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Cover Page Footnote

Thank you to my colleagues in the University of St. Francis' College of Education for their words of encouragement and support.

Forming Catholic School Principals as Leaders of the New Evangelization

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Pope Francis' call for a missionary transformation of the Church has radical implications for Catholic schools and their educational leaders. The Church expects her elementary school principals to serve not only as instructional leaders and ecclesial ministers, but also as agents of the New Evangelization. Given this focus on the New Evangelization as a fundamental conceptual framework for the mission of Catholic schools, it is essential to understand the roots and foundations of this vision as it pertains to the unique role played by Catholic school principals. This article also highlights insights from leading Catholic evangelizers and concludes with recommendations for Catholic educational leaders.

Keywords: Catholic school principals, New Evangelization, faith formation, professional development, six tasks of catechesis

From the beginning of his papacy, Pope Francis has relentlessly called for a missionary transformation of the Church. *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013) most thoroughly articulates this vision and clearly grounds it on the premise that, “Missionary outreach is paradigmatic for all the Church’s activity” (para. 15). The Holy Father’s use of the phrase “missionary disciple” throughout this Apostolic Exhortation challenges the entire Church not only to continue growing as committed followers of Christ, but also to embrace the reality of having been sent forth by the Lord himself. Pope Francis writes, “Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel” (para. 20). As if the call to leave one’s “comfort zone” and reach out to the “peripheries” were not radical enough, Pope Francis puts the following exclamation mark on this mandate for missionary transformation:

I want to emphasize that what I am trying to express here has a programmatic significance and important consequences. I hope that all communities will devote the necessary effort to advancing along the

path of pastoral and missionary conversion which cannot leave things as they presently are. 'Mere administration' can no longer be enough. Throughout the world, let us be 'permanently in a state of mission.' (para. 25)

As this vision for the New Evangelization clearly implies, Catholic schools must become—along with the entire Church—ever more mission-driven.

In order to help them move from “mere administration” to a permanent “state of mission,” the Church must encourage and accompany Catholic school principals throughout their own personal faith journeys. Those who provide initial and ongoing formation for these educational leaders must also help facilitate their ongoing transformation as leaders of the New Evangelization. For Catholic educational leaders, the question thus becomes: What impact should such a missionary transformation have on Catholic schools in general, and how should it shape the work of Catholic school principals in particular? In order to respond to such challenges, the Church as a whole must continue grappling with issues regarding how best to provide integral faith formation for principals in light of Holy Father Francis’ call for “Pastoral ministry in a missionary key” (2013, para. 33). Moreover, Catholic schools leaders will need to reenvision themselves as missionary disciples whose primary work is to “make disciples...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28.19-20).

The discussion below explores the missionary foundations upon which system-wide initiatives might build, as well as the need for ongoing faith formation of Catholic school principals. In response to the invitation “to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities” (Pope Francis, 2013, para. 33), diocesan Catholic schools offices, Catholic colleges of education, and Catholic school principals themselves might transform their work in light of such a guiding vision. The first section of this article explores the role of Catholic schools within the context of the Church’s broader mission in the world and of the call for a New Evangelization. The second section provides a review of related literature on the unique role which Catholic school principals play, focusing on their needs for lifelong spiritual and pastoral formation, with insights from contemporary leaders of the New Evangelization. The third section concludes by exploring practical applications of this missionary vision, along with recommendations for future efforts to provide initial and ongoing formation for Catholic educational leaders.

Catholic Schools and the Mission of the Church

The task of Catholic education exists within the broader context of the Church's universal mission to "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16.15). Indeed, the Second Vatican Council (1965b) describes the work of Catholic schools in this way:

No less than other schools does the Catholic school pursue cultural goals and the human formation of youth. But its proper function is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity, to help youth grow according to the new creatures they were made through baptism as they develop their own personalities, and finally to order the whole of human culture to the news of salvation so that the knowledge the students gradually acquire of the world, life and man is illumined by faith. (*Gravissimum Educationis*, para. 8)

Catholic schools ought to be animated by the Gospel, in order to help students see all of human existence in the light of Christian faith. The Congregation for Catholic Education (1977) builds upon these insights from Vatican II by emphasizing that: "It is precisely in the Gospel of Christ, taking root in the minds and lives of the faithful, that the Catholic school finds its definition as it comes to terms with the cultural conditions of the times" (para. 9). Subsequent work by the Congregation for Catholic Education (1997) also focuses on this comprehensive and mission-driven vision for Catholic schools by teaching that, "The Catholic school participates in the evangelizing mission of the Church and is the privileged environment in which Christian education is carried out"; quoting Pope John Paul II, the document then states, "Catholic schools are at once places of evangelization, of complete formation, of inculturation, of apprenticeship in a lively dialogue between young people of different religions and social backgrounds" (para. 11). To serve the evangelizing mission handed on by Jesus himself, the Church expects Catholic schools to be places of an integral and integrated formation.

