

CALL FOR PAPERS

“Not to Be Served but to Serve” (Mt 20,28): Rethinking Leadership and Ministry in the Church beyond 500 Years of Catholicism in the Philippines

The Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) ushered in a new way of thinking about the nature and mission of the church as it engaged the contemporary world. It affirmed the primacy of the grace of baptism and by virtue of it, the missionary character of the entire church. With its emphases on *aggiornamento* and *ressourcement*, the Council moved the church away from a Christomonistic understanding of itself to one which rediscovered its mystery, sacramentality and historicity and from a purely monarchical way of governance to one that is more participative, collegial and accountable.

Our upcoming conference focuses on issues that concern its leadership and ministry. The history of the Catholic Church shows us that our religious leaders play a crucial role in the understanding and performance of the church’s mission. On one hand, we have had popes, bishops, priests and religious who initiated necessary church reforms, provided inspiration to the church and effected the renewal of various communities. On the other hand, we also have had clerics who caused scandal and the untold suffering of many of the faithful. While there are different factors (social, economic and political) that influence the exercise of leadership and ministry, a significant aspect in one’s performance of it is one’s theology, particularly how a Christian leader – whether an ordained minister or a lay person – understands Jesus’ and the church’s mission. For instance, for Pope Francis, religious leaders “are called to be true ‘people of dialogue,’ to cooperate in building peace... as authentic mediators” (*Fratelli Tutii*, 284). For him, “The mediator... is one who retains nothing for himself, but rather spends himself generously until he is consumed, knowing that the only gain is peace. Each one of us is called to be an artisan of peace, by uniting and not dividing, by extinguishing hatred and not holding on to it, by opening paths of dialogue and not by constructing new walls” (*Fratelli Tutii*, 284).

While Vatican II presents its vision of leadership for the church, it seems that there exist various ways in which it is understood and practiced within the church. The pedophilia scandal that has rocked the church, for instance, is a prime example of failure on the part of the church’s leadership. In the face of accusations against many of the clergy, many bishops were more concerned in protecting the church’s image rather than ensuring that the victims/survivors were protected and get justice. The bishops of Rome for a long time have failed to act decisively on the concerns of the victims/survivors, did not, or refused to listen to their stories and allowed unintentionally the continuation of the abuses.

The present bishop of Rome, Pope Francis, in his apostolic exhortation, *Querida Amazonia*. While he spoke beautifully about the grandeur of God's creation and the mission of the church and the world to preserve and protect it, he disappointed many when he did not touch on the hot-button issues of women deacons and married clergy. One might disagree with the pope for his silence on those concerns, but his decision not to tackle them is an exercise of his leadership and his Petrine ministry. In a church context in which there appears a polarization between those who support the present pope's agenda and those who have been critical of them, one can perhaps better appreciate the bishop of Rome's ministry as "presiding in love."

In our own local context, the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II) regards the church as a communion in which there is unity in diversity and equality of dignity, and participatory in its way of life and mission in which each member's gifts are recognized and shared for the common good. PCP II called on the Philippine church to become a Church of the Poor – a church whose leaders have a special love and preference for the poor, who fight for the poor's dignity and rights, and who use the church's resources, including their own, for the poor's needs. It has a leadership that does not hesitate to side with the poor, even if that would mean alienation and persecution from the rich and powerful and the loss of societal privileges. Since it has been 30 years since the end of PCP II, we need to take stock of the kinds of leaders we have formed and have had in our local church. The recent cases of extra-judicial killings, the vast majority of whose victims are poor, seem to question the clergy's and lay leaders' commitment to the vulnerable ones of our country.

