



# Importance of Spirituality for Religion and Religious Experience Students: A General Perspective

**Leopoldo H. Lareza Jr.**

Department of Arts and Social Sciences

Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila College of Humanities and Social Sciences

**Abstract.** When we talk about spirituality, a conventional way of thinking is the connection to religion, which is why this paper will give an insight into the common definition of spirituality from various perspectives until its meaning is based on the conviction of Catholic Faith and the teachings of Jesus in the Gospel. Discussions on Spiritual Development have been overlooked in secular educational settings even though spirituality plays a pivotal role in shaping students' personal, emotional, and social well-being. This research will analyze the effects of Spiritual development and its contribution to the holistic development of students by developing a sense of connection to the divine and others. They are searching for meaning in life that leads them to personal and communal prayer and worship as well as the enforcement of their values to act accordingly. This research also explores how education, in general, plays a crucial role in developing one's spirituality, especially in public school settings that have no institutionalized religion, such as theology classes, compared with private Catholic schools.

**Index Terms-** Education, Secularism, Spirituality, Religion, Theology

## I. Introduction

When you search on the internet for the highest percentage of Christians living in a country in the world, you cannot miss the Philippines in the top ten. Is this a thing to be proud of as Filipinos that we can say to ourselves that we are part of the statistics? Is this still the case? We also know the fact that we have one of the highest numbers of Christians in the world, yet we cannot deny the reality that the Philippines has the highest incidence of corruption either at the local or national level. According to the 2022 report of Transparency International, the Philippines is number 116 out of 180 countries in the world in the corruption index. With this, there is something wrong happening along the way after a very good education provided by the School (private and public) and a very rich religious family background. Thus, how do the majority of people in a Christian nation express and practice their spirituality in society? In the



context of secular schools like Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila, which is predominantly Catholic, you often hear students' notion that they become more spiritual person rather than religious, or some say the other way around. However, the thing that puzzles the researcher is the kind of spiritual development that a public school can offer to its students. We know that developing spiritual discourse in public schools is clearer despite the existence of religious tolerance. However, spiritual formation is one of the aspects of holistic education that frequently cannot be touched or dwelled on in the current secular settings because of the absence of purely theology or religion classes. In this regard, it seems that secular education can only touch and penetrate the head level [knowledge] and [skills] while conveniently setting aside spiritual formation.

Integration of spirituality within the framework of public-school settings gives us a complex challenge in contemporary education due to the strong influence of secularization. However, public schools as secular institutions must balance their commitment to provide inclusive and diverse education by strictly observing the separation of Church and State. Thus, we must pay attention to and emphasize with a full recognition of the critical role of spiritual formation in the holistic development of the students. It also gives a "general suspicion about the place of spiritual awareness in the classroom, and inquiry into the personal and public lives of students and teachers."

Catholic private schools and universities around the globe have a concrete way of developing the spirituality of their students by following the spiritual identity of their founders, like Ignatian Spirituality, Lasallian Spirituality, Franciscan Spirituality, Thomasian, and many more. However, in a public-school setting, it is a different story because we cannot see the pattern of spirituality that a student should imitate and follow; and be modeled for society like the private catholic schools and universities are doing. Secular School is bound by the rules of the state that they cannot promote religion or any religious activities for the sake of equality and sensitivity of those who belong to the other faith. Sec 5 of the Philippines Constitution states that "the freedom of religion" vis-a-vis the enforcement by the 2010 CHED Memorandum states that "No law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall forever be allowed." College students can discern for themselves as they are considered young adults and the option expressed in writing by the parents or guardians, religion shall be allowed to be taught to their children" indicated Article 14, Section 3, No. 3 of the Constitution does not apply to them. In Secular settings, this might be a hindrance in promoting the essence of Catholic education in teaching the young as the secular institution relies on values education. The notion of Section 6 of the (Declaration of Principles and State Policies) "The separation of Church and State shall be inviolable" alerts some students and teachers who are part of the different denominations, even non-believers, felt that introducing them to Catholic Education (infusing Gospel values) means indoctrinating and an attempt to convert and force them to believe in the Catholic faith. The Constitution guarantees the freedom to believe absolutely, while the freedom to act based on belief is subject to regulation by the State when necessary to protect the rights of others and in the interest of public welfare.