The engagement and integration of the culture remains one of the great challenges for Catholic schools in the 21st century. Citing John Paul II's *Catechesi Tradendae*, the *General Directory for Catechesis* emphasizes the intrinsic influence of religious education in Catholic schools by noting that, "religious instruction in schools sows the dynamic seed of the Gospel and seeks to 'keep in touch with the other elements of the student's knowledge and edu-

cation; thus the Gospel will impregnate the mentality of the students in the field of their learning, and the harmonization of their culture will be achieved in the light of faith” (Congregation for the Clergy, 1998, para. 73). Because such work requires more than mere catechesis, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ *National Directory for Catechesis* (2005b) succinctly states that, “The Catholic school is a center for evangelization” (p. 231). It then proceeds to outline the expectations of Catholic school principals as catechetical leaders of these centers for evangelization. The principal’s responsibilities include: recruiting “teachers who are practicing Catholics, who can understand and accept the teachings of the Catholic Church”; supervising and evaluating religion teachers; providing “opportunities for ongoing catechesis for faculty members”; designing a curriculum that supports the parish and school’s catechetical goals; fostering “a distinctively Christian community among the faculty, students, and parents”; providing “alongside the pastor” for the “spiritual growth of the faculty” (USCCB, 2005b, p. 231). Thus, Catholic school principals must be not only organizational and instructional leaders, but also spiritual leaders who can shape and guide the broader faith formation goals of the school community in dialogue with the culture at large.

The Challenges of a New Evangelization

The Second Vatican Council (1965a) reaffirms not only that Christ is the light of nations, but also that Christ has sent the Church to the ends of the earth as a unique sign or instrument of this light. Moreover, the Council emphasizes that “the present-day conditions of the world add greater urgency to this work of the Church” (*Lumen Gentium*, para. 1). Inspired by this vision of the Second Vatican Council, recent popes would begin calling for a renewed commitment to the work of evangelization in order to advance the mission of the Church within a new set of social and cultural circumstances: Bl. Paul VI would insist that “the Church exists in order to evangelize,” St. John Paul II would envision an evangelization which is new in “ardor, methods and expression,” and Pope Benedict XVI would emphasize that the Church should “re-propose” the Gospel to those who have experienced a crisis of faith due to the radical secularization which marks the 21st century (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], 2012, pp. 10–11). In his call for a missionary transformation of the Church, Pope Francis (2013) echoes this vision by inviting the faithful to a “renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them”; striking a deeply personal note, the Holy Father adds, “I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each

day” (para. 3). Absent such a personal and living relationship with Jesus in and through the Church, postmodern persons will fail to discover the joy and peace of the Gospel for which they long, and the work of the New Evangelization will fail to take root.

It is only by meeting the Risen Christ and understanding their lives in relation to the Lord that his followers will become compelling witnesses and effective agents of the New Evangelization. According to Pope Francis (2013), Christians need to know Christ both personally and communally in order to communicate effectively the heart of the Gospel message, that is, the love of God revealed in the crucified and risen Christ. He writes:

Thanks solely to this encounter—or renewed encounter—with God’s love, which blossoms into an enriching friendship, we are liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption. We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being. (para. 8)

As disciples grow in this renewed encounter with the Lord, Pope Francis maintains that fear or trepidation about sharing the faith soon dissipates, because the Christian faithful come to realize that “Jesus is ‘the first and greatest evangelizer’” (para. 12). In addition, Pope Francis specifically states that, “Catholic schools, which always strive to join their work of education with the explicit proclamation of the Gospel, are a most valuable resource for the evangelization of culture, even in those countries and cities where hostile situations challenge us to greater creativity in our search for suitable methods” (para. 134). In sum, Catholic schools exist in order to transform both individual lives and the culture itself; this will require both ongoing personal and pastoral conversion of Catholic school leaders.

Whereas this brief overview points to the content and method of the New Evangelization, another essential question concerns its *locus*. In one of *Evangelii Gaudium’s* most unique insights, Pope Francis (2013) describes the New Evangelization in three primary settings: the work of ordinary pastoral ministry; the outreach to the baptized whose lives don’t reflect the demands of the Gospel; and the mission to engage the hearts and minds of those who do not know Jesus Christ or who have rejected him (para. 14). Whereas in generations past, Catholic schools may have presumed themselves to be working only with the first of these three groups (i.e., ordinary pastoral ministry), Catholic school principals increasingly find themselves engaging the

second and third groups within their school communities—i.e., the baptized who are in some way estranged from the fullness of new life in Christ, as well as those who are not Christians. Thus, Pope Francis' urgent and personal call for "spirit-filled evangelizers" clearly applies to Catholic schools:

The Church which 'goes forth' is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice. An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. 1 Jn 4:19), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast. (para. 24)

Catholic school principals must intentionally embrace this call, in order to serve the Church's evangelizing mission in a rapidly changing cultural context.

