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REMEMBERING NOT TO FORGET:
ANAMNESIS AND THE PERSISTENCE OF VOCATION

ABSTRACT

A sense of vocation knits together who we understand ourselves to be and what we envision for the world, and it has its origins in hope and idealism. And while the work of discerning one's vocation is challenging, the ability to sustain its focus and vision over time is even harder. The complexity and conflict of ordinary life often subvert our ability to live consistently and authentically out of our senses of vocation, regardless of the sincerity of our motivations and desires. How can we, as religious educators, cultivate the ongoing negotiation and sustenance of vocation, in both ourselves and those among whom we educate?

This paper will explore this question using data and insights from an ethnographic study of seven exemplary teachers who have managed to sustain their senses of vocation over time. The paper will consist of three parts: first, it will explore the construction of vocation as present among the teachers. Second, it will reflect on the role of anamnesis – the remembering of formative stories constituting one's identity and vision – in sustaining the ongoing vitality of their vocations. Third, it will argue for the value of the practice of anamnesis as an essential part of a religious education that intends the discernment and cultivation of participants' senses of vocation, identities, and vision.

Introduction

> What's the purpose of mankind? What is the meaning behind what we call the meaning of a thing? … What's our role on the earth? And how are we supposed to take care of nature and the world? Then, boy, when we got into social stratification, and why are some people steered towards being the workers and other people steered towards being the think tanks, and things like that…. You get into *all* the social injustices and things. You just question *every*thing. And I love that deeper thinking. I love it when you have to strip everything you believe down and build it back up with logic and truth and all that. If anybody asked me, I would say one thing that drives me and why I love to learn is to search for meaning and truth. I would say that, that defines me.
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> Kelly (1:24)[1]

> If you want to identify me, ask me not where I live, or what I like to eat, or how I comb my hair, but ask me what I think I am living for, in detail, and ask me what I think is keeping me from living fully for the thing I want to live for.
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> Thomas Merton, ***My Argument with the Gestapo***[2]

When Kelly offered the above observation, she sat at the edge of her seat. She radiated energy; her strong arms reached out to pull thought and listener in. I had asked her a simple question: Why do you teach math? Her first response was equal parts candor and cynicism; "You know, I majored in math in college because they said Black women couldn't do it." Nudged further, she wove her response out of her story and her passion:

> It's like, if you go through your whole life hearing things like, "Women don't do math and blacks don't excel academically," if you let that beat you, you'll end up being nothing. So I had to kind of put my neck on the line and say, "Okay; if that's true, I'll

[1] The citations taken from transcribed interviews are followed by the location of the quote in parentheses. The first number refers to the inter view: 1 = first interview, 2 = second, and so on. The second number refers to the page of the transcript. Hence 1:24 means, "first interview, page 24." All the teacher-subjects' names are pseudonyms.

[2] Thomas Merton, ***My Argument with the Gestapo*** (New York: Norton, 1975), 160-161, quoted in Brian Mahan, ***Forgetting Ourselves on Purpose*** (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), xxiii.

fail at this. But if it's not true, I'll exceed at it. I graduated, so I guess it wasn't true." (1:24)

She later added philosophy to her curriculum and found herself falling in love with the "big questions;" meaning, identity, a sense of place in the world. When offered the opportunity to teach high school students, she retrieved memories of her own love of learning and chose to make the transition. Ten years later, she saw teaching as the place where that passion could meet with her conviction that young people – particularly those abused by "the system," as she called it – needed the same opportunity to work hard, find their place in the world, and wrestle with truth. Teaching, she said, was what she had been called to do – her "role on the earth."

Integrity, Imagination, and the Presence of Vocation

Kelly was one of seven public high school teachers who participated in a year-long ethnographic inquiry into the inner landscape and vocation of exemplary teachers. The study focused on two questions: What qualities in certain teachers compels others to turn to them for example and mentoring? And what enables these exemplars to sustain what they do over time? The teachers, identified by colleagues and administrators as possessing exemplary qualities, had been teaching for at least years at the time of the study.[3] Their disciplines included math, English, and sciences.

The study consisted primarily of observations and interviews spanning an academic year and inquired into how the teachers understood themselves (voice), how they understood what they do and how they do it (vocation), and why they do it (vision).[4]

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[3] The teachers (Bill, Jim, Linda, Ann, Kelly, Stewart, and Cate) represented a variety of demographic characteristics. They included two white women, two white men, two African-American women, and one African-American man. Their teaching careers have spanned five to fourteen years; some were second career teachers, others had entered the profession directly from school. They taught in the math, science, and English departments, and several moderated extracurricular activities, including sports and literary publications.

