

The Relationship between the Catholic Teacher's Faith and Commitment in the Catholic High School

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This study investigates the relationship between Catholic teachers' faith and their school commitment in Catholic high schools. A national sample of 751 teachers from 39 Catholic high schools in 15 archdioceses in the United States participated in a self-administered website survey. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and the Pearson correlation. The findings of this study show that there are significant relationships between the four dimensions of Catholic teachers' faith (belief, intimacy with God, action, and a living faith) and the four dimensions of school commitment (commitment to mission, commitment to the school, commitment to teaching, and commitment to students). Among the four dimensions of Catholic faith, a living faith was most influential in all the four dimensions of teacher commitment. Among the four dimensions of teacher commitment, commitment to mission was most strongly connected with all four dimensions of faith. The findings of this study strongly suggest that Catholic teachers' living faith, placed in the center of intrinsic motivation for their school lives and activities, needs to be acknowledged as a critical predictor of teacher commitment within Catholic high schools.

A teacher's commitment to a school and its members is a very important subject in terms of a school's success and students' academic achievement (Dannetta, 2002; Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington, & Gu, 2007; Firestone, 1996; Louis, 1998). Teacher commitment has been recognized as a crucial factor influencing the effectiveness of the Catholic high school (Bempechat, Boulay, Piergross, & Wenk, 2008; Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Convey, 1992; Guerra, Donahue, & Benson, 1990; Schaub, 2000). Research suggests that teachers in effective Catholic high schools exhibit a strong commitment to their school, to teaching, and to their students (Bryk et al., 1993; Guerra et al., 1990; Irvine & Foster, 1996; Schaub, 2000). Guerra et al. (1990) stated that the commitment of teachers in Catholic high schools "strengthened by their perception of a shared religious mission" (p. 17) has a positive and powerful influence on student academic achievement. After detailed observation of teachers and students in Catholic high schools, Bryk et al. (1993) concluded that teachers in Catholic high schools are committed to high standards in class-

room work, show themselves as role models for their students, and are positive about their work despite low salaries compared to their public school counterparts (see also Schaub, 2000). Students, moreover, recognize their teachers as patient, respectful, and happy with their teaching. Such positive reports on teachers' commitment to their school, to teaching, and to their students in Catholic high schools raise the following question: Why do Catholic teachers generally devote themselves to their school?

Even though empirical studies on teacher commitment in the Catholic high school are few in number, studies that have dealt with Catholic high schools have indicated significant relationships among teacher commitment and constructs such as a sense of vocation, goal and value consensus among school members, a strong sense of community, and religiosity (Benson & Guerra, 1985; Bryk et al., 1993; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Convey, 1992; Tarr, 1992; Tiernan, 2000). The essential synthesizing element among these characteristics is Catholic faith. Church documents have consistently emphasized that the Catholic teacher's faith is the most essential factor that guarantees the success of the Catholic school (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, 1982, 1997, 2002, 2007). Indeed, Ciriello (1987), Tarr (1992), and Tiernan (2000) infer that there is strong connection between Catholic teachers' faith and their school commitment in the Catholic high school.

The Catholic high school is fundamentally defined as an educational institution of the Catholic Church actualizing the identity and values of the Church rooted in Jesus Christ (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977). Thus, the Catholic high school in the United States has been acknowledged as a faith community as well as an education community (Benson & Guerra, 1985; Moore, 2000). As a consequence, the Catholic Church's dogmatic and educational values have consistently had a great impact on not only the identity and values of the Catholic high school but also attitude and behaviors of teachers (Groome, 1996; Jacobs, 2005). This is an important driver of Catholic high schools' dual purposes for schooling—the academic and faith development of students (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, 1982, 1997, 2007). Also, the climate of the Catholic high school has typically attracted Catholic teachers who have faith (Benson & Guerra, 1985; Convey, 1992), and the teachers' faith has been recognized as an important motive for teacher commitment to school activities, including the evangelizing mission of the Church (Convey, 1992; McLaughlin, 1996; Moore, 2000; Tarr, 1992). However, until now, there has not been research that focused specifically on the relationship between Catholic teachers' faith and their commitment

within the context of the Catholic high school. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between Catholic teachers' faith and their commitment in the Catholic high school. For this purpose, this study investigated whether there are significant relationships between multi-dimensions of Catholic teachers' faith and their commitment in the Catholic high school, which dimension of faith is most influential in teacher commitment, and which dimension of teacher commitment is strongly associated with Catholic teachers' faith.

Literature Review

Since the main focus of this study is the relationship between faith and commitment of Catholic teachers in the Catholic high school, Catholic faith and teacher commitment become two core variables—Catholic faith as the predictor and teacher commitment as the outcome. Defined below, Catholic faith and teacher commitment are multidimensional concepts.