If they are to not simply survive but thrive, Catholic schools must find ways to reach out to families with a counter-cultural vision of the human person living in communion with others. Indeed, schools must help articulate the invitation to a deeper, more meaningful experience of life, and Catholic educational leaders must reframe their school communities in terms of being "centers for the New Evangelization" (USCCB, 2013). In *Striving for Balance, Steadfast in Faith*, Nuzzi, Holter, and Frabutt (2013) point directly to this need for greater creativity and new directions for Catholic schools: Both the quantitative and qualitative results of their study demonstrate that Catholic educational leaders are motivated by "their sense of leadership as ministry, of schools as centers of evangelization" (p. 53), even as they identify that "frustration with a never-ending list of urgent action items for each day points to their awareness of other important and essential tasks that they leave unaddressed" (p. 54). Focusing on school mission and on Catholic identity presumably stands among the essential tasks often left unaddressed, since this study's final recommendation states, "It is crucial for the ministry of Catholic schools to be known, seen and experienced as instruments of the New Evangelization" (p. 58). As this new self-understanding continues to unfold, additional challenges and opportunities for growth will likewise continue to present themselves.

In a related theoretical exploration regarding the implications of the New Evangelization for Catholic schools, Rymarz (2012) notes that, "The New

Evangelisation (sic) is a response to a well-documented decline in religious commitment in many countries that share a strong historical Christian association” (p. 110). He proceeds to explore a phenomenon which is becoming increasingly more prevalent within Catholic school communities—one which he describes as “vicarious religious affiliation.” He sees this as a form of practical atheism in which religion serves as a “metaphorical safety net” or as a “reassuring memory,” without having any meaningful impact on one’s daily life (p. 111). Given that a large numbers of Catholics are opting for such “vicarious religious affiliation” and are thereby choosing to maintain only a loose level of commitment to the Church, Rymarz identifies two fundamental implications for Catholic schools: First, school leaders should recognize that such families are “not hostile to the faith tradition and may be open to being invited to a deeper commitment”; secondly, however, they should be aware that, “a large number of loosely connected yet satisfied members makes the task of renewal difficult. . . .because there is no immediate felt need for it” (p. 114). Thus, Rymarz calls Catholic schools to recruit and nurture deeply committed Catholics who can serve as evangelizers of the more marginally-affiliated members of the school community. In other words, he argues that the New Evangelization will hinge on those who “see themselves as disciples of Christ in the terms spelled out in the ecclesiology of communion,” those for whom “the call to evangelize and to ever deepen their relationship with Christ will be a priority” (p. 117). Changes in both the cultural and the ecclesial contexts point toward an ongoing paradigm shift regarding the work of Catholic schools and the expectations of their principals.

The Unique Role of Catholic School Principals

Like their public school counterparts, Catholic school principals are responsible for the organizational and educational leadership of their school communities. However, the Catholic school principal serves—first and foremost—as an “ecclesial minister” (USCCB, 2005). Principals are servant leaders within the wider Church community. As the Vatican’s Congregation for Catholic Education (1997) emphasizes, the Catholic school has an ecclesial nature which is written into its very identity as a place of learning and which is directly tied to the evangelizing mission of the Church; the fostering of this ecclesial dimension should never be an afterthought but “should be the aim of all those who make up the educating community” (para. 11). Moreover, given “an increased secularization, individualism, and materialism” in the 21st century, Catholic schools need to create a “culture of witness” which fosters

conversion of hearts and minds (USCCB, 2012, p. 3). The U.S. Bishops (2012) reaffirm the powerful potential of Catholic schools by insisting: “Catholic schools and their teachers are witnesses to the faith....A vibrant Catholic identity and active promotion of Gospel values in Catholic schools help foster future generations of disciples and evangelists” (p. 13). Now more than ever before, the Church calls Catholic school principals to be catechetical and spiritual leaders who are acutely attuned to the needs of the New Evangelization.

From their time of flourishing in the late 19th century and early 20th century, the network of diocesan elementary schools in the United States relied on the spiritual and ecclesial leadership of religious sisters. The sisters, of course, provided Catholic schools with a culture which was infused by a lived-spirituality (Caruso, 2012). However, in the early decades of the 21st century, the task of promoting the New Evangelization in Catholic schools increasingly falls to lay men and women who must “allow the Gospel message and living presence of Jesus to permeate the entire life of the school community and thus be faithful to the school’s evangelizing mission” (Caruso, 2012, p. 94). In *Renewing our Commitment* (2005c), the U.S. Bishops acknowledge the many historical and cultural changes which impacted Catholic schools at the end of the 20th century, but they also express anew their conviction that, “Catholic schools continue to be ‘the most effective means available to the Church for the education of children and young people’ who are the future of the Church” (p. 3). After noting important demographic changes—including the incredible growth of Hispanic/Latino population and the importance of meeting their educational, spiritual, moral and academic needs (2005c, pp. 8-9)—the Bishops turn their focus to the question of lay leadership within the Catholic schools:

Ninety-five percent of our current school administrators and teachers are members of the laity. The preparation and ongoing formation of new administrators and teachers is vital if our schools are to remain truly Catholic in all aspects of school life. Catholic school personnel should be grounded in a faith-based Catholic culture, have strong bonds to Christ and the Church, and be witnesses to the faith in both their words and actions. The formation of personnel will allow the Gospel message and the living presence of Jesus to permeate the entire life of the school community and thus be faithful to the school’s evangelizing mission. (p. 10)

Changing times and changing leadership of Catholic schools point toward the need to transform the initial and ongoing formation of those who must be leaders of the New Evangelization.