[4] My use of *voice* is informed by the work of Belenky, et al. in ***Women's Ways of Knowing***. As Belenky and her colleagues conducted their interviews, the subjects frequently used the notions of *voice* and "gaining a voice" to name their journey towards growth and self-appropriation; by contrast, silence was equated with oppression and a loss of self. As the authors write, "We found that women repeatedly used the metaphor of voice to depict their intellectual and ethical development; and that the development of a sense of voice, mind, and self were intricately intertwined." [Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule, ***Women's Ways of Knowing*** (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 18.] In this project, then, I use the term *voice* to name this wholistic sense of self-identity and how one understands that sense of self.

The category of *vision* is shorthand for the sense of meaningfulness or purposefulness governing one's actions; it is the answer to the question, "For what reason?" A "religious" education, as I use the term, presumes that this education is engaged for the sake of some ultimate outcome – some sense of the common good and what shape that goodness takes. For the theologians and educators informing this study, this sense of goodness of characterized by a vision for human wholeness and flourishing. This vision directs and energizes the work in which the teacher is engaged.

Finally, the notion of *vocation* is informed by the works of James Fowler, Brian Mahan, and Parker Palmer. All three have made reference to writer Frederick Buechner's definition of vocation, "the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." [Frederick Buechner, ***Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC*** (New York: HarperCollins, 1973), 95.] Vocation, then, is the convergence of one's voice and vision – how one understands oneself in response to the world and what one hopes for it. Fowler asserts the notion of "call" at the heart of vocation (practically and linguistically), calling it the "response a person makes with his or her total life to the call of God to partnership" for the sake of the world's healing. [James Fowler, ***Weaving the New Creation*** (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), xv.] Not assuming the presence of theism in the research subjects, I understand his use of "God" to refer to whatever sense of ultimacy operates in the subjects' vision. To this end, Mahan's definition is helpful in emphasizing the interrelationship among vision, voice, and vocation, between the individual and his or her

The epistemological foundations and method were informed by the method and content of certain theologies of liberation (G. Gutierrez, E. Johnson, L. Russell) and liberative educational (P. Freire, M. Greene) and religious educational theories (C. Foster, M. E. Moore, G. Moran). Underscoring the approach was the presumption proceeding from A. N. Whitehead that all education is religious; that is, it "inculcates duty and reverence. Duty arises from our potential control over the course of events. …And the foundation of reverence is this perception, that the present holds within itself the complete sum of existence, backwards and forwards, that whole amplitude of time, which is eternity."[5]. That is, all education is capable of being sacramental, able to reveal and communicate a sense of moreness; and transformative, able to influence change and action in light of that revelation.

Several striking observations emerged. The first involved the interplay of distinctiveness and similarity among the teachers. Kelly and her colleagues each taught with a high degree of artistry and technical skill, a quality that distinguished them easily from colleagues not selected for the study. Yet while identified collectively as exemplary, they each possessed a distinctive way of living authentically into – and out of – their lives as educators. This was manifested in their radically different teaching styles, personalities, styles of classroom management, affect, and so on. Their differences resisted the distillation of an easy checklist of behavioral or instructional strategies guaranteed to result in a sustained exemplary teaching career.

Despite these differences, however, the informants who initially identified the teacher-subjects still pointed to some inchoate but tangible quality present beyond artistry and skill. As such, their distinctiveness appeared to be critical to their identification as exemplary. They were uniquely themselves, having developed vocational responses that were particular expressions of their subjectivities and hopes for the world. One informant described it well. Stretching his arms out wide, he said, "On the one hand, you have Bill" – entertaining, unpredictable, and informal – "and on the other, Linda" – fastidious, organized, and all business. He rejoined his hands and leaned forward; "But one could never be the other," he added. Among their peers, he said, they "stand someplace different," a place marked by a perceived congruence between the teacher's outer action and inner self.

