

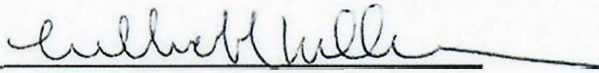
Serving and Leading Clergy With(out) Authority

by

Russell Charles Elmayan, M.B.A., M.P.S.

Date: October 15, 2019

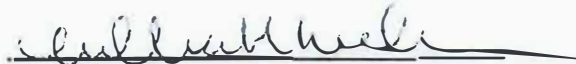
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Bishop William Willimon, Supervisor



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Bishop William Willimon, D.Min. Director

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in the
Divinity School of Duke University

2019

ABSTRACT

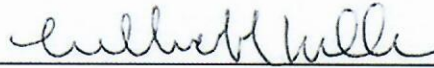
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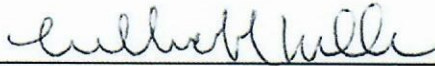
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ABSTRACT

Introduction of the Issue to be Addressed

One of the biggest challenges a lay senior executive has in ministering with tenured clergy in a Catholic diocese (and perhaps to some extent in many denominational traditions) is the tension between being called to serve the clergy while simultaneously leading the clergy without having any formal authority over them. Navigating these tensions in a manner which respects both administrators and the clergy is key to effective and collegial ministry.

Methodology Employed

I explored various types of materials and put them in conversation with one another: documents of the Catholic Church and from other academic sources on priesthood, Catholic documents on lay ecclesial ministry, writings from Catholic and Protestant theologians, and academic materials from professional business literature on leadership and psychology. Materials from these diverse sources were tied together to develop a protocol on how those who are in non-ordained leadership roles that lack formal authority can best work with those and through those where there is not a relationship where one reports to another person, in terms of a hierarchical organization chart.

It is crucial for successful diocesan or judicatory executives to be able to bridge the tensions between serving and leading in a way that respects the clergy while also addressing the need for accountability in the church and in the administration of parishes. I explored how the protocols related to servant leadership are best used in this circumstance. Those who are successful in bridging this tension have found a way to honor the clergy's challenges, establish win-win outcomes, and establish credibility and integrity with the clergy.

While there will be times when viewpoints of the clergy and the administrators differ, the research validates my theory that when trust, empathy, and commitment to service have been effectively built, it replaces the need for formal authority, reducing the tension inherent in this unique church position. The work of Ronald Heifetz and others on approaching leadership by diagnosing situations based on the values at play while avoiding solutions based simply on hierarchical relationships on where people align in an organization chart provide important guidance for those who are called to lead without formal authority.

DEDICATION

I am grateful to my loyal and dedicated wife, Diane Elmayan, for her steadfast support during the process of the Doctor of Ministry coursework and the writing of this doctoral thesis.

This doctoral thesis is dedicated to two people. It is dedicated to my late mother, Helen Elmayan, who first nurtured my faith in the Lord. It is also dedicated to the late Father Joseph Burke, S.J., a Jesuit priest who served as Catholic Chaplain at Duke when I was in graduate school there in the late 1970's earning my MBA degree. Father Burke's influence and patience and friendship had an immeasurable impact upon my faith and my faith journey.

I appreciate the support of Monsignor Mike Shugrue, a priest of the Diocese of Raleigh; and Father Mark Reamer, O.F.M., a Franciscan Friar who is also a graduate of the Duke Doctor of Ministry program. Mike and Mark both enthusiastically encouraged and supported my involvement in the Duke Doctor of Ministry program.

A special thanks goes out to Bishop William Willimon, who served as thesis advisor and just as importantly, served as mentor, friend, role model, and provider of unvarnished feedback. Thanks also to Father Michael Martin, O.F.M. Conv., Director of the Duke Catholic Center, who served as second reader for the thesis and who gave excellent feedback during the entire process.

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Chapter 1: Overview of the Significance of Serving and Leading Clergy With(out) Authority

Clergy and diocesan executives are both presumably motivated to be serving in ministry in the church and are both presumably motivated to be good stewards of the resources that God's people have entrusted to the church for pastoral ministry and charitable outreach. However, at times, the ordained clergy and those who come to serve from outside of the institutional church world do not speak the same "language", resulting in differing perspectives about what constitutes proper stewardship.

The clergy may perceive the diocesan executives as not being sensitive to their pastoral challenges at a parish level. Clergy sometimes perceive the diocesan executives as inappropriately applying analytical business principles to the church, such as measuring parishes by whether they operate at a surplus or a deficit. The executives sometimes perceive the clergy as being overly concerned with spiritual and pastoral matters at the expense of being concerned with the financial viability of the institution and "businesslike" practices. It is possible that some of this apparent "disconnect" is that clergy are not familiar with a business culture and its related language.¹

Catholic priests ministering in a Diocese who have been appointed to the office of "pastor" (i.e., responsible for leading a parish church) have "tenure", meaning they are appointed for a specific term of typically six years². During that six-year term, it is virtually impossible for a bishop to move or remove a priest from his role as a pastor without the pastor's consent, unless the pastor has committed a highly egregious act.³ Since the clergy, at least in the Catholic tradition, have "tenure", the burden is on the diocesan executives, who do not have

¹ Martin, O.F.M. Conv., August 3, 2019.

² Canon Law Society of America, Commentary to Canon 522, page 422.

³ Canon Law Society of America, Commentary to Canon 538, page 434.

“tenure”, to find a way to work with the clergy in a way that builds bridges and breaks down any misunderstandings caused by differences in their approaches to church management or roles in the church.

Ideally, some of this onus to build bridges and break down misunderstanding should be shared by the clergy as well, and indeed there are clergy who do an excellent job at it.⁴ However, the focus of this doctoral dissertation is on how lay executives can best work with clergy, from the perspective of what specific things a lay executive can do to positively effect this relationship. The reality is that a lay executive who cannot work well with clergy will ultimately not succeed and may eventually be fired. A clergyperson, at least in traditions such as the one I serve, will continue in their role regardless of how well they work with a lay executive, because they are “tenured” and have ministry jobs for life.

A real-life example of this tension between serving and leading without formal authority is encapsulated in this interaction between a diocesan executive and a pastor. I asked one of my staff members to develop and implement an early warning system for parishes that may be heading towards a financial problem. My employee, an analyst originally from a corporate job, noticed a parish consistently spending at a deficit, and after reviewing the parish financial statements, informed the pastor that he was overspending on “Word” and “Worship” (two expense categories on the parish financial statement), and asked the pastor if he needed any assistance in implementing a plan to cease the deficit spending. The pastor took great umbrage at being asked why he was spending too much money proclaiming the Word of God and administering the Sacraments, as he said his main job is to “save souls”, which cannot be quantified.

⁴ Martin, O.F.M., Conv., August 3, 2019.

In this case, both the analyst and the pastor were correct. As stated by Jim Collins in *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*, “for a social sector organization...performance must be assessed relative to mission, not financial returns.”⁵ Collins says in a not-for-profit setting, the key question is not how much money is flowing to the bottom line relative to an initial financial investment, but instead it is how effectively the mission is being carried out and what impacts are being made, given the resources invested.⁶ From the perspective of the analyst, the parish should be operated in a manner that exhibits prudent administrative practices. After all, if the parish spends itself into bankruptcy, it cannot continue to function as a parish and it cannot continue to provide ministry and pastoral care, at least not in the same way as in the past. In addition, Vatican II documents and Canon Law state that the role of the pastor includes governance of the temporal goods for which a pastor is also responsible, even though he may not resonate with that part of his role.⁷ From the perspective of the pastor, all the analytics in the world do not mean anything if souls are not being saved, and the only “analytics” that matter are whether someone’s soul is saved (although I am not sure how any individual, other than the Lord Jesus Himself, can know that with certitude). The pastor would likely have said that spending at a deficit means nothing when compared with saving someone’s soul. While this specific example cites the “saving souls” phraseology used by the pastor, I do note that my own belief is that there is one Savior, Jesus Christ. Perhaps, the pastor in this example meant that his main responsibility was something such as “facilitating the spiritual engagement of the People

⁵ Collins, 5.

⁶ Collins, 5.

⁷ Reamer, O.F.M., July 14, 2019.

of God such that they encounter the Lord Jesus and live their lives in accord with His precepts and the precepts of the Church.”⁸

A similar example occurred when the Diocese hired a financial auditor who had previously served in roles in private industry. He audited a parish with a parochial school. The school, located away from the urban and more heavily populated areas of the Diocese, needed a financial subsidy from the parish to survive. When the auditor issued his audit report, he recommended that the school be closed, as it was losing money and “draining” funds that the sponsoring parish could use for other ministries. The pastor was quite upset, as he rightly saw the school, which drew less than half of its student body from parishioner families, as an evangelism tool, and as an outreach to those in the community without significant financial means. The auditor learned the hard way that while finances are one aspect of a decision-making process in a church setting, there are other constituencies and ministry objectives that must be considered in a holistic manner before a final decision is made.

In my own experience, during my early years in diocesan ministry, I was asked several times by some of the clergy whether I was running a church or a business at the diocesan offices. There was no way to win with the answer to that question, as if I answered that we were running a business, it would seem that we were “too” businesslike for a church, and if I answered that we were running a church, it would seem that we were not businesslike enough, given the financial and administrative complexities involved in running a diocese. At some point, I realized that answering either way in a declarative manner was problematic, and perhaps the question was designed to result in a problematic answer. I therefore concluded that the best way to answer that question was to say that we are not running a church, as a church is where

⁸ Martin, O.F.M., Conv., May 15, 2019.

one comes to receive the Sacraments and to encounter the Word of God in a community of believers. However, I said that we are running the headquarters operation of a church related institution, and therefore we needed to be sensitive to the pastoral implications of the decisions that were being made, but in large part we needed to be running the operations in a businesslike manner, for if we were not, we were not being prudent stewards of the resources that were entrusted to us by our donors and benefactors.

If, at the time, I had been better versed in sacred scripture, I may have responded to the question by reminding those who asked the question that St. Paul said that “administration is one of the gifts the Risen Christ gives to His church (1 Cor 12:28) and thereby help those involved in this ministry to realize that serving as an administrator is an authentic expression of the Church’s mission in the world.”⁹ However, that concept may not have been warmly received. A recent study by the Lilly Endowment titled “The Reluctant Steward” addressed clergy attitudes about administration and fund raising. Both Catholic and Protestant clergy generally enjoyed the work of preaching, counseling, teaching, and presiding at liturgies, but they considered administrative duties to be an “unwelcome intrusion” on their ministerial vocation, rather than an integral part of their ministerial vocation.¹⁰

The supposed polarity between pastoral ministry and administration is another example of the tension involved in the ministry of a lay executive serving clergy in a church judicatory. As John Wimberly states in *The Business of Church*, “business is not a dirty word, it is a descriptive word. As businesses, our churches should have transparent financial operations, ethically sound personnel practices, and effective facilities management.” He said the government understands

⁹ Senior, xii.

¹⁰ Senior, xvi.

churches to be businesses, as they are required to be incorporated not-for-profit entities. ¹¹ Wimberly said that the sacred scriptures show that Jesus, especially in his parables, had a “theology of management”, in which he showed that the material aspects of ministry were as important as the more pastoral or spiritual aspects of ministry. ¹² The Parable of the Talents, for example, seems to be to be essentially a discourse on the importance of proper stewardship of the resources that are entrusted to us. Bishop William Willimon, when facing pushback about the use of tools to measure results and effectiveness in the church, said “It wasn’t a bureaucratic bishop who sent out disciples to make more disciples, feed more hungry, heal more sick, cast out more demons, and forgive seventy times seven- it was Jesus! A church all full of platitudes but devoid of much discernable fruit is the sort of church that Jesus warned against.” ¹³

For the good of the church and its ministries, these differing views should be bridged. The clergy have made a lifetime commitment to the church, often at great sacrifice. The lay executives are often those who have a similar devotion to the church, using their skills and talents for the good of the church, usually at a salary that is significantly lower than what they could earn in the secular world.

My experience is that those lay executives who come to the Diocese expecting that the same rules of the road apply in the church as they did in the secular world are rudely awakened. Therefore, during the interview process, care is taken to explain the differences in managing, leading, and administering in a church environment vs. in a typical corporate environment. In a typical corporate job, when headquarters asked a regional manager to jump, the regional

¹¹ Wimberly, 3.

¹² Wimberly, 2.

¹³ Willimon, Bishop, 60.

manager would typically ask “how high?” In the church, working with tenured clergy who cannot be forced to do anything by lay executives without authority (and even the bishop, to whom the clergy report, has limited authority), these types of hierarchical protocols just do not work. There must be another way. The institutional Catholic Church is more hierarchical than most other religious traditions, especially when it comes to doctrine and polity. However, the unique relationship between diocesan lay executives and clergy can represent a type of non-hierarchy within a broader concern for top-down unity in the church. ¹⁴

There are clearly instances where those from the secular world have failed in their roles in church judicatory administration, and I believe it is because they have not faced the reality of the different circumstances involved with working with tenured clergy. It can be easy for a lay executive to fall into the trap of frustration and fatalism. While most clergy want to cooperate and do the right thing, there are some who quite frankly choose not to work with or learn from a lay executive and therefore are difficult to work with and less than cooperative. It is easy to fall into a mode of disinterest and demoralization when one sees no consequences to those who will not cooperate and who will not be held accountable.

In the book by the Arbing Institute titled *The Anatomy of Peace*, there is a description of The Influence Pyramid. The bottom 90% of the pyramid is labeled “Helping Things Go Right”, and the top 10% of the pyramid is labeled “Dealing With Things That Are Going Wrong.” The theory is that we should spend most of our time helping things go right rather than dealing with things that are going wrong. ¹⁵ However, the lived reality is typically just the opposite. We try to correct a problem when we see one, but when it comes to dealing with people, this strategy

¹⁴ Yuckman, April 26, 2019.

¹⁵ Arbing Institute, *The Anatomy of Peace*, 16.

often does not work.¹⁶ We can become agents of change only to the extent that we try to help things go right rather than try to fix something that has gone wrong. We need to spend time building relationships.¹⁷ It is the same principle with a lay executive dealing with tenured clergy. Ninety percent of them are trying to do the right thing and are cooperative. Ten percent can be difficult and uncooperative. Lay executives presumably will be most successful when they are helping things go right with the 90% of the cooperative clergy and then spend time building relationships with the remaining 10% of the uncooperative clergy. This 90/10 rule also applies to cooperative and uncooperative lay executives, from the perspective of the clergy.¹⁸

There clearly are those who have been successful in working with tenured clergy, even when they did not formally control or oversee them. I will explore what those lay executives have been doing to be successful in the unique environment of working with clergy in a church administrative setting. In this case, I define success as maintaining fiscal solvency within the parishes and at the diocesan headquarters, making investments of resources to grow the ministries and outreach and pastoral care in a diocese, and doing these while receiving cooperation from the clergy and while maintaining excellent working relationships with them and providing excellent service to them, as defined by the clergy and the leadership at the parishes that are shepherded by the clergy.

The Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Raleigh who served the diocese from 2006-2016 made it clear that it was a baseline expectation that one does their job and does it well, but doing that job well from a technical perspective is only one part of successfully doing the job and it would not be an overall adequate standard of performance if the clergy were not

¹⁶ Arbinger Institute, *The Anatomy of Peace*, 17.

¹⁷ Arbinger Institute, *The Anatomy of Peace*, 18.

¹⁸ Martin, O.F.M., Conv., August 3, 2019.

supportive and on your side and if the clergy did not feel that their needs were being met and that excellent service was being provided to them. Steven Sample, the former president of the University of Southern California, said that a leader should spend 90 percent of his or her time doing everything possible to help those who directly report to the leader to succeed. This means helping them get their work done, promptly returning their calls, listening to their problems, and helping them achieve their goals.¹⁹ While the clergy are not “direct reports” to a lay executive at a judicatory level, if the lay executive is to be successful, he or she must help the clergy succeed, be attentive to them in returning their phone calls, and helping them to achieve their ministry goals. In the book *The Outward Mindset* by the Arbinger Institute, we read that “without relationship excellence, task excellence and superior results are built upon feet of clay.”²⁰ My hunch is that when diocesan executives are successful according to the criteria referenced above, most of their success is based on their intuition about how to best operate in this setting. This doctoral thesis will further explore whether there is a church teaching or practice, or even a secular teaching or practice, that would support the use of this “intuition” as it relates to being successful in this church culture. It will be used to discern whether the research identifies what specific actions can be taken, so that those actions can be successfully replicated elsewhere. This thesis will also try to ascertain how much of the success in these circumstances is related to knowing what to do, when to do it, and how to know what actions to take in what can be very differing circumstances at differing times.

¹⁹ Sample, 121-122.

²⁰ Arbinger Institute, *The Outward Mindset*, 64.

CHAPTER 2 - Nature of the Catholic Priesthood and Catholic Dioceses:

2.1 Overview of the Catholic Priesthood and Catholic Dioceses

Any thesis relating to interactions with the Catholic clergy should start with background information about how the Catholic Church is organized, with a focus on the nature of a Catholic diocese, the role of a Catholic bishop, and the relationship of a Catholic priest to the bishop and the diocese in which they serve. The role of priestly “tenure”, the sacramental nature of priestly ministry, and the nature of ordination, where the Catholic church teaches that a priest is “ontologically changed” at ordination, are all important things to be further explored.

In Catholic ecclesiology, the “local church” is the diocese, which is led by a bishop who is appointed by the Pope. As noted in Canon 369 in the *Code of Canon Law*, “a diocese is a portion of the people of God which is entrusted for pastoral care to a bishop with the cooperation of the presbyterate (clergy) so that, adhering to its pastor and gathered by him in the Holy Spirit through the gospel and the Eucharist, it constitutes a particular church in which the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and operative.”¹ Canon 372 says that “as a rule the portion of the people of God which constitutes a diocese or some other particular church is limited to a definite territory so that it comprises all the faithful who inhabit that territory.”² Canon 374 says that “each and every diocese or other particular church is to be divided into distinct parts or parishes.”³ Therefore, a diocese is led by a bishop, it is generally geographic in nature, and is split into different subsections which are typically called parishes and which typically have a geographic boundary.

¹ Code of Canon Law, Canon 369.

² Code of Canon Law, Canon 372.

³ Code of Canon Law, Canon 374.

Similarly, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that a diocese is “a community of the faithful, in communion of faith and sacraments, whose bishop has been ordained in apostolic succession. A diocese is usually a determined geographic area.”⁴ Canon Law states that every diocese is to be divided into distinct parts and parishes. In order to foster pastoral care through common action, several neighboring parishes can be joined together in special groups, such as vicariates.⁵ In the Diocese of Raleigh, these special groups are called “Deaneries”, and they are presided over by a “Vicar Forane” or a “Dean”, who is a priest, serving as a pastor of a parish, who also acts as a consultant to the bishop and a representative of the bishop to the parishes and the other pastors in a particular geographic area of the Diocese.

Gil Rendle, in his book *Quietly Courageous*, writes of dual and conflicting reward systems between denominational headquarters and local congregations. He said that “given the polarity between purpose and relationship, it is generally accepted that denominational staff...tend to lean more toward the pole of purpose and speak more easily about vision, mission, and outcomes.” He said that “local congregational clergy and leaders...tend to lean more toward the pole of relationship because...they lead in community where the contract for leadership is held by the people to be led and where satisfied people are a default measure of leadership.” He also said that in the tension between purpose and relationship, “denominations tend to be more purposive, and congregations tend to be more relational.” He said that clergy in these circumstances are in the middle of two different systems. The denomination is the entity that certifies the qualifications of the clergy for serving and the denomination is the entity that assigns clergy to a specific parish or congregation. However, the local parish or congregation is

⁴ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 874.

⁵ Code of Canon Law, Canon, 374.

the entity where the clergy person is invested in day to day relationships with parishioners, with a different type of reward system.⁶

One real life example of this tension is embodied in an example that took place early in my ministry. The Diocese is the “banker” for parishes needing a loan. Parishes are required to use the diocese if they need a loan, they cannot use a traditional bank for this purpose. Parishes with surplus cash place that cash on deposit with the Diocese, and the Diocese loans that cash out to other parishes which need to borrow funds for construction projects. After review and approval of a financial plan submitted by a parish, the Diocese granted a loan to support the construction of a new parish facility. Several months later, I received a letter from the pastor saying that in his pastoral judgement, the top pastoral need at the parish was to hire a director of religious education. He said that because this position was not in the budget, he would be redirecting the funds that had been going to pay the loan to instead pay the new director or religious education. He said he was not sure when he would be able to start repayments on the loan. I told the pastor that the loan was a fixed obligation into which he and the parish entered, and I said that the director of religious education position, while important, was discretionary, as the parish obviously had been living without it, and I said that a fixed obligation should be paid before a discretionary one. He wrote back to say that he showed my response to his pastoral council at the parish, and he informed me that they were of the mind that I needed to get my personal prayer life in order, for if it was in order, I would have never written such a letter. My final response was that I did indeed pray strongly, every day, that the Holy Spirit would give me the strength and the courage to make difficult decisions and to have difficult discussions such as these, as that was my sacred duty to the bishop and to the church. As stated

⁶ Rendle, 101.

in the previous paragraph, there are clearly two different reward systems in the broader institution, and in this case, the pastor was clearly invested in the reward system tied to the day to day relationships with parishioners. I was addressing the issue from a purpose/outcome perspective, while the pastor was addressing the matter from the perspective of the relationship with the people and the satisfaction of the parishioners.

