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The Power of Spiritual Leadership in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

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THE POWER OF SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP IN THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

A Capstone in Education with a Concentration in Educational Leadership

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY
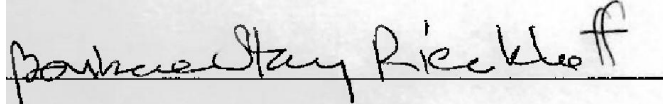COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

STEFANIE MINGARI

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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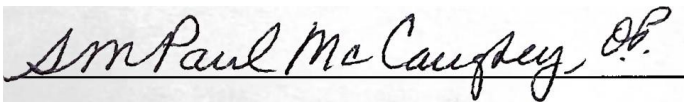
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I certify that I am the sole author of this capstone. Any assistance received in preparing this dissertation has been acknowledged and disclosed. Any sources utilized, including data, ideas, and words, those quoted directly or paraphrased, have been cited. I have prepared this capstone according to DePaul University College of Education's program guidelines, as directed.

Author Signature: _____   Date: __16 Aug 202__

Executive Summary

Faith and spirituality are becoming increasingly sought-after anchors in mounting challenges in the contemporary world. The need for effective leadership, spiritual guidance, and mentorship have become more pivotal. Evidence also suggests that spiritual leadership values and practices are related to leadership effectiveness and encompass the behaviors needed to motivate oneself, satisfy spiritual well-being, and positively influence others within that organization. However, more research has yet to explore how spirituality affects leadership behavior and action in faith-based programs such as the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA).

This study explored the lived experiences of RCIA leaders and participants to understand better the essence of leadership styles within the RCIA process. A narrative research method was implemented, which involved interviews, observations, and field notes. Interviews provided the primary source of data, and four major themes emerged from the analysis of data: (a) spirituality, (b) spiritual wellness (c) transformational and personal development, and (d) shared commitment.

The key findings of this study reinforced the evidence-based correlation between the RCIA process and spiritual leadership. Ultimately, by shedding light on the importance of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in fostering spiritual leadership, this research not only aimed to enhance the understanding of the RCIA process and its impacts on individual spiritual journeys but also underscored the relevance of spiritual leaders in navigating the challenges of modern life.

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BACKGROUND

Leadership has been extensively researched and is defined as "a process in which an individual influences the progress of group members toward attainment of a goal" (Levi, 2010, p.166). According to Oyinlade (2006), motivation, support, and aligning followers towards a common mission are measurable abilities of an effective leader. However, having a title of a leader and being an effective leader are two different things, and workplace settings, educational institutions, and organizations operate better when effective leadership occurs within those spaces (Spinelli, 2006). Faith-based programs are no exception and will be in jeopardy without effective leadership. Eguizabal (2009) stated that religious organizations need more solid leadership to avoid confusion and discomfort when lacking faith, vision, and motivation. Overall effectiveness will improve when an organization's vision and purpose are clear and meaningful.

A continued interest in leadership studies is the spiritual leadership theory and approach (Burke, 2006; Crossman, 2010; Fry, 2003). A spiritual leadership approach asks different questions about what it means to be human, to be transformational, and to grow as a person and what values and power distributions are needed to improve organizations and society (Burke, 2006). Regarding the implementation and effects of spirituality, scholars have found that the attitudes and behaviors of spiritual leaders play a vital role in how leaders incorporate a sense of well-being, calling, and membership in their organizational and community environment (Crossman, 2010; Fry, Hannah, Noel, & Walumbwa, 2011; Garcia-Zamor, 2003;). However, in the current climate, scholars and researchers have differing definitions of spiritual leadership, and it has been suggested that this diversity of purposes has limited the collective understanding of the effect of spirituality within organizations (Chen & Li, 2013).

Workplace spirituality offers the possibility of solid influences in faith-based organizations. Faith-based organizations have been defined as any religiously affiliated organization, many of which trace their origins to a religious or structured church belief system (Farnsley, 2001). The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is a faith-based program within the Catholic faith that has a series of rituals that celebrate and guide a person's spiritual journey of conversion toward God within a worshipping community. The essential introduction instructions in the rites of the RCIA include important theological explanations and directives for parish community involvement, which are necessary to the RCIA process. The parish community initiates and joins the candidates and catechumens on their faith journey. RCIA team members and the parish community are companions and agents of conversion who guide catechumens to Christ by celebrating the catechumenate rites and other catechetical endeavors. However, Hage and Posner (2015) explained that spiritual leaders utilize their faith to model, encourage, empower, inspire, and challenge followers. It is argued in this research that different leadership styles, such as transformational, servant, and symbolic leadership, reflect the influences of spiritual leadership. The teachings in the RCIA process can be adopted and transferred to leadership modeling in a design that will transform the discipline.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The process of Christian initiation encompasses various sacraments, catechesis teachings, and faith-related experiences that help individuals cultivate a closer relationship with Jesus Christ through the Catholic Church. Traditionally, these rites are aimed at children and infants, with baptisms, confirmations, and first communions as the key milestones. However, recent demographic shifts and religious trends have also increased the need to return to the early Church's adult-focused initiation rites. The problem this paper sought to address was the current lack of understanding and the dearth of academic exploration on the importance of rites of Christian initiation for adults, specifically as it relates to the development of spiritual leadership.

Growing secularization in Western societies is causing more individuals to turn to religion later in life, often seeking guidance and spiritual deepening in their adult years. Scholars and religious authorities have identified the current crisis of spiritual leadership and argued that fostering strong lay leaders is pivotal for the continued flourishing of Christian faith communities (Lakeland, 2005). Empowering adults who undergo initiation rites to take on leadership roles in their faith communities is essential for revitalizing church communities and ensuring their sustainability.

Despite the apparent necessity of exploring adult initiation rites and their connection to spiritual leadership, research is limited. This gap contributes to understanding the effectiveness of current adult initiation programs, potential areas for improvement in their design and implementation, and how these traditions can directly impact individuals' growth into spiritual leaders. As a result, faith communities may need an opportunity to tap into the invaluable potential of newcomers to shape the future of Christian communities through their leadership.

The study aimed to address this gap in the literature by investigating the importance of the RCIA, specifically through the lens of spiritual leadership development. The research provides further insight into the role of adult initiation in fostering spiritual leaders and a better understanding of how various initiation processes contribute to the development of lay leaders. It offers recommendations for enhancing current programs with an emphasis on leadership growth.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is a significant process within the Catholic Church that facilitates the integration of individuals into the faith community. At the heart of this process lies RCIA leadership, a crucial component that guides and supports individuals throughout their initiation. This transformative journey requires skilled and dedicated leaders who effectively guide and support prospective converts throughout their spiritual formation. In this literature review, the researcher seeks to delve into the realm of RCIA leadership, examining the existing body of research to gain insights into

the various aspects of this critical role. The role of RCIA leaders entails multifaceted responsibilities, including catechesis, spiritual formation, pastoral care, and community building. Furthermore, the success of the RCIA program heavily relies on the competence, commitment, and adaptability of these leaders. Thus, understanding the characteristics, qualities, and practices that contribute to effective RCIA leadership becomes imperative in promoting the growth and success of this important process. As the RCIA program plays a significant role in the lives of those seeking initiation, understanding the dynamics of effective leadership within this context becomes paramount.

However, in the contemporary world, where faith and spirituality are increasingly becoming sought-after anchors in the face of mounting challenges, the need for effectual spiritual guidance and mentorship has become more pivotal. As the Catholic Church endeavors to meet this demand, the Rite of Christian Initiation process, which offers a comprehensive initiation into the faith for interested adults, has emerged as a potent instrument in shaping, nurturing, and empowering individuals with the necessary qualities for effective leadership. To achieve the research goals, various relevant sources, such as books, scholarly articles, Church documents, observations, and interviews, were investigated and analyzed, shedding light on models of leadership employed within the RCIA process.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The information, skills, and perspectives RCIA leaders show when leading in their respective communities are called informed practices, behaviors, and attitudes (Wiley, 2021). Therefore, this study explored the experiences of RCIA leaders and participants and sought to understand the essence of effective leadership styles within the RCIA process. The following questions served as a basis for this study's research, and considering their knowledge, what are the leaders of RCIA doing, saying, and feeling?

- Which practices, behaviors, and attitudes do RCIA leaders in the sample population have regarding the RCIA process?

- How do the RCIA leaders display leadership styles such as spiritual, transformational, symbolic, and servant, and how do these styles impact the RCIA process?

- What are the perceptions of candidates, catechumens, and RCIA leaders on the many leadership styles and methods19?

RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE

After an overview of over 150 previous studies, Reave (2005) proposed that values that have long been regarded as spiritual ideals, such as integrity, honesty, and humility, have been proven to impact leadership success substantially. As a result, these spiritual needs at work significantly positively affect human health and psychological well-being and establish the foundation for workplace spirituality and spiritual leadership (Fry et al., 2017). Therefore, this study is significant because it contributes to social changes by better-understanding perceptions and leadership styles within the RCIA process, leaders, and participants. Evidence also suggested that spiritual leadership values and practices are related to leadership effectiveness (Fry, 2003; Fry & Matherly, 2006; Reave, 2005).

Faith-based programs have been assumed by many to be organizations in which spirituality influences leaders and their decision-making processes, yet only limited research has explored how spirituality affects leadership behavior and action in faith-based programs such as the RCIA (Beheshtifar & Zare, 2013; Hester, 2002; Lee, 2010; Martínez Hardigree, 2008; Reave, 2005). When it comes to achieving the objectives of the RCIA process, the informed practices, behaviors, and attitudes of those who lead the process are of utmost importance. This study analyzed the many leadership styles RCIA leaders use and how they impact the RCIA process. Thus, leadership styles play an integral role in improving the value of any organization. The research explored ways to enhance the RCIA process and leaders in general, and possible recommendations emerged by adopting the four leadership styles: spiritual, transformational, symbolic, and servant.

According to surveys conducted by CARA in the United States in 2000 and 2014, most parishes must celebrate the RCIA according to its principles. However, for many parishes, the RCIA is a school-year program, running from September to April each year, indicating a lack of focus on a gradual response to God. In addition, mass attendance of newly baptized adults declines in the first three years after full initiation, indicating a need to fully integrate them into the community's ongoing journey of conversion and worship. The findings of this study provided valuable data on the leadership styles of RCIA leaders, in addition to the effects that those styles have on the success and improvement of the RCIA program.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative study design using narrative inquiry aims to interpret the lived experiences of RCIA participants by collecting and analyzing their stories. Narrative research focuses on how individuals assign meaning to their experiences through storytelling. Narrative inquiry is commonly used in educational research because educators have storied lives. Narrative inquiry emphasizes the importance of thinking narratively and understanding that narrative research does not lead to conclusive findings but offers understanding and meaning. The narrative inquiry process requires reflexivity from both the Researcher and

the participants as the story evolves through multiple iterations (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018; Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

The Researcher conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with participants with open-ended interview questions to gather data about their experiences and practices within the RCIA process. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. Member checking was used to ensure the accuracy of the findings, with participants reviewing and editing their interview transcripts. Follow-up conversations were also conducted to address any questions or concerns. Using open-ended interview questions allowed for a deeper exploration of participants' experiences, and the Researcher actively collaborated with them to co-construct knowledge. The findings were presented in narrative and graphic forms to understand the RCIA participants' experiences comprehensively.

A verbatim reflexive journal was kept throughout the process. Reflexivity is a concept that has become significant in qualitative research because it recognizes the researcher's role in shaping the meaning of the research. This entails the researcher being aware of their biases and influences throughout the research process. Reflexivity should be practiced throughout the entire research process, from the initial acknowledgment of the researcher's background and beliefs to providing details about potential biases and reflecting on personal experiences that have shaped the researcher's growth and change. It is a process that emphasizes one's perceptions and impact on the research (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Watt, 2007).

ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

I have been practicing Catholicism for most of my life. However, I was only baptized as a baby and never completed my sacraments of receiving the Eucharist and being confirmed. My sons both attend Catholic Schools, and I always told them that I would never make them do things that I would not personally do. So, when my eldest son asked why I did not receive communion at mass and why he had to, I knew it was time for me to become a better Catholic. Therefore, in 2019, I registered for the RCIA program at our parish. My life truly changed during and after the process. I learned that there is a common thread that binds all Catholics together. Catholics belong to a Christ-centered faith community with Jesus Christ at the center and as the foundation. Catholics share Jesus' vision to care for one another and to use our unique gifts and talents for the good of the community and the world.

I have participated in many diverse programs that prepare individuals to live in an "all-inclusive" and "just" society. However, it was only when I officially took part in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) program that I had a truly transformational experience. I became fascinated and wanted to learn everything I could about why the RCIA had a profound positive or negative influence on everyone who participated in their spiritual and or transformational journey. Catholicism is a conversion process within the faith

community, and the RCIA is the roadmap for that spiritual journey. This gradual process varies according to the many forms of God's grace, and each person's journey of conversion and initiation into Christ differs. This process evoked my passion for pursuing spiritual leadership and wanting to live a meaningful and purposeful life with God's grace.

It is my belief and perception that spiritual leadership is rooted in love and formed by community while encompassing values and practicing justice. Love is a critical element of spirituality, as it requires faith and is difficult to define or replicate scientifically. Personal experiences, such as being supported by a loving family and faith community, have shaped my understanding of spirituality. Accepting Jesus and being born again have been influential moments of faith. Spirituality is understood as living in openness to the divine, oneself, and others to become more fully oneself through love. Kindness, righteousness, and peace are essential aspects of spirituality. Following Jesus' commandment to love each other are necessary for spiritual leadership.

RESEARCHER ASSUMPTIONS

The study assumed that participation in the RCIA process is voluntary and that participants view it as a sacred and transformative journey. The researcher expected participants to be open and honest in sharing their experiences. The researcher also refrained from projecting her thoughts and opinions during data collection. It was expected that the participants would be encouraged to engage in parish and community activities. The researcher expected RCIA leaders to have strong spiritual and transformational leadership skills, and all participants were expected to be motivated to contribute to the research.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMINOLOGY

Candidates are defined as Christians who have been baptized and are now seeking to enter full communion with the Catholic Church (Modern Catholic Dictionary).

Catechesis is a unique practice of teaching a basic but comprehensive introduction to the Christian faith. (https://teamrcia.com/about/rcia-glossary, 2023).

Catechumenate is the period of instruction in faith before baptism and the admission of converts to the Catholic Church (MODERN CATHOLIC DICTIONARY).

