

A Roadmap for American Churches and People of Faith: W.W.J.D. (What Would Jesus Do?)



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Stewardship Calling

CHAPTER 5. Servant Leadership.

At the beginning of my Roadmap, I asked you the critical question of if you believe Jesus Christ is who He says He is. If you answered in the affirmative and studied his Bible teachings, then you have already read the greatest leadership book ever. Period. There has never been a greater leader in human history! Even non-believers must concede this fact because no other leader started a movement that has already lasted almost 2,000 years (and remains the dominant force in humanity). Thus, one must first study Christ's story to study leadership truly (Roberts, 2023a).

The Search For The Leadership Holy Grail (LHG) And Servant Leadership (SL).

Humans are constantly seeking the **Leadership Holy Grail** (“LHG”) of the ultimate leadership processes, activities, methods, or approaches that are the most effective. Humankind is also in pursuit of the secret ingredient of best practices to provide optimum leadership results. The Gospel of Matthew shares a tremendous inspirational, motivational talk toward that end. On a hill overlooking the Sea of Galilee just behind Capernaum is a place now called the Mount of Beatitudes.

There, Christ aimed a motivational missile at everyone by explaining that they were to be the light, but not just any light. Those who follow Jesus are to be the light for the “whole world” (Matthew 5:14). However, since we discovered that light points people in a direction, it is what Christ said next that you must not miss. The light all believers are to become by their good works and deeds is not merely for their benefit but so that observers in darkness might see the glorious light of their Father in Heaven (Matthew 5:16).

Thus, the motivation derived from being the light points toward something bigger and better. This inspires people to be in service of something greater than oneself. The Lord had a more personalized opportunity to teach this message to his team of Apostles when two of them (St. John and St. James) sought recognition and honor greater than the others (Matthew 20:22). In that critical “teachable moment” when the other Apostles expressed displeasure at the recognition they might not receive, the Lord provided the foundation for what Dr. Robert Greenleaf would later make a career discussing, **Servant Leadership** by **Servant Leaders** (Greenleaf, 1970, 1977). (For simplicity, I will use the abbreviation “SL” to mean both **Servant Leadership** and **Servant Leader** as the context requires.) The Lord shone the light of wisdom on the pursuit of vainglory that drives people toward darkness rather than being the light of the whole world. “*Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant*” (Matthew 20:26).

St John Chrysostom's Model For Servant Leaders (SL).

An essential SL element is helping you discern your calling (WHY) and how you can live it by serving others through using your gifts. A true SL recognized and granted sainthood by virtually all Christian religions was St. John Chrysostom, who lived in the 4th

century BC. He offered a clear definition of an SL, which I cite many times in my Roadmap because of its applicability to many contexts.

The most basic task of the Church leader is to discern the spiritual gifts of all those under his authority and to encourage those gifts to be used to the full for the benefit of all. Only a person who can discern the gifts of others and humbly rejoice at the flowering of those gifts is fit to lead the Church (Chrysostom, 1964, p. 44; Kostakis, 2018).

Note St. John's poignant criticism of any SL not exemplifying these characteristics by suggesting they lack the fitness to serve as a leader. Recent SL scholars have echoed the importance of asking followers what they are trying to do, listening carefully to their responses, and providing beneficial guidance (Greenleaf, 1977).

Being a servant requires great strength since it runs counter to human nature, which seeks personal recognition, satisfaction, and benefit. Yet, as far back as possibly 450 BC, people were taught to: "...*be strong and do not let your hands be weak, for there is a reward for your work*" (II Chronicles 15:7; Maximos et al., 2008, p. 498). Thus, motivation must include the standard elements of human resources incentives with a healthier dose of emphasis on the demanding work of bringing the light among darkness in pursuit of recognition for something much bigger than oneself. Does this work in modern life?

Leading through serving others to achieve a vision is the essence of SL. At its core, SL maintains that: "The servant-leader is servant first...It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first" (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 27). This leadership model is the multi-dimensional and holistic engagement of people relationally, ethically, emotionally, and spiritually to achieve their WHY and live their purpose fully (Eva et al., 2019).

[An Exceedingly Brief History Of The Journey To Servant Leadership \(SL\).](#)

A historical review of Western civilization identified the roots and origins of SL over 2500 years ago in ancient Greece/Rome (Valeri, 2007). The greatest SL example is Jesus Christ, who fully served everyone He led (including giving His life for them) and created an organization that remains the most dominant global force, even if somewhat fractured into various divisions (Roberts, 2023a). Indeed, the Lord's exact words were, "...*the Son of Man (Christ) did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many*" (Matthew 20:28).

More recently, scholars have identified different articulations of the elements of effective SL: (1) listening, empathizing, healing and humility, awareness of environment/impacts, persuasion, conceptualization of vision, foresight, stewardship, commitment to people's growth, and building communities (Greenleaf, 1970, 1977; Spears, 2010); (2) love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service (Patterson, 2003). While the words differ, the essence between these two and other

articulations is strikingly similar. Moreover, these SL elements are not isolated and are often interdependent and interrelated, with one element supporting and cross-fertilizing others (Patterson, 2003).

