

Editorial

Leadership and Spirituality

Leadership as a concept has been of immense interest to humans everywhere. To be a leader has deeper meaning and responsibilities than what appears on the surface. They have to humble himself to the lowest of ranks as a servant but at the same time rise to the occasion to guide their people to higher goals. In Christianity, Jesus Christ is a very good example of a leader who was able to bring the two concepts together successfully. The editorial attempts to give some insight into the topic of leadership, and the integration of leadership and spirituality, and finally shine a light on the importance of reflecting on this in the present era.

Leading Others is Not Easy

Plainly said, leading is not easy. Leaders are said to bear an almost sacred duty to create conditions that enable people to meet their full potential (Senge, 1990). William James once said that “Most people live – whether physically, intellectually or morally - in a very restricted circle of their potential being. We all have reservoirs of life to draw upon, of which we do not dream.” To do this, leaders need to have a vision. Hellen Keller famously mentioned, “I’d rather be blind than have sight without vision.” The leadership entails focused planning of bringing direction to action for a worthy purpose. Great leaders like Jesus Christ, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, St Kuriakose Elias Chavara are all great examples of how difficult leadership made to look easy. It is given that even great leaders make mistakes; for example, Moses was a great prophet and had outstanding abilities of a great leader compared to more contemporary leaders, but he failed at some levels (Friedman & Friedman, 2018). His inability to meet the psychological needs of the people who were following him and less proactive reactions to crises lead to various downfalls among the people. The disappointed Lord leaves his protégé and successor Joshua to complete the mission that was allocated to them. The certain failures in the leadership of Moses echo the need to understand and teach young and aspiring leaders the vast abilities and responsibilities of a spiritual leader.

There are various models of leadership and integrating them in various institutions and organizations. In the workplace setting, the Triple Bottom Line through Spiritual Leadership develops business models to address various topics like ethical leadership, employee well-being, sustainability, and social responsibility without sacrificing profitability, growth, and other metrics of performance excellence (Fry & Nisiewicz, 2013). In the religious institution, spirituality and leadership run a deep and vast influence on the community than one imagines as this institution has been present for a long time. Great community leaders often drew on the teachings of the religious community to emphasize ideas and dreams that successfully brought the people together- for example, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Saint Chavara. Saint Paul was also an important person in leading the Christian ministry. “Paul embodied principles of leadership that he also described in his letters. He certainly thought the life of individual believers and Churches ought to resemble a solid foundation on Christ (1 Corinthians 3:9-17). Looking at Paul’s life, we can see leadership all the more clearly” (Sanders, 2017). Great leaders lead their strength and lead others by drawing on their strengths, capabilities, and needs. In addition to this, spiritual literature reveals five values that are consistent with a spiritual individual which includes- finding meaning, altruistic love, self-awareness, visioning, and authenticity (Selver, 2013). Efficient leaders are empathetic, creative, disciplined, strategic, humble, and decisive and are effective communicators (McAlister, 2016). Also, successful leaders are said to have integrity, enthusiasm, warmth, shows toughness and fairness, and are calm. Even though the list does not stop here, one will get the idea of what they need to do to reach the level of a leader who is not only capable and designed to reach goals but be successful among their people. Most of the great leaders who have left a mark in the history of this world were able to do so with the help of the integration of spirituality with leadership.

Formation of Christian Leaders- Reflection from the New Testament

An essential understanding in the Christian ministry is how His ministers are not self-appointed but are chosen by God for a specific mission just like how Jesus was called to the mission. The ministry of Jesus is one that is of love and service, servitude to those around and loving your enemies even when they try to push one down. “Christian leaders are called, formed, and commissioned to tread the path that Jesus had trodden so that through them humans and the cosmos may finally share in the power and glory of Jesus’ resurrection” (Kuthirakkattil, 2017). Leading such a ministry often does not rest in the hand of a single person and the cause of the mission survives only when it is passed down and around by the

delegates of the mission. Kuthirakkattil (2017) reminded us that “there is only one leader in Christianity, Jesus Christ. Yet Jesus, the leader, has ensured the continuity of his mission through his ambassadors of delegates- the Christian leaders.” The oppression and persecution that Christian leaders have to surmount are extended over vast areas of life including and not limited to social, racial, religious, economic, and cultural issues. Parallel to the depiction of Jesus as a man with flowing white robes and a general sense of peace around him, a deep study of the Biblical narratives shows that Jesus was ‘more complicated, compassionate, and dangerous’ (Conder & Rhodes, 2017). Church leaders are called not to be docile and complicit with the action of the society but to challenge and inspire the followers so that the ministry has far-reaching goals.

