

MCKEE-ALEXANDER, BETHANY JOY, Ed.D. *El Camino Arduoso—The Arduous Pilgrimage: An Autoethnography Examining The Impact Of Patriarchy on Critical Democracy and Catholic Schooling*. (2015)  
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This autoethnography critically examines my experiences with the Catholic Church, Catholic schools, organizational structures, and hierarchical relationships in order to make social and cultural connections that speak to the larger Catholic community. Through this research method I use my five year journey as an administrator at a Catholic elementary school with a predominately Latino population, in a conservative West Texas city to illuminate the obstacles involved with practicing critical democracy running counter to an hegemonic culture. I identify significant themes from my experiences that disclose the illusion of democracy found in the Church's organizational structures. In addition, I reveal the oppressive relationship between pastor and laity when clergy mistake their leadership position for a positions of superiority over the laity. Moreover, this study explores the struggles and successes involved utilizing critically-democratic pedagogy in an educational environment micro-managed by an oppressive leader and structure. This dissertation makes suggestions for Catholic school administrators attempting to introduce and sustain a critical democracy in their schools and challenges the Church to discontinue its discriminatory practices and re-envision a Church where ALL are truly welcome.

EL CAMINO ARDUOSO—THE ARDUOUS PILGRIMAGE:  
AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY EXAMINING  
THE IMPACT OF PATRIARCHY ON  
CRITICAL DEMOCRACY AND  
CATHOLIC SCHOOLING

by

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Approved by

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Committee Chair

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To my husband, Cory, for his endless love and support.  
My daughter, Emma, who inspires me to envision a  
world grounded in critical democracy.

To my parents, Mike and Becky, my first educators  
who encouraged me to challenge authority and work for justice;  
especially my mother who modeled how to embody  
a Catholic identity within a feminist framework.

## APPROVAL PAGE

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The topic of schooling in America has been at the forefront of discussion boards for countless decades and it seems that many people have strong opinions on the subject. Teachers, politicians, administrators, parents, business owners, and other community members have debated about the right path for schools, but rarely do these various entities come to a consensus. Political candidates offer a strong position on education and even promise to “fix” the ever growing problem. Realtors make faster, more lucrative, sales for houses that are zoned for the “good” school districts. Too many parents, including myself, spend sleepless nights worrying about the state of education and how it impacts their child/ren. Teachers spend years and money training for this profession and then spend countless hours beyond the normal work day preparing lessons, grading papers, and buying classroom supplies lamenting how they will reach that unreachable child. Most citizens can agree that education is vital and that education is the foundation to a better society. Unfortunately, few agree what education should look like. Most all support catch phrases like “critical thinking” and “problem solving,” and discuss why these skills are important. In addition, most agree that developing these skills is a positive contribution to education. However, agreeing on how to teach critical thinking and problem solving remains problematic. This is where my passion for critical democracy is relevant to this debate. I believe that creating schools where students

engage in a deep understanding of critical democracy enables students to obtain critical thinking skills permitting them to become responsible citizens for the larger global community. After spending five years at a conservative Catholic elementary school I see the vital necessity of engaging Catholic students and their families in a discourse that challenges the status quo and is the catalyst for positive change. The central research question in this dissertation is whether it is possible to prepare students for a critical democracy and utilize critical pedagogy at a private Catholic School which is primarily based on a conservative, patriarchal structure? What are the obstacles in curriculum, teaching practices, administrative structure, and identity formation to such a pedagogy?

### **The Beginnings...**

I was born and raised in a college town in Florida and attended St. Francis Catholic Church and Student Center for all of my formative years as well as during my college years. As with any long term experience, this church played a significant role in my formation into adulthood. This was the place where my parents married; I received all of my sacraments (including my own marriage), spent many hours in worship, service, social gatherings, and where my own daughter was baptized. Other than occasionally attending my friends' churches and religious gatherings this was my family's sole place of worship for 30 plus years.

My parents played a significant role in my upbringing and instilled in me the importance of honesty, respect for others, and social justice. They also stressed the importance of church, family, and school. Interestingly, these three rarely overlapped. My church and family merged when we gathered together for Sunday morning Mass,

CCD (Sunday School), youth group, service projects, and informal gatherings with our church family. My church youth leaders were largely responsible for introducing me to service projects. They believed that young people needed to be physically and emotionally connected to serving others; most often the poor. One memorable event was the day we went to the home of a recluse and cleaned his small one bedroom apartment top to bottom. We threw away most of his roach infested furniture and trash that were scattered throughout his apartment. We scrubbed his toilet, floors, kitchen, and walls, and provided him with a clean bed and sofa. This was the first time that I truly looked a stranger in the eye and saw his heart. This missionary experience inspired me, and is one of the reasons I still seek justice for those in need.

School, however, was its own entity where I attended five days week, completed homework, engaged in numerous extra-curricular activities including band and chorus, and socialized with my friends (none of whom attended my church). I had my church friends and school friends; seldom did I have a friend in both groups. I was a firm believer in the separation of Church and State and honestly viewed students who attended private schools as rich snobs. I thought I was better because I attended a public school with the rest of the real world, and where I was afforded opportunities to expand my horizons and develop a true work ethic because I had to work for what I got. Now, after spending five years at a private Catholic school, I recognize how little I understood about private education (specifically Catholic), and I now see how beneficial Catholic education can be creating socially responsible citizens. This revelation will be further explored through my reflections in Chapter 4.

Now that I have lived in other states and attended other Catholic churches I recognize that my Catholic experience as a youth was unique. St. Francis is where most Catholic students and faculty from the local university and college attend. For nearly 30 years St. Francis maintained a relatively progressive message from the pulpit as compared to a traditionally conservative message found in the Roman Catholic Church. However, when an ultra-conservative bishop was installed the diocese banished our pastor and relocated him to small parish in a small town.

To paint a picture of St. Francis Church, on the rare occasions when a more conservative priest visited or was assigned to the parish, the church members in my family's inner circle became offended by his conservative message and challenged these priests. The adults in my church family never apologized for questioning a priest, bishop, or Pope. They believed they were "The Church" and therefore had a responsibility to advocate for progress in church.

As one can imagine, my own progressive ideals stem from this experience and were cultivated later during my education at the University of North Carolina Greensboro. St. Francis maintained a beautiful balance between the sacramental traditions of the Catholic Church while continuing to grow and change with post-modern times. During my 20 years at St. Francis I observed females taking their place on the altar as readers, altar servers, and Eucharistic ministers. The altar was moved closer to the congregation in a semi-circle formation so that the people could engage in a more participatory role. The music became multi-lingual and multi-ethnic to represent the diversity of the parish, and there was an earnest attempt to involve families in the

education programs. In the early 80s the pastor, Father Joe, was disheartened by the growing attacks on homosexuals in our town and, despite the criticism he received from his superiors and other community members offered St. Francis as a shelter to anyone who feared for their safety. He advocated for women in the church and was chastised when he refused to disband a women's book club for reading literature that was according to ultraconservative spies in violation of Church teachings. These women were reading books that promoted liberation theology, social justice, and women's rights. He encouraged his congregation to use their own conscience when making moral decisions, and fully embraced the spirit of Vatican II. There were a number of times Father Joe challenged his own superiors on matters of Catholic teachings as when it related to social justice issues. In time this resulted in his "transfer" to another parish where he suffered close scrutiny. Watching Father Joe, a well-respected church official take a stand against some of the archaic, conservative Catholic Church teachings empowered me to stand up for my beliefs and fight for social justices.

### **The Inspiration...**

Before I accepted the position as Assistant Principal of Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic School in Jude, Texas, I never expected to be involved with Catholic education let alone in charge of a Catholic school. I'd never fully agreed with all of the beliefs of the Catholic Church and at St. Francis I was encouraged to use my freedom of conscience. Challenging authority was considered essential to growth spiritually and intellectually. The Church officials and the church members at Jude would strongly disagree with the concept of challenging authority. In fact, the Catholic community at

Our Lady of Guadalupe believes in the supreme authority of not only the Pope, but of all its priests as well. The amount of culture shock and depression I suffered as a result was profound. Of course these issues were compounded by the pendulum swing back to the right occurring during Pope Benedict's reign and his criticism of the way many Catholics understood the documents from the Vatican II Council. Priests prepared their congregations for the changes instituted a few years after Pope Benedict took office. These changes were the result of the Church's effort to "correct" the misinterpretations of Vatican II Council by providing a newly translated version of the Roman Catholic Missal. The language used in these "corrected" translations reverted back to Pre-Vatican II ideas and rules. The belief that all things holy are good and all things worldly are bad is just one example of a Pre-Vatican II belief that found its way back into the newly "revised" Roman Missal. In the newly revised Penitential Act we humans are to emphasize our sinfulness by using the old translated Latin text "mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa" where we beat our chest with our fist three times and say.

Figure 1. Roman Missal

<b>Text from Roman Missal 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.</b>	<b>Text from Roman Missal 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.</b>
I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do. And I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all	I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have <b>greatly</b> sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, <b>through my fault, through my fault,</b>



the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.	<b>through my most grievous fault;</b> therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.
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Most of the community at Our Lady of Guadalupe accepted these changes without question or complaint, let alone any suggestion of disapproval. Some were happy to return to the old ways of the Church. Here in Jude, Texas, specifically at my school, I even witnessed a group of people who believe in the unchallenged, unquestioned Church. They believe that what the priest says is the ultimate Truth and should not be disputed. On the rare occasion when a member doubts the teachings of the priest they begin with a “forgive me Lord” caveat before sharing their doubts or disagreements. This Church was now my reality; this community was now mine. Despite my feelings of displacement I found ways to ruffle a few feathers, stir the pot just bit, and most importantly love the people who eventually became my family at Our Lady of Guadalupe.

### **Why Critical Democracy?**

As I navigated my way through the conservative terrain of Our Lady of Guadalupe I found solace and inspiration reflecting on my experience with social justice and the transformative readings and discussions about critical democracy during my course work at the University of North Carolina Greensboro (UNCG). During my doctoral studies at UNCG my passion and dedication for critical democracy grew and became the inspiration for my future leadership in education administration. Prior to my

doctoral work I taught in the public schools and after spending additional time at Our Lady of Guadalupe the need for critical democracy became more evident. Many of my own experiences with social justice and critical democracy through my church, schooling, and profession lifted the veil so that I no longer viewed the world as compartmentalized but recognized that every living person and thing are connected. With this revelation and accepting my responsibility to humanity and the earth I sought to lift the veil for our children so that they become aware of their interconnectedness with each other and their world. This crucial paradigm shift in how our children view the world begins by changing the educational institutions that instruct them about their world: their schools. I believe critical democracy can be the catalyst for these changes and help our children and families experience this paradigm shift.

I believe that it is highly improbable that the schools are or can be a powerful vehicle for the fulfillment of our dreams of a community permeated with love, justice, and freedom for all. It is very clear to me that, if we want real fundamental changes in our social-economic-political structures, we cannot engage in that struggle by relying on institutions that are the embodiments of the very structures that need changing. (Purpel, taken from Shapiro, 2009, p. 16)

I believe that in some ways public schools are becoming even more restrictive and controlling from when I was attending. Catholic Schools are examples of these restrictive and controlling environments all under the auspice of love and justice. After living in this environment and reflecting on my experiences I recognize the lack of democratic education within these educational institutions. As David Purpel conveys in the above quote the current educational structure is not conducive to creating a loving and just society. While Purpel speaks about public education this is also applicable to

Catholic education, which is based on a patriarchal, authoritarian system. We must help children develop the skills necessary for making moral decisions that improve their community through democratic education whether in public or Catholic schools.

Joel Westheimer (2009) wrote an essay, “No Child Left Thinking,” where he describes the lack of democratic modeling in our public schools. He explains that one would expect a difference between schools in China versus those in the United States. However, the types of interactions students have with their school communities are actually more similar than dissimilar. Comparable to those in China, United States’ schools are rigidly structured, instill a belief that adults are authority figures who should not be questioned, and assimilate children into an “ideal patriotic citizen.” Westheimer also illustrates that there is a distinct difference between teaching democracy and practicing democracy. Schools that actually teach a modified version of what democracy means often do not practice those ideals within their school walls. (259) He also shares that in 2006 the Florida Senate passed a bill stating “The history of the United States shall be taught as genuine history...American history shall be viewed as factual, not constructed, shall be viewed as knowable, teachable, and testable” (260). In addition, this bill mandates that students learn how to “properly” display the flag and respect said symbol. In this example there is absolutely no room for critical thinking, questioning, or alternative perspectives. For these students whatever story is written in their history textbooks becomes the Truth. Catholic history goes a step further and teaches it as God’s Truth.

During my course work at UNCG I read a number of books and articles that discussed elements for democracy in education and the need for critical pedagogy in our schools. My own understanding of democracy was turned upside down when I began reading other perspectives on American ideology of democracy and how my grade school definition of democracy was instilled in me. My framework for democracy comes from a variety of sources but began transforming while reading Cornell West's (2004) *Democracy Matters*. West defines democracy as the amalgamation of three elements; Socratic questioning, prophetic witness, and tragicomic hope. West describes these respectively as a "commitment to questioning-questioning ourselves, or authority, of dogma, of parochialism, and fundamentalism...prophetic commitment to justice-for all peoples...and the mighty shield and inner strength provided by the tragicomic hope (16)." Each one of these elements forces us to reexamine our own understanding of democracy and the structures built on democratic principles including schools.

The first element is probably the most uncomfortable for many teachers and administrators: Socratic questioning. Often teachers detest students who question their authority and therefore the idea of creating an environment where students are encouraged to challenge authority leaves them feeling vulnerable and powerless. However, learning to question ourselves and others will enable our future generation to break down oppressive structures and prevent a select minority from speaking on behalf of the rest of the world. Instilling the "prophetic commitment to justice" in our children will help them understand their responsibility for each other, and that justice is truly meant FOR ALL, not just those individuals who look, think, and behave like them.

Michael Lerner quotes Sister Joan Chittister who explains, "...I must be all that I can be or I can't possibly be anything to anyone else. God goes on creating through us.

Consequently, a life spent serving God must be a life spent giving to others what we have been given (48)." West also explains that if society has true justice then there is no need for charity. In other words if we create a society where the basic needs of all people are satisfied, when we understand our responsibility to serve each other then, we will no longer have individuals in need of charitable acts. The poor, uninsured, homeless, and hungry will not exist, and therefore the need for donations of food, medical treatment, money, and clothing would no longer be necessary. This goal of justice for all sounds utopian but certainly a worthwhile aspiration for our society. Lastly, instilling tragicomic hope would help our youth discover that even in the most horrific circumstances there is hope for a better world. We need to help our children recognize this inner strength in themselves so that they believe they can hope and endure all things. In the Catholic Church, and other religions, this is called faith in God and something that a Catholic educator can use to help her children look within themselves to hope, envision, and create a better world.

The idea that hope alone will transform the world, and action undertaken in that kind of naïveté, is an excellent route to hopelessness, pessimism, and fatalism. But the attempt to do without hope, in the struggle to improve the world...is a frivolous illusion...hope is an ontological need, demands an anchoring in practice. As an ontological need, hope needs practice in order to become historical concreteness. That is why there is no hope in sheer hopefulness. The hoped-for is not attained by dint of raw hoping. Just to hope is to hope in vain (Freire, 2014, 8).

If we allow ourselves to succumb to hopelessness we can become immobile and unable to take action. Freire believes we need to provide hope education so that children understand the importance of maintaining a sense of hope while simultaneously taking action and pursuing that which is hoped-for (Freire, 2014).

Additionally, I was inspired by the conversation between three professors regarding democracy in the essay “Beyond Generic Democracy: Holding Our Students Accountable for Democratic Leadership and Practice.” These three professors, (2007) discuss what democracy means, where it exists, and the importance of discourse and dialogue. Dr. Reitzug’s definition, “a way of living that requires the open and widespread flow and critique of ideas, with an overriding commitment to determining and pursuing the common good,” aligns effectively with West’s belief in Socratic questioning (West, 2006). This commitment to open and honest dialogue, I believe, is the foundation of democracy and the essence of quality education.

In addition to West’s explanation of democracy, Jesse Goodman and Deborah Meier inspired my passion for bringing critical democracy to children in my own schools. These prominent authors each wrote about their own experiences practicing critical pedagogy in elementary schools and the struggles that came with this unconventional approach to education. Goodman defines critical democracy as preparing children:

for a society in which citizens are intellectually aware of the world around them, are capable of taking an active role in promoting democracy in all spheres of social life, are encouraged to develop their unique individuality, and can exhibit a vital concern for not only their own well-being but also the well being of all people (as well as all other species of animals and plants) who live on our planet (Goodman, 1992, 25).

As an advocate of children and democracy we, the educators, must instill a sense of responsibility for ALL elements of this earth; humans, natural resources, and all living things. We must work together as a community for the betterment of this world. In addition, this sense of responsibility needs to extend to those living outside of one's comfort zone; whether that be beyond their community, city, state, or country. Students need to understand that democracy, as John Dewey states, must be participatory and community driven.

The concept of critical democracy is not one that is easily learned or accepted, especially in this culture of consumerism and fear. The habits conducive to free inquiry don't just happen with age and maturity. Meier explains the process of instilling these ideals in our children.

They take root slowly. And uncertainties, multiple viewpoints, the use of independent judgment, and pleasure in imaginative play aren't luxuries to be grafted onto the mind-set of a mature scholar, suited only to the gifted few, or offered after school on a voluntary basis to the children of parents inclined this way. It is my contention that these are the required habits of a sound citizenry, habits that take time and practice (Meier, 81).

Students need their educational environment to reflect a loving and accepting community that consists of dialogue, group problem-solving, and critical thinking.

In his book, *Elementary School for Critical Democracy* Jesse Goodman's (1992) discusses the practical elements found in an elementary school based on democratic principles. Those who practice critical democracy embrace all perspectives; their determination teaches connectivity and responsibility to humanity and the earth.

Critical democracy also suggests the extension of this responsibility beyond the borders of a particular state; that is, it recognizes the interdependency of all life forms on this planet, and therefore implies a commitment to the welfare of all people and other living species that inhabit the earth (Goodman, 1992, 8).

Goodman stresses that he is not referring to a utopian like community where conflict doesn't exist, in fact he suggests that it is through conflict that we find opportunities for dialogue and therefore growth as individuals and as a community. If we use conflict to openly dialogue this will teach children that conflict doesn't have to result in violence.

West's explanation of democracy emphasizes creating a society where justice for all people exists as well as an individual's inner strength. This balance between a communities' responsibility to all people and the freedom for an individual to express him/herself is what Goodman calls the dialectic tension. This is the debate that occurs regarding the values of the community versus those of the individual. Goodman believes that a balance between the two is necessary for critical democracy to exist successfully. He illustrates the problems that occur when one side outweighs the other. For instance, when the good of the community far outweighs the values of the individual then open dialogue is seen as problematic or even "treasonous." In this situation we end up with group individualism or uniformity rather than community. On the other hand, a society where individuals are encouraged to think only of themselves despite how their choices affect others results in anarchy. If everyone is looking out for their own good rather than a prophetic commitment to justice for all people, then there will be no guarantee of basic human rights for all citizens of this society.



In order for schools to experience the democratic balance between individualism and community they must deemphasize competition among students, teachers, and schools (Shapiro, 2006). There is such a strong message that students should obtain the highest grade at all costs, classes need to earn superior rankings, and schools must reach number one in their district. Of course all of these ratings are based on the results of standardized tests. Families with social capital begin preparing their children for these tests when they are infants out of fear that another child will get ahead. Policymakers, government officials, parents, and educators stress the importance of preparing students for global competition: these translate into educators pushing students to be educationally, economically, and socially competitive. Why is getting ahead and winning so important? So that we can earn money and buy material possessions.

For too long we've been equating democracy with consumerism and materialism. "That critical aspect of democracy—the capacity to exert power over one's own circumstances—is reduced to the ability to shop from the ever-expanding, dizzying array of available products (Shapiro, 2009, 4)." If we teach our children that their success is defined by high standardized test scores or how much buying power they can accumulate, then we instill in them a lack of responsibility for others and their earth. The time it takes to respond to the needs of others is time a competitor may use to get ahead and purchase desirable commodities. Students need the skills to combat the capitalism that overshadows democratic ideals. Often students confuse capitalism with democracy, believing that economic choice is the same as freedom. "People are bound together not as citizens, but as consumers, while the values of self-interest, individual responsibility,

and economic calculation now render ornamental ‘the basic principles of and institution of democracy’ (Giroux, 2009, 223).” The emphasis on the “free world” or the “free market” promotes the competitive, win-loose ideology responsible for the egocentric society that exists today. Additionally, the more we understand resources as something purchased at a store the less respect we have for the originality of that resource. Created educational environments completely disconnected from sustainability.

The individual no longer has an intimate sense of relatedness to the food he eats, the clothes he wears, the shelter which houses him. He no longer participates directly in the creation and production of the vital needs of his family and community. He no longer fashions with his own hands or from the desires of his heart. Modern man does not enjoy the companionship, support, and protection of his neighbors....He strives to acquire the latest in comfort, convenience, and fashion...he is primarily a consumer, separated from any direct and personal contact with creation. Modern man is starving for communion with his fellow man and with other aspects of life and nature. (Moustakas, 1961 cited in Goodman, 1992, 20)

This quote from Moustakas (1961), who wrote in the early 1960’s, is still applicable today regarding the lack of connectedness between humanity and the earth. It is concerning that our society still hasn’t learned the importance of preparing our citizens to care for their environment and humankind.

How can we help our students become actively involved in making changes towards critical democracy? Students need to understand that democracy, as John Dewey states, is participatory and community driven. Students need their educational environment to reflect a loving and accepting community that consists of discussion, group problem solving, and critical thinking. Rather than using cooperative learning as an isolated strategy for instruction, students can learn all subjects as a cooperative project

and their assessment can be based on how they utilize their resources within their group and how they reach a solution together. Alfie Kohn laments that students experience and practice basic subjects; reading, writing, and math, but democracy is presented in lecture format devoid of dialogue. He suggests that children can practice democracy by taking an active role in decision-making, thus preparing them to actively participate in decisions effecting their community. Often when people share decision-making power they accept more responsibility for their community and see themselves as coauthors (Shapiro, 2006). They become more responsible and caring towards members of their community and recognize their active role in creating a peaceful society.

### **Democracy in Catholic Education**

I've been passionate about promoting critical democracy in schools since I began my doctoral program and I've been passionate about Catholicism since I was a little girl who was raised Catholic. However, this connection between critical democracy and Catholic education became a passion of mine when I was employed as the assistant principal at an elementary Catholic school in the small town of Jude in West Texas. Moving to this city and becoming involved in this Catholic school community was like stepping back in time seventy years to what I imagined most Catholic communities looked like during the 1940's. Further description of the organizational structure, school culture, and Catholicity of the community will be in the following chapters. In brief, being a liberal Catholic who upholds the ideals of liberation theology and challenging authority, I never imagined that I would be working in such a conservative Catholic school, and later leading this school as its principal. However, circumstances were such

that my husband and I found ourselves in this West Texas city with me working at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic School for five years.

When I first moved to Jude and began working in this conservative Catholic school I resigned myself to the fact that my beliefs about critical democracy and the importance of teaching children to question, challenge, analyze, and critique were going on the back burner. In my first year I accepted that there was no room for critical democracy within Catholic education and my dissertation was going to be a reflection about how oppressive Catholic education is for the youth of America. I went to school daily feeling like an impostor who was hiding her beliefs and keeping her opinions quiet. I spent most of the first year holding my tongue (a very difficult task for me and I wasn't 100% successful) and observing the interactions of my school community including my teachers, students, parents, religious, and clergy. Not that observing is a bad thing; it provides a wonderful opportunity to listen and hear the hopes and dreams of the community. What was difficult was not having an open and honest dialogue with anyone in my professional community. For example, in preparation for my very first board meeting, where my attendance was a job requirement, I was told to keep quiet and only speak if I was asked a specific question. My inner voice asked: so why do I need to be present? The answer I actually gave was a polite and compliant "yes ma'am." Feeling oppressed and unwelcome to engage in honest discourse with anyone in my professional surroundings, I began to question how I could continue working in this environment.

I sought my mother's counsel frequently and shared my concerns and feelings of loneliness. She had recently joined the American Catholic Council (ACC) whose vision

seeks ways maintain the ideals of Vatican II and suggested I do the same. The ACC is a group of people, mostly Catholics, who strongly believe in liberation theology and the importance of challenging the oppressive direction the Catholic Church was taking. They promote unifying our voices and expressing our disapproval of the changes that the Church was attempting and forcing into action. My mom encouraged me to join this organization as a way to stay connected with like-minded people and find some inspiration for challenging the surrounding conservative ideologies. I was pleasantly surprised to find their website to be full of literature promoting democratic principles within the Catholic traditions, including their own Bill of Rights stated below.

- **Primacy of Conscience.** Every Catholic has the right and responsibility to develop an informed conscience and to act in accord with it.
- **Community.** Every Catholic has the right and responsibility to participate in a Eucharistic community and the right to responsible pastoral care.
- **Universal Ministry.** Every Catholic has the right and responsibility to proclaim the Gospel and to respond to the community's call to ministerial leadership.
- **Freedom of Expression.** Every Catholic has the right to freedom of expression and the freedom to dissent.
- **Sacraments.** Every Catholic has the right and responsibility to participate in the fullness of the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church.
- **Reputation.** Every Catholic has the right to a good name and to due process.
- **Governance.** Every Catholic and every Catholic community has the right to a meaningful participation in decision making, including the selection of leaders.
- **Participation.** Every Catholic has the right and responsibility to share in the interpretation of the Gospel and Church tradition.
- **Councils.** Every Catholic has the right to convene and speak in assemblies where diverse voices can be heard.
- **Social Justice.** Every Catholic has the right and the responsibility to promote social justice in the world at large as well as within the structures of the Church.

My initial reaction to reading these was one of excitement and surprise. I thought “Wow, you mean there are other Catholics who not only believe in these ideals but are willing to put them in bold print for all to see?” I also thought how appropriate that the basis for my dissertation was so eloquently stated by my own Catholic brothers and sisters for the greater Catholic community. I was absolutely inspired and it renewed my own belief in a democratic education even at a Catholic school. Maybe I could find a way to bring these two opposing sides together.

This connection to democracy within the Church made me wonder how I might practice democracy within the confines of my current structure. The Catholic Church makes no effort to hide its highly patriarchal structure; how could democracy possibly fit within these parameters? Aren’t these two principles contradictory? Even Catholic students need to be prepared for a democratic society and therefore need to find a way of connecting democracy with their faith. The problem with the current structure is that Catholic students here in Jude, TX are not encouraged to question or think critically about the world around them. Teachers will openly express the need for students to gain critical thinking skills within their classroom as though it is a skill taught in isolation from other subjects. However, it is difficult, I would venture to say impossible, to teach students to think critically about literature during an English lesson but not during their religion class. Critical thinking is more than a skill, it’s an approach to life. There is a fear that if Catholic educators utilize critical pedagogy and allow our children to become critical thinkers, then the oppressive structure of the Catholic Church will begin to unravel and those in positions of authority will lose power. If children are suppose to live

as adults in a democracy, then we as educators need to prepare them for such a world through critical pedagogy. Despite the challenges of attempting this task in the patriarchal confines of a Catholic school, I believe we need to move beyond the fears of questioning and losing positional power and recognize that it is through these questions Catholics can have a deeper connection to their faith and find closeness with God. I believe that Catholic school educators and administrators can find ample support in the Gospel teachings of love, respect, and charity and the Catholic Church's stance on social justice.

### **Research Focus...**

The purpose of this dissertation is to answer the question; is it possible to prepare students for a critical democracy and utilize critical pedagogy at a private Catholic school primarily based on a conservative, patriarchal structure? How does a Catholic school administrator committed to critically-democratic pedagogy navigate the rough terrain of Catholic education steeped in traditions of patriarchy and hierarchical organizational structures? What are the obstacles, difficulties, and problematics of implementing such a pedagogy? Through an autoethnographic methodology I will reflect, share, analyze, and critique my past and current experiences with Catholicism, education, and democracy in order to provide answers and suggestions to this crucial question.

Truth is neither in the words nor in the theories that they spin out; truth is in the experiences that each of us has, and the value of words and theories is not that they communicate truth, but that if all is aright they may help us grasp and comprehend the truths of our experiences... (McClintock)

This quote is the inspiration for my quest to use my personal experiences to illustrate the journey of a Catholic school administrator attempting to promote critical democracy in a highly conservative environment. My goal is that by using an autoethnographic approach where self-reflections, personal experiences, and artifacts from my journey will provide the basis of my research the reader will have a deeper level of understanding and connection to my story as I search for answers to the central question regarding preparing students for a critical democracy within a rigid patriarchal environment. This type of research, while relatively new, provides invaluable insight into the culture, experiences, and lives of this community. As the one who is “collecting the evidence, drawing the inferences, and reaching the conclusions” (Ellis and Bochner, 734) I am able to make this dissertation speak passionately about my findings rather than attempting to neutralize the data and provide an “objective” point of view. This allows the reader to “feel (my) moral dilemmas, think with (my) story instead of about it (Reed-Danahay taken from Ellis and Bocher, 735).” In chapter 4 I reveal intimate details about my relationships with members of my community and therefore have used fictional names to maintain their privacy. I will discuss the autoethnographic methodology in chapter 4 and in the appendix to the dissertation.

My journey for the past five years contains personal and professional insights, experiences, questions, and life lessons which can only be fully expressed by including the emotional, psychological, and spiritual impacts on me, the subject. As the subject of my research I will examine the journey itself in an effort to make deeper connections to the theory of democracy, education, and Catholicism as they intersect at Our Lady of



Guadalupe Elementary School. Sharing my personal reflections about my relationships with the pastor, teachers, staff, parents, and students will help illustrate the struggles that come with implementing a critical-democratic pedagogy in a private Catholic school setting. I hope that my story enlightens and encourages other Catholic school administrators as to how to implement critical thinking within the confines of a patriarchal structure.

### **Description of Chapters**

In the next chapter I provide a brief outline of the history of Catholic Education in America. I discuss when and why Catholic schools were established in America and the role they played in the Catholic Church. I examine how the purpose of Catholic Schools changed throughout history and the ramifications historical events had on their stability. I conclude with a description of current Catholic School structures, curriculum, and expectations.

Chapter 3 outlines the Vatican II council and the impact its significant call for changes in the Roman Catholic Church had on Catholic education and schools. I discuss the concerns of those calling for a change in the Catholic Church leading to Vatican II. I will share the hopes and dreams Pope John XXIII, discuss the dialogue that occurred between the various members of the council, and how decisions were eventually made. Lastly, I will discuss how the final documents were put into practice and the events occurring during Pope Benedict's leadership that set in motion his "fix" for the misinterpretations of Vatican II.

Chapter 4 is my narrative which illustrates my study of critical democracy within the confines of Catholic ideology at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic School. I include self-reflections, journaling, anecdotes, artifacts, and an analysis of my own experiences as it relates to the community at Our Lady of Guadalupe. This chapter organized into six themes and each one is examined through the framework of critical democracy; how is democracy being examined and practiced at Our Lady of Guadalupe?

- Hierarchical Organizational Structures-Commission, School Board, and Priest: How does the organizational structure impact change, growth, and critical pedagogy?
- Pastor-Principal Relationship-Father Knows Best? I detail the relationship between the Pastor of the school, Father Abraham, and myself. I expose Father's abuse of power and position and my strategic efforts to keep my job (making Father happy) in order to do my job (promoting critical democracy).
- Curriculum-Staff and Student: Being a Catholic School the curriculum is embedded with moral values and the agenda of the Catholic Church. I examine professional development presented internally and how it differs from what the Church provides. I discuss how this impacts a teachers' willingness to explore other forms of curriculum and the lack of discourse provided on the Diocesan level.
- Discipline-Confessions of a Catholic: How does the culture of this small Catholic School impact the way our teachers and staff discipline students?

- Identity-Gender and Sexuality-Where do we all fit in? Gender stereo-types and identity issues are ever present in the Catholic Church and specifically my school. Children witness regularly the patriarchal hierarchy of the church and our boys and girls are taught superiority of men over women. I will explore how the Catholic Church responds to the issue of homosexuality as it relates to identity. As our teachers prepare our children for the world around them our children are also learning about their own identity (gender and sexuality). How are we helping them become healthy, responsible adults?
- Critical Democracy in Action-Service Learning: I share a service project involving the entire school community to illustrate how critical democracy takes form in a Catholic school.

Chapter 5 is my final chapter where I summarize and analyze my findings from the previous chapter and explore how we can change the culture of a small Catholic School. Finally, I provide my vision for critical democracy within a Catholic School.