For decades (or perhaps millennia), businesspeople labored under the impression that the only way to lead was a hierarchical model in pursuit of another Holy Grail of maximizing shareholder wealth. The **Hierarchical Leadership** (“**HL**”) assumption was that leaders were born, and thus, upon discovering one, we were duty-bound to follow them, even if into an abyss. This model has mostly been repudiated (except in communist or socialist totalitarian countries, and we can see what that does for those followers). Thus, it merits no further discussion here.

In the mid-1970s, Dansereau, Graen, Haga, and others presented a crack in the Hierarchical model with the **Leader-Member Exchange** theory (“**LMX**”) (Dancera et al., 1975). LMX focuses on the dyadic relationship between leader and follower. In such dyads, some followers were “in,” and others were “out” with the leader at any given time. The same “in/out” principle applies to groups of followers depending on their relationship with the leader. This useful addition allowed humanity to take the next step toward an LHG (Leadership Holy Grail).

In the 1970s, Robert Greenleaf upended the HL and LMX Models and leadership pyramid with his SL model, which dared to put the follower first and above the leader. Imagine Greenleaf channeling a prophet of almost 2,000 years earlier named Jesus, who paradoxically said He was both God and man, placed on earth to serve and save mankind. How odd that sounded to the Jews, pagans, and others who believed in a different kind of retributive God(s) more akin to a harsh king.

Thereafter, Bass, Bryman, and others, in 1985 - 1992, proposed a 4th LHG model focused on **Transformational Leadership** (“**TL**”) (Bass, 1985, 1999, 2006; Bass & Avolio, 1993; Bass & Riggio, 2006). In TL, the leader concentrates on helping followers achieve their full potential in pursuit of the motivational realignment of the organization. When people pursue transformational goals, individuals’ inspiration, motivation, and intellectual stimulation are critical.

Transformational Leaders must play three-dimensional chess simultaneously, focusing on 1. stakeholders/shareholders/investors, 2. the followers/employees essential to do the work, and 3. a lofty transformational Vision of change from the status quo. After this TL 4th LHG, instead of seeing a single leadership abyss, you might feel stuck in the ever-pulling centrifugal force of quicksand experienced by *Indiana Jones in the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*. The only way Indiana could extricate himself from the quicksand was to be pulled out by grabbing a snake. Since he feared snakes, the TL saving Indiana Jones told him to think he was grabbing a rope. This was a hierarchical act in demanding behavior, with an LMX exchange with a follower and SL putting his needs first.

Around 2005, the concept of **Authentic Leadership** (“**AL**”) appeared. AL sounds ostentatious, as if all previous leadership approaches were somehow inauthentic. AL focuses on the genuineness of the leader/follower relationship as they jointly pursue a grand Vision. (Cue the *Raiders of the Lost Arc* theme music.) This authentic leader acts

with self-discipline and clear values focused on connected relationships in the passionate pursuit of an inspiring purpose.

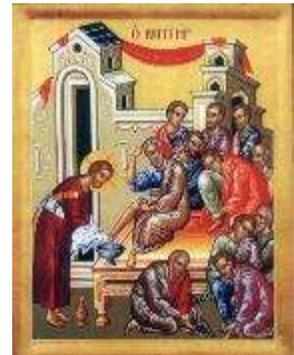
This AL model opened us to examine the leaders' mindfulness, motivations, and authenticity. I heard echoes of my Greek upbringing and my immigrant father saying, "Γνώθι σαυτόν" ("know thyself" attributed to my very ancient (maybe) ancestor, Socrates). Thousands of years later, a Brit named Will Shakespear translated this authenticity need in Hamlet as "to thine own self be true."

As it turned out, 5 LHG models (HL, LMX, SL, TL, and AL) were not enough as Sosik and Jung introduced **Full Range Leadership Development ("FRLD")**. At its core, FRLD acknowledges that everything is personal in leadership. An essential part of FRLD that starkly contrasts some other theories is the abandonment of the assumption that leaders are either predisposed to or stuck with any particular leadership approach. Like "free-range chickens," the FRLD leader can roam, morph, and adapt to their circumstances and environments and deploy a combination of leadership styles and behaviors as the situation dictates.

FRLD accepts that we begin as unique individuals, whether as leaders or followers. Individuals move from the personal to being nested in two-person dyads. Those dyads expand and connect into groups that eventually become organizations. But in this migration from one to many, I wonder if we "buried the lead," as they say in the newspaper business.

[A Desirable Servant Leadership \(SL\) Model For Parish And Parishioner Leadership.](#)

The Orthodox icon on the right depicts a seminal act of SL with Christ washing His disciples' feet (John13:1-5). The significance of this act should not be lost on those of us living in modernity who are used to washing our feet daily and covering them with socks and shoes. In Christ's times, the feet were largely exposed to the dusty terrain and soil, and foot washing lacked frequency. Thus, the feet of the Apostles were unimaginably (for us) dirty. This made the Lord's act of humility even more impactful and illustrative of true SL.

