able to handle stress better than others. But some teachers are even flourishing in the same circumstances that others find unbearable. These studies tend to focus more on the coping mechanisms that teachers are employing and they seek to determine which coping strategies may prove more beneficial for

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10 Litt and Turk, 178, and Pervez and Haniff, 98.

11 Ibid., 97.

12 For a discussion of the history of the study of teacher stress, see Blasé, 13-14; Mintz, 155; and Beech et al, 341-342.

13 Pervez, 97-8.
teachers in the long run. Also, specific coping techniques are tested among teacher groups to ascertain their value for dealing with teacher stress.\textsuperscript{14}

\textit{The Sources of Teacher Stress}

As previously mentioned, surveys about teacher stress have found that teachers must contend with a variety of daily challenges. Teacher stress derives from a number of different sources and it is precisely the sheer quantity of stressors that can make teaching such an emotionally draining profession at times. These studies on teacher stress, furthermore, have generally identified the same kinds of stressors. The various studies may disagree on the intensity or degree of the various stressors. Still, teachers in the various studies have consistently reported that the same aspects of their work have the potential to be difficult to manage.\textsuperscript{15}

One source of teacher stress is the lack of time to accomplish their many responsibilities.\textsuperscript{16} Simply teaching their class can at times take a backseat to ever increasing demands on their time. Teachers find themselves doing more paperwork documenting student performance and progress has become a major requirement of the teaching profession. There are several meetings a week that they must attend and teachers have been encouraged to call parents on a regular basis. Most teachers are involved with extra-curricular activities, from sport teams to clubs. Then when they finally get home, they are greeted with lesson plans to draw up for the next day and marking to finish. With this increased workload, teachers find little time for themselves and for the activities

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{14} Examples of these studies are Mintz and Stanley, along with, Eluned Gold, Alistair Smith, Ieuan Hopper, David Herne, Glenis Tansey, and Christine Hulland, “Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) for Primary School Teachers,” \textit{Journal of Child and Family Studies}, 19, no.2 (04/2010), 184-189.


\textsuperscript{16} Discussions on the issue of time can be found in Blase, 22-24 and 28-33.
\end{footnotesize}
that might give them renewed energy in body and spirit to be more vibrant at work. As one teacher
describes the situation,

My body is giving out before my mind. I have no life other than teaching. Every
night, every weekend I’m grading, planning, communicating with parents. I’m
never caught up. I miss having a life. 17

As governments continue to experience a financial crunch, the educational system suffers.
Teachers are expected to do more with fewer resources. Materials that teachers require to meet the
modern educational needs of students, such as new text books or computers, are not provided them.
Fewer funds equate to larger class sizes and the deteriorating of the physical plant. Schools may
not be able to afford the support staff to complement teachers, such as educational assistants for
exceptional students. Very often teachers are so conscientious about doing a good job that they
will pay for materials out of their own pocket. All the while, teacher salaries and benefits may also
be slashed. 18

Students are another source of teacher stress. One of the basic struggles that teachers face
on a daily basis is student discipline. 19 Students today do not necessarily comport themselves well
in class and do not always respect the authority of the teacher. Maintaining an orderly class requires
a great deal of attention and energy, along with classroom management techniques, on the part of
the teacher. The older the students get the more teachers must contend with student violence. It is
also difficult to hold the attention of students and keep their interest on the work at hand. Apathy

17 Richards, 302.

18 Blase, 35.

19 For a thorough discussion of student discipline as a stressor, see Blase, 17-19; Mintz, 153; and Hubb A. Everaert
and Kees van der Wolf, J. “Stress in the Student-Teacher Relationship in Dutch Schools,” in Understanding Teacher
Stress in an Age of Accountability, eds. Christopher McCarthy and Richard Lambert, (Greenwich, Conn.:
Information Age Publishing, 2006), 121-143.
is rampant among students who are born into a high definition, digital universe and teachers are constantly seeking to develop teaching styles that can spark some interest in their students. Nothing can affect a teacher more than to witness students who are struggling. Teachers often spend significant time and energy to assist students that are failing to meet grade-level expectations and when these students continue to struggle, the teachers are sometimes blamed. Finally, as family dysfunction and breakdown becomes more prevalent, teachers must deal with the fallout. Teachers at times must become counselors for their students even though they do not feel equipped to do so.

Not only is the workload of teachers significant and their students can be a handful, often teachers cannot even count on the support of the adults in the school community. Parents can regularly present a challenge for teachers as they are not always helpful in the educational process. On the one hand, there are parents who are involved far too much in the lives of their children and make unrealistic demands on the teacher. On the other hand, there are parents who are as apathetic as the students and do not support the teacher’s efforts on behalf of their children. Teachers also report that working with school administrators can be a challenge. They describe school administrators as not providing clear expectations, making unreasonable demands, and do not provide enough feedback or recognition for a job well done. School administrators may lack an effective leadership style, may not communicate well, and can sometimes appear indecisive. Above all, they do not always seek the advice or input of teachers. Community perceptions of

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teachers also negatively affect teachers. The once noble profession is attacked from all sides. The media can at times rake teachers over the coals, especially during periods of contract negotiations for asking for too much. While it would seem only sensible that in the face of such adversities teachers would support each other, in reality teachers are not always collegial. As each teacher simply tries to survive from one day to the next, they often have nothing left to give to others. Teachers can become so overworked that it negatively impacts on the relationship with their colleagues and can create competition between them.

The final area of teacher stress, which is more recent in origin, concerns government interference in education. Education has become a political football. At election time especially, political parties will typically cater to parental fears and will campaign on educational reform. As new parties are elected they will often implement a new theory of education and create standardized tests to ensure that students are learning at desired levels. Teachers are, therefore, left to deal with constant flux in the curriculum. They are rarely asked for their opinion and quickly realize that new educational policies will not work. Teachers have become powerless in the system, not even being able to choose what to teach or how to teach. They feel great pressure to teach to the standardized test, to the exclusion of other subject areas such as the arts. If students do not reach government imposed standards, teachers are blamed for their failure. As one researcher summarized,

...Government has to bear much of the responsibility for the dramatic increase in teacher stress, because promotion of its values creates not only unbearable pressure

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22 For community relations as a stressor for teachers, see Mintz, 162 and Litt and Turk, 183.

on teachers to ‘perform’ and heavy-duty accountability, but at the same time undermines teacher status in society thereby affecting their morale.\textsuperscript{24}

\textit{Manifestations of Teacher Stress}

In more recent studies on teacher stress, attention has shifted to examining the effects that the environmental stressors described above might have on teachers themselves. Studies have found that teachers are impacted in three major areas of their lives. Continual exposure to the above stress factors definitely has physical consequences. Teachers relate how fatigue is a consequence of the time crunch under which they work. Their energy levels are low and they do not always have the vitality that is needed to create a healthy learning environment in the classroom.\textsuperscript{25} Other physical symptoms include headaches, stomachaches and high blood pressure. Teachers also describe how the stressors that they contend with during waking hours invade their sleep.\textsuperscript{26} Stress can also alter teacher behavior. Stress negatively impacts on their relationships with their students. They are less calm with them and may raise their voices to them when they are irritable. Their teaching strategies tend to be unimaginative and revert back to simplified methods of teaching, as “rote and recitation.”\textsuperscript{27} Or as one commentator has described the situation, “…while under stress, teachers behave differently with students; they become less tolerant, less patient, less caring, and overall, less involved.”\textsuperscript{28}

The constant exposure to stress, however, has it most damaging effects on the emotional state of teachers. The conflicts in which teachers engage on a regular basis with students, parents

\begin{footnotes}
\item[24] Bachkirova, 346.
\item[25] For discussions on the physical effects of stress on teachers, see Blase, 28.
\item[26] Adams, 187.
\item[27] For discussions on the behavioral effects of stress, see Blase, 32-33.
\item[28] Blase, 32.
\end{footnotes}
and staff tend to develop into anger. Studies have shown that teachers can be so frustrated and resentful of how they are treated by others in the educational system that rage and hatred are not uncommon feelings which teachers harbor.\(^{29}\) Feelings of depression are also typical among teachers. The feeling of powerlessness that teachers have over their working environment may transform into depression. Working in an environment in which they feel is not functioning properly and will never change, has teachers feeling isolated and defeated, all classic symptoms of depression.\(^{30}\) Anxiety is another intense feeling experienced by teachers. Believing that most new initiatives in education are ineffective, teachers tend to expect the worse. Teachers can be tense and fearful that things will always conclude unsuccessfully. Teachers can work in a state of insecurity and apprehension. Other symptoms of anxiety can manifest in feelings of bewilderment and disorientation.\(^{31}\) Finally, feelings of self-blame are not uncommon among teachers. The self-esteem of teachers takes a beating because they will often take responsibility for student failures and internalize the negative comments from parents and the wider community. Self-doubt can lead to feelings of incompetency and lack of motivation. Teachers can lose the idealism that brought them into the profession and the motivation required to perform at peak levels.\(^{32}\) As feelings of guilt and self-pity grow, coupled with any of the other negative emotions, teachers experience a high-rate of burn-out and ultimately many good teachers end up leaving the profession.\(^{33}\) In the

\(^{29}\) Blase, 27.

\(^{30}\) Ibid.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 28 and Mintz, 159.

\(^{32}\) Kiziltupe, 153.

\(^{33}\) Blase, 28; Richards, 303-304; and McCarthy and Lambert, 222.
end, “the irrational, self-defeating cognitions, the aversive states, the maladaptive behavior and the bodily symptoms continue to interact and reinforce each other.”

*Teacher Realities and Spiritual Formation*

From this analysis of the working conditions of teachers, there would appear to be at least four main themes that a spiritual formation program for teachers should treat. One would certainly be stress itself. As a prominent characteristic of the teaching profession, Catholic teachers not only need to acquire healthy techniques to handle workplace stress. They also need to unpack the effect that stress has on the spiritual dimension of their lives. Since stress has much to do with the evaluation of one’s ability to handle difficult circumstances, assisting Catholic teachers to internalize their innate goodness that derives from being God’s children and created in God’s image can be an important contribution that a spiritual formation program can make in the lives of Catholic teachers.

A second critical issue for Catholic teachers would also include the time crunch. As one recent Canadian teacher survey found, four of the top ten stressors for teachers have to do with not having enough time to spend with their own children and other loved ones. Teaching encompasses so many diverse responsibilities and teaching can be so all-consuming that teachers have so little time for things which they enjoy doing and which brings variety to their lives. The effects of a heavy workload, moreover, will also spill over into the spiritual life of Catholic teachers. The workload for teachers can be so excessive that they will similarly not find time to

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34 Beech et al, 74.


practice their faith. If teachers cannot make enough time for their own children, they certainly will not be able to carve out any time for quiet and prayer or even to attend a spiritual formation program. A spiritual formation program that helps Catholic teachers grapple with this time crunch will only be doing them a great service in a number of different areas of their lives.\(^\text{37}\)

Another wall that Catholic teachers will eventually hit in the course of their professional careers is low morale. Most Catholic teachers enter the profession with a great deal of energy and enthusiasm. Teachers can be very idealistic, as they want to make a positive impact on the lives of their students and contribute to improving society. Catholic teachers also can perceive their work as more than just a job but as a divine calling and as a ministry of the church. Often, however, the idealism with which they enter the profession is soon dissipated as they encounter the realities of today’s educational systems. Low morale is a common sentiment shared by many teachers, especially among those who have been in the profession for a long time. This situation was well articulated by educational professors as:

> For the veteran teacher, there is an internal conflict between a vocational life that used to be rich intense, and full of purpose and one that now, by comparison, seems thin and lacking in purpose and integrity.\(^\text{38}\)

Another important function that a spiritual formation program might play in the lives of teachers is to help them regain their passion for their work. The more Catholic teachers are able to perceive their work with fresh eyes, the more effective they will be in their mission to pass on the faith to their students. At least, Catholics teachers can adjust their mentality to see their struggles and frustrations in light of the pascal mystery. Ligo addresses this aspect of workplace spirituality by

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stating, “Our toil, our successes and failures in work, even the daily grind of monotony, can be assumed as a participation in Christ’s total act of self-giving.”

A final issue that could be tackled in a spiritual formation program is decision-making. The stress that Catholic teachers endure partially derives from the many decisions that they are required to make daily, often at a moment’s notice. While decisions should be carefully considered and given as much time as needed to reach a conclusion, the reality is that Catholic teachers are often asked to make decisions yesterday. As there is so little time and energy to carefully consider important decisions, decision-making becomes one more stressor, and the ability of Catholic teachers to make prudent decisions is diminished. Educational researchers have described the issue as follows:

( Teachers) come to the uncomfortable realization that teaching is not as straightforward as they initially thought. The complexity and uncertainty of classroom life and the cognitive demands of the work become plain. Teacher educators must prepare candidates to perceive and interpret the wide variation that typifies teaching and learning situations and to manage the dilemmas that arise.

Providing Catholic teachers with a decision-making process would certainly benefit Catholic teachers with this often-neglected life-skill. Focusing on decision-making in a spiritual formation program can help Catholic teachers appreciate that even the many decisions that they need to make at work has a spiritual component and that they can learn to recognize God’s will even in the choices that they make in their working environment. Above all, recognizing the support that God gives them in the decisions that they do make will have a positive impact.

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39 Ligo, 460.

CHAPTER 3: THE CATHOLIC SPIRITUAL TRADITION

In the previous section, some of the more prominent obstacles in the life of Catholic teachers were described. It was noted, in particular, that Catholic teachers deal with stress, work/life balance, low morale, and decision-making. Moreover, it was pointed out that all these issues have a spiritual component to them. Providing them with spiritual resources to deal with these struggles, would generally be well received by Catholic teachers. The aim of the spiritual formation program for Catholic teachers, therefore, is to scour the spiritual tradition of the Catholic Church to find some respite for Catholic teachers from these challenges. In this section and the next, some of the more central spiritual tools of the Catholic tradition that may support Catholic teachers with their struggles and that will be incorporated in the spiritual formation will be delineated.¹

Sabbath Rest

As was reported, Catholic teachers are not finding the time they need to care for themselves. If teachers are not even finding quality time to spend with their children, they are not taking the time to engage in activities that make them feel rejuvenated and which assist them to deal with their stress levels. Teachers do not perceive self-care and maintaining balance in their lives as achievable goals. Carol Bass, who has written extensively on this modern predicament, captures the feelings of teachers well when she remarks:

How often people today cry out in exasperation or despair, "I just don't have enough time!" There is so much to do: earn a living, fulfill a vocation, nurture relationships, care for dependents, exercise, clean the house. Moreover, we hope to maintain

¹ Space does not permit a presentation of every component of the spiritual formation program. Those highlighted in this section and the next serve more as examples of how the spiritual formation program operates than as an exhaustive account of all the spiritual elements in the program.
sanity while doing all this, and to keep growing as faithful and loving people at the same time. We are finite, and the demands seem too great, the time too short.²

This lack of balance is not just a professional or personal predicament for Catholic teachers. It is also a spiritual crisis as well. Most Catholic teachers today find themselves feeling overworked, always tired, stressed, and pulled in multiple directions. They are constantly moving from one activity to another, both in their professional and personal/family lives. They would like to slow down and find balance in their lives. They would like some time for themselves. But most Catholic teachers do not know how to find some time for self-care. This continual activity thus has consequences for their spiritual lives as well, as they have little time for God, parish life or any other religious activities. They neither have the time nor the energy to pray, to do any spiritual reading, and in some cases even struggle to attend Sunday Eucharist. One commentator prosaically described this spiritual crisis as, “If, in our busy lives, we find we can take no time for sunsets or symphonies, walks in the woods or weekend retreats, we will starve ourselves as surely as if we’d stopped eating.”³ Busyness produces a spiritual crisis, adversely affecting Catholic education. As Claire Wolfteich remarks, who has written about this time crunch from the viewpoint of women, These authors (busy mothers) are putting their finger on a spiritual dilemma – one that, unfortunately, has not been adequately addressed in theological scholarship. And yet, the perceived gap has serious implications for Christian spirituality and the future of the church.⁴

In the spiritual formation program, the ancient practice in the Judeo-Christian tradition of Sabbath rest will be offered as an antidote to the contemporary time crunch problem. While the Jewish faith reserves time specifically for God on the last day of the week, called the Sabbath, the

early Christians changed their day of rest from work to Sunday, the first day of the week. The change was precipitated, in part, by the desire of the early Christians to distance themselves from the Jewish faith and, in part, to honor the day that Jesus rose from the dead. From the time that Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire until quite recently, western culture supported the Christian belief of dedicating Sunday to God. For Catholics, Sunday was a day where only essential work was done, Catholics began the day by going to church, and the balance of the day was given over to more leisurely activities. Even within my lifetime, stores were closed on Sunday and one could not find a drink as bars were closed in my province of Ontario. In the last few decades, however, this sense of the sacredness of Sunday has been lost as western society has become ever more secular and Sunday is now a day like any other. Without this cultural support, unfortunately, most Catholics have also lost the sense that Sunday should be special and a day dedicated to God. Many Catholics today are not able to take Sunday as a day off from work and keeping Sunday holy only means trying to find an hour to go to mass, if that. Given this cultural shift, where even Catholic teachers no longer perceive Sunday as a holy day, to their detriment, how can we help them come to an appreciation for the need for Sabbath rest.\(^5\)

In the Bible, God provides His people with the gift of Sabbath rest. The Israelites were to work six days and then rest on the last day of the week. This concept of Sabbath rest could be one way of dealing with the spiritual crisis in which busy Catholic teachers find themselves. At first glance, such an assertion about Sabbath rest might appear rather naïve. As one author, Robert Sherman, commented, “In a 24/7 world, the notion of “Sabbath rest” may come across as a quaint

\(^5\) In this chapter, the terms Sabbath and Sabbath rest are used as they are employed in the literature on this topic. The Sabbath does not so much refer to a day of the week but is a short-form for the notion that some time each week should be dedicated to God, in the case of Catholics, especially on Sunday. In this chapter, how Catholics teachers can incorporate this concept of Sabbath rest into their lives in order to assist them with their major professional struggle – maintaining a good work/life balance – will be explored.
anachronism, a cruel fantasy, or simply unimaginable.”

Yet, tailored to the circumstances of the lives of Catholic teachers today, Sabbath rest may prove to have relevance even in a world where time is of the essence. Over the past few decades, various studies on Sabbath rest have appeared for individuals. As one team of psychologists who have written on this topic explains, “There is a growing interest in Sabbath keeping in America as a counterbalance to our culture’s consumerism, exhaustion, and loss of segmentation between work and other life arenas.” This literature will be analyzed, along with the Biblical record on the Sabbath, to create a practice of Sabbath rest for Catholic teachers. Again, as Bass maintains, “…there has rarely been a time when awareness of the human need for Sabbath has been greater, or the church’s call to address the need more urgent.”

The Sabbath figures in the Hebrew Scriptures rather quickly. In the first creation story in the book of Genesis (1:31-2:3), God leaves us with the great example of resting on the seventh day after God had created the world in six days. The Sabbath also figures prominently in the Ten Commandments. Sabbath rest is the fourth commandment of both versions of the Ten Commandments in Exodus (20:8) and in Deuteronomy (5:12). The Sabbath plays a prominent role in the New Testament. Jewish officials often criticize Jesus for breaking the Sabbath. (cf. Matt. 12-9-14 and Mark 3:1-6). Jesus has a less rigid understanding of the Sabbath than that of his contemporaries. The early Christian also saw Jesus as the fulfillment of the Sabbath, a gift he

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shares with his followers (Luke 4: 16-21). Jesus’s less strict approach to Sabbath keeping and his famous dictum that “The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath” (Mark 2: 27) are keys to interpreting Sabbath for a contemporary audience.

The Sabbath, furthermore, is much more than a just a prescribed period of time for the Israelites. The significance of the Sabbath is rather in the activities in which the Israelites should partake. There are three specific practices in the Jewish tradition that would benefit Catholic teachers, which include “rest, reflection, and relationships.” Rest refers not only to the cessation of work but it also suggests participating in activities that refresh the body and the soul. The purpose of the Sabbath for the Israelites is to spend the day such that when they returned to work the next day, they would be rejuvenated and ready to take on the affairs of the week. The Sabbath is also a day of reflection on the work of God in the world. Israelites were to remember and celebrate God’s many blessings in their life. The Sabbath was a time to be renewed in hope, acknowledging that just as God provided in the past, God would continue to shower them with His blessings in the future. During the Sabbath, Israelites were expected to spend time with God in prayer and reflection, alone and together, activities that did not always fit well with the rhythms of the workweek. The Sabbath is also meant to strengthen relationships. During the Sabbath, the family is spotlighted and family time is protected. The Sabbath begins at sunset the day before with a festive meal. The Sabbath reinforces the idea that a special bond is created among family members when they dine together. Families come together with no other agendas or activities completing for their attention other than to enjoy each other’s company. The Sabbath is also a time to renew acquaintances with friends and neighbors and visiting extended family is another popular Sabbath practice.

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10 For this three-fold formulation of Sabbath practices, see Diddams et al., 4.
Studies on a contemporary understanding of Sabbath rest have tended to focus on three different areas. First, a modern conceptualization of Sabbath rest focuses on health issues. A hectic lifestyle can cause many related health problems, everything from obesity from too much fast food to high blood pressure from too much stress. The practice of Sabbath rest is intended to promote healthier choices. By slowing down, Christians are to make time for physical activity to burn calories and to go out into the serenity of nature to reduce stress. Sabbath rest is a call to live a more balanced life that includes time set aside for exercise and the promotion of one’s health. A renewed understanding of Sabbath rest incorporates the belief that our bodies are part of God’s creation. As good stewards of creation, Christians should look after themselves.¹¹

Modern interpretations of the Sabbath are also social commentaries. There are in North American culture a number of highly questionable principles that spur on a hectic life-style. Consumerism is an especially egregious culprit. North Americans are encouraged to shop at all hours of the day or night. As one common slogan so crassly captures this idea, “business never sleeps.” The idea of Sabbath rest, then, espouses a counter-cultural message to the typical messages found in a postmodern world. While work and shopping for one’s basic needs are a necessary part of life, they are not the only meaningful activities for human beings, or even the most important human endeavors. By opting to ignore consumer activities and instead carving time for family, God, and self, Christians are sending a message to a society whose priorities are in disarray. Christians are making the statement that human beings to do not always have to produce and be useful. Sometimes, it is more appropriate for human beings just to be. Drudge summarizes this aspect of Sabbath rest as follows:

A Sabbath-keeping community is also freed from the tyranny of a culture of materialism and consumerism. North American society desperately needs the good

¹¹ For health related issues and the Sabbath, see Diddmas et al., p. 8.
news that we are more than producers and consumers of goods and services. A Sabbath day is a day to rest from nonessential work, to refrain from buying and selling, and to resolve not to worry about these things. When this rest and restraint becomes a practice, the church participates in and is itself a sign of life lived in relation to God who loves, provides, and orders all of life.\footnote{Drudge, 11.}

A third theme in a modern reading of Sabbath rest concerns the notion of time. While it is true that many people are over-stretched, still many people must shoulder the blame for at least some of their predicament. Christians as well can be their own worst enemies when it comes to over-scheduling their time. Christians have too easily adopted the prevailing attitudes about time and have fallen prey to the ways that the general population makes use of their time. Christians should be cautious not simply to blindly follow time patterns established in society, when it can be avoided. Sherman maintains that

\begin{quote}
Conventional wisdom claims we are more harried, more “pressed for time” than ever before. …Caught up in the press and clutter of daily life, of being “overschedule,” we miss the ways we have brought this upon ourselves by making certain assumptions about time and its use.\footnote{Sherman, 38-39.}
\end{quote}

The Christian tradition certainly has a different sense of time, springing from God’s eternal vantage point. Time is a part of creation and thus time is under the authority of God. Time is a divine gift with its own inherent patterns, weaving together work and rest, prayer and family, for the optimal benefit of human beings. As Jesus promised, if we follow God’s sense of time, our yoke will be easy and our burden light. (Matt. 11: 28-29). A Christians understanding of time definitely needs to be taught in our religious education programs for adults, with practical advice on incorporating them into their own lives. As Sherman recommends, “For many contemporary
Christians, the real issue is less a matter of ceasing work … and more a matter of perceiving time properly, and using it well, especially, “free” time.”