Catechumens are unbaptized and want to enter the Catholic faith through the Sacraments of Initiation of baptism, confirmation, and Holy Eucharist (MODERN CATHOLIC DICTIONARY)

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is a gradual spiritual journey of the Catholic faith (Modern Catholic Dictionary)

Fry's Spiritual Leadership Model is an emerging paradigm within the broader" framework of workplace spirituality designed to develop an intrinsically motivated environment within an organization" (The International Institute for Spiritual Leadership, 2020).

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this literature review is threefold:

1. To provide an overview of the existing scholarship on the study of leadership, leadership practices, and the informed practices, behaviors, and attitudes of not only RCIA leadership but leadership in general.

2. To identify the key themes, concepts, and theoretical frameworks that inform current understandings of this role.

3. To identify gaps in literature and potential areas for future research.

The review encompassed scholarly works such as academic articles, books, and dissertations spanning various disciplines, including theology, pastoral studies, religious education, and leadership studies, and drawing from diverse sources to comprehensively understand RCIA leadership that incorporates both theological and practical aspects.

Examining the RCIA leadership scholarship aims to contribute to the existing knowledge base, providing insights and recommendations to enhance the training and support of RCIA leaders worldwide. Ultimately, this exploration will help to shed light on the critical components of effective RCIA leadership, enabling the Catholic Church to foster a nurturing and transformative environment for individuals seeking to deepen their faith and become integral members of the faith community.

In the subsequent sections of this literature review, the essential findings, and insights from the existing literature on RCIA leadership, highlighting relevant studies, theories, and practical implications are presented. The researcher is attempting to provide valuable insights and recommendations for enhancing RCIA leadership practice by synthesizing the available knowledge.

THE STUDY OF LEADERSHIP

The study of leadership and its significance to organizational and individual progress has been dominant for the past half-century. Developing interest in workplace spirituality has led to a new paradigm in organizational science (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004). As a result, theoretical assumptions are growing regarding how workplace spirituality and transformational leadership might enhance organizational performance, most assuming a compelling positive impact (Fry, 2003, 2005; Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004; Reave, 2005).

Although there is little empirical work and nothing which gives attention to the significance of spiritual experience in educational leadership due to secularism, secularizing the schools was gradual and incremental. As America expanded, the needs of the agricultural

agenda, among other things, contributed to parents desiring those academic subjects to be the priority at school; religion could be valued, taught, and modeled in the home. (Wiley, 2021). There is, however, compelling evidence and connection that spiritual experience and transformational leadership are widespread and essential to leaders in general (Woods, 2007).

Additionally, the analysis of the literature review provided evidence that leadership styles are a crucial area where religion manifests itself, with several authors indicating a significant relationship between religion and the dimensions of leadership styles (fry, 2003, 2005; Gaitho, 2019; Hage & Posner, 2015). For faith-based organizations such as the Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), the practices, behaviors, and attitudes of leaders can encourage, enable, inspire, and challenge critical dimensions of leadership styles (Hage & Posner, 2013).

THE RITES OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS (RCIA)

"It has been often said that one of the characteristics of the modern world is the disappearance of any meaningful rights of initiation" (Eliade, 1958, p. ix).

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is a rite of passage integrated into the church year by a local parish for adults who want to join the Catholic Church, receive full communion, or learn about the faith. Because each person's journey is unique, the RCIA divides converts to Catholicism into catechumens and candidates. The catechetical endeavor native to catechumenate process is a life-long personal conversion. Catechesis is about teaching the fundamental elements of the faith, and the catechumens and candidates must come to understand the person and work of Jesus. Through word, worship, service, and community, catechumenate catechesis aims to lead all of God's people to an ever-deepening relationship with God and empower all to grow in faith and discipleship. Additionally, because the RCIA process is a spiritual and transformational journey, there are four periods, shown in Figure 1, designed to help individuals deepen their relationship with God and enter full communion with the Catholic Church. The RCIA process is often accompanied by sponsors, mentors, and parish community members who support and encourage those on this faith journey.

McCallion & Maines (2002) explored and discussed the initiation process into the Catholic Church, known as the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), and focused on the temporal sequencing and duration of initiation. The researchers conducted interviews with initiation coordinators and found tensions between the prescribed sacred temporal order of the RCIA and enacted secular, temporal orders. City coordinators, who often had already been parishioners, were more likely to shorten the RCIA process and adapt it to the candidates' level of theological knowledge. Suburban coordinators, who had liturgical training, tended to adhere strictly to the prescribed texts and insisted on full educational experiences, resulting in a longer time frame. The findings indicated that both groups of

coordinators faced the challenge of balancing Catholic identity and the inclusiveness of the RCIA process.

Figure 1 Stages of the RCIA Process (Adapted from St. Augustine Parish, 2023)
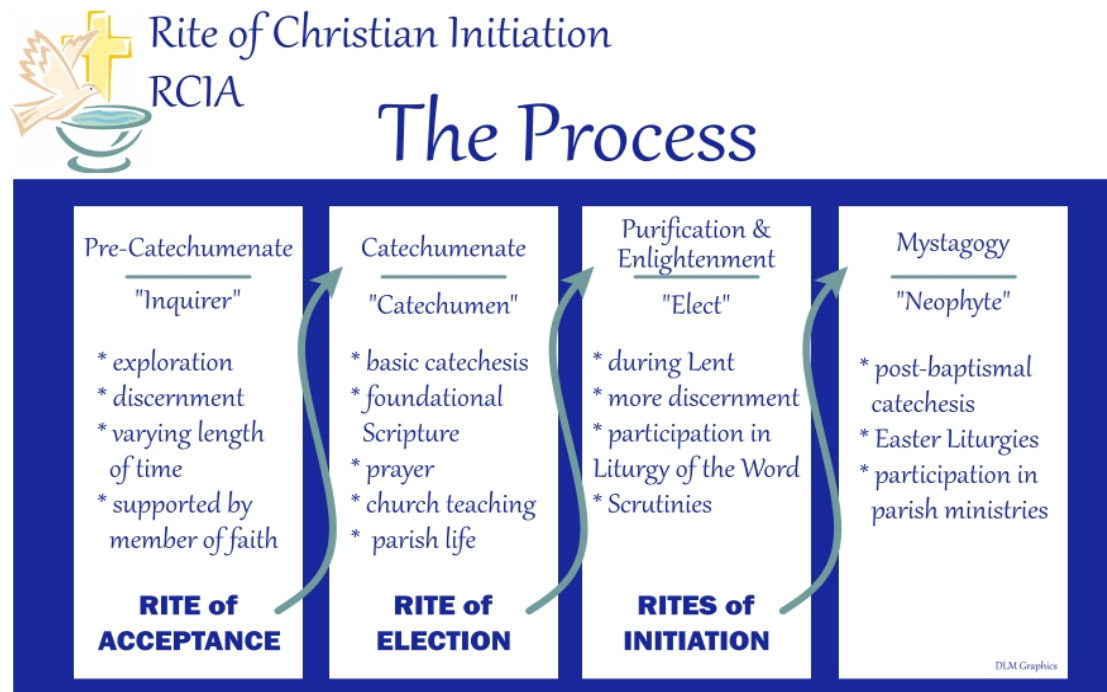
Yamane (2012) explored the impact of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) on individuals who participate in the process of joining the Roman Catholic Church. The study used a quasi-experimental design and collected data on individuals before and after their initiation to identify changes in religiosity. The research also looked at the characteristics of the RCIA process in different parishes to explain differences in individual change. The findings showed that those who were initiated in parishes with a more fully implemented RCIA process were more engaged with their parishes and experienced growth in their spiritual practice. The RCIA profoundly affected the lives of the people involved. Many participants reported feeling closer to God, a greater understanding of the Catholic faith, and a sense of calling and membership. Additionally, some participants reported experiencing peace and joy in their lives. These findings also indicated that the leadership models reflect the RCIA process, and more participants applied the spiritual leadership model to transform into better leaders. Yamane's study contributed to the sociological study of religion by examining initiation within organizational contexts and offers insights into the concept of initiation as a process of reaffiliation that seeks to foster conversion.

Ecklund (2006) investigated the differences in the congregational culture surrounding women's leadership among six Catholic parishes. The findings showed that progressive parishes actively encouraged women's leadership, saw the priest shortage as an

opportunity for more lay leadership, and that female leaders believed they could change the Church through their local parish. In contrast, traditional parishes viewed women's leadership as placeholders until more priests were found. The priests' interpretation of their role, the discourse they used to talk about lay leadership, and the parish's account of the priest shortage influenced the power and authority given to female leaders. The study also emphasized the need to understand the factors contributing to a parish's culture of women's leadership and how these factors may change over time.

In Summary, Yamane (2012) conducted a study on the impact of the RCIA process on individuals joining the Roman Catholic Church, finding that those in parishes with a well-implemented process experienced growth in their spirituality and engagement with the Church. McCallion & Maines (2002) explored tensions between the prescribed order of the RCIA process and the temporal sequencing and duration enacted by coordinators. Ecklund (2006) examined congregational culture surrounding women's leadership in Catholic parishes, finding that progressive parishes encouraged women's leadership, while traditional parishes saw it as temporary until more priests were available. The priests' interpretation of their role influenced the authority given to female leaders. However, there needs to be more literature regarding the informed practices, behaviors, and attitudes regarding RCIA leaders and the leadership styles used within the process and the community.

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Spiritual leadership encompasses the values, attitudes, and behaviors needed to motivate oneself and satisfy intrinsic spiritual well-being, positively influencing others within that organization; Because the RCIA process is being led by RCIA leaders and catechists whose beliefs align with their personal experiences with God, providing a concise clarification of spiritual leadership, its defining characteristics, and essential elements, this section will lay the groundwork for understanding the connection between RCIA and spiritual leadership.

> The RCIA program teaches that in the sacraments of Christian initiation, we are freed from the power of darkness and joined to Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. We receive the Spirit of filial adoption, and we are part of the entire people of God in celebrating the memorial of the Lord's death and resurrection (NCCB, 1985, p. xiv).

Literature is abundant on exemplary leadership practices, but spiritual leadership is neglected as a sincere and trustworthy argument for scholarly research because of its assumed connection with religion (Zaharris et al., 2017). However, an ironic twist is that great leaders in history are not only remembered for what they accomplished but also for the spiritual core of values they imparted to their followers, such as fairness, kindness, trust, respect, honesty, and integrity (Northouse, 2010 & 2016). Therefore, leaders should be mindful of differences and similarities concerning stakeholders' spiritual and religious

orientations and how they influence their leadership behavior. Notably, religion and spirituality are different. Religion focuses more on the specific group and the organization. In contrast, spirituality is universal. It may even encompass more than one religious approach and is more often associated with closeness with God and feelings of togetherness with the world and living things.

A spiritual leader may do a lot to boost the morale of their team and organization by appealing to their sense of purpose. Since offering a shared vision is thought to increase creative behaviors in the workplace, spiritual leaders draw from spiritual leadership theory to establish a compelling vision that outlines the path to achieving followers' ideas in the workplace (Fry, 2003, 2005). First, leaders and followers may benefit psychologically from spiritual leadership, which addresses their basic spiritual requirements by reinforcing spiritual ideals and management techniques such as encouraging employees to look for jobs that they find personally fulfilling (Guillen, Ferrero, & Hoffman, 2015). Second, organizations that follow spiritual leaders perform better due to the shared and well-defined direction (Wang & Hou, 2015). Part of being a spiritual leader is inspiring others by depicting a better, more challenging future. There was a correlation between having specific and challenging goals and increased performance. Goals that were both realistic and difficult encouraged more productivity than vague ones. Third, faith and hope are gifts that those spiritual leaders provided to their followers by creating a vision rooted in spirituality (Wang & Hou, 2015). The self-assured stance set an example of perseverance and drove people to strive for excellence in their work.

Fry (2003, 2005) presented a theoretical model of spiritual leadership, shown in Figure 2, and how it can improve leadership paradigms. Fry argued that spiritual leadership is necessary for effective leadership and can help leaders connect with their followers deeper. The article supports the claim that spiritual leadership can improve the effectiveness needed in educational leadership. Fry discussed the idea of spiritual leadership and the need for more research in this area. In reviewing the literature on leadership and spirituality, Fry argued that there needs to be a clear definition of spiritual leadership. Fry presented a case study of his work with the American Native Movement, and this research assisted in proposing a new definition of spiritual leadership. Through this investigation, Fry explained that spiritual leadership is a self-transformational process grounded in love, compassion, and service to others and concluded that further research on spiritual leadership is needed. Although Louis Fry did an excellent job arguing the importance of spiritual leadership, there needed to be more clarity regarding spiritual leadership, and he needed to provide a clear definition of what spiritual leadership is. He should have discussed the different approaches to spiritual leadership or the various theoretical perspectives on spiritual leadership. In addition, the article needs to examine empirical evidence on spiritual leadership. There needs to be more empirical research on spiritual leadership and its effects. Lastly, the report needs to discuss the practical applications of spiritual leadership, and there needs to be more discussion on how spiritual leadership can be used to improve organizational outcomes.

Dayler & Fry (2020) explored the relationship between spiritual leadership and Catholic organizational identity in Catholic health and service organizations. The study found that spiritual leadership positively influences Catholic organizational identity and other individual and organizational outcomes such as life satisfaction, organizational commitment, productivity, and social responsibility. The findings suggested that leaders who emphasize spiritual well-being in the workplace can positively affect individuals and the organization. The study also highlighted the importance of preserving Catholic organizational identity in Catholic organizations, as it is associated with the values and traditions of the Catholic Church.

Figure 2. Fry's Spiritual Leadership Model (Adapted from Fry, 2009)

Glenys Woods (2007) further extended the importance of spiritual experiences for educational leaders. Woods argued that spiritual experiences can help leaders be more effective by giving them a sense of purpose and meaning. Therefore, Woods conducted qualitative research and explored the experiences of twelve educational leaders who reported having spiritual experience. The data collection methods used were interviews and document analysis. Using purposeful sampling, the participants were white, middle-aged, male, Christian educational leaders. The findings indicated that the participants' spiritual experiences profoundly impacted their lives, reassessing their values and priorities and becoming more compassionate and authentic leaders. Again, Woods argued that spiritual experiences are essential for educational leaders and suggested that these experiences can help leaders to connect with their students and to understand their needs. The article also argued that spiritual experiences can help leaders to develop a sense of purpose and to motivate them to work for the good of their students. The article implied that educational leaders should cultivate spiritual experiences to improve

effectiveness. Additionally, the report suggested that spiritual experiences can help leaders to develop a more holistic view of their students and to understand their needs on a deeper level. Therefore, the study's results proved that spiritual experiences were necessary for leaders to provide them with a sense of purpose and meaning.