The most apt term to describe this perceived congruence, critical to their identification as exemplary, is *integrity* – an integration of their voices, visions, and vocations.[6] They taught from complex, multilayered identities, and they did so out of a desire to live in alignment with some sense of what was "right," rooted in a vision they held for human wholeness. This integrity constituted their ways of being in the world, including the ways they made and construed meaning. Stewart provided a captivating reflection on this when I asked why he went out of his way to tutor at-risk students after school Given his large class sizes, why not let someone else do it? His eyes widened in response – "I… *can't*," he said simply. "I believe that we are here to help each other, and that if I have something that you don't have and I have the ability to impart that to you, then why not? …If I have knowledge that you need, then why <u>not</u> give it to you? …It's my duty as a human being to do that as a teacher – <u>all</u> of it." (1:22)

What enabled this dynamic quality of integrity to persist in these teachers? Their ability to engage daily the specific demands of their life and work in an integrated way depended on the degree to which they were able to move beyond the givenness of a situation in creative and transformative ways. Simultaneously attached to and detached from their contexts, the teachers were able to be as present as possible to the work

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context; "Vocation speaks of a gracious discovery of a kind of interior consonance between our deepest desires and hopes and our unique gifts, as they are summoned forth by the needs of others and realized in response to that summons." [Brian Mahan, ***Forgetting Ourselves on Purpose*** (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 10-11.]

[5] A.N. Whitehead, ***The Aims of Education and Other Essays*** (New York: The Free Press, 1967), 14.

[6] In his exploration of integrity, Stephen Carter refers to it as a sense of authenticity in living rightly. Philosopher Susan Babbitt and anthropologist Mary Catherine Bateson underscore the narrative and dynamic quality of integrity, identifying it as responding to and shaped by one's context. It is a quality of embodiment, not just a cognitive structure or attitude. See Stephen Carter, ***Integrity*** (New York: Basic Books, 1996); Susan Babbitt, ***Artless Integrity*** (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001); and Mary Catherine Bateson, ***Composing a Life*** (New York: Plume, 1990).

and people at hand while not being entirely embedded in (and thus trapped by) the moment. Stewart responded to the angry outbursts of students with firm, quiet redirection, demonstrating an alternative to their behaviors. Recalling her own origins in public housing, Ann pushed her general level and academically troubled students the hardest, challenging them to rise above the social scripts consigning them to hopeless futures. Simply put, they were able to be in – but not of – their locations. Maxine Greene describes this as one of the capacities of the *reshaping imagination*, the ability to see beyond what *is* to what is *not yet*, or what is *more*. In order to function responsively, the reshaping imagination requires that one have a sense of who one is, over time, as well as that for which one hopes – in other words, voice and vision.[7]

Vocation and the Religiosity of Education

What do these observations, gleaned from the lives and work of public high school teachers, have to do with the work of religious education and the presence of vocation therein? First of all, the study began and, in the end, confirmed the broad understanding of "religiosity" I bring to education and to this research. The integrity and imagination central to the exemplariness of these teachers demonstrate the presence of sacramental and transformative power of their work, regardless of the disciplines they teach. They engaged a sense of sacredness, moreness, in their work, and desired to respond with their lives to change the world in alignment with that sense of moreness – a task close to the heart of religious education. Furthermore, their exemplariness marked the presence of a vibrant vocation as educator, rooted in a distinctive sense of voice and energized by a vision for human flourishing.

Religious education is at least in part about the intentional cultivation of vocation in its participants, a particular way of understanding self and world and how one is called to respond in light of that understanding. As Foster, O'Gorman, and Seymour write, churches are called to reclaim the "religious in education," that is, "The discernment and mediation of the sacred dimensions of reality" for the sake of "[opening] new possibilities for human life and organizations."[8] Doing so, argues Moore, requires that one encounter education as an act of reverence, one that calls forth a stance of wonder in the other – be it God, the source of life, or other persons, cultures, or experiences – and the self as teacher. This reverential stance enables one to encounter not only the value of the other but also the capacity of the other to reveal that which is transcendent and to draw from its wisdom.[9]

The work of teaching, then, emerges from the personhood of the teacher; teachers teach who they are. Parker Palmer asserts, "As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together."[10] The act of teaching and the presence of the teacher in the educational encounter are radically subjective and particular. The vocation of educators cannot be nurtured and engaged without attention to the narratives of their lives, whether the teaching is done in a church or a public high school. These narratives include the traditions and stories of the communities in which the teacher has been formed and in which they educate. In the case of the educator in a religious context, these stories and traditions are an explicit part of the task and content of their teaching.