Bishops and their dioceses are required by canon law to provide for the support and sustenance of priests who are tied to the diocesan bishop. Canon 281 states “when clerics dedicate themselves to the ecclesiastical ministry they deserve a remuneration which is consistent with their condition in accord with the nature of their responsibilities and with the conditions of time and place; this remuneration should enable them to provide for the needs of their own life and for the equitable payment of those whose services they need. Provision is likewise to be made so that they possess that social assistance by which their needs are suitably provided for if they suffer from illness or incapacity or old age.”⁷ Canon 1274 says, in part, “unless other provisions have been made for the support of the clergy, each diocese is to have a special institute which collects goods and offerings and whose purpose is to provide, according to the norm of Canon 281, for the support of the clergy who offer their services for the benefit of the diocese. The conference of bishops is to see to it that an institute exists which sufficiently provides for the social security of the clergy wherever social insurance has not yet been suitably arranged for the benefit of the clergy.”⁸ Canon 384, referring to the requirement of a bishop to support the priests, says that “the diocesan bishop is...to make provision for their decent support and social assistance.”⁹ This is the case whether a priest has a formal ministerial

⁷ Code of Canon Law, Canon 281.

⁸ Code of Canon Law, Canon 1274.

⁹ Code of Canon Law, Canon 384.

assignment or not. Therefore, this means that clergy in the Catholic Church do not have to worry about behaving in a manner that will not get them fired – they essentially will be financially supported, minimally at a sustenance level and often more than that – for the rest of their lives.

A Catholic priest has a key role in presiding at and celebrating the sacraments, especially the sacrament of Holy Communion and the sacrament of Reconciliation or Penance. According to Canon Law, “the eucharistic celebration is the action of Christ himself and the Church. In it, Christ the Lord, through the ministry of the priest, offers himself, substantially present under the species of bread and wine, to God the Father and gives himself as spiritual food to the faithful united with his offering.”¹⁰ “The minister who is able to confect he sacrament of the Eucharist in the person of Christ is a validly ordained priest alone.”¹¹ According to Canon Law, “in the sacrament of penance, the faithful who confess their sins to a legitimate minister, are sorry for them, and intend to reform themselves obtain from God through the absolution imparted by the same minister, forgiveness for the sins they have committed after baptism and, at the same time, are reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by sinning.”¹² “A priest alone is the minister of the sacrament of penance.”¹³ “In hearing confessions, the priest is to remember that he is equally a judge and a physician, and has been established by God as a minister of divine justice and mercy, so that he has regard for the divine honor and the salvation of souls.”¹⁴ “The confessor is to impose salutary and suitable penances in accord with the quality and number of sins, taking into account the condition of the penitent. The penitent is

¹⁰ Code of Canon Law, Canon 899.

¹¹ Code of Canon Law, Canon 900.

¹² Code of Canon Law, Canon 959.

¹³ Code of Canon Law, Canon 965.

¹⁴ Code of Canon Law, Canon 978.

obliged to fulfill these personally.”¹⁵ This sacramental aspect of the Catholic priesthood is something that I believe creates a sense of priests being set apart and being placed on a pedestal by many. This dynamic is one that plays into some of the tensions that can occur between clergy and lay executives.

One example from my ministry illustrates some of these challenges. Canon 536 of the Code of Canon Law says that every Catholic parish throughout the world is required to have a parish finance council, which is advisory to the pastor and whose members are selected by the pastor. “Each parish is to have a finance council which is regulated by universal law as well as by norms issued by the diocesan bishop; in the council the Christian faithful, selected according to the same norms, aid the pastor in the administration of parish goods...”¹⁶ If a diocesan bishop judges it to be prudent, each parish can be required to have a parish pastoral council, which is advisory to the pastor, and most of whose members are elected by the parishioners. “After the diocesan bishop has listened to the presbyteral (clergy) council and if he judges it opportune, a pastoral council is to be established in each parish; the pastor presides over it, and through it the Christian faithful along with those who share in the pastoral care of the parish in virtue of their office give their help in fostering pastoral activity.”¹⁷ Interestingly, the institutional Catholic Church requires there to be parish finance councils, but it makes parish pastoral councils optional at the discretion of the bishop. This seemingly enhanced focus on church finances perhaps indicates the importance of administration and fiscal stewardship in the life of the church. It also perhaps indicates that there is further growth needed in the institutional

¹⁵ Code of Canon Law, Canon 981.

¹⁶ Code of Canon Law, Canon 537.

¹⁷ Code of Canon Law, Canon 536.

Church's understanding of the necessity for a broader engagement of lay voices in the running of a parish.¹⁸

I have experienced in my ministry several instances where parishes have had financial crises, and after performing a debriefing in which the causes of the crisis were diagnosed, it was apparent that the appointed members of the parish finance council knew that the parish was heading towards a serious financial problem. When I asked why the members of the parish finance council did not intervene and get the attention of the pastor, or if that was not feasible, of the diocese, the answer I was given was "I was taught never to disagree with a priest and I just will not express disagreement with my pastor". While the clergy misconduct scandals of the last generation have likely mitigated that mindset to some extent, I was quite surprised when the person who gave that answer was the no-nonsense CEO of a corporation. He clearly would not have allowed his corporation to go down this fiscally irresponsible road, but he was willing to let his parish go down that road because of not wanting to respectfully challenge his pastor. This mindset, while waning, is still present and it is one of the examples of the challenges of the laity ministering alongside clergy, at least in the Catholic tradition. Kathleen McKinless, a partner in a top accounting firm and former interim Chief Financial Officer at the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C. spoke of the culture of deference that can be present in the Catholic Church, when she said "staff, volunteers, and parishioners have been taught – and want – to believe the priest or bishop has been called by Christ to do what is right, and they are more likely to defer to him. Some may even think it is wrong or sinful to challenge a priest's authority."¹⁹

¹⁸ Martin, O.F.M., Conv., May 15, 2019.

¹⁹ McKinless, June 12, 2019.

In addition, I have had complaints and concerns about the management practices pastors reported to me, but the people lodging the complaints would not allow themselves to be identified, for fear that the pastor would withhold sacraments as a punishment making the negative report against the priest. While I do not know if this fear was warranted or if it had any realistic basis, the concerns that were identified by those parishioners appear to be part of the effect that the sacramental nature of Catholic priesthood can have on the behavior of parishioners.

While Catholic priests receive rigorous training in the seminary, none of that training is related to administration or management. In the *Decree on Priestly Training* proclaimed by Pope Paul VI in 1965, during the time of the Second Vatican Council, we see this in concrete terms. This document focuses on the need for the “careful development of spiritual training”, the “revision of ecclesiastical studies” towards an alignment of the philosophical and theological disciplines, and “the promotion of strictly pastoral training”, which includes “matters particularly linked to the sacred ministry, especially in catechesis and preaching, in liturgical worship and the administration of the sacraments, in works of charity, in assisting the erring and unbelieving, and in other pastoral functions. They are to be carefully instructed in the art of directing souls...” There is a section in this document on “training to be achieved after the course of studies.” However, what was envisioned was “appropriate projects whereby the younger clergy would be gradually introduced into the priestly life and apostolic activity, under its spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral aspects...”²⁰ No reference was made anywhere in this document about training in management, administration, supervision, or leadership, which is where so many clergy spend so much of their time, out of necessity. Priests are expected to serve as shepherd to their

²⁰ Pope Paul VI, *Decree on Priestly Training*, 3-7.

parishioners, and be a “physician of souls”, at the same time they are ultimately accountable for what goes on at a parish, much like a chief executive officer of a corporation.²¹ These are two very different duties of responsibilities, as it is unusual for most to have skill sets in both areas.²²

Similarly, for the most part the lay executives do not have significant training in theology, sacraments, and other such subjects. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that there is a difference in world views between clergy and administrators. Clergy do not have training in administration other than what they get “on the job”. Some dioceses have implemented post-seminary training for clergy in administration and management that is designed to at least partially fulfill this gap. While some dioceses offer distance learning for staff in theology, sacraments, scripture, and other such subjects, most lay executives do not have training in these areas.

Second Vatican Council documents *Lumen Gentium* (the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church), and *Presbyterium Ordinis* (the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Presbyters) define priests as ministers of Christ for the sake of the church. They minister under the bishop’s authority, in the person of Christ.²³ *Lumen Gentium*, in addressing priesthood, says “though they differ essentially and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless ordered to one another; each in its own proper way shares in the one priesthood of Christ. The ministerial priest, by the sacred power that he has, forms and rules the priestly people, in the person of Christ he effects the eucharistic sacrifice and offers to God in the name of all the people. The faithful, indeed, by virtue of their

²¹ Papesh, 85.

²² Papesh, 86.

²³ Papesh, 44-45.

royal priesthood, participate in the offering of the Eucharist.”²⁴ *Lumen Gentium* also describes the roles the laity and the clergy have as they relate to the prophetic and royal offices of Christ. While both clergy and laity share in the priestly, prophetic, and royal offices of Christ, the laity have a secular character, in which their main realm is in the world. The clergy exercise their priestly, prophetic, and royal offices of Christ by preaching, sanctifying, and shepherding within the church. The priest consecrates the Eucharist and forgives sins in the Sacrament of Penance, but the priest also has responsibilities for preaching the Word of God and to be a shepherd for the parishioners.²⁵ On one hand, a priest is a cultic leader in the celebration of the Sacraments, while a priest is also expected to be and called to be a pastoral leader of a community of the faithful.²⁶ In Catholic theology, the ministerial priesthood represents Christ.²⁷ “Reverend Donald Goergen, O.P., quoting from section 1563 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, said “by their own particular sacrament of priestly ordination, priests are anointed by the Holy Spirit and signed with a special character to be configured to Christ in such a way that they are able to act in the person of Christ the Head.”²⁸

There are three types of priests who may be ministering in a Catholic diocese. Diocesan, or “secular” priests, are priests who take a vow of chastity and obedience to a diocesan bishop, and they are ordained to serve in a specific diocese for their entire ministerial career. Those priests would tend to have the most direct connection with a bishop and the diocese in which they minister. They often live alone, in church provided housing, which is sometimes on site at a parish property and which is sometimes off site in a residential neighborhood.

²⁴ Bleichner, 144-145.

²⁵ Bleichner, 139.

²⁶ Goergen, O.P., 1.

²⁷ Goergen, O.P., 7.

²⁸ Goergen, O.P., 8.

Extern priests are diocesan priests, ordained to minister in a specific diocese, but who for various reasons have been given permission by their bishop to minister in a different diocese other than the one in which they were first ordained to serve. Ultimately, a diocesan or extern priest is “incardinated” in a diocese, which has responsibility for his support for the rest of his life, unless his is “excardinated” from his original diocese and “incardinated” in another diocese.

There are priests who are members of religious orders (such as the Jesuits or the Franciscans, as two examples). These “religious” priests take vows of poverty (not owning property in one’s own name), chastity, and obedience. They are tied to ministering within a specific religious order, each of which has its own charism, for the entirety of their ministerial life. These priests are tied most directly to their community and have a “major superior, a “Provincial” who serves in an oversight role to the priests of a religious order in a geographic area.²⁹ Religious order priests can serve anywhere in the world, depending upon where they are assigned by their provincial. These priests tend to be required to live together in community with one or more other priests from the same religious order. Because religious order priests are tied more to their religious community than to the bishop in the diocese in which they currently minister, they tend to be assigned in a specific diocese only for a limited time.

As a generalization, priests from religious orders and extern priests (priests who were ordained to serve in another diocese) are thought to be less psychically invested in the diocese in which they minister since they are there only for a limited time rather than for a lifetime. However, there are certainly significant exceptions to this generalization, and some of the most invested priests in the Diocese of Raleigh over the years have been those from religious orders.

²⁹ Reamer, O.F.M., July 14, 2019.

2.2 Nature of Priesthood

The seven requisites for Holy Orders (Priesthood) are described in Canon 1029 in the Code of Canon Law. First is “The prudent judgment of the proper bishop or the competent major superior”, meaning that those who are responsible for training candidates for priesthood in the seminary are required to make consultative recommendations to the bishop or the religious order superior, who then decide on the candidacy for the person in question for ordination. Second is “an integral faith”, meaning that the candidate for orders accepts the faith and lives the out the faith. Third is a “right intention”, meaning that the person in question must choose to live in solidarity with the Lord Jesus as teacher, priest, and shepherd, and must assent to serving as a co-worker with the bishop. Fourth is to “possess the required knowledge”, meaning completion of mandated seminary coursework and formation. Fifth is a “good reputation”, meaning that the person to be ordained is a credible person to the people of God and in their representation of the Church. Sixth is “good morals and proven virtues”, meaning that those to be ordained are called to holiness and their lives should reflect their decision to serve the Church in this special way. Seventh is “physical and psychological qualities”, as a serious part of candidacy for ordination is psychological and emotional health.³⁰

When a priest receives the sacrament of Holy Orders, “this sacrament configures the recipient to Christ by a special grace of the Holy Spirit, so that he may serve as Christ’s instrument for his Church. By ordination, one is enabled to act as a representative of Christ, Head of the Church, in his triple office of priest, prophet, and king.” The sacrament of Holy Orders confers an “indelible spiritual character” upon the priest being ordained.³¹ Cardinal John

³⁰ Code of Canon Law, Canon 1029.

³¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 395.

O'Connor, in his address to an International Reunion of Priests, spoke of the "specific ontological bond which unites the priesthood to Christ the High Priest and Good Shepherd." He said "in my judgment, this concept of the ontological nature of priesthood is critical. We don't just put on vestments; we don't just receive an assignment. Neither makes us priests. We become priests at ordination. There is an 'ontological change' in our spiritual nature." ³²

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that "since Christ entrusted to his apostles the ministry of reconciliation, bishops who are their successors, and priests, the bishop's collaborators, continue to exercise this ministry. Bishops and priests, by the virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, have the power to forgive all sins, 'in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit'." ³³ The Catechism also states that it is in the Eucharistic assembly that priests exercise a key aspect of their ministry. "Acting in the person of Christ and proclaiming his mystery, they (the priests) unite the votive offerings of the faithful to the sacrifice of Christ their head, and in the sacrifice of the Mass they make present again and apply, until the coming of the Lord, the unique sacrifice of the New Testament, that namely of Christ offering himself once for all a spotless victim to the Father. From this unique sacrifice, their whole priestly ministry draws strength." ³⁴

The nature of priesthood - the ontological change, the indelible spiritual character, the ability to forgive sins, and the ability at Mass to change bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ – are aspects of a ritual priesthood which effect the sacraments "in persona Christi" and which should be valued. ³⁵ The sacraments are a large part of the Catholic ethos and world

³² O'Connor.

³³ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 367.

³⁴ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 391.

³⁵ Martin, O.F.M., Conv., August 3, 2019.

view, where God's grace is made present in everyday elements. "The sacraments of the New Testament, instituted by Christ the Lord and entrusted to the Church, as they are the actions of Christ and the Church, stand out as the signs and means by which the faith is expressed and strengthened, worship is rendered to God and the sanctification of humankind is effected, and they thus contribute in the highest degree to the establishment, strengthening, and manifestation of ecclesial communion; therefore both the sacred ministers and the rest of the Christian faithful must employ the greatest reverence and the necessary diligence in their celebration." ³⁶

At the same time, the aspects of a ritual and cultic priesthood can serve to place the priests on a pedestal, at least as perceived by some, and can lead to elements of a clerical culture that needs to be navigated if a lay executive is to be successful in his or her role. These aspects of the ministry of a priest also need to be navigated for the pastor to be successful in governing the temporal goods of the church. ³⁷ While a person holding any leadership role can be placed on a pedestal because of the responsibilities and power that they may hold, the nature of priesthood, as referenced above, is a different dynamic that combines the servant leadership role of a pastor with the specific ministerial and sacramental roles they hold, resulting in what can be a specific kind of "set apartness" of the priest. In addition, the "clerical culture" which is referenced briefly in this paragraph and which is addressed in further detail below, is clearly a generalization, as there are many members of the clergy who, because of their personality traits or their formation or their view of the world, would not conduct themselves in a manner that is indicative of the negative perceptions of "clericalism". In fact, I

³⁶ Code of Canon Law, Canon 840.

³⁷ Reamer, O.F.M., July 14, 2019.

believe there are aspects of “clericalism” that can be positive. The aspect of clericalism that holds clergy as being set apart, offering a counter-cultural witness to prevailing norms, for example, can be a good thing.

Canon 207 in the 1983 (new) *Code of Canon Law* says “among the Christian faithful by divine institution there exist in the Church sacred ministers, who are also called clerics in law, and other Christian faithful, who are also called laity”. The commentary on this canon says “sacred ministers are in the Church by divine institution, that is, it is through the will of Christ that ordained ministers are in the Church, and this distinguishes themselves from others in the Church. The traditional canonical terms for these two groups are “clergy” and “laity”. The old (1917) *Code of Canon Law* says “by divine institution there exist in the Church clergy distinct from laity”. “The old Code had an understanding of the Church as composed of two distinct and unequal groups – clergy and laity. Laity were supposed to support the work of the clergy, receive their ministrations, and obey their orders...Clergy were responsible for...preaching and administering the sacraments... and for the control of church funds and property.” The Second Vatican Council rejected this type of institutional clericalism and placed sacred ministry within the People of God. It said that the purpose of sacred ministry is service and unity, and while the clergy and the laity are distinct, they are complementary. Clergy are to support and promote, not take away, the role of the laity. Laity are not to usurp the proper role and work of the clergy, but the laity are not to be excluded from full participation of the work and life of the Church.³⁸ The wheels of the church can turn slowly, and while the current *Code of Canon Law* has been in force for 36 years, there are still those who have been formed by the former 1917 code.

³⁸ Code of Canon Law, Commentary on Canon 207.

2.3 Clerical Culture

As is the case in many “professions”, there is a clerical culture among some of the priests who minister in parishes and other institutions in a Catholic diocese. There are positive things that can come from a clerical culture. One such positive thing is the fraternity of the priesthood. In the Diocese of Raleigh, for example, there is a geographical area of over 32,000 square miles in which a priest can be assigned to ministry. The drive time from one side of the Diocese to the other is approximately five hours by car.³⁹ There are currently 128 active priests serving this geographic expanse. Over the last two generations, because of a relatively static number of priests in a diocese in which the Catholic populations has tripled in the past 30 years, the ratio of parishioners to priests has continued to move in an direction that makes the personal interactions related to pastoral ministry more challenging, with the number of parishioners served by each priest increasing from 471 parishioners per priest in 1970 to 1,854 parishioners to priest in 2018.⁴⁰ Interestingly, the national ratios of parishioners to priests rise from 1,068 parishioners to priest in 1970 to 1,878 parishioners to priest in 2016.⁴¹ In the 1970’s, when the Diocese of Raleigh was more rural and had much fewer Catholics, there was a more favorable ratio of parishioners to priests, but as the Diocese grew in population, it had a similar ratio of parishioners to priest as the rest of the nation. Because the unfavorable ratio of parishioners to priests has risen more dramatically in the Diocese of Raleigh than the national trends, priests who have been serving there may be experiencing more stressors than their national counterparts.

³⁹ Elmayer, Presentation to the Diaconate, May 4, 2019.

⁴⁰ Elmayer, May 4, 2019.

⁴¹ Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate.

The ratios for the Diocese of Raleigh are even more striking when consideration is given that there are a number of small rural parishes with less than 300 or less parishioners, which therefore have a relatively low ratio of parishioners to priest. Exclusive of those small parishes, the ratio of parishioners to priest in the remaining parishes is well over 2,100 parishioners per priest. Because of the large geographic distances, the heavy workload for priests, and in many cases the reality of priests living alone, with family at a distance, in far-flung areas of the Diocese, the fraternity of the priesthood is important and the need for meaningful relationships can be nurtured through this fraternity. This fraternity of the priesthood can therefore have positive implications on the life of a priest and, indirectly, on their parishioners.⁴²

Research has shown that in a university setting, which has some similarities to those of a diocesan or judicatory setting (both have “tenured” key constituencies, for example), turnover of less than 5% per year in the faculty, with few people coming in or out, can lead to an “unhealthy” system.⁴³ There is a low turnover in the population of diocesan priests, at least in the Diocese of Raleigh. Typically, 2-3 priests per year are ordained to minister in a diocese, and typically 2-3 diocesan priests retire each year from active ministry. There is also some additional turnover each year in priests from religious orders. This is on a base of 128 active priests ministering in the Diocese of Raleigh at any point in time. In the Diocese of Raleigh, turnover in clergy is well below 5% per year, which can lead to a challenge in maintaining positive relationships with clergy since the system does not have a significant amount of new blood each year.⁴⁴ On the other hand, the greater longevity in priests serving in the Diocese of Raleigh may

⁴² Reamer, O.F.M., July 14, 2019.

