

GOOD ZEAL

THE SPIRITUALITY OF BENEDICTINE ACADEMIC LEADERS

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RB Chapter 72: The Good Zeal of Monks

- ¹Just as there is a wicked zeal of bitterness which separates from God and leads to hell, ²so there is a good zeal which separates from evil and leads to God and everlasting life. ³This, then, is the good zeal which monks must foster with fervent love: ⁴They should each try to be the first to show respect to the other (Rom 12:10), ⁵supporting with the greatest patience one another's weaknesses of body or behavior, ⁶and earnestly competing in obedience to one another. ⁷No one is to pursue what he judges better for himself, but instead, what he judges better for someone else. ⁸To their fellow monks they show the pure love of brothers; ⁹to God, loving fear; ¹⁰to their abbot, unfeigned and humble love. ¹¹Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ, ¹²and may he bring us all together to everlasting life.*

INTRODUCTION

- This Chapter on GOOD ZEAL is the summary of what Benedictine monastic life is all about. It is the core of the Holy Rule. As Sr. Aquinata Bockman writes: "There is good reason for saying that chapter 72 is the high point of the Rule. One might also say, it is the depth dimension, or call it the key, with which one can read the whole Rule, or rather, live it. " (Aquinata Bockman, Good Zeal) It is not only for monks or nuns but for everyone who lives by the Rule of St. Benedict. Although St. Benedict in this chapter contrasts Good Zeal to Evil Zeal, I believe the opposite of Good Zeal is not Bad Zeal but acedia (indifference, mediocrity, apathy lukewarmness.) Evil zeal can be turned into good zeal but acedia cannot be turned into anything. There is just no energy to be transformed. As Scripture says: "But because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold, not hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth. "- REV. 3, V.16

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- When we read through this chapter of the Holy Rule, we are quite dismayed because St. Benedict seems to be asking the impossible—to go against our natural instincts. Who would ordinarily prefer to obey than to be obeyed, to do things that are good for others at the expense of one’s own advantage, to give precedence to others, etc? But if we take as the key injunction: TO PREFER NOTHING TO CHRIST, if we do succeed or even if we are at least serious at making this a reality in our lives, then the other injunctions become possible because if CHRIST IS THE CENTER OF OUR LIVES, it follows that our ego (which is responsible for those so-called “natural instincts”) would recede to the background and so by the grace of God we are able to obey others, to put other people’s advantage before our own, to be happy at their good fortune, etc. And then this will naturally flow into selfless service for others. Thus this chapter on Good Zeal can be summarized into:

1. Prefer nothing to Christ
2. Overcome your ego
3. Love and Serve others unselfishly

I don’t think it is my main job to make an exegesis of this chapter. My task is to share my reflection on how the main injunctions of this chapter can permeate the spirituality of academic leaders like you. In what concrete situation are you supposed to exercise these? I think, first as servant leaders in your academic institutions and second as prophetic leaders of your school in relation to the bigger community.

I. SHARED ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP FOR SERVICE

With regard to this, I would like to discuss the concepts of servant leadership and shared leadership

A. SERVANT LEADERSHIP

1. Origin of the Term

The term “servant leadership” was popularized in the early 70’s just after the close of Vatican II. The term “Servant Leadership” and “Servant Leader” were coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1970. He coined this phrase in his essay *“The Servant as Leader”*. Greenleaf worked a long time at AT&T and spent most of his career on management studies, management development and management training. The idea for his essay, “The Servant as Leader,” came out of reading *Journey to the East* by Herman Hesse. After reading this story Greenleaf came to the insight that a good leader is primarily a servant. A good leader must first be a good servant. Therefore he wrote down his essay *The servant as leader*. But his idea also came from his Christian legacy and consciously or unconsciously by the Second Vatican Council:

