

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN THE CHURCH: INTER-DISCIPLINARY METHODOLOGY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PASTORAL FORMATION

Christina Kheng[♦]

East Asian Pastoral Institute

Abstract

This article highlights issues that have arisen from leadership development in the Catholic Church particularly in terms of ambiguities and tensions in meaning and approaches. It discusses some problems associated with the ways in which secular and religious teachings on leadership have been appropriated and the underlying lack of attention to inter-disciplinary methodology. To address these problems, the article points out the importance of attending to philosophical foundations and outlines what a common foundation might be. The resulting orientations for leadership theory are then highlighted, along with suggestions on how secular and religious sources might be reformulated. Thereafter, the implications for leadership development are discussed.

Keywords: Church Leadership; Inter-disciplinary Method; Leaders; Leadership; Leadership Development; Pastoral Formation; Philosophical Foundations

♦ **Christina Kheng, PhD** teaches pastoral leadership and management at the East Asian Pastoral Institute, an on-going formation centre for clergy, religious and laity. She is also a consultant with the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific. Her research focuses on inter-disciplinary methods in Church-society dialogue. Her recent publications include “What Are They Saying About Church Management? Patterns, Problems, and Considerations for Proceeding,” *International Journal of Practical Theology* 23, 2 (2019) 188–205 and “Towards a Normative Philosophical Foundation for Management: Contributions from the Catholic Faith Tradition,” *Journal of Religion and Business Ethics* 4 (2021), Article 5. Email: chriskheng@gmail.com

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growth of training programs, consultancy services, pastoral literature, and other initiatives to promote leadership effectiveness in the Catholic Church. Various tertiary educational institutions, formation centres, and specialist entities have begun to offer degree courses, sabbatical programs, and a variety of workshops and advisory services to help clergy, religious, and lay persons become more competent leaders. The volume of books, articles, videos, and online media on pastoral leadership has also increased. This trend follows upon the attention to leadership that has been occurring in wider Christian circles.¹ Various reasons have been cited for this growth. Some view it as an apt response to the clergy sexual abuse crisis and the gaps that this has highlighted in terms of governance and pastoral support. For others, the increased attention to leadership formation redresses a mismatch between the demands of ministry today and the relative lack of skills-based preparation of pastors, especially the clergy.² Now the challenges of building back better from the Covid-19 pandemic and the emphasis on synodality in the Church are adding further fuel to the interest in leadership. However, there is a need to note some critical issues that have arisen from the developmental initiatives so far and to address them before going further. In particular, a certain ambiguity still prevails over the notion of leadership in the Church. This ambiguity is not unrelated to the lack of clarity and coherence in the leadership field as a whole. Moreover, questions remain about the distinctness of ecclesial entities from secular ones, and what this implies for Church leadership. At the same time, with a plethora of compelling leadership wisdom from both religious and secular sources, how does one reconcile what Jerusalem and Athens are saying on this topic? This article attempts to address these questions and propose a way forward for leadership in both Church and society. Before doing so, it will take a closer look at the ambiguities and tensions that have emerged.

¹Thomas E. Frank provides an insightful analysis of this development in the Protestant traditions. See Thomas E. Frank, "Leadership and Administration: An Emerging Field in Practical Theology," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 10, 1 (2006) 113-136.

²See Kristen Hannum, "The Parish that Works," *US Catholic*, July 2011; Alison Damast, "Mastering the Business of Church," *Bloomberg Business*, January 3, 2008; "Laypeople are Creating a Blueprint for the Church's Success," *U.S. Catholic* 80, no. 10, page 28-32.

Diversity of Meanings

The terms “leader” and “leadership” have been used in the Catholic Church with a variety of meanings, whether explicit or implied. For instance, in relation to the persons exercising leadership, some church documents apply these terms almost exclusively to persons holding formal authority, particularly the clerical hierarchy. A notable example is the English translation of the Second Vatican Council’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (LG).³ LG 12 points out that the assessment of gifts “belongs to those who are appointed leaders in the Church.” The Latin text uses the phrase “*qui in Ecclesia praesunt*” which connotes those who rule or preside over the Church. More explicitly, LG 28 speaks of priests being “under the leadership of the bishops and the Supreme Pontiff.” The original Latin text uses the phrase “*sub ductu*” which connotes a certain passiveness in being led by someone. LG 37 distinguishes the laity from “their spiritual leaders,” with the Latin text using the term “*pastores*.” Likewise, the English translation of the Council’s Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (PO) applies the term “leaders” to priests (PO 13, 22), from the original Latin “*educators*,” “*rectores*,” and “*duces*” respectively.⁴ In contrast, there is no use of the word “leader” in the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*.⁵

