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LEADERSHIP

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CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP: A BLESSING.

Too often, leadership is viewed, especially in the literature, as a task to be achieved, something that must be done, a disconnect between the leader and the led or something that is perceived as a constant struggle, that 'bedevils' leaders and leadership teams on a daily basis.

Perhaps our approach needs to be different!

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March 08, 2018

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March 8, 2018

Christian Leadership: A Blessing.

"Imagine if our starting point in Leadership was that everyone that encounters us as leaders, encounters goodness, respect and a forum in which their hopes, concerns and aspirations were listened to. It would change how we lead, for the better."
David Ivers via Twitter @edu_ivers February 2017.

Abstract:

Too often, leadership is viewed, especially in the literature, as a task to be achieved, something that must be done, a disconnect between the leader and the led or something that is perceived as a constant struggle, that 'bedevils' leaders and leadership teams on a daily basis.

Perhaps our approach needs to be different!

According to Dr. John C Maxwell (2000):

> ***"After more than five decades of observing leadership…I have come to this conclusion: Leadership is influence. That's it. Nothing more; nothing less."***
> **Maxwell, John. C. (2000) 'Developing The Leader Within (Nashville. Thomas Neilson. p1):**

Discussion:

Maxwell asserts: "Leadership is influence. That's it." If this is true, then how we lead becomes critical. Is Maxwell correct? At the heart of it, leadership involves 'getting' people to do things that advance the organization, it's vision, mission and goals. Assuming that one would preference a non-authoritarian, top-down, approach, then it seems logical, even on the most elementary of grounds, that the leader needs to be able to influence followers. In another paper, this author has expressed this in the following manner.

> ***"The leader empowers the followers through influence, encouragement, guidance and the like but the followers empowers the leader, by influencing how the big picture might be put into action and encouraging the leader to see it from different angles. To be attentive is to be present in the moment. Present to others, their issues and their solutions."***
>
> **Ivers, David (2014) Leadership: Beyond The Challenge** https://legacy.aitsl.edu.au/school-leadership-ecollection/search-the-school-leadership-ecollection/detail?id=leadership-beyond-the-challenge (p9).

So, leadership as influence, requires a change in mindset. A question worth exploring in the mind of this author is: *what would be required for leaders to have the mindset that every encounter with leaders, is an opportunity to "encounter goodness, respect and a forum in which their hopes, concerns and aspirations were listened to"* (@edu_ivers February 2017)?

Fundamentally it means seeing yourself in the leadership role, as one that has the capacity to bring blessings to the organization and to those you lead. It means as Stephen Covey suggested in 'First Things First' exploring the notion of 'Principle-Centred Leadership', the idea that every leader operates from some underlying set of principles (See: Covey. S. (1994). First Things First. New York: Simon and Schuster. p.74 passim).

What those principles might be, an astute leader would take the time to discern for themselves. Stephen Covey (2004) in his seminal work 'The Seven. Habits of Highly Effective People' made the following observation.

> ***"The way we see the problem is the problem…This new level of thinking is what Seven Habits of Highly Effective People is about. It's a principle-centered, character based, "inside-out" approach to personal and interpersonal effectiveness. "Inside-out" means to start first with self; even more fundamentally, to start with the most inside part of self – with your paradigms, your character, and your motives."***
>
> **Covey. S. (2004) The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. London: Pocket Books. p.40, 42).**

For this author, as a leader that works in a faith based organization (Sydney Catholic Schools), this notion of blessing through leadership is a fundamental. Christian leadership is more often akin to the accompaniment of his disciples on the road to Emmaus, in which he 'coached' them to see things differently, to open their minds (see Luke 24:13-35). It is at the very basis of what is done and more importantly, why it is done. This injunction that sets forward this path, at least in terms of Catholic Leadership, is found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

> ***"Every baptized person is called to be a "blessing," and to bless. Hence lay people may preside at certain blessings; the more a blessing concerns ecclesial and sacramental life, the more is its administration reserved to the ordained ministry (bishops, priests, or. deacons)."***
>
> **Catechism of the Catholic Church n.1669 Via:**
> **http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c4a1.htm Accessed August 7, 2017**

It would be hard to imagine the other variants within Christianity having difficulty with the notion that through Baptism, the Christian is called to be a blessing to the world. Indeed some 40 years ago (22 June 1977) in Australia, the Congregational Union in Australia, the Methodist Church of Australasia and the Presbyterian Church of Australia, came together to form the Uniting Church of

Australia. The Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia (December 1984), expressed this notion of being a blessing as a result of Baptism in the following way.