It should be noted here that at no point do modern interpreters of the Sabbath propose a rigid biblical Sabbatarianism, i.e. work six days and rest one full day a week. Rather modern understandings of Sabbath rest recognize that Christians are part of a society where they may have to work at any time, including weekends, and they have a legitimate number of other duties to occupy their time. Modern commentators on Sabbath rest suggest, therefore, adopting a more flexible approach to the Sabbath. Christians do not need to keep holy Sunday only. Christians can participate in the Sabbath rest on any day of the week whenever their schedules permit. Moreover, it need not be a full day. Sabbath rest can take place during any free hours, even minutes, which may open up for Christians. As well, the different Sabbath activities of rest, reflection, and relationships can be slotted in at different times of the week, not all at the same time. As Bass outlines,

In our situation, Sabbath keeping will require a good deal of inventiveness. Tilden Edwards, an Episcopal priest who has explored this practice in real life and in a book, urges contemporary Christians to be flexible, embracing not a renewed Sabbatarianism as much as a pattern of "Sabbath time." He recommends a combination of Sunday worship and play with a regular rhythm of disciplined spiritual renewal during the week.

Contemporary models of the Sabbath attempt to strike a balance between a strict observance of Sabbath and ignoring the commandment altogether. In the end, Sabbath rest is more about developing a new perspective about all time than spending one day a week in a certain manner. As once again Sherman instructs,

Sabbath was indeed made for humanity, as a gift and blessing of time for rest and refreshment, for joyful communion with God, one another, and all creation. Its

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14 Sherman, pp. 39-40.

If a strict observance of the Sabbath, as practiced by some Jewish traditions, is not the answer, then how might the idea of the Sabbath be modified for today’s Catholic teachers? A new vision of the Sabbath would need to be developed that retains the essence of the Sabbath and at the same time takes into account the realities of modern life. Specifically, the Sabbath cannot be another set of commitments added to an already crowded schedule. Wolfteich, who as mentioned examines the issue of time crunch for women, refers to the Sabbath as a possible tool to deal with the busyness of modern life. Still, the main thesis of her article is that traditional spiritual practices need to be adapted to our current context, including the practice of keeping Sabbath. A renewed understanding of the Sabbath for today’s Catholic teachers would need to be founded on three building blocks that can be termed mini-Sabbaths, midi-Sabbaths, and maxi-Sabbaths.

MINI-SABBATH: Earlier, I looked at the idea of some scholars that Christians would need to forge a new understanding of time in order to practice the Sabbath. I would argue that Catholic teachers would also need to adjust their perspective on the many duties that occupy their time. Currently, most Catholic teachers see the daily activities that crowd their schedules as being secular in nature. Most Catholic teachers would make a distinction between work as profane and church as sacred space. But Catholic thought no longer makes this dichotomy between the sacred and profane. All of life is considered sacred because God dwells in all the moments of one’s life and is present in all human activities. There would be a big impact if Catholic teachers perceived

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16 Sherman, 49.

17 For a parish that experimented with a different way of looking at the Sabbath, see Ralph DiBiasio-Snyder, and Carol DiBiasio-Snyder, “Keeping Sabbath in the Family: A Lenten Experiment.” Journal of Family Ministry, vol. 20 no 3 (Fall 2006), 46-48.

18 Wolfteich, 162-165.
their daily routine as infused by God’s Spirit. If Catholic teachers realized that God was present in their daily activities, protecting and blessing them, then they would not be so worried. Moreover, they would not need to find more time to dedicate to God. Catholic teachers would be present to God in the midst of their daily activities. Describing the experience of a mother, Wolfteich reports, “…if she listened differently, “God did, indeed, speak all day long – not despite the circumstances of my mothering, but through them…God could speak in unexpected ways or at unscheduled times.”19 A special dedicated time for God, while always needed, becomes less necessary when Catholic teachers learn to find God in teaching a lesson, supervising recess on the playground, and coaching a sports team.20

**MIDI-SABBATHS:** While most Catholic teachers would be hard pressed to find a consistent day where they can let go of all responsibilities, parts of days do materialize from time to time to dedicate to rest, reflection, and relationships. On long weekends, for example, there is always that extra day to do something life-giving. Occasionally, practices are canceled and meetings are rescheduled and teachers can find themselves with an unexpected free evening. Catholic teachers need to look for this unexpected free time and be prepared to do something special other than sitting in front of the TV or catching up on other work. As well, while contemporary life does not allow for one regular day per week to be devoid of work, over the course of a week, month, and year, times of leisure do appear on the calendar. For Catholic teachers, then, they need to learn to predict the rhythm of their week, month, and year, and dedicate that time for the Sabbath activities of rest, reflection, and relationships.

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19 Wolfteich, 152.

20 For a list of activities that “weave a pattern of holiness”, see *Follow the Way of Love*, 6.
MAXI-SABBATHS: The Sabbath time that Catholic teachers look forward to the most but who do not always take advantage of its potential to refocus their life is summer vacation. The common error that people make with vacations is that they try to pack in all the leisure activity that they do not have time for during the year. At the end of a vacation, many can be more tired than when they began. Instead, Catholic teachers should learn to use vacation time for practicing how they might want their regular routine to be. By experiencing during the summer months what a more leisurely pace is like, it might give Catholic teachers some ideas to implement when the academic year begins.
CHAPTER 4: IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY

Among the various spiritual traditions of the Catholic Church, the one that may have the most bearing on the lives of Catholic teachers is attributed to St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556). As a young man, Ignatius had aspirations of becoming a soldier but his military career was curtailed when he was wounded in battle.\(^1\) While recuperating from his leg wound, Ignatius would undergo a religious conversion while alternately fantasizing about a life of adventure and reading religious literature about Jesus and the lives of the saints. He noticed that after daydreaming about his exploits as a knight, he would be left with an empty feeling. He would, however, be more uplifted after reading about and reflecting on the example of the saints. Noticing these interior movements would inspire Ignatius to give his life to God. After he recovered, Ignatius abandoned his life at court and adopted an ascetical existence, growing in his religious fervor, as he wandered through the Basque area of Spain.\(^2\)

In due course, Ignatius began to attract a following who wanted to learn more about the spiritual life. Some acquaintances would come and stay with Ignatius while going through various spiritual exercises, while others would attempt them in the midst of their daily activity. At this point of his life, he would change the focus of his vocation from one of penance to “helping souls.”\(^3\) Eventually, Ignatius decided to consolidate all the insights that he had gained from his spiritual

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journey into a series of spiritual exercises, which would become the blueprint of what today are known as simply the Spiritual Exercises. The Spiritual Exercises are essentially guidelines for a retreat with a number of prayer sessions designed to assist people to grow in faith and knowledge of God’s will for their life. Margaret Silf indicates, “This continues to be the way in which the Exercises are used: as a guide to a director, mentor, or soul-friend in helping another person discover, through prayer and reflection, God’s action in his or her life.”

The Spiritual Exercises would also become the foundation of a unique expression of spirituality, known as Ignatian spirituality.

Essentially, Ignatian spirituality can be defined as

(Ignatius’s) experience of God’s gracious intervention in his personal human struggles, which he learned to carefully observe and methodize, provided the matrix of insights and practices that defined his own spiritual journey and became the foundation for the way of Christian life that is named for him.

Later in his life, Ignatius would find himself studying theology at the university in Paris where he would make the acquaintance of six young men – including St. Francis Xavier and Bl. Peter Faber - with similar religious aspirations. Ignatius put these men through the Spiritual Exercises and, together in time, they would go on to establish a new religious order known as the Society of Jesus. Ignatius would become the first Superior General of the Order. The order grew in numbers and significance quite rapidly. One of the distinctive features of the training of those who joined the order was making the Spiritual Exercises. Furthermore, one of the expectations that Ignatius had was that the members of his religious community would give the exercises to as many people as possible. Jesuits were instructed to offer the Exercises in parishes and they were

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6 Burke, xxiii.
encouraged to maintain in Jesuit houses a hospitality room for people who wished to make the exercises. Peter Faber wrote that he gave the Spiritual Exercises to royalty and to other religious communities who were in need of reform. One of the ministries of the Jesuit order, then, has always been to promote the Spiritual Exercises, which they have done with great flexibility in varying historical contexts. While addressing a gathering of Jesuits, Pope Benedict reminded them that

The Spiritual Exercises are the fountain of your spirituality and the matrix of your Constitutions, but they are also a gift that the Spirit of the Lord has made to the entire Church: it is for you to continue to make it a precious and efficacious instrument for the spiritual growth of souls, for their initiation to prayer, to meditation, in this secularised world in which God seems to be absent.\(^7\)

Since Vatican Council II in particular, Ignatian spirituality has found a good deal of popularity outside of the Jesuit order and has had a certain appeal among lay people as well.\(^8\) This modern interest in Ignatian spirituality by the laity may be a result of its origins. When Ignatius devised the Spiritual Exercises, he was still a lay person and they were intended for lay people. The Spiritual Exercises were conceived to strengthen the spiritual lives of the laity whose religious needs up until then had been largely ignored by clerical circles. Ignatius even made provisions that lay people could make the Exercises within the ordinary circumstances of their lives. As D. Lonsdale points out in his study on Ignatian spirituality, “And we should also remember that most of the crucial experiences which gave shape to his spirituality happened to him as a layman.”\(^9\)

Ignatian spirituality had its initial inspiration, consequently, within the context of the ordinary lives of the laity. Thus one of the distinguishing characteristics of Ignatian spirituality is

\(^7\) This statement by Pope Benedict is quoted in the introduction of the study by K. Burke and E. Burke-Sullivan, *The Ignatian Tradition*, xvii.

\(^8\) An example of this popularity can be seen in the number of books written on Ignatian spirituality aimed at the laity, such as those already cited in note #4 above and most of the other books that will be cited in this chapter.

that it emphasizes how to live a committed Christian life in the midst of the world. Even the Jesuit order was the first apostolic religious community. The Society of Jesus threw off any vestiges of monastic trappings, such as vows of stability and the liturgy of the hours, and their mission was to spread the Gospel message wherever they found themselves. Jesuit D. Brackley describes Ignatius as “...a revolutionary, breaking with the monastic ideal of prayer and insisting on integrating prayer and action. His style is especially suited to people leading busy lives.”

Since the vocation of the laity is to be lived in the world, Ignatian spirituality has much to teach lay people about being faithful to God among the many distractions of society, living peacefully with their neighbors, and making prayer a part of their busy lives. As M. Hellwig remarked, “Ignatius legacy goes far beyond the founding of the Jesuits – he launched a distinctive style and tradition of spirituality that is particularly apt for our time.” Given these ties to the lay life, Ignatian spirituality would have much to offer Catholic teachers. Many of the practices of the Spiritual Exercises, which derived ultimately from the lived experience of Ignatius as a layperson, still have relevance for Catholic teachers who live their vocation in a secular milieu.

Another interesting development in the early history of the Society of Jesus is that education became one of the key missions of the order. There is a very real complementarity between the teaching ministry and Ignatian spirituality. When the new religious order of the Society of Jesus was founded in Rome in 1540, they had no real vision for the order except to follow the directives of the Pope and they were quite unsure about the direction that their order


should take. But by the time Ignatius passed away in 1556, the Society of Jesus had established over thirty-five schools. From its very beginning, education has become one of the ministries for which the Jesuits are most noted. The Jesuits, moreover, would not only become a teaching order, but would become renowned for their academic prowess. Clearly, many who were intensely formed in the Spiritual Exercises would develop a real affinity for teaching and learning. The unexpected manner, therefore, by which the Jesuits became involved with education would suggest that there is something about the spirituality and charism of the order that made its members particularly susceptible to assuming the mantle of teaching. Inherit within Ignatian spirituality is an attraction to education or, stated slightly differently, there is an correspondence between Ignatian spirituality and education. Since the order that espouses Ignatian spirituality has had this long history with education, it would be one more reason to presuppose that Ignatian spirituality would be a suitable complement to any spiritual formation program designed for Catholic teachers.

While Ignatian spirituality might have much to offer contemporary Catholic teachers, the question still remains how it might best be delivered to them. Certainly, since the lives of teachers are already characterized by a shortage of time, a thirty day Ignatian retreat, which is the most common and fullest form that the Spiritual Exercises are offered, would be most impractical. In the section of instructions to retreat directors, known as annotations, Ignatius makes a provision, for those who are too engaged in worldly affairs and unable to withdraw for a month, to do the exercises in daily life. Known as annotation nineteen, the retreatants would need to be able to pray at least one hour every day for a number of months. This method of delivering the Spiritual

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14 For a study that surveys a number of lay people who did annotation nineteen, see Patrick Kelly, S.J., “Loved into Freedom and Service: Lay Experiences of the Exercises in Daily Life,” Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits, vol. 39 no. 2 (Summer 2007), 1-35. Due to the universal call to holiness proposed by Vatican Council II and the rapid expansion of lay ministry, Kelly concludes that the Nineteenth Annotation Retreat may be particularly suited for lay
Exercises would similarly require a significant amount of time which would be difficult to imagine that Catholic teachers could afford. In the previous annotation, however, Ignatius advises retreat directors that some people, due to their many commitments, would not be able to do the full retreat even in daily life. Ignatius, therefore, further modifies the delivery of the Spiritual Exercises to an even greater degree. In annotation eighteen\textsuperscript{15}, Ignatius provides for a shorter form of the exercises where the retreatants are only exposed to the most basic elements of his formation program. In this annotation, Ignatius counsels that

\begin{quote}
The Spiritual Exercises should be adapted to the disposition of the persons who desire to make them… exercitants should be given, each one, as much as they are willing to dispose themselves to receive, for their greater help and progress.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

For those who are identified as prospects for this category, the practices into which they should be initiated are the Examen, Ignatian prayer and discernment. In this study, then, the spiritual formation program for Catholic teachers will follow the recommendations found in annotation eighteen and the program will familiarize the participants with the practices of the Examen, Ignatian prayer, and discernment. While the full retreat experience would generally not be possible for Catholic teachers, some of the major themes and prayer methods of the Spiritual Exercises would not only foster their faith life but also assist them to reduce stress and face other professional challenges. These foundational elements of the Spiritual Exercises will now be described.

**The Examen and Finding God in All Things**

Ignatius promoted a spiritual ideal commonly referred to as “Finding God in All Things.” This ideal ultimately derived from his mystical experiences of the Trinity that Ignatian received people. Of the twenty lay people surveyed, many had similar kinds of profound experiences while going through the retreat, which helped them to see their lives and their work as service to God.

\textsuperscript{15} *Ignatius of Loyola*, 126-127.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 126.
during his stay in Manresa.\textsuperscript{17} Through these mystical illuminations, Ignatius came to understand that the Trinity created all that exists. But after creating the universe, the Trinity does not abandon creation. Rather the Trinity continues to be present in creation and is constantly working within creation for its salvation. The most dramatic example of God working in the world is seen in the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity and the redemption wrought by Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection. Through Jesus’ redemptive work, creation is being brought back to God. God is even immersed in human history through the third person of the Trinity and uses history to reveal himself and his love to the world. The Holy Spirit continues to operate in the world to mediate the redemptive work of Jesus to successive generations.

This understanding of the Trinitarian nature in Ignatian spirituality implies that God can be found not only in more sacred places and activities, such as churches and prayer. God is just as present in mundane activity and the monotony of daily life. As one study on Ignatian spirituality expresses this point:

\begin{quote}
Ignatian spirituality does not deny the importance of intentional prayer activities, but it is more essentially about recognizing the presence and power of God in absolutely everything and in every activity done for love. All the created order is overflowing with the divine existence.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

Since God is always working in creation, human beings can come to meet God in their regular routine. Human beings can sustain their relationship with God through recognizing God in the events and circumstances of their life. For human beings, even their work can become opportunities for growth in holiness. By recognizing the sacred nature of honest work and the


\textsuperscript{18} Burke, xxxv.
benefits that accrue from the effort that is put into their labor, human beings can become the best version of themselves and contribute to the Trinity’s work in creation. ¹⁹

This practice of finding God in all things could make a substantial transformation in the lives of Catholic teachers. If teachers could come to see the sacred nature of their work environment, where the presence of God is palpable, it would revolutionize the way they understand their profession. They would no longer perceive their work environment as simply a series of challenges that are difficult to negotiate. Rather work is a context in which sacred moments are realized and sacred rituals are enacted every day. The practice of finding God in all things will assist teachers to realize that God is present during their day to support them and give them strength for whatever may unfold. While there is always so much to do, recognizing the sacred in their midst may help them to prioritize and determine what is best for all concerned and what is just not worth worrying over. A refocused appreciation of their work environment, as a place in which God continues to work in the world, would allow Catholic teachers to be more confident in their role, would draw out their gifts and abilities, would develop their relationship with God, and ultimately, it would reduce their stress levels. It would also be one of the most important religion lessons that they could provide their students, that their classroom is a place where God is present and all that they do each day is done under the watchful protection of God. Through a greater appreciation of God’s presence even in their work, Catholic teachers may develop a greater ability to handle stress, their relationships with co-workers are strengthened, and their work becomes less frantic.

¹⁹ For a discussion on finding God in all things, see http://www.loyolapress.com/ignatian-spirituality-finding-god-in-all-things.htm?class_id=13&parent_class_id. See also Hedwig, 48-52 and Barry and Doherty, 77-80.
Followers of Jesus, therefore, are able to find God in all things because creation and history are full of God’s presence. God is present not only in special liturgical times but throughout a person’s life. Most people, however, normally do not notice this divine presence in their lives because they are too preoccupied. Wrapped up in their own affairs, they are not able to recognize how much God is a part of their lives. Consequently, humans need to develop the spiritual aptitude to discover God in the events of their life. For Ignatius, finding God in all things involves prayer. Prayer, moreover, was more than just spending time in quiet and stillness. According to Ignatius, it also consisted of becoming aware of God’s presence as people went about their regular routine, striving to fulfill God’s will in the world. Fundamental to the ideal of finding God in all things is the notion that “For parents, laborers, and community workers, lengthy daily prayer would require neglecting important responsibilities. If God calls us to such tasks, then God must want us to pray in ways that will help us fulfill them, not undermine them.” Ignatius was no stranger to the problem of being too busy to pray. As Superior General of the Society of Jesus, for example, he had to deal with members of the order in Spain who wanted those in formation to spend less time on their academic studies and more time in prayer. Nevertheless, each time that this thorny issue materialized, St. Ignatius always favored that his men focused on the mission that God had given them than spending large amounts of time in prayer. Ignatius would continually remind the members of his order, if they were not able to find God in the midst of their mission, they would not find God in prayer either. St. Ignatius’s advice was always to use the prayer he called the Examen as the foundation of a Jesuit’s spiritual life.

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20 For this tension between prayer and action, see Barry and Doherty, 25-33.

21 Brackley, 245.

22 For a discussion of the attitude of St. Ignatius toward prayer and action, where this incident and other examples are related, see ibid., 244-252.
The practice that Ignatius offers in the Spiritual Exercises to “find God in all things” is the Examen. Ignatius encouraged those who made the Spiritual Exercises to spend a few minutes at the end of each day to pray the Examen as it was the best way to continue the Exercises in one’s daily life. The Examen is a prayer that involves reviewing the past day. The Examen is not a kind of examination of conscious, though some have understood it in that manner in the past. The emphasis in the Examen is not so much on human action as it is on the activity of God in the world. The Examen is a prayer of awareness where, while examining their day, the practitioners of this prayer try to become conscious of where God has been present in their life that day. The Examen prayer is designed to help people realize that while they go through their day God is not in some distant afterlife. Rather God is imminently present in their life, supporting them and leading them to peace and love. Due to the human tendency to be so focused on their worldly concerns and activities, most people miss the many ways that God was involved in their life that day. The aim of the Examen then is to bring to consciousness what was largely ignored. Becoming aware of how God is present in their daily routine also has the effect of shedding new light on events of their life. What some may have originally thought was some kind of destructive experience, may turn out to be something grace-filled when analyzed through the prism of the Examen. With practice, those who make use of the Examen are better able to determine how God is present in all the events of their life, both monumental and seemingly insignificant. In time, as they mature in the practice of the Examen, they also learn to recognize God’s presence in their life as events are actually unfolding, not just in hindsight.

The Examen is a prayer with five steps. Those who use this prayer begin by acknowledging the many blessings that they received that day in their life and by offering a prayer of thanksgiving. This step helps them to obtain a more grateful disposition. In step two, they next make a prayer of
petition asking God to give them the wisdom and grace to make a good review of their day. This step recognizes that humans are unable to fully appreciate God’s actions in their life simply with their own intelligence but also require divine inspiration. In step three, they review their day attempting to discern where God was present. This involves, for example, appreciating that something someone said to them that day has such significance that it can be seen as a word from God. Recalling some powerful interior movements can be understood as a desire for or from God. In this step, those who pray the Examen are particularly interested in discovering which event during the day roused the greatest reaction in them, however positive or negative. The incident that is isolated in step three, then, becomes the source of reflection in step four. One attempts to find the significance of that particular event and how God was working in their life at that specific moment. Depending on what one discors from the experience, they can conclude this step with a prayer of gratitude, forgiveness, or petition for assistance, whatever the case dictates. In step five, those who pray the Examen look to the future and concretely begin to make plans for the next day. Here, they ask God for wisdom and strength for the next round of activities and events in the day to come, confident that God is with them.23

For busy teachers who have little time to pray and who deal with high levels of stress, the practice of the Examen would be ideal for them. First, the Examen prayer does not take much time. It should take no more than about ten or fifteen minutes and can be done as one prepares to go to

bed. Thus the Examen is especially suited for people who lead hectic lives. Not only is it practical, reflecting over their day may be exactly what Catholic teachers need to reduce stress. Levels of stress are determined primarily by one’s perceptions of one’s capabilities to deal with challenges. By reflecting on their day, teachers may come to learn that they may be handling things better than they thought. They may also come to the realization that there are more good things happening in their schools and classrooms than the one or two things they may be obsessing over. Teachers may be comforted as they become aware of God’s continuous presence in their work. Finally, as they look ahead to the next day, they can rest assured that God will provide them with the where-with-all to deal with whatever may come their way. The Examen can increase their confidence in dealing with the pressures of teaching and provide them with the spiritual strength to cope with any situation. Through the Examen, Catholic teachers will learn that “When we strive to love and serve as God desires, all of life becomes a prayer, and an offering, and we learn in the midst of our daily activity, to find God in all things.”