Other ecclesial documents have used the terms more generally in regard to persons who exercise influence, especially to make a positive change in their communities, whether with formal authority or not. An example is Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation to Young People and to the Entire People of God, *Christus Vivit*.⁶ Going further, authors such as Chris Lowney underscore the co-responsibility of every Catholic and highlight the need to “foster a culture where everyone leads.”⁷ Similarly, diverse views in the Church can be found with regard to what leaders do, what results from their actions, and what a training program should comprise. For instance, in *Pastoral*

³ Vatican II Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, Vatican City: Vatican Press, 1964.

⁴ Vatican II Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, Vatican City: Vatican Press, 1965.

⁵ Vatican II Council, Apostolate of the Laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, Vatican City: Vatican Press, 1965.

⁶ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation to Young People and to the Entire People of God, *Christus Vivit*, Vatican City: Vatican Press, 2019. See especially paragraphs 230–231.

⁷ Chris Lowney, *Everyone Leads: How to Revitalize the Catholic Church*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017, 4.

Leadership: Best Practices for Church Leaders, Dan R. Ebener writes that “we need leadership because we need change. Leaders produce change.”⁸ In *A Pastor’s Toolbox*, Robert Stagg discusses leadership more broadly in terms of a wide range of responsibilities in a parish context.⁹ Others such as Michael White and Tom Corcoran hold up leadership as the key determining factor of all outcomes, asserting that “everything rises or falls on leadership.”¹⁰ Such a view is echoed in the media where successes or failures are often attributed directly to leadership *per se* or to its absence.¹¹

Sometimes the word “leadership” is used with an imputed desired value regarding how it should be exercised, rather than as a neutral phenomenon. For example, it is sometimes said that a top-down autocratic style of governance is not leadership. Moreover, a distinction is commonly drawn between leadership and management, with an accompanying exhortation for pastors to focus more on the former.¹² At the same time, it is not infrequently acknowledged that formal preparation for ministry, especially in the seminary, needs to redress the lack of both.¹³ Training programs that have emerged for leaders in recent years include topics that range from team building, communications, spirituality, and inter-personal skills to pastoral planning, facilitating change, self-care, and managing organizations.¹⁴ The emphasis of each program is often historically-conditioned and influenced by the institution’s philosophy, expertise, and priorities. There are also leadership programs that seek to strengthen discipleship among Catholics in

⁸Dan R. Ebener, *Pastoral Leadership: Best Practices for Church Leaders*, New York: Paulist Press, 2018, 20.

⁹Robert Stagg, “Pastoral Leadership,” in Paul A. Holmes, ed., *A Pastors’ Toolbox: Management Skills for Parish Leadership*, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2014, 19-30.

¹⁰Michael White and Tom Corcoran, *Rebuilt: The Story of a Catholic Parish*, Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2013, 242.

¹¹For example, see Richard McBrien, “Church Crisis Reflects Lack of Pastoral Leadership,” *National Catholic Reporter*, October 4, 2010, accessed November 20, 2021, <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/essays-theology/church-crisis-reflects-lack-pastoral-leadership>.

¹²For instance, see Jack Wall, “Pastoring and Administering a Mission-Driven Church,” in Holmes, *Pastor’s Toolbox*, 96-97. Scholars such as Frank, however, point out that these delineations are misleading and reflect unequal power structures in corporate life. See Frank, “Leadership and Administration,” 120.

¹³For example, see Sean Salai, “Seminary Formation in the Age of Francis: Q&A with Monsignor David Toups,” *America*, August 27, 2014.

¹⁴See “What We Do,” Catholic Leadership Institute (website), accessed November 20, 2021, <https://www.catholicleaders.org/services>; “STL in Spirituality & Leadership,” Loyola School of Theology (website), accessed November 20, 2021, <https://lst.edu/academics/licentiate-in-sacred-theology/>.

general.¹⁵ All these observations highlight that many meanings and assumptions are variedly attached to the notion of leadership. This diversity echoes the plurality of leadership theories found in the field itself, and no consensus exists among leadership scholars to-date.¹⁶ A further complexity is the influence of cultures and contexts, which result in assumptions about power, gender, equality, age, and other factors in leadership which are often unexamined. At the same time, there is growing scepticism and disillusionment about leadership in general, as a result of political, religious, economic, and socio-ecological abuses. All these further aggravate the cognitive and emotional tensions which the notion of leadership invokes.