Though his terms are secular, his definition of leadership is the clearest statement of his belief that the needs of followers are holy and legitimate, and the leaders use of power arises from the consent of the followers. Greenleaf was very focused on action and ends, and he held a Sabbath attitude about organizational life. Like Christ, who said “The Sabbath was made for man(sic), not man(sic) for the Sabbath”^[2] Greenleaf believed that institutions should serve people. He also felt that he was on the threshold of an important historical moment, of a paradigm shift in the collective American response to formal authority.(Wikipedia, Robert Greenleaf)

2. Biblical Roots of Servant Leadership

There are Biblical foundations for the concept of Servant Leadership. The word “servant” comes from the Hebrew word “eved” which originally meant slave but evolved to mean trusted. In Isaiah, chapter 52 the “servant of Yahweh” was identified with 1) the nation of Israel serving God, 2) the faithful remnant who served God in difficult times and, 3) the Messiah who became the suffering servant.

In the New Testament, Jesus connected himself with the tradition of servant leaders and the suffering servant of Yahweh. (Luke 4: 18-19) In Mark 9:33-35-Jesus prescribed for the leaders of his Church the same quality: “Those who want to be first must be the very last and servant (diakonos) of all. And in John 13: he dramatically demonstrated this prescription by washing the feet of the apostles, an outstanding gesture of servanthood.

3. Characteristics of a Servant Leader

Larry C. Spears, who has served as President and [CEO](#) of the [Robert K. Greenleaf](#) Center for Servant Leadership since 1990, has extracted a set of 10 [characteristics](#) that are central to the development of a servant leader: I have taken his categories but have adapted them to the Benedictine academic leader. I have also incorporated some ideas of Howard Young in his article: “Rediscovering Servant Leadership” (Internet: Assemblies of God: Enrichment Journal)

- [***Listening and Availability:***](#)

Academic leaders are present to their constituencies not only physically but with their whole being. A servant leader has the [motivation](#) to listen actively to subordinates and support them in decision identification. The servant leader particularly needs to pay attention to what remains unspoken This means relying on her inner voice in order to find out what the body, mind and spirit are communicating.^[4]

- [***Empathy:***](#)

A servant leader attempts to understand and empathize with others. All the members of the academic community are entitled to respect and appreciation for their personal development. Administrators should not make themselves the measure of judging others but should take them as they are.

- **Healing:**

A great strength of a servant leaders is the ability for healing themselves and others. A servant leader tries to help people solve their problems and conflicts in relationships, because she/he wants to encourage and support the personal development of each individual.^[4] This leads to the formation of a community environment which is dynamic, happy and free of the fear of failure.^[5]

- **Awareness:**

A servant leader needs to gain general awareness and especially self-awareness. She/he has the ability to view situations from a more integrated, holistic position.

- **Persuasion:**

Servant Leaders do not take advantage of their power and status by coercing compliance; they rather try to convince those they are leading. This element distinguishes servant leadership most clearly from traditional, authoritarian models.

- **Conceptualization:**

Servant leaders think beyond day-to-day realities. That means they have the ability to see beyond the limits of the daily running of the community but always have the vision of the school before them having made it their very own vision.

- **Foresight:**

Foresight is the ability to imagine the likely outcome of a situation. It enables servant leaders to learn about the past and to achieve a better understanding about the current reality. It also enables the servant leader to identify consequences about the future.

1. **Stewardship:**

Religious leaders have the task to hold their institution in trust for the greater good of the Church and of society. Servant leadership is seen as an obligation to help and serve others. Openness and persuasion are more important than control.

- **Commitment to the growth of people:**

Servant leaders are convinced that people have an intrinsic value. Therefore; they should nurture the personal, professional and [spiritual](#) growth of those under their care in a well worked out plan of in-service training. They will develop gifted unthreatened by competence because they have inner security and healthy self worth.

- **Building community:**

Servant leaders' priority is building a loving, prayerful, compassionate community. In turn the community should serve the greater community, especially the poor and the oppressed. [\[4\]](#)
(WIKEPEDIA)

B. SHARED LEADERSHIP

One can be service-oriented and still have a centralized style of leadership—like that of a benevolent dictator or the “John Wayne style of leadership”—“tall-in the saddle” loners who get the job done through strong self reliance and rugged individualism THE BENEDICTINE STYLE OF LEADERSHIP IS SHARED LEADERSHIP.