Catholic Faith

In general, faith is defined as a strong belief in God. Faith contains belief, but it is beyond belief. In a psychological analysis of faith, Lewis (1974) indicated that faith has three components—the cognitive, the affective, and the active.

Catholic faith, in *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (United States Catholic Conference, 1997), is defined as “man’s response to God, who reveals Himself and gives Himself to man” (p. 17). In Catholicism, faith is primarily a loving action of God toward man and, at the same time, authentically a human act as a human’s response to God’s calling (United States Catholic Conference, 1997). As a human’s response to God’s loving invitation, Catholic faith has been recognized to have three essential components: belief (the cognitive dimension); intimacy with God (the affective dimension); and, action (the behavioral dimension) (Groome, 1980, 2002; Kreeft, 2001; Pollard, 1989).

Belief in God and in the tenets of Catholicism is the first component of Catholic faith. As the cognitive dimension, belief can also be called intellectual faith or head-faith (Groome, 1980, 2002; Lewis, 1974). Belief is to know and acknowledge the contents of faith with all capacities of the mind, including reason (Arnold, 1964). This intellectual faith is necessary because one cannot hold faith toward God unless he or she knows God and the contents of faith (Lewis, 1974). Therefore, in one aspect, faith is a matter of understanding and

intelligence (Arnold, 1964; Sokolowski, 2006). Faith clearly requires cognitive understanding and conviction about the tenets of Catholicism rooted in the revelation of the Bible and the tradition of the Catholic Church. However, all of the contents of faith cannot be completely revealed and understood by the mind and reason (Groome, 2002). Faith must be more than belief.

Intimacy with God is the second component of Catholic faith. As the affective dimension, it is called heart-faith (Groome, 1980, 2002; Lewis, 1974). Intimacy with God means for Christians to feel God's love and to love God with their hearts. Catholic faith, as more than an agreement of the mind, binds a man to God's love and makes a man enter into relations with Him (Arnold, 1964). The mysteries of faith are also accepted through a loving relationship with God beyond the understanding of reason and intelligence. Karl Rahner (1978), one of the most influential Catholic theologians of the 20th century, emphasizes that Christian faith is not just to believe a collection of abstract doctrines and mysterious rituals, but is essentially responding to the deepest longings of the heart toward God. However, Catholic faith still needs one more dimension, action, in order to be a lived reality. This is why, in Catholicism, "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26).

Action is the third component of Catholic faith. As the behavioral dimension, action refers to hand-faith (Groome, 1980, 2002). Action is to perform the will of God, to love and serve others, and to be dedicated to the Church. Jesus consistently emphasized action following belief: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). Therefore, Christians must apply their faith to their lives through tangible behaviors and activities.

When both intellectual faith and heart-faith are closely connected with hand-faith, the faith becomes a living faith as "a lived reality" (Groome, 1980, p. 57). A living faith integrating the mind, heart, and hand becomes lived, personalized, and internalized within one's life (Schuttloffel, 1999). The internalized living faith impacts one's identity, values, emotions, attitudes, and behaviors in all aspects of life. Therefore, only if Catholics have a living faith can they live their faith fully and put their faith into practice in all aspects of life. A life of unconditional love is a paragon of a living faith because Catholic faith has its root in love (Saint-Laurent, 2007) and "being a Christian means having love" (Ratzinger, 2006, p. 72). Unconditional love can be expressed in a variety of ways, such as unselfish love, compassion, collaboration, caring, honesty, sincerity, and generosity in a Catholic person's attitudes and behaviors (Groome, 2002). Through the pursuit of a life of unconditional love, a living faith be-

comes the core factor that enables Catholics to cultivate commitment to the Church, their neighbors, and society.

Catholic faith is also understood as “an existential developmental reality” (Groome, 1980, p. 57). It means that faith is not fixed, but grows like living creatures. All Christians have a faith history involving their individuality, temperament, experiences, and environment. Their personal faith history influences their faith development or retrogression (Guardini, 1998). Therefore, based on the individuals’ religious background, experiences, disposition, and environment, Catholic high school teachers’ inclination toward the three components of faith might be different although they try to live a living faith and the strength of their faith might also vary.

Teacher Commitment

Recently, a number of researchers have defined commitment as a psychological attachment or bond of an individual to someone or something that has a special meaning (Cohen, 2007; I. Park, 2005; Somech & Bogler, 2002; Tyree, 1996). A true commitment, however, must be a lived reality revealed through concrete actions (Crosswell & Elliott, 2004; Louis, 1998).