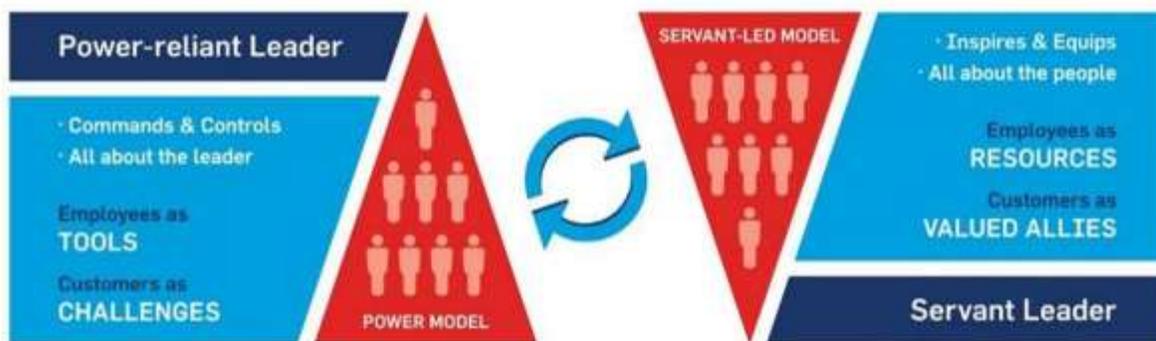


SL is often considered a paradox due to a simultaneous focus on serving and influencing as a form of moral leadership (Northouse, 2022). Indeed, true servant leaders consider themselves a servant first and a servant of all those they lead and who benefit from their leadership. (Greenleaf, 1970, 1977). Thus, SL organizations are different because of a preeminent focus on loving and serving others out of joy and not obligation. This engaging collective work can lead people and organizations to a better shared future vision while simultaneously valuing people and other traditional applicable measures of success (e.g., performance, effectiveness, satisfaction, etc.) (McGee-Cooper & Trammell, 2010, pp. 130-144).

Research has shown how SL flips the historical hierarchical organizational chart and builds critical interpersonal relationships that enhance team cohesion and performance. Indeed, effective SL creates a symbiotic triad of relationships between the servant leader, team members, and those in the environment they serve (Lemoine et al., 2023). As a result, SL has proven benefits in enhancing employee motivation, attitudes, and feelings of well-being and performance. And it can produce compounded results such that the whole can exceed the sum of the parts. The impact of followers in SL environments changes the behaviors of others for the benefit of the entire community (Lemoine et al., 2023). Indeed, growth in moral influence among followers of SL has been researched and identified. Thus, SL can be a super-spreader of optimal behaviors that ripple through an organization and extend to those whom the organization serves and the broader community/world (Berry, 2019).

The following “Flip the Organizational Chart Diagram” explains SL well and is courtesy of a Creative Commons open-source license granted by the Servant Leadership Institute.

Flip the Organization Chart™



The world can become a brighter place through serving and sharing the SL light with others. “A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle. And when it does, the light in the world doubles.” The first part of this quote is attributed to many people of faith but may have been first offered by Roman Catholic priest Fr. James Keller, who in 1945 formed The Christophers and began one of the first weekly television shows of faith.

Servant Leadership In Ancient Greek Warriors And Paralympians.

Greeks and warriors always love to talk about the Spartans. A famous saying is attributed to the soldiers of ancient Sparta, Greece: “Come back with your shield, or on it.” The Spartan mothers shortened the admonition in referring to their son’s shield: “Either this or on this.” In ancient Greece, those killed in battle were carried home on top of their shields (Hammond, 1979).

This leadership philosophy embedded in Spartan youth was not just because of their fierce warrior reputation. It contained a critical SL component. The shield was not meant to protect the warrior. It was carried on the left hand and was meant to protect the man to his left side. If a Spartan warrior were to lose or break his spear in battle, there was no punishment. But the loss of the shield led to being ostracized, or worse, as it was deemed to be a betrayal of the duty to protect his comrades on his side (Carlson, 2023).

A key essence of SL is protecting and caring for those entrusted to you. Indeed, trust is “at the root “ of all SL (Greenleaf,1977). Because your shield was meant to protect the person on your left, the SL value they were creating partially explained why they were so invincible. You shielded and protected the person on your left while the person on your right shielded and protected you. In this way, each warrior was the servant and leader of the other.

I was blessed to be a volunteer working at the 1996 International Paralympic Games. The Paralympics immediately follow the Olympics every four years. They are the competition for world-class athletes with one or more “disabilities.” The picture on the right indicted me so significantly that I felt I must include it in my Roadmap. It is an example of one of the longer-distance speed races where the Paralympic times are generally only a few seconds slower than the regular Olympic record times. The athlete on the right (in red) is blind. However, since degrees of blindness vary, they also wear blindfolds. You should wonder how a blind athlete can run at almost a world record time around an oval track they cannot see. The answer is represented by the world-class sighted runner (in yellow) on the left who runs side-by-side tethered by a small band by which the sighted athlete keeps the blind athlete in his lane around the oval.



The sighted athletes are themselves world-class competitors and leaders in their field. And yet, as servant leaders, they ensure those who are “differently abled” can exhibit athletic excellence as they represent their country and family and compete for medals and glory. The bond between sighted and blind athletes who train together extensively models the elements of SL (International Paralympic Committee, n.d.).

The Greenleaf SL Revolution.

