

# **Life to the Full**

## **A Study of Catholic School Teachers' Personal Spirituality**

Submitted by

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A thesis submitted in partial requirements of the degree of

Education Doctorate

Australian Catholic University

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July 2016

## Statement of Authorship and Sources

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

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All research procedures reported in this thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics Committee (Appendix J).

Signed: .....

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the spirituality of a small sample of teachers in Catholic schools through the expressions of their own personal understanding of spirituality. The study was conducted in a biographical, narrative way which allowed the voices of the participating teachers to be heard.

This research inquiry addressed the contemporary problem of the ambiguous relationship between religion and spirituality within a culture that is predominantly secular. The cultural religious overlay (in this case, Catholicism) which once served to identify and define spirituality and its practices for many Catholics, no longer provides a meaningful reference point for a significant number of those baptised in the Catholic faith. This problem presents a substantial challenge for church schools grounded in the Catholic tradition, which set out to educate young people religiously and to help induct them into the Catholic Church. Identifying and interpreting how the personal spirituality of teachers was expressed makes a helpful contribution to clarifying some of the issues within this problem. It could shed some light on the ways in which the spirituality of teachers related to the Catholic school's intended role in educating young Catholics and promoting an integration of faith, life and culture.

The study was located in the context of four aspects of spirituality identified in the literature. The first two considered spirituality in a broad way, regarding it as an intrinsic human capacity and then traced the ways this had been expressed over the centuries in the Christian tradition. The second two aspects centred on an exploration of more specific contemporary expressions of spirituality. The first of these was concerned with exploring the normative Catholic Church documents and the current religious education theory of Shared Christian Praxis. The fourth aspect was the literature which focussed specifically on the spirituality of teachers.

As the study explored the perceptions of teachers regarding their personal spirituality, the research design was situated within the interpretivist model. The investigation occurred inside the interpretive tradition of phenomenology which provided access to many facets of the human experience. Constructionism through the lens of symbolic interactionism and intersubjectivity provided the epistemological framework. This allowed for meaning to be created personally and for participants to express different perceptions of similar experiences.

The key data gathering strategy was three interviews with each of the 5 participants. While it was recognised that this was a relatively small sample, it allowed for prolonged time with each participant to explore spirituality across a range of experiences. Spirituality was therefore

identified within a broad spectrum inclusive of the religious and secular. The NVivo qualitative research program was used to assist with the analysis of the interview data and ensured that the analytical categories remained close to the words used by the participants

Conclusions from the study highlighted the interpersonal ways in which spirituality was understood and expressed in the themes of relationality, connectedness and belonging. The capacity for presence, combined with attitudes of listening and empathy were seen as important pathways to experience transcendence, described by the participants as “something other,” “something beyond” or “mystery.”

The study acknowledged that although spirituality may be regarded as an innate human potential, it needed to be awakened and nurtured for this capacity to be realised. Therefore recommendations were proposed for informing programmes that intended to promote ongoing spiritual development for educators in Catholic schools.

## **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost I wish to thank the teachers who participated in this research study. Their trust and openness provided significant glimpses into their personal spirituality and the ways they embodied this in their teaching. As each one reflected on and responded to music, art and a range of questions, I gained a deeper understanding of how the sacramental imagination can be the eye of the Christian heart; seeing all things in Christ.

Throughout the course of the research project I appreciated the work of several supervisors who guided me in the initial and middle stages. For the all-important final stage I wish to thank Professor Graham Rossiter, my Principal supervisor. I benefitted from the depth of his knowledge gained through his long commitment to research in the field of Religious Education and spirituality. Graham's meticulous and focussed response to my work, coupled with the firm belief that I would cross the finishing line, gave me the energy and confidence needed to complete this research.

My colleagues at the Catholic Education Office, Parramatta, NSW value ongoing professional learning in all aspects of the curriculum. I appreciated their sustained interest in my work and their generous technical support which facilitated my searching of resources and digital presentations.

I acknowledge my appreciation for my dedicated colleagues in the schools especially Michael Pate, Principal, Xavier Catholic College, Llandilo, NSW. Michael assisted me in keeping my perspectives linked to the complex reality of school life.

I wish to thank my Ursuline sisters for their constant encouragement. In particular I thank; my sisters in our local community; Venera Nicolosi, my faithful companion throughout this long journey; Mary Kneipp (deceased), Veronica Littleton and Kath Dwyer who inspired me in their love for learning and scholarship; Kath O'Shea whose wisdom and intuition taught me the essence of spirituality long before this academic exploration.

Thank you to my family including my brothers and sisters and their spouses, my nieces and nephews who expressed constant interest in my work and frequently nourished me with their good humour and grounded wisdom.

Finally I am deeply grateful to my parents, Marie Margaret (1913-1969) and Horace More (1911-2000) who not only gave me life but provided all the necessary educational opportunities for me to embrace "Life to the Full."

## Referencing Church Documents

The Catholic Church documents used in this study refer to material pronounced at the universal level of the Roman Catholic Church and the local episcopal levels, in terms of the Bishops' Conference of NSW & ACT (Australia) and the English Bishops (United Kingdom). The material has been referenced in the following way. The first time each document is referred to, it is given its full title followed by its abbreviated form. Subsequent references to the same document are made in this abbreviated way.

Listed below in chronological order is the abbreviated title of each document followed by its full title and year of publication.

**SC:** Sacrosanctum concilium (1963)

**LG:** Lumen Gentium (1964)

**GS:** Gaudium et spes (1965)

**GE:** Gravissimum educationis (1965)

**EN:** Evangelii Nuntiandi (1975)

**CS:** The Catholic School (1977)

**LCS:** Lay Catholics in Schools (1982)

**CCC:** Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994)

**CSNM:** Catholic Schools on the Threshold of the New Millennium (1997)

**NMI:** Novo Millennio Ineunte (2001)

**OWTL:** On the Way to Life (2005),

**HSTCS:** Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Schools 2006

**CSC:** Catholic Schools at a Crossroads (2007)

**EG:** Evangelii Gaudium (2013)

**LS:** Laudato Si' (2015)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Chapter One - Context, Scope and Purpose of the Study</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Issues related to the meaning of personal spirituality for teachers and the role of the Catholic schools in educating young people in spirituality.....	3
1.2.1 The important but problematic nature of the construct spirituality, and the changing relationship between religion and spirituality .....	3
1.2.2 The problem for Catholic schools where a religious institution tries to educate both religious and relatively non-religious pupils in spirituality. ....	4
1.2.3 The impact that the personal spirituality of teachers may have on the Catholic school’s religious education.....	5
1.2.4 Issues related to teachers’ own understanding and articulation of their personal spirituality. ....	6
1.3 Outline of the research study.....	7
1.3.1 Research Questions.....	7
1.3.2 Case Study Methodology.....	8
1.3.3 Purpose of the research.....	8
1.4 Structure of the thesis.....	8
<b>Chapter Two - Review of Literature</b> .....	<b>10</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	10
2.2 Brief introduction to the four context areas. ....	12
2.2.1 Spirituality: a natural human disposition.....	12
2.2.2 Spirituality within Christianity .....	12
2.2.3 Spirituality in the Catholic school .....	12
2.2.4 The personal spirituality of the teacher .....	13
2.3 Spirituality: A natural human disposition .....	13
2.3.1 An embodied human phenomenon .....	15
2.3.2 Diversity of features in spirituality.....	15
2.3.3 Spirituality and morality.....	16
2.3.4 The synthesizing capacity of spirituality. ....	18
2.3.5 Spirituality and the imagination. ....	18
2.3.6 Spirituality as desire .....	19
2.3.7 Spirituality as a sense of belonging.....	20
2.3.8 Spirituality as Focussing.....	20
2.3.9 Spirituality as Flow.....	20
2.3.10 Spirituality as Mindfulness.....	22
2.3.11 Spirituality as Liminality .....	22

2.3.12	Spirituality and the physical landscape. ....	23
2.3.13	Conclusion: Spirituality as a basic human capacity .....	23
2.4	Spirituality: Christian expressions and practices .....	24
2.4.1	Christian anthropology and spirituality. ....	24
2.4.2	Spirituality and the Christian concept of Grace.....	26
2.4.3	Christian morality and spirituality .....	27
2.4.4	Christian spirituality related to constancy and change .....	29
2.4.5	Spirituality and Christian theological traditions. ....	30
2.4.6	Christian spirituality and sacramentality. ....	36
2.4.7	Christian spirituality as presence. ....	37
2.5	Spirituality and the Catholic School: Views in normative Church documents and in the writing of theorists .....	40
2.5.1	The Universal Catholic Church documents about Catholic schooling together with related commentaries by theorists. ....	40
2.5.2	Spirituality and Catholic schooling; views in Australian Catholic church documents and related commentaries by theorists. ....	42
2.5.3	Spirituality and Catholic schooling as reflected in diocesan documents and in the related commentary of theorists .....	42
2.5.4	Spirituality and the new evangelisation.....	44
2.6	The personal spirituality of teachers in Catholic schools.....	47
2.6.1	Personal spirituality of the teacher .....	48
2.6.2	The interpretation of teaching as a vocation.....	48
2.6.3	The idea of teaching as being inner directed .....	49
2.6.4	The idea of teaching as having a sacramental vision.....	50
2.6.5	The Classroom; A space with a possibility to express spirituality. ....	50
2.6.6	Spiritual Attitudes of the teacher in the Catholic school. ....	51
2.6.7	Teachers' spirituality and Religious Education.....	52
2.7	A summary of the position held by the researcher regarding personal spirituality .....	55
2.8	Conclusion .....	57
<b>Chapter Three - Research Design and Methodology .....</b>		<b>58</b>
3.1	Introduction .....	58
3.2	Framework for the Research Design.....	58
3.2.1	Analytical philosophical phase of the study: The literature review ...	59
3.2.2	Empirical phase of the study: Case study with individual interviews	59
3.3	Epistemology of constructionism.....	61
3.4	Theoretical Perspective: Interpretivism .....	63
3.5	Research Methodology – Case Study -- and data collecting method.....	64
3.6	Participants.....	68

3.7	Data Collection strategy: In depth interviews .....	70
3.8	Transcription and analysis of interview data .....	78
3.9	Data Interpretation .....	82
3.9.1	The Interpretive process ; Hermeneutic phenomenology.....	83
3.9.2	Empathy and the hermeneutic circle .....	83
3.9.3	Intersubjectivity and symbolic interactionism.....	84
3.10	Trustworthiness of the research findings .....	84
3.10.1	Credibility.....	85
3.10.2	Transferability. ....	86
3.10.3	Dependability.....	86
3.10.4	Confirmability. ....	87
3.10.5	Trustworthy Reporting of the research data. ....	88
3.10.6	The place and purpose of participants' narratives.....	89
3.10.7	Ethical considerations.....	90
3.10.8	Role of the Researcher.....	90
3.11	Conclusion .....	91
<b>Chapter Four - Reporting the Research Data Collection .....</b>		<b>92</b>
4.1	Introduction .....	92
4.2	Description of the participants .....	92
4.2.1	Hilton.....	92
4.2.2	Louise .....	93
4.2.3	Rebecca.....	94
4.2.4	Edward.....	94
4.2.5	Maryanne .....	94
4.3	Reporting the data from interviews 1, 2 and 3 through open and axial coding ..	95
4.3.1	Open coding.....	95
4.3.2	Axial Coding.....	99
4.3.3	Selective Coding.....	110
4.4	Data regarding the language participants used to talk about their spirituality..	113
4.4.1	Limitations of language in talking about spirituality and problems regarding clarity of meaning.....	115
4.5	Data related to key processes for understanding spirituality .....	116
4.5.1	Focussing. ....	116
4.5.2	Flow. ....	117
4.5.3	Mindfulness .....	118
4.6	Analysis of the data within an analytical matrix of the focus of Interview 3 ..	118
4.6.1	General influences shaping one's spirituality.....	119
4.6.2	Aspects of Church tradition influencing personal spirituality.....	119

4.6.3	Identifying what nurtures personal spirituality.....	120
4.6.4	Identifying what inhibits the growth and expression of personal spirituality.....	120
4.6.5	Links between spirituality and professional practice .....	121
4.7	Conclusion .....	122
<b>Chapter Five - Discussion of the Meaning and Significance of the Research Data.....</b>		<b>123</b>
5.1	Introduction .....	123
<b>Section 1 123</b>		
5.2	The participants .....	123
5.3	Coding .....	124
5.3.1	Open Codes.....	124
5.3.2	Axial Codes .....	125
5.3.3	Selective Code .....	129
5.4	Discussion of problems with language and the interpretation of spirituality....	129
5.5	The significance of the data around some key process in the understanding of spirituality .....	131
5.5.1	Focussing. ....	131
5.5.2	Flow. ....	133
5.5.3	5.5.3 Mindfulness. ....	134
5.6	Discussion of findings from interview 3.....	134
5.6.1	General Influences Shaping Spirituality—especially family. ....	135
5.6.2	Aspects from Church tradition which shape spirituality. ....	136
5.6.3	Identifying what nurtures spirituality. ....	137
5.6.4	Describing expressions and experiences of spirituality.....	139
<b>Section 2 139</b>		
5.7	Introduction .....	139
5.8	The significance of the findings from the perspective of Groome’s hermeneutics .....	140
5.9	The significance of the findings in the light of Downey’s 7 focal points of Christian spirituality.....	143
<b>Section 3 148</b>		
5.10	Interpreting the personal, religious spirituality of the participants in a narrative format .....	148
5.11	The Narratives.....	149
5.11.1	Hilton.....	149
5.11.2	Louise .....	152
5.11.3	Rebecca.....	154
5.11.4	Edward.....	156
5.11.5	Maryanne .....	159

5.12	Discussion of particular themes in the narratives. ....	161
5.12.1	Sacramental Presence .....	161
5.12.2	Embodiment of the Spirit. ....	162
5.12.3	Conversation .....	163
5.12.4	Language of the Spiritual .....	164
5.12.5	Ecclesial Understanding. ....	166
5.13	Summary and conclusion .....	168
<b>Chapter Six - Conclusions and Recommendations .....</b>		<b>169</b>
6.1	Introduction .....	169
6.2	Main conclusions drawn from the study .....	169
6.2.1	Tension between spirituality as primarily a religious construct and spirituality as an intrinsic part of being human .....	170
6.2.2	Diversity of religious commitment and faith practices within the Catholic School.....	172
6.2.3	The role of spirituality in the synthesis of culture, faith and life.....	173
6.2.4	Context as a significant factor in clarifying the complexity of personal spirituality .....	173
6.2.5	Aspects of spirituality that need ongoing attention both in research and in professional development programs in spirituality.....	175
6.3	Recommendations for further research and for policy in Catholic schooling ..	178
6.3.1	Further research on the personal spirituality of teachers in Catholic schools .....	178
6.3.2	Ongoing professional learning.....	178
6.4	Potential limitations of the study.....	179
6.5	Potential significance of the study .....	179
6.5.1	The methodology of listening.....	179
6.5.2	Spirituality, synthesis and integration .....	180
<b>References/ Bibliography.....</b>		<b>183</b>

## List of Figures

Figure 2.1:	The contextual framework .....	11
Figure 2.2:	Summary of the natural human characteristics of spirituality .....	24
Figure 2.3:	Contrasting views of the idea of spirit .....	30
Figure 2.4:	Four processes integral to Christian spirituality .....	33
Figure 2.5:	Summary of the characteristics of Christian spirituality .....	39
Figure 2.6:	Summary of the concepts which relate to spirituality from the documents on the Catholic school and evangelisation.....	47
Figure 2.7:	Summary of the essential characteristics of spirituality relating to the teacher in the Catholic school .....	55

Figure 3.1:	Elements of the Research Design .....	59
Figure 3.2:	Chart of the audit trail .....	88
Figure 6.1:	An educational framework aligned with three key concepts from spirituality	181
Figure 6.2:	Components of spirituality that might inform both further research and professional learning programs in spirituality .....	182

## List of Tables

Table 3.1:	The research framework for the empirical phase of the study.....	60
Table 3.2:	Overview of Chapter 3.....	61
Table 3.3:	Profile of Participants .....	69
Table 3.4:	Summary of Interview Questions .....	73
Table 3.5:	Examples of the way the researcher interacted with the data in exploring possible meanings .....	80
Table 3.7:	Applied examples of the Constant Comparative method .....	82
Table 4.1:	Summary of the sections in this chapter in the reporting of the data .....	92
Table 4.2:	Three Examples of Forming Open Codes from Sections of the Interview Data.....	96
Table 4.3:	List of open codes .....	97
Table 4.4:	Reduction of open codes into six axial codes .....	99
Table 4.5:	The Selective Code Developed from the Axial Codes .....	111
Table 5.1:	New Codes .....	125

## List of Appendices

Appendix A.	Process for distillation of the characteristics of spirituality – Chapter 2.....	197
Appendix B.	Outline of the Focus for Interviews 1, 2 & 3 – Questions and Stimulus Material.....	201
Appendix C.	Data from Interview 1 .....	211
Appendix D.	Data from Interview 2.....	240
Appendix E.	Data from Interview 3.....	257
Appendix F.	Summaries for each participant from interview 1 and 2.....	288
Appendix G.	Matrix of the Data Analysis – Interview 3 .....	301
Appendix H.	Matrix of the Data around Downey’s focal points of spirituality.....	306
Appendix I.	Links between features of spirituality, characteristics of Christian spirituality and the data collection .....	313
Appendix J.	Letters related to conducting the research .....	315

# Chapter One - Context, Scope and Purpose of the Study

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## 1.1 Introduction

This study is concerned with the phenomenon of spirituality and investigates its meaning and expression in a contemporary context. The word spirituality has evolved in meaning over the last fifty years. Traditionally in the western world it was linked with religion, interpreted in a religious context and expressed in a devotional Christian life. It could be readily identified in particular ways of acting religiously through prayer, worship, reading Scripture, personal reflection and review of life (Rolheiser, 1998).

However with the growing secularisation of westernised societies coupled with the call of the Vatican II Council which addressed itself to the whole of humanity, (Vatican II Council, *Gaudium et spes*, 1965, n. 1. GS), there has been a change in the meaning of the word. Spirituality is now seen as being inclusive of secular elements where many individuals seek to articulate a spiritual and moral view of life not necessarily dependent on or relating to religious belief (Fuller, 2001; Fenn, 2001; Norman, 2002). Hence there is ambiguity about the meaning and use of the construct of spirituality. Rolheiser (1998) claimed that it was one of the most misunderstood words in the English language.

One recent definition of spirituality claimed it is the way in which individuals identify with and relate to the spiritual and moral dimensions to life, which may include the transcendent (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006). A number of scholars, as well as many people generally, consider that spirituality is a genetic capacity present in all individuals (Rossiter, 2011). This spiritual potential can be regarded as a defining characteristic of the human species (Tacey, 2000; Schneiders, 2003; Hay, 2006; King, 2008). The implied values in peoples' thinking and behaviour were described by Rossiter (2001) as coming from a "basic human spirituality" (p. 2) that all individuals possess.

However the spiritual dimension was not immediately evident at the surface level of behaviour. It became evident when teased out by identifying the individual's implicit values. When there is a cultural religious overlay that informs, motivates and energises basic human spirituality, the final product is a religious spirituality. This type of spirituality identified with an individual's overt commitment to the practices of a religious tradition, contrasts with a spirituality that is more personal and secular in nature. This disparity between religious and secular spirituality highlights

the natural problem in identifying and articulating just what is a relatively non-religious spirituality.

Because of their religious affiliation and religious history, Catholic schools have long been concerned with educating young people in a religious spirituality (Groome, 1991; Dwyer, 1993; Looney, 2003). However even in the religious setting of the Catholic school, there is a large proportion of pupils and their parents who do not attend Church regularly. This means that their operational spirituality tends to be more secular in nature than religious which presents problems both for the purposes of Catholic schools as well as for teachers involved in educating young people in spirituality. Teachers in Catholic schools represent a religious institution which aims to educate pupils religiously, but the reality of the situation is not fully congruent with the purposes of communicating a traditional Catholic religious spirituality.

This problem is often compounded by the personal spirituality of the teachers. Recent studies (Hughes, 2008; Gowdie, 2011) show that many educators would not have what could be described as a 'traditional Catholic spirituality'. While it is recognised that the purpose of Catholic school religious education is not for teachers to recreate their own personal spirituality in their pupils, nevertheless the way they understand and engage with the construct of spirituality, is likely to have a significant bearing on the way they recognise their role of educating young people spiritually.

Addressing these natural problems related to spirituality in religious education as well as in the personal lives of teachers, remains an ongoing challenge for Catholic school authorities and teachers. How classroom teachers themselves understand and articulate their personal spirituality will therefore be an important element in any review of the religious role of the Catholic school in educating young people both spiritually and religiously.

This qualitative research study focuses on the way that a small sample of classroom teachers in Catholic schools understands and articulates their own personal spirituality. It also connects with and explores the natural problematic associated with the meaning of the word spirituality today in a school context that is trying to discover what education in spirituality means when the term spirituality itself is in considerable flux (Rolheiser, 1998; King, 2008).

## **1.2 Issues related to the meaning of personal spirituality for teachers and the role of the Catholic schools in educating young people in spirituality**

The changing landscape in spirituality impacts on the mission and purpose of the Catholic school, especially regarding the spirituality of the teachers themselves and of their role in educating young people in spirituality.

### **1.2.1 The important but problematic nature of the construct spirituality, and the changing relationship between religion and spirituality**

As noted briefly above, Rossiter (2010) interpreted the current prominence of secular, relatively non-religious, spirituality as the situation where the former dominant, cultural religious overlay no longer appears to have much overt impact on people's basic human spirituality. The majority of people in the western world identify more strongly with the values, signs and symbols shaped by a secular culture. Their spirituality is no longer indexed and readily identified by formal religious activities. It is commonplace for individuals to describe themselves as spiritual but not religious (Fuller, 2001; Ranson, 2002; Hay, 2006). As a result of this trend an interpretation of spirituality where more attention is given to non-religious aspects has developed. This is an implied spirituality in the values that inform observable behaviours as spirituality is seen as coming from an interior source. Palmer (1998), described this as the "inwardness," the interior, or the heart of each person.

In contemporary Australia, many individuals seeking to articulate a spiritual and moral view of life are not as dependent as in former times on relating or connecting their views to a religious tradition. In forming their own personal spirituality, fewer people currently draw on the traditional cultural overlay. As a result, spirituality has become more complex and thus difficult to identify and articulate.

This creates problems when it comes to establishing shared meanings around spirituality which is a natural expectation in a religious school. The development of this thinking about spirituality, especially its secular, human dimension, points to a growing split between the interdependence of religion and spirituality which in former times were often understood to be synonymous. Ranson, (2002) described this split as the 'great divide.' Contemporary research in the fields of religion and spirituality has identified the growing divide between the two. While religion and its practices are declining in popularity, spirituality is becoming more prominent within both religious and secular cultures (Rolheiser, 1998; Tacey, 2000; Schneiders, 2003; Hay, 2006). However both are integral to any exploration of personal spirituality (Groome, 1991; Ranson, 2002).

The transcendent is usually prominent in traditional religious spirituality (Groome, 1991; Ranson, 2002). Religious traditions offer an interpretive framework which is intended to assist people making meaning from that which has been awakened through the capacity of the spiritual (Ranson, 2002). This defined religious dimension may not be so prominent in a secular spirituality which gives more attention to human experience and the existential. While there has been much research on religious spirituality (Schneiders, 2003 ) and on secularisation (e.g. Norman, 2002), there is a need for further study of contemporary spirituality, with its varied mixes of spiritual and religious aspects, and of how it might be understood and expressed by individuals, especially educators.

### **1.2.2 The problem for Catholic schools where a religious institution tries to educate both religious and relatively non-religious pupils in spirituality.**

The Catholic Church described the religious role of Catholic schools as being integrative and holistic. It is “fundamentally a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life” (Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School*, CS, 1977, n.37). This view seems to presume some congruence between the culture and religious faith – a congruence for which there is little evidence in secularised countries like Australia.

The problem then arises in relation to the Catholic school’s commitment to educate young people religiously within the Catholic faith tradition. There is no substantial evidence which indicates that young people educated in Catholic schools are more regular in their practice of their Catholic faith than those who do not attend Catholic schools. Questions then arise around the nature and focus of Catholic school religious education. Should it be exclusively concerned with Catholic religious traditions? Or if most of the pupils are relatively non-religious, should it also give some attention to enhancing and resourcing the basic human spirituality of young people, whether or not they are ever to become regularly committed to practising their Catholic faith?

The secularisation as a result of sociocultural change and the resultant secularity of young people in Catholic schools have called for some revision of the basic purposes of Catholic school religious education (Rossiter, 2010). In this re-visioning, consideration needs to be given to both religious and non-religious spirituality. The first requires an understanding of religious education that will enhance the religious faith and practice of students who are religious and members of a local community of faith. The other is the need to assist both religious and non-religious students to develop their own basic human spirituality.

The way in which these problems are understood and identified, and the direction in which any revision of Catholic school religious education might take, will be dependent on how teachers themselves both understand and identify spirituality. As stated in the previous section a key issue will be research on the spirituality of teachers in Catholic schools.

### **1.2.3 The impact that the personal spirituality of teachers may have on the Catholic school's religious education.**

Official Catholic views of the role of teachers in the education of pupils in Catholic schools, proposed that the teacher is indispensable in the realisation of the faith-culture integration task of the Catholic school; "The integration of culture and faith is mediated by the other integration of faith and life in the person of the teacher" (CS, 1977, n. 43). This presumes that the teacher in the Catholic school needs to have the capacity to search for points of contact between faith and culture and to connect apparent separate realities. The document on the Catholic school (1977) also stressed the importance of the teacher's spiritual capacity in imparting the spiritual dimension of education to the students.

A teacher who is full of Christian wisdom, well prepared in one's own subject, does more than convey the sense of what is being taught to the pupils. Over and above what is said the teacher guides the pupils beyond mere words to the heart of the total truth (n.42).

Furthermore the Catholic teacher was expected to be alert and vigilant in order to initiate the appropriate dialogue between culture and faith (Congregation for Catholic Education, Lay Catholics in Schools, LCS, 1982, n.29).

The spirituality of teachers is crucial to the faith/culture integrative task of the Catholic school because it has the capacity to connect (Rossiter, 2004) and the potential to offer an "intuitive grasp of the whole" (Bourgeault, 2003, p.14). Palmer (1998) considered that spirituality was integral to teaching because 'it animates work especially the work of the heart" (p.5).

The normative Catholic expectations of both the spirituality of teachers and their spiritual role in education seem to presume a shared understanding and a common language around matters of faith and spirituality. However the changing spiritual landscape from overtly religious to a spirituality that is more secular, subjective and personal makes the issue around shared language problematic. Empirical investigation is needed in order to determine the degree of consonance and dissonance around the language of faith and spirituality.

#### **1.2.4 Issues related to teachers' own understanding and articulation of their personal spirituality.**

As stated briefly above, the normative Catholic view of the educative role of the Catholic school, presumes a high level of commonality in religious commitment and spirituality on the part of teachers. It expects that teachers need to be spiritually aware so they might experience within their own spirituality a synthesis of faith, life and culture. This is seen as a necessary prerequisite for engaging in the process of assisting pupils in learning how to integrate the spiritual and human dimensions in their lives.

However there has been little research on how this integration of faith and life and faith and culture might actually operate for Catholic school teachers. Concerning personal spirituality, it could be expected that teachers in Catholic schools would be spread across a spectrum from very religious to the secular. It might also be expected that no matter what their personal spirituality, teachers in Catholic schools should have a professional commitment to maintaining a level of corporate spirituality in the life and curriculum of the school. These serve to resource and potentially enhance the spirituality of pupils and give them access to Catholic traditions in spirituality (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006).

Better knowledge of how these teachers themselves are negotiating the meaning of the spirituality construct would be valuable for considering the development of meaningful and relevant professional development programmes. What is commonly missing from the research is the voice of educators themselves in expressing how they are identifying and interpreting spirituality within their own lives. There have been research studies that have collected data on the personal stories and experiences of teachers. However these were instrumental to other purposes rather than describing and interpreting teachers' own understandings.

Conti (2002) focussed on the spirituality of teachers who worked in and embraced the philosophy of holistic schools. Downey's (2006) study explored the nurturing and sustaining of the spirituality of high school teachers. Gowdie's research (2011) was directed towards developing effective spiritual formation processes for teachers by focussing on a systemic staff formation initiative for Catholic educators. All these studies have been more about developing teachers' spirituality rather than giving a personal voice to the teachers themselves to see how they identify, understand and articulate personal spirituality.

Research into the ways that teachers understand their own spirituality might also give attention to the ways in which the teachers see their own spirituality impacting on their professional practice.

It would be useful to determine whether their views are congruent with the normative views of teachers' roles in educating in spirituality.

### **1.3 Outline of the research study**

This qualitative research case study involved five teachers working within five different Catholic schools in one of the metropolitan dioceses of Sydney. It aimed to identify and interpret the ways in which each of them understood and expressed personal spirituality. Two essential criteria guided the selection of the participants. Firstly they needed to show they valued religious spirituality and believed that the spiritual was an essential part of life. Secondly they needed to have a capacity for articulating experiences in which they identified aspects of the spiritual including spirituality which was connected to religion. The study compiled individual stories of these teachers as they conveyed their understandings and experiences of spirituality in the context of their professional lives as teachers in Catholic schools. Resulting from the study, characteristics and qualities of spirituality expressed in the personal narratives of the participants were identified.

Situated in the qualitative paradigm the study aimed to explore the subjective and intersubjective experiential worlds of the participating teachers. An interpretive case study on spirituality allowed the researcher to enter the life worlds of the participants to see how and where they identified their own personal spirituality.

#### **1.3.1 Research Questions**

The central research question generated in the light of the literature review (chapter 2) was;

How do teachers in Catholic schools understand and articulate their personal spirituality?

The two sub questions were;

How do teachers in Catholic schools express their spirituality?

What links do Catholic school teachers see between their personal spirituality and their professional practice?

Investigating the narrative responses of participants to identify their understandings of their personal spirituality would include looking at the words used to identify spirituality. In addition it takes account of their views on how their spirituality might be expressed, articulated or lived out in practice in their own lives. The second research question sought to identify their thinking about how their personal spirituality might be linked in any way with professional practice. This

could show up in a variety of ways, including potential influence on their teaching style and pedagogy; perspectives for understanding the spirituality of their students and trying to make their teaching of religion more meaningful or relevant.

### **1.3.2 Case Study Methodology**

Case Study was selected as the primary methodology for the research project because it had the capacity to uncover deep understanding of specific instances of spirituality. It also helped with the investigation of spirituality within a real life context. In the study it was the teachers' spirituality which was both particular in that it pertained to each individual, and complex because of the added element of being connected to the educative role of the Catholic school.

The methodology also allowed the researcher to be the 'primary instrument' of the data collection and analysis. It enabled her to engage with an "inductive investigative strategy with the product being richly descriptive" (Merriam, 2002, p. 179).

### **1.3.3 Purpose of the research**

The prime purpose of this research project was to study the interior life of each of the five participating teachers. It aimed to uncover core spiritual experiences by "giving attention to the personal, subjective, psychological aspects of spirituality" (Rossiter, 2010, p.8) and to develop some perspective on the nature of contemporary spirituality for teachers in Catholic schools.

Palmer (1998) in his exploration of the inner landscape of a teacher's life identified the gap in the research concerning 'the who' of teaching and claimed that rarely in educational research was there a focus on the quality of the teacher's integrated self. Gowdie (2011) noted that "thinking and reflecting in deep personal ways about teacher's spiritual perspectives is not part of the fabric of school culture" (p.299).

## **1.4 Structure of the thesis**

This first chapter introduced the context of the study and detailed its scope and purpose. It concluded with an overview of the following five chapters.

**Chapter two** appraised the literature relevant to the study. The review focussed on four aspects of spirituality beginning with an overarching view of spirituality as essential to being human. It then examined a particular expression of this universal human phenomenon in the religious spirituality of the Christian, Catholic tradition. The next section looked at the place of spirituality in Catholic schools. Attention was then given to spirituality of teachers in Catholic schools.

**Chapter three** detailed the research design and methodology within an overall theoretical framework of interpretivism and an epistemology of constructionism. The methodology of case study was used to investigate the bounded phenomenon of the spirituality of teachers in Catholic schools. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and document study. Coding and categorising were the initial processes used in the data analysis. Through concept mapping and constant comparison methods of analysis, themes were generated.

**Chapter four** reported the research data collection. Following the analysis of data into open and then axial coding, the findings were then presented within the matrices of emerging patterns. These showed the qualities of spirituality that were evident in the teachers' understandings of their own personal spirituality. Also identified were the participants' ideas about how their spirituality was linked with professional practice. Seven principal themes were identified.

**Chapter five** discussed the meaning and significance of the research data. Central themes in the participants' understandings of personal spirituality were highlighted and interpreted with links to related ideas in the literature review. The meaning of the data was also considered from the perspective of Groome's hermeneutics and Downey's key qualities of spirituality. Following on from the interpretations developed in this chapter, the researcher constructed 'spirituality narratives' for each participant to show how their data proposed a narrative description of spirituality for each one. The participants' were given copies of their constructed narratives descriptive of their spirituality and they were invited to respond. These responses were recorded at the end of each narrative. This action served as a type of validation of the interpretivist study results from the point of view of the participants.

**Chapter six** provided a summary of the study, generated conclusions, discussed the significance of the research and provided recommendations for future research. It also offered suggestions for policy and practice in professional development programs concerned with resourcing the personal and religious spirituality of teachers in Catholic schools.

# Chapter Two - Review of Literature

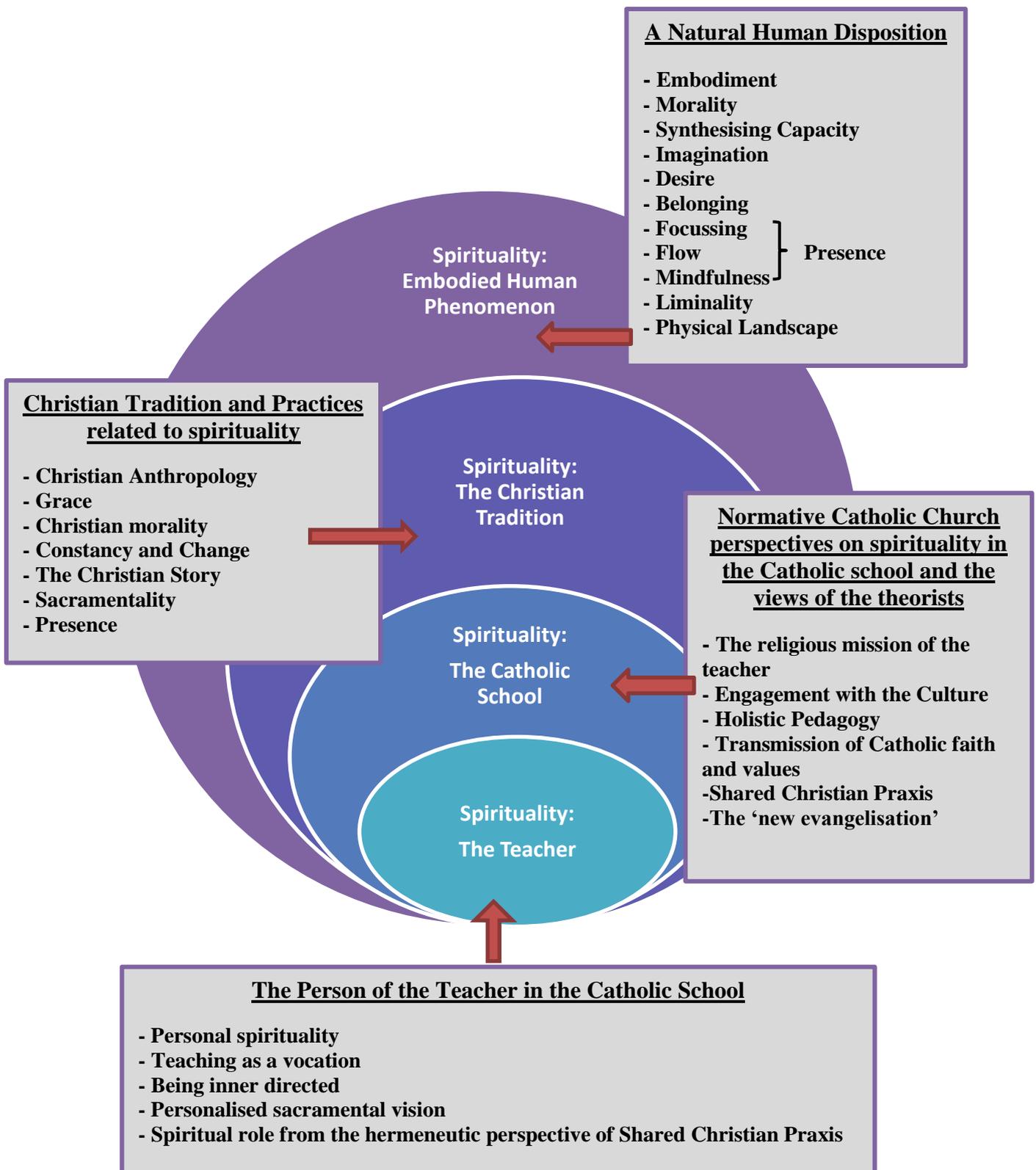
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## 2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of the literature on spirituality with respect to both its breadth within the human experience and its specific expressions within Christianity and in particular the Catholic school. The selected literature is pertinent to the exploration of the personal religious spirituality of Catholic school teachers. The literature studied was grouped in four areas as shown in figure 2.1 below.

The ontological assumption informing the review was that spirituality is intrinsic to being human. It was also embodied in the uniqueness of each person (Hardy 1965). Religious frameworks have served to awaken the capacity of the human spirit and have had a shaping influence on the interpretation of spirituality (Ranson, 2002). Teachers live and work in a particular cultural context. For those working in Catholic Schools the school culture is defined by a faith tradition, doctrines, beliefs and rituals. However this belief system underpinning Catholic schools is not separated from the broader culture.

The following diagram presents the contextual framework for the literature review. It presumes spirituality can only be considered contextually (Ranson, 2002). The nested circles indicate the four areas selected for the exploration of the literature as described above. The content of the boxes arrowed into each circle, specify the particular features of each context. The interactive dynamic of the context areas in the lived experience of teachers, impacts on the way they perceive and experience the spiritual.



**Figure 2.1: The contextual framework**

Each of the four sections of the literature review concluded with a summary diagram of the key characteristics of spirituality. At the end of the chapter these separate summaries were condensed into a concise overview of the characteristics of spirituality. This set of characteristics informed the development of interview questions (chapter 3); and provided a starting point for the coding of the interview data (chapter 4). It also had a bearing on the discussion of the meaning and significance of the data (chapter 5).

## **2.2 Brief introduction to the four context areas.**

The following four sub sections provide a summary of each of the context areas to be developed in this chapter

### **2.2.1 Spirituality: a natural human disposition**

The literature review begins with an exploration of the phenomenon of spirituality in its most basic and fundamental sense. It is grounded in Hardy's claim (1965) that spirituality is an anthropological constant and is intrinsic to being human. There are diverse definitions of spirituality that interpret various ways in which people describe the spiritual dimension to life (Ranson, 2002; Schneiders, 2003; Bowie, 2003; Mason, Singleton & Webber, 2007; King, 2008).

The following have been identified by scholars as four key dimensions to awakening the human spiritual capacity:- *Focussing* (Campbell & McMahon, 1997), *Flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990 ), *Mindfulness* (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1999), and *Belonging* (Vanier, 1998; McKay, 2014 ). These are regarded as experiences which manifest both the capacity and the presence of the human spirit. Turner, (1975), described spirituality as encounters which are liminal and provide critical spaces for transforming action. The physical landscape has been identified by Ranson (2002) and Silf (2011 ) as providing an interactive dynamic between the spirit of the land and the human spirit.

### **2.2.2 Spirituality within Christianity**

The second context is spirituality within Christianity. Here attention was given to the literature of Christian spirituality in the beliefs and traditions of Catholicism. Through the principles and perspectives of Christian anthropology and the Christian spiritual tradition, the human spirit is understood and shaped in a particular way. The ideas of grace, sacramentality and community were prominent in this tradition of spirituality.

### **2.2.3 Spirituality in the Catholic school**

The third context was spirituality in the Catholic school. An emphasis on spirituality in the Catholic school was consistent with the Catholic Church's view that the Catholic school has an

important place within the evangelising mission of the Catholic Church. Relevant, normative Church documents related to Catholic schooling at Roman, national, diocesan and local school levels were examined. The section concluded with a review of the current writing on ‘the new evangelisation.’ This particular approach to the missionary outreach of the Catholic Church was initiated by Pope John Paul II. Its primary focus aimed to lead people to an encounter with the living Christ who is “pre-eminently experienced in communion with the Church” (Rymarz, 2012, p.9).

#### **2.2.4 The personal spirituality of the teacher**

The final context was the personal spirituality of the teacher. In Catholic Church documents teachers were regarded as the major vivifying force of the Catholic school (CS, 1977). The intrinsic nature of human spirituality implies that it is embodied. In the Christian context, this embodiment of the spiritual or incarnation of the spirit, points to the central message of Christianity that God took flesh, became human and lived among us (John 1:14). From this perspective, the teacher in a Catholic school is regarded as the person who takes on a role that extends beyond the teaching function and is seen as the one “who is part of God’s ongoing incarnation” (Rolheiser, 1999, p. 70). When the profession of teaching is embraced with this faith perspective, it is seen as response to a calling. In theological terms this calling is referred to as vocation (Congregation for Catholic Education, *Lay Catholics in Schools*, LCS, 1982, n. 61).

### **2.3 Spirituality: A natural human disposition**

In most areas of the contemporary Western World, institutional Religion is in decline while spirituality in its many forms and expressions, is regarded as being more prominent (Schneiders, 2003; Bowie, 2003; King, 2008). The metaphor of “the Great Divide” has identified the spilt between these once interdependent realities of the life of faith (Ranson, 2002). Compelling evidence across many countries in the Western World points to an increasing sense of disjunction between the religious institution and personal experience (Hay, 2006). For religious people, it is recognised that religion is the optimal context for the expression and development of spirituality (Schneiders, 2003). However because of the growing distinction and difference between religion and spirituality, attention needs to be given to a natural human dimension to spirituality that may or may not be referenced to religion.

The etymological derivation of the word spirituality stems from the Latin word *spiritus* which can be translated as “breath, life or spirit” (Bowie, 2003, p. 11). In its broadest sense spirituality relates to the whole of life. Alister Hardy, (1965) claimed that it is an anthropological constant

and described spirituality as an innate potential residing in the human species and evolving through the process of natural selection. For Hardy spirituality is as natural and essential to humanity as breathing, eating or seeing and seen as a form of awareness which is different from and transcending everyday awareness. This reflective self-awareness is regarded as a distinct feature of the human species (Littleton, 2006).

Hay's (1998) research more than twenty years after Hardy, built on the position articulated in 1965. His findings supported the fact that there was a biological basis for spiritual awareness because he concluded that it was "essentially part of human evolution and not an element planted through culture and education" (King, 2008, p.87).

O'Murchu (1997) also supported the notion that spirituality was a natural human disposition. He considered it to be something that people are born with, that is dynamic and forever seeks articulation and expression in human living. Groome (1998) claimed that,

Spirituality is ontological - it belongs to humankind's very 'being.' It is more accurate to call ourselves spiritual beings who have a human life than human beings who have a spiritual life (p.332).

Rossiter (2010) considered that the spiritual was a natural feature of life and listed the following aspects which included dimensions of the spiritual;

Thinking and feeling about transcendence; ideas about a creator or creative forces in the cosmos; human values; sense of meaning and purpose to life; love and care for self and others; sense of stewardship for the earth and its flora and fauna; the aesthetic (p.7).

Schneiders (2003), grounded her position on the origins of spirituality in this anthropological perspective, and proposed that the intrinsic spiritual capacity enabled persons to reach beyond themselves in relationships to others. This view implied that spirituality therefore has a positive survival function for human beings in their natural environment (Hay & Nye, 2006). Hay (2006) argued that it was indestructible and therefore could not be annihilated even though it may be suppressed and even repressed.

The research referred to above proposes that spirituality is essential to the human condition, including both religious people and those who have no regard for religion. This view also suggests that there is something beyond individuals, either an ultimate reality or mysterious presence that animates all of life (Bowie, 2003). Even in scientific circles there is some evidence of a growing trend to interpret spiritual awareness as something positive rather than illusory,

pathological or just a plaything of language that can be deconstructed out of existence (Hay, 2006).

### **2.3.1 An embodied human phenomenon**

Some writers understand spirituality as not being separate from what is human. It is seen as being *embodied* in the human person. Champagne (2001), claims that spirituality cannot be “disassociated either from the human or from what is beyond the human in transcendence and in immanence” (p. 83). This embodied perspective of the human spirit, opposes the notion of spirituality being an abstract idea, a theory or an ideology. Instead it can be seen as existing in personal lived reality with the capacity for transcending human experiences (King 2008).

Husserl’s (1878) position on embodiment is consistent with this understanding. For him the lived body was a lived centre of all experiences including the spiritual (Behnke, 2011). He introduced the term *embodiment* which was inclusive of the physical body but also referred to all that was directly experienced from within. This non-physical dimension, filled with “its own familiar feel” (Behnke, 2011, p. 10), was regarded as leading to a way of experiencing, locating and speaking about the spiritual as being embodied. Husserl’s predominant concern was to understand the body, independent of the positivistic natural sciences which rendered the body as a natural organism subjected to being understood in terms of causal laws (Behnke, 2011).

### **2.3.2 Diversity of features in spirituality**

The key features that authors have identified as characterising spirituality include the following:-

- An intrinsic human capacity (Tacey, 2003; Hay 2006), holistic (Zohar & Marshall, 2000), connective or the idea of connectedness with self, others, the universe and God (Hay & Nye, 1998; Rossiter, 2004)
- An awakening that links people together more profoundly to life (Ranson, 2002)
- A human response to a transcendent reality (Bowie, 2003).

These features are regarded as being woven together in a variety of ways providing a backdrop for identifying the many and varied lived expressions of spirituality.

O’Murchu, (1997) described spirituality as the interior life of people while Crawford & Rossiter, (2006) proposed that it was related to religious experience and the search for meaning and purpose, Spirituality was understood by Macquarrie (1972) as being concerned with becoming a person in the fullest sense. It is a capacity for going out of oneself, beyond oneself in order to transcend the self. O’Murchu, (1997) described spirituality as the interior life of people while

Crawford & Rossiter, (2006) proposed that it was related to religious experience and the search for meaning and purpose, Spirituality was understood by Macquarie (1972) as being concerned with becoming a person in the fullest sense. It is a capacity for going out of oneself, beyond oneself in order to transcend the self. The following set of general characteristics of spirituality is derived from the authors referred to here as well as from, Hay & Nye, 1998; Zohar & Marshall, 2000; Ranson, 2002; Tacey, 2003; Bowie, 2003. They suggest that openness, freedom, creativity, the capacity for transcending any given state in which people find themselves, makes possible self-consciousness and self-criticism, understanding, responsibility, the pursuit of knowledge, the sense of beauty, the quest of the good, the formation of community, the outreach of love and whatever else belongs to the life of the spirit.

Mason, Singleton and Webber (2007) identified some key themes from the literature which they suggested captured the way spirituality is understood and lived today. The definition they formulated for their research project proposed that spirituality was “a conscious way of life based on a transcendent referent” (Mason, Singleton & Webber, 2007, p. 39). Broadly this was seen as a framework of ethos and meaning, grounded in one’s worldview. The inclusion of the concept of transcendence placed the individual in a wider context beyond the self.

Included in their analysis was the metaphor of journey which implied that spirituality was a quest rather than a home. They also drew on the concept of “the spiritual marketplace” (p.37-38), where people in the mode of consumers, adopted an eclectic spirituality as they mixed and matched components from a wide range of sources. Rossiter (2010) considered that there was an evolution from traditional religious spirituality in a similar way, noting that contemporary spirituality is “more secular, eclectic and individualistic.” (p.129). This avoided the necessity of being committed to buy “one complete package” (Mason, Singleton & Webber, 2007, p. 37).

### **2.3.3 Spirituality and morality**

There is a complex connection between spirituality and morality and Brown (1997) proposed that “morality is a necessary foundation of our humanity” (p.145). Spirituality is often considered personal but morality is both personal and social. While personal moral values are a core part of the individual spirituality because of the fundamental relationship quality of human beings, their moral actions inevitably impinge on others. Therefore personal morality always has a social dimension. The basis of morality lies in the fact that for survival, one needs another or several others. Moral actions have to do with the quality and authenticity of individuals’ acting consistently with personal moral values. This always relates to others because behavior generates positive or negative social repercussions and sometimes both.

Hay & Nye (1998) in studying the data from a large number of interviews with children regarding spirituality identified relational consciousness as the core category in the research findings. In mapping a “geography of the spirit” (pp. 63-78), Hay & Nye, described three sub-categories relating to spiritual sensitivity which they named - “Awareness-sensing, Mystery-sensing and Value-sensing” (p.65). All these categories contained a relational dimension while the third category in its explicit mention of values indicated the connection between morality and spirituality.

Swick (2006) suggested that Coles was a great moral visionary because he spent his life investigating morality in terms of what it was, how it was created and its place in the lives of human beings. He proposed that Coles (1997) defined morality as “the central issue of human existence, the factor that defines our lives as human beings.” (p. 1). In this understanding proposed by Coles, morality is closely aligned with the connective nature of spirituality which is integral to being human. He stated that;

Morality defines not only how we get along with the world and one another and its rules of life, it characterizes our very nature. Morality has to do with human connection, it has to do with the kind of connection that responds to others and in turn earns the caring response of others. If we are deprived of our morality, we’re deprived of an essential part of ourselves (Swick, 2006, p.1).

As stated earlier, spirituality has the potential to awaken human consciousness resulting in a heightened awareness of the individual’s place and purpose in the world. This personal awakening can lead to meaningful experiences of being connected to others. It is akin to a verse from Donne’s (1624) poem of the same title, “no man is an island.” Despite the strong emphasis in contemporary times, on individualism and expressions of narcissism (Rolheiser, 1994) there appears to be a counter movement that is being promoted and embraced by those seeking a morality that is more relevant to the growing awareness of the interconnectedness and interdependence of the human community.

It is proposed by the researcher that this movement stems from a spiritual capacity because it involves connectedness which as indicated earlier, is one of the identifying features of spirituality. The interface of spirituality and morality is evident in the greater awareness of global interdependence and the diversity of ecological issues which are being voiced at this time. Contemporary morality is often characterized by the search for appropriate ways to be in right relationships with humanity, the earth and the cosmos. A current moral compass is one which presents a guide to navigate through what at times can be a confronting moral maze and could be

set with values which include respect, solidarity, restorative justice, conservation and sustainability.

This contemporary example of the moral dimension to spirituality aligns with what Rossiter (2010; 2012) proposed regarding spirituality that is not linked to a religious tradition. He considered that a relatively non-religious spirituality is not easily identified in terms of religious practices. However Rossiter noted that there is an implied spirituality that can be interpreted by the values in the thinking and the behavior of the individual. This view regarded moral values at the core of human spirituality.

#### **2.3.4 The synthesizing capacity of spirituality.**

Schneiders (1986) considered that spirituality involved one's whole life in relation to reality as a whole. It was the "unique and personal response of individuals to all that calls them to integrity and transcendence" (Schneiders, 1986, p. 264). For persons who strove to actualize spiritual potential, their pursuit of life reflected a distinct coherence. Their quest was to integrate all aspects of life by bringing the polarities of body and spirit, emotions and thought, activity and passivity, social and individual into a balanced harmony (Schneiders, 2003). This view implied that the challenge was to find ways to connect the variety of experiences found in the individual's life, culture and faith, into a unified whole. Activating the imagination was regarded as essential to the process of synthesis.

#### **2.3.5 Spirituality and the imagination.**

The imagination is the human capacity which has the power to re-configure reality and bring coherence to the human vision (O'Leary, 2008). It was seen by Schleiermacher "as the highest and most original element in the human person" (Rae, 1997, p. 42). In Kant's critiques of Pure Reason (1781), Practical Reason (1788) and Judgment (1790), he provided a model of the functions and processes of the mind. Kant claimed that the imagination served as a bridge connecting the empirical world of the senses and the abstract world of understanding. This mediation between sense and understanding synthesized the data of perception and prepared the mind for the application of concepts (Marina, 2005).

According to the Kantian view, order and coherence were brought to the individual's experience of the world through the processing capacity of the imagination. Fowler (1981) identified the inherent capacity of the imagination in reference to one of the German words for imagination – "Einbildungskraft". It literally meant "the power (Kraft)" of "forming (Bildung)" into "one

(Ein)". The synthesizing capacity of spiritual awareness was considered to create a cohesive way of seeing the events of everyday life.

O'Leary (2008) proposed that a layered experience of reality became possible as spiritual awareness was fostered through the imagination. He described it as the "cradle of possibility" (O'Leary, 2008, p.34). This capacity allowed the individual to first experience what was presented and then to discover within it much more meaning than the basic phenomena allowed. The presence of the spiritual world was evoked and invoked through the imagination and "the meaning below the meaning, the beauty behind the beauty, the mystery within the mystery is revealed" (O'Leary, 2008, pp. 30-31). These experiences of the imagination are reflected in the words of the poet Kathleen Raine, "I have glimpsed the mountain behind the mountain" (Raine, 1988, p.132).

O'Leary (2008) noted that Newman (1841), Lonergan (1972), Rahner (1996), and Von Balthasar (1996), all ascribed an important place to the imagination. He made reference to the fact that Newman recognised the imagination as the human capacity to relate to an object in its entirety. This holistic understanding gained through the use of the imagination, was identified by Newman as a special kind of knowing. Newman's particular understanding of the imagination was endorsed by O'Leary, (2008) who claimed that the imagination provided a distinct kind of knowing, endorsed. O'Leary (2008) proposed that "the heart is commonly reached not through reason but through imagination" (p. 27). Furthermore O'Leary considered that by engaging the imagination in the experience of the spiritual, a capacity for expansive and liberating thinking was released which led to a deeper awareness (O'Leary, 2008).

### **2.3.6 Spirituality as desire**

O'Murchu, (2007) separated the concept of human desire from drives and instincts and saw desires as part of the "creative urges that need to be embraced and integrated" (p.8). While they were inclusive of yearning, longing and wishing, desires transcended all these elements. The spiritual essence of desiring was manifested in the idea that desires can never be attained (O'Murchu (2007).

Desire was regarded as linked to the orientation of the heart and in biblical terms was expressed in the image of the treasure; "For where your treasure is there your heart will be also" (Luke 12:34; Matthew 6:21). Groome's (1991) concept of conation included the active engagement of a desire to do "what is most humanizing and life-giving for all". This indicated that desire was always focussed on the other.

Weil (1974) proposed that the essential linking point of humanity is desire. In her *Selected Pensees* she stated; “All human beings are absolutely identical in so far as they can be thought of as consisting of a centre which is an unquenchable desire for good (p.41).” This desire, she noted is self-generating and self-multiplying in the human heart.

### **2.3.7 Spirituality as a sense of belonging.**

The drive to belong has been regarded as one of the strongest natural desires of the human person. Vanier, (1999) claimed,

There is an innate need in our heart to identify with a group, both for protection and security, to discover and affirm our identity, and to use the group to prove our worthiness and goodness, indeed even to prove that we are better than others (p.35)

Describing this need in the metaphor of herding, Mackay (2014), considered that human herding was a “critical factor in developing our awareness of ourselves as social creatures” (p.65).

Born’s study (2010) on community conducted with a group of 2,000 people, demonstrated strong interest around the questions of belonging. The results showed a consensus in regard to the meaning of belonging which included being part of something beyond oneself; feeling included and connected; a sense of being at home and of being accepted and needed by others.

### **2.3.8 Spirituality as Focussing**

The process of *Focussing* articulated by Gendlin (1962, 1981), is concerned with experiencing the internal body sense which Husserl proposed in his concept of embodiment. It was grounded in the assumption that the spirit was embodied and the way forward lay within each person. The practice entailed attending to the bodily awareness of situations, persons and events and had the capacity to unveil an inner spiritual resource through its unique quality of knowing. Campbell & McMahon (1997) identified spiritual embodiment as located in “a felt truth, a felt meaning a felt direction within each of us that can free us and guide us into the future” (p. xxix). *Focussing* was regarded as finding its point of spiritual resonance in that it is a mode of self-awareness that offered a quality to experiences which could otherwise go unheeded.

### **2.3.9 Spirituality as Flow**

The concept of *Flow* articulated by Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1990) is a state of concentration or complete absorption with the activity at hand and the situation. In an interview with Geirland (1996) he described the lived experience of Flow as,

being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitable from the previous one, like playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you're using your skills to the utmost (Geirland, 1996, p. 1).

*Flow* was considered to be an optimal state of engagement containing an inherent balance. A person in this state was felt to experience challenges to action as neither underutilising nor overwhelming his or her existing skills. It was as Schneiders (2003) noted, the experience of personal integration where the polarities of body and spirit, emotions and thought, activity and passivity, social and individual fuse into a balanced harmony (Schneiders, 2003).

The Australian poet, Les Murray (1986) found resonance with the concept of *Flow* in his poem, *Equilibrium*. He claimed that it was not necessarily the tranquillity of the rural life that was the heart of human order but rather a balanced composure which he called equilibrium.

Fire-prone place-names apart  
There is only love; there are no Arcadias,  
Whatever its variants of meat-cuisine, worship, divorce,  
human order has at heart  
an equanimity. Quite different from inertia, it's a place  
where the churchman's not defensive, the indignant aren't on the qui vive,  
the loser has lost interest, the accountant is truant to remorse,  
where the farmer has done enough struggling-to-survive  
for one day, and the artist rests from theory –  
where all are in short, off the high comparative horse  
of their identity.....  
Christ spoke to people most often on this level  
Especially when they chattered about kingship and the Romans;  
All holiness speaks from it. (Murray, 1986, p. 236)

Murray's verse implied that the activity of *Flow*, (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), was manifested in an attitude of heart towards the present moment of everyday activity. This enabled the dissolving of boundaries between the sacred and the secular and provided the ground from where "all holiness speaks" (Murray, 1986). Holiness in this sense was understood as the integrated self.

Christian educators have considered that this understanding and experience of the spiritual was woven into the art of teaching. The spontaneous nature of human interaction, described by Durka (2002) as a “network of relationships,” (p. 27) afforded multiple opportunities especially in the profession of teaching, to enter into this optimal state where the spirit and spirituality flourished.

### **2.3.10 Spirituality as Mindfulness.**

Thich Nhat Hanh, (1999) a Vietnamese Buddhist monk described *Mindfulness* as being aware of everything one does. He regarded it as a dynamic, all-inclusive process; “a kind of light that shines upon all your thoughts, all your feelings, all your actions and all your words” (p. 18). King (2008) noted the close link between the Christian concept of attentive presence and the Buddhist understanding of mindfulness. She referred to the words of Thich Nhat Hanh when he said that “mindfulness is the miracle by which we can call back in a flash the dispersed mind and restore it to wholeness so that we can live each minute of life” (King, 2008, p. 13).

The above three practices of *Focussing Flow* and *Mindfulness* were seen as expressions of human spirituality not necessarily related to a religious tradition. They are grouped together in the context diagram (Figure 2.1), as presence because of their capacity to facilitate engagement with the present moment. Constant repetition of these practices can bring about experiences of presence or living in the present moment, which means engagement with that **is** rather than what has been or what might still be to come.

### **2.3.11 Spirituality as Liminality**

The concept of *Liminality* articulated by the anthropologist Turner (1977), described a particular space in the human interior journey. He developed the idea by observing ritual processes of groups and societies. *Liminality* was encountered in the experience of arriving at a threshold, being held in suspension with a sense of powerlessness, engendered by not being able to move forward. Interpersonal status boundaries were dissolved and normal differences were suspended. Rohr (2011), suggested that spiritual change and transformation can happen best “when we are on some threshold of our own lives” (p. 171).

The experience of *Liminality* may be significant for teachers in particular situations. The interpersonal nature of the teaching profession can bring teachers to thresholds and experiences of *Liminality*. The rules which structure their professional lives as teachers may be held in suspension so that the routine of their regular classroom life is altered. This enables teachers to enter into relationships and ways of expressing themselves which are outside of what is expected of them professionally (Beattie, 2008).

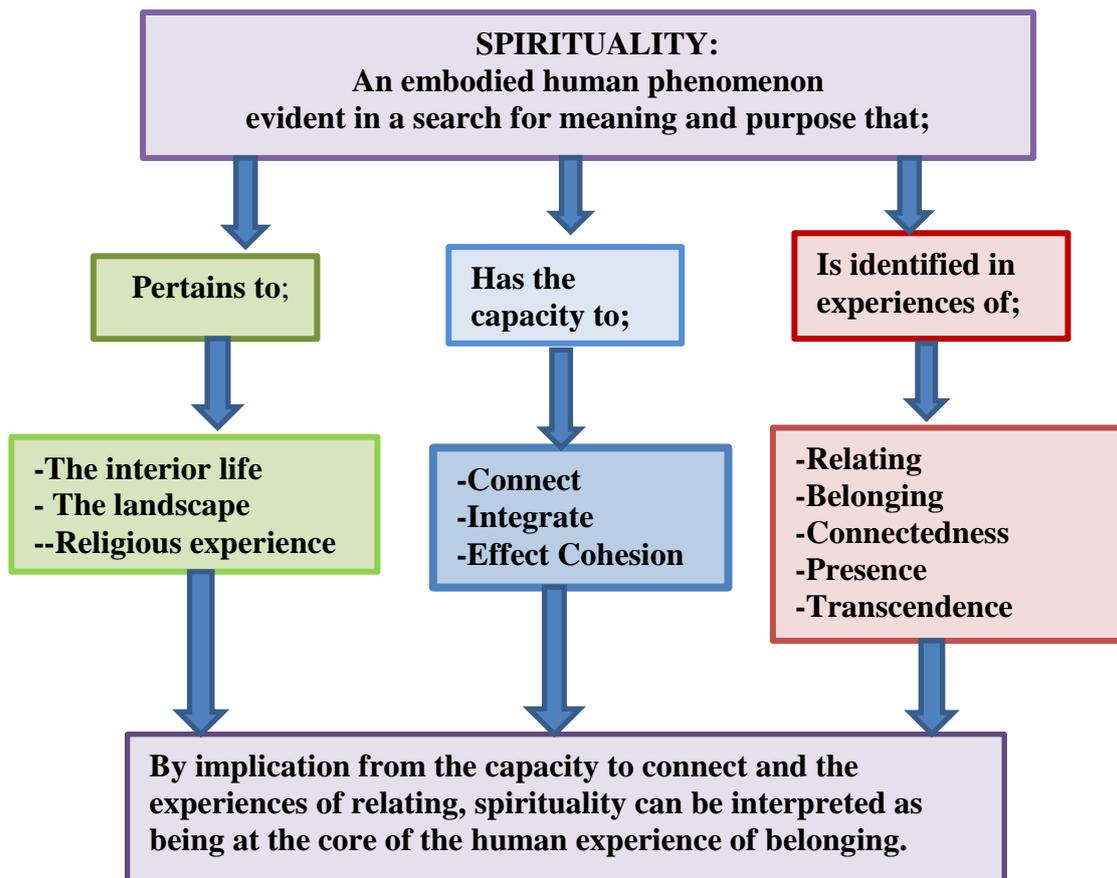
In engaging with some students, teachers may have uncertainty, anguish and even fear. Social boundaries may dissolve and sometimes reverse, as teachers find themselves in zones where they become the learner and the student becomes their teacher. It could be expected that teachers might naturally resist being in this space. Durka (2002) in her chapter on *Teaching Courageously* refers to this experience. Engaging with “each new class at the beginning of the school year” is seen as an act of courage (Durka, 2002, p. 14). Positively embracing this space might prompt the teachers to imagine new ways of seeing and understanding, enabling them to become aware of untried ways of relating and expressing themselves (Beattie, 2013).

### **2.3.12 Spirituality and the physical landscape.**

Beyond the human constructed contexts which influenced spirituality was the potential influence of the landscape. Ranson (2002) attributed the different features of Franciscan and Benedictine spirituality, to the unique landscapes which formed their original expressions. Through the exertion of their distinctive power landscapes might contribute to shaping one’s spirituality. Silf (2011) considered that individuals needed to allow the spirit of particular landscapes to penetrate their human spirit. Today, with highly advanced technologies there has been much altering of natural landscapes to serve the economic purpose of 21<sup>st</sup> century life. Experiences of the spiritual are changed and may well be diminished resulting in feelings of disconnectedness from the land and the natural environment.

### **2.3.13 Conclusion: Spirituality as a basic human capacity**

The following figure summarises the characteristics that emerged in this section. It indicates that spirituality can be understood as an embodied human phenomenon evidenced in the quest for meaning. It pertains to the interior life, has the capacity to connect, integrate and bring cohesion and is identified in experiences of relating, belonging, connectedness and presence. Inherent in this integrative capacity is that of belonging.



**Figure 2.2: Summary of the natural human characteristics of spirituality**

## 2.4 Spirituality: Christian expressions and practices

Spirituality takes specific readily identifiable overt forms where it is informed by a religious culture. Bowie (2003) suggested it was “the concrete experiences and cultural contexts which provided the stories and symbols of social awareness, different understandings of personal authority, and modes of knowing and feeling” (p. 12). Christian spirituality is understood as a particular form of spiritual awareness influenced initially by the life and person of Jesus Christ and shaped through the centuries by the life of Christian communities.

### 2.4.1 Christian anthropology and spirituality.

Anthropology explores the cultural history of human beings and in its philosophical orientation responds to the question; “Who is the human person?” It is about how persons are envisaged in terms of their role in the universe, their fundamental human values and their ultimate destiny (Sachs, 1991). Christian anthropology is central to this exploration of Christian spirituality.

The anthropology that underpins the belief system of Christianity asserts that human beings are created in “God’s own image and likeness” (Genesis 1:27), and therefore have inherent value independent of their place or function in society. They are alive by the very life-breath of God (Genesis (2:7), and this Divine life was never lost even after “the Fall” (Genesis 3). Bearing the divine imprint, “human nature is intrinsically ordered to God; humanity and history are transformed in Christ; the alchemist stone is Christ” (O’Leary, 2008, p. 68). This theological position provides answers to both the fundamental and ultimate questions regarding the human person in reference to the larger context of God the creator.

The first three chapters of the Vatican II document, *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) highlighted the key components of current Christian anthropology. They are; the inviolable dignity of every person, the centrality of community and the significance of human action (n. 40). It proposed that the locus for God’s revelation was the living experience of humanity and its meaning in the light of Christ

Several personalist philosophers have had a shaping influence on Christian anthropology. The distinction made by, Gabriel Marcel between “being” and “having” is reflected in an understanding of the inviolable dignity of every human person (GS, n.12, 21). Martin Buber’s relational understanding of the human person, also reflected in *Gaudium et Spes* (1965, nos.12, 23), was seen by Schneiders (2003) as the way spirituality is manifested in “a relatively developed relationality to self, others, the world and the Transcendent” (p.165).

An anthropological approach in exploring and understanding spirituality, values the person’s experience in its own right and as Downey (1997) noted, this way which attends to customs and beliefs focuses on human experience as spiritual experience. Therefore the human experience became the very “stuff” of the study of spirituality. The anthropological approach afforded seamlessness between human spirituality and Christian spirituality.