There are no outlines in the New Testament concerning the formation of Christian leaders. However, certain goals provided for the apostles were clear and straightforward. The apostles were called by Jesus to be with Him and to be sent out to preach and to have authority over all evil forces (Mark 3:13-19). Jesus leads with compassion and confrontation, love and servant-hood (Callahan, 2013) while facing opposition and hatred from Roman authorities and Pharisees. Jesus also showed remarkable and unconditional love to be able to set down from the position of a rich King to come to be with the poor, the needy, and the miserable sinners (Pelletier, 2017). Apostle Paul inspired by the teachings of Jesus also called upon the various churches to stand united and bear the weight of the goal of the mission. The strengths these people had and were asked to portray were not new and had been understood long before. The themes sounding the call of spirituality in leading work can be found in Psalms- integrity, conscientiousness, curiosity, concern for others, determination, faith, perseverance, resilience, self-confidence, and the power of hope (Friedman & Lynch, 2014). Spiritual leadership needs to tap into not only the followers but also the leader’s fundamental need for spiritual survival and well-being through calling and membership. Besides, vision and value congruence organizes and empowers the team, and eventually nurtures higher-level commitment and productivity. The values, attitudes, and behaviors that should intrinsically motivate each individual and bring a sense of spiritual survival necessitates two actions: a vision which brings meaning, purpose, direction and momentum in the institution, and social and organizational culture founded on altruistic love so that everyone feels belonged, appreciated, care for, and driven towards a goal. The formation institutions have the ability and the capacity to enterprise this and have been doing so for years. The drive for it needs to be further strengthened.

Trust, Compassion, Stability, and Hope: The Need of the Era

A Gallup study (2009) had reported that the four basic needs that followers require from leaders are trust, compassion, stability, and hope. All of these entail the leader to rise to the occasion and sometimes burn the midnight oil while pondering on meeting the needs of the followers. Kofi Anna once said, “If you don’t have a relationship you start from zero each time.” Building self-knowledge and creating stronger connections are a good head start for a futuristic and effective leader. Clifton (2003) famously compared a good leader who is aware of their strengths and uses it at the right time to that of a ‘carpenter who knows his tools or as a physician knows the instruments at her disposal.’ To instill the trust, compassion, stability, and hope of the followers, a leader must transform themselves into an effective leader.

The most effective leaders are always investing in strengths. Instead of trying to focus on eliminating weaknesses, effective leaders spend time and resources on focusing and building the top strengths of the followers. The four domains of leadership strengths are executing, influencing, relationship building, and strategic thinking (Rath & Conchie, 2008). Effective leaders also surround themselves with the right people and maximize the team by understanding and meeting the follower’s needs. Since problem-solving is one of the challenges of a good leader, they must surround themselves with experts, teachers, and leaders.

Instilling hope may seem like an obvious requirement for leading other people. Hope gives followers something to look forward to and it helps them see a way through chaos and complexity. Knowing that things can and will be better in the future is a powerful motivator. Instilling hope in employees is an important task of a good leader. Creativity is also an important aspect of effective leaders. Tough decisions are not easy to come by and the leader helps them to be comfortable to have tough discussions. The natural strengths of the individuals come out when the team is the most engaged (Rath & Conchie, 2008), and the collective talent of the team helps in the pursuit of the goal. It is the strength of a good leader when they can promote what they can’t buy namely smiles, relationships, and caring services.

Goals for the Pastoral Formation

The fourth pillar in the “Program for Priestly Formation”- Pastoral formation- addresses the need to educate seminarians in the practical administrative skills essential to run the parish.

The pastoral formation program should provide opportunities for seminarians to acquire the basic administrative skills necessary for effective pastoral leadership, recognizing that programs of continuing education and ongoing formation will be necessary to equip newly ordained priests to assume future responsibilities as pastors. Additional leadership skills include an ability to manage the physical and financial resources of the parish, including educating parishioners about the gospel value of stewardship, and an ability to organize parochial life effectively to achieve the goals of the new evangelization (Program of Priestly Formation, 2005).

The formation years are some of the most important years that can help the young formee to gather knowledge and experiences on effective leadership styles. Even though there are a lot of research on leadership and the various dynamics that surround the topic of leadership, there needs to be more focus on the manifestation of a leader's spiritual core (Fairholm, 1998).

Leaders establish a relationship with others by sharing their responsibility and creating bonds and trust for better function. Setting goals is significant but leaders should facilitate someone for establishing a project and feel good about your involvement. A leader who is nested in spirituality would be capable of delivering certain duties and capabilities that are refreshing, futuristic, and effective to reach bigger goals. As the Church shoulders more responsibilities and jumps more hurdles in the present era, the need to understand and research on leadership and spirituality are bigger than ever. The need of the hour is also to understand the qualities that help a spiritual leader capable of withstanding and overcoming societal and cultural issues and develop models in understanding how spiritual leaders can be developed in formation.

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