Teacher commitment is generally categorized into three dimensions: commitment to the school; commitment to teaching; and, commitment to students (Danneta, 2002; Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Hamilton, 1999; Nir, 2002; I. Park, 2005). For this study, it is required to add one dimension: commitment to mission due to the distinctiveness of Catholic high school teachers on whom this study focuses. As an educational institution of the Church, the Catholic high school pursues the evangelizing mission of the Church as its unique, essential goal. Catholic teachers in the Catholic high school are encouraged to participate in the mission by appearing as a witness to faith and helping students develop Catholic belief and values (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, 1982; Convey, 1992). Therefore, commitment to mission should be acknowledged as one important dimension of teacher commitment in the Catholic high school.

Many Catholic teachers in the United States want to work in a Catholic school because of their desire to participate in the evangelizing mission of the Church (Convey, 1992; Cook, 2004; Schuttloffel, 2008). In order to practice the evangelizing mission of the Church, the most important quality that a Catholic teacher must have is Catholic faith (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997). In this study, commitment to mission indicates teachers’ strong accep-

tance and participation in the evangelizing mission of their school, a willingness to appear as a witness to faith by word and deed, and dedication to help students develop Christian beliefs and values.

Commitment to the school means loyalty, identification, and involvement in the school as a workplace (Meyer & Allen, 1997). This commitment has been generally indicated to have three components: strong belief in and acceptance of the school's goals and values; a willingness to dedicate oneself to school work and activities; and a strong intention to remain in the school (Danneta, 2002; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979; Somech & Bogler, 2002). Also, based on the Catholic school's climate emphasizing the school as community, creating a sense of community within the school should be considered as an important aspect of commitment to the school (Moore, 2000; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1972). Therefore, in this study, teacher commitment to school means a teacher's strong acceptance and support of the goals and values of the school, a willingness to dedicate oneself to school work and activities, a strong intention to remain in the school, and effort toward building community within the school.

Commitment to teaching refers to teachers' effort and involvement in instruction and teaching subjects in order to teach effectively (Louis, 1998; Tyree, 1996). A teacher committed to teaching will express a strong orientation toward developing effective classroom practices and broadening his or her professional knowledge (Nir, 2002; Zehm & Kottler, 1993). More specifically, commitment to teaching involves a commitment to building the skills, knowledge and professional behaviors that will have a positive impact on student learning (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Somech & Bogler, 2002).

Commitment to students refers to a teacher's dedication to students' academic achievement and social development (I. Park, 2005). This commitment is associated with teachers' caring for students, a willingness to help students, taking responsibility for improving students' learning and school life, and forming strong emotional bonds with students (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; I. Park, 2005). Many teachers recognize students' academic achievement and welfare as core components of commitment to students (Tyree, 1996). Also, teachers who are committed to students pay particular attention to students who are academically at risk (Louis, 1998; I. Park, 2005).

Faith as a Critical Intrinsic Motivator for Teacher Commitment

Intrinsic motivation has a close relationship to commitment. Intrinsic motiva-

tion refers to motivation coming from the internal rewards of an individual rather than from any external or outside rewards (Woolfolk, 2007). Intrinsic motivation is clearly “based upon the value received from the work itself” (Sergiovanni, 2007, p. 128). A number of researchers have reported that intrinsic rewards, such as meaningfulness, purposefulness, and significance, are closely associated with commitment (Bredeson, Fruth, & Kasten, 1983; Crosswell & Elliot, 2004; Day, 2004; Thomas, 2000). It is obvious that when people recognize their work as being meaningful, purposeful, and significant, higher levels of performance will be produced (Sergiovanni, 2007). Intrinsic motivation is especially tied to teachers’ commitment (Ancess, 2003; Ball & Goodson, 1985; Reyes & Pounder, 1993; Wiener, 1982). Teachers’ identity, beliefs and values, morality, passion, and emotions have been indicated as critical components of their intrinsic motivation (Ancess, 2003; Day, 2004; Palmer, 2007; Thomas, 2000). Palmer (2007) paid great attention to personal identity, vocation, and the inner life of the teacher with regard to teacher commitment. He emphasized that “good teaching comes from identity, not technique” (p. 66). Day et al. (2007) also insisted that “teachers’ sense of professional and personal identity is a key variable in their motivation, job fulfillment, and commitment” (p. 103).

For many teachers, particularly those in Catholic education settings, faith is a critical component of intrinsic motivation. At its most basic, faith means a person’s inner quality that affects one’s identity, beliefs, values, passion, emotions, morality, attitudes, and behaviors (Astley, 1992; Fowler, 1981; Gallagher, 1996; Geyer, & Baumeister, 2005). According to Fowler (1981), who understood the term faith broadly, faith is “an orientation of the total person, giving purpose and goal to one’s hopes and strivings, thoughts and actions” (p. 14). Likewise, for many Christians, faith provides purpose and meaning for life, stirs passions, and serves as an individual’s moral compass (Matthews & Clark, 1998; C. L. Park, 2005; Geyer & Baumeister, 2005; Thomas, 2000). That is, faith is the primary and basic intrinsic motivator for strong believers.