This broadly-based anthropological approach views Christian spirituality as a specification of the religious spirituality, which is itself one specification of the actualisation of the human spirit or human spirituality (Downey, 1997. p.127).

While this way of understanding spirituality in general and Christian spirituality in particular, offered Christians an increased awareness, authenticity and transparency, its weakness in terms of Christian spirituality, needs to be recognised. Downey (1997) identified a tendency in the anthropological approach to let “spiritual experience free-float” (p.128). This he cautioned can

lead to neglecting or avoiding “the task of rigorous discernment and judgement in the face of the various expressions of the human spirit’s striving” (p.128).

Evidence of this “free-floating” approach was found in the work of Mason, Singleton & Webber (2007), in their use of such terms as the “spiritual market place” (p. 37), “the spiritual supermarket” (p.176) or “a potpourri” of spirituality (p. 37). The anthropological approach focused on the question of how one gains certainty that the values which were pursued in the quest for personal integration through self-transcendence, are indeed truly valuable (Downey, 1997).

Hence there is need for “a clear articulation of the normative criteria by which authentic spiritual experience, precisely as human experience, might be recognised” (Downey, 1997, p. 128). Tacey (2003), claimed that spirituality cannot be invented but needs to draw from the deep well of religious traditions, otherwise it runs the risk of being superficial and ultimately devoid of meaning.

#### **2.4.2 Spirituality and the Christian concept of Grace.**

The Christian anthropological understanding of the human person is grounded in a theology of grace which is intrinsic to the person. Karl Rahner, (1978 ) one of the foremost Catholic theologians who articulated this position, regarded grace as being constitutive of human existence and as such is embodied in human nature. He believed that grace is not something other than God, not some celestial ‘substance’ but God himself.

Human persons in every age, always and everywhere, whether they reflect on it or not, are in relationship with the unutterable mystery of human life that we call God. Looking at Jesus Christ the crucified and risen one, we can have the hope that now in our present lives, and finally after death, we will meet God as our own fulfilment. (Rahner, 1978, p. 93)

Without compromising the gratuity of grace, the Vatican II Council Document, *Gaudium et spes* (1965) proposed that grace was constitutive of the human person and therefore integral to the fabric of human nature (n.57).

The English 14<sup>th</sup> Century mystic, Julian of Norwich (1373), believed that every human being came into the world graced by God. This grace she claimed was the indwelling of Christ who she imaged as the “mother of grace” (Hide, 2001, p. 211). O’Leary (2007) described the lived reality of this understanding of grace,

our humanity, like that of Jesus, is the womb of the divine. We are all God-carriers. Already within us, we carry most unknowingly, the fresh wells we thirst for, and the beckoning horizons for which we long. (O’Leary, 2008, p. 9)

This implied that Christians cannot think of human nature independently of grace (Hanvey, 2005). Such an understanding contrasted with the theological position of St. Anselm (1033-1109) seen as the founder of the scholastic tradition where human nature and grace were understood to be separate entities. Scholastic theology focussed on created grace, coming from outside the person and became the means by which human beings conformed to God’s will (Nikolaus, 2003).

The understanding of grace articulated in the Vatican II Document of the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*) and referred to as “the Godlike seed” (n.3), grounded grace in persons, events and things. Consequently the Council focussed “its attention on, the whole human family along with the sum of those realities in the midst of which it lives; that world which is the theatre of man’s history, and the heir of his energies, his tragedies and his triumphs; that world which the Christian sees as created and sustained by its Maker's love” (n.2). The focal point of this document, *The Church in the Modern World*, was the human person, “whole and entire, body and soul, heart and conscience, mind and will” (n.3).

This claim of a graced world, could be interpreted as being in harmony with the concept of spirituality as a natural human disposition. Grace was regarded as empowering the person with a particular kind of awareness and capacity for action. This was consistent with the idea of spirituality proposed by Hay and Nye (1998) and derived from the work of Hardy (1965). For them it was “a form of awareness different from and transcending everyday awareness. It was potentially present in all human beings” (Hay & Nye, 1998, p. 22).

Consequently from this perspective, there was a dynamic relationship between grace and human nature. As grace builds on and enhances nature, it enabled the possibility for nature to realise itself through a process of transformation (Hanvey, 2005). Grace, understood as God’s free self-communication to each person, was regarded as both healing and elevating. From this perspective the presence of divine love within the human person had the capacity to transform broken lives (Hide, 2004; Reno, 1995).

### **2.4.3 Christian morality and spirituality**

Brown (1997) claimed that moral issues could not be separated from the human struggle to discern how to live well. In this regard he supported the view that,

theology manifests itself as a human activity by its cooperation with the processes by which human s come to know and decide; among these processes is our need to learn how to become moral beings ( p. 146).

Downey (1997) proposed that “the discipline of spirituality was developed out of moral theology’s concern for the *agenda* of Christian living” (p.119). In this way spirituality became the living out of what theology and morality articulated in concepts, theories and principles. However Downey (1997) identified a problem with the restrictive nature of this view. He noted that experience needed to be at the forefront of explorations of the spiritual. Conversely if certain experiences did not fit into the articulated theological constructs they could be dismissed or seen as less spiritual or authentic in comparison with explicit Christian spirituality (Downey, 1997).

An example of this nexus between theology, morality and spirituality was found in the pastoral letter from the Bishops of NSW & ACT, titled *Catholic Schools at a Crossroads* (2007). This was in a quote from *Ecclesia in Oceania* (2001) by Pope John Paul II;

Living the life of Jesus implies....a living spirituality and an authentic morality, strengthened by the word of God in Scripture and celebrated in the Sacraments of the Church (2001, para. 8).

This was the only time when the word spirituality was used in that document. In the same document, a statement was made about promoting religious practices. These included “Scripture reflections, the Angelus, Eucharistic adoration and prayerful silences” (p.10). All these practices were grounded in the spiritual tradition of the Catholic Church. However this limited list, with its emphasis on re-claiming past devotional practices, did not provide a path to a “living spirituality and an authentic morality” relevant to the moral challenges of this early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Alternatively in this quest for a living spirituality some teachers in their personal and professional lives engage with the practice spiritual practice of *Lectio Divina* (Divine Reading). This method of praying with the Scriptures is anchored in the Christian tradition as it dates from the early years of Benedictine monasticism in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century C.E. In this practice the emphasis is not on the study of scriptures but an encounter with the Word of God.

Brown (1997), raised an important issue pertaining to morality and the way its current expression was often stifled by the prevailing economically driven culture;

questions in this regard only become important for those who can put concerns about profit, productivity and strategy aside and become sensitive to the potential good or harmful effects our behaviour may have on the world around us (p.145).

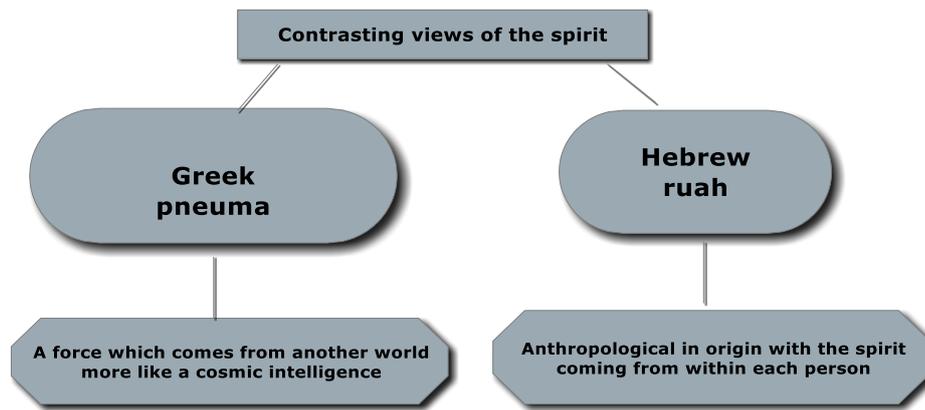
#### **2.4.4 Christian spirituality related to constancy and change**

Since the Vatican II Council, more theological reflections have been grounded in this anthropological understanding of Christian spirituality. However there has always existed in the Christian tradition tension between constancy and change. While this has been understood and expressed in a range of styles, two broad and contrasting ways of approaching the spiritual have been evident.

These broad contrasts appear to emanate from the different underlying philosophical assumptions of Plato and Aristotle which in turn informed conflicting theological opinions and shaped alternate views regarding spirituality. Plato's method had as its starting point the primacy of an 'ideal' - that is a universal concept like love, beauty, truth. In contrast, Aristotle saw the universal as existing in the dynamic of concrete reality which was always in flux. Those who adhered to Plato's philosophical view were suspicious of change because it could only mean a movement away from an ideal state. However as Ormerod (2006) noted Aristotle's philosophical method took change for granted, because concrete reality was always changing.

Ranson (2002) claimed these different and contrasting concepts of the human spirit had a pervading influence on the western tradition in both philosophy and spirituality. He described the Greek idea of the spirit originating with Plato, as a force which came from another world and was more like a 'cosmic intelligence'. It was regarded as something outside people, separate from their humanity. Supporting this view, Mason, Singleton and Webber (2007) asserted that the unique discovery of the Greeks was the realization that in humans, spirit/soul also showed itself as mind which was able to transcend, the material body, to grasp reality in the form of ideas – to possess consciousness- to reflect, to be self-conscious. The Platonic view held that the soul was immaterial, and therefore had the capacity to survive the death of the body.

In contrast with the Greek understanding, Ranson, (2007) stated that the Hebrew concept of spirit was anthropological in origin, as something from within each person and integral to being human. It was regarded as that which awakened people to life and gave personal energy. The following figure illustrates these two contrasting positions.



**Figure 2.3: Contrasting views of the idea of spirit**

Currently, in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, there is a sustained emphasis on the singular importance of the experience of searching for and finding God. This is linked with the importance of experience; a view which Husserl proposed was in opposition to a dualistic perception of reality. Hence spiritual discourse can be more about what distinguishes rather than what separates, body and soul, spirit and flesh, church and world, sacred and profane (Downey, 1991).

#### **2.4.5 Spirituality and Christian theological traditions.**

Michel de Certeau’s claim “that Christianity was founded on the loss of the body of Jesus Christ (1992, p.81), provided the foundation for the unfolding of Christian spirituality throughout the 21 centuries of its existence. This loss gives a particular nuance to the concept of spiritual quest which is intrinsic to spirituality. Christian spirituality can be broadly identified as the interplay between presence and absence and the “haunting question of an impossible mourning ‘Where art thou?’ ” (de Certeau, 1992, p. 81).

The utterance of Mary Magdalene at the empty tomb “I do not know there they have put him,” then her request to the stranger; “ If you are the one who carried him off, tell me where you have laid him” was not usually interpreted as limited to this one experience of loss. This statement was at the heart of the early apostolic discourse (de Certeau, p.82). During the centuries while there were evolution in dogma, liturgical adaptation and changes in Church governing structures, Christians in every era continue to wonder “Where art thou?” and ask of the changing culture down through the centuries “where have you put him?” (de Certeau, 1992, p. 81).

This quest for the lost body of Jesus has been interpreted as giving rise to the creation of many other bodies throughout the history of Christianity. There have been multiple Church and

doctrinal bodies as Christians strive to participate in and embody the mystery of Christ (Aumann, 1985). The one which pertains most to the notion of human spirituality, considered in 2.3 above, is that of the mystical body of Christ. Grounded in the letters of St. Paul to the Ephesians and Corinthians, this metaphor incarnates Christ in the world. Groome (1991) insists on the inseparable link between being and doing. An outcome of Groome's theory of *Shared Christian Praxis* is that one just does not speak about what it means to be just and compassionate but witnesses to this in one's being.

Spiritual expressions and practices changed according to experience as did the stories and symbols which underpinned the world view of Christians. Such changes pointed to the dynamic nature of Christianity "as it aims to make present a memory which transforms and strives to become the future" (Ormerod, 2006, p. 16). However in tracing the history of Christian spirituality from the birth of the Christian era until the present time, it is evident that there are integral features which have been constant throughout the centuries. Changes in Christian spirituality are largely in the form of emphasis and expression, which need to be identified for the purpose of this study.

#### ***2.4.5.1 Christian spirituality: beginning with Jesus.***

Christian spirituality is anchored in the life of Jesus and the primary source documents which give an account of his life and teachings are the canonical Gospels and the letters of St. Paul. These projected different portraits of Jesus which reflected the memory and experiences of the Christian communities of the first century of Christendom (O'Collins, 2008). In studying the texts, scripture scholars reconstructed them according to the meanings they conveyed for the early Christian communities. The people of Israel oppressed by successive governors' of the Roman Empire carried hopes and longings for their own Kingdom. Jesus was interpreted as responding to this longing when he spoke of a universal Kingdom which he proclaimed as the Kingdom of God.

This was the most predominant theme in the teaching of Jesus and was developed formally in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5: 1-10; Luke 6: 20-23). The descriptive parables like the Sower (Matt 13:18-23), the Treasure in the Field (Matt 13:44), the Mustard Seed (Matt 13:31-32), and the Yeast (Matt 13:33) were all about the nature of this Kingdom. It was a Kingdom that although hidden, was already present and emanated from the interior of each person. It had the capacity to grow and evolve, and from the individual it was capable of reaching out to all humanity - to the entire world.

From the early centuries of Christianity there has always been a desire in Christians to form a relationship with Jesus through knowledge and love of him. The Catholic Catechism (1994) presented a range of extensive references to the person of Jesus which highlighted the Christological aspects of the teaching Church. In the recent times of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Rahner identified the person of Christ with the Word of God. The Christology of Matthew's gospel spoke of Jesus as the God who walks with us. It was the Jesus portrayed in Matthew's Gospel who Byrne (2004) describes as "far from adding to humanity's burdens, Jesus comes to bear and lift them" (p.vii).

The theological language of Christian discourse was always evolving and in this current time there is an identifiable shift towards a cosmological world view which breaks from traditional language. Nolan (2007) referred to one of the great signs of the times as the emergence of "a new science, a new kind of scientific mentality that opens up vast possibilities for spirituality and faith in God" (p. 36). Within this context, Teilhard de Chardin presented an original Christology grounded in the concept of Christogenesis. This offered a dynamic view of the ongoing embodiment of God in the world and claimed that, "the Incarnation of Christ depends upon the emergence of Christ through the evolution of the universe, all life, indeed all reality" (Warner, 2013, p.2). Christ becomes the convergent focus of cosmic evolution.

#### ***2.4.5.2 Spirituality and Christians in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century C.E.***

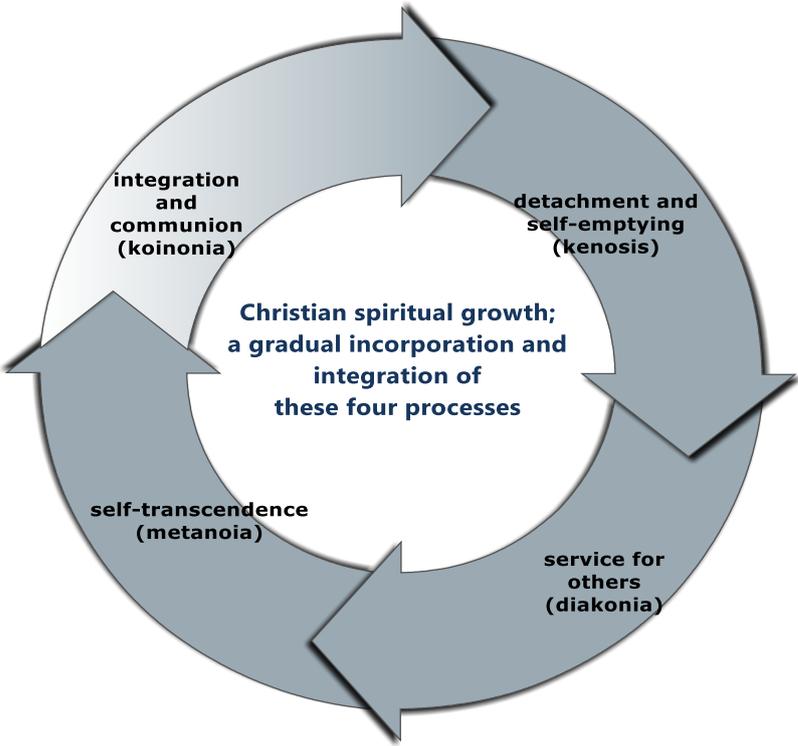
In the first century of the common era, Christian spirituality was characterised by strong communal and liturgical values. The emphasis on community, sharing and liturgical prayer provided a setting in which Christians could celebrate Eucharist and express fraternal love – embodying the central teaching of Jesus, "love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

Nouwen (1978), claimed that central to the Gospel was the experience of hospitality which in both the Hebrew and Christian scripture means love of/ for the stranger and the creation of a welcoming space where guests and hosts encounter each other. Hence in the early Christian Church spiritual maturity was believed to be evident in the authentic living of, love of God and love of neighbour.

From the earliest times, asceticism was also a strong defining feature of Christian spirituality. This way of life identified Christians as living with many expressions and practices of self-denial. They endeavoured to imitate the selfless life of Jesus, "who though he was God did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave" (Phil 2:6-7). The early Christians experienced alienation and persecution within their communities in the

Roman Empire and martyrdom was embraced as an extreme act of asceticism. This expressed their fidelity to the following Christ.

The legacy received from these foundational years of Christianity has been expressed with different emphasis across the eras. Spiritual growth was interpreted as a gradual incorporation of four processes identified by Wolski-Conn (1994). The first of these is that of *self-emptying* which aligned directly with Jesus who “did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave” (Philippians 2: 6-7). This was named by the early Christians as *kenosis* and it found practical expression in *diakonia* or service to others. Selfless service was considered to lead to a change of heart known as *metanoia*. These three practices were believed to bring about personal and communal integration which was named *koinonia*. The following figure provides a visual representation of the work of Wolski Conn (1994) and illustrates the cyclic nature of the four processes which are believed to be integral to the spirituality of Christians.



**Figure 2.4: Four processes integral to Christian spirituality**

### *2.4.5.3 Emergence of monastic spirituality*

When the persecutions of the early Christians ended, the Christian Church in the early 4<sup>th</sup> Century moved from being a forbidden cult to the imperial religion. Some members of the Christian Church found this new freedom a barrier and distraction to the practice of their faith (Bourgeault, 2004). They sought a more solitary landscape in order to imitate Jesus' practice of prayer. This new form of asceticism became known in the Christian tradition as the spirituality of the desert fathers and mothers (Bourgeault, 2004). The wisdom gained from this spirituality was one that "teaches rather than preaches and an authority that is experiential not theoretical" (Freeman, 2004, p. 8).

Withdrawal from the life of the world into the deserts of Egypt and Syria gave birth to Christian monasticism. It was inspired by the ideal to imitate the apostles and the life of the first Christians as described in the Acts of the Apostles, 2: 42-47. Living the authentic way of the apostles was regarded as an expression of the perfection of the Christian life. For St. Basil and for some of the other early fathers of monasticism, the monastic life was proclaimed to the faithful as the ideal.

Monasticism was identified as a religious way of life through the renunciation of worldly pursuits. Those participating in a monastic structured life dedicated themselves totally to spiritual works, the hallmarks of which were prayer, work and study. St. Benedict, (480-543 C.E.), is recognised as the founder and under his influence the monasteries spread throughout Europe. However this exemplary practice of spirituality became more and more the prerogative of the monks committed to monastic life

As the movement spread and flourished, Christian spirituality became a quest for the ideal in contrast to encountering Christ in ordinary everyday experiences. The contemplative celibate life was considered by St. Basil, as the perfection of Christian life (Aumunn, 1985). One of the implications stemming from this expression of Christian spirituality, was the emergence of two classes of Christians – the ordinary and the extraordinary. Such a dichotomy gave rise to the question, "If monasticism is the ideal, are married Christians excluded from the possibility of attaining Christian perfection?" or "are there two kinds of perfection, one ordinary the other extraordinary?" (Aumunn, 1985, p. 38). Although these questions about Christian spirituality have been raised throughout the centuries, the Second Vatican Council sought to dissolve the divisions between ways of life and life choices, in its proclamation of the "universal call to holiness" (Lumen Gentium, LG, 1964, Ch. 5).

#### **2.4.5.4 Christian spirituality and the monastery of the heart.**

This idea came from the belief that spirituality was integral to being human and that all were called to actualise their spiritual potential. In the Christian tradition human spiritual awareness was expressed in relation to Christ. Jesus, who was regarded by Christians as the Christ, spoke of the Kingdom of God being within. This “within” throughout the Christian tradition was understood as the interior of the person, often referred to in the word, ‘heart.’ The Hebrew and Christian scriptures referred to “the heart” as the root of all personal life. This biblical understanding implied that the heart was the place that carried wisdom, courage and creativity. The work of the heart was to integrate, synthesise and balance the disparate capacities of the human person located in the will, reason and the emotions.

Hanvey (2005), proposed that the heart was the school of the Spirit. Downey (1986) noted that prominent medieval figures like Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), William St. Thierry (1075-1148), Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), Aelred of Rievaulx (1110-1167) and Bonaventure (1221-1274), understood the heart as the locus for personal life and union with God through love. This is evident in their pastoral texts which expressed a contemplative response to the experience of God (Hide, 2004).

These expressions of Christian spirituality expanded the ideal of monasticism and diversified its expression. One prominent view considered that the ‘true’ monastery was not dependent on the enclosure of walls. Instead, it regarded the essence of monasticism as located in a quality of consciousness or a state of heart that involved daily commitment to maintain an inner solitude. The monastic cell became “the cave of one’s heart” (Whittier, 2010, pp. 172, 173) and was understood as the personal interior place where the spark of the Divine was embodied.

During the Renaissance period of the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries, Littleton (2006), identified the emergence of a new expression of the human spirit characterised by individualism and creativity. It was towards the end of this period that Ignatius of Loyola, (1491-1553), developed a series of *Spiritual Exercises* tailored to the individual person (Hide 2004). This disciplined and systematic approach to spirituality provided an effective tool in the synthesis of faith, life and culture as individuals sought to find God in all things and all things in God (MHSJ, Mon Nadal IV, 1544 ).

Various religious orders founded during these centuries offered, in the living of their charisms, a model for bringing faith and culture together. The men and women who followed this particular interpretation of the monastic way of life were described as contemplatives in action

The next major European epoch to effect Christian spirituality was the Enlightenment period, 17<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries. The dominant quest of this period was to attain value-free knowledge. Hence reason and rationality tended to overshadow knowledge that was gained through faith (Hide, 2004). With reason the only reliable method of knowledge (Littleton, 2007), a split developed between the theology which was mainly about meaning, and spirituality as it was expressed in the experience (Hide, 2004). Consequently expressions about the spiritual quest of this time focused on the interior life of one's soul rather than the whole "spiritually-embodied person" (Hide, 2004, p.112). The theological positions of two Jesuit priests of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Karl Rahner (1904-1984) and Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984), with regard to the ideas of grace and conversion, contributed significantly to restoring an integration of spirituality and theology.

#### **2.4.6 Christian spirituality and sacramentality.**

As stated earlier in this chapter (2.4.2), there was in the Christian spiritual tradition a view about an intrinsic relationship between nature and grace. Such a relationship made possible a sacramental vision of reality. "If grace is integral to nature then all nature has in some way the capacity to disclose grace and be a vehicle of it" ( Hanvey, 2005, p. 40). Grace therefore did not flow exclusively from the seven formal sacraments of the Catholic Church.

These seven sacraments have been instituted by the Church to provide a graced, faith dimension to many of the significant human experiences. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum concilium, (SC, 1963) proposed that, "For well-disposed members of the faithful, the liturgy of the sacraments and sacramentals sanctifies almost every event in their lives" (n. 61). Each sacrament offers a way of encountering the Risen Christ and of receiving the particular grace that the Sacrament symbolises (Groome, 2012).

The first three sacraments, Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist are known as the sacraments of initiation. They were believed to confer the graces which were part of being welcomed, initiated, empowered and sustained with the faith community. Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick were known as the sacraments of healing and they were believed to bring the graces of forgiveness and well-being. The final two sacraments related to commitment and life choices and were sought to offer the graces of fidelity, loving and serving.

All the seven sacraments in a Catholic Christian tradition are symbolised by the "ordinary" of life; by bread, wine, water, oil, touch, words, gestures and lovemaking in marriage (Groome, 2012). Each symbolised something profoundly ordinary and every day and were seen as peak moments that heighten and celebrate the sacramentality of life in the world. This broader

understanding of sacramentality was considered to open up for many an enriched spirituality. It included a greater awareness of the sacramental nature of their ordinary lives and the realisation that grace is inherent in the human experience (Downey, 1997)

O’Leary, (2008) considered that the revelatory quality of faith was more important than attempts to transmit faith through Catholic education. He described sacramentality as “a graced way of parting the veils of the mystery of our complicated lives and of perceiving God at the heart of all creation” (p. 9). Such a view proposed the positive response of loving the world more, not less. O’Leary claimed that the sacramental vision was “as close to us as our breathing, as intimate as our beating heart” (O’Leary, 2008, p. 9). This resonated with Hardy’s (1965) understanding of spirituality as a natural human disposition, essential to our humanity as breathing, eating or seeing.

#### **2.4.7 Christian spirituality as presence.**

The French Jesuit and spiritual guide, Jean Pierre de Caussade (1675-1751), suggested that the present moment held the capacity for an experience of the transcendent. Perceiving the present moment to be a sacrament from God, full of infinite treasure, he believed that each moment contained far more than a person had the capacity to hold. From this perspective of faith, every God given opportunity can be seen as a “Sacrament of the Present Moment”. From this point of view the experience of transcendence in the present moment, was a key indicator of the degree or quality of an individual’s Christian faith. De Caussade (1933) proposed, “the more your heart loves, the more it desires, and the more it desires the more it finds” (p. 56)

Another element in this thinking about spirituality considered that the dimension of faith required for an openness to experience the sacrament of the present moment was that of attentiveness. Simone Weil (1909-1943) reflected this view in her words as quoted by O’Leary (2008), “I live in this world by attention” (p.18). For Weil, the nature of this form of attention was characterised by self-emptying and resulted in the embodiment of God and empowerment of the other;

God's love becomes incarnate in us when we pay attention to others, putting aside our interests and projections and letting them reveal themselves to us. In waiting on them, we create room for them to act, a space that does not exist when human relations are those of power, even benign power (Springsted, 1998, p.18).

Secomb, (2010) linked an understanding of presence with Husserl’s concept of embodiment wherein the body was an essential part of the deep structure of all knowing. She claimed that “only the capacity for awareness of the present will enable appreciation of the immediacy of

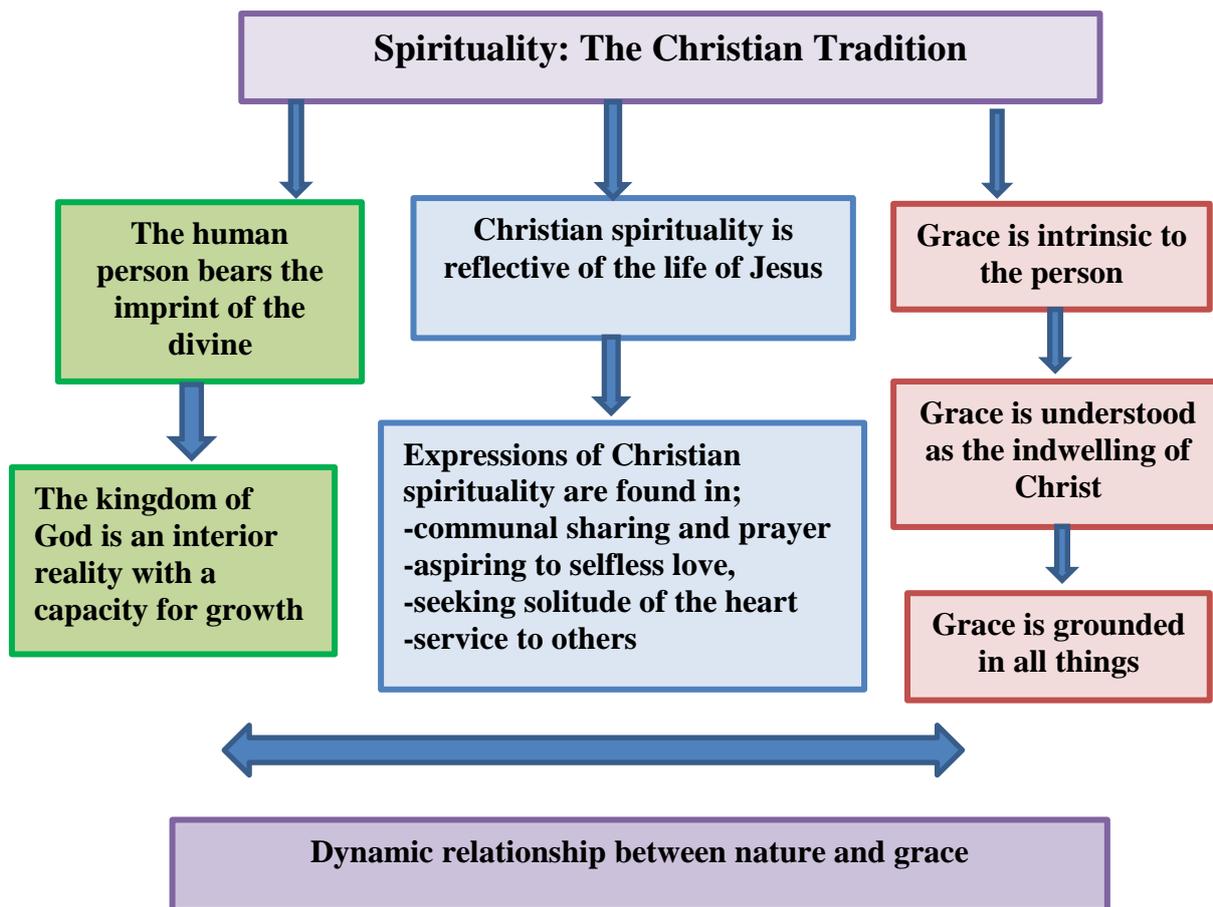
sensation” (p.7).

Weil’s expression of the need for focussed attention in spirituality, evident in her comments about attention as “the rarest and sincerest form of generosity," is sometimes realised in the attitude of committed teachers who suspend the centrality of their own selves to focus selflessly on their students. The term “attentive presence” brought together de Caussade’s insight regarding “The Sacrament of the Present Moment” and Weil’s concept of “attention”. For contemporary culture Rohr (1999) grounded the practice of the presence of God in the real and the ordinary which “doesn’t demand a lot of dogmatic wrangling or managerial support just vigilance, desire and a willingness to begin again and again” (p.19). These ideas may have relevance to the spirituality of teachers with respect to their relationship with students. Bringing this quality of presence to the classroom could be regarded as an expression of a teacher’s spirituality because awareness which is a capacity of the spiritual is “concealed within the present moment” (Tolle, 2005, p.78).

The first and arguably the most important aspect of the teacher’s attentive presence was identified by Berryman, (1990) as respect. This might be evident in the teacher’s capacity to enter into the lived reality and world of the students, to respond to a range of emotions and to relate to each student in his or her uniqueness. Berryman also identified the need for sensitivity to the existential limits of life - these being death, meaninglessness, freedom and aloneness and to know the appropriate questions which might guide students to grow in understanding of these issues.

Being present to ultimate issues of life by exploring them through reflection and discussion with the students, could lead to an experience of the transcendent. Berryman (1990) noted that “as the larger presence to our being and knowing is sensed” (p.529) there is the possibility of a significant response. He named this experience as being one of inspiration and suggested that it indicated “the presence of the nourishing Mystery that feeds and yet overwhelms us with awe” (Berryman, 1990, p. 529). Such experiences of sensing a larger presence can propose a synergy between the lived reality of the students and the faith dimension of the Catholic school as Christian theology holds that God’s presence is reliable and constant.

The following figure presents a summary of the characteristics from the exploration of Christian spirituality. The figure points to the way that Christian spirituality is modelled on the life of Jesus. The foundational belief of this spiritual framework is that each person bears the imprint of the divine and that grace, understood as the indwelling of Christ, is grounded in all existence.



**Figure 2.5: Summary of the characteristics of Christian spirituality**

Downey (1997), presented a comprehensive framework of Christian spirituality which consisted of seven focal points. He asserted that Christian spirituality was concerned with the work of the Holy Spirit and was seen happening,

within a culture, in relation to a tradition, in the light of contemporary events, hopes, suffering and promises, in remembrance of Jesus, in efforts to combine elements of action and contemplation, with respect to charism and community and as expressed in authenticated praxis. (p. 4).

In the context of this study an attempt will be made to see whether Downey’s references to a culture, a tradition, charism and community can be identified within the expressed spirituality of the teachers.

## **2.5 Spirituality and the Catholic School: Views in normative Church documents and in the writing of theorists**

This section focusses on the Catholic school as one particular context where teachers experience and express their spirituality. The mission and purpose of the Catholic school will be explored in normative Church Documents from three governing levels of the Catholic Church. Firstly that of the Universal Church in the form of -Vatican Documents, secondly the National Church, (documents and statements of the National Catholic Education Commission) and thirdly the Local Diocesan Church, through a Pastoral Letter from the Bishops of NSW & ACT. The related views of some of the Religious Education theorists are also considered.

### **2.5.1 The Universal Catholic Church documents about Catholic schooling together with related commentaries by theorists.**

These Church documents refer to the mission and purpose of the Catholic school as being an integral part of the Catholic Church. “The ecclesial nature of the Catholic school is written into the heart of its identity, as a teaching institution. It is a true and proper ecclesial entity by reason of its educational activity in which faith, culture and life are brought into harmony.” (Gabriel-Marie Cardinal Garrone, Congregation for Catholic Education CS, 1977, n. 11, n. 72). This work of the school occurs in “a centre that has an operative educational philosophy attentive to today’s youth and illumined by the Gospel message” (William Cardinal Baum, Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Religious Dimension in Education*, RDE, n. 22).

The universal Church documents, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the New Millennium* (Pio Cardinal Laghi, CSNM, 1997), *Lay Catholics in Schools* (William Cardinal Baum, LCS, 1982), and *The Catholic School* (CS, 1977), focussed specifically on the nature and purpose of the Catholic school. They built on the foundational position of engagement with the world, articulated within the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium* (1965) and the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes* (1965).

The Catholic Church declaration on Christian education (Vatican II Council, 1965), *Gravissimum educationis*, (GE) proposed that one of the characteristics of a Catholic school is that it interprets and gives order to human culture in the light of faith (n. 41). In these processes of interpreting and ordering, emphasis was given to the interweaving of faith and reason. The cohesive and transcendent nature of spirituality could play a vital role in the process of synthesis and integration. This spiritual capacity was regarded as intrinsic to each student and was essential to the work of personal integration. It allowed for what is learnt in a Catholic school to give rise to a Christian vision of the world, of life, of culture and of history (GE, n. 4.2).

### 2.5.1.1 *The role of the Catholic school in the transmission of faith*

The normative Catholic view of Catholic schools proposes that within the process of the integration of faith, life and culture is the important dimension of the transmission of the Catholic faith and values. This is considered to operate through the communal dimension of the school which, as Bracken, (2004) noted, is an inherent characteristic of the faith-based Catholic School.

“The school must be a community whose values are communicated through the interpersonal and sincere relationships of its members and through both individual and corporative adherence to the outlook on life that permeates the school” (CS, 1977, n. 32).

It was hoped that the idea of creating a community permeated with the Gospel spirit of freedom and love, might enable students to experience the lived beliefs of the Catholic faith so that “the pupil experiences his or her dignity as a person before he or she knows its definition” (CS, 1977, n. 55). The faith therefore “is principally assimilated through contact with people whose daily life bears witness to it” (CS, 1977, n. 53).

In line with this view, O’Leary (2008), considered that a particular and necessary way of handing on the faith would be through attuning hearts and minds to the ongoing revelation of God. He claimed that “education is more about “revealing than transmitting” (p. 68) and in a Christian context this was regarded as “revealing the presence of God hidden within our lives and within the world” (p.68). Revelation was understood as the self-communication of God and “this divine self-disclosure always happens sacramentally” (O’ Leary, 2008, p. 55). This position was grounded in the Christian anthropology referred to in the previous section and espoused by Vatican II Council especially in its document *Gaudium et spes*. The locus for God’s revelation was regarded as situated within the living experience of humanity. The meaning of these experiences was thought to be revealed in the Christian community of faith which in the context of Catholic education is the school community.

One proposed process for enabling an openness to receive God’s self- revelation, and the passing on of Christian beliefs, is Shared Christian praxis according to Groome’s (1991) authorship. This view considered that teachers and students were enabled to access their Christian faith with “practical understanding and wisdom that has emerged from the faith life of the Christian community over time” (p. 137). It also included dialogue in its methodology. This invited a reaching out and inclusion especially to the stranger and to those who were of different faiths. The Catholic schools’ aim therefore was to be “places of evangelisation, complete formation, of inculturation, of apprenticeship in a lively dialogue between young people of different religions” (CSNM, 1997, n.11).

Pope John Paul II spoke of breathing life into the structures of community and maintained that the communal dimension of the Catholic school went beyond being a sociological fact to becoming a community which has a theological foundation (CSNM, 1997, n.18). He urged that a spirituality of communion should become the guiding principle of education which he described as “the heart’s contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must be able to see shining on the faces of the brothers and sisters around us” (Pope John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, NMI, 2001, n. 43).

### **2.5.2 Spirituality and Catholic schooling; views in Australian Catholic church documents and related commentaries by theorists.**

Interpreting the Universal Church Documents in the light of the uniqueness of Australian culture provided a challenge for local Bishops, school community groups and system administrators. In the process of applying the principles of the Universal Church Documents, Catholic school systems in the latter part of last century, wrote statements which expressed their purpose and goals. These were generally framed in terms of the broad concepts of vision and mission.

Dwyer (1993), noted four basic orientations in these statements. They were; “towards evangelisation, towards a deep respect for the individual, towards the building of Christian community, towards service” (Dwyer, 1993, p.17). These were reflected by the Australian Catholic Bishops in a statement from the Australian National Catholic Education Commission (2015). It stated that the aim of Catholic Schools was to be welcoming and reflective communities whose most distinctive sign was the discernment of God’s presence and their spiritual life.

In describing the nature and task of Catholic schools, the Commission stated that, “they utilise students’ experience as the basis for developing a synthesis of faith and culture, and of faith and life” (Website of the NCEC, 2015). This synthesis is seen as “the bringing together of our faith and the broader culture in which we live in order to compose new personal meaning” (Dwyer, 1993, p. 15). The idea of a cohesive and transcendent nature to spirituality would play a vital role in the process of synthesis and integration

### **2.5.3 Spirituality and Catholic schooling as reflected in diocesan documents and in the related commentary of theorists**

At the state level, the Bishops of NSW and the ACT in their Pastoral letter, *Catholic Schools at a Crossroads* (CSC, 2007) articulated an ecclesiastical perspective on schools which aligned with the Vatican Documents. They emphasised aspects relevant to Catholic Education in the local

Dioceses. The letter called all those involved in Catholic Education to commit themselves to a re-founding and re-visioning of the Catholic school. This was a somewhat different emphasis from the earlier noted attention given to the idea of the integration of faith and life.

The Bishops invited all teachers in Catholic schools to take an active part in the processes of re-founding and re-visioning. However these processes could be challenged because they appeared to be in conflict with an understanding of what the living Gospel in this place and this time actually means (Rossiter, 2010). The Bishops described “the surrounding culture and its powerful agents such as the media and new technologies” as being “commonly less supportive” (CSC, 2007, p. 6). This was given a more explicit description when they identified social trends. “Society-wide trends such as secularisation, consumerism, family dysfunction and values disorientation also impact on young people”. (2007, p.8). While all of these trends are evident in our present society, there was no mention of how to engage with what is seen as the negative impacts of cultural change. Rather than calling for an engagement with these forces through discernment and dialogue, the Bishops appeared to be thinking about the role of the Catholic school as being one of damage control and rehabilitation by “picking up the pieces” (CSC, p.8).

It is suggested that the idea of an integration of faith and culture was not clearly articulated in this Pastoral letter. There was no invitation to open out positively to the world to find a new place for God’s self-disclosure and saving activity (Groome 1991, p 49). These ideas were prominent in the Second Vatican Council documents referred to above. This appeared to limit the scope of teachers to develop a holistic spirituality which would enable their students to appreciate and integrate the positive elements of their culture thus facilitating the, “synthesis of culture and faith and a synthesis of faith and life” (CS, 1977, n. 37)

The same statement describing the less supportive nature of the surrounding culture and its powerful agents of the media and the new technologies, suggested a split between faith, culture and life. It failed to articulate the necessary inter dependence of faith and culture. Dwyer (1993), described this important relationship; “Our faith provides us with an understanding of reality that we use to make sense of our culture. Our culture gives us ways of expressing our understanding of life and purpose for living” (p.15). The Vatican statements urged that students be taught an appreciation for the positive elements of their culture and be led in ways suitable to their level of intellectual development, to grasp the importance of this relationship (The Holy See’s Teaching on Catholic Schools, HSTCS, 2006. Art.4.2). The declaration *Gravissimum educationis*, (GE, 40) proposed that one of the characteristics of a Catholic school was that it interpret and give order to human culture in the light of faith (41).

A different emphasis in the local interpretation of the Vatican Documents on Education, was given by the English Bishops. In their Episcopal Statement, “On the Way to Life” (2005), they saw the need,

to create a living language, a vision and language which have interpretative force, which articulates what it is to be human, what it is to have a good society and reveal why the Church’s ultimate values are an enrichment and liberation not a surrender of autonomy and rationality (Hanvey, pp. 7, 28, ).

They warned that a failure to create this “living language” would lead to a growing dissonance between the ecclesial understanding of spirituality and the truth of the individual’s own personal experience of spirituality. Already in Australia there is evidence of this in what Mason, Singleton and Webber (2007) referred to as a self- styled spirituality derived from the authenticity of one’s life experience. This they claimed was a grasp on the spiritual that was self- constructed, borrowing from various religious traditions and closely connected with the core of self, with self- nurture and self- development.

#### **2.5.4 Spirituality and the new evangelisation**

Rymarz, (2012) noted Schindler’s (1997) proposition, that the intellectual origins of the new evangelisation could be traced to the Christocentric focus which Pope John Paul II brought to the reading of the conciliar document *Gaudium et Spes* (1965). As noted earlier (2.5.1) the first three chapters of this document highlighted, the inviolable dignity of every person, the centrality of community and the significance of human action (n. 40); all seen as the key components of current Christian anthropology. In order to actualise these principles Pope John Paul II reasserted the centrality of the person within what Dsiwicz (2007) identified as a robust Christocentric framework.

Despite the fact that many people today especially those of the Western developed world, are immersed in cultures which do not value transcendent reality, they are still faced with profound existential questions in regard to their search for meaning and purpose (Rymarz, (2012). It is claimed that this search is rooted in their origins as creatures of God. Pope John Paul II responded to these pervading existential questions by advocating an encounter with the living Christ “who is pre-eminently experienced in communion with the Church” (Rymarz, 2012, p. 9). However Christian belief holds that each person bears the imprint of the divine therefore Christ in some way unites himself with every human being (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1965). Consequently his presence reaches into every aspect of human culture.

Dulles ( 2008 ) proposed that as a result of the new theological position underpinning the Second Vatican Council, an ecclesial shift occurred. This resulted in a move from a static institutional model of Church to an evangelistic self-understanding Church described in the inclusive expression; the “people of God” (LG, 1964, Ch. 2). Such a shift strengthened the Christo-centric focus of the church and raised awareness of what it meant to evangelise in the current cultural context.

However the dominant cultural forces especially in the Western developed countries have pushed the majority of people including those once baptised in and belonging to the Church, away from the Gospel. Hence in order to make Christ known, the Church needs to adopt a new way of being in the world in a changing cultural context (Rymarz, 2012). This includes engaging innovative strategies and approaches in response to a changed cultural context. Egan (2012) of the Shrewsbury Diocese, England, proposed that the new evangelisation had three defining features. These he identified from John Paul II’s address to the Latin American Bishops (1983) as a new ardour, a new method which was Christocentric and a new expression which was culturally conscious.

The essence of this new method was found in dialogue. It had had been signalled in a range of ways in the conciliar documents especially *Gaudium et Spes* (1965).

By virtue of her mission to shed on the whole world the radiance of the Gospel message, and to unify under one Spirit all men of whatever nation, race or culture, the Church stands forth as a sign of that brotherhood which allows honest dialogue and gives it vigor (n.92).

The essential pre-requisite for this dialogue was respect for diversity which witnessed to the belief in the inviolable dignity of each person.

Such a mission requires in the first place that we foster within the Church herself mutual esteem, reverence and harmony, through the full recognition of lawful diversity. Thus all those who compose the one People of God, both pastors and the general faithful, can engage in dialogue with ever abounding fruitfulness. For the bonds which unite the faithful are mightier than anything dividing them. Hence, let there be unity in what is necessary; freedom in what is unsettled, and charity in any case (n. 92).

This aspiration to respect diversity, conflicted with the traditional signposts which identified the Catholic Church as it was known prior to the Second Vatican council. As the Church’s external identity began to weaken there was a reversion to reclaiming and restoring liturgical and spiritual practices of former times. In recent years pilgrim groups with Catholic school teachers adopt a

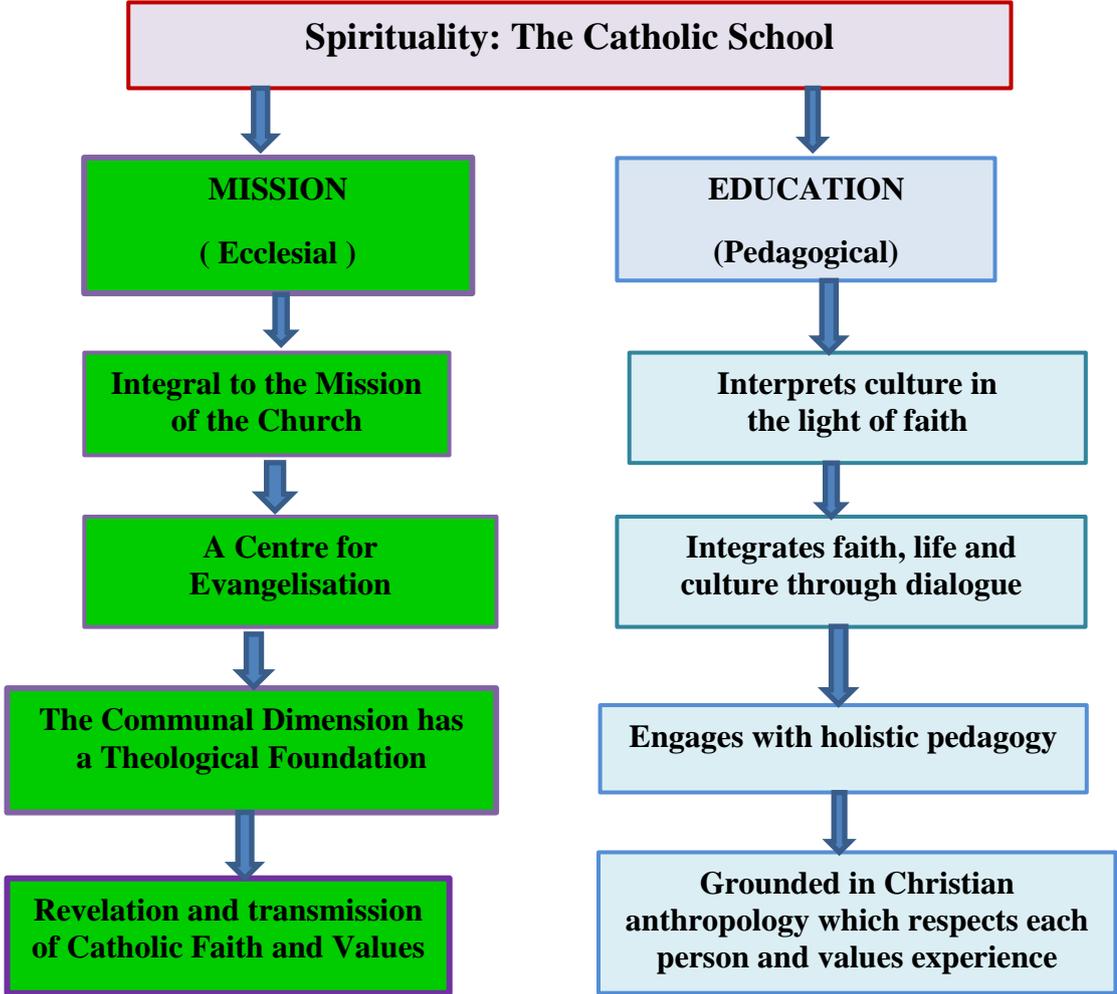
monastic approach to morning and evening prayer with the praying of the Psalms in the format of the Prayer of the Church. Teachers in Catholic schools have been affected by this restoration of traditional knowledge and practices.

It can be argued that, while it is important for teachers to know and support the essential narrative which underpins the faith tradition of the Catholic schools, they need to understand and embrace this with a relevance that nurtures their faith and spirituality. One could also argue that they need to teach the faith tradition with the intent of their students remembering and internalising knowledge of the Catholic faith. However to do this through a curriculum that is oriented to students being measured on their religious literacy competency, risks suppressing the teachers' own experiences of the spiritual. This view seems to assume that a core process will be teachers' communicating their own personal spirituality to their students and that academic requirements can hinder the process.

However, some would argue that this represents an unrealistic estimate of religious education to produce personal religious change in students (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006). They proposed that the main purpose of religious education was to 'educate' young people religiously and spiritually through an academic activity comparable to that of other areas of school curriculum, and that any personal spiritual change would depend entirely on the students themselves. In other words, Catholic school religious education is to 'resource' the spirituality of students; but any response would essentially require that it was through their own personal authorship.

The characteristics and concepts emerging from this overview of spirituality in the Catholic school were summarised in the following figure. Ecclesiology and Pedagogy provided two interconnected streams from which flowed the identity, meaning, purpose and task of the Catholic school. Its ecclesial identity gives rise to its sense of mission which is expressed in its work of evangelisation. The task of interpreting culture in the light of faith and integrating culture, faith, and life receives an impetus from the pedagogy it adopts.

**Figure 2.6 Summary of the concepts which relate to spirituality from the documents on the Catholic school and evangelisation**



**Figure 2.6: Summary of the concepts which relate to spirituality from the documents on the Catholic school and evangelisation**

**2.6 The personal spirituality of teachers in Catholic schools**

The document from the congregation for Catholic education, ( RDE, 1988) described the role of the teachers in the metaphor of cultivation and growth. It stated; “the teachers’ attitudes and behavior should be those of one preparing the soil; they then add their own spiritual lives, and the prayers they offer for the students entrusted to them” (n. 63 & 64).

### **2.6.1 Personal spirituality of the teacher**

The *Declaration on Christian Education* (GE, 1965) from the Second Vatican Council described the teacher as “requiring special qualities of mind and heart, careful preparation, and readiness to accept new ideas and to adapt to the old (n.8)” This statement, inclusive of teachers in Catholic schools (n.8 & 9), proposed that it was all teachers who determine whether the Catholic school can bring its goals and undertakings to fruition. The act of teaching in a Catholic school was seen primarily as one of witness which thus implied a “synchronicity between the message and the messenger (Fleming, 2009, p. 609).

The personal spirituality of the teachers was seen as being inseparable from the content and pedagogy of teaching itself.

A teacher who is full of Christian wisdom, well prepared in one’s own subject, does more than convey the sense of what is being taught to the pupils. Over and above what is said, the teacher guides the pupils beyond mere words to the heart of the total truth (CS, 1977, n. 42).

Consequently the teacher in a Catholic school required an “underlying spirituality within a humanising and holistic vision, educating not only for character but also for life” (Gowdie, 2011, p.134).

### **2.6.2 The interpretation of teaching as a vocation.**

From the 1970’s onwards, new ways of describing teaching in a Catholic school emerged. This resulted from a major change in Catholic school personnel moving from a high proportion of teachers who were members of religious congregations, to a situation where lay leaders and teachers comprised the large majority of teaching staff. Integrated into the professional role of the teacher was the concept of vocation. It was first articulated in the document, *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (LCS, 1982) which stated, “The life of the Catholic teacher must be marked by the exercise of a personal vocation in the Church, and not simply by the exercise of a profession” (n. 37). Fleming (2009) noted that “referring to the life of a teacher as a vocation, and stressing their role as witness, frames the teacher in church language, as opposed to their primary function as educators” (p.616). However Durka (2002), did not believe that the vocational aspect of teaching and its functional meaning in the term educator, are in opposition to each other.

Her understanding of the aspect of vocation in teaching reflected “the universal call to holiness” given in *Lumen Gentium* (LG, 1964, Ch.5). Broadening the discourse around vocation, Durka

(2002) claimed, “teaching is a calling that makes claims on our souls” (p.3). Palmer (1998) combined the functional aspect of teaching with vocation by recalling the classical understanding of education as to “lead out” (p.31).

Groome (2003), supported this same understanding of education as a movement of drawing out “the deep heart’s core of people” p. (38). This he believed changed them in life-giving ways, inviting them towards new horizons and fostering the human desire for the Transcendent (p.38). Buechner (1993), presented a positive image of vocation as being “the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet” (p. 119). Those who embraced teaching as a vocation, derived their teaching identity from an inner motivation that enabled them to shape their roles rather just fit into them (Durka, 2002, p.4).

In this creative approach to their role, teachers often resisted occupational language (Durka, 2002). Observations of teachers’ conversations showed that they quickly progressed from basic functional descriptions of their work in, “I teach reading” to speak in terms which reflect the relationship they form with their students. “A personal relationship is always a dialogue rather than a monologue, and the teacher must be convinced that the enrichment in the relationship is mutual” (William Cardinal Baum, LCS, 1982, n. 33). It is claimed that relational language has spiritual overtones. Teachers felt compelled to speak of their hopes for their students and the faith they have in their future. Durka (2002) noted that teachers in describing what they do, used “the language of creativity, engagement, imagination and transformation” (p.5).

### **2.6.3 The idea of teaching as being inner directed**

Teaching understood as a vocation emerging from one’s inwardness, can lead to the conclusion that “we teach who we are” (Palmer, 1998, p. 1). Rarely in educational research, is there a focus on the quality of the teacher’s integrated self, described by Palmer as “the who” (p.4) of teaching. Palmer drew on the insights of St. Augustine of Hippo concerning ‘the teacher within’ where he suggested that “when we learn something, the real teacher is not the teacher on the outside but inside” (Groome, 2003, p. 41). St. Augustine proposed that the ‘teacher within’ is the divine presence at the heart of the person. This inner spiritual capacity enabled the growth to personal wholeness and integration.

Palmer (1998) described the integrated self as the person who finds a balance with his or her intellectual, emotional and spiritual capacities. This allowed for a seamless flow between one’s inner and outer realities (Palmer, 1998, p. 5). Groome saw this movement as allowing the philosophical convictions espoused by the Catholic school “to seep into one’s soul and then

permeate how, what, why and where one teaches – the whole curriculum” (Groome, 1998, p.427). He concluded that a positive anthropology, a commitment to relationships and community, and an appreciation for the tradition all needed to become embedded in the teacher and permeate how each one fulfills her or his vocation. From this point of view, the teacher in a Catholic School had a reciprocal responsibility to nurture the Catholic tradition which had been planted within the institution of the Catholic School.

#### **2.6.4 The idea of teaching as having a sacramental vision**

This relationship with one’s interior self, could be interpreted as enabling the development of a sacramental vision of life. Bracken (2004) noted, that teachers could develop an awareness of the sacred or a sacramental consciousness when they began to embrace teaching from the inside, uncovering the depths and richness of teaching. This attitude connected them to their teacher within “who in the secret of the conscience and the heart, made one understand what one has heard but was not capable of grasping”. (Gabriel-Marie Cardinal Garrone, CS, 1977, n.72)

As stated in the earlier section on the Catholic school, O’Leary (2008), claimed that “education is more about “revealing than transmitting” (p. 68). This means that as teachers embraced their role with a sacramental consciousness they activated their potential to be ministers of grace and in every aspect of teaching then had the possibility to mediate grace.

A sacramental consciousness could enable teachers to see beyond the surface of the presenting and visible behaviours of their students. It could lead them to an insight into their students which showed not only the essence of each one but the connectedness at the heart of the human community. The parabolic discourse of Matthew chapter 13, could be used to illustrate this point. It featured Jesus recounting a series of parables about the nature of God’s Kingdom. These, especially the treasure in the field, could provide inspiration and meaning for teachers. Interpreting the parables of Jesus in the context of their teaching, teachers attempted to get beyond the surface presenting behaviours of their students so that they could discover a truth hidden in the ‘sub-soil’ of the student. Groome (2003), referred to the universality of God’s love as being the core conviction of the faith of Christian teachers. This he claimed is a bondedness with all God’s people which urged Christian teachers to live in harmony with and love all humanity.

#### **2.6.5 The Classroom; A space with a possibility to express spirituality.**

One of the basic tenets of Catholic theology espoused primarily by Schillebeeckx (1962) was the sacrament of encounter. It was this perspective that Looney (2003) embraced when she proposed

that, the most sacred place in the school could be the classroom rather than the chapel or oratory. “It is in the classroom that human potential is nurtured and the grace of self is discovered” (Looney, 2003, p.238). Looney claimed that the site of critical engagement in the process of Catholic Education was not so much at the macro level of the school in general, but in the classroom, especially in “the micro interactions that take place in that mysterious process of teaching and learning” (p. 238).

Groome defined spirituality simply as “faith at work” (2003, p. 37). For him it was in the classroom that teachers expressed their beliefs as they shaped the curriculum and delivered its content to their students. This for Groome (2003), was a manifestation of teachers’ spirituality.

When Catholic educators allow their faith commitments to shape the whole curriculum – what and how and who and why they teach – then their teaching becomes their faith at work and its foundation is their own spirituality (p. 37).

Butler (1998) noted that Wesley affirmed how belief in someone was a concern of the spirit. It mattered in the classroom for teachers to believe in their students and to encourage their discovery of hidden talents. However for this to occur, teachers needed self- belief which engendered a valuing and treasuring of their own ability and gifts.

### **2.6.6 Spiritual Attitudes of the teacher in the Catholic school.**

Much of the literature on Catholic schools, proposes that essential qualities for teachers committed to the evangelising mission of the Catholic school, are authenticity and sincerity. Teachers are called to live what they proclaim in word, because “the faith is principally assimilated through contact with people whose daily life bears witness to it” (Congregation for Catholic education, CS, 1977, n. 53). Pope John Paul II (1985), proposed that the qualities of Christian humanism were appropriate for all those who ministered the Gospel. They needed to be “experts in humanity, familiar with their own emotions and able to share with others, and who are at the same time contemplatives who have fallen in love with God” (Pope John Paul II, Address, 1985, n.13).

The teachers involved in the study by Kennedy and Duncan (2006), believed that there was a need for an articulated sense of the spiritual on their part to enhance opportunities for this awakening to occur in the students. Words such as awareness, sensitivity and alertness indicated the attitudes those teachers felt were needed, to be able to recognise children’s spiritual expressions. The teachers identified many ways they responded to children’s spiritual expressions. However of all the possibilities, the teachers considered that showing respect and

listening at a spiritual level were the most effective. These teachers apparently came to realise what Palmer (1998) had stated, that spirituality can only be at the core of the teacher/child relationship if teachers themselves are aware of and nurture their own spirituality. The starting point for this awareness was a sense of recognition which leads to understanding (Palmer, 1998). This thinking implied that teachers needed to be alert to opportunities to initiate with their students, possibilities for dialogue between culture and faith. However to bring the interior synthesis of the student to a deeper level, a sense of integration needed to already exist in the teacher ( LCS, 1982, n. 29).

As referred to earlier (2.4.3) some teachers engage with the practice of Lectio Divina in order to encounter the Word of God alive and active in the context of their lived reality. This reflective and focussing activity as discussed in section (2.3.8) can lead to a deeper sense of coherence in their lives.

### **2.6.7 Teachers' spirituality and Religious Education.**

Personal integration is generally regarded as being critical to the human interior journey of transformation. Lonergan suggests the importance of this in his major theological works; *Insight: A study of human understanding*, (1958) and *Method in Theology* (1973). He proposed a way of facilitating the integration of intellectual, affective and moral ways of knowing. Lonergan developed a critical philosophy of interiority, grounded in an epistemology which involved the four core activities of attending, inquiring, interpreting and acting (Ranson, 2002). This method was foundational to the Religious Education Programmes based on the Shared Christian Praxis developed by Groome (1991).

Philosophically the method is grounded in the concept of conation, which Groome (1991) proposed is a more comprehensive term than cognition. It was understood as extending beyond the acquisition of cognitive knowledge and was manifested when “the whole ontic being of ‘agent-subjects-in-relationship’ is actively engaged to consciously know, desire and do what is most humanizing and life-giving for all” (Groome, 1991, p. 9). A more familiar word and a synonym for conation is that of wisdom (Groome, 1991).

The engagement of the agent-subject in the construction of knowledge was consistent with Groome's belief in the incarnational principle located in the heart of Christianity. It necessitated a pedagogy that was grounded in and “shapes people's ontic selves – their identity and agency in the world” (Groome, 1991, p. 8). The pedagogical aim of this method is not just to transfer knowledge so that subjects know about the Christian values like justice and compassion. The ontological thrust

is directed to bringing personal understanding and change in the subjects so that in their being they embody the values of compassion and justice.

The following statement from the universal Church Document on the Catholic School (CS, 1977), is consistent with Groome's epistemic ontology as described in the above paragraph..

a teacher who is full of Christian wisdom, well prepared in one's own subject, does more than convey the sense of what is being taught to the pupils. Over and above what is said the teacher guides the pupils beyond mere words to the heart of the total truth (CS, n. 42).

Classroom teachers in schools of the Metropolitan Diocese which is the subject of this study, have been teaching religion with the pedagogy of Shared Christian Praxis developed by Thomas Groome (1991) for over 20 years. It is thus a useful example of pedagogy for exploring potential links with spirituality both in terms of the spirituality of the teacher and the role of educating young people in spirituality. Given the extensive staff development on the use of *Shared Christian Praxis*, as well as its systematic use in the classroom, suggest that it may well have had a shaping influence on those teachers' understandings of spirituality. Groome's *Shared Christian Praxis* is comprised of five essential movements. He is deliberative in his choice of the word movement so as to indicate the free-flowing nature of praxis which can be orchestrated in a seamless way like the movements of a symphony or of a dance (Groome, 1991).

The first movement of Shared Christian Praxis is naming or expressing an action from one's present life experience. The second movement calls for critical reflection on this present action while the third movement invites participants to engage with the Christian story and Vision identified as the Scripture and the Tradition. The fourth movement brings into dialogue the experiences of the participants with the Christian Story and Vision. This engagement invites the participants into a dialogue with a faith reality larger than their own context. Groome (1991) proposed two guiding questions to maintain the focus and integrity of this movement;

How does this Christian Story/Vision affirm, question and call us beyond present praxis? and how does present praxis affirm and critically appropriate the version of Story/Vision made accessible in movement 3 and how are we to live more faithfully toward the Vision of God's reign? (p. 147).

Groome (1991) referred to this process as 'dialectical hermeneutics' between what he claims are two sources of Christian faith. These are the present praxis of the participants which he terms conation and the Christian Story and Vision named by Groome, as wisdom. Through this method of interpretation of both participants' life experiences and the Christian Story, participants will hopefully integrate the Christian story into their own lives in a dynamic way. This could lead

both students and teachers to a knowledge of the Christian story which enables them to appropriate it as their own. The fifth and final movement in Shared Christian Praxis is one of response and decision. It offers the participants an opportunity for making decisions about how to live their Christian faith in the world.

Integral to the dialectical process proposed by Groome are three particular hermeneutics. These are retrieval, suspicion and creativity. In the context of this study the hermeneutic of retrieval aimed to recover, restore, examine and draw on the teachings of the Catholic tradition. Gowdie (2011) referred to retrieval interpretation as pulling things out of the “storehouse of tradition and creative interpretation – going into new spaces, which in turn become tradition” (p.321).

The scriptural connection with the hermeneutics of retrieval was found in the Gospel of Matthew 13:52. It relates to discipleship and for one to be effective in this role there was a need to bring from one’s storeroom of knowledge “treasures new and old.” Byrne (2004) commenting on this verse, pointed to the holistic nature of spirituality; “ the ‘discipled scribe’ knows how to re-mint the scriptural tradition and the expectations flowing from it with images adapted to the surprising nature of the kingdom” (p. 116).

The hermeneutic of retrieval was animated by faith and characterised by;

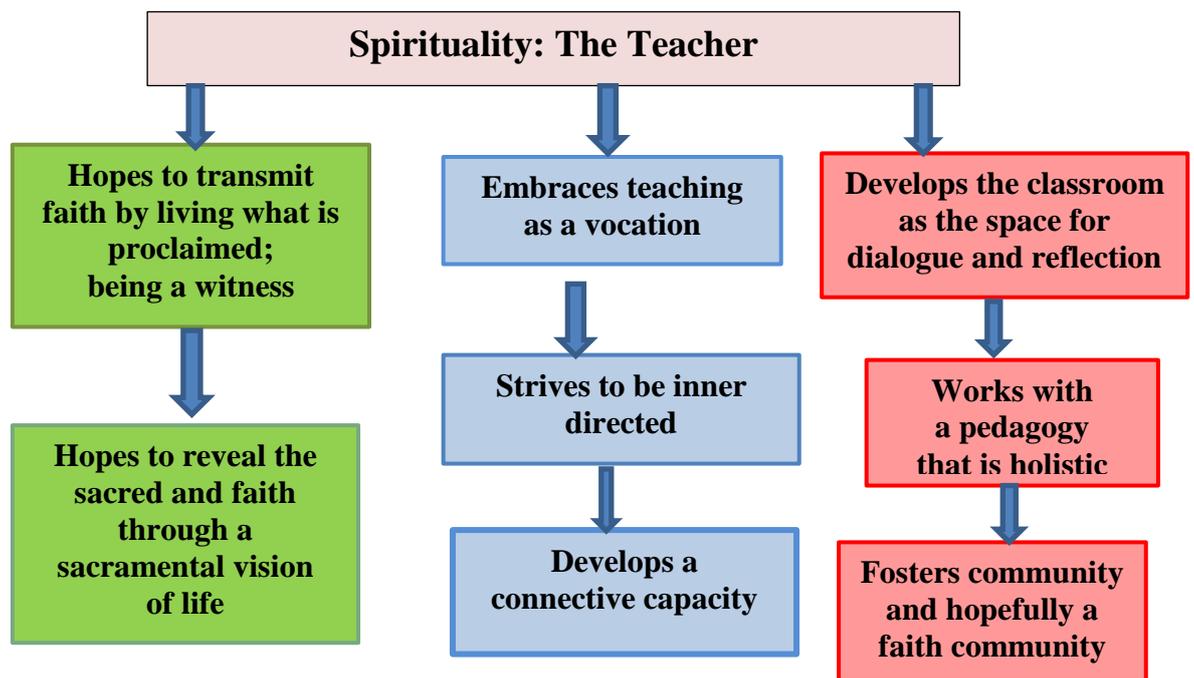
A willingness to listen, to absorb as much as possible the message in its given form and it respects the symbol, understood as a cultural mechanism for our apprehension of reality, as a place of revelation (Josselson, 2004, p.3).