> ***"The people of God are motivated and empowered by their baptism to struggle against sin (Rom. 6:1–11), to witness in church and world to Christ's resurrection, to love God and their neighbour, to serve, help, encourage and comfort all people and to do everything else that the new life in Christ involves."***
>
> **Uniting Church in Australia (December 1984) 'Baptism' from: https://assembly.uca.org.au/unity/dialogues/item/1395-baptism Accessed August 7, 2017.**

This notion of service in leadership is critical to our understanding of leadership as blessing. We are called to 'Servant Leadership', we are called to service through our exercise of leadership. This aligns well with the work of Covey and the work of Maxwell. It creates a positive mindset for leadership. Fundamentally, to see leadership as a blessing means that leadership must be relational. The intent is to be a blessing to others and indeed to be open to the possibility that others may be a blessing to you in your leadership. This means seeing all levels of leadership as being a relationship. At the basis of all good relationships are: Honesty, Trust, Courage, Compassion, Compunction, Wisdom, Good Communication, Respect, Integrity, Fairness, Justice. This is not meant to be an exclusive list, rather a starter list for others to add to. This notion of blessing, of service to others, of reaching out to build up the capacity of others was touched on by the 14th Dalai Lama in an audience he gave in Darwin, Australia.

> ***"The reality is it's in our interest to take care of others. Self-centredness is opposed to basic human nature. In our own interest as human beings we need to pay attention to our inner values. Sometimes people think compassion is only of help to others, while we get no benefit. This is a mistake. When you concern yourself with others, you naturally develop a sense of self-confidence. To help others takes courage and inner strength."***
>
> **His Holiness The 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet, June 23, 2013. 'A Teaching of the Four Noble Truths and a Public Talk on Ethics in a Shared World in Darwin Conclude His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Visit to Australia' Via: https://www.dalailama.com/news/2013/a-teaching-of-the-four-noble-truths-and-a-public-talk-on-ethics-in-a-shared-world-in-darwin-conclude-his-holiness-the-dalai-lamas-visit-to-australia Accessed August 7, 2017.**

What we can take away from this, is the notion of 'blessing' in leadership, is not unique to Christianity. A cursory glance at the teachings of the 14th Dalai Lama reinforces this. Nonetheless, there has been and continues to be much work in the area of 'Leadership as a Blessing' from a Christian perspective. Interestingly, it seems to be largely a study undertaken by experts in leadership as opposed to Theologians or Religious Educators. An example of this is the work of Bruce E. Winston and Paula A. Tucker from Regent University. They discuss the Beatitudes as a model or plan for leadership in 'The Beatitudes as Leadership Virtues' in The Journal of Virtues &

Leadership, Vol. 2. Issue. 1, Summer 2011, p. 15–29. Virginia. Regent University School of Global Leadership & Entrepreneurship.

The thesis of Winston and Tucker is that the Beatitudes are not just a road map for Christian living but for leadership (at least in the Christian tradition). Whilst adding a word of caution, there would seem to be some merit here. If the Beatitudes are indeed a road map for Christian living, and there is no reason to suggest that they are not, is there justification to appropriate them to the leadership of organizations, which obviously include the world's largest 'multi-national' companies? If we want our businesses and places of work to be conducted in an ethical, 'Principle-Led' manner and if we see leadership as a facet of life, not something that happens whilst we put life on hold, then it is perhaps not just appropriate but essential that leadership be considered from this vantage point.

Mindful that the Beatitudes are found in both the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke, it is important to be clear as to where we are drawing them from. Both Evangelists are writing for very different audiences. Matthew for the Jewish Christians and Luke for the Gentiles. Luke has 3+1 Beatitudes, where Matthew has 7+1 Beatitudes. The Beatitudes in Matthew are perhaps the best known. According to the New Revised Standard Version (Catholic Edition) Bible, the Beatitudes in Matthew are told in this way.