Finally, as I will discuss further below, part of what distinguished the work of these educators was the intentionality with which they cultivated the development of the voices, visions, and vocations of their students. Ann, who demonstrated perhaps the strongest and most explicit sense of advocacy for her

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[7] The vision for human wholeness and flourishing shared by these teachers finds much in common with Greene's discussion of a common world founded on common good. For Greene, "common" is neither abstract nor monolithic, but a living, changing "context of solidarity, a context of shared human stories within a changing human community," founded on respect, justice, and intersubjectivity. Maxine Greene, ***Releasing the Imagination*** (New York: Teachers College Press, 2000), 62.

[8] Jack L. Seymour, Robert T. O'Gorman, and Charles R. Foster, ***The Church in the Education of the Public*** (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 128.

[9] See Mary Elizabeth Moore, ***Teaching from the Heart: Theology and Educaitonal Method*** (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 212.

[10] Parker Palmer, ***The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*** (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 2.

students, recalled a formative memory in her own schooling, a memory that energized her own work as a teacher:

> One thing my most influential teacher told me, she told me when I was in tenth grade, she said, 'You have a story to tell.' You know, back then, what, fifteen years old, what is this lady talking about? And that comes up in my mind sometimes, you know. Like we were talking about before, just sharing with the kids where I come from and [that they] can do this too. (2:9)

An integrated sense of vocation, vision, and voice, then, marked both the character and work of these teachers.

Vocation as Invitation

One of the most striking observations from this study emerged from the effect the research had on me as investigator. The exemplariness of these teachers studied invited me as researcher into the same integrative and reflective process in which I asked them to participate. I realized this as I brought the project to a close and found myself resisting the sort of conclusion one typically finds at the end of such a manuscript. While I needed to mark the end of the project, I was not able to distill a set of conclusions or programmatic applications. I suspect that I was resisting the potentially *de*ductive and *re*ductive uses of the *in*ductive work engaged here. Theologians of liberation have pointed out the impoverishment of divorcing doctrine and theological reflection from the experiences which generate the insights; Gutierrez, for example, calls for attending to both moments of theologizing – the religious experience itself and the subsequent reflection on it. Theology is a process, not just content. Freire and Greene echo the same concerns in discussing the process of education, arguing that it be rooted in the experience of the participants rather than the content transmitted. Furthermore, the sort of reductive / deductive approach critiqued above elides the authentic distinctiveness of the teacher-subjects that emerged as constitutive of their exemplariness. Their wisdom has emerged in the midst of messy, unfinished, and complex lives, and any approach to analysis and reporting must honor this reality.

As I listened to the teachers recall their experiences teaching, their passions, their frustrations, two primary things happened. First, as they told their stories, they not only brought up past history and insight; they also called forth the power those initial experiences had had in forming their senses of voice, vocation, and vision. What was past became present again. The process was affective and intellectual, iterative and generative, sacramental and transformative. I observed its effects in their emotional tones and body language. They told stories with thoughtful silences, animated hand gestures, laughter, raised voices, occasional tears. In subsequent conversations, they often revisited stories and remarked that they hadn't thought of them in ages, or that it had been good and helpful to talk about a particular topic, or that they hadn't put things together in that way before. Whether the content of the stories was positive or negative, delightful or painful, they shared the notion that the process itself was good and useful.

Second, I found myself intimately involved in the process as well. I was the researcher and recorder, but I was also drawn into the act of reclaiming my own sense of self and vocation. I remembered that I love teaching. I realized consciously for the first time that I am deeply passionate about talking to others about their deep passions – an act which I came to see as not just powerful but pedagogical as well. What was it about this process of remembering and telling stories that was so evocative? And what insights does this offer to the work of religious education?

Remembering Not to Forget

In ***Forgetting Ourselves on Purpose,*** Brian Mahan refers to this act of recalling and telling stories as "formative remembering." He writes, "Formative remembering points to our intentional, ritualized, and repeated attempts to dwell within what we have encountered both in our epiphanies of recruitment and the wisdom of our sacred traditions."[11] It is the response to the question Merton recommends; "ask me what am I living for." More than just the recounting of historical events, formative remembering consists of reclaiming those watershed moments that catalyze some insight about our selves, our world, and our call to

[11] Mahan, ***Forgetting Ourselves on Purpose,*** 151.

respond in a particular way. In doing so, we are called to live in the midst of those moments again, evoking their power and insight.