In assessing this unique and multi-faceted role played by Catholic school principals, Nuzzi et al. (2013) argue:

a Catholic school principal has job expectations that go beyond what can be found in secular educational literature. Specifically, the Catholic school principal has responsibility for this religious purpose and mission and for the quality of the school's overall participation in the educational mission of the Catholic Church. This is no small responsibility and it is clearly an additional job requirement for the Catholic school principal that differentiates Catholic school leadership from other types of school leadership. (p. 2)

The requisite spiritual, ministerial and ecclesial leadership of Catholic school principals must be present in all that they do, given the fundamentally religious mission of Catholic schools. "Thus, for the Catholic school principal, the school is first and foremost a community of faith and a gathering of disciples, and the principal's role is ministry, a ministry of spiritual leadership exercised in a learning community" (Nuzzi et al., 2013, p. 3). As the Congregation for Catholic Education (2007) has noted, "By its very nature, the Catholic school requires the presence and involvement of educators that are not only culturally and spiritually formed, but also intentionally directed at developing their community's educational commitment in an authentic spirit of ecclesial communion" (para. 34). In other words, Catholic school principals need to embody a spirit of self-giving at the service of the Church.

Spiritual and Pastoral Leadership for the New Evangelization

The fact that Catholic school principals have duties far and beyond those of mere educational and managerial leadership provides the inspiration for Ciriello's (1994) seminal work exploring the specific expectations of their spiritual leadership. Ciriello focuses on the areas of faith formation, building community, moral and ethical development, as well as fostering a distinctively Catholic philosophy of education. Her study articulates the following vision for principals regarding the fostering of faith:

1. To nurture the faith development of faculty and staff through opportunities for *spiritual growth*;

2. To ensure quality Catholic *religious instruction* of students;
3. To provide opportunities for the school community to *celebrate faith*;
4. To support and foster consistent practices of *Christian service*. (p. 8)

In terms of building Christian community, Ciriello emphasizes the need to “foster *collaboration* between the parish(es) and the school...to recognize, respect, and facilitate the *role of parents* as primary educators...[and] to promote *Catholic community*” (p. 110; emphasis in original). Finally, addressing the area of moral and ethical development, Ciriello states that, “As a caring institution with a covenant-like relationship, the school accepts its responsibility to do everything it can to care for the full range of the needs of its students, teachers, and administrators”; she then notes that, as spiritual leaders, principals ought to “facilitate the *moral development* and maturity of children, youth, and adults” and “integrate Gospel values and *Christian ethics* into the curriculum, policies, and life of the school” (p. 162). This wide array of spiritual responsibilities clearly requires that Catholic educational leaders transform or deepen conventional views of leadership, and Ciriello’s work continues to influence many other educational leaders to do so.

The changing social and cultural challenges of recent decades have resulted in a number of different approaches to exploring a vision for Catholic leaders rooted in ongoing personal and pastoral conversion. In an effort to address the need for a deeper understanding of spiritual leadership among Catholic school leaders, a study by Lichter (2010) focuses on the relationship between religiosity and leadership style. She writes that, “this research set out to discover whether or not a person who has an Intrinsic Religious orientation is more likely than a person with an Extrinsic Religious orientation to live out one’s religiosity in his/her leadership role versus using one’s religiosity in his/her leadership role to advance the mission and vision of the school” (p. 21). This mixed-methods study includes surveys of Catholic K-8 school teachers regarding their building principals as well as interviews of 65 principals, and it concludes that, “There was a significant positive correlation between the two variables Intrinsic Religiosity and Transformational leadership... with high scores on the Intrinsic Religiosity scale being associated with high scores on the Transformational Leadership scale” (p. 145). A fundamental question of this study concerns the traits or behaviors that contribute to the development of a transformational leadership style. According to Lichter, “The individuals identified as Intrinsically Religious in this study recognized the importance of spending time in prayer and meditation to reflect upon his/her religious beliefs and also placed those religious beliefs at the center of

life being sure to carry them into all other aspects of life as well” (p. 155). One of this study’s recommendations for future research focuses on the question of what types of formation programs work best to help develop more intrinsically religious K-8 principals for Catholic schools: “In settings where the religious foundations are central to the mission and vision of an organization, it becomes essential then to have a leader who possesses not only the traits of a Transformational Leader but also a deep commitment and embodiment to the creed of the religious organization he/she serves” (p. 166). Because Catholic educational leaders in the 21st century must help foster learning communities which are vibrant and mission-driven, a deeper and more integral faith formation among the principals is necessary in order that they might embody the teachings of the Church which they represent. The renewal of “missionary discipleship” for which Pope Francis longs will require a more dynamic, intentional and transformational approach to leadership formation within various sectors of the world of Catholic education.

