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## From the Editor: Church Leadership

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# Church Leadership

Pat Fitzpatrick CSSp

**“See everything. Overlook much. Correct a little.”**

— Pope John XXIII, the wise old man of Vatican II

**N**ew Pope — new leadership?  
Church leadership — shepherds in Galilee, Samaria and Bethlehem come to mind.

On the Mount of Beatitudes a shepherd led his flock of sheep and goats by walking ahead of them, leading them to pasture someplace else.

In Samaria a shepherd stood surrounded by his sheep and goats, allowing them to graze and be nourished.

Near Bethlehem, at midday, one shepherd stood in the shade of some olive trees, a second squatted nearby asleep — encouraging the sheep to rest in the shade from the noontime sun.

Leadership — shepherding — knowing what it is time for — knowing the needs of the flock — keeping watch.

Leadership speaks to our hopes and needs, to what we long to be and what we know is right. It has been described as “the ability to walk confidently in the dark” in some definite direction — unlike Don Quixote who jumped on his horse and galloped off in all directions.

## A Christ-like leader

“The top-of-the-pyramid image of leadership is of little use ... The purpose of leadership is service: the leader is an enabler who empowers and releases potential in a follower ... ‘The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.’” *William Byron S.J.*

At the Last Supper Jesus said to his disciples: “I, your Lord and Master, am among you as one who serves.” Then he took off his outer garment, tied a towel around his waist, got a basin and some water — and washed and dried his disciples’ feet one by one. Servant leadership.

The Christ-like leader might be compared to a Lookout, an Interpreter, a Weaver.

The Lookout sees the total picture and hears what’s going on. “*You can observe a lot by looking.*” Yogi Berra

The Interpreter has his finger on the pulse of life, makes sense of what is happening, knows what to lament, what to correct and what to celebrate.

The Weaver interlaces different threads into a colourful tapestry.

## Leading by example

“Every leader who cares about people is taught by them how to become the leader they need. Leadership is most often a response to the questions and needs of people rather than an initiative designed by an individual leader for the supposed benefit of a community at large.” *Anthony Padovano*

Jesus didn’t come with a series of lectures on life. He didn’t propose a philosophy of life. He didn’t write a book on the meaning of life.

He went from village to village. He met people where they were. In his storytelling he made connections between their day-to-day lives and God. He attended to their needs. He fed their hunger. He healed their sick ones. He invited them to find God in the events of their lives.

“*The Church needs to become a little more tolerant, accessible, welcoming, compassionate. All the things that, for many people, it is not.*” Bishop Kieran Conry, Arundel and Brighton

## Vision and courage

“Nothing we do is complete ... No statement says all that could be said ... No set of goals and objectives includes everything ... We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted. We lay foundations that will need further development.” *Archbishop Oscar Romero*

Our time calls for a leader with vision — down among his community, meeting with them, listening to them. In giving us two ears and two eyes, but one tongue, did God mean us to listen and look twice as much as talk?

Our time calls for a leader with courage — the courage to keep going, to pick ourselves up after a fall. The sower parable summarizes Jesus’ life: much of what he sowed fell on either the footpath, or rocky ground, or among thorns and brambles and produced nothing. Yet year after year he went back out again to sow more seed. The good ground, the good soil made all the losses tolerable. Failures along the way — yes, but a harvest too.

“*Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.*” Serenity Prayer ■