Two points are worth emphasizing in Mahan's description. First, the power of formative remembering is constituted at least in part by its capacity to recall and re-form one's sense of voice, vision, and vocation. Second, he refers to it as a *practice* – something that must be engaged regularly in order to be effective. While these stories are always with us, sometimes they are so deeply submerged in our unconscious memory that they are overwritten by other, conflicting concerns, including things which inhibit our ability to live authentically out of those experiences.[12]

Parker Palmer calls this act "re-membering" – "putting ourselves back together, recovering identity and integrity, reclaiming the wholeness of our lives."[13] This act of constructing and recalling our narratives brings to the surface the ways by which we make meaning in our lives. When we forget the stories, we forget who, how, and why we are; we become, as Palmer calls it, "dis-membered." He writes, "we can reclaim our belief in the power of inwardness to transform our work and our lives. We became teachers because we once believed that ideas and insight are at least as real and powerful as the world that surrounds us."[14]

Each teacher claimed that they had the space and opportunity outside of school to re-member who they were called to be in school, and they spoke passionately about these spaces as critical to their sustenance. They identified relationships or communities that were critical to maintaining their basic senses of self and provided them with reminders of what they were working toward. These "re-membering" activities included both the cognitive and the pre-cognitive; family time, liturgical practices, nature walks, prayer, discussions with mentors, and so on. Stewart spoke eloquently about keeping the Sabbath; Bill climbed rocks with his fiancée; Jim craved time with his sons, as Linda did with her grandchildren. This is not to say, however, that they regularly had occasions for engaging their stories and reflecting on the meaning of their work to them. Indeed, most of the teacher-subjects claimed that our time interviewing was the first opportunity they had had to do so in an intentional and focused way. And all underscored the value of the interviews at the end of our time together.

Catholic liturgy includes such a primordial and powerful practice of formative remembering called the "anamnesis" – literally, "not forgetting." It takes place during the Eucharistic prayer, after the sacred stories have been told and during the reenactment of the sacred meal. The prayer begins by invoking the memory of the Passion and proceeds through a recollection of the faithful who have gone before us and those present among us. It concludes with a prayer for strength to work towards the vision of wholeness prefigured by Jesus' ministry and promised by the resurrection. Immediately following this invocation is the doxology, bringing the assembled back to the fundamental statement of faith underscoring what they are called to do. The function of anamnesis is to draw the congregation back into the primal story of Christianity – the events leading up to and including Jesus' death and resurrection – and to confirm the identity and mission of the community in the process. This identity is one rooted in present relationship with God, with the past communion of saints, and with the future promised by the right relationship with God, each other, and creation, as symbolized by the Reign of God.

In their ***Theological Dictionary,*** Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler define anamnesis as the invitation to re-present this story, to make it present again for the community. They write, "although the event has historical uniqueness, it is at the same present, that is, remains in force as an accomplished fact."[15] The words of the prayer evoke and invoke the memory and power of the original event and call for the community to respond in hope towards its eschatological vision. The act of anamnesis, then, "actualizes the effectual presence of this event in [one's own] time in a manner superior to a mere

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[12] Mahan says that the practice of formative remembering must be accompanied by the practice of "spiritual indirection," unmasking "what is keeping us from living fully for the thing we want to live for" – the scripts, inhibitions, and illusions that force our vocations underground. See Mahan, 98.

[13] Palmer, ***The Courage to Teach***, 20.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, ***Theological Dictionary*** (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), 19.

subjective recollection."[16] It is a practice does not simply recall the story – it also brings the fullness of the event into being.

The sort of storytelling called for by the above writers, then, incorporates the conscious and the submerged, the rational and the affective. It is an imaginative act that intends to affirm and integrate the voice, vision, and vocation of an individual or a community. As such, it is sacramental in its power both to signify and to effect. It is transformative, not only in reorienting the storytellers to their sense of identity, but also in calling forth that which is needed to actualize the vision that constitutes in part their identity. The practice of anamnesis enables the storyteller to draw anew from the wisdom of formative narratives. Furthermore, it creates a space in which others are invited – tacitly or explicitly – to draw wisdom from their own stories in a way that reminds them of who they are and what they are to do. Furthermore, as the teacher-subjects and I learned, it is also key in cultivating and sustaining the integration at the heart of vocation. As Cate wrote after reading the report from the study,