The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12)
When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition "Holy Bible: Matthew 5:1–12 Via https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+5%3A1-12&version=NRSVCE Accessed August 7 2017

Interestingly there is a version of the Beatitudes in the apocryphal 'Sayings Gospel of Thomas'. Without dwelling on it, it is preceded by the notion that:

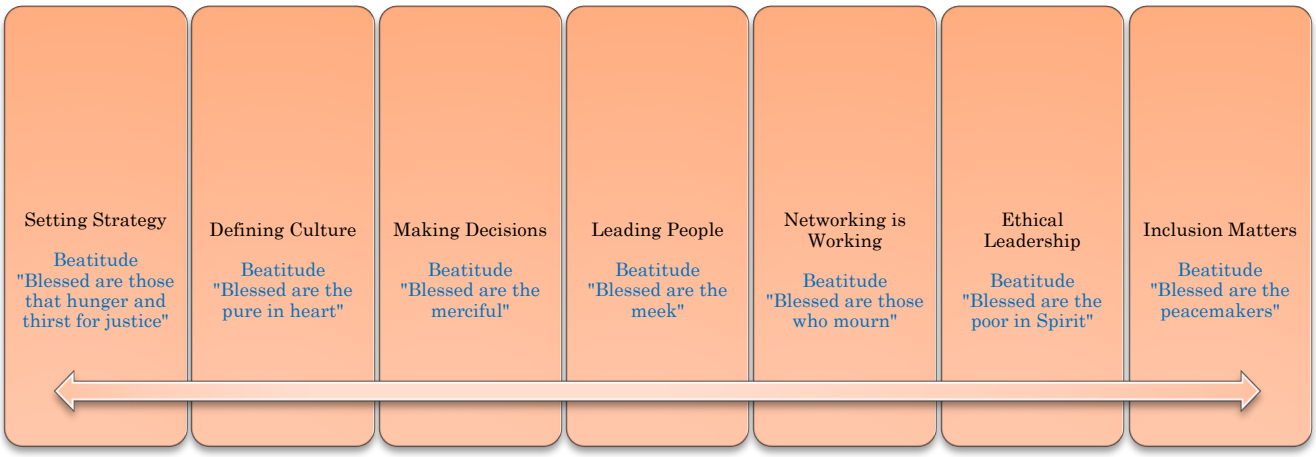
> ***"a city being built on a high mountain and fortified cannot fall, nor can it be hidden…For no one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel, nor does he put it in a hidden place, but rather he sets it on a lampstand so that everyone who enters and leaves will see its light."***
>
> **Marshall, John. W. (Ed). (2001). Gospel of Thomas 32–33 From: http://sites.utoronto.ca/religion/synopsis/meta-5g.htm Accessed August 7, 2017**

In the Gospel of Matthew these passages come after the Beatitudes and form the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew Chapters 5-7).

One of two lessons about leadership emerge from this. It is either a mindset in which the leader and 'ipso facto' the leader's team, are willing to share their light with the world and thus engage with a model of leadership based on the Beatitudes. Alternatively, Matthew would lead us to believe that being the beacon on the hill, a lighthouse to the rest of the world, is the result of following the Beatitudes in Matthew as a 'road map' to leadership. The result may well be the same but the process and team building required would be vastly different.

Essentially the approach of Thomas starts at the goal and engages in serious formation to remain at that point, to be that lighthouse. The approach of Matthew is the opposite to this. Having set the goal to be a lighthouse, the team undertakes formation that will see them achieve their objective and sustain them in the position of lighthouse, once achieved.

Why is this important? It is important to know where the starting point for your team is, so you know whether or not you have arrived. From a secular point of view, it is possible to isolate the 'seven attributes of very successful leaders', as found via survey in 2017 by the Australian Institute of Managers and Leaders. One might add an overarching attribute 'Being Leader'! Like the Beatitudes this gives 7+1 attributes. These are listed in Black. This paper has aligned a Beatitude to each attribute, in Blue.



Australian Institute of Managers and Leaders 2017 'Seven Attributes of Highly Successful Leaders' Via: https://managersandleaders.com.au/lm7book/ Accessed August 7, 2017 (Alignment of Beatitudes by David Ivers. August 2017).