The motivation of the researcher to do this paper are the three things that [he] discovered about the students enrolled in Religion and Religious Experiences class: 1) they took the course because it is a requirement in their course (in other words they have no choice but to take it) 2) they took the course because they believe that it will help them to understand their future client/patient and 3) unfortunately, they are expecting that the course will not dwell more on Catholic teachings (it seems that they are allergic on those things). In this case, point number three shows how limited the understanding of the students is when they talk about religion and spirituality. It seems that they are allergic to the teachings of Jesus interpreted by the Catholic Church for them in the present context. Nonetheless, the point is simple: the idea of the student's point number two on the reason why they took the RRE course is a big boost and a positive avenue to help them understand better the diverse religious backgrounds of people and their future patients/clients. This notion will lead to the idea of promoting sympathy and a commitment to the welfare of their neighbors (Mark 12:21) and protecting the environment (Genesis 2:15). Identifying the role of spirituality in public school education by developing students to become better individuals who work and contribute for the betterment of society.

In this sense, the acknowledgment of the students about the importance of spirituality in public school [PLM] is the starting point of this research: first, to emphasize the need for spiritual development to achieve the holistic development of students in a secular educational setting; second, this study might contribute to the ongoing dialogue about the multifaceted significance of spirituality in the development of students within the framework of Secular Education; third, recognition of the important role of spirituality in education can lead to more comprehensive, well-rounded, and emotionally intelligent individuals capable of positively contributing to their communities and society as a whole. Finally, this research will serve as an avenue for future initiatives and interventions in terms of promoting a more inclusive and spiritually aware secular educational environment.

## II. Defining Spirituality

Some of us might think that the spiritual aspect is just a portion of Catholic Education and should be taught only in Catholic Schools and Universities and have no place in secular schools. Thus, let us clarify first the main goal of education. Is it enough to say that a successful education is when the student performs well in the national board exam? Or when the students got an A in the class standing? Is the main goal of education to prepare the students to handle and cater to the needs of the clients and patients in future endeavors? We know that “a true education aims at the formation of the human person in the pursuit of her/his ultimate end and of the good of the societies of which, as human, s/he is a member, and in whose obligations, as an adult, s/he will share.” According to students in their simple classroom activity in identifying the state of their kind of spirituality, surprisingly, most of the students are gradually losing their faith in religion due to the old-fashioned way of thinking and judgment of some old [adult] people but having this course [RRE] can somehow let students engage and open their minds and have new perspectives in the world and the traditional societal thinking. In secular school settings, you will notice that most students yearn



for spiritual guidance as they search for and want to determine their purpose and the real essence of life. We know that the spiritual development of the student is a game changer in facing modernity and secularism. We cannot deny that the starting point or background of one's spirituality in the public school setting is composed of diverse social, cultural, political, and personal norms. (I am not saying that this is not happening in private schools) Thus, private and public schools are clear in their mission and vision statement, however, private schools follow the charism of their Founder-Saint as they are geared toward the universal discipline. Furthermore, in public school settings, it is a big challenge for the teachers to develop the spirituality of their students since the abovementioned influences are shaped beforehand (the family upbringing, cultures, and other aspects such as the idea of its interconnectedness to religion).

According to Lisa Miller, Spirituality is a deep way of being, through which we feel connected to all life, with awe and reverence for the mystery of being. That is why When the students answered simple questions to classify their kind of spirituality, most answers claimed they were 'spiritual but not religious' followed by 'religious but not spiritual,' Others categorized themselves as 'searching for religious or spiritual identity.' Some of them thought that the good aspect of spirituality is the possible upright contribution to their life in public Schools, where they can create and have ideas of spirituality of their own. Some would not consider themselves religious even though they go to church every Sunday; however, they pray to God constantly for guidance and to express their gratitude for the blessings in life. Other students who are struggling with academic pressure may find solace and resilience in their spiritual beliefs with the help of prayer or meditation which helps them to focus and concentrate better in their studies.

Furthermore, spiritual development in public schools can help students find meaning and purpose [in life], leading to better emotional health [and better decision-making]. In some sense, spirituality can influence values such as kindness and understanding and make the school environment more welcoming. Practices like mindfulness and being still can improve focus and reduce stress, which leads to better academic results. However, it is crucial to make sure that any spiritual activities are optional and respect different beliefs to prevent problems and any legal constraints.