In the 1970s, the modern father of the SL movement, Dr. Robert Greenleaf, first identified ten critical characteristics of servant leaders (Greenleaf, 1970; Northouse, 2022; Spears, 2002). As you read this list, think of ways you could model this in your parish:

1. Listening first and deeply
2. Empathizing with what followers think and feel
3. Healing the personal well-being of followers

4. Awareness of the environment and impacts
5. Persuasion through clear and persistent communications
6. Conceptualization of the organization's vision
7. Foresight of the future
8. Stewardship over the organization and people
9. Commitment to the growth of people
10. Building a Community of shared interests

Expanding on Greenleaf's SL model, Spears (2010) elaborated on the ten SL attributes that can be highly instructive for parish leaders:

1. LISTENING – to different perspectives, what isn't said, and even their inner voice while they reflect on the totality of information,
2. EMPATHY – the need to understand what people are feeling and why,
3. HEALING – transformation can come after the healing necessary to overcome the impediments and issues one is facing,
4. AWARENESS – one must be acutely and honestly aware of themselves and what is happening around them,
5. PERSUASION - leadership provides positional authority, whereas SL includes persuading others to act in a certain way,
6. CONCEPTUALIZATION – while leaders must manage operations and results, it is critical also to see the big dream and how to achieve it,
7. FORESIGHT – seeking possible futures given past experiences and current challenges and resources,
8. STEWARDSHIP – facilitating each person's pursuit of their calling or destiny through persuasion and encouragement,
9. GROWTH OF PEOPLE – help each person grow the active engagement and support,
10. BUILDING COMMUNITY – seek to create better organizations, communities, and world.

Each of these characteristics and behaviors is perfectly aligned with how a parish leader should conceive of their responsibilities. As you re-read the expanded list, ask yourself how many of these attributes are you modeling and how many of them are you teaching in your parish training programs.

Patterson Servant Leadership Model.

I was blessed to have as one of my DSL professors, Dr. Kathleen Patterson, who has continued Dr. Greenleaf's research and has more succinctly summarized the ten attributes without changing or reducing the essential meaning. The self-explanatory diagram below shows the seven elements in sequence and how they interrelate (Patterson, 2003; van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010).

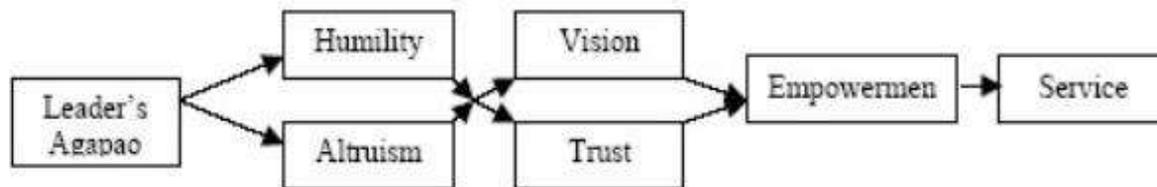


Figure 1, The model of constructs, This model details how the servant leadership constructs work together beginning with agapao love and ending with service.

Instead of reviewing these elements in greater detail here, I will expand on them by comparing them with my previously developed Stewardship Calling Six Building Blocks of Servant Leadership model discussed next.

The Stewardship Calling Six Building Blocks Servant Leadership (SL).

Several decades before beginning my formal DSL studies, I took my many years of leading organizations and my work with many clients and hundreds of Orthodox Christian churches and ministries and developed the Stewardship Calling Six Building Blocks of Servant Leadership (Marianes, n.d.) These six specific elements (each building on the preceding one) were present in the most effective parish servant leaders I studied and with whom I worked. My goal was to distill the most succinct list of essential ingredients for parish leaders. Fascinatingly, and no doubt providentially, my Stewardship Calling Six Building Blocks of SL summarizes and aligns perfectly with the far more extensive and validated SL research of Drs. Greenleaf, Spears, Patterson, and many others. Here is how I describe the Six Building Blocks:

1. LOVE. The Lord gave His Apostles and us His Great Commandment of love (John 13:34-35) as one of his last instructions. He defined you as His "disciple" by the degree to which you followed this foundational value. If you don't love your people, if you don't love Christ, if you don't love God, if you don't love others, dear brother or sister, it is impossible for you to be a parish SL. You must go into this mission field with love in your heart and love of service to others to be an effective SL.

2. TRUST. All leadership research has identified this essential building block of trust. How will anyone follow you if they do not trust you? If you start by first building a foundation of love and then act consistently by walking your talk of the WHY and Core Values while protecting and having the backs of those you lead, trust can blossom. But without trust, you will never lead volunteers.

3. HUMILITY. Servant leaders must show humility, which is one characteristic the early leadership literature did not focus on. Understanding both the psychology and biology of how humility engenders personal trust and integrity in someone is extremely helpful in advancing the case for humility. Jim Collins's Good To Great research on the best entities and the type of "Level 5 leader" he identified as most successful blended the essential building blocks of "extreme personal humility" alongside an intensity of personal will and dedication (Collins, 2001). When one sees Christ washing the feet of the Apostles and understands the abject ultimate act of humility He demonstrated, the importance of this building block is established.

4. COURAGE. Drs. Kouzes's and Posner's research confirmed my experience that being forward-looking and driving change within an organization is critical for successful SL (Kouzes & Posner, 2010). Accordingly, courage is the necessary condition precedent. It takes no courage to leave things as they are. However, charting a new course and roadmap into the unknown and an uncertain future requires courage. Courage, when built on a foundation of love, trust, and humility, can lead followers to want to join the cause.

5. TEAM. Everyone knows that without followers, one is not truly a leader. In some organizations, followers may be conscripted or bought with a paycheck. However, in the volunteer-centric world of parishes, joining a team is a true choice and exercise of free will. Teams will not effectively form in the church-world until the SL has demonstrated the preconditions of love, trust, humility, and courage. This is why each Stewardship Calling SL element builds on the previous ones to form the ideal SL.