### **Ready, Set, Go...**

I have been amazed at the many opportunities I have had to plant seeds with my staff, parents, and students. I have the opportunity to introduce a different way of thinking, acting, and loving. After spending five full years at Our Lady of Guadalupe I have witnessed firsthand how the Catholic Church as an institution oppresses the lay people and now understand the need for implementing critical pedagogy in all Catholic schools. Although I focus on Our Lady of Guadalupe, a small Catholic community,

mostly Latino, in far West Texas, I believe my experience are not unique. Through my own narrative I analyze the current conditions of this small Catholic school and offer changes towards a critical democracy. By continually reflecting and analyzing my experiences within Catholic education I continue to gain a deeper understanding as to why the Catholic Church maintains its patriarchal hold on its church members, and why many of us choose to stay. Through the analysis of these experiences and discussions I glean ways that critical democracy and Catholic education can coexist, and provide theoretical and practical suggestions for other Catholic administrators who are trying to maintain the spirit of Vatican II and prepare their students to be critical-thinking citizens in a democratic nation.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **A BRIEF HISTORY OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN AMERICA<sup>1</sup>**

The Roman Catholic Church today and its schools are steeped in tradition handed down from the Vatican. Establishing Catholic schools in America was met with opposition, suspicion, and in some cases violence. This chapter illustrates why Catholic schools were formed, how they were sustained, and the impact they had on the American society as a whole. Understanding the struggles American Catholics faced as they attempted to find a place for worship and take pride in their religious beliefs and traditions offers insight as to why letting go of the more archaic and oppressive practices is so difficult. It is important to understand the history of Catholic education as it relates to my story as a Catholic elementary school administrator. A brief history of Catholic education provides some clarity as to why my attempts to infuse critical democracy into a conservative Catholic school was met opposition and constraint. Covering Catholic education will add texture to my story as I attempt to analyze the elements of critical democracy at a Catholic Elementary school in a conservative town in West Texas.

In an effort to represent the title of this chapter with accuracy I will attempt to present a historical picture with enough detail to understand the significance of how

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term America in place of The United States of America for ease of reading. However, I do so with the understanding of the problems regarding this usage and how it reflects the superior attitude of the United States towards other Countries.

Catholic Education began in America and where it is now with as much brevity as possible. There are numerous books on the topic and all seem to take different vantage points, highlighting different historical periods and significant figures. Some historians take a linear approach and explain the journey of American Catholic Education as it progresses by dates in history. Others choose to describe the various moments in history as it relates to different geographical regions and/or ethnic groups. I tend to view things in a linear pattern and therefore map out my own discussion with a timeline while including the significance of geographical regions and ethnic groups. The overarching theme throughout this historical account is the fight between Catholics and Protestants as they settled in America and established their communities. Many authors agree that American Catholics created Catholic schools as an escape from ridicule and torment from the Protestant dominated public schools. Additionally, as Catholics grew in numbers their need for schools became even more important and prominent across the United States.

### **Precolonial Times (1500-1700)**

#### **Spanish Catholics**

Many place the beginnings of formal Catholic schooling during the colonial period, however there are accounts of Catholic children attending schools designed by the Franciscans in Florida and Texas as early as the 1500s. In his book, *In Hoc Signo? A Brief History of Catholic Parochial Education in America*, Glen Gabert (1973) explains that Catholic schools were developed in the United States well before the founding of the first English colony in 1607. The Spanish settlers in Florida and Texas began developing

schools as part of missionary work done mostly by the Franciscans. Schools in Florida were supported by Catholic parishes in Cuba and those in Texas were support by the parishes in Mexico, making records difficult to locate. However, we do know that Spanish Catholic Schools in the United States were developed as early as 1516. As history unfolds it is quite clear that early Catholic schools were designed, built, and supported by the various immigrants who came to America including the Spanish, French, German, and Irish. These schools were a way for immigrants to find a community like themselves and where they were free to continue their cultural and ethnic traditions. Because Catholicism was so strong in Spain, the government supported these missionary schools in the United States and ran them like a school in their own country rather than incorporating “American” values. When Catholic Americans began to collectively unite, the Spanish influence was replaced by the English traditions (Gabert, 1973).

### **French and English Catholics**

The French established Catholic Schools around various states, but predominantly in Louisiana. The numbers of English American Catholics were small, and the Protestant Anglo-Saxons outnumbered them significantly. However, Maryland had the largest number of English Catholics; this was where English Catholics sought refuge from England and other anti-Catholic colonies. Catholics had a difficult time finding places where they were accepted and could freely practice their religion. Some states continued supporting a state religion after the Revolutionary War and these states did not tolerate Catholicism (Gabert, 1973).

## **Colonial Time (1700-1776)**

### **English Catholics**

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century Colonial times it was the English Catholics who controlled the development and growth of the Catholic Church in America. In Maryland Catholics held a high status and had a perception of being elitist; this may not have been just a perception but reality. The immigrant Catholic connection was not common until well into the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The English Jesuits established a Catholic school in St. Mary's City, Maryland in 1640 and later in 1673 another school opened in Newton, Maryland which is now the oldest Roman Catholic secondary school in the United States (Gabert, 1973). Maryland made it illegal to attend a Catholic school or to travel to Europe for the purpose of acquiring a Catholic education. Some families continued sending their children, although risky and dangerous. John Carroll, who later became the first American Bishop was educated in Maryland at the famous Catholic school, The Bohemia Manor, and later despite the risk went overseas to continue his education (Gabert, 1973).

The education for Catholics during Colonial times was similar to the Protestant based education in that it was only for wealthy and well-educated families. The first Catholic parochial school was established in Philadelphia in 1782 and run by lay teachers (Gabert, 1973). The school's finances consisted of tuition, fundraisers, donations, and Sunday collections much the same way Catholic schools are run today. Often, Catholic schools were a privilege afforded to those families who could afford to pay the tuition.



This established an elitist education system that overlooked the poor. This changed when more foreign immigrants fled to America, most considerably the Irish and the Germans.

### **Revolutionary War and Post Revolution (1776-1820)**

The Revolutionary War brought a short period of time when Protestants and Catholics united in the fight for freedom against England. They viewed each other as anti-England with a common goal of independence. Catholics were among the most “patriotic” and supportive of the Revolution and break from England. They were part of the population who had been discriminated against and ostracized so they wanted the freedom to practice without constraint (Walsh, 1996). The pivotal point in Catholic education was after the American Revolution when a newly independent America attempted to establish its own common set of beliefs, policies, and traditions.

### **Bishop John Carroll**

As previously mentioned Jesuit trained John Carroll came from a wealthy family who lived in Maryland where he was educated before traveling overseas to complete his schooling. When he returned to America he joined the Society of Jesus and later became a priest. His influence on Catholic education began during the war and gathered speed shortly after the war ended (O’Donovan, 1908). He took his place as Bishop in 1789 and addressed the State of Education in 1792 where he made a point to declare that education was important for the youth of the Church (Gabert, 1973). He recognized that most of the Catholics in America were illiterate and uneducated and believed this issue needed to be rectified for the good of Catholics as well as the American society. Coming from a prestigious family, Carroll maintained close ties with prominent American figures such

as Benjamin Franklin who supported his efforts. He was able to use these relationships to further his cause and gain support among a few political figures. He also acquired the endorsement of the Pope Pius IX when he wrote to Rome regarding the state of education among Catholic Americans. In his hopes for establishing an educational institution he stated that schools “in which Catholics can be admitted as well as others... We hope that some educated there will embrace the ecclesiastical state (Buetow, 1970, 45).” He also expressed this importance in education to members of his congregation, stating that the youth needed to be able to find higher education here in America without traveling to England (Buetow, 1970).

### **St. Elizabeth Ann Seton**

Elizabeth Bayley Seton was one of the most prominent women in the history of American Catholic education. After her husband died she converted to Catholicism and decided to dedicate her life in service to the church. She traveled to Baltimore and opened a boarding school for young women. She then joined with a few other women and formally organized a religious community now known as the Sisters of Charity. Seton took her vows in 1809 when she joined this order and became Mother Seton (Walsh, 1996). This order began St. Joseph’s Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland with the primary goal of educating poor boys and girls in a free parochial school. They provided the students with textbooks and meals while also maintaining their own upkeep. When they realized that the financial burden was too much, they decided to open the school to all children, including the wealthy who paid tuition. This decision helped the sisters maintain the school and prevent its closure (Buetow, 1970). Children from

various religious backgrounds were permitted to attend with the understanding that Catholicism would be the only religion taught and practiced. Mother Seton was an advocate of teacher training and her methods reflect the methods of today's school administrators. Her evaluation method is remarkably similar to the current model used today, she would

attend every class for herself...in order to witness herself not only the talents, application, and disposition of the children, but also the capacity, mode of teaching, attention, and success of the different teachers-on the whole, she will take notes that she may be able to judge better of those which will be taken by the Sisters (Buetow, 1970, 63).

Interestingly, many of the research sources provide basic facts about Sister Elizabeth Ann Seton while going into depth about her male contemporaries. In one of the historical sources she is briefly mentioned as someone who worked in the schools and was good friends with John Carroll and mentions her connection to famous men (Gabert, 1973). The Catholic Encyclopedia provides a bibliography where she is identified by her relationships with her father, husband, son, and other male figures. This cite does include information about her conversion to the Catholic Church and most importantly her dedication to the education of all children by opening and running numerous schools while overseeing teacher training, and making schools affordable to children living in poverty (Randolph). This is an example of how patriarchy impacts not only the organizational structure but the construction of history as well. I discuss this patriarchal grip on the Catholic Church in the following chapters.

## **The Common School and the Catholic Reaction (1820-1884)**

### **Irish Immigrants**

Irish immigrants began traveling to America during the 1700s, however during the 1800s the numbers grew exponentially. Many of the immigrants settled in the East and took factory jobs where they lived in poverty and created close-knit communities. Many of these immigrants, including the Germans, settled in the same area and continued their language and traditions (Beutow, 1970). They were mostly uneducated and poor, which created panic among those who were already established. They feared that these immigrants would cause trouble and be the demise of the “American way.” This created significant social conflict which was fueled by the anti-Catholic stance taken by Protestant leaders. These leaders would state that Catholicism was “not a Christian religion but a form of idolatry...irreconcilable with democracy...and acceptance of the Catholic moral standard would lead to the nation’s demise (Walsh, 1996, 25).” Protestants were warned that there was conspiracy among Catholics that threatened the American way of life. As the Catholic immigrants grew in number and responded to the anti-Catholic rhetoric the Catholic immigrants became more militant about defending their faith and began taking over the leadership of the American Catholic Church from the English Catholics (Gabert, 1973). Not only did this lead to the decline of the elitist status of Catholics, but violent attacks from both sides became all too common (Walsh, 1996).

## **The Common School**

The common school, developed by Horace Mann, was an educational system intended to teach all children a standard curriculum preparing them for the “American” society. Because of the influx of immigration the common school took on the responsibility of “Americanizing” the foreigners and stripping them of any outside culture and beliefs. The reaction of Catholics was to establish an educational system to counteract the Protestant influence of the common school. Proponents of the common school believed that this education system would be a way to assimilate new citizens into the Protestant Anglo-American culture. The common school was seen as a way to establish a society with a standard set of morals and therefore create a “good society” (Spring, 2005). Mann believed that there was a standard religious belief that students should learn in school. The various theological differences should be taught at home. This non-sectarian religion taught in the common school was not suitable for Catholics as it was based on Protestant ideology (McCluskey, 1964). For Catholics, the common school movement was oppressive of their beliefs and religious practices. Catholics recognized how much influence the Protestants had on the public school system. The separation of church and state was more about separating one’s place of worship from one’s place of education. The curriculum developed for the common school utilized elements of religion specifically from the Protestant faith, including the Protestant version of the Bible and textbooks containing anti-Catholic rhetoric in an effort to “Americanize” the immigrants from all over Europe (Spring, 2005). Catholics wanted to

provide a similar education for their children but with their faith at the center of the curriculum making Catholic schools evermore important (Buetow, 1970).

### **Building and Running of Catholic Schools**

Much of the early movement in Catholic education during this time was focused on colleges for boys. As time progressed and the common school movement became stronger, the Catholic Church pushed for each parish to build a school (Walsh, 1996). The Church believed in the hierarchical structure and that it show strong leadership from the top down (Buetow, 162-163). Therefore the schools reflected this organizational structure and leadership style. Bishop Carroll was an influential leader in the Catholic Church and his mission was to provide Catholic children the opportunity to attend Catholic schools. Being towards the top of the organizational structure Bishop Carroll worked diligently to build, sustain, and improve Catholic schools in America. Bishop Carroll was a strong advocate for teachers' education. He insisted that teachers receive adequate training to maintain the high academic achievement and to keep Catholic schools competitive with public schools. This was challenging as many of these schools were functioning in high poverty situations with little to no funding. These schools staffed teachers with religious men and women who received little to no salary. Finding the money to train teachers was not an easy task and finding teacher education depended on parish support of its schools. These religious men and women carried the responsibility of building, maintaining, and sustaining schools for Catholic children in America.

Buetow (1970) provides two extensive tables representing the teaching communities of sisters and brothers and their schools during this time. The tables illustrate 44 religious teaching communities and 11 brotherhood teaching communities (115-116). These men and women filled the void of teachers that was lacking from the previous time period. Now the Catholic Church was able to provide a Catholic education to many more children in America. Because of the low socio-economic status of immigrants who were the primary attendees of Catholic schools the upper class found Catholic education unappealing as these schools did not at this time have the reputation of being elitist. These were schools with the purpose of educating the local Catholics of that particular community which consisted of mostly poor immigrants. As the schools grew, more middle and upper class families began sending their children and the parents expected the curriculum to include more than basic skills. In order to meet the needs of all their students and attract more middle and upper class families Catholic school leaders recognized the need to compete with the public school's curriculum and provide equal if not better academics (Buetow, 1970).

### **Curriculum**

Catholic education during the mid to late 1800s was geared towards the formation of faithful Catholics. Students were taught Catholic doctrine and expected to memorize through the rote drill method the beliefs of the church with little to no discussion or explanation. In addition, students were taught basic skills to become active members of society as a whole. They learned reading, writing, and "ciphering". The American Catholic schools followed a translated version of *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*.

There were a few Catholic textbooks written during this time and some schools used books from other denominations, deleting material that would be in objection to Catholic teaching. The division of gender roles was specified and the schools' teachers were expected to pass along this ideology that young girls were to become teachers and boys were to be prepared for a variety of professions. Young girls were taught first religion and morality and second reading and writing. They were also taught order, neatness, and manners, whereas young boys were taught math, reading, and Catholic doctrine each with equal importance for the preparation of their future (Buetow, 1970).

### **Father Gabriel Richard (“The Father of Indians”?)**

Father Gabriel Richard, a refugee from the French Revolution, wanted to provide education to all children from all walks of life. He came to the United States in 1792 and from 1823-1825 was a Congress official. Catholic historians extol him as this great man who was able to accomplish so much and work so hard. Interestingly, he had very specific ideas in mind regarding what kind of education each gender and ethnicity would receive. Indians, as Richard calls Native Americans, should be trained as farmers, white boys should be trained for manual labor; girls should be trained as teachers; and all should be taught morality. Not to undermine the note-worthy accomplishments Father Richard made to Catholic education and education in general, he made significant efforts to enlighten the general public about the mistreatment of Native Americans and put structures in place to ensure their basic human rights. What I find concerning is that the author, Buetow, speaks little about Mother Seton's accomplishments, he cites her work in a technical, informational report but finds ways to glorify and elevate Richard as this



great man who was liken to Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. Buetow includes a lengthy quote about all the things Richard is able to do in a day and all the people's lives he touched, and all the new programs and innovative ideas he brings to the field (Buetow, 1970, 65-66). So why is Father Richard more valuable and noteworthy than Mother Seton? Wouldn't it be more difficult, as a woman and a widow with three children to take on the education of impoverished children of that time period? She not only provided education to all children, trained and evaluated teachers, built and oversaw numerous schools, Seton also accomplished all of this despite the oppressive nature of the time period within the confines of a patriarchal religious structure.

Additionally, Father Richard is considered the "Father of the Indians" because he fought for their education and believed in its importance. There is a mosaic in the Detroit bus terminal of Richard with an Indian kneeling before him. I wonder if the Native Americans see Father Richard as their savior, as someone who truly had their best interest at heart or if they find this monument insulting. Were these Native Americans given a choice to obtain this Catholic education? Were the Native Americans attending these schools permitted to continue practicing their beliefs and follow their religion of heritage? I'm assuming they were not. Did these schools perpetuate the myth that Native Americans were savages who needed to be tamed and "Americanized"? The Indian students were expected to accept the vocation of farming. This expectation illustrates that they were not expected to become professionals like their white counterparts but rather become their workers (skilled labor).

## **Legislation and Funding**

During this time Catholic leaders such as Archbishop Purcell of Cincinnati pushed for legislation that would allow public funding for Catholic schools. Since the public common school was primarily based on Protestant teachings Purcell believed that those wanting a Catholic education should be permitted to attend Catholic schools with public funds. When Purcell's proposal was denied the Cincinnati School Board voted to remove Bible readings and religious exercises from the public school. Those in favor of the common school who believed in the inculcation of Anglo-Protestant values were outraged at the thought of "their" money being used "against" them, and their religion being pushed out of their schools. They viewed the Catholic Church as un-American and that Catholic citizens' allegiance rested with the Pope who was considered infallible. How could they (Catholics) be loyal to both America and Rome (Buckley, 2004)? The fight continued when President Ulysses Grant wanted to deny public funding of religious (Catholic) schools permanently by creating a law that would prohibit public taxes being used for religious purposes. Grant also wanted to ensure that every child, regardless of religion or ethnicity, would receive a free and secular education. While he wanted to deny public funds to religious schools he also wanted to prohibit any religious teachings within the public schools (Klinkhamer, 1956). Speaker of the House James Blaine brought this amendment to the house for a vote:

No money raised by taxation in any state for the support of public schools, or derived from any public fund thereof, nor any public lands devoted thereto, shall ever be under the control of any religious sect, nor shall any money so raised or lands so devoted be divided between religious sects or denominations (Buckley, 2004).

He didn't want to be seen as someone who would place this restriction on just one religious denomination and therefore made it applicable to all religions (Klinkhamer, 1956). This amendment became known as the famous "Blaine Amendment" and was adopted in various forms by many states. Congress ruled that "all states admitted to the Union after 1876" must also incorporate the Blaine Amendment into their state constitution (Buckley, 2004). Thirty seven states have a provision in their constitution based on the Blaine Amendment and it is used as a basis for decisions involving the separation of church and state even today. Buckley (2004) notes that the salient point of the Blaine Amendment was not that it separated church and state but that it is based on the principle that public funding should not be used for Catholic schooling and that Protestant-based public school was considered appropriate. These legislative debates regarding public funding for religious based schools continues to this day.

### **Turn of the Century (1884-1920)**

The next period leading into the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the pivotal point for the American Catholic Church and Catholic education. Now stronger in numbers and organization the Catholic Church was becoming one of the largest Christian denominations in the United States of America and moving towards a status of prestige and political power (Buetow, 1970). Using their elevated status the Catholic Church in America believed they were entitled to government funds to support Catholic schools and were allotted money for various educational programs including minority schools. This funding was stopped as a result of The American Protective Association (APA) founded in 1887 by Henry Bowers, which opposed any federal funding to Catholic programs.

One of the most effected programs was the “Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions” (Buetow, 1970). Realizing that their sources of government funding was not guaranteed, Catholic school leaders saw a need to unite nationally and formalize their organizational structure and educational goals.

### **Formal Organization of Catholic Schools**

At the turn of the century Catholic educators recognized a need for organizing themselves nationally for purposes of unifying their schools in curriculum, ideologically, and structure. Catholic schools began taking on a “public school” appearance to attract more parents (Lazerson, 1997). Three different organizations, (The Educational Conference of Seminary Faculties, the Association of Catholic Colleges, and the Parish School Conference), united their membership and formed a single organization called the Catholic Educational Association in 1904. In 1927 they changed the name to the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) which is still successfully running today. Leaders of this organization wanted to understand how the National Education Association (NEA) for public schools created a unified system. The NCEA created a committee of ten to study the developments of the American public high schools and how they could organize their Catholic schools to be competitive. Upon seeing the need for comparative schooling between Catholic and public school the NCEA organized a second committee of 15 to study the elementary public schools and report back to the national organization for ideas to improve Catholic education. The conflict that was occurring in the public schools regarding the kind of teacher training that was necessary found its way

into the Catholic teacher training developments. Catholic educators also debated the difference between teaching has a science versus teaching has an art. The report said,

Professional training comprises two parts: (a) The science of teaching, and (b) the art of teaching. In the science of teaching are included: (1) Psychology as a basis for principles and methods; (2) methodology as a guide to instruction; (3) school economy, which adjusts the conditions of work; and (4) history of education, which gives breadth of view. The art of teaching is best gained: (1) by observation of good teaching; (2) by practice teaching under criticism. (Annetta & Leonard, 1956, 135)

This quote demonstrates that the ongoing debate about education was not isolated to public schooling. Being that the NCEA was now using public educational structures as a model for their schools this debate was bound to find its way into the discussions of Catholic educators in America.

### **Minorities: Missionaries versus “Missioned”<sup>2</sup>**

#### **Forced Migrants**

After the Civil War African Americans were displaced, marginalized, and impoverished. This deracinated race now had to make a new home for themselves with little to no resources, basic human rights, and all while under threat of physical harm. Many religious organizations, Protestants and Catholics alike, believed they had a “God-given” responsibility to educate and assimilate African-Americans much like the early settlers worked and were still working to assimilate the internally displaced Native Americans, also known as “native immigrants”(Spring, 2005). The Catholic Church

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<sup>2</sup> The term “missioned” identifies those individuals who were seen by missionaries as people in need of their services because of their inferior status.

decided to make minorities, specifically during this time Blacks and Native Americans, a mission of the Church. The earliest record of a school for Blacks was in 1825 when the Sisters of Francis established a school for Black girls where for \$4 per month they learned industrial skills as well as reading, writing, English, sewing, washing and ironing (Buetow, 1970). Later in the late 1800s the Catholic Church, especially in Baltimore, Maryland, extended these earlier efforts to educate African American and Native American children. The goals and results were not about the assimilation of “the savages.” It’s true the Catholic Church instilled their religious values and provided academic education, but they also fought to protect basic human rights for Native Americans and African Americans (Buetow, 1970).

In 1894 the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions became the Commission for Catholic Missions among Negroes and Indians. Their mission was to educate “American Indians and colored races throughout the State of Maryland and beyond...” This mission included training teachers, providing a comprehensive education to the children, preparing them to sustain themselves within the society, and taking care of the sick and poor of these cultures. The Bureau would “act as the guardian of such of their orphans and minor children as may be committed to their care (Buetow, 1970, 209).” While the mission was to extend these benefits to children from various races it became primarily for American Indians. The Bureau entered into contracts with the federal government to support these schools and the children who attended. These schools were very successful and yet other religious organizations petitioned to end these schools resulting in funds being cut. Once their funds were cut the Catholic Indian Bureau asked that

Native American parents be given the choice to use their “share of the Indian Education Fund to support their children attending mission schools (Beutow, 1970, 209).” This request made its way to the Supreme Court where they ruled in 1902 that Native Americans could use their Indian Tribal Funds for their children to attend Catholic mission schools. Interestingly the author’s response to the opposition from Protestant organizations towards the Catholic mission schools was that the Protestant petitioners were bigoted and wanted to prohibit Catholic ideology from being spread across America. The author certainly makes a valid argument, however neglects to include a discussion regarding the use of federal funds to create and sustain religious schools. Regardless, I believe that those working to maintain Catholic mission schools really saw the discrepancies between poor children of other races and wealthy white, Anglo-Protestant children and as a result attempted to create positive change.

### **Immigrants as Leaders**

Those minorities who held the established Catholic ideology became the missionaries of the Church. Irish and German immigrants were now the foundation of the American Catholic Church and accepted their mission role to provide services and resources for the poor uneducated minorities. During the late 1880s German immigrants played a critical role in Catholic education (Gabert 1973). They were the largest group to immigrate to America. While some were Lutheran or Calvinist, a large number were Catholic. Germans worked to increase funding for schools where they could maintain their culture and language. Regarding the children of immigrant families the Catholic Church was a haven for many of these differing ethnic groups. Immigrants (who chose to

leave their homeland and establish roots in America) had a tendency to group themselves together geographically and maintain their cultural traditions. The Catholic parishes were natural places to congregate, and the schools associated with these parishes were similar in ethnic make-up. The public schools believed this was in conflict with their goal to “assimilate” these foreigners to the American way. That was the beauty of the normal school or the common school which became known as public school; one unified ideology given to children in masses (Gabert, 1973). Massachusetts school system records state,

While the isolation of even this portion [10.6%, in 1864 in Catholic schools] of the school population is to be regretted for their own sakes—separated thus from those early associations in work and play by which the individuals of each generation becomes affiliated with one another in youth, prevented thus from growing into the possession of those common thoughts and purposes which mark interests common and imply one people, born, and reared and molded into a sect, rather than into a nation—while this is misfortunate for those who are subjected to it, we have profound reason for congratulation and thankfulness that this divisive spirit has gained so slight a hold upon the people of our State. (Sloyan, 1963, 202)

This debate between Catholic immigrant schools and public school assimilation ideology went on for decades. Proponents of protecting the immigrants’ traditions and culture were “suspicious of undue accommodation to American ideas (Buetow, 1970, 204)” and seen by others as impeding the American way of life. Those wanting to assimilate foreign children into the “American way” where English was the only language that should be spoken believed that cutting ties with any other ethnic or cultural tradition was imperative. Catholic educators in these immigrant communities believed that schools should maintain immigrant traditions so that faith in the Catholic community



would be maintained while simultaneously preparing them to become responsible citizens (Buetow, 1970). Unfortunately, those in the Catholic Church who advocated for maintaining immigrant traditions did not extend their debate to include the traditions of the Native Americans. The Protestant English settlers who established the “American way” of life did not make room for other religions, languages, or cultures. The Catholic response was to form schools and communities where immigrants were free to practice their traditions and celebrate their ethnic difference. Despite this stance for cultural and ethnic freedom, the Catholic Church did not include the Black and Native American people in their fight for ethnic and racial freedom. As the Catholic Church continued evolving it experienced significant changes especially as it entered the 1900s when Pope John XXIII called for the Second Vatican Council. During this historically significant period the Catholic Church experienced drastic changes.

### **Pre-Vatican II (1920-1962)**

The next century is often referred to in three areas: Pre-Vatican II, Vatican II, and Post-Vatican II. During this time the Catholic Church transformed and as a result Catholic schools in America changed. The specific changes that occurred as a result of Vatican II Council are examined and discussed in detail in the next chapter. These next two sections focus on the general changes in Catholic education in relation to public schooling, funding, and organization. During 1918-1957 and specifically in the 1920’s the National Catholic Education Association was strongly in support of providing an education that included intellectual, spiritual, and social elements. This was the belief of the Catholic Church across the board (Buetow, 1970). While providing the religious

aspect of Catholic Doctrine was of vital importance, the educational foundation was equally important to the Catholic Church. It recognized that preparing people academically, socially, and spiritually meant creating leaders of the nation (Buetow, 1970). Curriculum was extremely important and changed during this time. There was debate between viewing education scientifically, as purely mental, versus maintaining the spiritual/human connection. Catholics at the time believed that the mind, body, and soul all worked together, whereas new studies were indicating that learning was more mechanical and separated the brain from the soul. Additionally, this was the onset of the standardized test movement in public education which Catholic educators initially opposed. By the end of this period, however, the Catholic school systems began to see benefits in standardized testing and incorporated them into their curriculum (Buetow, 1970). By the 1940's and 1950's Catholic schools were using the "Faith and Freedom Series" for reading which focused on teaching Catholic principles and reading skills. Before this time reading was more about inculcating students in the Catholic faith and less about skills (Buetow, 1970).

Financial constraints made it difficult for Catholic schools to keep up with the changing curriculum especially secondary schools which were offering trade preparations (Buetow, 1970). The new accreditation standards for public schools and certification requirements for teachers that were established after World War II created a difficult situation for Catholic teachers. Catholic educators already found it challenging to obtain appropriate training through college courses due to the cost, and these added expectations were not easily funded for Catholic schools. The inability to meet these new expectations

left many Catholic educators uncertified and therefore the schools unaccredited (Buetow, 1970).

Historically this was the period of desegregation which many Catholic churches and schools, especially in the Northern states, had already initiated before the famous Brown vs. Board of Education ruling. Catholics in the Southern states were keeping pace with fellow Southerners (Buetow, 1970). Court decisions regarding church-state issues had some significant impact during this period. A previous decision in Oregon to make public schooling for students a requirement was ruled unconstitutional in 1925 with the Pierce vs. Society of Sisters case, as it didn't give educational control of children to their parents. This important case was a pivotal point in Catholic education because this ruling protected the rights of Catholic schools to exist in the long term future. More common court rulings continued examining issues regarding finances and whether the state should be providing financial support to private religious schools. Financial support ranged from transportation to textbooks. Interestingly, those debating the issue were looking at the balance between protecting the separation of church and state while also protecting the welfare of children. In some cases the court ruled in favor of providing services to private schools with public funds rather than awarding money directly to schools because the protection of the child called the "child-benefit theory" outweighed the religious separation clause (Buetow, 269).

#### **Vatican II (1962-1968) and Post Vatican II (1968-2005)**

During 1958-1968 there was an increase in Catholic enrollment initially however, beginning in the late 1960s numbers began to drop. Schools closed or merged with other

Catholic schools, often combining diverse student populations. The teaching of religion changed during this time but the other academic areas reflected the public schools (Buetow, 1970). Vatican II Council occurred during this time and influenced Catholic education indirectly. The documents of Vatican II supported both Catholic and public education and were respectful of all ways of learning as long as the student was well taken care of (Buetow, 1970). Unfortunately, the financial difficulties that began to occur in the late 60's continued. Discussion of state aid in these situations was considered, as it would be less expensive providing funds to private schools at a lower rate than absorb the cost of these students in public schools at a higher rate. The federal assistance given usually took the form of helping students with disabilities or special needs, and went to the student not the school (Buetow, 1970). These stipulations became the foundation for the federal laws Titles I, II, and III and were crucial to the funding of schools both public and private.

Before Vatican II mostly priests and nuns ran Catholic schools at a minimal cost. However, the decline of men and women taking religious orders left the responsibility for Catholic education to the laity. The financial burden of paying a living wage to lay teachers was too much for many parishes, causing them to raise tuition in order to sustain their schools. The rise in tuition was a challenge for many Catholic families, causing them to leave Catholic schools. This caused many schools to close or merge with another Catholic school (Walch, *Catholic Schools*). In addition, neighborhoods were no longer communities of the same ethnic and cultural traditions; this dramatically changed the face of Catholic churches and their schools. Once parents stopped sending their children to

Catholic schools and pastors no longer saw a direct link to the evangelization process churches they stopped supporting schools financially (Dolan, 2004). In addition, after the courts ruled in the early 1960s that no form of religion could be taught in the public schools, Catholic parents no longer felt unwelcome in public schools and sought the high quality education offered by public school thus leading to decreased enrollment (Walch, *Catholic Schools*). Rome's response to the evolution of American Catholics was to tighten its grip so to not lose many of the ultra conservative traditions of the Church and reintroduce pre-Vatican II values.

Pope Paul VI, who completed the Second Vatican Council, was the first in a line of conservative popes with the level of conservatism increasing with each successor. It was during this 30 year time period that the Church experienced an imbalance between the documents and spirit of Vatican II and the actions of the Vatican. Pope John Paul I who succeeded Pope Paul VI died only 33 days after his election and therefore his papacy ended before it even began. Pope John Paul II took office in 1978 and took every opportunity to remind Catholics that the authority of the Church rested with the pope and that they should practice pre-Vatican II ideology. Any hopes for revisiting the democratic principles of Vatican II in Pope John Paul II's successor were quickly squashed with the election of Pope Benedict who raised conservatism to a new level and moved the Church further back into pre-Vatican II times.

### **Throw Back to Pre-Vatican II Times (2005-2013)**

After Pope Benedict's ordination in 2005, the Catholic Church took a substantial step backwards into pre-Vatican II theology and practice. One of the most significant

changes Pope Benedict finalized was the revision of the Roman Missal used for celebrating Mass. This new missal used language that was not inclusive of women, emphasized human sin and guilt, and was imposed on Catholics with no room for questioning. Schools were now expected to use this missal in their curriculum for developing the faith of Catholic children. I personally lived through this change and experienced the negative impact it had on our school. I discuss this return to pre-Vatican II standards in the chapters ahead.