According to Eva Natsis, "Spirituality is to be viewed as an emergent concept shifting between traditional notions of institutional religion, [the five major religions in the world] and one that is more humanistic, focusing on the intrinsic aspect of individuals." It is a new way of thinking for some students as they keep on claiming that they are more likely to be Spiritual but not Religious because they can categorize themselves as individuals who typically believe in the existence of a spiritual being as well as the spiritual dimension of life but avoiding themselves to be associated with religion. However, in the study of Philip Hughes, "spiritual but not religious" has been widely debated because these people were becoming more secular in their thinking, and secularization is described as partly a decline in religious beliefs and practices. In this sense, people/students are shifting their mindset from institutionalized religion to more individualistic and subjective forms of spirituality. They are inclined to seek the intimate meaning of life and their connection to the world and the divine through their own spiritual experiences because they cannot feel it when they attend a



gathering or worship in their institutionalized religion. This idea is closely related to American studies about how "religion has become [more] associated with institutional beliefs and practices and spirituality with more personal connections with a Higher Power." These are the person who always tends to reject the notion and to distance themselves from any organized religions as well as to the specific teachings and interpretation of morality and way of life, including [dogma and rituals] as the expression of their spirituality. If possible, they want to be separated from any related institutions and organizations related to religion as they wish to become more individualistic in the sense that they can pray and worship God in their own and diverse ways in approaching and developing their spirituality.

When [I] you ask the students what they are doing to express their spirituality, they may say that they are engaged in personal "prayers or silence." Some say exploring various ways of "worship and spiritual beliefs," such as joining a charismatic group, and they find their inspiration from different Christian religious denominations or philosophical thoughts, especially intellectual students. Even though they want to try the abovementioned ways of discovering and developing their spirituality, students are very cautious about committing to any of those belief systems or forms of worship because they want to explore more. Students were searching for a sense of purpose or something that relates to God [divine], a higher being, including personal values. However, some are still claiming that spirituality is tied to religion while others do not believe it's the case, nor does spirituality relate to God or a divine being.' Most of the time, they are looking for personal growth with their peers and direct connections with God [divine] or the spiritual aspects of existence without the need for typical religious formations and doctrines.

On the other hand, those who consider themselves religious but not spiritual typically are the students aligned with an organized religion. These are the ones who were born, baptized, and raised as a Catholic or Christian by their parents. They know the basic doctrines and rituals in their respective churches and places of worship as part of community practice. Some of them still "argued that spirituality is about religious symbols and rituals, while a few thought of spirituality is finding your core or digging deep into your being to find the meaning of existence and purpose in life." Most of the time, they participate in religious services and worship, following the spiritual laws and moral codes. They engage in activities prescribed by their faith tradition, especially celebrating the Mass every Sunday or observing the day of obligation. However, they might not place a strong emphasis on personal spiritual experiences or a deep, direct connection with God the [divine] as they are just following the mere routine of their family or the community.

Furthermore, most students feel that they cannot find themselves in deep communion with God [divine] or any importance on the development and improvement of their spirituality. In other words, they are just doing those things as a routine and a shallow practice without internalizing it. Conversely, despite the emptiness and dryness of their experience, they are willing to be involved in any religious activities such as prayer meetings, bible sharing, and any other community involvement. They are not seeking a profound spiritual connection; instead, what matters to them is they



enjoy the moment. In this regard, they should still prioritize the external aspects of religion (such as attending religious gatherings and worship and following religious traditions) but not necessarily have a strong and deep internalization of spiritual life and faith conviction. Nevertheless, “distinguishing the two groups of the ‘spiritual but not religious’ a group who found their spirituality from an eclectic mix of religions and philosophies and a group who found it through a connection with nature, the land or the environment.”

### **Three-Dimensional Model of Spirituality**

According to David Baker, the three-dimensional models of spirituality will help us understand spirituality better. At the same time, it was presented with two polarities (divisions) that may have both been expressed individually and in groups (corporate). First, transcendent spirituality - is a kind of spirituality that takes on the perspective of a child looking out with amazement beyond the limited scope while trying to make sense of the world, which might be a quest for the meaning of life either religiously or philosophically. This kind of quest on a personal level can be done through prayer, meditation, personal reflection, and any form of personal discipline that nurtures spirituality. Nevertheless, at the corporate level, it can be through “group worship, dialogue, or education.” In some sense, this transcendent spirituality is a pursuit for perfection in life that may embark privately through personal discernment to study and creativity [while discovering the beauty of individual spirituality], whereas, at the corporate level, it is through the lens of arts and sciences. Second, a transpersonal spirituality – it is a kind of spirituality that addresses and observes ourselves and others from the perspective of a mature adult individual, which is full of knowledge and wisdom about life. This form can be viewed as intrapsychic – meaning intrapsychic (from or within the mind or self) is “expressed in terms of self-understanding, self-actualization, self-care, and interpersonal skills” as the main focus of this (intrapsychic) is oneself. Thus, the interpersonal aspect side is expressed in terms of “finding expressions in helping people through communication, in service to others, or in loving or caring for others.” Third, transmission spirituality – is a perspective that is very similar to the role of a parent who is “passing on to future generations [children] the values, morals, knowledge, and skills that we have been acquired during in lifetime” especially during the formative years. This transmissional spirituality, in a wider perspective, is a sense of caring for the world through efforts of good stewardship.