6. VISION. Driving a team forward requires an inspiring Vision the team can see and want to be a part of realizing. At the same time, the parish Vision cannot be only what the SL desires. Leadership requires building a team around an inspiring Vision.

Much more has been (and will be) written by scholars and students of leadership regarding each SL building block. However, over three decades of parish work in the American Orthosphere have confirmed the necessity of each of these six SL building blocks. I am often asked how one could assess these building blocks, which resulted in creating the Stewardship Calling Parish Servant Leader Test and Score. It is extremely short and simple and is meant to be completed as an honest self-assessment first.

Think about each specific statement to the right and record your score from one to five, where five is you always demonstrate that characteristic, and one is you never demonstrate it. This begins as a self-scoring mechanism not to be shared publicly. Thus, it is critical to be honest with yourself. The purpose of this exercise is for candid self-assessment against a standard of SL excellence that can hopefully lead to further self-reflection, study, and work to improve those of the six elements in which you are performing not at the highest level to become an even better and stronger SL.

Parish Servant Leader Score

LOVE	I love unconditionally _____	5 = Always 4 = Mostly 3 = Sometimes 2 = Rarely 1 = Never
TRUST	I do what I say _____	
HUMILITY	I admit my mistakes _____	
COURAGE	I persevere regardless of danger, difficulty or uncertainty. _____	
TEAM	I support my people _____	
VISION	I lead to a righteous destination _____	

However, a way to expand the effectiveness of this tool is to ask others whom you trust, who know your leadership style, and who will be honest with you to also score you on a one to five scale in each of these six building blocks. You can then compare those scores with your own. This is not a full 360 SL assessment (discussed below) but is a beginning step focused on improving your parish performance in six critical SL building blocks.

Servant Leadership 360 Evaluations.

Paul Wong (together with various colleagues) developed an SL 360-degree evaluation tool for you to assess your SL excellence by obtaining feedback from superiors, peers, subordinates, and yourself. The SLP-360 (Wong & Page, 2003a) is a validated tool I have used to assess a person’s SL strengths and opportunities for improvement. To evaluate your SL abilities, I typically use the 62-question Servant Leadership Profile-360 (SLP-360) survey tool (Wong & Page, 2000, 2003a, 2003b; Wong et al., 2004; Wong et al., 2023). I typically deliver this comprehensive SLP-360 via an online survey by Survey Monkey to evaluate the SL characteristics of a critical parish or ministry leader (including clergy). I survey the leader’s supervisor, peers, and subordinates in those situations for a more robust 360 evaluation.

Each question is a statement about the leader, where they are rated on a 7-point Likert scale between 1 (Strongly Disagree) through 4 (Neutral) up to a maximum score of 7 (Strongly Agree). In evaluating the SL scores, it is helpful first to examine the average of all respondents and then compare the self-reported scores of the servant leader being evaluated to those of the other evaluators. An average score of 5.6 or above is evidence of a strong SL, whereas a score below 5.6 identifies areas for improvement (Wong et al., 2004).

Importantly, several questions are negative factors such that a reverse scoring means a score of 2 or less is consistent with good SL, and a score above 2 identifies an area for improvement (Wong et al., 2004). In the debriefing guide for the SLP-360, Wong and Page (2003a) identify that an SL assessment ideally looks at positive qualities consistent with SL scholarship and the absence of negative behavioral characteristics

that detract from SL. In this regard, positive behavioral attributes and personal characteristics include SL concepts such as:

- 1) servanthood,
 - 2) leadership,
 - 3) visioning,
 - 4) developing others,
 - 5) empowering others,
 - 6) team building,
 - 7) shared decision-making, and
 - 8) integrity
- (Wong & Page, 2003a, p. 5).

On the other end, the negative SL qualities to be avoided include (a) abuse of power and control, and (b) pride and narcissism, which are scored by reversing the scoring (where a 1 is positive and a 7 is negative) (Wong & Page, 2003a, p. 5). The inclusion of these negative characteristics (e.g., abuse of power or pride) allows an evaluator to disqualify a person from SL excellence based on a high negativity score, even if other subscale attributes of SL are present (Wong & Page, 2003a).

When standing in the center of a 360-degree round object, one can observe the totality of their surroundings and imagine how they might interact with each point on the circle. This all-encompassing perspective can be positive or challenging and enlightening as it provides a roadmap for growth. A 360-degree “magic circle” is even postulated to be a metaphorical barrier that can divide real and virtual worlds (Fairfield, 2009). However, being in the middle of a circle of people can provide multiple touchpoints.

When a parish leader wants the best assessment of their bearings, using a variety of methodologies to gather the perspectives of the diverse group with whom they interact (e.g., supervisors, peers, subordinates, those served, etc.) and comparing it to their self-perception provides robust feedback and valuable assessments of skills, performance, and specific attributes being assessed (Craig & Hannum, 2006). Indeed, the opportunity for diverse individuals to work with the evaluatee effectively provides actionable insights (Borman, 1997).

As valuable as the assessments of others can be for a person, the potential inconsistencies between their self-evaluations and those of the other 360 assessment participants can often provide some of the most fertile growth opportunities (Craig & Hannum, 2006). The unique ways people at different organizational levels assess one another provide alternative perspectives that can be considered and acted upon (Borman, 1997). Indeed, when evaluations occur across multiple organizational levels, even different performance ratings may be equally valuable and useful (Borman, 1997).