1. Concept of Shared Leadership

According to Peter Smith, this type of leadership concept “believes that rather than relying on a single individual to lead to a successful endeavor, there is need of other group members to take on shared responsibility in problem identification, solutions, and action taking.”

This leadership concept believes in the importance of the individual, that individuals are interested in participating in the development of their well-being, that individuals are able to learn and able to change and can take on responsibility; that individuals and communities can identify problems in their lives, can analyze their situations , arrive at various alternative solutions and act on their chosen alternative; that people can work effectively together to change conditions that may be beyond their individual control ; that community participation and group process are in themselves health enhancing. (United Way of the Fraser Valley.)

2. Shared Targets for a Sharing Leader

What specifically should academic leaders share with their co-workers? Phil Van Auken suggests the following:

- **POWER**-the aim of the leader is to empower others, to encourage them to be source of ideas and decisions. This presupposes inner security in the leader

- **FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS-** Leaders should be open both to share and listen to feelings. Leadership is more than making the right decisions. It is also helping people to discover who they are. By acknowledging their own humanity, they invite others to be similarly transparent and real
- **TIME-**Time is a precious commodity and the leader must make a conscious decision to invest that time in people rather than in administrative functions
- **PERSONAL NEEDS-** Leaders should share with others in a sensitive way their own goals, frustrations, pressures and needs. This will make the community feel the need to pray for them and feel with them “true kinship.”
- **TRUST-** Trust allows two or more people to disagree and still respect the motives of each other. It is the lubricant for relationships amidst frictions and differences.
- **TALENTS AND GIFTS-** It is understood that leaders should share their gifts but they should encourage others also to share their gifts and talents. Members of the community should be helped to understand their role, how they can develop and use their gifts for the community.
- **INFORMATION-**As much information must be shared for decision making. Leaders must be givers as well as receivers of information. An atmosphere should be created that members have a desire to talk and listen openly and without fear.
- **SUCCESS AND FAILURES-** Leaders need to talk both about their successes and failures. Success stories encourage others to continue to persevere and failure stories help others to see the leader as a human being with problems like anyone else.
- **PRAYER-** Through communal prayer we find encouragement, empathy, and commitment to seeing all of our life through the eyes of faith.

3. Values of Shared Leadership for Service (Vincent Warner, Jr)

There are values that guide an academic leader

- COLLABORATION rather than COMPETITION—puts premium on truthfulness and admitting mistakes
- CAPACITY to move to the other side-COMPASSION
- HOLDS ACCOUNTABLE but does not blame. Blaming is covering up. Accountability offers possibility of growth.
- WILLING TO COMPROMISE when appropriate and does not need always to control the outcome.
- TRUSTING AND VALIDATING OTHERS which makes possible to be joyful. Joy and cheer come from not always being right.
- POWER IS FOR PARTICIPATION, not for domination-power with , rather than power over
- PUTTING ONESELF AT RISK with humility and clarity.

Reality Check List.

In order to gauge the effectivity of Shared Leadership, the following questions can be asked:

○ ARE THOSE BEING SERVED

- GROWING AS PERSONS?
- BECOMING HEALTHIER?
- BECOMING MORE FREE AND AUTONOMOUS?
- BECOMING MORE SERVICE ORIENTED THEMSELVES?
- SHOWING HOSPITALITY TO THE LEAST

If we reflect on all the qualities described above of servant leadership for service, we will readily realize that these are all Benedictine values that are embodied in the chapter on the Abbot in the RB. I would just like to specifically mention a unique Benedictine quality of leadership: that of COMPASSION ABOVE ALL.

B. PROPHETIC LEADERSHIP

A prophetic academic leader looks beyond the school. What is the vision of the prophetic academic leader for the school? What strategies, methods and pedagogy would be employed to fulfill this vision?

I. THE THRUST OF A BENEDICTINE SCHOOL

The usual aim of every educational institution is to prepare the students to become good citizens and good leaders in their society. But if there is something wrong with society, would it still retain this objective. I believe so but it would prepare its students to be AGENTS OF CHANGE.

