

**Homily for Legatus Chapter of Northeast Wisconsin  
Thursday of the 4<sup>th</sup> Week of Lent  
April 3, 2014**

**Butte de Mortes Country Club  
Appleton, WI**

**+ Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki  
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, the subject of leadership has been a keen interest of mine for many years. When I was a young priest, my Archbishop, the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, nominated me to participate in a year-long fellowship program called, "Leadership Greater Chicago." For a full year we spent a whole day each first Friday of the month talking about leadership, based on readings that we had read and presentations that were made on the subject. Last year I completed the Executive MBA program at the University of Notre Dame, in which we had several courses that addressed the topic of leadership. I continue to appreciate reading articles about leaders and leadership

In a recent issue of the *Ivey Business Journal*,<sup>1</sup> an article was written with an overview of the results from a series of interviews of more than 30 leaders from around the world. The interviewer was attempting to determine some common elements of what constitutes a good leader.

While the author concluded that there is no silver-bullet to answer this question, he did conclude that a very important part of the answer was that good leaders develop through constant learning at various levels.

One of the common avenues mentioned by those interviewed was the importance of learning from other leaders and role models who have been successful in leadership. The insights and experiences of those leaders offer ideas for best practices and provide encouragement to others who desire also to be effective in leadership. There is no shortage of great leaders from the relatively short history of our country in the areas of politics and business from whom we can learn many valuable lessons. As people of faith, we have a much wider pool to draw from, including the many saints throughout the ages, as well as the many figures from the Scriptures, both from the New Testament and the Old.

In our first reading for today's Mass, we are presented with the example of one of the greatest leaders of the Old Testament, Moses.<sup>2</sup> While Moses may not be the first person that comes to mind regarding how to run an organization in our modern world, his example offers many helpful lessons that are well worth learning, especially for us who are consciously aware of the need to incorporate faith into the way that we practice our

leadership. One such example is the practice of delegating responsibilities to others. Actually, it was Moses' father-in-law who offered this advice when he saw Moses sitting all day listening to people's complaints and arbitrating their disputes. He recognized that Moses would wear himself out trying to do this all by himself, so he suggested enlisting the assistance of others to help him with the less difficult cases.<sup>3</sup> From this we get the practice of appellate courts and the management concept of delegating responsibilities to others.

The reading for today recounts how God instructed Moses to go down to the people who had begun to worship the idol of the molten calf. The Lord expresses His anger with the people and tells Moses that He has in His mind to wipe them out and start over with a new people whom He will form into a great nation.

Without delving into the deep theological discussion about God and His changed reaction, we can focus on how Moses responded in this circumstance and how his response provides a helpful lesson for us. Moses becomes aware of the failings of the people that he had been chosen to lead, but he was not willing to give up on them. Rather, he pleads on their behalf with God that they receive pardon and mercy so that they might

continue to have the opportunity to realize and live their position of being God's chosen people.

Moses' reaction can show us how important it is for us as leaders to value the people that we lead. It may be tempting, when we see somebody not performing to their potential, to remove them from their position or even eliminate them from the organization. While there may be circumstances when such action is necessary, we should generally seek to do what we can to assist that person. It may be that they just need some words of encouragement from us. In other cases, the person might need some additional training or resources to assist them in their work. Even if we determine that a move *is* needed, that change must be undertaken while always respecting the dignity that is due to them as a person. In all cases, we should imitate Moses in praying to God for them and for the needs and struggles that they are facing. Jesus tells us in today's Gospel that if we believe Moses, we believe Him.<sup>4</sup>

As Catholic leaders, we must always realize, as Blessed John Paul II reminds us, that workers constitute "the firm's most valuable asset."<sup>5</sup> The ends of making a profit or satisfying the shareholders can never replace the attention that we give to the people whom we have the privilege of

serving. This all begins, as I just mentioned, by praying for our people every day. By doing this, we keep before our eyes the awareness that each individual is a child of God and that we are called to assist them in our capacity as leaders.

When it comes to our own particular judgment, we will be held accountable for how we have treated our neighbor, which for us as leaders, includes in a very special way those whom we have led. I am confident that the Lord is not going to ask us at the Last Judgment about our profit margins or about how many deals with clients we were able to close. The Lord will be looking for how well we have served His people as His stewards, always seeking to provide for their needs and to assist them in realizing their full potential as human beings made in His image and likeness. As a Catholic leader, this is the true mark of success and one that will prepare us to be worthy to achieve our ultimate goal of eternal life in Heaven.

As we continue our celebration of the Eucharist, let us ask the Lord for the grace to imitate Him who is our greatest model of leadership. May we pattern our leadership on Him who came not to be served, but to serve those under our care with love and mercy, assisting them on their journey

to the Resurrection.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Seijts, Gerard, "Good Leaders Never Stop Learning," *Ivey Business Journal*, July-August 2013, <http://iveybusinessjournal.com/>

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 32:7-14

<sup>3</sup> See Exodus 8:13-24 and Deuteronomy 1:9-15.

<sup>4</sup> Jn 5:31-47.

<sup>5</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 35.