The hermeneutic of suspicion named by Ricoeur (1991), identified what aspects of the Catholic tradition and wider culture were problematic. Rossiter’s (2010) suggested approach to Religious Education as being a ‘critical interpretation and evaluation of cultural meanings” (p.15) resonates with this hermeneutic. However the title of the hermeneutic although adopted by Groome has become problematic. It presents concerns to those who may interpret suspicion as having a subversive effect on the faith tradition. Lennan (2005) suggested a better way of naming the hermeneutic would be “a desire for authentic catholicity.” (p. 405)

In pursuit of this authenticity, the hermeneutic sought to decode issues to find an explanation beyond what was experienced. Creatively combining the outcomes of critical retrieval with the hermeneutics of suspicion was the product of the hermeneutic of creativity. In this inventive process new meaning was produced which indicated “that Christian faith is not static and thus its potentiality can never be exhausted.” (Gowdie, 2011, p. 321). The dynamic of Groome’s hermeneutical position was premised on his understanding of revelation. He stated,

A deep Catholic conviction is that God’s revelation did not end with the Apostolic era and is not limited to the Bible’s pages. Rather by the presence of God’s Spirit, tradition continues to unfold through the human experience (Groome, 2002, p. 147).

The following figure summarises the concepts from the literature on the personal religious spirituality of the teacher in the Catholic school. Central to the figure is the teacher embracing his or her role with a sense of vocation which results in being inner directed. This enabled teachers to witness to their faith. It also empowered them with a connective capacity so they can teach in a holistic way and strive to integrate faith, life and culture.



**Figure 2.7: Summary of the essential characteristics of spirituality relating to the teacher in the Catholic school**

**2.7 A summary of the position held by the researcher regarding personal spirituality**

Harding (1987), asserted that, “the beliefs and behaviours of the researcher are part of the empirical evidence for or against the claims advanced in the results of the research” (Josselson, 2004, p.11). Heidegger referred to these as “horizons of understanding”. This concluding section presents features of the literature on spirituality which have influenced the researcher’s personal spirituality.

Hay (2006) notes that research interests and insights are closely tied with biography. The topic of spirituality has always held significant interest for the researcher. In her perception

spirituality has often been associated only with religion and its practices. This has limited the understanding of spirituality and the exercise of its potential, which the researcher believes is much broader and more universally present in the human species than the culture bound nature of religion. For the researcher the study was about “investigating a natural phenomenon that exists far beyond the world of formal religion and religious language.” (Hay, 2006, p. 42).

The researcher supported the claim “that spiritual awareness is a necessary part of our biology whatever our beliefs or lack of them” (Hay, 2006, p. xii). Furthermore as Hardy proposed in the Gifford Lectures (1963-1964), “this awareness is like a sense; it is there because it has an important function. It has indeed been ‘naturally selected’ in the process of evolution because it helps us to survive” (Hay, 2006, p. 37.).

Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) brought a faith perspective to this biological understanding which the researcher believes is consistent with the Christian religious framework and integral to the mystical tradition of Catholicism. He described the spiritual as “the central phenomenon, the central strand interwoven with evolution at all levels” (King, 2008, p. 26). His writings especially *Le Milieu Divin* (1960) promoted a particular way of seeing everything infused with the spiritual.

The researcher concurs with Rahner’s theological position about the spiritual and believes that “every Christian is called to a mysticism of everyday faith, hope and love that differs only in degree and not in kind, from the extraordinary mystics” (Steinmetz, 2012, p.4). For Rahner the spiritual was experienced in the ordinariness of life and he proposed “the first way that humans experience God is simply through the mystery of who they are” (Steinmetz, 2012, p. 3). The researcher believes that we weave the fabric of our eternal lives out of our humdrum daily lives; that our ordinary daily life is the stuff of authentic life “(Egan, 2013, p.46).

Teachers in Catholic schools as they pass on the faith tradition of the Church, may not make the connection between the ordinariness of life experience, the awakening of the spiritual, the movement of God’s spirit and the transmission of the Catholic faith. They may need to learn processes which assist with reflecting in a theological way on their lived reality.

So the researcher’s intention in this study was to listen to the lived reality of each of the participants. She believes that the spiritual is transformative (King, 2008) and has the capacity to effect inner personal awakening. This growth in consciousness brings about connection and transcendence. The researcher considers that the spirituality of each teacher contributes significantly to enabling the synthesis of faith and life and faith and culture in all aspects of the

curriculum and school experiences. Therefore it is important to find out what views teachers have about their own personal spirituality.

How the starting position of the researcher's personal spirituality may affect the research process is considered in the ethics section of the following chapter on research methodology.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

This chapter studied the literature on spirituality in the areas of; spirituality as a basic and universal human phenomenon, spirituality in the Christian tradition, spirituality and the normative Catholic Church documents and spirituality and the teacher in the Catholic school. The researcher then presented a summary of her own position on religious spirituality in the context of selected aspects of the literature on spirituality.

Each section concluded with a summary of the main characteristics of spirituality in the four context areas. These were then brought together and distilled in a final complete summary which is located in Appendix A . The next chapter presents the research design and methodology.

# Chapter Three - Research Design and Methodology

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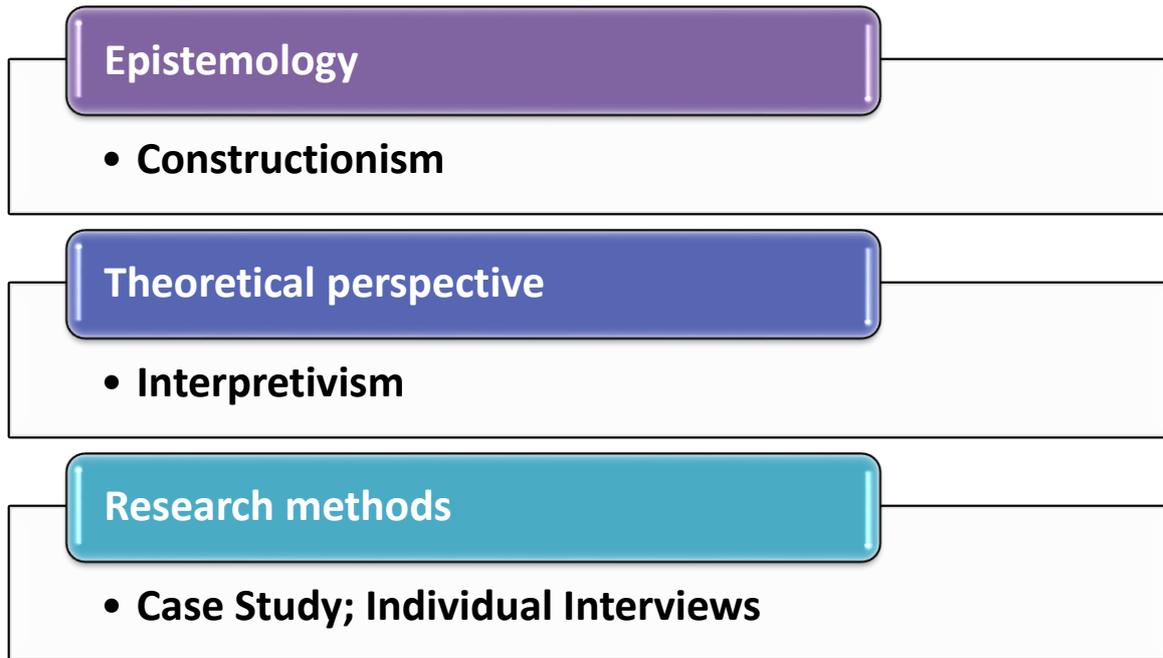
## 3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present an explanation and justification of the research design selected for the study. The design was seen as providing the “logic that links the data to be collected to the initial purpose of the study” (Yin, 2003, p.19). Given the personal and contextual nature of spirituality and the research questions articulated in chapter 1, there was a need to adopt a research framework and design that enabled each teacher’s subjective experience of spirituality within his or her lived reality to be articulated in term of perceptions, awareness and consciousness

Creswell (2009) proposed that the research design was formed from “the intersection of philosophy, strategies of inquiry and specific methods” (p.5). This study was grounded in the philosophical position of interpretivism on which was built the study’s epistemological framework, identified as constructionism. The qualitative strategy of inquiry was case study, the data was collected through interviews and the selected methods for analysing the data involved strategies similar to those of Grounded theory.

## 3.2 Framework for the Research Design

The following figure presents a visual overview of the research design



**Figure 3.1: Elements of the Research Design**

### **3.2.1 Analytical philosophical phase of the study: The literature review**

The literature related to the topic was analysed and interpreted to provide a systematic background to the empirical phase of the study. The epistemology of constructionism and the theoretical perspective of interpretivism, as outlined below, were applicable to the whole study and hence were applied to the documentary research.

### **3.2.2 Empirical phase of the study: Case study with individual interviews**

The research framework is summarised in figure 3.1 and the components are explained in more detail in the following table.

**Table 3.1: The research framework for the empirical phase of the study**

Research framework	Elements	Relevance to this study
<b>Epistemology</b>	Constructionism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assumes that personal meaning is constructed by individuals and is influenced by their social contexts.</li> <li>• Ultimately, knowledge, meaning and truth are grounded in the life world of the individual's experience.</li> <li>• An appropriate epistemology for investigating personal, subjective views of individuals' understanding and experience of spirituality.</li> </ul>
<b>Theoretical Perspective</b>	Interpretivism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerned primarily with the inner experience of the individual, and with reporting participants' articulation of their experience and understandings.</li> <li>• Suitable for an inductive, hermeneutic research activity which sets out to interpret, analyse and synthesise individuals reported views.</li> <li>• Also tries to develop themes and generalisations that can be derived from the data.</li> </ul>
<b>Research Methodology</b>	Case Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allowed for a detailed data collection from a small number of participants.</li> <li>• Ensured that a study was conducted within the participants' natural physical and social environments.</li> <li>• Enabled the researcher to experience an empathetic relationship to facilitate the process of intersubjectivity.</li> <li>• Enabled cross subject comparisons.</li> </ul>
<b>Data Collection Strategies</b>	Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enabled in depth collection of subjective data from individual participants.</li> <li>• Extensive interviews allowed the researcher to develop an essential or 'eidetic' (Husserl, 1982), understanding of the participants' views of their personal spirituality</li> </ul>
<b>Participants</b>	Purposive Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent with the study's purpose to interview teachers who were prepared to be involved in talking about their personal spirituality and life experience.</li> </ul>

The following table indicates where the above components of the research framework are situated in the chapter. These sections give a detailed account of each element of the research framework

**Table 3.2: Overview of Chapter 3**

Elements in the Research Framework	Section numbers
Epistemology	3.3.
Theoretical perspective	3.4
Research methodology and data collecting method	3.5
Participants	3.6
Data collection strategy	3.7
Transcription and analysis of the interview data	3.8
Data Interpretation	3.9
Trustworthiness	3.10

### 3.3 Epistemology of constructionism.

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy concerned with the nature of knowledge through the study of “how knowledge is generated and accepted as valid” (O’Donoghue, 2007, p.9). Each epistemological system “embodies a certain way of understanding what is (ontology) as well as a certain way of understanding what it means to know (epistemology)” (Crotty, 1998, p. 42).

This study is framed within the particular epistemological position that knowledge is constructed by people either individually or socially rather than being received from an instructor or outside source. The particular type of constructed knowledge chosen for this study is constructionism. It is grounded in the claim articulated by Crotty (1998) that all meaningful reality “is contingent upon human practices being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world” (p.42). Constructionist epistemology holds that as individuals try to make sense of their world, meaning rather than being discovered, is constructed. This epistemological perspective focuses exclusively on the meaning-making activity of the individual mind” (Crotty, 1998, p.58).s used with respect to the social construction of knowledge. It is unnecessary to pursue the finer details of these distinctions.

The constructionist’s understanding of what it means to know, emphasise the importance of culture and context and propose that different people may construct meaning in different ways even in relation to the same phenomenon (Crotty, 1998). This was evident as Crotty demonstrated the difference found when moving from one era or one culture to another

This understanding of what it means to know proposes that different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon (Crotty, 1998). This was evident as Crotty demonstrated the differences found when moving from one era or one culture to another. Therefore individual constructions of meaning were filtered through and shaped by “the cultural, historical, political and social norms that operate within that context and time” (Darlston-Jones, 2007. p.19). In this view of things, subject and object emerge as partners in the generation of meaning. Groome, (1991) expressed this subject/object partnership by claiming,

the meaning of the objective world is how it engages human consciousness (how it appears to us), and the meaning of our subjective consciousness is the mode with which it opens us to the world (how we look at it) (p.74).

Within the epistemology where the individual is at the centre of meaning making is the science of hermeneutic phenomenology. This developed from the work of Edmund Husserl (1887) which is considered to have a useful bearing on this study of personal views of individual teachers. The hermeneutic approach recognised that all knowledge, meaning and truth are grounded in the life world of one’s experience (Groome, 1991). Knowledge was generated through the interactive relationship between human consciousness and human experience resulting in an individual’s understanding and interpretation of their own lives.

For Husserl the living body was the centre of experience. He named this, “lived embodiment” which was not only a means of practical action, but an essential part of the deep structure of all knowing (Behnke, 2011). In this study spirituality was identified within the life experiences described by teachers.

Hyde, (2005), in reference to van Manen (1990), claimed that the hermeneutic phenomenology tradition sought,

to be attentive to the way in which things (phenomena) appear to be, and to be interpretive, since all phenomena are encountered meaningfully through lived experience and can be described in human language (p.111).

Although the exploration of spirituality was the focal point of this study, it was not seen as a singular activity. Ranson described spirituality as multi-faceted, and perceived it to be an “integrated constellation of different activities. It is an unfolding enterprise and, one in which a number of factors are held in tension” (Ranson, 2002, p.18). Constructionism places an emphasis on meaning making as individuals actively construct new knowledge through their interaction with their environments. It is therefore an “unfolding enterprise,” and as such is a pertinent

perspective for the researcher's construction of meaning from teachers' reported understandings of spirituality.

### **3.4 Theoretical Perspective: Interpretivism**

The theoretical framework for empirical research was regarded by Crotty (1998) as “the philosophical stance that lies behind the methodology” (p. 66). It served to anchor the research design by providing “both a context and a foundation for its logic and criteria” (Hyde, 2005, p.110). Interpretivism was selected as the appropriate theoretical perspective for this study because it allowed for a focus on what was specific and unique in participants' subjective views (O'Donoghue, 2007). It was also disposed towards generating new knowledge concerned with higher levels of meaning and generalisation. The interpretivist approach was also consistent with the researcher's entry into the particular context of the participants with its own defined culture and values and look for what Crotty (1998) described as “culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social world” (p.67).

The symbolic interactionist approach to interpretivism is pertinent to this study particularly with respect to the identification and articulating of personal, subjective accounts of spirituality. This emphasized social interaction as the basis for knowledge. First articulated by Blumer (1969), it posited an understanding of the self as “the lens through which the social world is refracted” (Rock, 1974, p.146). It was primarily concerned with the inner experience of the individual (Mead, 1934, pp, 7-8). This approach was consistent with giving attention to the domain of the spiritual, located in the inner, experiential world of the individual's life (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986).

Meaning was one of the central features of symbolic interactionism and according to Blumer (1969) human beings acted towards things on the basis of the meanings they attached to them. The symbolic interactionist approach recognized that all human action was meaningful. In the context of this study human action was understood as that which “arises out of a reflective and socially derived interpretation of the internal and external stimuli that are present” (O'Donoghue, 2007, p. 19).

Symbolic interactionism presented a threefold approach to meaning given to situations, to phenomena and to the self. Embedded in this process of meaning making was the concept of empathy. Dilthey (1977) proposed that empathy enabled identification with the other. Understanding another's actions came through grasping the subjective consciousness or the intent of the other person. This approach to understanding enabled individuals to immerse

themselves in the mind of the other, so as to experience and understand reality from the point of view of another human being (Blumer, 1969).

Generating meaning through symbolic interactionism was considered as leading to the forming of ‘perspectives’. O’Donoghue (2007) saw these as points of view which allowed the individual to claim a particular position from which he or she viewed reality. They captured the notion of a human being who interacts, defines situations and acts according to what is going on in the present moment. Charon (2001) claimed that perspectives were an absolute part of everyone’s existence as they acted as filters through which everything around was perceived and interpreted.

Generally it was seen that perspectives lacked permanence because of their capacity to change from one situation to the next (O’Donoghue 2007). However Christian spirituality is grounded in a system of beliefs, which enables some core perspectives to be transferred across situations. This provided the possibility for participating teachers to articulate some permanent perspectives particularly regarding their view of the world and their understanding of the human person.

Symbolic interactionism demonstrated that people do not act towards social structures, institutions or roles. Instead they act towards situations and only understand meta-situational language if it is directly connected to these situations (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Therefore in exploring the teachers’ views on spirituality, the contrasting difference between the fluid and situational nature of personal perspectives, and the teachings of the Catholic faith needed to be balanced within the context of the Catholic school. The diversity in expressions of spirituality was understood as emerging from the different views held by teachers.

Subjectivity is another key feature of symbolic interactionism. It was each person’s experience which provided the building blocks for the knowledge base constructed by each individual. This personal or social construction of meaning was regarded by Lincoln & Guba (1985), as an ontology of truth and a subjectivist’s epistemology. Meaning arose out of and was generated from social interaction with others. It was therefore connected to context which meant that each person’s way of making sense of and meaning from his or her world was as valid and worthy of respect as any other (Crotty, 1998; Holloway, 1998).

### **3.5 Research Methodology – Case Study -- and data collecting method**

Research methodology offered a constructive, generic approach to data collection . According to Sarantakos (2005), the methodology of the research contains “a model which entails theoretical principles as well as a framework that provides guidelines about how research is done in the

context of a particular paradigm” (p. 30). It was the research methodology which justified the choice of the selected research methods.

Because the study explored spirituality within the bounded system of the Catholic school it adopted Case Study as its research methodology (Merriam, 2002). This enabled the researcher to gain information and understanding through data gathering methods which were interactive, cooperative and participative. These were face to face in depth interviews. Analysis of relevant school and Catholic Church documents provided another source of data for the study.

The methodology appropriate for the subjective and personal focus of this research was a descriptive case study. Coding strategies related to Grounded Theory, were used in the process of data analysis and interpretation. Case study was defined by Stake (1995) as “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances.” This methodology is consistent with an “holistic, in depth investigation” (Tellis, 1997, p. 1) and with an empirical investigation of a specified or bounded phenomenon (Smith 1978) intended at yielding a deep understanding of specific instances of social phenomena.

The Case Study methodology was suitable for gathering data about teachers’ views on spirituality and the ways in which they experienced and described their own spirituality in the context of the Catholic school. It also allowed for the inclusion of multiple perspectives – for example how personal subjective views might relate to outside cultural meanings, as in normative documents about Catholic schooling. Case Study methodology was also appropriate for the role of the researcher as it placed her in a position to “emphasize episodes of nuance, the sequence of happenings in context, the wholeness of the individual” (Stake, 1995, p.xii).

The data collected from 5 individual participants allowed for cross case comparisons and the development of a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being. The following characteristics of case study methodology were most relevant for this research.

**Real Life Context – Naturalistic.** Case study can investigate “a phenomenon within its real life context when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident: and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (Yin, 1989 p, 13). Personal spirituality cannot be abstracted from the context in which it was experienced and expressed. Hence it needed to be studied where social interaction took place – where it might also have an integrative function. The school setting where each participant was situated became like a “social laboratory” where the case investigation took place with as little disturbance by the researcher as possible.

**Bounded.** A case is defined as “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context”. (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 25). The five participants engaged in the study from five different Catholic schools, ensured that there were clear and distinct boundaries within the case study.

**Breadth and Depth.** The case study had the capacity to facilitate the development of ‘deep understandings’ about specific instances (Mabry, 2008) and engage with multiple perspectives. This was pertinent to understanding a complex phenomenon like spirituality. It would be possible within case studies to distil the data from interviews to yield some generalisations, even if this was limited by the small number of individuals who were interviewed. Case study methodology was also able to hold different perspectives and explore contested viewpoints (Simons, 2009).

**Emic and particular.** An emic approach to the case study meant that the research was done from within the social group, from the perspective of the teachers. This allowed the case study research to take as its starting point the words and views of the participants. While the ideas and perspectives on spirituality discussed in chapter 2 served as background knowledge to this empirical phase of the research, it was still possible for the researcher to put aside these perspectives to allow the participants’ data to speak for itself. This illustrates what was noted earlier as a ‘grounded theory like’ aspect to the case study data analysis.

The emic approach was seen as being relevant to this particular case study regarding the spirituality of teachers in Catholic schools. The understanding and expression of personal spirituality is an area of research which has not received a lot of investigation. As a result it is a field that is not theory-laden. Adopting this approach within the case study respected individual viewpoints and provided the possibility of uncovering unexpected findings.

In addition the emic aspect of Case study allowed the researcher to initiate the study within the social group of the school from the perspective of the teachers. Ideas and perspectives on spirituality documented by the researcher in chapter 2 served only as background knowledge to this empirical phase of the research. It was the words and views of the participants which formed the research data. The approach aimed to ensure that the researcher put aside any theories or assumptions regarding spirituality. With the starting point being the perspectives and words of the participants, the data were able to ‘speak’ to previously held theories and assumptions. This allowed the themes, patterns and concepts to emerge from the participants’ data.

The emic approach also allowed for the possibility of previously unknown aspects of the explored phenomenon of spirituality to emerge. Consequently it pointed to any missing pieces

regarding knowledge of spirituality or could substantiate previously held theory. In this particular case the previously unknown aspects of the spirituality of teachers were what Gowdie (2011) referred to as the external factors of spirituality.

The interview questions focussed on the internal beliefs and personal values of teachers because they were seen as ways of attending to “the personal, subjective and psychological aspects of spirituality” (Rossiter, 2010, p.8). However as Gowdie (2011) noted a significant role in shaping teachers’ understandings of the spiritual were also the external factors of professional values. While these were stated in the formal documentation of the school, the way these were interpreted varied in how they were appropriated personally and practised by individual teachers.

**Bounded.** A case is defined as “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context”. (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 25). The five participants engaged in the study from five different Catholic schools, ensured that there were clear and distinct boundaries within the case study.

**Holistic.** Through a case study approach the researcher had the capacity to engage with the many and varied expressions of the questions being studied. In studying each subject, the researcher could identify the complex interactions of factors which included different theological positions and positive or negative experiences of institutional Church and Religion. It would also be possible to interrelate the pieces of individual experiences to illustrate the larger pictures that might emerge in terms of body language, the participant’s ease or lack of ease in the interview situation, response to outside stimuli especially bells, students voices and interruptions.

**Heuristic.** Stake (1995), proposed that the nature of case study allowed for the possibility of previously unknown relationships and variables to emerge. The heuristic aspect of the case study focussed the attention inwards on the feeling responses of the researcher (Moustakas, 1990). This approach invited “the conscious, investigating self as researcher to unknown aspects of the self (Sela-Smith, 2002). The researcher therefore identified aspects of her own experiences featured in the study. In addition there is potential for readers of this research to discover traits of their own experience with that documented in the research report. Such identification can illuminate one’s own experiences and allow new meanings to emerge (Merriam, 2002; Stake, 1995).

**Inductive** The inductive approach to the case study allowed for the interview questions to be open ended. It also provided the necessary freedom for the researcher to build on previous answers with further questions in order to expand or clarify answers. In the data analysis phase the inductive approach allowed the researcher “to build patterns, categories and themes from the bottom up by organising the data into increasingly more abstract units of information” (Creswell,

2009, p.175). The inductive method also allowed the researcher to collaborate with the participants on two occasions throughout the study. This gave the participants an opportunity to shape and validate the themes or abstractions that emerged from the data analysis process (Creswell, 2009).

**Descriptive.** The case study aimed to offer deep understanding conveyed through descriptive reporting. This was done in the narrative form which built on natural ways of understanding. (Alasvvtan, Bickman & Brannor, 2008). Case study description also offered the contextual and experiential understandings of the disclosures.

### **3.6 Participants.**

The participants were five individual teachers who consented to actively participate in the research study. Their selection for the study was purposeful and was negotiated with the Director of Catholic schools in the Diocese.

The main criterion which guided the researcher in the selection of teachers was that they claimed to have a Catholic religious spirituality. They indicated that they valued the spiritual and religious dimension of reality and showed a willingness to speak about this with reference to their personal experiences and their teaching. The intent of participant selection was to include both male and female teachers and within the limited number of participants, to include teachers working across the span of years K-12.

Consideration was also given to selecting teachers who were in a position to set aside the required time for three, 60 minute interviews and give responses to interview summaries at two stages of the study. It was the intention of the researcher not to select teachers known to her in a personal or professional way. Hence the selection was done in consultation with senior colleagues who had extensive experience in schools in both leadership and Religious Education. Suggestions were then given to the researcher about possible participants.

Once the final participants were decided by the researcher, permission from the school principals was then sought. The request to participate was twofold: to invite a particular member of the staff to take part in the research and to conduct this research within his or her particular school setting. A letter formally inviting involvement was sent to each participant (Appendix J). From the initial 5 invitations four replied, indicating their willingness to participate study. As there was no reply from the 5<sup>th</sup> person, the researcher sent an invitation to another teacher who consented to take

part in the research. The following table details statistics relevant to the professional context of each participant. New names were given to the participants to preserve their anonymity.

**Table 3.3: Profile of Participants**

<i>School Enrolment Numbers</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Grades Taught</i>	<i>Male/Female</i>	<i>Years of Teaching Experience</i>	<i>Years in Current School</i>
1004	Hilton	7-12	M	29	15
576	Maryann	K,1& 2	F	7	6
411	Louise	5 & 6	F	8	4
449	Edward	K, 2,3,5,6	M	18	2
1042	Rebecca	7-12	F	7	7

The researcher was employed at the Catholic Diocesan Education Office. She has had a long involvement in many aspects of educational work in the Diocese and has developed effective and trusting working relationships with teachers and colleagues. She had no specific or supervisory role with any of the participants or the schools in which they worked. Furthermore the researcher had no role which impacted in any way on the future employment of the participants. This enabled the participants to respond authentically to the interview questions.

**Sample size:** Scriven (1972) claimed that many people experiencing the same phenomenon does not necessarily mean that their accounts are more reliable than that of one individual person experiencing the same phenomenon. The selection of five participants was purposeful and a manageable number for a series of 3 extensive interviews. It enabled the researcher to become immersed in the data within the interviews and to investigate the “quality and texture of experience” (Larkin, 2013, p. 15), located in the contextual data which related to each of the five participants

**Engagement with Participants.** To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, each participant was given a pseudonym and all data was handled with strict confidentiality. All collected data from participant interviews were stored in compliance with the ethical guidelines of the Australian Catholic University and the Catholic Education Office. Each participant was given general feedback prior to the second interview. This facilitated a connection and renewed focus on the topic being investigated. As a stimulus to the third interview the participants were given a summary of the past two interviews which included emerging themes.

The researcher sought ways to interact with the participants in an empathetic way. She conducted all interviews in school spaces where the participants worked and she became familiar with the school environments. Observation of the students and the teaching spaces were important in the school visits and where possible she interacted with the Principal and other staff members

### **3.7 Data Collection strategy: In depth interviews**

Data collection was the process of gathering information in an established systematic way in accord with a qualitative study that enabled the research questions concerning the spiritual views of teachers to be answered.

In preparing the interview questions and format, the researcher was guided by a range of criteria as suggested by Kvale (1996) and cited by Hyde (2005). The first was that of being knowledgeable by having an extensive understanding of the interview theme which in this study was that of spirituality. However the interviewer was also aware not to allow this knowledge to intrude on the interview through use of theological terms or academic and professional language.

The interviewer conducted the process in a moderate manner which enabled the interviewee to proceed at a rate which was comfortable for each one. Many of the questions provoked thought and reflection. The interviewer allowed time for this and encouraged interviewees to take reflective time, if needed and finish each statement. There was sensitivity and attentiveness in listening to the content. This enabled the interviewer to hear the nuances of meaning which came through in the emphasis placed on certain words.

Remaining open during the interview process was important for the interviewer. This allowed her to hear which aspects of the interview topic which were important for the interviewee. She also needed at times to be to steer the conversation towards finding out what was relevant for the research topic.

The interviewer exercised a capacity for remembering and making connections. This enabled her to make links with statements made in earlier interviews. On example of this was when a participant in describing her understanding of spirituality, spoke of it as being like an experience of unfolding where she noted “there is no definite path in terms of your spirituality and relationship with God; you go on a journey and you don’t know where it will take you.” The researcher made a connection with this comment and referred back to it by repeating the participant’s words of “no definite path” and then asking “how does that make you feel?” Furthermore presenting a summary of the first two interviews at the beginning of the third

interview, allowed the researcher to make several links and connections with previous statements by the participants

The researcher displayed empathy at all times allowing her to gain an understanding of each interviewee and to attempt some initial interpretation of the interviewee's statements. This was needed so that the interviewer could clarify and expand the meaning of interviewee's disclosures without imposing a meaning on them.

Finally, each interview followed a clear and consistent structure. There was a statement of purpose at the beginning and a conclusion which provided scope for the interviewee to ask any further questions or make additional comments.

**Interview Format and Questions.** To gain in depth understanding of each participant's life context, the researcher arranged a series of interviews with each participant. These were designed and conducted in such a way as to allow each participant time and scope to reflect on the immediacy of his or her experiences and share these at whatever level each felt was appropriate.

The researcher's predominant concern was to focus on each participant. She prepared herself for each interview with an exercise in *Mindfulness*. This allowed the researcher to be as attentive as possible to the present moment to ensure she listened unconditionally to each participant. The researcher had no prior experience of conducting interviews of this personal nature. Hence she did not enter into the interviews with preconceived expectations. This provided an openness which minimised factors of personal bias. She understood herself to be part of the research in the way described by Larkin (2013).

A person is an embodied, meaning-making being, 'always-already' immersed in a linguistic, cultural and physical world; their experiences are interpreted in the context of ongoing personal and social relationships, of which the researcher forms a part (p.8).

The five participants were interviewed three times with at least six to nine months break in between interviews. The primary purpose of the questions was to assist participants in analysing "the activity of their own consciousness as it intentionally attends to and structures its perceptions of phenomena" (Groome, 1991 p. 74). In keeping with the inductive approach to the study the questions were open ended with a flexible structure which invited description, self-expression and richness of detail. They also allowed the researcher to probe more into some issues and gave scope to the participants to qualify and clarify their responses. Furthermore the emic aspect of the case study allowed for different interpretations and a variety of responses from which emerged new insights and examples

The researcher's aim of bringing to the fore the lived experience of the participants, was met by including a focus on the four life world existentials of body, time, space, and relations with others (Veletsianos & Miller, 2008). In this quest to discover the life-world of each participant, the questions were also framed in a way which enabled the participants' responses to be traced back to the original source of meaning (Mall, 1991). The phenomenological approach proposed separating "that which is experienced (the what, noema) and the manner in which it is experienced (the 'how' noesis) (Larkin, 2013). Examples of questions separating the 'what' and the 'how' and inclusive of body, time, space and relations with others are listed in table 3.9

The first four questions for Interview 1, related to spirituality being a natural human disposition which in its broadest sense connects with all of life. The song "*Everyday God*" was selected to stimulate the thinking of the participants in a broad way that was inclusive of a range of aspects of the human experience. These questions aimed to facilitate what King (2008) saw as the need for personal language in naming and discussing the spiritual. Hence the intent of the questions was to allow the participants to give voice to their personal lived reality in ways that were appropriate and true for each one.

The first question in Interview 2 was about the relationship between the imagination and spirituality (O'Leary, 2008). The art prints provided a stimulus for the imagination. The researcher would be able to observe how the participants used their imagination to unite the external stimulus of art work with their personal awakening.

Questions 2 and 3 in Interview 2 related to a sense of presence to self, others and things – also to the categories of *Mindfulness* and *Flow*. Question 4 in this same interview was about ultimate values -- the moral dimension of spirituality.

The first two questions for Interview 3 asked the participants to talk about what they thought were influences that might have shaped their personal spirituality (Palmer, 1998).

Question 3 of Interview 3 referred to expressions of spirituality (O'Murchu, 1997). The final question asked the participants to describe how their spirituality might have contributed to the integration of faith, life and culture especially in the context of the Catholic school. This question connected with the synthesising capacity of spirituality in general and Christian spirituality in particular Schneiders (1986).

The full list of the interview questions is located in Appendix (B).

**Table 3.4: Summary of Interview Questions**

Interview Questions	What is experienced (Noema) How it is experienced (Noesis)	Life World Existentials; Body, Time, Space, Relations with others
<p><b>Interview 1.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What were the words or phrases in the song “Everyday God” which you identified with; the ones which were true for you, and /or reflected you spirit?</li> <li>2. Do you have a name for the spirit?</li> <li>3. How do you talk about and discuss the spiritual?</li> <li>4. In addressing God what name do you use?</li> </ol>	<p><b>What</b> is the experience of Spirituality?</p> <p><b>How</b> is spirituality experienced?</p>	<p>Time and Space</p> <p>Relations with others</p>
<p><b>Interview 2.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Select the art prints with which you find a connection. Share the reasons for your choices.</li> <li>2. What do you believe are your personal gifts, your strong qualities?</li> <li>3. Do you ever notice something when your concentration is so intense, your attention so undivided and wrapped up in what you are doing, that you sometimes become unaware of things that you normally notice? Can you describe this?</li> <li>4. What in the end matters to you?</li> </ol>	<p><b>What</b> is the experience of spirituality?</p> <p><b>How</b> is spirituality experienced?</p>	<p>Time, space, body</p> <p>Space, body</p> <p>Space, body, Time</p>
<p><b>Interview 3.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What have been the influences that have shaped your spirituality?</li> <li>2. What nurtures your spirituality?</li> <li>3. How and where do you feel you can best express your spirituality?</li> <li>4. How does your spirituality contribute towards realising the task of the Catholic school to integrate faith, life and culture?</li> </ol>	<p><b>What</b> is the experience of the spiritual?</p> <p><b>What</b> is the experience of spirituality?</p> <p><b>How</b> is your spirituality expressed?</p>	<p>Time</p> <p>Relations with others</p> <p>Time, space Space,</p> <p>Relations with others</p>

While the interviews were guided by the research questions (chapter 1), the interviewer delivered these with the qualities cited previously by Kvale (1996) especially openness, flexibility and

sensitivity. This allowed for the articulation of the life experiences of each participant. In some instances the interviewer invited the participant to expand on certain answers to take the response to a deeper level and “to lead the conversation into new areas” (Patton, 2002, p. 282).

The progressive focus of the interviews was broadly aligned with the movements in Groome’s (1991) Shared Christian Praxis teaching method as discussed in chapter 2. The first two interviews paralleled the movement of conation wherein the participants were asked to reflect on and name realities from the perspective of their own unique life experiences. The participants were invited to speak from the reality of their everyday experiences. They were asked to give a name to how they experienced God and addressed God. The question “Where do you feel most at home?” enabled them to talk about places where they experienced a deep sense of security and belonging.

Questions in the third interview prompted the participants to reflect on influences which have shaped their spirituality. Such questions brought to the fore memories of family, influences of community, the role of Scripture and Liturgy and the impact of Church tradition. There was scope in these two major movements of Shared Christian Praxis to bring the life experiences articulated by each participant into dialogue with the Christian story and Vision. Several questions in the third interview guided participants to identify some expressions of their spirituality in the context of their work in the classroom. In addition they were asked to describe how their spirituality impacted on the learning environment, their relationship with the students, their pedagogy across all the key learning areas including Religious Education.

Each interview was conducted in a way which resembled Groome’s understanding of authentic communication when “the symbolic interaction of language is free of domination or manipulation” (Groome, 1991, p. 108). The first one was guided by questions which enabled each participant to name God and/or the spiritual in the totality of one’s life experiences. A recording of the song *Everyday God* by Bernadette Farrell (2000) was played at the beginning of this interview. Its purpose was to offer the participants a range of names which portrayed existential experiences of God. This strategy connected with the ordinariness of the participants’ lives and reflected the position of Blackledge & Hunt (1985) who state that everyday activity form the building blocks of society. Situating this claim in the context of education, O’Donoghue (2007) argues, “if we want to understand education we must begin by looking at everyday activity” (p.17).

**The second interview** aimed to gain insight into each participant's sense of self and connectedness to those outside of oneself. This understanding of self, was understood to be at the core of one's spirituality (Conti, 2011). However such self- awareness was often difficult to articulate, so each participant was given a selection of art prints from a range of art periods – classical to contemporary (Appendix B ). The art prints were arranged on a table and aimed to create a meditative space which held each participant in the present moment. This visual dimension, provided what Valters Painter (2011) identified as the capacity of this medium.

The arts afford us insights into life and access the movements of the spirit in our lives that are not available through cognitive ways of knowing. We can suspend our judgements and embrace intuitive and image-centred ways of knowing (p.4)

Used in a non-directive way the art prints enabled participants to respond freely. Responses to these prints were invited in terms of their positive, negative or neutral impact. Conti (2011) noted that the use of materials (artifacts) during interview sessions, assisted the researcher “in understanding parts of the participant's spiritual life, beliefs and consciousness (p.86).

Introducing the art prints into the second interview allowed the researcher to observe the participants engaging with phenomena that required interpretation. Gadamer (1975) proposed that art work while it has a fixed historical point in terms of its creation, “it is never simply past but is able to overcome temporal distance by virtue of its own meaningful presence” (p. 158).

At the commencement of **the third interview** each participant was given a summary of the content of the previous two interviews. The text of each these is in Appendix (F). This strategy served several purposes in the research process. It acted as a participant review wherein each person was given the opportunity to verify, validate or alter the wording of the emerging themes (van Manen, 1990). Furthermore it tested the strength and validity of the third criterion suggested by Tracey (1981) for interpreting ordinary human experience. He proposed that interpretation needs to be credible and true to life. The participants were given the opportunity to respond to this initial interpretation of the data from their first and second interviews and indicate if it represented the truth of their life experiences.

This way of beginning the third interview offered the participants an experience of reading their spoken words in an external, objective way. It brought about a dynamic process of interaction within and between the researcher, the participants and the data that informed decisions, actions and interpretations at each stage and served to make the study more collaborative.

Furthermore the summary text which was offered to each participant, at the beginning of interview 3 represented the researcher's initial attempt to reduce the data gained from the first and second interviews. In order to verify this reduction it was necessary to enter into "genuine conversation with the text, or life expression" (Hyde, 2005, p. 114) so as to get to the essence of its meaning. Collaborating with the participants in this way pointed to the inductive nature of the data analysis. The researcher's interaction with the participants in terms of their own responses in a transcribed format, gave them an opportunity not only to verify the data but also to shape the emerging themes.

**Purpose of Interview Stimulus Material.** Talking personally about spirituality and experiences of the spiritual is not usually part of the ordinary daily discourse. The researcher anticipated that initial conversations centring on spirituality, especially within the context of teaching could be difficult. Conti (2002) noted how several "holistic scholars believed that current society and educational processes discouraged education of the emotions and spirit. This contributed to difficulties expressing the 'inner life' (Moffett, 1993; Miller, 1999; Palmer, 1998). The selected music and art enabled the participants to talk about their inner experiences and reveal their values and beliefs.

Beginning the first two interviews with music and art respectively, offered each participant the possibility of engaging their spiritual senses. Gortner (2009) differentiates between the physical and spiritual senses but draws a parallel between their functions. Just as the physical senses of seeing, touching, tasting, feeling and smelling provide the gateway to the physical world, so the spiritual senses enable one to access the realm of the spiritual. The spiritual senses have the capacity to receive stimuli which originate in the non-corporal and the inner spaces of the person (Ahlborn & Arnold, 2009).

The wholeness of reality presents an interweaving of the physical and the spiritual. For the purposes of this study it was necessary to focus on the single phenomenon of spirituality by enabling physical stimuli to recede from the immediacy of experience. The following insight from Underhill (2002) illustrates this necessity.

For the most part, of course, the presence of the great spiritual universe surrounding us is no more noticed by us than the pressure of air on our bodies, or the action of light. Our field of attention is not wide enough for that; our spiritual senses are not sufficiently alert. Most people work so hard at developing their correspondence with the visible world that their power of correspondence with the invisible is left in a rudimentary state (p. 42).

The use of music and art in the interviews offered the possibility for the spiritual senses to come to the forefront of experiences.

The stimulus material also served to enable the participants to reflect on the spiritual and spirituality in a new and fresh way. Such an approach had the capacity to lead to responses that were creative and richly descriptive. Hyde (2005) in reference to van Manen, maintained that texts which describe a certain phenomenon “need to contain thickened language” (p.113). As a consequence,

if the description is phenomenologically powerful, then it acquires a certain transparency, so to speak; it permits us to ‘see’ the deeper significance, or meaning structures, of the lived experience it describes (van Manen, 1990, p.122).

The researcher was also aware that the languages of both religion and the spiritual were often restricted to expressions and definitions ascribed to it through the official discourse of the institutional Church. Teachers working in Catholic schools were generally aware of this language which was sometimes referred to as ‘church speak.’

In Husserl’s quest for ‘eidetic’ knowledge or the essence of things, he advised the bracketing out or suspending of all suppositions which distract from getting to essential meanings. The researcher was aware that this would be difficult to do in a Catholic school with prescribed religious frameworks grounded in theological concepts and defined by specialised language. The stimulus material of the song *Everyday God* and the selection of art prints, provided a broader base for conversation. It assisted in bracketing out theological terms for God like the ‘Omnipotent One’, ‘Almighty One’ or ‘Holy One.’ Such terms can distract from the activities of one’s pure consciousness and from the innermost self (Groome, 1991). The stimulus material assisted and encouraged participants to respond during the first and second interviews with personal language in order to describe more authentically their experiences of the spiritual and spirituality

Introducing the art prints at the beginning of the second interview prompted the participants to recall certain experiences. These included remembering experiences of being in the early morning mist, having self-doubt, dining with friends, recalling the inner emergence of a particular student, gazing at the night sky and marvelling at the moon. The researcher was limited in not being able to directly share in the recalled experience. However the remembering and recounting by each participant allowed the researcher to get close to the experiences. This

maintained her focus on the interpretation of the meaning of these events and relationships in the lives of the participants.

In the use of the auditory and visual stimulus material at the beginning of interviews 1 and 2 it was not necessary for the participants to be technically competent in either the musical or artistic domains. This material was used as stated above, for the purpose of awakening the spiritual senses and offered an alternative to thinking about and expressing spirituality through verbal language. Furthermore using the stimulus material in the interview situation mirrored an aspect of contemporary culture in which all the participants are immersed.

**Document Study in the Literature Review.** The literature review was the first documentary, philosophical analysis part of the research study. It sought to elaborate a comprehensive perspective on spirituality. And this in turn informed the second empirical part of the study. According to Merriam (1998), the study of relevant documents is a non-intrusive, non-interactive method of research.

The perspective on spirituality in the literature review would also be useful in assessing the degree of congruency between the stated guiding principles for spirituality in Catholic school teachers and the reported views of the participants. It was also important to see how participants may have interpreted the normative Catholic spirituality goals and the extent which they thought they had appropriated them and the extent to which they might have affected their professional practice (Interview 3).

### **3.8 Transcription and analysis of interview data**

This analytical phase aimed to bring “order, structure and interpretation to the mass of collected data” (Marshall & Rossman, 1990, p. 150). The material from fifteen hours of interviewing was transcribed into text. Each interview on average amounted to approximately 2,000 words in length. A first reading of each transcript enabled “a more holistic and intuitive grasp of the data” (Simons, 2009, p.118). It provided a sense of the whole interview, the sequence and the emphasis each participant gave to the range of issues which emerged from the questions. Researcher’s notes were added to any statement which appeared to have significance for the study. This was followed by a systematic approach to studying the data which included, “coding, categorizing, concept mapping and theme generation” (Simons, 2009, p. 117).

In studying the raw data the researcher attempted to raise it to a conceptual level through the process of coding. The three levels of coding, open, axial and selective used to categorise the

data, originated from the Grounded theory approach to research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This allowed for a study of the data which enabled the researcher to interact with the interview material. Probing and mining the data in this way allowed knowledge to be built inductively and ensured the integrity of the emic approach to the study.

Open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), was used to identify concepts and their relationships to other concepts. This first step in the data analysis involved extracting words, phrases, metaphors and sentences from the data and placing them in broad categories. The NVivo computer software programme was used to assist with this process. The use of this particular tool in open coding had the capacity to use the actual words of the participants in naming the codes. This helped to ensure that the naturalistic, inductive and emic aspects of the study were maintained.

The open coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), was used to identify concepts and their relationship to other concepts. This process was followed by a grouping of open code concepts, in a process of reduction and ‘distillation’, to give groups of concepts called axial codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In turn, the axial codes were further grouped into ‘selective codes’

The first step in the development of open codes involved extracting words, phrases, metaphors and sentences from the data and placing them into broad categories. These were then examined for connections. Patterns began to emerge which assisted in giving explanation and understanding to the data (Simons, 2009). The development of these patterns through linking together discrete pieces of language, involved the researcher in the process of interpretation whereby the symbols of language gave rise to thought (Crotty, 1998). Consistent with the Grounded Theory approach, the axial codes were formed around a basic frame of generic relationships. These were; experiences, processes, language, qualities, places and values.

In order to stimulate the inductive process and to expand on some of the standard ways of thinking about spirituality, the researcher gained different insights by examining the data from the perspectives of the participants. Strauss & Corbin (1998) suggested that “when we probe and develop a concept it becomes not just a label for a piece of data but a whole new set of ideas about a phenomenon” (p.10).

The following table presents some examples of the method of analysis and interpretation showing how the researcher thought about the possible meanings related to the participants’ statements.

**Table 3.5: Examples of the way the researcher interacted with the data in exploring possible meanings**

Participants' Statements	Researcher's Reflections on the possible meanings of the statements
<p>Edward Commenting Leunig's Cartoon; Interview 2            "It conveys the idea that when you have self-doubt there is a constant presence of God you can draw on. It is the space within that is like an inner fire. You can retreat back to that inner space to be revived, but it needs to connect. It is like being on the edge of the ocean".</p>	<p>How often does Edward have self- doubt?            Why did he use two different metaphors in such a short space of time?            Is there a relationship or are there similarities between the two metaphors of fire and ocean?            What is 'it' referring to in "it needs to connect?"</p>
<p>Rebecca commenting on the print of Van Gogh's Starry Night: Interview 2            "I could actually see myself there. Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that it is night time. I do a lot of my thinking at night time or early morning and I will often come to new insights or conclusions about things.....the painting shows me there is something much larger at work. I can't describe it...something greater than myself where I live. Larger than humanity. I guess something that is infinite, something that can't be measured."</p>	<p>What would it be like for Rebecca to be immersed in the scene of the Starry Night?            How did the painting convey that there is something larger than humanity, something that can't be measured?            What is Rebecca's understanding of measuring time?</p>

**Ongoing use of the Constant Comparative Method in analysing the data.**

The Constant Comparative Analysis method was used to interpret the data. This helped to maintain a connection between the stages of interviewing. It involved processes that were both iterative and inductive (Fram, 2013). Sections of the data were constantly compared with other parts of the data leading to the identification of core categories and allowing them to emerge. The iterative nature of this method was consistent with the researcher's re-visiting of the data. Through the use of matrixes the researcher was able to group participant responses to interview questions and note their different ideas about spirituality.

The method ensured that the researcher remained attentive to the way in which spirituality appeared. Husserl (1887) proposed a special role for intuition in the interactive relationship between consciousness and the phenomena, in the refinement of the categories as patterns and themes emerged. The stimulus material for interview 3 was developed following an analysis of

the coded data from interviews 1 and 2. The insights gained from that process informed the next iteration of the data collection in interview 3.

The following table illustrates the use of the constant comparative method, in analysis of the data, prior to the 3<sup>rd</sup> interviews. It illustrates the emerging themes and records a sample of the researcher's notes which helped guide the analysis by linking it to the material in the Literature Review (chapter 2).

**Table 3.6: Applied examples of the Constant Comparative method**

Participant's Voice	Researcher's Reflections and Notes	Concept from Literature Review
<p>“I think that you giving me the opportunity just to sit here and listen makes me realise that we don't take time to listen..... We don't take the time to appreciate the fact that God or some sense of the spiritual is present all the time and I don't think we take time to appreciate that”</p>	<p>Expressed appreciation for this interview time; saw it as a positive opportunity to reflect and listen.</p>	<p>Integrative</p>
<p>“I will be 27 in two months....as I am growing up and developing as a teacher as well, it is not about me acquiring a possession or achieving something that is socially deemed great...it is more about those personal connections, so for me in my personal life, it is about making real connections to family or something like that.... I feel most at home when I make connections with someone”</p>	<p>Primary value is that of being in relationship with others, described as making connections.  Home in the sense of relating. An experience of synergy around home; being centred and experiencing connectedness.</p>	<p>Relational  Integrative Relational</p>
<p>Commenting on the cartoon of Michael Leunig. “the boy in my class, he has just got to let it out...like the little figure wanting to jump out. Each and every student has something”.</p>	<p>Frequent references to students or situations within her class. Spirituality is expressed in relationship with students.</p>	<p>Relational</p>
<p>“Even when you are in the classroom you can tell it is not about what you said...there is a deeper form of understanding that happens in a response...as a teacher you were taken aback by that...there is a sensitivity that you have, an important part of spirituality”</p>	<p>Experience of something bigger than self in the context of teaching. When it is recognised and there is an experience of surprise maybe encountering mystery.</p>	<p>Transcendent</p>

### 3.9 Data Interpretation

“In the world of social science there is only interpretation. Nothing speaks for itself” (Denzin, 1994, p. 50). Interpretation as defined by Simmons (2009), means “the understanding and insight

derived from a more holistic, intuitive grasp of the data and the insights they reveal” (p. 117). Interpretation attached meaning to the data and therefore aimed to make sense of the data which emerged from the process of analysis. Meaning making from the data resulted from structure and interpretation. Hermeneutics, the critical theory of interpretation, assumed a link between the participants as the authors of the texts and the researcher as the interpreter of their words (Crotty, 1998). It was this connection which informed the interpretive process.

### **3.9.1 The Interpretive process; Hermeneutic phenomenology.**

For Husserl and the phenomenologists truth did not have to be expressed in a proposition and then comparisons made with reality. Instead truth constituted an insight or an intuition which derived from Husserl’s concept of ‘gazing essences’ (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). Heidegger included the current context and the historical process as informing the interpretation of experience.

While it was necessary to reduce the data in order to get to the essence of its meaning, this data reduction needed to be done “by entering into genuine conversation with the text, or life expression” (Hyde, 2005, p. 114). Developing Husserl’s phenomenological approach, Merleau-Ponty, (1945/1996), helped with discerning the importance of the researcher’s capacity for observation, reflection and judgement. Hyde (2005) stated that,

it is the value of such observation, reflection and judgement, lying beyond the employment of any one particular method that is brought to the fore in hermeneutic phenomenology (p.115).

### **3.9.2 Empathy and the hermeneutic circle**

In the interpretative process for this study, the life worlds of the participants blended with the life world of the researcher. Alvesson & Skoldberg (2009) referred to this activity as a “fusion of horizons” (p.120). They claimed that “every world is a ‘horizon’ of meanings” (p.120) and that these horizons were flexible as they change from time to time. According to their view the way to move into the world of the other was through empathy. However in this movement to the world of the other, one is not free of the context and history of one’s own world. As a response to this impasse, Heidegger proposed the use of the hermeneutic circle wherein there is constant alternation between merging into the world of the other and linking back into one’s own reference system.

In adopting the interpretive mode of the “hermeneutic circle” in the interpretation of the data, the researcher developed the prior understanding which emerged from an elementary state. As a

result interpretation was articulated as “a development of what is already understood, with a more developed understanding returning to illuminate and enlarge one’s starting point”. (Crotty, 1998. p. 92).

### **3.9.3 Intersubjectivity and symbolic interactionism**

Intersubjectivity was central to the Symbolic Interactionist approach to generating meaning derived through social interaction. It led to the forming of perspectives. These points of view allowed the individual to claim a particular position from which he or she viewed reality (O’Donoghue, 2007). Through the interview process the researcher identified the perspectives that participants had on spirituality (Charon, 2001), which tended to filter their perceptions and interpretations of life.

An interpretation process occurred in two ways in relation to the use of interview stimulus material. The participant was engaged with interpreting the selected art print to gain meaning, while the researcher was endeavouring to interpret meaning from what each participant shared. This involved a “double hermeneutic” which in the quest for shared meaning gave rise to the process of intersubjectivity.

Interpretation of the data focussed on the following qualities of spirituality; intentionality, self – awareness and embodiment . In addition to this, special attention was given to language in accord with the ideas of Ricouer (1981) and Derrida (1971) who proposed that metaphor and symbol acted as the primary interpreters of reality. Text, speech, art and actions were understood by Dilthey (1977) to be the universal spiritual forms which shaped the particular events encountered through life experiences (Crotty, 1998). Speech and art in the forms of music and paintings, were the modes of expression during the interviews.

The data gathered from the disclosures of the participants during the interview processes, were reduced by the researcher’s observation, reflection and judgement. An important referential point in this process was the framework of characteristics of spirituality, developed from the synthesis of features of spirituality from the literature review in chapter 2

### **3.10 Trustworthiness of the research findings**

Qualitative research is based on the assumption that reality is “constructed, multi-dimensional and ever changing” (Merriam, 2002, p. 54). Consequently this particular way of viewing reality, requires a need for an understanding of the concepts of validity and reliability distinct from that of quantitative research (Merriam, 2002). Qualitative researchers cannot address the concepts of

validity and reliability in the same way as is done by quantitative researchers. Research method scholars claimed that it is possible for qualitative researchers to adopt appropriate techniques which deal with the issues of validity and reliability (Shenton, 2004). Current qualitative researchers referred to these techniques in terms such as credibility, dependability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Four criteria were proposed by Guba (1989) which he asserted should be considered by qualitative researchers in determining the trustworthiness of a study. He proposed the term credibility in preference to internal validity, the term transferability in preference to external validity, the term dependability in preference to reliability, and the term confirmability in preference to objectivity. These constructs are detailed in the following sections with an indication of how each was applied in the study.

### **3.10.1 Credibility.**

Validity with its preferred term of credibility in a qualitative study, was understood by Creswell & Miller (2000), as “how accurately the account represents participants’ realities of the social phenomena and is credible to them” (p.125). Merriam (2002) explored the issue of credibility through the degree of congruency between the findings and the actual reality. A high degree of congruency generates trust.

Several strategies centred on building trust, were used in the study to ensure credibility. The first concerned the prolonged length of time in which the data was gathered. The researcher was involved with the participants for a period of eighteen months. During this time good rapport was established that apparently enabled each participant to share information with ease. Being in the field for this long period of time allowed the information to be confirmed and solidified as the researcher compared interview data with observational data.

In addition this longer period of time gave the researcher the opportunity to transcribe the interview data and listen several times to the audio recording of the data. This ensured that the researcher kept the participants in the forefront of her mind so she could gain better understanding of each one’s particular context and culture.

At the start of the third interview each participant was given a summary of his or her interview data with the researcher’s interpretations. Time was then given for participants to read his or her summary before proceeding with the third interview. This gave each one the opportunity to check and verify if what the researcher had written was in accord with what was said in the previous two interviews. Focussing the lens on each participant in this way allowed the researcher to systematically check the data and its interpretation in the early stages of the narratives. Lincoln &

Guba, (1985) refer to this as member checking and claim it is “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility in a study” (p.314).

Finally when the participants’ narrative were written by the researcher each one was invited to write a response which verified the accuracy of what the researcher had composed. These responses are recorded at the end of each narrative at the conclusion of chapter 5

### **3.10.2 Transferability.**

Within a constructionist paradigm, transferability depends on context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and is possible if the persons, the situations and the contexts are described in enough detail. Although such descriptions do not specify the external validity of an enquiry, they do enable others interested in replicating the research, to reach conclusions about whether such a transfer might be considered a possibility.

The major technique for transferability used in this study was thick rich description. The variety of approaches during the interviews through music, art and interview summary material, provided the opportunity to gather rich data. This assembled material allowed the researcher to construct narratives in a way that aimed to enable the reader to identify with the situation portrayed. Immersed in the scenes and situations of the narratives, especially those recounting classroom experiences, readers particularly teachers, could see how closely their experiences identified with each case and what implications could be drawn from them and applied in their own teaching contexts.

### **3.10.3 Dependability.**

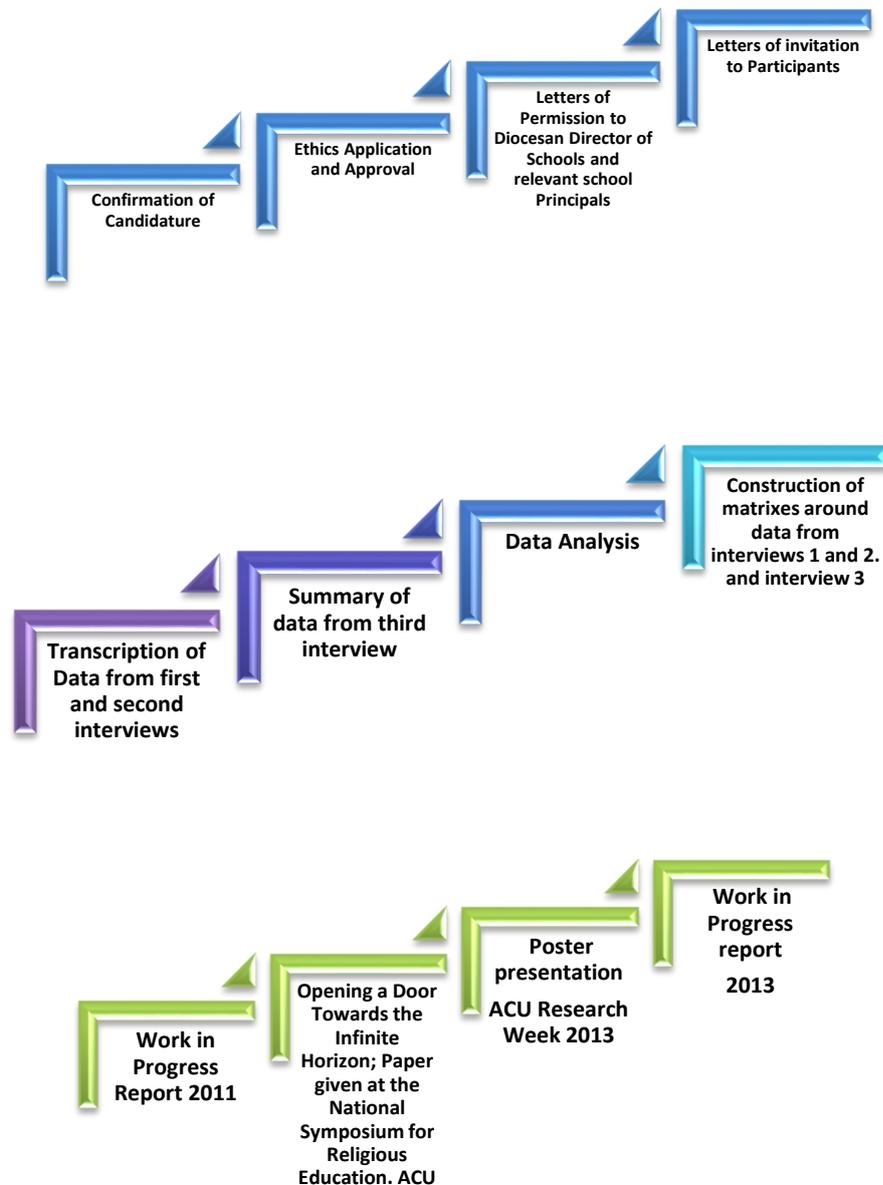
Qualitative researchers frequently viewed reliability as a fit between what they record as data and what actually occurred in the setting under study. Dependability was addressed in this study through ensuring that all phases of the research were accurately described and documented. Recording each of the interviews assisted in ensuring dependability. These recordings formed the text for reflection, analysis and interpretation. Throughout the lengthy process of transcription the recordings were listened to a number of times. The researcher paid special attention to the participants’ reflective pauses and to the way some probed for certain words. In addition attentive listening enabled the detection of the expressive emphasis especially when teachers spoke of their desires for their students. This ensured that the conversation between the text and the interpreter was genuine and that the understandings of each were weighed and tested through conversation.

### 3.10.4 Confirmability.

This was addressed through the assistance of the supervisors who guided the researcher throughout the study. Their probing questions ensured that the researcher remained faithful to interpretation from the evidence of the data within the framework of the hermeneutical phenomenological tradition. Close and constant supervision helped to ensure that findings from the research resulted from the experiences and insights of the participants.

In addition there were wider networks involved in the ongoing critique of the study. The researcher presented at two *Work in Progress Seminars* as required by the Higher Educational Research Body of the ACU. Purposeful feedback was received especially around aspects of the study's methodology. The researcher also presented a paper at the *National Symposium for Religious Education, ACU*. The content of this presentation drew largely on the material in Chapter 2 of the thesis. Informal responses were given by the participating group. In addition two lecturers from the ACU critically reviewed the paper and gave constructive feedback.

The "audit trail" was critical in the confirmability process (Shenton, 2004). This was constructed with the relevant documents through the course of the research. The following figure charts the path of the research indicating the significant phases and the acquisition of official documentation at each stage of the research process. The first tier lists the steps prior to the commencement of engagement with the participants. The second tier details the steps in the data gathering analysis and interpretative processes. The third tier records the Work in Progress presentations the Conference paper and the Poster presentation given during the course of the study



**Figure 3.2: Chart of the audit trail**

### 3.10.5 Trustworthy Reporting of the research data.

While the five school sites were already familiar to the researcher she intentionally visited each one three times during the eighteen month period she was engaged with this study. On each visit the resident participant shared with her the general layout of the school site. In some instances the researcher was given an update on the developments of the school site in terms of new

buildings or transformation of older more historic parts of the educational complex. This gave the researcher insight into the degree of connectedness each participant experienced in his or her school. All participants engaged in conversation about the students and their educational opportunities in each particular setting. As a result the researcher was able to make observations on each school site, which helped with the understanding and uniqueness of each school context.

Throughout this process of engagement with the participants in their school setting, the researcher endeavoured to familiarise herself with the curriculum documents especially that of the Religious Education Curriculum, *Sharing Our Story*. This was seen as an important background document to the study as it offered insight into the way religion and spirituality was framed within the school context.

### **3.10.6 The place and purpose of participants' narratives.**

The final presentation of the data was in the form of a narrative for each participant. The purpose of this was to draw together all the pieces of the data into the holistic format of a story constructed around several themes. This was done because the narrative has a unique capacity to hold together in tension the whole and the parts. Sandelowski (1991) referred to narrative as “a threshold activity” (p.162). The researcher perceived that for the teachers participating in the study they appeared to be at times taken to the edge of their self-understanding. For the researcher in listening to the participants, interpreting their responses and co-constructing meaning, the study was also an experience of being at a liminal place. The descriptive narratives provided the possibility of responding to this experience of the ‘in between space’ for both participants and researcher by linking elements of past, present and future at a particular moment in time (Sandelowski, 1991). The cohesion and continuity contained in the narrative was identified by Rossiter (2012) as offering an evolving sense of meaning. This was enabled through the capacity of the narrative to provide a greater transparency of the data so that “the deeper significance, or meaning structures, of the lived experience could be seen” (Van Manen, 1990, p.122).

Presenting findings in the narrative mode allowed the researcher to write texts that remained close to the actual experiences of the participants. Such experiences indicated how the teachers understood their spirituality, how they expressed it and what links they saw between their personal spirituality and professional practice. It also enabled the researcher to identify insights from the literature which resonated with the participant data. Weaving these together in the narrative format strengthened the significance of the data. The narratives were written within the

structure of five themes which developed from the axial codes of the data analysis and the literature.

Following the writing of the narratives each participant was given a copy of his or her text. Each one was asked to comment on the validity of the narrative from their point of view. This served to verify the researcher's interpretation of the data around which the narratives were constructed. These participant responses are presented in chapter 5 at the end of each narrative.

### **3.10.7 Ethical considerations.**

Following the confirmation of Candidature for this study an application for ethics approval was submitted to the *Human Research Ethics Committee* (HREC) of the Australian Catholic University. This was granted and is documented in Appendix J. All research was carried out within the research guidelines of the Australian Catholic University. The participants prior to giving their consent, read the required material regarding their involvement in the study. Each participant was advised of the confidential nature of the study and the responsibilities of the researcher in this regard. The anonymity of each participant and his or her school was maintained at all times through the use of pseudonyms and alphabetical labelling. During each interview the researcher was aware of being in each participant's personal space (Stake, 1995) and was therefore respectful of personal disclosure at all times.

### **3.10.8 Role of the Researcher.**

A key criterion for confirmability is the extent to which the researcher discloses her own predispositions and bias (Miles & Huberman, (1994). No researcher commences with a blank mind and no analysis of data is neutral (Charmaz, 2005). Interpretive researchers must "systematically reflect on who he or she is in the inquiry and is sensitive to his or her personal biography and how it shapes the study". (Creswell, 2009, p.182). The researcher realised that she needed to divest herself from patterns of perceiving or desired outcomes, in order to promote optimum openness to the persons and events in the study.

The analysis of the participant data was essentially a hermeneutic task. It provided "a rich field for potential interpretive work both in terms of personal and social meanings". (Josselson, 2004, p. 8). Interpreting the intended meanings of the texts involved the researcher in a relational way with the participants including both the desire to understand and the impetus to connect and respond (Josselson, 2004). Furthermore the texts were not limited to directly expressed, explicit meanings but also considered implicit meanings. Reflexivity in research (Creswell & Miller, 2000), promoted openness and strengthened the confirmability of the study. It required the

researcher to have “a keen understanding of what aspects of the self are the most important filters through which one perceives the world and, more particularly, the topic being studied” (Behar, 1996, p.13).

The researcher in this qualitative study was the primary instrument of the research and brought to the task a long history in Catholic Education. She is well known in the Diocese where the study took place and has worked across many Diocesan schools in the areas of Leadership, Religious Education, Spiritual Formation and Faith Development. Because of this at the commencement of each interview, the researcher assured each participant that there were no right or wrong answers to the interview questions. She emphasised that the purpose of the questions was to awaken the truth of the experience which each participant already held within. This approach resonated with the position of Husserl (1887), who claimed that knowledge, meaning and truth are grounded in the life world of one’s experience (Groome, 1991).

While working with teachers in a range of situations over a span of thirty years, the researcher has witnessed an intuitive grasp of the spiritual and its expression held by many teachers. However because their expressions did not always align with traditional forms of spiritual expression teachers did not readily recognise the integrity of their personal spirituality.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter has been to explain the elements of the research design and demonstrate how each component contributed to the study. The following chapter reports on the data collection

# Chapter Four - Reporting the Research Data Collection

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## 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to report the data gathered during 15 interviews with 5 teachers in Catholic schools concerning their views on personal spirituality. The following table lists the sections in the data reporting, specifies their purpose and indicates their location in the chapter.

**Table 4.1: Summary of the sections in this chapter in the reporting of the data**

Aspects of the data presented in the chapter	Contributions to the purpose of the chapter and the study.	Location within the chapter
Description of the participants	Set the data in its historical and social context	4.2
Reporting of the data through the coding processes Interviews 1 &2	Identification of the key ideas and ‘groups’ of ideas in participants’ statements about personal spirituality.	4.3
Data related to the language used for describing spirituality Interviews 1 &2	Indicated the language participants used to talk about spirituality including the problematic around language and spirituality	4.4
Data about experiences and understandings of spirituality Interviews 1 &2	Specified some lived experiences of spirituality	4.5
Data on views about spirituality and professional practice. Interview 3	Reported participants’ data on questions about the relationship between spirituality and professional practice	4.6

## 4.2 Description of the participants

The following short contextual profiles give a description of the participants. This data was presented by the participants as self-descriptions. The biographical summaries provide background information and present the personal and social context in terms of family and the school workplace. New names have been given to the participants to preserve the anonymity.