Therefore, faith as the primary and basic intrinsic motivator for believers is likely to contribute strongly to commitment. Cartwright (1962), who claimed a close relationship between the confession of faith and a life commitment, stated that when people believe in God with all their heart, faith reaches wholehearted commitment to God and it influences all the interests and relations of their total life. As mentioned earlier, Catholics are encouraged to embrace the whole of life and to look at all aspects of life from a faith perspective. Because a living faith becomes lived, personalized, and internalized within the whole life of a faithful person, the faith affects one’s identity, values, emotions, and atti-

tudes positively, so that it functions as the basic intrinsic motivator that causes the committed lives of the faithful. Consequently, for Catholic school teachers who have a living faith, the faith would be placed in the center of intrinsic motivation for their commitment to mission, the school, teaching, and students.

Methodology

This study was designed to examine the relationship between Catholic teachers' faith and their school commitment in the Catholic high school. For that purpose, this study employed a quantitative method that uses a self-administered website survey.

Sampling, Distribution, and Data Collection

The population for this study was all Catholic high school teachers in the United States. Since the population for this study was very large and spread out over the United States, this study used cluster sampling. For a cluster sampling of this study, a logical cluster was a Catholic high school and the unit of analysis was a teacher. The survey invitations were sent to the principals of 165 Catholic high schools randomly selected in 16 archdioceses across the United States that have more than 10 Catholic high schools. Among them, 39 Catholic high schools in 15 archdioceses participated in the survey. The researcher used an online survey tool for survey distribution and data collection because this survey's potential respondents were professional members (teachers) that have e-mail and Internet access. Of the 2,106 Catholic high school teachers sent the survey, 751 teachers were included as the completed respondents and the overall response rate of sample teachers was 35.7%. Table 1 displays school/teacher numbers included in the survey and survey response rates in the 16 archdioceses.

The Survey Instrument

This research study utilized a 96-item online survey instrument developed by the author on the basis of several survey instruments (Benson & Guerra, 1985; Ciriello, 1987; Hill & Hood, 1999; Mowday, et.al., 1979; I. Park, 2005) that dealt with subjects regarding faith and teacher commitment. The survey had three sections: Section I—General Information; Section II—Catholic Faith; and, Section III—Teacher Commitment. Section I (General Information) dealt with personal and professional background characteristics, such as gender, marital

Table 1

School/Teacher Numbers Included in the Survey and Survey Response Rates					
Archdioceses	Schools con- tacted for the survey	Schools included in the survey	A total of teachers	Respondents (completed)	Response rate
Baltimore	10	4	219	59	26.9%
Boston	10	3	136	57	41.9%
Chicago	10	2	139	19	13.7%
Cincinnati	10	2	146	38	26.0%
Detroit	10	4	209	72	34.4%
Indianapolis	8	2	82	29	35.4%
Los Angeles	11	4	209	87	41.2%
Miami	11	1	56	22	37.9%
Milwaukee	9	4	198	83	41.9%
Newark	10	1	21	5	23.8%
New Orleans	10	2	94	52	55.3%
New York	13	2	140	16	11.4%
Philadelphia	14	0	0	0	0%
St. Louis	11	3	133	61	45.9%
St. Paul and Minneapolis	10	1	72	30	41.7%
Washington, D.C.	8	4	250	103	41.2%
Totals (n = 193)	165	39	2,106	733+18=751	35.7%

Note. *Regarding total respondents, 18 teachers did not identify the location of their school.

status, age, Catholic education background, years of teaching, and teaching subject. Section II (Catholic Faith) contained 54 items dealing with the importance of Catholic faith (1 item), Catholic identity (10 items), belief (17 items), intimacy with God (7 items), action (12 items: action attitude 5 items, religious practice 7 items), and a living faith (7 items). Section III (Teacher Commitment) dealt with motives for teaching (3 items), motives for remaining (3 items), and four dimensions of teacher commitment (24 items): commitment to mission (6 items); commitment to the school (6 items); commitment to teaching (6 items); and commitment to students (6 items). Methods to measure these questions were multiple choices, top-down multiple choices, Likert scales, and rating scales.

Validity and Reliability

In order to secure validity and reliability for this survey instrument, a pilot test was performed using responses from 50 teachers in three Catholic high schools in the Washington, DC, area by using an online survey tool. Through the pilot study all items were carefully examined and the wording of some items was revised. A reliability estimate for the survey instrument employed Cronbach's Alpha. Because Cronbach's Alpha for all variables was between .781 and .927, this survey instrument secured reasonable internal consistency reliabilities for the population.