Another recent study addresses fundamental questions about knowing and following Jesus by offering a conceptual framework for discussing and fostering missionary discipleship. In *Forming Intentional Disciples*, Sherry Weddell (2012) explores questions of evangelization and catechesis in terms of essential stages—or thresholds—of conversion. Provocatively titled, “God has no Grandchildren,” the first chapter provides an overview of the startling data regarding Catholicism in the U.S. In this section, Weddell bluntly states the facts: “Only 30 percent of Americans who were raised Catholic are still *‘practicing’*” (p. 24; emphasis in the original); “fully 10 percent of all adults in America are ex-Catholics” (p. 25), including 15% who become Protestant and 14% who become “nones” or “unaffiliated” (p. 28). She also notes the fact that “Nearly half of cradle Catholics who become ‘unaffiliated’ are gone by age eighteen” (p. 33), as well as the troubling decline of not only Catholic marriage (p. 36), but also Sunday Mass attendance by generations (p. 38). Perhaps most shocking, however, is the data that “Nearly a third of self-identified Catholics believe in an impersonal God” and that “only 48 percent of Catholics were *absolutely certain* that the God they believed in was a God with whom they could have a personal relationship” (pp. 43-44; emphasis in the original). The call to have an explicit and personal relationship with Christ in and through his Church becomes the focus of the rest of the work.

Since one’s personal relationship is the key issue in the process of forming intentional disciples of Jesus, Weddell (2012) proceeds to describe the thresholds of conversion: The first, naturally, is trust; once this is established,

a period of curiosity begins to unfold; gradually, a person moves into greater openness, which allows for the possibility of personal and spiritual change. If the person is willing to cross this most difficult threshold, then the stage of conversion follows, along with a more active process of seeking to know the God who calls each person by name. Finally, once a person is ready to commit to walking with Christ in and through his Church, the stage of intentional discipleship begins. Weddell concludes her work with a call that would impact all faith formation at all levels. In a very practical summary statement, she recommends four beginning steps for nurturing discipleship in parish communities:

1. Break the silence
 - a. Talk openly about the possibility of a relationship with a personal God who loves you. Talk about your relationship with God.
 - b. Talk explicitly about following Jesus: Drop the Name!
 - c. Do Ask: Ask others about their lived relationship with God.
 - d. Do Tell: Tell the “Great Story of Jesus” (Kerygma).
2. Offer multiple, overlapping opportunities for baptized and non-baptized people to personally encounter Jesus in the midst of his Church.
3. Expect conversion. Plan for conversion.
4. Lay the spiritual foundation through organized, sustained intercessory prayer. (p. 188)

Weddell’s observations about the interrelation between evangelization and catechesis could provide mission-essential information for Catholic school leaders regarding both their own personal journey of discipleship and the process of helping make new disciples.

Life-Long Faith Formation and Professional Development

In *Striving for Balance, Steadfast in Faith* (Nuzzi et al., 2013), one of the four major recommendations focuses on the need for intentional and integrated professional development and renewal for Catholic school leaders. Nuzzi et al. (2013) state, “An ongoing program of professional growth and development, focused on the identified needs of principals, would be a major contribution to the field and to the health and successful functioning of principals”; the authors emphasize that such a program should “be attentive to their ongoing spiritual formation as well, addressing every instructional

and administrative need in the context of the faith of the Church” (p. 57). The Catholic Church articulates the core content for such ongoing faith formation and spiritual renewal in both the *General Directory of Catechesis* (1997) and the *National Directory of Catechesis* (2005b), each of which outlines six fundamental tasks of catechesis and life-long faith formation:

1. Promoting knowledge of the faith
2. Promoting liturgical education and a knowledge of the meaning of the Sacraments
3. Promoting moral formation in Jesus Christ
4. Teaching the Christian how to pray with Christ
5. Preparing the Christian for community life and participation in the mission of the Church
6. Promoting a missionary spirit and preparing the faithful to be present as Christians in society

The first four of these tasks correspond to the four pillars of the universal *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994), while the final two relate more explicitly to the evangelizing work of the Church. Integral faith formation of Catholic school leaders, therefore, must incorporate these tasks in relevant and engaging ways.