In my experience using the SLP-360 within the American Orthosphere, I have found reasonably good consistency between honest self-evaluations and the survey responses of superiors from those individuals I have observed who have an SL heart or training. Generally, peers and subordinates tend to be more gracious and softer in the evaluations. This underscores the importance of the evaluatee selecting peers who are willing to provide the most honest assessment.

Everyone loves to be praised, but praise does not lead to improvement. Thus, I have found it critical to ensure that the most honest and forthright evaluations occur for the maximum benefit of the SL being evaluated. If you wish to elevate your SL abilities, performance, and areas for improvement, I cannot recommend undertaking an SL 360 evaluation highly enough.

A 360 assessment is not the only vehicle for improving performance. In research cited by Toegel and Conger (2003), one meta-analysis concluded performance decreased after one-third of 360s, and another study concluded that one-half of 360 participants failed to demonstrate a positive effectiveness response after their 360. Nevertheless, the more effective 360s include those where (i) participants know they are accountable for results from the feedback, (ii) follow-up activities are scheduled to ensure accountability and performance enhancements, (iii) they are repeated rather than as one-time events, (iv) feedback for development is delivered separate from appraisals of one's performance (Toegel & Conger, 2003, pp. 15-16).

Conducting an SL 360 with a particular and narrower focus area may provide meaningful insights into that performance aspect, much like zooming in with binoculars or a camera lens providing more detailed information. This motivation leads us to undertake a 360-assessment focused especially on SL, which I believe all clergy and parish council and ministry leaders should undertake.

Some Powerful Impacts Of Servant Leadership (SL).

SL is not just a theoretical leadership or management construct. Instead, it is based on the observed natural desires of people to serve that can be cultivated and learned, even if some are more predisposed to SL than others (Speers, 2010). One reason SL has delivered positive results (empirical, psychological, developmental, etc.) is that by flipping the typically hierarchical pyramid to emphasize an interpersonal relationship with and commitment from the followers, the process of symbiosis creates an interconnected triadic relationship among servant leader, follower, and those they all serve (Lemoine et al., 2023). This leadership is extremely powerful in a parish environment.

In this way, SL becomes a self-perpetuating, potentially ever-growing force multiplier of committed personal energy to achieve a desired outcome or objective for a much broader community (Berry, 2019). Research has proven the efficacy of SL with positive results and outcomes in the parish, profit, and non-profit sectors (Amir et al., 2021). However, implementing SL in parishes introduces many unique cultural elements that can produce different impacts, applications, dilemmas, and strategies necessary to optimize SL administration and impact, particularly in parishes with parishioners from various parts of the world (Hofstede et al., 2010; Trompenaars & Voerman, 2010).

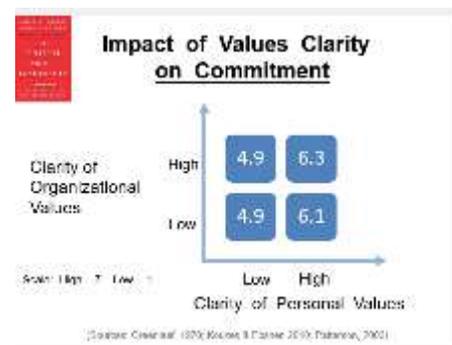
SL not only answers the call of all leadership scholars and faith leaders but satisfies a fundamental need inherent in humans through which psychological satisfaction is enhanced the more one's leadership behavior is aligned with SL (Paas et al., 2020). As it turns out, studies have shown that followers who get along with agreeable servant leaders

perform very well. Thus, the interrelationship between a parish volunteer’s and parish SL’s personalities may be part of the mystery of superior performance (Hunter et al., 2013)

The precepts of “social learning theory” suggest that influenceable parishioners/followers are likelier to emulate the SL characteristics of those who lead them. Subordinates thereby become more likely to serve others if they accept being served by their parish leaders, thus completing Greenleaf’s theory of the repeatability of a cycle of service (Bandura, 1977). Accordingly, parishioners/followers must be coachable and willing to trust a parish SL who inspires and reinforces them. Ultimately, significant evidence suggests followers do not serve leaders. Rather, a symbiotic relationship develops between leader and follower based on their common purpose, each finding the optimal role they can play in achieving that goal (Chaleff, 2009).

Knowing Your Core Values Is Critical In Leadership.

Kouzes & Posner’s (2010) research provided another interesting element of the type of parishioner/follower best suited to work with a servant leader. As the model on the right indicates, aligning individual and organizational values produces the best results (a 6.3 on a scale of 7). However, the research also showed that it is far more critical for the individual parishioner/follower to have clarity of their own values than merely having clarity of the organization’s values alone (Kouzes & Posner, 2010). In this way, parishes can serve a vital role in helping their parishioners achieve clarity of their Core Values even before ensuring alignment with the parish’s Core Values. This is logical since so much of following a parish servant leader deals with alignment. This includes alignment of trust, loyalty, shared future vision, love of people, and serving others while building an empowered parish (Patterson, 2003).



The Servant Follower (“SF”).