### **Enrollment and Funding**

There was a significant decline in enrollment between 1960 and 2000. By 2001 enrollment in Catholic schools dropped by more than 50%. Within the last 15 years there has been a push to use public funding for Catholic (any private school for that matter) tuition called, “school choice.” With “school choice” in place parents could receive a voucher or tax credit for sending their child to a private school of their choice (Walch, *Catholic Schools*). In 2002, under the ruling of *Zelman vs. Simmons-Harris*, the Cleveland courts approved a voucher program allowing parents of low socio-economic status to use public funds to send their children to private school. To date, most other states attempting this have been denied under the ruling that it is unconstitutional (Buckley, 2004). Between 2004 and 2014 Catholic school enrollment has continued to decline by over 22% across the nation. What my school, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and the other Catholic school in the neighboring city experienced was the opposite of what was happening nation-wide (NCEA Annual Report, 2014); most likely this was a result of the Texas oil boom. This economic boom brought hundreds of thousands of new residents

with parents looking for quality education for their children. The rest of the nation was in an economic crisis while West Texas was exploiting the Oil boom of 2012. My reflections in chapter 4 provide deeper insight into the impact of this period on Catholic education and how the economy play a vital role in its financial stability.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter is designed to provide the reader with an understanding of the evolution of Catholic education in America. The purpose of Catholic schools changed from its inception to today and the social and economic conflicts that occurred throughout America's history influences the Catholic Church and therefore its schools. This chapter examines the financial challenges in building and sustaining Catholic schools and the role of politics on Catholic schools who seek federal funding. In addition, this chapter illustrates the influence of Protestant ideology on American education and as a result the conflict created for Catholics who were attempting to maintain their Catholic identity in a predominately Protestant society. The next chapter explores the pivotal point in Catholic history when Pope John XXIII called for the Vatican II Council. Although efforts and discussion generated by the Vatican II Council to "renew" the Church took place in Rome, the effects of these changes impacted the Church globally. Moreover, discussion regarding the impact of this Council on Catholic schools in America is important to have a deeper understanding of my own personal story with Catholic schooling and my attempts to hold on to the democratic ideals asserted by the Second Vatican Council.

### **CHAPTER III**

## **SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL AND ITS IMPACT ON CATHOLIC EDUCATION**

The previous chapter provides a timeline and overview of how Catholic schools in America began and transformed throughout history. Over the course of history in the United States there were various figures and events that impacted the Church here in America but one of the most important events in Catholic history was the Second Vatican Council which took place in Rome. This Council caused a paradigm shift in the way Catholics understand their roles in the Church and relationships to God and to their Church. Indeed, Vatican II Council established a more democratic and participatory form of Catholicism. Many of the elements of critical democracy that inspired me to write this dissertation can be found in the spirit that motivated the Council. Catholics were beginning to take ownership of their relationship with the Church and recognized the importance of participating in the decision-making process. I devote this next chapter to the impact Vatican II Council had on American Catholics and Catholic schools in particular. This chapter illustrates the dialectic tension between those who embraced reform and those who feared the changes introduced by the Council. I demonstrate that the patriarchal structure of the Church is the anchor dragging in the water slowing down the ship of progress that the Council attempted to make. This chapter sets the stage for my narrative where I share my own experiences with Catholicism, democracy, and



patriarchy. As an administrator at Our Lady of Guadalupe School my efforts to lead with the democratic ideals of Vatican II that align with the concept of critical democracy were met with obstacles created by a stubborn patriarchy stuck in a pre-Vatican II operational mindset.

Understanding the inner workings of the Vatican II Council is complex, intricate, and substantial. Historians have written numerous documents, books, and articles about what led to the Council; what happened during the council; how the documents from the council were implemented; the results of these documents; and the impact of this Council. Vatican II was life-changing for Catholics because their relationship with their Church and their God was transformed into something significantly different, making it for some unrecognizable. Catholics will often identify themselves in relation to Vatican II: “I’m a pre-Vatican Catholic” or “I’m a post-Vatican Catholic”. In the Catholic community we understand what this means and what the individual is sharing about their Catholic identity. There are some who were born after Vatican II but align themselves with the pre-Vatican II ideals; they even refer to that time period as “the good days”. Understanding this point in Catholic history as it relates to Catholic schooling and Catholic education is crucial not because the schools changed dramatically but because Catholics as a Church and as individuals changed dramatically. Within the vast amounts of writings about Vatican II Council little has been written about the specific impact Vatican II had on Catholic schools. Historians focused on the documents that resulted from the Council and rarely discussed why more wasn’t written or discussed regarding Catholic schools. Regardless, schools did change because their leaders, members,

teachers, and interpretation of doctrine changed. The purpose of this chapter is to provide insight into the changes that occurred within the Catholic Church; share the limited research findings specific to Catholic education; and provide my own conclusions about how it impacted Catholic schools.

### **Prelude: Leading up to Vatican II Council**

It was not Vatican II that brought about the revolutionary changes in the Church; a totally new approach to human and Christian existences brought about Vatican II. Popes, bishops, theologians, were just instruments of a moving force which must be found within the whole human experience, sharing in God's providential presence in the world (Bishop Frank Markus Fernando taken from Sullivan, 12)

While the actual event of the Vatican II Council was significant and historically pivotal it did not occur because one revolutionary pope called for this Council. Various theologians, religious leaders, and a modern world ignited this momentous event. Maureen Sullivan (2007), author of *The Road to Vatican II: Key Changes in Theology*, discusses the importance of acknowledging those important figures and historical events that led to the Council. She provides a number of examples of religious figures (e.g. Yves Congar, M.-D. Chen, and John Newman) who challenged the static Church and offered new ways for Catholics to engage their faith. Sullivan also explains the shift in thinking and theology that occurred prior to the Vatican II and how these new critical perspectives on Catholicism, history, and modern science created the need for a change within the Church (Sullivan, 2007).

Sullivan (2007) points to three significant shifts that paved the path to Pope John XXIII calling for a renewed Church. The first is the move away from a "classicist

worldview” to an “historically conscience worldview,” which allows theologians to recognize history as having a major impact on how we perceive the world. No longer is history viewed as one truth, unchanging or without influence of the events during that time. Theologians are expected to look at the conditions of time in context to have a deeper understanding of their faith. The second shift is in the methodology used to examine the relationship between God and humans. Theologians began departing from the deductive method which performed biblical exegesis without any historical context and perpetuated a black and white view of how humans relate to God. Humans were expected to strive for perfection like God because scripture states that we are to be perfect like God is perfect. This impossible act of “being divinely perfect” caused much guilt among Catholics as it didn’t allow for individuals to live as humans. During this period leading up to Vatican II a shift occurred to an inductive method wherein theologians practiced biblical interpretation from within human experience when studying the human-divine relationship (Sullivan, 2007). Lastly, there was a change in how religious leaders present the Catholic faith to its people. This move away from the “apologetic,” where faith is stated and defended without any questions to a “foundational” approach where faith is presented as a dialogue and questions are appreciated caused the greatest impact on Catholic education. The use of the *Baltimore Catechism* which condenses the Catholic doctrine into a script with specific questions and answers for students to memorize was now seen as problematic. The “foundational” approach which allows students to discuss the doctrine denies the validity of the former curriculum. Vatican II catechism is now intended to teach the “why” rather than the

“what” (Sullivan, 2007). This reform also led to perhaps the greatest debate because it allowed people to question their religious leaders and not be satisfied with the “because I said so” answer. These three shifts created a rumbling within the Church that only grew louder; it could no longer be ignored. Pope John XXIII embraced these new ideas and began the transformation with his call for the Vatican II Council.

### **Hopes and Dreams of the Council: Pope John XXIII**

When Pope John XXIII took office in 1958 the assumption was that he would maintain the status quo and due to his age would only hold the position for a short time. Cardinals thought Angelo Roncalli who took the name John XXIII would make a good interim after the authoritative reign of Pope Pius XII (Sullivan, 2007). Catholic leaders believed that Roncalli wouldn’t make waves. The curia was shocked when Pope John XXIII called for the Second Vatican Council (D’Antonio, 1989). Pope John the XXIII set the stage for Vatican II Council with his announcement and preparations for such an historical event. He wanted to make it clear to all, Catholics and non-Catholics, leaders of the people, and those close to the pope that this council was to be a time of renewal for the Church and

inspired by the faith and by history’s critical juncture, with profound trust in the Holy Spirit, in the Church’s inherent sense of faith, and in the creative capacity of the assembly of bishops...The Church was invited to recognize that it was facing a new world before which it must represent the values of universal equality, poverty, justice, peace, and Christian unity (120). In the words of Pope John the council was “a face to face encounter with the risen Christ” (taken from Alberigo, 120)

The preparations for the Vatican II Council were long, extensive, and tedious. The Roman Curia had a difficult time accepting the Pope's vision of a "Pastoral Approach" to the Council that permitted a variety of voices to be heard, including Catholics outside the Roman circle and even non-Catholics. In his book, *A Brief History of Vatican II*, Giuseppe Alberigo (2006) explains that the preparation for this Council was a perfect example of the power and control the Catholic hierarchy held over its people and therefore why this Council was so vital to the renewal of the Church.

More than any other form of testimony, the years of preparation are themselves the most convincing documentation of the Church's lack of preparation for the commitment to participation and shared responsibility required by the celebration of a council, and of the condition of anguished immobility afflicting Catholicism. Almost without realizing it, Catholicism had drifted along a path of centralizing all decision-making in Rome, and, to an even great extent, of concentrating this in the person of the pope. This situation was heading toward the creation of a monolithic structure. Experiencing Catholicism as the besieged fortress of truth was a position of apparent strength but substantial weakness. Any dynamic and vital impulse ran the risk of being looked upon with suspicion and deprived of the necessary room to express itself of growth. (Alberigo, 2006, 19)

The structure of the Council is reflective of the structure of the Church itself. Pope John XXIII worked hard to create a diverse council representative of the people of the Church and to provide an opportunity for those whose voices were typically kept silent to contribute their ideas to this Council. The Roman Curia at that time were potent and powerful, accustomed to decision-making authority. They were stunned when Pope John XXIII announced his plans for the Council. Once the Curia resolved that the Council would occur members of the Curia assumed they would be solely responsible for

collecting input from the people, facilitate the writing of the documents, control the final revisions, and oversee the implementation (Alberigo, 2006). To their shock and dismay Pope John put the leadership of the Council into the hands of non-Curia leaders.

Alberigo (2006) explains that to determine the topics for discussion the Curia wanted a questionnaire with predetermined topics provided to the bishops so as to control the direction of the Council. They wanted to limit what topics would and would not appear on the agenda. This was not the intention of the Pope who instead sent an open-ended statement asking Bishops to express what topics they would like to be considered. The Curia also wanted to steer the sub-committees so they could maintain control over the organization of the Council. Instead the Pope appointed people outside the Roman Curia as commission secretaries. Despite conflict between Catholics and non-Catholics, Pope John insisted that non-Catholic representatives be included in the Council in an effort to unite the Christian churches and illustrate the Church's commitment to ecumenism. Pope John XXIII emphasized a pastoral approach, a Church for ALL, and a need to help the poor and marginalized. Bishops from third world countries would sit side-by-side with bishops from wealthy countries and together make decisions about the future of their church (Alberigo, 2006). Unfortunately, this proved more a utopian dream than reality, as mostly white European bishops led the preparations for the Council thus providing little diversity of thought. In her book *Catholic and Feminist; The Surprising History of the American Catholic Feminist Movement*, Mary Henold (2008) conveys that in the early stages of the Council women were not permitted to sit on the Council nor attend as an observer. However, partway through the Council a few women were allowed to audit

the Council, and toward the end a select few were even given an opportunity to speak. The dream of diverse representation at the Council was a noble vision, but only minimally realized in actuality.

### **The Council: Three Sessions, Two Popes, and Much Debate**

Pope John XXIII over saw the first session, which produced material about various topics for discussion and debate. He appointed five cardinals who would sort through material, evaluate it, and reduce to 17 schemata. Topics for discussion and debate were written and submitted prior to the Council session and all responses followed the same procedure. As a result there was not a smooth course of discussion about these important topics nor was there any authentic debate (Alberigo, 2006). This Council was truly a work in progress. As procedures failed new procedures were created to make the Council run more effectively and efficiently. By the second session the Council altered the procedure for submitting topics and provided responses. In addition, by the second session there was a new leader. The opening session was held October 11, 1962 but by June of 1963 Pope John XXIII died leaving the Council influx with many questioning if the next pope would take on this huge responsibility and see to its completion (Alberigo, 2006).

Pope Paul VI whose papacy extended from 1963-1978, took office and immediately went to work on completing the Council; he committed to finishing this process. Pope Paul certainly made this Council his own by appointing additional members to the group responsible for evaluating the material and creating a group that would serve as a liaison between the Pope and the Council and oversee the process. In

addition, Pope Paul VI added a group of auditors to observe and in some cases participate in the council. He made numerous political moves to obtain the support of opposing sides (Alberigo, 2006). One of Pope Paul's political moves made the Curia happy by stating that the Curia would be responsible for reforms that directly impacted their organization. While Pope Paul gained support from the Curia he simultaneously created ill-will among members of the Council (Alberigo, 2006). In all, Pope Paul VI made a number of decisions that would cause many to believe that he wanted the Curia to regain authority and therefore strengthen Papal Authority.

By the third session the Council reorganized itself again for better efficiency and speed. Pope Paul VI worked to gain acceptance by as many of the Council as possible. This meant keeping ties with the Curia and others who were not always in favor of the direction of the Council. This was a different approach from Pope John XXIII who was less concerned about political agendas. Pope Paul tried to bring disparate views together in an attempt at conformity wherever possible (Alberigo, 2006). Towards the end of this third session there was a great deal of tension between opposing sides as well as fatigue among its leaders. Despite this they pushed through and completed many items on their agenda and produced four constitutions, nine decrees, and three declarations. All controversial issues that were discussed and/or decided during the Council are found in the "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World". This is the dialogue about church teachings and how such teachings fit into real life situations in the modern world (Alberigo, 2006).



At the closing of the Second Vatican Council Pope Paul IV announced his full support of the Council's decisions and asked the people to follow these new policies. Some Catholics were concerned that Pope John XXIII's initial hopes of a renewal weren't being met and that these changes were not enough nor was the implementation specific enough which would cause the Church to revert back to the old ways (Alberigo, 2006). Regardless, this epic event revealed important topics for the stagnant Church in changing times. Some of these topics were discussed by the Council who proposed changes, others were identified by outside observers who shared their critique of the Council and structure of the Church.

### **Shared Power versus Supreme Papal Authority**

#### ***Motu Proprio*-“On his own impulse”**

Power of control seems to be so important to those wanting to maintain their positions of authority by oppressing those in positions of submission. Whether pope and bishops, bishop and priests, priest and laity, or other authoritative figures represented in our history; those who fear losing their unquestioned authority create clearly defined roles for themselves with rules and regulations for those under their power. Being placed in a position of submissive follower to a priest, I experienced the oppressive actions of the priest who was in constant fear of losing his control and his presumed power. Therefore the struggle between Papal Authority and bishops' authority resonated with my own experience at Our Lady of Guadalupe. During the Council there was a significant issue regarding the power of the bishops and how their function would impact the office of the Pope. The “episcopal collegiality” was an organization that through sacrament

united the bishops into a single collective (Alberigo, 2006). This union was committed to working together on common goals with a common vision. They found that this College connected them to the 12 Biblical apostles and feared losing this important function and relationship to the apostles. The bishops were concerned that not recognizing the sacrament of episcopal collegiality would undermine their leadership and influence, thereby diminishing their function among their diocese. They didn't want to relinquish their authority to oversee the teachings and governance of the Church. Those who were committed to maintaining the authority of the Pope were also concerned that allowing bishops to have this amount of control would somehow lessen Papal authority (Alberigo, 2006). Pope Paul approved a "Motu Proprio" giving back bishops certain authority they once held in prior centuries (Alberigo, 2006). Bishops were grateful to regain their authority over their local diocese. Some bishops encouraged their diocese to openly accept and practice the principles of Vatican II, whereas other bishops fought to maintain their control and instituted faux committees and procedures to present an illusion of democracy all the while practicing traditional Catholic patriarchy.

### ***Lumen Gentium*-“Light of the Nations”**

Lumen Gentium was one of the most debated documents that came out of the Vatican II Council. This document dealt with a variety of topics; the most debated was the hierarchy of the Church. Many bishops and priests thought they should share authority with the pope, diluting the power of the Roman Curia who was not in favor of shared power with anyone except the pope (Huebsch, 1997). Interestingly, this desire for shared power often extended in the upward direction: the Curia wanted to share with the

pope; the bishops wanted to share with the Curia; and the priests wanted to share with the bishops. During these struggles for decision-making control, those wanting to maintain a position of authority and gain more control for themselves lacked the ability to recognize their own feelings of suppression with those they were oppressing. As a result, the Council recognized the need to analyze decision-making structures within the Church and define who “The Church” is. Those who were in favor of shared decision-making believed that “The Church” consisted of the people, the laity, not the leaders and therefore the laity should participate in the development of policy especially when it directly impacted the laity. For example, the laity asserted that decisions regarding sex and birth control should be left with the individual (D’Antonio, 1989). Vatican II proposed the collegiality of church leaders with the laity; however, leaders were and still are reluctant to give up that control. D’Antonio’s (1989) 1987 study shows that while those from lower income and lower education wanted less decision-making power, the majority of Catholics were in favor of a more democratic approach to decision-making. They advocated participating in the selection process of priests to their church and providing input on finances. In addition, proponents of this change pushed to redefine membership within the church to include “people of good will” and not just those “in full communion with Rome” (Huebsch, 1997, 18). The battle for power and control was the catalyst for a more democratic approach to the structure of the Church while simultaneously being the conflict that slowed down progress and in some cases ultimately impeded the laity’s voice from being acknowledged.

## **Ecumenism**

Ecumenism was a significant topic at the Council and cause for serious debate. Many of the other Christian denominations had already begun this ecumenical movement and found great success. Catholics, however, maintained their separation from other Christian denominations and non-Christian religions until John XXIII insisted on changing the ideology that Catholicism is the superior religion. Catholics in previous years had isolated themselves for various reasons and Rome promoted this division as an “avoidable reality that was someone else’s fault.” (Alberigo, 2006) The draft that was initially presented at the Council was agreeable to most regarding other Christian denominations but received serious opposition regarding other religions, especially Judaism. There was still anti-Semitism permeating the Catholic Church and some Catholic leaders were apprehensive to recognizing the Jewish faith as legitimate. They claimed that to do so would be politicized and create additional conflict in Israel. This is despite the fact the John XXIII made strides to end anti-Semitism within the Church by removing the “Prayer for Salvation for Jews” during the Good Friday service as a way to show solidarity between Jews and Catholics (Alberigo, 2006). Interestingly, during my time in Jude, I noticed during the Good Friday service at St. Agnes that prayers for the Jews’ salvation was still being used. I remember questioning myself and wondering why I didn’t remember this part of the service from my home church. At the time I thought it was a problem with my memory or I hadn’t paid close attention back home, but after learning about the changes in liturgy made by Pope John XXIII I realized that my church back home in the implementation of Vatican II on liturgy removed that prayer, and that

St. Agnes was maintaining this absurd tradition. This is an example of how some churches chose to maintain the traditions and practices based on pre-Vatican II ideology and were somehow permitted to continue living in the past. The topic of ecumenism among other Christian denominations made progress during the Council, but sadly for some Catholics accepting other religions was beyond their capability. Whether these Catholics lack the ability to think or lack the freedom to think something other than what had been their lifelong tradition is questionable. Regardless, the Council proposed a new and enlightened method of thinking about and understanding one's faith and practice as it relates to other religions and Christian denominations.

### **Intellectual Autonomy**

"Intellectual autonomy" is one of the most essential ideas that came from Vatican II that caused such a paradigm shift in the way Catholics related to the Church. Before the Vatican II Council there was a significant emphasis placed on obedience that far outweighed any form of thinking for one's self or what D'Antonio (1989) calls "intellectual autonomy". Data from a 1958 survey illustrates that there was a connection between those who valued intellectual autonomy with high academic achievement and higher social-economic status. In the 1958 pre-Vatican II study, intellectual autonomy was more common among Protestants. Since Vatican II the number of Catholics attending and graduating from college has increased and as a result they have moved up the social-economic ladder that corresponds to Jews and Protestants (D'Antonio, 1989). D'Antonio believes this economic and social growth among Catholics is a result of them embracing intellectual autonomy. These Catholics more readily accepted Vatican II

changes within the Church and some were even instrumental in advocating for these changes. Again, this was yet another cause for debate between those for renewal of the Church and those who wanted to maintain its traditional ideology.

### **Practiced: Impact of Vatican II Council**

Putting the changes from Vatican II Council into practice was not an easy task and some changes were accepted more readily than others. Here are some examples of the changes that effective the daily lives of most Catholics. Catholics no longer were required to abstain from meat every Friday and were permitted to choose their own penance at the Sacrament of Reconciliation. They no longer needed to feel guilt over some of the trivial things that had previously been considered mortal sins such as missing Sunday Mass. In the past, skipping Sunday Mass meant a trip to Confession before receiving Communion; now the Church encouraged Catholics to attend weekly Mass but if missed they were not committing a sin and could therefore receive Communion without needing to be first absolved of their sin (D'Antonio, 1989). The definition of “a good Catholic” was no longer to “study, learn and believe in the Baltimore Catechism and accept the pope and his teachings as the unerring voice of God on earth.”

Catholicism was no longer formulaic and based upon following the rules set by the Church and any breaking of the rules would result in a trip to the confessional. Prior to Vatican II the expectation was that a good Catholic attended Mass every Sunday and all Holy days; they blessed themselves with their right hand; genuflected on their right knee making sure it touched the floor upon entering the church; and tithed 10% of their income. Good pre-Vatican II Catholics understood the difference between a venial sin

and a mortal sin and knew how to obtain absolution if they committed such a sin. They maintained a separation from Protestants and sent their children to Catholic school. Women aspired to be like the Virgin Mother Mary. Women either married the Church and became a woman religious or married a man, who was head of the house, and became a wife. Regardless, she was obedient. Post Vatican II “good Catholics” didn’t have defined parameters and were still in good standing with the Church without following such traditional practices. More simply put D’Antonio defines “good Catholics” as those who help the poor and who are not in favor of abortions (D’Antonio, 2006). Moreover, those Catholics with a large amount of Catholic education (all three levels) had a higher percentage for favoring more democratic practices in Church regarding church policies than those with little Catholic education. They also believe that the final say on issues that directly impact their personal lives should stay with the people and not Church officials. Post-Vatican II Catholics tend to believe that a “good Catholic” doesn’t equate to following rules set by the Vatican (D’Antonio, 1989).

How does this renewed Church transform its people into these renewed Catholics with these very different ideals? After the closing session of Vatican II Pope Paul VI asked that the people put these new policies and practices in place. This translated to bishops overseeing the transformation of their diocese and priests overseeing the transformation of their parishes. In the United States some areas were more accepting of these changes than others. It truly depended on the leadership of the bishop and priest. The Catholic Church in its entirety is too vast for every parish to be held under strict scrutiny that assured the policies of Vatican II were carried out efficiently and effectively.

Nor was there detailed records kept regarding the implementation of Vatican II ideals within the churches. In an effort to study and understand the impact of Vatican II on American Catholics and their schools, Andrew Greeley created a survey and analyzed the results in his book, *Catholic Schools in a Declining Church*. In this study, Greeley (1976) reports some of the significant statistical changes in the ways Catholics viewed their Church and religious beliefs. He looked at results of a survey given in 1963 and compared it to the same or similar questions in 1973, ten years later. The results regarding the attitudes of Catholics in some areas are quite significant. In 1963, 70% believed in the authority of the pope and priest versus a mere 32% in 1973 (42). “Catholics still like their priests, but they don’t seem to respect them nearly so much as they once did (Greeley, 1976, 43).” Instead of Catholics not “respecting” their religious leaders I believe there is more of a respectful understanding that these men are now seen as human and therefore capable of making mistakes. These priests, bishops, and the pope are still respected as religious leaders, however, the laity are permitted to respectfully disagree with their views and their proclamations and these views are not accepted as the God-given “Truth”. I believe this illustrates not a lack of respect but rather respecting the intellectual autonomy of the community of Catholics.

Politically there was a shift to the left in many Catholic families specifically in regards to racial issues (Greeley, 1976). “Vatican II council occurred just at the time when the youngest generation of Catholics marked the definitive end of the immigration era (Greeley, 1976, 59).” In addition, Catholics were “Americanized” and no longer as loyal to the Church in Rome. Greeley argues that the changes from Vatican II would have



naturally occurred here in America and in some areas these changes were practiced long before the final documents were released from Rome (Greely, 1976).

Some ultra conservative Catholics disagreed with the changes from Vatican II and documented their dissatisfaction with the Church for turning away from its traditional values in some conservative journals. They were concerned that allowing one change and redefining sinful acts would succumb to moral relativism where judging right from wrong becomes relative to the culture and personal beliefs rather than God-given rules. In their mind this would be the undoing of the Church, the opening of “Pandora’s box” that would expedite the decline of the Catholic Church. Greely points out that the changes that occurred didn’t lead to a decline in devotion to the Church but rather an increased expectation for change and a continued movement in the current direction of the Church (Greely, 1976). This forward momentum was obstructed and suspended at various times often as a result of conservative Catholic leaders attempting to take back control from the people and reinstitute pre-Vatican II theology.

### **Humanae Vitae-“Human Life”**

“Humanae Vitae” is such a pivotal document and statement of authority that followed this “renewal of the church” instituted by Vatican II Council. In 1967, Pope Paul VI released the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* stating the sinfulness of birth control and reiterating the conservative and archaic stance on sex and contraceptives. Why would this stance on sex and contraceptives be important to the study of Catholic education? This statement establishes how Catholic school teachers and administrators are permitted to educate young Catholics about their bodies, relationships with their future partners,

and their understanding of sex and family. In addition, this stance perpetuates traditional roles for men and women with husband as head and wife as submissive. While these roles did not hold true within the greater Catholic community those attending Catholic schools, more specifically at Our Lady of Guadalupe, maintained a strict and conservative understanding of marriage and family. Because of my experiences witnessing this position I explain why Pope Paul VI wrote “*Humanae Vitae*” and how it impacts Catholic families.

The Catholic Church over the past three centuries maintained a conservative view of sex and pushed the idea that it is for procreation only and that any use of birth control is “unnatural” and therefore sinful. Population increased exponentially and the “abstinence only” method of birth control was scrutinized by the medical field (D’Antonio, 1996). During the 19<sup>th</sup> century France began examining other forms of birth control and England followed suit pursuing alternative methods. In 1930 the Anglican Bishops agreed that contraceptives were not sinful, the Vatican opposed this position with a statement in “*Casti Connubii*” that “contraceptives were evil (D’Antonio, 1996, 48).” Pope John XXIII brought the question of contraceptives to the Papal Birth Control Commission when the invention of the birth control pill became readily available. These discussions took place publically and permitted laity to enter the discourse. After Pope John XXIII’s reign, a 1967 survey showed that Catholics were in favor of birth control pills and that the Church should change its position. However, Pope Paul VI ended these discussions and formally prohibited the use of artificial contraceptives with the release of

“*Humanae Vitae*” (D’Antonio, 1996). The Church’s position did not reflect that of the people but rather held the archaic position of conservative Church officials.

The purpose of formally prohibiting the use of birth control pills and restating the traditional position of the Church was to restore the faith in the institution as one that could control its people. This action actually weakened people’s faith in the Church and did not prevent couples from using birth control. Not only were more couples now using unapproved forms of birth control, thanks to Vatican II’s intellectual autonomy they did so with a clear conscience. Statistics illustrated that those Catholic couples using birth control pills were more likely to receive communion than those couples using the Church approved rhythm method (Greely, 1976). This reflects a more conservative view of communion held by some Catholics. Couples using the Church approved rhythm method often align their values with more conservative Catholic views; this adheres to extremely strict guidelines for when communion should and should not be received. The fact that the Council and the Encyclical occurred at the same time were counterproductive on both sides. It lessened the positive impact of the Council and pointed out the hypocrisy of Rome (Greely, 1976).

In response to “*Humanae Vitae*” the Catholic Theological Society of America released a report in hopes that it would help people have “an ever-deepening appreciation among all of God’s people for the beauty, power, and richness of the tremendous gift that is human sexuality.” This report was a collection of data that illustrated how people thought about human sexuality in an effort to exchange dialogue between the laity and the Magisterium. This report from 1977 was pulled three years later and was criticized for

exposing some of the significant gaps between the Vatican's ideas on sexuality and people living these experiences. With the removal of this report the dialogue was shut down, illustrating that the laity still did not have a place at the table to discuss matters that impacted them. The result was that the laity continued ignoring instructions from the Vatican and doing so with a clear conscience. (D'Antonio, 1996)

D'Antonio (1996) explains that Catholics were able to act in accordance with their conscience because they recognized that the Church's position was based on an understanding of Paul's interpretation of sexuality not Jesus. Paul places celibacy above marriage and sex. Paul writes that we need to prepare for the coming of Christ, believing this meant stripping oneself of all things worldly including sex. However if celibacy was not attainable, then sex within a marriage was deemed acceptable (D'Antonio, 1996). Moreover, a major theologian in Church history, St. Augustine, promoted the belief that sex was for the sole purpose of procreation and that otherwise it was sinful. The "natural" act of sin was to procreate and a "duty" of marriage. D'Antonio (1996) posits that St Augustine had experiences with "sexual exploits" before becoming a priest and therefore his views on sexuality stemmed from his own guilt. The documents "The Church in the Modern World" and the report from the Papal Birth Control Commission from 1967 expresses the importance of the sexual act between a husband and wife as more than just for procreation. These reports show

...explicit recognition to the personal and interpersonal values at the core of human sexuality. They called attention to the human quality of expressions of sexuality and how they contribute to the growth and development of the person. They reflect a keen sensitivity to the social and communal dimensions of human sexuality and marriage (Kosinik taken from D'Antonio, 1996, 48).

Regrettably, Pope Paul VI dismissed these findings and presented his stance in “*Humanae Vitae*” which states that sexual pleasure between a husband and wife is good as long as it comes with the understanding that they must openly accept the possibility of new life. Pope John Paul II also reiterated this statement and prohibited any form of birth control other than “natural family planning” (D’Antonio, 1996). What these celibate men continued to ignore was the negative spiral effect that natural family planning has on the pleasure aspect of sex. Because natural family planning comes with the “acceptance” that at anytime this form of birth control might not actually prevent unwanted pregnancy, then a couple who does not want children is left with only abstinence. Couples are left unable to partake in the pleasurable act of sex; or the act of sex is clouded with a looming fear of becoming pregnant and the couple is no longer experiencing the intimacy and bonding that strengthens a marriage (Greely, 1997). These Church leaders may claim that they believe the pleasurable act of sex is acceptable however, they appear to hold on to the idea that sex is sinful and dirty unless it is to fulfill the duty of procreation.

### **Women in the Church**

Issues of women in the church are massive and cause much dissent among Catholics. Pre-Vatican II women in the church were not visible but very involved with preparations such as ironing, cleaning, and preparing the altar for mass. Sister Theresa Kane in 1979 spoke with Pope John Paul II about the woman’s role in the Church. She didn’t find much success from her discussion with the Pope. However, when Archbishop Rembert Weakland spoke on behalf of women in 1987, the Church began to see movement. Weakland explained that women wanted to serve and be seen as equal to

their male counterparts. He also shared that the people no longer wanted a male dominated Church (D'Antonio, 1989). D'Antonio (1976) argues that women have a higher percentage than men of wanting to participate in decisions about church policy and they believe that the final decisions on issues such as women ordination, birth control, and remarriage should rest with the people and not Church officials (89-91).

After Vatican II women questioned how they fit into this renewed church. The Church didn't feel "renewed" to them as they still didn't have a voice or a real seat at the table. They were not represented at the Vatican II Council and they were still not allowed to serve in visible roles. They certainly were not considered equal to men. By the end of the Council there were only 12 laywomen and 10 religious who participated in the Council, and only then served as auditors (Henold, 2008). Surprisingly, The Code of Canon Law permitted women to accept leadership positions in the Church, yet few actually held these positions. It wasn't until 1988 that the US Bishop's released a statement that "sexism was a moral and social evil" (D'Antonio, 1989). To this day, while Catholic school girls are permitted to serve as choir members, altar servers, and readers they are not invited to accept "the call to priesthood" or as part of the "prayer for more vocations (priests)".