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Many kinds of leadership models are apparent in any organization or institution. Leaders are like frontrunners who should inspire, direct, and determine the goal and develop the pathway of change to improve the condition of an institution or organization. Wiley (2021) explained that transformational leadership requires spiritual formation and integration. In her study, Wiley stated that she used the metaphor "preparing the soil (the school environment, the formational practices, and the students) to receive best the seed (God's gospel of Jesus) to encourage and promote growth (spiritual formation, maturity of students, shalom)" (p. 59). Spiritual formation must occur in each part to make a fully integrated person and leader. According to Willard & Simpson (2005), spiritual transformation requires thoughts, feelings, heart, body, social context, and soul (p. 25). The connection of religion and spirituality in leadership takes many shapes. Although religion serves as the backbone of ethics, values, and morals, thus the vital element of societies, the significance of religion is to guide spiritual and personal beliefs through transformational leadership (Gaitho, 2019).

James MacGregor Burns introduced the concept of transformational leadership as a leadership approach that aims to create positive change in individuals and social systems. It involves connecting followers to the mission and collective identity of the organization, being a role model, challenging followers to take ownership, and aligning their strengths with tasks. Additionally, Bernard M. Bass expanded on the concept and explained its psychological mechanisms. He identified four elements of transformational leadership: individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. Research has shown that transformational leadership predicts positive performance outcomes (Bass, 1998; Burns, 2004; Crossman, 2010; Gaitho, 2019; Kuhnert & Lewis, 1989).

Furthermore, transformational leadership is a process that changes, transforms, and creates essential organizational change through encouragement, inspiration, and motivation. It concerns emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals. It includes assessing followers' motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as human beings. Transformational leadership involves a distinctive influence that moves others to accomplish more than expected. It is a process that embodies charismatic and visionary leadership by which a person engages with others and builds a relationship that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower (Northouse, 2016). Finally, transformational leadership is a relational method of leading where all have a respected voice and set of tasks and are motivated toward a common goal (Boamah et al., 2018). Through proper communication, motivation, and management, this leadership

style allows for exploring workplace changes, behavior modifications, and program delivery while creating an environment for enhanced outcomes.

Rich and Stennis (2021) investigated spiritual coping and transformational leadership within social work practice, education, and personal and corporate worship. The authors offered awareness of spiritual coping and the understanding of its value in exploring and examining the negative and positive factors influencing one's beliefs towards managing and dealing with challenges. They also discussed transformational leadership to enhance methods of excellence in practice, social work education, and personal worship using technology, intellectual stimulation, and motivation, to name a few supporting ideas. The authors concluded and hoped that the theories supported in the study provided impactful and long-lasting suggestions "when confronted by challenges, and those beyond with grace, prayer, transforming, leadership, and strength in knowing how to best cope with it all" (p. 346).

Leadership in organizations, institutions, and faith-based programs can take various forms. Transformational leadership involves inspiring and guiding followers to bring about positive change. Spiritual formation and integration are essential to transformational leadership, creating a fully integrated person and leader. Religion and spirituality play a role in guiding personal beliefs within transformational leadership. James MacGregor Burns (2004) and Bernard M. Bass (1998) developed the concept of transformational leadership, which involves connecting followers to the organization's mission, being a role model, challenging followers to take ownership, and aligning strengths with tasks. Research has shown that transformational leadership is associated with positive outcomes. It is a process that creates change by motivating and inspiring individuals, focusing on emotions, values, ethics, and long-term goals. It involves treating followers individually, addressing their needs, and leading by example. Transformational leadership is a relational approach that promotes a sense of common purpose and allows for the exploration of change and improved outcomes. Spiritual coping and transformational leadership are interconnected and can enhance practice, education, and personal worship. Technology, intellectual stimulation, and motivation are some supporting ideas for facilitating transformational leadership. Transformational leadership and spiritual coping provide valuable tools for managing challenges and achieving excellence.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

"True greatness, true leadership, is achieved not by reducing men to one's service but in giving oneself in selfless service to them" (Sanders, 1986, p. 20).

Servant leadership dates back thousands of years and describes that a leader's primary focus is to empower and serve those under their leadership (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018; Greenleaf, 2002). A servant leader leads because they genuinely want to serve others; people will follow because they trust that leader; without trust, no one will follow (Greenleaf, 2002). This model includes prioritizing the needs of others before your own and using one's power and influence to help others grow and develop (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018; Reddy, 2019). In addition, this leadership style requires leaders to consider the organization rather than just giving orders and expecting everyone to follow them.

Robert K. Greenleaf coined servant-leadership in a 1970 essay titled "The Servant as Leader." Greenleaf was a management researcher and spent most of his career at AT&T before becoming a consultant. He founded the Center for Applied Ethics and was interested in the Catholic Church from an organizational standpoint (Tran & Spears, 2020). Servant leadership is a leadership approach that puts serving others as the top priority and emphasizes community, holistic work, and shared decision-making. Greenleaf identified ten servant-leader characteristics: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growth, and building community. Tran & Spears (2020) explained that Greenleaf believed the Catholic Church had the potential to be a force for good in society but needed to adopt a more affirming and positive leadership approach. He viewed Pope John XXIII as a prime example of a servant-leader and credited him with developing servant-leadership and promoting the common good. Pope John XXIII's leadership and the Second Vatican Council have significantly impacted the Catholic Church and society, promoting justice, human dignity, and interfaith dialogue. Greenleaf and Pope John XXIII are potent examples of leaders prioritizing service and contributing to the common good.

Although servant leaders build communities by partnering with workers within their organization, Greenleaf (1998) argued that it is challenging to create a harmonious, trustworthy, and organizational community utilizing synergy when applying this model. However, Dierendonck (2011) emphasized that servant leadership is motivated by the need to serve others, which influences and builds a healthy working environment that can increase an individual's performance. Servant leadership enhances team performance, which will lead to an increase in the organization's sustainability.

According to Reddy (2019), Jesus Christ exemplified the concept of servant leadership, as seen in the scripture passage from Matthew. Jesus taught and practiced servant leadership, serving others with compassion, love, and grace. He emphasized that true greatness comes from being a servant, rather than exercising authority over others. Jesus' ultimate act of service was giving his life as a ransom for many.

But Jesus called them to himself and said, you know that the rulers of the Gentiles Lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever wants to be first among you, let him be your slave just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (The Great Adventure Catholic Bible, 2022, Matthew 20:25-28).

Spirituality in the workplace aims to create a holistic and meaningful environment within an organization or faith-based program. In the RCIA process, leaders must embody servant leadership, following the example of Christ, who emphasized the importance of serving others, thus, Jesus taught that a leader's greatness is measured by a total commitment to serving fellow human beings" (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002, p. 59). Servant leadership fosters a spiritual generative culture that promotes personal and team growth and caring institutions. A servant leader in the RCIA process is committed to the spiritual growth of others, prioritizes the needs of those seeking to join the faith, and uses leadership skills to serve and empower them. Good leadership in the RCIA process is crucial for effective evangelization and strengthening the followers of Christ (Barga, 2022; Reddy, 2019).

Servant leaders in the church have a role in promoting spirituality and supporting others in various ways. They should have qualities like empathy, awareness, and the ability to foresee outcomes. They empower others and prioritize their needs, while also deepening their own spiritual practice. In addition, a leader practicing servant leadership will likely find their spiritual practice deepened and continues to become more meaningful as they focus on serving people and assisting in developing a positive culture within the RCIA process (Ortiz-Gomez, et al., 2020; Spears, 1995).

SYMBOLIC LEADERSHIP

Leadership is the act of leading a group of individuals toward the achievement of specific goals (Robbins,1990); Northouse (2010) stated that power is related to leadership because it is part of the influence process and in the symbolic frame, "leaders who comprehend the governance of symbols have a better chance of influencing their followers" (Abdourrahmane, 2019, p. 70). Symbolism constructs and sends meanings, evokes emotions, affects perceptions and beliefs, and impacts actions. Leaders must use myths and metaphors, stories and tales, and rituals and ceremonies to inspire organizational followers to get things done symbolically. The symbolic frame is vital in communicating a sense of mission and identity, frequently in the form of values, which can help build cohesiveness and a shared vision. In addition, leaders might intentionally choose specific communication strategies to create shared meanings, and myths, metaphors, stories, tales, ceremonies, and rituals strengthen these values. Finally, leaders might consider the critical processes by which individuals make sense of their attitudes and behaviors (Abdourrahmane, 2019).

Bolman and Deal (2017) explained that symbolic leadership uses symbols, other cultural practices, and non-verbal forms of communication to convey meaning and purpose used to motivate and inspire others. This model uses language, expression, and other symbolic communication forms to understand common sense and identity (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Symbolic leadership is linked with the intersection of spirituality and leadership because it includes spiritual and cultural symbols to convey meaning and guide behavior.

Leaders use different forms of symbolism, such as stories, symbols, or ceremonies, to communicate their visions and values to their followers (Deflem, 1991). Such symbols are drawn from various sources such as religion, history, culture, and experience. (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Symbolic leadership can be specifically applicable when there is a need to develop a sense of shared goals and meaning for others and guide behavior in challenging or complex problems. In the RCIA process, symbolic leadership uses Christian symbolism as an artistic representation, an outward expression, or an object that has shades of various, often hidden meanings that are applied in multiple ways, from symbols and rituals to communicating the importance, creating a sense of community, and belonging through body language and gestures.

According to Omodunbi (2021), ritual actions, objects, and places are symbols in ritual processes and events. For example, the cross is the most recognized symbol that represents Christianity, especially Catholicism, because the sign of the cross on the person being baptized means they are part of the Catholic community or God's family. However, the Cross will have multiple meanings for us according to our life experiences. For example, it can convey a wealth of ideas, concepts, scriptural quotes, experiences of suffering, etc.; The Dove represents the Holy Spirit, who came down as a dove when Jesus was baptized; prayers and laying hands are symbolic actions, and the sacred oil for anointing is a symbolic object used by leaders to communicate meaning in the church.

Omodunbi (2020) also argued that "sacramentality does not mean that God is in all things, but that all things are capable of revealing God (or at least something about God)" (p. 39). Symbols call us to stop, think, and meditate on the meaning or story behind that symbol. Individual perceptions and interpretations vary; for example, water can symbolize many things, such as thirst, weather, and cleanliness, but through a spiritual and religious lens, water represents the sacrament of baptism and the sprinkling of holy water during mass or at celebrations. The immersion of water during Noah's Ark and the crossing of the Red Sea and River Jordan by the Israelites can bring together various meanings of what water symbolizes (Omodunbi, 2020).

Through symbols, people enter the experience of spirituality and the meaning of sacred, and in the RCIA process, no sacrament is richer in meaning and symbolism than the Eucharist. The primary elements of the Eucharist are bread and wine, symbolic of essential nourishment for life. However, these core symbols need the necessary relationship with the other symbols of the Eucharist: the presider, the Word, and the gathered community. Jesus, the Bread of Life, is present sacramentally by invoking the Holy Spirit. Christians are fed at this table of the Lord. The first fruit of their sacramental

nourishment is a closer union with Christ. "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them" (The Great Adventure Catholic Bible, 2022, John 6:56). Consequently, through communion, one is bound more closely in charity to all who form the mystical Body of Christ.

Scholars argued that symbolic leadership focuses on vision and inspiration, and symbolism creates and sends meanings, provokes emotions, affects perceptions and beliefs, and impacts actions (Abdourrahmane, 2019; Deflem, 1991; Omodunbi, 2020) within organizations, especially within the RCIA process. However, further research is needed on the power of symbolism in enhancing shared meanings and commitment because it can improve organizational effectiveness and contribute to a better understanding of the symbolic leadership style adopted in organizations.

DATA AND METHODS

INTRODUCTION

This study used narrative inquiry and the work of Donald E. Polkinghorne to capture participants' experiences. It viewed narrative communication to understand and interpret a person's perceptions and experiences. The study emphasized the importance of thick, rich descriptions in creating a meaningful understanding (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Polkinghorne, 1996).

A narrative inquiry methodological approach allowed participants to share their perceptions of the informed practices, behaviors, and attitudes of leadership in the RCIA process. The research explored ways to improve the RCIA process and leaders in general by investigating the following four leadership styles: Spiritual, transformational, servant, and symbolic leadership. The participants reported experiences enriched the objectivity and thoroughness of the study by allowing the researcher to accurately convey the participants' perceptions of the informed practices, behaviors, and attitudes of the RCIA leaders and leaders in general.

Through the implementation of narrative inquiry methodology and considering the Spiritual Leadership Model as the conceptual framework, purposive sampling was employed to discover the factors that impacted the RCIA process.

RATIONALE FOR RESEARCH DESIGN

Through the utilization of narrative inquiry, this qualitative study examined the lives and experiences of two RCIA leaders, one catechumen, and one candidate, who were in the RCIA process. Because narrative research has many forms, incorporates various practices and applications, and is rooted in different social disciplines, the researcher selected narrative inquiry to allow the participants to tell their stories in their own words and from their perspectives (Frost & Ouellette, 2011). Since narrative researchers collect stories from participants and their lived experiences from a first-person point of view, field observations and interviews were utilized to collect data. This assumption was based on the premise that these lived experiences shed light on the participants' identities and how they see themselves (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Researchers often need to pay more attention to the importance of including field observations in their studies, despite the valuable qualitative insights they can provide. Observations can offer a way to document behaviors, events, and unexpected occurrences and play a crucial role in qualitative research data analysis. Field observations can help researchers understand behavior, uncover the broader context of a scenario, and go beyond selected perceptions and protocols to understand activities and their contexts better. Field observations also provide a way to connect field observations with the bigger picture, reflect on the research process, and analyze

emergent patterns or themes (Bailey C. A., 2018). Field notes can be analyzed like any other qualitative text, and even if not formally analyzed, they can provide important context for understanding other data sources. Determining when to end the observational period can be based on predetermined goals or reaching data saturation. Field observations are essential for understanding contextual factors in any research project and offer the potential to reveal important insights. The 3 Cs approach to unstructured field observations provides a practical template for recording events and behaviors in any project involving human participants (Fetters & Rubinstein, 2019). Field observations can be used as a primary research method or in conjunction with other methods (Bailey C. A., 2018).