Discernment – For the Greater Glory of God

In keeping with the times, Ignatius encouraged a certain humility and spiritual poverty. When it came to acting on God’s behalf, conversely, Ignatius urged Catholics to seek what in Latin is termed the *magis.* The *magis*, often translated as “the more,” is the Ignatian ideal that Christ’s followers should always strive to do better and always give more of themselves. Ignatius taught that Catholics should dream big and not be afraid to follow their deepest desires. Seeing the *magis* was not intended as a kind of self-promotion or self-aggrandizement. Rather, it was envisioned as doing something special for God and to exalt God before others. Jesuit J. Martin depicts this

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24 Brackley, 252.

25 For a fuller description of the concepts of the magis and the greater glory of God, see Martin, 369-371.
concept as, “Built into the Ignatian way, then, is the desire for the magis. Ultimately, “eliciting great desires” and inviting people to think big is the seed for doing great things for God.” As Jesuits are fond of expressing it, the magis is a call to do everything “for the greater glory of God.” According to Ignatius, when negotiating the twists and turns of life and decisions need to be made, Catholics are to choose that which puts the focus on God and underscores the love that God has for all people. For Catholics, then, the question becomes what concretely are they to do in their life that would give God the greater glory. In Ignatian spirituality, there is a practice that helps Catholics make decisions for the greater glory of God.

Another practice in the Exercises of St. Ignatius that might support the work of Catholic teachers is Ignatian discernment. Out of his experience of reading religious literature and fantasizing over being a courtier while convalescing, Ignatius developed a process or methodology of decision-making. Ignatius would codify these experiences in the Spiritual Exercises as “the rules for the discernment of spirits” (SE # 313-336). All retreatants learn and practice these rules of discernment during the Spiritual Exercises and are invited to use these rules whenever they have a decision to make, large or small, in their daily lives. In this process of the rules of discernment, intellect plays a role. Those who are making a decision are asked to acquire and analyze as much relevant information as possible when making a decision. But for Ignatius feelings also play a significant role in reaching any determination. Known as the discernment of spirits, a feature of Ignatian decision-making involves learning to pay attention to one’s affectivity. Those who practice Ignatian discernment need to learn how to recognize those impulses in themselves that draw them to God, which Ignatius termed spirits of consolation. Alternatively, they need to identify

26 Martin, 370.

27 *Ignatius of Loyola*, 201-207.
those dynamics in themselves that push them away from God, known as spirits of desolation. Much more sophisticated than merely distinguishing between feelings of happiness and sadness, discernment of spirits is a complex process that requires decision-makers to know themselves well. In North American society, at least, emotions are not always trusted and certainly should not be overtly demonstrated in public. Given this uncertainty about emotions, people tend to have an underdeveloped sense of this aspect of their personality. Learning to understand one’s interior movements which often unconsciously influence one’s decisions is an insight of Ignatian spirituality that many Catholics need and which has even been appropriated by the fields of morality and psychology.28

Integral to Ignatian discernment is the concept of indifference. When in the process of making a decision, Ignatius instructed that people should be indifferent to the results. Indifference does not connote apathy but requires those using the method not to have a stake in the outcome. For if they favor any of the possibilities over any of the other choices, then they will not be objective and free enough to make the best decision possible. Ignatian discernment is ultimately centered on finding God’s will for one’s life. Any significant decision that Christ’s followers make in their life, be it career, marriage, or where to live, should include some reference to where God wants to plant them in order to grow in their vocation. In their choices, Christ’s followers should attempt to determine how their lives can be best used to honour God and give God the greater

glory. In short, Ignatian discernment is a practice for Christ’s followers to bring their decisions to prayer and to invite God to be part of the decision-making process. As Monty Williams explains in his study on this topic, “Discernment, however, puts the context of decision making in terms of a lived relationship with the mystery we call God.”

As a tool for Catholic teachers, the rules of discernment may assist them in the many decisions that they have to make each day. As was discussed earlier, the stress that Catholic teachers endure partially derives from the many decisions that they are required to make on a daily basis, often at a moment’s notice. The Ignatian discernment of spirits can help Catholic teachers with this much needed life-skill. By learning to discern their affective movements, Catholic teachers can be better attuned to whether they are in consolation, and working in a manner that is essentially moving towards God. In contrast, they would be better able to detect times of desolation, when the general direction of their affective movements is away from God. Discernment can help Catholic teachers understand that even the many decisions that they need to make at work has a spiritual component and that they can learn to recognize God’s will even in the choices that they make in their employment. Ignatian spirituality can assist Catholic teachers to recognize that God has a plan, not only for their life, but for their work as well. Sometimes this can be hard to discern when they are constantly on the move. Nevertheless, the practice of the discernment of spirits provides teachers with a convenient tool, which might help them with one of the stressors in their professional lives.

**Ignatian Prayer – Contemplation in Action**

As mentioned, the Spiritual Exercises are essentially a series of meditations principally on the life, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The crucial feature of Ignatian prayer, however,
is its relationship to action. Ignatian prayer is characterized by its incarnational quality. As Ignatian scholar J. Melloni, S.J. states

The search for union with God – that aspiration which is within the heart of every human being – comes about for him not through the flight from the world (fuga mundi) of monastic tradition, but through the kenotic movement of incarnation in the world and for the world.³⁰

Prayer in the Ignatian tradition is not intended to be divorced from the vagaries of daily life. In fact, everyday activities are the raw data for prayer. Prayer in the Ignatian tradition is understood as a tool for those who come before God to make sense of their lives. Prayer is a way to gain insight into their lives from a divine perspective. Moreover, prayer should inspire those who pray to return to the world in order to work in the service of God. Action in Ignatian spirituality is seen not only as the fruit of prayer but a prayer in its own right. Action that emanates from one’s prayer life is a continuation of that prayer. For Ignatian spirituality, prayer and action are two-sides of the same coin for one’s actions are brought to prayer and prayer is concretized in action.³¹

Ignatius employed an imaginative form of meditation in his Exercises, where retreatants would place themselves in the Gospel passage. As retreatants reflected on various Gospel passages, they were not only to use their minds to derive some moral lessons or theological truths from the events in Jesus’s life. More importantly, Ignatius instructed those who did the Spiritual Exercises to imagine themselves as part of the action. By putting themselves in the scene, retreatants were encouraged to experience the event in the passage through their senses. They were to smell, hear, and touch whatever was occurring in the passage. Furthermore, retreatants were asked to feel the


emotions emanating from the passage. If characters were dealing with loss or experiencing wonder, the retreatants were to empathize with the characters of the story. The objective of this form of prayer was to become attune to the affects that the sights and sounds of the passage, as well as the emotional aspects of the story, would have on the retreatant. By reflecting on what they were drawn to in the passage, the retreatants were to uncover the condition of their own interior self and to grasp the spiritual issues that needed attention in their own life. Above all, the retreatants were to listen for any call that the passage might inspire or action that may be required on the part of the retreatant.\(^{32}\)

A number of resources have been produced to assist a modern audience to pray in the Ignatian tradition. Those interested in Ignatian spirituality can find several prayer books that assist the reader to become a contemplative in action without having to do the thirty-day retreat.\(^{33}\)

The Spiritual Exercises are sprinkled with a number of pivotal meditations, such as the meditation on the “Two Standards” (#136-147),\(^{34}\) where retreatants are asked to reflect on whether they wish to stand behind the banner of good or the banner of evil, that is to choose between good and evil. As a summary of the Ignatian spirit, however, the one meditation that is especially pertinent in a spiritual formation program for Catholic teachers is “The Contemplation to Attain Love.” (#230-237)\(^{35}\) G. Fagin maintains that “…this contemplation captures the essence of the

\(^{32}\) For a discussion of Ignatian imaginative prayer, see Burke, xxxviii-xxxix; O’Brien, 23-28; Brackley, 224-252; Fleming, 49-59; and Martin, 143-173.


\(^{34}\) Ignatius of Loyola, 154-156.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 176-177.
Ignatian vision and articulates the heart of Ignatian spirituality.” In a similar vein, Dean Brackley considers this meditation to be “... the conclusion and apt climax of the Spiritual Exercises.” This is the case because the contemplation brings together the main elements and movements within the Exercises. Brackley comments that “The purpose of the Contemplation is to arouse love in us; to become so aware of God’s love that we are moved to respond by loving in the same way.” Everything in the Spiritual Exercises, according to Brackley, concerns experiencing the love of God and this process reaches its culmination in the Contemplation to Attain Love. This particular meditation awakens retreatants to how much God has loved them and God is inviting them to love Him in return. Growing in their awareness of God’s love for them, there is an expectation in the Spiritual Exercises of an ultimate surrender on the part of the retreatants that is finally properly expressed in the Contemplation to Attain Love. In the Exercises, then, there is this process where in the beginning God is the lover and the retreatants are the beloved but by the end the retreatants are the lovers and God is the beloved. There is this process of reciprocal love which gets reinforced in the final prayer session of the Exercises in the Contemplation to Attain Love.

Ignatian prayer and this meditation specifically will be incorporated into the spiritual formation program for Catholic teachers because helping them see themselves as God sees them may be the most important formation experience that Catholic teachers can receive. By reflecting on how much God loves them and has blessed them, Catholic teachers will realize the many qualities and gifts that they possess that make them lovable to God and others. As Burke and

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36 Fagin, 67.
37 Brackley, 212.
38 Ibid., 213.
39 For a more in-depth discussion on this mediation, see Brackley, 212-222 and Fagin, 67-70.
Burke-Sullivan maintain, “a person’s experience of that love (of God) undercuts the power of self-loathing, the negative effects of human rejection, and the human tendency to fear death and a myriad of other perceived threats.”\footnote{Burke, xxxii.} Knowing that they are loved by God is the most important fruit of the spiritual formation program for Catholic teachers, to which we now turn.
CHAPTER 5: THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT

An Overview

In a treatise that probes what might prove to be an effective spiritual formation program for Catholic teachers, the researcher attempted to answer this question by designing a spiritual formation program and offering it to twenty-five Catholic teachers. The spiritual formation program was developed in a course taken by the researcher on project design. The twenty-five Catholic teachers consisted of staff members from the Durham Catholic District School Board where the researcher works as the chaplain for the school board. After participating in the program, the Catholic teachers were then asked to evaluate the program by filling out two different surveys. The responses to these surveys have been the primary data that the researcher utilized to determine the value of this spiritual formation program.

The project began with the search for the requisite number of Catholic teachers. In September of 2015 at the beginning of the academic year, the researcher contacted by email approximately seventy Catholic teachers from the Durham Catholic District School Board to participate in the faith formation program that he had designed. In the email, it was explained that the researcher was a graduate student in the Doctor of Ministry Program at the Catholic University of America and that one of the requirements of the D. Min. Program was the completion of a project. The email gave a brief explanation of the spiritual formation program and that the researcher was inviting them to be part of the project. The researcher approached teachers to be a part of the project who were well known to him and whom he suspected would be interested in such an endeavor. The researcher attempted to assemble a cross-section of the teachers in the

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1 The actual email that was sent to prospective participants can be found in appendix #1.

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school board. The intention was to have some participants from elementary schools and high schools; some experienced teachers and some who were newer to the profession.

The faith formation program for Catholic teachers consisted of nine sessions of two hours each. There was one introductory session, where the participants were given further information about the project. It was followed by eight sessions of two hours each that constituted the actual spiritual formation project. The introductory session was held on the last Wednesday of September 2015 and the spiritual formation sessions took place on the eight subsequent Wednesdays, ending on the final week of November 2015. All nine sessions were held in the same location, the library of All Saints Secondary School. This library was well suited for the purposes of the spiritual formation program. It has a large area for presentations, equipped with the technology that was required for presentations. It also had comfortable sections for personal reflection time, and was large enough for breakout or small group sessions. There was also a convenient section of the library where snacks could be laid out and which the researcher had on hand for the participants at each of the sessions.²

The project began with the above-mentioned introductory session. The purpose of the introductory session was to allow the participants an opportunity to get to know each other and to learn more about the spiritual formation program. The following eight sessions consisted of two different formats that alternated from week-to-week. In four sessions³, the researcher gave a presentation dealing with a challenge commonly faced by Catholic teachers and its spiritual implications. He then followed with a exploration of an aspect of the Catholic spiritual tradition

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² While the researcher provided snacks for the participants at each of the sessions, at the conclusion of the eighth session, the researcher engaged the services of a catering service and the participants shared a meal together. The dinner was a token of the researcher’s appreciation for the participants volunteering their time and energy to his project.

³ Sessions #1, #3, #5, and #7.
that has some bearing on the particular teacher struggle. The concluding part of these four presentations consisted of an introduction to an Ignatian spiritual practice that pertains to the struggle under discussion. The participants were instructed on how to perform the Ignatian spiritual practice and encouraged to use it during the course of the upcoming week. Interspersed between each of the four presentation sessions were four sessions of faith sharing.\textsuperscript{4} In these small group sessions, participants were given an opportunity to discuss the professional issue and Ignatian practice examined the previous week.\textsuperscript{5}

Approximately, two weeks after the end of the program, the participants were sent an email with a link to a survey. This instrument of evaluation was created with the assistance of the online, software service SurveyMonkey, to which the researcher purchased a subscription. The questionnaire gathered data on the participants’ impressions and impact of the overall spiritual formation program. In addition, the participants were asked to evaluate the individual components of the program. Three months later, a second, shorter questionnaire was sent to the participants, again through SurveyMonkey. The main purpose of this survey was to assess the long-term impact of the program on the spiritual lives of the participants.\textsuperscript{6}

\textit{The Spiritual Formation Sessions}

\textbf{PARTICIPANTS:} As mentioned, the researcher approached potential participants by email. The researcher sent the original email to 35 staff members but received only 18 positive responses. The Catholic teachers who decided to participate in the project reported that they were honored to have

\textsuperscript{4} Sessions # 2, #4, #6, and #8.

\textsuperscript{5} See appendix #2 for a proposed outline of the various sessions, which however was altered as the project progressed.

\textsuperscript{6} The questions asked in these two surveys can be found in appendix #9.
been asked and felt that they would receive some personal benefits from the program. The reason that was generally cited by those who declined to participate in the program was that they could not afford to make the extensive time commitment that the project required. Another common reason that was given for declining the invitation was that they could not attend on the night of the week that the project was scheduled to take place. Among those that declined were some teachers that the researcher was counting on to participate in the project. It made the search for participants that much more precarious. The researcher continued to send the same email to prospective participants until he received affirmative responses from 28 teachers, a number sufficient for the project.

At the initial introductory session, however, only twenty-five teachers were present. Two of those who did not attend contacted me after the introductory session to inform me that they had decided not to participate in the program after all. The third staff member who was absent apologized for missing the session and promised to make future sessions. But, as a high school vice-principal, one incident or another kept her from attending any of the sessions. Of the twenty-five Catholic teachers who attended the introductory session, two of them, upon further reflection, decided not to take part in the project. They commented that, after learning more about the project at the introductory presentation, they realized that they did not have the time that the program required, especially for one teacher who had just had a baby.

Of the twenty-three that continued after the introductory session, twenty of them came to at least seven of the nine sessions. The average attendance was about eighteen participants per session. Three participants were more sporadic with their attendance. One elementary vice-principal had various conflicts. Another staff member got into a car accident during the period of the program and had to miss for medical appointments. The third acquired a new position in the
school board and the changes in her workload made it difficult for her to attend. One of the obstacles, therefore, with which the researcher had to contend throughout the project was absenteeism. Despite the good intentions of the participants, the pressures and commitments of their lives kept them from attending some of the sessions. As one of the participants inferred, the problem with absences simply mirrored the issues that were being discussed in the spiritual formation program.

Of the twenty-eight Catholic teachers that originally accepted the offer to participate in the spiritual formation program, there were nineteen elementary, female teachers and three elementary, male teachers. There were also four secondary, female teachers and two secondary, male teachers. All the Catholic teachers in the program had been in the profession for at least ten years. The demographics of the participants in my project are instructive in two ways. First, the preponderance of females over males indicates more than simply there are a significant higher number of females than males in the teaching profession. It is also evidence of the challenge of attracting male teachers to spiritual or religious activities. Second, the lack of younger teachers is more than just an indication that the board has not been hiring many new staff members in the last several years. It also exposes a difficulty for any spiritual formation program. Catholic teachers with young families cannot carve out the time to attend such a program.

**INTRODUCTORY SESSION:** The initial session began with introductions of the participants. Each shared their names, schools, and current assignments in the board. These brief introductions were followed by the opening prayer. Titled *Companions on the Journey*, the opening prayer service focused on becoming a community journeying together to grow spiritually. The prayer service was created in PowerPoint to save paper. The prayer service was conducted in the library
(even though it could have been held in the chapel) to create the impression that it will be their sacred space through the duration of the program.

The researcher then had the participants engage in an icebreaker known as “Four Corners.” This is an activity where the facilitator posts four quotes in the four corners of the room. Players then walk around the room reading all four quotes. They then settle at the quote that most speaks or applies to them. The players at each one of the four corners introduce themselves to those they do not know and discuss why they came to that corner. In this way, the players of the icebreaker get to know one another better and meet people with whom they may not have been familiar. The researcher used four quotes by Pope Francis. For the purposes of his project, moreover, the researcher used this icebreaker to form the faith sharing groups for later sessions. The researcher explained to the participants at the end of the icebreaker that those at each one of the corners would be the four faith sharing groups in subsequent sessions. The researcher had each group record the names of the participants at each corner.

Following the icebreaker, the participants were given a survey to complete at this session.\(^7\) The purpose of this survey was to determine their level of knowledge of and experience with some of the elements of the spiritual formation program. The survey also inquired about the obstacles that they experience to their own spiritual growth and their understanding of spiritual formation. The results from this survey were then be compared with the results of the survey at the end of the program to measure any progress that may have been made in their spiritual lives.

After a short break, the researcher then described the purpose and nature of the four presentation sessions and the process of the four faith sharing sessions. The researcher provided

\(^7\) This survey is found in appendix #3.
the participants with a handout describing each one of these sessions. The researcher then proceeded to give the participants a brief introduction to Catholic spirituality and the purpose of a spiritual formation program. Ignatian spirituality was also a topic of discussion and the researcher impressed upon the participants the significance of praying the various Ignatian practices during the course of the spiritual formation program. Finally, the researcher also gave them a journal and the participants were invited to keep a record of their thoughts and experiences while in the spiritual formation program.

PRESENTATION SESSIONS: The first session of the spiritual formation program focused on the issue of work/life balance. As was noted earlier, one of the biggest challenges that teachers face is a lack of time for themselves. In this session, the researcher began with an opening prayer on PowerPoint on the theme of “slowing down.” In the first half of the session, the researcher began by examining the spiritual implications of the busy lives that teachers lead. As well, the researcher reviewed the current research that is being done on Sabbath rest. The overview of this topic was done on PowerPoint. During this section of the presentation, the participants were also given some personal reflection time. After a brief break, the second half of the presentation featured the Ignatian practice of the Examen. The researcher described the five-step process of the Examen and provided the participants with a handout on the purpose and steps of this spiritual practice as a

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8 See appendix #3.
9 See Chapter 2 of this treatise for a fuller discussion of this issue.
10 See appendix #4 for the opening prayer.
11 For the discussion on Sabbath rest, see chapter 3.
reference guide. Specifically, the researcher highlighted how the Examen could be a tremendous spiritual tool for people who were too busy to pray on a regular basis.

The first session immediately brought to the surface two issues that would continue to plague the project. The first problem concerned participants not arriving on time. Given their many responsibilities, the participants could not always be punctual and the sessions never began as planned. Consequently, the researcher was forced to make adjustments to the schedule and many of the individual elements of the spiritual formation program were given short shrift. As the researcher could not keep the participants any later then the agreed upon ending time, the final element of the program was particularly impacted. Not enough time was generally dedicated to the Ignatian spiritual practice, which in many ways was intended to be the centerpiece of the spiritual formation program.

Another issue that promptly came to light was the over use of PowerPoint. The researcher was instructed that he would need to document all that took place in the different sessions and he surmised that PowerPoint presentations would best meet this requirement of the project. After the first session, however, the researcher at once received some negative feedback about the presentation. While they felt that the content was good, a few suggested that the use of PowerPoint was excessive and it made the session feel too much like a classroom. As the researcher reflected on this constructive criticism, he came to agree that too much PowerPoint would indeed turn the presentation sessions into a classroom format. Obviously, this predicament was contrary to one of the key objectives of this spiritual formation program that it would not take on the tone of a classroom setting. The researcher intended that the spiritual formation program have a retreat-like

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12 For these resource materials, see appendix #4.

13 For a fuller description of the Examen, see chapter 4.
quality to it. Consequently, the researcher turned his attention to giving the subsequent presentation sessions less of a classroom aura and more of an atmosphere of a retreat. This change in direction entailed, as well, altering previously published descriptions of the presentation sessions.

In the second presentation session (#3), projectors and screens were pushed to the side and the participants sat in a circle. The opening prayer, which emphasized God’s love, was conducted with minimal worship aids, the participants receiving only a sheet of paper with the responses. The theme of the presentation was work-place pressure and stress and its impact on the spirituality and self-image of the Catholic teacher. Again, this presentation took on the tone of a friendly chat, as the different teacher stressors were examined. I took the insights from Henri Nouwen’s book, *Life of the Beloved*, as a tool to assist participants with work related stress. The aim of the presentation was to get participants to see themselves as God perceives them, beloved children with special gifts, capable of dealing with any challenges that may come their way. Nouwen provides four means by which individuals may come to appreciate their uniqueness and the researcher provided the participants with some reflection time after each piece of advice that Nouwen provides. The second half of the presentation consisted of an exploration of the final meditation of the *Spiritual Exercises*, popularly known as the “Contemplation to Attain Love.” As the title suggestions, the purpose of the prayer is for the participants to discover, not only God’s love for them, but also their own qualities that make them loveable. There was some time at the end of the session for them to begin this meditation.

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15 See appendix #5 for these reflection questions.
At the end of this session, the researcher once again took the pulse of the group and without fail each participant appreciated the more relaxed atmosphere of session #3. The general consensus indicated that they found this model, where there was time to relate the material to their own lives, preferable to being bombarded with information on a screen. Inadvertently, then, the feedback from the first two presentation sessions affirmed the researcher’s argument that Catholic teachers would get more from a more prayerful approach than a classroom model of faith formation. The final two presentation sessions continued this process style of faith formation.

In session #5, the participants examined the issue of decision-making. Since choosing between various goods is such an important aspect of the teaching profession, learning to make good decisions, where God is included in the process, is a necessary skill for Catholic teachers to acquire. Subsequent to the opening prayer on PowerPoint, which highlighted the call of the laity to ministry, the participants were treated to a video by Fr. Michael Himes. While not a Jesuit himself, Fr. Himes teaches in the Jesuit institution of Boston College. In the video, Fr. Himes is astutely deft at distilling the essence of Ignatian discernment into three easy steps. According to Fr. Himes, making a good decision entails asking three essential questions and, during the first part of this session, the researcher gave the participants some reflection time to grapple with each of the three questions posed in the video.

The second half of the session included an introduction to the “Rules of Discernment”, as outlined in the *Spiritual Exercises* (#313-336). This presentation on discernment consisted of a combination of PowerPoint and a video resource from Loyola Press. The participants were also

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16 The video can be found at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-4lKCuNdnw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-4lKCuNdnw).

17 The three questions are i) What gives you joy? ii) Are you good at it? iii) Does anyone need you to do it?

18 [http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/?s=Discernment](http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/?s=Discernment)
given some time to recall a significant decision that they had made in the past and apply the method of Ignatian discernment. The participants were asked to use a process of Ignatian discernment that the researcher provided them. The purpose of the exercise was to see if they would have come to a different conclusion than the one they actually arrived at then. The participants were also encouraged to employ these rules during the upcoming week and they were provided with reference materials on Ignatian discernment to help them with this assignment.