Why this alignment? In understanding this, it is important to have a well-founded understanding of each Beatitude. Whilst much has been written on this topic, one of the Fathers of the Church, St Augustine of Hippo, is possibly the most helpful. Written in the year 393AD, his 'Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount' is an extensive sermon that gives a thorough analysis of this critical part of Matthew's Gospel. The entire sermon (all 23 Chapters) is sourced from a translation by *William Findlay. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 6. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/16011.htm*

In his treatise, St Augustine notes that:

- "Poor in spirit are rightly understood here, as meaning the humble and God-fearing." This sense of humility, which is the opposite to pride, should be taken as the basis of any sound form of 'Ethical Leadership'.

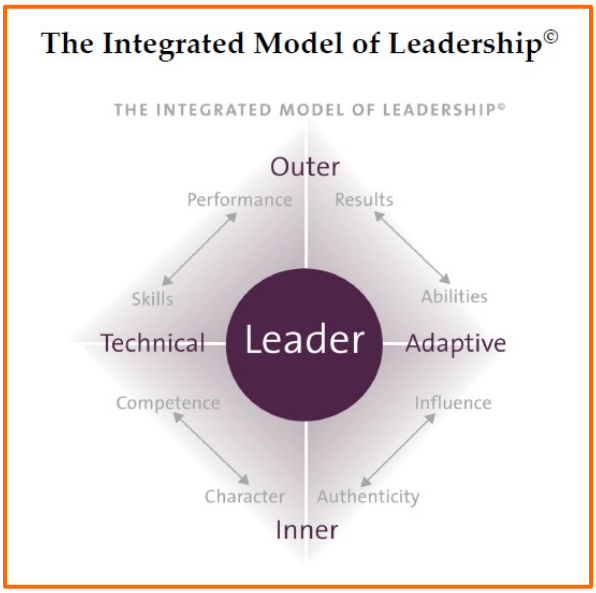
- "The meek are those who yield to acts of wickedness, and do not resist evil, but overcome evil with good. Let those, then, who are not meek quarrel and fight for earthly and temporal things." In the attribute of 'Leading People', it would surely be desirable to be leading a team of 'meek' people, people who know how to overcome adversity and in turn do good for others. These are not weak team members but the core of the team's inner strength.

- "Mourning is sorrow arising from the loss of things held dear; but those who are converted to God lose those things which they were accustomed to embrace as dear in this world." Those that have the ability to cope with loss also have the ability to cope with change. In some cases, they may even have overcome, what the Harvard Graduate School of Education Professor, Robert Kegan, refers to as an "Immunity to Change!" They become change-agents in the team and in the work place and consequently become quite agile at 'Networking with Others' and building relationships based on empathy, not sympathy.

- "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness (justice): for they shall be filled. Now He calls those parties, lovers of a true and indestructible good." In 'Strategic Planning', scanning the environment is key. Whilst formulating a strategic plan that is flexible enough to bend with the changing times, it needs to be just (and of course lawful) and should seek to create an 'indestructible good' for the organization.

- "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. He says that they are blessed who relieve the miserable, for it is paid back to them in such a way that they are freed from misery." This aligns with 'Decision Making' in a number of ways. Firstly, leaders are regularly called upon to show not just mercy and compassion but compunction as well, towards their team; that sense of holding a differing view but being able to see the other point of view and the merits in adopting it. Secondly, leaders that are merciful when mercy truly needs to be shown, are accepting of the fact that the one fault that humans have, is that they are at times 'annoyingly human' and thus make mistakes. The key here is that the team or the individual can learn from the mistakes that they have made. Finally, decisions that are just, merciful and show compunction are more likely to build the team and in return, strengthens and rewards the vision of the leader in leading that team.

- "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. How foolish, therefore, are those who seek God with these outward eyes, since He is seen with the heart! As it is written elsewhere, and in singleness of heart seek Him. For that is a pure heart which is a single heart: and just as this light cannot be seen, except with pure eyes; so neither is God seen, unless that is pure by which He can be seen." Those who can see with a 'Pure Heart', according to this commentary from St Augustine, have developed their 'Inner-Self'. The 'Inner-Self' is essential to 'Adaptive Leadership'. In her presentation at Harvard Graduate School of Education in June 2014, Irma Tyler Wood, demonstrated research that her organization had undertaken regarding Adaptive Leadership. Individuals and indeed teams that focus on the 'Inner-Self' are more adaptive as a result and have a better use of their technical skills. This manifests itself in their leadership that is perceived by the 'outer-world'. In this respect, it has the capacity to shift and 'Define the Culture' of an organization, not just into positive territory but into territory where real growth can occur. It is the mechanism that gives rise to authentic leadership and influence.