Through the research process, I kept a verbatim reflective (field) journal to document the entire study process and make connections between theories and practice. Watt (2007) explained that reflexivity is a crucial aspect of qualitative research that involves critically examining your own biases, beliefs, and actions as a researcher. It helps to ensure the accuracy and validity of the study by identifying and addressing any personal influences that may have impacted the data collection and analysis process. Reflexivity involves questioning assumptions, keeping a reflective journal, and being accountable and transparent in the research process. Researchers need to acknowledge their role and the potential impact of their beliefs and experiences on the research outcomes. The benefits of reflexivity include accountability, trustworthiness, clarity in reporting, and personal growth for researchers (Watt, 2007).

Clandinin (2013) explained the importance of understanding the context of the narrative and advised that "the focus of the narrative inquiry is not only valorizing individuals' experiences but is also an exploration of social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives within individuals experiences were, and are, constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted" (p. 18). Furthermore, the in-depth dialogue allowed these experiences to be collected, analyzed, and understood.

Figure 3. Research Methods Model
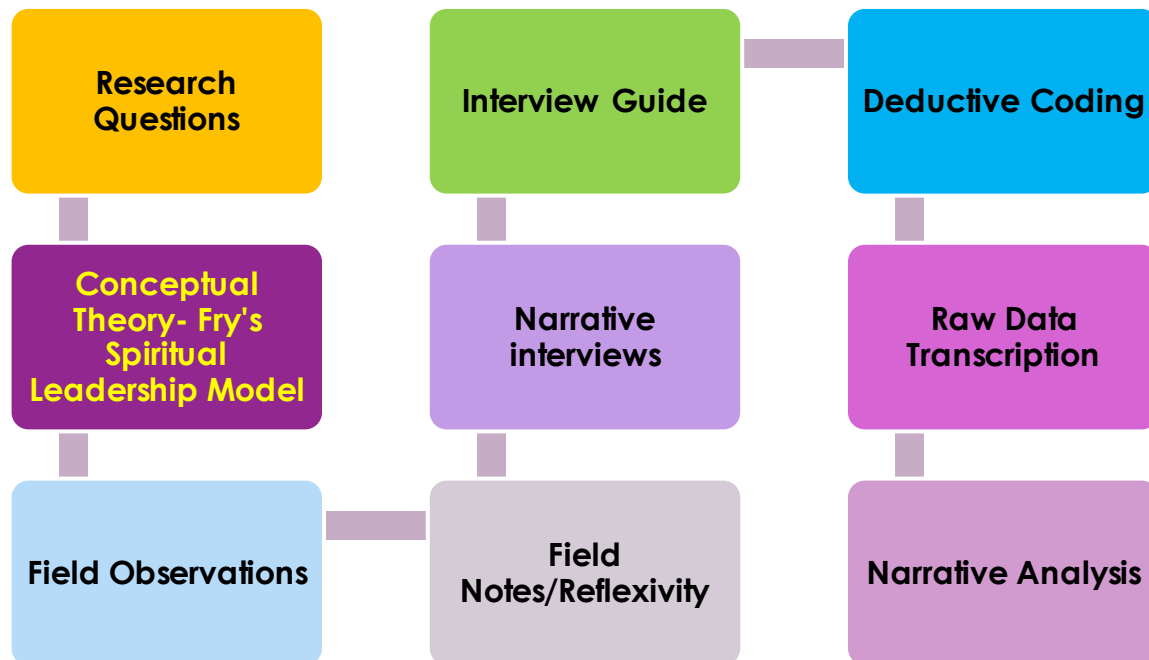
RESEARCH SAMPLE/SOURCES OF DATA

In conducting this narrative inquiry, it was essential to select participants who have experience with the phenomenon being explored and could articulate their lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Purposeful sampling was utilized to recruit two RCIA leaders, one candidate, and one catechumen with experiences and insights into the RCIA process. An in-depth understanding of various leadership models emerged by collecting and analyzing their experiences, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Participant profiles were created using background information such as title, role, and length of time in the RCIA process. Demographically, participants were required to be parishioners at two parish locations (Northwest and Southside of Chicago). Participants' perceptual knowledge of the phenomenon was necessary because interviews were the primary method for collecting data. Care was taken to select subjects comfortable with providing open and honest descriptions of their experiences, attitudes, thoughts, motivations, and feelings.

Theoretical information was collected through a detailed literature review on leadership styles (Shown in Figure 4), especially spiritual leadership. This review provided insight into interpreting, analyzing, and synthesizing the collected data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Figure 4. Leadership Styles
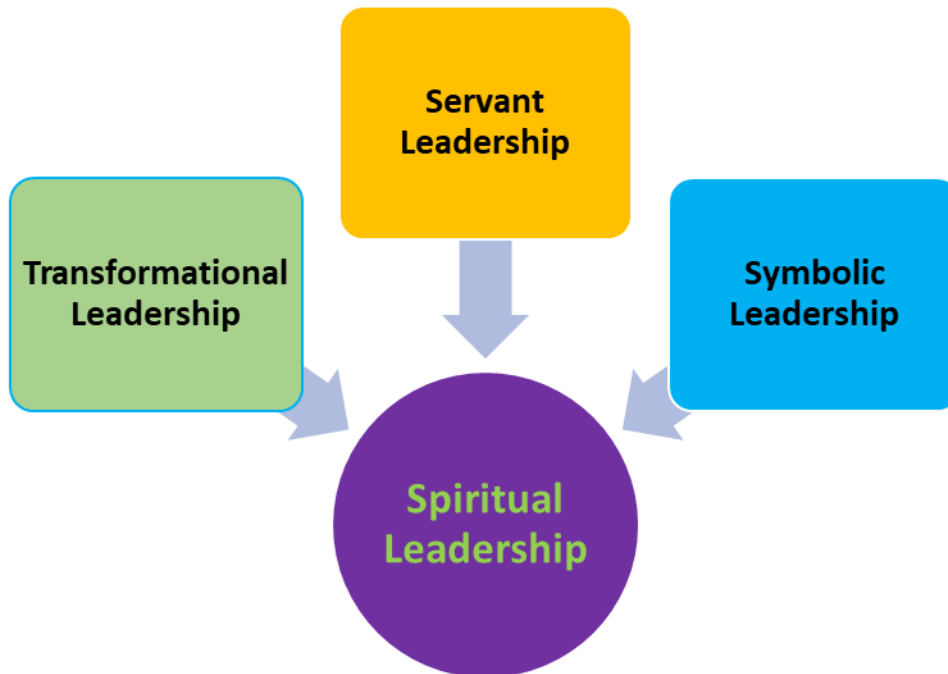
RESEARCH SETTING

In seeking to extract meaning from the lived experiences of the RCIA participants, the use of narrative inquiry aligned with the scope of this study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Four participants were selected for this study: two RCIA leaders, one candidate, and one catechumen. In choosing a research setting, it was essential to examine and document vital aspects of the context and environment in which the study occurred (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Because most of the data was gathered through interviews, a handheld electronic device was used to record the responses. Discussions were limited to one hour, and each participant determined the location.

Using a narrative analysis approach provided valuable insight into the complexity of the participant's attitudes, feelings, and behaviors and allowed for a deeper understanding of their lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches, 2018). Using deductive coding with narrative analysis allowed for predefined themes to identify frequency and reoccurring words and subjects in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021; 2006).

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The study included two first-hand field observations at RCIA group sessions and one-on-one interviews in a private and comfortable setting, chosen by each participant. Field observations were considered essential for qualitative insights and data analysis and

helped to understand behavior and context and uncover patterns or themes. Two additional follow-up conversations occurred for a deeper understanding of responses.

Field notes were analyzed and provided important context for understanding other data sources, and included nonverbal behaviors, moods, and environment descriptions during observations and one-on-one interviews. The observational period ended based on predetermined goals or data saturation. The 3 Cs approach (Content, context, and concepts) was used for recording events and behaviors (Fetters & Rubinstein, 2019).

During the interview process, efforts were made to make the participants feel comfortable, and they were encouraged to be open and honest in their responses. A semi-structured interview format with predetermined questions (See Appendix B and C) helped to facilitate the interview process. Each interview lasted about an hour and was recorded and transcribed; field notes were logged and assisted in deepening the interview transcripts. Lastly, because the existing theory of Spiritual Leadership was applied to the data, a deductive coding approach was used to organize and understand the predetermined themes.

DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

The narrative analysis and deductive coding approach provided a structured and systematic way to analyze the data and uncover meaningful insights. The use of Fry's Spiritual Leadership Model as a conceptual framework further enhanced the understanding of the participant's experiences.

 The process began with preparing and organizing the data by reviewing and identifying more significant ideas and themes. This allowed for a preliminary understanding of the overall content and direction of the data. Next, predetermined codes were applied through deductive coding to identify experts in the data that fit these codes. This method helped identify key concepts and themes already established in existing literature. The data was then re-read and coded, focusing on identifying common themes, categories, and patterns. This step allowed for a closer examination of the data and a deeper exploration of the participants' attitudes, feelings, and behaviors (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The findings were reported by formulating finding statements, providing participant quotations, and summarizing key findings. This step helped to communicate the analysis results and provide evidence from the participants' narratives to support the findings. Finally, the findings were interpreted by dissecting and synthesizing the results. This involved critically analyzing the data, drawing connections between themes and categories, and providing a nuanced understanding of the participants' experiences. Throughout the data analysis process, bracketing ensured that biases were minimized, allowing for a more objective and valid interpretation of the data.

Overall, the narrative analysis, deductive coding approach, and the application of Fry's Spiritual Leadership Model provided a robust framework for analyzing the data and gaining valuable insights into the participants' lived experiences.

CODING PROCESS

The predefined codes shown in Figure 5 were applied through deductive coding, based on existing literature and research questions. An initial codebook was created before the data was analyzed via ATLAS.TI. ATLAS.TI is a software program that helps with qualitative data analysis by allowing users to code and analyze text. It can identify themes, find patterns, and create data visualizations. ATLAS.TI assisted in transcribing data and organizing the codes and categories. After coding the data, a comparison of the different groups and relationship between concepts was analyzed. ATLAS.TI also allows for data visualization to help identify patterns and relationships, and in using the memos and visualization, a tree map of word frequencies was created during the analysis process.

Typically, a small number of codes are used, but new codes can be added or adjusted if needed, and Saldana (2015) emphasized the importance of refining codes to ensure clarity and avoid misinterpretation. Codes are words or phrases that assign attributes portions of data. The data was assessed using descriptive codes, and each interview was coded according to theme (See Figure 5) and frequency of words represented in Figure 6.

Figure 5. Predefined Codes
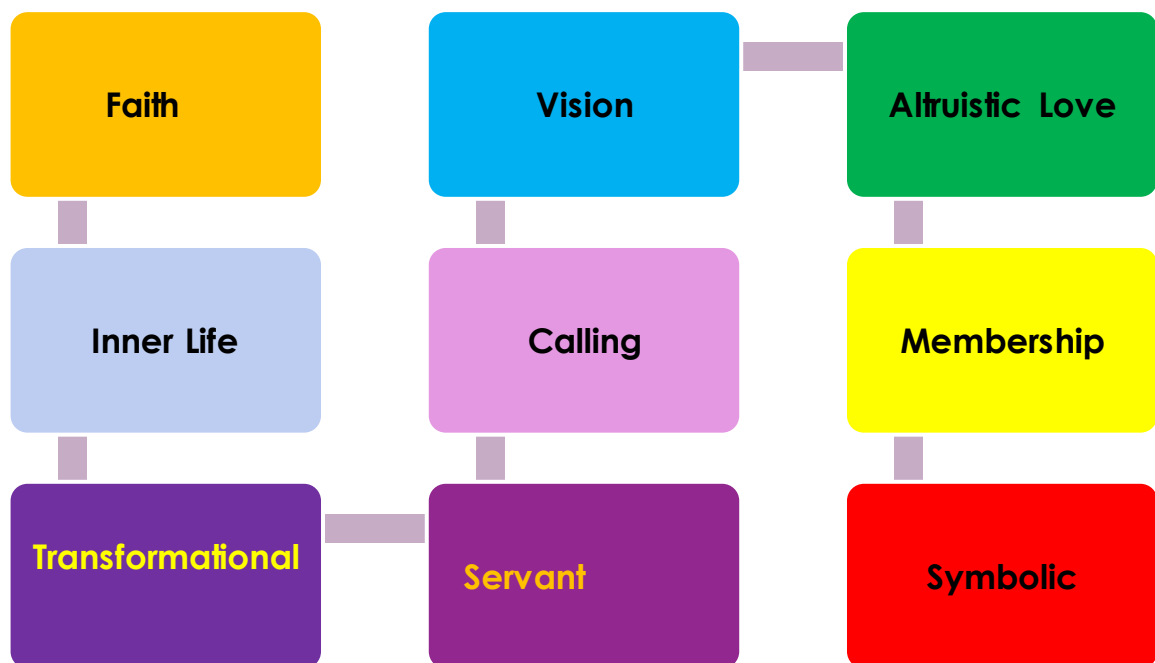
Figure 6. Tree Map of Word Frequency- ATLAS.TI

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study followed ethical guidelines by protecting the identities of participants and obtaining their informed consent. No deception was used during the interviews, and participants were made aware of the purpose of the study and given the option to withdraw at any time. Efforts were made to build trust and rapport with participants, and leading questions and personal impressions were avoided during interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Confidentiality was ensured, and all information collected was kept in an encrypted computer-based system; consent forms were locked in a file cabinet, and all personal identifiers were removed from study documents. Data collected from the research study was kept confidential. Pseudonyms were created for each participant to protect the identities of participants, as well as the names of other people referenced in the study and the names of the parishes (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

The recordings were only used to answer research questions, were transcribed in writing, and then were erased. Audio recordings were transcribed in writing. There were no risks to the participants. All the data was stored in a locked file cabinet and was accessible only to me. All electronic files have been secured on a computer using password protection and encryption. All recordings were destroyed after this study. Transcripts, field notes, and journal are being kept for possible future use for one year.