⁴³ Odom, July 9, 2018.

⁴⁴ Elmayan, Duke Doctor of Ministry Strategy Class Final Paper, July 19, 2018.

allow lay executives more time to cultivate relationships and build trust with the clergy, which is presumably a positive dynamic.⁴⁵

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* speaks to the fraternity of the priesthood in saying that “All priests, who are constituted in the order of priesthood by the sacrament of Order, are bound together by an intimate sacramental brotherhood, but in a special way they form one priestly body in the diocese to which they are attached under their own bishop. The unity of the presbyterium finds liturgical expression in the custom of the presbyters imposing hands, after the bishop, during the rite of ordination.”⁴⁶ In his “Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, issued in the wake of the Second Vatican Council in 1965, Pope Paul VI said “priests, by virtue of their ordination to the priesthood, are united among themselves in an intimate sacramental brotherhood.”⁴⁷ In that same document, he said “priests are made in the likeness of Christ the Priest by the Sacrament of Orders...” He also said priests have been “consecrated by God in a new manner at their ordination and made living instruments of Christ the Eternal Priest that they may be able to carry on in time his marvelous work...” He also said “every priest in his own fashion acts in place of Christ himself, he is enriched by a special grace, so that, as he serves the flock committed to him and the entire People of God, he may the better grow in the grace of him whose tasks he performs...”⁴⁸

In the same document, the Pope said “priests must sincerely acknowledge and promote the dignity of the laity and the part proper to them in the mission of the Church. And they should hold in high honor that just freedom which is due to everyone in the earthly city. They

⁴⁵ Martin, O.F.M., Conv., August 3, 2019.

⁴⁶ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 392.

⁴⁷ Pope Paul VI, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, 5.

⁴⁸ Pope Paul VI, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, 8.

must willingly listen to the laity, consider their wants in a fraternal spirit, recognize their experience and competence in the different areas of human activity, so that together with them they will be able to recognize the signs of the times. While trying the spirits to see if they be of God, priests should uncover with a sense of faith, acknowledge with joy and foster with diligence the various humble and exalted charms of the laity.”⁴⁹

At the same time, the fraternity of the priesthood, much like the fraternity of medical doctors, attorneys, and police officers, can have unintended consequences. George Wilson, S.J., in his book *Clericalism*, speaks of the “unexamined attitudes” that can stem from clerical culture. Some of those unexamined attitudes, which are of course generalizations and are not held by all clergy, are as follows:

- “Because I belong to the clergy, I am automatically credible. I don’t have to earn my credibility by my performance.”⁵⁰
- “People use a special title in addressing me, so I must be something special.”⁵¹
- “The laity accept...manifestations of privilege so they must be deserved.”⁵²
- “We are special. Who are “they” to judge us?”⁵³
- “If you criticize our profession, you are disrespecting us as persons. We do not allow outsiders (or insiders) to criticize anyone in our guild.”⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Pope Paul VI, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, 6.

⁵⁰ Wilson, 16.

⁵¹ Wilson, 18.

⁵² Wilson, 19.

⁵³ Wilson, 22.

⁵⁴ Wilson, 23.

- “Protecting our image is more important than confronting the situation. If someone blows the whistle on us we will deflect the question and attack the messenger.”⁵⁵
- “If we ignore what people are saying about us, we won’t have to change anything.”⁵⁶
- “Our calling and training make us superior to the laity.”⁵⁷
- “We don’t have to be accountable to the laity. We are their shepherds.”⁵⁸

These attitudes, which are present in some, but not all, of the clergy, constitute a special challenge for a lay executive who is called to serve, to lead, and to hold clergy accountable.

Pope Francis has said that clericalism is “an ailment that pretends ‘the church’ means ‘priests and bishops’, that ignores or minimizes the God-given grace and talents of lay people and that emphasizes the authority of clerics over their obligation to service.” He said clericalism tries “to replace or silence or ignore or reduce the people of God to small elites”, generally the clerics. He said when people create “small elites”, there is a “temptation to preserve ‘us’ and ‘our vision/lives/privilege’ at the expense of ‘them’ – the laity, ‘those who don’t understand”, ‘those who aren’t burdened the way we are.” Quoting from Australia’s *Royal Commission Report*, “clericalism is linked to a sense of entitlement, superiority, and exclusion, and abuse of power.” That same report said that “the theological notion that the priest undergoes an ‘ontological change’ at ordination, so that he is different to ordinary human beings and permanently a priest, is a dangerous component of the culture of clericalism.” Archbishop Coleridge of Brisbane does not agree with the report’s findings, saying that the ontological change that happens at ordination does not necessarily lead to clericalism. He says that

⁵⁵ Wilson, 24.

⁵⁶ Wilson, 25.

⁵⁷ Wilson, 30.

⁵⁸ Wilson, 31.

something actually takes place at ordination, where God is acting in manner that causes the relationships that a priest has with other people to be changed in a significant way, but not necessarily in a way that leads to clericalism. ⁵⁹

Since the clergy are tenured, have ministry jobs for life, and are the key part of the Catholic Church which relies so heavily on priests to provide sacramental ministry that only a priest can provide, at a time when there is a shortage of Catholic priests, it is incumbent upon the lay executives to find a way to navigate through these challenges and work with the clergy in a positive and collaborative manner. At the same time, while the lay executives cannot force this to happen, if clergy entrust the administration of the parish to lay leaders, the clergy can focus their energies on proclaiming the gospel and on the pastoral care of the parishioners. ⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Wooden, August 22, 2018.

⁶⁰ Reamer, O.F.M., July 14, 2019.

CHAPTER 3 - Nature of Lay Ecclesial Ministry and the Role of Lay Executives in the Church:

3.1 Overview of Lay Ecclesial Ministry

While the nature of the training and formation of the clergy has an impact on the issues addressed in this thesis, so does the nature of the training and background and formation of the lay executives need to be explored. In many ways, they seem to be going along parallel tracks that are not going to intersect unless there is some type of intervention or some type of conscious way to try to find a way to work together, even though each group may be coming from different perspectives. Applying business phraseology to this dynamic, it is important to be able to implement a type of “vertical integration” of “delivery of product” in a church setting.¹ Since both the clergy and the lay executive share a desire to help build the Kingdom of God, those shared values are perhaps a starting point from which to explore a way to achieve common ground.²

Lay executives (part of a group which is sometimes called lay ecclesial ministers by the church) have an important role to play. In the parlance used by the Catholic Church, a lay ecclesial minister is a non-ordained person ministering in a formal way in the church. This could be in a role at a parish, such as a director of faith formation or a music minister, but it can also be in a role at a diocese or some other arm of the institutional church. Canon 231 in the Code of Canon Law says that “lay persons who devote themselves permanently or temporarily to some special service of the Church are obliged to acquire the appropriate formation which is required to fulfill their function properly and carry it out conscientiously, zealously, and diligently.”³

¹ Yuckman, April 26, 2019.

² Martin, O.F.M., Conv., May 15, 2019.

³ Code of Canon Law, Canon 231.

In the last one or two generations, there has been a major shift in who fills the roles currently filled by lay ecclesial ministers. Two of the roles that I have held at the Diocese, Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer, are roles that at one time were mostly filled by clergy. Now, many of the people filling those roles are either ordained deacons, religious sisters, religious brothers, or lay people. The reasons for this shift are varied. One reason is due to the shortage of clergy in the Catholic Church in the last few generations. After Vatican II, there was a significant drop in priestly vocations, and many existing clergy left the priesthood. The clergy shortage, and the importance of the priest in the sacramental life of the church and its parishioners, meant that the limited clergy resources needed to be placed in parishes rather than in diocesan roles, as administrative and executive level roles could be handled by those who were not ordained. At the same time, the complexities of running the “business” of a denominational headquarters, especially one where parishes had no legal standing apart from the diocese, called for laity who had formal training and experience in operating a large organization. As this transition took place, many dioceses transitioned from “mom and pop” type of operations to ones using more formal protocols typically associated with other large for-profit and not-for-profit organizations. As younger generations of lay leaders assume leadership roles in the institutional church, they may be less likely to engage a church judicatory culture that is not reflective of the standards that they have been accustomed to in their professional lives.⁴ In the Catholic tradition, there are opportunities for clergy who are open to learning more about best management practices and greater incorporation of the laity in those practices.⁵ One example is *The National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management*, which

⁴ Martin, O.F.M., Conv., August 3, 2019.

⁵ Martin, O.F.M., Conv., August 3, 2019.

has a mission to “promote best practices and accountability in the management, finances, communications, and human resources development of the Catholic Church in the United States, including greater incorporation of the laity.”⁶ My experience tells me that clergy are much more likely to partake of opportunities such as this if their bishop or others in a similar capacity encourage it.

While lay ecclesial ministers are called “co-workers in the vineyard”⁷ with the clergy, there is a difference in how those lay ecclesial ministers are perceived. Some clergy are more liberal and are more accepting of the laity in roles of authority and/or influence in the institutional church, while other members of the clergy are more conservative and are more likely to fall back on traditional views of the clergy being set apart and not accountable to a lay ecclesial minister.

This dynamic is reinforced by various protocols in Canon (Church) Law. Canon Law says that pastors are essentially masters of the ship that is the parish which they serve.⁸ There are two advisory councils that are required in each parish in the Diocese of Raleigh. The parish pastoral council has members which are for the most part elected by their fellow parishioners. The parish pastoral council advises pastors about pastoral matters impacting the parish. The parish finance council is appointed by the pastor and advises the pastor about financial and administrative matters. While the pastor is required to listen to and prayerfully consider the advice of these two advisory bodies, the pastor is not required to accept that advice if the pastor

⁶ National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management.

⁷ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1.

⁸ Canon Law Society of America, Canons 528-532.

has what it judged to be a good pastoral reason to go in a different direction. Parish pastoral councils possess a consultative vote ⁹, and parish finance councils are advisory in nature. ¹⁰

3.2 Overview of Diocesan (Judicatory) Operations

A Catholic diocese is a complex organization. In many ways, it needs to be run in a “businesslike” manner, as there are hundreds of millions of dollars of funds for which the diocese is obligated to properly steward on behalf of the parishioners. However, the “businesslike” way in which a diocese should, in many ways, be administered, goes beyond just the stewardship of its financial assets. The entrepreneurial aspect of the marketplace in which businesses operate is an asset, and church judicatories should learn from that aspect of a business culture so that it can be used in evangelism and building the Kingdom. ¹¹

As an example, the Diocese of Raleigh is a medium sized diocese, and it and its parishes have over 2,500 employees, has systemwide (parish and diocese) revenues of over \$100 million per year, has over \$100 million in endowments and pension funds, and has insured building values approaching \$1 billion. The Diocese also operates as a type of “bank” for its parishes, and currently parishes have \$70 million on deposit in savings accounts at the Diocese, and the Diocese has \$35 million on loan to parishes in support of construction of new parish facilities. ¹² The Diocese operates a mostly parish-based Catholic School system with over 9,000 students, and parishes educate many more young people as well as adults in faith formation activities. Given this profile, it is important that Dioceses hire people with the education and experience necessary to properly steward those financial and human resources. ¹³

⁹ Canon Law Society of America, Canon 536.

¹⁰ Canon Law Society of America, Canon 537.

¹¹ Martin, O.F.M., Conv., August 3, 2019.

¹² Elmayan, Presentation to the Diaconate, May 4, 2019.

¹³ Martin, O.F.M., Conv., August 3, 2019.

These people will likely not have grown up working in the institutional church. They would likely have come from complex for-profit and not-for-profit secular organizations. The positive side of this circumstance is that those who are hired from the “outside” will bring with them experience that can be successfully applied to the church setting. The negative side of this circumstance is that those who are hired from the “outside” are not steeped in the “culture” of the institutional church. They need to discern “how to win”¹⁴, meaning that they need to know what will and will not be effective in working with the clergy and gaining their cooperation. They also need to discern how to “manage what matters”¹⁵, meaning that they need to know what activities and projects upon which to focus and which activities and projects, even if successfully implemented, are not going to gain them much traction in the eyes of the clergy. They can be thoroughly competent in their various disciplines, but if they do not know how to successfully navigate working with the “tenured” clergy, all their competence will not get them very far. Only those who understand that service to the clergy is the most important barometer to their success will be able to make the adaptive challenge and truly be the most successful in their overall roles. A.G. Lafley said one of the biggest lessons he learned while at Proctor and Gamble was the power of simplicity and clarity.¹⁶ As an example, I have instructed my staff who work in the financial office that while they all have their individual jobs and day to day tasks in which I expect them to be competent, they will be largely judged on two key matters. First, they need to provide outstanding service to the clergy and the parishes. The measure of that service will be based upon the receipt of positive unsolicited feedback from those they serve. The feedback must be unsolicited, because if a service receiver is so moved, without prompting, to send a

¹⁴ Lafley and Martin, 75.

¹⁵ Lafley and Martin, 129.

¹⁶ Lafley and Martin, 156.

laudatory email or letter or to give a phone call stating their gratitude, that is evidence that the service being provided is exemplary. Second, the role of those in the finance office is to protect the diocese and its parishes from having a financial disaster.¹⁷ Ninety percent of the success in their roles boils down to those two things.

While service to clergy is a crucial barometer of success, simply doing what the clergy want done is not always the appropriate course of action to take. The executives must still take responsibility for the prudent operation of the diocese and its parishes, and at times that requires an executive to say “no” to a request by a member of the clergy. In circumstances such as this, it is crucial for the executive to have established a prior relationship with the clergy, such that they realize the executive is still “in their camp”, even though occasionally the executive must deliver news or give an answer that the member of the clergy does not want to hear and does not agree with. It is clearly a delicate balancing act!

Failure to respect the liturgical world of the clergy will result in significant problems for a lay executive. Committing mistakes such as reaching out to clergy on a routine matter during Holy Week or in the days before Christmas will come across as extreme insensitivity to the world in which the clergy live, and it will render that lay ecclesial minister as a pariah in the eyes of the clergy.

Most lay ecclesial ministers who come from a non-church working environment are used to employment-at-will organizations, where managers are expected to be team players and are expected to implement directives from “headquarters”. In these circumstances, someone who is not doing their job in a competent manner will typically be offered training, mentoring, and constructive feedback; and if ultimately someone is unable or unwilling to

¹⁷ Elmayan, Duke Divinity School Doctor of Ministry Strategy Class Final Paper, July 19, 2018.

cooperate with a request from “headquarters”, they will not be able to continue to be employed by the organization. Clergy in the Catholic tradition cannot be “fired”. In fact, if they behave badly enough, they are taken out of active ministry and in extreme circumstances they can have their ability to publicly celebrate the sacraments taken away, but the Diocese is still required to pay them and to ensure they have health benefits and room and board expenses. In the age-old carrot and stick scenario, there is no “stick” to use. There are lay ecclesial ministers who just cannot make the shift of working in this type of environment. Those who do make the shift realize that there is no “stick”, so cooperation must be garnered in some other, non-coercive manner. Further exacerbating this dynamic are some diocesan practices that are not particularly collegial. For example, every parish is “assessed” a percentage of its offertory to help support Diocesan administrative operations. This assessment from the “headquarters office” does not help in facilitating a collegial culture between clergy at parishes and lay staff at the Diocesan offices.¹⁸

I have found that the lay ecclesial ministers who have the most difficult time succeeding in their roles are the ones who come to the role with the thought that working at a diocesan headquarters will be a holy environment filled with grace, kindness, and religious symbolism. While these elements are certainly present, the lay ecclesial ministers are working in an organization that, while guided by the Holy Spirit, is comprised of flawed human beings with the same issues with human dynamics that are present in any secular organization. St. Augustine said that the church was a “hodge-podge of good and bad, a mixed-up body.”. He said, presumably tongue-in-cheek, quoting from Expositions of the Psalms 99, “The Catholic Church is great. They all love each other; each and every one of them does all they can for one another.

¹⁸ Martin, O.F.M., Conv., August 3, 2019.

They pray, fast, sing hymns; they do this around the whole world. God is praised in peace, in unanimity.” Then, when a person encounters the humanity and human flaws of those who comprise the church, they flee. He then says, also tongue-in-cheek, “Who are Christians? Money-grubbers, loan sharks. Aren’t the very people who pack the theaters or the amphitheaters for the games or for the other big-time entertainments the same people who pack the churches on festival days? They’re drunks, gluttons, they’re jealous of each other, they tear each other down.”¹⁹ Indeed, the church is a hodge-podge of people with their human frailties, and the lay ecclesial minister should recognize this from the beginning lest he or she be rudely surprised. I have encountered some lay ecclesial ministers who could no longer bring themselves to work for the church because they had an idealized concept of what it would be like and the reality did not meet the idealization.

3.3 Importance of Catechesis and Formation of Lay Executives in the Church

Reverend George Wilson, S.J., says that it is fully possible for a Church executive (or any church administrator or employee or leader) to be fully knowledgeable of all “doctrine, law, practices, and procedures that are required by various supervisory structures and still fail as a church leader.” He said that those who are ineffective leaders are ones who “fail because they do not know how to recognize the human dynamics that are play in a parish or diocese or any human system.” He said “because they do not understand the human system at work, they make poor choices of strategies to employ in dealing with the situations that confront them.”²⁰ Referring to the similarities in human dynamics in any judicatory structure, not just in a Catholic

¹⁹ Harmless, S.J., 90.

²⁰ Wilson, S.J., Church Leadership, iii.

diocese, he said “the dominant focus is on the people – the human system-rather than governmental structures. Realities like hope and fear and control and cooperation, and the need to be listened to and be taken seriously, are not the exclusive property of any denomination. ²¹

Perhaps one way in which the role and the importance of a lay ecclesial minister can be elevated is through the bishop highlighting the role and importance given to lay executives and lay ecclesial ministers in the Church. ²² In my experience, when a bishop clearly and publicly gives a lay executive backing and support, the clergy are more likely to come to realize that the lay ecclesial minister is carrying out the mission of the bishop, and the clergy are more likely to give that lay executive their cooperation. Leadership clearly drives culture ²³, and each of the three bishops whom I have served have had very different leadership styles which have influenced very different organizational cultures during their time with the diocese. Because bishops are not likely to change leadership style once they arrive at a diocese, the lay executive, as well as the clergy, need to recognize the leadership style of the current bishop and adapt to it, and the resulting culture which will flow from that leadership style. My experience is that lay executives who are hired to work at a diocese and who try to change the diocesan culture which flows from the bishop have fought an unsuccessful uphill battle.

I believe it is crucial for lay executives (and lay volunteers, for that matter) who come to minister in a church judicatory setting to be catechized, or instructed, in the protocols and precepts and cultural issues that are peculiar to the church environment in which they have come to work and minister. In the Jubilee Year 2000, I had proposed a Jubilee Debt Forgiveness to the Diocesan Finance Council, a volunteer advisory body to the bishop, made up of

²¹ Wilson, S.J., Church Leadership, iv.

²² Martin, O.F.M., Conv., May 15, 2019.

²³ Martin, O.F.M., Conv., August 3, 2019.

parishioners, clergy, and diocesan staff. I proposed that the diocese, based upon the Old Testament biblical precepts of jubilee ²⁴, forgive the debts ²⁵ of its smallest and poorest parishes. I identified a funding source and had the bishop and the clergy advisory board (the Council of Priests) embrace the proposal. The mostly lay Diocesan Finance Council struggled greatly with the proposal, thinking it was inappropriate and possibly dangerous to relive a parish of an obligation to which it agreed. Some wondered if this proposal would encourage more parishes to default on loans. Ultimately, the Diocesan Finance Council grudgingly agreed to the proposal. (I think the bishop would have implemented the proposal even if the Diocesan Finance Council did not agree, as in the Catholic tradition, a bishop must listen to the advice of this advisory body but does not necessarily have to accept and act upon that advice). I came to realize, after the fact, that I had not done a good job adequately forming the Diocesan Finance Council in its role. They felt that their marching orders were to protect the assets of the diocese and to keep the diocese and the bishop out of financial trouble. That clearly was a significant role for this advisory body. However, they were never given an orientation about the expectation of using the resources of the diocese to make a positive impact in our parishes and in the communities in which the diocese was present. “What we possess is not our own, it belongs to God. Hence, it must also belong to those whom God loves. ²⁶ Andre’ Trocme’ said “If Jesus really walked this earth, why do we keep treating Him as if He were a disembodied, impossibly idealistic ethical theory? If He was a real man, then the Sermon on the Mount was made for people on this earth, and if He existed, God has shown us in flesh and blood what

²⁴ Leviticus 25:10.

²⁵ Deuteronomy 15:1-2.