Data Analysis

For this study two types of analyses were conducted: (a) descriptive analysis and (b) inferential analysis. Descriptive analysis was utilized to summarize and describe the data gained by the survey and to provide percentages of survey responses with regard to demographics of the sample, the importance of religion, motives for teaching in the Catholic high school, and motives for remaining in the Catholic high school. The Pearson correlation was applied to determine whether and to what degree correlations exist between multi-dimensions of faith and commitment of Catholic teachers.

Survey Findings

Demographics of the Sample

The sample was comprised of 751 teachers, including 425 females (57%), 321 males (43%), and 5 (0.6%) who did not indicate a gender. Of the sample teachers, 81.7% were Catholics and 18.3% were non-Catholics. Lay teachers (93.4%) were the majority of the sample. Catholic teachers and religious teachers (priests, brothers, or sisters) made up 6.7% of Catholic teachers. The vast majority of the sample teachers were White (87.4%). Hispanic teachers constituted 6.6% of the sample and less than 4.0% were from other racial groups (American Indian 0.1%, Asian 1.7%, and Black teachers 1.9%). Of the sample teachers, 36.4% were under the age of 35, 40.4% were between 35 and 54, and 33.2% were over 55. With regard to teaching subject, 22.1% of the sample teachers were involved in teaching religion, and the remaining 77.9% of teachers were teaching other subjects only. As for teaching experience at their current Catholic high schools,

16.6% of the sample teachers had teaching experience of more than 20 years, 20.5% of teachers had teaching experience between 11 and 20 years, and 62.9% of teachers had teaching experience between 1 and 10 years.

The Importance of Religion

With regard to the importance of religion, only one question asking, “overall, how important is religion in your life?” was included in the survey. Almost all Catholic teachers (98.4%) reported that religion is influential in their lives. Of Catholic teachers teaching religion, 98.2% responded that religion is the most important or one of the most important parts in their lives; of Catholic teachers teaching other subjects, 72.8% reported similar degree of importance (see Table 2).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for the Importance of Religion

Scale	All Catholics (n=612)		Cath. Religion (n=160)		Cath. Other (n=446)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Most important	200	32.7	90	56.3	105	23.5
One of the most important	288	47.1	67	41.9	220	49.3
Somewhat important	114	18.6	3	1.9	111	24.9
One of the least important	10	1.6	0	0	10	2.2
Least Important	0	0	0	0	0	0

Note. Cath. Religion = Catholic teachers who teach religion or religion with other subject;
Cath. Other = Catholic teachers who teach other subjects.

Motives for Teaching and Remaining in the Catholic High School

Catholic teachers' motives for teaching and remaining in the Catholic high school provide crucial information to grasp their intrinsic motivation regarding school commitment. With regard to motives for teaching in the Catholic high school, survey participants were asked to select the most, the second most, and the third most important reason that influenced their decision to teach at this school by using top-down multiple choices on 21 reasons. For Catholic teachers, three reasons closely associated with their Catholic faith, “God’s choice for my life” (15.8%), “view of teaching as ministry” (12.1%), and “commitment to Catholic education” (10.6%) had the highest frequencies as the most

Table 3

Motives that Influenced Teachers' Decisions to Teach in Catholic High School

Motives	Catholic teachers (n=594)		Non-Catholic teachers (n=135)	
	Most Important	A total of the top three	Most Important	A total of the top three
1. God's choice for my life	15.8%	28.0%	11.9%	17.1%
2. View of teaching as ministry	12.1	31.2	5.9	14.2
3. Commitment to Catholic education	10.6	29.7	–	0.8
4. Love of teaching	9.1	30.7	23.0	49.1
5. Teaching my academic subject	6.9	21.0	14.1	33.5
6. Desire to work with students	6.4	20.3	6.7	32.2
7. Opportunity to witness to my faith	5.2	14.5	1.5	6.0
8. General working conditions	4.7	15.6	5.2	18.7
9. The school's Christian values	4.4	19.8	7.4	16.3
10. Satisfaction with my work	4.0	10.8	3.7	20.2
11. Family situation	2.7	8.9	1.5	5.3
12. Working in a school close to home	2.0	7.2	1.5	6.8
13. Helping children develop their faith	1.7	8.1	–	0.8
14. Job security	1.7	5.6	1.5	5.9
15. Working with committed people	1.3	12.1	2.2	11.2
16. Students' achievement	1.2	6.1	2.2	16.5
17. Administrator's style and philosophy	1.0	4.7	3.0	12.8
18. Salary or benefits	1.0	7.6	0.7	5.9
19. Relationship with the principal	0.8	3.0	–	3.8
20. Helping create a Christian community	0.7	5.4	1.5	6.7
21. Summer vacation and holidays	0.3	0.8	–	1.5

Note. Most important = the percentages of the most important reason;

A total of the top three = the total percentages of the most, the second, and the third important reasons.

important reason (see Table 3). On the other hand, for non-Catholic teachers, the reasons with the highest frequencies as the most important reason for teaching at the Catholic high school were “love of teaching” (23.0%), “teaching my academic subject” (14.1%), and “God’s choice for my life” (11.9%).