> I realized that your time talking with me gave me opportunity to reflect at a time when I really wasn't having time to reflect on my teaching. This summer, with its rest, I regained perspective on why I do what I do, and though I can't articulate it any better than I did when we spoke, I'm reconnected to my origins of seeing teaching as a calling, in the way that healing and ministering are, and more specifically of seeing it as my calling. This, I think, is the religiosity of teaching that you were talking about--the inner life and the hope and the connection and the higher purpose that propel us in the profession.[17]

Over the course of the project, the teacher-subjects were invited to remember who they are, what they are doing, and why they do what they do. Some of the most powerful conversations were narrative – recalling the experience itself – followed by a spontaneous induction of the meaningfulness of the account in conversation with me. The act was both reflective and creative. I discovered the power of anamnesis as well as I found myself revisiting my own sense of vocation in the process of listening to these teachers reflect on theirs.

What kinds of stories did the teacher-subjects tell? They recalled "epiphanies of recruitment,"[18] moments of vocational clarity when they knew in their heads and hearts that they wanted to teach; for Stewart, it was when he recognized that he had a gift for helping college students understand math. For Ann, it came in conjunction with realizing that her heart wasn't in being a doctor. For Linda, it was a moment of revelation on the beach. They told stories of being wounded and transformed – Kelly recognizing her limits, Linda feeling like a "shattered crystal." They told stories of success and transformation – Bill, connecting with a troubled student and watching him engage enough to get one of the highest averages in the class; Stewart; helping a student pass the math graduation exam. These were stories of meeting students where they were; stories of hoping that they could be elsewhere and otherwise; stories filled with passion and compassion. These stories helped to affirm and constitute some sense of their identity in the world.

These were also stories that re-membered lives in process, not lives "in extremis," as Mahan refers to idealized portraits of people.[19] Colleagues identified these teachers as exemplars, yet as exemplars they were conflicted, messy, talented, paradoxical, confused, and confident all at the same time; they were works in progress. Linda wanted to be more flexible, Ann wanted to be more available to her students, Bill wasn't sure how long he'd stay teaching. Their stories and encounters represented the full spectrum of human experience, not just the self-affirming or ostensibly "positive" aspects. These teacher-subjects demonstrated, in other words, a willingness to engage that range of experience in its fullness.

Mahan points out that exemplars are not standards to be reached but invitations into a different kind of life, the integrated life called forth by anamnesis. It does not work to set up extremes and expect

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[16] Ibid., 19-20.

[17] Email from Cate, dated August 7, 2002.

[18] See Mahan, 134-135.

[19] See ibid., 130.

people to aspire to them. Unfortunately, this "inspiration-aspiration"[20] model is at the heart of much contemporary rhetoric and research into good teaching, particularly in public education, as well as some of the literatures that provide portraits of exemplary teachers. It is also a particular danger in a religious education which intends the cultivation of a particular way of life.

Why is this model unsuccessful? First of all, it sets up a hierarchy between those who are "good" and "everyone else" (read here either "bad" or "not there yet"). I discovered this shortcoming when first trying to collect a pool of research subjects. When I initially asked the teachers to identify those who were "exemplary," I received no response at best and criticism of the question at worst. They resisted separating their colleagues into sheep and goats, as though "exemplariness" were an ontological status. Yet when I rephrased and asked for the names of colleagues "possessing exemplary qualities," suggesting that exemplariness was a complex process and not a state, I received enthusiastic and passionate responses (as well as a remarkable pool of subjects). The kind of exemplariness suggested here was invitational and evocative.

Second, part of what identified these teacher-subjects as exemplars was their respect for and hospitality towards their students. They consistently demonstrated a willingness to meet students where they were, while working with them to help them move into claiming their own senses of voice and vocation. Their brand of exemplariness provided a space of both affirmation and challenge rather than simply a contrast between the exemplar's saintliness and the other's shortcomings.[21] This sort of encounter was a consistent theme in the stories teachers told about students who came back to thank them, particularly students who moved from troubled adolescences to self-actualization as adults. These students were invited to become who they were distinctively capable of being, not mini-versions of the teacher-as-template. Furthermore, there was something in the teacher-subjects' willingness to engage the complexity of their lives in our conversations that resulted in me re-membering my own sense of vocation.