Diversity of Approaches

When it comes to the application of leadership theory, a diversity of stances can also be observed in the Church. For instance, there is a view that insights and tools from the secular leadership field can be applied directly to the Church. Proponents of this view hold that contemporary leadership thought is but a means to an end. They highlight the Church's institutional nature and compare it with large multinational organizations or point out its *de facto* stewardship tasks. The urgency of addressing current leadership gaps in the Church is also often stressed. There is an overarching assumption that contemporary leadership wisdom would help make the Church more effective and fruitful.¹⁷ In the middle ground, some express doubts about the compatibility of secular leadership and management tools with religious entities. Even as they explore what the secular field has to offer, questions remain about whether there is "some difference between the two models of management."¹⁸ A typical response has been to combine both secular and religious teachings so as to reap the best of the two worlds. However this runs the risk of arbitrary and biased selection of leadership material from amongst a wide range of options in both sources. Finally there are those who avoid or resist

¹⁵ For example, see "Online Catholic Leadership Program for Lay Catholic Professionals Launches," *The Catholic Sun*, August 4, 2020, accessed November 17, 2021, <https://www.catholicsun.org/2020/08/04/online-catholic-leadership-program-for-lay-catholic-professionals-launches/>.

¹⁶For a detailed discussion of these challenges, see Barbara Kellerman, *The End of Leadership*, New York: Harper Business, 2012.

¹⁷See Joe Feuerherd, "Business Leaders Say They Can Solve Church Management Woes," *National Catholic Reporter* 41, 21 (Mar 25, 2005); Hannum, "The Parish that Works," 15; Charles E. Zech, "Best Practices in Parish Internal Financial Controls," in Holmes, *Pastor's Toolbox*, 73.

¹⁸Peter Feuerherd, "At Villanova Seminar, Italian Visitors Learn About US Church Management," *National Catholic Reporter*, August 25, 2016.

any application of secular wisdom to ecclesial entities, insisting that the religious tradition provides all that is needed for leadership in the Church. This view reflects the stance of radical religious orthodoxy and has been asserted prominently by John Milbank.¹⁹

Despite the arguments in favour, each of the above approaches has its own shortcomings. When secular leadership thought is adopted directly in the Church, the inherent limitations of the secular field become imported as well. Traditionally, much of this field has developed from the context of for-profit businesses and within cultures of the West. Leadership thought has been fuelled by a predominantly male perspective and through a somewhat privileged lens of those in relative power. Although this has changed more recently to include a greater diversity of voices including that of women, nonprofit organizations, and various cultures, many secular leadership tools have a lingering inclination to be Pelagian, subtly manipulative, over-optimistic about outcomes, focused on the empirical and temporal, directed at organizational survival, and instrumental in their regard of persons and the cosmos. There is also a tendency to over-generalize principles from context-specific cases. Those who adopt secular leadership tools need to be mindful of these challenges as well as of the historical development of schools of thought, and the resulting differences of approach. Most importantly, there needs to be a greater critical awareness that a paradigm of economics has permeated the collective consciousness of modern humanity to such an extent that the predominant business leadership thinking is automatically assumed as normative. As a result, religious and other perspectives can become marginalized.²⁰

Drawing upon church teachings to elucidate normative practices for leadership and to re-formulate secular theories has its own set of problems. Such an approach would not find traction with the many non-believers who work with Catholic organizations. More seriously, such pastoral advice on leadership sometimes appear to use religious texts at face value, offering instruction on leadership purportedly from Scripture or other church documents without adequate attention to hermeneutical principles. Thus models and best practices are prescribed directly, with little heed of contexts, background, historicity, authorship, authoritativeness, literary features, nuances,

¹⁹ See especially John Milbank, "Stale Expressions: The Management-Shaped Church," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 21, . 1 (April 2008) 117-128.