Researchers are pursuing how servant leaders (SL) can create servant followers (SF) (Roberts, 2023b). Indeed, as Crystal Davis pointed out succinctly since volunteers do not get paid, their job satisfaction is critical (Davis, 2017). The data shows that the most effective parishioners/followers are enthusiastic, intelligent, and diligent pursuers of the Mission of their parishes and ministries. This elevates the servant followers well beyond the prior notion of “subordinates.” Author Nicole Davis outlined the growing body of research focusing on the role of followers and their growing interrelationships with servant leaders (Davis, 2017).

This enhanced understanding of **Servant Followership** transcends the prior notion of merely “doing what I was told to do” mentality to empower parish followers to understand and align with parishes’ WHY, Core Values, Mission, and Vision. As Servant Leaders increasingly serve and integrate with their parishioners/followers (and other

impacted stakeholders), the interconnectedness of roles develops a mindset between leader and follower that elevates followers to a heightened level of servanthood. These individuals become **Servant Followers** (“**SF**”). The days of leadership research and scholarship ignoring followers are gone. As Chaleff, Greenleaf, and others have noted, the follower’s role has been elevated due to SL’s growing understanding and development.

The most inspiring leaders have their followers combine their best ideas and efforts to produce innovative solutions. According to Kouzes and Posner: “Leaders never make extraordinary things happen by themselves. Leaders mobilize others to want to struggle for shared aspirations, which means that, fundamentally, leadership is a relationship” (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). In this way, they define leadership not as a unidimensional or one-way interaction but as an interpersonal relationship among leaders and followers.

New parish, church, and global leaders worth following are simultaneously comfortable embracing constant change without sacrificing their fundamental faith beliefs and Core Values. Thus, effective parish leaders must be committed to experimenting, taking risks, and seeking ways to innovate continuously while remaining true to the timeless foundations of their faith tradition (Marquardt & Berger, 2000). The research verifies the expectation that parishioners/followers believe their parish leader will have a sense of the direction they will take the parish and that their parish has a viable and exciting future. This requires a vision, goals, and a creative or innovative path to make that vision a reality (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

Scholars of SL, Drs. Kathleen Patterson, Bruce Winston, and others have written extensively on Christian faith leadership (Patterson & Winston, 2023), focusing on how Christ developed effective SL and SF in his Apostles. Scholars have identified how Christ’s followers are trained and learn to be SL themselves. These are examples of SF and include Elisha, Elijah, and many SFs in the Bible. Observing the SF stories and the SL examples further underscores my thesis that the Bible is the greatest leadership treatise. Indeed, the very concept of SF is perhaps one of the most visible messages in the Holy Scripture.

[The Stewardship Calling Unified Servant Leader/Follower \(“USLF”\) Model And The 7th Leadership Holy Grail \(Part 1\).](#)

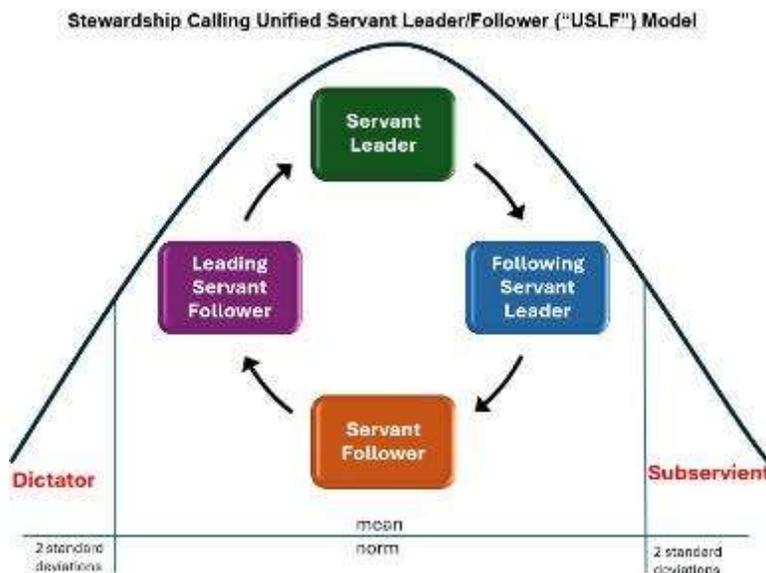
The more I observed and studied SL and SF in highly successful parishes and other relationships and organizations, the more I concluded we were trying to differentiate the undifferentiable. Or, put another way, perhaps the previously conceived leadership continuum line is a closed-loop circle. Let me provide a simplistic and practical example.

A dynamic SL priest is on a critical parish mission trip in the parish van with a few loyal and dedicated SF parishioners when the vehicle breaks down. Fortunately for the team, the parishioner SF driver is also a mechanic and can quickly diagnose the problem. However, he needs help to fix the van. The dynamic SL priest immediately volunteers because, while he is a dynamic clergyman, he has never studied car mechanics or worked on cars with his father. At that moment, the SL becomes a “**Following Servant Leader**”

(“FSL”) who will follow the servant leadership and instructions of the now “**Leading Servant Follower**” (“LSF”) driver/mechanic.

In a more complex hypothetical, the role reversal can last for an extended period. Witness what happened during the COVID pandemic when a traditional priest SL immediately became subservient FSLs of their technology and ministry teams LSFs as the parish migrated from a live to a virtual environment for many months. Many other examples exist in parishes, businesses, and non-profits where the best SL needs to subordinate, not merely as a leader practicing servanthood, but by becoming an FSL of a colleague or other person who had previously been an SF. That relationship shift remains as long as necessary until the transaction, situation, or event passes. Perhaps the LSF returns to the SF role or uses this event of inflection to become a more permanent SL.