### **A Common Understanding of Spirituality**

The burning question that remains unanswered is, “What is Spirituality”? The lack of a clear definition of spirituality is one of the contentious issues that we should address to enable us to grapple with the essence of spirituality. According to Maya Spencer, it is the “recognition of a feeling or sense or belief that there is something greater than yourself, something more to being human than sensory experience and that the greater whole of which we are part is cosmic or divine in nature.” Through the diverse understanding of spirituality, it is a deeply personal and multifaceted concept that cannot be grappled by our reasons to give a concrete meaning and definition because it may vary among individuals' upbringing and cultures. “Spirituality is like explicitness; we may not know how to define it, yet we know it when we see it.” the



uncertainty and inability of the academic discipline, either theological or philosophical, to provide precise definitions. The good thing is, despite the uncertainty and lack of definition, there is no preventing people from practicing spirituality in their respective contexts. Most of the time, spirituality is misunderstood by many because of its immersed interconnectedness with religion. If we look at the etymology of the word "spirituality," it is from the Latin word *spiritus*, which means to blow or to breathe and has come to mean that which gives life to the soul. In this regard, we cannot separate our being from spirituality because from the mere creation of the first human being, the spirit that gives life, "the truth," is present (Geneses 1:2).

Therefore, we cannot deny the overlapping distinction between religion and spirituality because of its interconnectedness and the overlapping secular ideas about it. To reiterate, in some sense, "spirituality is a more personal belief and experience of a divine spirit or higher purpose and the way of a person to construct meaning of individual and communal experience as the person attend and honor the presence of the sacred in life." There are some instances that students perceive spirituality as outside of the religious traditions (which is not possible in the Catholic context) because of their outward perception and awareness of their interconnectedness with ethereal beings. With these, the researcher wants to explore five (5) different possible avenues of discovering and improving one's spirituality.

### **1. A Sense of Connection between the Divine and Creation**

Since the beginning of human civilization, human beings have been in wonder and awe about the things they see in their surroundings. They are always puzzled by the mysteries of life, such as the origin of life and many things in the universe and the world we live in as we can see that many people in the past associated spirituality with a sense of connection to a higher being, whether a traditional deity or a supreme being presented by the institutionalized religion. This personal connection to the world they live in is seen as a source of meaning and purpose in their life. Pope Francis made it clear in *Laudato Si'* about humanity's relationship towards the creation and the Creator. This notion of spirituality thus encourages the need for "environmental stewardship" and a sense of "interconnectedness with the natural world" as part of our responsibility to care for the Earth which is seen as a reflection of God's love and creativity. Prayer is the common form of connecting with God in Judeo-Christian tradition. Christianity believes in the important role of prayer as a way of communicating with God, requesting guidance in times of need, a form of thanksgiving during times of success, and the only way to voice out the content of their heart to God. "In the face of ecological crises, humans do have to acknowledge their qualities and responsibilities; the attitude of control and manipulation needs to make way for an attitude of partnership and care."

Every individual can give meaning to the world around them and to their experiences, as well as set goals, plan activities, and order their behavior. Some individuals find spirituality in their connection to the natural world and the universe. They may see the beauty and wonder of the cosmos as a source of spiritual inspiration. "Spirituality means knowing that our lives have significance in a context beyond a mundane everyday existence at the level of biological needs that drive selfishness and aggres-



sion. It means knowing that we are a significant part of a purposeful unfolding of life in our universe.”

The universe unfolds in God, who fills it. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, or in a poor person’s face.[159] The idea is not only to pass from the exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul but also to discover God in all things. Saint Bonaventure teaches us that “contemplation deepens the more we feel the working of God’s grace within our hearts, and the better we learn to encounter God in creatures outside ourselves [160] The point of Pope Francis is simple: the mystical meaning of the universe unfolds about our relationship with God and the entire creation. It is up to us to discover God in all things, like the invitation to us by St. La Salle to be aware and remember the holy presence of God in all things, and we can look on the overflowing of grace in our whole being. Spirituality, then, “focuses on a belief in, or a relationship with, a higher power; it is the aspect of life that gives purpose, meaning, and direction, and which may encompass religion.”