It is important to point out that deaconess was an acceptable position in the early church and these women performed baptisms and anointed the sick during the 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries. These appointments disappeared by the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and women have been fighting their way back into leadership positions ever since (D'Antonio, 1989). Women made a small step forward when the Church permitted them to direct the Diaconate

program, a program that trains Deacons. However, they are not allowed to participate in the very program they lead. Moreover, any hope for ordination has been denied by numerous popes including Pope John Paul II who prohibited even a discussion regarding women's ordination. Statements to and from the US bishops have been written but very few have been released (D'Antonio, 1989).

### **Post-Vatican II Catholic Education**

As mentioned in the introduction the amount of focus given to Catholic education during the Council was relatively small. In addition, the document that was produced at the Council on education encompassed all aspects and levels of education including adult catechism, youth groups, Sunday school (CCD), and Catholic schools from the elementary to university levels. This document was in the form of a Declaration and titled, "Gravissimum Educationis" (Latin for Declaration on Christian Education). As the focus of this dissertation is on elementary Catholic education I focus on the specific sections of the Declaration from Vatican II Council pertinent to my topic. In this Declaration Pope Paul VI shares a vision for Christian education and calls on the Church leaders to determine how they will put into action this vision. The United States Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) responded to this Declaration in *To Teach as Jesus Did* providing more detail regarding the implementation of the Pope's Declaration.

### **Gravissimum Educationis**

All men of every race, condition and age, since they enjoy the dignity of a human being, have an inalienable right to an education (5) that is in keeping with their ultimate goal, (6) their ability, their sex, and the culture and tradition of their country, and also in harmony with their fraternal association with other peoples in the fostering of true unity and peace on earth. For a true education aims at the

formation of the human person in the pursuit of his ultimate end and of the good of the societies of which, as man, he is a member, and in whose obligations, as an adult, he will share.-(Proclamation of the Pope-Gravissimum Educationis)

In this Declaration, the Pope calls on the religious leaders, specifically the priests, to make education a priority for children and to see to it that all are provided an appropriate education that will prepare them to be responsible citizens of their society (Gravissimum Educationis). He continues stating that as baptized Catholics we have a right to a Christian education and spiritual formation. The parent is the primary educator of their children and they must see to it that their children are obtaining this Christian education. The role of Catholic schools is condensed to a brief paragraph and a half which clarifies the importance of schools for the purpose of educating the youth of the Catholic Church. Schools are to provide an opportunity for intellectual growth, spiritual formation, developing moral values, sustaining cultural traditions, and preparations for the professional world. The vocation of education should include preparations and special consideration for the “mind and heart” of educators. Parents have the right to choose the school they deem appropriate for their children, and public subsidies should be distributed in such a way that parents are financially able to make this choice freely. The state should support children’s right to education, the school of their parents’ choice, and should maintain its subsidiaries in such a way that a monopoly of schools does not occur (Gravissimum Educationis). The Pope instructs the “faithful” to find “suitable methods of education” and ensure that teachers are adequately prepared to provide a “true” education.



So indeed the Catholic school, while it is open, as it must be, to the situation of the contemporary world, leads its students to promote efficaciously the good of the earthly city and also prepares them for service in the spread of the Kingdom of God, so that by leading an exemplary apostolic life they become, as it were, a saving leaven in the human community (Gravissimum Educationis).

The Church has the right to establish and maintain schools at every level. Educators should be well prepared in religious formation and academic content relevant to the area they will be teaching. Pope Paul VI states, “Let them work as partners with parents and together with them in every phase of education give due consideration to the difference of sex and the proper ends Divine Providence assigns to each sex in the family and in society (Gravissimum Educationis).” Parents have a duty to support Catholic schools by providing financial assistance and enrolling their children “wherever and whenever possible” (Gravissimum Educationis).

### ***To Teach as Jesus Did***

*To Teach as Jesus Did* is a message written by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in response to the Declaration “Gravissimum Educationis”. The declaration was more of commendation for Catholic education and a support for its continuation. The specifics of making Catholic education a sustainable and instrumental pillar of the Church was left to later writings of Church leaders. The US bishops came together to publish their message on education in 1972. While this document was not produced by Vatican II Council, it is an important aspect of Catholic education and was written as a result of Vatican II. The bishops devote the majority of their message to the general education of adults, higher education, and youth ministry. A small portion of *To Teach as Jesus Did* discusses Catholic schools and their need for change. The

commitment to Catholic schools is recognized as a “service to society” since they prepare children to be responsible members of society who embrace the expectation that all others are equal members of the same society and thus must be treated with love, respect, and kindness. However, if such “service” is understood as superior then it defeats the purpose. We began to see ourselves as “better than” the rest of society with an obligation to take care of our “lesser” societal members just as a good master takes care of his slaves (To Teach as Jesus Did). The bishops also explain that the decrease of Catholic schools in America is caused by a variety of issues “economical, sociological, demographic, and psychological” (To Teach as Jesus Did, 114 & 115). Therefore, the Church has a responsibility to provide “quality education for the poor and disadvantaged of our nations (To Teach as Jesus Did, 121).”

### **What Happened Next?**

Despite the support that Catholic schools obtained from the Pope and bishops, enrollment in Catholic schools after Vatican II declined rapidly. Why were families leaving Catholic schools and sending their children to public schools? Why were Catholic schools closing across America? Andrew Greely (1976) agrees with numerous Catholic historians, in his book *Catholic Schools in a Declining Church* that the significant decline in priests and nuns working in Catholic schools led to the rapid decline of enrollment in these schools. The financial stability of schools diminished as they attempted to replace low cost religious teachers with higher cost lay teachers. In addition, public schools were changing in terms of academic integrity and claiming to be more religiously neutral, allowing Catholic parents to see public schools as academically

superior and sensitive to their religious differences. Parents looked at the cost/benefit ratio of sending their children to Catholic schools and many didn't believe that the high cost was worth the benefit (Greely, 1976). With the decline in attendance and increase of higher paid lay teachers the cost of tuition increased and the availability of schools decreased. Despite these events Catholics still viewed Catholic education as important and believed in their existence. Parents were not as likely to send their own children there for various reasons (most often financial) but they wanted the choice and the opportunity to be available if they choose. In his report, Greely showed that 80% were in support of Catholic education and would provide financial support if asked by their local priests, indicating that there were untapped resources available to help support and sustain Catholic schools (1976).

Catholics were in hope of obtaining federal aid for their schools to help offset the rising costs of these institutions. Unfortunately, convincing political leaders to provide these funds was not an easy task and often fruitless. Even President John F. Kennedy, himself a Catholic, was against the use of federal funds for private religious institutions (Greely 1976). The only way around these restrictions was obtaining funds solely for direct services to students such as special needs and non-ideological supplies. Since Vatican II the need for "arming (Catholic children) against forces regarded as inimical to their faith (Koob and Shaw, taken from Greely, 1976, 284)" was no longer an issue and therefore Catholic schools had to remarket themselves as providing a better education than the public schools. In addition, the Church had to create an alternative method for

teaching the Catholic doctrine to children who were not attending Catholic school. Thus began the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) movement.

### **Replacing Catholic Schools with Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD)**

After Vatican II, diocese developed well-intentioned, though seriously misguided, programs to help form catechist; unfortunately, these efforts ushered in a period of religious illiteracy that converged with untold foolishness masquerading as catechesis, and these were not exclusively found in CCD programs but also in Catholic schools (Greely and Rossi, 1966, quoted in Caruso, 103)

Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) programs replaced religious education in many parishes as it was more financially feasible (Greely, 1976). Interestingly, survey results showed little difference in responses regarding questions about the direction of the Church as a result of Vatican II between those with no religious instruction and those who participated in CCD programs versus those who had attended Catholic schools who showed a significant difference in their responses regarding their level of religious commitment (Greely, 1976). In this regard CCD is viewed by some as a failure for not instilling a sense of Catholic identity and pride in Catholics. The other negative effect of CCD was the impact it had on the Catholic school teachers who were asked to also run CCD on Sundays. This expectation was considered a service to the parish and staff members were not compensated for the extra duties. In addition, CCD was often held in the schools' classrooms which were left messy or missing supplies for the school children. CCD students felt like they were visitors and didn't have a space of their own while teachers were frustrated that their classrooms were being left in chaos (Caruso, 2012). This caused a great deal of tension between Catholic schools and CCD. Then

there was the issue regarding the curriculum for teaching the Catholic faith as the *Baltimore Catechism* was replaced with a less scripted and dogmatic curricula.

### **The Removal of the *Baltimore Catechism***

“The church and their schools are criticized for replacing their icons with child-like banners, changing their sacred music to folk music, promoting a “self-help” style of preaching, and removing the Baltimore Catechism (Day 1990, quoted in Caruso, 2012, 103).” The *Baltimore Catechism* was the foundation of religious formation in the Catholic school before Vatican II. It was a series of 499 questions with very specific answers that children were to memorize as part of their spiritual formation. If you asked questions from the *Baltimore Catechism* to a graduate of a Catholic school from before Vatican II most likely they could regurgitate the answers.

Q: Why did God make you? A: God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in heaven.

Q: How shall we know the things which we are to believe? A: We shall know the things which we are to believe from the Catholic Church, through which God speaks to us.

These very specific questions and answers were the basis for Catholic education and how the Church was able to maintain a conformity of believers. There was no room for discussion or debate. These were the questions provided to the students and students memorized the answers. To be a “good” Catholic meant knowing and reciting the *Baltimore Catechism*. When Vatican II changed to a philosophy of Christian formation, supporters of the *Baltimore Catechism* were skeptical of how the children of the Catholic faith would form into “good” Catholics. Certainly there is no longer a formulaic rubric

for identifying a “good” Catholic. Those who feel comfortable with clear and defined rules and regulations long for the days of the *Baltimore Catechism*. However, those who view their faith and relationship with the Church through the lens of critique were left unsatisfied with the *Baltimore Catechism* and longed for something they could connect to on a spiritual and intellectual level. Caruso (2012) points out that despite these “silly seasons...and endless liturgical folderol” people continued attending week after week and financially supporting their church (104). Caruso explains this phenomenon as proof that God is still present in the Church and that these changes promoted a feeling of inclusion and hospitality for its members. While this shift away from the *Baltimore Catechism* made defining Catholic identity less rigid and absolute it also made it more difficult for youth to articulate what it means to be Catholic. This is illustrated in Greely’s survey. When Catholics were asked what it means to be a “good” Catholic, many expressed frustration with not having the language for explaining their positions and values.

Post Vatican II brought about a theology of “being nice” and moved away from the formal doctrine full of rules and regulations. Catholics are now taught to be nice to each other and not to worry about the evils of the world because there’s not much to be done about them. We no longer have a judgmental and vengeful God but a nice and loving God who forgives us no matter what our sins (D’Antonio, 1989). Catholics are not as informed about the writings and documents from the Pope and CCD: the new form of religious education is not highly regarded. Catholics generally lack the vocabulary to describe their faith and have little sense of Catholic identity which separates them from many mainstream religions. Their determination of right and wrong is no longer black

and white, but based on “the circumstances and the effects such actions have on others” (D’Antonio, 1989, 88). They weigh the cost versus the benefits of certain actions as the basis for deciding whether an action is right or wrong. A number of Catholic historians including D’Antonio (1989), Greeley (1976), and Caruso (2012) blame the institution of CCD and the decline of Catholic school enrollment for diluting Catholic identity.

### **Where Have All the Sisters Gone?**

The most visible and distinctive change that effected Catholic schools as a result of Vatican II Council was the mass exodus of women religious from the schools. Not only did nuns leave the teaching profession to explore other service opportunities, fewer young girls were choosing to enter the convent. After World War II there was an increase in population with the “Baby Boomer” generation and as a result the Catholic Church experienced significant growth in the number of parishes and schools in America (Caruso, 2012). Prior to Vatican II the neighborhoods were mostly homogeneous and the women religious shared the same ethnic identity as their parish and school community. Young girls found a commonality with the women religious and chose religious life. The culture of these schools was based on the culture of the convents where sisters were prepared for religious life. Their experience of tradition, culture, prayer, respect for authority, and traditional teachings impacted their schools. Sisters worked hard to pass these same beliefs and values to their students. The expectations were quantified and reported like this example taken from a report card, “I am polite, I obey, I know my prayers, I follow directions, I am careful of school things, I play nicely, I listen attentively (Caruso, 2012, 37).” When the neighborhoods became more diverse and girls

no longer observed a “likeness” in the nuns who served as their teachers, their desire to join the convent vanished. As schools reflected this new diversity it was more difficult for sisters to impart their beliefs and traditions on their students as these values seemed foreign rather than familiar.

Prior to Vatican II, women religious from overseas made substantial sacrifices to relocate to America and serve as Catholic school educators. For example one order from Ireland, the Sisters of St. Louis, came to the United States to open and manage Catholic schools. They took a significant pay cut and lost their pension to come to America, but believed they were called to serve through the education of young Catholics (Caruso, 2012). Another order, the Daughters of Charity, were responsible for opening and maintaining many Catholic schools Pre-Vatican II, including my school Our Lady of Guadalupe. These significant sacrifices in pay and benefits resulted in serious financial problems. These young sisters were given the responsibility to teach children without any prior academic training. They were provided a mentor and worked on their teaching certificate during summers and on Saturday mornings. Recognizing that this was not the most effective method of teaching that directly impacted the students’ learning, the sisters believed they should work on their teaching degrees during their spiritual formation before ever entering the classroom (Caruso, 2012).

Their living conditions were often poor and depended solely on the generosity of the pastor of the church. A contract was negotiated between the religious community and the pastor which gave the pastor power over the women religious. If the pastor was generous, then the nuns were well taken care of; if he was not, the nuns would sacrifice



such things as health care, benefits, and living conditions. Often the sisters, like those who founded Our Lady of Guadalupe, would live at the school in small dorm like rooms either above the classrooms or in the basement of the school building. The cafeteria would serve as their kitchen and if they were lucky, they would share a car provided by the pastor. While they took a vow of poverty, some of their sacrifices were extreme and unhealthy (Caruso, 2012). The expectations of many pastors for the women religious of their parish and school were unreasonable and some could argue shameful.

Unfortunately, as I observed at Our Lady of Guadalupe the relationships that were and are established between priests and women religious reflect the hierarchy of the Church and support the power of the priest. Religious communities were asked to renew their constitutions based on Church doctrine and in preparation for the Code of Canon Law in 1983. This led them to look beyond the traditional areas of education and some chose to serve the poor as social workers, causing a decline in the number of sisters in schools.

They no longer felt compelled to live in unhealthy conditions dictated by their pastor and felt underappreciated when they lost the respect and support of their school families.

Parents didn't want their children reprimanded by sisters thus undermining their authority. This gave nuns yet another reason to leave the profession changing the face of Catholic schools (Caruso, 2012). As women religious left schools the laity took over these positions as school teachers and administrators.

Since finances were unstable, those lay teachers who could afford to work in Catholic schools were limited to individuals who met specific financial criteria. The lay women who taught could not be the sole income for their families. Many married women

relied and still rely on their spouses' income (Caruso, 2012). Caruso (2012) provides criteria for teachers who could afford to teach in Catholic schools which reflects the teachers who worked at Our Lady of Guadalupe.

- Single-Lived with parent
- Divorced-Received child support
- Retired-Second income
- Single man-Second Career
- Married-Second Income

The lay staff had little input and the sisters made most decisions about the school until the lay became the primary educators in the school (Caruso, 2012). Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education issued "Lay Catholics in Schools: Witness to Faith" in 1982 stating that laypeople are important to Catholic education and have a place in the schools (Caruso, 2012, 94). I don't believe this statement was made to clarify the laity's place or importance in Catholic education but rather to encourage laity to tolerate these vacancies in order to avoid the closure of schools. Since women religious were leaving Catholic schools in mass quantities the future of these schools were in the hands of the laity. The Church recognized that the laity needed to feel responsible for their children's schooling and willing to work for little monetary compensation. Therefore, the Church stated "laypeople are important to Catholic education..."

### **Vatican II Unravels**

Pope John Paul I held office for only a month and therefore made no notable changes to the Church. Pope John Paul II whose papacy ran from 1978-2005, made significant strides re-establishing the authority of the Pope by appointing conservative

supporters of the Papacy to positions as Cardinals (D'Anotio, 1989). A noticeably conservative Pope, he was not an advocate of women's ordination nor did he support the use of birth control. However, he worked diligently establishing peace between various religious groups including Jews, Muslims, and Christians. He reintroduced the role of confession and diminished the use of general absolutions. Pope Benedict XVI continued this effort by finalizing his Roman Missal revisions. Those attempting to bring back the ways of pre-Vatican II believed that the original structure of the Church was effective and efficient and that Vatican II was a mistake despite that fact that most American Catholics approved these changes and were happy with this renewed Church (D'Antonio, 1989).

### **The Pendulum Swings Again**

"The People of God" was intended to mean "all" people, laity and clergy alike are all the people of God. This opened doors for the laypeople of the Church to participate in many aspects of parish life. "We" are the church; it no longer belongs to priests and nuns (D'Antonio, 1996). This is why the word "we" in the opening of the Creed is so powerful and meaningful. "**We** believe in one God..." unites us as the Church. The missal revisions implemented by Pope Benedict reverts back to "**I** believe in one God" dividing us into individuals and taking away the importance of community as we proclaim together as the Church.

"John Paul II and Benedict XVI have cleaned up a lot of the mess, but a lot more remains, as the Synod deliberations well show (Royal)." In his article, "Vatican II: The Yes and the No," conservative Vatican journalist Robert Royal praises both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI for bringing the Church back to its more conservative

structure and theology. Royal, like many conservative Catholics view the changes of Vatican II as overdone or gone too far and needs to be “cleaned up.” Royal quotes Pope Benedict’s explanation of the last 50 years since the Council,

The Council was a time of grace in which the Holy Spirit taught us that the Church, in her journey in history, must always speak to contemporary man, but this can only happen through the strength of those who are profoundly rooted in God, who allow themselves to be guided by Him and live their faith with purity; it does not happen with those who adapt themselves to the passing moment, those who choose the most comfortable way. (Royal)

With his conservative message to the Catholic community and issuing of the new missal which returns to the pre-Vatican II text, Pope Benedict illustrates his disapproval of the direction of the Church and his intention of restoring the church to pre-Vatican II times. He is viewing the progressive Catholics eager to continue the renewal that Vatican II initiated as not living “their faith with purity (Royal)” and the attempts to challenge the patriarchal structure is choosing the “most comfortable way” (Royal). This is the culture, environment, and overall feeling of the people at Our Lady of Guadalupe that made critical democracy most challenging. The leaders of the Church continue to oppress her people and the people continue to believe in the authority of the Church and are fearful of challenging that authority. Providing a space for critique and democracy seems daunting and at times hopeless. This is what leads me to share my story of living out this vision for a critical democracy within the confines of this patriarchal and oppressive environment at Our Lady of Guadalupe.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter is an examination of the Vatican II Council and how this significant event impacted American Catholics and Catholic schools. Beginning with the onset of the Council and leaders who were initiating change within the Church to the arguments from current conservative Catholics yearning for a return to pre-Vatican II ideology this journey has been treacherous and transformational. The democratic framework that Pope John XXIII envisioned for the Council and for the Catholic Church is what motivated me to analyze my own experience as an administrator at a conservative Catholic elementary school through the lens of critical democracy. As illustrated in this chapter there have been and still are numerous forces within the Catholic Church working against the democratic spirit of Vatican II making my research all the more relevant and important. As Michael Lerner talks about taking God back from the right, I felt like taking Catholicism back from the right. In the next chapter I share my experiences as a proponent of Vatican II, working in a school where these ideals are considered radical and unchristian.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **THE JOURNEY OF A CATHOLIC SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY**

The introductory chapter of this dissertation describes the juxtaposition of critical democracy and Catholicism at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Elementary School during my journey there as an administrator. The next two chapters provide insight into the history of Catholic education and the ramifications of Vatican II Council on Catholic schools. These three chapters enable the reader to better understand the purpose for writing this autoethnography about my journey at a conservative Catholic school in West Texas. In a later appendix, I further explain the methodology used for this study and share the benefits of using autoethnography. Written effectively, an autoethnography allows the reader to share the author's journey and make relevant connections about the culture of the greater community.

In order for the reader to make personal connections to my story and analysis he/she must first understand the setting and the history and culture of my school and city. To honor the privacy of the school, city, and families I use fictitious names throughout my narrative. To help describe these significant people and places I use names that have significant meaning and relevance to my story. I called the city "Jude" after St. Jude, patron saint of hopeless causes, to reflect the many times I felt such despair. In times of despair and darkness Catholics believe St. Jude will intercede on our behalf and bring comfort and solace to those in need. I refer to the elementary school as Our Lady of

Guadalupe since the Mexican culture is so prevalent at my school. I refer to the pastor of the school as Father Abe, because Father “Abraham” was the first of many patriarchs in the church. The Biblical Abraham represents obedience to authority reflected in the story where he almost sacrifices his son as God instructed. My home church is named after one of my favorite saints, St. Francis, who dedicated his life to serving the poor.

To paint a picture of Jude, Texas and Our Lady of Guadalupe Elementary I provide background regarding the socio-economic position of the school’s families as well as a brief history of the city and school. Jude, Texas is an historically blue-collar town located less than 30 miles from Ewing, its white-collar counterpart. When we arrived in Jude we were told the “owners” live in Ewing and the “workers” live in Jude, and that I should avoid living in Jude. I chose Jude. Another colleague shared the phrase commonly used to describe raising children in these two cities: “You raise ‘em in Ewing and you raise hell in Jude.” This was supposed to be commentary on the demographic disparity between the two cities as the majority of people living in Ewing are white business owners and those living in Jude are mostly Latinos who work for the business owners. Census data indicates that in 2000, 29% of the population in Ewing identified as Latino and in 2010 there was a slight increase to 30%. Whereas in Jude, 50% of the population in 2010 was Latino and many of these individuals worked for oil companies.

Before I arrived the economy in Jude struggled as oil companies lost business and downsized its numbers of employees. The economy greatly impacted Our Lady of Guadalupe; student numbers dropped consistently each year as families lost jobs and/or relocated. Interestingly, school teachers and staff continued working for the same

minimal salary for a number of years. Then a year after I began working at Our Lady of Guadalupe the city's economy began to bounce back. During my last three years, Jude experienced an economic boom when oil companies made tremendous amounts of money that enabled them to employ more workers at a higher wage. Indeed, Jude reached an all-time high. The census data shows a population increase of over 40,000 people and projections predict an increase of another 100,000. While the success of these companies brought families and money to the area, other companies struggled to accommodate the boom. Families struggled to find housing and development companies couldn't build houses fast enough. Those who were not working in oil struggled to find affordable housing as the price of rent and purchasing was at an all-time high. My husband, a college professor, and myself, a school administrator, struggled each month to pay our rent for a small two bedroom apartment as it continued increasing every year. When our family grew with the birth of our daughter we attempted purchasing a house. Unfortunately, the price for a modest three-bedroom house were beyond our budget and finding a rental property for less than our current price was fruitless. Non-oil companies (restaurants, construction, small businesses, schools etc.) found it difficult to employ and maintain workers; they couldn't compete with the oil companies' wages. Hence, families of Our Lady of Guadalupe who were not benefiting from the oil boom struggled to afford tuition.

Our Lady of Guadalupe opened its doors in 1960, to an initial enrollment of 108 students assigned to grades Kindergarten through third. The school was staffed by volunteers until the fall of 1962 when a group of Franciscan Sisters came to serve as



principal and teachers; volunteers continued running the Kindergarten until 1979. Our Lady of Guadalupe employed a variety of religious communities over the years who served as teachers and administrators until 1998. As reflected in chapter 3, in the aftermath of Vatican II Council the laity at Our Lady of Guadalupe grew in number; laity served as teachers and administrators as the number of nuns diminished exponentially. While I was at Our Lady of Guadalupe we employed only one nun who served as director of religious education to our 1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade students.

The demographics at Our Lady of Guadalupe reflect a largely Hispanic<sup>3</sup> population, specifically Mexican descent. The year before I left Our Lady of Guadalupe (2013) the student and staff population was 81% Hispanic and 53% Hispanic respectively. The staff did not reflect the demographic makeup of the students due in large measure to Father Abe's efforts to "whiten" the school. The year Father Abe arrived the school's student and staff population were 71% Hispanic and 65% Hispanic respectively. As the school's Hispanic student population increased the Hispanic staff population decreased. During the hiring process, I would screen the candidates before Father Abe would hold the final interview. Ultimately he decided whether he wanted to

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<sup>3</sup> The Hispanic and Latino community at Our Lady of Guadalupe refer to themselves primarily as Hispanic and Mexican using the two terms interchangeably. Rarely was the term Latino used while living in West Texas. The Larger Catholic community of West Texas also refer to this ethnic group as Hispanic in informal dialogue as well as formal writings such as public memos to and from the Bishop of the Diocese. Recognizing that Hispanic and Latino have different meanings it is important to note that in some cases Latino would more appropriately describe members of this community as many are decedents from Latin America living in the United States. The census data uses the term Latino which I include in description of the demographics of Jude, Texas. However, to reflect the culture of this community I use the terms Hispanic and Mexican when describing the culture of my school community.

hire the applicant. When I brought him the resume of a potential candidate he would make disparaging remarks if the person's name sounded Hispanic. He would ask me if the candidate was Hispanic or white; he preferred to hire white teachers. He questioned the ability of my secretary who he assumed was Mexican because her last name was a common Hispanic name. When I explained that she was actually Canadian who married a man of Mexican descent Father Abe's first comment was "why {would she marry a Mexican}<sup>4</sup>?" and in the very next breath told me, "You are fortunate {to have a white secretary}." Being a privileged, white, educated, woman (non-Hispanic), I think Father Abe assumed that I agreed with his assessment of the Hispanic community. I discuss Father Abe's discriminatory practices and my frustrations with him during my reflection and analysis section.

The school practiced many of the Mexican Catholic traditions such as "Dia de los Muertos," (Day of the Dead) where school children and staff display pictures of their deceased loved ones at a decorated exhibit in the front entry of the school. Traditionally, the church community celebrated this nine day festival prior to Christmas called Las Posadas (The lodging). Las Posadas is a tradition where families process to lively music from house to house asking for a "room at the inn." This is a reenactment of the Holy Family as they travel to Bethlehem in search of a room where Mary ultimately gives birth to Jesus. The activity ends with a celebration at a family's home where everyone enjoys food and game, where children take turns hitting the star shaped piñata. Mariachi bands

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<sup>4</sup> {Note}: adding these words helps the reader understand the unspoken meaning behind Father Abe's comments.

frequented our celebrations; decorations often included bright vibrant colors and traditional Mexican symbols; dancing was a must; and the food always included tamales handmade by someone's abuela (grandma) or tia (aunt), homemade salsa, and tortillas. The Hispanic families were proud of their Mexican heritage and shared their love of music, food, language, family, and faith with the school and church families. They truly embraced me and took delight in sharing their culture. They giggled watching me eat a tamale for the first time or queso dip that was ridiculously spicy. I was praised for my pronunciation of Hispanic names and singing of Spanish music. They took delight in teaching me their language and answering my questions about their practices. One day shortly before I left Our Lady my secretary, Mary who had become a close friend and confidant, looked at a picture of my future staff in Florida and immediately noticed the lack of diversity. She exclaimed, "Bethany they're all white! What are you going to do without your Mexicans?" I was theirs and they were mine.

In addition to their Mexican identity the community at Our Lady of Guadalupe was very proud of their Catholic identity. The Catholic identity shared by many members of the school community reflected an ultra-conservative, pre-Vatican II ideology. My Catholic identity was shaped by my parents and experiences at St. Francis, where post-Vatican II values were fully embraced and practiced. While working as an administrator for five years at Our Lady of Guadalupe I kept a journal where I reflected on my experiences in this role and the challenges I faced as a liberal, middle-class, white woman leading a school where patriarchy and conservative traditions were the norm.

## Why Critical Democracy?

*It was “Graduation” Sunday and all of the Catholic churches in Jude were recognizing students who graduated from their local high schools. Holy Family Church decided to also recognize its graduating 6<sup>th</sup> grade students from Our Lady of Guadalupe, so I decided to attend and show my support. The driving message from the priest that morning was to hold on to their “beliefs” (the ones the Church has been indoctrinating them with for these many years) no matter what questions they may have in the future. He criticized families and young people for leaving the church to find other places of worship where the message was “more to their liking and lifestyle.” He described these individuals as people who were looking for a place where their “sinful beliefs” were accepted. He then explained to our children that they shouldn’t question the teachings of the Church and they would find greater rewards in life for sticking to these important moral values. (Author’s Journal, May 2013)*

This is why critical democracy is crucial to the growth of our future generation.

We need to give children the tools to hear statements such as the one from this Graduation Sunday and ask themselves “Hmm is this a problem?” They don’t need to maintain inherited convictions provided for them in a neat package with a pretty bow on top. No! Our children need to challenge these convictions and decide if and how these convictions connect their greater responsibility to themselves and others. I believe it is through a critical examination of their beliefs that their morals and values will actually be strengthened and challenged because they have the freedom to recognize the ambiguities of this world. I was saddened when I heard the priest’s message in which he demonized critical thinking. In my experience, when children and adults accept what they are told without understanding then those beliefs often have little value in their lives. I observed my teachers telling children which hand to use to bless themselves; how to bow to the altar or Eucharistic host; to be reverent and quiet in the church; which prayer goes with

which bead during the rosary. Sadly, these instructions were without much explanation about the importance of these practices and devoid of any discussion about if these practices were even relevant. Later I listened to their disappointment and disgust with the high school and college age Catholics who were no longer following the rules they were taught as a young child. If these children had been given explanations as to why we have certain traditions or were given the opportunity to question the validity of these traditions, then perhaps many would behave differently as young adult Catholics. So much time has been spent on rules and regulations that our children are spoon fed their religion in an oppressive environment that stifles spiritual growth and stunts critical thinking.

The Vatican II Council “urged the establishment of agencies by which the laity can express their opinion of things which concern the good of the Church” (140 taken from the Constitution of the Church, 37). When I began writing about my journey in a private Catholic school I was a bit nervous in sharing my critical thoughts about its leaders, policies, and organizational structure. I emailed a newly graduated doctoral student who wrote her dissertation about Catholic schools in an honest critique of the Church. She shared with me the above quote as a reminder that we as lay women have the right to express our opinion about issues regarding the Church. The actual process of writing my reflections stirred up a great deal of emotions and provided me with a therapeutic release from the oppression I felt during my time at Our Lady of Guadalupe. I believe that through this journey I was strengthened, stretched, and challenged. Now I am a better educational leader, wife, mother, friend, and Catholic. This journal exposes the times I felt beaten down and fearful to defend the oppressed; moments I felt strong,

and moments I felt empowered to challenge authority. I reveal private exchanges with others regarding progressive ideas, figures who changed my life for the better, and those who challenged me to be a better person. I share moments of despair and moments of triumph. I describe my relationships with people who confused me, consoled me, challenged me, disgusted me, surprised me, and supported me. This journal is a glimpse into my life, as I attempted to navigate through unfamiliar and uncomfortable terrain, all the while attempting my own goal of providing a critical democracy for my school family at Our Lady of Guadalupe in Jude, Texas.

As I reflect on my journey a number of themes emerge based on information I shared and the silences I kept. I tried to be honest and open with my experiences over these five years; what I didn't share is also interesting. I've organized these stories, reflections, and analyses into major themes. The overarching theme that connects all of these stories is critical democracy. One of the most significant relationships that I established was with the pastor of the school, Father Abe. As I read through my journals more than half of them directly or indirectly related to him. He played such a pivotal role in my life both professional and personally during my time at Our Lady of Guadalupe that I devote an entire section specifically to him. This relationship between pastor and principal sets the stage for how the school ran. I analyze all themes through the lens of critical democracy: the obstacles that get in the way of critical democracy; how this community negotiates this ideology; and the efforts to establish a critical democracy at Our Lady of Guadalupe. The themes are as follows:

- Hierarchical Organizational Structures-Commission, School Board, Priest;

- Pastor-Principal Relationship-Father Knows Best?;
- Identity-Gender and Sexuality-Where do we all fit in?;
- Curriculum-Staff and Student;
- Discipline-Confessions of a Catholic; and
- Critical Democracy in Action-Service Learning.

### **Theme 1: Hierarchical Organizational Structures**

“The laity likewise share in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own share in the mission of the whole people of God in the Church and in the world (To Teach as Jesus Did, 2).” It is important to understand the organizational structure of the Catholic Church and how that structure impacts Catholic Schools. After Vatican II the Church invited the laity to take an active role in their faith and that “American Catholics should continue to articulate and implement their commitment to the educational ministry in ways suited to their times and circumstances (To Teach as Jesus Did, 4).”