ISSUES OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness in research refers to the researcher's commitment to thoroughly analyzing a phenomenon using evidence collection, thick descriptions, and triangulated analysis (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). To establish trustworthiness, researchers must demonstrate credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Techniques such as field notes, thick descriptions, and member checks are used to address any bias and validate the findings. Credibility is determined by the believability and authenticity of the results, which can be assessed through member checks. Participants are asked to review and edit their interview transcripts to ensure accuracy (Bailey 2018). Active engagement with participants' feedback and follow-up conversations are essential for data validation (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

A limitation of this study was the small number of participants (four). According to the Archdiocese of Chicago, as of 2022, there are 246 parishes, and interviewing more participants may have added insights into the RCIA process experience. In addition, observational data collection can be complex in recording the data on time because it is time-consuming and demanding in trying to build rapport. There is also a risk of maintaining objectivity by immersing yourself in the culture and environment.

Narrative inquiry and analysis were both a limitation and delimitations. On the one hand, narrative inquiry relies on the researcher's interpretation which biases and assumptions can influence. Narrative analysis also often relies on data already available, such as interviews, oral histories, or written texts, which can limit researchers' control over the quality and completeness of the data. However, on the other hand, a narrative inquiry worked best for this study in capturing a small sample population's detailed stories or life experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Finally, deductive coding was a delimitation because pre-established codes and themes were used to focus the coding of the issues that were known to be important in the existing literature and theory (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019).

SUMMARY

This study used narrative inquiry and the work of Donald E. Polkinghorne to understand participants' experiences. It explored leadership styles in the RCIA process and aimed to improve leadership practices. Purposive sampling and the Spiritual Leadership Model were used in the research design. The Researcher collected data through observations and interviews to understand how the participants' stories contribute to their identities and self-perception. Overall, a narrative inquiry was a powerful tool for exploring the experiences of RCIA participants as it allowed researchers to gain a deep understanding of the lived experiences, perspectives, and transformative processes within the RCIA community. Further, in utilizing narrative inquiry to explore these experiences, insight was gained into how the RCIA process facilitates personal growth, spiritual development, and transformation for those seeking to deepen their relationship with God and the Catholic Church.

APPLICATION

OUTCOMES

This study explored the experiences of RCIA leaders, candidates, and catechumen in the RCIA process. Potential study participants were identified after meeting with an RCIA leader and Associate Pastor. Purposeful sampling was used to identify participants with varying demographic characteristics, such as the parish's geographic location, membership size, years of experience as an RCIA leader, and the candidate/catechumen's time in the RCIA process. After observing and participating in two different RCIA sessions with 15 people, a verbal explanation of the study's significance and purpose and a printed study information sheet were given (see Appendix A). Follow-up phone calls and emails were made to the 15 people to explain the research study further, answer questions, and determine suitability. Ultimately, four were chosen to participate in the study.

Participants from two Parish communities were selected for the study that represented different Catholic networks and neighborhoods. Pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Table 1 visually represents the study's participants' demographic information. The interview dates, times, locations, and formats were mutually agreed upon and scheduled separately with each participant.

Observations were made during the RCIA group sessions, and during interviews, and included written field notes of participants' interactions, body language, and facial expressions. By observing participants in the study, the researcher gained a firsthand understanding of the informed practices, behaviors, and attitudes of leaders in the RCIA process. These observations also provided further information about the essence of leadership styles and methods experienced by the leaders. The researcher's reflections were also documented in a journal to avoid preconceived notions and biases in conducting the research.

An interview guide with questions was created to establish rapport and generate responses to open-ended questions. During the interviews, the goal was to have the participants share their RCIA experiences. To establish trust and transparency, the participants received the interview guide before their scheduled times via email. Participants reported that receiving the questions in advance allowed them to take their time and give deep and honest responses because they felt comfortable and prepared. In facilitating conversations with the participants, questions were asked using a flexible interview format to maintain a relaxed and non-threatening setting (Bailey, 2018). Field notes were used to capture nonverbal behaviors such as environment and mood during observations, and a handheld recording device was used during the interviews. Each interview lasted approximately one hour, and pseudonyms were used in the transcripts to protect the confidentiality of the participants. Follow-up conversations occurred to explain and define the Spiritual Leadership Model. All four participants requested further explanation and definition of Fry's Spiritual Leadership model.

Each participant received a verbatim-typed interview transcript via email, and they were asked to read, edit, add to their interview transcripts, and reflect on the content's accuracy. Member checks allowed the study participants to speak and respond to the representation of their realities as captured during the interview transcripts. Participants offered feedback and validated their transcripts. No new information was shared.

The core principles of Fry's Theory of Leadership Model (2003) were used in the evaluation process of the interview transcripts; informative passages were labeled using focused coding, also called selective coding, in which a researcher focuses on what seems to be most relevant to the study (Bailey, 2018). Data units were coded and analyzed through narrative analysis and deductive coding (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2019; Patton, 1999), which provided insight into each research question. The following questions guided this study:

- Which practices, behaviors, and attitudes do RCIA leaders in the sample population have regarding the RCIA Process?

- How do the RCIA leaders display leadership styles such as spiritual, transformational, symbolic, and servant, and how do these styles impact the RCIA program?

- What are the perceptions of candidates, catechumens, and RCIA leaders on the many leadership styles and methods?

Four major themes emerged from the analysis of data: (a) spirituality, (b) spiritual wellness, (c) transformational and personal development, and (d) shared commitment. A representation of the four themes is presented in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Four Major Themes
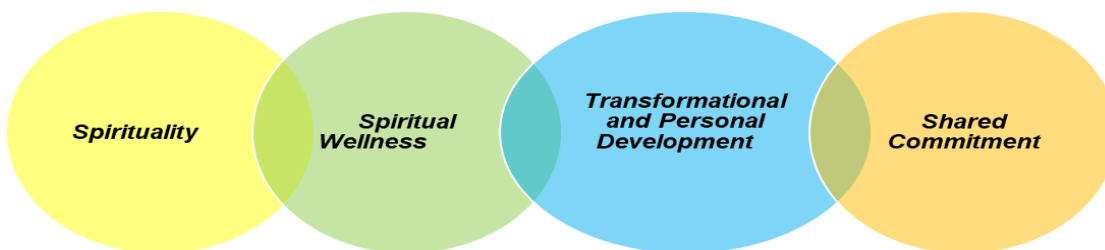
Study Participants

St. Patrick is a 54-year-old African American male and is currently the Associate Pastor and RCIA leader at the Northwest side Parish. St. Patrick was born in Eldoret, Kenya. Prior to his current position, St. Patrick worked and traveled with the Kenyan Catholic Community ministries. St. Patrick's duties consist of daily teaching and announcing the word of God, offering guidance to members of the community, and building up the communion of the church through the RCIA process.

St. Mary is a 62-year-old Caucasian woman, she retired as a religious education teacher after 30 years and has been a catechist at the South side parish for over 10 years. During her spare time, she teaches knitting classes and gives piano lessons.

St. Rocco is 41-year-old male who is half Italian and half Lebanese. St. Rocco was raised in the Muslim culture and religion but was baptized secretly by his Italian grandmother. St. Rocco entered the RCIA as a candidate at the Southside parish because he did not have any documentations of his baptism and completed the process in 2020.

St. Gianna is a 34-year-old Filipino female and was baptized as a baby. She explained her religious upbringing, "I was raised in a diverse family, Filipino, Dutch, English, and German. My dad is a Methodist, and my mom, who is Filipina, was raised Catholic, but when she met my dad, she conformed to being a Methodist, but they divorced when I was young, and my mom married my stepdad, a Mormon. I was exposed to several religions and baptized as a baby. The last church where I was a member was a Pentecostal Church". St. Gianna entered the RCIA as a catechumen at the Northwest side parish and completed the process in 2022.

Table 1. Demographics of Participants

Participants	Age/Gender	Location	Role	Race/Ethnicity	Community Demographics	Educational Background
St. Patrick	54/M	Northwest Side Parish	Associate Pastor & RCIA Leader (5 years)	Born & raised in Kenya, moved to the USA	English, Spanish, & Filipino	MA
St. Mary	62/F	Southwest Side Parish	Catechist for over 40 years	Born in the USA	English, Spanish, & Polish	BS
St Rocco	41/M	Southwest Side Parish	2020- Entered the RCIA as a candidate	Born in the USA & raised in the Muslim Faith	English, Spanish & Polish	MBA
St. Gianna	34/F	Northwest Side Parish	2022- Entered the RCIA as a catechumen	Born in the USA and baptized	English, Spanish, & Filipino	BA

FINDINGS

Theme 1: Spirituality

Faith

For this study, having faith is the intrinsic motivation that emerges when people have been connected to their inspiring potential (Fry, 2003, 2005). Even though there is opposition and difficulty, this motivation produces a personal commitment. Leaders with faith clearly understand where they are going and how to get there; they are ready to face opposition and endure difficulties to reach their goals. Hope or faith provides direction and willingness to persist, confident that the result will bring meaning to life.

The participants stated that faith is believing even when we do not understand why things happen. It is about trusting God's plan and finding strength in difficult times. Faith can be a source of comfort and guidance, helping us to stay strong and resilient. It is not about choosing what to believe but rather a response to the realization that God has chosen us. Faith can lead to beautiful spiritual journeys and can transform our lives for the better.

> *"Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase."*
> *(Martin Luther King Jr.)*

St. Patrick explained that faith is believing that everything happens for a reason and that God is always in control, and further stated "I know this is hard for people to believe, especially when something tragic happens. People ask me all the time, why would God let this happen? I thought God loved me. It is hard for me sometimes when I hear sad

and tragic stories. I have an amazing family here at the parish, always involved and willing to help. Then one summer day, the tides swept their son away and drowned. His mom sat by the pier all night waiting, saying, "I just want to hold my son." This broke my heart, but even though they lost their son, they remained faithful; they said they believed God needed another amazing and wonderful Angel. Their younger son still has trouble accepting that his big brother is gone but knows he is in Heaven. How does a family stay strong in their faith after losing their son and brother? This is the mystery of faith, the strength we receive from the Holy Spirit. I hope and pray that when tragic events happen, those who are affected by it can still see through the sadness and grief and understand that keeping their faith in God will help them get through it. Even if it's just one person who believes, I feel I have done my job as a Pastor".

St. Mary explained that although the Catholic faith and the RCIA process isn't perfect, having faith and hope is what keeps her motivated to continue her calling as a catechist. I don't try to deny the faults of the Church, but I believe in the absolutes of Faith. Therefore, those truths I try to emphasize. Those are the two greatest Commandments and the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist and life everlasting. This is what I believe the Faith to be.

St. Mary further stated:
I try to stick to the basics and not be caught up in language, ritual, or other incidentals. Motivating others in teaching is something I don't know if you can measure. The RCIA is built on faith and trust; I am here for those who want to learn our faith. I firmly believe that once we allow God into our lives, our journey of faith is true and beautiful. Faith leads us to beautiful, amazing spiritual journeys.

St. Rocco explained how faith helped him through difficult times and led him to find his beautiful wife and journey to Catholicism. Everything happens for a reason; that's how I see faith. Even as a Muslim, I knew that good things would happen if I believed in good and did my best to be good. When I was going through some rough times, I knew that it was my fault that things were out of control, but deep down, I knew better was coming, and I had to pick myself up and go in the right direction. My friends were there, but again, my wife, now, was the shining light for me to want to be a better person. I could have missed that baseball game and gone somewhere else, but I chose to go there. That faith led me to my wife and my spiritual journey to becoming Catholic.

St. Gianna came from a diverse background and experienced various faith-based organizations, and explained how faith brought her to the RCIA process. I was a member of the Pentecostal Church for a long time, but I was not enjoying my time there. I felt like the leadership and community didn't care, there wasn't much excitement because nothing seemed to change, just the same boring routine at every mass. When I bought my house, I didn't even realize that the Northwest side Church was a couple of blocks away. One day, I was walking to the park, and I saw a group of Filipina women walking with their bibles and cross. One of the older ladies recognized me when I was moving in. She asked me how I was doing and if I wanted to join them at the women's bible session. Since I

had nothing planned, I said sure, and my life changed for the better, everyone at the bible session had amazing and exciting attitudes. I left that session with new friends, and faith and hope. God placed those amazing women in my path because he wanted me to come home.

St. Gianna further stated:
I believe that leaders who are faithful to the word of God and spend time in worship and with the community, will make others want to continue their journey with them because their spirits will feel whole and spending time in worship and community with others has made me a better person, and my spirit feels whole. I joined the RCIA and was excited to begin the journey. The RCIA leader and team had faith and believed in me. They were with me every step of the way, never denying my questions and always guiding me.

Self-Reflexive Journal Entry

Faith is at the core of these individuals' stories. They believe their faith in God gives them strength and hope despite tragedy and challenges. St. Patrick emphasizes the importance of staying faithful even in difficult times. St. Mary believes in the basics of the Catholic faith and emphasizes the importance of faith and trust in teaching others. St. Rocco shares how his faith guided him through tough times and led him to find his wife and convert to Catholicism. St. Gianna shares her experience of finding a vibrant and welcoming community that renewed her faith and led her to join the RCIA process. All these individuals highlight the transformative power of faith in their lives.

Vision

A compelling vision towards a shared goal can motivate and energize workers, simplify decision-making, and coordinate actions. In the context of the RCIA program, the participants believe that the vision should focus on spiritual and transformational conversion and align with God's vision. This transcendent vision gives meaning and purpose to their lives and inspires others, and leaders who have a vision that aligns with their values and beliefs are more likely to serve others and have a sense of purpose.

St. Patrick's response:
As a young associate Pastor in Eldoret, Kenya, I joined the Kenyan Catholic Community to speak the word of God and bring faith and love to the families in my town. Faith and love brought them hope, especially when food and water were scarce. I felt truly blessed when I was given the opportunity to come to America, further my degree, and become part of this amazing parish. I came here wanting to help and guide whoever came to me. When they allowed me to lead the RCIA, I felt honored. The vision of spiritual and transformational conversion seems simple, but it's not; to me, it can be simple, but how do I guide others down the correct path of faith, hope, love, and so on? I must make sure that I can create a vision where others can experience a sense of calling in their lives so that they can have a purpose, meaning, and make a difference. I don't want to preach the

words, I want these words to dig deep into their souls, and they feel the power of the Holy Spirit and continue being servants to all.