Table 4 presents the percentage of most important reasons for teaching at the Catholic high school into four groups of religious, professional, environmental, and economic reasons on the basis of a similarity of the reasons. According to the findings presented in Table 4, as a total, religious reasons

Table 4

Motives that Influenced Teachers' Decisions to Teach in Catholic High School

Motive categories	Most important reasons	
	Catholic teachers (n=594)	Non-Catholic teachers (n=135)
Religious motives	50.5%	28.2%
Professional motives	27.6%	49.7%
School environmental motives	7.8%	10.4%
Economic motives	7.7%	5.2%

Note. Religious motives = 1, 2, 3, 7, 9, 13, 20; Professional motives = 4, 5, 6, 10, 16; School environmental motives = 8, 15, 17, 19; Economic motives = 11, 12, 14, 18, 21 with regard to item numbers of Table 3.

Table 5

Motives that Influenced Teachers' Decisions to Remain in Catholic High School

Motives	Catholic teachers (n=594)		Non-Catholic teachers (n=135)	
	Most Important	A total of the top three	Most Important	A total of the top three
1. Satisfaction with my work	15.3%	29.3%	15.6%	36.5%
2. Love of teaching	10.1	26.3	14.8	35.0
3. God's choice for my life	9.1	17.4	5.2	12.0
4. View of teaching as ministry	8.9	19.7	5.2	14.2
5. General working conditions	7.9	21.5	10.4	29.9
6. Commitment to Catholic education	6.9	23.1	0.7	2.2
7. The school's Christian values	6.2	20.0	3.7	12.0
8. Job security	6.2	13.5	11.1	18.6
9. Working with committed people	3.9	16.4	5.9	14.9
10. Desire to work with students	3.4	18.3	3.7	16.5
11. Students' achievement	3.4	14.5	5.2	25.2
12. Family situation	3.0	9.1	0.7	8.2
13. Teaching my academic subject	2.4	9.8	2.2	17.2
14. Salary or benefits	2.4	9.2	3.7	10.4
15. Helping children develop their faith	2.2	9.3	–	1.5
16. Helping create a Christian community	1.5	7.9	–	4.5
17. Opportunity to witness to my faith	1.2	9.5	2.2	4.4
18. Administrator's style and philosophy	1.2	5.2	3.0	13.5
19. Relationship with the principal	1.0	3.7	1.5	4.5
20. Working in a school close to home	0.8	4.5	1.5	6.0
21. Summer vacation and the holidays	0.3	3.3	–	3.0

Note. Most important = the percentages of the most important reason; A total of the top three = the total percentages of the most, the second, and the third important reasons.

Table 6

Most Important Reasons by Category that Have Influenced Teachers' Decisions to Remain in the Catholic High School

Motive categories	Most important reasons	
	Catholic teachers (n=594)	Non-Catholic teachers (n=135)
Religious motives	36.6%	17.9%
Professional motives	34.6%	41.5%
School environmental motives	14.0%	20.8%
Economic motives	12.7%	17.0%

Note. Religious motives = 3, 4, 6, 7, 15, 16, 17; Professional motives = 1, 2, 10, 11, 13; School environmental motives = 5, 9, 18, 19; Economic motives = 8, 12, 14, 20, 21 with regard to item numbers of Table 5.

(50.5%) were much more influential on Catholic teachers' decisions to teach at the Catholic high school than professional (27.6%), environmental (7.8%), or economic reasons (7.7%).

In regard to Catholic teachers' motives for remaining in the Catholic high school, Table 5 presents the percentage of reasons that have influenced teachers' decisions to remain in the Catholic high school, and Table 6 shows the percentage of most important reasons by four categories based on a similarity of the reasons. As shown in Table 6, religious reasons as a whole (36.0%) were still more influential on Catholic teachers' decisions to remain in the Catholic high schools than professional (34.6%), environmental (14.0%), or economic reasons (12.7%). However, Table 5 indicates that there were notable changes in their preference rank between reasons to teach and reasons to remain. While God's choice (15.8%), ministry (12.1%), and commitment to Catholic education (10.6%) related to Catholic faith had been the highest preferences regarding Catholic teachers' decisions to teach at the Catholic high school (see Table 3), their highest preferences in the decisions to remain in the Catholic high school were satisfaction with their work (15.3%), love of teaching (10.1%), and God's choice (9.1%). These results imply that Catholic teachers' motives were moved into professional reasons from religious reasons while experiencing the school life.