From the description of this session, it is apparent that the screen reemerged. Given that he was going to show videos, the researcher deemed that inserting a few PowerPoint slides as well would not adversely affect the peaceful atmosphere that he was striving to create. Upon asking their feedback at the end of the session, the participants agreed that PowerPoint had not been a distraction as it was in the first session, because it had been kept to a minimum. At least from this limited sample size, PowerPoint could still have a role in spiritual formation.

The final presentation session (#7) followed the approach of the previous presentation session (#5) with a combination of prayer and reflection, videos and PowerPoint presentations. With a lack of personal time, a stressful workload, and multiple decisions to make on a daily basis, it is only natural that Catholic teachers would experience discouragement from time to time. No matter how much Catholic teachers might view their profession as a divinely appointed call and appreciate the sacred task of educating children, the workplace conditions can eventually overwhelm any Catholic teacher. Low morale is a common feature of many a school staff, particularly in certain hectic times of the year. The input from the “Catholic” spiritual tradition that the researcher used for this issue began with a video from a National Geographic photographer.

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19 See appendix #5 for the handout.

20 For these print resources, see appendix #5.
by the name of DeWitt Jones. Titled *For the Love of It*,\(^{21}\) Jones provides the viewers with several strategies on how to maintain a positive attitude at work. Intended as an inspirational video, Jones touches the heart as much as he does the mind and his message is amply appropriate for a retreat setting. Although these strategies are presented from a non-religious perspective, the insights in the video complement well a traditional Catholic understanding of vocation. After showing the video, the researcher took the approaches found in the video and interpreted them through a Catholic lens. In particular, Jones speaks about the importance of gratefulness, which is also a necessary Catholic virtue. The researcher then proceeded to discuss gratitude as an effective antidote for workplace discouragement. Specifically, the researcher referenced the work of Benedictine monk, Brother David Steindl-Rast, who is well known for his work on gratefulness.\(^{22}\) The session concluded with an explanation of some concrete exercises that may assist the participants to develop an attitude of gratitude.

The proposed Ignatian practice that was to complement this session was the mediation on the Two Standards (#135-148). Time, however, did not allow for its inclusion in the session. Reflecting on the consequences of this omission for the project, the researcher discerned that not having time for the meditation was far from problematic. In fact, it was another unplanned benefit. Introducing one more element into the session would certainly have overburdened the participants. Moreover, while gratitude was not a distinctive characteristic of Ignatian spirituality, although it is one of the steps in the Examen, focusing on developing an attitude of gratitude was more than an appropriate focus for the week.

\(^{21}\) DeWitt Jones, *For the Love of It*, Owen-Stewart Performance Resources Inc.

\(^{22}\) See www.gratefulness.org.
FAITH-SHARING SESSIONS: As suggested earlier, one of the more effective approaches to adult faith formation occurs in small faith-sharing groups. To grow in faith, adults not only require outside resources and programs. More importantly, adults need a vehicle in which they are able to discuss their own internal issues in a safe, caring, and confidential setting. Sharing their own journey of faith, while at the same time listening to the experiences of others, has proven to be a tremendously beneficial process for adults wishing to develop in their faith. Recognizing the effectiveness of faith sharing in adult faith formation, the researcher made this process an integral feature of his spiritual formation program. In fact, the researcher concluded that this practice of faith sharing was so crucial that it required its own dedicated time, not merely a small portion of a much larger session.

As indicated above, the participants were divided into four faith-sharing groups in the introductory session. Manuals that the researcher consulted indicate that faith-sharing groups function best when there is consistency in the group membership, where over time they are permitted to bond together as a community. The researcher planned that the participants would be a part of the same group throughout the four faith-sharing sessions. Some of the challenges previously discussed, however, also impacted the faith-sharing sessions. First, the issue of absenteeism resulted in not needing four groups per faith-sharing session. Furthermore, given that some of the participants were not always punctual but, on the other hand, many were on time, commonsense dictated not to wait for all the participants to arrive before beginning the session. Instead, it was more practical to divide those who were there on time into different groups and have them begin promptly. Then, there could be a separate group for the stragglers who would begin when there was a quorum. Adopting this strategy resulted in establishing three fairly stable

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23 For the importance of small faith-sharing groups in adult faith formation, see Strynkowski, *Spirituality for the 21st Century*, 20.
groups. Two groups consisted of participants, who if they were at the session, were generally on
time. The membership of the third group was comprised of those participants who came later for
whatever reason.

When the group was assembled, the researcher provided the participants with reflection
questions to guide their discussion.\(^\text{24}\) The questions were based on the material of the previous
session and the Ignatian prayer practice that the participants were to attempt during the week. The
participants were not required to answer each question. Instead, the questions were only intended
as a guide to assist each participant to determine what were the more salient elements of the past
session for their own spiritual journey. The issue of absenteeism also required another adjustment
at this point of the process. If any of the participants were absent the week before, the group was
to give a quick recap of the material that was examined at the presentation session.

After a sufficient period of reflection, the group could begin their discussion.\(^\text{25}\) The format
for the discussion period consisted of two rounds of sharing (itself a contemporary Ignatian
practice).\(^\text{26}\) Sitting in a circle, the researcher placed a rock in the middle of the group. When one
participant was ready to begin the discussion, the participant picked up the rock and begin sharing.
The person holding the rock and only the person holding the rock could speak, all other participants
were required to simply listen. This format encourages active listening and guards against anyone
dominating the discussion. The first participant to share then passes the rock to the person on their

\(^{24}\) To see the questions for all four sessions, see appendix #9.

\(^{25}\) For easy reference, the researcher provided the participants with directions for the discussion format on the back
of the same sheet as the reflection questions.

\(^{26}\) The researcher became familiar with this faith-sharing format when he began his employment at the school board
in which he now works. Prior to his arrival at the school board, the high school chaplains had procured two spiritual
directors in the Ignatian tradition to guide them through annotation #19 of the Spiritual Exercises. The chaplains
were taught this faith-sharing technique, which the researcher used in the project, as part of this program. The
chaplains have continued to employ this method of faith sharing at their monthly meetings. The researcher was
introduced to it when he began attending these regularly scheduled meetings.
left. This second participant could share or pass the rock to the next person on their left, if they were not ready to share. The rock keeps moving around the group until all participants have an opportunity to contribute. In this first discussion round, the participants are to focus their remarks on their own spiritual journey. The participants are to address how the material of the past week impacted their relationship with the Sacred, particularly in the context of their professional lives.

After each participant has had a chance to share, the rock returns to the middle of the group. The participants once again spend a few moments in quiet reflection, this time considering what they heard other participants in the group disclose. When a participant feels inspired to begin the second round, they pick up the rock and this time they share for only about two minutes. Passing the rock to the left, the object of this round is to express what strikes the participant most from the first round. Participants could either react to a comment made by another participant in the first round, which may have inspired them or may have given them a cause for pause. Alternatively, participants could attempt to summarize any common themes that they found emerging from the discussion.

Even though this Ignatian format of faith sharing has only two rounds, the researcher included a third round. After all the participants had their turn in the second round, they were permitted to put down the rock and have an unstructured, free-flowing conversation. Suspecting that this discussion format might be a bit constricting for the extroverts in the group, the researcher finally provided them with the option to discuss the material in a less rigid format.

Each of the four faith-sharing sessions, moreover, had a specific focus. In the initial faith-sharing session (#2), the participants concentrated on the hectic pace that characterizes the teaching profession today. They also shared their experience of praying the Examen in the midst of their busy lives. Dealing with stress was the topic of the second faith-sharing session (#4). In particular,
participants discussed how recognizing that they are God’s beloved children might improve their own self-image as educators and, in turn, help them cope with stress. Good decision-making by employing Ignatian discernment was the theme of the third session (#6). In the final session (#8), participants divulged how practicing gratitude helped them to perceive their work in a more positive light.

During the faith-sharing sessions, the researcher typically joined one of the three groups for the entire period. In this way, the researcher spent one faith-sharing session with each one of the three groups. In addition, the researcher neither participated in the sharing nor made any remarks of any kind during or after each session. Rather, the researcher was simply an observer. As a bystander, the researcher was able to make some observations, which he was anxious to see if they would be collaborated by the surveys.

Initially, the researcher took note that the act of expressing their spiritual journey was obviously alien to the participants, as most had never engaged in such a practice. This newness also made them at first slightly anxious and there was a hesitancy to share too much of their private lives. But in time, as they discovered that there were no judgments and no recriminations for anything that they shared, the participants seemed to become more comfortable with and more engaged in the process. The participants became less concerned with what they were going to share and more interested in the interaction between group members.

The researcher also surmised that the sharing tended to remain at a rather superficial level. The participants never appeared to reach a stage of being able to share more intimate details of their spiritual lives. Especially in the unstructured third round, the discussions immediately turned to what the researcher would call “shop-talk.” At that point, they reverted back to their comfort

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27 During the fourth faith-sharing session (#8), the researcher made preparations for the meal that the participants were going to share as the project drew to a close.
zone and raise more mundane, less personal issues of the profession. Clearly, three or four sessions were not sufficient to reach any great depths of sharing. If it would take a group more than a few sessions to get comfortable with each other, in that case, the researcher was left with the question whether it was worthwhile to have faith sharing in a spiritual formation program with only a small number of sessions? Still, while it was clear that the participants had only started to skim the surface with their faith sharing, it was equally clear by the end of the final session that they had come to appreciate the potential benefits of the process. The question, therefore, for a spiritual formation program might rather be how to support the participants to continue the practice once the spiritual formation program is over.

*Survey Results*

In order to gauge the effectiveness of the spiritual formation program just outlined, the researcher had the participants fill out three separate, anonymous surveys. The first survey was distributed during the introductory session. The purpose of this original survey was for the researcher to acquire some basic information about the spiritual lives of the participants. In particular, the four questions in this survey were designed to ascertain the familiarity of the participants with the basic elements of the spiritual formation program. With this information, the researcher would be able to create a benchmark by which to measure any progress that the participants might make during the spiritual formation program.

The second instrument of evaluation was a questionnaire that the participants received in their email inboxes through SurveyMonkey. Among the various benefits of this on-line program was that it provided the participants with total anonymity. The participants were invited to complete the questionnaire approximately two weeks after the end of the last session. The questionnaire gathered data on the participants’ perceptions and experiences of the overall spiritual
formation program, along with its individual components. A second, shorter questionnaire was again conducted on SurveyMonkey roughly four months after the conclusion of the program to obtain data on the long-term impact of the project on the spiritual lives of the participants.

Given that the project employed a qualitative research approach and the surveys generally contained open-ended questions, the researcher used a “coded” method of analyzing the data. While various names are given to this system of content analysis, a coded method essentially attempts to discover patterns and commonalities in the responses of those who took the survey. As Tim Sensing explains, “Collecting and identifying themes is the primary way qualitative researchers process and analyze data.” John Creswell, for example, outlines a four-part process of qualitative data analysis. The researcher begins by reading the answers, striving to understand the conscious intent of the respondents and the sometimes not so conscious subtext of the replies. Then the researcher attempts to code or, as Creswell terms it, classify the data. The researcher is searching for connections and similarities in the responses of the participants. The more a certain idea or phrase appears in the responses, the more weight is given to these parallels or correspondences by the researcher. Creswell describes this classifying stage as follows:

Classifying pertains to taking the text or qualitative information apart, looking for categories, themes, or dimensions of information. As a popular form of analysis, classification involves identifying five or six general themes.

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29 Sensing, 202.

30 This aspect of data analysis is often termed “thick description.” See Sensing, p. 195 for a fuller description of the process. See also, Berg, 225-227.

31 Creswell, 144.
In the next step, the researcher interprets the various categories or themes that are discovered in the data. In qualitative research, data analysis is essentially a hermeneutical endeavor, as it involves the interpretation of source material. Specifically, the researcher seeks to ascertain the significance of these general themes to the problem under investigation in the study. The researcher brings into dialogue these common themes with the focus of the study to arrive at some tentative conclusions. Finally, the task of the researcher is to find the most appropriate method of presenting the findings from the data. Whether it’s by pie charts or by written descriptions, the researcher attempts to simplify or package the material in a coherent fashion so that it is easily comprehended by interested parties, as this researcher hopes to have done below.

Survey #1: Introductory Session (Respondents: 24)

Question #1: How would you define the term “spirituality”? What comes to mind when you hear the word?

As discussed in the opening chapter, the term spirituality has many nuances and distinct meanings even among scholars in the field and within popular culture. It is not surprising then that the twenty-four respondents to this initial question on spirituality offered a variety of perspectives on the nature of spirituality. The respondents to this question on spirituality clearly mirrored the contemporary ambiguity of the term. In total, there were five distinct impressions of spirituality among those who participated in the survey.

The most common understanding of spirituality among the participants (13 of 24) is an interior presence of the sacred. Spirituality was described as an inner experience of the divine or

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32 As indicated earlier, there were twenty-five staff members at this initial meeting but one person did not fill out a survey. The researcher did not notice the discrepancy until days later, at which point it was too late to rectify the situation.

33 There are more than twenty-four total results because some respondents gave more than one nuance of the term spirituality.
the “sense of a higher being” as one respondent phrased it. In the second most typical response to this question on spirituality, participants mentioned the idea of faith in daily life (9 of 24). This sense of the term concerned the living out of faith. Spirituality involves the entrenching of religious beliefs into the patterns of one’s daily existence. One example of the concrete nature of spirituality that was offered is serving others. The final three depictions of spirituality had only minimal support but are instructive nonetheless. A few respondents (4 of 24) described spirituality as a kind of divine providence or “God working in one’s life.” Spirituality in this sense highlights the presence of God in people’s lives to guide and support them. Participants also described spirituality as a sense of peace (3 of 24). Moments of tranquility and serenity are manifestations of one’s spirituality. Finally, one respondent suggested that spirituality is a “New Age” term and not a part of the Catholic tradition.

The replies to this initial question would indicate that the participants have an above-average grasp of the phenomenon of spirituality. The two key aspects of spirituality, as internal reality and external practice, are very much in evidence. Their responses to the question on spirituality, moreover, appear to derive from a more personal level than from any academic study of the topic. The participants clearly have an active spiritual life and they referred to their experience of spirituality to explain the term. In a similar vein, their perceptions of spirituality are more impacted by their cultural context than any formal education. In short, their understanding of spirituality is a direct result of their own experience rather than from any educational setting, which is further borne out in the second question.

**Question #2**

A) Have you ever participated in a spiritual formation program? Yes/No

B) If yes, what was the program?

C) If yes, would you say the program was Very Helpful/Helpful/Somewhat helpful/Not helpful

D) If no, why not?
Of the twenty-four respondents, six replied to question 2A in the affirmative and eighteen in the negative. Of those who indicated that they had participated in a spiritual formation program, three listed a course on adult faith formation that I had organized a few years earlier. One mentioned being on a retreat, while another attended a program featuring the Catholicism series of now Bishop Robert Barron. Lastly, one participant specified being part of an Ignatian spirituality program, but added no further details about this program. In 2C, two noted that the program that they attended was very helpful. Three responded that it was helpful and “energizing” and one responded that it was somewhat helpful and “fruitful.” Of the respondents who had not participated in any spiritual formation program, seven skipped question 2D and gave no reason. Four of the respondents explained that they had never had an opportunity to attend any such programs and another four attributed the omission on time constraints. Two revealed that they had never felt a need for any such program and one respondent began a program but did not complete it. Two of the more telling responses were those who reported having been part of different programs, such as having gone on retreats, but were not certain whether they actually were spiritual formation programs because they were not labeled as such.

This question on spiritual formation programs generally supports the assumptions of the researcher. Most Catholic teachers have not participated in any such programs. The clear majority of Catholic teachers who responded to the survey had not been involved in any formal spiritual formation program. Even among some of those who indicated that they had been through a spiritual formation program, may in fact have not. Certainly, the course on adult faith formation that was mentioned by a few respondents that I facilitated was not a spiritual formation program but a pastoral training opportunity. As well, while retreats can be uplifting, they are more “one-and-

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34 It is possible, however, that they were spiritually enriched by the training.
done” events than any systematic program. Minimally, none of the respondents cited any programs that were identified as spiritual formation programs. These respondents, who clearly possessed a rich spiritual life, nonetheless were nurtured in their spiritual growth from different odds and ends that were offered either through their parish or school board and not from any formal, on-going formation.

**Question #3**

A) What would you say are some of the biggest challenges you face as a Catholic teacher?  
B) How do some of these challenges effect your relationship with God?  
C) How has your faith helped you to deal with the challenges you face as a Catholic teacher?

By far, the most significant challenge with which those surveyed grapple is working with students whose faith is not well developed. An overwhelming majority (21 of 24) mentioned, in one-way or another, the lack of faith of their students as their greatest concern and most difficult challenge. In their responses, there were references to students not knowing their faith and who did not attend the Eucharist on a regular basis. Some respondents also discussed the lack of a faith commitment on the part of the parents and working with other staff members who were not practicing Catholics. The current cultural climate is frequently mentioned as an obstacle. The respondents are under the impression that the biggest influence on the lives of their students is secularism and they find it difficult to teach religion in our secular culture.

The only other challenge that the respondents reported in the survey concerned time. The participants felt a time crunch in two different areas of their lives, personal and professional. A few respondents revealed that they found it difficult to find time for their own spiritual formation, which included a lack of time to pray. In a similar vein, one respondent grumbled, “Our board preaches about Catholicism but offers … not many authentic (adult faith development)
opportunities.” Another two respondents indicated that there was so much curricula to cover that they did not have the time that they would like to spend on the teaching of religion.

In the follow-up question, the most common reply was that these challenges do not affect their spiritual lives very much. Of those who highlighted the faith lives of their students as their biggest challenge, they indicated (18 of 24) that this issue did not affect them very much. They may have been discouraged but not personally impacted. Of those who included something of their own spiritual journey (6 of 24), their answer was significantly different. They indicated that teaching negatively impacted their spiritual growth at a significant level.

The answers that the respondents provided to this question surprised the researcher. The respondents did not give the kind of challenges that the question was designed to elicit and the phrasing of the question may have been at least partly at fault. As discussed above, teachers in other studies have reported that stress and low morale are the kinds of tensions that they regularly experience. Yet the respondents of this survey did not identify any of these personal issues. Rather they opted to focus on a religious challenge. The suspicion of the researcher is that the inclusion of the word “Catholic” teacher in the question may have skewed the results. Since they were part of a religious enterprise, the respondents may have assumed that they were required to give some sort of a religious answer, not something personal. Nonetheless, teaching religion is a very difficult undertaking in our postmodern world. The researcher discovered that it should not be underestimated the kind of impact that unchurched students would have on teachers who cared deeply about their faith. Moreover, the researcher began to consider what treasures from the Catholic spiritual tradition might assist Catholic teachers with this dilemma.

**Question #4**

A) *How familiar are you with Ignatian Spirituality?*

B) *Do you use any Ignatian Spiritual practices?*

C) *If yes, which ones?*
On the scale of one to ten, twelve of the respondents chose the lowest number (#1), while another six had answers under five. Only six respondents indicated having any kind of significant knowledge of Ignatian Spirituality. The second question in this category yielded similar results. Eighteen respondents did not employ Ignatian practices, and a few indicated that they did not know what they were. Six did use such practices and they listed in the final question such activities as retreats at an Ignatian Retreat Center, daily prayer and guided meditation, and Ignatian discernment. One respondent practiced the Examen for a short period of time but was unable to sustain the practice.

The results of this final question generally imply that Ignatian Spirituality is not a common feature of the spiritual lives of the Catholic teachers surveyed. Due to the presence of an Ignatian institution in the area, some of the participants had brushed up against Ignatian spirituality and some of its practices. Overall, however, Ignatian spirituality was not a commonly recognized expression and its key spiritual tools were not being utilized. Ignatian spirituality would be a fresh, new treasure from the trove of the Catholic spiritual tradition for the participants in the study.

Survey #2: At the Conclusion of the Program (Respondents: 21)

Immediately following the end of the spiritual formation program, the Catholic teachers who participated in the program received via SurveyMonkey the second and most extensive survey that they would complete. Twenty-one participants responded to this survey. On the whole, the results of this survey were quite positive. The participants found the spiritual formation program

35 The region in which the researcher’s school board is located includes a Jesuit retreat center named the Manresa Renewal Centre. Many Catholic teachers avail themselves of the retreat opportunities offered by the center. The researcher also conducts the retreats that he organizes for the staff of the school board at this center.

36 Given that the survey was anonymous, there is no way for the researcher to know who did not fill out the survey nor why.
extremely beneficial. The initial question asked about the participants’ overall impressions of the spiritual formation program. Each and every participant found the program to be either very helpful (13) or helpful (8) to their spiritual formation. One of the participants, which SurveyMonkey identified as #37, summed up succinctly the general consensus of the participants in the following statement:

The spiritual formation program provided a focused and dedicated time for me to develop and nurture my spirituality. It became a time I looked forward to during long, busy weeks to simply be and expand. The guided input, meaningful conversation and encouragement to ‘carry forward’ our new learning each week, all permitted reflection and deeper spiritual thinking.

In the second question, the participants were asked to be more specific and indicate what they found constructive about the spiritual formation program. In the end, some reference was made to each element of the program. The participants identified the exploration of the practical concerns touching the lives of Catholic teachers as being the most advantageous aspect of the program. In this open-ended question, there were fourteen comments made about the program assisting them with “how to deal with stressful situations (and) how to maintain balance…” (#5) In the same question, there were seven mentions of the spiritual resources that were provided in the presentation sessions. As one participant noted, “some practical spiritual practices to overcome the challenges” (#9) were useful. Another respondent indicated that “I was pleased to receive some new information to deepen my own spirituality.” (#17) The participants also found the discussion sessions meaningful. There were seven comments suggesting that group discussion with colleagues was a valuable exercise. These group discussions were “interesting to hear the...
perspective of other colleagues” (#19) and “the time spent in groups allowed me to consider this learning in a deeper way.” (#17) Finally, three respondents alluded to Ignatian spirituality.

In the next series of questions, respondents were asked to evaluate the extent to which the program assisted them to cope with the challenges examined in the presentations; balance, stress, decision-making, and low morale. In these four questions, there is a general pattern. Most respondents (between 12 to 15) “agreed” that they received some form of benefit from the program, while typically four respondents “strongly agreed.” What was encouraging to the researcher was that there was also a sprinkling of dissenters in the group. There were a few who “disagreed” and who were not assisted with one or other of the challenges covered in the program. There were also a few “other” comments as well.

These negative voices are reassuring because it demonstrates to some extent that the respondents could be critical of the program, if warranted. As Sensing discusses in his book on Doctor of Ministry projects, ministers in particular face the problem of the Hawthorne Effect. According to Sensing, the Hawthorne Effect concerns the reliability of research “... when subjects know they are being studied.”38 Since ministers in D. Min. programs usually include members of their congregation in their research project, there is the possibility that they will simply iterate in interviews or surveys what paints the minister in the best possible light. As Sensing maintains, “congregants want their minister to do well.”39 Therefore, Sensing recommends that ministers check for this potential bias in their research. In the case of this project, the researcher did develop some suspicions about the validity of the answers. Many of the responses were couched in such glowing terms and high praise that the researcher could not but wonder whether they were simply

38 Sensing, 82.

39 Ibid.
the result of the participants liking him and wishing him to do well. The responses to questions three through six, however, provides some evidence of independent thought. At least some participants were not afraid to offer an honest critic of the project.