²⁶ Williams, 97.

goodness is for flesh and blood people.”²⁷ He said that one’s neighbor is anyone who needs assistance, as revealed in the Good Samaritan passage.²⁸ I did not provide any formation to the members of this key advisory body regarding their dual responsibility for prudent fiscal management and protection of assets as well as the use of those assets in ways that spoke to church teaching and biblical principles. This advisory body was to provide their best advice to the bishop on matters of administration. Ironically, the root of the word “administration” is “ministry”. Even sacraments are “administered.”²⁹ I clearly proposed something to this advisory body for which, through no fault of their own, they were not properly formed.³⁰

This same principle is one which should be applied to lay executives who come to work for the church from corporate jobs. They likely will have the same default position as the members of the Diocesan Finance Council in the previous example. They are likely to think that they will be evaluated based upon their ability to preserve and grow assets, which they will, in part. However, they will also be evaluated on their ability to make prudent and visionary proposals on how to best use those assets to help bring forth the Reign of God in this part of God’s Kingdom. It is incumbent upon people with roles such as mine to sensitize these lay ecclesial ministers that this is not a corporate model, where maximization of shareholder value is the key criteria for success. In a church judicatory setting, there are multiple constituencies to be considered and multiple outcomes to be measured, only some of which may be financial. This is clearly a delicate balancing act, but one that is key to be learned if the lay executives are going to be fully successful in their roles.

²⁷ Hallie, 68.

²⁸ Hallie, 170.

²⁹ Jones and Armstrong, 107-108.

³⁰ Elmayan, Theology of Christian Leadership Final Paper, October 15, 2018.

In many ways, the lay executives are called upon to exercise the priestly, prophetic, and kingly roles of our Lord Jesus. They are asked to be prophetic when called upon to think about the use of diocesan and parish resources in new and different ways. They are also called to exercise the priestly role in exercising a pastoral concern for the parishes and the pastors who are supported by the diocese. They are called to exercise a royal or kingly role when they are expected to use their knowledge and authority over church finances to bring those assets to bear on making a real difference with those they serve.³¹ One of the documents from the Second Vatican Council said “all God’s people share in Christ’s kingly ministry through their special vocation to seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them to God’s will.”³² This gives a clear road map to the lay executive ministering in the church. By acting on this exhortation from *Lumen Gentium*, lay executives will show they are in solidarity with the clergy and will show that they are working shoulder to shoulder with them to accomplish a similar goal. Doing so can serve to build credibility with the clergy and should engender cooperation from the clergy on other matters.

³¹ Elmayan, Duke Divinity School Theology of Christian Leadership Final Paper, October 15, 2018.

³² *Lumen Gentium*, 31.

CHAPTER 4 – Characteristics which Assist when Leading Without Formal Authority

4.1 Use of Empathy in Working with Clergy

Joseph Hayden, in his book titled *Covering Clinton – the President and the Press in the 1990's*, spoke of President Bill Clinton as “the empathy candidate”. Clinton advisor Paul Begala said that President Clinton’s most compelling interpersonal attribute was empathy. He said that when Clinton makes a connection with another person, “the whole world melts away”.¹ Regardless of what one may have thought of Clinton’s personal foibles, one of his compelling qualities was his “solicitous, reassuring compassion”.² When one was talking with Clinton, “he acted as if you were the only person in the room. Every fiber of his being, from his eyes to his body language, communicated that he was locked into what you were saying. He conveyed how important you were, not how important he was.”³ He clearly knew how to use empathy to connect with another person, to his advantage.

Empathy is “about genuinely seeking to understand who another person is, what she thinks, and how she feels.”⁴ I have long theorized that the use of empathy – the ability to put oneself in another’s shoes, and to see a set of facts and circumstances from another’s perspective – is useful in engendering cooperation from those over which one has no formal control. This theory is borne out in the Harvard Business Review’s *Emotional Intelligence Series*, where it is stated that putting focus on others is foundational to the concept of empathy and of building relationships with others. Those in executive roles who focus on others are typically the ones who develop win-win situations, who have opinions that are respected, and who are ones

¹ Hayden, 8.

² Hayden, 7.

³ Goldsmith, 149.

⁴ Riel and Martin, 48.

with which colleagues want to work. Executives who do this are ones who are seen by those in the organization as leaders, notwithstanding their place in the organization chart.⁵ A lack of empathy can result in narrow solutions which are only single-minded.⁶

While many people may think that it is easier to empathize with someone if you have walked in their shoes, the research indicates otherwise.⁷ People who have “walked in another’s shoes” actually seem to show less compassion towards someone in similar circumstances, especially if the person who has “walked in the other’s shoes” was able to overcome the situation with less apparent difficulty.⁸ People typically have difficulty recalling just how difficult past circumstances may have been, a phenomenon that is called an “empathy gap”.⁹ Those who successfully negotiated difficult circumstances can find it hard to sympathize with others who have not easily dealt with those similar circumstances.¹⁰ At the same time, since clergy were once lay people prior to their ordination, sometimes with previous jobs in the business world, the empathy gap may also be present because those clergy may feel they have once walked in the shoes of a particular lay executive.¹¹

Since a lay person will never have personally experienced all the things that an ordained clergyperson has or will experience, the research referenced above should indicate that a lay person can be more empathic towards clergy than others who are ordained. This should serve a lay person well in leading and interacting with clergy even if they do not have formal authority over them. A potentially contrary argument is made by Riel and Martin, as they say that humans

⁵ Harvard Business Review, Empathy, 3.

⁶ Riel and Martin, 52.

⁷ Harvard Business Review, Empathy, 51.

⁸ Harvard Business Review, Empathy, 55.

⁹ Harvard Business Review, Empathy, 56.

¹⁰ Harvard Business Review, Empathy, 57.

¹¹ Martin, O.F.M., Conv., May 15, 2019.

have cognitive biases which make it easier to feel empathy for people who have similarities to us, and those biases make it more difficult to feel empathy for people who are different than us. ¹² This seems to indicate that it is best if the lay executives can see the clergy as being more similar to them rather than different from them in order to engender more empathy toward the clergy. This may be somewhat challenging, however, since clergy, at least in the Catholic context, are “set apart” in several ways. While the laity are “co-workers in the vineyard” with the clergy, the clergy are also clearly different, in how they are attired, how they are treated, and how they are addressed. Perhaps this means that it is crucial to create more opportunities for the clergy and lay executives to work together on various projects so that they can bond and find ways to break down barriers and preconceptions of each other. This seems to ratify my long-held contention about how important it is for the lay executives to be focused on being “in the trenches” with the clergy. Doing so should serve to increase empathy, which will only help those lay executives in their relationships with the clergy and which should only help them in getting results and cooperation when working with the clergy. Intentionally finding increased opportunities for lay executives to collaborate with the clergy, and vice versa, on items that are not just related to solving an existing problem, could be a creative way to increase bonding and break down barriers and preconceptions. ¹³

In addition, research indicates that power within an organization can make an executive less empathetic. Power can make a person less empathetic and less able to read other’s emotions, as power can change ways in which the brain functions. ¹⁴ This dynamic can be something that a lay executive can use to his or her advantage when dealing with tenured

¹² Riel and Martin, 49.

¹³ Martin, O.F.M., Conv., August 3, 2019.

¹⁴ Harvard Business Review, Empathy, 64.

clergy. The lay person does not have formal power which can serve to erode the capacity for empathy. At the same time, since the lay person has not fully walked in an ordained clergyperson's shoes, it should mean that the lay executive can exhibit more empathy towards the clergy than would be exhibited by a fellow member of the clergy.

While empathy has its benefits, especially in working in circumstances where one does not have formal authority, it can cause potential problems. It can lead to "compassion fatigue", which ultimately is an inability to empathize due to burnout from constant investment in empathy.¹⁵ Empathy is a quality that seems to have its limits. The more empathy expended at work, the less empathy one may have available to give to their family.¹⁶ Anecdotally, I have personally experienced this on the receiving end myself. I have had close relationships to social workers and to clergy, and I have been sometimes surprised how these people in the helping professions, who experience significant empathy to categories of people (the poor, the immigrant, and the unemployed, for example), do not seem to exhibit the same level of empathy to individual people in their own families or intimate lives. Now I can see what the dynamic is that may cause this to be the case. Clergy can experience empathy burnout by routinely interacting with parishioners who regularly present their broken lives to the clergy.¹⁷ Perhaps this can inhibit the clergy from being empathetic towards administrators as well. While it would be ideal for the clergy to exhibit empathy to the administrators, the facilitation of clergy exhibiting more empathy to the administrators is not the focus of this thesis. Because the clergy have tenure and essentially have jobs for life, the burden is on the administrators to facilitate the working relationship with the clergy, not the other way around. While this seemingly one-

¹⁵ Harvard Business Review, Empathy, 101.

¹⁶ Harvard Business Review, Empathy, 103.

¹⁷ Martin, O.F.M. Conv., May 15, 2019.

sided responsibility or burden may not seem “fair”, it does reflect a reality that is present in this dynamic. If clergy do not facilitate a working relationship with lay ecclesial ministers, they will go along in their present pastoral roles and duties, but if a lay minister does not facilitate a working relationship with the clergy, they will not be successful and will ultimately not be able to survive in their ministerial roles.

Bishop William Willimon, in his book titled *Bishop*, seemingly takes a much different position on empathy than what is addressed in the Harvard Business Review’s *Emotional Intelligence Series on Empathy*. Bishop Willimon references Edwin Friedman, who says that “empathy is the enemy of transformative systems leadership.”¹⁸ Friedman says that “the introduction of empathy into ...institutional meetings is an effort to induce failure of nerve among its leadership”.¹⁹ He said that in the name of “relationship”, harmony becomes a higher purpose than the mission of Jesus,²⁰ “empathy is too low a goal for ministry of Word and Sacrament”, and we need to spend less time asking how people are feeling and more time asking why we are here and what is our purpose.²¹

Willimon appropriately voices his concern about the risks of empathy, especially in his role of serving as a bishop of a major denominational judicatory. However, I have two challenges about his position. First, I wonder if the issue at hand is more one of sympathy rather than empathy. If the word “sympathy” was substituted for “empathy”, I would be in total agreement with Bishop Willimon. Second, while “empathy” or “sympathy” can cause the limpness within clergy relationships that Willimon mentioned, there is a different dynamic when it comes to

¹⁸ Willimon, Bishop, 81.

¹⁹ Willimon, Bishop, 82.

²⁰ Willimon, Bishop, 83.

²¹ Willimon, Bishop, 83.

working relationships between a lay denominational executive and tenured clergy. Empathy in this circumstance is a tool that a lay executive can use in developing the relationships that are necessary to obtain cooperation from those who cannot be ordered to comply and play ball. Perhaps Willimon is really addressing an over-emphasis on process rather than on mission. Exploration should be performed on how the administrator/clergy process dynamic can be improved while maintaining a joint focus on the mission that is so important to both groups.

Paul Bloom, in his article *The Perils of Empathy*, which appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, perhaps is in some level of agreement with Bishop Willimon. Bloom said “when it comes to guiding our decisions, empathy is a moral train wreck.”²² He makes a distinction between cognitive and emotional empathy. He defines cognitive empathy as understanding what another person is thinking without automatically sharing their feelings. He said while this can help someone act effectively, it can also be used negatively, as cognitive empathy is necessary for con artists, for example. Emotional empathy is not just understanding another person, it is to feel what the other person is feeling. This type of empathy can lead to biases. For example, one tends to feel more empathy for someone who has treated them fairly vs. someone who did not. Empathy can evaporate if one believes someone is responsible for their own suffering. Empathy can be more likely exhibited when an individual person is discussed rather than when an entire group of people may be impacted.²³

Gil Rendle, in his book *Quietly Courageous*, writes of the “perils of Christian empathy.” He speaks of how leaders in denominational settings are tempted to focus on relationships, because attention to relationships is rewarded.²⁴ He said that “empathy is a Christian good,

²² Bloom.

²³ Bloom.

²⁴ Rendle, 174.

defining empathy as “the capacity to understand and to feel what another human being is experiencing.” He said the word empathy comes from the Greek word *pathos*, which means passion or suffering, and says that empathy brings people to the common good. Empathy connects people, and it is needed to impact the negative result of the mindset today which is highly focused on individualism and the rights of the individual to do what they wish as long as they do not impact the rights of another to do what they want to do. ²⁵

Empathy and compassion are not necessarily the same things. Compassion means caring about others, rather than sharing in their suffering. Compassion is feeling for, not with, another person. People can be high in compassion but not high in empathy, and vice versa. Compassion predicts charitable donations, but empathy does not. In a research study referenced by Bloom, subjects who were told of a needy student competing for a cash prize. When the subjects were prompted to feel empathy for the student in need, they were motivated to torment the rival student in the competition, even though the rival student did nothing to deserve that torment. Empathy tends to wear on the person exhibiting it and can lead to less than ideal decision making. Compassion, on the other hand, has some of the benefits of empathy with less of the negative side effects. If empathy is limited, it may be easier to exhibit kindness. ²⁶ He said empathy causes people to focus on the needs of the common good rather than focusing on their own needs. He said that empathy is “sensitive to and engaged by suffering, by pain.” He said that empathy causes people to want to relieve the pain of others. ²⁷

This observation lends some insight in to Bishop Willimon’s criticism of empathy, as he has stated that leaders are called to be “inducers of pain.” Willimon quotes Ronald Heifetz as

²⁵ Rendle, 175.

²⁶ Bloom.

²⁷ Rendle, 176.

stating that “a real leader induces pain - the pain the organization has been studiously avoiding.” Willimon says pain is unavoidable. Life cannot reasonably be lived without discomfort. Jesus clearly showed, by the cross, that pain is part of a life lived truthfully. He said that the Lord Jesus was the embodiment of both truth and love, and that being willing to put people in pain is part of the reality of being a disciple of Jesus. He quotes Rabbi Edwin Friedman as saying that “empathy is the great enemy of pastoral leadership. Empathy can be a form of pastoral self-protection, disguised as the desire to shield others from pain.”²⁸

Rendle says that empathy that is unrestrained in a pastoral setting can lead to paralysis and the inability to make decisions for the overall good of the church. Necessary decisions can result in expressions of pain by those impacted, and empathy can result in a response that results in the reduction of pain. Rendle says that “unchecked empathy favors relationship over purpose.”²⁹ He said that prioritizing relationships which avoid disagreement often negatively impacts decisions made for the overall good of the organization.³⁰ He said that “unchecked empathy favors weakness over strength.”³¹ He says that empathy has often been “perverted” into something that rationalizes a non-decision, and calls empathy “a power tool in the hands of the sensitive.” He says that the achievement of the mission should be chosen over relational comfort.”³² Empathy can take leaders away from the achievement of their mission.³³ Rendle says that the “way through the temptation of empathy is a clear, missional, caring focus on purpose.”³⁴

²⁸ Willimon, *Inducers of Pain*.

²⁹ Rendle, 180.

³⁰ Rendle, 181.

³¹ Rendle, 182.

³² Rendle, 183.

³³ Rendle, 188.

³⁴ Rendle, 191.

People who feel listened to are more likely to be present to hearing what is said to them. When one listens, one can come to know what the person who is being listened to really needs, rather than what someone else speculates those needs to be. This can only serve to enhance the relationships with those who are being listened to.³⁵ In the Harvard Business Review book on *Influence and Persuasion*, we are encouraged to “empathize with the people you need to persuade to purchase your product or services or to work hard on your behalf. It gives you better ideas, and it makes you worth listening to. And if your stakeholders can empathize with you in return, you are on your way to building real, lasting relationships with them.”³⁶ Clearly, the clergy are major stakeholders in the life of the church and in the life of a lay executive in the church, who at times need to be persuaded by the lay executive to do something or take some type of action, so empathy seems to be one of a number of key behaviors that are necessary for success.

4.2 Use of Empathy with Lay Executives as They Relate to Clergy

Clearly, the research cited in the previous section indicates that empathy can have both positive and negative aspects associated with it, but the positive aspects should be used to help the relationships between lay executives and clergy. I would submit that lay executives should be exposed to circumstances where they will have opportunities to see things through the lens that the clergy see them. To be fully successful in their roles, lay executives in a judicatory setting need to embrace the culture of the institution in which they are ministering, so that they can better exhibit empathy to the circumstances that make up the world of a typical priest or

³⁵ Harvard Business Review, *Influence and Persuasion*, 85.

³⁶ Harvard Business Review, *Influence and Persuasion*, 88.

clergyperson. They need to realize that the analytical principles they bring with them from corporate settings are only one of the factors that should go into decision-making in a church setting, where there are so many constituencies that need to be considered before a decision is made.³⁷

One possible way to facilitate this enculturation could be to begin staff meetings with a prayer in which specific parishes (and possibly specific clergy) are held up in prayer, especially those parishes or clergy facing significant challenges in their ministries. This could help build up the “heart” of the lay staff for the ministries of the church, with a focus that was beyond just pure analytics.³⁸ Formation of lay leaders in leading prayer at meeting such as this could also help to build up their “heart.”³⁹ A second way to do this would be to invite pastors to speak to the lay staff to sensitize them to “a day in the life of a priest”, so that the staff can gain a better understanding of the resources constraints that many pastors have and so that the staff can be sensitized to the tradeoffs that a pastor has to make on almost a daily basis.⁴⁰ A third would be to have the lay staff personally visit various ministries and parishes, especially ones that may need a subsidy in order to survive, so that they can see that at times it can be a prudent decision to subsidize a money-losing ministry for purposes of evangelism or in order to maintain a Catholic presence in rural parts of the diocese.⁴¹ Riel and Martin, in their book *Creating Great Choices*, say that an excellent way to build understanding and empathy as it relates to another person is to actually experience what that person is going through.⁴²

³⁷ Elmayan, Duke Divinity School Strategy Class Final Paper, July 19, 2018.

³⁸ Lucas, Duke Divinity School Web Ex, July 9, 2018.

³⁹ Martin, O.F.M., Conv., August 3, 2019.

⁴⁰ Lawrence, Duke Divinity School Web Ex, July 9, 2018.

⁴¹ Lines, Duke Divinity School Web Ex, July 9, 2019.

⁴² Riel and Martin, 51.

4.3 Establishment and Cultivation of Personal Relationships with Clergy

Lovett Weems, in his book *Take the Next Step*, quotes Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky as stating that “One of the distinguishing qualities of successful people who lead in any field is the emphasis they place on personal relationships.”⁴³ When Abraham Lincoln was taken to task for speaking kind words about the Confederacy, he said he destroyed his enemies by making them his friends.⁴⁴ While the clergy are clearly not the enemies of the lay executives, there can be some natural tension that can be diffused by trying to maintain personal relationships with the clergy and by attempting to understand the unique roles that the clergy have in pastoring parishes.⁴⁵

This tension can exist when there are competing points of view that can be difficult to reconcile. In cases such as this, it is helpful if the incentives between the two points of view can be somehow aligned, as this can mitigate the tension that can arise.⁴⁶ When there are opportunities to bring the resources of the diocese to bear to assist pastors or parishes in their local matters, it can be a demonstrated example of a shared purpose, showing that the lay executive and the clergy are on the same team. As there are more opportunities to take actions of this nature, it can serve to help to foster the personal relationships with the clergy that are some important, since so much of ministry is relational. As this takes place, when there is the inevitable tension that can arise between diocesan protocols and parish desires, it seems more

⁴³ Weems, *Take the Next Step*, 29.

⁴⁴ Jones, 37.

⁴⁵ Elmayan, Duke Divinity School Strategy Class Final Paper, July 19, 2018.

⁴⁶ Riel and Martin, 113.

likely that both the clergy and those in the diocesan offices will give one another the benefit of the doubt.⁴⁷

4.4 Use of Intuition

At the beginning of this document, I said that those who are successful in making the transition from a corporate role to a church administration role have a sense, or an intuition, about how to best interact with the clergy in a way that establishes instances where cooperation and win-win circumstances take place. Therefore, I want to explore further the “science” of intuition.

Gil Rendle, in *Quietly Courageous*, says that “in learning a profession, the move from competency to proficiency is described...as a stage at which one acts intuitively, without thinking, and drawing on know-how that comes from the backlog of experiences in similar settings.”⁴⁸ He writes that “the most common form of intuition is ‘ordinary intuition’, which is a form of emotion.” It is a hunch, requiring no thought, just action. “Expert intuition is not a feeling, it is a form of rapid thinking.” It takes place when one has experienced something before and when one can utilize their experience. The response to a specific circumstance is expeditious because the circumstances have a similarity to what one has previously encountered and can therefore help quickly form a response.⁴⁹ Perhaps this type of intuition is the type used by those lay executives who are the most successful in working with the clergy.

As a leader, one cannot usually wait for every piece of information to be available before a decision is made. There is almost always more information that can be garnered, but

⁴⁷ Elmayer, Duke Divinity School Strategy Class Final Paper, July 19, 2018.

⁴⁸ Rendle, 140.