Tyler-Wood, Irma. June, 22 2014. 'Essentials for Effective Leadership: Inner Work and Adaptive Skill', presented at Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge MA. Also See: http://www.kithoughtbridge.com/the-integrated-work-of-leadership
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- "Blessed are the peacemakers… this is the peace which is given on earth to men of goodwill; this the life of the fully developed and perfect wise man." Leaders of goodwill and those considered to be wise, know the value of 'Inclusion' of key team members and indeed of all team members, in the process of leading. They do not offer 'peace at all costs' but rather a pragmatic manner in which varying and competing views can be heard, in order to move forward together for the peace and security of the organization.

- In the eighth attribute of 'Being Leader', identified by this author, the remaining Beatitude *"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake".* There is the reminder that good, sound, ethical leadership, is not without inherent difficulties. It is the ability to overcome these difficulties on a regular basis, that distinguishes great leaders from good ones.

This brings the discussion to the work of Bruce E. Winston and Paula A. Tucker from Regent University, in which they discuss the Beatitudes as a model or plan for leadership (See: 'The Beatitudes as Leadership Virtues' in The Journal of Virtues & Leadership, Vol. 2. Issue. 1, Summer 2011, p. 15–29. Virginia. Regent University School of Global Leadership & Entrepreneurship).

In this work Winston and Tucker contend:

> ***"Winston (2002) contended in his treatise on the beatitudes as a base for leadership behavior that the sum of the seven beatitudes lies in the concept of Agapao as a form of moral love: —doing the right thing at the right time for the right reason‖ (p. 5). This definition aligns with Aristotle's definition of a virtue; thus we might say that Agapao is a collection of virtues. According to Winston, the beatitudes become a guide for what good leaders believe or should believe, which forms the base for behavior. Blanchard (2007) and Fry (2003) supported this notion, and each stated that leaders' beliefs should flow from values that seek to do what is good and to drive out fear in the workplace. Kilroy (2008) expanded upon Winston's work and crafted seven distinct scales to measure the seven beatitudes. While these scales help to understand more fully each of the beatitudes, they do not help to see each beatitude in the role as an intermediary between two vices—one of defect/neglect, and one of excess."***
>
> **Winston, Bruce.E. and Tucker, Paula.A. (2011) 'The Beatitudes as Leadership Virtues' in The Journal of Virtues & Leadership, Vol. 2. Iss. 1, Summer 2011, p. 15–29. Virginia. Regent University School of Global Leadership & Entrepreneurship. P.16. Via: https://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/jvl/vol2_iss1/Winston-Tucker_JVLV2I1_p15-29.pdf Accessed July 27, 2017.**

Certainly, within Christianity, the Beatitudes are seen as the basis of moral teachings and ethical living. To view the Beatitudes as sitting between the "two vices of defect/neglect, and one of excess" (see above), is interesting and potentially useful. The issue in using such a scale is that the understanding of each Beatitude needs to be clear and well understood across the organization. This paper has referenced extensively the work of St Augustine of Hippo on the Beatitudes, as one of the Fathers of the Early Church. This gives a close approximation as to the likely intent of each Beatitude. Scales of measure always run the risk of being misinterpreted or of being used for purposes well beyond their original intent. They can also have the effect of minimizing what should be something significant. On the positive side of the equation though, the scale put forward by Winston and Tucker is useful for organizations wanting to take an 'inventory' of where people are at

in the context of 'Principle-Centered Leadership' (to borrow from Covey) and discern what needs to still be done. Such a scale may also help to guide discussions around 'good governance' and be useful in team building.

The scale refined by Winston and Tucker (2011) is:

Beatitudes As A Virtues Semantic - Differential Scale								
Defect				**Virtue**				**Excess**
Lowly	1	2	3	Poor in Spirit	5	6	7	Haughty
Disregarding	1	2	3	Concerned for Others	5	6	7	Controlling
Laissez-Faire	1	2	3	Controlled Discipline	5	6	7	Overbearing
Complacent	1	2	3	Seeking What is Right	5	6	7	Wayward
Lenient	1	2	3	Merciful	5	6	7	Ruthless
Ambiguous	1	2	3	Pure in Heart	5	6	7	Unyielding
Pacifist	1	2	3	Peacemaker	5	6	7	Warmonger

Extracted From: Winston, Bruce.E. & Tucker, Paula.A. (2011) 'The Beatitudes as Leadership Virtues' in The Journal of Virtues & Leadership, Vol. 2. Issue.1, Summer 2011, p.15–29. Virginia. Regent University School of Global Leadership & Entrepreneurship P.27. Via: https://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/jvl/vol2_iss1/Winston-Tucker_JVLV2I1_p15-29.pdf Accessed July 27, 2017. (Used Under Fair Dealing Provisions of Australian Copyright Act 1968 and as Amended for the Purpose of Research and Study).