One of the ways we are able to enact this commitment to education is to participate in the structure and organization of Catholic schools. The organizational structures designed to develop, sustain, and support Catholic schools should be an example of critical democracy. Catholic schools could be a way to build community and invite families to participate actively in their education. However, even with the emphasis on laity provided by the documents from Vatican II Council, the Church finds ways to maintain a patriarchal structure in Catholic schools. It is no secret that the Catholic Church is a patriarchal structure. From the pope to the priests, to the laity, the

Roman Catholic Church has a long held tradition of male leaders who control the direction of the whole Church. Because the structure of the Church is so strongly patriarchal it's understandable that church related organizations reflect a similar structure at the parish level. This translates to numerous committees whose role is to "guide" the pastor when making decisions involving church matters. There are finance councils, liturgy committees, Diocesan committees, music liturgy committees, and youth ministry committees to name a few. For Catholic schools there is a Diocesan Board of Commissioners; and at the local level there is a School Board expected to guide and support policy matters related to Catholic schools. In my experience these committees, boards, and councils present mere façades of democracy while actually maintaining patriarchy. Members of said committees who recognize the façade either become complacent, hold on to the belief that eventually their voice will be heard, or give up and leave. I think the level of investment the member has in the organization predicts whether they stick it out or leave. I remember my own dad sitting on the finance committee of our home parish. Being a CPA he hoped his expertise could be utilized for the benefit of the parish. However, our pastor, albeit was wonderfully pastoral, was abysmal at managing the church finances. Unfortunately, he didn't heed the advice of his finance council and continued poorly managing the church's budget. In this particular situation, my dad was volunteering his time, and realized his services were not being utilized and so resigned his position on the council.

My own experience with Our Lady of Guadalupe's school board and the Diocesan Commission was a bit different. Members on the school board whose children attended



the school had a personal investment and would carry out their time on the board. Some worked to make their voices heard, some complacently agreed to everything the pastor asked, and others tried to push their own personal agendas. The purpose of sharing these stories is to illustrate the role these organizations had in the overall structure of the Church. Catholic schools are required to have boards and Diocesan commissions, but they are not required to run democratically. That is up to the priest who oversees the school and the Bishop who oversees the Diocese. I next share my experiences, first with the Commission as it is led by the Bishop, and then the Board which is led by the pastor.

### **Commissioner Meetings**

The Diocesan commission is made up of the Bishop, the Superintendent, each schools' pastor, principal, assistant principal, and three lay representatives from each school. All lay representatives were supposed to have some sort of investment in the school or Catholic education in general as their responsibility was to make recommendations regarding school policy and also represent the greater Catholic community. There were three meetings held each year on a Saturday and I attended most of them. As with any volunteer organization it was difficult to gather all members on the same day and there were times we did not obtain a quorum. During first year I was never really sure who was on the commission, since different representatives appeared at different meetings. Father Abe rarely attended these meetings and said they were a waste of his time; he expected me to attend though. Prior to these commissioners' meetings the principals always met with the superintendent for a Principal's Meeting, and once a year we also held board training for school board members, for which I was expected to

participate. Here I include memories from a number of meetings over the years to help summarize the purpose, process, as well as my feelings at these meetings. All of this demonstrates the hierarchal structure of the Church and school and its impact on the laity.

*My first commissioners meeting was at St. Helen's Catholic School in the next town which was one the three Catholic schools in the Diocese. I wasn't sure what to expect other than the Bishop "might" be there. My principal, Jackie and the other two area principals kept talking about the Bishop as though he were merely a figure head who at times would grace them with his presence and usually on his schedule. They weren't sure if he would show up but wanted to be prepared. We were in the school library all sitting around large wooden tables in the shape of a large rectangle. The community coffee pot was percolating next to the donuts, orange juice, breakfast burritos (something I came to love), and diet coke (which was a must for our superintendent Sister Anne). We went ahead and began the meeting without the Bishop, knowing he might arrive at any time. And he did. The Bishop was about 30 minutes late and when he arrived, the meeting came to an abrupt halt as everyone stood up to greet the Bishop. He was a kind and gentle man. He made a point to welcome me to the community as the new assistant principal. Once the Bishop had his coffee in hand and joined us all at the table, we skipped to his portion on the agenda: "Bishop's remarks."*

I don't remember the specifics about his remarks that day but they involved his "pro-life" (aka anti-abortion) agenda. He regularly sponsored the public rosary (where people gathered and prayed the rosary together) in front of the local Planned Parenthood. When it closed down, he took it as a personal victory. The benevolent patriarch that he is, he went on to say that we needed to now take care of the women who no longer could receive some of the "valuable" services that Planned Parenthood provided. While I don't agree with the closure of the clinic I fully accept that it is our responsibility to provide quality health care to these women.

The Bishop and the Superintendent did NOT get along and there were numerous meetings wherein tensions rose. At one my last meetings the Bishop got angry at one

unusually vocal member (new to the commission) and stormed out. It was fascinating to observe the dialogue or lack thereof that occurred between the bishop and other commissioners. I remember the meeting shortly before President Obama was elected for his second term and “Obamacare” was on everyone’s radar. Bishop decided that he needed to share his position with the Commission during one of our meetings. Here was a perfect example of the power of his position.

*During the Bishop’s remarks he went on a rant about the problems with Obamacare because it provided abortions to women. He spoke with much authority saying that health care is important and should be provided to all, but we can’t sit idly by and allow this to happen. I looked around the room and waited for someone to correct the Bishop. This wasn’t about being for or against abortion, this was a matter of misinformation. No one questioned him. My mouth stayed shut. I didn’t challenge. I sat there in silence and watched most of the people in the room nodding in agreement with the Bishop. (Author’s Journal, 2011)*

Keep in mind that the commission was supposed to discuss the progress of our schools, policies that relate to schools, and oversee any major projects conducted by the schools. It fascinated me how much time was spent pushing Bishop’s political agenda. The superintendent, Sister Anne wanted to stay focused on school matters. She was a rather progressive nun and disagreed with the Bishop’s views on many issues, but never offered her opinions on matters other than education and school policy. On the rare occasions when the superintendent offered a position that the Bishop didn’t like he would either avoid the issue by reading the newspaper or argue his point until he had the last word.

*We were discussing the four areas on which schools were to focus their attention: Catholic Identity; Children with Special Needs; Hispanic Retention; and Finances. Bishop began lamenting how schools needed to serve special needs children better by offering additional financial assistance to low income families. The superintendent explained that low-socioeconomic families are certainly important, but those are not the “special needs” children that we are discussing. She then began explaining that special needs children are children with learning disabilities and physical disabilities. She further explained what it would take for small schools such as ours to be able to provide quality education and meet their needs. Bishop cut her off and basically said she was wrong and that we needed to focus on the needs of low income families. He refused to accept that he didn’t understand the educational lingo being used and didn’t want to hear the explanation. He refused to allow any of the school educators, our superintendent or any of the three principals, to offer their expertise. He alone was the expert. He had to be right and have the last word. (Author’s Journal, March 2010)*

### **Building a Catholic High School**

The issue of building a Catholic high school was the topic of discussion for the five years that I was there, and I believe it still is a source of contention. Father Abe had the ear of the Bishop (according to Father Abe) and shared with me that the Bishop was not in favor of building the high school. For what reasons? I’m not sure. From the first meeting, the superintendent along with a few of the commissioners brought up the idea of building a Catholic high school between Jude and Ewing so that two of the elementary schools could feed into this high school. Bishop created obstacles all along the way to impede the progress rather than saying, “No, I don’t want to pursue.” I guess he didn’t want to be the one to say “no” and hoped the vision would just go away. On the demand of the Bishop an expensive and professional feasibility study was conducted, people sought donations and even received a substantial donation of land. They worked tirelessly to provide the Bishop with the required documentation for building a high school. Despite these efforts the Bishop obstructed their progress by claiming he didn’t receive

certain documents that he had requested. He changed the order in which he wanted the process to be completed. He also failed to show up for meetings where he would be expected to make a final decision. Then in the fourth year he was in line to retire, and by the beginning of the fifth year stated that the next Bishop could decide. The proposal was once again tabled until after he retired. Rarely did these meetings really amount to anything. Father Abe was accurate; they really were a waste of time. These meetings perpetuated the myth that there was some sort of democracy in place, that the “people” were running the schools. In actuality, these meetings were merely a façade for the priests and bishops to hide behind as they made all the decisions for the church and school. Why was I there? I’m still not sure. I read my principal’s report about the events of the school and highlighted the aspects I thought important. I didn’t make a single decision, nor was I ever asked for my opinion or guidance. That’s not to say I didn’t offer it once in a while, but honestly I knew it wouldn’t make a difference and would only prolong the meetings when really all I wanted was to go home and spend time with my husband and daughter.

### **Board Meetings**

“The laity should accustom themselves to working in the parish in union with their priests, bringing to the Church community their own and the world's problems ...they should examine and resolve (these problems) by deliberating in common (Pope Paul).” On paper the school board is designed to provide support and guidance to the school’s administrators and pastors as they strive to create a quality academic institution deeply rooted in Catholic identity. School board meetings should be opportunities for the

lay members to examine and resolve concerns relevant to Catholic school.

Unfortunately, pastors have a difficult time letting go of their control and allowing the laity to have decision-making power. In my experience Father Abe held tightly to his perceived right given to him by Rome to mandate the cooperation of the people. “The laity function under the higher direction of the hierarchy itself, and the latter can sanction this cooperation by an explicit mandate (Pope Paul VI).” At Our Lady of Guadalupe our school board was comprised of mostly parents who met once a month to discuss policy; what the school should or shouldn’t do; and make judgements and proclamations about children, education, staff, parents, and administration. The board had nine voting members and three to four non-voting members: the pastor (ultimate authority to accept or reject board recommendation); the Home and School representative and the administrators. The first board that I worked with consisted of the board president and vice president who were current parents, a retired public school principal, a past parent who served as the secretary and had a reputation for being vocal and opinionated, and five other quiet and accommodating parents. According to its by-laws, boards are purely advisory and have no authority to make decisions. When they vote on matters, they are recommending their position to the pastor who then chooses to accept or reject. In practice, this structure gives the board a false sense of authority; the pastor always drives the agenda. He created committees to study any and all decisions that needed to be made. This would have been good if the committees held sway over Father’s decisions, but unfortunately Father Abe already made his decision. He merely wanted to check off that he “sought council”. During one of my first board meetings I quickly learned about some

of the perceptions of Father and a few of the board members. I watched how he would choose bizarre and irrelevant topics in order to prove his power over the board and see which members were willing to offer an alternate point of view, who was malleable, and who aligned with him.

*This particular board meeting during the principal's monthly report Jackie, the principal, provided a breakdown of the schools' student population such as grade levels, gender, catholic and non-Catholic, and race/ethnicity. One of the categories for the racial breakdown was "multi-racial". For some reason Father Abe took this opportunity to debate whether "multi-racial" was an appropriate term to use. He argued that a child only had two parents and therefore could only be composed of two races. He said we should use the term "bi-racial" and told Jackie to change it. No questions asked; "just change it". I was still in my first year, first semester, so I sat quietly, my heart pounding, and just listened. This statement opened the floor for some of the other board members to speak up in affirmation. I was in shock. One by one a few of the board members added their "that's right!" and "yea". I was appalled at the direction this conversation had headed. The "vocal and opinionated secretary" spoke up and stated, "I've got all sorts of descendants in me (German, Irish, etc) but I pick white; don't these people have to choose?" Then she went so far as to compare our children to the various pedigrees of horses that she owns talking about the amount of money she pays for thoroughbreds versus crossbreeds. I felt like I had transcended into another dimension, talking about Muggles and Mudbloods or Nazis and Jews. Her statement motivated Father to continue and he reiterated his initial demand to Jackie and said to change the term and make them pick. She said she would change it, but cautiously and carefully explained that all of these category terms were based on a template provided by our accrediting body, the Texas Catholic Conference Education Association. He said, "No matter, it's not right. Change it." I couldn't stand it. I leaned towards Father Abe and quietly mentioned, almost as an aside, that most other schools and districts have adopted the term multi-racial and I had seen it in Florida and North Carolina. That was it. That seemed to appease him and he let it go. (Author's Journal, September 2009)*

Now I realize that there is so much wrong with this exchange on so many levels. When I got home and vented to my husband I honestly didn't know where to begin. So much angered me. I was angry at Father Abe for his abuse of positional authority to

bully the members of the board (some of whom were in fact multi-racial). I was upset that more members of the board didn't speak up and challenge him. Some of them had been part of the school and served on the board for years. Did they not recognize the problem? Were they too afraid of the consequences in this life or the next? I was disgusted by the woman who compared our children to horses. I was disappointed in my principal for not having more confidence in herself to speak up. Why did Father listen to me and not Jackie? Was it because I was young, white and held one more degree than my experienced Hispanic principal who Father Abe thought was old? On a deeper level, I wondered why it was so important to spend this much time categorizing children in the first place. So much about that 20 minute diatribe angered me. It was but a snapshot of future meetings.

Early on Jackie had asked me to keep silent at these meetings. She didn't want me to ask questions or make comments, she was worried that it might create more tension for her. She worried that anything either one of us said could get twisted or backfire. She was suspicious of the board and worried about being seen as incapable of her job or unwilling to cooperate. Unfortunately her silence actually made her appear indecisive and lacking the knowledge to succeed at her job. Board members would discuss situations about the school and when the principal kept her thoughts and experiences to herself the board took that as a sign that she needed help and would make suggestions that were usually ideas that she had already attempted. Often she would be upset that the board was telling her what to do.



*One board meeting the discussion of people who were behind on their tuition payment came up. Instead of Jackie sharing the various attempts to collect this debt, she sat quietly and let the board speculate about why the school couldn't make these families pay. I was aware of different avenues Jackie took and the numerous phone calls, meetings, and formal letters that she used. Sadly Jackie's silence was taken as a cry for help. Of course Father created a committee to look at our policy and come up with a plan for collecting this debt. We already had a policy and a plan we just needed to follow the policy and enact the plan. A number of board members were thrilled to be on the committee and adamant about the inexcusable behavior of "those" parents for missing their payments. "How can they be late?" they would ask. I wanted to say, "I don't know? Why don't you share with the rest of us the reason for **YOUR** late payment?" What they neglected to share with Father and the rest of the board was that each one of them had made a late payment at some point in the last year. In fact two of the board members currently owed money to the school. Yet their solution was that if parents didn't pay, their children wouldn't be allowed to attend. Really? This is what they wanted us to do? What would happen if I said to that board member, "Sorry your child needs to stay home"? The principal and I knew these families' stories: mothers who were caring for a dying family member; fathers who lost their job; family members who had passed. We were working with these families who were trying to pay off their debt a little at a time. Jackie and I believed these stories were private and not something that should be shared with the board as some of whom were parents at the school. They couldn't understand why we wouldn't share their stories or names. Even Father questioned this. Jackie explained that financial information is private and shouldn't be shared with other parents. While their stories and names didn't need to be shared, our efforts to follow policy and collect debt should have been shared. This is where I think Jackie made a mistake in her silence. (Author's journal, March 2010)*

I learned so much from observing the interactions between Jackie, Father and the other board members. Yes, this board could be an opportunity for the laity to participate in a critical examination of the school and their faith. However, I learned that the only opinions worthy of acknowledgement were those that supported Father's agenda. I discovered that if I could strategically position people on the board who earned Father's respect and voice my agenda to him, then I could begin moving the school in a different direction. Year after year new members were appointed to the board and I was able to

choose a few of these people. Father would ask me to give him a list of parents for the board and made sure every name on the list was someone with whom I could work. Eventually, I had earned the respect of most board members and had one close confidant who was not afraid to rebut Father's agenda.

James, as I will refer to him, was a white business owner. James earned Father's admiration and respect when he donated his own time, talent, and treasure for our building project. James spent many weekends completing the building renovations despite his physical ailments. James trusted me and did anything and everything to support my efforts to move the school forward; eventually we became close friends. I nicknamed him "St. James". The most influential role he played was being my voice on the board. He would meet with the finance committee which included the board president, another board member, and myself each month before the board meeting. During these meetings we would talk about what was on the agenda and James would ask for my input. There were a few times when I wanted the board to approve certain things such as giving the teachers and staff a raise or purchasing certain educational materials. I would tell James and he would present it at the board meeting. I knew if it was James' idea then Father would approve it. This became my strategy for getting my work accomplished. As I became more skillful at this manipulation I struggled with my own ethics. There were plenty of times I had feelings of triumph and satisfaction that I successfully manipulated Father and used James in the process. I still feel guilty that not only was I skilled at the art of manipulation but that I took pleasure in this. I told myself it was worthwhile because my students and staff benefited, and that James was a willing

participant. It makes me wonder if politicians ask themselves these questions. Is such strategy necessary when working under these circumstances? Perhaps, but this certainly doesn't fit into the framework for critical democracy. I'm sure Cornell West would have plenty to say about the lack of Socratic questioning that Father permitted among the board or the lack of prophetic justice that we modeled. Is this what it means to "keep the job in order to do the job"? Was I avoiding the inevitable conflict that would ensue if I challenged Father?

### **Theme 2: Power Struggles between Pastor and Principal-*Father Knows Best?***

The pastor by Canon Law is solely responsible for the school (1983 Code of Canon Law). Because of this law the relationship between the pastor, who is "solely" responsible for the school, and the principal, who is responsible for running the school, can be challenging. In his book, *When the Sisters Said Farewell*, Michael Caruso (2012) discusses the significance of this relationship. Caruso shares that during each of his interviews the principal talks about this pastor-principal relationship even though these interviewees were not asked specifically about this area of school leadership. For an elementary principal this is the first topic discussed (44). He says that the working relationship between the pastor and school administrator whether it be a religious figure or lay person "was (and continues to be) a less than perfect arrangement (Caruso, 43)." After spending five years tiptoeing and holding my breath during every exchange between myself and Father Abe I can certainly relate to this statement. Caruso blames the lack of preparation of the pastor; in my experience it was the pastor's mindset. Father Abe was originally from India and had years of experience as a school administrator.

Frequently he would brag about his number of degrees, one of which was Doctorate of Education. So to say that he wasn't prepared for running a school was not the cause for our contentious working relationship. To say he wasn't prepared for running an American school with a large Hispanic population is plausible. However, I maintain that his inability to form a successful working relationship with me has nothing to do with his preparations for school administration; rather it has everything to do with his unwillingness to open his heart and mind. Caruso organizes his interviewees' descriptions of their pastors into four categories: "*Father Hostile, Father Schizophrenia, Father Laissez-Faire, and Father Engaged* (45)." I would describe Father Abe as a combination of Father Hostile and Father Schizophrenia. These next journal entries illustrate this description of Father "Hostile and Schizophrenia" as he continually used his position of authority to create hostile and abusive relationships.

### **Careful What You Ask For**

The relationship between the pastor and principal is vital to the school's success. Caruso explains that when there is a conflict between the two, often the school community didn't flourish because the "principal was often trying to do damage control (82)." I regularly shielded my staff and families from Father Abe by either keeping his anti-Hispanic comments to myself so that the parishioners didn't actually know how Father felt about them or maintaining distance between the pastor and school community. Many times my teachers would lament that Father Abe didn't participate in school events and activities. They would reminisce about former pastors who would pop into their classroom and visit with the students. Prior pastors would take an interest in student

projects, musical performances, and the everyday occurrences of school life. Father Abe's lack of presence at the school was the source of a lively discussion during one of our staff meetings as we prepared for our accreditation visit.

The accreditation self-study is organized into seven domains and within each domain the school administration and staff are asked to provide explanations and supporting data on a variety of subsections called focus areas. One focus for this self-study requires the school to "Explain the pastor's relationship to and involvement with the school (Texas Catholic Conference Education Department Self Study-Domain 2)." What we wrote was an honest explanation about Father's involvement "to" the school; however we did not write a reflection on his relationship "with" the school. His involvement was not ideal for a successful school community. The lack of relationship "with" the school and members of community was what my staff rightfully found problematic. During one staff meeting teachers shared their concerns.

*Today during the accreditation preparation meeting we were looking at the various focus questions for Domain 2, Community. The working session was moving along nicely until we came to "Focus 5: The school is seen as a viable part of the local civic community and is supported by pastor, governing body, parents/guardians, school organizations, and the larger Catholic community." Now we were supposed to provide evidence about how the pastor supported and was involved with the school. One of my more vocal teacher's aides, Ms. Amalia, spoke up and bemoaned that Father was never around. "He needs to be there for the kids and not just at mass or poking his head into the cafeteria during lunch." Ms. Amalia had been part of the school for decades as a student, parent, and staff member and remembers the positive benefits of an active and engaged pastor. Her comments paved the path for other teachers and staff to share their disappointment with Father's lack of involvement. After a number of them agreed that the school would benefit from more pastoral support they decided that we, which meant I, needed to insist that Father be more present on a regular basis at the school (Author's Journal, May 2013).*

This was the downside to “shielding” my staff from Father. Most of them were unaware of Father’s racist and abusive behaviors and would hurt if they knew how little respect Father had for his teachers, staff, and children. A few teachers had experienced Father’s behavior and were not as quick to invite Father into their classroom.

*The orchestra teacher, Mrs. Smith, reminded the staff of the time Father showed up to their dress rehearsal the day before their spring concert. She said “At first I was touched that Father took the time to stop by and listen to our rehearsal.” Mrs. Smith knew how hard the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> grade children worked in preparation for this concert was proud to share their music with Father. After the kids played their last note and looked up with prideful anticipation, they were all devastated when Father admonished them for not doing a better job. “My kids left in tears, parents were angry, and I was furious,” Mrs. Smith exclaimed. “If that’s the attitude Father is going to have then I’d rather he not be around.” Another teacher shared a similar, more personal, experience coming to the same conclusion. I reminded the staff that we can’t control Father’s attitude or behaviors toward the students, teachers, and staff; when he makes an appearance we must expect criticism, disdain, and disappointment. “I agree, it would be nice to have a pastor who was more involved and supportive, but inviting or even insisting that Father be more present does not equate to being more supportive”. The staff agreed that their expectation of a pastor-school relationship was not possible with Father Abe. (Author’s Journal, May 2013)*

I include my experience with Father because he was a major part of my personal and professional life. Everything I wanted to do for my school had to be approved by Father. He dictated every aspect of the school and I had to learn how to play the game in order to make positive changes toward a critical democracy. It was interesting that as I attempted to provide a critical lens for my students and faculty, I simultaneously created a façade in my relationship with Father. I was trying to provide opportunities for the school to grow in critical pedagogy while not allowing myself to be critical of the very structure I was trying to change. There were times I knew I had to present an idea and

make Father think it was his. At times I would provide just enough information to appease him so that I could move forward with my own agenda. I earned the loyalty and respect of a few key figures who had the ear of Father and would push my agenda forward. I learned how to be politically savvy and convince Father that I was doing his work while attempting to be true to my own values and beliefs. I believe Our Lady of Guadalupe was beginning to slowly move in a direction of critical democracy, but I'm sure that without the support of its pastor true critical democracy is impossible. This next section describes the evolution of my pastor-principal relationship. I want the reader to have a deeper understanding of how it began and my efforts to negotiate my goals for critical democracy within this adversarial relationship.

### **The Day the Music Died**

One of my first meetings with Father Abe illustrates his vision for the school and how it conflicts with the elements of critical democracy. One of the important aspects of critical pedagogy is allowing all involved to participate in the building of the community. Our Lady had a large Hispanic population who was rightfully proud of their culture and traditions. I wanted to celebrate their culture by infusing their traditions into different aspects of school life including Mass. Father had different ideas about what these families should do with their traditions. This journal entry illustrates a conflict of vision.

*I met with Father and Jackie today for the first time since I was hired as the assistant principal. During this meeting Father Abe informed me that I would be in charge of leading the music for the weekly school Mass. He knew that I had a music background and taught music during my teaching career. I wasn't really thrilled with taking on this task as I knew the amount of work involved in preparing quality music for a weekly Mass and now I had to balance that with my administrative tasks. Despite my reservations and knowing that saying no would*

*not be received well, I agreed. Then Father began dictating what music I could and could not use. First he explained that all of those “kid’s songs” needed to go. He said “no hand motions or clapping during the Mass; that isn’t liturgically correct. You choose music from the Music Issue.” The Music Issue is the Church produced collection of Catholic songs designed to align with different sections of the Mass. I was disappointed that he was taking the excitement for the kids out of the Mass, but I was familiar with the Music Issue and thought of ways to make the music fun and interesting for the students and a wonderful way to reflect their Hispanic culture. I said that there were a number of Spanish songs in the Music Issue that I used at my home parish that the kids would enjoy. Shockingly he said loudly “NO! This is an English-speaking school. There will be NO Spanish music”. I was rather taken aback...this was not the typical stance of the Church who was extremely accommodating to Spanish Catholics. At first I thought I misunderstood him and said, “Oh, I thought this would be a good way to connect with the students’ culture during the Mass and promote diversity.” He was adamant, “NO Spanish music! These children can get ‘that’ at home.” Realizing that I did not misunderstand him I said “OK” and shut my mouth—an action I regrettably repeated many times. (Author’s Journal, July 2009)*

There was no room for discussion or dialogue. In his mind this was one way to “whiten” the Hispanic population of Our Lady of Guadalupe. This would be a constant struggle during my five years. Truthfully he didn’t want to connect with any culture other than the upper class, educated, white families preferably males. There were few people in this community who fit this mold. I realized this was probably the reason he accepted me into his world despite my one strike against me—being female. Father made sure to acknowledge my inferiority with his numerous sexist remarks. My attempts to use culturally relevant pedagogy as a way to connect with our students was getting in the way of his attempts to assimilate these children into his value system, stripping them of their Mexican traditions. I must point out that he was not successful at stripping them of their culture. My families continued their traditions proudly, but only in their homes and school activities where Father was not involved. When Father was away on business



we sang traditional Spanish music at our school Mass. Once in a while I would even sneak in a song that was bi-lingual. Sadly though, no longer did home and church intersect.

### **The Jubilee Year**

My first year at Our Lady of Guadalupe was the school's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary jubilee. The year that should have been a time of celebration and joy was a time of pain, stress, anger, and anxiety. Upon my arrival there was an established committee of past alumni who were planning various activities to make this Jubilee year special. They envisioned family dances, an open house for alumni, recognition of past faculty and religious figures, and other celebratory events. Father, however, had another vision to mark this a memorable event. Nothing was open for discussion among members of the school or community. Father decided that the Jubilee year was the perfect opportunity begin a capital campaign to renovate the building. He hijacked a vision for the Jubilee and geared all activities to fundraising the school's building project. Father created a number of different committees all of which had the same five people, myself included. We met at least once a week, often two or three times a week. We had an editorial committee, a building committee, a celebration committee, and the school board. Additionally, we had sub committees for some of these. He expected these committees to research every intricate detail of the events surrounding the Jubilee, including finding the best paper for the invitations and what desserts would be served at this grandiose event.

*I attended yet another Jubilee planning meeting. We're now expected to plan a Catholic community performance with representatives from each of the Catholic churches to celebrate the school's Jubilee Anniversary. Father decided it would*

*be a great idea if each Catholic youth group performed a musical number and then highlight the students at Our Lady. I was assigned the task of organizing and vetting each performance. So far the other church music leaders were kind enough to participate but I felt they were rather offended that Father asked me to ensure their performances were “worthy” of OUR celebration. Father Abe wasn’t asking these groups to participate—he demanded it; I was the one expected to follow through with his command. During this meeting we were all reporting on the progress of our assignments. I shared that the groups had all agreed to perform and they would send representatives to the final rehearsal the night before the performance. Father was displeased. “No! Pick a day and time two weeks before and tell them to all come here and show you their musical number.” Father had absolutely no respect for anyone’s time or acknowledged that most of these people worked long hours or were students in school who volunteered their time to participate in these groups. Knowing that I would not be able to accommodate the schedules of four different church youth groups nor did I want to insult the leaders of these volunteer groups I asked if I could go to their scheduled rehearsals. Father begrudgingly agreed. “But make sure you go to each one of them!” “And make sure they’re good! Tell them what they need to change if it’s not good enough!” I thought, “Oh my goodness! Are you kidding me? You want me to walk into someone else’s rehearsal and take over? You really expect me to insult the very people who are giving up time out of their busy schedules to perform at an event solely for the benefit of our school? I don’t think so!” I replied, “Don’t worry, I will personally attend each rehearsal. They’ll be just fine (I prayed, “I hope”).” (Author’s Journal, April 2010)*

This meeting illustrates the authority Father maintained over the Catholic community. His arrogance and assumption that his ideas were better and his dictatorial leadership continually created tension and stress among those of us working to complete his vision. He showed total disregard for the laity and expected all of us to submit to his authority. Father Abe would often state his disgust with the Hispanic people by complaining that they were “all lazy, and spend all their money on beer”. No matter what small successes we shared he seemed angry all the time and would take his anger out on those of us trying to complete his assigned tasks in the way he wanted.

## **The Memory Book**

One of his ideas was to create a memory book, similar to a year book, and sell ads to place in the book and then sell it to the community. He believed that we could sell this book to the community and raise \$100,000. Only a few people delicately shared that the audience who may possibly purchase this book were mostly parents and not other community members, and therefore might not be the best way to raise a \$100,000. Father dismissed them and moved ahead with this memory (ad) book. Knowing that we were stuck with this project these same few brave souls suggested that we would make more money if the producing company who had the resources to obtain ads and who were invested in making a profit collected the ads for a small percentage of our sales. Again Father Abe shut down the discussion. He decided we would produce a memory book, the parents would collect ads, and I was named editor and in charge of compiling all the information for the book. I asked Jackie and the former principal Ruth who were members of these committees, “what if we just say no? If we all stick together and refuse to do the book, then what would happen?” They both said “Oh no, if Father Abe says we have to do it, we do it!” This is a perfect example of people’s unwillingness to challenge clergy. When it came time to sell the book, the only people interested in purchasing were the parents just as we had said. Unfortunately, Father blamed everyone but himself for the failure of the project. Father’s memory book only raised \$20,000 and we were left with close to 400 unsold books.

## My Assignment

During one of the many committee meetings regarding the memory book Father decided articles should be written about various elements of the school and faith. In this excerpt from my journal I reflect on being assigned an article, and how I prepared to complete my task. This was an opportunity to introduce elements of critical democracy and divulge a small glimpse of myself.

*Here we were again, another committee meeting, and this time Father decided we should write articles for the memory book. He started doling out topics like a professor to his students—no discussion, no questions. I got “Unity in Diversity”. Really? I was a bit surprised. This was the last topic he would want to include in this book. In the past four months he had made racist, sexist, and ageist comments. How in the world could I write an article to please him and be true to my own convictions without losing my job? Up to this point I’d been quiet about my dissatisfaction with the conservative direction of the Catholic Church. No one here really knew me at Our Lady, as the progressive, feminist, democrat, who voted for Obama. One parent had called him a fascist communist, yes I recognize the paradox, just a year prior. Me—the one who just finished a course on Queer Theory the summer before, a topic that would make many of the people here, Father included, squirm. All things that would shock Father and many of the members of this community. I’d been living incognito—sweating bullets that I’d be outed. This topic for an article would surely reveal my true self. What would I do? I knew the answer! I’d use the Bible. I knew I could find scripture that supported Unity in Diversity as loving ALL. How could Father argue with the Bible? I was sure he would find a way, but would try. I wasn’t allowed to say no. (Author’s Journal, January 2010)*

It was one of the hardest articles I’ve ever written, not because it wasn’t an interesting topic, but because I had to write so guarded. I was pleased with the outcome. It was just enough “me” to qualify as a little pot stirring but subtle and mostly thought provoking. Truthfully, I don’t think anyone read the article other than Father, and maybe

it planted a few seeds. He never said anything about the article, but he didn't ask me to exclude it from the book.

I incorporate elements of critical democracy in my article hoping that questions would be asked and challenges made. Here are a few snippets from my article...