In the conventional way of thinking, we can suggest that spirituality sprung out from religion. However, according to this research, spirituality starts with the sense of connectedness with people and to the natural world, which leads to the feelings of something greater than us, leading to religious beliefs. That is why we can conclude that spirituality is a means of connecting people to all living things, nature, and the universe. A way of appreciating the wonder and mystery of everyday life. This kind of feeling helps the individual to live more on the “possibility for love, happiness, goodness, peace, and compassion in the world.”

## **2. Personal Quest for Growth, Purpose, and Meaning of Life**

Most of the time, spirituality involves a lifelong journey of self-discovery and self-improvement. It is never a “once and for all” but a gradual and careful process to discover our missionary mandate here on Earth. This quest for personal growth and meaning in life can include discipline, such as private prayer and mindfulness of the inner thoughts, feelings, emotions, and beliefs. We know that all humans are always aiming for “personal growth and development, and spirituality has become an increasingly popular axiom in the secular society.” However, we cannot also deny that searching for personal growth, meaning, and purpose in life is deeply grounded in religious sensitivity, as we know that “individuals can operate based on personal beliefs or theories that they have about themselves, about others, about the world of situations they encounter, and their relations to it.” Discovering and developing one’s spirituality is a path to personal growth and healing from emotional wounds inflicted on us as we learn to accept those negative experiences from the past to achieve a sense of inner peace and well-being. Jesus reminds us of the value of forgiveness in the Gospel of Matthew “seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:22). Through the lens of spirituality, we can observe the moderating effect of spirituality based on the relationship between forgiveness of self and happiness of the person.

This secular Convention speaks to the innateness of spirituality and reinforces research in the field that attests to spirituality as about all people, regardless of culture





or faith. Mata (2014, p. 8) affirms this view, stating that spirituality “provides humans with a window to greater consciousness and more profound understanding of being, meaning and purpose.

We can suggest that “spirituality enhances forgiveness and acts as a protective factor against negative emotions.” A dimension of Christian Spirituality that is rooted in the general virtues of loving our neighbor through concrete deeds such as “Corporal Works of Mercy” (Matthew 25:31-46), feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, and so on. Hence, “Spiritual Works of Mercy” (Matthew 25:31-40) help us to become more sensitive to the needs of others by teaching them about the Gospel Values, comforting them in times of crisis, and forgiving them for their wrongdoings. A sense of purpose and meaning in life can be influenced by spiritual well-being because spirituality can inspire students to set and meet their goals most of the time. Spirituality is a larger concept that deals with meaning, purpose, and direction in life.

Viktor Frankl, the author of *Man's Search for Meaning* and father of Logotherapy, mentions three possible sources for meaning, all of which embody the discourse of spirituality as conceptualized by the respondents in the study: (1) in work or by doing something significant, (2) in love or by caring for another person, and (3) in courage during difficult times. Spirituality can develop a person to become more humane to others and be still in times of trials in life. Many people turn to spirituality to find meaning and purpose in life beyond material or superficial pursuits because, for them, spirituality can provide a framework for understanding the larger questions of existence and human experience. On the part of the students, they are “searching for deeper meaning in their lives, looking for ways to cultivate their inner self, seeking to be compassionate and charitable, and striving to determine what they think and feel about the many issues confronting them and their communities.”

### **3. Embodying Ethical Values**

When a person develops spirituality, we can see significant changes in their lives, such as becoming kindhearted, loving individuals and acquiring many more positive values as a person. Spirituality gives the person parameters or framework for living a religious or ethical life. Spirituality is often linked to a set of values and ethical principles that guide a person's actions and choices. These values include compassion, kindness, love, and a sense of responsibility for the greater good. In the field of education, the personal growth of students can be greatly aided by spiritual well-being. According to studies, most of the time, those students who feel that they have a good sense of spirituality are the students who have a better and healthy state of mind, tend to become more successful in academics, and are resilient in facing daily life struggles.