### 4.2.1 Hilton

Hilton considered himself to be a competent teacher whose teaching experience spans 29 years. He has been teaching in his present school for 15 years and currently has a leadership role as the

Religious Education Coordinator. It is a large co-educational secondary school in a semi-rural setting, with an enrolment of just over 1,000 students.

In regard to characteristic personal qualities, Hilton identified his capacity to be a good listener. He said he was aware of his own inadequacies and this had a positive impact on others through empathy and compassion. Hilton felt that he perceived connections readily which afforded him a cohesive view of the world and of life.

He noted that a shaping influence in his life in general and his sense of the spiritual in particular, was the fact that he was “very blessed with a Catholic mother and a Protestant father.” Hilton felt “there was always a different openness to seeing the faith”. He reported that it was not until 6<sup>th</sup> Form that he experienced something meaningful and engaging in his education in faith. A Religious teaching brother introduced the class to the Scriptures as a serious form of study. An enjoyment in studying the Scriptures has been with Hilton ever since.

Hilton said that the foundation of his pedagogical approach with his students came from what he desires for them. He noted that the desire was been heightened by his current experience of an institutional Church which appears to be placing an emphasis on the separation of faith, life and culture. Hilton said “I deeply want that life in the grass roots; working with kids I want those kids to see the life places where the spirit is restricted. They see it in social justice activities”.

#### **4.2.2 Louise**

Louise regarded herself as an energetic and highly skilled teacher with 8 years teaching experience. During the past 4 years she had been teaching in a medium size Primary school with an enrolment of 411 students. Louise’s teaching experience so far has been concentrated on the upper primary grades.

According to Louise the strongest and most formative influence in her life, her faith and her spirituality has been her family. She believed that from her maternal grandparents in particular she inherited prayer traditions and values. Louise remembered how as a young person, “she would sit on Nan’s bed and say the Rosary. She would say a decade of the Rosary every afternoon”. She felt that in her family the public practice of the faith was also strong. “Nan would be the one who would ask you to come to extra masses. I learnt a lot in the modelling.”

Louise thought that these experiences gave her a faith which enabled her to hold fast to traditional values in a time of major social change. She was able to say of herself, “I am bit old school thinking about God”.

### **4.2.3 Rebecca**

Rebecca is a young teacher at a large co-educational secondary school with an enrolment of 1042 students. She is in the early stages of her teaching career with seven years teaching experience. Reflecting on her career so far Rebecca said, “as I am growing up and developing as a teacher, it is not about me acquiring a possession or achieving something that is socially deemed great. It is more about those personal connections”. These connections were made primarily with the students in her classes across Yrs. 7-12.

Describing herself as quiet and reflective, Rebecca throughout each of the interviews, spontaneously expressed appreciation for the opportunity as a time to reflect and listen:

Being able to have these discussion with you has given me a greater awareness of who I am not only as a person but as a teacher and in some way you have given me a form of space in which to do it and a positive space, a comfortable space, which we don't get as teachers.

### **4.2.4 Edward**

Edward has been teaching for 18 years and has taught all grades from K-6 with the exception of year 1. He is presently Religious Education Co-ordinator in a medium size Primary school with an enrolment of 450 students located in a recently developed suburban residential area.

Edward considered the Catholic faith was intrinsic to his identity. He said, “I have always been raised a Catholic. It is an innate part of who I am”. However he had a sense that those who were not Catholic believed that Catholics think their way was the way. Edward questioned why this has to be as he did not regard the Catholic faith being an end in itself. He believed that “it is through this, that we meet something else.” Edward defined spirituality as “about being properly human.” and proposed that “when you talk about the spiritual I think it is our connection with God.”

### **4.2.5 Maryanne**

Maryanne teaches in a large Primary school established in 2001 in a newly developed suburban residential area. She has been teaching for 7 years and came to teaching as a second career. She felt that this has afforded her a breadth of life experience which is not present in most early career teachers. All Maryanne's teaching experience so far has been with the younger years; K, 1 and 2. She is regarded as a very competent teacher who displays a particular rapport with younger children.

Maryanne said that she was born and raised in the Catholic faith in her family. She noted: “not only did we attend Mass but we lived our Catholic values”. With three older siblings, two brothers and a sister, Maryanne remembered that they were kept very close, taught to do the right thing and attended Catholic schools. She then met her husband John who was also raised in what she regarded as a good Catholic family.

She said they have continued living the Catholic faith throughout their married life and raised their three boys in the Catholic tradition. Despite this experience of a strong Catholic culture throughout her life, Maryanne said that she was aware of and endorsed different expressions of faith and spirituality. She said, “What I value is my going to Church. It is a way of showing respect and love for God but not everyone has to do that”.

### **4.3 Reporting the data from interviews 1, 2 and 3 through open and axial coding**

This and the following sections report data that answer the main research question in the study:

How do teachers in Catholic schools understand and articulate their personal spirituality?

As explained in chapter 3, strategies somewhat similar to Grounded Theory were used to generate open codes from the data. This range of codes was then grouped and ‘reduced’ to axial codes and finally to a greater level of generalisation in selective codes. A detailed record of the data from the transcripts of the Interviews is located in appendices C,D,E . The content of the reported data is in the analytical codes reported in this section.

#### **4.3.1 Open coding**

This initial process identified short statements or phrases from the words of the participants . The transcripts of each interview were entered into the Nvivo programme as primary source material. The researcher then analysed each transcribed interview by extracting key words or phrases from the text. Forming the open codes in this way allowed the naming of the codes to remain close to the actual words used by the participants in their responses to the interview questions. A range of open codes resulted from this initial analysis which indicated what the participants thought about their spirituality, how they expressed it (Interview 1 &2) and the links they made between their personal spirituality and their teaching (Interview 3).

The following table takes three small sections of the interview data from each of the three interviews and indicates the particular open codes which were formed from each sample. .

**Table 4.2: Three Examples of Forming Open Codes from Sections of the Interview Data**

Interview Data	Open codes developed from the interview data
<p><b>Context; Interview 1; Question 1</b>  <b>Response to the song ‘Everyday God’ What resonated with you or what did you connect with as you listened to the song?</b></p> <p>“Um I think that you giving me the opportunity just to sit here and listen is.....I guess a situation that we don’t often take. We don’t take time to listen...we don’t take the time to appreciate the fact that God or some sense of spirituality is present all the time and I don’t think we appreciate that....I guess it depends on a variety of factors...the willingness of the individual to make the time to listen...to listen to that inner sense of self”                      (Rebecca)</p>	<p><b>Listen</b>  <b>Appreciate</b>  <b>Present</b>  <b>Inner sense of self</b></p>
<p><b>Context; Interview2. Question 10. Do you think spirituality can ever be annihilated in the human person? Why?</b></p> <p>“Spirituality is so fundamental to our humanness. It gets expressed often in all sorts of ways. It gets partially satisfied by materialism but the source of that is a yearning for much more than the material and therefore it must be from the spiritual”                      (Hilton)</p>	<p><b>Satisfaction</b>  <b>Quest/ yearning</b>  <b>Striving for something more</b>  <b>Expressed in all sorts of ways</b></p>
<p><b>Context; Interview 3 Question 1</b>  <b>In thinking about your spirituality and reflecting on it what do you think have been the influences which have shaped it?</b></p> <p>“I think that the children I have taught....because you see so many different people in the children and um....I am beginning to see the people they are within and um....just to look through the Scriptures and see Jesus’ focus on people and people being the most important...that has really helped my spirituality. It really kind of helps me centre myself when it comes down to just managing a classroom...um my family give me a perception of life and what is really important”                      (Edward)</p>	<p><b>Seeing within</b>  <b>Teaching children</b>  <b>Scriptures</b>  <b>The focus of Jesus</b>  <b>Personal centring</b>  <b>Family</b></p>

As a result of this initial analysis of the data, 70 open codes were developed and named from the actual words of the participants. The following table lists the codes and indicates the frequency of their occurrence for each participant. This showed the most frequently occurring codes which guided the researcher in forming the selective code inclusive of the data categories. It also helped the researcher interrogate the data and make cross-subject comparisons.

**Table 4.3: List of open codes**

Open Codes		Frequency in each of the Participants					
		Hilton	Louise	Rebecca	Edward	Maryanne	Total
1	Acceptance	1		1			2
2	Appreciation			3			3
3	Awareness			2		1	3
4	Belonging/family		5			4	9
5	Belonging/presence					1	1
6	Blessing	1					1
7	Care and nurture				2	5	7
8	Challenge			1	1		2
9	Church			1		6	7
10	Coherence				1		1
11	Compassion/ sensitivity	1					1
12	Confidence			1		1	2
13	Connectedness	1	2	4	5		12
14	Connectedness and family		2	1	2	1	6
15	Connectedness and teaching	3	2	4	1	2	12
16	Connectedness beyond self in community		2	3			5
17	Conversation	1	1	1		2	5
18	Creating family		1			1	2
19	Desire	1		1			2
20	Diversity of expression	1					1
21	Embodied	1	2	1		2	6
22	Empathy and compassion	2		2	3	1	8
23	Family		4			1	5
24	Family and integration		1				1
25	Family and Literature		1				1
26	Feelings		1		1		
27	Flexibility and Fluidity			1			1
28	Honest			1			1

Open Codes		Frequency in each of the Participants					
		Hilton	Louise	Rebecca	Edward	Maryanne	Total
29	Images of God	7		3		3	13
30	Images of the spirit	1				2	3
31	Inner sense of self		1	1			2
32	Inner voice			2			2
33	Jesus	3	1	1		2	7
34	Journey		1	2			3
35	Language	1			1		
36	Light	1	2			1	4
37	Literature	3		2			5
38	Love	1					1
39	Mary, the mother of God			3	1	4	8
40	Meditation	1					1
41	Mindfulness	1					1
42	Music			1			1
43	Mystery	1					1
44	Names for God associated with images of God	4	4	4	3	2	17
45	Openness to the new			1			1
46	Patience			1			1
47	Peace and calm		5	1	2		8
48	Positive space			1		1	2
49	Pregnancy and birth associated with awe and wonder	1				3	
50	Presence	5		3	2	3	13
51	Quest / yearning/ striving for something more	1		2	1		4
52	Real and natural	1	1	1			3
53	Reflection			2	2		4
54	Rejection		4				4
55	Relationships	2	1			2	5
56	Respect	2		2	2	3	9
57	Scripture and spirituality	1					1
58	Sensitivity			1			1
59	Something more		1	8		1	10
60	Spirituality beyond death					1	1
61	Spirituality and conversation	1	1				2
62	Spirituality and nature	3		2	2	3	10
63	Spirituality embodied	1			1	2	4
64	Thanksgiving and gratitude	1				1	2

Open Codes		Frequency in each of the Participants					
		Hilton	Louise	Rebecca	Edward	Maryanne	Total
65	Transcendence	2	1		1		4
66	Trust		2				2
67	Truth	2					2
68	Truth/value of being real		1				1
69	Wholehearted and genuine			1			1
70	Wonder and awe			1			1

### 4.3.2 Axial Coding.

The next stage in the process of analysis was to conceptualise the open codes into more general or higher categories. The Nvivo programme helped with this second analytical stage through its capacity for grouping similar codes into data sets. This was done by examining the relationships, patterns and similarities among the open codes which led to a data reduction into a smaller number of axial codes. This second stage of analysis was described as axial because of the way new codes formed around something akin to an axis. Each axial code was named according to what was judged to be its central characteristic. The six axial codes are listed in the second column of the following table. The first column lists the open codes which showed the different but related dimensions of each axial code.

**Table 4.4: Reduction of open codes into six axial codes**

Open Codes	Axial Codes
Absence, Presence, Belonging, Rejection Challenge, Pregnancy, Childbirth, Awareness, Connection, Feelings, Immersion, Manifestations, School Spirit, Transcendence, Connectedness	<b>Experiences</b> of the spiritual
Prayer, Reflection, Conversation, Journey, Quest, Communication, Listening	<b>Processes</b> which nurture the spiritual
Images of God, Names for God, Mystery, The Heart, Images of the Spirit, Mary Mother of God, The Transcendent, Prayer	<b>Language</b> associated with the spiritual

Open Codes	Axial Codes
Flexibility, Desire, Honesty, Listening, Empathy, Compassion, Sensitivity, Wonder, Awe, Calmness, Flexibility, Fluidity, Real and Natural, Openness to the new	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Qualities</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">associated with the spiritual</p>
Church, Scripture, The Catholic School, The After Life, Family, Literature, Positive Space, Nature,	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Places</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">associated with the spiritual</p>
Truth, Holistic, Honesty, Being Real, Valuing the Ideal	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Values</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">linked to the spiritual</p>

The following section presents samples of the data showing how the 6 axial codes were derived. These codes showed the key themes in the participants’ understanding and articulation of their personal spirituality. Sections of the data from interviews 1 &2 also showed some of the links that teachers made between their personal spirituality and their professional practices.

#### 4.3.2.1 Experience

The first axial code identified the experiences described by the participants which contained elements of the spiritual.

**An experience of internal coherence;**

“When we have...whatever reason we have...a resonance with things coming together, you can feel that presence there; try and clam yourself so you can get in touch with that.”

Edward.

**An experience of home and security;**

“Walking in my front door, I feel God’s presence there.....I think of home and shelter and that is where I feel safe”

Maryanne.

**An experience of transcendence;**

“Even when you are in the classroom there are times when you can tell it is not about what you said. There is a deeper form of understanding that happens in a response; as a teacher you are taken aback by that. I don’t know how to describe that. In the everyday you see there is something else there.”

Rebecca

**An experience of awakening;**

“When the lights go on for a kid and you know what they’re saying has spoken the truth and the truth isn’t just intellectual, but it is like a sacrament, there’s a presence there that feels like God’s there”

Hilton

**An experience of connectedness;**

“After coming close to dying there was a real sense of connectedness. I was fearing dying, fearing God. Very concerned with how I would be judged by God, obsessing over what I would say to others.....I came back to the Spirit as calming.”

Louise

#### **4.3.2.2 Process**

The second axial code aimed to identify the processes which nurtured the spiritual. These processes were seen as engagement with specific practices as well as pointing to the fluid nature of spirituality. This axial code showed that the participants understood their spirituality to be dynamic, interactive and open ended.

##### **Process of practising spirituality in a Church setting;**

“When we are in church.....um I feel as if I am one on one with God whereas with every day I am sort of one on one but I am thinking of God in the day ahead. In terms of being in his house, in the Church, I am more alone with him”

Maryanne.

##### **Process of conversation in awakening the spiritual;**

“Stay with the conversation and take it in a pondering way”

Hilton

##### **Process of the spiritual characterised by open-endedness and flexibility;**

“There is no prescribed path. As you grow and develop you become more comfortable with fluidity and you allow yourself to become more flexible”

Rebecca

##### **Process of spirituality described in the metaphor of journey;**

“We don’t exist in isolation...we came into the world in the same way.....I see it more as being about a journey.....all to do with people, family.”

Louise

**Processes of constancy and change;**

“Spirituality is always changing but there are some constants.....I think...it takes a while to say things.....what could be the same is the purposeful direction...even though opinion changes direction...it is the same movement towards what is good. The idea of Jesus as teacher does not change”

Edward

**4.3.2.3 Language**

The third axial code related to the complexity of language and its relationship to spirituality. This axial code was also pertinent to the second research question about links between personal spirituality and professional practice.

**Language of the spiritual expressed by the inner voice;**

“I think of the spirit as an inner voice or reflective voice or awareness of another. It is difficult to define”

Rebecca

**Language of unconditional love and its relationship to spirituality;**

“My whole staff prayer is on friendship. I used the song by Leona Lewis which doesn't mention God but God is there.....listen to the lyrics and think who is that person for you. Can you see God through other people? ‘No matter how hard it gets I'll always be there for you’. ..... When I picked that song.....it was how I felt God is...It doesn't mention God but it is obviously deeply spiritual...Some people will think of it as their partner... but when I listen to it I think of God.”

Maryanne

**Limitations of language in describing the spiritual;**

“Language of the spirit is intangible so staff sometimes fearful of talking about it”

Edward

**Incongruity between language of the religious tradition and personal experience;**

“We teach kids about a loving gentle God yet I find it hard to relate to”

Louise

**Spirituality and the language of metaphor contrasted with language of lived reality;**

“ It is the amount of spiritual material especially written for primary school kids...it is also language that kids cut off from ...in the end it means nothing...it ends up being a barrier...words like journey...kids turn off...My job is using plain down to earth language...at times too banal...like the God who mucks in with people who are just struggling through life”

Hilton

The above statements indicate problems with the use of words to describe and express spirituality because of their ambiguities.

**4.3.2.4 Qualities**

The fourth axial code identified qualities associated with the spirit. These were interpreted as features of human motivation and behaviour and included desire, listening with empathy and compassion, a heightened sensitivity leading to experiences of wonder and awe and a projection of self which conveyed calmness and peace. This axial code showed how the participants

understood and articulated their personal spirituality through the qualities which characterise and define spirituality.

**A quality of the spiritual evident in responses of wonder and awe;**

“When I think about the idea of God being the earth’s creator that can sometimes overwhelm me..... I am quite insignificant. It brings a sense of wonder”

Rebecca

**A quality of the spiritual expressed in desire;**

“I deeply want that life in the grass roots working with kids. I want those kids to see the life places where they see the spirit is restricted”

Hilton

**Being calm as a quality of the spiritual which assists the experience of presence;**

“When we have....whatever reason we have...a resonance with things coming together you can feel that presence there....try and clam yourself so you can get in touch with that”

Edward

**A quality of the spiritual evident in expressions of empathy and compassion;**

“Another experience of the spiritual is through our kids...if I am feeling down they make a joke of it. There is a flow of empathy and compassion in the family. You can look at one of them and know that something is amiss”

Maryanne

**The qualities of stillness, peace and calm affirm the spiritual;**

“I link back to a sense of calm, that sense of stilling, that sense of peace within me...with spirituality...a lot of it has a sense of re-affirming what you are doing and I find, I suppose the connectedness to that, to God”

Louise

**4.3.2.5 Places**

The fifth axial code brought together the places associated with the spiritual. The places identified were the school, the home especially the front door and the dinner table, the Church and the natural environment. This axial code showed that participants understood and articulated their personal spirituality in a context or a place.

**Discovering connections through art and a place where the spiritual is experienced;**

“Aboriginal art is something that I really like. My friends bought some Aboriginal art and had it sitting over the dinner table. They didn’t even realise they had placed it there. It was the meeting place with the circle and the cross all in dot painting...their Mum got it from Darwin.....and I said isn’t it nice that you put it over your meeting place”

Louise

**Art triggering a deeper response in discovering the spiritual through a sense of belonging and being at home in the natural environment;**

“Ah well this looks like home up here with the mist over the mountains. It’s that sort of scene I see regularly coming to work...and I am at home...in the mountains and in the bush not that I am an adventurer or anything like that but I very much feel ...uh...just the presence of fresh life and God over the bush. I think it is the light and the freshness at the beginning of the day....that is something I find....redemptive”

Hilton

**Discovering the spiritual in the place of the school through staff formation processes;**

“If you have a lot of people trying to do good....like our staff at present..... Currently we have a lot of staff formation moving towards open learning amidst all the conjecture.....what came out of the reflection is that people are trying to be united....the spirit is a great unifier. The constant here is the direction in which we are going....we are spirit driven. Idea is when you are trying to do what is genuinely good you do what is right. What the direction is, is the teaching of the children.”

Edward

**Discovering the spiritual in the place called home;**

“Home....walking in my front door...I feel God’s presence..... I think of home and shelter and that is where I feel safe”

Maryanne

**Discovering the spiritual in the place of the classroom;**

“Even when you are in the classroom you can tell it is not about what you said...there is a deeper form of understanding that happens in a response ...as a teacher you were taken aback by that.

Rebecca

**4.3.2.6 Values**

The final axial code was that of values linked to experiences of the spiritual. These were seen as being connected to the moral dimension of spirituality. The values referred to by the participants specify the moral standards to which they aspire. This axial code pointed to the ways participants understood their spirituality as having a moral dimension. Such a feature would be evident in their expressions of spirituality and also illustrated an important link between their personal spirituality and professional practice.

**Justice as an aspect of the moral dimension of spirituality;**

“I want those kids to see the life places where they see the spirit is being restricted. They see it in social justice activities”

Hilton

**Informed conscience as an aspect of the moral dimension of spirituality;**

“They may say ‘why do I have to go to Church if I can’t relate to it’.....as long we as we continue to instil the correct beliefs and guidances.....as long as they know right from wrong”

Maryanne

**Solidarity - an instinctive moral dimension of spirituality regarding concern for a family member;**

“One that distinctly comes to my mind when I was a teenager, I saw my brother and he had just been in a fight that I was unaware of.....he had obviously been hurt....my whole vision was on him...my focus so intent I forgot about anything else. People were looking at me with that look, ‘where are you?’

Edward

**Respect for others – an aspect of the moral dimension of spirituality;**

“ I am working with a particular student at the moment...he is having difficulties and he has just been transferred into my Religion and my English classes. He would have this negative self- talk. He is a learning support student and has been very disruptive. He is in Year 9 and I have always doubted that I am going to get through and only now we are seeing this change.....I called his mum a couple of weeks ago and I asked his permission could I do this because he has been working..... something has happened.....and I said that he is actually working now. I don’t know what it is.....the way that he is now speaking to others in class”

Rebecca

### **The truth of what is real as an aspect of the moral dimension of spirituality;**

“This is the image of Jesus I like which I found on the internet. I chose it because it looks real you can even see the hairs on his arms....it looks natural. To me I think I relate to what is honest about that. I think the kids do as well.”

Louise

#### **4.3.3 Selective Coding.**

While the identification of axial codes constitutes the core part of the analysis and is important for interpreting the way participants have understood and articulated their spirituality, a further reduction of the data was undertaken to identify the ‘big picture’ themes that might also be used to describe and interpret the data.

This stage aimed to select core categories that could provide a relatively coherent way of interpreting groups of similar and apparently related axial codes. The idea of proposing selective codes was a further distillation or interpretive process applied to the data that might help serve as ‘thematic unifiers’ or ‘key drivers’ in understanding personal spirituality, particularly in the way of a personal narrative or life story. The selective codes could be understood as themes that made the personal stories more understandable and coherent and as drivers that took their personal stories forward

The initial coding of the interviews showed a high occurrence among the open codes of ‘connectedness.’ These were then grouped together under the heading of ‘connectedness in general’ -- this meant connectedness in terms of the family, connectedness with the students in teaching and connectedness beyond self in community. In other words, the selective code of connectedness was regarded as a useful construct for highlighting the points of similarity and into relationships between the axial codes.

All the axial codes could be related at least in some way to the more generalised core category of connectedness. The following table illustrates the reduction of the seven identified axial codes into the selective code of connectedness.

**Table 4.5: The Selective Code Developed from the Axial Codes**

Axial Coding	Selective Coding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>❖ Experiences</li> <li>❖ Aspects</li> <li>❖ Processes</li> <li>❖ Values</li> <li>❖ Language</li> <li>❖ Places</li> <li>❖ Qualities</li> </ul> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-left: 20px;"> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px; margin-right: 5px;"></div> <span>of the spiritual</span> </div>	<p><b>Connectedness</b></p>

Threaded through the participants’ responses to a range of questions, was the fundamental experience of being connected in a relational way. The teachers’ responses were consistently framed in the context of being in relationship to others especially family and students.

The first three axial codes of experiences, aspects and processes, were all premised on the reality of being connected to a range of experiences. Louise spoke of this in terms of connectedness stemming from our common humanity, our common origins. This was prompted by her response to the stimulus of the aboriginal art piece.

“there is a real sense of connectedness either in that being your family, the community and the lines meaning the people streaming from the core group and the lines leading, interweaving with another core group.....the painting shows the connectedness we have with others; how we don’t exist in isolation, we came into the world in the same way”

Rebecca spoke of connectedness in relationship to what she values most in her early career of teaching

“I will be 27 in two months...as I am growing up and developing as a teacher as well; it is not about me acquiring a possession or achieving something that is socially deemed great... it is more about those personal connections, so for me in my personal life it is about making real connections to family or something like that.....I feel most at home when I make a connection with someone.”

The next three axial codes; values, language and qualities, showed concrete expressions of spirituality. This was interpreted as an indication of connectedness expressed in relationality.

Maryanne identified empathy as an important quality of connectedness. “There is a flow of empathy and compassion in the family. You can look at one of the boys and know that something is amiss.”

Louise spoke of the qualities of spirituality she connected with as;

“a sense of calm, that sense of stilling, that sense of peace within me. With spirituality a lot of it has a sense of re-affirming what you are doing and I suppose I find a connectedness to that”

In her Religious Education teaching Rebecca noted the difficulty the students had making connections with the Biblical texts during a unit of work on morality, justice and peace.

“They are finding this unit so difficult. It is about morality and justice and peace. I was supposed to go to passages in the Bible to make connections. Instead of that I went to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and I said see the connections and they said, ‘Oh yes this all makes sense’”

Maryanne imaged God as one who initiates and forges connectedness. She believed this capacity to be one of God’s defining qualities; “God has given me so many lifelines. There have been times when I haven’t been in tune with them.....it is my job to be attentive to the life line.”

One of the qualities of the spiritual is its capacity to access the transcendent. Edward identified this in terms of connectedness. He said “when you talk about the spiritual I think it is our connection with God.”

The data around language indicated that regarding expressions of spirituality, the experiences were those of both connectedness and disconnectedness. The latter was expressed by Hilton in the context of his teaching.

“I suppose it is a bit of resistance to the jargon.....it’s not because of any of those words but it is the overuse of them that puts people off. And I have to find other words that don’t turn them off.....It is in the amount of spiritual material especially written for primary kids...it is also language that kids cut off from...in the end it means nothing...it ends up being a barrier.”

However for Hilton connectedness through language was experienced when truth was spoken

“When I talk about Jesus and what matters to Jesus..... and for me it is the spirit of Jesus’ relationships and what it means to be people of the Kingdom that characterises the spirit. I know it is there in the recognition that truth is being spoken and there is a connection that goes beyond us.....taking truth to a deeper level is where you touch the spiritual. Stay with the conversation and take it in a pondering way”

In thinking about values and their place in the participants’ understanding of spirituality, they identified values which worked towards cohesion, connectedness and union of opposites. In speaking about what is of ultimate value Hilton said,

“Love and after love.....and when I say that..... it is the love that brings to reality someone’s full humanity and therefore godliness in that same moment. Therefore everything I do in my work and in my relationships is about trying to help people.....not

that I am running around consciously wanting to help everyone. I think it is about trying to help them find moments where they can be aware of their humanity and find God in it”

Rebecca spoke about the connectedness between the personal understanding of herself and her sense of vocation as a teacher;

“Part of my personal life, who I am, is intertwined with my job of teaching. I don’t really separate the two. Some people say just leave work at work..... That doesn’t happen.....can’t just leave work..... so even in my professional life it is not about students getting 95% or something like that. It is more about developing that connection with the students so that they feel they’re on the right track..... whatever the right track means for them. ”

The final axial code of place was consistent with the interpretation that participants’ perceptions of spirituality were located in particular settings. The four main places identified were the school, home, the Church and the natural environment.

Hilton voiced this experience of connectedness in the context of something larger than self especially the natural environment; “Sometimes in the bush I get a sense of being connected to something much bigger.....” His reflection on a particular art scene brought together the bush and an experience of being ‘at home’

“This looks like home up here with the mist over the mountains. It’s that sort of scene I see regularly coming to work...and I am at home...in the mountains and in the bush...not that I am an adventurer or anything like that but I very much feel...uh...just the presence of fresh life and God over the bush”

Maryanne also spoke of the experience of connectedness in terms of ‘being home.’ She said;

“my husband and I lead such busy lives....I don’t think we spend enough time together as such but there are times of laughter...home...walking in my front door I feel God’s presence. I think of home and shelter and that is where I feel safe”

Rebecca expressed this sense of connectedness within a place in terms of being at home not so much as a physical place but of being in connection with someone.

“In my personal life I feel most comfortable when I am at home but if there is no one at home you don’t feel at ease.....I don’t feel at home. I need to have some connection with someone”

#### **4.4 Data regarding the language participants used to talk about their spirituality.**

The data reported in this section relate specifically to the ways participants articulated and expressed their spirituality. Expressions of spirituality were seen as twofold:- one relating to verbal statements about spirituality; the other was expression in behaviours, actions and all that could be included in that which was non-verbal.

In talking about their spirituality the participants used language that was personal, varied and wide ranging. Hilton confronted the frequent use of some metaphorical expressions which had been reduced to jargon to describe the spiritual. He said ; “I have a bit of resistance to some words like dreaming...daring....searching.....sharing...It is not because of any one of those words but it is the overuse of them that puts people off...and I have to find other words that don’t put them off. I prefer to use plain down to earth language. ” He described God as “the brother, the mate by your side, the wise parent that sleeves rolled up knows what you are going through”

However metaphorical language could be used in a meaningful way to describe the spiritual if it was connected to the personal lived experience of the one speaking. Edward used a metaphor drawn from the ordinariness of an everyday activity to describe the action of the spirit. He spoke about the Holy Spirit “being like a sieve.....what is left is good...the essence of the spirit.” Hilton gave a metaphorical description of the spirit which indicated his personal understanding of this reality.

“For me in terms of the spirit there is an association with lady wisdom from the scriptures who God has dandled on his knee....playful creativity. My image of this is like a breeze that blows through and refreshes.....and is here...now there.....unpredictable but fun and the divine sense of humour in it.”

Louise referred to good literature when trying to find an effective language to speak about spirituality especially with her students. In reading and studying with her class a trilogy of stories by Maurice Glitzman, she was able to talk about and discuss the spiritual and its associated experiences with her students. In response to the question, “How do you talk about and discuss the spiritual?” Louise replied,

“ through literature. It is very good just to read a book to Year 6. They talk about it in their prayer journal. It’s a voluntary thing. They often write the things they are concerned about. I see spirituality in that.....We also do stuff every morning at morning prayer...it can be a social skill. They are asked to look at how what they do affects others. ”

Hilton also referred to literature especially poetry as providing for him the language which enabled a sense of awareness of the present moment.

“One thing that helps me be present in the moment is really good poetry and for me that has almost the strength of scripture..... in a sense for me poetry offers an alternative to some of the truths and the presence of God.”

#### **4.4.1 Limitations of language in talking about spirituality and problems regarding clarity of meaning.**

All the participants referred to the limitation of spoken language in regard to the language around spirituality. It was experienced in a range of ways and expressed in the following words.

Edward stated;

“The context of spirituality is so difficult to talk about because it is so um.....I am not sure if it is a cultural thing. Within our language we don’t have a variety of words and language with which to express it.....really we are always struggling to find it and refine it with metaphors and images but it is ....maybe we should all learn a particular language so that we can talk about it”

Hilton observed; “Language is part of awareness. It is not just the meaning, it is the catalyst. People struggle with the language of the heart”

Rebecca noted; “As a religion teacher I think students are in connection with a sense of spirituality. We as teachers find it hard to articulate to them. Our lives would be richer and more aware if we could.”

Maryanne reported an experience of preparing prayer for the school staff. She raised the issue of language which contained the twofold possibility of being interpreted in a secular and/or sacred context.

“My whole staff prayer is on friendship. Song by Leona Lewis doesn’t mention God but God is there....listen to the lyrics and think who is that person for you? Can you see God through other people? No matter how hard it gets I’ll always be there for you. When I picked that song...it was how I felt God is.”

Rebecca referred to an experience of something operating that seemed larger than the sum total of the personal interactions of the present moment. She realised that it is often difficult to put words on experiences when you know there is another less tangible dimension operating. This can often be identified as the spiritual.

An example of this occurred during a retreat time with senior students. The teachers were endeavouring to give feedback at the end of the retreat experience. Rebecca noted how difficult this was because the responses which the students gave indicated that “there was something else there”. She observed that they wanted to say more about the spiritual impact of the retreat but “didn’t have the language” to put words on their experiences. All they could say was, “you gave so much of your time, learnt so much about us”.

Maryanne experienced a limitation in language when trying to express loss and disappearance shortly after her father-in-law's death. She expressed this in a personal interpretation of an extraordinary occurrence in the physical world. During the interview she recalled,

the night he passed away at ten past three in the morning, we sat with him.....so we were lucky to be with him right to the end. And that night I remember going upstairs and looking out the window and the moon was bright red. I have never seen anything like it. I said to John, 'look at that, Dad is telling us he got there' and then within a half an hour it went normal.

#### **4.5 Data related to key processes for understanding spirituality**

The processes of *Focussing*, *Flow* and *Mindfulness*, detailed in chapter 2 provided a way of interpreting how the participants understood and articulated their personal spirituality. The following section shows how the participants expressed significant life experiences where a sense of the spiritual was evident.

##### **4.5.1 Focussing.**

Two of the participants, Maryanne and Louise spoke of this felt sense in the body in the context of the experiences of conception and childbirth.

“Falling pregnant is a special moment with God..... I thank God for making me a woman. There is no feeling like having a baby.....When Patrick was born I knew he was a boy. I had this overwhelming feeling that my life was now content – absolute contentment and completion”

(Maryanne)

“My husband and I longed to have a child. We received treatment through IVF but in the end we felt uncomfortable with what would happen to the fertilised embryos if not used. We left the IVF treatment and I became pregnant naturally. I experienced a sense of miracle, of gift and knew there was something bigger operating in our lives”

(Louise)

Rebecca voiced this felt sense in the body during a time of sudden illness. This experience gave her a sense of awakening to something new.

“While I was at university I became very ill. It all happened very suddenly. I had an MRI scan. In that time I did feel there was something there supporting me, guiding me and giving me strength so there had to be something else there. I had returned to Mass.....I would feel the heat, I can’t describe it. I would feel the presence often with me, eyes closed. I would feel as if there was no one else there. So in that time I felt very close to God in terms of something I had never experienced before”

(Rebecca)

#### 4.5.2 Flow.

Hilton reflected on his commitment to being in this state of *Flow*.

“You know there have been times in my past life when I have engaged more in training for being absorbed in the present moment.....not that the full presence in the moment has been easy but I have been more practised at being open to it”

Edward expressed his experience of *Flow* in terms of cohesion

“When we have; whatever reason we have....a resonance with things coming together, you can feel that presence there. Try and calm yourself so you can get in touch with that”

This concept was perceived by Maryanne in terms of the constancy of a life-giving God. She described *Flow* as a way of being in tune.

“God has given me so many lifelines that there have been times when I haven’t taken them. It is my job to be attentive to the life line. Awareness has grown. It is only in recent times that I have become in tune”

(Maryanne)

It was the song, *Everyday God* from Interview 1, which evoked the sense of *Flow* within Louise.

“So many images from the song ‘Everyday God’ link back to a sense of calm, that sense of stilling, that sense of peace”

(Louise)

### 4.5.3 Mindfulness

Hilton showed a breadth of knowledge of the spiritual traditions as he recognised that this state of Mindfulness is at the heart of Buddhism.

“There is that lovely Buddhist thing in awareness....sensing of that being an aim called mindfulness”.

(Hilton)

Intentional life choices were made by Rebecca in order to develop the practice of *Mindfulness*

“I listen to classical music in the car; it is almost as if I have this heightened awareness to what is around me. If you listen to talk back radio it clouds what is there”

(Rebecca)

## 4.6 Analysis of the data within an analytical matrix of the focus of Interview 3 .

Some questions in interview 3 related specifically to the second research question; what links do Catholic school teachers see between their personal spirituality and their professional practice? So in addition to the open and axial coding processes described above, the data from the third interview was further analysed within a matrix of the questions from Interview . The matrix structure allowed for grouping relevant sections of the data in response to the same questions. In this way the data was reduced to facilitate reporting but still remained linked to the total body of data.

The categories of the matrix located in Appendix E constructed around the questions of interview 3 contained data from the participants in regard to 5 aspects of spirituality. These were, the general influences shaping one’s spirituality, aspects of the Church tradition which have shaped

one's spirituality, identifying what nurtures and then what inhibits one's spirituality, describing expressions of spirituality and the experiences of spirituality within the context of one's teaching including Religious Education.

#### **4.6.1 General influences shaping one's spirituality.**

Four out of the five participants' initial responses regarded the influence of family as being foundational in the shaping of their personal spirituality. Hilton spoke positively of having a Protestant father and a Catholic mother. This he maintained brought a balance because "there was always a different openness to seeing the faith". Maryanne endorsed the fact of being brought up in a Catholic family and commented that "not only did we attend Mass but we lived our life looking at Catholic values"

Louise and Edward as well as mentioning the influence of family also commented on the influence of the children they had taught. Edward commented on receiving his education in Catholic schools and attending a Catholic University. However it was not until he studied for his Masters' Degree in Religious Education that "a lot of it kind of made a lot more sense"

Rebecca did not immediately mention the influence of family. Instead her initial response was in terms of the life changing experience of being diagnosed with cancer. This had been significantly influential in the shaping of her spirituality. She termed this influence as being life itself by which she meant, "the experiences you go through that in some way you see something greater or you are asked to rise to something greater"

#### **4.6.2 Aspects of Church tradition influencing personal spirituality.**

The second focus of the third interview asked the participants to reflect specifically on the aspects of Church tradition which have shaped their spirituality. Hilton mentioned reading the Documents of the Vatican II Council. He claimed that "so many were freed by the voice of Vatican II not into something new but something that echoed with their own reality". Louise referred to the liturgical seasons especially Advent and Christmas because they offered "a sense of preparing for something which focusses your attention beyond ordinary time". The Mass was mentioned as a great source of reflection and enrichment by Maryanne and Edward especially in terms of the Scripture readings.

Rebecca saw the benefits of the Church tradition by way of understanding the foundational meaning and purpose of Church teachings. This was provided through the teachers' notes in the Religious Education units of study. It helped her with her own personal growth and enabled her

to teach the unit in a way that was relevant to the students. In exploring with them the good works that some organisations do for people, Rebecca asked the students “where does that come from? What Christian and or Catholic values are at the heart of this organisation?”

#### **4.6.3 Identifying what nurtures personal spirituality.**

The third aspect of the interview asked the participants to speak about how they nurtured their spirituality. Louise shared that it is “going to Mass, building a sense of community with those you worship with and having good music in the Liturgy”. Rebecca who has undergone radical treatment for cancer, spoke of the nurturing effect of solitude and silence. In her isolation during therapy she experienced that “you can become comfortable with silence and comfortable with reflection, and that reflection and that silence can be a comfort and gives you the nourishment to continue that openness.”

Reading and the integration of spirituality and literature were identified by Hilton as nurturing his spirit and spirituality. He spoke of embracing the uniqueness of Australian spirituality as captured through the poets where they “expressed a deep sense of Incarnation” (Hilton).

#### **4.6.4 Identifying what inhibits the growth and expression of personal spirituality.**

When asked in the fourth aspect of the interview, to identify what inhibits the growth of their spirituality the participants responded with a range of factors. Many comments centred on bureaucratic pressures, fatigue, distractions and the lack of stillness and silence. Rebecca spoke of the social values that are projected in the media, in film and in some forms of literature. She claimed that much was in “contrast to how I live my life.....and can inhibit me continuing to allow my spirituality to blossom” (Rebecca).

While some spoke of the Mass as a source of nurturing one’s spirituality another referred to it as an aspect of Church tradition which inhibits growth in spirituality. Maryanne shared the experience in the following way. “I suppose when we talk about the Mass there would probably be particular times when you go to Mass and you hear the same thing over and over and it wasn’t relating to the Gospel as such; it was more just a point of view or a message that was wanting to be conveyed and it was just being done in the wrong way.”

Hilton identified the inhibiting factor as being his own sinfulness. He reflected on this in the context of three major religions.

As I teach a variety of religious traditions to senior kids I am increasingly aware of the commonality between at least three of the religions – Buddhism, Islam and Christianity

about self and self-centredness. They each have their own words around that as being a major block to a deeper spirituality.

#### **4.6.5 Links between spirituality and professional practice**

The fifth aspect of the interview focussed on expressions of spirituality. This area overlapped with the final aspect which concerned experiences of spirituality within the context of teaching.

All participants identified the classroom as a place where they expressed their spirituality.

Maryanne spoke of the importance of the teaching environment; “of having the classroom set up in such a way that the spirituality is there even if it is not a religion lesson...it is always there because you are talking about the way of respect and trying to make it a safe place where the children can talk to you about anything.”

Some participants extended this expression of their spirituality to other aspects of their roles like leadership and Parish meetings. Hilton qualified the expression of his spirituality in these places by saying, “not that I am trying to influence everyone with my spirituality but it is about giving voice to it”. Edward felt that “there is far more opportunity with the staff than in the classroom”

Louise showed her expression of spirituality through the dimension of pastoral care. A preferred time and place in the school was when it was her turn to be on duty in what was termed the “rest room”. In her school this place had been designated for students who find the social complexities of the playground overwhelming. Louise liked “to spend time with children in this room encouraging them” .

Maryanne took a broader perspective and identified her expressions of spirituality in the classroom in terms of “everything we do; just the way that the children respond to my expectations of the way they treat one another...everything we do sort of relates back to why we are here; why we are here in our Catholic faith, our beliefs”.

The final aspect asked the participants to reflect on their experiences of spirituality in the context of teaching including Religious Education. For Edward it was important to remember that the presence of Christ is in everyone. For him this meant that “they should all be honoured as individuals of Christ”. This implied that the relationship with each child is individual and that the students are led to see the worth in each other.

For Maryanne, in embracing the diversity within her class she saw an expression of her spirituality in the following way.

If I look at my classroom I have children in my class who have stability at home, that nurturing, that love, that support; they obviously pray as a family and then I have children who don't. I tend to bring those who don't have this nurturing love and support in a little closer and try to provide that stability for them.

In the classroom with senior students Hilton reported that his spirituality was evident in terms of providing space and freedom for students to develop their own responses to their reality.

Spirituality was evident in processes which bring about a synthesis. Here Hilton aims to,

get things to a point in the classroom where what dominates is a conversation so that the kids feel able to explore their thinking and their feeling and to find points where they can integrate those. I try to give them a sense that this is an ongoing reality and to find moments where I can say I am learning this or I am thinking this at the moment or I am changing the way I think about that. It is not for them to take on what I am thinking but to get the sense that as they grow and as they become adults keep thinking, keep trying to put things together. Keep trying to integrate the way you see life.

Louise spoke of a practice which enabled her students to build and experience relationships with older people. During their final year in primary school the students prepared a "This is My Life" journal. Visits were then arranged with the residents in the local Aged Care Home. Each student shared his or her journal with one person from the home. They learned to connect with and enter into the world of another.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

This chapter presented biographical data on each of the participants. It then reported the interview material through a series of analytical codes; open, axial and selective. Some specific aspects of the data were presented around language and spirituality. This was followed by a report on the data regarding key processes for understanding spirituality. The chapter concluded with an account of the participants' responses to the questions in interview 3. The next chapter discusses this data in the light of the research questions articulated in chapter 1 and the literature reviewed in chapter 2.

# Chapter Five - Discussion of the Meaning and Significance of the Research Data

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## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter is presented in three sections. The first part is aligned with the headings in the previous chapter. It discusses the meaning and significance of the research data. The interpretation is linked with the relevant literature. The second section shows how the results harmonise with two significant perspectives on spirituality: Groome's (1991) hermeneutical approach to the Christian religious tradition, and Downey's (1997) 7 focal points of Christian spirituality.

The final part of the chapter includes a validation exercise in which the researcher's interpretations of the spirituality of the participants in narrative format (constructed narrative accounts of the spirituality of each participant) have been verified through the responses of the participants themselves

Each part commences with an italicised summary of the findings from the relevant sections in chapter 4.

## Section 1

## 5.2 The participants

*Spirituality can only be considered and understood contextually.*

This study developed detailed biographical interpretations of five teachers' personal religious spirituality. While providing detailed information, the small size of the sample limited the generalizability of the conclusions that could be made. The significance of the study is in its yield of autobiographical accounts of spirituality.

The profiles of the participants' spirituality contained common themes around family and desire. All spoke of family as basic to their experiences of spirituality. Several recounted the birth of their children as being profound experiences of the spiritual, leading them towards mystery and transcendence.

Desire for the well-being of their students especially in terms of the spiritual was central to each one's spirituality. This appeared to provide the energy which fuelled their commitment to their profession of teaching. In terms of teaching in a Catholic school this desire seemed to be

heightened in the way it was expressed. One participant spoke of this as wanting the students to see those places in life where the spirit is restricted because of the sometimes narrow interpretation of the spiritual through aspects of the religious tradition. However despite this, there was an impetus to the aim of passing on aspects of the Catholic faith which were regarded as life giving by the teachers themselves and which they believed could benefit the students in terms of a meaningful interpretation of life.

### **5.3 Coding**

*The three levels of coding effectively distilled and reduced the data to greater levels of generalisation.*

The significance of this process of coding was its capacity to produce generalisations about spirituality while at the same time allowing for the participants' voices to be registered. The use of the NVivo programme to assist with the coding, helped frame the codes and categories in the actual words of the participants.

#### **5.3.1 Open Codes**

The 70 open codes were classified in two broad categories. The majority of the codes (52) could be identified within the characteristics of spirituality constructed from the theoretical base articulated in the review of the literature and recorded in Appendix A. 18 new codes were generated which did not fit into the list of these characteristics. These codes had a central theme about spirituality as integral to the humanity of each person. This is consistent with the idea of the uniqueness of each person and how their individuality could not be adequately defined in generic terms.

The new codes included acceptance, appreciation, blessing, confidence, sensitivity, gratitude, and patience; all of which were experienced through being connected to other people and to the created world. They also described a relational way of being in the world. Tacey (2003) suggested that this particular way of being, manifests a spirituality that is fluid and flexible. Therefore it cannot be confined by static form or held to a given position of truth located within a given tradition.

The following table lists the 18 new codes referred to above.

**Table 5.1: New Codes**

Codes emerging from the data which were not readily identified within the characteristics of spirituality noted in the literature and recorded in Appendix A	
1	Acceptance
2	Appreciation
3	Blessing
4	Care and nurture
5	Challenge
6	Confidence
7	Family and literature
8	Flexibility and fluidity
9	Literature
10	Mary the Mother of God
11	Patience
12	Peace and calm
13	Positive space
14	Pregnancy and birth
15	Scripture and spirituality
16	Sensitivity
17	Thanksgiving and gratitude
18	Wholehearted and genuine

### 5.3.2 Axial Codes

In the process of analysis, the open codes were reduced to 6 axial codes. The following, discusses each of these codes in the context of the literature and their relevance to the interview questions

#### 5.3.2.1 Experiences

This code centred on experiences which contained elements of the spiritual. The particular category was consistent with the purpose of the study which was to uncover core spiritual experiences by “giving attention to the subjective, psychological aspects of spirituality” (Rossiter, 2010, p.8). Personal experience was seen both by Groome (1991) in naming and experiencing present action, and Ranson (2002) in attending to the recognition that something is beckoning, as the first step towards an experience that could be described as religious. In order to bridge the great divide between spirituality and religion respect for the life experience of the individual needs to be given its due recognition.

As stated in the previous chapter the experiences named by the participants as times when their spirituality was expressed, included presence, security, transcendence, awakening and connectedness. Presence related to a broad dimension of spirituality and appears to be central to the mystical traditions of the major world religions. Akin to the Buddhist concept of Mindfulness

which restores the dispersed mind to wholeness (King 2008), an experience of presence is integral to an understanding of spirituality in general and Christian spirituality in particular.

The significance of this quality of presence named by all the participants in a range of ways, was that it provided an opportunity for all in the school community to experience a sense of inclusivity and connectedness. As referred to in chapter 1, members of the Catholic school community, are connected to the faith life and values of a Catholic school in a range of ways. But the diversity of religious identification and the range of personal spirituality amongst school staff and students, would inevitably give rise to different levels of commitment to Catholicism and different degrees of connection to Catholic religious practice. Often these presenting differences are categorised in a positive/negative dichotomy as practising and non-practising Catholics. This creates a problem in identifying the common ground especially in terms of beliefs and values which is necessary to build and sustain a community of a faith. The experience of presence for which everyone has the capacity, could provide a foundation in this search for new ways of defining what it is that the Catholic school community holds in common.

Furthermore many teachers are at different points on the continuum of faith and religious spirituality and some may feel inadequate in sharing a faith perspective on life with their students. However all have the capacity to ground their teaching practices in the real and the ordinary of the present moment. This is seen by Rohr (1999) as a way which “doesn’t demand a lot of dogmatic wrangling or managerial support just vigilance, desire and a willingness to begin again and again” (p.19).

Presence provided a strong link between the personal spirituality of teachers and their professional practice. Berryman (1990) proposed the idea of teaching as presence. It had the capacity to expand and convey more than is possible in the limits of the spoken or written word. When the participants spoke of their teaching in this way especially in terms of listening and allowing the conversation to unfold, they appeared to be present to their students in an open ended way. Their teaching was not underpinned by the assumption “that life can be solved completely like a jigsaw puzzle that all the pieces fit together and there are none left over” (Berryman, 1990, p. 527).

The other experiences of awakening, connectedness, security and transcendence are experienced through presence. It is significant that the participants identified these as ways of understanding and articulating their spirituality. Ranson (2002) suggested that the experience of awakening is

one of the key features of the connective nature of spirituality because it links people together more profoundly to life.

This experience of personal awakening was seen as another way of linking teachers' personal spirituality with their professional practice. Among the responsibilities of teachers in Catholic school is that of education in the Catholic faith. As noted in chapter 2, O'Leary (2008) proposed that this particular aspect of education was more about "revealing than transmitting" (p.68). The process of revealing, he suggested was through attuning hearts and minds to the ongoing revelation of God. This adjustment was seen as part of the work of the teacher educating in faith and a necessary way of preparing students for their personal experiences of awakening.

### **5.3.2.2 Processes**

The second axial code was concerned with processes which nurtured the spiritual. These processes indicated that spirituality is expressed in particular practices but that it is also fluid. It can be manifested and experienced in processes like engagement in conversation. Many of the participants recognised the importance of processes and as teachers knew that understanding is constructed through the processes of discovering meaning and building on experiences.

### **5.3.2.3 Language**

The third axial code centred on the complexity of language. While spirituality is an individual phenomenon it is like all human capacities in that it is only fully realised when it is expressed and communicated in the human community. However the data around language especially in terms strict definition, pointed to problems. This will be discussed in more detail in a later section.

### **5.3.2.4 Qualities**

The fourth axial code identified some personal qualities associated with the spirit. Included with these was that of desire. This particular quality is significant because it pointed to the desires teachers expressed for their students. The spiritual essence of desire was contained in the notion that aspirations can never be attained (O'Murchu, 2007). Its emergence as a quality of the spiritual was important because it conveyed the idea that spirituality was a quest which stretches beyond the self.

Although not always explicitly articulated in the interviews, desires were evident in the underlying hopes and longings the participants expressed for their students. It was through the

desires teachers expressed for their students that they showed a spiritual orientation towards the other. This thrust enabled openness to the different capacities held by others. Berryman (1990) in suggesting that the first step in teaching as presence was that of respect, highlighted the importance of this other-centred focus.

Several recent studies acknowledged the importance of desire as a source for sustaining and giving meaning to teachers in their work. Downey, (2006) noted, when teachers experienced their expressed desire for the growth and development of their students, their spirituality was nurtured. Gowdie (2011) used the word “aspiration” (p.313), when speaking of teachers’ desires and indicated “a strong aspiration of authenticity evident among participants” (p.313). Gowdie suggested that this is a “source reality that is sustaining” (p.313).

#### **5.3.2.5 Places**

The fifth axial code brought together the places related to experiences of the spiritual. The category supported the view that participants’ perceptions of spirituality were located in particular settings. This resonated with Giddens’ (1981) suggestion, that “all social action consists of social practices, situated in time and place” (p.19).

The places named by the participants as being of significance in their experiences of spirituality were all connected to the ordinariness of everyday life; home, especially the front door and the dinner table, the school, in particular the classroom, and the natural environment. The Church was also named as a particular place of spirituality experienced in the gathering of the people. In naming these ordinary places where spirituality was expressed there was a sense that the participants “perceived the deeper meaning of the ordinary” (O’Leary, 2014, p.11). This was consistent with Weil’s (1909-1943) view that “the finite and the infinite live in the same place” (O’Leary, 2014, p.11).

#### **5.3.2.6 Values**

The final axial code referred to values linked to the spiritual. The inclusion of this code was significant because it was seen as relating to the moral dimension of spirituality. The definition of spirituality referred to in chapter 1 proposed that it was the way in which individuals identified and related to the spiritual and moral dimension of life (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006). Chapter 2 located this moral dimension in the literature. Reference was made to the view that contemporary morality is often characterised by the search for appropriate ways to be in right relationships with humanity, the earth and the cosmos. It is significant in this study that participants’ data included statements about justice, conscience, solidarity, respect and truth.

### 5.3.3 Selective Code

The selective code of connectedness was chosen and applied because it covered key elements in the axial codes. Connectedness is significant because it referred to the unique capacity of spirituality. This construct was regarded as being able to integrate the disparate dimensions of the person sometimes referred to as body, heart and mind. A personal sense of integration has the potential to offer an “intuitive grasp of the whole” (Bourgeault, 2004, p.14). This connected form of perception could be regarded as having the capacity to help teachers to contribute to the integrative task of the Catholic school which is seen as a “synthesis of culture and faith and a synthesis of faith and life” (CS, 1977, n. 37).

Connectedness has the capacity to cross all religious boundaries so therefore like presence it has the potential to provide common ground within the diversity of faith expressions and commitment in a Catholic school. Louise referred to connectedness when speaking about the aboriginal art print. She noticed that “the painting shows the connectedness we have with others; how we don’t exist in isolation, we came into the world in the same way.” This reference to common humanity and common origins, echoed the central theme of the encyclical of Pope Francis I, *Laudato ‘si* (LS. 2014).

Interpersonal connectedness allowed for the expression of empathy. This way of trading places with the other appeared to enable teachers to immerse themselves in the lives of their students so as to experience and understand reality from the students’ point of view. The expression of spirituality through empathy was significant because it pointed to an important link between teachers’ personal spirituality and their professional practice.

The final significance of the selected code of connectedness relates to the interpretive process in the study. It included making connections between the participants and the researcher. As mentioned in chapter 3 Alvesson & Skoldberg (2009) referred to this activity as a “fusion of horizons” (p.120) wherein the life worlds of the participants connected and blended with the life world of the researcher. This linked to the connectedness implied in Heidegger’s (1927) concept of the hermeneutic circle wherein there was an alternation with the world of the participants and the linking back into the researcher’s own reference system.

## 5.4 Discussion of problems with language and the interpretation of spirituality

*There was a gap between the experience of the spiritual and its expression in verbal language*

The major significance of the data around language was that the participants had the capacity to respond to reality beyond the ordinary. This human response to a transcendent reality was

identified in chapter 2 as one of the key features of spirituality. The main medium for participants to reveal the perspectives they held on spirituality was verbal language. Alvesson & Skoldberg (2009), claimed that language is the mode through which the life worlds of participants are revealed. Crotty (1998), suggested that central to being human is the capacity for language. He alleged that language,

“is pivotal to, and shapes the situations in which we find ourselves enmeshed, the events that befall us, the practices we carry out and, in and through all of this, the understandings that we are able to reach” (p.87).

However Ricoeur’s linguistic critique illuminated a problem with regard to language and spirituality. He proposed that language “by nature is metaphorical, figurative, context-dependent and not very successful at mirroring complex circumstances” (Alvesson & Skolberg, 2009, p. 230).

The participant data collection confirmed this as it spoke about the inadequacy of language when speaking about the spiritual. The following discussion proposes an explanation for the gap between the experience of the spiritual and meaningful language which enabled the sharing of experiences.

Several participants suggested that the language of the spiritual needed a special language. It was difficult to accurately interpret the intended meaning of this statement. However it conveyed to the researcher that language, descriptive of the spiritual was limited. This was significant especially for the participants in this study, who as teachers in schools defined distinctively by religion and spirituality need to communicate about these realities to their students.

Recent studies by Hay & Nye (1998) and Conti (2002) explored the issues surrounding language and spirituality. Hay & Nye proposed that much of the difficulty with language concerning the spiritual is conditioned by culture. They suggested that most people have a spiritual life but they are embarrassed to talk about it in public for fear of being thought foolish or mentally unbalanced.

In exploring this issue Hay & Nye identified several contemporary factors which prevented the open acceptance of spirituality which in turn inhibited the construction of a spiritual discourse. These included the lack of social context, the economic system with its extreme forms of competitive individualism and consumerism (Hay & Nye, 1998) and the narcissism of popular culture as referred to by Rolheiser in chapter 2 (2.3.3). Even though the participants in the study

did not work directly in environments driven by competitive individualism and consumerism, they were effected by issues in the dominant culture.

Conti (2002) referred to the limits of language and noted that “in the absence of being able to find exact language to describe spirit and spirituality, participants used metaphors, symbolism and stories from their lives to describe spirituality” (p.182). The presentation of the music and art during the interviews in this study assisted participants in speaking about their understanding and experiences of the spiritual.

However they did not readily transfer these insights to their own authentic language when describing the spiritual. The researcher concluded that teachers felt they needed a formal language endorsed by the teaching authority of the Church to put the correct words on their experience. Implied in this perception of the teachers participating in the study, was the notion that the language of the spiritual was a specialist language around which experience is identified and moulded.

Tacey (2003) highlighted this tension between the language of personal experience and the formal language of metaphysics, theology and philosophy. He suggested that “religion imposes the ‘big story’ of theology upon our experience without exploring the ‘little stories’ of our individual biographies, which might give theology a foothold in our lives” (p.37). For the teachers in this study it appeared that they needed more encouragement to trust the language constructed from their own lived experiences which would allow them to draw intentionally on their personal source of inner wisdom.

## **5.5 The significance of the data around some key process in the understanding of spirituality**

*The spiritual practices of mindfulness and focussing can lead to an experience of living in the present moment*

### **5.5.1 Focussing.**

Gendlin (1962) developed the concept and practice which he termed *Focussing*. It aimed to attend to what is felt in the body and in this sensing there was a capacity to unveil an inner spiritual resource through its the unique quality of knowing (Campbell & McMahon, 1997). Because this felt sense “doesn’t communicate itself in words it isn’t easy to describe in words. It is an unfamiliar deep down level of awareness.” (Gendlin, 1981. p.33).

The major significance of this data around *Focussing* was that it endorsed the claim expressed in Chapter 2 that spirituality is an embodied phenomenon. However it was noted that the participants, who described spiritual experiences as a felt sense in the body, were all women.

Louise and Maryanne recounted experiences of conception and pregnancy. Support for their claims was found in Fiand's work (1995). She commented on the research of Lake (1982) who investigated the period immediately following conception and the first trimester of life. He identified this time as one of "sheer bliss, a period of free floating wonder, free of attachment of any kind. (Fiand, 1995, p. 72). This particular state referred to as "blaystocystic bliss" is described by Fiand (1995) as "unearned mysticism" (p.72).

The three women in describing their experiences of the felt sense of the spiritual in the body, used language which related broadly to a sense of the transcendent in terms such as "something bigger" or "something else there". This is consistent with the findings from the research of Hay (2006). The title of his book, *Something There*, illustrated the common thread woven through the conversations with those who participated in his research.

As noted above, these three descriptions of the felt sense of the spiritual in the body were all experienced by women. There is no reference in the interview data from the male participants describing the spiritual in terms of being felt in the body. However because specific questions were not asked in relation to bodily experiences and spirituality, it cannot be assumed that men do not experience the spiritual as a felt sense in the body in ways that pertain to the uniqueness of their gender. The data here would be consistent with the claim of gender differences in the experience of spirituality, as noted by Ranson (2002), Bracken (2004), King, (2008), and Rohr (2012).

As one of the most significant markers of human life is gender, King (2008) suggested this in itself must make a difference to the way men and women experience the spiritual. This claim was verified by Bracken (2004) in one of his findings through reference to a focus group conversation. The participants who had recently experienced a liturgy, described it as being, "more female oriented" (Bracken, 2004, p. 115). Bracken (2004), referred to Ranson's (2002) argument of gender being a foundational context for spirituality and that "there is a specifically male way of entering into the life of the spirit" (Bracken, 2004, p. 115). Rohr (2012) suggested that there are gender differences in approaches to spirituality. He identified these in the distinct starting places and symbols used by men and women

The significance of this data around *Focussing* and the discussion which followed it, pointed to the need to engage a broad range of images, symbols, music, poetry and story. Being inclusive of both genders in formative and expressive experiences of the spiritual, ensures that all have the possibility to identify with spiritual realities in ways that are authentic to their gender.

### **5.5.2 Flow.**

The concept of *Flow* articulated by Csikzentmihalyi (1990) was seen as an optimal state of engagement containing an inherent balance. It brought about a complete absorption with the activity at hand and the situation. The data which related to this experience of spirituality was significant in that it connected to the sense of awakening identified in Chapter 2 as one of the key features of spirituality.

It was also inherent in the experience of sacramental presence recognised as an important concept pertaining to spirituality (Chapter 2). The participants appreciated the optimal state of engagement and were committed to cultivating the conditions necessary for this experience. They recognised it as a way of nurturing their spirituality. However what was significant for this study was the fact that each participant nuanced their understanding of their sense of presence differently.

Hilton prefaced his response by referring to the necessity to train himself in order to activate this capacity for presence. He envisaged himself as being active in the process which he identified as a way of “being absorbed in the present moment.” Taking the initiative in the process to create the conditions for optimal engagement with the present moment, is identified by Rohr (2012) as particular to masculine identity.

Edward approached his reflection on the phenomenon of presence with a sense of awaiting the gift coming to him. Presence in Edward’s understanding, is expressed as a noun; something constant and always there. His task was to facilitate the unifying and synthesising so there is “a resonance with things coming together.”

Maryanne was aware that as a consequence of the life giving presence of God she was constantly being offered lifelines. She saw her task as “being attentive to the life line.” This type of attention was another way of describing presence. It was the term used by Simone Weil who speaks of attention as the rarest and sincerest form of generosity. She says “love for our neighbour, being made of creative attention is analogous to genius” (Hay & Nye, 1998, p. 146).

The teachers in this study showed a capacity to engage with the present moment. However each of them practiced this in a way that was unique to his or her way of being in the world.

### **5.5.3 Mindfulness.**

*Mindfulness* was expressed by Thich Nhat Hanh (1999) as being aware of everything one does. He described this awareness in terms of a light shining on all one's thoughts, feelings, actions and words. The data which illustrated mindfulness, suggested that it could be understood as a strategy for realising the sense of awakening and the experience of sacramental presence as discussed in the above section on *Flow*.

The practice of being aware of everything one did, heightened the capacity for attentiveness and presence. Intentionality was critical to this practice which aimed to still the mind by filtering out the many and varied stimuli which impacted on it. Rebecca experienced talk back radio as a distracting source. She therefore made purposeful choices in times of solitude. "I listen to classical music in the car; it is almost as if I have this heightened awareness to what is around me. If you listen to talk back radio it clouds what is there." Hilton was the other participant who referred to the practice of mindfulness. He linked the practice to the Buddhist way of obtaining stillness and silence.

The references to *Mindfulness* came from only two out of the five participants. This could point to the possibility of an over reliance on vocal communal prayers and rote personal prayer. While the prayer of stillness and silence within the Catholic/Christian tradition is being reclaimed especially through the intentional activity of the World Community for Christian Meditation, it is not yet embedded as an accepted practice into the schools where the participants teach. Of further significance was the need for openness to and an understanding of other spiritual traditions coupled with an awareness of the unclaimed richness of the mystical tradition of Christian spirituality

## **5.6 Discussion of findings from interview 3**

This section discusses the key ideas and themes that emerged from the matrix of participants' responses to interview 3 as presented in section 5.6 of the previous chapter

*Spirituality was shaped by a range of influences- especially by family*

### **5.6.1 General Influences Shaping Spirituality—especially family.**

Family in its many expressions was acknowledged as being the most influential factor in the shaping of each participant's spirituality. There was no reference to what constituted an ideal family. Instead the emphasis was placed on family being a place of acceptance and belonging. Family provided core experiences of belonging which were anchored in an existential understanding of connectedness identified as a feature of spirituality (Rossiter, 2004).

The major significance of the influence of family was found in the way it included the features of spirituality which were relational, holistic and connective. The importance of family with regard to perspectives of the spiritual was identified in a range of ways in studies by Downey (1997), Hay & Nye (1998), Hughes (2008) and Gowdie (2011). It was family relationships which formed a "governing category of human life and Christian life" (Downey, 1997, p.95). Hughes (2008) pointed to the significance of family in giving meaning to teachers' lives and nurturing their spirituality.

Family was a significant place where relationality was experienced and nurtured. It was relationality which drew together the disparate pieces regarding things, other people self and God. This was identified by Hay & Nye, (1998) as "relational consciousness" (p. 109) which they claimed was a core experience of spirituality.

The recurrent theme of family evident in participants' responses, showed relationality in a sustained way and reflected a perspective of the spirituality of teachers. Schneiders (2003) proposed that it was the intrinsic human capacity of spirituality which allowed one to reach beyond self in relationship to others. Durka (2002) in reference to Merleau-Ponty referred to the teacher as embodying a "network of relationships (p.27). Relationality thus became a significant aspect of teachers' experiences of spirituality. It was from this connected way of being that arose "meaningful aesthetic experience, religious experience, personal and traditional responses to mystery and being, and mystical and moral insight." (Hay & Nye, 1998, p. 109).

A further significance of this finding was that family, with its different forms and expressions, was common to all in the school community. Teachers participating in the study identified empathically with their colleagues, their students and the families of the students. Although maintaining a professional distance from their students appropriate to their role, teachers

suggested that they entered into the life world of the students in a way akin to the extent of trading places with them.

Relationality has a significant place in the evangelising mission of the school and Gowdie (2011) noted its importance. With reference to Borg (1994), Wright (2002) and Bevans (2005), she suggested that shifting the focus from dogma to relationship opened a new way forward. This was seen “as the firmest pathway in recovering the ‘layered universe’ and ‘conceptual world’ of the Catholic tradition” (Gowdie, 2002 p. 355).

### **5.6.2 Aspects from Church tradition which shape spirituality.**

The aspects of Church tradition which were considered by participants to have had a shaping influence on each one’s spirituality were varied. These included a global appreciation of the universal church and its relevance in people’s lives as stated in the Documents of Vatican II, the liturgical seasons of Advent and Christmas, and the communal celebration of Eucharist.

Embracing these positive features of the Church was significant because it could be regarded as ensuring that one’s spirituality was formed and nurtured by factors larger than the subjective experiences of the individual person. It also pointed to a lived understanding of the interdependence between religion and spirituality wherein spirituality engendered an awakening and religious frameworks interpreted and gave meaning to that which was awakened (Ranson, 2002).

There was compelling evidence from the data that all participants considered that they were “at home with the Spirit and with the Spirit’s voice in the tradition” (Lennan, 2005 p. 407). The data was consistent with the view that there was no essential discrepancy between the way the Spirit was appropriated by the faith community and by an individual or between the ways of the Spirit in the past and in the present (Lennan, 2005).