⁴⁹ Rendle, 141.

one often does not have the luxury of time to gather every piece of information. Therefore, most decisions must be made with an information gap of some amount. That gap is often bridged by what some would call “intuition”, or a judgment from an unconscious process.⁵⁰ This intuition is “a feel for patterns, an ability to generalize based upon what has happened previously.”⁵¹

One trap that I personally can fall into is “analysis paralysis”. Research has shown that too much analysis and too much information can prevent circumstances to be evaluated in the best and most expeditious manner. Herbert Simon, a Nobel Prize recipient, said “a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention.”⁵² The capacity in one’s working memory can only address up to four pieces of information at one time. The unconscious part of the brain has an almost unlimited capacity, and it works faster than the conscious mind.⁵³ This means that decision making based upon intuition can work better than decision making based upon analysis because the brain has more space with which to make intuitive decisions.⁵⁴ Therefore, while counterintuitive at first, thinking less may be able to lead to a better answer. In fact, in some cases, in areas where we may have an expertise, the more thinking that is done, the more likely that a better decision will be made.⁵⁵ Fabritius suggested allowing the unconscious brain to make most of the initial decision making and then using the conscious brain to serve as a check against the unconscious brain.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Greenleaf, 36.

⁵¹ Greenleaf, 37.

⁵² Fabritius, 145.

⁵³ Fabritius, 143.

⁵⁴ Fabritius, 151.

⁵⁵ Fabritius, 144.

⁵⁶ Fabritius, 159.

Intuitive decisions and “gut feelings” are not random and are not based on lack of information. Typically, they are based upon experience and expertise.⁵⁷ Herbert Simon said “intuition and judgment are simply analyses frozen into habit.”⁵⁸ There are two regions of the brain that drive decisions based upon intuition. The basal ganglia address the patterns that are based on expertise and experience that have been accumulated over the years. The insular cortex addresses the awareness of vital bodily functions such as heartbeat and temperature. When a decision needs to be made, the unconscious brain begins working on making that decision. When a conscious decision is attempted, the brain compares it to the decision already made by the unconscious brain.⁵⁹ If the conscious and unconscious decisions are in harmony, the body will respond one way. If they are not in harmony, the body will respond as well. Those of us who have an awareness of their bodies feel this response from their body, and that is why intuitive decisions are based upon a “gut feeling”.⁶⁰

Intuitive decision making can best be honed by increasing expertise and by enhancing the awareness of body functions that take place as the result of intuition. The best intuitive decisions are made when they are based upon built-up experience and knowledge, and they are best confirmed by enhancing the awareness of the body’s warning signs of a potential problem or bad decision.⁶¹ Intuitive decisions that are based on expertise are often reliable ones, providing they are not tempered by or based upon stereotypes or prejudices.⁶²

⁵⁷ Fabritius, 148.

⁵⁸ Fabritius, 156.

⁵⁹ Fabritius, 149.

⁶⁰ Fabritius, 150.

⁶¹ Fabritius, 159.

⁶² Fabritius, 160.

Why, then, are some executives in the church able to use their intuition to successfully interact in addressing challenges with clergy and some are not? Perhaps part of the reason is that those executives who are unsuccessful in the church environment are relying too much on their analytical background that was so well rewarded when they were in their previous corporate roles. Fabritius said that “in the risk averse corporate world, executives who rely on intuitive decisions frequently feel the burden of backing up those decisions with data.” He also said “a leader may settle on a second or even a third choice simply because he knows he can provide facts and figures that appear to support it... Defensive decision making hurts the company and protects the decision maker.”⁶³ In this area, being the “best” could actually serve to be the enemy of “the better” or “the good”.⁶⁴

Malcolm Gladwell, in his book *Blink*, addresses some of the research into the use of intuition. He referred to a series of experiments that were performed where those who were forced to come to a decision based on an unconscious, spur of the moment decision based upon their gut feeling, chose the right decision the majority (sixty percent) of the time. Gladwell believes that in circumstances where there is a straightforward choice to be made, a deliberate analytical approach is the best course of action. However, he said when things get more complex – where there is analysis and personal choice to be considered, and where there are multiple variables to consider, it is best to use intuition or an unconscious thought process. The unconscious part of the human brain seems to be at its best when there are multiple and competing variables to consider.⁶⁵ Gladwell quotes Sigmund Freud as saying “When making a decision of minor importance, I have always found it advantageous to consider all the pros and

⁶³ Fabritius, 152.

⁶⁴ Martin, O.F.M., Conv., August 3, 2019.

⁶⁵ Gladwell, 267.

cons. In vital matters, however, such as the choice of a mate or a profession, the decision should come from the unconscious, from somewhere within ourselves. In the important decisions of personal life, we should be governed, I think, by the deep inner needs of our nature.”⁶⁶ This research seems to say that lay executives, who are faced with complex interpersonal relationships in a cultural environment with which they are not familiar, should rely on their intuition and their unconscious brain, even though it flies in the face of their analytical, business, and corporate training.

Perhaps intuition in a church setting can be likened to some of the *Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, which are permanent dispositions which help men and women to follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Those seven *Gifts of the Holy Spirit* are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. They allow the faithful to be ready to follow divine inspiration.⁶⁷ The biblical reference to this tradition of the Church is found in Isaiah 11:1-4, where we read “A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor and decide with equity for the meek of the earth...”⁶⁸

4.5 Political Savvy and Use of Power

Like it or not, lay executives, to succeed in a church environment, must be able to successfully read the political tea leaves and must successfully navigate through potential

⁶⁶ Gladwell, 268.

⁶⁷ Catechism of the Catholic Church 1831, page 450.

⁶⁸ New Oxford Annotated Bible, Isaiah 11:1-4.

roadblocks to their success. Heifetz encourages leaders to find partners – they provide protection and they can provide an entrée to alliances and groups that may be outside of one’s normal sphere of influence. ⁶⁹ He encourages leaders to “keep the opposition close.” ⁷⁰ One must work just as closely with those who may oppose you as those who support you. ⁷¹

In practice in my own ministry, I have found that it is beneficial to “solicit contrary opinions” ⁷² and place critics and those who may be naysayers on advisory bodies that relate to their areas of criticism. That way, they are no longer slinging arrows from the outside, but are instead part of the inner group, charged with developing a solution rather than just complaining about a present reality. In addition, by seeing how things operate on the “inside”, they are more likely to have an appreciation for the challenges that are at play. Finally, by having at least some “critics” on a committee, it prevents groupthink and encourages exploration of new ideas.

Heifetz asks us to “accept responsibility for our piece of the mess.” One takes a risk of making oneself a target when they do not admit that they are part of a problem. ⁷³ My experience in working with clergy, and most other people for that matter, is that they are fairly forgiving if one owns up to one’s responsibility for a problem or a bad decision. It is when one does not admit to an obvious problem and make some type of mea culpa that things can quickly go downhill. Heifetz says that loss must be acknowledged when adaptive work takes place. ⁷⁴ He said that you must model the behavior that you want others to exhibit. ⁷⁵ One cannot expect others to make sacrifices that they are not making themselves. Finally, Heifetz says that in any

⁶⁹ Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, 79.

⁷⁰ Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, 85.

⁷¹ Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, 87.

⁷² Goldsmith, 119.

⁷³ Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, 90.

⁷⁴ Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, 92.

⁷⁵ Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, 95.

adaptive change, one must be willing to accept casualties.⁷⁶ Accepting casualties shows a commitment to doing what it takes to follow through on carrying out an adaptive challenge. I see this taking place in my own ministry during budget discussions. When there is a down year in revenues, even in the church, difficult choices must be made. It is easy to pontificate about what needs to be done to balance a budget, but when the rubber hits the road, difficult choices need to be made, which may include casualties of positions and jobs that may need to go away. The leader needs to take the lead in setting the tone, even if it means that someone's ox will have to be gored.

In my ministry, I need the cooperation of the clergy in numerous administrative functions and in completing various tasks and reports that are needed to enable the Diocese to monitor the health of the parishes and parochial schools. The Diocese derives 75% of its revenue base either directly or indirectly from the leadership of the clergy. The largest single source of revenues is the Bishop's Annual Appeal, which is contributed to by parishioners and which is conducted in every parish. Every parish has a financial goal for the Appeal. While a parish benefits financially if it overachieves its goal, there is no penalty if a parish does not achieve its goal. The pastor can either energize the parishioners to contribute to the Appeal by speaking positively about it, or the pastor can turn the parishioners against the Appeal by speaking negatively or neutrally about it. There are other dynamics at play with the Appeal as well, as parishioners can decide not to give because they are upset with their pastor, their bishop, or the institutional church because of how it has handled various controversial issues.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, 98.

⁷⁷ Reamer, O.F.M., July 14, 2019.

Similarly, the second largest source of revenues for the Diocesan operations is an assessment or tax on parish offertory (the Sunday collections). While the pastors presumably have a vested interest in maximizing parish offertory, the higher the parish offertory, the more revenues there are for the ministries of the Diocese. However, I still need the pastors to play ball with the Diocese, as a pastor could easily ask parishioners to make donations to the parish outside of the regular Sunday offertory collection, and those collections are not subject to being assessed or taxed by the Diocese.

How can leadership (and power/authority) best be used in working with structures such as these, which can both support and detract from the mission of the church? The research seems to validate my hunch that the clergy need to feel that the lay executive is playing ball with them, listening to them and empathizing with them, if they lay executive expect to have their cooperation in areas where her or she will need it. One anecdotal piece of evidence seems to validate this theory. In my own ministry, there were many years when virtually every pastor met the Bishop's Annual Appeal goal. This resulted in steady stream of increasing revenues each year. When I asked the priest in charge of working with the clergy how he engendered this type of cooperation, even though he did not have direct control of the tenured clergy, he told me that he made it clear that "if they scratched his back, he would scratch theirs."

In practice, this meant that if the clergy cooperated with diocesan objectives and met the Appeal goal, this would be remembered when the time came to decide on clergy assignments to parishes. While the priests have tenure once they are formally assigned to a parish, eventually that tenure comes to an end, usually after six years. Meeting the Appeal goal could result in a move to a resource-rich parish in a favorable location. Not meeting the Appeal

goal could result in a future move to a less desirable parish. In this case, the bishop does have some limited level of power/authority over a pastor, even though it may not be immediate.

Power and authority can be used for flourishing. It is a gift worth seeking and stewarding, just as we are stewards over so many other resources that have been bestowed upon us. ⁷⁸ Saint Paul showed us that power does not necessarily stem from strength. He showed that there is power in weakness, there is power in the Gospel, and power in the cross, but that power does not look like power in the traditional manner of thinking. ⁷⁹ What was seen as a symbol of weakness – the crucifixion of Christ on a cross, turned out to be the beginning of the action of God intervening in the world, showing the power of the resurrection and showing that in an apparent weakness, a power never seen before burst on the scene in the world. ⁸⁰

The church itself is an entity that is about power – “the end of power, meaning the purpose of power, the taming of power, and the unleashing of power for true flourishing.” “The church proclaims the true story of power, by telling the stories of the Sacred Scriptures, by telling the stories of the positive aspects and dark aspects of our humanity, and by telling the story of the power that our Lord Jesus has achieved for us through the redemption he gained for us. ⁸¹ “The church reminds of the end of power in death.” The church does this through its cemeteries and columbaria, by its funeral liturgies, by its baptisms where people are born to a new life in Christ, and by its celebration of the Eucharist, where the Lord’s death is proclaimed until He comes again. ⁸² “The church celebrates a greater power in worship.” In celebrating liturgies, we come to be aware of the power that “can raise the dead, can heal the nations, can

⁷⁸ Crouch, 37.

⁷⁹ Eastman, January 5, 2018.

⁸⁰ Elmayan, Reflections on Saint Paul’s Power in Weakness.

⁸¹ Crouch, 171.

⁸² Crouch, 172.

hold everything forgotten in memory.”⁸³ When we come to gather in worship, we are gathered as a church and are fed by the Word of God and the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus, and then we are sent out into the world, empowered by the Holy Spirit and its power, to help bring forth the Kingdom of God.

While the word “power” can have negative connotations for some, in a church setting power is not necessarily inherently negative. Early Christians were excited by their sense that they were empowered, and they described that power in terms of the Holy Spirit. This power facilitated them in making a difference and in making the Christian movement known and in impacting the world in a positive way.⁸⁴ In church terminology, I would submit that grace, which is described in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as “favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us...”⁸⁵, is a form of power.⁸⁶

Power can be exercised in an informal manner when a person without the formal charter to act as a decider, implementer, recommender, or evaluator do indeed perform those roles. This type of informal power is present in any human system. Formal power is not necessarily an ideal, as perhaps informal power is really the work of the Spirit.⁸⁷

4.6 Science of Persuasion, Influence, and Reciprocity

In my role, I often try to persuade the clergy to do things that they may not want to do (even though it may help them in their ministry), and I do this without having any real control over those tenured clergy. Fortunately, there is an actual science of persuasion that I can call on

⁸³ Crouch, 173.

⁸⁴ Wilson, S.J., *Church Leadership*, 1.

⁸⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1996.

⁸⁶ Martin, O.F.M., Conv., August 3, 2019.

⁸⁷ Wilson, S.J., *Church Leadership*, 8.

for assistance. Finding common areas of enjoyment or interest help to establish a bond and can create a sense of goodwill and a sense of trust between the two parties.⁸⁸ I have used this in my own ministry with one member of the clergy with whom I do not see eye to eye with regarding ecclesiology. While we do not have common ground in that area, we are both passionate fans of our college football teams, and virtually every conversation begins with a discussion how each of our respective teams are faring, and that conversation seems to create an environment which gives each other the benefit of the doubt and allows us to speak to each other about subjects with which we disagree, because of the common ground we have established on another subject.

The rule of reciprocation says that “we should try to repay, in kind, what another person has provided us.” It says we are obligated to the future repayment of favors.⁸⁹ This principle has application in the executive-clergy relationship. Cohen and Bradford, in *Influence Without Authority*, say “the person asking something of you today may be the very one you’ll need next week.”⁹⁰ They say that the “law of reciprocity” is a social science precept that said that people expect to be repaid when they do something to help someone else. When someone helps you, you will be expected to reciprocate in some similar way.⁹¹ While this “law of reciprocity” is clearly not necessarily altruistic and may perhaps even seem out of place in a church setting, it is “a core part of all human interaction and the lubricant that makes organizations functional.”⁹² While the lay executive, and even to some extent, the bishop, cannot force clergy to do anything of substance, to the extent that the lay executive can do things that serve the clergy, help them

⁸⁸ Harvard Business Review, *Influence and Persuasion*, 16.

⁸⁹ Cialdini, 29.

⁹⁰ Cohen, 5.

⁹¹ Cohen, 9.

⁹² Cohen, 9.

with the problems they encounter at their parishes, and bring the resources of the diocese to bear on assisting them, this could motivate the clergy to “repay” that assistance in the future, perhaps by offering their cooperation in areas that they may not have otherwise had any reason or motivation to offer their cooperation. Robert Cialdini cites numerous examples in his research where even an unwanted gift that was given to someone engendered a reciprocal reaction.⁹³

The principle of reciprocity can influence and persuade others.⁹⁴ When one can do something for another person, that other person is more likely to want to reciprocate in kind. If I can show the clergy that I am willing to go out of my way to do something that will help them or make their life easier, they will be more likely to help me by cooperating with my requests of them. If I can shepherd a request they make through the protocols on one of our advisory committee meetings, if I can work with them on a proposal they are making so that it will have a high likelihood of being approved, or if I can direct them to a pool of funds that their parish may be able to use for their local ministries, it will be more likely that they will cooperate with me when I need their cooperation. Some of the key aspects in the principle of reciprocity and the influence model that flows from it are as follows:

- Assume everyone is a potential ally – even when someone may be difficult to deal with, they may one day be able to help you. It is very likely that those with whom one interacts may care about something that you may be able to offer.⁹⁵
- Clarify your goals and priorities – know what is important and what is not so important, what is worth settling for and what is not worth settling for.⁹⁶

⁹³ Cialdini, 35.

⁹⁴ Harvard Business Review, Influence and Persuasion, 19.

⁹⁵ Cohen, 9.

⁹⁶ Cohen, 9.

- Diagnose the world of the other person – knowing what is important to the other person will help in knowing what can reasonably be offered. ⁹⁷
- Identify relevant currencies – yours and theirs – different people value different things, and this is important to know in any type of exchange. ⁹⁸
- Dealing with relationships – strained relationships should be resolved if possible, and it is important to know how the other person wants to be related to. ⁹⁹
- Influence through give and take – something is given away or offered that is valued by the other party in exchange for something the giving party wants. ¹⁰⁰

4.7 Importance of Credibility

I have long theorized that having a reputation of credibility and integrity with the clergy are key in obtaining and maintaining their cooperation and support. Since there is no formal authority to wield over them, two of the important things that lay executives possess is their credibility and integrity. It is the importance of credibility that results in what some may feel is an over-emphasis on accuracy and delivering on commitments to the clergy. Without credibility, the lay executive loses what implied authority or expertise he or she has, which makes it more difficult to gain cooperation of the clergy.

Winston Brembeck and William Howell, in their book *Persuasion: A Means of Social Influence*, quote Aristotle as defining the role of ethos, or character, in public speaking as saying “the character of the speaker is a cause for persuasion when the speech is so uttered as to make

⁹⁷ Cohen, 10.

⁹⁸ Cohen, 10.

⁹⁹ Cohen, 10.

¹⁰⁰ Cohen, 10.

him more worthy of belief; for as a rule we trust men of probity more, and more quickly about things in general, while on points outside the realm of exact knowledge, where opinion is divided, we trust them absolutely. This trust, however, should be created by the speech itself, and not left to depend upon an antecedent impression that the speaker is this or that kind of man. It is not true, as some writers on the art maintain, that the probity of the speaker contributes nothing to his persuasiveness; on the contrary, we might almost affirm that his character is the most potent of all means to persuasion.”¹⁰¹

Research indicates that trustworthiness and expertness are the key criteria in establishing credibility. In addition, the research indicates that a receiver of a message may believe that someone is capable of valid statements, but the message receiver is likely to reject the message if it seems that the communicator is motivated to make non-valid assertions.¹⁰² This seems to support my long held hunch that it is crucial that the clergy trust the lay executive, and that even though expertness is also important in establishing credibility, making non-valid statements can erode that credibility. It seems to be better to occasionally have to say “I do not know, but I will get the answer” to a question rather than to give an answer that may later be proven wrong because it was given without having access to all the facts.

Lovett Weems, in his book *Church Leadership*, discusses how important integrity and credibility are to effective leadership.¹⁰³ He says that credibility must be constantly earned, but it can be lost in a heartbeat, and once lost, it can be very difficult to regain. Credibility is based in part on behavior. Credible behavior is doing what one says they are going to do. Predictable behavior is credible and trustworthy behavior. Relationships built upon trust and respect are

¹⁰¹ Brembeck, 252.

¹⁰² Brembeck, 253.

¹⁰³ Weems, *Church Leadership*, 110.

credible relationships. When a leader helps those which whom they work to address the issues they are facing, credibility and trust are built. ¹⁰⁴ Trust is created by three main factors – the development and maintenance of personal relationships ¹⁰⁵; the character of the individual in question, where character is defined as constancy between words and actions, honesty, and integrity ¹⁰⁶; and the competence of the individual in question, where in order to maintain trust, that person must not disappoint in what they are expected to accomplish. Weems also talks about the importance of religious authenticity in conjunction with competence. ¹⁰⁷ In my experience, the lay executives who are the most successful working with clergy are ones who exude and demonstrate competence, but competence is not enough. The clergy need to see that the lay executive has a grounding in church teaching and scripture and the sacraments that form the undergirding for their decisions and their actions.

It seems to me that credibility and integrity create trust. In a work or church setting, trust “increases information sharing, openness, fluidity, and cooperation”. It can also allow people to hear the messages that are being sent by others and it can result in the opportunity to change attitudes, especially as it relates to influence and having others accept the message that one is trying to deliver. ¹⁰⁸

The aspect of the importance of credibility in a church leadership setting is why I believe it is so important for those lay executives who are working with clergy to say what they mean, mean what they say, and to be accurate and trustworthy in their interactions with the clergy.

¹⁰⁴ Weems, *Church Leadership*, 113.

¹⁰⁵ Weems, *Take the Next Step*, 28.

¹⁰⁶ Weems, *Take the Next Step*, 31.

¹⁰⁷ Weems, *Take the Next Step*, 35.

¹⁰⁸ Harvard Business Review, *Emotional Intelligence Series, Leadership Presence*, 44-45.

The currency that lay executives have at their disposal in their relationship with the clergy is their credibility and their integrity, especially since they have no formal authority.

