

May 2023

## Ministrare Non Ministrari: Urgently Needed Servant Leaders

Basilio G. Monteiro

St. John's University - New York, [monteirb@stjohns.edu](mailto:monteirb@stjohns.edu)

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### Recommended Citation

Monteiro, Basilio G. (2023) "Ministrare Non Ministrari: Urgently Needed Servant Leaders," *Journal of Vincentian Social Action*: Vol. 7: Iss. 1, Article 4.

Available at: <https://scholar.stjohns.edu/jovsa/vol7/iss1/4>

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# ***MINISTRARE NON MINISTRARI:*** **URGENTLY NEEDED SERVANT LEADERS**

Basilio G. Monteiro

**L**eadership or servant? For most people, it is an oxymoron. It does not conjure up in the imagination that a good leader is or ought to be a servant. By and large, our imaginations are corporatized and along with it, our professional roles. The industrialization of all sectors of human activity demands efficiency as the driver of productivity. Presently, leadership is constructed as a command-control vertical structure, focused on overseeing personnel, crafting core values statements, and issuing directives for employees at every level. Very few leaders take on the characteristics of a “company servant,” someone who listens with empathy, awareness, and foresight.

Vertical structure of the management generates human distance, anonymity between the leader and the lower rank employees, which allows the leader to mechanize the functioning of the employee for maximum productivity. The anonymity and distance provide less or non-emotional involvement, which makes it easier to demand or extort “productivity.” The more the distance between the leader and the employees, the more dehumanization is generated by issuing disembodied directives. The “corporatized” leaders are obsessed with maximum productivity, invariably, at a stupendous cost of the employee’s human dignity, as their measure of success. The mechanization of “efficiency” has spawned an industry to professionalize virtues of heart as “trainable” skills by way of series of workshops; thus, the industry of “training workshops.” Corporatized leadership in its structure is an affront to human dignity as it sees the human being as a cog in the wheel, at the service of the corporation. To “manage” human beings as production spigots has become a prized axiom in

the practice of management, which is a euphemism for “measuring” the work of an employee.

Tragically, almost all organizations, including the ‘non-profits,’ academic and religious institutions have appropriated the “corporate” model of management as the paradigm of “good management.”

Good leaders influence, not intimidate, promote, encourage, and foster respectful and meaningful relationships. People, like a leader who is engaged and present, not someone who pops up solely through meetings, memos, or emails.

People value someone who communicates with integrity. That means getting to the heart of the matter, especially when times are tough, not clouding crucial developments with euphemisms.

Servant leaders place the needs of others over their own self-interests. Robert K Greenleaf believed leaders have a social responsibility to care for the disenfranchised and to serve them first; he proposes shifting power to those who are being led.

Academic institutions have embraced the industry leadership paradigm and industrialized “academia” where education is an enterprise. Academic leaders, who follow *corporatized* leadership models are canonized by the corporate pantheon as model leaders.

The contributors to this issue, dedicated to exploring various dimensions of servant leadership, have eloquently and convincingly explored and argued the significance and urgency to adopt servant leadership to manage and lead, particularly, academic institutions. Larry W. Boone makes it clear from the outset and as he develops

the ten supporting attitudes, that leadership is “attitude” (not skill set) and “it involves the type of person you are.” Ricardo Colasanti, in his tightly constructed essay, makes a compelling case that servant leadership is about changing the society by way of changing management. Anthony Nicotera, Dawn Apgar and Ines Murzaku bring together Catholic Social Teaching and Social Work’s core commitments of dignity, service and justice to develop a theology of servant leadership by looking at “Mother Theresa as an exemplar of CST in Action.” Joseph D’Mello, while examining servant leadership bottom-up from the workers perspective, takes us to a long ride back into the history to demonstrate that “servant leadership” has a long and respected life in its different iterations. Robert Sr. Margaret Mary Fitzpatrick, S.C., makes a compelling argument why the Catholic Educational Institutions have a sacred responsibility to practice servant leadership. Sr. Sally Duffy, SC., herself grounded in humility, explores the spirituality of servant leadership by pointing out that “a servant is the person in right relationship with God.” Sr. Sally, as a child of St. John’s University, examines the interweaving of

gospel values and leadership as “ministry... rooted in God, of God and for God and others and for all creation...” Shweta Sinha, doctoral candidate in Multi-Sector Communication conducts an empirical study to examine the post-pandemic rise of *Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting* across various sectors and comes to a conclusion that “servant leadership style of management” could have mitigated the harshness of professional work requirements. Tara DeWorsop examines, through the lens of a police lieutenant, how community policing is about servant leadership; Franklyn Ezeorah looks at the roots of servant leadership in African culture.

We hope this focus on servant leadership will initiate a robust conversation on our St. John’s University campus and lead to *ministrare non ministrari*.

### **ABOUT THE EDITOR**

**Basilio G. Monteiro, PhD, Chair and Associate Professor, Division of Mass Communication, Collins College of Professional Studies**