²⁰ For a critical reflection on this issue, see Michael L. Budde, "The Rational Shepherd: Corporate Practices and the Church," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 21, 1 (2008) 96-116.

contrary teachings, and other pertinent factors in the original texts and other related materials. In fact, few religious sources can be clearly seen as giving explicit instruction on leadership *per se* simply because the notion of this term is ambiguous. What exists are guidelines that have been expressed for those in formal charge of faith communities from the time of the early church. However, these too must be interpreted and applied with the appropriate hermeneutical and pastoral principles rather than used at face value. Religious doctrines undergo on-going development and purification through the ages. Caution must also be exercised when taking general teachings in religious texts, such as Jesus' declaration that he has come to serve (Mk 10:45), and drawing direct links to leadership. Such teachings often pertain more broadly to discipleship rather than to leadership *per se*, however it is defined.

With regard to the resistance against any appropriation of the secular sciences, the Catholic tradition holds that truth and divine revelation can potentially be found in any realm of human knowledge. In particular, Vatican II asserts that

methodical research in all branches of knowledge, provided it is carried out in a truly scientific manner and does not override moral laws, can never conflict with the faith, because the things of the world and the things of faith derive from the same God. The humble and persevering investigators of the secrets of nature are being led as it were, by the hand of God, even unawares, for it is God, the conserver of all things, who made them what they are ... The Church is not unaware how much it has profited from the history and development of humankind. It profits from the experience of past ages, from the progress of the sciences, and from the riches hidden in various cultures, through which greater light is thrown on human nature and new avenues to truth are opened up.²¹

In this regard, Robert Doran rightly points out the "one real world" in which both theology and the secular sciences carry out their tasks, such that there is no "pure form" of either science.²² All fields inevitably inter-penetrate one another in the course of their historical development and have shared concepts and categories. Scripture and the early doctrinal tradition of the Church have appropriated concepts such as person, family, shepherd, and kingdom, to name a few examples, all borrowed from philosophy and other social,

²¹Vatican II Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church and the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* (GS), Vatican City: Vatican Press, 1965, 36, 44.

²²Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990, 454.

economic, and political spheres of life. Similarly in leadership studies, concepts such as “charisma” have been traced to religious roots.²³

Towards Common Foundations

All these issues highlight the need to attend more conscientiously to inter-disciplinary methodology in the development of leaders. Whilst “leadership” with its varied meanings is a category that arises mainly from the social sciences, it is used increasingly in religious and other domains. At the same time, both religious and secular wisdom can be brought to bear in understanding what leadership is, whether there should be a normative way of exercising leadership, and what this norm could be. However as Doran has also pointed out, “tradition and situation are not foundations but sources of theology.”²⁴ The content of wisdom traditions provide data that can be investigated as part of a process towards insight. The same applies to “situation” as a source of theology, including contexts, cultures, and experiences which are not necessarily normative in themselves but serve as important data. All these need to be assessed with a base criterion on what constitutes the real, true and good. This entails no less than a communal endeavour to confront, discern, and clarify common universal foundations.

Bernard Lonergan uses the term “foundations” to refer to the ultimate horizon from which various options and viewpoints are evaluated and decided upon. Foundations thus pertain to one’s worldview and its associated tenets about truth, being, reality, life, and value. It is ultimately what one regards to be the principle of existence. As Lonergan writes, “foundations ... is a decision about whom and what you are for and, again, whom and what you are against. It is a decision illuminated by the manifold possibilities exhibited in dialectic. It is a fully conscious decision about one’s horizon, one’s outlook, one’s world-view.”²⁵ Hence foundations serve as the basis “in which doctrines have their meaning, in which systematics reconciles, in which communications are effective.”²⁶ Foundations are developed through an on-going process of researching or attending to experience and data, understanding and interpreting, comparing and assessing, and then deciding. This is a

²³See Bent Meier Sørensen et al., “Theology and Organization,” *Organization* 19, 3 (2012) 275.

²⁴Sørensen et al., “Theology and Organization,” 453.

²⁵Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, New York: Herder & Herder, 1972, 267-268.