St. Mary's response:
A vision is needed to explain and guide others. Everything that we do daily is planned accordingly, of course there are times when the unexpected happens and we have to adjust. However, true leaders must always have a plan and a backup plan. For things to go smoothly and successfully, a leader must have a clear plan/vision. I know that the RCIA and Catholic Church isn't perfect, no one is but God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. When you turn on the T.V. there is a lot of troubling news, but I try to stick to the basics and not be caught up in language, ritual, or other incidentals. My focus, my vision, is the spiritual and transformational journey of those in the RCIA, and the parish members, and my goal is that they experience the best spiritual conversion.

St. Rocco's response:
It was not my vision, its God's vision, and his vision drives everything that I do. I felt lost and needed help finding my way, and the RCIA team did exactly that. They led me toward the word of God. I know it can be hard to lead someone with a wall built to protect their emotions which I did, but they never stopped. The Pastor and his team were patient with me and the others in my group. We were a very diverse and confused crowd, but the team continued with us; they kept their focus on the word of God and my conversion. Even though I said it was not my vision, they reminded me it was also about my spiritual conversion with God and the Catholic faith.

St. Gianna's response:
A leader's vision can create success or failure. I have dealt with people who thought they were leaders but failed because they had ridiculously high expectations that were unreachable, and people were complaining and leaving because they were working so hard. Nothing was accomplished project after project that never got completed or implemented. A leader must realize that sometimes it's ok to know the limits of yourself and those in your organization. Overwhelming people without empathy or consideration will never win respect or success. An organization must have passion, excitement, realistic goals, and opportunities for people to flourish and succeed.

Self-Reflexive Journal Entry

The participants all agreed that a compelling vision in the RCIA program should focus on spiritual and transformational conversion, align with God's vision, and provide meaning and purpose to participants. Leaders should have a clear vision that aligns with their values and beliefs and incorporates empathy, consideration, and realistic goals to create success and inspire others.

Altruistic Love

The participants all emphasize the importance of humility, honesty, empathy, and compassion in leadership. They believe in leading by example and treating others with kindness and forgiveness. They also stress the importance of trust, gratitude, and acknowledging the contributions of others. They recognize the need for courage in standing up for religious freedoms and the power of love and patience in making a positive impact. They emphasize the need to forgive, even if an apology is not received, and to remember that judgment awaits all individuals.

St. Patrick's response:
I have noticed that some leaders start with great intentions and then slowly become power hungry and have the "do as I say, not as I do" mentality. When leading, I always try to remain humble, honest, and empathetic to my parish and community. I have had bad days, but I must stop and tell myself that the Holy Spirit will guide me through these difficult times. I don't want ever not to show compassion, patience, or kindness towards anyone because we will never know what others are going through daily, and what if my simple kind gesture brings some light to their sadness? I would feel horrible if I acted out of character and something bad happened to that person. I also feel that humility is lacking in many leaders, I don't know everything, but I will always try to help and find the answer. My motto is that we can get through the good and bad together.

St. Mary's response:
If I had to pick three words to describe altruistic love, I would pick trust, kindness, and forgiveness. We live in turbulent, scary, and sad times, and the Catholic Church has gone through good, bad, and evil moments. I would also pick courage because we must stand up and fight for our religious freedoms. I will always be kind because why live through life as a miserable and evil person? Once trust is broken, it is so hard to fix. I've seen and experienced broken trust; however, if we don't forgive and love again, we are no better than the person who hurt us.

St. Rocco's response:
If a person wants to make an impact, they must show love, compassion, patience, and forgiveness because these are true qualities of the human spirit. It was tough for me to forgive others, especially when the actions or words were intentional. I know that people change, and some will never change. But I can't move on if I hold onto the past. Although I forgive, I don't forget, and even if I never receive an apology, I'm ok with that. In the end, we all will receive judgment. Now that part took a long time for me to accept. Sometimes we want revenge immediately to make ourselves feel better, but do we? It takes patience and faith to realize that again, we will be judged for our actions and behaviors.

St. Gianna's response:
As I was going through the RCIA process, I immediately noticed that the team had much patience, especially with me, LOL, because I had so many questions. I have dealt with bosses that made sure everyone knew that they were in charge and never admitted to

making a mistake; they would brush it off, but if any of the employees made a mistake, watch out. It's frustrating when a leader takes all the credit and never acknowledges those who helped them succeed. This attitude causes a lack of trust and respect. I do not want attention every time I achieve something, but a simple gesture of gratitude, like a thank you email or text, would be appreciated. I wouldn't want to see anyone fail, but if you want your members to work and get things done right, showing kindness, empathy, and compassion goes a long way and will help make the organization fun and strive for excellence.

Self-Reflexive Journal Entry

St. Patrick emphasized the importance of remaining humble and compassionate as a leader. St. Mary believes in trust, kindness, forgiveness, and courage, especially during difficult times. St. Rocco emphasized the need for love, compassion, patience, and forgiveness, even when difficult. St. Gianna highlighted the importance of leaders showing gratitude, kindness, empathy, and compassion to foster a positive and thriving environment. Listening to St. Rocco express his feelings about forgiving but not forgiving is something I can relate to. We will hurt others, and we will get hurt, but it is about the faith and strength to pick yourself up and continue to move forward with or without an apology.

Symbolic Leadership

The use of symbols in Catholicism is seen as necessary by many believers, as they convey meaning and help deepen faith and shape prayers. The participants felt that learning and appreciating symbols is essential as they provide insight into the events and beliefs of the time, even if they represent both the good and bad moments in history. While tragic and horrific, the crucifixion is viewed as a powerful and fantastic symbol in the Catholic faith, representing the sacrifice made by Jesus for humanity. Symbolic leadership is decisive in conveying stories and experiences to others. Learning about symbols in the Catholic faith, such as the cross and crucifix, can be impactful in understanding the history and significance of these symbols.

"Every sacrament enacts a story. The Eucharist is the story of our transformation through faith, hope, and love. It too has an implicit narrative" (Radcliffe, 2012, p. 4).

St. Patrick's response:
Since I can remember, Catholic symbols have always been important. When I give the Gospel or my homily, I always try to add visuals to it because symbols convey meaning and it helps us deepen our faith and shape our prayers. Symbols unite spiritual words and reveal truths about God. Christians and non-Christians have asked me many times about the crucifix. I explain that the crucifix is the most common symbol of our faith. It is a cross with the figure body of Jesus Christ attached to it and symbolizes sacrifice and atonement.

St. Mary's response:
Symbols are everywhere, and in the church, symbols tell a story and are essential for understanding the faith. The symbol of the Holy Trinity, shown in Figure 6, is often overlooked by new members, so I always take them inside the parish and have them look around for symbols. Holy Thursday symbolizes the abandonment and humiliation of Jesus before his crucifixion, and when the catechumens are there to witness and assist in the stripping of the altar, it is a very intense and sad experience. But it is important to understand the history and meaning of symbols to have a deeper understanding of faith that is the power of symbolic leadership.

Figure 8. The Holy Trinity (Adapted from Saint Angela Merici Catholic Church)

St. Rocco's response:
I saw an interview with Kobe Bryant, and he was talking about how he returned to his Catholic faith, and he said, "Until you got to pick up that cross that you can't carry, and He picks it up for you and carries you and the cross, then you know'. I don't know what else is if that isn't a powerful statement. He was going through a rough scandal, and he needed God more than ever, and guess what? He made it through it and was able to save his family. Listening to his experiences and so many others is why I started looking into leaving the Muslim faith. Muslims think the cross is an idol and should not be publicly displayed. But when I look at the cross, it is not an idol to me; Jesus Christ is on that cross, and the story of his life and death is on it. I didn't understand much why Christians wore crosses; some had Jesus on them, and others didn't. I wanted to know the difference. I wanted to hear that story and why the cross is an important symbol. I learned that there is a cross and a crucifix. I think it is so important to hear about the symbolism in our Catholic faith because it truly paints the picture of what was going on during that biblical and historical period of the Catholic faith.

St. Gianna's response:
I loved learning about the Catholic symbols. Because they tell a story, it's such an amazing listening experience. Of course, it's also unfortunate and horrific to hear and

vision what the symbols represented at that period, but it is something that we need to learn. Religious or not, we can't erase history because it is good or bad, history can repeat itself, and I hope only to repeat the good. When I see a cross or hear about the crucifixion, I wonder why God would allow that to happen to his only son; if God was so powerful, why couldn't Jesus save himself? Because of us, he died, and he is one of our faith's most powerful and amazing symbols.

Figure 9. A Cross and a Crucifix (Adapted from Catholics at Work, 2022)

Do you know there is an important difference between a cross and a crucifix?

A cross is a symbol of Christianity but there are over 35,000 Christian denominations.

Protestants do not have the Body of Chirst on the cross. They typically say, "We serve the Risen Lord.

A crucifix is a Catholic symbol which reminds us of the suffering of Christ and his willingness to give up His life for us out of love.

Self-Reflexive Journal Entry

Growing up, I remember attending Spanish mass with my Abuelo (Grandfather), and as much as my sister and I would complain about how boring mass was going to be, the one thing I truly enjoyed were the symbols, paintings, and statues in the church. Hearing each participant discuss the importance of Catholic symbols, particularly the crucifix, in conveying meaning, deepening faith, and understanding the history of the Catholic faith, brought back the beautiful memories and faith formation that my Abuelo wanted to instill in my sister and me. I agree with the participants as they admired the cross's power and significance and Jesus Christ's crucifixion.

Theme 2: Spiritual Wellness

Inner Life Practices

The connection between leadership and spirituality lies as a source of wisdom for decision-making. Cultivating one's inner life through meditation, prayer, and journaling supports personal spiritual leadership. Leaders that support their employees' inner life create a context for spiritual leadership to flourish. Inner life practices can enhance spiritual wellness and bring peace. Prayer, silent walking in nature, journaling, and yoga can all be forms of prayer and gratitude (Fry & Nisiewicz, 2013). These practices provide insights into one's purpose and the importance of one's contributions, forming the foundation of spiritual leadership.

St. Patrick's response:
Praying in silence and with others is very powerful to me. When new members join the RCIA or the Parish, many don't know how to pray and are embarrassed to try and pray, but I remind them that God doesn't care how you pray if your prayer is meaningful and sincere. I tell them that as they progress in their conversion, they will learn the prayers, the psalms, and the greetings, and before they know it, it will come naturally to them. Praying gives me peace, and I want to spread that peace to others.

St. Mary's response:
When I was teaching religious education to the younger students, I would always chuckle when we would talk about prayer because of the things that they would pray for, like passing their test, not getting in trouble, or getting gifts. I would have to explain to them that praying is about letting it all go to God, and it doesn't always have to be about asking for help; God loves to hear how we are thankful as well. As I moved toward the RCIA, meditation and prayer were valuable tools to discuss with them. A few of my candidates enjoyed journaling their conversion and discussing it as a group, while others enjoyed quiet walks and silently praying.

St. Rocco's response:
As a Muslim, you have to pray a lot during the day, and practices and rituals must be done while praying. It was ok, I guess, but after a while, it felt like a chore or job, and I was not enjoying it or being sincere when I prayed. I stopped praying. I love walking through the park early in the mornings because I see nature for what it is, beauty. Learning the different prayers helped me to enjoy praying, and I can pray for the right things, not selfish things. My wife loves yoga and meditating, so if we cannot make it to mass, I join her, and we pray together, sometimes out loud, and sometimes in silence.

St. Gianna's response:
I love doing yoga, and during one of my RCIA classes, we did yoga and then meditated to release any negativity or sadness we were experiencing. I loved yoga even more, and now when I am stretching, I also say a prayer, sometimes long prayers, and other times, just a simple prayer of gratitude for everything I have been given.

Self-Reflexive Journal Entry

St. Patrick found power in both silent and communal prayer and encouraged newcomers to find their way of praying. St. Mary emphasized the importance of letting go and being thankful in prayer, guiding her students to explore different forms of meditation and prayer. St. Rocco shared how praying became boring because he was losing his Muslim faith, but he found enjoyment through learning the Catholic prayers and praying for the right things. St. Gianna incorporated yoga and meditation into her prayer practice, combining physical stretching with spoken or silent prayers.

I have always believed in God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit (The Holy Trinity), but there was a time when I felt I did not know what to say when I prayed, I felt like it became more of a job than a sincere moment with God. So, when I listened to my participants, I could relate to their responses. I appreciate that RCIA leaders and my parish community are bringing in more activities in which members can pray and still feel blessed and rejoiced in sharing thoughts and gratitude with God.

Themes 3: Transformational and Personal Development

Calling

Calling refers to finding meaning and purpose in life through service to others. It is about making a difference and finding transcendence through work (Reave, 2005). Professionals are often associated with having a calling. They possess specialized knowledge, are dedicated to their vocation, and are committed to their work and careers. Calling is essential to professionals who believe their work is valuable to society. Organizational leaders can use the spiritual leadership model to cultivate a sense of calling in employees by engaging them in tasks and helping them identify with organizational goals.

The participants highlighted their experiences in finding a purpose in their work within the Catholic Church. They view their roles as more than just regular jobs and voluntary but as vocations and calls to service. They believe in the importance of sacrifice, authentic love, and spreading the word of God to bring hope and faith to others. Their work is seen to make a difference, find personal meaning and fulfillment, and contribute to the well-being of others and society. This sense of calling transcends a mere professional commitment. It becomes a spiritual connection that gives them a sense of value, purpose, and connection with what is truly meaningful.

St. Patrick's response:
Fatherhood calls for sacrifice and authentic love. This is not a regular job but a vocation and a call to service. Growing up in Kenya, I witnessed sadness, despair, and desperation, and I wanted to help change something and bring hope and faith back into my town. My mother was always religious and spiritual, so she taught me about faith and

hope. One day, I prayed and asked God if he wanted me to be a priest. Not long after, a Catholic retreat came to my town, and I went to it. I instantly felt that I was home. I can't explain how but my soul was filled, and I wanted to hold onto that feeling firmly, and I knew God chose for me, and it was up to me to decide if I was going to follow that path, and I did.

St. Mary's response:
To be a catechist, you must know and embrace faith. Catechesis is about helping people walk along with Jesus; it is not just about teaching; it's about witnessing the spiritual conversion of the candidates and catechumens. I am still here because I am helping to spread the word of God and our faith to the next generation. I am honored and blessed to be given this opportunity to continue to witness these amazing experiences with those in the RCIA.