A discrepancy was experienced and expressed around the current swing in the Church to interpret the tradition in a more conservative way – one that precedes the Second Vatican Council. This was described by Hilton as “the negative tribal conformist voices” proclaiming a “tribal form of Catholicism.” The significance of this finding indicated that participants represented a view that desired a meaningful spirituality, authentic to their own experiences and reflective of personal integrity. The findings in Hughes’ study (2008) were consistent with the fact that participants found meaning in a spirituality that was consistent with the authenticity of their lived experience. Hughes’ noted in the findings to his study that young teachers were less

likely to be “uncritically Catholic” (p.39. In this way he saw a parallel with the characteristics of Gen X-ers And Gen- Y-ers who were “suspicious of authority, institutions and ideology, reactive to orthodoxy and absolutism, preferring to build their own conceptions of reality” (p. 39).

### **5.6.3 Identifying what nurtures spirituality.**

The participants demonstrated views that spirituality was nurtured in a range of ways. The data suggested that one of these related to the Catholic tradition, experienced through participation in good Eucharistic liturgy. Others expressed it in broader terms by referring to silence, solitude and the reading of good literature.

Downey’s (2009) study related the nurturing of spirituality to experiences of teachers’ daily work. His findings indicated that it was teachers’ experiences of community especially through being connected to colleagues, students and their families that their spirituality was nourished. Downey also noted that the experience of growth and development in their students contributed to teachers’ own spirituality.

Hughes (2008) claimed that there was an important link between what nurtures spirituality and what gave people meaning. In his research he found participants’ responses in both these areas to be very similar. “Most often people spoke of personal relationships: with their family, their spouses, relationships with parents or with children” (p.29).

In this same study Hughes (2008) indicated that one third of his 60 participants spoke about experiencing spiritual nurturing by “being in nature, perhaps bushwalking or being with animals” (p.29). Several added the importance of having “some time to themselves, some time alone. Many others said it was important for them to have time to reflect when they were not pressured by the busyness of life” (p.29).

The significance of this finding indicated that participants represented a view that desired a meaningful spirituality, authentic to their own experiences and reflective of personal integrity. The findings in Hughes’ study (2008) were consistent with the fact that participants found meaning in a spirituality that was consistent with the authenticity of their lived experience. Hughes’ noted in the findings to his study that young teachers were less likely to be “uncritically Catholic” (p.39. In this way he saw a parallel with the characteristics of Gen X-ers and Gen- Y-ers who were “suspicious of authority, institutions and ideology, reactive to orthodoxy and absolutism, preferring to build their own conceptions of reality” (p. 39).

#### **5.6.4 Identifying what inhibits spirituality.**

Just as silence, stillness and solitude were seen as major sources for nurturing the spirit, opposite factors were identified as inhibiting one's spirituality. These were recognised as bureaucratic pressures, fatigue and distractions. Downey's study (2006) reported what teachers said in this regard. They "indicated that the constant busyness and multiplicity of demands on teachers afforded them little opportunity to reflect on and articulate what this meant" (p. 169).

Gowdie (2011), in reference to social history literature identified the contemporary culture as 'time-poor.' Schools she noted were not exempt from this pressure within the culture and were recognised as "busy places, with new curriculum initiatives, compliance audits and support programs" (Gowdie, 2011, p. 310). One of the 'time poor' issues was located in the tension between the competing demands of the 'system world' and 'life world' (Gowdie, 2011, p. 310). This was evident with all the participants in this current study who sustained outside school commitments with the major one being family responsibilities.

The data concerning busyness and bureaucratic pressures eclipsing times for stillness and silence, were significant because the teachers in this study could become more preoccupied with delivering outcomes and disconnected with the deeper meaning and purpose of their work. This meant, that they may not always have taught with the necessary personal integration and animation that "guides the pupils, beyond mere words to the heart of the total truth" (CS, 1977, n.42).

One participant noted that it was his own sinfulness which he described as "a major block to a deeper spirituality." This insight reflected an understanding of spirituality as being a gradual awakening. Sinfulness could be equated with darkness or being in the dark as spoken of by St. Paul, (Eph; 5:3); "you were darkness once now you are light." Refusal to keep journeying towards the light could be considered as blocking or inhibiting the growth of the spirit.

This perception of personal sinfulness as the cause of repressing spiritual growth was significant because it was consistent with the understanding of sin that is not defined solely in terms immoral behaviour. Traditionally sin had been defined in the context of the commandments . The study done by the Heythrop Institute for Religion, Ethics and Public Life (2005) offered a post Vatican II position regarding sin by contending that the Christian understanding of sin was not a mechanism for oppression and anxiety. Instead it was a theological reality which was about the human capacity for freedom and relationship with God (p. 45).

This new context for understanding sin and sinfulness was significant in this study because it gave rise to the following questions which could be considered to open up new areas for theological exploration; What does reconciliation mean for these teachers in Catholic schools? What is their sense of sin or sinfulness? What does redemption mean in a spiritual context?

Gowdie's (2011) discussion of her research findings touched this complex area. She noted that "time, space, developed trust and tools for reflection were all important elements in participant negotiation of the difficult parts of their lives." (p. 314).

#### **5.6.4 Describing expressions and experiences of spirituality.**

Although the expressions of spirituality were different, all the participants identified the classroom as the place where the spiritual was experienced and expressed. One point of significance in this data was its resonance with other current findings. Durka (2002) suggested that "we meet our students with all of their histories and we bring ourselves with our own experience to each encounter." (p. 27). The classroom was the place which Looney (2003) described as sacred because it was in this space "that human potential is nurtured and the grace of self is discovered" (p.238). Downey's (2006) study confirmed the significance of the classroom in experiencing and expressing spirituality. The events of the classroom were categorised as "making a difference" (p.97) and included experiences of students' achievement, of students growth and development and the realisation that teachers' work was often "planting seeds" (p. 99) which may come to fruition at a later time.

## **Section 2**

### **5.7 Introduction**

This section discusses the data in the light of two theoretical perspectives which were presented in chapter 2. The first is that of Groome's Shared Christian Praxis which the participants engaged with in their teaching of Religious Education. The main purpose in examining the data in the light of Groome's Shared Christian Praxis, was to gain insight into the way the participants' personalised their spirituality through a hermeneutical approach to finding meaning in their faith tradition. Downey's 7 points of Christian spirituality provided the second perspective for studying the data from interviews 1 and 2. As stated in the introductory chapter the term spirituality is in considerable flux (Rolheiser, 1998; King, 2008) and there is ambiguity surrounding its meaning and use. The essential features of Christian spirituality contained in Downey's work, offered a stable reference point for the researcher to recognise and name expressions and experiences of the spirituality. Furthermore the data was examined through a

matrix format which gave the researcher the opportunity to view the data from the participants in a comparative way.

### **5.8 The significance of the findings from the perspective of Groome's hermeneutics**

As stated in chapter 2 all the teachers in this study have been involved in teaching religion according to the pedagogy of Shared Christian Praxis. It was therefore seen as appropriate to analyse the participants' responses to the interview questions. This enabled the researcher to see the extent to which the participants engaged with the hermeneutics of retrieval, suspicion and creativity. In the context of this study the hermeneutic of retrieval aimed to recover, restore, examine and draw on the teachings of the Catholic tradition. The hermeneutics of suspicion identified what aspects of the tradition and wider culture were problematic. While the hermeneutics of creativity aimed to create new meaning by combining the outcomes of retrieval and suspicion (Groome, 1991).

Exploring the data in this particular way gave the researcher another general perspective on the way the participants gained spiritual understanding. This appeared to be through their capacity to be *reflectively Catholic* rather than *uncritically Catholic*. These descriptors, identifying different ways of being Catholic, were adopted by Hughes (2008) in his research regarding the spirituality of teachers in Catholic schools.

The uncritically Catholic "were people who had always been Catholic, and who were quite uncritical in the way they approached their faith" (p.21). However teachers in the largest group in Hughes' sample, were described as reflectively Catholic because they had thought critically about their faith. They did not simply accept what the Church said because many of them were critical of some aspects of the teaching and practices of the Church. However they accepted the essence of the Christian faith and belief in Jesus Christ (Hughes, 2008).

The following examples identify the themes of inclusive language, images of God and participation in the practice of the Catholic faith drawn from the data. The discussion shows the different ways of interpreting issues which originated in the tradition yet needed to find an interpretation which was meaningful for teachers in their current life and teaching context.

***Inclusive Language.*** After listening to the song *Everyday God* at the beginning of interview 1, Hilton paused and reflected on the way God was addressed as "Loving Mother." It seemed to take him by surprise because the traditional way of naming and addressing God is, "Father." He then interpreted the non-inclusive language of the Catholic tradition within the perspective of the

hermeneutic of suspicion indicating that some traditional religious language was problematic for him.

As I heard those words, I thought I would love to use that with the kids; then I thought in no way would I be able to use that with the kids in this Parish. There is no scope for inclusivity and different names for God.

His response to this problem found a way to create new meaning by combining the outcomes of retrieval and suspicion. In his personal spirituality Hilton was able to express his understanding of God and spirit in gender inclusive language and images. Through a creative hermeneutic he gave life to a scriptural text that is rarely cited. Hilton said,

For me in terms of the spirit there is an association with lady wisdom from Scripture who has been dandled on God's knee. There is a playful creativity in this. It is like a breeze that flows through and refreshes.

Adopting a hermeneutical approach to this important aspect of inclusive language in the Catholic tradition was significant. It attempted to respond to one of the identifying features of spirituality. This was seen as a human response to a transcendent reality. It is suggested that a major way of responding to this reality is through language. Therefore if the language of religion and spirituality was predominantly framed in gender exclusive words like 'he' or 'father' for God or 'men' for human kind, then this human response to the transcendent could be judged to be limited and incomplete.

***Images of God.*** In the Christian Catholic tradition God is often imaged as the one beyond and above. Hierarchical structures of Church authority can be modelled on this image of God. This aspect of the tradition becomes problematic when recovered and examined in contemporary democratic societies. Rebecca indicated this in the way she engaged with the hermeneutics of suspicion. She reflected on the concept of a hierarchical God promoted and conveyed through both the Church and the culture.

It is the hierarchical God, preconceived societal notions of what God is...the abstract God...the one that has been portrayed by the media. It is a human construct; tying the concept of God to a hierarchical Church that is purported in the media all the time.

She saw this false portrayal as being "quite dangerous to see God that way". Her creative response to this problem was found through the experience of personal encounter, through developing a personal relationship. "I see God as personal...as someone I can have a personal relationship with...a dialogue".

In the Christian Catholic patriarchal tradition, God is imaged as Father. However for Louise this part of the tradition conflicted with her life experience. The image of God as a loving, loyal father was quite problematic. Her own biological father rejected her and left the family when she was a young teenager. She said, “I tell you that particular reading from Scripture when they say would a father forget his own child, I hate that one because they do....yeh,.... they do....it is not true.”

Her creative response was one of empathy as she connected with others who had been rejected by either their father or mother. She said she resonated with the stories featured in the television series *Find my family* and stated,

It would be hard I would imagine for some to try and find a connection with God through the role of father or mother or sister or brother when life circumstances have left you rejected by members of your family.

This hermeneutical approach to traditional images of God verified for the researcher that participants were speaking their personal authentic truth. Tacey (2003) suggested that images of God were relative, not absolute and served to offer people “ways of imaging the unimaginable” (p.159). He saw these images as transient and therefore could “come and go with the rhythms of culture, history, time and place” (Tacey, 2003, p.159). For Louise an important way to make sense of her faith was by addressing what was problematic for her. The authenticity of her life experience resonated with Tacey’s proposition “that the old patriarchal dominants have gone into decline; that God the Father has waned or is dead” (p.189).

***Participation in the Practice of the Catholic Faith.*** An interpretation of the tradition of the Catholic Church is that as baptised members, each person has the responsibility to practise their faith by attending church regularly. However for most children in Maryanne’s class although baptised Catholics, they do not participate in the practice of their faith. This presented a problem which focussed on the meaning of being catholic. What was the difference between being a nominal Catholic or a committed, practising Catholic? She engaged with this problem in a compassionate and understanding way saying “with the children I teach it is not up to them to go to Church, it is up to their families. I can’t change that”.

Maryanne created meaning around this problematic by focussing on what is ultimate and lasting. Realising that so much was beyond her capacity to manage hoped for outcomes, she described her role in terms of beliefs, guidance and moral judgements; “as long as we continue to instil the correct beliefs and guidance; as long as they know right from wrong”

The significance of this tension around participation in the practice of the Catholic faith indicated that for the participants in this study, formal Catholic religious practices still provided a means for the expression of their spirituality. However they appeared to recognise that among many of their students and some colleagues, expressions of spirituality and a moral view of life were not dependent on or connected to a religious tradition.

### **5.9 The significance of the findings in the light of Downey's 7 focal points of Christian spirituality.**

The data from interviews 1 and 2 were arranged within a matrix constructed in accord with Downey's 7 focal points of Christian spirituality. This is recorded in Appendix H. The following section presents a discussion of the study's findings from this particular perspective.

Downey's first point, "within a culture" was understood by the researcher as the culture of the Catholic school situated within the broader social context of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This was seen as a multicultural, Australian, secular society supporting religious pluralism and witnessing a growing divide between religion and spirituality. Situating spirituality within a culture was significant in that it spoke directly to the task of the Catholic school. This as stated in chapter 2 was seen as "a synthesis of culture and faith and a synthesis of faith and life." (CS. 1977, n. 37).

In examining the data through this particular focal point the researcher found spiritual perspectives articulated by the participants which were immersed in and grew out of their culture. The most significant of these centred on conversation and dialogue. Louise said "it is more in dialogue with others ...is kind... of where I would see the spirit". Hilton recognised that "the spirit is in the conversation moving where it will....and taking truth to a deeper level is where you touch the spirit, so stay with the conversation and take it in a pondering way".

Links were made between the secular culture and the ecclesial culture. The themes of conversation and dialogue were evident in the Vatican II Document, *Gaudium et spes* (1965) where the call to enter into dialogue with the culture was stated. It was seen as integral to the mission of the Church which seeks to "foster mutual esteem, reverence and harmony" (n. 92). The pathways to dialogue in both these cultures had the potential to merge through the common spiritual perspective of dialogue. A statement from *Gaudium et spes*, (1965) invites inclusion in this important area which builds connectedness and understanding: "all those who compose the one People of God, both pastors and the general faithful, can engage in dialogue with ever abounding fruitfulness" (n. 92).

The second focal point articulated by Downey was that of spirituality in relation to a tradition. It was the tradition which carried the capacity to formalise structure, embody and therefore make visible the quest for the sacred (Downey, 1997). In the context of this study the tradition was acknowledged as Catholic. While the data showed that the participants had their own unique ways of claiming the Catholic tradition, all drew on the framework of Catholic teachings and scriptural interpretation to inform their responses during the interviews.

Two of the participants, had recently completed courses in Religious studies – one at the level of Masters in Religious Education and the other received a Graduate Diploma. Both spoke of how these courses had made them much more aware of the Catholic tradition, strengthened their spirituality and made them more confident in talking about religious and spiritual issues.

Despite an expressed commitment to the Catholic tradition by all the participants, there was no evidence in the data that participants had a sense of religious or spiritual superiority. A clear distinction appeared to be made between that which is different rather than separate.

Understanding religious and spiritual differences in this way was of critical significance in a multi faith society reflected in the student populations of the participants' schools. Such an understanding had the potential to generate an openness to and acceptance of different world views and faiths. This way of being open to the other and acceptance of difference was a defining characteristic of Christian spirituality.

Downey's third focal point identified spirituality "in light of contemporary events". In the interviews there were no specific questions which related to major specific contemporary events either national or international. Therefore there were no specific references made by any of the participants to public events in the contemporary culture. However several personal contemporary experiences like human conception, birth, sickness and death were spoken of as being of spiritual significance. In sharing these events and reflecting on them, there was a sense that the particular participants were engaging in something which took them to the edge of their human understanding. These experiences contained the possibility of leading them to an experience of the transcendent.

The fourth focal point was stated as "in remembrance of Jesus". In order to encompass the broad dimension of human spirituality, the interview questions were intentionally framed in wide-ranging and general terms. However it was anticipated that from those teachers educated in the Catholic tradition, immersed in and shaped by the culture of Catholic schools there would have been more distinct reference to the person of Jesus. The absence of data in this regard is

significant because as Ranson (2002) says, the specific nature of Christian spirituality “is foundationally one of personal encounter with Jesus whom we believe to be the pathway into life’s deepest meanings” (p.53)

The matrix (Appendix H) shows that data from only one participant clustered strongly around this point and was integrated into many of his responses. It was evident that Hilton’s reference point for major decisions and in particular ones relating to pedagogy was the person of Jesus.

In recalling the conversational method involved in exploring major life issues in Religious education, Hilton said,

If what I am valuing in spirituality is centred on the way Jesus did business then I am fairly regularly and maybe not always consciously thinking how did Jesus handle those sticky questions...um...how did he spend his time....um what did he get criticised for? At times was it the equivalent of you are not getting through all the content or you are not aligning it with everything?...um and if so, good...I don’t feel too uncomfortable.

Two other participants, Rebecca and Edward referred briefly and specifically to Jesus. Another recalled some of her favourite images of Jesus as being portrayed in the essence of his masculine humanity, “really strong and with hairy arms”.

A lack of reference to the person of Jesus indicated a complexity and confusion around an understanding of Jesus and what it means to be in relationship with him. As referred to in chapter 2 (2.4.5.1) the primary source documents which portray Jesus were the canonical Gospels and the letters of St. Paul. These offered different portraits of Jesus which reflected the memory and experiences of the Christian communities of the first century of Christendom (O’Collins, 2008). Scripture scholars in studying these texts, reconstructed them according to the meanings they conveyed for the early Christian communities.

The lack of data indicated the possible non-engagement of some participants in dialogue between what Groome (1991) referred to, as the two sources of Christian faith. These he named as the wisdom of personal experience and the Christian story or vision. One of the outcomes of this dialogue was that participants appropriated the Christian story to their own lives and contexts. This empowered them to embody the Christian story, to know it from within and thus witness to it through personal integrity.

The absence of data regarding the person of Jesus also found resonance with the rationale of ‘the new evangelisation’, referred to in chapter 2. The impetus for this approach which aimed to lead to a personal encounter with Christ, came from the fact that even in countries which had

Christian roots so many showed that they had not experienced an ‘encounter with the living Christ’.

“Combining action and contemplation” was Downey’s fifth focal point. This attribute was interpreted broadly as reflection on experience. While the method of the interviews enabled this process by offering time and space for focussed reflection, each participant demonstrated a capacity to be reflective of their experiences. This was evident in that the clustering around this point was strong across all participants.

In reflecting on the song *Everyday God*, Maryanne spoke of the way she combined the active part of her life with contemplation; “Loving Father is me seeing God through my mother-in-law and father-in-law, and through my husband and often I’ll see God through him no matter what and through my children”. Edward spoke of this integration in terms of an attitude of heart which flowed from contemplation into action. He said. “I think nearly everything can be done with a certain purpose or way. When you are doing something with compassion for others you have rightness of heart”.

The significance of this data was that it pointed to how teachers taking part in the study responded to the presence and experience of the transcendent. All participants indicated a capacity to reflect on their experiences especially in the light of the Christian/Catholic tradition. In doing so they said that they were able to discern the presence of God in the range and diversity of their lived experiences. The importance of this data is found in the endorsement it gave to one of the aims the Religious Education Programme, *Sharing Our Story* which is to assist the personal and professional development of teachers.

Bracken’s (2004) research on the spiritual formation of teachers supported this aim. One principal in Bracken’s study described teachers’ involvement in Religious Education as a ‘jumping off point’ for the spiritual formation and religious development of teachers. The principal noted “the connection between your own spiritual development and the teaching of Religious Education” (Bracken, 2004, p. 102).

This process of combining action and contemplation was significant for these teachers in Catholic schools because it led to the type of personal integration which was essential in the work of evangelisation. The Document *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Pope Paul IV, 1975) stated; “Modern men and women listen more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if they listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.” (n. 41)

The sixth focal point was that of “respect to charism and community”. The word charism was not used by the participants during any of the three interviews. Hughes’ (2008) study on the spirituality of teachers in Catholic schools indicated the founders of the orders who established the schools like Edmund Rice and Mary Ward were “quite frequently mentioned in the interviews and always positively”(p. 26). However there was no reference to or an interpretation of charism as being the potential energy which fuelled the fire or “fanned into a flame” the human capacity for ongoing spiritual awakening.

Catholic schools have evolved in the nature of their personnel during the last forty years and are now staffed by men and women who are not members of the traditional Religious Congregations. Despite this change, charisms understood as the gifts or ministry that shape each group, are still regarded as being alive and active in the school communities. Grace (2012) noted that in his study of Catholic school principals in English secondary inner-city schools he found these leaders drawing upon a spiritual and religious source. Although he described this personal resource as spiritual capital he aligned it with the concept of religious charism. Grace (2012) claimed this gave them a sustained sense of “mission, purpose and hope in their work.”( p.8). Furthermore Ranson (2014) considered that the emergence of what he terms “new ecclesial movements” (p. xxxvi) are giving rise to the spread of spirituality beyond the confines of Religious congregations. The presence of charism is inherent in these new communities.

The absence of data regarding the word charism, invites further exploration to determine the cause of this inability to connect with what is regarded in Catholic education as a vital source of spiritual energy and nourishment. It is proposed that an understanding of charism needs to develop which reflects the unity of life shared by all in the Christian faith community.

The seventh and final focal point was “expressed in authenticated praxis”. In the context of the study this feature was interpreted as the integration of one’s life experiences, faith tradition and spirituality. Insights from all the participants clustered strongly around this point. The data indicated that expressions of spirituality were grounded in the lived experiences of the teachers. Despite the diversity of expressions of spirituality by all the participants, these manifestations were all connected to their lived experiences.

The participants spoke of times of withdrawal from the activities of life towards silence and prayer as offering spaces to deepen and find meaning in the events of their lives. These times were not understood to be an opportunity to seek the spiritual as something outside, beyond them or in another realm

Conti's research (2002), regarding the spiritual life of teachers, noted the importance of silence. He observed that the participating teachers in his research project, gave priority to nurturing a sense of connectedness. Conti claimed that this was "the core of their spirituality" (p.203) and stated that, "the key to connection seems to be silence" (p.203).

The finding in this study of the link between contemplation and action is significant because it is in stillness, silence and reflection that one often sees patterns, links and the thread of continuity which connects what appears to be fragmented and random pieces of life experiences.

### **Section 3**

#### **5.10 Interpreting the personal, religious spirituality of the participants in a narrative format.**

This section comments on the results of one part of the research study concerned with validation of the researcher's interpretation of the personal spirituality of the participants. In the light of the analysis and interpretation of the data in chapter 4, and taking into account the interpretation of the significance of the data in this chapter, the researcher generated an interpretative narrative of the personal spirituality of each participant. This was then sent to each of the participants for their commentary on whether or not they considered that the narrative was a meaningful account of their personal spirituality generated from the interview data. This process was intended to help verify the analysis and interpretation activities of the researcher and to provide the possibility of verification from the participants themselves. How the development of the narratives was undertaken was explained in the research methodology of chapter 3, (3.11.6).

One way of developing a holistic interpretation of the personal spirituality of the participants was to develop a narrative, heuristic account of their contributions within the ideas and language of spirituality developed in the research study. The process of writing the narratives highlighted an aspect of the co-construction of meaning between the researcher and the participants. While involved in listening to the participants, transcribing the recorded interviews reading the written conversations, the researcher tried to interpret the data in a meaningful whole.

The interpretive narratives summarising the views of the participants, kept close to the actual expressions of the experiences of the participants. Their experiences showed how they understood their spirituality, how they expressed it and what links they saw between their personal spirituality and their professional practice. The constructed narratives helped to organise the teachers' own self-interpretation of their spirituality as they attempted to highlight their values, beliefs and experiences. While the participants' reflections were grounded in the

personal, the alignment of their sharing with insights from the literature provided the possibility for the personal to move into the broader context of the universal.

A thematic structure formed around the key characteristics identified in the literature, the categories developed around the axial codes and the selection of the core category of connectedness. Five of these themes provided a way to organise the content of the interpretive narratives. The first of these concerned how the participating teachers hoped to achieve their desires for their students. This was essentially through a quality of presence described in the literature as sacramental. It enabled a way of being present to the students which was grounded in the immediate but pointed to a transcendent dimension. The means for trying to develop 'presence' were evident in the second theme about an understanding of the spirit and the spiritual that was embodied and therefore integral to the lived experience.

Meaningful and real expressions of spirituality and the spiritual provided a challenge for all participants and this was evident in the third theme about the language of spirituality. The fourth theme was conversation; related to language but about the relational process where experiences of the spiritual were communicated and brought to another level of awareness. Ecclesial perspectives which included understanding of Church, were identified in the final theme. This area showed some degree of ambivalence between appreciation for the teaching and language of the tradition and a more dynamic language constructed to express the immediacy and authenticity of the lived experience.

## **5.11 The Narratives**

The following section presents the interpretive narratives of the five participants. Each one was written as an integrated short story for the individual teachers and indicates a range of perspectives on spirituality. The accounts weave together direct quotes from the each participant, relevant material from the literature on spirituality and comments from the researcher.

### **5.11.1 Hilton.**

Throughout the three interviews it was evident that Hilton was comfortable in articulating many aspects of his own spirituality. He spoke with clarity, precision and humour when describing experiences of the heart, of faith and of presence. Hilton's central understanding of spirituality was that "it is not initiated by the person, it is a response to the voice or the mystery."

***Sacramental presence.*** Hilton referred to the theological position of Karl Rahner as a way of reflecting his own understanding of mystery and God. He interpreted Rahner's grasp of

transcendence in the ordinary by claiming “that which is incomprehensibly other is also illimitably within and close and intimate”.

An important link between faith and daily life was expressed by Hilton. In reflecting on his experience in the everyday activity of teaching, he said,

when the lights go on for a kid and you know what they’re saying has spoken the truth and the truth isn’t just intellectual but it is like a sacrament, there’s a presence there, that feels like God is there.

This insight regarding a deeper form of knowing, resonated with the critical core of Rahner’s theology which is “a dynamic interplay of the ordinary and extraordinary”. (Reno, 1995, p. 198

***Embodiment of the Spirit.*** For Hilton the concept of the spirit and the spiritual appeared to be integral to his understanding of what it means to be human. His sense of spiritual embodiment seemed to ensure that he remained connected to what is real and true. In sharing his image of God he said, “it is the God on high before whom we must fall down in self- abnegating worship, that I feel most distant from”. He suggested that “it is not by reaching beyond our life that we find the spiritual but it is in taking truth to a deeper level that you touch the spiritual....stay with the conversation and take it in a pondering way”.

***Conversation.*** The primary place for Hilton to locate and experience the spirit was in the conversation. One description given by Hilton of the spirit was, “a voice of something”. He identified the conversational dynamic of Scripture, “Scripture has always been a dialogue ever since it got on the page” and noted its free flowing nature, “the spirit is in the conversation moving where it will”.

Hilton spontaneously contextualised this insight by sharing his beliefs and convictions then recalling a conversation with his Yr. 11 students.

When I talk about Jesus and what matters to Jesus, for me it is the spirit of Jesus. I know it is there in the recognition that truth is being spoken and that there is connection there that goes beyond us. It can be a question that kids ask and I can feel myself responding. I can hear myself saying something that I know is true. And I sense the kids’ reaction.

I am trying to think of a recent example. I had some Yr. 11 students discussing the basis of religious beliefs, hopes and fears. I asked the questions, ‘what do advertisers do in their appeal to intimacy? Wouldn’t it be nice to be accepted just for who you are without having to prove yourself?’ The students knew what was meant. There was some communication of truth that goes beyond what I said or did yet it is truth.

In this conversation Hilton sensed there was a moment of mutual awakening for himself and the students. By allowing the conversation to move to this deeper level, a reflective dialogue between faith, life and the strong persuasive culture of advertising developed. He identified that there was “some communication of truth that goes beyond what I said or did”.

***Language of the Spiritual.*** Hilton strongly resisted the use of clichéd or overused words to describe the spiritual. He referred to words like “dreaming”, “journey” or phrases like “hearts are burning”. The over use of these he claimed, can become a barrier and in the end mean nothing especially to students. Hilton saw his job as using “plain down to earth language”. His description of God as “the one who mucks in with people who are just struggling through life,” was an example of this aspiration.

Threaded through Hilton’s responses was this consistent approach to language. When offering his preferred image of God, he spoke of “the brother, the mate by your side, the wise parent that sleeves rolled up knows what you are going through”. In speaking of truth and the spiritual Hilton used the verb “touch”. Such a choice of word indicated an understanding of the spirit as a phenomenon that cannot be owned, possessed or stored away. It is more akin to a source that can be drawn upon rather than, harboured or controlled. In this he found resonance with Mary Magdalene’s encounter with the Risen Christ and the statement “do not cling to me” (John 17:20).

***Ecclesial Understanding.*** Hilton was deeply committed to the vision espoused by the Vatican II Council. He saw the heart of this vision residing in its inclusivity regarding who is saved. Rejoicing in the fact that many people were freed by the voice of Vatican II , he stated it was “not into something new, but something that echoed with their own reality”. Hilton was aware of what he described as “the negative tribal conformist voice” exerting a power in our current Church that is counter to the vision of the Vatican II Council. This was a source of grief for him as it inhibited meaningful experiences of liturgy and ritual, especially for young people wishing to participate in the life of the Church.

### ***Hilton’s response to the narrative***

It’s interesting reading your narrative – a bit affirming and a bit like standing in the changing room in Myer – who *is* that in the mirrors?

When we talked I remember you identifying that gratitude is pretty central to my spirituality. I’ve found your insight there very helpful. Mary Magdalene in the empty tomb you’ve cited (I rely on the translation from the Greek, which I prefer to the

somewhat disembodied Latin version), clearly embraced Jesus physically because he then says, ‘do not *keep* clinging onto me.’ I like that especially because it affirms that we should grab the Spirit while it is present and rejoice and give thanks for that fleeting intimation of divinity, and with the same gratitude let it move on.

### **5.11.2 Louise**

A strong and deep commitment to family was central to Louise’s understanding of life. Throughout the three interviews the experience of family became a catalyst for her to focus on a range of issues and enter more deeply into them. It seemed that this range of significant life issues which she shared in the interview setting, impacted strongly on Louise’s life. This could have led to her understanding of spirituality as centred in “the quest of the human spirit which is bigger, deeper, ‘more than’ the ordinary surface of life” (Guinan, 1998, p.1). She also noted that it is “in the struggles that you find strength.”

***Sacramental Presence.*** For Louise the family was the primary place of belonging where the constant mutuality of giving and receiving resided.

During the second interview Louise chose the Aboriginal art print. She spoke confidently about why she chose this particular print which for her echoed family relationships.

When Mum finished teaching at her last school they gave her a painting of the Rainbow Serpent. They said that she is the Rainbow Serpent for them. She is the mother figure for them protecting the offspring and inspiring and creating things for other people.

***Embodiment of the Spirit.*** Essentially Louise’s faith and spirituality reflected a reality that was grounded in the interpersonal and sought to be authentically connected to all of life. During the second interview Louise referred to her favourite image of Jesus with the children, sourced from the internet. She gave reasons why it meant so much to her.

“I like this particular image of Jesus I found on the internet. I chose it because it looks real. You can even see the hairs on his arms. It looks natural. To me I think I relate with what is honest about that. I think the kids do as well. There is an interest in each other and there is a sense of nurturing. He is looking into their eyes. The children look as if they want to be there”

***Conversation.*** Louise organised for her students each year a visit to a local Aged Care Home. The primary purpose of this experience was to strengthen the children’s capacity to build relationships through engaging in conversation with people of another generation. Throughout their final year in Primary school each student compiled a journal titled “This is My Life”. During the visits each student would then sit with one person from the Aged Care Home where

there was a mutual sharing of stories and memories. Louise commented that this experience “gives the children confidence in speaking and relating with others instead of being pre-occupied with texting on their mobile phones”.

When asked to identify some expression of her spirituality in the context of her work with her students, Louise spoke first of being with students in what is termed by the school as the “rest room”. This is “a specially designated room for those who may find the social complexities of the playground overwhelming”. Louise spoke of her preference for being in this space with the students. Here she was able to spend time in conversation with them encouraging each one and helping them build relationships.,

***Language of the Spiritual.*** Louise developed the language for recounting experiences that reflect the spiritual through introducing her students to good literature. Her class were engaged in reading and studying a trilogy of novels called *Once, Then and Now* by Maurice Glitzman. The central story line of the books was about survivors of the Holocaust and the alienation and disintegration resulting from this experience. The two main characters, Felix and Zelda eventually created their own new family and built an integrated unit of belonging.

In reading and studying this series of stories with her class, Louise was able to talk about and discuss the reality of the spiritual and its associated experiences with her students. She found that literature like this helped the students integrate the values of their Christian faith with their life. They talked about the characters from Glitzman’s novels especially in times of decision making in their own lives. Louise noted that the students referred to the characters in identifying the qualities needed for good leadership and mentioned them in terms of hopes and values as they wrote in their prayer journals.

Louise celebrates the Eucharistic Liturgy with her family every weekend. She appreciated the liturgical cycle of the Church year and the various emphases brought by each season. However she expressed concern that the Church was demonstrating “an inability to respond to current needs” and noted one of these in particular as being a shortage of priests. She suggested that “the solution is to ordain married men or women” and saw these as “ways forward’ but regretted that they “are not heard or acted upon”.

### ***Louise’s response to the narrative***

Reading this narrative shows me that you have done a great job on interpreting what I shared with you. I loved the use of families and the reference to Maurice Gleitzman’s books. I felt assured in reading what you wrote that the aspects of the spirit which I

expressed are centred on family because that is what I value. Thank you for making me seem much more intelligible than I feel at the moment. Being the mother now of young twins with many distractions and demands on my time, I can't believe I said things so clearly to you. I was glad to have the opportunity to share and discuss these parts of my life which I value very much.

### 5.11.3 Rebecca.

The word that Rebecca most readily identified with as a connection to the spiritual was presence. Throughout the three interviews, Rebecca readily connected with her work and presence in the classroom. She believed that spirituality was “potentially present in all human beings and for kids we have to find it” but then corrected herself by saying “we don't have to find it ...we can see it...we have to help them find it.”

*Sacramental Presence.* Rebecca spoke of a strong conviction of the constant presence of God and said, “God and the spiritual are present all the time. It is us who are not present to this reality”. She noted that things, especially the distractions of contemporary culture get in the way and “cloud our perceptions”.

It is in the art of teaching that Rebecca experienced a sense of the transcendence as she described,

even in the classroom you can tell it is not about what you said. There is a deeper form of understanding that happens in a response. As a teacher you are taken aback by that; there is a sensitivity that you have; an important part of spirituality.

During the second interview when Rebecca identified with the art print, *Starry Night* by Vincent Van Gogh she again spoke of transcendence and said,

the painting shows me there is something much larger at work. I can't describe it; something greater than myself, where I live; larger than humanity. I guess something that is infinite; something that can't be measured.

Rebecca spoke further of her connection to the cosmic scene,

I could actually see myself there. Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that it is night time. I do a lot of my thinking at night time or early in the morning and I will often come to insights or conclusions about things.

In this she seemed to convey a sense of immersion, of being at one with the scene in the art print before her. This appeared to be different from the stance of the observer who distances oneself from the real action of life. Instead Rebecca's placement of herself in the scene indicated an attitude of heart and mind which seem to render presence and intersubjectivity.

This empathetic presence was expressed by Rebecca through her understanding and compassion towards the other. She spoke of one of her Yr. 8 students who received learning support, as being very disruptive in classes and has been since the beginning of Yr. 7. With such sustained and entrenched behaviour he was categorised informally though out the school, as disruptive. When recounting her engagement with this student, Rebecca displayed sensitivity, empathy and a capacity to actually trade places with him. She stated, “that must be a terrible label to have placed on you from a school perspective”.

**Conversation.** In making an intentional commitment to try and reverse this student’s disruptive behaviour Rebecca found that she forged a connection with other teachers.

In trying to get the best out of him meant that I could not do it on my own. I needed to have dialogue with other teachers and as somebody who has prided myself on the fact that I do have all the answers and I can do this on my own, for the first time I could not. I needed people to help me; other teachers to help me, but isn’t this why we are all here. It is something that I had to learn.

As well as this being an essential learning for a young teacher to seek out the wisdom of other experienced teachers, Rebecca opened herself to others in trust. This letting go of her own sole position of authority promoted success both for the student and growth in her own spiritual capacity to see more. The result was a positive change in behaviour. Rebecca recounted,

He moved away from the distraction of the group and tried to work on his own so in that way and for the first time I saw vulnerability in that child; determination, so that meant no shouting out, no screaming, no standing up wanting to make a spectacle of himself.

Rebecca’s experience with this disruptive student showed that in vulnerable situations it is possible for something more to enter into the situation and can draw one into the new.

**Embodiment of the Spirit.** It was through recalling this experience that Rebecca referred to a felt sense in the body which confirmed and deepened the experience. She alluded to a bodily sensation akin to *Focussing*, when she recalled the significant change in the formerly disruptive behaviour of her student.

I am getting goose bumps about that; to have that label then almost inch by inch like a band aid to rip that off, to rub it off, to wipe it clean; because it was quite messy for that child in that particular class and I would pray all the time. I would say ‘Lord Jesus help me to help these children’.

**Language of the Spiritual.** It is often difficult to put words on experiences when you know there is another less tangible dimension operating. Rebecca gave an example of this in reference to a

retreat time with senior students. The teachers were endeavouring to give feedback to the students and sum up at the end of the retreat experience. Rebecca noted how difficult this was because the responses which the students gave indicated that “there was something else there”. She observed that they wanted to say more about the spiritual impact of the retreat but “didn’t have the language” to put words on their experiences. All they could say was, “you gave so much of your time, learnt so much about us”.

***Ecclesial Understanding.*** Rebecca showed a respect for the Catholic tradition and often interpreted this in the light of her Italian heritage. Catholic principles provided an important reference point in seeking answers to questions raised by students especially regarding the mission and purpose of organisations.

She expressed concern about the language of liturgy and Church Documents by saying, “the language at times I have to grapple with for my students because that can inhibit their spirituality or their access”. There was a constant challenge for her to help the students see meaning and relevance in some aspects of the tradition.

#### ***Rebecca’s response to the narrative***

In taking time to reflect on the experiences that were the subject of the interviews, I am overcome with a desire to continue the vocation of a teacher. I can appreciate the complexities of my experiences at the time. Although I often consider myself to be ‘self-reflective’, upon reading of my reactions to experiences within the classroom, I can appreciate the constant complexities that teachers are faced with. As teachers we do not take the time to reflect on these complexities, with the compassion of our faith. These interviews allowed for that time of reflection, presence and a reinforcement of my own sense of spirituality. For me this summary around each of the themes is a good account of the many ways I talked with you about my spirituality

#### **5.11.4 Edward**

The faith vision at the heart of Edward’s interaction with others was “the perception that Christ is in all of us”. He described spirituality as “a mindset or a way of perceiving things which enhances the relationship with the sacredness of life, nature and the universe”

***Sacramental Presence.*** Edward’s understanding of the human person seem to resonate with the foundational belief of Christian anthropology. He confirmed this core belief in his selection of the image during interview 2, which depicted Leunig’s cartoon. Edward gave voice to the meaning he derived from the image by saying,

It conveys the idea that when you have self-doubt there is a constant presence you can draw on. It is the space within you that is like an inner fire. You can retreat back to that inner space to be revived, but it needs to connect. It is like being on the edge of an ocean.

When asked to reflect on his experience of sensing mystery Edward briefly answered, “I’d define that as the Holy Spirit working.” The researcher then asked him to expand a little more on what he meant by the Holy Spirit. He paused for quite a while then spoke about an experience of inner personal change;

It brings about a change of mindset, a drive to step up, overcome, to feel the empathy. It relates to whatever is good in you to surface, hopefully you would act on that but it is your choice...the ah ha moment when something comes into focus for us, a frame of mind which clicks into compassion....feel the presence of something beyond normal.

In responding to the song, *Everyday God* at the beginning of interview 1, Edward referred to the words “in our searching, in our sharing” and offered the following reflection. He said,

I believe that we find spirituality...when we have...whatever reason we have...a resonance with thing coming together...you can feel that presence there. Try and calm yourself so that you can get in touch with that.

**Embodiment.** Edward’s understanding of spirituality was anchored in his lived reality. His perception that it is, “about being properly human” located spirituality at the centre of all that is human. He noted the dynamic nature of the spiritual when he said “spirituality is always changing but there are some constants.”

In relating with his students in the classroom Edward endeavoured to create a culture where all students became aware of their fundamental equality. He shared with them in a way that was accessible to their understanding, the fundamental Christian truth that each person carried an imprint of the divine. Edward says,

in speaking of that with the children, like naming that in the classroom...um getting them to see they are all, what is the word...more than valued...um they should all be honoured as individuals of Christ.

This ultimate understanding provided an anchor and a secure, consistent pathway for conversations about behaviours and practices which worked to “mend relationships that are so easily broken within a class”. Edward worked to achieve this through,

speaking with the children one on one about how they are, how they are relating to each other and getting them to see the worth of each other, also getting them to see the value that I see in them for whoever they are.

*Language of the Spiritual.* Edward used metaphorical language to describe the action and function of the spirit. He spoke about the Holy Spirit “being like a sieve.....what is left is good...the essence of the spirit.” His approach to language and expressions of the spiritual were best done in an informal way. Edward noted that “Jesus would tell a story and talk about it in a way that wasn’t orchestrated or choreographed. In the same way Edward believed “that prayers can be spontaneous and don’t have to be well worded or perfect.”

*Ecclesial Understanding* Allowing his sense of the spiritual to expand and change, afforded Edward a clarity regarding the separateness but interconnectedness of religion and spirituality. He believed in the personal uniqueness of spirituality and that, “our Catholic tradition gives us a scaffolding to stand on in terms of our own spirituality”. For Edward there was a hierarchical order in the aspects of religion and that the Church is not an end in itself.

He said that “faith and spirituality exist above the institution of doctrine. We have a system that lifts us up to somewhere else”. Echoing the words of St. Paul in his letter to the Romans, Edward claimed that, “the love of Christ does not need to be a written law”. He noted, “through our Church we tend to achieve this. Other people might believe that the Church is where it stops. The Church is like the launch us up”.

### *Edward’s response to the narrative*

Thank you for your thoughts and the effort you went to in picking my own responses apart. It was really interesting to read about myself and especially as I’m referred to as an alias. To be honest I was sceptical in how I would react to your interpretation of my concept of spirituality. Not so much due to your interpretation but I thought that I may not relate to my responses anymore.

Since my interviews with you I have come a long way – personally, professionally and spiritually. My time in the school where I did my first interview with you was difficult as I was in the middle of competing my masters of RE (which was a consuming task) as well as being a very busy father of very young children. Since moving to my new school I feel much more empowered and I believe I have also matured spiritually.

What was affirming for me as I read through your narrative, is that my words from my interviews still ring true. My confidence in the Church may have grown but the relationship between spirituality and the institution of the Church I think remains. Seeking Christ in the individual remains a significant focus for me in terms of reaching students. It is interesting that you can apply the metaphor of the sieve to focussing on a student. If you can sieve through the behaviour, the language or whatever is the immediate context of the situation, you may be able to reach the person underneath – or connect with their spirit.

To finish I am humbled by your work in deconstructing my words. It has been a great experience in itself to reflect on my own words but through the careful study of another. Thank you for your efforts and for giving me the opportunity to be part of your study.

### **5.11.5 Maryanne**

Throughout the three interviews Maryanne demonstrated an integrated sense of her Catholic faith enabling her to experience God as the changeless one amidst the constancy of change in life. She believed that the “quest of the human spirit is bigger, deeper than the ordinary surface of life.” Maryanne said that “we talk about God is everywhere but the main thing is, he is within us.” Her sharing and insights indicated that she perceived the spiritual to be potentially present in all human beings and functioning positively.

***Sacramental Presence.*** Maryanne offered an insight into her understanding of sacramental presence in the claim, “God in the Church setting and God in everyday life – one is not better than the other. It is just different. One doesn’t take precedence over the other”. This sense of the unchanging presence of God despite the change in physical location, reflected something of the integrated spirituality which guided and sustained Maryanne in the diverse aspects of her life.

A song by Leona Lewis was chosen by Maryanne for a prayer time with her staff colleagues. She was aware this song did not specifically mention God, but Maryanne knew that in listening to the lyrics “no matter how hard it gets, I’ll always be there for you,” you realise that there was a veiled reference to the unconditional love and eternal presence of God. Maryanne said that when she chose that song “it was how I felt that God is. It doesn’t mention God but is obviously deeply spiritual. Some people will think of it as their partner but when I listen to it, I think of God”.

***Embodiment of the Spirit.*** Being pregnant and giving birth, gifted Maryanne with contentment and a sense of completion which led her to an experience of something greater and beyond.

When Patrick was born the doctor didn’t even have to say it was a boy...I knew...and when I held him it was this overwhelming feeling of satisfaction. I just had this overwhelming sense there was something else there.

Maryanne claimed that motherhood was a definite source for strengthening her confidence. She appeared to embody a maternal expression of spirituality.

This expression was not confined to certain times and aspects of her life. Her identity as a loving mother to three boys overflowed spontaneously and sincerely to the children in her class. She said,

I love coming to work every day, just seeing the looks on the kids' faces. I feel like a mother to 26. I can remember getting out of the car on the first day and opened the car door and said 'God be with me for this whole year.'

Maryanne's father-in-law was a significant source of inspiration to her. For her, he embodied a wholeness of spirit which found so many expressions in acts of selflessness and goodness. Maryanne described him as 'the sort of person who would just give and give and give....he looks at both sides...he is always there...things he knows will put more stress on our lives he will do for us'.

His sudden and untimely death was an encounter with the most profound mystery of life leading to a deep experience of loss and grief for Maryanne. "Probably the hardest thing I have ever gone through is losing my father-in-law". However she held the conviction that "he lives on...as hard as it is, he still lives in us". Through the death of her father-in-law, Maryanne was convinced that the human spirit is bigger, deeper than the ordinary surface of life. That she said "was definitely not evident to me prior to his passing".

**Conversation** Using the touchstone "WWJD", (What Would Jesus Do) as her central point of reference, Maryanne entered into a reflective conversation either with her own biological children or the children in her class and broader school environment. This gave her a point of reference around agreed upon values expressed in the Gospels. It assisted the children to reflect on their behaviour within an inspirational and moral framework.

**Language of the Spiritual.** In the event of death verbal communication is severed between the living and the dead. The language of symbol becomes a source for encountering connectedness in a new way. Maryanne reflected on an experience shortly after her father-in-law's death wherein an interpretation of an extraordinary occurrence in the physical world carried important meaning for her. She recalled,

the night he passed away at ten past three in the morning, we sat with him.....so we were lucky to be with him right to the end. And that night I remember going upstairs and looking out the window and the moon was bright red. I have never seen anything like it. I said to John, 'look at that, Dad is telling us he got there' and then within a half an hour it went normal.

**Ecclesial understanding.** Maryanne spoke of her commitment to practising her Catholic faith by participating in Mass with her family each week. She saw these times as being "one on one with God." Her children (three sons) know it is one of the regular weekend family practices along with their soccer and other recreations. Maryanne realised that many families are not connected

to Church. She said “we all went to Patrick’s reconciliation last week and looking around I noticed that there weren’t a lot of full families there.”

She expressed her desire that her sons continue “to have that one on one and be close to God.” Maryanne realised that aspects of Church liturgy do not always engage her children; “I can see that sometimes they may have turned off especially with some sermons. It takes a lot for us to keep turned on.” However despite all this she remains faithful and committed to the communal practice of her faith.

### ***Maryanne’s response to the narrative***

I was very honoured when asked by Patty to assist her in the research on exploring the spirituality of teachers in Catholic schools. My faith is very important to me and I feel proud to have been able to share this during the interview process. The process was a spiritual and moving exercise. It is wonderful to read over the narrative which reminded me of the several discussions we had. I really enjoyed explaining my beliefs and feelings and expressing the importance of God’s presence in my life”

## **5.12 Discussion of particular themes in the narratives.**

The following section discusses the significance of the participants’ narratives and indicates some of the meaning which are contained in these accounts of personal understandings of spirituality. For the purpose of this discussion, the content of the narratives is synthesised to form a unified approach to the five themes. As with the previous sections in the chapter, a concise summary statement precedes the discussion of each theme.

### **5.12.1 Sacramental Presence**

*Experiences of sacramental presence allowed teachers to be aware of something extraordinary in the midst of ordinary classroom encounters.*

Sacramentality has the potential to infuse spirituality with a Christian dimension that is central to the life and culture of the Catholic school. Therefore this theme of sacramentality was significant in the exploration of spirituality within the context of a Catholic religious framework. Essential to sacramentality was the concept of grace which energised the dynamic interplay between the ordinary and the extraordinary. It was “a graced way of parting the mystery of our complicated lives and of perceiving God at the heart of all creation” (O’Leary, 2008, p. 31).

The ordinary daily work of teaching in the classroom gained added significance and meaning when student engagement and responses were interpreted in the light of a sacramental vision. One participant identified a student’s response with the actual word ‘sacramental’; “when the

lights go on for a kid and you know that the truth they have spoken isn't just intellectual but it is like a sacrament" (Hilton). Another reflected the concept of sacramentality in terms of "a deeper form of understanding that happens in a response" (Rebecca). Cohesion, seen as one of the features of spirituality, was identified by another participant as an indicator of sacramental presence. He said, "when we have...whatever reason we have...a resonance with things coming together, you can feel that presence there" (Edward).

These statements around sacramentality are significant because they indicate how teachers perceived another dimension to their work. They engaged what Hanvey (2005) called their "sacramental imagination" which is "the eye of the Christian heart" (p.9). In doing this they expressed their spirituality in an existential way which enabled them to "find God in a new place" (Tacey, 2003, p.193). Furthermore a broader sacramental way of experiencing the presence of God provided the necessary bridge between what Lennan (2005) described as the 'institutional church' and the 'real church' (p. 405).

### **5.12.2 Embodiment of the Spirit.**

*In the context of teaching in a Catholic school, embodiment of the Spirit was about each person being what he or she proclaimed. It was manifested in personal authenticity and expressed in relationships characterised by sincerity and compassion.*

Embodied spirituality was about gaining spiritual perspectives on culture and experience from the standpoint of bodily being in the world. It was the opposite of what is found in 'other worldly' experiences of spirituality which are experienced as being alienating. One participant put words on the experience of a remote God; "It is the God on high that I feel most distant from" (Hilton). The images in the song, *Everyday God* presented God as an existential reality who can be "seen, touched and heard" (1 John 1:1) through the ground of human experience. Therefore spirituality is corporeal because "we live in our bodies" (Roccosalvo, 2005, p. 60).

This finding related to the ontological thrust of Shared Christian Praxis. The method's dialectical process was directed towards bringing personal understanding and change in the subjects so that in the being of their humanity they embody the values of justice, love, mercy, compassion and peace (Groome, 1991). There appeared to be a synergy between what the teachers said and did and who they were as persons. This view of embodied spirituality opened up the possibility for the five participating teachers to live the ongoing incarnation of Christ in the way that St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) imagined and expressed in her prayer, *Christ has no body now but ours*.

Significantly this finding also pointed to the integrative and connective features of spirituality. It was the body which unified the spiritual and physical because although they were seen as opposites, in the body they reside together. The Christian viewpoint sees the event of the incarnation as pivotal (John: 1:14) wherein God became embodied, unified the divine and the human. It was in the ordinariness of God's humanity that the participants' experienced authenticity.

Louise said that for her the spirit of Jesus was in the reality of his humanity manifested in his body; "My favourite image of Jesus is one that I found on the internet. It even shows the hairs on his arms. He is looking into the eyes of the children. They look as if they really want to be there." Hilton reflected the same reality of embodied ordinariness when he spoke about "the God who mucks in with people who are just struggling through the ordinariness of everyday life.... who is the brother, the mate by your side, the wise parent that sleeves rolled up knows what you are going through."

A further aspect of the 'embodiment' of spirituality was evident in participant views which did not personally identify that which was 'within their own self. The other persons, usually the students or staff members who were the recipients of the lived expressions of the spirit, acted like mirrors reflecting the Christian spirituality lived and expressed by the teachers. As teachers focussed on their students, it was the students' responses which gave them some insight into embodied spirituality. Recalling the final session of a Year 12 retreat, Rebecca said "we were just trying to sum it up but we didn't have the language. The kids said 'you gave so much of your time, learnt so much about us'. Rebecca noted that it was a heightened time of openness and acceptance of others and concluded with" the interactions that were at play there indicated that there was something else there – bigger than all of us"

### **5.12.3 Conversation**

*Conversation provided the necessary flexibility and openness which allowed the forming of personal perspectives. It was an integrative process drawing on and weaving together experiences of life, culture and faith.*

This finding around conversation was significant because of the key role it played in symbolic interactionism. In this process knowledge was constructed in the interaction between human beings and their world (Crotty, 1998). Conversation was also essential in the inquiry based pedagogy used by the researcher in the study. It was also important in the classroom, with colleagues and with the parents of the students.

Hilton's expression of his intentionality regarding the importance of conversation, was a practical example of constructionist epistemology. Furthermore it emphasised the importance of conversation as one of the major processes in the integration of life, culture and faith.

“In terms of pedagogy and the learning environment I try to get things to a point in the classroom where what dominates is the conversation.....and wherever the kids feel able to explore their thinking and their feeling and to find points where they can integrate those. I try to give them a sense that this is an ongoing reality and to find moments where I can say I am learning this or I am thinking about that at the moment or I am changing the way I am thinking about that; not for them to take on what I am thinking about but to get the sense that as they grow and as they become adults keep thinking, keep trying to put things together. Keep trying to integrate life”

An added significance of this finding was that it demonstrated the fluid nature of the learning conversation in the forming of perspectives which are as Charon (2001) proposed an absolute part of the filtering of everyone's existence. These perspectives allowed the students to interact, define situations and act accordingly to what was going on in the present moment (O'Donoghue, 2007).

Of further significance in this finding was that conversation was at the heart of Movement 4 in Shared Christian Praxis (Groome, 1991). The movement is constructed around, “a dialogue by participants between their own stories/visions and a Christian Story/Vision that was shared and tested in the teaching/learning community.” (Groome, 1991, p. 251). This focussed conversational process, Groome proposed, was analogous to “Lonergan's notion of judgement, to Piaget's equilibration between assimilation and accommodation and to Gadamer's 'fusion of horizons' with the intent of practical wisdom” (Groome, 1991, p.251).

Hughes (2008) noted in his study on the spirituality of teachers in Catholic schools, the importance of dialogue and conversation in the process of ongoing spiritual development. He suggested that conversation was the way to unlock the appropriate processes which connected with the spiritual journey of each individual teacher. In this way of mutuality “the school may also be enriched by some of the insights and understandings that its teachers bring” (Hughes, 2008, p. 40).

#### **5.12.4 Language of the Spiritual**

*Language of the spiritual described the awakening experienced in the interior self, often referred to as the heart.*

The significance of this finding was that it indicated the similarities and differences between language which communicated experiences of the physical and the spiritual. A general function of language was to name and express what was identified by the physical senses. Language of the spiritual operated in a similar way in that it named and expressed what the spiritual senses awakened. However, Underhill (2002) proposed that generally spiritual senses lie dormant because of an overriding preoccupation with the physical senses stimulated by the visible world. Conti (2002) contended that there are aspects of current society and educational processes which do not foster education of the emotions and the spirit.

Hughes (2008) recorded in the findings of his study that one third of the 60 teachers who participated, spoke about “being in nature, perhaps bushwalking, or being with animals” (p.22) as sources for nurturing their spirituality. Several of these added the dimension of solitude; time to be alone in nature. Here there was a quality of stillness and silence which awakened the spiritual senses.

All participants in this current study appreciated times which provided opportunities for personal reflection. These ranged from being in the early morning mountain mist, walking by the sea, gazing at the night sky or in the solitude of the car. Sounds of nature heard in the bird calls, laughter and song, running water, crashing waves, rustling leaves, all helped the participants to rest their active minds and engage with the stillness. The experiences were described in phrases and metaphors like “that draws me,”(Hilton); “it is like being on the edge of the ocean”(Edward); “beginning, unfolding.....the enduring notion of God.....you go on a journey and you don’t know where it will take you” (Rebecca).

These above quotations showed that metaphors and images were often used to describe an experience of the spiritual. For Gadamer, “thinking - at its deepest level was metaphorical – poetic, not logic-formal” (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p. 123).

When incorporating the images and metaphors into the language of the spiritual they needed to rise out of deep thinking and be authentic to one’s experience. Metaphorical language needed to be formed from one’s personal experience, and remain connected to it. This was important in the findings of the study around language. Hilton noted that when this did not happen such language was reduced to jargon. As a response to the images in *Everyday God* he said,

It’s not because of anyone of those words but it is the overuse of a lot of them that puts people off; and I have to find other words that don’t turn them off. It is in the amount of spiritual material especially written for primary kids.... it is also the language that kids

cut off from.....in the end it means nothing.....it ends up being a barrier.....words like journey.....kids turn off.....another journey. My job is using plain down to earth language...at times too banal.

Significant in this finding around language was the challenge to maintain the constancy of Catholic doctrine and tradition yet express it in a language that was emerging and evolving.

#### **5.12.5 Ecclesial Understanding.**

*A positive ecclesial understanding aimed to integrate the teaching of the Catholic tradition and the movement of the Spirit in the hearts of the participants who were members of the Catholic faith community*

This final theme focussed on the Catholic faith and culture and reflected the impact that the Catholic tradition had on the participants' perspectives on spirituality. It also indicated the relationship each participant had with the Catholic faith tradition which by reason of the employment conditions in a Catholic school, every teacher was committed to foster.

An important aspect of this finding was that it uncovered each participant's ecclesial understanding which informed his or her spiritual perspective. It is premised on the teaching from the Catholic tradition which emphasised "that each believer has through the Spirit, the *sensus fidei*, the capacity both to identify what constitutes authentic faith and to choose ways of acting that will embody that faith authentically" (Lennan, 2005, p. 403). Accenting this vital human dimension of Church resonated with the ecclesial perspective of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century mystic, Julian of Norwich. She envisaged the Church first and foremost as a gathering of 'graced people' not an institution. (Hide, 2001, p. 212).

While there was commonality in each participant's commitment to and support for the teachings of the Catholic Church, each one presented different reasons for their continued allegiance. Significant in this finding was that the age range of the participants indicated that they experienced insight, ecclesial meaning and impetus from various situations and at different points in time.

Hilton referred to the vision espoused by the Vatican II Council, (1962 – 1964). He found a deep connection in the gift of freedom that so many experienced from the theology which underpinned the Documents of the Vatican II Council. Recognising that the content of these documents touched the core of what it means to be fully human, Hilton said, "It was not into something new, but something that echoed with their own reality"

For Rebecca it was the Catholic principles which provided an important framework in seeking answers to questions raised by students. In this similar role of support structure, Edward referred to the concept of scaffolding developed from the work of the educational theorist, Vygotsky (1896-1934). Edward's insight, that "our Catholic tradition gives us a scaffolding to stand on in terms of our own spirituality" reflected Tacey's (2003) claim regarding the evolving nature of religious tradition.

While God may be eternal, religion as a cultural response to God, is necessarily subject to time and place and cannot escape these realities -one of which is change (p.34).

The discussion of findings in Gowdie's, (2011) study offered a creative response to this need for ongoing change. She adopted the term "traditioning" (p.315), to describe "an intentional approach that seeks to faithfully hold the essence of traditional ways in new and imaginative ways for a contemporary audience" (p.315).

Gowdie (2011) noted the urgency in finding this new way by referring to,

"the current dissonance between members of Catholic school communities and 'church' resulting in the lack of connection and attendant meaning making of traditional symbols, concepts, rituals and other expressions of Catholic culture" (p. 315).

A specific example of this lack of connection around the language of liturgy and Church documents was expressed by Rebecca; "the language at times I have to grapple with for my students because that can inhibit their spirituality or their access."

Louise noted the church's inability to respond to current needs especially in terms of "shortage of priests." She quickly offered a practical solution which was to ordain married men and women but regretted the fact that suggestions "are not heard or acted upon." This experience of one's voice not being heard in the faith community to which one is committed engenders feelings of powerlessness and alienation. Ambivalent feelings towards belonging became apparent.

In their responses the participants were seeking to give authentic answers offering insight into the ecclesial perspectives of their spirituality. These responses were governed by the following two interrelated factors identified by Lennan (2005).

First, openness to the tradition of faith which comes to me as 'another', as something I did not form, and something that I can appreciate and understand only if I receive it as gift that is beyond my control and manipulation; and secondly, sensitivity to the movement in my own heart of the Spirit who is also the heart of the community's faith tradition (p.403) .

Lennan (2005) described these factors as distinct but not in contradiction to each other and noted that discernment is the task and process of unifying these movements. This quality of discernment was evident in the conversational style of pedagogy adopted by teachers. In conversation and sharing, teachers and students deepened the truth of the tradition. Examples of ongoing discernment as a spiritual perspective were revealed by the participants.

Hilton honoured the experience of the students and interpreted this as the Spirit moving in their hearts. In reflecting on the influences which shaped his spirituality he included his students and recalled a specific example.

One girl summed up salvation one day in Year 8. She is here in Year 12 now. We were talking about what it means that Jesus' death and resurrection saved us and what did it mean that he overcame death and brought new life and she said in the parlance of those kids 'it is like he really owned his death' and I said 'O my God! Yes.' When those things come up there is just as much wisdom as I might gain from a thousand page treatise.

### **5.13 Summary and conclusion**

The findings discussed in this research study pointed to the intrinsic nature of spirituality and the way it was enhanced regarding ultimate meaning and purpose in the Christian/Catholic tradition. The discussion also showed that the participants' understandings and expressions of spirituality were linked to many aspects of the characteristics of spirituality which were identified in the literature on spirituality in chapter 2. These links are documented in a table in Appendix J which aims to show the congruence between features of spirituality, characteristics of Christian spirituality and the data collection

All five teachers who were part of the study articulated their personal understandings of spirituality. They also identified the spiritual dimension as it linked to and was expressed in their work of teaching. The findings showed the importance of attentive presence to the persons and situations and "indicated a depth and capacity for insight and connection" (Gowdie, p. 355). However as Gowdie (2011), noted "this is not always captured in the language of evangelisation and ecclesial referencing" (p. 355).

The following chapter presents the conclusions of the study and provides recommendations resulting from the findings. It also considers the limitations of the study and the significance of the research.

# Chapter Six - Conclusions and Recommendations

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## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights and summarises the principal findings of the study and considers the potential significance of this research. It presents and speculates on what might be relevant follow up developments in theory and practice, especially with respect to the focus on spirituality within the ongoing professional learning of teachers in Catholic schools. While there has been considerable research on adult spirituality, part of the originality in this contribution has been a detailed, ethnographic, biographical research method.

## 6.2 Main conclusions drawn from the study

The study was primarily concerned with the phenomenon of religious spirituality and how it was expressed by individuals working in Catholic schools in Australia. In particular, it focused on analysing the religious spirituality of teachers who were overtly committed to membership of the Catholic Church and to having a Catholic religious spirituality. It is important to note that such religious lay-staff are not fully representative of the wide range of levels of commitment to the Catholic faith and expressions of spirituality. Hence there is a need to see how the findings of the study would be likely to compare with the results of a similar study of staff members who had a more secular, relatively non-religious spirituality.

Chapter 4 provided an extensive analysis of subjective accounts of 5 teachers' personal religious spirituality. It was shown in that chapter, and especially in the discussion of the meaning and significance of the findings in chapter 5, that the teachers' idiosyncratic accounts of their own spirituality were consistent with the characteristics of contemporary spirituality that were explored and summarised in the literature review in chapter 3. Their views of how their personal spirituality was linked with their professional practice was also reported.

Common to the 5 accounts of the participants' personal spirituality was the 'connection with experience'. Spirituality for them was understood as a particular dimension of the human experience and not separate from it. Their understanding of spirituality was not defined by 'boundaries'. The diversity of the examples of personal spirituality they provided, combined with a range of expressed emotions, indicated that the teachers understood spirituality as something which permeated every aspect of their lives.

As anticipated, and in accord with the selection of participants who professed an overt Catholic religious spirituality, all of the teachers recognised that their spirituality had been influenced by the Catholic religious tradition. Some paralleled their experience with that of other faith traditions and showed a capacity to be inclusive of difference.

The findings showed that all participants when talking about their own spirituality referred often and spontaneously to their students in a variety of ways. When they were seeking examples of particular spiritual experiences they referred either to their family or their students. There seemed to be a seamless connection between the lived spirituality of the teachers and the way it was expressed in their professional practice.

In addition, the study identified a number of key issues about religious spirituality in contemporary secular society that are significant for Catholic school systems in Australia – systems concerned with enhancing the spirituality of school staff as well as with the task of educating young people in spirituality.

### **6.2.1 Tension between spirituality as primarily a religious construct and spirituality as an intrinsic part of being human**

Religious spirituality is generated and manifested through the interaction between a *cultural religious overlay* and the *basic human spirituality* of the individual person (Rossiter, 2012). For those who respond to a particular religious overlay (or overlays), the cultural religious tradition can inform and influence individuals' spiritual orientation, their values, beliefs and behaviour. Specifically *religious* spirituality is therefore readily identifiable within the individual's basic human spirituality through explicit links with the religious tradition. Just how much a religious tradition actually enhances or diminishes an individual's basic human spirituality would vary from individual to individual.

By contrast, a relatively non-religious spirituality is exhibited or implied in the thinking and behaviour of individuals without any links with a religious tradition. In other words, their basic human spirituality remains. It is not as immediately evident or identifiable as religious spirituality because of the absence of overt religious identifications – but it remains especially in the implied values embedded in the individual's thinking and behaviour.

Previous recent studies of spirituality, as well as the self-evident secularisation in a culture like that of Australia, have shown that the spirituality of many people is no longer referenced to formal religion as much as was the case in the past when the society was more overtly religious. A relatively *non-religious spirituality* is therefore becoming much more common, even the

cultural norm. Fewer people are indexing their spirituality to formal religion. And even people who consider themselves religious may have a less clear indexing of their personal spirituality with their religious tradition.

This situation then creates a significant problem for a religious school which sets out firstly to function as a type of ‘community of faith’ and which is committed to educating young people in spirituality – especially in giving them comprehensive access to and familiarity with their cultural religious tradition.

This study which focused specifically on individuals who professed an overt Catholic religious spirituality showed that the emphasis in their spirituality was special attention given to the experiential and psychological dimensions of their basic human spirituality. The religious reference points for their spirituality were certainly not lacking. They were conscious of the importance of their religious traditions; but they showed that the inner, personal dimensions to their religious spirituality were more important than overt religious identifications. This is particularly significant when it comes to addressing the real situation of Catholic schools where it is likely that the majority of staff members do not have a strong or overt Catholic religious spirituality. It is presumed that the spirituality of the teachers selected for this study would not be typical of the spirituality of the majority of teachers in Catholic schools. Two important conclusions can be drawn.