Spirituality, then, “focuses on a belief in, or a relationship with, a higher power; it is the aspect of life that gives purpose, meaning, and direction, and which may encompass religion.” Spirituality enables people to make sense of their lives because it provides a way to review and interpret the events of their lives, to make sense of them, and to come to terms with and develop an understanding of integrity about who



they are as human beings. Enforcing values through spirituality is a moral or ethical framework to help individuals identify right from wrong and serve as reinforcement of values such as honesty, integrity, compassion, and empathy. Spirituality often involves a belief in a higher purpose, such as aiming for the common good. The common good is an invitation to us to participate “in promoting the common good...by taking charge of the areas for which one assumes personal responsibility.” This belief in the common good can inspire individuals to act in ways that are consistent with their values, as they see their actions as contributing to a larger scale of society. Generally speaking, when we talk about spirituality, it helps the person become a mature individual. A common observation on the teachings of spirituality emphasizes the developmental change of a person leading to compassion, empathy, and love for others. Practicing these values can lead to a deeper understanding and a commitment to act deliberately in various ways to promote the well-being of the self and others. In other words, the development of Christian spirituality leads people to live a life following moral and ethical principles based on the life of Jesus, such as unconditional love, compassion, forgiveness, and social justice, especially for the poor and the environment.

#### **4. Personal and Communal Prayer and Worship**

A very complicated relationship between spirituality and religion continues to occur because of the need for an exact definition of spirituality. When you ask people what is their common ways to express and deepen their spirituality, some say through prayer, meditation, attending religious services, and helping pings others are among the many answers. However, from the Christian Catholic standpoint, we can look at the teaching of Jesus in the Gospel, pointing out the importance of prayer to Our Father (Matthew 6:9-13) and breaking of the bread (Matthew 26:26-29) as the perfect and complete form of worship. The teachings on spirituality in the Christian Church, particularly in the Catholic traditions, are deeply rooted in the beliefs and practices that seek to deepen one's relationship with God and live a life following religious principles. Our Catholic spirituality is relational as it keeps us related to God and fellow human beings in the community. We can improve and nurture this relationship through personal prayer. “Christian prayer is a loving, conscious, personal relationship with God.” and this “relationship defends fundamentally on WHO IS GOD and who we are.” The central tenet of Christian spirituality is the belief in a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ with the help of the Holy Spirit. This relationship must be nurtured through prayer and worship, either public or private. Prayer is considered a crucial aspect of spiritual life. Christians are taught to communicate with God through prayer, seeking guidance, strength, and communion with the divine. According to the Catechism for the Filipino Catholic (CFC), we Filipinos are “spirit oriented,” and that natural orientation proves a sound cultural basis for Christian prayer life.” On the other hand, it is significant to state that spirituality is highly individualized because people may have unique interpretations and experiences. Still, the uniformity of goal and expression is deeply related to the life example of Jesus. Some may find spirituality within the framework of organized religion, while others may have a more secular approach. Whether we look at spirituality in a personal or communitarian or even religious or secular, we cannot deny that it helps the people's as-



pect of human life. Its understanding can evolve, change, and grow deeper over time, and it aims for the betterment of humanity.

### **5. Community Involvement**

We are living in a secular and pluralistic society, and the challenge of modernity is very obvious in various aspects of life. Despite this situation, our Christian spirituality still calls us to have a concrete internalization and application of our prayer life into action. The phrase “Christian Spirituality of Work” proposed by the Pastoral Constitution of the Philippines II (PCPII) is considered part of the “spirituality of the Social Transformation.” The personal dimension of our spirituality is manifested in our social life through the involvement of current issues faced by society, especially in promoting justice for all.

For some, spirituality involves being part of a community of like-minded individuals who share similar beliefs and values. These communities can provide support, guidance, and a sense of belonging. A Catholic spirituality could reference a spirituality that encompasses a sacramental vision that sees God in all things - other people, communities, movements, events, places, objects, the environment, the world at large, and the whole cosmos. The visible, tangible, the finite, the historical — all these are actual or potential carriers of divine presence. Indeed, for Catholicism, it is only in and through these material realities that we can encounter the invisible God. The great sacrament of our encounter with God and of God's encounter with us is Jesus Christ. The Church, in turn, is the fundamental sacrament of our encounter with Christ and of Christ with us. The sacraments, in turn, are the signs and instruments by which the ecclesial encounter with Christ is expressed and celebrated.

Christian spirituality often includes a strong emphasis on serving others and engaging in social justice initiatives, which are seen as a way to live out the teachings of Jesus and express one's faith in action. According to the research of the Fetzer Institute on spirituality, “recognize that religion has long been seen as promoting civic engagement.” Our Christian way of life is a way of giving because we “people of faith are obligated to give, and those who do so are especially noted and blessed by God.” Analysis of civic voluntarism identified [different] religious congregations as incubators of civic skills, nodes of recruitment networks, and repositories of organizational infrastructure that contribute to civic engagement. Those Catholic religious congregations and organizations are helping the people, even those who belong to other religions and denominations. It is a clear indication that they are living the teaching of Jesus in addressing the needs of the people, even the Samaritan Woman (John 4:5-30), the Centurion's slave (Luke 7:1-10), Zaccheus Tax Collector (Luke 19:1-10). According to Putnam and Campbell, religious people are more generous and civically engaged than their counterparts because this impact mainly works through religious participation rather than through the influence of theological beliefs through its religion's "network of morally freighted personal connections, coupled with an inclination toward altruism, that explains the good neighborliness."