In the seventh question, moreover, the participants were asked to comment on the ways that the program assisted them to deal with workplace challenges. One common response was that “the program was an eye opener.” (#7) A common theme woven through the various responses was that the participants came to a deeper awareness of the implications of these issues of time, stress, decision-making, and morale for their spiritual lives. The respondents had obviously taken notice of these issues in their lives prior to their participation in the program. They, however, had not recognized the extent to which these issues impacted their spiritual life in particular. According to six respondents, the spiritual formation program taught them that these were the actual burning issues affecting them both professionally and spiritually. As one respondent reflected,

“I realized my participation in this spirituality program was truly because I had been called to focus on my work/life balance, stress, decision-making and disillusionment…The presentations by Dominic helped me to pause and reflect upon where I am in my journey as a Catholic teacher.” (#1)

In short, there was a definite confirmation by the participants in their replies that these were in fact the crucial spiritual challenges facing Catholic teachers today.\(^4\)

The most often reported benefit of the spiritual formation program in question seven was that the respondents came to an appreciation of self-care. Many Catholic teachers operate from an attitude that they must pour their heart and soul into their work and families, at the expense of their

\(^4\) This observation is also corroborated in question number eight of the survey. When asked what other spiritual issues could have been explored, ten had no other suggestions and one skipped the question. The issue of non-practicing staff members received three mentions, as did a catechetical suggestion and a union matter – none of which are technically spiritual issues. In other words, this question received a similar response as when it was posed in the introductory survey. Even after being exposed to a series of spiritual wellness challenges, the participants could still not specify any new, genuine spiritual challenges.
own needs. As one respondent affirmed, “I always thought my work, children, and family came first.” (#11) Prior to participating in the program, many felt that taking care of themselves was a luxury that they could not afford. Again another participant confirmed, “Too often I find that my personal spiritual development, and even time dedicated to such, is first to be eroded…” (#3) For twelve respondents, however, they became aware of the importance of taking time for oneself. As one participant boldly stated, “I learned to listen to myself, MY needs.” (#2) The respondents came to a fuller realization that self-care is neither selfish nor self-indulgent. It is an essential requirement for becoming an effective teacher. A respondent admitted that “it is okay to take time for myself and enjoy down time instead of having feelings of guilt while relaxing.” (#7) Furthermore, respondents shared that they were provided with a rationale and discovered various legitimate reasons for taking care of themselves. Catholic teachers should engage in activities that reenergize them and bring them joy, not only because it improves their overall well-being, but also because it enables them to carry out their many responsibilities much more productively. They discovered that self-care can be one tool in their arsenal to reach their potential as a Catholic teacher. Employing an image of the cup taken from a video viewed in the program, one participant shared, “I take more time for myself and fill my cup, because I realize I cannot give to others, if I haven’t filled my cup.” (#8)

Another value of the spiritual formation program as reported in question seven is that it provided the respondents with some coping strategies. Most of the different topics discussed in the presentations were given at least some mention as means by which participants might deal with the issues under consideration. Among almost half of the respondents, i.e. ten, they came to a new appreciation of prayer. Prayer was not simply an empty gesture to a distant deity. Prayer promotes spiritual wellness, which can also have positive affects in a workplace environment. As one
respondent discovered, “Carrying my prayerfulness into my work helped me deal with difficult situations…” (#5). Clearly, the participants were able to draw a direct connection between prayer and wellness. The image of filling your cup resonated with four of the respondents and finding Sabbath time was another useful concept for three of the participants. One respondent related that “I use the mini-Sabbath idea where I have changed my attitude towards time – all time is sacred and God is everywhere in daily life…” (#8) Even notions such as “attitude of gratitude” and “being God’s beloved” provided respondents with a new framework from which to view these issues and from which to derive some solace for the stress, busyness, decision-making, and disillusionment in their lives.

In summary, the responses in question seven indicate that the participants were all on their own unique spiritual journey and they each resonated differently to the various resources offered in the presentations. As would be expected, they found some resources more helpful than others depending on where they were in their spiritual lives. But in the end, all were able to find something about the program that spoke to them. The respondents all appear to have acquired some nugget of wisdom to support them with the pressing issues of their lives. As one participant characterized the experience: “Strangely, although the course put an extra demand in my day, I always left the course feeling very positive and uplifted, and more connected to my spiritual self.” (#17)

Similar inferences can be made from the data in questions number ten and eleven. Even in those questions, there is no consensus on any preference among the different presentations. While five found the presentations equally valuable in question ten, each of the four presentations found some support among the participants. In fact, stress, balance, and morale each received four positive votes, with decision-making collecting a close three votes. As difficult as it was to pick a clear favorite in question ten, it was even more difficult for the respondents in question eleven to
pick a least favorite presentation. In question eleven, a total of thirteen respondents determined that they were all equally valuable. Morale and discernment were the only topics to garner any negative feedback. Again, questions ten and eleven substantiates the conclusion that each participant received something uniquely their own from the different presentations commensurate to the state of their spiritual lives at the time of the program.

As meaningful as the four presentation sessions were for the participants, the four discussion sessions did not generate the same kind of enthusiasm, at least in the estimation of the researcher. In question nine, when asked to compare the two equally prominent halves of the program, only two found that the group discussions were more beneficial. Seven respondents found the presentation sessions more noteworthy and ten found them both about the same. Prior to reading these results, the researcher would have predicted that the participants would have found the discussion sessions more noteworthy by a large margin. In fact, as discussed earlier, the reason that the researcher dedicated half of the allotted time of the program to group discussion was precisely because he was of the opinion that Catholic teachers would rather converse with each other over weighty topics than passively listen to someone speak. Instead, the data in the survey does not bear out this supposition.

In the survey, while there is no other question exclusively referring to group discussions, - although in hindsight perhaps there should have been - there were questions where addressing this aspect of the program would have been appropriate. In particular, question number two, which focused on supportive elements of the program and question number seven, which highlighted teacher obstacles, would have been fitting points in the survey for participants to discuss their experience of the discussion group. Now, while there was some mention made of the discussion groups in the responses in these two questions, nevertheless, the comments were generally
underwhelming. In question number two, only seven of twenty-one respondents referenced discussion groups. Moreover, the responses were typically generic and uninsightful. The discussion groups “were good” (#21) and it was “interesting to hear perspective of others.” (#19). Similarly, only six participants referred to discussion groups in question number seven and one of the comments was blatantly negative. One respondent remarked, “…my group got off task in discussing issues which led to us running in circles rather than truly exploring wellness…” (#1)

Given the results of the survey, which in fairness were not necessarily terrible but certainly nothing outstanding, along with the impressions that the researcher gained while observing the groups (see earlier), the role of discussion groups in a spiritual formation program may need to be reconsidered. It certainly takes time for a group to mold into a true community and feel safe to deliberate on personal, intimate matters. Also, it would also appear relevant that there be consistency in group membership in order for a deep trust to develop among the participants of the group. Unfortunately, there was neither much time nor consistency in this spiritual formation program. The kind of meaningful group sharing that the researcher was striving to create did not quite materialize and this result provides some food for thought for any future spiritual formation program.

While the exact amount of time that may be dedicated to any future spiritual formation program may not be identical to this project, the survey demonstrates that the length of the program may dictate what can be realistically envisaged for the discussion groups. In a spiritual formation program that, for example, might run through the course of a full school year, then a reasonable expectation for the discussion groups might be to develop a deeper relationship between the members of the group. In shorter programs, however, only more superficial discussions can be expected to be generated from the group and thus the purpose of group sharing should be more
modest in scope. In longer programs, there can be a structure and questions that lead to a deeper familiarity among the group members. In shorter programs, the format of the group sharing should be more respectful of the privacy of the participants. In a similar vein, in spiritual formation programs where attendance is stable, then there would be some reason to anticipate stronger bonds developing between group members. In programs where attendance is more fluid – as was the case in this project – group discussions should have a more informal atmosphere. In brief, then, this researcher has concluded from his examination of the data from the survey that the structure of the group discussion portion of a spiritual formation program should take into account such issues as length of the program and the nature of the group membership.

The final aspect of the spiritual formation program that was measured in the second survey was Ignatian spirituality. The responses of the participants to this aspect of the program were also generally encouraging. In the twelfth question on how much they learned about Ignatian spirituality, all either agreed (12) or strongly agreed (7) they had learned a significant amount. As was noted in the analysis of the first survey, the participants in general entered the program not having much of an acquaintance with Ignatian spirituality. The spiritual formation program helped them to acquire a greater familiarity with one of the Catholic Church’s spiritual treasures. The respondents also largely either agreed (11) or strongly agreed (5) in question thirteen that sharing their experiences of their forays into Ignatian spirituality with others was beneficial. Three respondents, however, did not get much further insight into Ignatian spirituality through group discussion. Again, group discussion received mixed reactions.
When asked which of the four Ignatian spiritual practices more deeply impacted their spiritual lives, unlike some of the other areas of the survey, there was a clear favorite among the participants in this question. Of the nineteen respondents to this question, fifteen of them listed the Examen as the most impactful Ignatian spiritual practice. These results are consistent with comments found in other questions. In question two, the Examen was explicitly mentioned three times as one of the more meaningful resources of the program. Similarly, in question seven, the Examen also made an appearance. In question fifteen, seven were practicing the Examen daily and eight weekly. Only four were not practicing it at all. Respondents found the Examen practical and uncomplicated. One respondent’s experience of the Examen was “…practical, natural fit with my personality, easy to practice, flexible to incorporate into my day.” (#2) The fact that the Examen does not take much time to complete was another definite bonus. It is an excellent complement to a hectic lifestyle. Another respondent expressed that the Examen “…honors the limited time I have for reflection and gives me time to pause and delve deeper into the day and my relationship with God.” One participant found the Examen to be so powerful that the participant began to share the practice with family and colleagues at work. (#17)

The other Ignatian tool that some of the participants of the program found worthwhile was the Discernment of Spirits. Of the nineteen respondents in question fourteen, seven identified Ignatian discernment as a meaningful practice for Catholic teachers. In question fifteen, nine were still employing the practice, while ten were not. There was obviously an assortment of reactions by the participants to the Discernment of Spirits. For some, allowing God to become part of their decision-making was an intriguing notion. Having a process to follow when decisions need to be

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41 Again, since there was not enough time in the final presentation session to introduce the Two Standards meditation, the participants only actually were familiarized with three Ignatian spiritual practices, the Examen, Discernment, and the Contemplation on Divine Love.
made was another helpful aspect of Ignatian discernment for a few participants. As one respondent stated, “Discernment because it went through the steps of making decisions and involves what God wants.” (#18) The reason, perhaps, that Ignatian discernment was not as eagerly adopted by the other half of the participants may have been due to the complexity of the practice. As the Examen is simple and straightforward, Ignatian discernment is complex and often intimidating. Certainly, a half-hour presentation on Ignatian discernment will do little to demystify the practice and adequately explain the difference between “consolation” and “desolation.” Similarly, Ignatian imaginative prayer and meditation did not receive any favorable comments among the participants. The deafening silence with respect to Ignatian prayer may, however, speak volumes. 42 As discussed earlier, since the Ignatian spiritual practice was always last on the agenda, there was not the time to introduce the practices thoroughly and Ignatian prayer certainly got short shrift in this spiritual formation program.

Survey #3: Four Months After the Program (Respondents: 19)

In order to measure the long-term impact of the spiritual formation program, participants were sent a third and final survey to complete at the end of March, 2016. 43 There were nineteen returned surveys and the results remained fairly consistent with those of the second survey. All respondents reported that, to one degree or another, the spiritual formation program continued to be of assistance to them. In the initial question, eight indicated that the program was still very helpful, ten helpful, and one somewhat helpful. In the third question, which inquired into the lasting effects of the program on the work-related issues highlighted in the program, the

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42 There is an anomaly in the data in question #15. When asked how often they practice the meditation on the Two Standards, the one that was omitted due to lack of time, twelve correctly said never, but seven did indicate that they had. The researcher did provide the participants some handouts on the prayer and perhaps a few did their “homework” even though it had not been covered during the presentation.

43 The researcher experienced a health issue in the early part of 2016, which resulted in a delay of a month in emailing the third survey.
respondents provided similar results. Most agreed that the spiritual formation program remains a source of support for better work/life balance, stress reduction, easier decision-making, and improved morale. There were a few respondents who strongly agreed with the long-term impact of the program on their professional lives and one dissenting voice who did not derive any lasting benefits from the program.

When asked in the second question to provide specific examples of the enduring impact of the program, nine referred to the new outlook that they acquired through the program in their role as a Catholic teacher. Recognizing that workplace challenges have spiritual implications, along with spiritual solutions, was a positive, persisting influence of the program. As one respondent shared, “I see spirituality in my work which brings me a great deal of satisfaction in my life.” (#9) Another on-going benefit of the program concerned prayer. Many of the respondents mentioned that they began to take their prayer life more seriously. No longer perceiving prayer as an obligation due a demanding deity for which they had no time, they now made prayer a part of their daily routine because they had experienced the health benefits of prayer, which they could no longer do without. One respondent indicated that the programed continued to impact her life “by using different spiritual exercises to address different needs.” (#15) Another participant suggested that “the program has reminded me that there are spiritual remedies available to better deal with the ever-present and challenging issues of balance, stress, discernment and disillusionment.” (#3) In summary, the program supplied the participants with spiritual tools to better handle the issues that they face as Catholic educators.

In the fourth question that delved more deeply into the enduring impact of the program on their spiritual life, prayer once again surfaced. There were nine references to prayer in this question and comments ranged from a better relationship with God through prayer to increased reflection
on the areas of their spiritual lives needing improvement. One respondent captured the renewed importance of prayer in the lives of the participants as follows:

The program has helped me finally become more consistent in spending sometime every morning in prayer so as to deepen my relationship with the Lord. The Examen helps me reflect on the day and see the positive and become more mindful of where I can improve or change some negative ways of dealing with situations. (#2)

A surprising result that emerged from this fourth question concerned love of neighbor. While the researcher in earlier parts of this study maintained that love of neighbor is a signature component of any Catholic spirituality, still the spiritual formation program did not specifically take into account to any significant degree issues arising from daily interaction with others. In this question, however, four respondents report that the program has assisted them to be more loving towards others. One respondent shared that they were “being more compassionate to the needs of others” (#5) and another commented, “It has continued to help me reach out to others.” (#4) This outcome from the program would reinforce the notion of the interconnectedness of a person’s spirituality and whatever touches one aspect of a person’s spirituality, whether in a healthy or damaging way, touches all parts. This interrelatedness or cohesion of the spiritual life between love of God, self and neighbor, is concisely portrayed by one respondent who stated: “(The program) has provided me with some insights in how I should live my life as a person with mercy and love. Be more like Jesus. Pray daily. Converse with God. Be at peace.” In these few words, both the breadth and depth of the Catholic spiritual life are deftly integrated.

With respect to this insight on the love of neighbor, the next question on identifying other challenges in the teaching profession may shed some further light. One respondent remarked, “My issue is teachers bad mouthing other teachers. I tried to stay away from this. I tried to live by Jesus’s examples.” (#8) Such comments which also appeared in various forms in the other two surveys may suggest that another obstacle that could be included in a spiritual formation program
may be connecting with others. In particular, a challenge for Catholic teachers may be how to deal with other staff or students who may not be practicing Catholics or share common values. What love of neighbor may entail in a Catholic educational system where many do not appear to share in the mission of Catholic education may be a challenge that should be included in a spiritual formation program for Catholic teachers. Clearly, the repetition of this theme in the various surveys would imply that are spiritual ramifications to this issue.

The responses to the two questions on the group sharing sessions again were somewhat opaque. First, it should be noted that in previous questions in this third survey, there is no mention from any of the respondents of any enduring impact of the group sharing sessions. It is only when the participants are specifically prompted to discuss this aspect of the program that fourteen respondents would have liked to continue meeting with their colleagues, although five would not. These results are confirmed by the comments given by the respondents. On the one hand, there could be such glowing reflections on the group sharing sessions, such as, “The sessions always left me uplifted and ready to tackle the rest of the week. I truly enjoyed coming to the sessions and sharing with the group. You gleaned so much insight into life issues, you didn’t feel alone and the spirit of support and confidentiality made it easy to share.” (#13) Conversely, there were also more disapproving feedback from respondents who state, “No, I prefer to talk in very small groups (4 people). Also I prefer to reflect and write what I think and feel.” (#11) The two distinct benefits that the respondents received from the group sharing were learning from others and having others who would listen to them. Again, the dilemma that this researcher faces with these observations about the small group sessions is that they do not meet the expectations that he had prior to the implementation of the spiritual formation program. In the estimation of the researcher, the participants would find the faith sharing sessions to be the most beneficial aspect of the program.
Yet, this expectation did not materialize, at least according to the surveys. The results of the surveys suggest that, while the group sharing sessions continue to be a feature of the spiritual formation program, they be given less prominence in terms of time allocation.

The feedback in the final two questions on Ignatian spiritual practices also remained consistent with the previous survey. The Examen remained by a large margin the most helpful prayer tool that the respondents received in the program. Twelve respondents continued to find the Examen very helpful and seven helpful. Respondents would once again refer to the simplicity and practical nature of the Examen. Of the fourteen remarks on the Examen, respondents emphasized that “the Examen is a relatively short and simply way to pray (i.e., become aware of God’s presence in my life) and be thankful at the end of each day.” (#3) Surprisingly, the contemplation on divine love was favorably appraised by four respondents.

CONCLUSION

A Final Recap of all three Surveys

As Henri Nouwen would concur,44 the researcher has argued in this study that a Catholic spirituality consists of three distinct but interrelated components: love of God, neighbor, and self. Consequently, a spiritual formation program intended for a Catholic audience should impact and support all three of these movements. The results of the three surveys would suggest that two of these three aspects of a Catholic spirituality were well handled in the spiritual formation program, while the third could use some further attention. The participants fostered their love for God and they came to an increased awareness of their need to nurture themselves. Love of neighbor, however, could have fared better in the spiritual formation program.

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The hectic lives that Catholic teachers kept caused many of the participants to neglect their prayer lives. Given the time crunch that they endured, prayer had to be placed on a back burner. The participants in the spiritual formation program, however, connected with their God through prayer. By offering the participants a simple, practical prayer practice, the participants were able to benefit from the positive effects of prayer and draw closer to God. From the popularity of the Examen, it can be inferred that the kinds of prayer tools that contemporary lay people require are not those that derive from the monastery that require significant amounts of time. Rather, they are thirsting for prayer practices that fit into a busy lifestyle and that are easy to master. Teaching lay people to draw closer to their God in the midst of their regular routine, is the kind of support that lay people need today. If lay people are going to make strides in developing their spiritual lives, it is crucial that they come to appreciate that all time and space is sacred and that God can be found even in the middle of the whirlwind that swirls around them. The spiritual formation program certainly accomplished these objectives for the participants in this project.

Today, most lay Catholics recognize the importance of taking care of themselves physically and psychologically. What is less familiar to lay Catholics is the concept of spiritual wellness. Spiritual health is just as critical as physical and mental wellness. The typical challenges that most lay Catholics face in their personal and professional lives have a spiritual component. These challenges adversely affect them spiritually and there are spiritual remedies available to them to deal with these issues as well. The participants in the spiritual formation program found this new perspective, this new way of looking at the issues that frustrate them, as the most beneficial part of the program. Promoting spiritual self-care is a key aspect of a spiritual formation program. Recognizing, for example, that we are God’s beloved children and special in God’s eyes does much to improve our attitude, cope with stress, and improve our general well-being. From the
results of the three surveys, the participants certainly derived these benefits from the spiritual formation program.

The spiritual life is also comprised of loving one’s neighbor. How one relates to God should impact the way one treats those who are created in God’s image. In the spiritual formation program, while there was much attention paid to one’s relationship to God and oneself, the same courtesy was not extended to relating to others. In various ways, the participants in the spiritual formation program implied that many of the issues they come up against involve their relationships with other people. These struggles with others, moreover, have similar spiritual consequences and remedies from the Catholic spiritual tradition. The one aspect of the spiritual formation program that needs to be augmented, therefore, concerns loving one’s neighbor. The program requires at least one concrete struggle that Catholic teachers face in relating to others and some spiritual tools to deal with the issue.

In a study whose goal was to measure the value of a spiritual formation program, then, the surveys would generally indicate that the program is both successful and needed. The results of the survey imply that, even among Catholic teachers who take their faith seriously, the program helped them to grow spiritually. In a church that perceives adult faith formation in catechetical terms, this project suggests that Catholic teachers also require some formal spiritual formation. In a contemporary context where spirituality is both ubiquitous and opaque, a programmatic approach to spiritual formation would assist Catholic teachers to develop both personally in their own faith journey and professionally as ministers of the Gospel. And as a closing thought, it would not take much to extrapolate from this study that a spiritual formation program may have some merit for all adult, lay Catholics.
APPENDICES

APPENDIX #1
(The researcher sent the following email to prospective participants.)

Dear DCDSB colleagues and friends,
If you are receiving this email, it is because we have worked together in some capacity and I have come to respect and admire the work that you do in the DCDSB. More than that, I have come to value you as a person of faith and I consider you a friend. I am emailing you because I can use your help with a personal project on which I am working.

Most of you are probably not aware that I am currently enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program at the Catholic University of America in Washington DC. Over the last three years, I have been taking courses which I completed this summer. The only requirement that I have left to complete is the thesis. In the spring, my thesis proposal was passed. My thesis will consist of developing a faith formation program for Catholic teachers (to find out more about my thesis, please read the attached proposal).

Part of the thesis consists of taking a minimum of 25 Catholic teachers through the faith formation program that I have designed. After the teachers go through the program, they will complete a survey where basically they will tell me what they thought of the faith formation program. The program will consist of 9 sessions of an hour and a half each, running this fall. The sessions will be on Wednesdays, from 4:30 to 6:00 beginning on Wednesday, September 30 until November 25, 2015. The first one is an introductory session, four sessions will consist of participating in presentations on spiritual issues related to teaching and four sessions are group discussions based on the previous week's presentation (again more information is available in the attached proposal). The location of these sessions is yet to be confirmed but will most likely be either Notre Dame or All Saints, depending on what is best for those who agree to take part in the study.

The favour that I would like to ask you is whether would you like to become part of the study? I recognize that it would be a big commitment on your part. This is not a board-sponsored event in any way, though I will produce certificates that you have participated in the program. You would be simply assisting my research efforts. You would be basically helping out a friend. As well, you would be a great help in designing a spiritual formation program that hopefully one day will become a staple of Catholic education for many years.

If you would like to learn more about this program and the commitment that you would be making, I certainly could discuss this further with you. Similarly, if you just want to attend the first session, where the program will be discussed in greater detail, that would be possible as well. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns and I hope that we can work on this project together. Of course, if you are not able to participate at this time, it is more than understandable.

Thank you for considering this matter and I remain always your friend. God bless!
APPENDIX #2  
(Below is a description of the project that was included in the researcher’s proposal package.)

Doctor of Ministry Project

General Information

1. **Participants**: I will personally invite Catholic teachers from the Durham Catholic School Board to participate in my D. Min. project until I reach my desired goal of thirty participants. As part of the invitation, I will explain to them the nature of the project, their role in the project, and the time commitment. Some of the teachers that I invite will not be able to be part of the project. The time commitment, in particular, may not allow some Catholic teachers that I invite to participate. I will continue, however, to invite teachers until I reach my goal of thirty teachers. I will invite a cross-section of Catholic teachers from the DCDSB; some elementary and some high school, some teachers who have taught for many years and some who are new to the profession.

