

THE VOCATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

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Introduction:

--Paul lists "administration" as one of the gifts of the Spirit or ministries that united in harmony help the church thrive (1 Cor 12:28). Yet many religiously motivated people consider administration in its various forms a kind of "necessary evil" or activities that keep them from the true work of the church.

--The goal of this presentation is to show from the New Testament that administrative service is, in fact, an authentic expression of discipleship and essential to the church's mission.

I. The Institutional Church – There is No Other Kind.

a) Temptation to believe that one can be "spiritual" but not "religious" – i.e., understanding "religion" as organized, institutional religion. Yet from the outset the church has been and must continue to be an "institution."

b) Jesus himself as a devout Jew participated in an "institutional" religion: the temple and its upkeep; the synagogue and its organization; modest organization among the community of disciples (funding, for example).

c) The organizational development of the apostolic church: assignment of deacons; funding; establishment of leadership in local communities; communication networks; meetings and decrees; Paul and his collection.

==Being an institution is essential for a community to have an identity and a future; from a Christian point of view, accommodating the needs for structures, funding, leadership, communication, etc., without compromising our deepest ideals, is part of the reality of the Incarnation.

II. Leadership as Discipleship.

a) Robert Greenleaf's concept of "Servant Leadership" as secular notion yet in harmony with fundamental perspective of the gospel. The gospel notion of *diakonia* as exemplified by Jesus and reaching its culmination in his self-transcending death (e.g., Mark 10:32-45).

b) Leadership and mission: the mission-oriented and eschatological nature of Christian discipleship. "Striving to live now by the future we most earnestly desire to see." "You will see greater things than these..." (John 1:50).

c) Leadership and Paul's notion of the orchestration of the gifts of the community, forming one body of Christ, animated by charity (see Paul 1 Corinthians 11-13). Leadership at various levels as able to convene and mobilize a community towards its goal.

III. Money and Meaning.

a) Resources, financial and other, as necessary for the life of a community: facilities, personnel, means of "production"; communication; just reimbursement, etc. Attention to finances in Judaism and early Christianity.

b) Beyond the pragmatic necessity of financial resources, there is the symbolic dimension of money: extension of self, exchange; solidarity; communication of value; participation in the work of another. Paul's multiple motivations for his collection: helping the poor; homage to Jerusalem; solidarity with all levels of the community; participating in the building up of the church for God (see especially 2 Cor 8-9).

IV. Personnel and the Ideals of Christian Community.

a) The New Testament and the struggles with personnel: the errant disciples (Mark 8:17-21); procedure for conflicts (Matthew 18:15-20); cultural conflicts in Jerusalem community (Acts 6:1-6); Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36-41); Paul and Peter (Galatians 2:11-14).

b) Keeping perspective: The Body of Christ as the Crucified Body of Christ... (1 Corinthians 12:22-26).

c) The power of language to wound and to bless is emphasized in the letters of the New Testament. The symbolic role of leadership within an institution See 1 Peter 4:7-11. James 3:1-12.

d) The ability of administrative leadership to convene and set the tone.

Conclusion:

--Administrative service as authentic Christian discipleship: Remembering who we are and to whom we belong.

Some Recommended Reading:

Donald Senior, **The Gift of Administration: New Testament Foundations for the Vocation of Administrative Service.** (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2016).

Ann Garrido, **Redeeming Administration: 12 Spiritual Habits for Catholic Leaders in Parishes, Schools, Religious Communities, and Other Institutions** (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2013).

Craig C. Hill, **Servant of All. Status, Ambition, and the Way of Jesus** (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).

Pope Francis, "Presentation of the Christmas Greetings to the Roman Curia. Address of His Holiness Pope Francis, Monday, December 22, 2014,"
https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/december/documents/papa-francesco_20141222_curia-romana.html.