In examining this scale, this paper would suggest keeping the language of the original Beatitude. Instead of 'Concerned for Others' perhaps 'Mourns-Adaptable to Loss' is more useful and ensures clarity around the Beatitude being used. In a similar manner, 'Controlled Discipline' might read 'Meek-Well Developed Inner-Self'. In terms of the vices cited, ambiguous might be better replaced with 'Foolish/Blinded to Potential. In terms of 'Poor in Spirit' perhaps Haughty/Proud is a more precise term. That said, in the context of a road map for Christian Leadership, the Winston and Tucker scale has much merit and would seem to be in keeping with the spirit of the writings by the Fathers of the Early Church, such as St Augustine of Hippo.

Conclusion:

It needs to be remembered that the focus of this paper is ultimately Christian Leadership in a Catholic school setting. Principle-Centred leadership as discussed by Covey and the idea of using the Beatitudes as a 'Blue-Print' for Christian leadership, has much to be commended. However, Principle-Centred leadership is ultimately left to the Principles that an individual leader decides to follow and the Beatitudes are often lauded in the literature as a road map for good ethical living and one imagines, leadership. Principles and Ethics are certainly a crucial part of Christian leadership, as is Church teaching. The Beatitudes are, as Pope John Paul II states in his 1993 Encyclical

'Veritatis Splendor' (see http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor.html). "The Beatitudes are not specifically concerned with certain particular rules of behaviour. Rather, they speak of basic attitudes and dispositions in life." In 'Christian Leadership', especially in the Catholic school context, we are really alluding to Religious Leadership, of which Principles, Ethics, the Beatitudes, the teachings of Jesus, are all contributory factors. According to Michael Bezzina and Greg Wilson (1999) in "Rethinking Religious Leadership in Schools."

> "Religious Leadership in the Catholic context is that it is:
>
> - Relational
> - Incarnational
> - Transformational
>
> …In principle, Religious Leadership forms a significant and explicit part of the role descriptions of Principals and Assistant Principals. In practice, much of the responsibility is seen as residing with the REC (Religious Education Coordinator)."
>
> Michael Bezzina and Greg Wilson (1999) "Rethinking Religious Leadership in Schools" Journal Of Religious Education 47, (2) 11-18. Strathfield. Australian Catholic University Via: http://203.10.46.30/mre/cdrom/Rethinking%20Religious%20leadership%20in%20Schools.htm Accessed August 16, 2016

At the heart of Christian Religious Leadership is relationship and this is found in the first Beatitude, which elegantly expresses the relationship we should have between ourselves and our God: "Blessed are the poor in Spirit" (Matthew 5:3). These relationships are based on the person of Jesus Christ, through which, Jesus is incarnated, made present within the faith community through our works and our interactions / relationships with each other. In the process, the school community is transformed into a community of faith, where the experience of God can and should be shared.

As we come to the end of the first quarter of the Twenty-First Century, Authentic Religious Leadership is emerging as a must for Catholic schools and an essential component of the Church more broadly. It is all well and good to talk of Principles and 'Blue Prints' to good, ethical Christian leadership and living. Ultimately it has to be lived in order to be expressed and thus have the impact that it should have in a true faith community, adding value with every interaction. This is something that is well understood in the leadership of Pope Francis, as General John E Michel USAF (Retired) once observed. "The world's first Jesuit Pope is demonstrating daily his commitment to becoming the best human being he can possibly be. Not for selfish gain, mind you. But because he understands a life well lived is a life dedicated to serving humanity—one opportunity to add value to your surroundings at a time." (General John E Michel (2014) 'Learn To Be That Somebody' in General Leadership Blog Via http://generalleadership.com/learn-somebody/ Accessed August 16. 2016.)

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