2. **Location**: I will book the library from one of the high schools in my school board that I have used on other occasions. The individual sessions of the project will take place at Notre Dame High School in Ajax, Ontario. It is a good mid-way point for most teachers in the board. The library itself is highly conducive to creating a relaxed, informal, non-classroom feeling, with many comfortable chairs for private reflection times. The school has a chapel that participants can use for personal prayer as well. The library is large enough to one central space for full-group activities, with plenty of space for breakout groups.

3. **Food**: Given that participants will be coming straight from work for the most part, I will have some healthy snack foods for them as they arrive, along with coffee, and which will be available to them throughout the session.

4. **Schedule**: Each session will take place on a Tuesday afternoon from 4:30 pm to 6:00 pm.

5. **Sessions**: There will be a total of nine sessions. The first session will be an introductory meeting, followed by eight sessions that will consist of the core of the project. There will be two types of session. For four weeks, I will give two presentations (all presentations will be on PowerPoint) and some prayer time will follow each presentation. Interspersed between each of the presentation weeks will be four weeks of faith sharing. These faith-sharing weeks will be connected to the presentations delivered the week before.
Sessions

1. **Introductory session:** Jesus said to them, “Come and see.” (John 1:39)
   - Welcome and Opening Prayer (20 Minutes)
     “Companions on the Journey” – The opening prayer service will focus on becoming a community traveling to see where Jesus “lives.” The passage from John 1:35-42 will be the focus of the prayer service. My prayer services are in PowerPoint to save paper. The prayer service will be conducted in the library (even though it could be held in the chapel) to highlight the idea that it will be our sacred space as we meet.
   - Icebreaker to get to know each other (30 minutes)
     “Four Corners” – This is an icebreaker where the facilitator asks a question with four options and each of the four corners in the room represents one of the four options. Participants head to one of the four corners which most applies to them. In the corner, you introduce yourself to those you do not know and discuss why you came to that corner. After a few rounds of this, you get a sense of those you have something in common and assist in forming the breakout groups as well.
   - At the end of the icebreaker, they will be asked to break up into five groups of six people. They will remain in these groups throughout the project so that they might become more comfortable with each other and go deeper in each sharing session.
   - Break (10 Minutes)
   - Presentation on the Process (30 minutes)
     I will discuss the four presentation weeks (1,3,5,7), content and process. I will discuss the group sharing process in sessions 2,4, 6, and 8. I will discuss the four prayer practices that they will use in-between sessions. I will give a brief presentation on Ignatian spirituality and the reasons that it will be featured prominently within the project. Finally, I will give them all a journal and explain the practice of journaling to capture insights that they gain throughout the process. (Their journals are confidential and no one sees them.)

2. **Session #1:** Jesus woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. (Mark 4:39)
   - In this session, Catholic teachers will examine balancing work, family, and personal commitments. Catholic teachers will also learn to prayer the Examen as one prayer practice that might assist them to achieve balance in their life.
• Welcome and Opening Prayer (10 minutes)
In each session, the opening prayer will be minimal and consist mostly of silence and breathing exercises to unwind after a long day at work. There will be other opportunities to pray during the sessions. As well, a focusing scripture passage will be proclaimed related to the topic of the week. This week, the scripture passage will be Jesus calming the storm (Mark 4: 35-41) and a few reflection questions will be given to the participants about the “storms” raging around them and about the need for peace and stillness.

• Presentation #1: Attaining balance in our lives from a Christian Perspective. (35 minutes). In this presentation, I will reference the work of psychologist Robert Wicks, principally Everyday Simplicity, (Sorin Books: Notre Dame, Indiana, 2000). The presentation on PowerPoint will focus on the hectic lifestyles we lead and its impact on our spirituality. The presentation itself will be about 20 minutes and participants will be given 15 minutes to reflect on the material.

• Break (10 minutes)

• Presentation #2: The Examen Prayer and Busy Lives (35 minutes)
In this presentation, I will explain the Examen prayer and its effectiveness in helping us grow spiritually in those times in our lives when we are too busy to pray. I will describe the five-step process and then I will save the last 10 minutes of the class to do the Examen together. They will be given handouts on the purpose and steps of the Examen to which they can refer in between sessions.

3. Session #2: Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11: 29)

• In this session, Catholic teachers will discuss in a small group setting their experience of the Examen prayer in the midst of their busy lives.

• Welcome and Opening Prayer (10 minutes)
Same as in session #1, except scripture passage is Matthew 11: 25-30.

• Group-Sharing Round 1: (45 minutes)
After the opening prayer, participants will divide into their five groups of six people and will remain in these groups for future sessions that were created during the introductory session. Catholic teachers will discuss their experience of the Examen prayer in the midst of their busy lives in this round. They will be given about seven minutes each to share what they found helpful about the Examen, or what they may have struggled with. There will be a rock in the middle of the group. The first participant wishing to start the sharing takes the rock and has his/her time to share. No one else is allowed to speak when a participant is holding the stone. After the participant is done, the stone is passed to the person immediately to the left and they can either go next or pass to the next person on the left. This continues until each participant has an opportunity to share.
• Break (10 Minutes)

• Group-Sharing Round #2 (30 minutes)
  Participants will have five minutes to share on what they heard from the others in
  the group. Again, one participant begins by picking up the rock and has now four
  minutes to express the insights they gained, or something they had not thought
  about from listening to the other participants. As well, the sharing session comes
  to an end when each participant has had their turn at which point the session is
  over.

4. **Session #3:** “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.” (Mark 1:11)

• Catholic teachers will consider how work-place pressures impact on their self-
  image. Catholic teachers will reflect on God’s love and mercy for them as
  presented in the fourth week of the Exercises.

• Welcome and Opening Prayer (10 minutes)
  Same process as in previous sessions with the account of Jesus’s baptism being
  the focusing scripture passage (Mark 1: 9-11)

• Presentation #1: **We are God’s Beloved** (35 minutes)
  This presentation will focus on the work of Henri Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved*,
  (New York: Crossroad Publishing Inc.: 1992). The aim of this presentation is to
  help the participants see themselves as God sees them, God’s beloved child. There
  will be time at the end of the presentation for personal reflection time on this idea.

• Break (10 minutes)

• Presentation #2: **Contemplation to Attain Love** (35 Minutes)
  This presentation will focus on the meditation found in the fourth week of the
  Spiritual Exercises known as **Contemplation to Attain Love** (#230-237). After
  some explanation, participants will be provided a copy of the meditation and will
  be given time to begin reflecting on the meditation and will be asked to return to
  the meditation during the week.

5. **Session #4:** For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son... (John 3:16)

• Opening Prayer (10 minutes)
  Same process as in other sessions, with focusing scripture being John 3:13-18.

• In their small groups, Catholic teachers will share how reflecting on God’s love
  for them affected their self-image as educators.

• Round #1: (45 minutes) Following the same process as in session #2, participants
  will share their insights into the Contemplation to Attain Love.
• Break (10 minutes)

• Round #2: (25 minutes) Again continuing the process as in session #2, participants will share their reflections on what they heard in round #1.

6. **Session #5:** *Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.* (Luke 5:10)

• Catholic teachers will reflect on the idea that teaching is a vocation. Catholic teachers will learn the Ignatian practice of “finding God in all things,” particularly as it applies to the regular events of school life, as a way of gaining a deeper appreciation for their work as a vocation.


• Presentation #1: **Listening for the Voice of Vocation** (35 minutes)
  By examining the work of Parker Palmer, *Let your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2000). Catholic teachers will reflect on teaching as a vocation. They will be given some personal reflection time at the end of the presentation.

• Break: (10 minutes)

• Presentation #2: **Finding God in All Things** (35 minutes)
  Catholic teachers will examine the Ignatian idea of finding God in all things, and will learn to put this idea into practice, especially in their workday. At the end of the presentation they will be given some time to reflect on how they might integrate this notion into their lives.

7. **Session #6:** “... *though he was in the form of God ... (He) emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.* (Philippians 2: 6-7)

• In small groups, Catholic teachers will discuss how practicing finding God in all things helped them to see their work in a new light and as a vocation.

• Opening Prayer (10 minutes) – Focusing Scripture Philippians 2: 1-11.

• Round #1: (45 minutes) Following the same process as in previous sharing sessions, Catholic teachers will share their experiences of trying to find God in the midst of their daily activities.

• Break (10 minutes)

• Round #2: (25 minutes) The same process will be followed as in previous sharing sessions. They will discuss what they got out of listening to others in round #1.
8. **Session #7**

- Catholic teachers will investigate making good decisions. Catholic teachers will learn the basic principles of the Ignatian discernment of spirits.

- Opening Prayer (10 minutes)

- Presentation #1: **Ignatian Discernment** (35 minutes)
  Catholic teachers will examine the Ignatian method of decision-making, commonly referred to as discernment. This presentation will rely on some of the classic books written on the topic, such as Thomas H. Green, S.J., *Weeds Among the Wheat*, (Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria Press, 1984). Again, some personal reflection time will be given to the participants.

- Break (10 minutes)

- Presentation #2: **The Rules of Discernment** (35 minutes)
  As outlined in the Spiritual Exercises (#313-336), some of the rules of discernment will be explained in this presentation. Participants will be given some time to apply these rules and will be encouraged to use them throughout the week as opportunities to make decisions arise, especially at work.

9. **Session #8**

- Catholic teachers will share their experiences of making daily decisions using Ignatian discernment.

- Opening Prayer (10 minutes)

- Round #1: (45 minutes) Following the same process as in previous sharing sessions, Catholic teachers will share their experiences of trying to make decisions using Ignatian discernment.

- Break (10 minutes)

- Round #2: (25 minutes) The same process will be followed as in previous sharing sessions. They will discuss what they got out of listening to others in round #1.
APPENDIX #3
(Materials used in the introductory session of the project)

DESCRIPTIVE OUTLINE OF THE PROJECT

General Information

• The project will consist of nine total sessions, an introductory session followed by eight sessions on spiritual formation.
• The participants will consist of 25 Catholic teachers of the Durham Catholic District School Board. A cross-section of Catholic teachers from the DCDSB will be represented; some elementary and some high school, some teachers who have taught for many years and some who are new to the profession.
• The sessions will take place in the library of one of our high school (All Saints High School in Whitby, Ontario). It is a big space with a section suited for presentations, enough room for personal reflection time, and large enough for breakout or small group sessions.

Formation Program in Spirituality

• Introductory Session – This session will allow the participants to get to know each other and to learn more about the program.
• Session #1 - Catholic teachers will examine balancing work, family, and personal commitments. As well, Catholic teachers will learn to prayer the Examen.
• Session #2 – Participants will be divided into 4 groups of six people and will remain in these groups for future sessions. Catholic teachers will discuss their experience of the Examen prayer in the midst of their busy lives in this session.
• Session #3 - Catholic teachers will consider how work-place pressures impact on their self-image. Catholic teachers will reflect on God’s love and mercy for them as presented in the first week of the Exercises.
• Session #4 – In their small groups, Catholic teachers will share how reflecting on God’s love for them affected their self-image as educators.
• Session #5 - Catholic teachers will deal with feelings of disillusionment with their profession. Catholic teachers will learn to practice finding God in all things, particularly in the regular events of school life.
• Session #6 – In small groups, Catholic teachers will discuss how practicing finding God in all things helped them to see their work in a new light.
• Session #7 - Catholic teachers will investigate making good decisions. Catholic teachers will learn the basic principles of the Ignatian discernment of spirits.
• Session #8 - Catholic teachers will share their experiences of making daily decisions using Ignatian discernment.
SURVEY #1

1. How would you define the term “spirituality?” What comes to mind when you hear the word?

2. A) Have you ever participated in a spiritual formation program? Yes____ No____
   B) If yes, what was the program?
   C) If yes, would you say the program was
      Very helpful _______ Helpful _______ Somewhat helpful _______ Not helpful _______
   D) If no, why not?

3. A) What would you say are some of the biggest challenges you face as a Catholic teacher?
   B) How do some of these challenges affect your relationship with God?
      Greatly _______ Very much _______ Somewhat _______ Not very much _______
   C) How has your faith helped you to deal with the challenges you face as a Catholic teacher?

4. A) On a scale of one to ten, with one being a little and ten being a great deal, how familiar are you with Ignatian Spirituality?
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
   B) Do you use any Ignatian spiritual practices? Yes _______ No _______
   D) If yes, which one(s)
APPENDIX #4
(These are materials distributed to participants at the first session)

The Examen

Ignatius left his Society two spiritual legacies: The Examen, and the spiritual exercises. The Examen (or, The Examen of Consciousness) is intended as a short daily period of reflection. St. Ignatius believed that he received the Examen as a gift from God that not only enriched his own Christian life but was meant to be shared with others. The Examen was a "method," a way to seek and find God in all things and to gain the freedom to let God's will be done on earth.

The Examen traditionally has five steps:

1. Recall you are in the presence of God. No matter where you are, you are a creature in the midst of creation and the Creator who called you forth is concerned for you.

2. Give thanks to God for favors received. Pause and spend a moment looking at this day's gifts. Take stock of what you received and gave. Notice these clues that guide living.

3. Ask for awareness of the Holy Spirit's aid. Before you explore the mystery of the human heart, ask to receive the Holy Spirit so that you can look upon your actions and motives with honesty and patience. The Spirit gives a freedom to look upon yourself without condemnation and without complacency and thus be open to growth.

4. Now examine how you are living this day. Recalling the events of your day, explore the context of your actions. Review the day, hour by hour, searching for the internal events of your life. Look through the hours to see your interaction with what was before you. Ask what you were involved in and who you were with, and review your hopes and hesitations. What moved you to act the way you did?

5. Pray words of reconciliation and resolve. Having reviewed this day of your life, look upon yourself with compassion and see your need for God and try to realize God's manifestations of concern for you. Express sorrow for sin, give thanks for grace, and praise God for the times you responded in ways that allowed you to better see God's life.

The Examen is a method of reviewing your day in the presence of God. It’s actually an attitude more than a method, a time set aside for thankful reflection on where God is in your everyday life. It has five steps, which most people take more or less in order, and it usually takes 15 to 20 minutes per day. Here it is in a nutshell:

1. Ask God for light.
I want to look at my day with God’s eyes, not merely my own.

2. Give thanks.
The day I have just lived is a gift from God. Be grateful for it.

3. Review the day.
I carefully look back on the day just completed, being guided by the Holy Spirit.

4. Face your shortcomings.
I face up to what is wrong—in my life and in me.

5. Look toward the day to come.
I ask where I need God in the day to come.
APPENDIX #5
(Below are the materials used in the third session)

Session #3 Schedule

1. Opening Prayer (10 Minutes)

2. Teacher Issue – Stress (10 minutes)

3. Spiritual Tradition – Henri Nouwen, Life of the Beloved. (15 minutes)

4. Reflection Sheet – Taken, Blessed, Broken, Given. (20 minutes)

5. Contemplation on the Love of God – video, reflection sheet, pray Suspice with video (30 minutes)

OPENING PRAYER: SESSION #3

Hymn: Only in God

Gathering Prayer

- Side A: We praise You, God and we worship You with songs that sing of relationship, with symbols that speak our experience, with sacraments that celebrate life.

- Side B: We thank You, God for so many things: Your promise when we are discouraged, Your presence when we experience tensions, Your guidance in our decision making.

- Side A: For You call us and lead us in mission and strengthen us for our ministry through the nurturing bonds of community and the sustaining support of friends.

- Side B: We are sisters and brothers in Your service, missionaries in the service of Catholic education. We thank You, God, for those who stand beside us, for all who have gone before us to preach and prepare the way.

- Side A: May we be of one mind in our mission, work side by side in ministry, walk hand in hand through our ups and downs until You come again.

- Side B: In confidence we ask for guidance and wisdom. Send your spirit to be with us in our deliberations. Grant us hearts open to your word and to one another. Shower Your blessings upon us and on all who are touched by our actions.
Opening Prayer

Father God, we come into your presence so aware of our human frailty and yet overwhelmed by your love for us. We thank you that there is no human experience that we might walk through where your love cannot reach us. If we climb the highest mountain you are there and yet if we find ourselves in the darkest valley of our life, you are there. Teach us today to love you more. Help us to rest in that love that asks nothing more than the simple trusting heart of a child. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

First Reading - Romans 8: 33-39

Psalm

Side A: Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing.

Side B: Know that the Lord is God.
It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Side A: Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him, bless his name.

Side B: For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Gospel – Mark 1: 9-11.

Gospel Reflection

Closing Prayer

- Side A: O Holy One of Blessing, Giver of all life and beauty, You love us into being, We stand before you in gratitude for calling us, alone and together, into our journey of life.
- Side B: Bless us with the gift of vision… to see your beauty around us and within us, to delight in the lavish gifts of your gracious creation.
- Side A: Bless us with the gift of courage…to embrace the darkness and pain in our journey, to stand in love with those who suffer and ache on life’s journey. Carve into the canyons of our hearts your faithful love.
Side B: Bless us with the gift of gentleness…to walk through our joys and pains, especially the growing times, with gentle love. Teach us to be gentle with our sisters and brothers as we share in the wonder of living.

Side A: Bless us with the gift of creativity…to help us brave new grounds, to test new horizons, to risk in trust and be co-creators with you, transforming your creation according to your vision of peace and justice.

Side B: Bless us with the gift of compassion…to see the interconnectedness of all life, to celebrate fiery hearts, your healing presence in and through us.

Side A: Bless us with the grace to recognize your gifts when they are given, to own them, to claim them, to acknowledge them as ours to give away.

Side B: God, you have called each of us to a special role or ministry during our journey here on earth. Of ourselves we could never accomplish the task, but Jesus has won for us the power and strength of the Holy Spirit. Help us to use these gifts, freely given, to bring about your reign. Amen

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**Teacher Stress Notes**

1. 67% of teachers report that teaching is very stressful.

2. Stress is assessing a situation and whether one can handle it.

3. Complexity of stressors/sheer number of stressors that make teaching difficult.

4. Different stressors:
   - Too much on their plate/increasing demands on teacher time
   - Financial crunch – less resources to do the job well, larger class-sizes, not enough EAs.
   - Today’s student – behavior and discipline problems; don’t always respect authority; disengaged; struggling students; personal issues.
   - Adults – lack of support; parents either too involved or distant; administrators are not always supportive (don’t seek input); media attacks; government interference and constant changes to the curriculum.

5. Manifestations of teacher stress:
   - Fatigue (physical)
   - Less enthusiasm for teaching (professional)
   - Emotional state – conflicts turn to anger; depression; insecurity; self-blame; self-esteem takes a beating.
1. Discuss the Baptism of Jesus – We are the beloved
2. Not easy to hear the voice that calls us beloved because of other negative voices
3. We tend to listen to the negative voices more than the positive ones
4. Must become the beloved
   - Taken/chosen – God loved us from all eternity – negative voices not telling me the truth about myself/my teaching; stay with those people who see our special nature; show others their belovedness.
   - Blessed – speaking well of someone; more than just affirmation and appreciation, creates what it speaks; listen to the voice in prayer; reflect on the good things people say about us.
   - Broken – recognize our brokenness – face it squarely; befriend it – suffering need not be negative.
   - Given – life lived for others; when live for others, then we see our unique qualities.

**Henri Nouwen: Life of the Beloved**

**Reflection Sheet**

1. How do I know that I have been **taken or chosen** by God?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

2. When have people **blessed** me or spoken well of me?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________
3. Which parts of us are broken and need to be befriended?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

4. How do I or can I give of myself to others?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

**Contemplation on the Love of God**

The Contemplation on the Love of God is the concluding meditation of the Spiritual Exercises (Spiritual Exercises, 231–237). It presents a God who loves without limit and who invites us to make a generous response of love in return.

The contemplation invites reflection on four themes.

1. Reflection on God’s gifts to us (life, family, friends, faith, church, eternal life).
2. God’s self-giving in Jesus.
3. God’s continuing work in the world.
4. The limitless quality of God’s love. As a contemporary paraphrase has it, “God’s love shines down upon me like the light rays from the sun, or God’s love is poured forth lavishly like a fountain spilling forth its waters into an unending stream.”

At the end of this contemplation we are invited to make a generous response in return. Ignatius Loyola suggests the Suscipe prayer:

*Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will—all that I have and call my own. You have given it all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace. That is enough for me*
APPENDIX #6
(Materials distributed to participants in the fifth session)

DISCERNING YOUR VOCATION: REFLECTION SHEET

1. What gives you joy?
   Does teaching give you joy?
   What are your obsessions?
   What new question/decision might God be calling you to?

2. Are you good at it?
   What are you good at? What are your skills and talents?
   What do people say you are good at?

3. Does anyone need you to do it?
   What is the community calling you to?
   What is your deepest fundamental vocation?

#1 A Step-by-Step Discernment Process

Not everyone wants or needs a step-by-step process for spiritual discernment. But for those who do, you can do no better than a process based on St. Ignatius’ principles for the discernment of spirits.

Stage One: The Preparation

- Begin in silent prayer.

- When you think from your deepest, truest self, what is your burning desire in life right now? (Keep it concrete, and be as specific as you can be.)

- Write this desire somewhere.

- Reflect on this desire.
  - What do you notice?
  - Does a question for discernment emerge for you? Is there a choice facing you that needs to be made?

- Develop a discernment QUESTION. It needs to be relatively concrete and specific. Keep the focus on what GOD is inviting you to be or do. Even if you feel that knowing that is hard to determine. Examples of specific and concrete questions:
Is it time to leave this job for another one?
Is it God’s desire that I get more education?
Is God leading me to deepen a current relationship? And if so, in what way?

Stage Two: Holy Indifference to Outcome
Can you be at peace with whatever God shows you in this discernment, regardless of the outcome? If not, ask God to help with that?
- Do you desire to know what God wants in this situation? If there is a fear or a block, acknowledge it and ask God for help.

Stage Three: Practical Considerations
- What are the facts surrounding the question?
- What are the practical considerations?
- What are the options for answering the question?
- Pros and cons for each option?
- What beliefs and values affect this question?

Stage Four: Considering Intuition and Felt Senses
- In silent prayer (allow at least 20 minutes), listen to your intuition as individuals around the options you face in answering the question. If you need to walk around or stretch or go outside, please do so.
- In silence, listen to your body’s “felt senses.”
- Make a note of how your body is leaning on this question. Write about your “gut feelings.”

Stage Five: Using Your Imagination
- Imagine standing before God (or Jesus) to explain the decision you made on the question. Imagine explaining each option to God. What do you imagine God’s reaction to be? (Allow at least 20 minutes for the imagination prayer)
- Imagine your best friend is facing this same question. What advice do you give him or her?
- Imagine you are very old and looking back on this discernment. What choice do you imagine you would have wanted to make?

Stage Six: Make the Choice
- You have considered the facts, the intuition, the imagination, and have prayed. Now it’s time to make the choice. Search for which way you feel God is leading. What choice feels like the one that God desires?
- As you make the choice, contemplatively sit with and reflect upon the following questions:
  - Where do I feel consolation around this choice?
Where do I feel desolation around this choice?

Stage Seven: Take the Action & Evaluate

- Reflect on this choice for an appropriate amount of time and see you feel consolation or desolation around the choice. What is the fruit of the Spirit? Continue to keep the choice in prayer.

- At some point, discernment always leads to action. So you have to take the leap of faith. Set a time frame for doing that.