The Relationship between the Catholic Teacher's Faith and Commitment

Table 7 presents the correlation matrix and descriptive statistics for four dimensions of Catholic faith and four dimensions of school commitment of Catholic teachers. As shown in the correlation matrix, Catholic teachers' re-

ported belief, intimacy with God, action, and a living faith all were significantly related to their reported commitment to mission, commitment to the school, commitment to teaching, and commitment to students at $p < .001$. Among the four dimensions of school commitment, commitment to mission was the highest and had strong relationships with all faith variables of belief ($r=.567$), intimacy with God ($r=.593$), action ($r=.682$), and a living faith ($r=.729$). Also, among the four dimensions of Catholic faith, a living faith was the highest recommitment to the school ($r=.299$), commitment to teaching ($r=.247$),

Table 7

Correlation Matrix and Descriptive Statistics for Four Dimensions of Catholic Faith and Four Dimensions of School Commitment Reported by Catholic Teachers

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Belief	–	.626	.499	.548	.567	.220	.120	.194
2. Intimacy with God		–	.616	.681	.593	.259	.221	.244
3. Action			–	.787	.682	.215	.160	.245
4. A living faith				–	.729	.299	.247	.323
5. Commitment to mission					–	.324	.301	.382
6. Commitment to the school						–	.614	.522
7. Commitment to teaching							–	.529
8. Commitment to students								–
M	4.43	4.53	4.48	4.26	4.47	4.44	4.51	4.75
SD	.589	.601	.926	.702	.557	.494	.475	.323

Note. Action variable is the combination of action attitude variable and religious practice variable. All correlations are statistically significant at $p < .001$.

and commitment to the students ($r=.323$). Although commitment to teaching was significantly correlated with all faith variables, that commitment was the lowest relationship with all faith variables of belief ($r=.120$), intimacy with God ($r=.221$), action ($r=.160$), and a living faith ($r=.247$) compared with other commitment variables. In addition, of the relationships between the multi-dimensions of Catholic teachers' reported faith and their reported commitment, the highest relationship was between a living faith and commitment to mission ($r=.729$) and the lowest relationship was between belief and commitment to teaching ($r=.120$).

These results imply that there are significant relationships between the four dimensions of Catholic teachers' faith and the four dimensions of their commitment in the Catholic high school; among the four dimensions of

Catholic faith, a living faith is most influential in all commitments to mission, the school, teaching, and students of Catholic teachers, and among the four dimensions of teacher commitment, commitment to mission is most strongly connected with Catholic teachers' faith.

Discussion

A number of researchers reported that Catholic high school teachers in the United States are strongly committed to their school, teaching, and students (Bryk et al., 1993; Convey, 1992; Guerra et al., 1990; Schaub, 2000). This research study also reveals that Catholic teachers in Catholic high schools on average support the religious mission of their school ($M=4.84$ in maximum possible score=5.0), willingly put in a great deal of effort to help their school be successful ($M=4.71$), think about ways to improve their teaching and professional knowledge ($M=4.73$), and really care about their students' futures ($M=4.88$) to a strong degree. Why do Catholic teachers devote themselves to their school's religious mission, the school, teaching, and students?

It is clear that there is no single factor that impacts teachers' commitment to school, and it results from the combination of multiple factors, such as teacher sense of efficacy, a teacher's passion and values, collegial and administrative support, workplace conditions, and student behavior and background (Crosswell & Elliott, 2004; Dannetta, 2002; Day et al., 2007; Firestone & Pennell, 1993). That is, teacher commitment should be comprehensively understood not by any single factor, but by multiple factors and by an interaction among the factors (Hamilton, 1999). However, for Catholic high schools, a Catholic teacher's strong faith needs to be considered as one of the most important predictors that would create, sustain, and/or improve teacher commitment. The critical reason is that for Catholic teachers who have a strong faith, the faith is placed in the center of intrinsic motivation associated with teacher commitment.

This study showed that almost all Catholic teachers surveyed think faith is important in their lives. With regard to Catholic teachers' intrinsic motivation, this study also found that the most important reasons that influenced Catholic teachers' decisions to teach at their current Catholic high schools were closely related to their faith in comparison with non-Catholic teachers. That is, for Catholic teachers, religious motives such as "God's choice for my life," "view of teaching as ministry," and "commitment to Catholic education" had the highest frequencies as the most important reasons and, on the whole,

religious reasons were much more influential than professional, environmental, or economic reasons. On the other hand, for non-Catholic teachers, the highest frequencies as the most important reasons to teach at their current Catholic high schools were professional motives such as “love of teaching” and “teaching my academic subject,” and the professional reasons on the whole were much more influential than religious reasons. Also, with regard to Catholic teachers’ decisions to remain in the Catholic high schools, religious reasons as a whole were continually more influential than professional, environmental, or economic reasons. These results demonstrate that faith is placed in the center of intrinsic motivation regarding Catholic teachers’ school life and activities.