I would like to take the example of St. Scholastica's College in its efforts through the years to implement its prophetic thrust which was defined by the Priory Chapter of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters in 1975, namely: EDUCATION FOR JUSTICE AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION. This has been adopted by Benedictine Administrators in all our schools as their own vision.

They seek to inculcate Benedictine values in their students. They are guided in their prophetic leadership by

THE OPTION FOR THE POOR- JESUS' OPTION- If Christ had an option for the poor, it follows that his disciples should also have an option for the poor.

CONCERN FOR JUSTICE AND EQUALITY- Poverty in the Philippines as in most underdeveloped countries, was not due to scarcity of resources but by an unequal distribution of resources. In the Philippines 2 % of the people owned and controlled 75% of all land and capital.

COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION – Elimination of poverty and struggle for quality of life is not a matter of dole outs for the poor but presupposes a fundamental change in society—both in consciousness and structures.

CARE FOR THE EARTH (BENEDICT AS PATRON OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE) - The global ecological crisis has prompted administrators to inculcate ecological awareness and commitment to ecological justice in the thrust of social transformation.

PASSION FOR PEACE (PAX BENEDICTINA) - In a world of conflict and violence, St. Benedict's passion for peace is integral to vision of social transformation

2. QUALITIES TO BE DEVELOPED IN STUDENTS.

In a workshop of administrators and teachers, it was agreed upon that if the students are to be educated as agents of change there are some qualities that should be developed in them, namely:

2.1 Critical Awareness of one's Surroundings - The Philippine educational system is like many educational systems in that it does not encourage critical thinking in the students. Obedience to rules and regulations are considered the signs of being good students. It is important that students first of all are aware of the important happenings in society—economic, political, cultural, religious. They need to be trained to read the newspapers and listen to newscasts. But they have to be trained to be critical and not swallow what they read or listen to hook line and sinker. They should be able to analyse and discern and judge what is wheat from chaff. Teachers should encourage questions and opinions of students.

2.2 Moral and Intellectual honesty - Our society is plagued with endemic and systemic corruption in all levels. Students have to be trained from the start towards moral and intellectual honesty. There should be appropriate sanctions for cheating and other forms of dishonesty.

2.3 COMMITMENT TO ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE- social orientation is not incompatible with academic excellence. In fact they are corollaries. Students need to know deeply about the issues they are espousing. Academic excellence is in itself a social responsibility.

2.4 SENSITIVITY TO THE PLIGHT OF THE POOR- Most of our students come from the middle or upper class. They should be made to see the plight and sufferings of the poor and should not only have an intellectual knowledge of this but should have genuine empathy for them which is manifested in concrete actions.

2.5 EQUIPPED TO TAKE PROPHETIC ACTIONS- Students are exposed to the realities of the poor not only intellectually but by actual exposure and immersion. They are encouraged to join mass rallies and protest actions of various kinds –from signature campaigns, to writing to editors, etc.

3. ***CHARACTERISTICS OF A SOCIALLY-ORIENTED SCHOOL***

In the same workshop, the body worked out what should be the characteristics of a socially oriented school that is supposed to educate students as agents of change. They came up with the following:

A socially oriented school is one where

- THE ADMINISTRATION, FACULTY AND STUDENTS ARE COGNIZANT OF THE ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, AND CULTURAL SITUATION OF THE COUNTRY - It was felt that every one in the academic community must have the critical awareness that is demanded of students.
- THE CURRICULAR, EXTRA AND CO CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL AWARENESS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY - It should not only the different disciplines that should promote social awareness and social responsibility but other activities like extra-curricular and co-curricular activities such as drama presentations, symposia and fora and activities of other student organizations should also reflect the school thrust and should not go contrary to it.
- THE METHODOLOGY AND SYSTEMS OF VALUATION CONSIDER INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY - The thrust of the school has to be reflected in the methodologies used in the classroom that should not be confined to lectures but to exposure and immersion programs
- THE POLICIES REFLECT JUSTICE AND PARTICIPATORY DECISION MAKING- While advocating justice for workers in the bigger community, the salary structure, the benefits, the policies governing the students, faculty and other lay co-workers have also to be not only legal but also compassionate. (for example: disciplinary policies, hiring and dismissal policies, etc.)
- THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY AND PARENTS ARE INVOLVED IN THE SOCIAL THRUST OF THE SCHOOL- The exposure and social action activities should not only be confined to the students but should include teachers and personnel as well as parents and alumnae.