Building upon the foundation of these six tasks of ongoing faith formation, Thompson (2011) focuses on the theological literacy, beliefs and religious practices of Catholic school administrators. He argues that, “The issue in Catholic school leadership today is not necessarily the decline of religious and priests in administrative positions, but rather, whether or not those lay men and women who have accepted the call to leadership in Catholic schools are theologically literate in the Catholic faith and if those beliefs and perceptions are aligned with Church teaching” (p. 120). Although this study focuses only on secondary schools in the U.S. which are sponsored by a specific religious order, there are important points of connection with the issues faced by Catholic schools in general. Thompson uses the framework of the National Catholic Educational Association’s “Information for Growth Assessment” as the guiding conceptual tool for his quantitative study, and this instrument itself utilizes the aforementioned six tasks of adult faith formation. One of Thompson’s research questions focuses on what topics of Catholic theology the lay administrators wish to incorporate into their spiritual and theological formation. The three top priorities that the principals identify are prayer, spirituality, and Catholic social doctrine (p. 124). Regarding future research and practice, Thompson recommends the following: “On the Diocesan level

offer a certification program for administrators utilizing the six components of adult faith formation and theological formation from *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* (USCCB, 2005a) to equate a school administrator as a *lay ecclesial minister*" (p. 136). An integrated and integral formation process will necessarily include the "six tasks" within a holistic context of personal and professional growth.

Indeed, Earl (2005) addresses the need for such intentional formation programs to concentrate on integral faith formation for lay leaders in Catholic schools: "If Catholic schools are to continue to be distinguished by their strong faith communities and not become private schools characterized as schools of academic excellence and a religious memory, attention must be given to faith leadership and how it is being developed in school leadership" (p. 514). Earl looks at theories related not only to educational leadership in general, but also to moral and character education, as well as to the fostering of spirituality as a means of integrating the two. Noting that elementary school principals need to cultivate a school culture which is steeped in Catholic values, symbols and beliefs, Earl emphasizes that "spiritual leadership is central to the identity of the Catholic school" (p. 514). In her review of essential Church documents and related theory regarding Catholic education, Earl gives priority of place to the need for principals to nurture the spiritual development of their faculty and staff, as they learn to live in and with the power of the Holy Spirit: "Recognizing this role of the Catholic school principal as the spiritual leader, who must nurture the spiritual formation of both faculty and students, helps to establish the importance of assisting principals to nurture the spirituality of the teachers within the Catholic school" (p. 525). The ancient adage, "one cannot give what one does not have," clearly applies to the modern and postmodern mission of Catholic school leaders.

An additional question of the New Evangelization in the U.S. is whether the nation's Catholic schools will become places "where the New Evangelization can reach out to parents and children" (USCCB, 2013). The answer hinges on whether—in and through their other roles and responsibilities—Catholic school leaders will themselves be "dynamic Catholics" (Kelly, 2012). Reporting on research conducted by his Dynamic Catholic Institute, Matthew Kelly cites the following data regarding Catholics across the country:

- 6.4% of registered parishioners contribute 80% of the volunteer hours in a parish;
- 6.8% of registered parishioners donate 80% of financial contributions;
- There is an 84% overlap between the two groups. (p. 12)

Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic then proceeds to examine what qualities or characteristics differentiate the highly involved 7% (rounding up from the 6.4% and 6.8%) from the other 93%. Kelly identifies “264 behaviors or qualities that were unique to the 7%” and then explores “the cause-and-effect relationship between all 264 behaviors, and the overlap that existed among them, to arrive at the four signs of a Dynamic Catholic” (p. 16). According to Kelly’s research, the four signs are: prayer, study, generosity, and evangelization (p. 18). The rest of the work is devoted to exploring the specific ways that “dynamic Catholics” live out these signs—as well as the intentional habits and incremental steps they take to build and maintain these signs. Kelly insists that, “The research shows that if you help Catholics develop habits in each of the four signs with focused and specific outcomes in mind, they become among the most highly engaged Catholics” (p. 201). He also invites those who are already dynamic Catholics to think in terms of adding to their number by 1% per year. As they apply the findings of such research to their respective school communities, Catholic school leaders would need, first, to find ways to build and maintain the good habits which correlate with the Kelly’s four signs and, then, to invite their faculty, staff, and school families to make this journey as well. By identifying the core 7% of dynamic Catholics in any given school community, Catholic school leaders would be able to mobilize those who have already experienced a life-changing conversion to Christ. This group could then form the center from which various outreach initiatives might effectively proceed.