- After taking the leap and making the action, notice the early outcome. Does the discernment need revisiting? (It’s not a sign of failure if it does—discernment is spiritual art and mystery, not science!)

- Keep praying and listening to your deepest greatest desires.

- Keep using principles of discernment for making faithful choices. Tweak the process if need be—make it yours.

#2 Discernment in a Nutshell

By Joseph A. Tetlow, SJ From *Making Choices in Christ*

Human beings are moved by a dense complex of motives, both in the things we do from day to day and in our big decisions. What drives a young woman to become a doctor or a young man to be an engineer? Many things contribute: success, altruism, interest. Or what drives a woman who has smoked for years to quit or an obese man to get thin? Again, many things contribute: fear of death, desire for health, concern of family. But they all interact in a kind of movement that eventually drives the person to act. Master Ignatius learned to think about those dense complexes of motives—images, ideas, attractions, revulsions—as “spirits.”

We can all name many spirits. There is school spirit, in which everyone cheers together for the football team. There is fear, which can depress an entire city, and exultation, which can cause a whole nation to rise up. But spirits are not only secular. A thrill of devotion fills St. Peter’s Square when a saint is canonized. A spirit of prayer drives people to make retreats. Christians under atheistic despotisms are moved to remain faithful.

Consolation and Desolation

Master Ignatius noted that these dense complexes of motives and energies take on two configurations, which he identified with consolation and desolation. He discovered that both consolation and desolation can move you toward God or pull you away from God. Then he noted...
that sometimes consolation comes from a good spirit and sometimes from a bad spirit, and he noted the same thing about desolation.

Ignatian spirituality applies this to interpreting major decisions and daily experience as well. The movement of spirits, obviously, involves a set of complex variables: consolation and desolation, good and evil spirits, movements to and away from God.

How Spirits Work

Some basic patterns are easy to grasp. For instance, as you would anticipate, the good spirit usually brings love, joy, peace, and the like; the evil spirit characteristically brings confusion, doubt, disgust, and the like. Another pattern: when you are leading a seriously sinful life, a good spirit will visit you with desolation to turn you around; an evil spirit will keep you content so that you will keep sinning. Another clear pattern is the opposite of this: when you are seriously serving God, the spirits change roles. The evil spirit clouds your day with desolation to lead you away from God, while the good spirit fills your day with trust and love of God. And a final, easily grasped pattern: a spirit that works in light and openness is good, while a spirit cloaked in secrecy and deception is evil.

What to Do about Feelings

Some basic practices are also easy to figure out. When you have made a good decision to serve God better and after awhile go into desolation, you should not change the decision; it’s hardly a good spirit moving you. When you are feeling down, you would do well to pray a little more and increase the help you give to others. When, without warning or any preparatory activity, you are consoled with the love of God above all things, you can trust that it is a good spirit (particularly if it comes with tears). But when you are thinking or praying and grow consoled or disconsolate—well, test those movements. They could come from either spirit, as we have seen.

There is a good deal more to Ignatian discernment, and it gets no simpler. It is not, however, a merely human discipline. “Now instead of the spirit of the world, we have received the Spirit that comes from God, to teach us to understand the gifts that he has given us” (1 Corinthians 2:12). Serious disciples cherish this gift and put it to good use.
Five Tips for Discerning Balance in a Busy Life

by MARINA MCCOY

This past summer I have spent time in prayer, discerning how to find better balance in my busy life as a mother, wife, teacher, writer, volunteer, and all-around household manager. I can easily overextend myself, partly because I feel genuine enthusiasm for many different kinds of relationships and activities (well, maybe not the housecleaning). Yet I have increasingly felt a call to contemplation, which I understand as not only time spent in the presence of God, but also with family and friends, just for the pure gift of the “being” of another.

It’s helpful to distinguish between being active and being busy. Some forms of activity are restorative; for example, I took up running this summer, and while I am far from being a star athlete, running outdoors boosts my mood, relieves stress, and is a way of taking out some time for myself in nature. Still, some daily time for solitude and silence is essential to resisting the “busy” and walking more closely with God. Here are a few other guiding principles that I am bringing into my ongoing discernment:

1. When in doubt, choose relationship.

In teaching, relationship to the students and their learning matters more than all the e-mails and administration. At home, playing a game of cards and chatting with the teenagers takes precedence over a perfectly clean house. Even a solitary activity like writing is relational, in choosing to write on a topic close to one’s heart rather than what gains the most prestige or profit.

2. Pray, then go where called. A spiritual director phrased it beautifully in asking me, “Do you know the difference between being drawn and being driven?” Sometimes God’s call is clear, but it takes courage to “go,” like Abraham, and follow where God calls rather than where we think we are “supposed” to go.

3. Love thyself.

Self-care is not selfish. Jesus reminds us the greatest two commandments are “The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” and “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:29-31). Jesus doesn’t tell us to love neighbor instead of self, but to love neighbor as oneself. Here,
Jesus’s initial words are central to his deeper meaning: “The Lord is one.” Loving God and loving others is “one.” Loving others and loving oneself is also “one.”

4. Practice material simplicity.

The less physical “stuff” there is to worry about, the more relationships to God, people, and nature stay at the center.

5. Make room for spontaneity.

If life is too closely scheduled, we won’t have time for a friend who suddenly arrives from out of town, or for a few minutes to lie down on the grass just to watch the clouds. Seeking God in all things includes seeking God in the spaces and margins of the day.

- See more at: http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/19810/five-tips-for-discerning-balance-in-a-busy-life/#sthash.y6gQc5ju.dpuf
APPENDIX #7
(These are the materials distributed in the seventh session)

Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola

MEDITATION ON TWO STANDARDS

The one of Christ, our Commander-in-chief and Lord; the other of Lucifer, mortal enemy of our human nature.

First Reflection. It will be here how Christ calls and wants all under His standard; and Lucifer, on the contrary, under his.

Second Reflection. The second, a composition, seeing the place. It will be here to see a great field of all that region of Jerusalem, where the supreme Commander-in-chief of the good is Christ our Lord; another field in the region of Babylon, where the chief of the enemy is Lucifer.

Third Reflection. The third, to ask for what I want: and it will be here to ask for knowledge of the deceits of the bad chief and help to guard myself against them, and for knowledge of the true life which the supreme and true Captain shows and grace to imitate Him.

- First Point. The first Point is to imagine as if the chief of all the enemy seated himself in that great field of Babylon, as in a great chair of fire and smoke, in shape horrible and terrifying.
- Second Point. The second, to consider how he issues a summons to innumerable demons and how he scatters them, some to one city and others to another, and so through all the world, not omitting any provinces, places, states, nor any persons in particular.
- Third Point. The third, to consider the discourse which he makes them, and how he tells them to cast out nets and chains; that they have first to tempt with a longing for riches—as he is accustomed to do in most cases—that men may more easily come to vain honor of the world, and then to vast pride. So that the first step shall be that of riches; the second, that of honor; the third, that of pride; and from these three steps he draws on to all the other vices.

So, on the contrary, one has to imagine as to the supreme and true Captain, Who is Christ our Lord.

- First Point. The first Point is to consider how Christ our Lord puts Himself in a great field of that region of Jerusalem, in lowly place, beautiful and attractive.
- Second Point. The second, to consider how the Lord of all the world chooses so many persons—Apostles, Disciples, etc.,—and sends them through all the world spreading His sacred doctrine through all states and conditions of persons.
- Third Point. The third, to consider the discourse which Christ our Lord makes to all His servants and friends whom He sends on this expedition, recommending them to want to help all, by bringing them first to the highest spiritual poverty, and—if His Divine
Majesty would be served and would want to choose them—no less to actual poverty; the second is to be of contumely and contempt; because from these two things humility follows. So that there are to be three steps; the first, poverty against riches; the second, contumely or contempt against worldly honor; the third, humility against pride. And from these three steps let them induce to all the other virtues.

**How the Two Standards Meditation Can Help Outside of a Retreat**
**By John Monroe**

So often when we leave a weekend retreat, we are on fire with love for God. However, as time goes by this fire subsides as life drains away the graces of the retreat. Before we know it, we have drifted away from God. How can we stop this from happening? The Two Standards meditation from the Spiritual Exercises comes to mind as a way to periodically check to see how we are living our lives. Ignatius believed that there is a battle between good and evil going on in the world and in our hearts. It is important that we are aware of this battle. In this meditation, Ignatius instructs us to imagine the armies of Christ and Satan in a big field. Each group has a standard or flag, which helps everyone know his position on the battlefield.

First, Ignatius gets us to focus on Satan. He describes a fearful image of Satan sitting on his throne of fire and smoke and instructing his followers to go out into the world and ensnare our hearts so that we are not open to God’s will. To trap us, he uses wealth, possessions, honors, and pride. Satan starts by getting us to fixate on our possessions. Satan wants our wealth and possessions to become the focus of our lives and worldly success to be the goal of our lives. Satan also whispers to us that we need the praise and acceptance of others, and tells us that because of our successes, we deserve honors. Finally, Satan tries to convince us that we did it by ourselves. He tells us to be proud of what we have accomplished. He wants us to adopt the attitude of “look at me and what I have done.”

On the other hand, Ignatius gets us to consider Christ as he stands on the great field in a lowly place. We are to listen as Christ instructs his followers to go out into the world and lead everyone to freedom. On Christ’s standard we see spiritual poverty, insults, and humility. These lead to true freedom.

Spiritual poverty means we live a life recognizing and accepting that all that we have is a gift from God. Possessions are not something to be worshipped. In regards to insults, Ignatius tells us that we are to let God’s love lead us through the illusion of self-satisfaction and approval of others to a life of serving others. We are called to a life of selflessness, and such a life will put us at odds with the world, which could result in insults and rejection. Finally, Christ calls us to a life of humility, a life of unconditional love and service for God and others.

The purpose of this meditation is to help us understand the value systems of Christ and Satan and to see which value system we are living. Periodically, we need to look at our lives to see where we are standing in relation to the standards of Christ and Satan. If we find that we have drifted a little close to Satan’s standard, we can strive to live a life of spiritual poverty by serving others through humble love and compassion. Remember we are called to live in this world but be of God’s world. So whose standard are you standing under?
The Two Standards Meditation

Article #1

In Ignatius’s day a “standard” was another name for a military banner or flag. Therefore, the Two Standards meditation was a way of testing the retreatant’s allegiance. The overwhelming question was: Whose flag will you wave? I asked bluntly, “What kind of question is that? Who would ever intentionally choose to be on Team Satan?” It seemed like a no-brainer. But when it came time for my prayer, it was much more difficult than choosing Christ over the evil one.

I entered what appeared to be a desert. It was dark and gloomy, and the wind had a distinct chill. Walking into the scene, I saw my friend and rabbi, Jesus, in the distance. As I looked closer, he had a cloth tied around his mouth and was tied up with heavy rope around his hands and waist. As soon as I saw this I ran to untie him, but I remembered that the choice wasn’t supposed to be this easy—it was a choice between the two greatest loves of my life.

It was then that I noticed something on the opposite side of Jesus. I saw an office desk, cluttered with countless books and magazines, and it, too, was tied up with rope. I was confused until I noticed that the books on the desk were my own—this was my future work desk. There were countless books and articles that I had written. I came closer and began to read title after title with my name on the bottom in an aesthetic font, “JURELL G. SISON.” Some even read, “New York Times Bestseller.”

These were my two standards. I was being forced to choose, and it wasn’t as simple as choosing between “Team Jesus” or “Team Satan.” These were the two greatest loves of my life. I always dreamed of publishing a book that would bring life to people, one that would help them discover faith at its finest. But this passion was taking over like a cancer. It was killing me, so I had to kill it. Needless to say, I chose Team Jesus, but it wasn’t without internal struggle and reflection about my priorities.

When we forget to hold God as the center, something else will surely take God’s place. When we take our focus off of God—shoving love, humility, and service to the side—something insidious creeps into us, turning our passion into poison. Sometimes we create our own demons without even knowing it.

The Two Standards meditation isn’t a choice between the good and evil that’s out in the world—it’s a choice that lies within one’s own heart. So whose flag are you waving?
Article #2

What do I want to be? Who do I want to be? If my students could have read my thought bubbles this last week, I’m certain many of them would have been startled. Uh, don’t you know by now? I know that I am, to their eyes, old enough to be a grandmother— if not theirs, someone’s. Old enough, they must think, to be certain what and who I am.

True enough. Barring disaster, the broad outlines are unlikely to change. I am a wife and mother. A teacher, scientist, and writer. My life is settled, grace-filled, and often awash in joy.

Yet I understand that none of this truly defines who I am, for I have met disaster of a magnitude that can upend the seemingly settled, unravel the most carefully laid plans, and strip away even the most cherished of my extrinsic identities. When I was a young professor, I left for work one morning married, only to return home two days later a widow.

So I found the meditation on the Two Standards a potent reminder of where my identity is rooted, of where I stand regardless of the external conditions of my life: poverty, health, frustration, happiness, or rending grief.

I’m going to admit that I don’t see Satan on a throne of fire surrounded by angels gone bad and the occasional orc (despite having watched The Lord of the Rings this week). Instead I see the master of evil sitting alone behind a gleaming and elegant desk, all steel and glass, the whole world splayed out below. Dispatches glide across the desk; well-dressed minions come and go.

“What have you done for me lately?” he inquires.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the plain is gathered an unlikely crew. Suits and pearls mingle with torn jeans and ratty sandals. There is no long chain of command separating them from Christ. He is right there among them, up to his elbows in the mess, laughing as they work, holding them tenderly when they fall. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

At one level, the choice is glaringly obvious. Who would pick evil, even slickly packaged evil? But at least for me, the Two Standards sharpens my eye for the small ways in which I let the external facets of my life not only define, but drive me.

What am I at this moment? Wife, mother, teacher, writer. In the next? I know better than to try to predict. Who do I want to be? Christ’s, in whom I live and move and have my being.
APPENDIX #8
(These are the questions that the faith-sharing groups received.)

Discussion Questions: Session #2

1. How did you find the presentation last week? What would you change?

2. Do you find that achieving a balance between work and the rest of life is difficult for most teachers? Why? Do you find it a challenge?

3. Do you have any tips on how to achieve balance between work and the rest of your life?

4. Do you think that a lack of work/life balance also has a negative effect on one’s spiritual life?

5. Did you find the idea of “Sabbath Rest” helpful?

6. Did you find the psychological section on regrets of the past and fear of the future persuasive?

7. Have you tried using the Examen? If yes, how has it going?

8. Do you see how the Examen might assist a person leading a hectic life with their spiritual life?

Discussion Questions: Session #4

(If there are any present in your group who did not attend the previous session, begin by giving them a brief recap of the session.)

1. How did you find the presentation last week? What would you change?

2. Is stress a major factor in the life of teachers? How is stress manifested in the teaching profession? Do you find it a challenge?

3. Do you have any tips on how to cope with stress in a school environment?

4. Besides physical fatigue and emotional strain, how does stress impact our spiritual life?

5. Did you find the idea of “being the beloved” helpful?

6. Did you find the four sections on taken, blessed, broken, given helpful for dealing with a bruised self-image?

7. Have you tried using the Contemplation on Divine Love? If yes, how did it go?

8. Do you see how this prayer exercise might assist a person to discover their belovedness?
Discussion Questions: Session #6

1. How did you find the presentation last week? What would you have changed?

2. Is decision-making an important feature in the life of a Catholic teacher? How is decision-making manifested in the teaching profession? Do you find it a challenge in your work or private life?

3. Do you have any tips on how to make good decisions in a school environment?

4. How does decision-making impact or play a role in our spiritual life?

5. Did you find the presentation by Fr. Himes helpful?

6. Did you find the three questions on joy, abilities, and need helpful in arriving at vocational decisions?

7. Have you tried using Himes’s method? If yes, how did it go?

8. Do you see how this method of decision-making helpful for Catholic teachers?

Discussion Questions: Session #8

1. How did you find the presentation last week? What would you have changed?

2. Is discouragement a common feature in the life of many Catholic teachers? How is discouragement manifested in the teaching profession? Do you find it a challenge in your work?

3. Do you have any tips on how to overcome discouragement?

4. How does discouragement impact or play a role in our spiritual life?

5. Did you find the presentation by DeWitt Jones on “For the Love of It” helpful?

6. Did you find the analogy of the full cup meaningful?

7. Did some of the other attitudes resonate with you? (i.e. gratitude, find guides, make a contribution, etc.)

8. Did you attempt any of the gratitude exercises and what were the results?
APPENDIX #9

(Below are the two surveys that were emailed to participants after the project ended. Survey #2 was sent immediately after the end of the sessions on December 3, 2015. Survey #3 was sent four months later on March 31, 2016. The researcher had proposed to send it out in early March but deemed it would be prudent to wait until after spring break and Easter.)

SURVEY QUESTIONS #2

1. For your own spiritual formation, would you say the eight-week spiritual formation program was…
   Very helpful ______  Helpful ______  Somewhat helpful ______  Not helpful ______

2. In what ways was the spiritual formation program helpful to your spiritual growth, if any?

3. Would you say that the spiritual formation program helped you to improve your spiritual wellness and maintain a better work/life balance?
   Strongly Agree_______  Agree ________  Disagree ________  Strongly Disagree ______

4. In what ways did you observe improved spiritual wellness, if any?

5. Where there any spiritual issues or obstacles for Catholic teachers that were not covered in this spiritual formation program?

6. Which of the two parts of the spiritual formation program did you feel helped you the most…
   The four presentation sessions ________
   The four group sharing sessions ________
   Both about the same ________

7. Which of the four presentation sessions did you find most meaningful and why?
8. Which of the four presentation sessions did you find least meaningful and why?

9. Would you say that the group sharing sessions helped you to understand better the Ignatian spiritual practice under consideration?

   Strongly Agree     Agree     Disagree     Strongly Disagree

10. How often did you practice each of the following Ignatius practices per week?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IGNATIUS PRACTICE</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>6-5 Days</th>
<th>4-3 Days</th>
<th>2-1 Days</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXAMEN</td>
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<tr>
<td>GOD’S LOVE AND MERCY</td>
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<tr>
<td>FINDING GOD IN ALL THINGS</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGNATIAN DISCERNMENT</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

11. Which of the four Ignatian spiritual practices assisted you the most and why?
SURVEY QUESTIONS #3

1. Would you say that the spiritual formation program has continued to be …
   Very Helpful______ Helpful________ Somewhat Helpful__________ Not Helpful______

2. In what ways has the spiritual formation program continued to influence your faith life?

3. Would you say that the spiritual formation program has continued to positively affect your spiritual wellness and to maintain a better work/life balance?
   Strongly Agree______ Agree_________ Disagree______ Strongly Disagree______

4. In what ways has the spiritual formation program continued to influence your spiritual journey?

5. In the last three months, have you been able to identify any other spiritual issues or obstacles for Catholic teachers not covered in the spiritual formation program?

6. Would you say that you would have liked the group sharing sessions to continue?
   Strongly Agree______ Agree_________ Disagree______ Strongly Disagree______

7. Is there anything you miss about not having group sharing sessions?

8. In the last three months, how often have you used the Ignatian practices covered in the program per week?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IGNATIUS PRACTICE</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>6-5 Days</th>
<th>4-3 Days</th>
<th>2-1 Days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXAMEN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOD’S LOVE AND MERCY</td>
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<td>FINDING GOD IN ALL THINGS</td>
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<tr>
<td>IGNATIAN DISCERNMENT</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Which of the four Ignatian Spiritual Practices has assisted you most in the last three months and why?
Appendix #10
(These are the results of the second and third surveys as provided by SurveyMonkey)

Survey #2

Q1 For your own spiritual formation, would you say the eight-week spiritual formation program was...

Answered: 21  Skipped: 0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
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<tr>
<td>Very Helpful</td>
<td>61.90%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>38.10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Somewhat Helpful</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not Helpful</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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Q2 In what ways was the spiritual formation program helpful to your spiritual growth, if any?

Answered: 21  Skipped: 0
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>It helped me to recognize how to take smaller breaks throughout the day to help me to pause, pray and reflect. The Examen Prayer has made it easier for me to truly reflect on the day’s end events.</td>
<td>1/12/2016 10:35 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Helps to focus me when I'm stressed by work demands, especially the IGNATIAN &quot;Examen&quot; Spirituality approach.</td>
<td>1/8/2016 3:54 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The spiritual formation program provided a focused and dedicated time for me to develop and nurture my spirituality. It became a time I looked forward to during long, busy weeks to simply be and expand. The guided input, meaningful conversation and encouragement to 'carry forward' our new learning each week, all permitted reflection and deeper spiritual thinking.</td>
<td>1/7/2016 8:02 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>provided me with different materials to use to help to develop my spiritual growth</td>
<td>1/6/2016 9:27 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>It gave me an insight into how I should deal with stressful situations, how to maintain a balance in my mind by keeping my thoughts focused on the present and to work through feelings and let them go.</td>
<td>1/6/2016 8:48 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>For one thing. It gave me a time to meet with colleagues and to participate in this wonderful program dedicated to our faith! Therefore I had a purpose to dedicate some time each week before during and after the sessions to reflect upon the content and to get in touch with my own journey of faith.</td>
<td>1/6/2016 2:06 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>It gave me the direction and the spiritual exercises I had been searching for, for a daily time frame for prayer.</td>
<td>12/14/2015 9:38 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I learned new ways to pray which was helpful to my spiritual growth. Sharing stories in a safe environment allowed for growth as well. I learned to be more reflective, thankful and open with my faith. I love to read books, take courses, discuss and share my faith with faith-filled people all in an effort to expand my knowledge and closeness to God and others. I hope to become a role model for younger teachers just starting out.</td>
<td>12/13/2015 9:37 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The program addressed 4 important and relevant challenges to living a spiritual life, offered community support and sharing, as well as some practical spiritual practice to help overcome the challenges.</td>
<td>12/11/2015 1:25 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>It put again all I do and why I wanted to become a Catholic educator in first place in proper perspective.</td>
<td>12/10/2015 7:34 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Discovered I can spend as little as 15 minutes to pray. Find a quiet moment to pray.</td>
<td>12/9/2015 2:18 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>- Time for reflection on the real priorities in life - Deeper understanding of God’s love for us - Practical insights in the spirituality of teaching</td>
<td>12/7/2015 6:46 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>It reminded me to take the time to reflect on a regular basis, if not daily. It also reminded me that it’s ok to make mistakes, and to forgive ourselves.</td>
<td>12/7/2015 3:11 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Reflect on self worth and practicing the Examen prayer</td>
<td>12/6/2015 2:55 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Keeping the Sabbath day holy - the first presentation really hit home for me.</td>
<td>12/5/2015 6:40 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Made me consider ideas and opinions that differed from my own. Also, made me more reflective on my own spiritual journey.</td>
<td>12/4/2015 8:59 AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>The sessions were a balance between new learning and group reflection/dialogue. I was pleased to receive some new information to deepen my own spirituality and found the time spent in groups allowed me to consider this learning in a deeper way.</td>
<td>12/3/2015 9:32 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>It helped me recognize my priorities, and made me recognize the truly important aspects of my life. It also was helpful in discussing with colleagues obstacles we face and we are all affected similarly.</td>
<td>12/3/2015 4:45 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Deeper understanding, awareness and meaning for example - Joy and happiness. Interesting to hear perspective of other colleagues.</td>
<td>12/3/2015 2:10 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>It encouraged me to be more reflective and make spirituality a priority.</td>
<td>12/3/2015 11:57 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>The discussions were good, the quiet time to reflect on spiritual practices was very helpful. It made me rethink my own spiritual practices.</td>
<td>12/3/2015 11:40 AM</td>
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Q3 Would you say that the spiritual formation program helped you to maintain a better work/life balance?