*...unity is coming together and agreeing on certain ideals and beliefs. Diversity refers to a plethora of differences including: religion; race; ethnicity, opinions; cultures; socio-economic status; jobs; political views; sexual preference; and gender to name a few. When such a broad range of differences exist, finding ideals or beliefs to agree upon is challenging. So how can unity be in diversity? Dr. Martin Luther King Jr understood that while the human race was full of differences we are all united by Christ's love.*

*"Americans, I must urge you to be rid of every aspect of segregation. Segregation is a blatant denial of the unity which we have in Christ. It substitutes an 'I-it' relationship for the 'I-thou' relationship, and relegates persons to the status of things. It scars the soul and degrades the personality...It destroys community and makes brotherhood impossible." (King, taken from Hooks, 2001, 74)*

*This quote by Dr. King signifies his efforts to find a commonality between a diverse group of people who had been caught in an oppressive-suppressive relationship for years. Often these oppressive relationships are grounded in fear. The weak are convinced that they need protection from his/her oppressor creating "I-it" relationships. The protector may even manufacture fear so that the weak believe they need and are safer in their oppressive relationship with their protectors, hence perpetuating their own oppression. "Fear keeps us from trusting in love." This vicious cycle has been at the root of many power struggles and oppressive relationships throughout history here in the United States and abroad. "When we are taught that safety lies always with sameness, then difference, of any kind, will appear as a threat. When we choose to love we choose to move against fear—against alienation and separation. The choice to love is a choice to connect—to find ourselves in the other." (Hooks, 93)*

*...Jesse Goodman, author of Elementary Schooling for Critical democracy, believes that a balance between community and individualism is necessary for a true critical democracy to evolve. His reasoning reflects the same issues involving unity (community) in diversity (individuality).*

*...If citizens only focus on knowing the self then community values break down. He also illustrates that when the good of the community far outweighs the values of the individual open dialogue is seen as problematic or even “treasonous.” A society is told what beliefs, values, and ideologies they must have. In some cases they are even told which races or ethnicities are dominant and which should submit or what religion they are to uphold. The result of this union is actually conformity rather than community. Goodman believes the celebration of diversity and individuality is equally important to the responsibility of the community as a whole. “One’s ability to focus on one’s desires, fears, hopes, dreams, and creativity in order to existentially ‘know oneself’ is important for any society that wishes to promote freedom and human dignity (Goodman, 9).”*

*Attempting to find unity among such a diverse human race is certainly not an easy task. However, living in a society based on the principles of conformity or anarchy is not an option I am willing to accept. Therefore, I must ask myself, what is the commonality that unites humanity? Dr. King talked about the “unity we have in Christ” and Goodman discussed the interconnectedness of humankind. I believe the essential element that unites us all is love, specifically Christ’s love. ...I turned to the Bible for a deeper understanding of Christ’s expectations about love. ...My most significant finding was that the Bible clearly states that Christians should unite as brothers and sisters in Christ. We are all called to love each other and treat each other with kindness, compassion, and respect. In Romans 12:10 Paul the Apostle says,*

*Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarrelling over opinions...for God has welcomed them. They are God’s servants, not yours. Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand. (Romans 14:1-4 New Revised Standard Edition)*

*This last statement is powerful when thinking about the amount of judgments Christians make about their brothers and sisters in Christ. Sometimes, I think we can get caught up in our pride trying to change the minds of others that we forget that Christ calls us to love not judge.*

*Jesus Christ himself states “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind” and “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Mathew 22: 37-39 NRSV) Jesus did not say love those neighbors who look like you, act like you, uphold your beliefs, and make the same amount of money as you. He challenges us to love ALL our neighbors including the stranger. He modeled this love throughout his life on earth and blessed us with*

*the beautiful example when he washed the feet of his disciples. Through his actions he modeled humility, love, and service. At first his disciples were mortified that their master would wash their feet and insisted that they should wash Jesus' feet. Jesus explained "Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them." (John, 13:16)*

*...It is very clear what is expected of Christians when it comes to love and how we should love each other. If the second most important commandment is to love each other and we are called to love as stated by Paul in Corinthians then unity in diversity is given. If we are united by Christ's love then all the diversities in the world cannot divide us. We are challenged to go beyond our comfort zone and find unity in diversity for the good of God's children. (Author's article, January 2010)*

Going back and reading this article I am struck by the similarity to the issues I experienced with the Catholic Church and Our Lady of Guadalupe. Struggling to unite our school in love and working against the power-struggles of the dominant church was precisely what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr conveyed, the I-it relationships between priest and "his" people and trying to move toward an I-thou relationship. Interestingly, the model of Jesus washing his disciples' feet is reenacted in most Catholic churches on Holy Thursday. The priest is suppose to wash the feet of his congregation. I've witnessed this moment in the liturgy many times growing up. At my home church we began to wash the feet of those who were going to become members of the Catholic Church through the Sacrament of Baptism, Holy Communion, and Confirmation. It was a beautiful ceremony to watch as these eager catechumens and candidates sat on the altar with the priest knelt down in front of them and washed their feet. How Father Abe interpreted this ceremony reflects how he could take something meant to represent humility and service and turn it into a representation of authority and patriarchy.

## **Washing THEIR feet? Only on MY Terms...**

*Father Abe decided it would “look good” if he washed the feet of some of our students. This was my last year at Our Lady so I was not excited about the prospect of my children participating in this capacity since I knew there had to be a catch. Five years ago I would have been touched by the thought of Father Abe humbling himself before our children in such a memorable way. But no...he just wanted to make a spectacle of my kids and use them to try and convince his congregation that he believes in serving as he would so often preach about during Mass. I waited for him to tell me specifically who he had chosen and what directions I needed to provide to their parents. Sure enough...ONLY BOYS, and they had to be members of his parish. Of course, he couldn't be seen kneeling at the feet of girls. During the practice with the children he was extremely adamant that they needed to go home and wash their feet before coming to the service and they needed to wear socks and shoes so their feet wouldn't get dirty on the drive to the church. I'm sure Jesus asked his disciples to wash their feet before kneeling down to wash them. I wasn't surprised, this was typical of Father Abe-inside I was rolling my eyes and praying for my days with Father Abe to end quickly. I relayed the information to the boys and their parents. (Author's Journal, April 2014)*

I'm sure the congregation thought it was a nice gesture and the boys were certainly excited that they had been picked for such an honorable role in the liturgy. My heart was sad for those sweet young girls who were once again left out and by Father Abe's actions told that they were not worthy of such a role in the liturgy.

## **Taking Our Staff Picture**

Every year the school staff had a group picture taken for the yearbook. For my first year at Our Lady of Guadalupe I had no expectations about the logistics of this activity. I knew the day, time, location, and attire. What more could anyone need? Father Abe on the other hand had other expectations about how this activity should unfold. Apparently, arriving on time, standing with a smile, and saying “cheese” was not an adequate plan. Father Abe insisted on taking charge of everything and everybody.



*Now you wouldn't think taking a group picture for the yearbook would be such an ordeal but Father Abe in his usual MO took the joy and life out of this community building activity. Because this was the picture going into his ever important Jubilee Memory Book, he had to control every aspect of it. The teachers and staff were asked to arrive at 7:30 AM to take a quick picture before greeting their children in the Church and preparing for daily morning devotional. When Jackie, the principal, told him he needed to be there at 7:30 he said that it was too early and she needed to make it later. When she explained that the teachers needed to be with their students, he begrudgingly agreed. He still showed up 10 minutes late and then spent half an hour telling the photographer how to do her job. He would stop the process and insist that he look through the camera lens to make sure it was just right. When the teachers and staff were lining up on the risers Father would use their titles to tell them which way to move. He said, "Secretary" move to your left, "bookkeeper step down one", "1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher" and so on. Amalia, my spunky teacher's assistant would say the name of the person after each time he called them by their title. I don't know if Father ignored her or didn't notice, but he didn't once use the name of a staff member including the principal or me. Keep in mind he had been with this school for nine months and some of the staff were also members of his parish AND it's a small school. There are only 12 teachers and 5 assistants plus a few more staff members. Father made quite a statement when he decided that we couldn't take one large staff picture. We had to take one of the teachers who were the "professionals," and one with the staff who were "the support". What he didn't know was that this was NOT the culture of the school. This school community had been taking one group picture (school family) every year for the past fifty years. (Author's Journal, November 2009)*

There was a separation between those who are, in his mind, "more important" than others. Unfortunately, he didn't take the time to learn about the traditions of Our Lady of Guadalupe. He wanted it done his way and no one was going to tell him otherwise. Ultimately, we took one large group picture but were directed to exclude it from the Memory Book and only use the separate pictures.

## **Principals and Pastors Go Fishing**

During my second year as assistant principal I attended the National Catholic Educators Association Conference in New Orleans. I went with a few other teachers and Father Abe. It was my first trip away from my new baby who was only 6 months old and I was apprehensive about leaving her. Along with my apprehension I wasn't thrilled about sharing this experience with Father Abe. Nonetheless I wanted to make this experience as positive and educational as possible. I saw in the brochure that there was a session titled "Principals and Pastors Go Fishing" about the relationship between pastors and principals. I thought maybe I could gain some insight and/or strategies for working with Father Abe.

*I knew I was taking over as principal the coming school year and knew that Father Abe was beyond challenging to work with so I thought maybe I'd learn something from this session about how principals and pastors can work in harmony. I walked into the room and sat towards the back and observed very few men wearing collars. My suspicion that few priests were in attendance was confirmed when we were asked to raise our hands identifying who was a principal and who was a pastor. There were 3 or 4 pastors in the room the other 40 or so participants were principals hoping to gain some insight into how to build better working relationship with our pastors. Those pastors who attended the session seemed already willing to collaborate with their principals. The speaker explained the five C's of collaboration between principal and pastor: Contemplative practice, Communication, Credibility, Curriculum, and Community building. My question was whether Father Abe was willing to collaborate. As I sat and listened to the presentation I wondered if it was at all possible. If someone was unwilling to be collaborative, respectful, kind, and trusting, what do you do? Nothing that had been said was untrue, I just was not learning anything I didn't already know. How could I make the "5 C's" happen with a pastor who was so untrusting? (Author's Journal from the NCEA Conference, 2011)*

## Pastor versus Nun

As mentioned in Chapter 3 any services provided by a religious congregation is negotiated between the religious community and the pastor. The pre-Vatican II method of employment is still common today, giving the pastor significant control over the living conditions of the women religious. Granted there are systems in place to provide healthcare and retirement benefits, but the actual living conditions are still based on the generosity of the pastor (Caruso, 31-32). Thankfully housing is no longer unhealthy. However, expectations of the pastor for women religious can be unreasonable and at times shameful. I am reminded of some of the conversations I would have with Father Abe regarding Sister Alice who worked at Our Lady of Guadalupe. Here I summarize a few of my conversations with Father over the three years I was principal.

*Sister Alice was from the Philippines and had worked at Our Lady of Guadalupe for ten years. This spunky 70 year old nun had worked in schools most of her life and held administrative positions during her time in the Philippines. When she moved to the states her congregation negotiated a contract with the school to be the religious director. Her living conditions were not unhealthy like some of the stories from Caruso's book, but she was limited and dependent on the generosity of Father Abe. Her salary was reasonable but the entire amount went directly to her religious order, a portion of which was used to support her retirement and pay health expenses not covered by her benefits. She lived in a small old house in a poor area of town rented by the school, furnished with donations from families. She received a stipend of only \$300 a month which covered her food and other living expenses. She received healthcare and a small used car; she taught herself to drive at age 65. Being that her contract was negotiated ten years earlier, each year I worked on the new budget I asked to increase her stipend to help her pay for the growing cost of groceries in our area. Each year not only would Father Abe deny her any additional money, he would complain that we had to cover her expenses. He would compare his own salary to hers and claim that because she took a vow of poverty she didn't need anything else. Keep in mind that when he first moved to the church rectory he purchased brand new furniture for his house including a new mattress costing over \$1500 and drove a very nice car. After three years of pushing and pleading I finally got him to agree to give Sister Alice*

*a \$50 increase in her stipend. This was after I renegotiated her rent with the landlord and was saving the school over \$100 a month. In actuality the school was saving \$50 a month and coming out ahead. Here again is a perfect example of the power held by the priest.*

All of these stories demonstrate the impact the relationship between pastor and principal has on the success of a school. Throughout my time at Our Lady of Guadalupe the success I found was despite Father Abe rather than in collaboration with him. The role of the priest has been overly authoritative. My experiences illustrate how the Church allows priests to continue asserting power over the laity through hierarchal structures and perceived authority. The hegemony existing in Jude and at Our Lady perpetuates the myth that the priest is superior and the laity inferior. Until Catholics at Our Lady and others in similar hegemonic communities recognize that through baptism we are all equals, then priests will continue residing over their congregations in tyranny.

### **Theme 3: Identity-Gender and Sexuality**

The Vatican II Council documents clearly denounce discrimination and call us to work towards providing basic human rights to all of humanity, especially in regards to women's rights. The Constitution on the Church in the Modern World states,

There is, therefore, a basic equality of all human persons regardless of social or cultural background...All discrimination should be overcome and eradicated, and we regret that so many human rights are not being honored around the world, especially for women who are not free to choose a husband freely, to embrace a state of life, to acquire an education, or enjoy cultural benefits equal to men (Huebsch, 1997, 147)

This statement fits accurately into the framework of critical democracy, working as a community to provide a just society that recognizes women as equal to men. I'm struck

by the sentiment of equality, but the lack of its actualization in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. When looking through the lens of critical pedagogy I'm aghast at how the patriarchy of the Church impacts the identity of our young boys and girls, more specifically gender and sexual identity issues. The Church clearly defines the roles expected of our youth when they became adults. Girls are directed to be "Mary-like," obedient to God and accepting their roles as mothers. Boys are charged with the role of father (of the Church or their family); both must identify as heterosexual beings and remain celibate or engage in sexual activity for the sole purpose of reproduction. During my time at Our Lady of Guadalupe I observed these gender roles being scripted for our children and denying them any questions they may have about their sexual identity. First I examine the role of women in the church and how they are routinely excluded from leadership positions. The Women's Justice Coalition published a report identifying the status of the church regarding women.

Justice in the Liturgy: It is within the celebration of the Mass that women experience most keenly a sense of alienation... This is particularly important for young girls, whose first exposure to discrimination against their core identity may occur in their church, the place where they should feel safest and deeply "at home" with their God. Often, the first stirring of what may ultimately result in a calling to deeper service occurs when children are welcomed as participants in liturgical celebrations." (Status of Women in the U.S. Roman Catholic Church: A Report Card Women's Justice Coalition, 5/22/2007)

At Our Lady of Guadalupe girls were allowed to participate as readers, altar servers, and choir members but were told regularly that their participation stopped there. At every Mass they were reminded that the priest was and always will be a man. When we prayed for vocations, we said, "Fill the hearts of young **men** with the spirit of courage

and love that they may answer Your call generously...May many young **men** choose to serve You..." Women were invited to serve as nuns or lay ministers, but the invitation to the priesthood was and is reserved for men. The next two sections illustrate the grandiose display of the patriarchy for this exclusive boys' club and how it affected one little girl.

### **Catholic Schools Week 2010**

My first experience at Our Lady's Catholic Schools Week was in 2010. It was a fantastic week of celebration. Each day we focused on an aspect of what makes Catholic education unique and special. We hosted a volunteer breakfast for those who served our school; the parents honored our teachers and staff with a luncheon; the students completed a school-wide service project; and the last day was devoted to the celebration of clergy and women religious. The day for "Vocations" began with a special prayer service for these men and women. After the liturgy each nun and priest went with a different class to talk about their vocation. The hope was that our young boys and girls would be inspired to join the religious life one day—more importantly, our boys. The twentieth century has shown a dramatic decline in the number of men entering the priesthood in America. The Roman Catholic Church has been in a panic about what to do. Our "vocation" day was a way of helping to promote the priesthood.

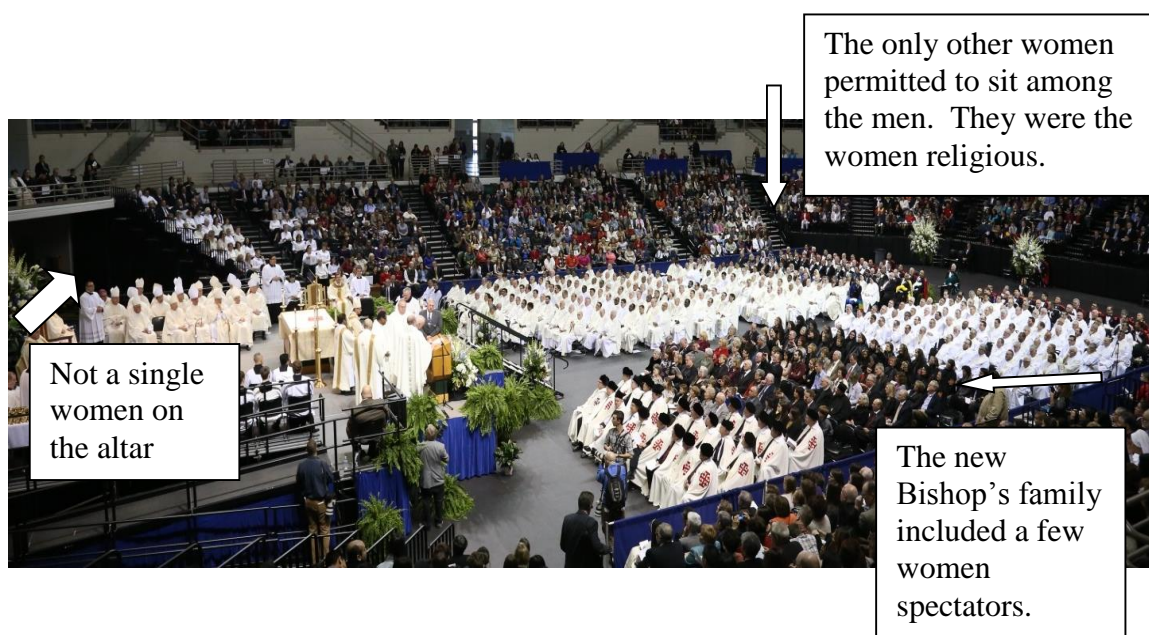
### **"You Can't Be a Priest! You're a GIRL!"**

*During lunch that day I was on duty and monitoring the students in the cafeteria. I noticed that some of the students in the fourth grade class looked upset; they were arguing about something. I approached the kids and asked if everything was OK. Melanie, a bright eyed spunky girl in the class spoke up quickly and said, "It's fine. They (she pointed to the two boys sitting on either side of her) misunderstood me!" The boys chimed in, "No we didn't. She said she wanted to be a priest and we were telling her SHE CAN'T! Cause SHE'S a GIRL!" Melanie*

*argued, “No I didn’t! I just meant that I wanted to work in the church LIKE a priest.” I could tell that Melanie probably did in fact say that she wanted to be a priest and was now embarrassed by the reaction of her two classmates. I jumped in and said, “Wow Melanie, I think you would make an awesome priest! Maybe you could be the first female priest in the Catholic Church. Wouldn’t that be cool?” The boys looked at me with their mouths hung open and their eyes perplexed. Melanie’s big brown eyes opened wide and a huge smile came across her face as she nodded in agreement. I left them with a final thought: “I sure hope that happens one day, I’m going to pray for that?”*

## **Bishop’s Inauguration**

Figure 2. Bishop’s Inauguration



I wanted to include this picture from the Bishop’s inauguration. During my last year at Our Lady of Guadalupe a new Bishop was appointed to the Diocese. Every Catholic from the Diocese was invited to the ceremony including our school children. Some of our children performed music for the prelude to the Mass. The priests in the area thought it would be a valuable experience for our children. How often would they get to

participate in a ceremony of such magnitude? I was excited to observe it from a socially relevant point of view. We were in the local coliseum and each of the three schools' representatives sat two levels up for a bird's eye view of the event. The diocesan photographer, Alan Torre, was generous enough to allow me to use his picture from the event. I watched the ceremony and wondered, where are all the women? Oh they were there, but way in the back, behind all the priests. This picture speaks volumes about the status of women in the church. How were young girls able to see themselves in the leadership of the Church? It was an all boys' club, and I literally have a picture to prove it.

### **Father "Empowers" Women**

In the spring of my last year with Our Lady of Guadalupe, Father Abe was celebrating his 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination and in keeping with his modus operandi wanted to throw a large spectacle for himself. One of the elements of this celebration was the program for the event which included Father Abe's bio; I was asked to edit said document. In his self-aggrandizing biography Father Abe glorifies himself for empowering women with the establishment of his organization, The Daughters of Mary.

*The morning after Father Abe's celebration Sister Alice pulled me into my office. "Bethany, did you see this bio?" She pointed to the section about how Father Abe empowers women. "Look at this! 'He's empowered women'?" she read from the bio. "I know sister, I read over it last week and wanted to delete it when I saw what it said." "Do you know what that organization does? They wash and iron the linens for Mass; they organize lunches and dinners for funerals; and they do some fundraising. How is that empowering them? They provide a wonderful service but how is that empowering them?" sister reiterated. "I know, I know! That's Father! In his mind providing a venue for women to perform "womanly" duties for the service of the church is, in his mind, empowering" I explained. "Oh my, Bethany!" was all that sister could say. We rolled our eyes at each other and*



*I responded, "As we say in the south, Bless his heart!" (Author's Journal April, 2014)*

Were we making any strides since Vatican II to improve gender equality in the church? Since Vatican II, girls are permitted to participate in liturgical roles during Mass, continue teaching our children, and organize church functions but as the report from the women's justice coalition illustrated we can do better.

Nonetheless, as the report card indicates, there is certainly room for improvement. We see a pattern that indicates our seminaries fail to provide priestly candidates with a deeper appreciation of the role of women and their manifold contributions in the history of the church, and the church's own history of misogynist teachings. It is deeply troubling that women constitute only a very small proportion of faculty teaching core courses in seminary education in too many seminaries. Not only is this practice unjust, this discrimination in education contributes to attitudes that are destructive of seminarians' capacity to recognize the intellectual and leadership capacities of women (Bannen, Farrell, and Howarth, 2007, 10)

I see a different issue that impacts the leadership roles women obtain. The real problem is that we are allowing women to teach at an institution where they are excluded from ordination because they are women. The Church continues to perpetuate the idea that men are superior to women, and as long as the Church continues only allowing men to serve as priests, bishops, and hold other high church positions women will never fulfill Vatican II's vision. I find it patronizing to allow women to hold positions as professors and teach in seminaries but not allow them to attend as a student. What a slap in the face!

### **Sexual Orientation**

This next journal entry is from my experience at the church I was attending while in Jude. I did not want to attend the church connected to the school for two reasons: one I

wanted a little separation between my job and my place of worship; but more importantly I needed a break from Father Abe who was also the pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church. As part of my job requirement, I had to be a practicing Catholic, meaning regular attendance at Sunday Mass. I had a difficult time feeling at home in any of the four Catholic churches in Jude, but settled on St. Agnes, the one identified by a few of its members as “the progressive church”. For a church in West Texas I can see why some might consider it progressive; however, coming from an Episcopal Church in Greensboro, where the pastor was female and gay couples could worship freely, “progressive” is not the word I would use to describe St. Agnes. Regardless, I met my obligation and attended regularly enough to call myself “practicing”. I do firmly believe in serving through ministry and wanted to model that for my students who were members at this church. I was a member of the choir and cantored for mass once or twice a month. I looked forward to seeing my students’ smiles out in the congregation which gave me an incentive to go to mass on the weekends when I would rather stay home and snuggle with my daughter and eat the yummy breakfast my husband made. There was one particular Sunday however that will forever be seared in my memory. The events at mass illustrate a number of points. This next journal entry details the Church’s stance on homosexuality and gay marriage while demonstrating the impact the Church’s message has on its people. It’s hard enough to read write memos and listen to sermons from the pulpit on the sinful nature of homosexuality and gay marriage. This particular Sunday brought this issue to a whole new level as I watched tears of anger, listened to words of hate, and experienced feelings of hurt brought on by a priest’s cold and disconnected statements. I

wanted to include this experience because as a congregant at this Sunday Mass I was amongst a number of my students and their parents and one in particular, a young boy who I suspect had been working through his own feelings of homosexuality.

*I went to church early this day. I was asked to cantor at the 11:30 Mass for one of the other cantors but our wires got crossed and it was actually the 10:00 Mass. I received a frantic message from my choir director at 9:45 that I was supposed to be there and could I please come. I rushed around to finish getting ready and ran out the door, drove across town as quickly and safely as possible, and ran into the choir room. My director gave me the binder of music and I raced up to the altar and began reading the opening message. We opened with the song, "All are Welcome," which is important to this story. Church began. I was not a huge fan of the new priest. His homilies were often judgmental, patronizing, and ill-informed, but I hoped and prayed that this one wouldn't be too bad. My mind was preparing for the Psalm Response and Gospel Acclamation not paying close attention to the first or second readings. Then it was time for the homily. I finally took a breath and opened my ears—more for curiosity than any expectation of spiritual nourishment.*

*The priest began explaining the readings and Noah's ark (still not sure how they were related) but then brought up Proposition 8 and the Supreme Court's ruling on same-sex marriage. See, this was the Sunday after not only Proposition 8 but also the stance that Texans in Austin took to protect Women's healthcare rights when Senator Wendy Davis stood for 17 hours straight and filibustered the session. I think this has been the only time I was proud to say I lived in Texas—but I digress. When Father began talking about same-sex marriage I thought to myself "Oh goodness here we go again." I then prepared myself for an annoying homily. His remarks went from bad to worse. Father began "teaching" us how homosexuals are "made to be that way" because they were molested as children, AND they will then make more homosexuals by becoming molesters themselves. The anger, outrage, and hurt now coursed through my veins. I tried to decide how do get out of there, how could I make him stop. I was sitting on the altar. I wondered what would happen if I just stood up and went to the microphone and began singing the next song. What if I told the congregation he was wrong and I was so sorry for his hateful homily? I wanted to scream out to these people "don't listen to him, he doesn't understand, he is misinformed and saying hateful things" He continued saying that "these people" are sick, and mentally ill. He also said that those who support homosexuals are doing the work of the devil. After 20 minutes of pure hate, it was time for me to announce the next song and lead the congregation.*

*My whole body shook with rage, my mind scattered in a million directions, and my heart ached with pain. I could see our music director in the back where the choir stood, himself a homosexual, shaking his head in disapproval and anger. After Mass was over I went to the choir room to tell the director that I would no longer cantor for Mass if that priest was going to be there. He said he completely understood; he seemed rightfully agitated. I placed my hand on his arm and said to him how sorry I was that he had to listen to such hateful words. He fell into my arms and wept saying thank you. I told him that despite what Father said, God loves him and so do I; we don't all think that way. At that point I decided something had to be said. I didn't think, I acted. The priest was standing in the foyer shaking hands with church members as they left. Just as I approached him an older man walked toward him clapping his hands in applause and giving two thumbs up. The church member said "good job Father, it needed to be said." I briskly stepped up and declared, "I disagree! You were offensive and your information was wrong. Homosexuals are not made that way because they were molested as children nor do they become molesters themselves." He started to defend himself saying, "I didn't say I didn't love them..." I interrupted him and stopped his defensive retort. "You, Father, just hurt and ostracized members of your own congregation. They didn't hear a message of love, they were just called sick, mentally ill child molesters." I reiterated, "You are just wrong, you are misinformed, your information is just flat out wrong." Overwhelmed with adrenalin, I wasn't particularly eloquent. The phrase "you are just wrong" was all that came to mind. He tried to defend himself again, but I didn't want to hear his justification; I had just listened to his 20 minute diatribe. I raised my hand up as if to say enough, and I said again "You are just wrong." I turned around and walked away. What I had done was considered a huge disrespect to the priest and I truly wondered if I would going lose my job. At this point I just didn't care. If I was going down for something, I was glad it would be for this cause. And if I went down, I was going down big and loud!! (Author's Journal, June 2013)*

I decided to write a letter to the Bishop regarding this matter but before I had a chance to send the letter we were informed that the Bishop was retiring and this priest was being transferred out the Diocese. Sadly, this is a mistake of the Catholic Church, moving problematic priests to become someone else's problem. He inflicted damage on people in the congregation more concerning on my young students. How are these boys and girls who may be working through their own sense of homosexuality and are struggling with feelings of self-worth, who wonder how their identity fits into their

Catholic faith feel after such a hateful message? How might their parents think and feel toward their children working through issues of sexual identity? The conservative Church has not been accepting of homosexuals and allowing people to fully embrace this part of their identity.

#### **Theme 4: Curriculum**

##### **Professional Development as a Source of Discourse**

The theme about curriculum is complex because there are so many layers to this discussion. There is the students' curriculum as handed down by the superintendent, the religious curriculum handed down by the Church, the curriculum for staff development, and the hidden curriculum that is embedded in all three of these levels. I worked hard at updating the curriculum and resources at Our Lady of Guadalupe to provide students with current and relevant material. I also provided the staff with professional development on the latest teaching strategies including cooperative learning, project learning, Guided Reading, parent involvement, and justice education. I supported their efforts to attend education classes. I held a book study on *The Essential Conversation*; Sister Carol Cimino, a progressive nun who regularly speaks at conferences and schools, provided a workshop on parent involvement and the changing family structure; and we committed ourselves to service learning opportunities. However, these opportunities to grow were constantly met with the challenge of balancing it all with Church teachings. Within the walls of Our Lady of Guadalupe teachers shared their thoughts, challenges, and successes with each other.

Using the book discussions on *The Essential Conversation*, teachers and staff began looking at their own experiences and how these influenced their relationships with students, parents, and coworkers. Some of the older Hispanic teachers shared memories of being scolded for speaking their home language and the strict discipline they received from their teachers. Because of this they had little patience for parents who wanted to make excuses for their child's behavior. The teachers viewed their own strict upbringing, where their own parents conformed to the expectations of the school, as helping students reach their fullest potential. Therefore, classroom rules needed to be followed, respected, and unquestioned. What was wonderful about this insightful discussion were the connections teachers made to their past experiences with how they structured their own classroom. Some of them began to question themselves and decide if their ways really were the best way. Some began to see the benefits of including students and parents in the classroom community. They listened intently to new ideas and methods for engaging students in the learning process. Some of them attempted these strategies in the classroom while others reverted back to more traditional methods of teaching. Financial constraints kept me limited to the amount of staff development I could provide.

### **Diocesan Conference-Don't Speak**

The direction of the church was different from the direction I wanted to take my school. My teachers were willing to jump into this boat and take a ride with me but unwilling to fully embrace their own intellectual autonomy and challenge their understanding of Church teachings. The Diocese required staff development each year with an annual conference, but was more geared towards religious teachers and

catechists. The idea was that every Catholic school teacher was a religious educator. This is true in that each teacher was expected to support the teachings of the Church and incorporate Gospel values into their regular curriculum. However, the responsibility of teaching a religion course to our children for 30 minutes a day was left to our religion teacher Sister Alice. After attending a few conferences I felt that the topics were rather watered down, and never provided strategies or inspiration to deeply touch the hearts of our children through religious instruction. Having researched the CCD movement and how it has replaced Catholic education in many parishes, I wondered if this was the reason for a watered down curriculum.

To illustrate the Church's perspective on the direction we should take our schools I've included my experience with two conferences. Through these experiences I gather more insight into the Church's perspective on religious education and how it was received by members of my community. I also include the method by which information was presented to the audience. From my critical democracy perspective I was intrigued by the lack of dialogue, participation, and critical examination that took place during these conferences. Some of the information was interesting and supports the notions of community and diversity. Unfortunately, the participants were not a part of the conversation; they were not asked to reflect on themselves, they were not asked to dig deep into their own experiences and values. Participants were spectators watching and listening to an entertaining speaker. These are not the methods conducive to creating a critical democracy. During these conference sessions I couldn't help but critique and have an inner dialogue with the speakers. I included this dialogue between the various

speakers and myself as well as my notes on the presentation. This first section is from the Author's Journal (February 2010).

*This is my first annual Diocesan Conference and I don't know what to expect. The title of this year's conference is "Christ...In Our Families, Hearts, and World." The Bishop opens the conference by asking us, "How many of us want to be happy? How do we find true happiness?"*

*There's that word, "true". Coming off of my course work at UNCG I'm uneasy with the word "true" when defining one right way of being. As if there is one and only one "true happiness."*

*He goes on to say that following Christ and the teachings of the Gospel is how to be happy.*

*Now I can get behind that. I do believe that we are to follow Christ and His teachings. However, I also find that discomfort and unhappiness can often follow. And that's OK. I don't believe we are suppose to be happy all the time. But we can find contentment with where we are and I suppose happiness is knowing that the choices we are making are Christ-centered and Gospel-based.*

### **All? Are Welcome**

Then we sang this song by Marty Haugen, "All Are Welcome". The lyrics are beautiful and the sentiment is wonderful.

*Let us build a house where love can dwell  
And all can safely live,  
A place where saints and children tell  
How hearts learn to forgive.*



*Built of hopes and dreams and visions,  
Rock of faith and vault of grace;  
Here the love of Christ shall end divisions:  
Chorus: All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.*

*Singing this song I can't help but doubt the meaning behind the words. How many of the people singing along beside me truly believe ALL are welcome. I suppose there are varying ways to welcome. We can allow someone to enter the building, maybe even offer a faint smile and call that welcoming but I want something more for myself and my community. If we are singing about providing a place where "all can safely live" then we need to make that happen. In the fourth verse it says*

*"Here the outcast and the stranger Bear the image of God's face; Let us bring an end to fear and danger."*

*What profound words to live by. I'm baffled that we can be singing this song which begs of us to answer the call to be better than we are. To see Christ in every single human on the planet and yet for many of these people it's just a nice song with a nice tune. How do we make this happen....build a house where "All" truly are welcome.*

*"Truth building on truth, wisdom building on wisdom."*

*Hearing the stories of each other brings us closer to the truth. However, we will never fully know the truth because it continues to unfold with time.*

### **Can we talk now?**

As I reflect on my dialogue between myself and the presentation I am struck by two things. One is my frustration regarding the lack of critical examination of ourselves and our ability to put into action the very things we are called to do. The other is my relentless criticism of this presentation. I was relieved to see that I noticed this during the conference and made note in my journal.