²⁶Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 268.

process of discernment animated by genuine love, entailing a holistic epistemology that involves both intellect and affectivity. As Lonergan notes, “genuine objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity.”²⁷ Although confronting and purifying foundations is not easy, it is nevertheless a journey that beckons to be undertaken time and again, and leads to greater personal and communal integration. The Catholic faith tradition also holds that human beings are able to find consensus on universal truths. GS 16 highlights that “in the depths of their conscience, humans detect a law which they do not impose upon themselves, but which holds them to obedience.” Just as important, the discernment of foundations is an on-going, dialogical, and communal process. In Lonergan’s words, “human authenticity is never some pure and serene and secure possession. It is ever a withdrawal from unauthenticity, and every successful withdrawal only brings to light the need for still further withdrawals.”²⁸ He adds that genuine meaning and truth is “known not by the sense experience of an individual but by the external and internal experience of a cultural community, and by the continuously checked and rechecked judgments of the community.”²⁹

What might be a viable philosophical foundation that can elucidate the notion of leadership and upon which teachings on this topic from religious and secular sources can be evaluated? One starting point could be a cosmology that sees the universe as originating from a primordial life force that continues to create, animate, and renew, even through death and destruction. Religious traditions hold up specific notions of God as this life force but it can still find wide traction as a general concept. Eckhart Tolle, for instance, speaks of “Being” as “an eternal, ever-present One Life beyond the myriad forms of life.”³⁰ Likewise, sociological novelist Meira Chand reflects on the Covid-19 pandemic and remarks that “a nameless presence within us all, so often hidden or forgotten by our everyday selves, provides calm and resilience in the face of adversity, if we will but acknowledge it.”³¹ Organizational theorist C. Otto Scharmer speaks more generally of being “connected to a deeper source—to the source of who you really are and to a sense of why you are here—a connection that links you with a profound field of coming into being,

²⁷Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 292.

²⁸Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 110.

²⁹Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 238.

³⁰Eckhart Tolle, *Practicing the Power of Now*, Novato, CA: New World Library, 1999, 4.

³¹Meira Chand, “Embracing Inner Imperfections in a Damaged World,” *The Straits Times*, Dec 10, 2020.

with your emerging authentic Self.”³² These more universal notions of an indwelling life force which enlivens all creation pave the way for a common foundation in which the primacy of God can have a central role in the principle of existence. Consequently leadership must take into account this universal life force and its creative activity.

A common cosmological foundation might also include a stance that all things in the universe are inter-connected and are developing continuously, sometimes in non-linear ways. This is a view that is increasingly hard to refute given the experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change, and other global phenomena. Moreover, a normative good can be identified in the form of harmony among humankind and creation with well-being in all dimensions—physical, social, mental, emotional, cultural, and spiritual. A philosophical foundation in terms of anthropology might also regard human persons as multi-faceted beings whose corporeal, social, psychological, and spiritual dimensions are inter-related. Human beings’ agency, free will, and innate orientation to transcendence indicate that human persons are meant to exercise responsibility in collaborating with the primordial life force for the universe’s flourishing, each one with unique and complementary roles. The process of animating and supporting persons and communities in such development of the cosmos might be regarded as leadership. It is thus a task that is rightly undertaken in tandem with the primordial life force, and depending on the need of each context, it can be directed at either change and transformation or staying on course. Moreover, since the primordial life force acts through all the cosmos in creative ways, leadership might be exercised by various persons at one time or other, with or without formal authority. Its effectiveness also does not depend on an exclusive set of in-born qualities in leaders but on their openness and unity with this life force.

Orienting Directions for Leadership Development

Based on this common foundation, a set of orienting directions might be identified for leadership theories, whether they arise from religious or secular sources. First, the exercise of leadership must be directed towards the normative good with its multiple dimensions as outlined above. This entails promoting the holistic flourishing of all persons including the leader, those with whom leadership is

³²C. Otto Scharmer, *Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges*, Oakland CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2016, 12.

exercised, and those who would be impacted by their actions. It also entails cultivating all other aspects of the cosmos including the physical, social, cultural, intellectual, and aesthetic. Second, leadership must respect the profound inter-connectedness of the world and promote the good of the whole, taking into account each context and not acting in isolation. Moreover, since the agency and knowledge of human beings are neither absolute nor perfect, leadership theory and practice should not be deterministic but heuristic. Leadership is also a collaborative endeavour, requiring the co-operation and coordination of multiple parties. Most of all, since it has meaning only within the reality of the primordial lifeforce, leadership must be exercised at all times in connection with this lifeforce and grow in intimate relationship with it. This calls for a stance of humility and contemplation, in which the leader can become more aware of the primordial lifeforce in oneself and all things.