St. Rocco's response:
After completing the RCIA, I wanted to help but wasn't sure how to help because I still was learning so much about Catholicism. During a Sunday Mass, there was an announcement that the Ministry of Care needed help. I thought about it and attended the meeting. The Ministry of Care team is tasked with taking communion to those homebound or sick, but it is also more than that. You must be compassionate, empathetic, and willing to comfort the person by just listening and praying with them. At first, I was nervous and unsure because I didn't know what to expect. I went to a nursing home and met with two members of our Church who could no longer attend mass. I felt sadness but also a feeling of love and strength. I sat with them for a few hours and talked about everything. These experiences are incredible, and I feel complete. I have taken additional training courses, which have helped my spiritual development. I hope I am making a difference in their lives, and they feel the same way.

St. Gianna's response:
When I'm not working at my regular job, I volunteer to help with the women's ministry. It is not about getting paid; I am doing this for free because I feel connected with these amazing women, week after week. Some women who attend come from shelters, broken homes, or abusive relationships. These women have been through more than I can imagine, and my 2 or 3 hours of spare time is the least I can do in helping them cope with their sadness and bring some faith and hope into their lives.

Self-Reflexive Journal Entry

Do you ever wake up feeling like you have no purpose in life? Feeling purposeless can be very disappointing, especially when you see the lives of your family members, friends, and co-workers so vibrant, engaged, and meaningful. They have beautiful and loving relationships, fruitful jobs, and a sense of direction that compels them to get out of bed each morning and enjoy their lives. I always wondered how others felt when they truly knew their calling and purpose.

In the Catholic Church, individuals view their roles as vocations and call to service, believing in sacrifice, authentic love, and spreading the word of God. Calling refers to finding meaning and purpose in life through service to others. The participants found personal fulfillment and a sense of meaning in contributing to the well-being of others in their community. Being a pastor, being a catechist, joining the Ministry of Care, and volunteering in the women's ministry were examples of how my participants found their calling within the Catholic Church.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leaders inspire followers to change expectations, perceptions, and motivations to work towards shared goals. They convey a clear vision, energize the group, and provide support, guidance, and inspiration. The goals of transformational leadership are to promote growth, loyalty, and confidence in group members within the organization's culture. Organization culture refers to shared values and beliefs that guide member behavior and interactions within the organization. In a faith-based organization such as the RCIA, the organization's culture is based on the shared beliefs, values, and norms derived from a spiritual and transformational conversion. (Bass, 1998; Burns, 2004; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2007).

St. Patrick's response:
Without conversion, there is no transformation. Conversion within the RCIA is a profound reorientation of life. Through individual life experiences and the culture of any organization, a transformational leader inspires positive change for both the members and the organization itself.

St. Mary's response:
People must be willing to look deeply into their lives, realize what needs to change for the better, and allow transformation to occur. A transformational leader must motivate and not manipulate for personal gain. When others see that the leader is genuine and honest, they will follow that leader because they can feel the inspiration and true motivation towards a common good and vision that will benefit the organization and the community within.

St. Rocco's response:
To be Catholic is to be a disciple and become like Jesus; I was not born Catholic but chose to become Catholic. My transformation from Muslim to Catholicism was a beautiful conversion. I was thankful and blessed to have an RCIA leader and catechist team who displayed transformational leadership qualities, inspiring and motivating me to continue this journey despite my doubts.

St. Gianna's response:
If a leader's purpose is to inspire, motivate, and transform others in an organization for good reasons, people will respect that leader. Humbleness, trust, creativity, motivation, and inspiration are true characteristics of a transformational leader; we often deal with

selfish, stubborn, and hateful leaders who lack vision, consideration, and respect towards those in their organization and communities.

Theme 4: Shared Commitment

Membership

Membership in a social group provides a sense of understanding and appreciation. Leaders who work with employees to create a vision and show care and altruistic values foster a feeling of membership and mutual respect. In the Catholic Church, pastors and members emphasize welcoming and accepting all individuals, regardless of background, and value the diversity and cultural traditions of their members. The participants shared their experiences and emotions regarding membership in the RCIA process and within the parish community.

St. Patrick's response:
When I first arrived here from Kenya, I was fascinated with the diversity of this city. So many cultures and ethnicities are around, and the population is very populated. My goal as the Pastor and as a leader is to reach out and welcome all who want to enter this community of faith. I understand that spiritual conversion can make someone feel scared, nervous, and confused, and these are things we can help them get through. But if we don't provide a safe and comfortable welcoming space, individuals will feel they don't belong here. I want all my members to feel supported and appreciated, especially my RCIA team, the Parish Council, the staff members, and all those who help our parish community thrive.

St. Mary's response:
I volunteered to work in religious education because I strongly believe in the Catholic Church as a lifestyle handed down by God. This is His greatest gift and is to be shared with others. While I see the values in other Faiths, I believe that the Catholic Church is unique. Along with being a sacramental Church, I think Apostolic Succession gives it legitimacy from Christ Himself. That is not to say there are not many problems, but that does not change the Church's fundamental beliefs. Individuals in the Church (including leaders) are human, and humans are by no means perfect; that's why there are so many opinions and ideas. The message is often lost among the many conflicting views, and this is why I continue to help and serve the word of God because I want to help those who are lost or confused because of conflicting views. I want them to feel comfortable in my classes and give them a space of faith to feel they belong there.

St. Rocco's response:
I was a little nervous when I started the RCIA process because I was a Muslim, and because of how I was raised, a part of me thought that Christians, especially Catholics, would not welcome me. I was so wrong. Getting to know the RCIA and the other candidates, we all realized that we come from diverse backgrounds and faiths, but we have many similarities. My story of my Italian grandmother kidnapping me and having me

baptized in secret amazed the other candidates, and they told me how happy they were that I found my way there. During one of our classes, we had a visiting catechist, and she talked to us about the controversial issues that the Catholic faith presents, such as divorce. One of the catechumens said she had a Vegas wedding that ended in divorce, and Father, our leader, asked us, "What is a Vegas wedding" Because he was from Nigeria, we laughed and explained it to him, and he laughed as well. The feeling I got from this fellowship was a warm, welcoming, and loving feeling that I belonged there. I want to continue this journey and help others feel welcome and comfortable in their spiritual journey.

St. Gianna's response:
I recently attended a 12 PM mass, I usually attend the 9 AM mass. As the mass concluded, a special mass was starting at 1:30 PM, and it was a baptism mass. I watched the members coming in to celebrate the baptism of their little loved ones. I was completely amazed of what I saw, about 20 members of an Indian family came in, and the mom was holding her beautiful baby girl in a white dress, who was going to get baptized. The women of the family were dressed in beautiful Indian, and the men were also wearing clothes of the Indian culture. The fact that they are practicing Catholics but still hold onto their cultural beliefs, brings such a welcoming and understanding community. I truly love seeing the diverse faces at mass. I feel that all are welcomed to our faith.

Servant Leadership

A servant leader puts serving others first and is motivated by a desire to help rather than seeking power or wealth. They are willing to take risks and show the way for others to follow. These leaders focus on their calling, offer comfort to those in need, and inspire others to serve. They have been influenced by leaders in their own lives who have served others and have inspired them to do the same (Greenleaf, 2002).

The participants believed that true leaders focus on their calling, offer comfort to those in need, and teach those willing to learn. They also believe that helping others can bring others into the service of God. Many participants were inspired by leaders who served them or their community, leading them to become servant leaders.

St. Patrick's response:
To lead, one must inspire and motivate, and to implement transformational leadership, a leader must articulate an appealing vision that inspires and motivates others to perform beyond expectations. I try to motivate my team with high but achievable standards and expectations as a leader. As a young priest in Kenya, I interacted with children, teenagers, and adults during their faith formation journey. I was motivated and inspired by the Holy Spirit and ensured they completed their transformation into our Catholic Faith. Before I left Kenya, a former student told me that because I was always optimistic and encouraging to him and always stated the importance of duties and responsibilities, he continued his calling and entered the Seminary to pursue a degree in theology. Knowing that my former student had a sense of purpose and meaning is why I believe transformational leadership

is important to the RCIA process; not only does the process itself develop a transformation within oneself, but it encourages followers to invest more effort in their tasks, be optimistic about the future, and invest in their abilities.

St. Mary's response:
To serve others means to do it for them and not to make yourself feel better. Of course, it feels great when we help each other, but are we doing it for the right reasons? A servant leader knows that this is more than a job; this is a calling. Putting others before ourselves can be amazing because it comes from the heart. Someone who displays kindness, giving, generosity, and is willing to step up and help no matter the cost, is a true servant leader who will always have the respect of their followers.

St. Rocco's response:
John 3:16 tells us, "For God loved the world that he gave his only begotten son", who else would do that for us? This is why my heart and soul transformed, and the RCIA process helped me to become a better person and want to become a servant leader. I am not perfect, but I will always try to be the best disciple I can be.

St. Gianna's response:
People don't realize that we serve others daily, it is a simple gesture of holding the door open for someone or picking up an item that someone else dropped. Servant leadership means thinking and putting others first. One day, I will have children, and I will serve them with love, strength, and faith, and I pray that as they grow older, they, too, will want to serve; this is what the RCIA taught me, the joy of serving others and making a positive difference in our community and our lives.

Self-Reflexive Journal Entry

When I began the RCIA process, I discovered that I was not just going on a spiritual journey but a transformational journey in which I wanted to become a servant leader. St. Gianna stated that one day, she will have children and serve them daily without hesitation. I genuinely believe she is ok. We serve daily and do not even realize it. Through my family, my job, and my faith, I serve. My awareness of the four leadership styles has heightened through my experiences in my Catholic faith and my experiences with my participants. I want to share the knowledge I have gained from the literature and from my participants to enhance the RCIA process so that more individuals can experience the positive impact this journey has afforded me.

Follow-up Conversations

Two follow-up conversations were conducted with St. Patrick, Associate Pastor/RCIA of the Northwest Side Parish, and with St. Rocco, of the Southside Parish because I wanted a deeper discussion with them regarding their perceptions of the four leadership styles, specifically transformational and servant leadership and how it impacts the leadership within the RCIA process and the parish community.

St. Patrick believes that the key to leadership is internal humility, dependence on Christ, and striving to be an example of Christ externally. Formal education or ordination doesn't make someone more equipped than others in faith and spirituality. Putting people and transformation before profits is essential in spiritual leadership. Spiritual direction guides the decision-making process and is vital to the overall vision and values of the RCIA process, our parish community, and the Catholic Church.

St Patrick stated:
I believe that spiritual, transformational, and servant leadership naturally fit with one another, and RCIA leaders must possess qualities and abilities that reflect those leadership practices if they want their parish to succeed in making a positive change within their members and their communities.

St. Rocco explained that a person's spirit is seen as a connection between their soul and values. To be a spiritual leader, one must develop self-awareness and the ability to inspire and motivate others. Spiritual leadership involves motivating and inspiring others through a vision of service and values such as trust, humility, courage, empathy, and patience.

St. Rocco stated:
I believe that a person must go through a spiritual and transformational journey before they can consider themselves a leader. I am not saying that religion must be a part of that journey because a person can be spiritual and have no religious affiliation. When on a spiritual and transformational journey, you realize who you are and what you are meant to do in life. When a person finds their purpose, it is the greatest feeling. I hope and pray that leaders in the RCIA and in our Catholic faith, continue to put others first before themselves, and continue to inspire and motivate our communities to seek the transformation for themselves, and become better members of society.

IMPLICATIONS

Leader, God, RCIA, life, and vision, were words that were repeated the most throughout the data analysis (See Figure 5), and based on those numbers, my interpretation of the data implies that faith is essential in our everyday lives as it helps us navigate life's challenges and provides peace and hope. It is not limited to winning or losing but rather a belief that we are in the hands of a higher power. Faith is built through life experiences and is essential to our humanity. It is not just a wish, but a belief rooted in the heart, and it plays a crucial role in our individual growth and transformation. The RCIA program also recognizes faith as a significant moral power that guides us through life's uncertainties. Faith is what many people are searching for. They are drawn to faith-based programs like the RCIA because of their experiences with faith, a calling to serve, and the sense of belonging to a welcoming community. Most importantly, these individuals want a leader who aims to lead followers into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

The data also implies that leaders in RCIA emphasized the importance of faith, love, servant leadership, and transformational practices. They discussed the role of faith in times of tragedy, the significance of having a solid vision as a leader, the power of symbolic leadership, and the value of altruistic love. Prayer, symbolic rituals, and cultivating one's inner life were mentioned as essential spiritual well-being and leadership practices. The participants emphasized the importance of humility, empathy, and kindness in leadership, compassion, and forgiveness. They also highlighted the importance of finding a calling and serving others to find meaning and purpose. Transformational and servant leadership and an accepting culture are essential in faith-based programs. The leaders in RCIA described their leadership styles as a reflection of themselves and their beliefs, leading through positive behaviors and incorporating faith-based practices. They also emphasized the role of spirituality in organizational leadership, suggesting that it can preserve Catholic values and vision. The study highlights the importance of faith, values, and spirituality in leadership.

THE PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL MODEL

This study explored the informed practices, behaviors, and attitudes of RCIA leaders and the perceptions and influences on leadership practices in the RCIA process. A conceptual framework was developed through the lens of Fry's Spiritual Leadership Model.

A conceptual framework is a structure that explains how ideas in a study relate. It is built from theories and research and helps define concepts within the studied problem (Creswell, 2013), and examples of other frameworks can help a researcher create their conceptual framework (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Previous research (Carter, 2009; Frisdiantara & Sahertian, 2012; Washington, 2016) has shown that spiritual and transformational leadership positively affects work performance, organizational commitment, and pastoral effectiveness. Therefore, this study found that integrating Fry's Spiritual Leadership Model with transformational, servant, and symbolic leadership

theories could benefit faith-based programs such as the RCIA. Incorporating the four leadership styles could help RCIA leaders understand and improve their effectiveness by enhancing intrinsic motivation, commitment, performance, and well-being among candidates, catechumens, and community members.

Thus, the following model, shown in Figure 10, was created to visually demonstrate the connection between the characteristics of Fry's Spiritual Leadership Model (See Figure 2) and transformational, servant, and symbolic leadership styles. Furthermore, this study proposed that incorporating the four leadership methods into faith-based programs could enhance and improve the effectiveness of leadership in general.