The kind of exemplariness explored here, then, is marked by an integrating effect on both the teacher-subjects and those around them. Their teaching practices emerge from a commitment to help others, particularly students, induce the wisdom from their lives, know more deeply who they are in context, and respond to what they are called to do. Referring both to her personal quest and to her hope for her students, Cate said, "Finding a place where your greatest desire meets the world's greatest need is what we're all trying to do I think." (2:21) If this invitational process works with their students, can it – and should it – be engaged in sustaining the vocation of educators?

Re-Membering the Religious Educator

One of the primary insights from this study, then, is the relationship between anamnesis and the sustenance of vocation in educators. While each of the teacher-subjects remarked that they had little opportunity to engage in the kind of conversation we had during the interviews, it was evident that they were involved in relationships or communities that invited some kind of re-membering of who they are. These included friends, significant others, and religious communities. Each had a space, somewhere, where they had the opportunity to step away from the day to day, reflect, renew, and start again, resourcing their integrative and imaginative work. Yet none of them had a regular and professionally sponsored opportunity for intentional reflection on the work of teaching itself. If part of our agenda as religious educators is to cultivate a sense of vocation, then it stands to bear that we need to explore ways to create contexts in which this sort of remembering is invited – for both the educators and the participants. As Mahan argues, if it is to be effective, formative remembering must be a practice.

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[20] As Mahan points out, "[This] approach is all but ubiquitous in the literature addressing issues of vocational discernment and spiritual transformation." Yet as he found in his teaching, presenting exemplars *in extremis* usually resulted in a short-lived burst of enthusiasm in some of his students, followed by either deflation or backlash. The inevitable question arose: "What do you want from us, anyway?" See ibid., 128-9.

[21] Mahan recalls the comments of Bryan Stevenson, a Harvard Law graduate who works with death row convicts, on attempts to "sanctify" him and his work; "When people say I'm great, what I'm doing is great, they aren't talking about me. They're talking about themselves, about what's missing in their lives." Ibid., 139.

As I stated at the beginning of this essay, my intention here is not to conclude with a strategy, ready for application. Rather, what follows is a summation of three of the hopes I have for engaging the practice of anamnesis among religious educators. I leave the specifics of how to do this must emerge from the specifics of the context.

Re-membering Self-in-Community. As the study revealed, formative remembering – anamnesis – is critical to the cultivation and sustenance of vocation as it "re-members" the religious educator. Yet as the anamnesis in the Eucharistic prayer demonstrates, the nurture of one's individual vocation and identity as Christian happens in the midst of the community story. In other words, anamnesis involves a dynamic interplay between personal story and corporate narrative. As a practice, it provides a way to cultivate connection and community membership while honoring the distinctiveness at the heart of personal vocational integrity.

Re-membering the Sacredness of Lived Wisdom. It is important and valuable to invite people into the practice of gleaning wisdom from life experience. This wisdom is the source and resource for the inner life from which exemplary teaching comes, and it funds the sacramentality and transformation characteristic of a religious education. Most of the time, however, people get talked out of their own wisdom. Yet part of what this study has demonstrated is what powerful things happen when we invite people back into that wisdom. It is a process that underscored these teachers' work with their students, implicitly and explicitly, as they nudged their charges into their own integrative and imaginative work. It is a process that had effects on the researched and the researcher as well. If these teachers' exemplary work and character is funded by this interiority and wisdom, then attempts to cultivate a sense of vocation in teachers must find a way to reclaim it. Inviting educators into the work of re-membering and providing the space and opportunity to do so enables them to reclaim their personal narratives as valuable and wisdom-bearing. It also provides them with the opportunity to learn how to tell those stories and glean that wisdom. As Freire's pedagogy indicates, this is a skill to be developed, not something that just "happens."

Furthermore, the task of drawing on the wisdom of one's experience is critical to cultivating the skill and artistry necessary for educating well. In their work with professional training and adult learning, Donald Schon and Ron Cervero have long been proponents of this sort of critical self-reflection, "reflection-in-action,"[22] as Schon calls it. The goal of reflection-in-action is to recall and integrate the wisdom collected from past experience so that it can inform current action. It is important to point out that the reflection-in-action advocated here is not synonymous with rational explanation and cognitive accessibility. One of the critical lessons gained from this research was the role of intuition in the teacher-subjects' artistry and sense of integrity. On the whole, they resisted "keeping their eyes on themselves," cultivating a sense of self-consciousness about what they were doing and who they were. The activities they avoided included excessive deconstruction of classroom practices, standards-based assessments, and, as indicated earlier, imposing any kind of hierarchy on their colleagues. Rather, their artistry was characterized primarily by a measured self-forgetfulness.[23]