With these orienting directions, leadership principles from religious and secular fields can be evaluated and re-shaped where necessary. For instance, the tendency of some religious sources in the Catholic teaching tradition to confine the term “leadership” to the clerical hierarchy can be countered with a broader application of this term such that it includes any person taking initiative to animate or steer a community towards the ultimate good. Likewise pastoral leadership advice that appear to be too presumptuous of results or over-confident in tone should be balanced with more intellectual humility and tentativeness. Those that proffer strategies for influencing people towards one’s vision or point of view should be reoriented to promote openness and communal discernment.³³ Similarly with regard to secular leadership theory and practice, those which espouse mainly empirical and material considerations need to be widened in purview so as to encompass social, cultural, and spiritual realities. Likewise leadership strategies that reinforce competition and prioritize personal interest or organizational survival need to be reformulated to promote the good of the whole. Approaches to leadership that are ultimately manipulative of human persons or which leave no room for contemplation and discernment should be reoriented to promote genuine human freedom and collaboration with the universal lifeforce.

³³For specific examples of such pastoral advice that require reorientation, see Christina Kheng, “What Are They Saying About Church Management? Patterns, Problems, and Considerations for Proceeding,” *International Journal of Practical Theology* 23, 2 (2019) 188–205.

With regard to leadership development, the philosophical foundation calls for a holistic approach which recognizes the complexity and multiple dimensions of human persons and human communities. For instance, formation needs to cultivate the interiority of leaders and not just their theoretical knowledge or technical skills. It should engage the whole person in an integrated way, including the psycho-spiritual, social, cultural, affective, intellectual, and corporeal aspects of each one. To this end, leadership development could be considered in terms of a Who-What-How dynamic. This framework has been applied to personal vocational discernment in the tradition of Ignatian Spirituality and can lend itself well to leadership development. At the level of “who”, leaders could be helped to attend to their sense of identity, purpose, values, beliefs, and connection with the universal life force. This entails an inward journey in the depths of one’s heart, in which one encounters the indwelling presence of the primordial life force. In this encounter, a renewed sense of self-identity and vocation often arise. Although this level is the least calculable aspect of leadership development, it can also be the most powerful. A leader’s outlook, commitment, motivation, and attitudes are often transformed accordingly. In religious terms, this would be regarded as a process of conversion. The inward journey might be facilitated through contemplative exercises, prayer, reflection, psycho-spiritual guidance, and mutual companionship, all within a safe space for exploration and risk-taking. Such authentic personal renewal is often lacking in pastoral leadership training programs that focus on theoretical knowledge or technical skills. Consequently, participants emerge from these programs showing little improvement or change.

At the level of “what”, leaders could be helped to deepen their understanding of mission and ministry, including the signs of the times. This should engender a clearer sense of what the leader might be called to do in his or her current context, in accordance with the normative common good. Finally at the level of “how”, leaders could learn relevant skills so as to fulfil their call as fruitfully as possible. These might include collaborating with others, discerning appropriate interventions, mobilizing resources, and working with institutions. Besides directing formation at leaders, leadership development should also attend to systemic factors. As highlighted in the philosophical foundation, leadership is not exercised in isolation but in the midst of communities, institutions, cultures, and systems. Sometimes these are contrary to a leader’s discerned direction and thus present formidable inhibitions. Leadership formation programs

often do not take this into account and participants emerge only to find themselves unable to put their newfound learnings into practice in their larger contexts. Disillusionment, resignation, and withdrawal often result. To redress this, leadership development efforts should engage a community as a whole so that more tangible and lasting change can occur. Inevitably, this would entail a communal re-discernment of common foundations.

Conclusion

As can be seen in the foregoing discussions, attention to philosophical foundations is indispensable in leadership development. Without it, the exercise of pastoral leadership risks being swayed by dominant trends in secular leadership thought or fundamentalist religious orthodoxy. Foundations enable orienting principles to be established for leadership theory and practice, which in turn facilitate the proper application of religious and secular sources on leadership. Such orienting principles also enable leadership development and formation to be more fruitful. However, confronting philosophical foundations is a demanding journey. It requires leaders and the whole community, including those engaged in leadership research, consulting, and formation, to see beyond secular and religious forms and discern together what is ultimately good, true, and valuable. This is a process in which all persons are invited to be open to one another, to their wisdom traditions and current realities, and to the divine presence. Through such openness, a newfound shared wisdom can be gained and a deeper communion in the primordial life force can be forged. Moreover, since foundations are universal in nature, they are pertinent for leadership not only in the Church but also in wider society. Given the dire need for better leadership in all domains of life, a communal discernment of common foundations is an urgent prerogative in these times.