Figure 10. Connecting Fry's Model to Leadership Styles
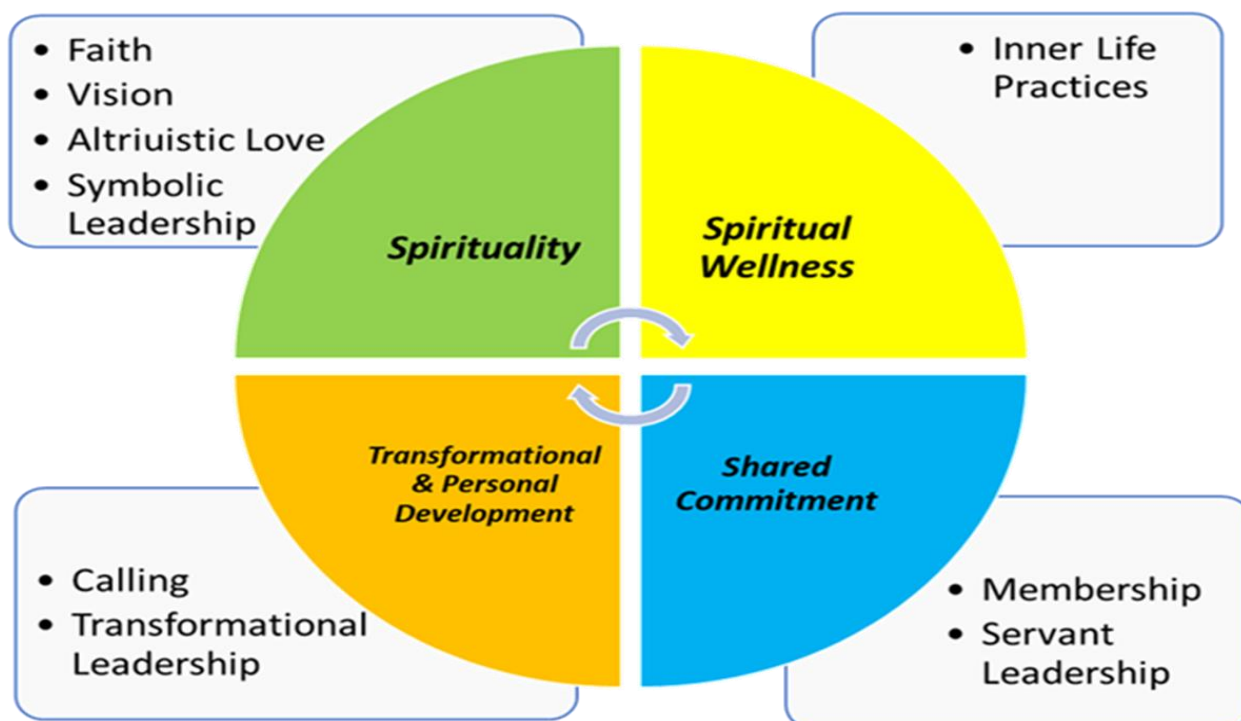
CONCLUSION

This study explored the experiences of RCIA leaders and participants and sought to understand the essence of effective leadership styles within the RCIA process. The following questions served as a basis for this study's research, and considering their knowledge, what are the leaders of RCIA doing, saying, and feeling:

Which practices, behaviors, and attitudes do RCIA leaders in the sample population have regarding the RCIA Process?

All the participants identified faith as a critical intrinsic motivation that drives both leaders and followers to have a personal commitment and overcome obstacles. It provides direction, resilience, and a willingness to expand goals. The participants emphasized the importance of trust in God's plan, finding strength in difficult times, and the transformative power of faith. A compelling vision aligned with a spiritual conversion and God's vision is seen as motivating and inspiring. Humility, honesty, empathy, and compassion are essential leadership qualities. Cultivating one's inner life through meditation, prayer, and journaling supports personal spiritual leadership and enhances spiritual well-being.

How do the RCIA leaders display leadership styles such as spiritual, transformational, symbolic, and servant, and how do these styles impact the RCIA program?

RCIA leaders apply the four leadership styles daily to their informed practices, behaviors, and attitudes during the RCIA process and within the parish community. RCIA leaders aim to meet the spiritual needs of both leaders and followers and create a spiritual and transformational journey and describe their leadership styles as a reflection of themselves and their beliefs. They actualize their beliefs through positive behaviors and actions that others can observe. They lead by incorporating faith-based practices, such as "do unto others," which creates an atmosphere of kindness and respect. In the RCIA process, these practices are more easily witnessed and implemented because of the nature of the program. These spiritual leadership practices influence those in this environment because they are drawn to the faith-based program and have a need or desire for its services.

RCIA leaders also instill a sense of purpose and destiny in those who volunteer or work for the organization. They embody this purpose by acting and choosing to serve as spiritual leaders. In faith-based programs, leaders and community members can freely express their spirituality, which secular organizations may not recognize. RCIA leaders incorporate their spirituality into their leadership practices, often through personal reflective practices like prayer or meditation. They also inspire others to pursue their interests and goals through service to others. They understand stewardship and take personal responsibility for the care of their institutions and the needs of others.

What are the perceptions of candidates, catechumens, and RCIA leaders on the many leadership styles and methods?

The participants in this study believe in the foundational principles of spiritual, transformational, servant, and symbolic leadership. Informed practices, behaviors, and attitudes such as faith, grace, and humility are essential for effective leadership, and the participants emphasized the importance of trusting and empowering their team, displaying generosity and empathy, taking responsibility for failures, and leading with courage and grace.

It is their perception that leadership within the RCIA process and parish community should be seen as a service to others and believe that respect and dignity are derived from faith, grace, and humility. The participants also emphasized the importance of trust in their RCIA process. They felt that trust was essential in building relationships with the leaders and community members, allowing them to feel safe and supported throughout the process. Love was mentioned as a significant aspect of spiritual leadership, and the participants felt loved and accepted by the RCIA community, encouraging them to continue their spiritual and transformational journey. All participants in the RCIA process felt welcomed and appreciated within the parish community. They found connections and comfort with one another despite their diverse backgrounds.

RECOMMENDATIONS

How can RCIA leaders make the most of the four leadership styles to improve the process?

Spiritual leadership is characterized by embodying spiritual values and demonstrating them through behavior. Christian faith practices like servant leadership are important in the RCIA process because they promote acts of kindness, helping others, and volunteering, which contribute to personal spiritual leadership and a meaningful sense of purpose within the community. Therefore, I propose several recommendations in which RCIA leaders can make the most of the four leadership styles to improve and enhance the RCIA process:

1. Demonstrating spiritual leadership: Leading by example and exemplifying spiritual values such as integrity, honesty, and humility. This creates trust and admiration among participants and encourages them to embody these values.

2. Practicing servant leadership: Displaying kindness, helping those in need, and volunteering personal time. This fosters a sense of altruistic love and encourages participants to engage in acts of service and care for others.

3. Having a clear vision and inspiring motivation: Leaders should have a strong vision for the RCIA process, and they should be able to inspire and motivate participants

to enter the faith, participate in the process, and continue as future leaders in the community.

4. Creating a welcoming and respectful environment: Leaders should ensure that the RCIA process is welcoming, caring, and respectful towards all participants. This will help create a sense of belonging and increase the likelihood that individuals with a calling will continue their journey within the parish.

Additionally, RCIA leaders should encourage open communication and create opportunities for members to share their thoughts and feelings. A sense of membership and belonging within the RCIA community can be fostered by creating an environment where participants feel understood and appreciated. Integrating the sense of calling, emphasizing the purpose of the faith journey, building trust and love within the community, and incorporating cultural diversity are all essential to enhancing the RCIA experience because cultural differences can cause stress. However, if the leaders in the RCIA process and parish community incorporate the different cultures, it can help to bridge the gap between a person's culture and their newfound faith. Sharing stories and experiences in small groups can help build a comfortable and intimate setting. Celebrations are also a great way to expose others to different cultures and beliefs. RCIA teams can arrange events where everyone can bring aspects of their culture.

SUMMARY

This study examined the informed practices, behaviors, and attitudes in faith-based programs, focusing on the RCIA process. The findings suggest that spiritual leaders in the RCIA program inspire their teams and parish members through positive spiritual practices and personal experiences. The study identified four major themes: spirituality, spiritual wellness, transformational and personal development, and shared commitment. The findings also emphasized the importance of community involvement, transformation, discipleship, relationships, and community engagement in the initiation process. The study proposes a conceptual theory integrating spiritual, transformational, servant, and symbolic leadership approaches.

Spiritual leadership is essential in the RCIA process because it promotes acts of kindness, helping others, and volunteering, contributing to personal spiritual leadership and a meaningful sense of purpose within the community. RCIA leaders can enhance the process by demonstrating spiritual leadership, practicing servant leadership, having a clear vision, and creating a welcoming environment. These leadership styles can enhance the transformative experience of participants in the RCIA process and promote personal growth and a deepening of faith.

The study recommends fostering a sense of membership and belonging within the RCIA community, incorporating cultural diversity, and expanding programs and support for

younger members. It also emphasizes the value of spiritual leadership in the recruitment and training of leaders in the RCIA process.

Overall, the study emphasizes the value of spiritual leadership in recruiting and training leaders in the RCIA process, and effective leadership and community support are crucial in the RCIA process and suggested areas for future research, such as expanding the participant pool, conducting a phenomenological study on one participant's journey, and studying the impact of spiritual leadership in non-religious contexts.

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INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH STUDY
A NARRATIVE INQUIRY STUDY OF THE RCIA PROCESS

Principal Investigator:
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Associate Dean & Associate Professor Leadership, Language, & Curriculum

Committee Member:
Sr. Mary Paul McCaughey, Theology and the Social Sciences, Chicago Theological Seminary, ABD
Instructional Assistant Faculty; Coordinator Catholic Educational Leadership
Department of Leadership, Language & Curriculum

I am conducting this research study to learn more about the lived experiences of RCIA leaders and their informed practices, behaviors, and attitudes within the RCIA process. I also seek to understand the essence of leadership styles within the RCIA process.

I am conducting this study by observations, field notes, and audio recordings of interviews of participants as they share their RCIA experience. Collecting and analyzing the participants' experiences, I hope to understand their perceptions, thoughts, and feelings regarding the RCIA process.

I am asking you to participate in this study because you are either an RCIA leader or participated in the process as a candidate or catechumen. You will be asked to participate in a face-to-face interview if you agree. This study should take about an hour to complete. Your participation is voluntary and there will be no negative consequences if you decide to not participate or change your mind later after you begin the study. If there is a question you do not want to answer, you may skip it. All research data collected from you will be kept confidential and I will provide you with a pseudonym in which I will only know who it belongs to.

I will need to collect personal information such as age, time in the RCIA process, and ethnicity. Questions regarding leadership, perceptions, and expectations will be asked. I will consider your preference when selecting a site and interview time. A semi-structured interview format with a pre-determined list of questions will be used and emailed to you

ahead of the interview. Field notes will be taken to record any nonverbal behaviors, moods, and the site environment. A handheld device will be used to audio record the interview.

To ensure confidentiality, all information collected will be kept in encrypted computer-based files, consent forms will be locked in a file cabinet, and all personal identifiers will be removed from study documents. All recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study, but transcripts will be kept for future use for a period of five years in the de-identified way. There will be no risk to you should someone gain access to the data.

You will be given a $25.00 Amazon Gift Card for your participation in the research. If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about this study or you want to get additional information or provide input to the research, please contact me, Stefanie Mingari at 224-200-5234 or via email cpdlatina08@hotmail.com

You may keep this information for your records.

I have explained the study to you, and by signing the document below, you are indicating your affirmative agreement to this research.

Signature:

Printed Name:

Date:

APPENDIX B
<u>RCIA LEADER INTERVIEW GUIDE</u>

Research Topic: A Narrative inquiry on the informed practices, behaviors, and attitudes of RCIA leaders.

Interviews: Approximately one hour in length. Five interviews will be conducted. Thank the participants and briefly discuss the purpose of the interview. Remind participants that identifying information will be kept confidential. Share the reason for using a recording device. Request consent via the Information Sheet for Participation in Study and read the consent prompt regarding recording on interview.

To Be Read to Each Participant: This conversation is recorded for research purposes. Please let me know now if you disagree to be recorded. You may request that the recording stop at any time.

- How long have you been a leader in the Catholic Church? Why did you become a leader in the Catholic community, especially within the RCIA program?
- What does the RCIA process mean to you? What is faith and spirituality?
- What is spiritual leadership?
- Can you tell me about your leadership or how you lead in a spiritual context?
- How do you go about leading and motivating others?
- As an RCIA leader, what is your perception of leadership?
- What is your leadership mission?
- What can catechumens and your parish community expect from you, and what are your expectations?
- How would you describe your level of self-awareness (the ability to reflect on one's identity, values, strengths, and weaknesses)?
- How would you describe your current leadership role, and which leadership style best describes you? Tell me about when you engaged in leadership styles: Spiritual, transformational, symbolic, and servant leadership.
- Which leadership style provides the biggest challenge for you?
- What in your daily life calls you to be a leader, to awareness and connection with others, to a deepening of spirituality?

APPENDIX C
CANDIDATE/CATECHUMEN INTERVIEW GUIDE

Research Topic: A Narrative inquiry on the informed practices, behaviors, and attitudes of RCIA leaders.

Interviews: Approximately one hour in length. Five interviews will be conducted. Thank the participants and briefly discuss the purpose of the interview. Remind participants that identifying information will be kept confidential. Share the reason for using a recording device. Request consent via the Information Sheet for Participation in Study and read the consent prompt regarding recording on interview.

To Be Read to Each Participant: This conversation is recorded for research purposes. Please let me know now if you disagree to be recorded. You may request that the recording stops at any time.

- How long have you been a member of your church?
- How would you describe your current role in the RCIA process to others? Tell me why you are in the RCIA program and what experiences brought you here.
- What does the RCIA process mean to you? What is faith and spirituality?
- What is spiritual leadership?
- What experiences come to mind when you hear the following:
- Faith
- Vision
- Altruistic love
- Inner life
- Membership
- Calling
- What are catechumens' perceptions of leadership? And how do these perceptions affect the informed practices, behaviors, and attitudes of RCIA leaders?
- Describe an effective leader and an ineffective leader.
- Describe how the leader in your parish displays and maintains respect, commitment, and membership for the community.
- What can the RCIA leaders, and the parish community expect from you, and what are your expectations?
- Tell me how the RCIA program has affected your spiritual growth. And how does your development describe your conversion?
- What will your role in the parish community be after you complete the RCIA process?