4.8 Boasting

Bishop William Willimon, in his forward to Craig Hill's book *Servant of All*, quotes C.S. Lewis as defining Hell as "where everyone one is perpetually concerned about their own dignity and advancement, where everyone has a grievance, and where everyone lives the deadly serious sins of envy, self-importance, and resentment."¹⁰⁹ I think this is probably a description of just about any organization, whether it be a for-profit corporation, a government entity, a not-for-profit organization, or a church or judicatory body. Hill says that various forms of the word "boast" appears in over fifty instances in St. Paul's letters. Hill says that bragging about one's attainments is the type of self-justification that St. Paul criticized by saying that if one is justified in Christ, one cannot make a claim to justify oneself. Hill said "to boast in one's attainments as if they were the basis for one's right standing, one's justification, is wrong. If is right, however, to 'boast' in God and by extension, in God's works."¹¹⁰

I contend that some amount of boasting by lay executives is necessary to facilitate the work that they are called to do. Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Raleigh serves 60,000 people per year regardless of faith tradition, or no faith tradition, with immigration services, counseling, emergency assistance, food distribution, and disaster relief. The staff are mostly social workers who feel called to this ministry because of their Christian faith. They are generally so humble that they do not want to do anything that smacks of self-promotion or self-congratulation. They

¹⁰⁹ Hill, Craig, ix.

¹¹⁰ Hill, Craig, 92-94.

are encouraged to get the word out about the works of charity they are performing in the name of the Lord, but they are uncomfortable doing so because of their humility. However, it is necessary to get the word out about the work that is being done. The work of Catholic Charities is an evangelism tool (but not a proselytization avenue) for the unchurched, and in addition, if the word gets out about the good work being performed, it will inspire others with financial means to contribute so that even more good work can be done. The paradigm needs to be shifted, away from one of “boasting” to one of “celebrating the good work that God is enabling to be performed in our midst.” ¹¹¹

It is important for lay executives to “boast” of the accomplishments that are being made in the name of our Lord Jesus, even if they are the vessels through which those accomplishments are being made. It is important because the clergy need to know and need to see that the lay executives are using the resources that they oversee to serve clergy, the parishioners, and all of God’s people. If the clergy see that the lay executives are serving them and their constituencies, through data-driven evidence ¹¹², they are likely to be more cooperative with their initiatives. The clergy are not going to know the entirety of what is being done to serve them, their parishioners, and their communities unless they are told about it. One of the few ways they are going to be told about it is from the lay executives themselves. In this context, “boasting” can lead to more moral support from the clergy, more interest from the clergy in these initiatives, and it can lead to more financial support from the parishioners, over whom the clergy still have significant influence.

¹¹¹ Martin, O.F.M., Conv., August 3, 2019.

¹¹² Martin, O.F.M., Conv., August 3, 2019.

St. Paul says “We do not boast beyond limits, that is, in the labor of others, but our hope is that, as your faith increases, our sphere of action among you may be greatly enlarged, so that we may proclaim the good news in lands beyond you, without boasting of the work already done in someone else’s sphere of action. Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord. For it is not those who commend themselves that are approved, but those whom the Lord commends.”¹¹³ When lay judicatory executives “boast” to the clergy about the things that are being accomplished through the resources entrusted to them by God and God’s people, they are not boasting of their own actions, but are boasting in the Lord and in what the Lord is doing through them.¹¹⁴

4.9 Mental Toughness

Leaders have difficult and challenging roles, and mental toughness is a quality that virtually any leader presumably wants to embrace. Harvard Business Review addresses several characteristics that lead to mental toughness.

One is optimism. In a study about learned helplessness, there was a subset of people who, despite experiencing ongoing setbacks, do not lose their optimism. They view setbacks as temporary, localized, and things that can be changed. People who think in an optimistic manner are “immunized”, in a manner of speaking, against learned helplessness and giving up after failing in a task.¹¹⁵ At the same time, while resiliency comes from a nature that is optimistic, that works only in circumstances where optimism overshadows the reality at hand. Former prisoner of war Admiral Stockdale, who survived eight years of torture and imprisonment in Vietnam, said that the prisoners who did not make it out of the prison camps were the

¹¹³ 2 Corinthians 10:15-18.

¹¹⁴ Elmayan, Russell C. Duke Divinity School D.Min. New Testament Paper, Power in Weakness.

¹¹⁵ Harvard Business Review, On Mental Toughness, 27.

optimists.¹¹⁶ He said those who kept thinking they would be getting out by a certain date were disappointed so often that they died of a broken heart. Optimism is important, but when it comes to matters where the cold reality needs to be confronted, optimism may not be the best tactic, at least not in a vacuum.¹¹⁷

At the same time, when it comes to viewing the world, one can view difficult or challenging things through at least three lenses.¹¹⁸ The use of “realistic optimism” enables one to tell oneself about a most hopeful version of a specific set of circumstances without misrepresenting the facts. Doing so enables one to view a situation in the way that may serve one in the best manner. It allows one to act as if they were at their best.¹¹⁹ The use of the “reverse lens” allows one to view the world through the lens of the person who may be causing difficulty in a relationship. This ability to view the world through another person’s lens could prompt the other person to feel valued, and therefore could prompt them to behave in a better manner. It is often a feeling of insecurity that causes a person to behave inappropriately, and therefore mitigating that feeling of insecurity can have a positive impact.¹²⁰ Looking at events through the “long lens” allows one to look beyond current circumstances that may be difficult and instead try to consider what can be learned from this situation. Perhaps it is something that pushes one out of a comfort zone to something better. Perhaps something that seems terrible now will seem trivial when it is looked back upon at a future time.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Harvard Business Review Emotional Intelligence Series, Resilience, 11.

¹¹⁷ Harvard Business Review Emotional Intelligence Series, Resilience, 12.

¹¹⁸ Harvard Business Review Emotional Intelligence Series, Dealing with Difficult People, 52.

¹¹⁹ Harvard Business Review Emotional Intelligence Series, Dealing with Difficult People, 53.

¹²⁰ Harvard Business Review Emotional Intelligence Series, Dealing with Difficult People, 54.

¹²¹ Harvard Business Review Emotional Intelligence Series, Dealing with Difficult People, 55.

Another characteristic of mental toughness is resilience, which is the “capacity to respond quickly and constructively to crises.”¹²² This ability to turn a negative into a positive is key to survival in seemingly very difficult circumstances. Those who are resilient demonstrate that they can move quickly from analysis to action, and from thinking about the cause of the situation to the response to the situation, and they have a forward- thinking orientation.¹²³ Most research about resilience indicates that people who are resilient have three traits or characteristics – an acceptance of reality, a resolute believe that life is meaningful, and a genuine ability to improvise.¹²⁴

A third characteristic is the ability to realize that “your happiness is more important than righting injustices.” This does not mean that those of us in the church should not spend time righting injustices. Of course, we should do that, as a baseline expectation of what it means to live the Christian life. In the context of a lay person working at a Catholic diocese, lay executives are expected to give deference and respect to clergy, including referring to them as “Father” even though they are “co-workers in the vineyard” with the clergy. However, if one is a victim of particularly bad or inappropriate behavior, that behavior should be confronted and called out in a timely manner that is close in proximity to when the bad behavior occurred. The message should be “Don’t mess with me, it won’t be worth your effort.”¹²⁵ In my own experience, I have been unpleasantly surprised on a number of occasions when a member of the clergy with whom I thought I had an excellent personal relationship would blindside me with an inappropriate question at a public meeting or who would make a statement that was either false or

¹²² Harvard Business Review, On Mental Toughness, 77.

¹²³ Harvard Business Review, On Mental Toughness, 78.

¹²⁴ Harvard Business Review, Emotional Intelligence Series, Resilience, 10.

¹²⁵ Harvard Business Review, Emotional Intelligence Series, Dealing with Difficult People, 63.

questionable as to its accuracy. On those occasions, I followed up immediately after the event with those individuals on a one on one basis, letting them know of my displeasure with what they did. I would usually refer to our friendship and would express my puzzlement that they would say what they said in a public meeting, in a manner that caught me by surprise. The results have typically been mixed. On some occasions, the person in question was aghast after seeing the circumstances through my lens and they took actions to repair the damage, to the extent that was possible. On other occasions, there was no apology rendered, but the follow up seemed to dissuade further inappropriate actions – apparently, it caused the person to think twice before they did something like this again. There have been some rare circumstances where there the follow up did not result in a change in behavior, but because the follow up may have changed future behavior in most circumstances, it was well worth it. Once again, one must decide which battles are worth fighting, as one cannot be seen as thin-skinned or unable to accept challenging questions.

In the ministry context which is the focus of this doctoral thesis, one must pick and choose what battles are worth fighting. It means that when an injustice happens in a work or ministerial setting, especially where there may be a double standard applied to the behavior of a clergy vs. a lay executive, there is no value to trying to expend energy on “righting that wrong” or in taking the behavior personally. The double standard is not going to change in the short term, and any energy devoted to being upset at this “wrong” is going to be energy wasted. It is better, in my opinion, to not take it personally, put it aside and move forward on things that have a better chance of being changed. My experience is that those executives who are not successful in the church judicatory setting are those who expend significant energy and frustration on these areas where perceived injustices in treatment between clergy and lay

executives are present. A similar, and fourth characteristic, is that “you can’t control what happens, just how you respond.”¹²⁶ Many lay executives who come to work for a church judicatory are used to having positions where they have more control over those which whom they interact. When dealing with tenured clergy, there are times when it will not be possible to control how they respond or what they do. In circumstances such as this, the only control a lay executive has is to be able to focus on the things he or she has the power to control. Responding to perceived slights or differences in privilege will only lead to a dead end. The only control one has in a circumstance such as this is to control their own reaction and to control what is within their ability to control.

4.10 Forgiveness

As a Christian, one of the central tenets of my faith is that of forgiveness. If we expect God to forgive us for our many trespasses, we must forgive those who trespass against us. It is what Our Lord Jesus has called us to do. Personally, while I intellectually acknowledge this central tenet of the faith and while I intellectually agree with it, I struggle with being able to practice it in every circumstance, even though I know that is what I am called to and I know I would be better for it if I could practice it more often.

As a lay executive ministering in a judicatory setting, my colleagues and I have encountered more than our share of behaviors that are inappropriate, including by those who have a vocation to serve the Lord. We have also encountered circumstances where those who have perpetrated that behavior have not been held fully accountable for it. That behavior can range from boorish conduct, to attempted public humiliation in meetings, to extreme examples

¹²⁶ Harvard Business Review, On Mental Toughness, 104.

of clergy who have betrayed their vows of chastity. Some of my lay colleagues cannot get beyond their frustration of the lack of accountability of clergy, especially when they engage in behavior that would result in a lay person being fired. While this behavior cannot be condoned, there is little that a lay executive who has no formal authority can do about it. In this case, the lay executive, for his or her own good, must find a way to “let go of the past”. Marshall Goldsmith calls forgiveness “letting go of the hope for a better past.”¹²⁷ While never condoning the egregious behavior, the past is not going to change – it is not going to get better. It is crucial to let go of the hope for a better past to move forward with addressing the tasks at hand.

As the sacraments have such a central focus in the Christian tradition in general and in particular in the Catholic tradition, with its emphasis on seven sacraments and the role of the priest in the exercise of sacramental ministry, perhaps there is a way to periodically publicly and ritually celebrate a dynamic of forgiveness between lay executives and clergy. Doing so could help name some of the egregious behavior on both sides and could lead to a recognition of the humanity, flawed and gifted as it is, in both groups, and could conceivably lead to better working relationships.¹²⁸

4.11 Use of Praise and Warmth

Praise of another person can create positive relationships and can positively impact relationships that may have gone awry. Praise can result in relaxing negativity that is felt by a person with whom you have a working relationship. It should be that one values what the person is doing and what that person feels is important.¹²⁹ In my own ministry, I try to offer

¹²⁷ Goldsmith, 114.

¹²⁸ Martin, O.F.M., Conv., August 3, 2019.

¹²⁹ Harvard Business Review, Influence and Persuasion, 18.

unsolicited praise to clergy where appropriate, as it shows the clergy that I am thinking of them, appreciative of their efforts, and to the extent possible, am “in the trenches with them”.

Similarly, research has shown that the foundation for leadership and influence is based upon warmth. It enables ideas to be communicated and absorbed. It facilitates trust. Even a smile or a gesture can show another person that you are present to them and to their concerns. Warmth helps one to connect with those they serve and lead, showing that they are heard and understood.¹³⁰

While not praise or warmth per se, the Arbinger Institute theorizes that those people who are inspirational, who are respected, who are well liked, and who have had positive influences upon others are people who make others feel seen and feel as though they matter. When the reality is that others do indeed matter, this is known as an outward mindset.¹³¹ It is a way of viewing the world that is beyond seeing just oneself, but also seeing into the needs of another person.¹³² I submit that in working with clergy, it is crucial that lay executives have an outward mindset. Requests based upon the need of the lay executive are more likely to fall upon deaf ears if they are perceived or based solely upon the executive’s needs. The mindset and the paradigm should be shifted so that it is focused on the needs of the clergy, while still focusing on the overall objective. Even if there is not an immediate positive response to this shift in paradigm, the lay executive should not wait until those whom they serve change in kind. It is important for the lay executive to shift his or her outlook, even if the clergy whom they serve

¹³⁰ Harvard Business Review, Leadership Presence, 40-41.

¹³¹ Arbinger Institute, The Outward Mindset, ix.

¹³² Arbinger Institute, The Outward Mindset, x.

do not change their outlook. ¹³³ The most important step is to begin to act in a way that one wants others to act. ¹³⁴

While management and leadership theory would say that much of a lay executive's role should be strategic and proactive in nature, the lived reality in the church world, especially in recent times within the Catholic Church, is that diocesan and judicatory officials spend a significant amount of time reacting to problems and putting out fires. When a phone call comes in from someone alleging misconduct on behalf of a member of the clergy, or any church employee for that matter, most everything comes to a screeching halt so that this crisis can be addressed.

This stands in stark contrast to the *Influence Pyramid*, as described in the Arbinger Institute's *The Anatomy of Peace*. The *Influence Pyramid* contains six levels, with only the top and smallest level devoted to correction or dealing with things that are going wrong. The other levels of the pyramid, starting with the lowest and largest are "getting out of the box and obtaining a heart of peace", "building relationships with those who are influential", "building relationships", "listening and learning", and "teaching and communicating." ¹³⁵ The most time and effort should be spent at the lower levels of the pyramid – building relationships and actively helping things to go right rather than stepping in to correct things that have gone wrong. ¹³⁶ Eighty percent of success in learning from others is related to how well one listens. Based upon the hierarchy in the *Influence Pyramid*, failure or success is secured before any action is taken. ¹³⁷

¹³³ Arbinger Institute, *The Outward Mindset*, 160.

¹³⁴ Arbinger Institute, *The Outward Mindset*, 96.

¹³⁵ Arbinger Institute, *The Anatomy of Peace*, 218.

¹³⁶ Arbinger Institute, *The Anatomy of Peace*, 221.

¹³⁷ Goldsmith, 147.

4.12 Bridging the Conservative/Liberal, Traditional/Progressive Divide

The Church is experiencing the same polarization that is present in our society today. Some clergy are conservative or traditional when it comes to church teaching and social mores, and others are more liberal or progressive. As is the case in broader society, conservative or traditional clergy can look at the same set of facts or circumstances as liberal or progressive clergy, and each group can come to a different conclusion because they see the circumstances through their own lens.

The phenomena of drawing vastly different conclusions from the same circumstance was dramatically shown in a photo elicitation study I performed as part of an Analysis class in the Doctor of Ministry Program at Duke Divinity School. I analyzed the reactions of participants in the study to photographs of the exterior and interior of various Catholic churches, some showing a very traditional church design and others showing contemporary designs. One of the interesting conclusions of the study was that minimalist church designs resonated positively with inactive and marginal Catholics, while those types of designs had a strong negative reaction to traditional, dyed-in-the-wool Catholics. Another interesting conclusion from the study was that almost without exception, inactive and marginal Catholics as well as traditional and involved Catholics resonated with traditional exteriors of churches.¹³⁸

What does this have to do with the subject matter of this thesis? It shows clearly that there is a significant divide in the church, as there is in society. People of good will are going to look at the same set of facts and come to different conclusions. Lay executives are going to be

¹³⁸ Elmayan, Duke Divinity School Analysis Class – Photo Elicitation on Catholic Church Architecture and Design.

working with clergy of all theological and ecclesiological persuasions. While they may have their own views on theological and ecclesiological matters, they must be able to work with, serve, and support clergy of all differing perspectives. If they are perceived as being in or supporting “one camp” to the exclusion of “the other camp”, they will be compromised in their ability to serve *all* the clergy. While the lay official can certainly have his or her own personal options on theological or ecclesiological issues, if they are perceived as pushing an “agenda” in favor of the liberal or conservative camp, or the progressive or traditional camp, they will be compromised in their ability to serve and lead the clergy.

4.13 Leading with Raw Intelligence, Emotional Intelligence, and a Decency Quotient

The Dean of the Fuqua School of Business at Duke University is charged with developing leaders of organizations who can become “leaders of consequence.” He claims that to do this, leaders must have IQ (raw intelligence), EQ (emotional intelligence), and DQ (decency quotient). When it comes to IQ, a leader must have competence to be effective in their roles. When it comes to EQ, leaders must be sensitive to the emotions, feelings, and emotional states of others. Leaders also must be able to modulate their own emotions to be able to effectively connect with those they lead. When it comes to DQ, a leader must show they are interested in others and interested in their success. People need a DQ so that those they lead will trust and respect them. ¹³⁹

In many ways, those serving and leading clergy without having formal authority must have adequate levels of IQ, EQ, and DQ. If the clergy are to respect and cooperate with the lay executives, those executives must show that they are credible, which is why it is so crucial to

¹³⁹ Lebowitz, 1-4.

have a high standard of accuracy and competency in their work (IQ). Lay officials will work with clergy on many stressful and emotion-laden matters, and in circumstances such as these, they will need to have a keen sensitivity to the emotions and emotional states of the clergy with whom they work as well as to their own emotions (EQ). Lay executives will gain credibility and support from clergy if they clearly show, by their actions, that they are interested in the clergy and in the success of the clergy (DQ).

CHAPTER 5 – Literature and Professional Research on Leading Outside of Formal Authority

5.1 Leading from Behind

One counterintuitive philosophy is the concept of *leading from behind*. This concept flies in the face of what we typically read about iron jawed leaders who issue orders and directives and take no prisoners. Linda Hill, in her article *Leading From Behind* in the Harvard Business Review, quotes Nelson Mandela as saying that a great leader is like a shepherd – “he stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble go out ahead, whereupon the others follow, not realizing that all along they are being directed from behind.”¹ Pope Francis takes this to the next step and says that pastors should be shepherds who have the smell of the sheep.² Pamela McLean, in her article on *The Art of Leading from Behind in Our Coaching*, quotes from *Building the Bridge as you Walk on It* by Quinn, saying “telling is not as effective in situations requiring significant behavior change because it is based on a narrow, cognitive view of human systems. It fails to incorporate values, attitudes, and feelings. While people may understand why they should change, they are often not willing to make the painful changes that are necessary. When the target of change begins to resist, the change agent often becomes frustrated and turns to an even more directive strategy.”³

In my own ministry, I encountered an example of this phenomena. In the wake of the clergy sexual misconduct crisis and scandal in the church, I believed a possible next scandal could be a financial scandal that could pop up in our parishes. At the time, the diocese did not require financial audits to be performed at parishes. I proposed to the then bishop and the main clergy advisory body that the diocese begin requiring audits at parishes so that any financial

¹ Hill, 1.

² Reamer, O.F.M., July 14, 2019.

³ McLean, 2.

irregularities would be more likely to be caught, exposed, and addressed and rectified. I had an immediate negative response from the clergy, and the bishop at the time, who was a huge supporter of mine, was visibly upset with me for making the proposal. As Ron Heifetz said in his book *Leadership on the Line*, “you appear dangerous to people when you question their values, beliefs, or habits of a lifetime. You place yourself on the line when you tell people what they need to hear rather than what they want to hear.”⁴ Heifetz said “people cannot see at the beginning of the adaptive process that the new situation will be any better than the current condition. What they do see clearly is the potential for loss. People frequently avoid painful adjustments in their lives if they can postpone them, place the burden on someone else, or call someone to the rescue.”⁵ In this case, the clergy likely perceived a loss of autonomy and loss of authority if the audits were conducted in their parishes, so it was a painful adjustment that was being proposed. Heifetz says that when one has a high- quality argument, there is a likelihood that it will result in an internal contradiction within those who may be impacted by a proposal, and he says this will cause conflicts and can result in efforts that are seen to “restore order”. He says that a leader who prompts a formal leader to address a problem through a controversial proposal can expect that formal leader to “strike back”, not because of a personal opposition to the proposal but because of pressure from the community to “maintain equilibrium.” Heifetz says in circumstances such as this, the formal leader may be sympathetic to what is being proposed. However, given the expectations of the other stakeholders (in this case, the clergy), even repackaging the proposal in a way that resonates more with the formal leader will likely

⁴ Heifetz, *Leadership on the Line*, 12.

⁵ Heifetz, *Leadership on the Line*, 13.

not be successful. ⁶ This is apparently exactly what happened in the ministry example cited above.