Answered: 21  Skipped: 0

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Q4 Would you say that the spiritual formation program helped you to cope with workplace stress?

Answered: 21  Skipped: 0

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<td>Disagree</td>
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<td>Other (please specify)</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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Q5 Would you say that the spiritual formation program improved your ability to make decisions?

Answered: 21  Skipped: 0

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<td>Disagree</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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</table>
Q6 Would you say that the spiritual formation program helped you to handle times of disillusionment with the teaching profession?

Answered: 21  Skipped: 0

<table>
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<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
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Q7 In what ways did you observe improved spiritual wellness in work/life balance, stress, decision-making, and disillusionment if any?

Answered: 21  Skipped: 0
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I realized my participation in this spirituality program was truly because I had been called to focus on my work/life balance, stress, decision-making and disillusionment. I found that at times, my group got off task in discussing issues which led to us running in circles rather than truly exploring wellness in relation to work/life balance, stress, decision-making and disillusionment. The presentations by Dominic helped me to pause and reflect upon where I am in my journey as a Catholic teacher.</td>
<td>1/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Prayer strategies during the day, helped me incorporate into my day with students. Program helped me keep all aspects of life in perspective—not place such high demands on myself in some ways at work or at home, to help compensate for the busy times -achieved a greater balance -accept the things you cannot change, let it go - disillusionment, directors have lost touch with education world, that's their problem, I'm going to do the best I can with what resources I have -not going to lose sleep, in fact I will take that day if I really need to, as a last resort -learned to listen to myself, MY needs</td>
<td>1/8.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Life as a teacher is busy. Too often I find that my personal spiritual development, and even time dedicated to such, is first to be eroded. There is little in the daily round of a school that nurtures spiritual development (beyond performing rituals and expected activities based on past practice) yet this remains the exact element that is critical to creating a Catholic Learning Community. I found that I began to put this important aspect of both my personal and professional growth a little more to the forefront. Happily, it continues to be the case.</td>
<td>1/7.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>provided coping strategies to help in these areas</td>
<td>1/6.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Carrying my prayerfulness into my work helped me deal with difficult situations and decision making.</td>
<td>1/6.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The attitude of gratitude sticks with me everyday. I like to fill my cup with moments, people and events that fill my cup. I make a concentrated effort to filter out the unimportant things, people and events that do not fill my cup or help me have an attitude of gratitude. Knowing that there is a community of others within our board who share the same outlook as me is a wonderful thing.</td>
<td>1/6.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The program was like an eye opener. It helped me try to let go of things which are out my control and be less of a perfectionist. Having a positive and accepting attitude which reduces stress helps me enjoy the people and the events of the moment rather than being stressed of the outcome in the future. Learning to become and believe that we are the beloved of God who loves us in spite of our failings and faults. It is okay to take time for myself and enjoy down time instead of having feelings of guilt while relaxing. It is important to make time everyday for prayer and quiet reflection in order to feel the presence of God in my being and in others. This helps to be more accepting of God’s will for me without resentment.</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I use the mini-sabbath idea where I have changed my attitude towards time - all time is sacred and God is everywhere in daily life, not just in church. That being said, I go to church more regularly and pray more in the car and during the day when things are rough. I liked the Examen prayer that focuses my thoughts. I take more time for myself and fill my cup, because I realize I cannot give to others if I haven’t filled my cup. Worry and concern get us out of balance and I try to give up my worries and concerns to God and let go. I surround myself with more positive people and try to find the positive aspects of teaching and not get sucked into the negativity that occurs at times in the staffroom. I feel happier and turn to God more so now than before the course.</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>- Increased dedication to prayer - Important insights to better decision-making - Building community with other like-minded colleagues</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I started coming home from work a bit earlier so I could go running to transition better from work to home - helped me with my stress. I also took one day (usually) Saturday and do things that I love to do (reading, going for a walk, solitude) - recharged my &quot;batteries&quot; to help me be more efficient when working. In addition, I had to let go of some of my &quot;busy&quot; commitments in parish to have time for regular prayer, adorations and reflections. If God is first in my life I have spiritual wellness, balance and joy.</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I realized I need to focus on me. I need to have some time for myself. I always thought my work, children and family came first. I'm beginning to work on my life. Do something for myself.</td>
<td>12/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>- Deepened calmness and inner peace even in times of stress in the workplace</td>
<td>12/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>With the videos and shared stories, a reminder that anything in life needs to be balances. Being a teacher is not being perfect, and we need to accept that and work at improving our practice not forgetting to forgive ourselves for our imperfections.</td>
<td>12/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>try to take time for means also made plans to see lots of friends over the next month</td>
<td>12/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Spiritual wellness promotes Taking time for you and your God. It reminded us to slow down and show discernment during difficult times.</td>
<td>12/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Just made me more aware of my own work stress and how I have let it affect my work and home life. Now that I am more aware, I take steps to ensure I deal constructively with it.</td>
<td>12/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I found that I more intentionally made time for reflection and prayer outside of hype work day. Strangely, although the course out an extra demand in my day, I always left the course feeling very positive and uplifted, and more connected to my spiritual self.</td>
<td>12/c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I observed this by taking more time for myself to breathe, reflect by doing the Examen. I learned to delegate more and ask for help more.</td>
<td>12/c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>I feel more grateful for each day no matter what the events of that day bring. Able to not get involved in certain issues and pick my battles. Learned to continue looking down the road.</td>
<td>12/c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Discussions were &quot;soul&quot; serving. Some discussions led to more quiet time/meditation at home.</td>
<td>12/c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Talking with people in similar situations, makes you realise everybody is going through similar things each day.</td>
<td>12/c</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q8 Where there any spiritual issues or obstacles for Catholic teachers that were not covered in this spiritual formation program that should have been?**
Q9 Which of the two parts of the spiritual formation program did you feel helped you the most...

Answered: 21  Skipped: 0

Answer Choices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The four presentation sessions</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The four group sharing sessions</td>
<td>9.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both about the same</td>
<td>47.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>9.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Q10 Which of the four presentation sessions did you find most meaningful and why?

Answered: 21  Skipped: 0
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I honestly can't choose one of the presentation sessions over another. They were all equally valuable to my understanding of the unique stress encountered by Catholic teachers.</td>
<td>1/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Session 5 - Catholic teachers will learn to practice finding God in all things, in regular events of school life. Able to change my perspective on day to day demands of teaching, to celebrate the small successes, of which there are many, to focus less on the TO DOs in terms of stressing out, or the inability to achieve everything that one wants to achieve, to incorporate our prayer and our spirituality into more of the day in different ways. Changing perspective allowed me to de-stress!</td>
<td>1/8/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I found all presentations beneficial in their own unique ways although the session on Ignation Spirituality was most meaningful to me.</td>
<td>1/7/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I enjoyed learning about the Examen. It has helped me to review my day in the presence of God and to set aside time for thankful reflection at the end of my day.</td>
<td>1/6/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I think the presentation on Discernment - To be made aware that God is calling us to serve Him in may ways but we have to respond to that call- it is a spiritual journey. .</td>
<td>1/6/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dewitt Jones presentation spoke to me the most. The attitude of gratitude is important for me to focus on to make me a more faith filled and spiritual person.</td>
<td>1/6/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The session on the Life of the Beloved by Henri Nouwen . I have read this book which helped me see the relationship between God and man in a new way. This presentation reiterated what I got from the book and increased my determination to try to practice the suggestions he offers us to deepen our relationship with God. Henri Nouwen offers simple but profound suggestions and teachings which relate to our lives.</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Companions on the Journey where we spoke about how to deal with feelings of disillusionment with our profession. Learning to find God in all things, especially in the regular events of school life. The solutions to overcome discouragement were helpful. The insights from Dewitt Jones were meaningful and reminded me that when we fill ourselves up and fall in love with our work it spills into everything that we do. The question, &quot;What fills your cup?&quot; was insightful and meaningful because this is how we find happiness in our job again. I had to really think about what filled my cup.</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The session on decision-making because I thought Fr. Michael Hime's video was excellent!</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Session 2 - I had to dig deeper to understand what causes my stress. I had to be yet again reminded that I am beloved of God.</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The third presentation. What gives us Joy? Do I see the cup as half full or half empty? If we know what give us joy, we are able to perceive the world in a different view.</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The presentation on Dwight Jones and the importance of seeing life as a full cup.</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Sorry I cannot recall the exact topics and don't have the notes with me.</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Overtime you speak you put everyone in a very calm and quiet state of mind so I loved all your presentations</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The first one. It was a current topic and spoke to where a number of people are in their lives at this moment.</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I think the presentation that was most helpful was the one about stress because I didn't really realize I was stressed. I thought my feelings were just part of the job.</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>The session on discernment and decision making sat with me the longest. It was a mix of lecture, videos, reflection.</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I liked the work/life balance because it had the richest discussion with the group. The second last one with the video from disillusionment was very complicated to fully comprehend.</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Each the first session was okay. The following were very interesting and I especially liked &quot;What do you bring to the table&quot;. The videos were motivating and very true.</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Q11 Which of the four presentation sessions did you find least meaningful and why?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>All were meaningful.</td>
<td>1/1/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Making good decisions, because I am a very analytical, logical person, and feel that I have a good process for decision-making already.</td>
<td>1/8/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I cannot answer this as I found all sessions to be beneficial.</td>
<td>1/7/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>They were all good.</td>
<td>1/6/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A difficult question to answer as I cannot figure this out as each session had its own impact.</td>
<td>1/6/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I found all of the sessions meaningful in different ways. There was not one that I would say was my least favourite. I definitely got something out of each session. Well done!</td>
<td>1/6/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I missed one, but I enjoyed all of them.</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Honestly, I thought every session was meaningful and moved me along in my spiritual journey. I felt uplifted every time I left the session, no matter how I felt before I got there. I would have liked to learn more about the relationship between our 'belovedness' and the last supper. We ran out of time to expand on this.</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The session on discouragement because I was already familiar with DeWitt Jones' video.</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Session 3 - The topic of discernment is too complex to be explored in one session.</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>q</td>
<td>12/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>All were meaningful</td>
<td>12/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>The last one, I did not like the video's for that one.</td>
<td>12/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>12/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>All held meaning to me so I really couldn't say that any of them were not necessary. I did miss a couple.</td>
<td>12/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Please see previous answer.</td>
<td>12/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>The first was okay. Maybe it was me who could not focus - not really sure.</td>
<td>12/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>12/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>I found all of them meaningful in some way.</td>
<td>12/5</td>
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</table>
Q12 Would you say you learned a great deal about Ignatian spirituality and Ignatian spiritual practices through this formation program?

Answered: 20  Skipped: 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>35.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>60.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
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Total: 20
Q13 Would you say that the group sharing sessions helped you to understand better the Ignatian spiritual practice under consideration?

Answered: 19  Skipped: 2

![Bar Chart]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>26.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>57.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>10.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q14 Which of the four Ignatian spiritual practices (Examen, Contemplation on Divine Love, Discernment, and the Two Standards) assisted you the most and why?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Examen - the most easy to implement right away into my daily practice Discernment - helped to reinforce that which I already recognized about my faith journey and spirituality</td>
<td>1/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Examen- practical, natural fit with my personality, easy to practice, flexible to incorporate into my day</td>
<td>1/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Great Examen definitely had great impact as I was aware of it yet I never reached the point where I would consciously practice it as part of my daily round. I also found the work on Discernment very meaningful. I was very moved by the entire topic of Ignation Spirituality.</td>
<td>1/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Examen, feel it brings me closer to God, and helps me to accept and confront my own shortcomings and gives me hope for the next day.</td>
<td>1/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Examen- it helps me reflect on the day and with God's help to look ahead to a more positive next day.</td>
<td>1/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Examen because I felt it was an answer to my prayer. I had been searching and had tried many ways of prayers and here was one which was meaningful and I could practice and I have started using it.</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Examen, it was a good prayer to review the day, reflect on where God was in my life. The steps were easy to follow.</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Discernment because I think a spiritual approach to decision-making was really deficient in my life.</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Examen assisted me the most because it forced me to go deeper to look at the emerging issues that take me away from God.</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Discernment: because it gave a concrete approach to the need to reflect on our journey and the decisions we make.</td>
<td>12/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Examen because it gave me a prayer direction</td>
<td>12/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Examen. It honours the limited time I have for reflection and gives me alone my to pause and delve deeper into the day and my relationship with God.</td>
<td>12/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I loved the Examen. It is now hung up beside my desk, and I have shared it with colleagues.</td>
<td>12/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Examen and Discernment. The first gave me pause to reflect and pray in my day. I really found the Examen allowed me to see prayer as both a simple act and a refreshing addition to my life. Discernment provided me with another way to consider decisions.</td>
<td>12/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Examen because it showed me that I reflect and appreciate life when looking through rosier lenses.</td>
<td>12/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Examen impressed me and I shared it with staff before a staff meeting. Another form of praying which everyone can do. I have given a copy to every adult and have them around my room. Most people are only familiar with formal prayer or just complaining to God. The Examen allows you another format easy to do.</td>
<td>12/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Discernment because it went through the steps of making decisions and involves what God wants.</td>
<td>12/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>I personally liked the Contemplation sessions, as I find I often make decisions too quickly, without discerning the outcome.</td>
<td>12/6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q15 How often did you practice each of the following Ignatius practices?

Answered: 19  Skipped: 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Once</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>(no label)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Weighted Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examen</td>
<td>36.84%</td>
<td>42.11%</td>
<td>15.79%</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemplation on Divine Love</td>
<td>10.53%</td>
<td>21.05%</td>
<td>47.37%</td>
<td>21.05%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discernment</td>
<td>10.53%</td>
<td>36.84%</td>
<td>31.58%</td>
<td>21.05%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.63</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two Standards</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>26.32%</td>
<td>10.53%</td>
<td>63.16%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.37</td>
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**Survey #3**

Q1 Would you say that the spiritual formation program has continued to be...

Answered: 19  Skipped: 0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Very Helpful?</td>
<td>42.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful?</td>
<td>52.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Helpful?</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Helpful?</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents: 19
Q2 In what ways has the spiritual formation program continued to influence your faith life?

Answered: 18   Skipped: 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>balancing work and family life</td>
<td>4/26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>It has help improve my prayer life.</td>
<td>4/27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The program has reminded me that there are spiritual remedies available to better deal with the ever-present and challenging issues of balance, stress, discernment and disillusionment.</td>
<td>4/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>It has increased my awareness of the true meaning in life</td>
<td>4/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>balance and prayer</td>
<td>4/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>gives me focus, helps me to cope when days are difficult</td>
<td>4/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Going forward, I have intentionally put my faith practice and focus into my daily round... even in small ways.</td>
<td>4/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>continues to refocus my time and thoughts</td>
<td>4/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I see spirituality in my work which brings me a great deal of satisfaction in my life.</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>made me more conscious of my practices and prayer life.</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>daily reflection and end of day various ways to pray</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>It continues to influence me in how I see that my faith is a strong part of my life. My faith helps me to be who I am and should not let people change me regardless of the challenges I've endured and some of which I'm facing presently.</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I keep going back to the notes and prayers. I want to learn more about my faith.</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>It's allowed me to continue to exam the areas of work/life balance. I've continued to look for opportunities to support my mental well-being.</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>By using different spiritual exercises to address different needs.</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>putting things into perspective and communicating with peers in a more personal level, more comraderie</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>The Examin</td>
<td>3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>by deepening my understanding of our faith and by providing an opportunity for open comfortable discussion with other faith filled adults</td>
<td>3/3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q3 Would you say that the spiritual formation program has continued to positively help you maintain a better work/life balance, reduce workplace stress, make decisions, and handle times of disillusionment?

Answered: 19  Skipped: 0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>(no label)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Weighted Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work/Life Balance</td>
<td>21.05%</td>
<td>68.42%</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace Stress</td>
<td>26.32%</td>
<td>63.16%</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discernment</td>
<td>15.79%</td>
<td>73.68%</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disillusionment</td>
<td>15.79%</td>
<td>78.95%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q4 In what ways has the spiritual formation program continued to impact your spiritual journey?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>spend time in silence</td>
<td>4/26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The program has helped me finally become more consistent in spending sometime every morning in prayer so as to deepen my relationship with the Lord. The Examen helps me reflect on the day and see the positive and become more mindful of where I can improve or change some negative ways of dealing with situations.</td>
<td>4/27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I believe practising the Examen and the Discernment have brought me closer to God.</td>
<td>4/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>It has continued to help me to reach out to others</td>
<td>4/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>being more compassionate for the needs of others</td>
<td>4/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>opened different doors, made me aware of new ideas and possibilities</td>
<td>4/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>It has been a reminder and has offered some tools that I can easily reach for.</td>
<td>4/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>more conscious of prayer life and they way I approach my job as a teacher coach</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>not doubting and feel the connect</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>It has provided me with some insights in how I should live my life as a person with mercy and love. Be more like Jesus. Pray daily. Converse with God. Be at peace.</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Having experienced the course, it remains in my mind now as a way of being and reflecting.</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>It is always in the foreground of my mind. I read spiritual books that continue to help on my journey. I try to be more conscious of what I say and do and how my actions impact others.</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I continue to use the Examen prayer at the end of each busy day.</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>It has made me refocus my faith journey</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Open myself to connect with others, get help when needed and offer help to others</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Keeping Subday Sabbath</td>
<td>3/3C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>By providing me an opportunity for focused practice</td>
<td>3/3C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q5 In the last few months, have you been able to identify any other issues or obstacles for Catholic teachers that could have been covered in the spiritual formation program?

Answered: 14  Skipped: 5
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>yes, let go of negative forces around me</td>
<td>4/28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>How do you deal with being a teacher and disagreeing with some Church teachings.</td>
<td>4/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The threats against Catholic Education are escalating and will require Catholic teachers and boards to be well grounded, united and intentional. Catholic teachers will need a plan of action for our own personal and professional challenges. Our school system must become much more dynamic... we, as Catholic teachers must become much more dynamic. Catholic boards must remember to put the Cross before the business model because it is the Cross that makes us who we are.</td>
<td>4/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>More Scripture readings and discussions on Sacraments.</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>ongoing support and more focus from administrators</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>My issue is teachers bad mouthing other teachers. I tried to stay away from this. I tried to live by Jesus’ examples.</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Perhaps more information on the stand of the church on hot topics such as gay marriages, people living together, when not to take the host</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The negativity we sometimes face from within</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Possibly ‘1 of the sessions could have been as a twilight retreat</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sometimes parental involvement that make you question how good of a job I am doing. I try my best but it may not be enough progress given their needs</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>3/30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>overcoming the Elephant in our schools amongst staff who do not feel comfortable practicing and discussing their faith with colleagues for fear of being judged and being labelled “too catholic”</td>
<td>3/30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q6 Would you say that you would have liked the group sharing sessions to continue?

Answered: 19  Skipped: 0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree?</td>
<td>21.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree?</td>
<td>52.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree?</td>
<td>10.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>15.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Responses Date</td>
<td>Q7 Is there anything you miss about the group sharing sessions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 not really 4/28/2016 7:38 PM</td>
<td>Answered: 17 Skipped: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 The different ways others dealt with life experiences and some lessons which I could follow. 4/27/2016 11:44 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Having the opportunity to share my experiences about faith and being heard by others who understand or relate. 4/8/2016 9:28 AM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 No the group sessions gave great affirmation 4/7/2016 7:25 AM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 listening without interruptions 4/3/2016 8:32 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 time for me and to be with others who could understand and give help/comfort to each other 4/3/2016 6:14 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 The gift of time... sharing... learning... and community. 4/3/2016 5:22 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Yes, I miss the sharing of ideas and opinions on certain issues. 3/31/2016 9:58 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 no 3/31/2016 3:40 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 opportunity to share and hear if anyone else is faced with similar issues 3/31/2016 12:49 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 No, I prefer to talk in very small group (4 people). Also I prefer to reflect and write what I have I think and feel. 3/31/2016 12:46 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 They were for me, a means to &quot;force myself&quot; to slow down and be attentive to the spiritual dimension of myself 3/31/2016 11:52 AM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 The sessions always left me uplifted and ready to tackle the rest of the week. I truly enjoyed coming to the sessions and sharing with the group. You gleaned so much insight into life issues, you didn't feel alone and the spirit of support and confidentiality made it easy to share. 3/31/2016 9:39 AM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Just the ability to be able to talk about common experiences and insights. 3/31/2016 9:20 AM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Getting together and talking through issues and hearing different perspectives. 3/31/2016 8:09 AM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 The people and hearing that I am not the only one with the same obstacles. 3/31/2016 7:21 AM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 definitively having a venue to discuss our faith 3/30/2016 10:11 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q8 In the last few months, to what extent has the Ignatian spiritual practices covered in the spiritual formation program been beneficial to you?

Answered: 19  Skipped: 0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Very Helpful</th>
<th>Helpful</th>
<th>Not Very Helpful</th>
<th>(no label)</th>
<th>(no label)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Weighted Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examen</td>
<td>63.16%</td>
<td>36.84%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemplation on Divine Love</td>
<td>31.58%</td>
<td>63.16%</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discernment</td>
<td>26.32%</td>
<td>52.63%</td>
<td>15.79%</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Standards</td>
<td>15.79%</td>
<td>52.63%</td>
<td>26.32%</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q9 Which of the Ignatian spiritual practice has assisted you most in the last three months and why?

Answered: 17  Skipped: 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Examen prayer</td>
<td>4/28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Examen as it has helped me strengthen my prayer life</td>
<td>4/27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Examen because it is a relatively short and simple way to pray (ie, become aware of God's presence in my life) and be thankful at the end of each day.</td>
<td>4/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Contemplation on Divine Love</td>
<td>4/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>contemplation on divine love</td>
<td>4/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>All. The Examen and Contemplations on Divine Love have been my go to practices.</td>
<td>4/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>examen; I make a definite time each day to review the steps in the prayer</td>
<td>4/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Examen.</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>examen- easy to use</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>examen and contemplation of Divine Love</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I have the Examen in sight. It's quick to do it daily. Therefore I have used consistently. The others I do use them when I need to destress. They are all helpful.</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Examen because it is a simple step by step and practical way for me to reflect on my day in a more spiritual way.</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>The Examen has assisted me the most. It is structured, I like structure, and I felt calm and focused when practicing this prayer. I have it by my bedside and try to pray this prayer daily.</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Examen because it allows for reflection at the end of the busy day and helps to put things into better perspective</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Discernment, because of contemplating the future</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Review the day with gratitude. Make sure that no matter what has happened, that I grow and that the day is a blessing.</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Examen keeps me grounded</td>
<td>3/31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BIBLIOGRAPHY
Treatise Introduction


**Chapter 1: Toward A Catholic Spirituality**


Postmodern/Seeker Spirituality


Chapter 2: The Life of a CatholicnTeacher


*Highlights of CTF Survey on the Quest for Teacher Work-Life Balance (Conducted Feb. 24th to March 26, 2014)*, This survey commissioned by the Canadian Teacher Federation, can be found at http://www.ctf-fce.ca/Research-Library/Work-Life-Balance-Survey-DW-CAPTO.pdf.


**Chapter 3: The Catholic Spiritual Tradition #1: Sabbath Rest**


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Drudge, Kevin R. “Living by the Sign of the Sabbath,” *Vision*, vol. 6 no 2 (Fall 2005), 6-13.


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**Chapter 5: The Doctor of Ministry Project**