Practical Applications

Strong leadership is essential for any organization, but particularly for Catholic schools since they are so intimately linked to the Church’s evangelizing mission. Indeed, the University of Notre Dame’s Task Force on Catholic Education (2006) observes that, “Research consistently shows that effective leadership is the most significant element of an effective Catholic school” (p. 6). Since effective leadership within a Catholic school context will always include catechetical, spiritual and missionary dimensions, it is imperative that the building principals engage in ongoing faith formation which nourishes and challenges them as disciples of Jesus. In *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* (USCCB, 2005a), the U.S. Bishops call for lay ecclesial ministers whose service is characterized by: “Authorization of the hierarchy to serve publicly in the local church”; “Leadership in a particular area of ministry”; “Close mutual collaboration with the pastoral ministry of bishops, priests, and dea-

cons”; “Preparation and formation appropriate to the level of responsibilities that are assigned to them” (p. 10). Not only do these traits apply to Catholic school principals, but the Bishops specifically cite school principals as examples of lay ecclesial ministers (p. 11). This document identifies the four foundations for lay ecclesial ministry as human formation, spiritual formation, intellectual formation, and pastoral formation, and the Bishops note that these four elements may be addressed separately, but “they must be integrated as a unified whole in the person of the well-formed lay ecclesial minister, which happens best if these elements are integrated in the formation program itself” (p. 50). Thus, one step which would promote a more integral faith formation for Catholic school principals and which could incorporate an explicit focus on themes of the New Evangelization would be to reframe their formation in terms of service as lay ecclesial ministers. If Catholic educational leaders understand that “The most important thing is to keep the most important thing the most important thing” (Coduto, 2001), this should mean integrating their educational expertise within a vision of themselves as spiritual and pastoral leaders at the service of the Church. It will also mean reframing the role of lay ecclesial ministry in terms of leadership for the New Evangelization.

Following the path charted in *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* (2005a), the USCCB’s “National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers” (2011) provides a rigorous vision of core competencies within each of the four standards of formation. The document states, “Lay ecclesial ministers can use these standards and competencies for self-assessment and ongoing ministerial growth” (p. 4). Since Catholic school principals clearly serve as catechetical leaders within the Church, the following provides a sampling of particularly relevant competencies:

- Human formation: “Lay ecclesial ministers, as all ecclesial ministers, develop their human character and relational abilities so that they can be ‘a bridge and not an obstacle’ for people in their encounter with Jesus Christ” (p. 4). To do so, lay ecclesial ministers will “Appreciate and affirm the dignity of the human person,” and “Recognize both the reality of sin with its personal and social consequences and the power of forgiveness and reconciliation to heal persons and relationships” (p. 5).
- Spiritual formation: “Having encountered the person and message of Jesus Christ, the hunger of the lay ecclesial minister for union with the Triune God is constant” (p. 5). To respond to this call to holiness, lay ecclesial ministers will “Give witness to an integrated spirituality formed by Scripture, theological reflection, sacramental celebration, communal wor-

ship, and active participation in parish life,” as well as “Honor the call to ministry that is rooted in one’s baptism” (p. 6).

- Intellectual formation: “A lay ecclesial minister’s faith and ministry is formed by the study of the Catholic theological tradition focusing on the following core elements: Scripture and its interpretation, dogmatic theology, Church history, liturgical and sacramental theology, moral theology and Catholic social teaching, pastoral theology, spirituality, canon law, ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, the social sciences, humanities, and culture and language studies” (p. 7).
- Pastoral formation: “As a response to their baptismal call, lay ecclesial ministers accept the grace of leadership and manifest a range of skills and pastoral gifts which allow them to function effectively in ministry”; they “Exercise sound practices of compassionate pastoral care,” and they “Implement the principles and processes of evangelization and faith formation as outlined in national and universal Church documents” (p. 8)

As these core competencies suggest, holistic ongoing formation of lay leaders within the Church will challenge all those involved to grow in personal holiness.

In addition, a concluding section of the document provides specialized competencies for catechetical leaders. It features the following: “Direct the parish catechetical program through design, implementation, and evaluation”; “Develop a comprehensive lifelong vision and plan for parish catechesis based on ecclesial catechetical documents”; “Insure the centrality of catechesis in the development of the parish as an evangelizing and catechizing community” (USCCB, 2011, p. 14). Though the Catholic elementary school principal may collaborate with a parish director of religious education or director of adult faith formation (guided by the pastor), many of these catechetical duties are likely to become the principal’s responsibility within the school. Initial and ongoing formation of principals should address these questions of catechetical content and pedagogy, since most Catholic school leaders have not had separate formation in these areas.

Formation for the New Evangelization

Leadership formation is intrinsically linked to the wider issue of lifelong adult faith formation within the Church, as well as to the call for a New Evangelization. The Church’s *General Directory for Catechesis* (Congregation for the Clergy, 1998) describes adult catechesis as the “organizing principle, which gives coherence to the various catechetical programs offered by a par-

ticular Church,” as well as “the axis around which revolves the catechesis of childhood and adolescence” (para. 275). This fundamental focus of catechesis is also directly related to the Church’s New Evangelization, which is directed to the Church herself: “to the baptized who were never effectively evangelized before, to those who have never made a personal commitment to Christ and the Gospel, to those formed by the values of the secularized culture, to those who have lost a sense of faith, and to those who are alienated” (USCCB, 2005b, p. 47). Leaders themselves need meaningful adult catechesis, and this formation should include formation in reaching out to those with various degrees of affiliation to the Church. The question of how best to provide adult formation for the New Evangelization remains fluid, however.