After licking my wounds for a few months, I came to realize that I was proposing a significant change, which did not address the feelings and attitudes that the clergy may have. The clergy were worried that audits were going to uncover practices at the parishes that, while not fraudulent, would have made them look bad, and so they had an immediate visceral negative reaction. I made the mistake of treating the adaptive challenge of beginning parish financial audits as if it was a technical problem to be solved with analytics and protocols and procedures. ⁷ I needed to first engage the clergy to change their expectations and frame of reference before proposing a technical solution. ⁸ I needed to bring the clergy along by taking actions in smaller steps rather than in one large step. Ron Heifetz, in his book *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, quoted President Lyndon Johnson as saying “Congress is like a whiskey drinker. You can put an awful lot of whiskey into a man if you just let him sip it. But if you try to force the whole bottle down his throat at one time, he’ll throw it up.” ⁹

After doing some back-channel consultation about this with some of the clergy I trusted and respected, I reformulated the proposal so that the audits would take place upon clergy transfers from one parish to another. This proposal garnered the necessary support, because clergy who were coming to a new parish wanted to have an audit so that they knew what they were walking into and so that any problems would be identified from the outset. In the years since this implementation, the audits are well accepted, every parish is now audited every two

⁶ Heifetz, *Leadership on the Line*, 228.

⁷ Heifetz, *Leadership on the Line*, 14.

⁸ Heifetz, *Leadership on the Line*, 15.

⁹ Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, 246.

years, and surprisingly and counterintuitively, the auditor is one of the most well liked and well-respected employees by the clergy. As Marshall Goldsmith writes, “the best ideas are like great wines. They improve with age. But they can also go through a dumb period when they need time to settle and sink in.”¹⁰

Seeing things through the eyes of another person is crucial if we want to change behavior.¹¹ Deferring judgment about what seems to be a bad idea is important because sometimes even bad ideas can have aspects of them that are good. What first seems like a bad idea has within it the promise of something good.¹² It is often important to step back, ask questions, and reframe the playing field. Promulgating facts, force, and fear typically does not result in change. Instead, it is crucial to discern whether the key question has been properly framed, reframe those questions when necessary, and frame them in a way that will obtain the best results.¹³

Goldsmith also writes in *What Got You Here Won't Get You Here*, “every project goes through seven phases: The first is assessing the situation, the second is isolating the problem, the third is formulating. But there are three more phases before you get to the seventh, implementation.” In my ministry example, I clearly addressed these first three phases in my proposal. Goldsmith says that phases four, five, and six are just as important in creating buy-in from various constituencies to plans and proposals, and I did not address those phases. Phase four is “wooing up – getting your superiors to approve.” I did not do that. Phase five is “wooing laterally – to get your peers to agree.” I suppose in this context the clergy were closest to peers.

¹⁰ Goldsmith, 144.

¹¹ Jones, 104.

¹² Riel and Martin, 55-56.

¹³ Duke Divinity School Strategy Class Web Ex, May 15, 2018.

I did not woo them either. Phase six is “wooing down – getting direct reports to accept.”¹⁴ In this case, my direct reports were on board, so that was not necessary. Phase seven is implementation. In my ministry example, I clearly skipped phases four and five, which is why I believe the proposal initially failed.

5.2 Role of Informal Leaders

As a lay executive does not have direct authority over clergy ministering in a Catholic diocese, it is necessary that the lay executive lead in informal ways. Marcia Smart, in her doctoral thesis on *The Role of Informal Leaders in Organizations: The Hidden Organizational Asset*, writes that the relationship networks that are formed across organizational lines is the “central nervous system” which impacts thoughts, actions, and reactions of an organization.¹⁵ Smart says that informal leaders are taking over roles previously held by formal leaders, and those informal leaders who can transform the organization are ones who take prudent risks, express belief in others, display sensitivity to others’ needs, and are open to learning from their experiences. They are typically operating within the existing social structure of an organization.¹⁶

Trust is a key aspect of leadership. At its core, trust consists of vulnerability, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness.¹⁷ Trust is “built by achieving results with integrity and in a manner that shows real personal regard for the people with whom you work.”¹⁸ One aspect of authority is related to power - that power which exists when one party has the other party’s

¹⁴ Goldsmith, 144.

¹⁵ Smart, 2.

¹⁶ Smart, 4.

¹⁷ Smart, 19.

¹⁸ Smart, 20.

trust. It is a power granted by one party because the behavior of the other party has earned that trust. While it may seem that this authority may not be strong or lasting, it can be very strong as it is freely offered and received. ¹⁹

Because informal leaders do not have the same authority and power over those with whom they interact, they must lead with different characteristics than formal leaders. ²⁰ Informal leaders often nurture relationships and connections with others. They typically have earned credibility and respect from those with whom they interact. ²¹ They can act as a bridge between the formal leader and the others within the organization because they can understand and communicate both perspectives. ²² An informal leader is a key person in the organization, one who is typically quite knowledgeable. ²³ All leadership is relational. A leader's power and effectiveness is a function of that leader's relations and interactions with a particular group of people with whom he or she interacts. ²⁴

Some of the key traits that have been identified for informal leaders include open, direct, and honest feedback. In addition, empathy and understanding of others and their challenges are very important characteristics. ²⁵ Breadth and depth of knowledge is crucial, as is credibility ²⁶ and the ability to achieve results ²⁷. On a practical basis, an informal leader is a de

¹⁹ Wilson, S.J., Church Leadership, 56.

²⁰ Smart, 25.

²¹ Smart, 26.

²² Smart, 62.

²³ Smart, 63.

²⁴ Wilson, S.J., Church Leadership, 55.

²⁵ Smart, 63.

²⁶ Smart, 64.

²⁷ Smart, 65.

facto extension of the formal leader, as they have power and influence that their peers recognize, and they are therefore sought out for guidance by others in the organization.²⁸

Informal leaders are people who can and who wish to exert influence within the organization. One way in which they do this is to have a breadth to their viewpoint, especially as it relates to the overall organization.²⁹ Informal leaders speak up and speak the courage of their convictions.³⁰ They can work with differing personalities and differing functional areas. They can understand and “speak the language” of differing groups within the organization. This ability allows them to build strong relationships across various parts of the organization, which gives them access to information and resources that others may not otherwise have.³¹

Another key characteristic of an informal leader is approachability, which results in those they work with having a level of comfort interacting with them.³² When one is approachable, they are willing to listen to others and express concern about a problem that may not be directly related to their own area of responsibility.³³ Open-mindedness, including working through conflict and differing opinions, is also an aspect of approachability in informal leaders.³⁴

Integrity is a key behavior exhibited by informal leaders. To have integrity, one must have actions that match their words. Integrity must be built over time, and it is interrelated to credibility and the building of respect and trust. If one does not know an answer, it is much better to say so rather than to risk being seen as disingenuous by providing an answer that is not

²⁸ Smart, 66.

²⁹ Smart, 70.

³⁰ Smart, 71.

³¹ Smart, 72.

³² Smart, 72.

³³ Smart, 73.

³⁴ Smart, 73.

accurate.³⁵ People of integrity will provide unvarnished feedback, and they will provide difficult news when warranted.³⁶ This behavior leads to respect, which is key for an informal leader, since informal leaders cannot force those they lead to follow them. Those who are led by an informal leader follow the informal leader because of their respect for that person, not because of the formal authority that is wielded over them.³⁷

Informal leaders are often extensions of the formal leader³⁸, especially with the increasing span of control and reporting that formal leaders have in organizations today.³⁹ In a typical Catholic Diocese of medium size, the diocesan bishop may have well over 100 clergy who report directly to him, along with numerous diocesan executives. Given the wide span of oversight of a diocesan bishop, informal leaders can bridge communication gaps between the bishop and the clergy⁴⁰, especially when trying to interpret how decisions made from above may impact a specific member of the clergy.⁴¹

In summary, top characteristics of informal leaders are integrity, competency, a sense of direction, enthusiasm, and positivity. Other characteristics include the ability to build and maintain strong relationships, to build trust which is the foundation of leadership, to admit mistakes, and to garner respect, which is built by making sound decisions and putting the organization and its employees ahead of any personal gain or agenda.⁴²

³⁵ Smart, 76.

³⁶ Smart, 74.

³⁷ Smart, 75.

³⁸ Smart, 92.

³⁹ Smart, 93.

⁴⁰ Smart, 91.

⁴¹ Smart, 92.

⁴² Smart, 119.

5.3 Second Chair Leadership

In their book *Leading from the Second Chair*, Mike Bonem and Roger Patterson write about the second chair leader, who is “a person in a subordinate role whose influence with others adds value to the organization.” A lay executive in a Catholic diocese, and perhaps in any hierarchical judicatory, even a senior lay executive is, by definition, a second chair leader, and by default the first chair leader is the bishop or someone serving in a similar role. These lay executives do not have formal authority over the clergy, as the clergy ultimately are accountable to the bishop. However, those lay executives have a significant amount of responsibility without formal authority. Bonem writes that leadership from a second chair position is unique since it is not based fully on the power and authority given to a position in the organizational leadership. People in these roles succeed because they exert influence in the organization rather than issuing orders that are expected to be followed.⁴³ They succeed because they exert influence and build and maintain relationships. In many ways, they are servant leaders.⁴⁴ Those who successfully carry out these roles add value for the benefit of others and the organization, and they influence without having formal authority. Bonem equates this form of leadership to what Jesus modeled.⁴⁵ Bonem says that to succeed as a second chair leader, “the right relationship is everything.”⁴⁶ In addition, while traits such as competence, interpersonal skills and integrity are important, perhaps the top attribute for a successful second chair leader is trust.⁴⁷ Trust is built over time, and that process cannot be rushed.⁴⁸

⁴³ Bonem, 2.

⁴⁴ Bonem, 3.

⁴⁵ Bonem, 7.

⁴⁶ Bonem, 34.

⁴⁷ Bonem, 35.

⁴⁸ Bonem, 37.

Bonem says that successful leaders use influence that is developed from strong relationships and wise decisions.⁴⁹ Second chair leaders need to have credibility with those they serve, they need to be consistent in their service, and they need to be trusted by those with whom they interact and serve.⁵⁰ Leadership is relational, and second chair leaders must be excellent with the development and maintenance of relationships. Those relationships must be fostered with and built upon integrity, following through on commitments, and exhibiting genuine care for those who are served. Successful people, regardless of the organizations they serve and lead, place a high emphasis on personal relationships.⁵¹

Bonem said that successful second chair leaders must add value to the organization and to those they serve.⁵², and cites several “t’s” that are traits or circumstances that can contribute to the success of a second chair leader. Those traits and circumstances include title, tenure, timing, talent, (personal) touch, temperament, and tenacity.⁵³

Second chair leaders have key choices and decisions to make. First, they must see things through a leadership lens, keeping the needs of the overall organization in mind. Second, they must maximize major opportunities that stretch them in their leadership role and in their ability to serve the organization. A third key choice is to not back down from the right decision, even if it is not an easy decision and even if it is a difficult circumstance.⁵⁴

One example of this occurred somewhat early on in my own ministry career at the diocese. At that point, I was probably the third chair, as the bishop was clearly the first chair and

⁴⁹ Bonem, 12.

⁵⁰ Bonem, 13.

⁵¹ Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, 75.

⁵² Bonem, 15.

⁵³ Bonem, 19.

⁵⁴ Bonem, 22.

another member of the clergy was the second chair (and who was known to have a temper and he also was known to have great influence in the diocese), and I was the third chair, reporting to the second chair. Then, as now, one of the clearest duties of a person in my role is to provide excellent service to the clergy in the diocese. The second chair came to one of my staff members who oversaw the payroll department and demanded that a priest, serving from a foreign country without proper documentation to be paid to work in the United States, be paid. My staff member came to me and said if she paid this priest it would be against the law, and she asked me for direction. I thought it would be a very slippery slope if anyone on my staff felt they could be intimidated to do something illegal, so I backed my staff member up and told the second chair I would not be forcing my staff member to write the check. The second chair demanded that the check be written by 2:00 PM that afternoon. At that point I knew I could not back down from the right decision. I told him I would not do it and then I prepared myself mentally to possibly be fired. Fortunately, I had an opportunity to tell my side of the story in front of the bishop and the second chair, and the bishop backed me up. Ever since that time, neither my staff or I was again threatened by the second chair and I felt more respected by the second chair. It is somewhat of a paradox that while a great measure of success of someone in my role is service to the clergy, there are times when one must make a stand that will be perceived as not being service oriented, as there is a greater good involved.

5.4 Use of Negotiation Techniques

In their book *Getting to Yes*, Roger Fisher and William Ury, along with Bruce Patton of the Harvard Negotiation Project, address ways on how to arrive at negotiated agreements. This is something that is necessary as lay executives work with tenured clergy to arrive at mutually

acceptable solutions to various matters. Several key principles are set forth: First, do not bargain over positions held by each person. This tends to lock those people into their initial position ⁵⁵, and it results in attention not being devoted to the needs and concerns of each party. ⁵⁶ It can also negatively impact what must be a relationship that should be ongoing over time. ⁵⁷ In arriving at a negotiated solution that will be acceptable to all parties involved, there are several key principles.

First, is to “separate the people from the problem.” ⁵⁸ Negotiations are about problems and their solutions, but because people are involved as well, there are human beings who have human reactions and human feelings that need to be tended to. ⁵⁹

Second, is to “focus on interests, not positions”. ⁶⁰ Interests are what have initially resulted in the positions of each of the parties. If the focus remains on interests, it is possible that the positions can change if the interests can be addressed.

Third, is to “invent options for mutual gain.” ⁶¹ Options for agreement and mutual gain can be multiplied if premature judgment, searching for one answer, the assumption of a fixed universe of solutions, and thinking that the solution to the problem is only the responsibility of one of the parties are avoided. ⁶²

⁵⁵ Fisher, 4.

⁵⁶ Fisher, 5.

⁵⁷ Fisher, 6.

⁵⁸ Fisher, 17.

⁵⁹ Fisher, 19.

⁶⁰ Fisher, 40.

⁶¹ Fisher, 56.

⁶² Fisher, 57.

Fourth, it is to “insist on using objective criteria.”⁶³ That means to somehow have a negotiation that does not depend on the desire of either side.⁶⁴ This means there should be agreement by both parties on the principles which will be involved in the negotiation. This part could be challenging in some circumstances in the executive-clergy dynamic, as there could be different threshold views between the executive and the clergy, as in the example used early in this paper about the clergy who did not want to be held to operating at a balanced budget if it meant that he was helping souls to be saved.

Fisher has a subsection of the book titled “What if They Won’t Play.”⁶⁵ This piqued my interest because of the tenured nature of clergy in several traditions, who do not have to “play” and who cannot easily be prodded or coerced to “play.” Fisher talks of the “one text procedure”⁶⁶, where a third party develops a proposal for both parties to react to and change and eventually agree upon. While in my ministry, bringing in a third party would typically not be a viable option (because I am clearly expected to be able to find a way to solve these problems on my own together with the clergy), I have successfully used a derivation of this technique in the past. On many occasions, I have worked with a pastor of a parish which had a problem that needed to be solved, and it would have reflected poorly on both me and the clergy for us to throw up our hands and delegate the solution of the problem upward to the bishop. In those cases, I would often tell the pastor that it would be much better for both of us to be able to say that we rolled up our sleeves, worked together, and developed a proposed solution that we both supported. This way, the bishop does not have a problem delegated upward for him to

⁶³ Fisher, 81.

⁶⁴ Fisher, 82.

⁶⁵ Fisher, 107.

⁶⁶ Fisher, 112.

solve, both the pastor and I are invested in the solution to the problem, and the ultimate resolution of the problem is surprise-free to both parties. This is the type of win-win solution that I believe works best in circumstances such as the one described here.

5.5 Role of Leader Tenure on Proactiveness in Religious Organizations

One area that warrants further exploration is the role of tenure of a leader in a religious organization. David Fritz and Nabil Ibrahim addressed this in an empirical study reported in the *Review of Business*. They found that leaders with less tenure need more time to develop their power and their power base. Not surprisingly, the amount of power that can be wielded increases as the amount of time the leader spends in the organization also increases.⁶⁷

Proactiveness is easier with a knowledge of the environment within which the organization operates, which is typically acquired by leaders with longer periods of tenure. While this is the case with most organizations, this condition is even more evident in religious organizations, which develop protocols that can be quite difficult to change. Leaders in religious organizations with short periods of tenure in the organization may find it difficult to foster the trust that may be required to proactively make changes that impact the organization. Trust is built by demonstrating behaviors such as integrity, competence, and altruistic behavior.⁶⁸

This research seems to indicate that it takes time for leaders in religious organizations to build credibility, trust, and power. For informal leaders, and those who must lead without formal authority, it seems that it takes time to build trust, credibility, and integrity; all of which

⁶⁷ Fritz and Ibrahim, 6.

⁶⁸ Fritz and Ibrahim, 7.

seem to be very important in fostering that ability to lead. This means that one should expect that a new denominational or judicatory executive needs to have his or her feet on the ground for a period of time in order to build the relationships necessary to be successful in their ministry. This presumably flies in the face of the typical mode of operation of the usual “type A” leader, who wants to get things done yesterday and who has a strong bias for action.

5.6 Leading Outside of One’s Authority

In her article in Harvard’s School of Public Health’s publication on Executive and Continuing Professional Education, Erica Hersh writes of how formal authority is not the only type of influence that one can, or even should, exercise in an organization.⁶⁹ The success of managers in most organizations, including those of lay executives in the Church, is dependent upon those whom are out of one’s direct control, and therefore traditional modes of leadership do not apply if one is to motivate others to cooperate. The way that an informal leader can influence others to cooperate is both an art and a skill.⁷⁰

In writing about different types of professionals, Gil Rendle said “there is a critical difference between an expert and a deep generalist. An expert is one who digs deeply into his or her own field of enquiry or practice to master the complexity of that particular field.” He also writes about the difference between an expert and a deep generalist. “A deep generalist has a core expertise, a mastery of a central discipline that forms his or her work. In this sense, the deep generalist is also an expert. However, the deep generalist then supplements that core expertise with information and experience from other disciplines so that, living deeply within his

⁶⁹ Hersh, 1.

⁷⁰ Hersh, 2.

or her own core, he or she can look about across a wide plane to see things in a new and different way.”⁷¹ He writes that “experts can be dangerous when the only thing they bring is their own certainty, wanting others to understand their lives by looking into the world of the expert. The deep generalist, however, is of value because she or he is able to look at the same world that others are living in and help them see new things for themselves.”⁷² My experience is that those lay executives who are the most successful in working with the clergy are those who are the deep generalists – those who have a particular competency, but who also have taken the initiative to be invested in areas of expertise beyond their own based competencies. Those who do take that initiative are the ones who are most likely to have a view of a multiplicity of outcomes, of possible win-win situations, that may not be immediately apparent to those who are only invested in their own core expertise.

When one tries to influence others without having authority over them, one cannot be focused only on his or her own narrow silo, as that will impede the ability to network with others. One also must find a way to carve out time to build relationships, even when there is the day to day pressure of getting the specific job duties accomplished. One way to do this is by specifically carving out time to network with others within the organization, through things such as periodic lunch meetings with colleagues in other areas.⁷³ When I was in a corporate job at the headquarters of Denny’s Restaurants, there was a protocol there where those hired were from top MBA programs and they would be moved or promoted every 18 months. This led to a very collaborative environment, since someone who was going to be moved every 18 months had no turf to protect. In that environment, it was standard operating protocol for people to go

⁷¹ Rendle, 147.

⁷² Rendle, 148.

⁷³ Hersh, 2.

out to lunch with colleagues in other areas on a regular basis to foster learning and networking. Little did I know at the time that this was building influence in an environment where most of us were peers with each other. It would be excellent if the diocese were able to foster a similar dynamic, where there was more cross pollination between roles at parishes and the diocese, for both laity and clergy, and it could allow more opportunities for upward mobility for those in the parishes and it could add to the empathy that each group - clergy and laity, diocesan staff and parish staff - have for the roles and responsibilities and challenges of the other group.⁷⁴

I see similarities between this protocol and what may work well in a church setting. Judicatory executives need to build relationships and influence with the clergy, and one way to do this is to find ways to connect with them outside of times where something is being asked of them. These denominational executives need to be present at times and events that are important to the clergy, to meet them on their own turf, and to be perceived as being in solidarity with them.

Hersh lists several characteristics that should be in place for a person in an organization to be more influential:

- Establish relationships – when one has a personal relationship, there is a certain amount of human capital that is established, and it is easier to influence someone when one person trusts and respects the other.⁷⁵
- Leverage your existing power base – whether one has direct authority over someone, or whether one has a relationship with someone with direct authority over someone who

⁷⁴ Martin, O.F.M., Conv., August 3, 2019.