*As I've been listening to the speaker for approximately 30 minutes, I'm struck by how critical I am. For some reason I am listening to this guy and waiting for him to offend me, or say something that I can jump on. I live on edge, continually paranoid.*

While my critique of this presentation may come from paranoia, I'm also writing from a lived experience over the past 8 months. I've been living in an environment devoid of critical pedagogy, welcoming of the stranger, and recognizing the face of God in all of humanity. I've listened to the hypocritical sermons of Father Abe who says we should show our love of God by serving each other but then criticizing those in need of being served as lazy and unworthy. Honestly, Father Abe was not the only one who held this mindset. He was just rather mean about it. Most of my other interactions with my community speak about the "other" with pity as though the outcasts need tough love. A few years later a teacher criticized the welfare program because she'd seen women on welfare driving hummers with their professional nail job. This section is taken from the Author's Journal (February 2013).

*On the way home from the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Diocesan conference all of us in the car debriefed all that we had learned at the conference. I was driving, Mr. Brown in the back seat and Ms. Jane in the passenger seat.*

Mr. Brown was the math teacher for our upper grade students and had been teaching at Our Lady for over 20 years. I loved visiting with Mr. Brown because he was one of the few people in my life who shared many of my values and beliefs. Early in my time at Our Lady we discovered our shared values and often talked about politics, religion, and how we could solve the problems of the world. He also became a regular passenger in my car whenever we had to caravan to a Diocesan event. Ms. Jane was new to our school and this was her first year as a teacher's aide. She was a retired Kindergarten teacher with a passion for children and held ultra-conservative views.

*Being aware of Ms. Jane's views I warned Mr. Brown that our usual conversations would not be well received. He chuckled and said, "So I shouldn't lead off with politics?" "Only if you want to have a debate," I replied. The drive to the conference was very pleasant as we shared stories about our college days, early teaching careers, family stories, and how we met our spouses. On the drive home we talked about the topics from the conference; diversity, serving the poor, and other social justice matters. When the topic of the poor came up Ms. Jane stated that she didn't think people needed to get free money from the government. I glanced at Mr. Brown in my review mirror. I was thinking, "Don't take the bait." He didn't hear my inner voice and replied, "What do mean?" "They all drive around in their hummers, with their painted nails, and all their kids. They're just stealing from us tax payers" Ms. Jane explained. Mr. Brown said "I'm sure there are people who manipulate the system but there are plenty of people who benefit and use the services to return to the workforce." He continued, "We should get rid of the entire system because of a few individuals?" Ms. Jane argued that it was more than a few individuals and expressed that "those" people should have to work for their money just like she did. (Author's Journal, February 2013)*

She summed up the entire welfare system based on her interaction with one woman who she observed as “working the system.” Ms. Jane’s solution was to take away welfare so that they had to work for their money just like her. I was proud of Mr. Brown and appreciated his willingness to discuss the matter. Truthfully, I was a little envious that he could express his opinions and I had to be so careful for fear of jeopardizing my job. During my doctoral training I was driven to challenge, question, critique, and look for the hidden messages. I wanted to jump into that debate but worried about the ramifications. This was a perfect opportunity to I make the words to *All Are Welcome* come to life and bring it home to Our Lady of Guadalupe? I’m frustrated because we’re not encouraged to discuss these questions or critique our attempts enact this call to welcome all. This next section is from the Author’s Journal (February, 2011).

*The second Diocesan Conference held in 2011 presented the topic “Diversity and the Call to Unity”. The information was extremely interesting, however, I was struck with how much the Catholic Church doesn’t put these teachings into action. I question if the Church believes that they are following these teachings or it sounds nice but they’re just going to continue doing their own thing. The speaker talked about a diverse group of people who make up one Catholic face. Scripturally speaking “one body many parts”. Interestingly, while the population of this community is mostly Hispanic all of the song selections were in English. This would have been a wonderful opportunity to practice diversity among our very own community. The speaker talked about “enculturation” and making our faith come alive to transform who we are as humans. He explained how much our own culture impacts the way we hear the Gospel message and experience the world around us, especially our children who live in an ethnocentric world where they believe everyone around them is like them. They see and experience the world based on their own culture which is passed down to them by their family and traditions. It’s our job as teachers to help children widen their lenses and begin seeing the world through the eyes of the “other”.*

He then included the “Armor of God” with his own descriptions of the various parts of the scripture.

*From a simplistic point of the view it sounds nice, and gives leaders a sense of encouragement to go out and “spread the good news” and “tell the Truth” about the Gospel. However, critically speaking because of its simplicity it neglects many aspects of the idea of diversity within the Catholic Church.*

*A leader always “tells the truth” even when challenging.*

*This doesn’t take into account the grey areas of Truth. Whose truth are we supposed to “always tell”? What happens when the truth we once knew becomes questionable?*

*He explains that a leader is supposed to be “just”, meaning be “fair” to everyone.*

*Many would interpret this as giving everyone the same thing, which is actually the opposite of what I would describe as just. I believe we should give what is needed to create the most opportunities for that individual regardless if I’ve given the same thing to another individual who may not have the same needs.*

*A leader believes in “God’s promises even when there is no proof”.*

*This sure leaves many things open for discussion but then I guess that wouldn't be "faithful" leadership. What promises are we referring to? Whose interpretation of the Gospel are we to use?*

*A leader is supposed to have a "peaceful spirit that comes from knowing he/she is a child of God."*

*What happens when the very church that has given her the foundation for her faith begins treating her or those she loves as less than a "child of God"? What happens to this "peaceful spirit"?*

*Lastly, a leader is "familiar with the scriptures" and should live as Christ lived with "truth, justice, love, hope, and faith."*

*All sounds great to me but again, how I interpret this message is probably very different from how many at this conference interpret the message.*

Being a "shepherd" means we are to follow Christ as our shepherd and allow Him to guide us in our lives. Separately the speaker talks about how we are called to be shepherds and are responsible for tending to the flock of our community through our own gifts and talents. (Handout from Arturo Chavez, Ph.D: Mexican American Catholic College)

I found his handout on the six steps of Intercultural Respect to be a valuable resource. Sadly, this was only a handout, he spent very little time talking about each of these steps. He missed a great opportunity to help each of us examine where we fall on

this spectrum. This would have taken his presentation from traditional lecture style to a critical democracy framework. Allowing us to look into our own actions and beliefs to see how we relate and respond to cultural differences. As educators who interact with various cultures every day we need to examine how we view differences, and how our own values and experiences influence the way we interact with our students.

The six steps of “Intercultural Respect” are as follows.

1. Denial—there are no differences
2. Defense—differences are categorized into good and bad
3. Minimization—differences aren’t really important
4. Acceptance—willingness to accept differences and live together without judgment
5. Adaptation—include differences within my own perspective of the world and find empathy
6. Integration—difference is integrated in my identity

(Based on Milton J. Bennett’s *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity*.)

### **Theme 5: Discipline**

“Can empathy be taught?” one of my teachers asked me. She was frustrated at the lack of empathy some of her fourth graders had for each other. She was trying so hard to make them understand each other’s feelings. I’ve had similar conversations with children of all ages and could relate to her frustration. I believe part of the problem is that often educators, including myself, get wrapped up in covering the core academic subjects and we don’t want to take the time to work through social conflicts as they occur. We might provide a scripted solution and send the students on their way leaving questions unanswered. One of the strategies that I observed at Our Lady was the guilt method. Coming from a public school I was not used to hearing references to Jesus in daily

conversations with students. Moreover, using Jesus as a way to impart guilt on a child was a foreign concept to me. The goal of a critical democracy is to help students build a community where they recognize their connection to other members and understand their responsibility to and for others. This is not the goal of the guilt method. With the guilt method the child understands that they have not pleased the teacher and/or Jesus and then they are shamed into making a different choice. What follows is a combination of a few journal entries that illustrate the shift in discipline methods from guilt to forgiveness.

### **Whose Heart Did You Break?**

*When I first began working at Our Lady of Guadalupe I observed the culture of the school and how the teachers and principal interacted with each other. One day a child was brought to the office for making a bad choice. I honestly don't remember what the child had done because I was so shocked when the principal told him that he broke Jesus' heart. I thought, "What? Did you really say that?" I saw the remorse and guilt in the child. This was a common disciplinary practice of our teachers, principal and staff. They would ask a child who had made a wrong choice why they broke Jesus' heart or they would ask the child "whose heart did you break?" and the child would answer with their head hanging down in shame, "Jesus". Talk about breaking hearts, my heart was pierced the first time I heard that. The old adage "Catholic Guilt" took on a whole new meaning. As I began getting more comfortable and earning the respect of my teachers I would interject, "and Jesus forgives you no matter what." A few months later I had personal conversations with some of the teachers about the importance of forgiveness and love. I don't want children growing up with a guilty conscience or believing they are actually breaking Jesus' heart. I want children to make loving and respectful choices because they're thinking about the impact of their choice and how it affects their community not because they feel guilty. Two years later in my first year as principal I didn't hear that phrase used once!! Halleluiaah!*

### **Policy Handbook Meeting-A Missed Opportunity**

Here is another example of the attempt to use guilt to make students conform.

The school year had ended, I was taking over as principal, and it was time to look ahead



to the next year. I gathered the teachers to discuss the current student/parent handbook to see if there were any changes that they would like to make. Of course I had my own thoughts about what changes I would like to make, but I wanted to provide the staff with opportunities to make decisions about their school and taking active leadership roles in their community. How could I begin practicing and teaching critical democracy? One way was to open the discussion of the parent/student handbook to the staff. I realized later that I should have included our parents and even students in this discussion as well. It's a learning process. This memory is from the meeting I held with my staff. It demonstrates the gaps in my own ability to practice critical democracy as well as offers insight into the mentality of some staff members.

*During our discussion one of the teacher's aides wanted to discuss the discipline section of the handbook. She said that students needed to spend more time in Confession because if children knew that they would have to go to Confession after misbehaving they would be less likely to repeat the bad behavior. She continued talking about how important it was for these kids to know about and experience Confession. Her biggest selling point was that this would reduce discipline problems. I must admit I didn't ask for other teachers' opinions. I was a novice administrator and let my emotions and misguided expectations get the best of me. I was angry. I took a breath and said, "Let's make sure we use the term 'Reconciliation.' Vatican II shifted the emphasis from confession of sins to reconciliation and forgiveness." Then I proposed, "I'm concerned about using Reconciliation as a punishment; that's not its purpose." She began back-pedaling saying, "I didn't mean it should be a punishment, I just think that kids should know about it since it's part of the Catholic Faith." Another teacher chimed in and said, "Our kids receive Communion every Friday. We SEE them do this, but we don't see them go to Confession." I reminded them, "Well Reconciliation isn't part of the Mass so we wouldn't see them receive that sacrament, that's something parents would arrange." The teacher replied, "The parents don't even go; they're surely not taking their children." I could tell that the teacher's aide was not going to let go of this and so I thanked her for the suggestion and explained that this was something we could discuss later with the religious director who was absent from the meeting. I quickly changed the subject and moved on. (Author's Journal, June 2011)*

Afterwards I remember thinking about how surprised I was by this teaching assistant's comments. I shouldn't have been surprised, as I've been observing this school for the past two years and knew the mindset of this person. However, I was completely caught off guard. Her initial idea was that when kids make bad choices we could send them to Confession and this practice would deter them from making bad choices in the future. The idea that we (teachers and staff) would hand out Confessions is to me completely absurd and actually goes against Catholic teachings. From a technical standpoint our children are exempt from the expectation that they receive Reconciliation regularly. In addition, the mass includes a "Confession of Sins" as part of the preparation for receiving the Eucharist. Every mass we all state, "Lord I am not worthy to receive you but only say the word and I shall be healed". This is the recognition that we are sinful humans in need of God's forgiveness. So this teaching assistant's statement that children "need" to go to Confession before receiving Communion is erroneous. Such a disciplinary method was not something that I wanted at Our Lady of Guadalupe; it was completely counterproductive to critical democracy. However, I noticed my own resistance to other points of view to have a place at the discussion. I was not interested in listening to her position or even considering it for further examination. I wanted to quickly shut it down and move on. In a true critical democracy I would have opened up the discussion for further examination to explore the impact of Confessions on the culture of the school. In retrospect I should have provided an opportunity to have dialogue about the evolution of Reconciliation and considered possible benefits of educating our students

on this Sacrament. This dialectic tension could have been a source of growth and transformation for all.

### **Theme 6: Critical Democracy in Action-Service Learning**

As an advocate of children and democracy educators must instill a sense of responsibility for ALL elements of this earth: humans, fellow creatures, and the environment. We must all work together as a community for the betterment of this world. This sense of responsibility needs to be extended to those living outside one's own comfort zone; whether that be beyond the community, city, state, or country. Students need to understand that democracy, as John Dewey states, is participatory and community driven. I looked for ways that students could actively participate in and make connections with their community. Social justice is a significant aspect of Catholic identity and is why many of us progressive Catholics hold on to this deeply traditional religion. I wanted to introduce service learning at Our Lady of Guadalupe and illustrate how acts of service connect us (Catholics) to our call for social justice and critical democracy. Helping students make connections to the people and world around them allows them the opportunity to understand their role and responsibility to "the other". This last section is devoted to a school wide service project that was the springboard for discussions about poverty, charity, and justice. For this community a service project of this magnitude was new, challenging, and exciting,

I had been the assistant principal for two years and Jackie was getting ready to retire. I was preparing to take over as principal and excited about the opportunity to provide a few service projects for the students. During one of the sessions I attended at

National Catholic Education Association back in April we discussed instilling the importance of service in our children and providing them opportunities to serve their greater community. The presenter talked about allowing students to “feel” their service and make real connections with those they serve. Having “felt” my service before, I understood what he meant and agreed that this was important for our students. I also knew that this was a perfect opportunity to practice elements of critical democracy.

Normally our school collected canned goods at Thanksgiving, baby items at Christmas, and monetary donations year-round to help support relief efforts when natural calamities occurred. These efforts usually translated to cleaning out the family pantry of unused food, or mom running to the store to pick up a few baby items so that her child had something to offer during the “baby item” collection, or a parent writing a check to send to school for the relief effort. All of these were worthy charitable activities but none of them directly involved students or took them outside of their comfort zone and “feel” their service. This act of service was near and dear to my heart. I wanted a school-wide service project where students could be involved, and where they could experience the needs of their community personally. Each year just before Thanksgiving break the school would host a Thanksgiving meal for the school children and their families. It was a pleasant social gathering for our school families and provided some elements of community building, but we had many other events that allowed us to bond as a community. I pondered, what if we turned our Thanksgiving meal into a meal for the hungry of our local community? During our summer calendar meeting I proposed this idea to the teachers and staff.

*It's the first week of June and a large number of the staff returned to help plan the calendar for the upcoming school year. We all sat around the conference table, refreshments in hand, and started placing events on the calendar. When we reached the month of November and it was time to set the date for the annual Thanksgiving meal I broached the subject of a school wide service project. I began with, "So, I had an idea and wanted to run it by you and get your feedback. What if we turned our Thanksgiving family meal into a meal for the hungry of our community? We (the staff) could donate the turkeys and hams, each grade level could be in charge of certain items on the menu, and the older students could help prepare the food and serve it to our community in need." The staff was intrigued and any concerns about giving up their thanksgiving meal wasn't even discussed. A few were a bit skeptical that our students could cook and serve this meal. "So the kids would make the meal? Can they handle the responsibility of preparing food? Can they really serve the food without making a mess? I've seen them in the cafeteria making a mess with their own lunches." The Pre-K and Kinder teachers were enthusiastic about the project and offered their suggestions. One excited Pre-K teacher said, "Our kids can make place mats and we can put together toiletry bags as a parting gift. We can get our parents to donate toothbrushes, soap, deodorant, and small bottles of water. We'll have the kids decorate the bags." The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers jumped in, "Our kids could make cards for our guests and wrap the silverware." The excitement was infectious, by the end of the conversation the entire staff was a buzz about this exciting endeavor. It was decided we would prepare a Thanksgiving meal for the hungry of our community. (Author's Journal, June 2011)*

Convincing Father wasn't so easy. I had to work it gradually into a conversation and somehow make him think HE was giving me direction on how to organize such an event. Once he recognized that this event would make great publicity for Our Lady of Guadalupe and more specifically himself, he agreed to allow us to pursue with a few stipulations and safety precautions. They weren't unreasonable stipulations, but they were things I'd already had in place. I thanked Father Abe for "his" insight and guidance. Next I looked for support from the parents.

*It was the first Home and School meeting of the year and I was proposing this project to the parents. I wasn't sure if they were going to be excited, or worried about allowing strangers on the school grounds, or disappointed that their annual*

*Thanksgiving meal could change. As I distributed the calendar of events for the year I proposed the idea of a Thanksgiving meal for our community. I explained the process, preparations, and organization of the event and explained the precautions we would take to ensure their children's safety. I also invited them to participate and share in their child's service learning experience. I was pleasantly surprised when I had full support and excitement from the parents. They were excited that their children were participating in this activity and not a single one complained about any aspect. Parents offered donations, support, and marketing. A few shared that this was why they had their children at a Catholic school for opportunities such as this. I was thrilled by how supportive the parents were as though they had been waiting for such an experience. (Author's Journal, July 2011)*

Now to sell it to the kids. I wasn't sure how the students would feel about giving up their annual Thanksgiving meal. At first a few were disappointed that they wouldn't get to eat the delicious meal themselves. Some asked why we had to do this. Most just went with the flow and waited to be told what to do. When I told the students about our plans I explained the importance of serving and how blessed we all are that we have a Thanksgiving meal to eat every year. The students were on board. When the time drew closer to Thanksgiving the kids started preparing for the day and becoming more and more excited about their involvement.

*The day before the event my 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students gathered in the cafeteria and waited for instruction. I don't know if they were more excited about missing class or getting to "play" with their food. There were turkeys to be shred, milk to be measured, pudding to be stirred, pie crusts to be filled, and green bean casserole to be prepared. We divided up the students, gave them instructions, and let them go to work. What a joy, watching our students work together, reading the directions for their pudding pie, measuring milk, mixing cans of green beans with cream of mushroom soup, and piling their turkey meat into the large bins. My cafeteria manager was not really happy that the students were shredding the turkey for the turkey stuffing casserole that she made every year. She didn't think the students were shredding it properly. I kindly reminded her that it would taste the same and it provided the kids a great learning opportunity. She still wasn't happy, but complied. (November 2011)*

*The next day before sending the kids to their classrooms I met with them to discuss their upcoming experience and things they might witness. I began by asking,*

*Q-How many of you ate dinner last night?*

*A-All raised their hands.*

*Q-How many of you ate breakfast?*

*A-Most raised their hands.*

*Q-How many of you are going to eat dinner tonight?*

*A-All raised their hands.*

*Q-What's the first thing you do when you wake up in the morning?*

*A-Go to the bathroom.*

*“Now I want you to imagine that you skipped dinner last and didn't eat any breakfast this morning, and you weren't sure when or where you would get your next meal. You slept on floor outside, because you don't have a bed or house. You haven't had a shower since you don't have access to running water and you don't have a toilet.” Noses started to crinkle and eyes began to widen. I heard a few “Ewe gross!” and “That's nasty”. I shared that some of the people who we invited to our meal may not have bathed, eaten, or changed their clothes recently. Our job was still to serve them with love, honor, and respect. I shared with them my own experience cleaning out the home of a recluse while in high school. I revealed my own feelings of shock and sadness when I witnessed this man's filthy and unhealthy living conditions. The kids listened and asked a few “what if” questions? I answered and used them for further discussion. I read to them a few excerpts from my book about service by Mother Teresa. We ended in prayer and returned to the classrooms before reconvening in the cafeteria at lunch-time.*

*The moment arrived! Kids entered the cafeteria, smiles on their faces and excitement in their step. I had never seen children more excited about filling cups with lemonade or walking a plate of food to the table for a guest. Students took turns serving the food, welcoming our guests when they arrived, preparing their drinks, seating them, serving dessert, and cleaning up trash. Our orchestra played their Christmas repertoire for our guests who appreciated the kindness and generosity of our children. I had a couple of students say to me during the lunch that this was the best day ever. One student said that she loved serving and wanted to do it again.*

It was a great day and one that we repeated annually. A parent wrote me a letter the next day saying that her daughter couldn't stop talking about that day and thanked me

for providing such an eye-opening experience. I knew this experience would touch the hearts of some but didn't expect such an overwhelming positive response. I hoped it would inspire our children to study issues surrounding poverty and homelessness, to allow their experience to take them deeper. This service project allowed our children to see with their own eyes the people in their local community who were hungry and homeless. The last year I was part of this project during my preparation discussion I asked the kids to think about these questions: why are there people in the community who are homeless and hungry? What are we doing as responsible citizens to care for each other and change the world in a way where we wouldn't need to feed them a meal? I didn't want to take away from their excitement about serving but I also didn't want them to think this was enough. I hoped that this would ignite in them a curiosity about why the world has poverty and what might eliminate poverty. I wanted them to ask what they could do to join the discourse and transform their community.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of sharing these experiences and analyses is to convey the story of a Catholic school principal negotiating the highly patriarchal and conservative structures of a private Catholic elementary school in West Texas. The major themes in my story illustrate the various obstacles to implementing critical-democratic pedagogy in a highly patriarchal Catholic school. In the first theme I illustrate that the formal structures of boards, committees, and commissions give an illusion of participatory democracy. My experiences with these organizational structures reveal the intimidation of clergy, silencing of the laity, and manipulation of the system. I share my struggles and



frustrations with being an observer of these organizations and not valued as an active participant. I identify how I navigate the system to make my voice heard and promote my agenda to complete my goals for the school. The second theme discloses the adversarial relationship between Father Abe and myself demonstrating the influence a pastor has on his parish and school. Writing about Father's discriminatory and callous actions while therapeutic for me also enabled the reader to "relive" my experiences and become what Ellis and Bochner calls a "coparticipant in dialogue (744)." I invite the reader to converse with me on matters of curriculum, discipline, and identity and the successes and struggles I had implementing critical-democratic pedagogy.

The critical analysis of my narrative in the third and fourth themes reveal my efforts to introduce and practice critical democracy at Our Lady of Guadalupe through professional development and shared decision-making. It also exposes the times I failed to be inclusive of opposing ideology where I should have utilized growth opportunities associated with dialectic tension. My reflections exemplify the impact emotions played on my choices dealing with people; at times causing me to shut down dialogue rather than encourage discussion. The disciplinary practices at Our Lady evolved from an old school punitive method to one that reflects forgiveness, empathy, and thoughtful decision-making about one's choices. The fifth theme on gender and sexual identity illustrates the negative impact the Church has on the formation of one's identity. Writing about my experiences involving people who struggle with gender roles and homosexuality in the Church humanizes the issue. The reader should feel my empathy for the 4<sup>th</sup> grade girl who hopes to become a priest and relive my outrage and fury with

the priest who demonizes homosexuals. These stories should evoke emotion that inspires the reader to recognize the oppressive nature of the Catholic Church especially regarding issues of gender and sexuality.

The final theme proves that critical-democratic pedagogy can exist in a Catholic school; even one that is highly conservative and patriarchal. The experience with the school wide service project is one that I am proud to share. It illuminates the Catholic stance on social justice and puts this belief into action. The analysis of my reflections indicate the willingness and excitement of the school community to participate in service learning; providing a catalyst for dialogue about poverty, homelessness, and other social issues. I divulge my strategy for persuading Father Abe to allow the school's participation in the service project. Similar to the manipulation involved with board meetings, I swayed Father into believing that this service project was his vision and the implementation was under his complete control. Here again, my actions were unbecoming; and sharing as such, humbling.

To make an honest and thorough analysis I had to critique my actions and acknowledge my part in manipulating the system and using people for the attainment of my own goals. "Often our accounts of ourselves are unflattering and imperfect, but human and believable. The text is used, then, as an agent of self-understanding and ethical discussion (Ellis and Bochner, 2004, 748)." My strategy to use my friend James to manipulate Father Abe; or intentionally forgetting to mention events to prevent Father from attending; or shutting down dialogue when it opposes my beliefs is certainly not flattering but is very human. The text of these experiences, virtuous and flawed, provides

an understanding of my successes, failures, and struggles. In addition, it presents an opportunity for “ethical discussion.” Through these stories I hope the reader finds a deeper understanding of social and cultural implications of the Catholic Church on people, social institutions, and the global community.

In the next chapter I explore the overall implications of this research and how critical democracy could be utilized to prepare our Catholic school children to be socially responsible citizens in this world. Next I discuss significant findings based on my research as well as insights on my silences I kept throughout my experiences. I hope that current and future Catholic school administrators can use my research to find ways to infuse critical democracy into their schools. Moreover, I hope and pray that pastors will have a better understanding of their influence on schools and administrators and make greater effort to work in harmony with their school principals.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CRITICAL-DEMOCRATIC CONNECTIONS**

In chapter 4, I shared my personal experience with working as a Catholic school administrator. Using an autoethnographic method I made social and cultural connections. Through my five-year journey, I illustrated the patriarchy of the Catholic Church and revealed constraints hierarchical leadership has on the progress of a Catholic elementary school. I communicated my attempts to introduce critical democracy to Our Lady of Guadalupe, including my failures and successes. In this final chapter I provide insights into the process of making myself the subject of my research, and offer lessons learned from my lived experience of analyzing those personal reflections. I question silences I kept and assumptions I made based on my bias. I draw conclusions about larger issues regarding the patriarchal structure of the Catholic Church and the obstacles that stand in the way of transforming Catholic schools into a place where critical pedagogy is the norm and children leave prepared for critical democracy in a global community. I suggest changes to structures that impede critical democracy and provide Pope Francis and current Biblical support for how this vision fits into the goals of Catholic education. I disclose how this experience impacts my current role as an administrator at my new school, and the differences/similarities between the two. Lastly, I share my vision for a Catholic elementary school grounded in critical democracy. I

include an in depth explanation of autoethnography and identify the benefits of this methodology in the appendix.

### **The Autoethnographic Process-I am the Research**

The topic of my dissertation shifted from its inception in large part because I was moving to Jude, Texas and had taken an administrative position at a private Catholic school. My initial thought was to study the impact of critical pedagogy on a public school classroom or even an entire school. I love personal stories and knew that qualitative research was more interesting to me than quantitative analysis. However, when I took the job at a private Catholic school I was perplexed as to how I could continue my original research. In November of 2009 I returned to Greensboro for my comprehensive oral exam with my committee. Prior to my comps I met with my advisor Dr. Shapiro to discuss my dissertation and how I would proceed. We were sitting in the student center coffee shop and I was sharing a few of my experiences at Our Lady of Guadalupe over the past four months and expressing my frustration with the lack of critical democracy. Dr. Shapiro looked at me and asked why don't you write about that? Your narrative and story would be your research. I must have looked like a deer caught in head lights because Dr. Shapiro asked me why I looked uncomfortable. "Does that worry you?" he asked. I remember thinking, why would anyone want to hear what I have to say? Also, I would be vulnerable and exposed. It was the same feeling I had the first time I had to sing in public for a group of judges. Dr. Shapiro alleviated my fear

however, by explaining the process of autoethnography and the currere<sup>5</sup> method. He also shared that many researchers find this method rather therapeutic, this appealed to me. The more I thought about myself as the subject, the more excited I got about writing this dissertation. This was a perfect opportunity to tell my story; make my observations about the Catholic Church and Catholic schools.

I read about autoethnography and a few examples of researchers who utilize this method. Everything I read expressed the vulnerability of this method and warned about the intense emotions that the subject would feel. I was already depressed about living in Jude and worried that this process might intensify my overwhelming sadness. While I did experience intense feelings of anger, sadness, and rage, I found the process therapeutic just as the research indicated. I'm sure the customers and employees at my local Starbucks wondered why I was sitting in front of a computer crying or intensely pounding away on the keyboard. I didn't mind: I was releasing my emotions and pouring them into my story, which would reveal deep insight into the culture and structures of a conservative, predominately Latino Catholic elementary school. What I wasn't expecting was that this process revealed my own biases as a white, middle-class, feminist, Catholic woman. Through the analysis of my reflections I detect my own white privilege and how it impacts my view of the community I served. As a white, middle class, educated, woman, I recognized certain expectations I had to "save" the people of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Was I perceived as the superior white woman who thinks her beliefs are

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<sup>5</sup> Currere, proposed by William Pinar, is the investigation and examination of one's own experience. (Pinar, 1975)

better and therefore imposed on the community of Our Lady of Guadalupe? There is a balance between exposing the hegemonic structures and practices so that those who accept the established norms can recognize the possibilities for positive change versus elevating myself as their superior in need of helping those less fortunate. As I indicate in my article cited in the previous chapter this is the potential problem with creating what Martin Luther King Jr. borrows from Martin Buber as, I-it<sup>6</sup> relationships. Relationships that are based on I-it “relegates persons to the status of things.” As the outsider coming into this community I had to take ownership of my own biases and hold myself accountable to avoid elevating myself above the rest of the community.

### **Silences**

My silences add another level of insight to the larger story. I noticed that I left out many positive experiences at Our Lady of Guadalupe. I left out important people who actually helped me maintain my hope and work through my depression in my professional life. I only briefly mention Sister Alice and completely left out a former principal of the school, Ruth, who were both supportive of my goals and visions. We would have secret discussions lamenting the conservative direction of Pope Benedict and the racist, sexist, and bigoted prejudices of Father Abe. My reflections illustrate more anger and leaves out the times I experienced joy. I didn't share that the despair I felt was kept secret and those in my professional life believed me to be happy and satisfied with my job. During the “going away” party my staff prepared they took time to reflect on the

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<sup>6</sup> Martin Luther King Jr. quotes Martin Buber's “I-it and I-thou” relationships to discuss the effects of segregation.

time I spent at Our Lady of Guadalupe. The phrase I heard most from the people I worked with was, “She’s always so positive and bubbly. She always had a smile on her face.” I am in general a happy person whose tries to find the good in people and make the best out of bad situations. Interestingly, my journal reflections don’t illustrate that side of me.

My writing focused so much on the anger and frustration I felt towards Father Abe and the hypocrisy of the Catholic structure. As I think back on the positive experiences, I remember them being clouded by the critique, judgement, and control of Father Abe. He even wanted to dictate where and when my going away party should be held. My secretary, Mary had already secured the location and set the time for a surprise party. When Mary felt obligated to invite Father Abe, he told her she needed to move the party to a different location and change the time. He then called me into his office, ruined the surprise by instructing me to see to it that my party would occur on his terms. No wonder I didn’t focus on the positive events in my life. If I was lucky enough to escape Father Abe’s brash outbursts, than I was in a state of constant worry that it was just a matter of time before he would attack.

The other reason my writing focused on many negative aspects of my journey is because my writing was therapeutic and liberating. My journal was one of the few places where I could be completely honest and open about my beliefs and feelings. I would pour myself into my journal and release the anger and frustration without fear losing my job. I knew my stance on issues such as marriage and gender equality, abortion, and contraceptives would not be accepted at Our Lady of Guadalupe. I didn’t share that I was



afraid that if I exposed these beliefs I would lose my job and be forced to work for a public school district with their own problems. I believed the issues that I would face in the public school system in Jude were worse than the issues I was facing at Our Lady. This realization made my journaling experience vital to my sanity and helped me negotiate the structures and obstacles I faced daily.

### **Revelations from the Research**

When I set out on this journey I hoped that my research would reveal strategies and suggestions for transforming Catholic schools across the United States of America into educational environments that fully embrace critical democracy. Instead my research reveals ways to navigate through the conservative and patriarchal structures of a Catholic school to implement activities, projects, and minor changes based on critical democracy. My hope for a critical democracy at Our Lady of Guadalupe looks bleak based on a large portion of my reflections. The research illustrates the numerous obstacles that stood in the way of critical democracy, most notably the single relationship between the pastor and principal. "...if we want real fundamental changes in our social-economic-political structures, we cannot engage in that struggle by relying on institutions that are the embodiments of the very structures that need changing (Purpel, taken from Shapiro, 2009, p. 16). It became evident through the years at Our Lady that any hope for a complete transformation was unattainable due to the leadership of the pastor. What research indicates (Curuso, 2012 and Greely, 1976) and my experience illustrates is that the pastor of the school has the ultimate authority to support progress or maintain the ultra-conservative stance of the Vatican. On the few occasions when I shared my

opposing view with Father Abe he would reprimand me and reiterate his authority over the school, church, and me. As long as I was working for Father Abe I realized that I could not change the institution of the Church and/or school which is the embodiment of patriarchy and therefore hopes for a complete transformation to critical democracy was impossible.