Bishop Robert Barron (2012) provides one substantive articulation of core categories, or perhaps even outcomes, for forming “new evangelists.” As founder of Word on Fire evangelization ministries, former rector of Mundelein Seminary in the Archdiocese of Chicago, and current auxiliary bishop of Los Angeles, Bishop Barron reflects years of lived experience in the work of New Evangelization. In his YouTube summary entitled “7 Great Qualities of a New Evangelist,” Barron outlines a platform for the seminarians that could be of benefit for lay ecclesial ministers as well, and he elaborates and expands upon this framework in an address to several thousand catechetical leaders from across the country at the 2014 L.A. Congress. Barron’s (2012) recommendations highlight the following fundamental tasks for those who would be new evangelists:

1. “Be in love with Jesus Christ”: Barron advocates that Catholics begin with the basic encounter with Jesus as their personal and evangelical starting point—speaking with love about the one who has first loved them.
2. “Be filled with ardor”: The passion, or fire, which Catholics must exude should flow from the reality of Christ’s Resurrection; if the Lord is really risen, then he can transform the hearts of all who are open to him.
3. “Know the story of Israel”: The greatest storyline in the history of the human race is the salvation history which flows from the beginning of time through God’s covenant with the chosen people of Israel, to the coming of Jesus as the Messiah and the establishment of the kingdom of God, in anticipation of his Second Coming; Barron’s point is that Christians must understand how Jesus fulfills God’s promises.

4. “Know the culture”: The New Evangelization is a matter of meeting people where they are, and then helping people realize St. Irenaeus’ great insight that “the glory of God is man fully alive”.
5. “Know the great tradition”: Here Barron speaks to the way that Scripture and tradition complement each other—particularly in the beauty of the arts as they reflect the grandeur of God revealed in Jesus of Nazareth.
6. “Have a missionary heart”: New evangelists must be passionately concerned about both the eternal salvation of souls and their proximate salvation from temporal suffering and misery.
7. “Know and love the new media”: Barron leads by example on this point, both advocating and modeling how the power of the internet and social media can help new evangelists reach those who await the good news of the Gospel.

This conceptual framework could be a helpful guide to those in Catholic school central offices, as they look for concrete areas in which to foster personal and pastoral growth among principals. It could also provide school principals with a practical self-evaluation tool for formation of their own faculty and staff members, identifying strengths and areas for growth.

Recommendations for Catholic Educational Leaders

Pope Francis’ call for a “missionary transformation” of the Church implies the need for a renewal of formation programs and professional development processes for lay leaders within the Church. If Catholic school principals are to reach out to those on the “peripheries” of their neighborhoods, their parishes and their school communities, they will themselves need to be “Spirit-filled evangelizers” (Pope Francis, 2013). However, the practical challenges of fostering and sustaining a shift from maintenance to mission will require creative responses. From Catholic school principals themselves to those who provide initial and ongoing formation for these mission-essential leaders, the following steps would help transform both the structure and the content of leadership formation:

1. Utilize the “lay ecclesial minister” vision from *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* (USCCB, 2005a) as the organizational framework for programs; its integrated focus on human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation will allow for rich overlapping of themes and the type of “real-world” applications which busy school administrators so often desire.

2. Structure the content of faith formation according to the six tasks of catechesis (USCCB, 2005b); since these six tasks serve as the overarching domains of the NCEA's ACRE and IFG assessments, they could provide an integrated approach to linking professional development with questions of curriculum and instruction.
3. Work and think in terms of fostering conversion of heart, with special attention to the stages or thresholds of conversion; an ability to recognize where people are on the spectrum of Christian discipleship will empower Catholic school principals in their own personal faith journeys and in their call to help form "intentional disciples" (Weddell, 2012).
4. Build on the foundations of prayer, study, and generosity identified by Matthew Kelly (2012); both Catholic school principals and their teachers would benefit from practical strategies for daily prayer, for addressing questions about the teachings of the Church, and for seeing service to God and neighbor in terms of a deeper discipleship.
5. Employ various evangelization resources, such as Bishop Barron's (2012) qualities of a new evangelist—and encourage principals to use these with their own teachers; to "be in love with Jesus Christ" and to understand this relationship within the context of the Church's Scripture and tradition would naturally lead to an increase of passion for sharing the faith.

By focusing on sustained and systematic support for principals, central Catholic schools offices could model and inspire an evangelizing catechesis among their school leaders. Catholic colleges and universities with education programs could also provide a much needed service to the Church by integrating formational theory and recommended practices such as these.

Ultimately, the work of the New Evangelization will hinge on whether Catholics in the 21st century have a lived experience of the Lord Jesus. Christ himself commands that we remain in his love and then adds: "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete" (John 15.11). Such evangelical joy must transform the leadership and the formation which are themselves at the heart of Catholic schools. This is the path by which Catholic school principals will be able to make their schools centers of the New Evangelization.

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