Firstly, the special attention given by participants to personal and psychological dimensions of the spirituality is particularly significant in that these dimensions would in all likelihood be similar to the dimensions of personal spirituality for staff members who were not particularly religious and who had a more secular, relatively non-religious spirituality. So one might speculate that in reality there may not be such a significant difference in the personal spirituality of school staff – whether they be ‘church-going’ or not. The similarities in personal spirituality between the religious and the relatively non-religious staff may in practice be more important and relevant than the differences that relate to overt referencing of spirituality to Catholicism. If this is the case, then it warrants further research like that done in this study but focused on the spirituality of relatively non-religious staff.

Secondly, there are significant potential implications for discourses about Catholic school staff spirituality and about what it means to *educate* young people in spirituality. As noted in the literature review in chapter 2, the normative documents on Catholic schooling tend to presume that all Catholic school staff either have, or should have, an overt Catholic religious spirituality.

But it is proposed that the catholicity of Catholic schools will not necessarily be compromised by acknowledging that in the natural situation of Catholic schools there is considerable variation in the relatively overt religious character of the personal spirituality of school staff. That the school should continue to offer staff professional development programs that offer potential enhancement of personal religious spirituality is not in question. But, in the long run, it may be more realistic and ultimately more effective for the Catholic school's role in educating in spirituality not to overemphasise an exclusive or an overt Catholic religious spirituality. This is a contentious issue that will inevitably be difficult for Catholic school authorities to deal with. But the findings of this study could be referred to as evidence that might be taken into account when trying to address this question constructively.

Also, the findings in this study would suggest that the ongoing clarification of what it means to *educate* young people in spirituality and in their own religious tradition will remain a crucial issue for Catholic schools, because there is considerable flux in understandings and experience of what spirituality actually entails. Also, there is need for more acknowledgment within the official discourse of Catholic schooling that educating in spirituality is a far more complex process than simply trying to get pupils to imitate the religious spirituality of the teachers. Crawford & Rossiter (2006) proposed that in educating young people in meaning, identity and spirituality, in the formal classroom setting, the primary content should never be the teachers' own personal spirituality or idiosyncratic religious faith. Rather, these dimensions should only be referred to if and when they can serve educationally as relevant content to religion lessons along with the standard syllabus content. Complementing what can be done within the formal classroom curriculum there would no doubt be opportunities for enhancing young people's spirituality through the culture and religious practices of the school, and also to some extent as influenced by the quality of the personal relationships between staff and students.

## **6.2.2 Diversity of religious commitment and faith practices within the Catholic School**

This point follows up some of the issues raised in 6.3.1. There is a natural expectation that within the faith based setting of the Catholic school that shared meaning around spirituality would be established. However the changing spiritual landscape from overtly religious to a spirituality that is more individualistic, subjective and personal makes the issues around shared meaning, understanding and language problematic. This study showed that Catholic school staff who maintained an overt commitment to Catholicism and to educating young people in Catholicism were not easily categorised as 'traditional' Catholics. What it means to be a committed Catholic is in flux as related to changing culture and secularisation as noted in 5.3.1.

It cannot be assumed that the language of people's own personal spirituality will be aligned in an obvious or overt way with the formal language of the Catholic spiritual tradition. This study has shown the diversity of understandings of religious spirituality even in a very small sample of Catholic school teachers.

This discussion suggests that ongoing dialogue and further clarification will be needed within Catholic education to try to address this issue.

### **6.2.3 The role of spirituality in the synthesis of culture, faith and life.**

The religious spirituality of teachers is crucial to the faith/culture integrative task of the Catholic school. Spirituality has the capacity to connect what initially appears to be disparate areas of knowledge and experience. The findings of this study would suggest that teachers in Catholic schools have an important spiritual role in the educational process and that this educative role would be enhanced if the teachers have a coherent understanding of their own personal spirituality and how this relates to the religious tradition.

It would therefore seem appropriate that teachers in Catholic schools consciously try to activate and draw on their spiritual capacity along with their other professional capabilities which contribute to their professional work as teachers. Attempts to develop and clarify language for talking about personal spirituality will therefore be important for the progression of the education in spirituality to which Catholic schools are committed. This is an urgent task in times where there remains ambiguity about what spirituality is and how it might be expressed.

The significance of this study as far as this issue is concerned is that it has provided original data about the idiosyncratic and personal expression of what a religious spirituality means for individual teachers. More of this sort of empirical research is needed to show how personal and psychological dimensions of spirituality need to be taken into account in educational discourse about spirituality. And this applies both to the role of the Catholic school in enhancing the personal religious spirituality of its staff as well as to its role in educating young people in spirituality.

### **6.2.4 Context as a significant factor in clarifying the complexity of personal spirituality**

As illustrated in the previous two chapters and in the discussion above, personal spirituality that is experienced and expressed in a contemporary secular society is predominantly personal, more internalised and therefore difficult to identify – and usually less overtly indexed to formal religion.

The emphasis on the personal and the psychological dimensions to spirituality in this study would suggest that a better, more informative and more helpful discourse about spirituality in Catholic schools would be enhanced if more attention was paid to the four areas of spirituality identified and studied in the literature review of this study. The first contextual area grounded spirituality as an innate human potential, present in every individual. This provided a broad, solid and relatively unchanging human base on which to build an understanding of spirituality. The second contextual area traced the development of Christian spirituality through the past 20 centuries. Such an historical sketch showed that in the particular contexts of former times, there was a difference of emphasis regarding spiritual values and practices.

The third area of spirituality study would be current perspectives of the Catholic Church on spirituality, as evident in the documents from the Second Vatican Council, especially the positions articulated in *Gaudium et spes* and *Lumen Gentium* which signalled significant shifts in theological perspectives that had a bearing on spirituality. The call to engagement with the world and “the universal call to holiness” endorsed the presence and experience of the spiritual in the ordinariness of everyday life. This opening out to the world with the intention of “reading the signs of the times” provided the possibility that the boundaries, constructed by the more traditional concepts of religious spirituality were giving way to more fluid, psychological understandings of spirituality and its role in the living of “life to the full”.

The development of new theories in Religious education was influenced by this change in theological perspective as well as by other historical, social and educational factors. A notable one, referred to throughout this study was that of Shared Christian Praxis authored by Groome (1991). This method aimed to awaken and identify the spiritual dimension in every aspect of the human experience. Such an approach acknowledges how spirituality is an innate human potential.

The final contextual area focussed on the teacher in the Catholic school. It considered that personal spirituality in an educational setting showed teachers to be inner directed who embraced teaching with a sense of a response to a calling. Durka (2002) developed this perspective in her writings suggesting that those who embraced teaching as a vocation, derived their teaching identity from an inner motivation that enabled them to shape their roles rather just fit into them

Studying the literature in the above four areas, showed that spirituality was a complex phenomenon which eluded strict definition. The nature of spirituality meant that it could only be

fully identified and verified in particular contexts. The literature pointed to a range of features which related to identifying spirituality and expressions of the spiritual.

### **6.2.5 Aspects of spirituality that need ongoing attention both in research and in professional development programs in spirituality**

This study provides evidence that could support a call for more research and professional development attention given to key aspects of contemporary spirituality. These are;

- Relationality and belonging
- Listening, especially to the voices of teachers
- Ways of identifying the spiritual
- Bridging the divide between spirituality and religion
- The problem with language in the expression of spirituality

#### ***6.2.5.1 Relationality and belonging***

Relationality was shown to be a significant aspect of teachers' perceptions and experiences of spirituality. Connected to relationality were experiences of belonging. It had a unifying effect in the way it brought together the disparate pieces regarding things, events, other people, self and God. Gowdie (2011) noted the significant place that relationality had in the evangelising mission of the school. She suggested that shifting the focus from dogma to relationship opened a new way forward for the development of meaningful contemporary religious spirituality.

#### ***6.2.5.2 Listening to the voices of teachers***

The study identified a gap in the research on the spirituality of teachers. This was interpreted as an absence of listening directly to educators themselves, in regard to how they identified and interpreted spirituality in their own lives. The study provided insights into how teachers recognised and articulated the spiritual dimension in their own lives. As one participant noted: "It has been a great experience in itself to reflect on my own words but through the careful study of another" (Edward).

For teachers in Catholic schools, the normative view of the system was that religious beliefs and expressions of spirituality, needed to be lived and expressed in an interdependent way.

#### ***6.2.5.3 Recognition of the spiritual***

With the growth of secularisation, the religious cultural overlay which once provided many of the identifying features of spirituality, is diminished in its influence and in some instances it has no

impact at all. New ways of recognising and naming spirituality have been referred to in this study. This is particularly important for the leadership and management of Catholic school education.

The conceptual structure for personal spirituality developed in this study could assist with ongoing interpretive work in the complex area of spirituality. It has the capacity to contribute towards gaining a shared understanding and an objectivity in discerning personal experiences of the spiritual, which occur subjectively in individuals.

#### ***6.2.5.4 Bridging the divide between religion and spirituality***

The study's focus primarily on spirituality, sought to place spirituality in what might be regarded as its rightful context. This was in terms of its capacity for human awakening and increased awareness. Meaning was personally or communally constructed by some Catholic teachers with reference to formal religion – for example, especially with reference to Christian scripture.

When basic human spirituality and religion are discussed and understood in terms of their complementary qualities, there is a stronger possibility that their interdependent nature will be recognised. Sacramentality provided the opportunity for a dialogue between religion and personal spirituality. This concept is commonly regarded as a religious construct related to ritual and ceremony. However a broader understanding of sacramentality which permeates all of life, provided a way of bringing together the human, the spiritual and the religious. This perspective allowed for a recognition of the spiritual at the centre of all matter.

Ranson (2002) described this deeper recognition, as an experience of being beckoned by something. This was seen as spiritual awakening. However he suggested that the religious movement was about interpreting, evaluating, and acting in response to the beckoning or to that which has been awakened. In the context of this study in the Catholic tradition, an awareness of the spiritual in all life was seen as an experience of grace. This has a particular definition in Catholic mystical theology and was understood to be inherent in the human experience. It was primarily God's universal self-communication and all human beings were the recipients of this communication (Egan, 2013)

The study concluded that this balance between spirituality and religion is at present tentative and fragile. The strength of sacramentality was seen in its inherent two-fold dimension. It grounded the spiritual in the presence of ordinary everyday experiences but also pointed to something

beyond the present. This was named in the data as, “something bigger than us”; something there beyond the ordinary everyday experience.”

#### ***6.2.5.5 Limitations of language in the expression of spirituality***

This study highlighted the problem which surfaced when the participants tried to find accurate and appropriate language to describe experiences which had a non-material component. Furthermore the multifaceted nature of spirituality aligned with what Ricoeur (1991) recognised as the inability of language to mirror complex circumstances. The study showed that the language around spirituality is context- dependent. It finds its best expression in conversation and interpersonal dialogue.

In addition to the natural complexity surrounding language and the communication of the spiritual, the official language of the Catholic religious tradition presented a problem. The formality of this language has always struggled to find authentic expression within personal spirituality. However the recent new translation of official Church liturgy has widened the gap between the formal language of the tradition and the language of personal spirituality. Furthermore several participants referred to the lack of inclusive language in official Church prayer and Liturgy. The quest to preserve the tradition and find a common universal language in liturgical celebrations has marked the liturgy with a stilted language devoid of the spontaneity of the spiritual experienced in the unfolding of everyday living.

Tacey (2003) commented on the tension between the language of personal experience and the formal language which provides expression for the tradition. He suggested that religion “imposes the ‘big story’ of theology upon personal experience without exploring the ‘little stories’ of individual biographies. Tacey noted that if opportunities were given to explore the stories of personal experience, theology might gain a foothold in the lives of more people. This study in the light of Tacey’s suggestion of exploring individual stories, found that participants described their sense of the transcendent in ordinary everyday language using expressions like; “ the God who mucks in with people who are just struggling through life”; “someone with me, the brother, the mate by your side”; “something there beyond the ordinary everyday experience.”

As noted in the previous section these terms which described an experience of the transcendent, were very much related to basic human spirituality in words like an awakening and/ or beckoning. “Something there” indicated a belief in a reality bigger than self but it was amorphous and free floating. It pointed to the limitations of spirituality when not linked to a religious tradition.

### **6.3 Recommendations for further research and for policy in Catholic schooling**

The points developed in this section relate to ongoing research and teachers' professional learning and development in the area of spirituality.

#### **6.3.1 Further research on the personal spirituality of teachers in Catholic schools**

As noted in 6.2.1, this study is so far unique, in its provision of a detailed account of how personal religious spirituality was expressed by a small sample of overtly religious teachers in Catholic schools. That section also noted that it now remains important to replicate this study with teachers who are not overtly religious but who are still contributing in an authentic and responsible way in the Mission of Catholic schools.

The crucial thing to test will be whether relatively non-religious teachers still refer to their personal spirituality with the same qualities and categories that were so prominent in the personal, experiential and psychological dimensions to the spirituality of the teachers reported in this study.

If this is the case, then it will have significant potential implications for what is written about the spirituality of teachers in the normative documents for Catholic schooling. It is proposed that greater emphasis on the basic human spirituality of teachers (and on personal, subjective, experiential and psychological dimensions) will not necessarily compromise the overarching reference to the Catholic religious tradition which would be expected in schools sponsored by the Catholic Church.

#### **6.3.2 Ongoing professional learning.**

Following on from the above comments, it is proposed that the findings of this study would support a review of the content and purposes of professional development programs in Catholic schools intended as experiences that might enhance the personal spirituality of Catholic school staff. The conceptualisation and content of such programs need to resonate with the affective nature of spirituality. Awakening the spiritual dimension of each person is essentially about releasing his or her interior potential spiritual energy. Effective experiential processes need to be incorporated into the program in order to facilitate this heightened awareness. The following summarises proposed helpful dimensions that need to be incorporated into such programs.

- Personal practices nurture spirituality
- Scope for conversations that expand the language of the spiritual

- Promoting the idea of relating one's personal spiritual narrative to the large narrative of the religious tradition (living within a larger story)

#### **6.4 Potential limitations of the study**

In Catholic schools there is a wide range of personal spirituality along the continuum of awareness of and commitment to religion, faith and spirituality. The five teachers invited to participate in this study were considered to be at the stronger end of this spectrum. As this study was exploratory work together, the researcher considered it was important to work with teachers who showed that they valued spirituality and had a capacity to articulate aspects of their faith and spirituality.

The participating teachers were all engaged in the teaching of Religious education and endeavoured to approach this area of their teaching with good pedagogical practice which aimed to connect with the lived reality of their students. In the range of examples of classroom practice given during the interviews, the teachers showed they had the capacity to adapt curriculum units of study to meet the current needs of their students. In addition they showed the ability to transfer concepts studied at depth in Religious Education especially mercy, forgiveness, compassion and gratitude to other fields of study in which the students were engaged.

However it is recognised that the sample is small and focussed on teachers who are actively committed to the religious dimension of life and to developing an awareness of their spirituality. Hence it is not possible to generalise too far beyond the boundaries of this study. The important need to replicate this research study with relatively nonreligious teachers has already been referred to.

The researcher was aware of her own commitment and understanding in the area of spirituality. While this passion energised the study's purpose it presented the possibility of projecting one's own perceptions and hopes for outcomes into the data. Constructing the tools of analysis like the conceptual framework (Appendix A) and the analytical codes helped to promote objectivity in interpretation. In addition supervisors of the thesis adopted an important role in interrogating and critiquing interpretations to ensure this did not happen.

#### **6.5 Potential significance of the study**

##### **6.5.1 The methodology of listening**

A major point of significance in the study was its methodology of listening to teachers. It allowed them to talk about spirituality in their own words in response to the prompts of interview

questions and stimulus material. This focussed engagement with the 5 participating teachers representative of both genders and all teaching years K-12, uncovered a range of perspectives they had regarding spirituality. It is proposed that more of this type of research be conducted which would allow teachers to have their own voice about their experiences of personal spirituality in very confusing and secularised times

### **6.5.2 Spirituality, synthesis and integration**

A further point of significance in the study is that it explored the integrative and connective nature of spirituality, so as to increase teachers' awareness and capacity of the task of Catholic school in the synthesis of faith, life and culture. This union of apparently isolated human qualities counterbalances a dualistic perception of reality. It is not about either / or, but it is about both capacities in their rightful place. Within this perspective, the study could be regarded as an attempt to begin to bring into focus the right relationship between religion and spirituality. This was not done in a way of reclaiming the tradition first and foremost, so that an attentiveness to the religious culture might be better re-contextualised for meeting contemporary needs.

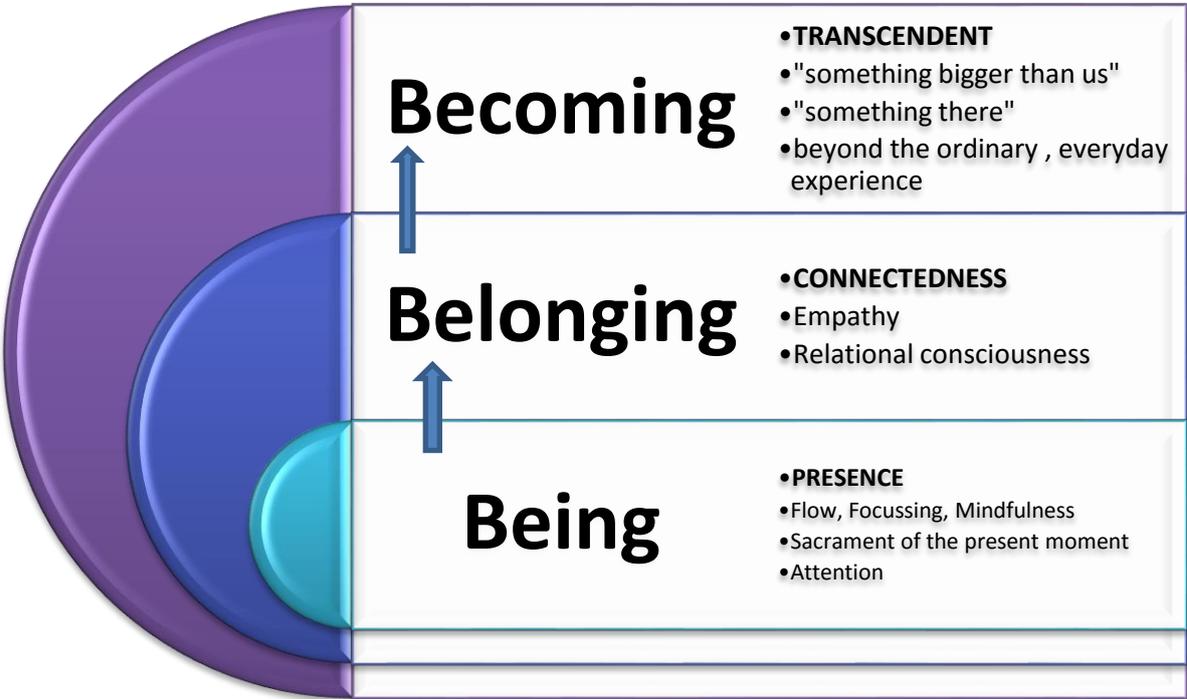
It is proposed that the emphases in spirituality identified in this study offer a useful pathway through the growing maze of secularisation by beginning its exploration of spirituality in the centre of each participant's lived experience. This approach provided a perspective which enabled participants to engage with their personal reality and the current culture both in terms of its positive and negative dimensions; its light, shadows and darkness.

The study provided the opportunity to discover frameworks of meaning and tools for discernment established within the contemporary culture. The role of the Catholic religious tradition was seen as bringing its own interpretation to the secular frameworks. This was noted by King (2008), in that the nature of experiences which transcend the self, can only be defined and determined within the perspective of one's framework of meaning. Such structures were seen as emanating from one's world view, religious faith or secular belief.

The Delors' educational framework, *Learning: The Treasure Within*, (1996) provided an example of interpreting spiritual perspectives identified in the secular writings, within a Catholic religious context. The following section indicates how the conceptual framework from the work of the UNESCO *International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century* (1996), was adapted to summarise the major findings of the study.

Integral to the vision of the International Commission on Education was its lifelong learning paradigm. This identified four key pillars surrounding learning. These were learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, learning to live together. From the four pillars, the Australian Early Learning framework titled, *Being, Belonging and Becoming* was developed. These three existential concepts provided a way of describing the instances and progression of spiritual experience and understanding from the participants’ in this study

The following figure shows the alignment between the educational concepts of the *Australian Early Learning Framework* and the development of spiritual awareness through presence, connectedness and transcendence.

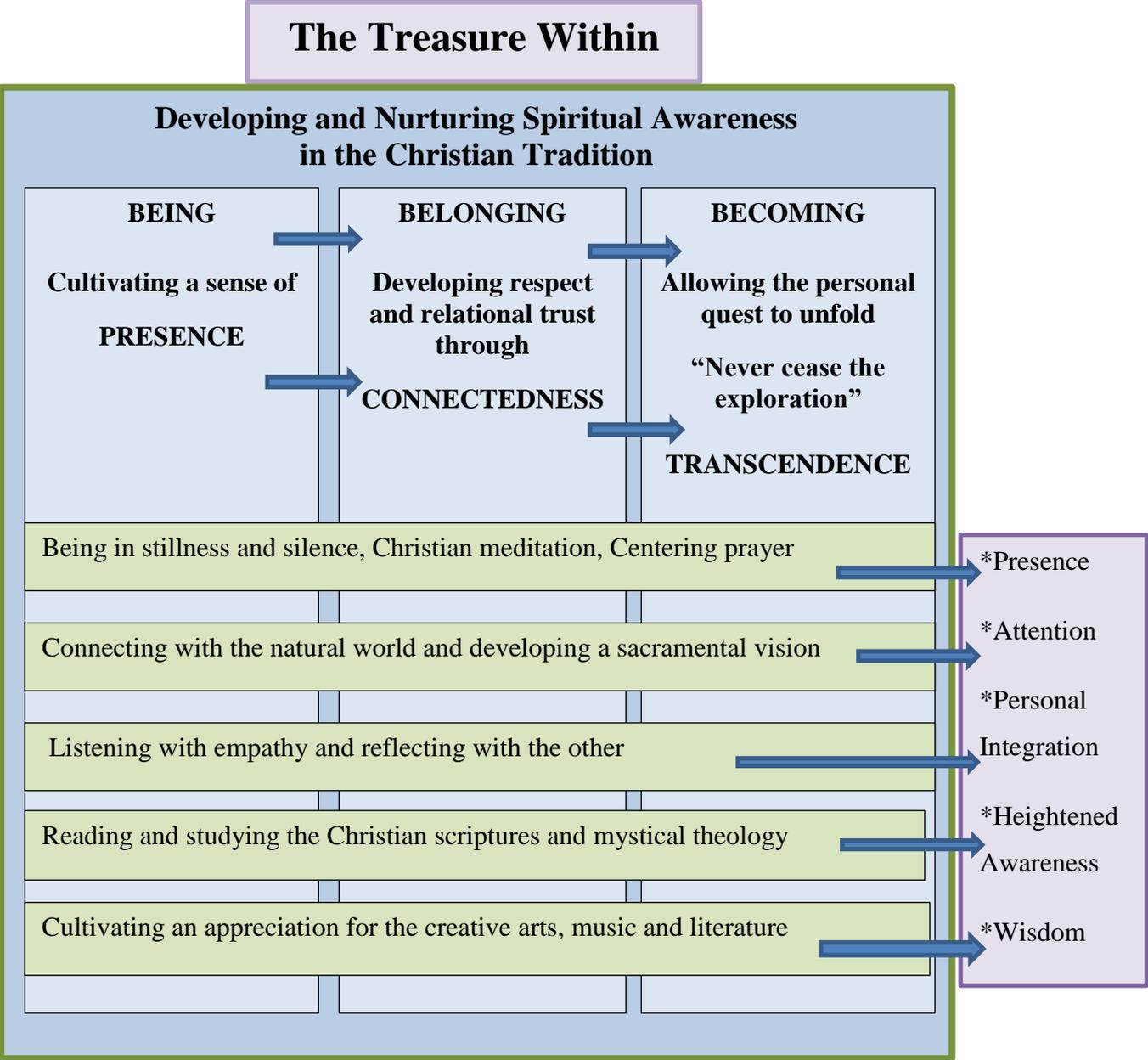


**Figure 6.1: An educational framework aligned with three key concepts from spirituality**

This adaptation of *The Early Years Learning Framework* modelled on the work of Delors, is useful for summarising and encapsulating the key conclusions and recommendations arising from this study. It shows the spiritual and the secular are not necessarily in opposition to each other. An awakened religious perspective can bring another layer of meaning to basic human spirituality.

The following figure further elaborates on the suggestions made above. It provides a checklist for both research and professional development programs in spirituality.

The vertical columns list three essential concepts integral to personal spirituality while the horizontal boxes present ways of developing spiritual awareness. These are intended to lead to personal and holistic expressions and practices of spirituality within the Catholic religious tradition.



**Figure 6.2: Components of spirituality that might inform both further research and professional learning programs in spirituality**

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## Appendices

The Appendices contain the details of all the research instruments used in the study. These are identified in the following list through alphabet letters.

Appendix A	Process for the distillation of the characteristics of spirituality from chapter 2	p.197
Appendix B	The interview questions	p.201
Appendix C	Data from interview 1	p.211
Appendix D	Data from Interview 2	p.240
Appendix E	Data from interview 3	p.257
Appendix F	Summaries for each participant from interviews 1 and 2	p.288
Appendix G	Matrix of the data around interview 3	p.301
Appendix H	Matrix of the data around Downey's focal point of spirituality	p.306
Appendix I	Links between features of spirituality, characteristics of Christian spirituality and the data collection	p.313
Appendix J	Letters related to conducting the research.	p.315

## Appendix A. Process for distillation of the characteristics of spirituality – Chapter 2

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This is related to the literature in chapter 2 and shows the distillation of the characteristics of spirituality from the literature in the four contextual areas

Eighteen characteristics are listed in the first column, drawn from the summaries presented at the end of each of the context areas of the review of literature. The second column describes each characteristics, with references noted in the third column.

Name of Characteristic	Description of Characteristic	References from the Literature for each concept
<b>Potential</b>	Innate, residing in the human species and evolving through the process of natural selection	Hardy (1965) Hay (1995) Benson et al, (2003) Tacey (2003)
<b>Energy</b>	“Fan into a flame the gift that has been given to you”  “They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filed with the Holy Spirit”	2 Timothy 1:6  Acts of the Apostles 2 :3-4
<b>Interiority</b>	“The kingdom of God is within”  Integration of the four core activities of attending, inquiring, interpreting and acting	Luke 17:21  Lonergan (1971)
<b>Indestructibility</b>	It cannot be annihilated even though it may be suppressed and even repressed	Hay (2006)
<b>Embodiment</b>	The spirit exists in; personal lived reality, concrete experiences, cultural contexts.  Human beings are spirit in the world. Spirit names the dimension of the human person which is distinct from but not opposed to the material	King (2008) Bowie (2003)  Downey (1997)
<b>Asceticism</b>	While the spirit is embodied it also transcends the body. In Christian spirituality this process is termed Kenosis or self-emptying	Imitation of Christ (Phil 2:6-7)

Name of Characteristic	Description of Characteristic	References from the Literature for each concept
<b>Connectedness</b>	The capacity to effect connectedness, cohesion, integration, transcendence	Palmer(1998) Castelli (2001) Berk (2001) Rossiter ( 2004)
<b>Relational</b>	Enables persons to reach beyond themselves in relationship to others.  Spirituality is manifested in a “relatively developed relationality to self, others , the world and the transcendent”	Buber (1878-1964)  Schneiders (2003)
<b>Holism, Integrity, Coherence</b>	Integration of all aspects of life by bringing the polarities of body and spirit, emotions and thought, activity and passivity, social and individual into balanced harmony	Zohar & Marshall (2000) Schneiders (1986)
<b>Liminality</b>	Moving to a new threshold. The space in between  Necessary thresholds of dissolution, and indeterminacy  Rules that structure our daily lives are suspended so that we are able to enter into states of consciousness, relationships and ways of expressing ourselves which are outside our expectations.	Rohr (1999)     Turner (1967)
<b>Presence</b>	Being attentive to and absorbed in the actual living moment	Weil (1977)
<b>Flow</b>	A state of concentration or complete absorption with the activity at hand and the situation  Optimal state of intrinsic motivation  Being completely involved in an activity for its own sake	Csikszentmihalyi (1990)
<b>Transcendence</b>	Going out of oneself, beyond oneself  Wider context than oneself  The infinite horizon	Bowie (2003)   Rahner
<b>Mystery</b>	The absolute mystery is revealed in God’s self-communication  The depth of mystery is infinite and the project of transcendence is eternal	Rahner  Reno (1995)

Name of Characteristic	Description of Characteristic	References from the Literature for each concept
<b>Fire</b>	“Catching Fire”	Gowdie (2011)
<b>Journey</b>	Spirituality is a quest rather than a home	Mason. Singleton and Webber (2007)

The next stage in the distillation of the characteristics was to link together similar ones. Similarity was determined by examining the function or capacity of each characteristic. Those with similar or parallel purposes were linked together.

The following table lists the six key characteristics which were developed from this further synthesis. The first column also specifies the characteristics from the initial categorising which were integrated into the final six defining characteristics. In the second column the capacity or function of each characteristic is identified while the third column provides a description of how each characteristic operates in experiences of the spiritual.

The Characteristic	Capacity/Function	Description
<b>Potential Energy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Potential</li> <li>❖ Energy</li> <li>❖ Fire</li> </ul>	Being or ‘is-ness’ of spirituality	This characteristic relates to the claim that spirituality is a potential, indestructible energy within every human person (Hardy 1965). It is experienced in a heightened form of awareness which leads to absorption in the present moment (Hay & Nye, 2006 )
<b>Embodiment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Awareness</li> <li>❖ Embodiment</li> <li>❖ Presence</li> <li>❖ Flow</li> <li>❖ Interiority</li> </ul>	Specifies the place where spirituality exists	This characteristic relates to the fact that spirituality is an innate part of being human. Therefore it exists in personal lived reality, concrete experiences and cultural contexts (Downey, 1997)

The Characteristic	Capacity/Function	Description
<b>Transcendence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Transcendence</li> <li>❖ Mystery</li> <li>❖ Journey</li> <li>❖ Liminality</li> <li>❖ Indestructibility</li> </ul>	Indicates the movement of spirituality	This characteristic relates to the thrust of spirituality. Its movement is towards that which is beyond the self and therefore transcends the self. Asceticism known in Christian spirituality as kenosis or self-emptying, is a spiritual practice which enables the person to move beyond the self (Aumunn, 1985)
<b>Communication</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Metaphor</li> </ul>	The language of spirituality	This characteristic relates to the forms of language used to talk about the spiritual and communicate spiritual experiences. The images of journey and fire emerge in the literature pertaining to this study.
<b>Integration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Holism</li> <li>❖ Integrity</li> <li>❖ Coherence</li> </ul>	The capacity of spirituality	This characteristic relates to the potential of spirituality. It has the capacity to integrate four core activities of the human person; attending, inquiring, interpreting and acting (Lonergan 1971). It also brings into a balanced harmony the polarities of body and spirit, emotions and thought, activity and passivity and the social and the individual (Schneiders, 1986); Zohar & Marshall, 2000) Furthermore it has the capacity to realise the task of the Catholic school which is defined as; “a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life” (The Catholic School, 1977, Art. 37)
<b>Relationality</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Relationality</li> <li>❖ Connectedness</li> </ul>	Manifestation	This characteristic relates to the expression of spirituality. It is manifested in a relatively developed relationality to self, others, the world and the transcendent (Schneiders, 2003). It enables persons to reach beyond themselves in relationship to others (Buber, 1964)

## Appendix B. Outline of the Focus for Interviews 1, 2 & 3 – Questions and Stimulus Material

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### Interview 1

**Theme:** Naming God and/or the spiritual in the totality of one's life experiences

**Stimulus:** Listen to the Song, *Everyday God* by Bernadette Farrell

1. Earth's creator, *Everyday God*,  
Loving Maker, *O Jesus*,  
You who shaped us, *O Spirit*,  
Recreate us, *Come, be with us*.
  
2. In your presence, *Everyday God*,  
We are gathered, *O Jesus*,  
You have called us, *O Spirit*,  
To restore us, *Come, be with us*.
  
3. Life of all lives, *Everyday God*,  
Love of all loves, *O Jesus*,  
Hope of all hopes, *O Spirit*,  
Light of all lights, *Come, be with us*.
  
4. In our resting, *Everyday God*,  
In our rising, *O Jesus*,  
In our hoping, *O Spirit*,  
In our waiting, *Come, be with us*.
  
5. In our dreaming, *Everyday God*,  
In our daring, *O Jesus*,  
In our searching, *O Spirit*, In our sharing, *Come, be with us*.

6. God of laughter, *Everyday God*,  
God of sorrow, *O Jesus*,  
Home and shelter, *O Spirit*,  
Strong and patient, *Come, be with us*.
  
7. Way of freedom, *Everyday God*,  
Star of morning, *O Jesus*,  
Timeless healer, *O Spirit*,  
Flame eternal, *Come, be with us*.
  
8. Word of gladness, *Everyday God*,  
Word of mercy, *O Jesus*,  
Word of friendship, *O Spirit*,  
Word of challenge, *Come, be with us*.
  
9. Gentle father, *Everyday God*,  
Faithful brother, *O Jesus*,  
Tender sister, *O Spirit*.  
Loving mother, *Come, be with us*.
  
10. Our beginning, *Everyday God*,  
Our unfolding, *O Jesus*,  
Our enduring, *O Spirit*,  
Journey's ending, *Come, be with us*.
  
11. Alleluia, *Everyday God*,  
Now and always, *O Jesus*,  
Alleluia, *O Spirit*,  
Through all ages, *Come, be with us*.

### *Participant responds*

1. General response in terms of feelings, connections and appeal
2. What were the words or phrases you identified with, were true for you, and / or reflected your spirit?
3. Was there an experience of disconnection at any time? Can you describe this?
4. Is there an image of the “Everyday God that is missing from the song?
5. In addressing God what name do you use?
6. In talking about God what image or images of God do you use?
7. Do you have a name for the spirit?
8. How do you talk about and discuss the spiritual?
9. Can you remember and describe a time when you felt the nearness of God?

(connection to....)

10. Can you remember and describe a time when you felt the absence of God?

(disconnection from....)

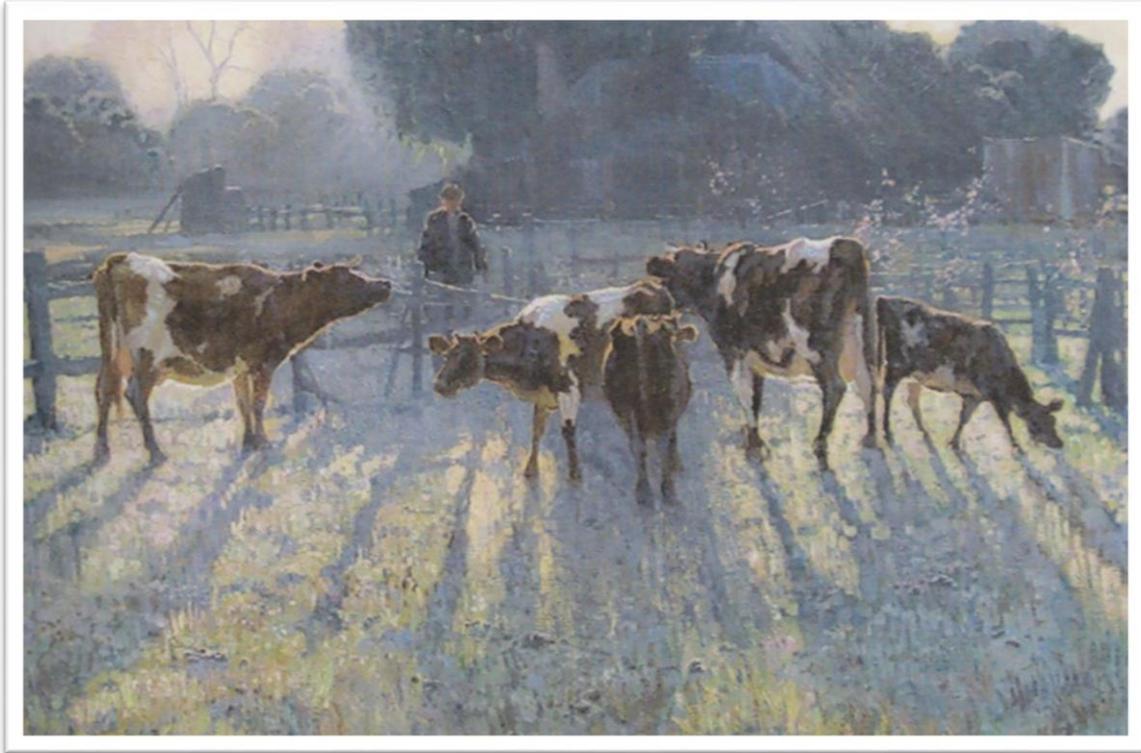
11. Do the words God and the spiritual have the same meaning for you?

What is similar? What is different?

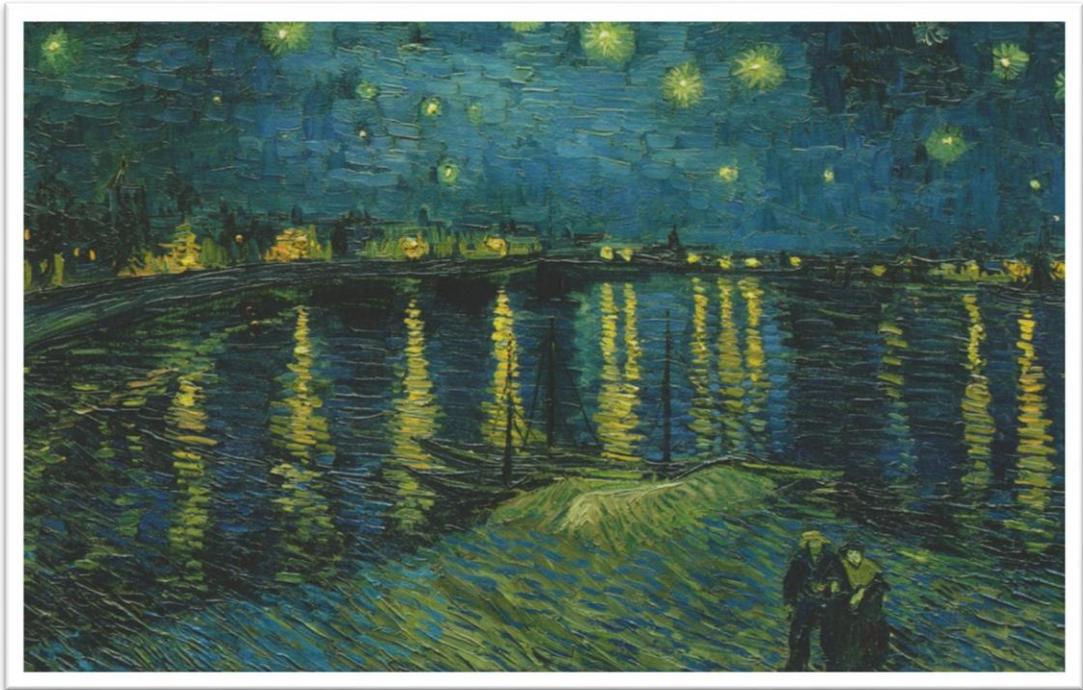
## **Interview 2**

**Theme:** Gaining insight into the participant's sense of self and connectedness; exploring the relationship between one's sense of self, of being and one's spirituality

Stimulus; A selection of art prints



**Morning Mist by Elioth Gruner**



**Starry Night by Vincent van Gogh**



**Cartoon by Michael Leunig**



**Lyaw (Grass Seed) by Kylie Kemarre**



**The Angelus by Francois Millet**



**The Pioneer by Frederick McCubbin**



**Parliament House by Claude Monet**

Each participant was invited to select three prints with which he or she found a connection then shared reasons why each print was chosen.

The interview was conducted around the following questions.

1. What do you believe are your personal gifts, your strong qualities?
2. Do you experience feelings of self- doubt and if so what is the source of these feelings?
3. Can you describe a situation where you felt very confident?
4. What are the situations which cause you to lose a sense of confidence in yourself?
5. Where do you feel most “at home”?
6. Have you ever experienced a sense of “not belonging” and can you describe this experience?
7. Do you ever notice something where your concentration is so intense, your attention so undivided and wrapped up in what you are doing that you sometime become unaware of the things that you normally notice? Can you describe this?
8. Have you ever been aware of or influenced by a presence or power, whether you call it God or not that is different from your everyday self? Can you describe this?
9. What in the end matters to you?
10. Do you think that spirituality can ever be annihilated in the human person? Why?

### **Interview 3**

**Stimulus:** The researcher presented a summary of the key points from the two previous interviews within the context of this is what I heard. Each participant responded to his or her particular summary.

Interview 3 continued with the following questions as a focus for discussion and response

In thinking about or reflecting on your spirituality.....

1. What have been the influences that have shaped it?
2. What nurtures it?
3. How and where do you feel you can best express your spirituality?
4. Is there anything that inhibits the growth of your spirituality?
5. Can you identify some expressions of your spirituality in the context of your work in the classroom?
6. How does your spirituality impact on all areas of your work in the classroom especially your relationship with the students, your pedagogy, the learning environment?
7. How does your spirituality contribute towards realising the task of the Catholic school “to integrate faith and life and faith and culture?”
8. How does your spirituality impact on the way you teach Religious Education?
9. What aspects of Church tradition and teaching contribute to shaping and nurturing your spirituality?
10. Are there aspects of Church tradition and teaching that have inhibited the growth of your spirituality?

Each participant was asked to respond to some of the following definitions:

**Spirituality is:**

an awakened consciousness or heightened awareness which brings a capacity to connect and to experience a oneness in all reality

“the quest of the human spirit which is bigger, deeper, ‘more than’ the ordinary surface of life” (Guinan, 1998, p. 1).

“a way of being in this world in the light of mystery at the core of the universe” (Harris 1996, p 75).

“a form of awareness different from and transcending everyday awareness. It is potentially present in all human beings and has a positive function in enabling individuals to survive in their natural environments” (Hardy, Hay & Nye, ).

11. What in any or all of these statements connects with and/or reflects your experience of spirituality?
12. Is there anything further that you would like to add to this exploration of spirituality?

## Appendix C. Data from Interview 1

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### Interview 1

#### Rebecca

##### *Are there any feelings connections appeal?*

Um I think that um..... you giving me the opportunity just to sit here and listen is I guess..... it is the situation that a lot of the time can help you.

We don't take the time to listen we don't take the time to appreciate the fact that God or some sense of spirituality is present all the time and I don't think we take the time to appreciate that God is always present to you..... the spirit

Most things get in the way things cloud our perceptions, our understandings

It is the time needed

*That as soon as you were given that time you were able to focus you were able*

*Not the case with everyone*

It requires I don't know .....don't know how to describe it.

Often people would describe me as someone who is quiet reflective but I would say it about myself about the interaction I have with others, with my faith

If you try to say it to someone else unless they are like minded it doesn't make sense

If you give the opportunity to someone else maybe they would not have the ability to appreciate it

*Why is there a difference?*

I don't know because the spirit is integral to all

I guess it depends on a variety of factors the willingness of the individual to make that time to listen..... to listen to that inner sense of self

Can be obstacles to that

If I am going to talk about my students, can see those who have that ability then there are others who I don't know how would you describe ...societal influence sometime they deliberately use them as barriers sometimes they are subconsciously blocked

***Were there any words or phrases you identified with or were for you a connection with your spirit?***

I would probably suggest the idea of the presence

The fact that God has called us or called me, I often..... I think about the fact that I did embark on a teaching career there was deliberate reflection of that

Idea of every day god

God is with us all the time

Particularly in today's society - images of a hierarchical god they don't apply in today society

Can have a personal relationship with God

Idea of God of laughter, god of sorrow, ideas of God being there all the time. Idea of strong and patient we are called to be strong and patient

As a teacher I am often asking the student to realise they can be strong in their faith but they have to be patient

Beginning, unfolding, enduring notion of God, Jesus being there all the time concept of the journey I guess how can I say....there is no definite path in terms of your spirituality, terms of your spirituality and relationship with God..... you go on a journey, you don't know where it will take you..... if you are strong and patient

***No prescribed path how does that make you feel there is no prescribed path?***

In previous years when I was at university

That was something I was questioning

It overwhelmed me and I guess particularly when I thought about teaching it would overwhelm me

There is no prescribed path as you grow and develop you become more comfortable with fluidity and you allow yourself to become more flexible

Idea that there is no concept or way you have take..... some comfort in that

***Who do you think shapes the path?***

I don't think necessarily it is me

I would suggest the way I would have some input into that

God has a way of guiding me through; fascinating when you start articulating all of that

***Was there any time felt a sense of disconnection?***

**(Long pause)**

Um.... disconnection.....

**(Thinking.....)**

Well when I think about the idea of God being the earth's creator that can sometimes overwhelm, me I am quite insignificant..... sense of wonder.....not quite disconnection....

Apart from that I don't think so

***Is there an image that might be missing....favourite one that you would have like to have seen there?***

No..... no.....thinking

I guess the connotation with the term every day god I would relate particular images with that..... probably the images of someone you would consider..... like an image of God ...person on the street or some student. Think of my everyday.....street person the broken..... the ordinariness...

***In addressing God what name would you use?***

If I am going to give God a name..... if I pray and reflect I often use the name Jesus.... but apart from that it is as if I am talking to a person so I use the second person you

***Name for spirit.....***

I think of inner voice or reflective voice or awareness of another difficult to define...

Often use the word broadly lacked spirit

Often maybe it's me when I am thinking about spirituality..... think on an individual level. I don't think of it as a collective when I am in Mass and I hear the whole congregation singing

***Do you have a sense of what is the spirit of your school?***

When you talk about the students the adjective we use is that that are genuine. Connotations for me is that they are wholehearted, in a lot of their actions they have a lot of heart..... so we do use that as well.

As a religion teacher I think students are in connection with a sense of spirituality. We find it hard to articulate to them

Lives would be richer and more aware: people being together

Can name it individually what is the spirit

Retreat teachers had to give feedback summing up struggling to find the word because the response the students gave there was something else working there

I didn't even use this phrase.....only a month after, difficult to describe

***How do you talk about and discuss the spiritual?***

Who do you discuss that with?

I don't know. That's interesting.....

We were just trying to sum it up but we didn't have the language

I then knew we achieved but.....

Kids said you gave so much of your time, learnt so much about us

Open and accepting of others

Interactions that were at play there..... there was something else there.....

Even when you are in the classroom you can just tell it is not about what you said...there is a deeper form of understanding that happens in a response as a teacher you were taken aback by that

I don't know how to describe that in the everyday you see there is something else there

There is a sensitivity that you have, an important part of spirituality

Lot of people dismiss that

*Can you remember a time when you felt the nearness of God?*

Um....trying to think....how to describe it

While I was at University I became very ill it all happened very suddenly...I had an MRI

In that time I did feel there was something there supporting me, guiding me and giving me the strength so there had to be something there, and it was in that time that I had returned to mass and I would go to church and I would listen and hear the hymns, the collective; I would feel the heat I can't describe it. I would feel this presence often with me, eyes closed I would feel as if there was no one else there so in that time I felt very close to God in terms of something I had never experienced before

When I was a child when I was very young my parents were deciding where to send me in primary school, it was between two catholic schools

I wanted to go to where the statue of Mary was; that's how the ultimate decision came..... I felt I had that connection. I loved this statue of Mary..... I can't remember that..... they remember

We use to go to church there but in terms of location we were closer to the other

I said take me to Mary and that's where I am going to school

In terms of disconnection

Prior to getting sick at uni I wasn't close to my family

I felt lost I didn't know where my moral compass was..... it was interesting...I couldn't see what was going on, I had lost any element of faith I was detaching myself from everything.. I got off the bus at the town hall

And this homeless man said

“For god's sakes put a smile on your face and eat something. I was angry with the world and not eating”

It was only months later that I realised God was trying to tell me that in this man God was trying to tell me..... at the time I had no awareness of it.

It was a huge disguise and I completely dismissed it. It wasn't until years later that I realised it.

***What was it like when the realisation came to you?***

It was a little bit surreal..... it was a difficult period and I had made a lot of mistakes

For some reasons the memory of the man came back to me

I realise that they were important words

I thought oh my gosh I can't believe that. I gave thanks that had happened

The students couldn't believe it. They said "We would never have even imagined that you would have experienced something like that..... we only see you as the image of the teacher" but the teacher is only one facet of the person.

Spiritual awakening often comes years later

I actually lost the sight in one of my eyes. It became all blurred. I couldn't see anything

God was with me when I had to see the neurologist.....he didn't give treatment

Sight has returned

I often think to myself I was blind then. I had no idea what I was doing. I can only see now what was so wrong..... then the significance of the man coming to see me

I strongly believe that. Is it something that I would tell everybody..... that is something when we talk about spirituality..... these encounters are people open to that

We actually all shared something of where God has been in our lives

All our experiences were treated with respect but with a greater appreciation of who we are

***Do the words God and the spiritual have the same meaning for you ?***

**(Pause....)**

I guess when I think about the term God I think of it in a more formal sense whereas with spirituality I don't. If I am going to think about them in terms of my experience or my journey I

can blur the two. There can be some assumptions with the term God ..... I try to keep and name them personal so I can make them personal

Sometimes I think my spirituality will lead me closer to God .....sometime I think God is central to my spiritual

Think of the God who as the text book definition. I try to look beyond that

Even when you are teaching kids in general you want them to go beyond that if they use the text book definition of God they will dismiss God

That is what they are using not to engage with their faith.

To teach an abstract concept of God is a mistake.

It will rid them of the opportunity to engage with their own faith

To be inner reflective

That is something that is quite special

If you never get to experience that once you do you can see it will be such a missed opportunity

If you are motivated or if you make sense you have still have to make the time or make the space

If I want to give time to this I need to find this space.

I listen to class music in the car..... it is almost as if I have this heightened awareness to what is around me.

You gain the greater appreciation of the work

If you listen to talk back it clouds what is there.

Hierarchy God preconceived societal notions of what god is..... the abstract concept of God..... the one that has been projected by mainstream society perhaps projected by the media....human construct....tying the concept of God to a hierarchical church that is purported in the media all the time that is quite dangerous to see God that way.

I see God a personal..... as someone I can have a personal relationship to..... a dialogue..... my observation of that is perhaps at odds with mainstream society.

Let's get quick fixes to distract us..... technological medium .....faster way of communicating with each other..... it is empty to have communication. I refuse to have a facebook; that I see as empty communication; it doesn't mean anything. What is that doing for me? If I want to talk to someone let me see them face to face...not the fact that I have just had a sandwich.....

So mundane.....let's talk about an issue.

You have to allow yourself to be open..... that is our responsibility.

If you are not willing.....Some people don't have the capacity

But some let me cram my life with other things so I don't have to hear other things.

## **Interview 1**

### **Hilton**

#### ***General Response to Song: Everyday God in terms of feelings, connections appeal***

Um.....pause.....ok. so appeal.....a couple of little um.....e verses there jumped out.. emerged especially so the God of laughter, God of sorrow

Sounds "fulfilling" (*emotional*) wouldn't expect

Voice of something in the distant that I yearn for sometime .....that is not fed terribly well and then the other one.....

Our beginning; our unfolding; our journeys ending. I don't want to over analyse

The feeling that goes with that is encouragement and persistence..... encouragement and of course the Gentle father, tender sister

Loving mother and I suppose it was at that point I thought I would love to use that with the kids; then I thought in no way I would be able to use that with the kids in this parish..... inclusivity and names for God.....

That is the strictures we work under. I suppose more broadly for me a couple of years ago I would have been somewhat buoyed and encouraged by people saying the right wing of recent years has been more of a backlash.....

However the right winged backlash is gaining strength and authority closer to home

So there is a variety of reactions.....

How congruent is the church's language around spirituality and the personal.

I deeply want that life in the grass roots working with kids I want those kids to see the life places where they see the spirit is being restricted.

They see it in social justice activities

***Was there an experience of disconnection?***

Um.....pause...slightly...

I can explain why...in our dreaming in our daring.....in our searching in our sharing.....

Understand all those words and where they come from....I suppose I have a bit of a resistance to .....the jargon of uh.....the age of Aquarius..... Now that I don't....it's not because of anyone of those words but it is the over use of a lot of them that puts people off. And I have to find other words that they don't turn off from..... It is in the amount of spiritual material especially written for primary kids...it is also language that kids cut off from ...in the end it means nothing..... it ends up being a barrier... words like journey... kids turn off... another journey...my job is using plain down to earth language...at times too banal. What's the.....Conference coming up .....hearts are burning....same words been thrown in a different syntax.....

***Is there an image of the everyday God that you think is missing?***

It is really comprehensive....nothing jumps out. It might later on...The God who mucks in with people who are just struggling through life...words of God of mercy....just in the everyday of life.

***In addressing God are you aware that you use a particular name?***

Trevor!!!!

I think it is Lord....interestingly because I don't perceive God as a royal personage or someone who Lords it over.... fairly comfortable with father and mother.....

Rahner that which is incomprehensibly other is also illimitably within and close and intimate.

***In talking about God what images do you like to use?***

Pause.....I think he is...the image I use uh..... that are at the feeling level I am most congruent with are someone with me....someone with me the brother, the mate by your side the wise parent that sleeves rolled up knows what you are going through.....and it is the God on high before whom we must fall down in self abnegating worship, that I feel most distant from

***Do you have a name for the spirit?***

I pray to the spirit but not in any charismatic way....I think it is just spirit. I love and often have recourse to “come holy spirit fill our hearts fire of love”.....I don’t have a dove rather than a flame. And I suppose for me there is an association with lady wisdom from the Scriptures who God has dandled on God’s knee....playful creativity.....image of this... breeze that blows through and refreshes...and is here now there..... unpredictable but fun .....and divine sense of humour in it.

***How do you talk about and discuss the spiritual?***

“Fufilly” ....I feel a bit emotional..... unexpectedly a couple of lines from song touched me at an affective level...comfortable with being a bit teary but.....didn’t think this song would do it.....

I think I do actually .....When I talk about Jesus and what matters to Jesus and for me it is the spirit of Jesus relationships and his what it means to be people of the Kingdom. That characterises the spirit. I know it is there and I know I am it is there and recognition that the truth is being spoken and that there is a connection there that goes beyond us. And it can be a question that kids asks and I can feel myself responding .....I can hear myself saying something that I know is truth. And I sense the kids’ reaction. I am trying to think of a recent example I had some Yr. 11 students discussing the basis of religious beliefs, hopes and fears. I asked.....

What do advertisers appeal to intimacy’ Wouldn’t it be nice to be accepted just for who you are without having to prove yourself”?.....the students knew what was meant. Some communication of truth that goes beyond what I said or did yet is truth.

Taking truth to a deeper level is where you touch the spiritual...stay with the conversation and take it in a pondering way

Spirit is in the conversation moving where it will.

Listening to where the conversation is going.

What matters to Jesus.

Both kinds of blind people. Those who couldn't see but also those who were blind to what others were feeling.

*Can you remember and describe a time when you felt the nearness of God.*

Examples I just gave you.....Birth of my children

I can't think of a specific example....a generic category ...moments when there is more there than what I expected. In moments of relief when things went better than I expected.....in my job I hang out for those. In my job I spend time trying to make disasters not happen. It is edge stuff and liminal and when I allow myself to be immersed in the present moment.

Thanksgiving for the moment

Gratitude is a spontaneous expression of the heart.

*Converse of that .....A time when you felt the absence of God.*

Institutional spirituality and theologies. It is not common for me.

Times in my life when I have felt conflicted and frustrated. It is not common.

Feel it for others.....which makes me angry and I say God where are you for others?

*Do the words God and the spiritual have the same meaning for you?*

Large degree of overlap. God is personal and the spirit is a bit amorphous

When people talk about the spiritual and their spirituality I see that as the door open to God.

Mystery and God is more overlapping.

Spiritual might get there.

Talk about the spirituality of Australia and so analysing the spiritual has very broad terms of reference that God doesn't have.

Sense of the spiritual is not personal.

## **Interview 1**

### **Maryanne**

### ***General Response to the Song Everyday***

It is a little bit ironic because I was on staff prayer this morning. And a few weeks back when I was planning it there has been a few things in my life when I have had to search for God in people....something they have done for me and things they said

Seeing God in people

In our dreaming..... in our resting, I can relate to that..... God is around us all the time but there are particular moments when it is clearer. Having said it is not just when I am in Church on the weekend

Having conversation with my family

*Everyday God* is not just God but the symbols he uses which is through us, through people

***God in the Church and the God in the everyday. Is there a preference or a more heightened awareness?***

No it is just different

Pray with our children

Boys 15 and 16 years old carry a holy card when doing exams

Still carry it with him

Use the card to get through tests - the naplan

When we are in church .....um I feel as if I am one on one with God whereas with every day I am sort of one on one but I am thinking of him in the day ahead

But thinking of God in terms of the day ahead

In terms of being in his house in the Church

I am more alone with him

I look at the week that has passed

One doesn't take more precedence over the other but they are just different

Doing the Religious Education course has made me more aware.

Teaching religion as well has made it a lot clearer.

Feel stronger and that things are a lot clearer now.

I suppose that I used to think even friends, my sisters don't go to Church..... my brother doesn't but I had the interpretation that if you were catholic you had to go to church but with the children (I teach) it is not up to them to go to Church it is up to their families. I can't change that.

Giving them the support and guidance knowing that God is with them..... and not just through Church but through everyday life.

What I value is my going to Church but not everyone has to do that,...it is another way of showing respect and love for God but not everyone has to do that.

***Words or phrases that you identify with ?***

Um I think that the God of laughter....um .....my husband and I lead such busy lives...with the boys with soccer. I don't think we spend enough time together as such but there are times of laughter....home ...walking in my front door.....I feel God's presence.. I think of home and shelter and that is where I feel safe.....I have God there. My family....my boys. If something is going on in my life.....I ring my husband.....I speak to John about that.....Sometimes he suggests something.... sometimes he just listens. I associated that with home...feeling safe and supported

Timeless healer....mum being sick...I had a scare.

**Friendship**

My whole staff prayer is on friendship. Song by Leona Lewis doesn't mention God but God is there.....listen to the lyrics and think who is that person for you. Can you see God through other people. No matter how hard it gets I'll always be there for you. When I picked the song..... it was how I felt God is.

It doesn't mention God but it is obviously deeply spiritual.....

Some people will think of it as their partner...but when I listen to it I think of God....

I see God through my father in law..... We have been married for 20 years. It hasn't always been good but he supported me. Making sense..... he looks at both sides. They are always there....things that they know will put more stress on our lives they will do for us. He is an angel

there for me..... we are always having deep conversation. Those values are in my husband. Sometimes it scares me because I think he is too good. In the work force.....he always looks out for others.

My prayer was focused on friends and family.

***Any experience of disconnection during the song?***

Uh...no ...no.... really I think I can probably relate to everything.

Strong and patient. I felt in touch with every part of it

***Is there an image of everyday God that you thought was missing....?***

I suppose um....don't know how you would word it. Loving father is me seeing God through my mother in law and father in law and through John my husband and often I'll see God through him no matter what. ....and through my children.

Sharing everything with him.....brings you so much closer

We have always been like that. There was a time when work started to take over and we started to drift apart and that scared us so we put everything into our children

Another vision of God is through our kids..... if I am feeling down they make a joke of it.

There is a flow of empathy and compassion in the family. You can look at one of them and know that something is amiss

If you live with someone for so long you know when they are stressed. You are just in tune. You know how far to take things. It is time to back off...they are going through a hard time in their lives.

O Spirit.... when I think of spirit I think of God around in this room now...keeping me healthy happy..... on the right path.....Patrick did his reconciliation last week and so just going through the booklet with him....giving him guidance. We all went to the reconciliation and looking around I noticed that there weren't a lot of full families there...

***In addressing God what name do you like to use?***

Father, Holy Father, Dear Lord.

***In talking about God do you have a favourite image?***

My favourite image is a picture that I bought mum and dad when I first started work

Jesus has the long hair ..... looking very surreal.....

When thinking of God I THINK OF LIGHT.

***Do you have a name for the spirit?***

Um.....Yes....um...no probably not..... if I was praying to the Holy Spirit I would use the name holy spirit. I don't think of spirit as separate.

I suppose and I have only just thought of it now and it might be off on another tangent....I pray to God but I also pray to Mary and maybe that is because of John... when I was having Patrick ...it all happened so quickly.... I found myself praying to Mary maybe because she was a woman....then John went straight away and bought me a picture of Mary and I keep it on my bedside.

When Patrick was born the doctor didn't even have to say it was a boy...I knew and when I held him it was this overwhelming feeling of satisfaction. I just had this overwhelming sense there was something else there. This is your family...nurture and love.....

I thank God for making me a woman. There is no feeling like having a baby. Meeting John for the very first time. I was going through a very hard patch....I was going out with a boy I was only 17 and he was jealous. Mum and Dad had warned me and then I met John and meeting him and speaking to him for the first time I felt God's protection..... Falling pregnant a special moment with God.

Starting here at my present school I was working at another school at the time. My principal wanted to offer me the job but she couldn't. Walking into the foyer I felt I was at home. During the interview I was amazed at the things I said...where does that come from?.....

***How do you talk about and discuss the spiritual?***

When I was younger I wouldn't talk about things spiritual maybe because I wonder what others would think. But now I don't worry. I talk to the boys about the spirit. Feeling the comfort

We often say to the kids.....what would Jesus do?

WWJD.....Boys know what that means. It is important to keep. How can we make sure that the boys continue to have that one on one to be close to God. I can see that sometimes they may

have turned off especially with some sermons. It takes a lot for us to keep turned on. They may say why do I have to go to Church if I can't relate it..... as long as we continue to instil the correct beliefs and guidance...as long as they know right from wrong.....

### ***Time when you felt the absence of God***

There have been times when it has been hard but I don't think I have ever doubted God. I've needed him more. There was a time when I would pray that I want it this way but now it is whatever you want.....

Help me to guide me to be a good Mum and good wife.....Not necessarily to want everything to go smoothly but to do it well

God has given me so many lifelines that there have been times when I haven't taken them.....it is my job to be attentive to the life line. Awareness has grown....maturity and what is important.

Only in recent times that I have become in tune. Unless things that have happened over the last few years that I probably wouldn't be where I am now with God. Realise what is important in life. Have a very clear focus. No matter how dark things get, you know that God is there.

### ***Do the words God and the spiritual have the same meaning for you?***

When I say the word God I get the whole picture..... God is the being. Spiritual is the feeling around...it is everything all in one.

### **Interview 1**

#### **Edward**

### ***General Responses to the Hymn Everyday God***

I would have to say I was really thinking about Yr 6 graduation..... a good song to use

I was trying to phrase what I was going to talk about..... idea of spirituality present in everything around us

For this seemed to be a reflection on all those things God the powerful creator God..... overriding everything..... the spirit..... the energy

Three ways of seeing the spirit.

I was thinking God and Jesus and the spirit .....the constant in all the different part of the world.

Laughter..... all of those facets of life

Good reflection to think about

That was my reaction..... really calming song

Applied it to graduation

What triggered it?.... I wasn't thinking about it beforehand

***Any words or phrases that you identified with***

(Pause....reflection)....in our searching in our sharing...I believe that we find the spirituality....

Learning in my adult life..... my children find that spirit

When we have..... whatever reason we have..... a resonance with things coming together... you can feel that presence there.....try and calm yourself so you can get in touch with that.

Making mistakes..... learning searching..... reflect on what is going on..... you find the spirit.

Sorrow..... laughter

Word of mercy, word of gladness, word of challenge...very everyday happenings and feelings....

When they are done with the right purpose.....

Bring the right heart to it

***What is your understanding of the heart?***

I think nearly everything can be done with a certain purpose or way..... when you are doing something with compassion with others or for the purpose of ...um....

Having rightness of heart.....

Um you know even the idea of sorrow...solemn if you are going through that still.... it would be on your mind..... your heart is searching for .....contrite...you can be sorrow.... bitter angry..... positioning yourself.....

Spirituality is about being properly human.....

Spirituality always changing but are there some constants.?

I think the ....it takes a while to say things....what could be the same is the purposeful direction....even though opinion changes direction.....it is the same towards what is good.....

Idea of Jesus as teacher does not change.....

Been on a big learning curve since being my role (Religious Education Co-ordinator.).....trying to think back to growing up.....what I understand now...to see what is being consistent is hard...attempt to find..... faith and spirituality exists above the institution of the doctrine.....when we have a system that lifts us up to somewhere else. I believe that most people believe that.....the love of Christ does not need to be a written law.

Through our church we tend to achieve this...this is what we are after. Other people might believe that the church is where it stops.....The Church is like the launch us up..

***Lifts us up What does that mean.?***

Through ritual, through the understanding of the ritual we have a higher need.

Not trying to be critical I feel there is an opinion that as a Catholic....I have a feeling that those who are not catholic....believe that Catholics believe that this way is the way.

Why does it have to be this way?

It is through this that we meet something else.

In doing so I am talking about a particular structure of the church....the formal aspects...not the mission.

***Anything that caused disconnection.?***

No?.....

Is there an image of the everyday God that you think is missing.?

(Thinking.....)

Suppose two things....two things that you would be disconnected from you.....Gender is problematic.....that always comes to mind for me in terms of being careful about the image that is given in terms of gender.....I looked back.....and checked.

In terms of what is not there.

What is challenging? God is also a forceful thing.....a challenge. Image of God challenge us sometimes difficult ....when we are lazy.....sloth like...the God who challenges us to get up and do it...otherwise....God is framed like a big kind of bubble bath.....rather you need to get up and change the world.....

If you asked me again in two hours I would probably think of something else.

Everyone is happy in their comfort zone..... particularly in the luxury lives that we live.

Drawn also to the God of nurturing.

Do you think someone in Papua New Guinea would relate to this song?

Because we do have a peaceful life who knows what other people and cultures look to God for?

***In addressing God what name do you use?***

Father,

Lord,.....probably Lord...

***In talking about God what images are true for you to use?***

Rarely actually visualise God. It is nearly always a feeling I conjure up

I had a lot of difficulty for a long time praying to Mary....only recently that I have been able to do that a lot more.....ideas of mother...becoming a parent myself...seeing her as a mother of Jesus.

Always been the idea of father comforter.

***Do you have name for the spirit?***

No just the spirit

It has only been recently that I have developed my understanding of the spirit. In terms of name.

Conscious of it more now.

***What caused it? Was it the course?***

No but through the units (of study) we have spoken about the spirit ad hoc ...I have made more connections for myself..... especially in Liturgy.....

In instructing teachers ...most teachers are anxious about not getting it wrong. Teachers want to stick to what they know and keep it simple.....Teaching teachers liturgy....They ask “where did this ritual come from?”..... “What is the purpose?”.....Living the reasons behind it. Spirit guided them in forming these ideas. Even in terms of theology..... understanding scriptures.

Holy Spirit is the sieve. What is left is good....the essence of the spirit. Believing is...is really a faith statement..... spirit has guided people to where we are now..... It was a wake up call for me. It is still pretty challenging for me...

***Holy Spirit being a sieve...close to the action of the spirit.***

If you have a lot of people trying to do good.....like our staff at present..... currently we are having a lot of staff formation...moving towards open learning amidst all the conjecture....what came out of the reflection is that people are trying to be united.....holy spirit is a great unifier.

Constant here is the direction in which we are going.....we are spirit driven.

Idea is when you are trying to do what is genuinely good you do what is right. What the direction is, is the teaching of the children.

***Can you remember and describe a time when you felt the nearness of God?***

My family comes to mind cause you just have that love of your family and children which is very strong.