Wuthnow research concluded that spirituality is “all the beliefs and activities by which individuals attempt to relate their lives to God or a divine being or some other



conception of transcendent reality." Thus, spirituality, as distinct from religion, commonly references individual-level experience, belief, and practice in connection to the sacred or transcendent. Recent empirical studies find that spirituality is most frequently oriented toward God or a higher power but that a significant domain of spirituality falls outside the traditional boundaries of organized religion and doctrine.

For instance, the result of research by Steensland, Wang, and Schmidt in 2018 concluded that "spirituality in largely immanent terms about "holistic connection" and "ethical action" of a person. Spirituality can affect the core of one's humanity to make better decisions in life.

### **III. Role of Secular Education in Developing Spirituality**

During the simple survey of the physical therapy students in the classroom, their answers to the simple question, "Do you believe that spirituality should have no place in secular education (in public school)?" 8% Strongly agree, 10% Strongly disagree, 4% agree, 21% are neutral on the issue, and 56% of them disagree. For these students, it is very obvious that the majority of students are giving little importance to Spirituality in Secular Educational settings. On the other question about the big role of spirituality in promoting ethical and moral values of students, again, 67% of the respondents recognize its importance and values. For them, in public schools, spirituality can give students a sense of inner calm, empathy, and moral guidance, promoting a supportive and caring learning environment. PLM students are aware of the clear role of spirituality and the possible good effects in their lives in the future when they become professionals.

When the students were asked about the importance of the role of secular education in developing spirituality in secular education, they believed that the development of spirituality in secular education enhances their overall well-being because spirituality provides them with a sense of purpose, inner peace, and emotional resilience. Spirituality fosters a holistic approach to well-being in addressing not only academic but also emotional and psychological needs. For instance, practices like mindfulness and meditation, often associated with spirituality, can help students manage stress, improve focus, and cultivate a positive mindset. Furthermore, discussions about values and ethics stemming from different spiritual traditions can contribute to a more compassionate and harmonious school environment, promoting overall well-being among students. Spirituality provides them with tools to manage stress, cultivate emotional resilience, and find meaning and purpose in their lives. It also promotes empathy and ethical decision-making, contributing to a more harmonious and inclusive school environment that supports their mental and emotional health. Spirituality in secular education can help students become well-rounded and thriving individuals with a stronger sense of self, improved psychological and physical health, enhanced resilience and coping skills, and stronger relationships.

"Teacher's insight, worldview, adherence to religious principles, belief in ethical virtues, positive and constructive interaction with the student, and mastery of teaching skills are among those that can transfer spirituality concepts through teaching." A



Christian perspective looks at education as a means of fostering spiritual growth and understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Spirituality is a “deep way of being, through which we feel connected to all life, with awe and reverence for the mystery of being.” We know that all human beings are born with a natural capacity for spirituality as we are created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27), which is an integral dimension of human development. “Educational philosophies and policies influenced by globalization represent, for many cultures, a double-edged sword of opportunities and threats.”

In some instances, spirituality provides a foundational core to a young person’s intellectual, emotional, moral, and social development. In a secular manner, “spirituality is often defined concerning religion with some recognizing conceptual overlaps and maintaining a clear distinction between the two (Secularism and Spirituality); however, in the other sense, “spirituality is clearly distinguished from religion, there are variations in how the term is perceived. According to Crossman, “Education must contribute to the all-round development of each individual’, including spiritual values.” because “spiritual values can change human consciousness and transform the world.” The role of education is beyond imparting knowledge to students to prepare them for their future endeavors. “Educational globalization has ‘disastrously’ subordinated these holistic approaches to the curriculum, leaving a legacy of teaching and learning problems and the alienation of [students] from community life.”