PEDADGOGY,

Learning from Paolo Freire, the academic community made a contrast between a pedagogy that is domesticating and a liberating pedagogy:

DOMESTICATING	LIBERATING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The teacher is the subject and the student is the object 	Both student and teacher are subjects of education. Object of education is reality to be analyzed and changed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Primarily Banking method- transfer of knowledge from teacher to student 	DiAlogical, Creative and Research –oriented Includes exposure and immersion programs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Result: domesticated citizenry, incapable of changing society 	Result: Liberated and liberating citizenry – subjects of history, capable of changing society

SOCIETAL ISSUES THAT NEED A PROPHETIC RESPONSE:

In the course of the years since 1975, social issues have been analyzed , discussed and responded to by the academic community of St. Scholastica’s College. Every year a theme is chosen that would involve one or the other issue. This is explained by the president to all sectors of the academic community and each one had to come up with their own concretization of the theme chosen for the year. Among the issues that have been acted upon and continue to be main concerns are:

- POVERTY, ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND ELITE GLOBALIZATION- SOLIDARITY WITH THE POOR
- THE WOMAN QUESTION –EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN
- ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS – ECOLOGICAL ADVOCACY AND ACTIVISM
- SYSTEMIC CORRUPTION – ANTI-CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN AND ADVOCACY FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE
- FUNDAMENTALISM - INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE
- VIOLENCE, CONFLICT, AND THE CULTURE OF DEATH- CULTURE OF LIFE AND CULTURE OF PEACE.

There is no time to discuss these issues in detail nor the prophetic response to them. I can only suggest the following prophetic response:

THE WHOLE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY MUST RESPOND PROPHETICALLY TO THESE ISSUES THROUGH:

- CONSCIENTIZATION AT ALL LEVELS
- CONCRETE SOLIDARITY WITH THE POOR AND THE OPPRESSED IN THEIR STRUGGLE FOR THEIR RIGHTS AND FOR A GOOD QUALITY OF LIFE
- COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY—OF GENDER, RACE, ETC
- PARTICIPATION IN PROTEST ACTIONS AGAINST INJUSTICE
- ADHERENCE TO AND PRACTICE OF ECOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES
- NETWORKING WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS TO SUPPORT ADVOCACIES FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

CONCLUSION:

I admit being a prophetic academic servant leader is a tall order. That is why we need the almost impossible demands of St. Benedict in his chapter on Good Zeal® —to make Christ the Center of our lives, to relentlessly overcome our ego, and to selflessly love and serve others—In our case THE MEMBERS OF OUR academic community. Maybe at this point we should re-read what this chapter says

- **RB Chapter 72: The Good Zeal of Monks**
- *¹Just as there is a wicked zeal of bitterness which separates from God and leads to hell, ²so there is a good zeal which separates from evil and leads to God and everlasting life. ³This, then, is the good zeal which monks must foster with fervent love: ⁴They should each try to be the first to show respect to the other (Rom 12:10), ⁵supporting with the greatest patience one another's weaknesses of body or behavior, ⁶and earnestly competing in obedience to one another. ⁷No one is to pursue what he judges better for himself, but instead, what he judges better for someone else. ⁸To their fellow monks they show the pure love of brothers; ⁹to God, loving fear; ¹⁰to their abbot, unfeigned and humble love. ¹¹Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ, ¹²and may he bring us all together to everlasting life.*

THAT IN ALL THINGS GOD MAY BE GLORIFIED!