The process of autoethnography revealed an oppressive culture that failed to recognize their own voice or claim their seat at the democratic table. Catholic patriarchy created a hegemony around the Catholic community of Our Lady of Guadalupe and I venture to say the Catholic community of Jude, Texas. Even when individuals recognized fault with the structure and/or religious authority figures it was coupled with guilt. This guilt was displayed when they would make the sign of the cross and say “forgive me Lord” after making disparaging remarks about the Church or priest.

My experience with my home church and upbringing influenced my expectations about what constitutes a “good” Catholic. Those expectations were shaken as illustrated in the time Father Abe asked me if one of my current teachers, Mrs. Gomez, was a “good” Catholic. He was struggling to find someone to work for him and was interested in hiring Mrs. Gomez as his secretary. I replied, “what do you mean by ‘good’?” I knew the answers he was looking for but wanted to hear him identify the specific expectations. Father Abe said “well does she attend church every Sunday?” I said, “as far as I know. I don’t check.” “Does she follow the teachings of the church regarding marriage and family?” I said, “I know she was married in the Church and she has seven children.” I also included “she’s a great teacher, loves her students, works diligently to meet their

varying needs, and while raising her seven children obtained her teaching degree. I don't think she's going to leave the teaching profession." That didn't matter to Father, the fact that she held a degree made her more appealing to him to be his secretary. This understanding of "good" Catholic was not held by Father alone. I often witnessed other people at Our Lady describing someone as "good" based on their weekly Mass attendance and willingness to accept children in their family.

My expectations about what a relationship between priest and laity should be was influenced by my past experience and observations of the adults in my life interacting with Church authority figures as equals. Experiencing my own oppression and abuse from Father Abe was shocking as I entered the relationship with different expectations. In addition, the belief that the priest was superior to the laity was reflected in the interactions between the priests in Jude and the congregants. Father Abe was not the only one asserting his authority over the Catholics in Jude. My reflections reveal two other priests in Jude who perpetuated the patriarchal stronghold and reinforced a message that is contrary to the spirit of Vatican II.

### **Evaluation and Suggestions**

What makes my version of Catholicism better? I must first explain that this is not MY version of Catholicism. The Catholic identity that I hold and value which reflects the essence of critical democracy is grounded in liberation theology, the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, the writings of liberal Catholic scholars such as Mary Henold, and supported by Catholic organizations such as the American Catholic Council (ACC). If we, Catholic educators and administrators, don't utilize critical pedagogy and prepare

our children for a critical democracy, then we are destined to perpetuate the status quo. We are detached from the world we live in and those around us. Children need preparation for society where they are responsible to and for others. Children will not learn to find solutions to future problems if they don't learn how to think critically and problem solve. They won't learn how to recognize problems if they don't learn to critically analyze and question. They won't have the perseverance or determination to see a solution through to the end when met with obstacles and experience failures if they don't learn to hope and problem solve in times of distress. These are the significant lessons critical pedagogy teaches. Students need these skills so they can become responsible citizens of this society and global community.

Jesse Goodman's (1992) book *Elementary School for Critical Democracy* explains the importance of intentionally teaching democratic principles in an elementary school. Students need the opportunity to practice critical democracy so that they understand and respect different perspectives and recognize their connectivity and responsibility to humanity and the earth. Goodman points out that conflict is unavoidable but through these conflicts our students and staff are provided opportunities for dialogue enabling progress and growth for individuals and the community.

As stated before, students need to understand the participatory role of democracy (Dewey). Students need their schools to provide a community based on mutual respect, love, dialogue, and critical pedagogy. Cooperative learning can no longer be an isolated strategy for instruction, instead students need the skills to recognize problems, utilize resources, and determine strategies for reaching a solution together. As Alfie Kohn

suggests, children who actively practice decision-making are better prepared for democracy and the accountability to their community. When people share decision-making power they accept more responsibility for their community and see themselves as coauthors (Shapiro, 2006).

### **Validation for Catholic School Administrators**

Some who question the validity of critical democracy and whether it aligns with Catholic teaching need justification and proof. In my view the Biblical teachings of Jesus Christ reflect the principles of critical democracy. While Biblical teachings are used to justify multiple and opposing viewpoints my understanding and interpretations of the actions of Christ reflect an ideology consistent with justice, equality, and love for one another. Understanding the Bible in relation to history, context, and authorship is but one method of interpreting Biblical text and the actions of Jesus. Proponents of a literal interpretation of the Bible believe God moved the hand of the authors to write His words for the followers of Christ. I, along with many theologians and religious scholars, are deeply troubled with a literal interpretation of the Bible and believe that the authors were inspired by the life of Jesus Christ and their devotion to God; their understanding of spirituality and interpretation of theology influenced their writings. As someone who believes that subjectivity impacts one's writing I strongly believe that Biblical text was influenced by the author's values, experiences, and culture. This Biblical understanding allows me to find evidence in the life of Jesus Christ to advocate for critical democracy in Catholic schools. I focus on the Gospel writings found in the New Testament describing Jesus's actions, parables, and teachings. Stories in the Bible describe Jesus as a radical

who challenged religious leaders, pushed norms, and modeled servant leadership. Jesus performed miracles and preached a message that demonstrated His dedication to the marginalized and poor. Stories such as: the Samaritan woman at the well who was surprised that a Jew would dare speak to her, a Samaritan<sup>7</sup>; the attempted stoning of the woman accused of adultery when Jesus reminded the accusers that we are all sinners<sup>8</sup>; the parable of “The Good Samaritan” when Jesus answered the question “Who is our neighbor” by identifying those who are outcast by society<sup>9</sup>; and the Washing of the Disciples Feet<sup>10</sup>, model serving one another and exemplifies our responsibility for all of society. Jesus taught His followers to love not judge; insisted that we care for the poor, hungry, and oppressed; and not be constrained by rules and regulations that impede equality for humanity. If the term critical democracy had been invented during the life of Christ, Jesus would be calling His followers to practice critical democracy.

### **The American Catholic Council and The Catholic Bill of Rights and Responsibilities**

In addition, leaders of the American Catholic Council (ACC), in a collaborative effort with the people of the Catholic Church created a document that supports a democratic Church called the Catholic Bill of Rights and Responsibilities (CBRR). I mentioned the CBRR in the first chapter when discussing the inspiration for connecting critical democracy with Catholic education. Members of the ACC believe strongly in the

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<sup>7</sup> John 4: 7-26

<sup>8</sup> John 8: 1-11

<sup>9</sup> Luke 10: 25-37

<sup>10</sup> John 13: 1-17

spirit of Vatican II and want to see the Catholic Church become more egalitarian and collegial. The CBRR not only outline what steps are necessary to make the Church more democratic it also details how the Church should implement these steps. Moreover, the writers of the CBRR researched Catholic doctrine and Canon Law to provide documented support from these sources for the implementation of the CBRR. For the purpose of my dissertation I focus on four of the Rights and Responsibilities; 1-Primacy of Conscience, 3-Universal Ministry, 7-Governance, and 10-Social Justice.

1. Primacy of Conscience -- Church teaching would be grounded in the experience of all the baptized—**regardless of gender or sexual orientation** --Church pronouncements on Catholic life would be preceded by **dialogue** among all the faithful -- Such pronouncements would take into account an analysis of the perceptions of Catholic people, in accord with sound scientific discipline and theological reflection. --Catechetics, consistent with Catholic norms and practice, would focus on **conscience formation and moral decision making**.

Primacy of Conscience is the foundation for moving away from the scripted Catholic practice to the application of our faith. This encourages what D'Antonio (1989) calls “intellectual autonomy” where we are permitted to think through the regulations and question the structures that are in place. I bolded the words that speak to the issue that arose throughout my reflections and analysis. The idea that we truly are all equal through our baptism regardless of “gender or sexual orientation” is paramount to the progress of the Church. The song I included, “All Our Welcome” would no longer be a hypocritical text put to a catchy tune but an honest reflection of our faith. Dialogue among all peoples

is not only encouraged but expected. Children should learn how to make moral decisions rather than told what decisions are right and wrong.

2. Universal Ministry --The Church will return to its earliest tradition of welcoming both **married and celibate** priests. --**Women** would freely discern and test their calls and would be **eligible for ordination** alongside their brothers. --Each community would have a meaningful voice in choosing married or celibate, women or men pastors.

Universal Ministry would tear down the patriarchal hierarchy and invite men and women, single and married, to sit together as true equals and minister to the people. This would transform the Church into a place where my little 4<sup>th</sup> grader would be welcome to accept her call to priestly ordination, and the boys and girls would no longer have to choose between marriage and celibacy. Women of the Catholic Church would be reflected in the religious leadership, thus enabling ministers to connect with their people on a personal level.

7. Governance --Parish councils and diocesan councils would be elected and would be **deliberative and empowered, not advisory** --The baptized faithful would have realistic and meaningful participation in rule making bodies (such as curial offices)--Episcopal pronouncements must have at their heart a **spirit of love and compassion**, consistent with the Gospel

The area of Governance would completely alter school boards and diocesan commissions. No longer would priests such as Father Abe or bishops for that matter be permitted to control every decision and aspect of the Catholic life agenda. Allowing councils and boards to be “deliberative and empowered” would balance the power between religious authorities and the laity. However, to ensure that other individuals do



not replace the authoritative role normally assumed by the priest, the leadership would need to facilitate these meetings with honest dialogue and a shared vision grounded in respect and a commitment to critical democracy.

10. Social Justice. --The Gospel message of Jesus which focuses on **the poor, the marginalized, and the sick** would become the primary role of the Church. --The “**preferential option for the poor**” would become the standard for judging decisions. --The Church would refocus its attention on **peace-making, equal justice for all, and real economic minimum standards for all**.

Social Justice is the one area that the Catholic Church continues promoting regardless of the conservative or liberal direction leadership takes. When the Church focuses on the needs of the “poor, the marginalized, and the sick,” it aligns itself with the goals of a critical democracy; a critical democracy focuses on creating “justice for all” and meeting the needs of those oppressed and marginalized.

### **Pope Francis**

Jorge Mario Bergoglio ordained as Pope Francis the year before I left Our Lady of Guadalupe brings a new hope to the Catholic Church. When he was first ordained, March 13, 2013, I must admit I was skeptical. I thought after a long line of conservative popes Catholics were doomed to continue moving in the same traditional pre-Vatican II direction. I should have known when Father Abe told me that he didn’t like Pope Francis that this new Pope would revitalize the Catholic Church. After the first few statements made by Pope Francis I was apprehensively excited about the prospects that lay ahead. He made his first bold statement by remaining in The Domus Sanctae Marthae, the great guesthouse named after St. Martha instead of moving into the Papal apartments. He is

the first pope in 110 years not to live in the large and more luxurious papal apartments (Wooden, 2013).

December of 2014 during his Christmas speech to religious leaders including the Curia and other bishops, Pope Francis publically criticized the leadership of the Church for their lack of attention to the poor and their obsession with power and greed. In her article “Pope Francis makes scathing critique of Vatican officials in Curia Speech” Stephanie Kirchgaessner (2014) states that Pope Francis charged the cardinals with a “scathing critique of the church’s highest-ranking officials, including a list of 15 “ailments” that he said plagued the Vatican’s power-hungry bureaucracy.” Pope Francis uses the phrase “pathology of power” to reprimand Church officials for behaving in ways that promote their own superiority and power over the people of the Church. Kirchgaessner quotes Pope Francis saying that the Church leaders are

Suffering from “existential schizophrenia. It’s the sickness of those who live a double life, fruit of hypocrisy that is typical of mediocre and progressive spiritual emptiness that academic degrees cannot fill. It’s a sickness that often affects those who, abandoning pastoral service, limit themselves to bureaucratic work, losing contact with reality and concrete people” (Pope Francis taken from Kirchgaessner).

More recently Christopher Hale (2015), journalist for *Time*, wrote “Pope Francis Isn’t Holding Back—And U.S. Politicians Should Watch Out,” an article that outlines the Pope’s vision for the global economy. Pope Francis was quoted describing the evils of capitalism as a “subtle dictatorship” and the “dung of the devil.” Pope Francis chastised those who are driven by capitalistic gains for allowing the “unfettered pursuit of money” to outweigh “the service of the common good.” Francis declared, “Let us say no to an

economy of exclusion and inequality, where money rules, rather than service. That economy kills. That economy excludes. That economy destroys Mother Earth.” Hale notes that during his speech, Pope Francis maintained a message devoted to the Gospel and life of Jesus Christ. He quoted the Pope saying, “It is a moral obligation. For Christians, the responsibility is even greater: it is a commandment. It is about giving to the poor and to peoples what is theirs by right (Pope Francis taken from Hale, 2015).” A “moral obligation” is precisely what ignites the fire for social progress and critical democracy in a Catholic school. Catholic school educators and administrators are “commanded” to serve the poor and marginalized. Pope Francis reminds us of our interconnectedness and responsibility to each other.

While I find Pope Francis’s statements and actions inspiring others have criticized him from jeopardizing the long held conservative tradition of the Roman Catholic Church. Catholics and non-Catholics who come from an ultra-conservative value system are uncomfortable and angry about his progressive and nontraditional statements. They believe Pope Francis should align himself with the conservative Curia and make strong statements and rulings in favor of more traditional conservative ideology. For example, American Cardinal Raymond Burke publically announced that politicians Senator Kerry and former Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, both Catholics, should be denied the Sacrament of Communion for their pro-choice stance. Pope Francis rejected Burke’s position and continued propelling the Church in a direction that departs from its conservative stance. Cardinal Burke denounced the Pope claiming that he is “misguiding the Church causing it to be ‘like ship without a rudder’ (Burke taken from Minor).”

Cardinal Burke has been demoted twice from his high level positions for unstated reasons. It appears as though Burke was unwilling to listen to the “signs of the time” as Pope Francis requested of church leaders and therefore Burke was removed from his position enabling Francis to infuse elements of critical democracy into the Catholic Church.

Cardinal Burke and other outspoken Catholics who continue publically criticizing the Pope’s agenda are not speaking for the majority of Catholics. Frank Bruni, columnist for the *New York Times*, stated that politicians who use their Catholic identity as a reason for rejecting issues such as marriage equality and abortion find alliance more with conservative Protestants than Catholics. Bruni shared the results of a survey in 2014 by the Public Religion Research Institute that 60 percent of Catholic Americans support marriage equality compared to only 34 percent of Evangelical Protestants. In general, Catholics as a majority align themselves with a more progressive, left platform now being promulgated by their leader in Rome. The actions and declarations of Pope Francis support the key elements of critical democracy. He has challenged the norm, rejected the status quo, and holds humanity accountable for each other and our earth. I am inspired by Pope Francis to continue critically-democratic pedagogy now in collaboration with the Church rather than despite the Church.

### **Further Research**

There are a number of areas that would benefit from further research. Hearing the stories of the parents, teachers, staff, and students from Our Lady of Guadalupe would add another layer to the larger cultural narrative. As we hear more experiences and

understand the stories of other people we come closer to actually knowing the truth. I wonder how the narrative would change under the leadership of Pope Francis who has many similarities to Pope John XXIII. Would his progressive expectations touch the hearts of the religious leaders in Jude, Texas? Would Father Abe change his beliefs and behaviors? How different would my life and goals for a critical democracy have been with a different pastor? I make a strong argument that the pastor of a Catholic school can either hinder or promote the vision of its principal. Having spent a year now working with a leader who values me and the people we serve, I agree with my assessment that the pastor plays an enormous role in the success of a Catholic school. Therefore, an examination of Catholic schooling under the leadership of a different pastor would be valuable and compliment the current research on this topic.

### **A Vision Being Realized**

Catholic school administrators need freedom to lead within a critical democracy framework. The rigid structures need to be challenged and questions encouraged. Just as students need to feel safe to question, so do administrators. Catholic patriarchy needs to be eliminated. The autoethnographic method permitted me to identify the positive changes and successes during my journey. The service project that I described in the previous chapter was just the beginning of the transformation that could have occurred at Our Lady of Guadalupe. Sister Carol Cimino, Ed.D. provided professional development to my staff. Being a progressive former Catholic school administrator I was fortunate to spend some personal time with Sister Carol. We were talking about my new role as principal and Sister Carol shared with me how exciting and important this new chapter in

my life would be. She said that I had the opportunity to shape and mold the school into what I wanted it to be; Our Lady of Guadalupe would be a reflection of me. I felt like Peter Parker discerning his new role as Spiderman when he was told by his Uncle Ben, “with great power comes great responsibility.” Sister Carol and Uncle Ben are both correct and I wanted to take my responsibility seriously knowing Our Lady of Guadalupe or any other future school under my leadership could become a reflection of me. After spending five years as an administrator at Our Lady of Guadalupe I am convinced that until the Church as an institution changes its patriarchal structure no Catholic school could ever be a true “reflection of me” as Sister Carol implied. With a more engaged and open minded pastor infusing elements of critical democracy into Catholic education is certainly plausible but to embrace critical democracy in its entirety would mean breaking down and eliminating the barriers that the Catholic Church continues maintaining. My vision for a critically democratic Church would recognize woman as truly equal to men allowing them to become priests, bishops, and hold other offices normally reserved for men. As a Catholic school administrator I would have the freedom and ability to encourage my students to recognize their gifts and abilities when choosing their future goals and not be constrained to the gender norms set by the Church. My students would learn that as laity, they have a responsibility to actively participate in the decision-making process which is currently left to high ranking officials in Rome. My Church would practice the Gospel of loving and accepting all members of society including the LGBT community. My students grappling with their sexual identity would need not fear the demonization of homosexuality and be seen only for the beauty of their humanity. This

utopian Catholic school would be a reflection of me and one that I hope and pray to lead one day in the future. Our Lady of Guadalupe was nowhere near this utopia but there were glimmers of hope and moments when critical democracy was practiced. I learned that my passion for critically-democratic pedagogy is strong and something I intend to carry with me to my future administrative positions.

This experience made me realize that living in a constant state of worry, and stifling my beliefs and values is detrimental to my well-being. I was asked to interview at an Anglican school in Ocala, Florida for a principal who was looking to find his own replacement the following year. I was apprehensive to leave one conservative religious school for another but under the advice of my dad I applied with the understanding that I would not accept the position under the same constraints as before. When I interviewed for the position of assistant head of school at this conservative private school I was upfront and honest about who I am. I told my new principal how I'm a progressive feminist who wants students to learn how to challenge authority, think critically, and understand the connectivity they have to each other and the global community. He shared his own beliefs and while more conservative than mine was willing to have open and honest dialogue. I was welcome to voice my beliefs without fear of repercussions. The school demographics are predominantly white, upper-middle class with significantly more educated parents than Our Lady of Guadalupe. The religious curriculum is based on a literal interpretation of the Bible and the political leanings of the Ocala area are rather conservative. While the demographics of the school are strikingly different, the conservative atmosphere is similar. The major differences are the leadership of the

principal, the relationship with the pastor, and the openness to critical democracy. As I begin my new journey as Head of School, I remain excited about the possibility of building a community of critical thinkers who will understand their responsible to and for humanity and the earth. My vision is to provide an education grounded in critical democracy, preparing students to recognize injustice, participate in honest discourse, create peaceful solutions, provide egalitarian leadership, and hold themselves accountable to our global community.



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## **APPENDIX A**

### **METHODOLOGY**

Critical pedagogy, folded into and through performance (auto)ethnography attempts to disrupt and deconstruct these cultural and methodological practices performatively in the name of a “more just, democratic, and egalitarian society” (Kincheloe and McLaren 2000, 285, taken from Denzin, 422)

This quote from Norman Denzin’s article “Analytic Autoethnography, or Déjà Vu all Over Again,” advocates for a method of research that is committed to the democratic and inclusive principles stated by Kincheloe and McLaren. Denzin (2006) and many other advocates of authoethnography argue that we gain more truth from listening, analyzing, and reflecting on the stories of others than from more traditional research methods. My dissertation utilizes this autoethnographic method of research “to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno) (Ellis, Holman Jones, 2005, 23).” I use my personal experience as a Catholic school administrator in a conservative, predominately Latino region to describe the hegemonic structures and patriarchal grip on the culture of that community.

#### **Background**

Cultural anthropologist David Hayano coined the term autoethnography in 1974 as a way to define the “cultural-level studies by anthropologist of their ‘own people.’” (Ellis and Bochner 2004, Wall 2006, Anderson 2006). In a positivist world where science claims objectivity, neutrality, and devoid of personal bias, acknowledging the researcher’s subjectivity was a small step towards progress (Wall, 2006). As such,



researchers began including a section in their writing marked “subjectivity” where they would reveal possible biases based on their experiences and background and then proceed to present the rest of their research in a traditional, impersonalized format. Ethnography is the study of people and cultures where the researcher becomes part of the culture in order to make observations. An ethnographer draws conclusions about those he or she is studying and connects the research to the larger cultural and social story (Anderson, 2006). When ethnographers began reflexively studying themselves as the research they were able to make personal connections and draw conclusions about the culture.

The narrative approaches typical of ethnography are now changing to facilitate a more personal point of view by emphasizing reflexivity and personal voice (Mykhalovskiy, 1996; Tierney & Lincoln, 1997) and recognizing the researcher as representative of a multilayered lifeworld, itself worthy of expression... The essential difference between ethnography and autoethnography is that in an autoethnography, the researcher is not trying to become an insider in the research setting. He or she, in fact, is the insider. The context is his or her own. (Duncan)

Autoethnography makes the experience and reflexivity of the ethnographer the subject of research; making social and cultural connections deeply personal.

### **Why Autoethnography?**

Like many other students who obtained a traditional education I learned early in my schooling that science is based on the scientific method, hard proven facts, and logic. During English class I could express my opinions while writing a persuasive essay but research papers were to be neutral and objective. I believe my teachers were attempting to separate my sensibilities from science and research. I think I was readily willing to comply because of my love of numbers and statistics; it brought me satisfaction (and still

does to a degree) plugging numbers into formulas and producing a solution where there is only one answer. Results of surveys fascinate me and I enjoy gathering the results and calculating the outcome. My blissful ignorance began waning when these traditional methods of inquiry could no longer answer my questions of what if or why. Conclusions based on quantitative statistical analysis could appear in a packaged report providing the reader with an illusion of proof (Wall, 2006). One in three respondents made a declaration on a point of interest or rejected a product. Some surveys attempt to produce answers as to why respondents chose or rejected an issue, product, or position. Unfortunately, respondents are given prescribed answers to choose from, preventing explanations or alternative responses. This is not to say that quantitative analysis is useless; it's but one part of the larger picture especially when studying people, culture, and societies.

During my doctoral work I learned about qualitative methods and subjectivity. I was assigned the vulnerable task of analyzing myself, personal experiences, and biases; revealing the significance of the researcher on her research. The constant expectation of critically analyzing and challenging the norms made traditional methods of inquiry seem lacking. No longer was I comfortable with formulated and prescriptive methods. When posed a question, I prefer to pick more than one answer and provide an explanation for why both answers would work depending on the situation. During the administrative licensure exam I was given a scenario and asked how I would resolve the conflict. I knew what answer the test creators expected and responded accordingly, but I couldn't stop there. I also included a few other responses and explained that my solution to the

scenario would depend on a number of different factors: the culture of the school; personalities of the people involved; and the resources I'll be allotted. There was more than one answer and my personal experience and background impacted the solution to the scenario. When choosing a methodology for my research I wanted a method that would allow various perspectives and add multiple layers and dimensions to my inquiry. Autoethnography was the answer.

### **The Debate**

Proponents of quantitative research argue that subjectivity clouds the research and therefore makes neutrality impossible; assuming that neutrality is the goal and subjectivity is damaging. Sara Wall (2006), in her article "An Autoethnography on Learning about Autoethnography," describes the traditional research process where the "self" is taken out of the research for risk of "contamination," thus invalidating proposed outcomes. Autoethnography not only includes the "self" it makes the "self" the subject of research. Those suspicious of the validity of autoethnography label it a "soft" science and criticize it for being highly personal and self-indulgent. However, advocates argue that it is through these highly personal accounts that research makes deeper cultural and social connection. Wall (2006) states,

The questioning of the dominant scientific paradigm, the making of room for other ways of knowing, and the growing emphasis on the power of research to change the world create a space for the sharing of unique, subjective, and evocative stories of experience that contribute to our understanding of the social world and allow us to reflect on what could be different because of what we have learned (3).

Wall and other proponents of autoethnography such as Carolyn Ellis, Arthur Bochner, and Leon Anderson argue that the traditional methods of scientific research can be limiting and therefore researchers should accept the validity of reflexivity and self-examination as part of the learned experience. Once research is open to hearing the stories of autoethnographers, we can begin understanding cultural and social lessons.

While autoethnography offers an alternative form of knowing and inquiry it is not without its own limitations. Autoethnographers must grapple with reliability and validity of one's own memories. Does the memory of an event match reality?

We know that memory is fallible, that it is impossible to recall or report on events in language that exactly represents how those events were lived and felt; and we recognize that people who have experienced the "same" event often tell different stories about what happened (Tullis Owen et al., 2009, taken from Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011).

When utilizing autoethnography it is important to understand that the purpose is not about reporting facts but evoking emotion in the reader to illuminate cultural process and implications and connect the reader to the writer (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner, 2011). In addition, the implications of writing about people in one's life presents an ethical dilemma which Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011) refer to as "Relational ethics (281)." I divulged and disclosed information about people in my professional life that could potentially offend and hurt them, especially in the case of Father Abe. I knew that work of this subject matter would not be well received by those in positions of authority thereby jeopardizing my job. I chose to protect the privacy of those involved by changing their names and creating a fictional school and city. However, the fear of

revealing information that could be damaging stifled my writing while working at Our Lady. When I resigned from my position and began working in a new school, city, and state I was liberated and wrote freely and honestly about my experiences. The autoethnographer must consider and address the limitations with this methodology so that the product is valuable to the reader.

The process of autoethnography recognizes how prevalent the relationship is between the researcher and the research, allowing one to use her own story to make cultural connections (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). The researcher identifies his or her own bias, experience, and vantage point thereby disclosing another layer of insight to the research topic. Rather than attempting to strip these elements from the researcher in an effort to create neutrality or produce fact, autoethnography embraces the “self” to produce authentic and personal research that tells a story. The researcher can acknowledge how their own emotions and subjectivity impacts the research. This acknowledgment brings honest and vulnerable insights when discussing the cultural and social connections found in the research (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner, 2011). Completing a study about critical democracy and patriarchy in a Catholic elementary school with a positivist research method would have prevented me from revealing deep cultural connections that became prevalent through an analysis of my reflections.

### **My Autoethnographic Process**

When I moved to Jude, Texas and accepted the position as administrator of Our Lady of Guadalupe, I was immersed in the predominately Latino culture at a Catholic elementary school. I entered this community with a Catholic identity providing a

personal connection to the Catholicity of Our Lady. I wasn't just an outsider living among the people; I became part of the community at Our Lady. I used myself as the subject of my research to make social and cultural meaning. To distinguish my research as an autoethnography and not a biography I contribute my analysis of my lived experience through a reflective process open to self-critique. Through analysis I look for "patterns of cultural experience through notes, artifacts, and describe these patterns using storytelling (Ellis, Adams, Bochner, 2011, 277)," and then I make social commentary about the culture at Our Lady of Guadalupe. Patricia Clough (2000) states, "Autoethnographic writing...has been nothing so much as the work of a subject self-consciously reflecting on the process of knowing Self and Other—that is, knowing one's place in relationship to the other (282)"

As the one who is "collecting the evidence, drawing the inferences, and reaching the conclusions" (Handbook Qualitative Research, 734), I make this dissertation speak passionately about my findings rather than attempting to neutralize the data and provide an "objective" point of view. This allows the reader to "feel (my) moral dilemmas, think with (my) story instead of about it." (Reed-Danahay, 735). This five year journey contains many insights, experiences, questions, and life lessons. As the subject of my research I examine the journey itself in an effort to make deeper connections to the theory of democracy, education, and Catholicism as they intersect at Our Lady of Guadalupe Elementary School. As a welcoming gift to the school, the librarian presented me a journal which I used to I write about my thoughts, experiences, reactions, and revelations. As someone who can be distracted by typing; especially the red and blue lines indicating

grammatical errors, I intentionally wrote in my journal rather than type on a computer to maintain the flow of my writing and capture the emotions I felt at the time. There were periods of time when I wrote three to four times a week and other periods when work interfered with my journal process and my writing came to a standstill. These periods would sometimes last as long as two months and I would use artifacts such as handouts and my calendar of events to remember important revelations about my experiences. These reflections include descriptions and analysis of certain events, relationships, and exchanges with people from the community. In addition, I collected handouts from conferences, pictures of events, letters from parents, and musical lyrics all as artifacts of my personal experience. These reflections, memories, anecdotal notes, and artifacts became the data for my research which I then analyzed and self-critiqued. The organizational structure of my data evolved over time as a result of my experiences. When I began, my intention was to use my experiences at our Lady of Guadalupe to write about critical democracy in a Catholic school and needed to organize my data into a meaningful and logical story. After spending a short amount of time at Our Lady and experiencing the school culture, four themes emerged that were relevant to the topic of critical democracy. These four themes were; critical democracy, discipline, curriculum, and identity issues. I began transferring my journal notes, reflections, and memories to the computer and categorizing them into my four themes. I discovered a large amount of narrative that focused on the hierarchal structure of the Church and the relationship between Father Abe and myself therefore I added two more themes. I read and re-read my journal entries multiple times reflecting on the memorable events and relationships as

they related to the social narrative and realized that each theme was viewed through the overall theme of critical democracy; becoming the framework for analyzing my data. Lastly, I wanted the service project to stand alone because it was a perfect example of critical democracy in action. The six significant themes that emerged through this process all grounded in critical democracy are:

- Hierarchical Organizational Structures-Commission, School Board, and Priest;
- Pastor-Principal Relationship-Father Knows Best?;
- Curriculum-Staff and Student;
- Discipline-Confessions of a Catholic;
- Identity-Gender and Sexuality-Where do we all fit in?; and
- Critical Democracy in Action-Service Learning.

I discovered copious entries regarding my relationship with Father Abe; therefore I combed through my journal and selected those that speak to the patriarchy of the Church and the impact oppressive leadership has on schools and their administrators. In addition, as I analyzed my data I realized how little I wrote about the students. Reading my journal it would seem as though my world revolved around Father Abe, my teachers, and meetings. However, in reality my daily routine involved regular student and parent interaction. The absence of students and focus on Father Abe in my journal reveals my emotional state during this time; I felt like my world revolved around Father Abe's



expectations and demands of me. The experiences that surface as most significant certainly connect to the social issues regarding patriarchy in the Catholic Church and its impact on critically-democratic pedagogy but limiting because other experiences are left out of the narrative. These unspoken narratives can be relevant to the cultural connection and therefore should be included as further research opportunities.

I use a narrative writing style to explain how these themes connect to critical democracy within a private Catholic school setting and speak to the issues of Catholic identity, patriarchy, and power-struggles.

Autoethnographically based personal narratives are highly personalized, revealing texts in which authors tell stories about their own lived experience, relating the personal to the cultural . . . In telling the story, the writer calls upon...fiction-writing techniques. Through these techniques, the writing constructs a sequence of events...holding back on interpretation, asking the reader to emotionally “relive” the events with the writer. (Richardson, 2000, 11, taken from Wall).

These “relived” experiences take the reader on my emotional journey, connecting with me on a personal level. Ellis explains that “this process is a dialogue between outward society as related to personal experience and inward insights “exposing vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations (Ellis, 739).” My personal stories connect to the larger social issue regarding patriarchy and hierarchical structures that oppress individuals; especially those attempting to break free and practice critical democracy. Writing this autoethnography reveals problems in the Catholic Church and Catholic schools. My experiences and analysis have exposed the gender inequality that exists in the Church and discrimination of homosexuals. By

sharing my personal struggles and attempts to practice critical democracy in a Catholic school I have uncovered larger social and institutional issues challenging the existing hegemony. Through this method I intend for my readers feel a personal connection to my narrative such that they have a deeper understanding of the cultural and social implications of Catholic patriarchy on humanity and are inspired to raise their own ethical questions. I invite my readers to join the conversation about critically-democratic pedagogy and suggest ways to improve the education of critical thinkers especially in the face of challenges that come with navigating critical democracy in such a patriarchal environment.