A teacher should pay attention to the “spiritual development of the students.” in the classroom because teaching should be recognized as sacred by the Rich Young Man addressing Jesus as a “Good teacher” (Luke 18:18) as the young man acknowledges God as the source of knowledge and also self-recognition are among internal attitudes and beliefs that can affect the performance of the teacher to convey spiritual concepts through teaching. “We should look first at teaching as a valuable, moral, humanistic, and religious work, not technical aspects” not just a job to earn a living. In some manner, if a teacher wants to convey “spiritual concepts during teaching, a teacher should have moral virtues such as controlling anger...good speech and behavior, love to teach, consciousness and awareness, sincerity...observance of ethics and professionalism, justice, humility...patience and tolerance” inside and outside the classroom as a role model to the students. It is clear to William James that spirituality is the character “the feelings, acts, and experiences of individuals in their solitude” that lead some psychologists to look at religious institutions seriously, and the roles they play in shaping the character of the person is very important.

Howard Gardner identified three domains of “Spiritual Intelligence.” in educational settings. First, “concern with cosmic or existential issues” is to be considered as existential intelligence. It is a sense of wonder for every person about the universe and the existence of life. Spiritual intelligence is regarded as a new type of intelligence and has been explored limitedly in the field of education. The notion of Spiritual Intelligence as a new term in educational psychology refers to the adjustable use of spiritual information to expedite one's daily problem-solving and goal achievement; the person can employ and represent spiritual resources to boost everyday performance and well-being, but it differs from religiosity. Second, “spiritual as achieve-



ment of a state of being," which represents the psychological states and phenomenal experiences that are called spiritual, and third, "spiritual as effect to others," a social aspect, which also coincides with the term charisma and is an important ingredient of conveying other people towards the fulfillment of the first two domains in their lives. On the other hand, David Hay presents the Three Categories of "Spiritual Sensitivity:" First, awareness sensing refers to an experience of a deeper level of consciousness when a person chooses to be aware by "paying attention to what is happening" in society. Awareness sense coincides with the "spiritual achievement of a state of being." In other words, a person should be aware of the awareness of others. Second, mystery sensing is connected to the capacity of the person to transcend everyday experience and to use our imagination as it concerns how to relate to cosmic and existential issues while emphasizing the mystery of the whole universe and nature. And finally, value sensing emphasizes the importance of feelings as a measure of what we value.

For Bradford, there are three types of spirituality. First, "Human Spirituality" refers to the needs of every human being of care, love, security, and responsibility that we all desire. This kind of spirituality is needed to satisfy and fulfill every human person, whether the person is a recipient or a giver. Second, "Devotional Spirituality" is built upon human spirituality, and it is expressed within a certain religious tradition, culture, and language. It is a kind of spirituality that Christians have concerning the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. Most of the time, it is deeply rooted in a particular culture, like what kind of spirituality we embrace in the Philippines. Lastly, Practical Spirituality is the two other types of spiritualities merged. This practical spirituality is present in our everyday life [becomes a way of life of every person] in the community by giving us direction and influencing our social responsibilities and concerns. We cannot separate the existence of humanity in their natural life and spiritual life as it always aims for the development and improvement of well-being and society. Education is the form of existence of human life because we live our lives to learn and to improve our relationships with God and others.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Spirituality is crucial in developing students in public school settings (SUC) as they need guidance to discover and improve their mindset and way of life. We must acknowledge the rich historical development and influence of spirituality in society, which is why spiritual formation in public schools is badly needed. However, we must be careful in our approach, showing sensitivity to diverse cultures and religious beliefs as well as the principles of secularism and inclusivity. Values formation can provide the students with valuable tools for personal growth, ethical development, and an understanding of diverse belief systems. Students may learn to open themselves up about the discussion of spiritual development, which should not be considered taboo in public school settings. It will serve as an avenue of unity from diverse social, cultural, and religious backgrounds by focusing on universal values and respecting individual beliefs. The inclusion of Spiritual and Values Formation can enhance the educational experience in public schools without overstepping the idea of the separation of Church and state.



Spirituality should be understood in the universal human capacity regardless of religious or cultural background. Some say spirituality cannot be separated from religion, and it is also a good point to reflect on because the example of Jesus' life is close to the reality of our life. Thus, from the Catholic standpoint, religious practice and discipline can lead to the development of Christian Spirituality as we follow Jesus' words and deeds interpreted by the Church. It is better to include the discussion of spirituality in secular educational settings because it can lead to the student's development of personal and social sensitivity with an emphasis on creativity and non-linear thinking. Spirituality in an academic setting means educating the whole person by acknowledging the importance of social and affective domains in addition to cognitive development. Spiritual sensitivity includes dimensions of awareness sensing, value sensing, mystery sensing, and community sensing. The different contexts of spirituality presented by the various experts will serve as a way for us to understand spirituality better in a different context, especially in the secular education setting.

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