***Any particular time?***

Ok.....pause.....no.....um.....no.....

No nothing leaps out at me

You know with my role I am fortunate that I am reflecting a fair bit about that and I am quite often trying to help the principal steer the school towards our faith part of the REC's role..... is what is our mission. I am quite often reflecting on where is God in me....even in my reaching out

where is God in this person....it is quite regular..... trying to think of something in particular. Mass this morning was remarkably good. It was just impromptu..... from my role it is very stressful because we have no time to prepare. Mass was very peaceful .... It is like when everything comes together...it works.....it harmonises.

***Do you remember a time when you felt the absence of God...disconnection?***

Um.....pause.....no.....though in my unit (of work) at the moment we are doing mission and we get into some very abstract concepts...pluralism and secularism....I came home thinking it doesn't have to be that difficult. I was a bit disenchanted as to why we had to pull this apart. It was academic faith.....

When I have done things wrong..... I certainly don't feel that God has left me.

***Do the words God and the spiritual have the same meaning for you.***

The word God means the same but more.....

Spiritual is more personal...human centered....God is far more universal.....

The term spirit is far more person driven. Doesn't have that same personal faith as the God of our tradition does.

When you talk about the spiritual I think it is our connection with God.

I am in a position when I am constantly thinking about it. My role is to constantly frame or phrase

**Interview 1**

**Louise**

***Having listened to Everyday God do you have a general overall response in terms say....Feelings***

I think that is initially if one sort of line was to jump out to me it would probably be the one where it said.....um..... where it that said um ..... strong and patient, word of mercy, word of challenge word of friendship .....with other words I suppose in a way because everything we do with others it is not just actions; it is words that others speak to us .....is not just words speak in anyway ....because everything we do.....and my word that's spoken to others and the comfort that is given by strong and patient calm and peace within

I reflect on words a lot

Comfort that is given by strong and patient

Words are really important to me

***Are you saying that words are a reflection of your spirit?***

At times they can be ....but it would be more in our dialogue with others..... is kind of what  
.....where I would see that spirit .....yeh

Actually I suppose your internal dialogue...as well you know that ..... self- talk would be part  
of that.....

Especially in instances, I mean when you say everyday God you are not looking at the  
extremities of that but when you have things that don't necessarily go the right way

I suppose the self- talk and self- belief in that the words start flowing a little bit more freely

***Would you call that reflection?***

I would call that..... Yes it depends

At the time it could be motivation..... is that right?..... I just want to draw that out it could be  
both

Is that right?.....

***Was there an experience of disconnection?***

Um .....Nothing in particular I suppose if there was one no I don't' feel strongly one way or  
the other..... the other line..... here it is I have just found it the one was... Um

To restore us..... that was the line I was looking for before

Link back to a sense of calm..... that sense of stilling..... that sense of peace within with  
me.... with spirituality..... a lot of it has a sense of re-affirming of what you are doing and find  
I suppose the connectedness to that..... to God but no..... in answer to what you are saying  
none of those lines I felt disconnected to..... what you are doing and to God

I suppose gentle father would be one.....hard for me to relate to

***Do you want to say any more about that?***

(Emphatically) Oh I would be happy to .... If you want me to .....I mean having not had that...I've got it from my grandfather but not having had that from my own father it is hard to draw a correlation between my relationships and that ...um

Didn't have it with my own father

That's part of the authoritarian. I'm a bit old school thinking of God .....maybe that's got a lot to do with sort of...um understanding of spirituality that..... this I don't know maybe we teach the kids today about a loving gentle God but I find that hard myself to relate to a gentle father..... a gentle God

I tell you that reading when they say "would a father forget his own child." **hate** that one because they do .....yeh they do..... it is not true.

I also feel for other people when they read that.....but that's just off to the side

***Little bit of disconnect around gentle father is that true to your life experience?***

Yes that's true but again in saying that..... that sense of ....

To restore us, strong and patient that would .....that sort of.....triggers more a relationship with what I think God is

Um I suppose even the fact that after gentle father comes faithful brother is not kind of helpful for that..... the whole thing I don't know if it is being bitter or not..... but just looking at I would prefer to overlook that line.

***Is there an image of the everyday God that you think is missing from the song?***

Um..... Don't know if they have one from a child's perspective in a sense um....have they have gentle father..... faithful brother..... tender sister.... loving mother..... but what if I mean we all have a mother..... obviously but what if you don't have that to relate to,

I am not necessarily saying from here but I am thinking of ..... when you look at that show what is it..... Find My Family

Is that...oh God that gets me every time but that would be hard I would imagine for someone to try and find a connection with God through the role of a father or a mother or a sister or a brother when life circumstances have caused them to be separated or rejected

I think it is trying to find their....Acknowledging or even ..... trying to find their identity and that whole process conjures up feelings of disconnection from other people um..... look the other night one of them was ...a mother..... said she wasn't ready..... the rejection that you saw on her daughters face was awful.....

***Is "Find My Family" a spiritual experience for you?***

Sometimes.....

Spirituality has something to do with human needs, the human heart

Don't relate to earth's creator, that image of God not strong for me

Gee this is harder than I thought it would be

How are you going to write it up, Sr. Patty?

When I had my operation I got very sick

After coming close to dying there was a real sense of connectedness: I was fearing dying, fearing God

Very concerned with how I would be judged by God obsessing over what I would say to others,.... come back to the spirit as a calming

When Sr. Kath came to our school she brought a prayer - finding peace where you are meant to be today.

Overall I am still terrified. After surgery then when I recovered there was a need for me to do something more..... that was when I went into to teaching..... I would be living that spirit.

***Was it a feeling of real powerlessness?***

I was absolutely out of control

It was a real ER. thing. I was conscious all the time. Had I been knocked out it would have been better.

To restore us..... home and shelter – that for me is shelter.

***Did you find a new home?***

I already had it but I perhaps made the home more important than I had before. Religion was not all that important to me. After that it gave me more peace from going and deepening from before

***Do you want to mention the whole thing of fear?***

***Did you let go of it?***

I think I still have parts of it today.

It probably did transform but I think I still have parts of it today

It didn't happen straight away . It was about three years after I realised that I was not in control. There is something that is predetermining what is happening to you. No way else to explain it. It wasn't like a car accident.

***Did you have a sense of belonging to something larger, of being held?***

Mainly held by Mum but one of the things why I felt I would be judged because it was at this stage Dad was rejecting me. I believe it was at that stage that his relationship with his new wife began.

When dad came to visit me in the hospital I remember trying to pretend I was asleep because there was no one there to answer for me. Mum had gone home..... didn't want Dad to answer for me. Only told Mum that last year because I didn't want her to feel guilty for leaving me.

Degenerative disease..... took a catch at netball and came down

Mum has always been no nonsense and said you'll have to get some Physio and toughen up. Went to the Surgeon .....said you were too young..... they would wait

Since then they couldn't put it down to anything

Clot happened so quickly

Told mum she couldn't breathe..... mum said take a Panadol

There was no preparation

Made me grow up

Most teenagers were quite rebellious whereas I was concerned doing the right thing.

Even now I still worry about being a good person. Mum has to tell me to stop it.

***Why is it a drive within you to be a good person?***

Mum said it is because you have been rejected

I think it was the near death thing.

Rejection really hit home about three years ago

I didn't really get from it what I thought I would.

No responsibility for any of it

Self-doubt why aren't I good enough to be in your life.

Lady next to me had both legs amputated

She was calling out...

I turned on Blue heelers and they had a siege at the hospital;

Sense of humour helps one survive

Talking to the students about grandparents

Maybe not all like their grand parents

Grandparents on Dad's side told me not to think about yourself, think of the people in wheel chairs..... through the fork under the table.....

I told the students what I did

***Addressing God what name do you use?***

Father in the Catholic tradition

Profession of faith don't put a gender on God .....say God instead of he.

Say the name in prayer but in your heart father is not a warm experience. Use the name Jesus.

When prayers are said aloud use father.

***How do you talk about and discuss the spiritual?***

Through literature..... is very good just read a book to Year 6 -by Maurice Glitzman which is about the holocaust. Yr. 6 really got into it.

Obviously in Religion classes

Very fixated at present about the characters in the book, Mum and Caroline..... used it in leadership talking about qualities of good leaders.....

Talk about it in their prayer journal..... voluntary thing..... often the things they are concerned about differently..... see the stages of spirituality in that

Even using the different cultures from home

Lebanese culture very traditional

In assemblies

Do stuff every morning at morning prayer..... can be a social skill look at how that affects others.

***Can you remember a time when you felt the absence of God?***

Just after Matt and I got married..... this is really selfish.....I felt..... what have I done wrong ....we go away for a holiday....

Don't know whether I felt there was a sense there was no God but I felt distant

***Have you reconciled this at all?***

Prepared the funeral.....Had a honeymoon

Reconciled it by keeping on with life?

Through Lexie's birth

Had to work at it .....very conscious that this was not a good way to start a marriage

Being at the hospital

See pictures of honeymoons .....people who didn't know the circumstances

It became easier to lie

Became embarrassing to say our honeymoon was cut short.

Don't worry mum he will be alright

Questioning the point of everything.

There was a lot of anger

As I am sitting here I am feeling angry

Didn't actually become about us

When we went home from the honeymoon and we were planning the funeral

Felt bad about bringing up a happy time

It was selfish to be worrying about a honeymoon when a child was dying

We tried to make as many compromises for family as we could but more was asked

Felt like saying when it is going to be our time to do what I want.

The day he died the assistant principal didn't come and tell me until after I finished my Parent/Teacher interviews.

I felt what was more important.

Started again to question the after-life. Don't know if everyone does it but when my best friends father died.....

Why put the family under stress

Little child who followed with his name. Will she realise that we would never had had you..... had Alexander not died. Big burden to carry

Even photos of seeing the whole family together.

You question what if.....

We sort of joked. Nan kept saying to me this is marriage. I said but I DON'T WANT TO DEAL WITH THAT YET.

*Nan a wisdom e figure in your life*

*Does that have an effect on shaping your spirituality?*

Definitely we would sit on her bed and say the rosary She would say a decade of the Rosary every afternoon. One of the sad parts of her dementia is that she can't be bothered

I have no problem talking to you as a religious they have always been around us.

Feel sorry for my sister in law she is not baptised anything and coming into a family

As for nan she would be the one who would ask you to come with her to the extra masses and I think the modelling of that...if you look at my other brother and sisters

Interesting to see my brother he takes her all the time and I don't think he would if he didn't have her.

Is Megan living with her boyfriend? I said are you kidding she would be out of the will.

You just don't do that in our family. Grandparents had a great effect on us..... our moral and religious traditions are being carried through.

## Appendix D. Data from Interview 2

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### Interview 2

#### Hilton

*In the sense of self what would you say are your strengths, gifts, personal qualities*

*Long pause*

Oh I suppose I am compassionate and I listen fairly well.....um.....What was the question?.....um..... I suppose I have strong sense of my own inadequacies ....which means I am a bit more empathic for others.... um....and um...I suppose I see connections pretty readily .....um....that helps.....

*Do you see a connection with your sense of self or a person's sense of themselves and a spirituality*

Oh yes .....oh....I think from a Christian point of view anyway that the Jesus someone hears and sees in the Gospels is going to be mediated through someone one's own sense of self uh..... in terms of people being able to relate to the Jesus of the Gospel and hear both echoes of their own world view but also to be awake to the challenges that are there for the person.

*Just moving on now this awareness sensing..... have you ever had a time perhaps like a transfixed moment?*

Oh look.....the short answer is no .....and the extended answer is that I would like more of them

I am well aware of what you are speaking of .....and it is something that is the aim in almost all the world's great religious traditions.

*Yes*

Um...in that sense of complete presence in the here and now, of openness to divinity, mindfulness..... however it is described in the different traditions, I sense it is about the very same reality

*Yes*

And oh .....my stumbling there is not really training myself enough to allow myself to let go of all the other stuff.

Um.... you know there have been times in my past when I have engaged more in the training..... not that the full presence in the moment has been easy but I have been more practiced at being open to it, .....um so I can't think of one particular event.... um....if you had asked me 10 years ago my memory for those things might have been better and I have to say often times my frustration is with myself is....um..... I should be really present to this moment. Um..... and I know I'm not fully and I wish I was cause I think there is something here.

There is that lovely Buddhist thing of that being an aim called mindfulness in the present but also the great source of suffering

Despite that I still feel the frustration.....Yes I think it is being whittled away

Overstimulated and use to immediate reward for that stimulation So I think there is a nascent capacity in kids and it is beautiful when you see it happening when they are just elsewhere

They are real children then.

Les Murray's poem called Equanimity....about being there between the moments..... celebrating

It is published in The Book -the anthology of Australian Religious Poetry

So working from that for me one thing that helps me be present in the moment is really good poetry and for me that has almost the strength of scripture in a sense for me they offer an alternative to some of those truth and the presence of God

So especially the work of Les Murray, Bruce Doran, Judith Wright..... I did a lovely course years ago, post grad stuff with Noel Rowe, he was still a priest then and Erin....Erin...who worked with him..... Graham English's wife...on Australian religious consciousness and we were free to work through whatever texts we wanted really and it was a great experience to wander through Australian Religious poetry..... some of Noel's own work spirituality really from the Australian Catholic perspective

***And now with mystery sensing could you remember a time when you had that sense of the transcendent,....***

Oh yeah ok

*And could you describe that*

Well at times..... it is as you say glimpses... oh.... I suppose descriptively nothing fresh about it but that sense of being part of something much bigger..... sometimes in the bush I get a sense it is something about subjectivity and objectivity it is something about a diminishing sense of the subjective and that's probably a way of saying being part of something bigger. Um..... oh so.....moments of extreme tenderness um.....dearest freshness deep down things... something like that ....whatever that is.....that the tiniest thing is a world...and whether it is a new born baby or a beautiful drop of water on a leaf.... just sometimes those momentary glimpses open the door to the other....um I miss them just as quickly. And I think also..... they're things offered I suppose..... In terms of me trying to access or respond to mystery..... um I suppose sometimes through meditation .....um sometimes it is when kids say something I spoke about this last time..... when the lights go on for a kid and you know what they're saying has spoken the truth and the truth isn't just intellectual but it is like a sacrament.... There's a presence there that feels like God's there

I don't know how to describe that

*The other final category is value sensing and so it is just to ask you what in the end would be of ultimate value?*

Uh....uh...uh....

*Values are sort of on a continuum.....*

This is something I often ask older kids to think about but don't dare ask me!

Oh what is of ultimate value?

No I think it is important.

Love and after love and when I say that it is the love that brings to reality someone's full humanity and therefore godliness in that same moment therefore everything I do in my work and in my relationships is about trying to help people..... not that I am running around consciously wanting to help everyone I think it is about trying to help them find moments where they can be aware of the depth of their humanity and find God in it. Yeh...

That is how I see the divinity of Jesus he reached the fullness of his humanity and that's why he was God .....Yeah that is certainly the Christology I work out of

*Reflecting on the images .....whole range of images that you can look at and maybe identify a couple that find a spiritual echo or something deeper*

*Looking at images or scenes or activating the visual, what is connecting.... perhaps with you spiritually or drawing you on*

There is one very much like this Gruner and I think it is by David Davis but that draws me like this in our home...(Gruner) that draws me ...the cattle in the first light of Day ...not sure why. I don't have any down on the farm living...I think it is the light and the freshness at the beginning of the day..... that is something I find.... redemptive

Uh ... I always love Leunig's take on the human experience and there is something melancholy about that I tune into so I suppose I am fairly sanguine but there is that melancholy aspect to my temperament.... um... uh....might be an introversion where I appreciate the odd moment of being able to turn in an uh.... Wrap myself in something big and warm and uh.... Nurture the inner man....um not that I do but I like the idea it must be nice for those who have the time.... but sometimes it is just snuggling up in bed when I am exhausted um....I suppose it is also there are two different faces here and the one inside is more alert than the one outside and I suppose I probably often feel like I am a bit more alert to the world in theory that I am actually in practice or engaged or switched on in the head than I really am

And well this looks like home up here with the mist over the mountains it's that sort of scene I see regularly coming to work ...and I am at home. ..in the mountains and in the bush not that I am an adventurer or anything like that but I very much feel uh just the presence of fresh life and God over the bush

*Would you say that the environment shapes or awakens?*

Yes much so and the beach too because that has always been a place of refuge and reconstitution .....when it is difficult or tiring I get energy when I go to the beach. Yeah I suppose I respond especially to environmental stimulus or gift....

It is about blessing it is about blessing the....that is what is in common with those three. It is about obvious sign of God's generosity..... the richness that we are so fortunate to have..... someone had a book maybe 20 years ago called Original Blessings...it was Fox

Yes

I mean I understand ...it was a nice corrective to seeing the world in those terms.....

No I think people more readily embrace their faith as sin. I certainly do. It is not so easy to embrace the goodness. It relates to that gratitude.

***Do you think spirituality can ever be annihilated in the human person?***

No I don't think so..... I think it is so fundamental to part of our humanness.....it gets expressed often in all sorts of ways..... it gets partially satisfied by materialism or..... or..... or.....individualism but the source of that is a yearning for much more than just the material and therefore it must be from the spiritual.

It's great when you see kids who might have been close to it just open the door a little bit...they don't say oh suddenly I am a card carrying member.....but something there....

## **Interview 2**

**Maryanne**

Understanding of self in terms of spirituality

***What do you believe are your personal gifts, your strong qualities?***

It's a hard one.... It's easy to think of the negatives like to think of myself as a good mum

I'm told by many that I am caring and kind.... having the new girls with me this year supporting them.

I like to think of myself as a good teacher, very motherly nurturing and caring, have a good relationship with all of the kids and the staff

Use the word motherly and nurturing, caring, non- judgemental.

With my own kids, forgiving, supportive no matter what problem they have I can work through it

No matter what the problem is if they communicate with us we can sort it out..... nothing is too big we can't sort it out

Others have told me

***Would you say you discover most about yourself by others reflecting it back to you?***

When I was working at Mutual I went from a person in finance to managerial position so I must have been doing it well

Unless you hear it you don't reflect on it.

If you are around people who can't express how they feel it is difficult..... my dad was a person who couldn't express his feelings but we knew he loved us.

***Did the way your Dad was shape you in any way?***

Yes and if I hadn't met John I would still be the same way. It has rubbed off. Early in the piece John came from a family who expressed themselves and found it difficult that I didn't show my feelings.

***Do you experience feelings of self-doubt and if so what is the source?***

Yes I do experience self-doubt but being a teacher has helped me. As a teacher you get a bit of a thick skin prior to that .....when I had my children I knew I was doing the right thing. When I became a mum I knew I was doing the right thing . Motherhood gave me confidence. From the moment I fell pregnant with my first child I remember feeling more confident.

I can just remember things I did when I first felt pregnant. I can remember doing things that I would never have done..... like talking to some people.

When Patrick was first born I knew he was a boy..... just this overwhelming feeling that my life is now content.

Absolute contentment and completion..... Had a straight road ahead.

In conjunction with that I was studying at that time..... maybe I felt that now my family is complete I am on the road to ...

***Can you describe a situation when you felt very confident***

I think teaching

With the boys. I am very confident with the way they have been brought up. Not that our job is complete. Get that gift naturally. In the other side I don't think I have been able to sit back and feel I am good. Not until I began teaching. Tony can bring people into the classroom and I am not phased by that.

***Situations or the experiences which cause you to lose a sense of confidence***

Early on the piece, I remember walking into the foyer and thinking I am home. Never felt that anywhere else. I felt I belonged but didn't have the overwhelming sense of being at home.

When I was working at St. Bernadette's I was offered a job by the Principal then the following day the Principal came and said he couldn't give me the job because another person wanted to come back and so he gave it to her. I was devastated, then Venera called and said a job had come up and it was mine.

That was the time I felt completely shattered. And the confidence was sucked out.

I can remember walking out of the interview at St. Angela's and feeling that I would have got myself a H.D. Two places here at school and at home when I have everyone around me.

I had never done any work here and I came in and put my application in and when I came for the interview I felt that this is where I want to be. I had gone for a job at OLOR and I never felt comfortable there, everyone had their own seats in the staff room. I went for the interview but didn't feel as confident as I did during the interview here.

Love coming to work every day just seeing the looks on the kids faces. I feel like a mother to 26. I can remember getting out of the car on the first day and opened the car door and said God be with me for this whole year.

God be with me..... intrinsic to your sense of self that you have a companion

Angels all around

Just knowing that when you are going into something new that you are not sure of, often say a prayer to help me make the right decision, give me the tools, guide me to do the right thing.

My understanding of God's presence gets a lot better as I mature....as a teenager just wanting things for self....as you mature don't forget to thank God in the good times. Now I am grateful for everything

Comes from the heart....comes naturally...is it part of our make-up. It is the way we apply that. How you apply it...it is what you make of it... do you go to Church because you have to ....or do you go because you want to....

I don't feel that I have to say a formal prayer to God.

I feel proud of my family especially at Mass and that gives you confidence.

We did the assumption with my class. Had the children say the prayers and one child dressed as Mary and we all sang the Hail Mary...all the children turned around and sang the Hail Mary. It was a proud moment. That whole day I was like a bright star. I was beaming.

***Have you ever experienced a sense of not belonging?***

I think working at another school..... I didn't feel comfortable. It wasn't nurturing. I didn't feel welcome you had to be in a click whereas here it as if you had 30 friends.

There has probably been heaps of times when I was younger and not as confident. When I didn't feel as sure as what I was capable of..... Worked with a lot of men who were out for their own. When I was promoted the men tried to intimidate me. That could have been a sign to show me I was not meant to be there.

Not belonging when you feel excluded from relating.

Here you have that sense of sharing as a grade buddy I probably do too much but that is just my nature.

***Reflection on the Art.***

***National Park***

That there I definitely relate to ....John is one in a million. Until he had met me he had never stopped and looked at the sunsets. We often stop and look at things like that Last night we stopped and looked at the moon. Patrick said isn't God so clever.

In particular it brings conversations to mind and John has said to me....I'll often comment on it....he said I had never stopped to look at it until I met you.....

When we had a staff day recently with Sr. Leone we were invited to take ten minutes and go out and look at the nature around. When others returned they said how they noticed so much in that 10 minutes. I don't get 10 minutes but I am aware of what is around me. If I am driving I often reflect I don't think you often need 10 minutes...often driving in you see the rose are beautiful....

Milet is very sad... don't want to think about that

Person on their own..... too sad. (Leunig)

***Comment on Milet's, Angelus....Have they just buried something?***

Just looking at it makes me sad.

## **Interview 2**

**Rebecca**

*What do you believe are your personal gifts, your strong qualities?*

My honesty is one of my gifts .....sometimes I don't know if sometimes, it can get me into trouble

Honesty would be one on my gifts um..... I think I have quite a caring nature which again in today's world that can be taken advantage of sometime.....I probably have patience with others but probably not with myself so that can be a weakness

*Would you say that you were a little bit demanding on self?*

Difficult to think about your own gifts

*Do you experience feelings of self-doubt and if so do think you know what the source of these feelings are?*

Yes to experiencing self-doubt . I think I experience that everyday whether it be in my personal life or professional life.....kids say to me particularly the senior ones stop worrying you worry too much about whether we will get through everything don't worry so much...

*Are you equating worry with self- doubt?*

Yes because I will question things but the kids say

I constantly questioning whether or not we are achieving the expectations that I have in my head

For some that would be difficult to understand that because part of my personal life, who I am is intertwined with my job. I don't really separate the two some people say just leave work at work. That doesn't happen..... can't just leave work.

What is the source of my self-doubt.....I guess because I want to strive to do better. Even if I don't know what the goal is I am constantly striving to do better. It may not be for my professional life...it is not for me.....I am trying to get the students to achieve and in the end it is not me achieving I don't actually see it as me who is achieving, I see it as the student as achieving and if they do that.

I am just there to help the,

....yes I think it is the high expectations.

I will be 27 In two months .....as I am growing up and developing as a teacher as well, it is not about me acquiring a possession or ...achieving something that is socially deemed great..... it is more about those persona I connections so for me in my persona life it is about making real connections to family or something like that

I was just thinking...it is not about acquiring possessions I was think back to the Motto that Caritas has ....it is not about aspiring to have more its about being more

I've got some of his work...that got me through university actually.

The same when you are working with students particularly the seniors.... because I have two classes at the moment. One for advanced English...one for Italian

They say you just want us to get marks.....I say "no I don't just want you to just get marks.....I want you to develop I want you to be taking on the skills and the knowledge and I want you to then go forward, it is not about what band you get into or whatever happens, it is more about how you are growing as a person and the skills you are developing as a person."

So even in my professional life it is not about students getting 95 % or something like that it is more about developing that connection with the students so that they feel like they're on the right track. Whatever the right track means for them

When that doesn't happen they can see the disappointment and they know I am disappointed about that because they know they haven't done their best.

It's quite complex

Difficult to articulate..... difficult for some people to understand that

***Can you describe a situation when you felt very confident?***

Um.....

***When you didn't have the voice of the worry...***

Um..... that is difficult.....because a lot of that time that voice is always there. It is interesting when you look back in hindsight and you look back on things um.....for instance..... and maybe

because I am marking all these trails at the moment....I think about when I went through the HSC, and I was quite confident that I was going to achieve but that confidence came at a price....so in hindsight was that really valuable for me. I had a confidence in my own ability and I knew the goal and I knew what I wanted to achieve. But I think that could have a false confidence or something that I had just built up because I was never going to become a teacher and it wasn't until I attained these fabulous results that I thought well what's the real point, what do I really want to do because results really don't translate into me having an impact on anything or me using my skills for anything of worth and so I guess I probably felt most confident when I decided to become a teacher. that I really thought

After I had attained those marks I questioned what those years, the whole final of school had been about....are these the right words...i was wanting something more and again....are these the right words...nothing materialistic.....nothing to say....I can put this label on myself I can say I have this.... what society deems as priority ...you know high paying job that all changed....there was none of that anymore.....there had to be something more and something more I guess had to be given of myself

If I am talking about my professional life as a teacher.....the most confident I feel is when.....um.. you are doing something that you are doing something that you have questioned whether or not it is going to work so there is that doubt or something unexpected has occurred in the classroom and you have had to change what you decided to do so there is that doubt there and then all of a sudden for some reason it just works...and it works for the kids.... For the kids not for me and a makes you question whether it will work.....it won't be anything to do with technology.....it could be the most simplest things.....I'll just have the board and the kids and we are talking and you can see something works within them.

I am working with a particular student at the moment .....he is having difficulties and he has just been transferred into my religion and my English class he is in Yr 9 and.... I have always doubted that I am not going to get through and only now are we seeing this change it is not me only then...but it is not me and when that happens you start to feel more confident that something is occurring.

***Do you feel there is something bigger that is happening for both.***

Oh yes, I called his mum...a couple of weeks ago and I asked his permission could I do this because he has been work.. ....something has happened..... and I said that he is actually

working now. I don't know what it is.....The way that he is speaking to others in the class. I haven't done anything differently. He would have this negative self -talk.

That gives you confidence to see changes in students

***Experiences which cause you to lose a certain confident in yourself.***

I guess .....from thinking about my personal life...things that make me lose confidence because i can't separate the two because a lot of it is intertwined with what happens at school .....is if i have given my trust particularly to students and I think that is going to work and... of want of a better phrase they have not met those expectations. If I have given them this immense amount of trust I am going to expect that they..... not deliver something...to maybe..... rise to the occasion then if that doesn't happen then that is incredibly disappointing... then I lose confidence.

Other students will say come on she has done so much and you have to do something. Those situations where you have given everything you have and there is no response.

***Where do you feel most at home.....most yourself? Most centered perhaps?***

I guess..... actually this is quite interesting..... personal life I feel most comfortable when I am at home but if there is no one at home you don't feel at ease...I don't feel at home. I need to have some connection with someone.

If we were talking about school....um.....it's quite interesting because a lot of people on staff think I am a quiet member of staff but if I can't make a connection with someone, I just say hello but don't have lunch with that person..... I just potter along and do my work, if I can't make a connection with someone and when I say connection it is not about likes or dislikes and interest...it has to be something deeper than that. I have to feel that you are a genuine person then I will feel at home.

***Have you ever experienced a sense of not belonging.....the outsider.....of not being at home?***

It is interesting that you should say that...in a social situation if I can't then obviously I am going to feel I am an outsider. If I can't find a connection with someone. If I am thinking about school life. I am thinking about my Yr. 9 R.E. class and often you can feel a complete disconnection with that class because a lot of them there are a small minority who completely understand but there are the majority who do not understand.....they don't understand...we are talking about

ethics and morals and the ...the influence of their world today on Christian ethics and moral...it is as if there is this wall....up

One of the students asked me today...do you **really** go to Mass? And I said yes I do he was so curious about that and he didn't want to ask anything else. And what I really found interesting is....I always wear this crucifix and this student says look yours is so small and look at mine it is quite large yet he doesn't go to Mass. ....and I thought you think it is so strange that someone would go to Mass.

They are finding this unit so difficult it is about morality and justice and peace....I was supposed to go to passages in the Bible to make connections .....instead of that... I went to the universal declaration of human rights and Christian rights and I said see the connections and they said oh yes this all makes sense.

They will engage with the electronic Bible but not the hard copy

Because of this disconnection it makes me want to work harder to get the connection.

***Looking at the pictures. Does anyone of them evoke something deeper within you?***

I selected that one as the screen saver for my i-phone recently that one to me seems like home to me. When I selected this I thought that would be me. I am obviously with someone and I have made a connection I am assuming that this would be home. I could actually see myself there.

Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that it is night time. I do a lot of my thinking at night time or early morning and I will often come to new insights or conclusions about things. And I am often asking for guidance and I feel guilty because I am praying for guidance for myself and there are many others who need guidance. That one it shows me there is something much larger at work I can't describe it something greater than myself where I live

Larger than humanity I guess something that is infinite, something that can't be measured.

***All those things are part of reality for you***

I can't have the answers because it is something greater than me.

Last one is this one – (The Leunig cartoon) the boy in my class he has just got to let it out.

Sometimes you say to students

My year 12 Italian class when I started here were in Yr. 9. I could just tell they wanted a space to tap into their heritage. I was teaching them English but I kept thinking it would be great if I could teach them Italian. Yet I didn't have to say very much but you could just tell it.....like the little figure wanting to jump out (Leunig)

Each and every student has something...that's is the way I think ....um...I don't like the word discipline that is the way I talk to students I know you are better than that.... why did you do that? You are better than that. Everybody has that right. There is something good about everyone. If you continue to tell them they are not right

They won't have a sense of who they are

## **Interview 2**

**Louise**

### ***In response to the art prints***

I'm pretty definitive in that these two are the ones I can relate with more only that

I find these images weird looking..... Seeing Christ' face like that.... is not something I could relate to in seeing him as human

It is like the images that Nan has around the house and they are looking a bit like this

There are some sketches on the internet that I have used for our journal all done in black and white sketches Jesus looks like one of us when you say that God made Jesus in the image of us you feel that he could have looked like that...that is what he is like

Aboriginal art is something that I really like. My friends bought some aboriginal art and had it sitting over the dinner table. They didn't even realise its meaning when they'd placed it there. It was the meeting place with the circle and the cross all in dot painting..... their Mum got it from Darwin and I said isn't it nice that you put it over your meeting place. I suppose in a way.....How the cross went..... how everyone has a different path but then how we all meet eventually.

### ***Why you were drawn to it and what it says to you about spirituality?***

When Mum finished at Emerton they gave her a painting of the Rainbow serpent that they said that she is the rainbow serpent for them.... she is the mother figure for them the protecting the offspring and she inspires and creates things for other people.

I suppose that was in my mind when I saw this..... to another central space if you look at each dot you see a different colour and how vibrant it is. Centre here is green, centre here is yellow... whether there is two different groups I'm not sure looks like..... there is a different number of lines leading from each one.

There is a sense of connectedness either that being your family, the community and the lines meaning the people streaming from that core group and the lines leading, interweaving with another core group.

We are the dots... I see it more as people... well I see it as the female. Like the mother figure that's what I keep thinking of and the lines meeting the offspring of that. I don't know why maybe that is how I think of my mum.... maybe that is how I think of....its funny how the black shows through in different maybe that's the colours... mean the different times in our lives. I don't know what our lives represent. So there are no clues on the back, Sr. Patty?

***Question is how does that painting evoke the spiritual in you?...***

the connectedness we have with others....How we don't exit in isolation we came into the world in the same way.

I don't see it as energy ...I don't see it as a sense of drive or anything like that but I ...I see it more as maybe it is about our journey .....all to do with people family... I even thinking that is when they are married.

All to do with people family, generation....

***Monet: Parliament House***

This one makes me feel a sense of calm..... even the brush stroke that is used..... and the colour is sort of mystical in a way .....that there is a sense of power beyond your control, even though we build structures, we humans do have a sense of being guided ultimately by that light if that is Parliament house... no matter how much we control things ultimately there is something bigger than us.

***Could you say something more about mystical?***

Mystical means we can't really see .....there is no person sitting in the sun sitting in the sun directing which way it goes.

Something a bit mystical the way it is set. Particularly when you see as water. I relate to water a lot

I suppose there is mystery in all of this..... why choose the purples and pinks, why is it not green? What's happening? Is it sunset? Is this the trouble that is coming through from the.....

With the calm comes trust, in that easing anxiety if you know what I mean .... there is someone looking after it all... You don't have to worry.....

this is hard isn't it.....

Pause.....

Now we are going really deep.....Is the three here the trinity or....?

This is fog here..... maybe the light is what..... guides us through. I suppose it goes back to that sense of trust having that calmness....wherever we are in life whether we are in fog there is the light guiding us through..... These magnificent colours coming through because of the sun

Maybe that comes with faith. I don't know how you would explain it if you didn't have faith....There would be a lot of things you couldn't explain.....

***Make a comment on the others.....***

They look.... I have said before maybe things looking more real life, are more inspiring to me rather than cartoons

***Angelus by Milet***

When I look at these I feel they are very bleak and depressing I don't feel inspired by them at all..... who'd be a famer?...I don't see God in there at all...Too hard work....I am not really into nature.....if you've got poos I don't want to know about it.

Oh is that what they are doing are they praying? I thought they were looking at the ground. I didn't know they were praying.

***Louise freely wants to talk about images that mean a lot to her***

She talks about an image of Jesus from the Internet.

Choose because it looks real you can even see the hairs on his arms, it looks natural.

To me I think I relate with what is honest about that. I think the kids as well.... if I gave them images...well there is a sense that there is a real father figure. I suppose that is what I am missing in my life as well,... then the interest in each other and the fact that there is a sense of someone nurturing. He is looking into their eyes. The children look as if they want to be there, whereas in the others everyone looks really pained.

## Appendix E. Data from Interview 3

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### Interview 3

#### Hilton

#### *Hilton responds to summary material from the two previous interviews*

Yes that is good that is representative.

I live more in the world of theory rather than practice.

I am more aware of disjunction than harmony most of the time – high sensitivity

*Mystery sensing – the more I went through that piece the more I appreciated the spontaneity of language at feeling at one with.*

Language is part of awareness

It is not just the meaning it is the catalyst

People struggle with the language of the heart

Has praxis failed because kids can't talk about the tradition

What is the language of the heart.

Had a lovely discussion Yr. 8 during a unit of study

What do we learn about prayer. We began the unit with what we know, what we learn about to see if we can come further with some of them. One of the kids brought up there was a question of the problem of evil what does that do for my prayer when I am confronted by good things happening to bad people? What are you thinking on that these are Yr. 8 just to have the privilege of listening to them say..... well one of them said oh my pop died and I was in Primary school and I stopped believing..... and I said where are you with that now so I have changed my mind a bit. Other kids came in with and said what I've learned is that you get what you need not what you want. Another girl at the moment, her dad has a fast degenerative disease..... well it is probably closer to him and hasn't changed his illness and I just sat there and said my God such wisdom not beyond their age but I was privilege to think they are putting some stuff together then I said often time people throw the baby out with the bath water when they come to a point

that is difficult. No one knew what “baby out with the bath water” meant so I spent some time explaining that but you know when you come up against something that is difficult you don’t have to toss out everything you believe in because in fact what you are doing now is an adult thing you are wrestling with it. And then so they just talked around that a bit so they are able to put some words on this experience of what is happening. It may not be eloquent but in some way it is far more eloquent than what they might read in the traditional formulation from the Catechism about the efficacy of prayer.

And maybe the more we enable the conversation people will

***It sounds to me as if in your teaching it’s drawing them out getting their words out. I think once they have spoken the word it becomes real for them.***

But it means the teacher can’t be afraid of it.....Exactly what is going to emerge.

***In reflecting about your spirituality what do you think have been the influences that have shaped it.***

Pause.

Sometimes emotions when

My family

Been very blessed with a Catholic mother and a protestant father. It balanced it. There was always a different openness to seeing the faith. So there is that.

I suppose the schooling, a secondary schooling marked by the absence of anything solid in terms of Religious Education..... um because it was the 70 ‘s and I think they were wrestling with what it meant to be a Catholic school .....

Right in 6<sup>th</sup> form in Yr. 12 there was a brother who was the principal who decided to take us...he opened scripture as a serious study. And I got the feel for that and I have enjoyed that since.

I was with the Marist fathers for a number of years so their spirituality is very influential

Training in theology and spirituality..... Hidden as if unknown is at the heart of that Marist spirituality which always focussed on Mary as holding Jesus up rather than posing for photos and so anything about Mary was always about Jesus and I think I carry that with me still..... and

you are in the world and not running around drawing attention to yourself always had a sense that was what distinguished the Marist fathers from the Marist brothers.

Yes about holding Jesus up for people to see.....to move into relationship with him if they choose.

Yes the opportunity to study theology and spirituality at an undergraduate level but then I came back to it by choice afterward I had left that order and spent a year doing some grad dip work at Sydney College of Divinity and had the opportunity to work with some really influential thinkers. Some work in my teaching on religious consciousness.

So then there was another American Maryknoll missionary. I did a course with him on death, denial of death embracing of death but that reached into many others areas

It was incarnational; it was formative

Not that I return to those often but I can see those as seeds

And some further deeper scripture work that was helpful. I guess there was other stuff too but that helped

And then I did later Masters of RE stuff but I am not sure that had a big influence spiritually. I just had to get it to be able to teach.

The reading over the time and close friends I had who are dead now for whom the integration of spirituality and literature was very important – those friends had a big influence. When I worked in Tasmania and afterwards and they introduced me to a lot of the Australian poetry. And that still matters a fair bit .....to Bruce Dawe and Les Murray and from Chris Wallace Crabb and some of those people who had that deep sense of the Incarnation. So that has all been very influential and my wife and my kids and that keeps challenging me to understand who Jesus is. And the kids (in the classroom)

One girl who summed up salvation one day in Yr 8..... She is here in Yr 12 now. We were talking about what it meant that Jesus death and resurrection saved us and what did it mean that he overcame death and brought new life .....and she said in the parlance of those kids “it is like he really owned death” and I said Oh my God. ...Yes..... so when those sorts of things come up there is just as much wisdom as I might gain from a 1000 page treatises. And just occasionally reading stuff and having the... great bonus of being in discussions with people like Eugene Stockton and Laurie Woods who are in my Parish – Laurie writes a commentary every

week that sort of supplements the sermon that pulls scripture together and that is shared with the whole parish; those sorts of things keep me in touch. I feel like I am in the wilderness a bit..... don't have any time to read so

It has been ongoing nurturing but increasingly harder to come by..... um there's very little provided other than our chats this year I haven't had that for many years. The system doesn't supply much.... um look I am fortunate with that back ground but what happens with those people who come into the job wanting to help but you know feeling behind the eight ball to start with..... who have had very little experience. They do the courses at Uni but there is very little that is about spirituality there is more on pedagogy and theories of RE..... but who nurtures that. Years ago when there was the Wellsprings Course that nurtured people and we ran a course form CEO. it was withdrawal of a teacher from every secondary school we introduced them to the best lecturers from Sydney...powerful in terms of the ongoing effects of those people and who they influenced. It was only a term but at least they realised what is at the heart of it all.

Course doesn't need to be radical with a lot of new ideas but just focussed on What is at the heart of who we are?

I think there was a model which involved input and tutorials and depending on who was running the group not about good or bad people and I know one of our teachers here a good young man. He was by no means riding the "opus dei" bus he is very moderate but he found .....sometimes he came back and was quite disturbed by what he heard..... some voices that were not challenged at all. I am not advocating rampant liberalism but for whatever the formation is being run be someone like yourself who have a strong sense of incarnation but also know it as part of our tradition cause you want them being freed by the experience and deepened and empowered and challenged .....you don't want them feeling like it is just about a spiritual free for all.

I was doing some of the meditation work with senior management. There was a deeper sense of integration and spirituality but it doesn't seem to be there at all now.

It does seem like an after-thought from those setting the system priorities we must put that stamp on that.

***How and where do you feel you best express your spirituality?***

Long pause

In the classroom

In meetings with my faculty; leadership meetings

In parishes where I can have an influence. Not that I am trying to influence everyone with my spirituality but it is about giving voice to it.

Is there anything that inhibits the growth of your spirituality/

My own sinfulness. I can't ...at the level of spirituality..... I can't blame anyone else about my own weaknesses....as I teach a variety of religious traditions to senior kids I am increasingly aware of the commonality between at least three of the religions – Buddhism Islam and Christianity about self and self centredness and they each have their own words around that as being a major cause of suffering and the major block to a deeper spirituality and the Muslims speak about the Sufi path to union with God as working through the levels of ego which are so subtle and self-deluding there is great wisdom there. I am too self-deluded to understand it all. Very much reflects what our great spiritual writers do in terms of talking about that movement through the dark night of the soul, wilderness and the desert and the Buddhist talking about coming to the awareness of non self that we are not separate selves and the greatest block to peace and harmony and enlightenment is that self centredness in all its subtle ways. And so ...I am just thinking that at the heart of many spiritualities in the world is that awareness that us getting in the way..... of us realising what life is about. ....And that union with the divine.

I suppose I am saying that those other religious traditions influence my understanding of my own.

***Identify some expressions of your spirituality in work of the classroom.***

In terms of pedagogy and learning environment I suppose I try to get things to a point in the classroom where what dominates is a conversation ah...and wherever the kids feel able to explore their thinking and their feeling and to find points where they can integrate those..... and their believing. I suppose I try to get to points as I described earlier well what are you thinking about..... that to give them a sense that it is an ongoing reality and to find moments where I can say I am learning this or I am thinking this at the moments or um I am changing the way I am thinking about that..... um not for them to take on what I am thinking but to get the sense that as they grow and as they become adults keep thinking, keep trying to put things together. Keep trying to integrate the way you see life don't become closed..... so on a good day and sometimes the pedagogy is woolly because..... and I know you have got to as a decent

teacher but and um because I am willing to let things head in a direction in discussion ways not in class management..... that I might not have expected and I am quite comfortable to say we will need to pursue that next time. So let's write up some questions that have emerged and then check in a few periods time to see where we have got to without thinking I am not getting time to get through all those little dot points in the curriculum.

I know that we will get there and I know myself well enough how to head back through that township so that we can still get the discussion going so um I suppose if what I am valuing in spirituality is centred on the way Jesus did business then I am fairly regularly and maybe not always consciously thinking how did he handle those sticky questions .....um..... how did he spend his time .....um what did he get criticised for?..... at times was it the equivalent of you are not getting through all the content or you are not aligning with everything..... um and if so good I don't feel too uncomfortable but of course I am driven to get through stuff as well..... it's finding that balance that is a struggle.

Eugene Stockton on the year of Grace – for staff development.

As we gathered we shared ideas about Grace then we gathered on a rock platform and Eugene directed three types of mediation

God's presence in creation as one of the greatest experiences of God's grace

Mystical tradition that entertains the idea of grace as the smile of God.

Then returned to the large stone and had mass together then a meal together.

Many said that it was beautiful for them

Increasingly using the bush as our classroom spirituality through science

Sorts of opportunities

Taking the opportunities staff would like more opportunities to do this even in small groups.

I am cautiously hopeful that the ACU and Notre Dame diploma course being offered that there will be people leading those who can open the doors beyond faith as a deposit of faith

Scripture always has been a dialogue ever since it got on the page.

***What aspects of Church's tradition continue to shape you?***

Love to spend more time reading the early documents. Deeply committed to the vision of Vatican 2.

Catechism is a normative expression of Vat 2 and that is disappointing.

Heart of Vatican 2..... the beauty of that vision of Church – the little documents on who is saved and about our relationship with other people seeking truth and that the people of God includes all those seeking truth even if they have never known Christ.

Want the negative tribal conformist voice to know that those in the pews are welcome to come home. It is the magisterium that needs to come home! All the macho stuff...stuff it

Putting on prettier frocks and having tribal Catholicism in Brazil next year is not going to get it. So many freed by the voice of Vatican 2 .....not into something new but something that echoed with their own reality.

### ***Definitions***

***Which one sums up spirituality or are there aspects which connects with your spirituality?***

Truth in all of them but the ones that feel like truth most to me are the Harris one and the Tacey one. Spirituality is about coming home....Harris one!

Spirituality is not initiated by the person it is a response to the voice or the mystery.

Response to something that is always offered.... Islamic mystic.....spirituality is very much a response to God calling them into this intimacy being totally rewrapped into the presence of God...becomes the ground of your being

Rabi'a al adawayya – Similar to Hildegard..... Often called the first Sufi saint probably 9<sup>th</sup> Century.....Religion without love is empty. Met every requirement of the law but it was motivated by love.

### **Interview 3**

**Rebecca**

***Response to the summary***

***Rebecca spent a good length of time responding to the summary of interview 1 and 2. It seemed to evoke many memories for her***

In reflecting on the notes.....it seems that it was like an age away however to return to some of these thoughts I still think these things but sometimes in the busyness of life and even the busyness of being a teacher you forget these things

They came to the surface in the discussion but you forget they are still there.

And some words I put there the observation of how I see God is at odds with mainstream society um.... At times I can see that filtering through now with students that sometimes they are at odds to it is almost like they are hindered in trying to develop a relationship with God and so when as a teacher, as a facilitator when you try to bring up those types of points there is often almost this resistance particularly at age 27 was I teaching religion then was I teaching religion then...I think I had just been allocated it ...

But it seems to be like I am teaching the same age group of students there just seems to be this resistance to listening or resistance to allowing that kind of mindset to even be explored...does that make sense?

And I try every day, every single day..... whether it be in home room or an English class or an Italian class or a Religion class because I work in a catholic school and it is meant to do that right across every subject and even in their interactions with others, other peers they don't that their interactions are within a certain space... but that culture and that space you should not just be behaving in that way in that culture, it should be something you take through life (*RN. Enduring nature of Faith and Spirituality*)

That is what I try to engender and some of the kids say you're so lovely you're so nice you never give up on us and I say but that is what a teacher is supposed to do, it is not just me.

That is just something I believe. The students say "oh thank you for giving me that wonderful grade."

I say "It has nothing to do with me I support you ...you achieve your grade..."

Another says. "You gave me all A's in my personal profile"...

I remind them. "it has nothing to do with me. I am there as support but I do not make your final decisions. I do not control your behaviour."

***Interviewer: do you think that underlying these comments they are saying “You have acknowledged my striving.” They are appreciative of the fact you are affirming and validating their work...***

For some of them they don't feel that within themselves. I think as teachers we forget that they lack so much self - belief.

You learn a lot from them that I don't think we acknowledge that

I say to them... students have such a false sense of what a teacher is....they think that you want to catch them out and you don't. I say to them if you were a teacher for that sole purpose and even for that purpose you would not be a teacher. I said you would not be a teacher. You do not get satisfaction out of that. If you think that teachers do, they don't. Also that is something that at a school level the school is trying to change; that to try and have....mutual relationships trying to engender this independence in the students..... because they can't be totally independent but even in their formation as Christian or Catholics or citizens of the world even if they're not Catholics..... ok but some of them have Catholic values. And again I think they are in contrast to what mainstream society projects to them

So um.....these are the thoughts that run through my mind....

Unfolding enduring notion of God at the adolescent level students really can't appreciate it. Some are more reflective, some aren't at that level. It is the unbelievable that has been something this year that has come through. There needs to be rationalisation. I have had to learn this year..... it is ok to talk to other teachers..... that sometimes as a teacher I will not have all the answers and in the same way when students question why does God not have an answer for me now..... so that is something that I have had to learn this year.

***Casting off an old image of God that God is at our beck and call....that is an old image***

I think it is so..... the students say..... so where do I go from here..... I think I just won't believe.

Yes there is a gap so the idea of having to as their teacher they may.....its almost like they do not want to trust you. So having to bring in your REC and other teachers and let's talk about this more on a personal level for some of them because it is almost as if there is this defence.....there is this wall that is not allowing them to appreciate the fact that there are unanswered questions. And that is ok and that the idea of faith..... and thinking that having to

and not having the answers and thinking you have failed as a teacher and think what can I do but it is not a failure you are just needing to talk to other people. It is a process.....it is a journey..... and your children's lives are enriched by that and yours can be as well.

And to recognise that maybe not having all the answers is ok..... um I've learnt that his year

***We have looked to religion as giving us the answers and yet religion is about asking and living with the questions because it is a journey to the ultimate***

***God is still there in the big questions***

Answers will be revealed. Some students cannot appreciate the bible. Trying to find contemporary examples and relate it back to their own experience...is difficult but as a teacher if you don't do that they can't appreciate it. This is Year 8.

Challenging behaviours at that level pushes you as a teacher to do so much more. In some ways the most challenging is probably the most rewarding.

I tell that to students all the time....you cannot understand it while we are going through that but they understand when they get their results.

Having sick leave in term 1 and coming back in term 2, I had to rebuild the trust. Some students don't know you; some don't know whether to trust or whether to burden you with questions because you have been ill..... "maybe we should just leave her alone. I have had to say "its ok, trust me." Do not doubt the fact that you can trust your teacher and we are here for you. We are not here to catch you out or to punish you; we are here to help you; "but will you be ok miss".....It is very interesting.

***Reflection on a diagram***

***Christian spirituality being embodied more in the teachers' actions towards their students- students could only put behavioural words on the actions of teachers towards them which embodied Christian spirituality***

I would agree with that..... in some ways this diagram ...working in a Catholic school you want to see that in your classroom with this diagram (*being lived out or actualised*) at some level. My sister in law..... they have a son and want to figure out whether they put him in a Catholic school or public and she said what do you think about that and I said Catholic system- that is why I work in a Catholic school.

In seeing this diagram you want to see that ...you strive to see that in your classroom....as a teacher you want to embody that and in some way try to engender some of the appreciation developing awareness and appreciation of these things for your students and that is when you see these things and when you see all of them at some point in time at work. That is something else. I won't use the word magic. It's something larger ...something that goes beyond. And that is why you are a teacher.....when I am thinking about experiences even with the most challenging children and you have to try and engender even through the learning process this it almost self-emptying and detachment I would suggest for some of them who adhere to this stereotype of being the disruptive student or not wanting to do work. The service for others, well that is the teacher..... teachers having to help despite this..... to help the child realise that they do not have to adhere to that and then this idea here integration and communion is when the child starts to produce work... work that goes beyond what they thought was possible for them....and that is when as teacher you have to try and wade through that. It may take you weeks. It may take you months but that is what you try to do and then by the time you get there integration and communion the child has actually developed a relationship with you..... but through this self transcendence of their former self they actually can do their work. They do have a hidden talent but they didn't want to show anyone..... but in some way that child has a greater sense of who they are and what they can achieve. And in doing that.... their interaction with others, their integration and communion, this one specific child actually helped another group. Before he was actually isolated and disruptive.... not wanting to help.

A learning support student very disruptive and has been so in year 8 religion and has been so since the beginning of his high school career. He has been here since the beginning of yr 7. That must be a terrible label to have placed on you from a school perspective..... *Researcher's Notes; Compassion and empathy for the student – right in the student's shoes*), in trying to get the best out of him meant that I could not do that on my own. I needed to have dialogue with other teachers and as somebody who has prided myself on the fact that I do have the answers I can do this on my own for the first time I could not...I needed people to help me..... other teachers to help me but isn't this why we are all here. It is something that I have had to learn. *(Researcher's Notes; Spiritual growth for the teacher – learning to trust and call on the help of other colleagues)*

*How did he show that self emptying...that getting out of himself...*

He moved away from the distraction of group work and tried to work on his own so in that way and for the first time I saw vulnerability in that child..... determination so that meant no

shouting out..... no screaming..... no standing up..... wanting to make a spectacle of himself and that is the behaviour he has not displayed all year

### *The service for others?*

I would suggest that is where the teacher has to come into play and he has to be willing to accept that support..... not perhaps explicit teaching but support. Because you do not want to show it as explicit teaching to that child. Um...and in doing so he had to work with another person and he had to work with other teachers and that child does not want to work with teachers in conjunction with people so in that way the teachers role there and the teacher's support is quite um...was quite paramount for that child....and helping him to move into this idea of self-transcendence to realise he did not have to adhere to that stereotype of that label and what he could achieve.um...and in doing so the teacher gains great satisfaction...I know that because it happened on Monday...there were quite messy these..... the detachment and self-emptying and service for others but this self-transcendence he is working towards it and you could see this piece of work was going to work, leaving him on his own to finish with the support of another student; the idea that he wants to work with someone else but in a different manner.....rather than the label of disruptive and....the teaching takes on a different aspect...for him to finish the final product there was teacher support needed and that communion between myself and him.... before he would never have listened and I said to him I will show you how to finish off this product. It was a technical problem he could not understand. With the finished product he kept wanting to play it to himself and then he went and moved onto another group and showed this is how you do it in such a different tone,....and to students that he would never have spoken to before.

I am getting goose bumps about that..... to have that label then almost inch by inch like a band aid to rip that off to rub it off to wipe it clean.....because it was quite messy for that child in that particular class and I would hope and I would pray all the time...I would say...Lord Jesus help me to help these children....Help them all because what a terrible existence to have at school.

*(Researcher's Notes; Teacher is more concerned for the label that the student carries rather than the amount of work he understands )*

Behaviour is coming out of frustration ...to have that piece of work and I said you now have that forever... and drawing on his talents that I never knew he had.....

You want to bring the student to wholeness..... Belief in the child's uniqueness. You can tell there is something there but there is frustration.

If we change our teaching the infinite is possible!

From the professional development given, the teachers have been able to change some of our ways of teaching. Need to be open to the idea of change.

### ***Influences that have shaped your spirituality***

Long pause.....

With everything that has happened this year I guess the thing that has influenced my spirituality would be life. When I say life I mean um...I mean the unexpected the um...experiences that you go through that in some way you see something greater or you experience something greater. Or you are asked to rise to something greater um...so the influences on my spirituality I suggest would be ...my family, the relationships that I have with others, um...that idea that the unexpected and to trust the unexpected..... and the unexpected relationships that you make with people..... um.....um..... yeh....idea of reflection and not to be scared to listen...to what something bigger...and you don't even have the words .....and taking the time when you have those unexpected experiences or connections with people taking the time to reflect on those things.....

### ***What nurtures your spirituality?***

Um.....one of the most significant experiences I had would be during my illness and having all that treatment you are isolated and you're all by yourself...and in having to experience that this year um.....you realise that you can become comfortable with silence and comfortable with reflection.

And that reflection and that silence can be a comfort. Um...and gives you the nourishment to continue that openness so being will to have I guess be open....to having that reflection I think nurtures the spirituality in me...um but then again that idea of connection nurtures that spirituality as well so it is almost as if there is always this flow

*(Researcher's Notes; Flow seems to be about the dynamic between solitude and connection)*

### ***How and where do you feel you can best express your spirituality?***

Um.....I would suggest in the interactions that I have with others and so where that happens that can be anywhere um..... I went to the bank the other day and the bank manager wanted to talk to me about increasing my credit limit and all the rest....and she said to me “I haven’t really met anybody like you” ... I said “I find that an unusual statement” and she said to me “you’re asking me a question about how my day is....nobody does that” and I think she said to me “you’re taking the time out of your busy life to ask me how I am” and I said to “why wouldn’t I” and she said “people are not like that.”

To me I don’t find that as any different. I see her as a person and as a mother .....that openness..... sometime that can hurt you to have that openness but and when I was sick that idea of that shut down...but I can’t help it I just slowly opened up..... some people say to me why did I say that....that is me to see beyond....and that is what I do with my classes.....being a human...being truly who you are. Sometimes I don’t even know that I am doing that.....

Don’t do it with the intention to push your ego

In that way I express my spirituality wherever I am ...just at home...making time for prayer....

With my husband.....We think about the world sometime..... we think about our journey

***Is there anything that inhibits the growth of your spirituality?***

I would suggest pressures of mainstream society ...the social values that are projected in media, in film...in some forms of literature that are incomplete. Contrast to how I live my life..... complete contrast. ....um.....when I am thinking about the spirituality of my classroom mean because when I think of my family and my marriage...um...they are places that I can allow my spirituality to blossom um.....and even with friendships some of them I thought are quite toxic so I will move away um.... But it is that undercurrent of what is projected in society which to me are quite vulgar values or distorted that I think can inhibit me continuing to allow that to blossom or I have to fight it...in other words I have to fight for my spirituality

Because I believe my spirituality I am not going to..... or my faith I am not going to change that.

Families are being influenced by the distortion of values. I am calling it distortion because it is almost this pretence or façade that it is a good value.

And maybe it started off as a good value but then there is this layering of other values on top

They're the things that I think inhibit.

***How does your spirituality contribute to realising the task of the Catholic school which is one of integration of faith ,life and culture?***

I would suggest that on a personal level I try to do that um....it is always in my mind and in my heart. In a way for want of a better expression that is who I am um....but...I don't think that we give enough to that. As a school I think we forget that...um....its difficult because I think that some students are finding their faith in isolation.....if that is not carried through at home....I think we have to do more here.....because they need to have role models at school and as you said those role models are teachers and we are not just the embodiment of knowledge. That is what pedagogy tells us that we are not..... we have to be a facilitator and support but in that way we have to be a facilitator and support for faith I think.....It is a way to live your life...You can read material. You can read information on the internet. You can learn, but if you are not going to live your life in a meaningful way and a meaningful way for me is that you or that I have a strong faith, a strong spirituality and strong connections with others. And I think those things are missing from mainstream society. They are missing and in that way they are influencing families and in that way they are influencing students. And there has to be a place where they can realise that faith and culture can integrate they are not separate.

***You commented earlier on the fact that with your RE and spirituality you want to bring it into every lesson...I felt that was a statement about integration.***

It is something that I think I do unconsciously....sometimes students will point to things, remember when we had that discussion that we need to be more critical about what we are reading in the media.....and they pinpoint those things which I don't even remember. Integration has to be almost seamless because students have to see that is the way you approach life. Not just the way you approach teaching and learning. So I think there is more work to be done on that ...because faith, life, culture all those things to me make up a person....and that is why I am in Catholic Education to be part of facilitating that embodiment of the person....so it has to come through in teaching ...that is what the students will remember.

***What aspects of the Church's tradition and teaching contributes to shaping and nurturing your spirituality?***

Clarify Church tradition..... our practices like our liturgy.....the documents of Vatican 2 all our Catholic faith.

I would suggest ...shaping my spirituality um... now would be and nurturing it as well because I am a teacher. I can't really separate teaching and life..... life outside the realm of teaching because they are one and the same. I don't; know if that is a negative or a positive however um....if I am reading something to do with the teaching I will reflect on that beyond what I am going to do with that in the classroom. If that makes sense so in some ways I am trying to apply it to my own life..... my own spirituality...if I can make sense of a document or religious practice or ritual or value..... if I can't make sense of it and I can't reflect on it how on earth can I try and present that in class or explore that in class. It will not happen

*(Researcher's Notes; Integrity of the person is important in the process of integration...it is first and foremost)*

Any element of catholic tradition or teaching I am consciously reflecting on that and reflecting on it for my own personal growth but also for the relevance to the students and how we can make sense of it together. Sometimes you will not have all the answers and that is ok because we can raise the questions and in that way it can be frustrating for students..... but that is the process...um so I guess I can't really categorise specifically um specific documents or practices because it just happens.

Teachers notes from the RE Curriculum are quite supportive or even doing my own research like looking at doing....organisations of the Catholic church and their work is often guided by religious doctrine. And that is where the true meaning is ...grounded in Scripture.

Exploring it with students..... that is good..... that this organisation does that for people but where does that come from.

Put question on the board what Christian Catholic values are at the heart of this organisation.

*Is there anything in the tradition that has inhibited your spirituality?*

I think in some ways...um...sometimes language. When I am thinking about the growth of my spirituality I will grapple with language. I love that maybe because I have a literary background. That is one thing that um....the language at times I have to grapple with for my students. Because that can inhibit their spirituality or their access

*Would you have in mind the new translation of the mass...some of that language?*

Well some of that language has been um... because I am from an Italian background some of that with the mass said in Italian some of that was already in there in terms of my cultural

background ...so I have grown up with some of that but for some of the students most definitely so explain that to them or seeing the value in that to them can be at times difficult um...

At times they say to me I don't really see the relevance of that ...so that is something we work towards having an appreciation of that um...and trying to..... I guess engender in them that it is ok not to completely understand but we will work toward that .....may say at 13 it is difficult for you to understand....and that.. so

***Are there any other examples of language?***

A lot of that even with the catechism if we break it down and put it into their language the it is ok but then it is that initial struggle even to see it up there for some of them particularly if they have learning support is that barrier. Um,,,,,,

***Response to Definitions***

Long Pause.....

I would probably suggest the first one – an awakened consciousness or heightened awareness.....um with that capacity to connect and to experience a oneness that idea of experiencing a oneness I don't know how we will ever achieve that.... I think that is the journey um but....that idea of having that heightened awareness or that awakened consciousness most definitely....I try to engender that in students as well in terms of teaching...making them more aware.....even if students become more conscious of their own abilities. It is almost that you are in the pursuit to enable others. It is not a journey that stops..... you move on.....

The first one most definitely and I think...Hardy Hay and Nye.....potentially present in all human beings and for kids we have to find it no..... we don't have to find..... we can see it we have to help them find it.

I think I would feel empty if I didn't interact in this way.....or have this dimension to life. It is something that other people would describe as being nice or that there is something else about you.....but maybe it is just because I can articulate it or can engender it in other people.

Being able to have these discussion with you it has given me a greater awareness of who I am not only as a person but as a teacher and in some way you have given me a form of space in which to do it and a positive space a comfortable space. ....which we don't get as teachers.....we don't have time or space which I think is sad....

### Interview 3

#### Edward

The context of spirituality is so difficult to talk about because it is so um...I am not sure if it is a cultural thing.....within our language we don't have a great variety of words and language with which to express it..... really so we are always struggling to find it and refine it with metaphors and images but it is...maybe we should all learn a particular language so that we can all talk about it.

#### *In thinking about your spirituality and reflecting on it what do you think have been the influences that have shaped it?*

I think that the children that I have taught...because you see so many different people in the children and um...I am beginning to see the people that they are within these little people and even within adults they can see .....

Even as adults I am getting better at dealing with adults because I can picture them as students and just an understanding or trying to understand that they are shaped by parents their own life and their own understanding 99.95% of people are doing what is right and what they think best

And um it is just a matter of people thinking differently..... so in terms of spirituality really kind of...you see children who act out.... children who don't..... parents who have no self-esteem and you think these are all people trying to do their best. And um...just to look through the scriptures and see Jesus' focus on people and the people being the most important...that has really helped my spirituality. It really kind of helps me centre myself when it comes down to just managing a classroom

um...teaching being on staff...

um my family...my family .....recently and though the study has been a massive influence on me..... just perception of life and what is important so they're all the things that have shaped me.

My study of the scriptures..... having an opportunity to listen and to talk and to....um enter..... hear from scholars who have different historical accounts as well ...it is a really good opportunity to think about them..... and that is really over and above my Catholic upbringing but then that has helped me to put all that Catholic upbringing in focus...so it is kind of an opportunity to look back and it is a bit of a worry because um.....going through all the schools I

had the Catholic University ...and in being in a family who go to Mass all the time.....um it wasn't until I did all this study and experienced a lot through my teaching that a lot of it kind of made a lot more sense. And I took all that for granted and I am certainly not saying that other people don't or that they haven't been able to find connections like I have....the opportunity that other people have or parents have to explore their faith is very limited. I get annoyed at the priests in their homilies..... sometimes... a great opportunity which is being missed out on

I love my REC position because I have the opportunity to help the staff...

***What nurtures your spirituality?***

There is a bit of concern because I have finished my masters now and that was such a great opportunity to read and think...I am a bit worried that as time goes by I need to get dipping into that when I can... but there are opportunities on staff to pray.....um that has been a great opportunity to sit and think um.... Each class is a new bunch of people....every grade every child is different so that is good. It does help having some good people who are priests....I'm not put off by leaders in the church who are not always the best with people...that doesn't hinder me in any way.....though it is good when you meet someone who is in that leadership role who is really personable. They really do stand out as role models ...they do nurture as well.

***How and where do you feel you can best express your spirituality?***

Um...long pause....through the school, through the class..... I am trying to..... you know how you were talking about.....how the best opportunities are with the staff or with the classes.....my kids at the moment are fairly young so we talk about.....um how wonderful the world is....that is where we are at .....though in a deeper sense there is far more opportunity with the staff than with your classroom.....to do that I enjoy doing it because I am really comfortable with it....I don't care as much.... I like being able to show that comfort to children so that they feel a little more relaxed.....and I like setting up a prayer space which is just very.....casual very lay back.....and I like setting up an opportunity to express spirituality .....in that kind of scenario.....

***Do you feel that there is anything that inhibits the growth of your spirituality?***

Um.....not immediately ...the thing that I find that takes most life from me is the craziness of bureaucracy which this time of year (December) we are all kind of wrapped up in....but my spirituality...I think that just fatigues people and from that you can get physically and emotionally distracted in your response to people though from a spirituality that is really based

on relationship and response. And so in that way being fatigued, being tired..... all of that impacts on how you are with people. In terms of my own spirituality when I sit and think and refocus you know there isn't much that is a road block for me...no nothing that I can really think of.....

***Can you identify some expressions of your spirituality in the context of your work in the classroom?***

.....long pause for reflection.....

all of us....and in speaking to that with the children like naming that in the classroom ....um getting them to see they all are what is the word..... more than valued.....um they all should be honoured as individuals of Christ and...in talking about reconciliation that is something that comes up a bit.....just in terms of mending the relationships that are so easily broken within a class...so its mainly in my speaking to the children one on one....about how they are how they are relating to each other and getting them to see the worth of each other. But also in hopefully them seeing the value that I see in them for whoever they are..... that's probably my number 1.  
...

Now in terms of prayer and liturgy ...and those types of expression of spirituality again it is like what I was saying before for me I believe that it should be or is better expressed in a relaxed and informal way. That Jesus would tell a story and talk it wouldn't be, in my opinion, orchestrated or choreographed that um prayers can be spontaneous that can be explained but don't have to be well worded.... You know God understands our needs...it doesn't have to be perfectly said. Um so in terms that.....

It is real..... it's human. Even setting up for mass even..... if something goes wrong...beforehand I make the point that were are all friends and we are here to help each other out and a mass doesn't have to be theatre in the round. Look after each other and start again.....and so in terms of it is all individual..... it is imperfect, but it is shared.

So that is how I'd express it.

***How does your spirituality impact on all areas of your work in the classroom?***

I love it here because I believe that it is personable and it is individual. It is not perfect that is for sure, particularly in my learning space... but.....um it is still a goal that we strive towards co-operative learning...we have all got a place..... we are in relationship with each other. toward

a common goal. That he um.....different forms of thinking....so that is something that is part of the culture here and with the changing leadership of the school, it is something that the staff have fought to keep. In terms of pedagogy I do think I am always thinking.... am I meeting the children at their needs....um...am I actually teaching them.... what learning have they got out of this? So it is trying to treat them individually.....