The brand of critical self-reflection under discussion, then, emphasizes the role of tacit knowing. Technique is necessary, but it cannot account alone for the development of professional artistry. Artists

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[22] Donald Schon recommends a move away from technical rationality as the primary mode for critical reflection on professional practice in favor of a tacit knowing-in-action. This mode of knowing combines an awareness of both technical proficiency and professional artistry, the integrated knowledge one accumulates from day to day practice in one's discipline. The reflection-in-action comprising part of this tacit knowing is based on the practitioner's critical awareness of professional episodes and stories of practice. The reflective process enables the practitioner to develop an "epistemology of practice", a malleable framework for responding to future situations as informed by prior practice and intended outcome. For a fuller description of the process, see Donald A. Schon, ***The Reflective Practitioner*** (New York: Basic Books, 1983), chapter 2.

[23] Perhaps part of the strength of integrity and imagination is that neither posits the self as center. Rather, the dynamic heart of integrity is the integration of self-in-context, for the sake of some envisioned good that transcends the self. Similarly, the heart of imagination resides in one's ability to enter into the experience or appreciation of the "other." Both posit some quality of relationship with the "other" as central.

intuitively bring frameworks for knowing and acting to their "performances." The training and nurture of potential "artists" requires providing them with the opportunity to gain and incorporate practical knowledge from field experience. It also requires enabling them to draw more effectively from the wisdom of those practices, integrating that wisdom into present and future work. This is part of the task of formative remembering, of anamnesis.

Re-membering the Participants and the Vision. As discussed above, the sacramental and transformative task of a "religious education" requires the cultivation of the sense of vision, voice, and vocation of the participants. Ann summarized it well when asked what she educates for:

> I would hope that I'm teaching them that you are important, that you are valuable, that no matter what life may bring you, whatever circumstance, may it be with your job, your family, whatever, that you can love yourself enough and be enough of a visionary that you can see beyond whatever and be able to go forward and be successful. That's what I hope I'm teaching more so than biology. (2:10)

Cultivating the sense of self, purpose, and hope in others requires that one mine the wisdom of one's own experience in conversation with the narratives that have formed and challenged it. The practice of formative remembering provides a means for engaging that process with participants; in order to steward it in others, the educator must practice it as well. Furthermore, as a process, it invites the possibility of wonder, induction, connection, empathy – all qualities that infuse the integrity and imagination that enliven the heart of vocation and help realize the sacramental and transformative potential of education.

Coda

Adrienne Rich begins her poem "Integrity" with the following:

> A wild patience has taken me thus far
>
> as if I had to bring to shore
> a boat with a spasmodic outboard motor
> old sweaters, nets, spray-mottled books
> tossed in the prow
> some kind of sun burning my shoulder blades.

The work of discerning vocation and constructing a life is the work of bricolage, of improvisation. It is a process engaged with the materials at hand, cobbling disparate and sometimes well-worn pieces together, into new forms for new uses. The teacher-subjects in this study, with their wild patience and spasmodic motors, were far from flawless – but they engaged their bricolage with integrity and imagination, and as a result, they did exemplary things in their work with their students. The hard work of teaching, of rowing toward their envisioned shore, demanded persistence and resistance, and sometimes it exacted a cost. Yet it also brought insight and wisdom and the passion of knowing that, as Bill said, there are "a million ways to be human, to be alive" (1:1) – and that vocation happens in the midst of coming to know one's own distinct "way to be human" in response to weaving the world envisioned, from the locus of incomplete and imperfect selves. Rich concludes her poem:

> After so long, this answer.
> As if I had always known
> I steer the boat in, simply.
>
> …
>
> Anger and tenderness: my selves.
> And now I can believe they breathe in me
> as angels, not polarities.
> Anger and tenderness: the spider's genius
> to spin and weave in the same action
> from her own body, anywhere –

even from a broken web.[24]

It is my hope that the work of these remarkable teachers – and the promise of formative remembering – will invite others into the hard work and deep joy of coming to know, after so long, their answers – the wisdom taken from the webs of their lives and experiences.

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[24]Adrienne Rich, "Integrity," ***A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far.*** (New York: Norton, 1981), 8-9.