Through the Pearson correlation analysis, this study examined whether Catholic faith as the intrinsic motivation for Catholic teachers is associated with their school commitment. The result was that Catholic teachers’ reported belief, intimacy with God, action, and a living faith all were significantly associated with their reported commitment to mission, commitment to the school, commitment to teaching, and commitment to students. That result strongly suggests that Catholic faith as an important intrinsic motivation for Catholic teachers in the Catholic high school would impact their school commitment.

This study also found that among the four dimensions of Catholic faith, a living faith had the highest relationship with commitment to mission, the school, teaching, and students. These results imply that a strong living faith as the primary intrinsic motivation contributes to school commitment of a Catholic teacher to a strong degree. A living faith integrating the mind, heart, and action becomes internalized within one’s life (Schuttloffel, 1999). And the internalized living faith affects one’s identity, values, emotions, attitudes, and behaviors positively, so that it functions as the basic intrinsic motivation that causes the committed lives of the faithful. Consequently, for Catholic teachers who have a strong living faith, the faith would be their orientation to school life and would be closely linked to their commitment to mission, the school, teaching, and students as the crucial intrinsic motivation.

Last, this study revealed that among the four dimensions of teacher commitment, commitment to mission was most strongly connected with Catholic teachers’ faith variables. These results confirm that Catholic teachers’ faith is strongly associated with and contributes to their commitment to mission most powerfully.

Implications for Practice

With regard to ongoing faith formation of Catholic teachers, this study provides two important considerations for leaders of the Catholic Church and Catholic high schools. The first implication is that a living faith as the balanced integration of head, heart, and hand faith is the best model for Catholic teachers because a living faith is strongly associated with not only commitment to mission, but also commitment to the school, teaching, and students. If Catholic teachers have a living faith, they should be generally devoted to their schools, and through their commitments their schools would become more successful in two fundamental aspects the Catholic high school has: the school's evangelizing mission and students' academic achievement. The second implication is that during their school lives Catholic teachers' faith seems not to have been strengthened through programs designed to enhance the faith formation of teachers. That is, this study showed that Catholic teachers' teaching motives were moved significantly from religious reasons, such as vocation, ministry, and commitment to Catholic education, into professional reasons, such as satisfaction with their work and love of teaching while experiencing the school life. Therefore, Church and school leaders need to examine deliberately whether Catholic high schools' current faith formation programs for teachers have a positive impact on Catholic teachers' faith development.

Ongoing faith formation for lay educators has been recognized as a very important task of the Catholic school's leaders. It can lead lay teachers toward a deeper personal relationship with God, a fuller understanding of Catholic faith, a greater confidence integrating faith and learning for students, and a higher level of devotion to school mission (Brink, 2004; Earl, 2007). Findings of this study strongly suggest that the ongoing faith formation for teachers should consider development of all three dimensions of Catholic faith—belief, intimacy with God, and action—as a way to strengthen teacher commitment. Some ways to provide teachers with various faith formation opportunities include faith seminars, gathering for prayer, Bible study, faith sharing meetings, involvement in school liturgies, participation in faith formation programs for students, spiritual retreats, and service for the church or the poor (Brink, 2004; Earl, 2007; Griffin, 1999; Mayotte, 2010).

Lastly, with regard to the selection of new teachers, Catholic high school leaders should have clear expectations about the faith of new Catholic teacher candidates. This study indicates that Catholic teachers' faith, especially a living faith, is a strong predictor of their school commitment. Accordingly, leaders of

the Catholic high school need clear protocols to evaluate whether new candidates integrate their belief, intimacy with God, and religious action—i.e., whether they exhibit a strong living faith.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused on Catholic teachers' faith and commitment in the Catholic high school. Therefore, the findings of this study do not generalize to Catholic elementary school teachers. Similarly, the findings of this study do not generalize to high school teachers from other Christian denominations or different religions, although most worldwide religions have commonly shared aspects in regard to the concept of faith. Therefore, exploring the relationship between Catholic teachers' faith and commitment in the Catholic elementary school or between faith and commitment of teachers in other religious high schools should be performed in order to understand more clearly the relationship between school teachers' faith and their school commitment.

In addition, this study employed only a quantitative method that uses a self-administered website survey. The use of qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews and specific observations would complement the quantified findings from analysis of numerical data by providing detailed contents and the inner dynamics on subjects explored through this study. In the future, a qualitative approach on this subject would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how and why Catholic teachers believe and live their faith and of how and why their faith is connected with their school commitment.

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