The learning environment that is acceptance of imperfection

That sounds like low standard but it is an environment where children feel safe because they know they can make mistakes and learn from it. We are there to support them...supporting each other. So in terms of reconciling ...being able to reconcile with self when there has been a time of difference....remember that this child, this student is Christ as well....and how am I going to approach them and reconcile with them and hoping that they see that too....having that culture of reconciling with each other; teacher to student teacher to teacher....

***Task of Catholic school to integrate faith, life and culture. How does your spirituality contribute towards realising the task of the Catholic School.?***

Long pause.....

..... well.....it be through the questions above..... what am I doing? how am I making it real through my spirituality? To try and make it present in the classroom through naming it making it real through my actions in how I am dealing with children in how I'm speaking to them.....and how my approach to teaching them when I am programming and thinking how am I going to meet this outcome..... it is in thinking that they all have worth and they all have capability that is coming from my spirituality..... where I am believing in them as people. And that I should honour their uniqueness which again is from my belief, the value of individual uniqueness it would be realising the task of the Catholic school through making presence, reconciliation explicit by saying those words and naming it. For faith to come in to life it has to be in the everyday life of someone.

For example being pushed into a window today or someone who for instance this year children who are self harming...that kind of thing...if it is not named it is not realised it is not integrated. ***(RN Confronting the issue with truth...naming it)*** A lot of children turn off in RE. because their questions aren't answered properly and they ask hard questions. They're interested in it but when these questions aren't fulfilled they see there is nothing in it which meets my needs.

They are interested in things like heaven and hell and sin and all that because they are interesting.....and um unless they are answered and real words are used and named.....in a real way which an **RE** lesson should be just as normal as an art or sport lesson. Some teachers think that for RE. we have to bring out our beautiful book, light a candle which creates a sense of unreal....then go back....**RE** needs to be spoken about like this otherwise it is not a part of their life. It has to integrate technology....using virtual candles reading scripture from their i-phones.....so in terms of my spirituality its that sense of people being number 1.

The Holy Spirit..... the idea of getting the children to name or to feel that instinct to do something that is right.....just as much as someone who can identify that first feeling of being unsafe or anger. Um if we can get them to identify their feelings ...that sense of rightness....they could be naming the Holy Spirit within them.....and acting on it.....there is that choice that free will....like acting on anger....acting on an instinct of justice.....compassion is obviously a choice....knowing that they have that within them.....The Holy Spirit is something that needs to be a part of discussion...what kind of opportunities are around us to see Christ in the world. And maybe it is the Holy Spirit working in this environment or maybe the Holy Spirit in us to be able to see that....

***How does your spirituality impact on the way you teach RE?***

Like I was saying with **RE**. Lessons I think they have to be as everyday as everything else like you were saying not removed...from life...so . Having great faith I think is like us.... Just also believing that the children get different things from different discussions.....that's a leap of faith ...again the idea of the work of the Holy Spirit....working differently....you know when we read a gospel you don't know who's listening to what and in **RE**. with my grade partner she'll often say oh the children won't care..... don't do that but you don't know who will..... she'll often say oh the children won't care..... don't do that but you don't know who will hear what..... where it will fall.....so I am willing to always have a go..... to be out there ....and you do it in a way which again is kind of not matter of fact but down to earth...really at ground level.....

***What signs do the children give that makes your grade partner feel they won't listen or take it in?***

I think a lot of it is also her..... where she is also at um.....there's to be a few vocal children and they might express their feelings against it but they express that about Maths AND everything....but um because RE can be quite .....difficult..... that is not the word for those who are not comfortable it is made really simple and basic

*What aspects of Church Tradition and teaching contribute to shaping and nurturing your spirituality?*

Um the....certainly the Mass is a great sense of reflection and enrichment not always the homily but certainly the readings um....an opportunity to pray as well in terms of church tradition and teaching

Church teaching.... Like I said and I suppose people relate to who they relate to and there have been certain kinds and leaders of the church who I relate to and they have been very good role models for me. So they have also been wonderful as people in modelling what I think is good spirituality .....um ....church tradition... not so much traditional prayer as such um....and I say that because I have been focussing on through this year..... previously when I have done meditation that has been an opportunity to which is connected more in terms of mediation with scripture..... yes I would probably name the mass as being central

*Are there any aspects of church tradition and teaching that you feel have inhibited the growth of your spirituality?*

Not really only because my um....I think I detach my spirituality from them...I think I take from this and leave that..... um and I would name parts of the catechism that probably I just don't understand the context of.... And for me they just seem I don't know wrong.....

there's obviously priests who are not priestly ....but they don't worry me because they don't own the mass and they are not the church...and being **REC** I am not phased by them anymore in terms like them being an authoritative figure they don't and that sounds pretty poor ....I have come to realise they are just as much a normal person as you and I are. ....

Institution needs to hold onto the core stuff

*Response to Definitions*

I like this one..... through this..... the idea of heightened awareness which brings capacity but I am not sure about..... to experience a oneness....in all reality for me that doesn't jell.... this one..... a form of awareness again different from and transcending everyday awareness so it really is a mindset or a way of perceiving things and ....potentially present in all human being but I am not sure of the awareness of it.... and I think it is positive function surviving (biological language) don't like that word so much. I like the word enhance better..... that last one..... relationship with the sacredness of life....nature and universe...

I'll go with the last one but with little dribs and drabs of the others.

### ***Final Reflection***

Becoming a parent has deepened my perception far more than I would have thought. Have privileged roles as teachers particularly in a Catholic school. Our Catholic tradition just gives us a scaffolding to stand on in terms of our spirituality that I don't understand how people who are brought up without any religion make deep moral sense apart from the words of wrong or right. I would hate to live like that because I value my sense of the world through my own faith.

### **Interview 3**

#### **Louise**

#### ***What have been the influences that have shaped your spirituality?***

My family – the faith, the beliefs and the culture that I have been nurtured in.

**(Researcher)** Liz spoke openly and freely about the conception of her twin girls. The way she and Matt had longed for a child. It was something that Liz wanted for Matt. Having children is a source of identity in Matt's family. Everything is focussed on the children. They had been receiving treatment through IVF but in the end they felt uncomfortable with what would happen to the fertilised embryos if not used. They left the IVF treatment then Liz became pregnant naturally. This enabled Liz to experience a sense of miracle and gift. Something bigger than her operating in their lives

#### ***What nurtures it?***

Going to Mass, building a sense of community with those you worship with.

Good music in the Liturgy. The personal struggles strengthen your spirituality

#### ***How and where do you feel you can best express your spirituality?***

In the classroom, through my teaching.

#### ***Is there anything that inhibits the growth of your spirituality?***

Distractions and not giving enough time to stillness and silence.

**(R.N. Liz admitted finding it difficult to be still, to meditate)**

***Can you identify some expressions of your spirituality in the context of your work in the classroom?***

(Researcher) Visiting the “rest room” – this is a specially designated room for those who may find the social complexities of the playground overwhelming. Liz likes to spend time with children in this room encouraging them. **(R.N. This action expresses empathy to the children on the margins)**

Enabling the children to build relationships – one example being visits to the Aged Care home where the students take their “this is my life journal” which they had been preparing throughout their last year in primary school and share it with one person from the Aged Care Home. This is aimed to give children confidence in speaking and relating with others instead of being pre-occupied with their texting on their mobile phones.

Prayer journal – Students volunteer to take the prayer journal home for a particular evening. They write a prayer in it and this is used as the final prayer of the day the following day

Reading appropriate literature with the children e.g. Maurice Glitzman’s trilogy Once, Then and Now – survivors of the Holocaust creating their own and a new family.

***How does your spirituality impact on all areas of your work in the classroom especially your relationship with the students, your pedagogy, the learning environment?***

Similar to above

***How does your spirituality contribute towards realising the task of the Catholic school “to integrate faith and life and faith and culture?”***

Researcher: Grandparents day – the generations come to the school, celebration in prayer and song, then they visit the classrooms – entering into the children’s world their lived reality.

Social Justice outreach – each class has a different project e.g. if someone in a class has been effected by Leukemia then the children support that foundation throughout the year.

***How does your spirituality impact on the way you teach Religious Education?***

Researcher: Trying to make it as real and as meaningful as possible for the children – getting into their world, their experiences

***What aspects of Church tradition and teaching contribute to shaping and nurturing your spirituality?***

Researcher: The Liturgical seasons especially Advent and Christmas – sense of preparing for something which focuses your attention beyond ordinary time.

***Are there aspects of Church tradition and teaching that have inhibited the growth of your spirituality?***

Homilies that you can't connect to.

Inability for the Church to respond to current needs e.g. shortage of priests. The solution is to ordain married men or women – These ways forward are not heard or acted upon.

Response to some definitions:

Spirituality is about;

“the quest of the human spirit which is bigger, deeper, ‘more than’ the ordinary surface of life (Guinan 1998 p. 1)”

*(Researcher's Notes. Louise identified with this statement because of her experience of the conception of her twins girls)*

“a form of awareness different from and transcending everyday awareness. It is potentially present in all human beings and has a positive function in enabling individuals to survive in their natural environments (Hardy, Hay and Nye)”

*(Researcher's Notes; Louise identified with this statement because it is in the struggles that you find the strength.)*

### **Interview 3**

#### **Maryanne**

R.E Course (Foundations in Theology) made me more aware, not a better person, indication that it is all with us.

***What have been the influences that have shaped your spirituality?***

I suppose influences, if I look at it from when I was very young it would be obviously my parents um...I was brought up in a Catholic family not only did we attend Mass but we lived our life looking at the Catholic values and so I have two older sisters and a brother so we were always kept very close and taught to do the right thing and so and as we progressed I went to good catholic schools so the spirituality was obviously nurtured then as well um...and then throughout my adult life. I met John who came from a good Catholic family so we just basically continued that on through our married life and through our children. We try and bring all those core faith beliefs in and so on in our everyday life so there has been a lot of influences and obviously as I said last time being within a Catholic school also just makes you live it every day..... which is really good.

***Tell me about your work as REC***

Well I only did that temporarily while Marilyn was away but obviously that is something thing that I would like to do in the future.

I have been blessed in so many different ways..... just you know what has happened over the last couple of weeks..... I have been blessed and given so many different life lines and me using that faith and showing it in all different ways

Showing my gratitude.....

Nurturing it

Part of nurturing is seeing the importance of spirituality in everything that we do and it is what makes us so the fact that I nurture my faith and I nurture all the things that come along with that. I can then bring that into my own children at home, their lives are showing them how my husband and I (*Researcher's Notes. Consistency with life in family and life at school.....*)

So looking at the bigger family, the family here at St. Angela's a; comes hand in hand.

***How and where do you feel you can best express your spirituality?***

Um...I think if I was asked that questions years ago I think I would have said in Mass....um and probably when you are talking about your faith...I think now as I get older and hopefully wiser, Its everywhere...even to the extent (*Researcher's Notes; Integration of faith and life comes with maturity*) I went home at lunch time...John's at home sick at the moment... and um I went home to check on him and there was someone in the car next to me that was clearly being silly and doing silly things and wanting to come in front of me and I just stopped I thought the

Christian thing to do would be to stop and let this person in because they are obviously in a bigger hurry than me. I think it is just whether it be a big thing we can show our faith and spirituality but we can also show it though little things...can be expressed anywhere.. and I think you tend to have people around you who are the same ..like I think that is true....working here is probably a lot easier for... me to show and express my spirituality being in a Catholic environment or an environment where everyone has the same core values. I think it would be different maybe I would not be able to express my spirituality

We are lucky in this environment because we are surrounded by people that it is easier to express the spiritual.

***Do you think there is anything that inhibits the growth of your spirituality?***

Um.....I suppose there has been times where not so much you question the belief or your faith but I think there are times in life where you start to um... feel a little bit negative and if you are not careful and if you don't have all those.... ..feelings which are so deep within to make you the person you are, there would be times where it could be difficult but if I look back no I don't think so ...probably the hardest thing I have ever gone through is losing my father in law.... And you know if anything that brought me closer um ....and hard to understand when so if there was ever a time that I was going to lose a bit of faith that would have been the time to wonder why...question why such a wonderful person was taken.

***Do you want to say anything about how you worked through that?***

It hasn't lifted the darkness. I still question why he went..... why he was taken at such a ... I mean he was only young , he was only 64.....um but it is not so much that it was just that he was such a big influence on our family..... um and then on the other side of it I think well I wasn't born into that family so the fact that I have had his presence in my life is a huge thing so I need to take that, embrace that, so that is probably how I work through the grief And I think he has a lot to do with me getting over it, well not so much getting over it. I don't think we ever will but I think sometimes I feel myself and then I look at Mum and think that I didn't think she would be able to pick herself up but I see she has..... she is a strong woman she is and I think that is him doing that...um (*Researcher's Notes; so in that sense the grieving has brought you into a different relationship*)

I know that time heals and in that sense it has you are not spending every minute of the day crying but I think that um..... we won't ever forget him and the fact that he was taken. But you

look at what he did give us and you build on that...so there are so many things in my boys they do and say I think that is Dad..... and obviously with John being just like his dad

*(Real times of spiritual turning points)*

He lives on..... as hard as it is He still lives on in us.....

He would say when you go you want people to remember you for the good things, the sort of person he was he would give and give and give.....

I have probably never thought of it in that way

*Just moving to your classroom can you identify some expressions of your spirituality in the context of your work in the classroom?*

Um.... I suppose everything that we do.....um just the way that the children, my expectations *(Researcher's Notes. Teacher expectation for the children are an expression of spirituality)*, and the way they treat one another...um...everything that we do we sort of relate back to why we are here.....um and why were are her in our Catholic faith ...our beliefs....um you... God's basically put us here to ...he gave us Jesus we follow in his footsteps.... we should all be living a Christian life and that comes to us constantly.....with the children even if it is something silly they are dong with one another I refer back to what do you think Jesus would have done.

*How does your spirituality impact on all the areas of your teaching?*

I think as we said before you have the classroom set up in such a way that um...the spirituality is there even if it is not a Religion lesson.....it is always there because you are talking about the way of respect...the way that the children should be acting.... um and as far as the classroom environment I suppose making it a safe place..... a place where you can talk about anything.... you being the source for the children to know that they can talk to you about anything. And um it all comes down to that and a comfortable environment.

*(Researcher's Notes; Giving children that security in a space in the classroom)*

*How does your spirituality contribute to realising the task of the Catholic school?*

I suppose um....the way that ...it is probably a difficult question for me to come straight out and answer but I think the way that my spirituality contributes, is the way that I live my life...( *Researcher's Notes; Witness*) my children in my classroom know all about my children at home...my children at home know everything about my children in the classroom. So it is like

one...although it is work and home it is all integrated....as far as I am concerned..... and it is easy for us to express our spirituality everywhere because if I am not there I am at home or with friends and it just comes naturally because this is the environment where we can show our spirituality. Children at the end of the day are probably the easiest ones to whom we can show the nurturing we bring them .

***How does your spirituality impact on the way you teach R.E. ?***

Um...I think RE is probably the easiest subject for me to teach....I like all the KLA S but I think with the religion you make it so personal and I said with my upbringing ....not all about going to Church but having those values and instilling those..... it has a positive impact because when I read the Gospel reading and I try and relate it to everyday life. During the homily recently the priest said .....When we are at church Jesus will pull out the people who are the most needy and if you live your life and you are comfortable he tends to draw out the people who need him the most and will give most attention to them .... I walked away from that and thought how true  
( *Researcher's Notes; Learning from the Homily or being awakened*)

If I look at my classroom I have children in my class who have that stability at home that nurturing.... They have that support..... they obviously pray as a family.....and then I have children who don't it.....I tend to bring them in a little bit closer and try and provide that stability for them so i think that is part of my spirituality .....

***What aspects of Church Tradition contribute to shaping and nurturing your spirituality?***

Oh look, I think our current Pope he is great influence.....I don't think we have really had that for a long time. Lead from the top. He is the best example we have so I think that is a huge step forward for the Catholic faith. Obviously Bishop Anthony is pretty good in this area...so good leadership that is important.

***What aspects of Church tradition that have inhibited the growth?***

Um...I suppose....when we talk about the Mass there would probably be particular times when you go to mass and you hear the same thing over and over and it wasn't relating to the Gospel as such..... it was more just a point of view or a message that was wanting to be conveyed and it was just being done in the wrong way

Um so I think that to me and it still happens now at other churches that inhibits..... there are people..... you want to be able to draw other people into the Church and into the community

but if you get stuck on that radiation you bring all the negativity into it that is not going to help..... that will drive people away.

### **Response to definitions of spirituality**

*Closer to your understanding of spirituality are there elements aspects.....*

Um..... there is two.....

Quest of the human spirit bigger, deeper than the ordinary surface of life. We can look at our faith our beliefs but it is much deeper than it needs to be within us. We talk about God is everywhere but the main thing is..... he is within us. So and the way that we build on that um.....and as I said since Dad has passed away..... I probably am an even a bigger believer in there being ...his spirit is still with us..... I can feel it.....all the time especially in times when I need his support .....that was definitely not evident to me prior to his passing.....um and from the day that he did go..... that night he passed away at ten past three in the morning we sat with him.....the whole night so we were lucky enough to be with him right to the end. And that night I remember going upstairs and looking out the window and the moon was bright red. I have never seen anything like it . I said to John ...”look at that Dad is telling us he got there...”and then within half an hour it went normal..... yes little things like that you know things that have happened in our life since then you can say that Dad was definitely looking after us,.

Spirituality is potentially present in all human beings and has a positive function. It is how we use it.....

## Appendix F. Summaries for each participant from interview 1 and 2

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### Summary of Insights and Emerging Themes from Interviews 1 and 2

Louise.

#### Describing spirituality, the spirit

Importance of words “it would be more in dialogue with others where I see the spirit...and in my internal dialogue, self- talk”

“Link back to that sense of calm, that sense of stilling, that sense of peace within me. A lot of it has a sense of re-affirming what you are doing and I find, I suppose that connectedness to that, to God” ( *R.N. The integrating capacity of spirituality, the synthesis of faith, life and culture*)

“Spirituality has something to do with the human needs, the human heart.”

*(R.N. Talking about and discussing the spiritual Louise. immediately gave an answer in the context of her class, her students)*

- ❖ “Through literature. I just read a very good book to Yr. 6 by Maurice Glitzman which is about the holocaust. Yr. 6 really got into it.
- ❖ “Prayer journals”
- ❖ “Using the different cultures from home. Lebanese culture can be very traditional”
- ❖ “In assemblies” (R.N. Return to these in the 3<sup>rd</sup> interview)

#### Reference to Life Experiences

Expressed compassion and concern for the family where cohesion is broken. Reference to the T.V. show Find my Family – the tension of acceptance and rejection.

Critical illness coupled with rejection by her father. “After coming close to dying there was a real sense of connectedness. I was fearing dying, fearing God. Very concerned with how I would be judged by God, obsessing over what I would say to others, came back to the spirit as calming”

Death of niece soon after L.S. wedding eclipsed sharing the joy of the wedding and the honeymoon.

## **Images of God and the Spiritual**

Aboriginal art.

Describing an aboriginal art work in a friend's home - The meeting place within a circle. The cross was done in dot painting. It conveyed that everyone has a different path but then how we all meet eventually.

“there is a sense of connectedness either in that being your family, the community and the lines meaning the people streaming from that core group and the lines leading, interweaving with another core group”

Painting evokes/ speaks of/ reveals the spiritual “because it shows the connectedness we have with others. How we don't exist in isolation, we came into the world in the same way.”

“It is all to do with people family, generation.”

*(R.N. Concepts of the spiritual which emerged from reflection on the Aboriginal art: connectedness, inclusion (circle), journey, generations, continuity)*

Monet's Parliament House.

“It makes me feel a sense of calm...even the brush stroke that is used and the colour is sort of mystical in a way. There is a sense of power beyond your control, even though we build structures, we humans do have a sense of being guided ultimately by that light if that is Parliament House, No matter how much we control things ultimately there is something bigger than us” *(R.N. The capacity of art to lead us to the ultimate, to lead us beyond ourselves, to transcend the surface of things)*

## **Summary of Insights and Emerging Themes from Interviews 1 and 2**

**Rebecca**

### **Insight into the Participant**

Expressed appreciation for this interview time – saw it as a positive opportunity to reflect and listen.

Identified personal gifts as honesty about self and patience with others.

“I will be 27 in two months.. as I am growing up and developing as a teacher as well, it is not about me acquiring a possession or achieving something that is socially deemed great...it is more about those personal connections, so for me in my personal life it is about making real connections to family or something like that”

“I feel most at home when I make some connection with someone”

### **Selected Images**

Connected with;

the image of Van Gogh’s Starry Night.

“I could actually see myself there. Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that it is night time. I do a lot of my thinking at night time or early morning and I will often come to new insights or conclusions about things.....the painting shows me there is something much larger at work. I can’t describe it...something greater than myself where I live. Larger than humanity. I guess something that is infinite, something that can’t be measured.”

The Leunig cartoon image

“the boy in my class.....he has just got to let it out....like the little figure wanting to jump out. Each and every student has something.

### **A “Faith” Perspective**

God and the spiritual are **present** all the time. It is us who are **not present** to this reality.

Things get in the way and “cloud our perceptions, our understandings”

The spirit is integral to all

### **Language and Images of God and the Spiritual**

Words or phrases from the song Everyday God which resonated with you;

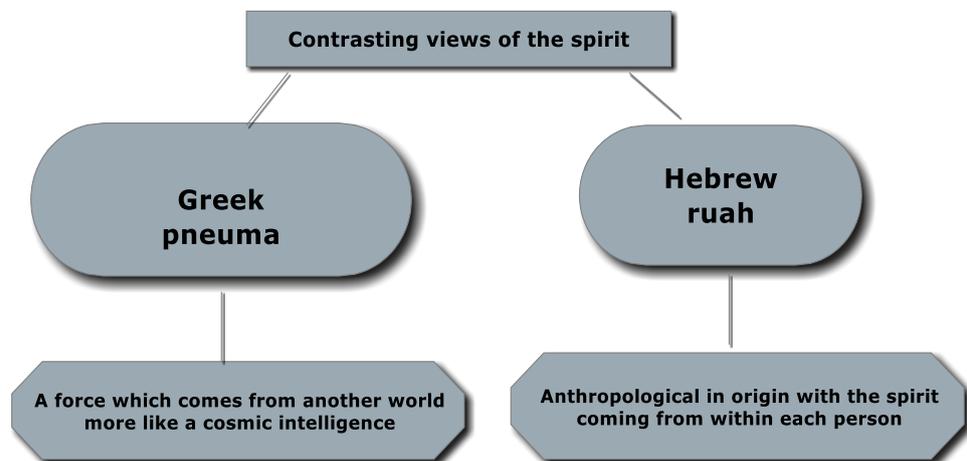
- presence, a God who is with us all the time, idea of God of laughter, God of sorrow, strong and patient, suggest God is with us in the range of our human experiences.

“God is with us all the time.....particularly in today’s society images of a hierarchical god...they don’t apply”.....

“Hierarchical God, preconceived societal notions of what god is...the abstract concept of God...the one that has been projected by the media...human construct...tying the concept of God to a hierarchical Church that is purported in the media all the time...that is quite dangerous to see God that way”

I see God as personal...as someone I can have a personal relationship to... a dialogue... my observation of that is perhaps at odds with mainstream society”

- (Researcher’s Notes: This comment, in identifying the two ways of conceptualising God, reflects the contrasting views of the Spirit as illustrated in the following diagram and featured in the Literature Review.)



- **Beginning, unfolding, enduring notion of God speaks of the concept of journey**  
“there is no definite path in terms of your spirituality and relationship with God...you go on a journey, you don’t know where it will take you...if you are strong and patient.” Reflection on the process of journey “as you grow and develop you become more comfortable with fluidity and allow yourself to become more flexible.” In shaping the path I have some input into it but it is not necessarily me”
- The idea of God being the earth’s creator that can sometimes overwhelm me, I am quite insignificant... brings a sense of wonder.

Conscious of embarking on her teaching career in an intentional way – as a response to a call.

“The fact that God has called us or called me..... I often think about the fact that I did embark on a teaching career. There was a deliberate reflection of that...”

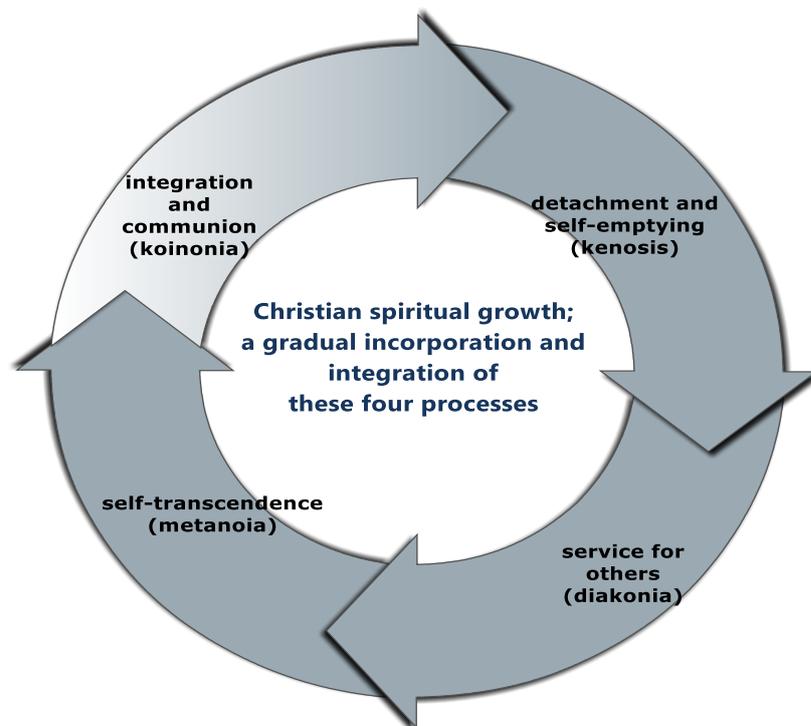
Difficulty in talking about and discussing the spiritual

During a retreat time teachers had to give feedback. They were summing up, trying to find the word because from the response the students gave there was something else there. We didn't have the language.

“Kids said you gave so much of your time, learnt so much about us”

“Kids said you gave so much of your time, learnt so much about us”

*(Researcher's reflection; is this an example of Christian spirituality being embodied in the teachers' actions towards their students? The students observed self-giving and unconditional listening. In classical Christian terms this is referred to as Kenosis (self-emptying), Diakonia (service to others) and Metanoia (transcendence). Reference to diagram in the Literature Review)*



## Summary of Insights and Emerging Themes from Interviews 1 and 2

**Maryanne**

### Experiencing the presence of God

- God is all around us all the time but there are particular moments when it is clearer.
- It is not just when I am in Church on the weekend.

- God in the Church setting and God in everyday life - one is not better than the other it is just different. One doesn't take more precedence over the other. When we are in Church I feel as if I am one on one with God, whereas with every day I am sort of one on one but I am thinking of him in the day ahead. (perhaps not such a focussed awareness)
- Doing the R.E. Course has made me more aware (Foundations in Theology), teaching religion as well has made it a lot clearer
- We lead such busy lives but there are times of laughter...home, walking in the front door...I feel God's presence. I have God there. My family...my boys. (Is this an experience of the intimacy of God "Make your home in me as I make mine in you?" Experiencing God is about homecoming)
- Flow of empathy and compassion in the family. You can look at one of them and know that something is amiss
- Falling pregnant and the birth of my children

### **Experiencing the absence of God**

- God has given me so many lifelines that there have been times when I haven't taken them. It is my job to be attentive to the life lines
- Only in recent times that I have become in tune. Unless things have happened over the last few years I probably wouldn't be where I am now with God.

### **Important values**

What I value is my going to Church but not everyone has to do that. It is another way of showing respect and love for God but not everyone has to do that (non-judgemental)

No matter how dark things get you know that God is there.

### **Spirituality**

Song by Leona Lewis doesn't mention God but God is there. (*How is God there? Is it in the transcendent – something bigger than us?*) Listen to the lyrics and think who is that person for you? Can you see God through other people? No matter how hard it gets I'll always be there for you. When I picked the song it was how I felt God is. The song doesn't mention God but it is deeply spiritual. Some people will think of it as their partner but when I listen to it I think of God.

When I say the word God I get the whole picture. God is the being. Spiritual is the feeling around. It is everything, all in one.

### **Images of God**

When I think of God I think of light

I often stop and look at God in nature. Last night we stopped and looked at the moon. Patrick said isn't God so clever!

My understanding of God's presence gets a lot better as I mature. As a teenager it is about just wanting things for yourself. As you mature you don't forget to thank God in the good times. Now I am grateful for everything

## **Summary of Insights and Emerging Themes from Interviews 1 and 2**

**Edward.**

### **Insight into the Participant**

“Creative flair that is part of me that I enjoy”

“Always been raised in a Catholic family..... It is an innate part of who I am”

Recently completed Masters in Religious Education

### **Selected Images**

- Leunig's Inner Person

“Conveys the idea that when you have self-doubt there is a constant presence of God you can draw on. It is the space within that is like an inner fire. You can retreat back to that inner space to be revived, but it needs to connect. It is like being on the edge of the ocean”

*(R.N. Balancing the within and the without; It is the within that is the starting point.)*

- Mc Cubbin's – The Pioneering Woman

“The woman looks pretty tired. There is a sense of doing it together. The clearing in the light shows there is beauty to be had all around”

*(R.N. Compassion for the woman)*

- Parliament House by Monet

“Like a cloud over your day. Why is it clouded? Yet there is such a reality behind it.

### **Emerging Themes**

#### **Presence:**

“When we have...whatever reason we have...a resonance with things coming together you can **feel** that presence there...try and calm yourself so you can get in touch with that”

*(R.N. Presence associated with the verb feel. Edward sees presence and connectedness essentially linked “a resonance with things coming together, you can feel that presence there” – the resonance with things coming together is seen as essential to or a pre requisite to the experience of presence.)*

#### **Statements about Spirituality:**

“Spirituality is about being properly human”

“Spirituality is always changing but there are some constants”

“When you talk about the spiritual I think it is our connection with God”

“Faith and spirituality exist above the institution of doctrine”

*(R.N. Sense of transcendence in faith and spirituality)*

“The Church is like the launch us up. It is through this that we meet something else”

***Q from interviewer; In talking about God what images are true for you?***

“Rarely actually visualise God. It is nearly always a feeling I conjure up”

*(R.N. Faith is a felt sense of God,)*

***However when talking about the action of the Holy Spirit the image of the sieve is used- the action of purifier)***

“The Holy Spirit is the sieve. What is left is good...the action of the Spirit.”

## **Awareness Sensing**

“One that distinctly comes to my mind when I was a teenager. I saw my brother and he had just been in a fight that I was unaware of.....he had obviously been hurt...my whole vision was on him...my focus so intent I forgot about anything else. People were looking at me with that look, ‘where are you?’

## **Mystery Sensing**

“I’d define that as the Holy Spirit working”

*(R.N. Language of our Catholic Tradition)*

*(Long pause – Interviewer asks ‘Do you want to say more about the Holy Spirit?’)*

“change of mindset, drive to step up, overcome, to feel the empathy – relates to whatever is good in you to surface, hopefully you would act on it but it is your choice.....the ah ha moment when something comes into focus for us, frame of mind which clicks into compassion...feel the presence of something beyond normal.”

Language of the spirit is intangible so staff sometimes fearful of talking about it.

## **Value Sensing**

“moving towards the ultimate...words coming to mind are ‘genuineness’ is that a word?”

*(Interviewer: authenticity?)*

Compassion, care for another, having an honest compassion, an understanding of the other and a balance in your own self

## **Summary of Insights and Emerging Themes from Interviews 1 and 2**

### **Hilton**

#### **Insight into the participant**

##### 1. Personal qualities

“ I suppose I am compassionate and I listen fairly well. I suppose I have a strong sense of my own inadequacies which means I am a bit more empathetic for others. I suppose I see connections pretty readily...that helps”

*(R.N. Connections and the link with synthesis especially in terms of faith and culture and faith and life)*

“One thing that helps me be present in the moment is really good poetry and for me that has almost the strength of Scripture. In a sense for me poetry offers an alternative to some of those truths and the presence of God”

*(R.N. Example given was the poem Equanimity by Les Murray. A poem about being there between the moments....celebrating.)*

## 2. Selected art works

- Morning Mist by Gruner:

“I think it is the light and the freshness at the beginning of the day. That is something I find redemptive”

- Leunig’s Inner Person:

“I always love Leunig’s take on the human person and there is something melancholy about that I tune into. So I suppose I am fairly sanguine but there is that melancholy aspect to my temperament....I suppose it is also, there are two different faces here and the one inside is more alert than the one outside and I suppose I am a bit more alert to the world in theory than I am actually in practice or engaged or switched on in the head than I really am.”

*(R.N. An interesting comment concerning the difference in alertness in the inner and outer person. Hilton explains it by being more alert to the world in theory than in actual practice. Throughout the course of the two interviews there appeared to be a good synergy in the way Hilton created meaning of the external world through what could be described as alertness to his interior self or attentiveness to the heart- the heart described by O’Leary as the school of the Spirit which carries wisdom, courage and creativity.)*

## Emerging themes

### 1. Desire/ Longing

Expressed a yearning and desire for God and the spiritual

- “**voice** of something in the distant that I yearn for sometimes”

*(R.N. use of the word voice denotes a personal sense of God and an embodiment of the spirit. This sense of God or the spiritual being incarnate is re-iterated in the use of various images and expressions throughout the interviews)*

- “Deeply want that life (of the spirit) in the grass roots; working with kids I want those kids to see the life places where they see the spirit is being restricted”

## 2. Language and the Spiritual

Resistance to the overuse of certain words to describe the spiritual “in our dreaming, in our daring” They can become jargon. “My job is using plain down to earth language...at times too banal”

“The God who mucks in with people who are just struggling through life”

*(R.N. Reveals a desire to keep the spiritual real and well grounded ‘earthed’ - reflection of God incarnate in our world – use of language and processes which aim to achieve a synthesis of faith and life, faith and culture. The next example builds on that)*

In an example of ways to talk about and discuss the spiritual an example was given of a recent discussion with some Yr. 11 students concerning religious beliefs, hopes and fears. M.S. asks the students “How do advertisers appeal to intimacy? Wouldn’t it be nice to be accepted just for who you are without having to prove yourself. The students knew what was meant. In this sharing I sensed there was some communication of truth that goes beyond what I said or did yet it is truth”

*(R.N. Here there is a dialogue with advertising and media culture which is given another dimension – that of true self -worth. It was a moment of illumination which perhaps had the capacity to transcend the short term goals of the culture of advertising)*

Captured the paradox of God as being both immanent yet transcendent in Rahner’s statement “that which is incomprehensibly other is also illimitably within and close and intimate”

*(R.N. being able to draw on such a core definition of God during an interview revealed how intrinsic this concept/understanding of God is in the heart and mind of the participant.)*

## **Images of God**

“Someone with me, the brother, the mate by your side, the wise parent that sleeves rolled up knows what you are going through”

*(R.N. Reveals the walking with, the companion, God who became incarnate, who “lives among us.” ‘We live in our bodies; our spirituality is corporeal. Our redemption lies in the real world*

*of space and time, the only world in which we can live. It is here and nowhere else, that God's great work is accomplished" (Roccasalvo, Joan. L., Hans Urs von Balthasar: Theologian of Beauty (The Way Oct. 2005 p.60)*

Spirit reveals the feminine face of God "Lady Wisdom"

*(R.N. Personification of the virtues as in Lady Wisdom reveals that incarnational sense of God referred to earlier)*

### **Presence of the Spirit**

"Taking truth to a deeper level is where you touch the spiritual...stay with the conversation and take it in a pondering way"

"The spirit is in the conversation moving where it will

"Listening to where the conversation is going"

"When people talk about the spiritual and their spirituality I see that as the door open to God"

"God is personal and the spirit is a bit more amorphous"

"Sense of the spiritual is not personal"

### **The Ordinary Transformed; a Sense of the Transcendent**

*(Interviewer's Question: And now with mystery sensing could you remember a time when you had that sense of the transcendent?)*

Oh yeah ok

*(Interviewer ...And could you describe that)*

Well at times..... it is as you say glimpses... oh.... I suppose descriptively nothing fresh about it but that sense of being part of something much bigger..... sometimes in the bush I get a sense it is something about subjectivity and objectivity it is something about a diminishing sense of the subjective and that's probably a way of saying being part of something bigger.

*(R.N. movement towards "unitive consciousness" – all is one. Reference to (Bourgeault, Littleton)*

Um..... oh so.....moments of extreme tenderness um.....dearest freshness deep down things... something like that ....whatever that is.....**that the tiniest thing is a world**

*(R.N. "To see a world in a grain of sand*

*And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,*

*Hold infinity in the palm of your hand*

*And Eternity in an hour" (Blake)*

*Experience of holding the paradox)*

...and whether it is a new born baby or a beautiful drop of water on a leaf.... just sometimes those momentary glimpses open the door to the other....um I miss them just as quickly. And I think also..... they're things offered I suppose..... In terms of me trying to access or respond to mystery..... um I suppose sometimes through meditation .....um sometimes it is when kids say something I spoke about this last time..... when the lights go on for a kid and you know what they're saying has spoken the truth and the truth isn't just intellectual but it is like a sacrament.... There's a presence there that feels like God's there

*(R.N. Sacramental Imagination ref to O'Leary "Sacramental imagination is the eye of the Christian heart which sees all things in Christ and traces the lines of his work- even in the darkest moments and the desert places. It has courage and it has truth; it is not some story of enchantment which the Christian invents as a sort of protective mantra against a hostile emptiness. It is truly the vision of faith because it sees God's faithfulness at work and knows how to wait upon him" Begin with the Heart p.9)*

## Appendix G. Matrix of the Data Analysis – Interview 3

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*(RN. Denotes Researcher's Notes)*

## Influences which have shaped one's spirituality

Hilton	Maryanne	Rebecca	Louise	Edward
<p>1. <b>Family</b> – blessed with a Catholic mother and Protestant father. It brought a balance. There was always a different openness to seeing the faith.  <i>(RN. An inclusive statement – not about which one was right instead it is about a different openness)</i></p> <p>2. “Schooling marked by an absence of anything solid in terms of Religious Education. However in 6<sup>th</sup> Form the Principal (a Religious Brother) opened up the Scriptures as a serious study...got a feel for that and have enjoyed that since”</p> <p>3. Had an experience of formation in the spirituality and charism of the Marist Fathers.</p> <p>4. Formal study in theology and spirituality</p> <p>5. Opportunity to work with some influential thinkers on religious conscious.</p> <p>6. Reading over time and the integration of spirituality and literature.</p> <p>7. The uniqueness of Australian spirituality especially through the poets who had a deep sense of the Incarnation.</p> <p>8. Wife and children</p> <p>9. The students in the classroom.</p> <p>10. Teaching other religions influences my understanding of my own</p>	<p>1. <b>Family</b> - “I suppose influences... if I look at it from when I was very young it would be my parents. I was brought up in a Catholic family; not only did we attend Mass but we lived our life looking at the Catholic values. I have two older sisters and a brother. We were always kept very close and taught to do the right thing. As we progressed I went to good Catholic schools so the spirituality was obviously nurtured there as well and then throughout my adult life I met John who came from a good Catholic family so we just basically continued that on through our marriage and through our children. In our everyday there has been a lot of influences”</p>	<p>With everything that has happened this year (2012), I guess the thing that has influenced my spirituality would be life. When I say life I mean the experiences that you go through that in some way you see something greater or you experience something greater or you are asked to rise to something greater.  <i>(RN – Rebecca was diagnosed with cancer of the thyroid at the beginning of 2012. She had surgery and extensive ray treatment which required isolation for some weeks)</i></p> <p>So the influences on my spirituality I suggest would be, my <b>family</b>, the relationships that I have with others, to trust the unexpected and the unexpected relationships that you make with people.....and taking the time to reflect on the unexpected experiences or connections with people.</p>	<p><b>My family</b> – the faith, the beliefs and the culture that I have been nurtured in.  Louise spoke openly about trying to conceive a child. She and her husband longed for a child. They had treatment through IVF but felt uncomfortable with what would happen to the fertilised embryo if not used. Leaving the IVF treatment Liz became pregnant natural and conceived twin girls. This enabled Louise to experience a sense of miracle and gift. Something bigger than her operating in their lives.</p>	<p>The children that I have taught.  <b>My Family</b>  My Catholic upbringing.  My study of the Scriptures, having an opportunity to listen and to talk  <i>(RN. Conversation)</i>  To hear from scholars who have different Historical accounts. It is really a good opportunity to think about them. I went to Catholic schools and a Catholic University but it wasn't until I did all this study that a lot of it kind of made a lot more sense.</p>

## Aspects of Church Tradition which shape one's spirituality

Hilton	Maryanne	Rebecca	Louise	Edward
<p>Love to spend more time reading the Documents of Vatican 2. The heart of Vatican 2 is the beauty of the vision of Church on who is saved and. It is about our relationship with other people seeking truth and that the people of God includes all those seeking truth even if they have never known Christ.</p> <p>So many freed by the voice of Vatican 2, not into something new but something that echoed with their own reality.</p>	<p>"I look at our current Pope (Francis I).. He is a great influence. I don't thin we have really had that for a long time. Lead from the top. He is the best example we have so I think that is a huge step forward for the Catholic faith. Good leadership is important"</p>		<p>The Liturgical seasons especially Advent and Christmas – sense of preparing for something which focusses your attention beyond ordinary time</p>	<p>Certainly the Mass is a great source of reflection and enrichment. Not always the homily but certainly the readings..... an opportunity to pray as well in terms of Church Tradition and teaching.</p> <p>There have been certain kinds of leaders of the Church who I relate to and they have been very good role models for me. They have modelled what I think is good spirituality</p>

## Identifying what nurtures one's spirituality

Hilton	Maryanne	Rebecca	Louise	Edward
	<p>Part of nurturing my spirituality is seeing its importance in everything I do.</p>	<p>One of the most significant experiences I had would be during my illness and having all that treatment you are isolated and you are all by yourself and in having to experience that this year you realise that you can become comfortable with silence and comfortable with reflection. And that reflection and that silence can be a comfort and gives you the nourishment to continue that openness. So having that reflection nurtures the spirituality in me but then again that idea of connection nurtures that spirituality as well so it is almost as if there is a flow.</p> <p>(RN There is an inseparable dynamic between solitude and connection)</p>	<p>Going to Mass, building a sense of community with those you worship with. Good music in the Liturgy. Personal struggles strengthen your spirituality.</p>	<p>Because I have finished my Masters now and that was such a good opportunity to read and think I am a bit worried that as time goes by I need to get dipping into that when I can. There have been opportunities on the staff to pray.</p>

## Identifying what inhibits the growth of one’s spirituality

Hilton	Maryanne	Rebecca	Louise	Edward
My own sinfulness. At the level of spirituality I can’t blame anyone else about my own weaknesses. “As I teach a variety of religious traditions to senior kids I am increasingly aware of the commonality between at least three of the religions – Buddhism, Islam and Christianity about self and self centredness. They each have their own words around that as being a major block to a deeper spirituality	“I suppose there have been times when not so much you question the belief or your faith but I think there are times in life where you start to um... feel a little bit negative and if you are not careful and if you don’t have all those feelings within to make you the person you are it could be difficult but if I look back ..no I don’t think so...probably the hardest thing I have ever gone through is losing my father-in-law...so if ever there was a time that I was going to lose a bit of faith that would have been the time to wonder why: question why such a wonderful person was taken.”	Pressures of mainstream society. The social values that are projected in media, in film, in some forms of literature that are incomplete. Contrast to how I live my life. It is the undercurrent of what is projected in society which to me are quite vulgar values or distorted that I think can inhibit me continuing to allow my spirituality to blossom or I have to fight it...in other words I have to fight for my spirituality (RN Non supportive environment for spirituality – spirituality has a survival edge “I have to fight for it”)	Distractions and not giving enough time to stillness an silence. LS admitted finding it difficult to be still, to meditate.	The thing that I find takes most life from me is the craziness of the bureaucracy which at this time of the year (December) we are all wrapped up in. I think that just fatigues people and from that you get physically and emotionally distracted in your response to people from a spirituality that is based upon relationship and response. And so in that way being fatigued, being tired...all of that impacts on how you are with people. In terms of my own spirituality when I sit and think and refocus you know there isn’t much that is a road block for me.. No nothing that I can really think of

## Expressions of Spirituality

Hilton	Maryanne	Rebecca	Louise	Edward
In the classroom. In faculty , and leadership meetings. In parishes. Not that I am trying to influence everyone with my spirituality but it is about giving voice to it.	I think you have the classroom set up in such a way that um...the spirituality is there even if it is not a religion lesson.....it is always there because you are talking about the way of respect...the way that the children should be acting and as far as the classroom environment, making it a safe place; a place where you can talk about anything		In the classroom , through my teaching	Through the school, through the class, the best opportunities are with the staff or with the classes. My kids at the moment are fairly young so we talk about how wonderful the world is. That is where we are at. In a deeper sense there is far more opportunity with the staff than in the classroom. I like setting up a prayer space which is just very casual, very laid back and I like setting up an opportunity to express spirituality

## Pedagogy and Spirituality

Hilton	Maryanne	Rebecca	Louise	Edward
<p>In terms of pedagogy and the learning environment I try to get things to a point in the classroom where what dominates is a conversation so that the kids feel able to explore their thinking and their feeling and to find points where they can integrate those. I try to give them a sense that this is an ongoing reality and to find moments where I can say I am learning this or I am thinking this at the moment or I am changing the way I think about that. It is not for them to take on what I am thinking but to get the sense that as they grow and as they become adults keep thinking, keep trying to put things together. Keep trying to integrate the way you see life.</p> <p>(RN Importance of keeping the discussion open – spirituality is expansive as well as integrative. The spirit can't be forced into a mould or timeline)</p>	<p>I think RE is probably the easiest subject for me to teach. I like all the KLAs but I think with religion you make it so personal and as I said with my upbringing it was not all about going to Church but having those values and instilling those has a positive impact</p>		<p>Visiting the “rest room” – this is a specially designated room for those who may find the social complexities of the playground overwhelming. LS likes to spend time with children in this room encouraging them.</p> <p>(RN This action reflects an empathy for children on the social margins)</p> <p>Enabling the children to build relationships – one example being visits to the Aged Care home where the students take their “this is my life journal” which they had been preparing throughout their last year in Primary school and share it with one person from the Aged Care Home. This is aimed to give children confidence in speaking and relating with others instead of being pre-occupied with texting on their mobile phones.</p>	<p>In the perception that Christ is in all of us and in speaking to that with the children like naming that in the classroom...getting them to see they are all more than valued....they should all be honoured as individuals of Christ (RN. First step for Teaching as Presence according to Jerome Berryman is respect)</p> <p>In talking about reconciliation...that is something that comes up a bit.. just in terms of mending the relationships that are so easily broken within a class. So it is in mainly in my speaking to the children one on one about how they are to each other and getting them to see the worth of each other. But also in hopefully them seeing the value that I see in them for whoever they are. (RN The vision of the child (the human person) is fundamentally important to expressing Christian Spirituality)</p> <p>In terms of prayer and Liturgy and those types of expressions of spirituality it is better expressed in a relaxed and more informal way. That Jesus would tell a story and talk, it wouldn't be orchestrated and choreographed that prayers can be spontaneous that can be explained but don't have to be well worded. You know that God understands our needs. It is real. It is human</p>

## Appendix H. Matrix of the Data around Downey's focal points of spirituality

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*(RN. Denotes Researcher's Notes)*

## Within a culture

That of:

- \* The Catholic School
- \* The first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- \* In a multicultural, Australian, secular society which supports Religious pluralism
- \* Witnessing the growing divide between Religion and Spirituality

Hilton	Maryanne	Rebecca	Louise	Edward
<p>“I don’t believe that spirituality can ever be annihilated because it is so fundamental to our humanness. It gets expressed in all sorts of ways. It gets partially satisfied by materialism or individualism but the source of that is a yearning for much more than just the material and therefore it must be from the spiritual. It is great when you see kids who might have been close to it just open the door a little bit. They don’t say oh suddenly I am a card carrying member but something is there.”</p>	<p>Who is that person for you? Can you see God through other people? No matter how hard it gets I’ll always be there for you. When I picked the song it was how I felt God is. The song doesn’t mention God but it is obviously deeply spiritual. Some people will think of it as their partner but when I listen to it I think of God</p>	<p>Let’s get quick fixes to distract us. Technological medium faster way of communicating with each other.  <i>(RN Speed and change moving along the horizontal v. depth and slowness moving vertically which is intrinsic to awakening of the spiritual)</i>            It is empty to have communication if it doesn’t mean anything. If I want to talk to someone let me see them face to face”</p> <p>“There is no definite path in terms of spirituality and relationship with God you go on an unfolding journey”</p>	<p>Spirituality has something to do with human needs, the human heart”</p>	<p>“ You have a lot of people trying to do good, like our staff at present. Currently we have a lot of staff formation, moving towards open learning amidst all the conjecture. What came out of the reflection is that people are trying to be united. The Holy Spirit is a great unifier.”            “The constant here is the direction in which we are going. We are spirit driven. Idea is when you are trying to what is genuinely good you do what is right. What the direction is, is the teaching of the children.”  <i>(RN Good link with a lived spirituality bringing unity and cohesion)</i></p>

## Relation to a tradition

### The Catholic Tradition

*(RN Language and images about God) The researcher tried to frame questions in language broader than the tradition so that the participants would feel free to describe experiences in their own everyday language*

Hilton	Maryanne	Rebecca	Louise	Edward
<p>God is personal and the spirit is a bit more amorphous. Mystery and God is a bit more overlapping “ In addressing God the name I mostly use is Lord. That is interesting because I don’t perceive God as a royal personage or someone who Lords it over...fairly comfortable with Father and Mother” <i>(RN perceives a contradiction within self, regarding the language of the tradition and the relational images used to describe God)</i> “The Rahner tradition captures my understanding - that which is incomprehensibly other is also illimitably within and close and intimate”</p>	<p>Spiritual is the feeling around. It is everything all in one.”</p>			<p>“Faith and spirituality exist above the institution of doctrine. Through our Church we tend to achieve being a system that lifts us up to somewhere else. Other people might believe that the Church is where it stops. The Church is like the launch us up”.</p> <p>“The Holy Spirit is the sieve. What is left is good....the essence of the spirit”</p>
			<p><i>(RN The participant is touching on an important aspect of Christian spirituality – that is discernment yet doesn’t use the traditional language instead uses a metaphor which describes the action of discernment)</i></p>	

## In light of contemporary events

Hilton	Maryanne	Rebecca	Louise	Edward
<p>“The God who mucks in with people who are just struggling through life...the God of mercy in the everyday life”</p> <p>The image of God that at the feeling level I am most congruent with is someone with me, the brother, the mate by your side, the wise parent that sleeves rolled up knows what you are going through and it is the God on high before whom we must fall down in self abnegating worship, that I fell most distant from”</p>	<p>“Walking in the front door of my home I feel God’s presence. I think of home and shelter and that is where I feel safe.. I have God there...my family...my boys”</p>			<p>“In instructing teachers most teachers are anxious about not getting it wrong. Teachers want to stick to what they know and keep it simple”</p>

## In remembrance of Jesus

Hilton	Maryanne	Rebecca	Louise	Edward
<p>When I talk about Jesus and what matters to Jesus and for me it is the spirit of Jesus” relationships and what it means to be people of the Kingdom that characterises the spirit. I know it is there in the recognition that the truth is being spoken and that there is a connection there that goes beyond us”</p> <p>“One girl summed up salvation one day in Yr. 8; she is here in Yr. 12 now. We were talking about what it meant that Jesus death and resurrection saved us and what did it meant that he overcame death and brought new life and she said in the parlance of those kids, ‘it is like he really owned death’ and I said ‘Oh my God’ ...Yes so when those sorts of things come up there is just as much wisdom as I might gain from a 1000 page treatise”</p>		<p>“If I am going to give God a name, if I pray and reflect I often use the name Jesus”</p>		<p>“I rarely actually visualise God. It is nearly always a feeling I conjure up”</p> <p>“And um...just to look through the scriptures and see Jesus’ focus on people and the people being the most important...that has really helped my spirituality.”</p>

## Combining action and contemplation

Hilton	Maryanne	Rebecca	Louise	Edward
<p>In repose to Morning Mist by Gruner.</p> <p>“It is the light and freshness at the beginning of the day...that is something I find redemptive”</p> <p>“I love Leunig’s take on the human experience. There are two different faces here and the one inside is more alert than the one outside and I suppose I am a bit more alert to the world in theory than I am actually in practice”</p>	<p>“Loving Father is me seeing God through my mother-in- law and father –in-law, and through my husband and often I’ll see God through him no matter what and through my children”.</p> <p>“When I think of God I think of light”</p> <p>“When my youngest son was born, the Doctor didn’t even have to say it was a boy. I knew and when I held him it was this overwhelming feeling of satisfaction. <u>I just had this overwhelming sense there was something else there.</u>”</p> <p>“I thank God for making me a woman. There is no feeling like having a baby....falling pregnant is a special moment with God”</p> <p>“God has given me so many lifelines that there have been times when I haven’t taken them. It is my job to be attentive to the lifeline.</p> <p><i>(Presence)</i></p> <p>Awareness has grown, maturity and what is important</p>	<p>“Spirit is integral to all”</p> <p>“Sometimes I think my spirituality will lead me closer to God, sometimes I think God is central to my spirituality”</p>	<p>“Aboriginal art is something that I really like. If you look at each dot you see a different colour and how vibrant it is. Centre here is green, centre here is yellow whether there is two different groups, I’m not sure; looks like there is a different number of lines leading from each one. There is a sense of connectedness either that being your family, the community and the lines meaning the people streaming from that core group and the lines leading, interweaving with another core group</p> <p>Monet’s Parliament House makes me feel a sense of calm....even the brush stroke that is used and the colour is sort of mystical in a way. There is a sense of power beyond your control. Even though we build structures, we humans do have a sense of being guided</p>	<p>“Everyday God – a really calming song”</p> <p>“When we have....whatever reason we have...a resonance with things coming together, you can feel that presence there. Try and calm yourself so you can get in touch with that”</p> <p>“I think nearly everything can be done with a certain purpose or way. When you are doing something with compassion for others you have rightness of heart. When you are doing something with compassion for others you have rightness of heart”</p>

*(R.N.An experience of transcendence)*

## Pedagogy and Spirituality

Hilton	Maryanne	Rebecca	Louise	Edward
<p>In terms of pedagogy and the learning environment I try to get things to a point in the classroom where what dominates is a conversation so that the kids feel able to explore their thinking and their feeling and to find points where they can integrate those. I try to give them a sense that this is an ongoing reality and to find moments where I can say I am learning this or I am thinking this at the moment or I am changing the way I think about that. It is not for them to take on what I am thinking but to get the sense that as they grow and as they become adults keep thinking, keep trying to put things together. Keep trying to integrate the way you see life.</p> <p>(RN Importance of keeping the discussion open – spirituality is expansive as well as integrative. The spirit can't be forced into a mould or timeline)</p>	<p>I think RE is probably the easiest subject for me to teach. I like all the KLAs but I think with religion you make it so personal and as I said with my upbringing it was not all about going to Church but having those values and instilling those has a positive impact</p>		<p>Visiting the “rest room” – this is a specially designated room for those who may find the social complexities of the playground overwhelming. LS likes to spend time with children in this room encouraging them.</p> <p>(RN This action reflects an empathy for children on the social margins)</p> <p>Enabling the children to build relationships – one example being visits to the Aged Care home where the students take their “this is my life journal” which they had been preparing throughout their last year in Primary school and share it with one person from the Aged Care Home. This is aimed to give children confidence in speaking and relating with others instead of being pre-occupied with texting on their mobile phones.</p>	<p>In the perception that Christ is in all of us and in speaking to that with the children like naming that in the classroom...getting them to see they are all more than valued....they should all be honoured as individuals of Christ (RN. First step for Teaching as Presence according to Jerome Berryman is respect)</p> <p>In talking about reconciliation...that is something that comes up a bit.. just in terms of mending the relationships that are so easily broken within a class. So it is in mainly in my speaking to the children one on one about how they are to each other and getting them to see the worth of each other. But also in hopefully them seeing the value that I see in them for whoever they are. (RN The vision of the child (the human person) is fundamentally important to expressing Christian Spirituality)</p> <p>In terms of prayer and Liturgy and those types of expressions of spirituality it is better expressed in a relaxed and more informal way. That Jesus would tell a story and talk, it wouldn't be orchestrated and choreographed that prayers can be spontaneous that can be explained but don't have to be well worded. You know that God understands our needs. It is real. It is human</p>

## **Appendix I. Links between features of spirituality, characteristics of Christian spirituality and the data collection**

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Identifying Features of Spirituality as an intrinsic human capacity	Characteristics of Christian Spirituality; A particular expression of human spirituality	Apparent in the Data Collection
Potential embodied energy	God becomes incarnate; the spirit is embodied. The energy of the spirit described as a spark with the potential to be “fanned into a flame” (2 Tim:1:6)	Focussing; Bio-spirituality Conversation
Search for meaning and purpose	Parable; The treasure in the field (Matthew: 13:44)  Within a community of faith “Where two or three are gathered in my name”	Desire  Focussing on the potential of each student
Human Response to a transcendent reality	The person of Jesus; the one who integrates the human and the transcendent  Integration of contemplation and action Interdependence between religion and spirituality	Something there Something bigger than us Mystery
Awakening of consciousness; Becoming more aware Becoming present	Sacrament of the Present Moment Attention	Flow Mindfulness Silence Solitude Being in nature
Connective	Openness to the other and acceptance of difference Reaching beyond self	Family The significance of the classroom Community

The first column of the table names five key characteristics which pertain to human spirituality. The second column indicates how Christian spirituality interprets and applies these characteristics within its own particular religious framework. The third column presents samples of distilled data from the study and attempts to show its the congruence with the characteristics

of basic human spirituality in general and Christian spirituality in particular. Each row is coloured differently to show the connection and continuity between all three strands in their identification of spirituality from different perspectives; humanity; the Christian culture, the lived experience of the participants.

## Appendix J. Letters related to conducting the research

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AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

Strathfield Campus (Mount St Mary's)  
25A Barker Road Strathfield NSW 2135  
Locked Bag 2002 Strathfield NSW 2135 Australia  
Email: [ainkarimhouse@bigpond.com](mailto:ainkarimhouse@bigpond.com)  
[www.acu.edu.au](http://www.acu.edu.au)  
Mobile: 0438269361  
Telephone: (02)96260361

### To the Executive Director

Dear,

I am a part time Post-Graduate student at The Australian Catholic University. At present I am undertaking research for the Educational Doctorate Degree. My supervisors are Dr. Sally Liddy from the Signadou Campus of the Australian Catholic University and Dr. Graham English from the Strathfield Campus of the same University.

The aim of my study is to explore understandings of spirituality embraced and lived by classroom teachers. Spirituality is understood to be a basic quality of all people. It is seen as a form of awareness different from and transcending everyday awareness. Insight into a teacher's spirituality may be gained by exploring the sense of awareness, wonder, awe and value that he or she attributes to ordinary, everyday experience.

I am writing to seek your permission to conduct this research by working with five teachers, who teach in either Primary or Secondary schools of the Catholic Diocese . The project will involve meeting with each teacher in his or her school setting three or times over a period of six months.

I intend to gather my research data through three interviews, each one being about one hour's duration. These will be conducted around a series of broad opened ended questions focussed on; personal identity, belonging, purpose, connectedness, values and appreciation of mystery.

Appropriate letters inviting teachers to participate in the project and letters of consent have been designed. At no time will the teachers involved in the project or their schools, be identified by name. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

Having more understanding of and insight into this form of awareness which transcends everyday awareness in our teachers will enable Professional learning and development programs to be constructed in a way that will nurture and deepen this awareness. It is hoped that the study will contribute to creating an approach to spiritual formation that is both faithful to the evangelising mission of the Church yet synchronised and responsive to the personal worlds of our individuals especially our teachers.

Your permission to approach five teachers in The Catholic schools of the Diocese in order to carry out this research would be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Andrew  
Teacher Educator



16 February 2010

Dear Patricia,

Thank you for your Application to Conduct Research in Parramatta Diocese which we received on 15/02/2010. We have now reviewed your ethics approval and completed Working With Children checks. I am happy for you to approach the teachers listed in your application in order to carry out research on *"Many Roads Beckon, Many Voices Call" Exploring Classroom Teachers' Understandings of Spirituality*.

We always stress the following points in relation to research requests:

- It is the school principal, who gives final permission for research to be carried out in his/her school.
- Confidentiality needs to be observed in reporting and must comply with the requirements of the Commonwealth *Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000*.
- There should be some feedback to schools and a copy of the findings of the research forwarded to this office.
- This letter of approval should accompany any approach to schools.

I look forward to the results of this study and wish you the best over the coming months. If you would like to discuss any aspect of this research in our diocese, please do not hesitate to contact me on 02 9407 7079 or [john.decourcy@parra.catholic.edu.au](mailto:john.decourcy@parra.catholic.edu.au).

Yours sincerely,

Dr John DeCourcy  
Head of Strategic Accountabilities Services  
Catholic Education Office  
Diocese of Parramatta



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Mobile: 0438269361  
Telephone: (02) 96269361

To the Principal

Dear

I am a part time Post-Graduate student at the Australian Catholic University. At present I am understaking research for the Educational Doctorate Degree. My research topic is focussed on exploring classroom teachers' understandings of spirituality.

The research project will involve five case studies involving teachers in the schools of the Diocese. I am writing to seek your permission to conduct this research with \_\_\_\_\_ one of your teachers.

The project will involve meeting with \_\_\_\_\_ in his/her school setting about three or four times over a period of six months. I request to use an interview space at your school during my visits, however if you do not have this space I am able to conduct the interviews in an appropriate room at the Catholic Education Office.

I intend to gather my research data through three interviews, each one being about one hour's duration. These will be conducted around a series of broad open ended questions focussed on: personal identity, belonging, purpose, connectedness, values and appreciation of mystery. I can assure you that at no time will \_\_\_\_\_ or your school be indentified by name. Confidentiality will be maintined at all times.

Spirituality is defined in a variety of ways. This study claims that spirituality is a basic quality of all people. It is seen as a form of awareness different from and transcending everyday awareness. Insight into teachers' spirituality is gained by exploring the sense of awareness, wonder, awe and value that they attribute to ordinary everyday experience.

One of the benefits of the study is that it will contribute to creating an approach to spiritual formation that is both faithful to the evangelising mission of the Church, yet synchronised and responsive to the personal world of individuals especially our teachers.

I trust in your initial and continued support for this project.

Yours sincerely

Teacher Educator  
Religious Education and Learning Services  
Catholic Education Office



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INFORMATION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

TITLE OF PROJECT: Exploring Classroom Teachers' Understandings of Spirituality  
*"Many Roads Beckon, Many Voices Call"*

SUPERVISOR : Dr. Sally Liddy.

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Sr. Patricia Andrew

PROGRAMME IN WHICH ENROLLED: Educational Doctorate

Dear ,

You are invited to participate in a research project which explores classroom teachers' understandings of spirituality. This project led, by myself as the student researcher, is the main focus of work for the Educational Doctorate Program. The purpose of this study is to learn how teachers, working in the classroom, understand the phenomenon of spirituality. The method used will be that of a case study and will involve gathering data through interviews and questionnaires.

The project will involve meeting with you at your school 3-4 times over a period of six months. I envisage that each of these meetings will be for about one hour. During one of these sessions I would like to visit your classroom and observe your interaction with your students. If a suitable interview space cannot

be found at your school I can arrange for the interviews to take place in a room at the Catholic Education Office.

I intend to gather my research data through three hour long interviews. These will be conducted around a series of broad open ended questions focussed on; personal identity, belonging, purpose, connectedness, values and appreciation of mystery. The processes for gathering this data contain no foreseeable risk to yourself as the participant.

Spirituality is described in a variety of ways. One broad and general way of describing spirituality is offered by Alistair Hardy (1965) who speaks of spirituality as a form of awareness different from and transcending everyday awareness. Often we are not aware of our awareness until we have to share and discuss it with another person. It is hoped that your involvement with this research study will offer you this experience of becoming more aware of your own awareness.

Having more understanding of and insight into this form of awareness which transcends everyday awareness in our teachers will enable Professional learning and development programs to be constructed in a way that will nurture and deepen this awareness. It is hoped that the study will contribute to creating an approach to spiritual formation that is both faithful to the evangelising mission of the Church yet synchronised and responsive to the personal worlds of individuals especially our teachers.

A possible outcome of this research is that results could be published especially through journal articles. Only findings, trends, conclusions will be published. Confidentiality will be protected and you and your school will remain anonymous at all times.

Even though this research project will gather material from a relatively small sample, appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that confidentiality is maintained. Furthermore during the project confidentiality will be protected at all times. My written notes and audio interview recordings will be kept in a safe and private office.

I respect your right to refuse to participate in this project without having to justify that decision. Furthermore if at any time you wish to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in the study you are free to do this without giving a reason.

I want to assure you that on completion of the Research project I will provide appropriate feedback to you.

If you have any questions regarding this project please contact me as the Student Researcher

Sr. Patricia Andrew .....  
0296260361 Mobile 0438269361 .....  
Australian Catholic University, Mt. St. Mary's Campus, Strathfield, NSW. ...

This study has been approved of by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian Catholic University. In the event that you have any complaint or concern, or if you have any query that I have not been able to satisfy you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee on the Strathfield campus of the Australian Catholic University.

Chair, HREC  
C/- Research Services  
Australian Catholic University  
Strathfield Campus  
Locked Bag 2002  
STRATHFIELD NSW 2135  
Tel: 02 9701 4093  
Fax: 02 9701 4350

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this project, please sign both copies of the Consent Form. Retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to me at;

12 Priscilla Place  
Quakers Hill, 2763.  
NSW.

With thanks,  
Yours sincerely,

.....

Student Researcher

.....

Supervisor

Human Research Ethics Committee

Committee Approval Form

**Principal Investigator/Supervisor:** Dr Sally Liddy Canberra Campus

**Co-Investigators:**

**Student Researcher:** Sr Patricia Andrew Canberra Campus

**Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:**

Exploring Classroom Teachers' Understandings of Spirituality. ("Many Roads Beckon, Many Voices Call")

**for the period:** 4 March 2010 to 31 August 2010

**Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number:** N2010 01

The following standard conditions as stipulated in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans (2007)* apply:

- (i) that Principal Investigators / Supervisors provide, on the form supplied by the Human Research Ethics Committee, annual reports on matters such as:
  - security of records
  - compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation
  - compliance with special conditions, and
- (ii) that researchers report to the HREC immediately any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol, such as:
  - proposed changes to the protocol
  - unforeseen circumstances or events
  - adverse effects on participants

The HREC will conduct an audit each year of all projects deemed to be of more than low risk. There will also be random audits of a sample of projects considered to be of negligible risk and low risk on all campuses each year.

Within one month of the conclusion of the project, researchers are required to complete a *Final Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer.

If the project continues for more than one year, researchers are required to complete an *Annual Progress Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer within one month of the anniversary date of the ethics approval.



Signed: ..... Date: 4 March 2010  
(Research Services Officer, McAuley Campus)