⁷⁵ Hersh, 4.

you may be trying to influence, these relationships can be leveraged to obtain information and get needed results. ⁷⁶

- Establish credibility – if you are to influence others, they must trust you and you must have earned their trust through your command of the facts and through your track record of results. ⁷⁷
- Understand and adapt to the working and social styles of others – people need to be met where they are at, and their working and social styles will have an impact on how you try to influence them. ⁷⁸
- Be a team player – help those who are outside of your direct authority when they need assistance. If you come to the aid of someone when they need your help, that person is more likely to assist you when you need their assistance. ⁷⁹
- Synthesize and simplify – by providing only the key information one needs to make their point, it will be easier to get the attention of those whom you are trying to influence. ⁸⁰
- Make your work speak for you – hard work does not necessarily get noticed on its own. There is nothing wrong with some self-promotion, so that your work is noticed and therefore positively impacts your influence in the organization. ⁸¹

5.7 Avoiding Self-Deception and Self-Betrayal

⁷⁶ Hersh, 4.

⁷⁷ Hersh, 4.

⁷⁸ Hersh, 5.

⁷⁹ Hersh, 5.

⁸⁰ Hersh, 5.

⁸¹ Hersh, 5.

At least in a diocesan setting, the tenured clergy are not going anywhere. Diocesan clergy have made a lifetime commitment to ministering in their diocese, and even clergy from religious orders, while they come and go, have an element of tenure that has implications on the working relationship between them and the lay executives at the diocesan offices. While I am sure that there are lay executives with whom the clergy do not enjoy working, the reality is that the lay executives are there to serve the clergy, not the other way around. This means that the lay executives will have times when they must work with clergy (and other lay staff members, for that matter) whom they find frustrating or with whom they find it difficult to work. In this setting, especially where there is little accountability with the clergy, the lay executive can experience disillusionment, frustration, and even demoralization. This can lead to the lay executive having an “us vs. them” attitude towards the clergy, it can lead to painting the clergy with a broad brush, and it can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies about clergy behavior and conduct in the work/ministry setting. St. Augustine said “We cannot see into the human heart nor bring it out into the open...” William Harmless quotes St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:5 as saying “Brothers and sisters, do not make any judgment before the appointed time, until the Lord comes, for He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness, and will manifest the heart’s motives, and then everyone will receive praise from God.”⁸²

The book *Leadership and Self-Deception* by the Arbing Institute refers to this behavior as “self-betrayal”, which “is an act contrary to what I should do for another.” When this happens, one starts to see the world in a way that justifies this behavior.⁸³ Trying to change others and trying to merely “cope” with others does not work well and does not result in the

⁸² Harmless, S.J., 91.

⁸³ Arbing Institute, *Leadership and Self-Deception*, 73.

desired results.⁸⁴ The best way to achieve results is when one changes themselves – changes their own behavior.⁸⁵ When one sees the world in a way that justifies their own perceptions of reality, their view of reality becomes distorted and this distortion is self-betrayal.⁸⁶ When one betrays themselves, they begin to tell themselves that their thoughts justify them in what they think or what they will do.⁸⁷ In cases such as this, one actually needs the other person to continue to be conducting themselves in a frustrating or inappropriate manner so that they can be justified in their perceptions of them.⁸⁸

This has implications on how lay executives should conduct themselves with clergy (or with anyone else for that matter). They should be focused on clergy and how to serve them, not on how the clergy may behave towards them. They need to have an outward focus rather than an inward focus, while being realistic about the reality of the circumstances they face. Lay executives should maintain a focus that most clergy want to do the right thing, and they should be wary of creating a self-fulfilling prophecy with clergy behavior where they almost need the frustrating behavior to justify their preconceived notions.

5.8 Basic Needs of Followers

If a lay executive is going to be successful in gaining cooperation from clergy and in encouraging clergy to follow their lead, it seems to me that the lay executive must be adept at

⁸⁴ Arbinger Institute, Leadership and Self-Deception, 136.

⁸⁵ Arbinger Institute, Leadership and Self-Deception, 138.

⁸⁶ Arbinger Institute, Leadership and Self-Deception, 77.

⁸⁷ Arbinger Institute, Leadership and Self-Deception, 73.

⁸⁸ Arbinger Institute, Leadership and Self-Deception, 160.

being able to meet the four basic needs of followers, which are trust, compassion, stability, and hope.⁸⁹

Trust, along with honesty, integrity, and respect, are key to the level of engagement from those who are being led.⁹⁰ One key to building trust is through authenticity, even if it means letting people see your flaws and even if it means delivering news that someone does not want to hear with candor and integrity.⁹¹ Those who are being led need to know that the person trying to lead them means what they say, says what they mean, does not sugar coat bad news, tries to employ win-win scenarios, and has the best interests at heart of those who are being led.

Followers need to see compassion, along with caring and friendship, exhibited by those who are leading them.⁹² As it relates to lay executives leading clergy, I submit that those successful lay executives are ones who make a point of trying to understand the challenges the clergy face at a local parish level, showing compassion and empathy to the issues the clergy face, celebrating their successes and being in solidarity with them in their challenges.

Followers need to see stability in those who are leading them.⁹³ Key aspects of stability are transparency, support, and reassurance. Lay executives can create stability by being open with information about the state of the diocese and other parishes. When they provide answers to questions and requests from assistance from pastors, they create stability. When they reassure pastors that they will walk with them in the challenges they face in their role of overseeing a parish, this creates stability.

⁸⁹ Clifton, *Strengths Based Leadership*, 82.

⁹⁰ Clifton, *Strengths Based Leadership*, 83.

⁹¹ Clifton, *Strengths Based Leadership*, 84.

⁹² Clifton, *Strengths Based Leadership*, 85.

⁹³ Clifton, *Strengths Based Leadership*, 87.

Followers need to instill hope in those who they lead.⁹⁴ While they need to be truthful and give answers with candor, leaders also need to give those whom they lead something to hang on to, something to help them through a web of complexities that may seem to cloud the future. In practical terms, this may mean that a lay executive helps a pastor serving in a small mission parish, which cannot sustain itself, by giving that parish a grant so that it can maintain its operations for another year. It may mean that the lay executive provides metrics to a pastor that the pastor can use to show the parishioners that their per person giving is below those of other parishes with less favorable economic demographics. It can mean just being a steady, calming voice when a pastor calls, voicing a concern or a problem, needing a roadmap for use in solving the problem and moving forward.

Christopher Beeley, in his book *Leading God's People – Wisdom from the Early Church for Today*, says “any leader who exhorts people to repent of their sins without having first established this relationship of love, trust, and care is committing an act of cruelty.”⁹⁵ While lay executives would rarely be “exhorting clergy to repent of their sins”, they do have many instances where they are working with clergy who may have mismanaged something at their parish, or in their personal lives, and if the lay executive is going to have any credibility with the clergy whom they serve, they need to have established a relationship of trust and care.

⁹⁴ Clifton, *Strengths Based Leadership*, 89.

⁹⁵ Beeley, 72.

CHAPTER SIX – CLOSING THOUGHTS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Closing Thoughts

While this doctoral thesis was being written, the author received a letter from every one of the six members of the parish finance council at one of the parishes in the Diocese of Raleigh. The members all resigned, under protest, effective immediately. The members had been raising concerns over the past two years about their relationship with the pastor and about what they reported as practices by the pastor that were not in compliance with diocesan protocols and with typical prudent business and management practice. They reported they were not being given access to the information necessary to give their best advice to the pastor.⁹⁶ Not surprisingly, later that same day, the pastor issued a response, stating he was upset that the letter went to a diocesan official and not to him, rebutting much of what was in the original letter, and referring to the accusations in the letter as “calumny, defamation, and malicious gossip.”⁹⁷ This presents a challenge in trying to determine the veracity of the competing claims. The diocesan financial auditor was asked to meet with the pastor and then with the former parish finance council members, obtain further information, and then weigh in on the veracity of these competing claims. However, these competing claims present another challenge for a lay diocesan official. The reality of the situation is that while the lay parishioners will come and go, the clergy, at least the diocesan clergy who are ordained to serve a specific diocese for their entire ministerial career, are here for life. One should assume that the letters have been or will be shared with other members of the clergy, and the clergy will be watching how the diocese

⁹⁶ Letter to Russell Elmayan from Parish Finance Council, June 10, 2019.

⁹⁷ Letter to Russell Elmayan from Pastor regarding the Parish Finance Council, June 10, 2019.

responds. If the lay diocesan executive is seen as siding against the clergy, the executive will need to have ample evidence that the pastor was in the wrong.

While in the Catholic tradition, a pastor is required to listen to, but not necessarily accept, the advice of the parish finance council, a mass resignation such as this is, at a minimum, an indication of a major communication problem between pastor and parishioner advisors, and it could be an indication of something more concerning. This mass resignation will certainly not engender a sense of trust and confidence of the parishioners in the pastoral leadership of the parish. Yet, since this pastor has been appointed for a six-year canonical term, there is very little in the short term that the diocesan Chief Financial Officer, or even the bishop, can do to intervene and reset the course of things at the parish. This is yet another example of the challenge of working with clergy without having authority over them. Clearly, the members of the parish finance council who sent this letter were asking for assistance and intervention by the diocese. While the diocese can meet with the pastor, get the pastor's side of the story, and attempt to mediate a resolution to this matter, the diocese cannot order the pastor to change his mode of operation and the diocese cannot say "change, or else." There is no "or else", at least not within the six-year period of a canonical appointment.

Based upon the research referenced in this doctoral thesis, and given the reality of tenure for Catholic clergy, what options would the parish finance council members have in this case? As the members are volunteers and not paid employees, they may not have the same incentive to do what it takes to make the relationship work between the pastor and themselves that a paid employee would have, but if they did have that incentive, what options would they have? The burden to make the relationship work would be on the parish finance council members, as the pastor has tenure and they do not. The parish finance council could try to

utilize empathy in dealing with the pastor, trying to place themselves in the pastor's shoes, and trying to see how they could best help the pastor and make the pastor's life easier. They could have tried to cultivate a personal relationship with the pastor, thereby diffusing some of the obvious tension that is in place. They could try to implement an "I'll scratch my back if you scratch mine" incentive-based system based on the science of reciprocity. They could have tried to improve on their credibility with the pastor, which is partly based on the establishment of trust, which clearly was lacking on both sides of this relationship. They could have tried to praise the pastor for things that the pastor did that were positive or effective. They could have tried to practice forgiveness, as there were clearly many perceived injustices that led to this mass resignation. In this case, since they were attempting to have the pastor follow their advice, the pastor was essentially in the role of the follower. The parish finance council members could have tried to address the four basic needs of followers, which are trust, compassion, stability, and hope. If those needs of the pastor were being adequately addressed, it seems unlikely that things would have boiled over as they did. In any case, unfair as it may be or seem, in this case the burden is on the lay members of the parish finance council to find a way to make the relationship work, as they have no direct leverage over the pastor and the pastor cannot be removed or moved, at least in the short term.

In a church judicatory environment, it is typical that clergy are trained in theology, and not in management and administration. Many clergy are disheartened when, after ordination, they are looking forward to spending at least 80% of their time in pastoral care, and the cold reality hits them that it is the opposite, with much of their time spent in meetings, managing people, and dealing with financial or facility related challenges. It is typical that lay executives are trained in business, administration, management, and leadership, but not in theology and

pastoral care. They can at times be disheartened that their analytical training may not seem to be respected and valued by some of the clergy, and they may feel at a disadvantage when theological concepts or aspects of church teaching are set forth in a way that seems to derail their analytical facts and conclusions.

One partial answer to this dilemma, it seems to me, is to use the concepts set forth in the Strengths Finder protocols, the most important of which is that we should press down on our strengths and do not spend much time trying to shore up our weaknesses. Research has shown that most parents believe that a student's lowest grades deserve the most attention, when more time should instead be invested in areas where their child has the most potential and aptitude.⁹⁸ Our room for most growth is where our natural talents can be developed.⁹⁹ Presumably, most of the clergy have strengths in theology and pastoral care. Presumably, most of the lay executives have strengths in management, administration, and leadership. They need to push down on those strengths and find ways to interact that bridge the gaps in any perceptions they have about how to address challenges in the administration in a diocese or similar church body.

The Strengths Finder protocols, however, are only one part of the "solution" to the problem identified in this thesis. The reality is that there are some potential inherent weaknesses in the way that the church system in the Catholic tradition is organized. Pastors can appoint "yes people" to their key advisory committees. Pastors do not need to accept the advice that comes from their key advisory committees. Even the bishop has little short-term leverage to try to compel a member of the clergy to cooperate. Lay executives have a significant amount

⁹⁸ Clifton, Strengths Finder, 7.

⁹⁹ Clifton, Strengths Finder, 9.

of responsibility with much less authority than the level of responsibility would indicate. There are realistic limits to how much a lay official can do to impact these dynamics. Therefore, the lay officials must work within the system as best they can, given the existing framework that is not going to change, at least in the short to intermediate term.

Lay officials must pick and choose their battles. If they come upon things that are illegal, immoral, or a violation of donor restrictions or intentions, they clearly should speak up, stand up and be counted, and take appropriate action. They could be at some risk for doing so, but they will be somewhat insulated from that risk if they have solidified their standing with the clergy through empathy, integrity of actions, competency of their work, and being perceived as “being in the trenches” with the clergy.

Also, while the lay officials clearly need to give great service to the clergy, at the same time they need to be seen by clergy as someone who cannot be intimidated by the clergy. This can be difficult for some to pull off, because of the “ontological change” that the church teaches takes place upon priestly ordination, and because of the role that a priest has in the celebration and dispensing of sacraments. However, my experience has told me that if certain members of the clergy believe they can intimidate lay officials because of their standing as clergy, they will, and when that takes place, the lay official loses all power and implied authority that they may have. When necessary, the lay official must take a stand and respond strongly when appropriate. The times when I have done so, even though it was done at some personal risk, it has resulted in a more respectful relationship between me and that member of the clergy, and rarely has any inappropriate intimidation by that member of the clergy taken place in the future.

Lay officials are occasionally going to find frustrating rules and protocols and practices that seem to be anachronistic, out of date, and perhaps out of touch with the present realities.

They are going to find things that perhaps are unwise or have poor optics but are not illegal or immoral or a violation of donor restrictions or intentions. Are those types of things battles worth fighting? Each person will have to make his or her own decision. I would submit that if the lay official wants to be able to make an impact, they must find a way to continue in the role and fight the battles worth fighting and not fight the battles that they either cannot win or are not worth fighting.

The lay officials should and must be respectful of clergy, but they have a moral and ethical duty to give their best advice, even if the clergy do not want to hear it. That advice will be best accepted by clergy if the lay officials have built personal relationships with them, have established credibility, exhibited empathy, shown integrity, and have exhibited win-win solutions with working with clergy.

6.2 Conclusion

Cohen and Bradford, in their book *Influence Without Authority*, summarize the crux of the issue well when they state “when you want to influence those you don’t control, you will have to get to know them, figure out what they want, build reasonable trust so they will consider making exchanges, satisfy them, and slowly build cooperation. If you already have close relationships, mutual influence is a free-flowing byproduct that seems to happen naturally.”¹⁰⁰

In conclusion, there is no recipe or cookie-cutter approach for a lay official to successfully work with clergy, just as there is no recipe or cookie-cutter approach for a lay official to supervise another lay member of their staff. Each circumstance is unique and each person is motivated by different things and each person must be “managed” differently. Each

¹⁰⁰ Cohen, 8.

situation is different and each situation requires different responses, some of which can only be learned over time. However, there are some standard protocols that can be used to guide most circumstances. Some of those protocols are as follows:

- Establish personal relationships with the clergy. So much of ministry is relational, and without authority to fall back upon, relationships are crucial. These personal relationships can be established by making it a point to visit the clergy in their parishes, on their own turf, rather than summoning them to the judicatory offices. They can be nurtured by sharing meals with the clergy. They can be fostered by sending personal notes to them on important occasions such as the anniversary of their ordination, the death of a parent or sibling, or when something of significance is accomplished in their ministries, such as paying off a loan for the construction of a church building, the successful implementation of a new ministry or outreach, or even the stabilization of a previously tenuous parish situation.
- Establish credibility with the clergy. Say what you mean, mean what you say, follow through on your commitments, show that you are supportive and understanding of their ministries.
- Establish integrity and trust with the clergy. Be honest, even if it means giving information that does not want to be heard. Help the clergy succeed. Do what you say you are going to do. Be transparent, to the extent it is possible given some of the confidential matters to which a lay executive may be privy.
- Establish a track record of win-win scenarios with the clergy. Circumstances where there is a clear winner and a clear loser, especially in matters where there are shades of gray rather than black and white, will not create the kinds of working relationships

that will serve the lay executive or the clergy well. Before a situation becomes a win-lose scenario, intervene soon enough to be able to have both the clergy and lay official roll up their sleeves and mutually develop proposals, projects, and game plans that will serve both groups well.

- Be, and be seen, as being “in the trenches” with the clergy. This means that the lay official is so invested in the world in which the clergyperson lives that the members of the clergy sees the lay official almost as “one of them”, rather than as someone who is on a different team.
- Practice and express empathy for the clergy, for their roles, and for their ministries.
- Lay executives are best served when they can translate between and be conversant in business terminology and concepts at the same time they are able to frame what they do in theological terms. Those who do so will stand a much higher likelihood of being accepted by the clergy.
- When there are instances of a double standard being employed where clergy are held to a different standard than the laity, it is important for the lay executive to stand up for his or her staff who are trying to enforce the protocols they are charged with enforcing. During the writing of this doctoral thesis, there was a situation which took place where an ordained Diocesan official asked for an exception to be made to the standard Diocesan protocols in an area of fiscal controls as it related to another member of the clergy. The request for an exception was not illegal, immoral, or unethical. However, it was a deviation from a best practice and a deviation from a practice to which others were expected to adhere. The double standard of how clergy and laity are treated in an institutional church setting, at least in the Catholic tradition,

is not going to be changing in the foreseeable future. A lay official is faced with a challenge when his or her staff are asked to implement an across-the-board policy, and then there is an exception made for a member of the clergy. The staff are not going to know when to make policy exceptions, and I would submit that they should not be expected to make decisions on policy exceptions. However, exceptions are going to be made for clergy – that is just the present reality. When these exceptions are made, it is imperative that the lay executives show that they are backing up their staff in their enforcement of the standard protocols, even though exceptions are going to inevitably be made for clergy. The lay staff have a challenging role, as they are seen by some clergy as being unreasonable in the policies they are enforcing. It is important that the lay executives do not allow their staff to become demoralized by the inevitable criticism they will face when they implement a policy with which a member of the clergy does not agree and then the clergy are able to obtain a policy exception. The staff of the lay officials must see the person to whom they report standing up for them and supporting their use of standard protocols, even when those protocols may not be enforced because of the double standard that is at times present for the treatment of clergy in the institutional church.

- Know what things to fight for and what things to let go. A lay executive in a judicatory environment will unquestionably find many practices that are frustrating, they will find double standards where the clergy are treated with a different set of rules than the laity, and they will find a lack of accountability that would likely not be tolerated in private industry. The lay official is not going to be able to effect a change in these things. Letting frustration boil over with these circumstances will serve no purpose.

Instead, the lay official must find a way to let these frustrations be put to the side so that he or she can focus on making a difference where they have some element of influence or control. When it comes to matters of illegality, immorality, and integrity, they must recognize when it is time to make a stand, even if it carries with it some element of risk.

As Ron Heifetz says, “the practice of leadership requires, perhaps first and foremost, a sense of purpose – the capacity to find values that make risk-taking meaningful.”¹⁰¹ While the church is guided by the Holy Spirit, it is clearly comprised of human beings with human flaws, both laity and clergy, and those human flaws can make it frustrating to be ministering in the church. However, in the final analysis, there are few more purposeful roles than the roles of those ministering in the church, and therefore it is important to hold fast to those values that make the risk-taking associated with leadership to be more meaningful. It is my hope that the research and examples in this doctoral thesis will make that leadership, especially for those with much responsibility but with little formal authority, a bit easier and more successful for those who choose to undertake it.

¹⁰¹ Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, 274.

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BIOGRAPHY

Russell Charles Elmayan is a native of the Los Angeles, California area. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Southern California, where he was a Dean's List Scholar and a member of Sigma Phi Epsilon Fraternity. He earned a Master of Business Administration degree from The Fuqua School of Business at Duke University and a Master of Pastoral Studies degree from Loyola University of New Orleans. He is a candidate for the Doctor of Ministry degree from Duke Divinity School.

Upon receiving his MBA degree from Duke, he spent eleven years in corporate management positions in his native California and then moved back to North Carolina to accept a position serving the Diocese of Raleigh. During his almost thirty years at the Diocese, he has served in a variety of roles, including Assistant Business Manager, Director of Business Services, Chief Financial Officer, Chancellor, Chief Operating Officer, and Chief Administrative Officer. During this time, he has served on the Board of Directors and Treasurer of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Raleigh.

He is a recipient of the *Pro Ecclesia Et Pontifice* (For the Church and the Pope, in Latin) medal, which was granted by the Pope at the request of the late Bishop F. Joseph Gossman. It is the highest honor that can be awarded to a lay person by the Pope. He has served three bishops and countless members of the clergy during his tenure at the Diocese.

He is privileged to be married to Diane Elizabeth (Sharkey) Elmayan and is the proud father of two children – Amy Rebecca Elmayan and Ann Marie Elmayan.