There has always been a lack of ordained ministers in our country and in many other parts of the world. While we pray for more priestly vocations and encourage others to the ordained priesthood, perhaps it might be the Spirit's way of inviting us to rethink church leadership and ministry in today's world. We might also need to rethink our theology of the ordained ministry since our present understanding of it seems inadequate to the pastoral situation of the people. At the same time, we need to recognize and affirm many of the laity who have occupied positions of leadership in our society in general and in the church in particular. Many who are involved in various church ministries have shown exemplary leadership and service in their areas of expertise in spite of the ministerial challenges they face, among which are clericalism and sexism in church structures, mindsets and attitudes. While Pope Francis rightly criticizes clericalism within the church, he has apparently not given enough attention to sexism within it and in the world.

It is in the above context that we invite you to submit paper proposals for our 2021 DaKaTeo Conference. Our theme is: **"Not to Be Served but to Serve" (Mt 20,28): Rethinking Leadership and Ministry in the Church beyond 500 Years of**

Catholicism in the Philippines. It will be held *online* on 11-12 November 2021. We ask you to reflect on what it means to be a Christian leader in today's context and to rethink ministry in ways that enable the church to be faithful to both its identity and to history. Since it has been almost 500 years since the arrival of Catholicism in our country, it is an opportunity for us to interrogate the tradition of leadership and structures of governance that have been handed on to us.

You may want to address any of the following questions:

- What biblical models of leadership are relevant in today's church? What principles should govern the church's practice of governance? Should these models be complemented by ones that come from other disciplines? How are we to understand the nature of ecclesial leadership?
- How are we to understand the mission and ministry of the bishop of Rome and his relationship to the college of bishops, all of whom are vicars of Christ, in the universal church and in our local churches? How do we understand the role of our local bishops not only in relation to the college but also in terms of being our shepherd in our local context?
- How can the sacraments foster a leadership that is truly Eucharistic, one that transforms the body of Christ as a "ransom for many"?
- What are the new spaces of leadership in the church that should be open to women as a way of overcoming structures of patriarchy in our systems of beliefs, worship and services?
- What theology underlies the canons of governance in the church? What are its strengths and weaknesses? In one's local context, how can we create church structures that are faithful to the church's canons but which at the same time, are truly responsive to the needs of the people and empowering of them? How can we conceive of ministries in ways that do not merely continue what has been traditionally done but are creative and responsive to emerging pastoral situations and contexts?
- Are there indigenous understandings and practices of leadership that might benefit and contribute to the church's understanding and practice of leadership?
- In the face of the demands of one's ministry/-ies, how does one exercise ethical leadership? How can one's leadership question and transform oppressive and discriminating church practices and structures?
- How do we understand the relationship between the clergy, the religious and the laity particularly in terms of promoting the church's life *ad intra* and its mission *ad extra*? In what ways can our different vocations and ministries be mutually enriching and supportive of each other's charisms and ministries?
- In the history of Catholicism in our country, who among our church leaders have exemplified leadership and have served as models for today's church leaders? In what ways can they inspire us in our roles in the church and in society?

- In light of the scandals caused by the clergy and the religious in the church, what kind(s) of formation program(s) do we need in order that we may mold those undergoing initial formation to be truly Christ-like? What kind(s) of formative leadership programs for lay leaders should we develop as their own preparation for their respective ministries?
- What is the responsibility of church leaders not only in the believing community but also in the political community? How are we to conceive of their role as both religious actors and state actors?
- In an unpredictable world (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous), how should leadership be exercised by the church? What does it mean to be leaders *virtually*? How can the church's ministries be more responsive to ever-changing situations?

The above questions are by no means exhaustive, but are meant to stimulate your interest. You may want to address other related theological and pastoral leadership and ministerial issues that are not mentioned.

Kindly submit your paper proposals of *not more than 300 words* to dakatephilippines@gmail.com *on or before 15 May 2021*. The ExeCom will deliberate on your proposals and inform you of *your proposal's acceptance by 1 June 2020*. For those whose proposals will be accepted, please submit to us *a draft of the paper that you will deliver (2000 words) by 31 October 2020*. You will be asked later on to further develop your drafts into an article that is suitable for publication.