This circular dynamic allows leaders and followers with a servant’s heart to migrate and shift between SL, FSL, SF, and LSF roles. If you accept my theory, perhaps too much is made of the separation between servant leaders and follower roles. Instead, a concept of circularity rather than a continuum might be better represented by the following picture:



As my Stewardship Calling USLF (Unified Servant Leader/Follower) Model identifies, two standard deviations from the norm on either end of the human spectrum are aberrant leaders or followers. The left extreme is a dictator, and the right extreme is a permanently subservient individual. However, within the two standard deviations of the human norm, one can see the cycle of SL and SF on the top and bottom, with the circle’s sides representing Servant Leaders who shift roles (FSL) to followers of their previous SF. The roles can migrate continuously and as needed so that the most effective team members become equally comfortable in the leader and follower roles as servants.

Thus, at any given time, the same person could be an SF following an SL in one context while simultaneously serving as a SL of another SF or SL. This circularity inspires everyone to consider first and foremost always being a servant, whether they act as an SL or SF, as their context and situation require. Thus, leadership training always teaches everyone the Christ-centered lesson of servanthood and allows a person's SL and SF status to change organically and episodically.

Some of the most successful leaders of exceptional sports teams routinely shift roles to support another team member. We have seen the football tight end run downfield to block for another wide receiver or the star point guard setting the pick for his center to get an open shot. My Unified Servant Leader/Follower Model also explains SL circularity in a flock of geese where the birds take turns leading the flock from the point of the V, only to eventually tire and go to the rear and draft off the leadership of a different goose now in the lead. This Unified Servant Leader/Follower Model cyclical transition also occurs in the best parishes where the priest or parish council president is never too good not to be a servant follower when needed.

The ultimate authority I cite in support of my USLF (Unified Servant Leader/Follower) Model are three passages from Holy Scripture where Christ himself suggests no one can be a leader unless and until they have mastered servanthood/followership described as being a "slave." *"And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave"* (Matthew 20:27). St. Mark shortens it to: *"And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all"* (Mark 10:44). St. Luke makes it even more explicit: *"Yet I am among you as the One who serves"* (Luke 22:27). The ultimate Leader makes clear that being servant/follower/slave is the essential skill to be acquired.

So, perhaps we might change how we think about teaching leadership and followership to emphasize the concept of the six elements of servanthood with the need to be both SL and SF fluidly as the circumstance requires. This presents an empowering (and perhaps revolutionary) concept that suggests real leadership training is always more about perfecting servanthood as the fundamental skill with less distinction between the role of leader or follower. Imagine a church where everyone is always willing to be a servant and then plays the role of leader or follower as the need arises and their gifts permit. Thus, a Unified Servant Leader/Follower training and practice might create an even healthier and more effective parish.

As I developed my USLF theory, what continually resonated with me was the following quote that has often been attributed to James Michener and some Zen Buddhist masters but is most likely originally authored by Lawrence Pearsall Jacks in his 1932 book Education Through Recreation. Regardless of original authorship, it has guided my life, was always framed and hung on my office wall, and I taught my daughters to embrace and live this philosophy (Jacks, 1932):

A master in the art of living draws no sharp distinction between his work and his play, his labor and his leisure, his mind and his body, his information, and his recreation.* He hardly knows which is which. He simply pursues his vision of excellence at whatever he is doing, and leaves others to decide whether he is working or playing. To himself, he always appears to be doing both.

*The phrase “**his love and his religion**” has been added over time, representing additional skills the master in the art of living must not distinguish between. I think that is a good addition, and it is on the version I have hung on my wall and in my brain.

I challenge you to follow this advice and consider developing your servanthood while simultaneously developing your servant leadership/followership. If you do, you will be the kind of representative of your Lord that will be most effective and righteous as you bring people closer to Christ and each other.

[The Fiction Of Leadership And The 7th Leadership Holy Grail \(Part 2\).](#)

This is an odd subtitle for a Roadmap discussing leadership. The provocativeness is because leadership studies primarily focus on the person/persons at the top of an organization. Yet very few people ever have direct (or even indirect) interactions with such “top-floor” or “top-box” leaders. How often do the typical “**PIPs**” (**Parishioners In Pews**) ever have any meaningful contact or interaction with their Bishop? So how can the Bishop’s leadership style directly influence people so far removed from them?

Certainly, great leaders are instrumental in determining an organization’s culture (good and bad) that drives WHY, Vision, Core Values, and operations. However, the reality is that most followers do not directly follow the top leader. Instead, they follow subordinate managers (i.e., leaders in training) whose leadership styles and abilities may materially differ from the “top dogs.”

So, my first **Leadership Holy Grail (LHG)** challenge is that if your parish’s leadership is not in the “business” of developing consistent leaders throughout the parish, a particular leadership style may be more or less important. Evidence of this is the dynamic and growing international company, which was voted the best restaurant in America for eight years running. Chairman Dan Cathy regularly pronounces, “Chick-fil-A is a leadership development company disguised as a restaurant.” And because top leadership believes one of their primary jobs is developing other leaders, they become a force multiplier leadership tsunami.

Truth be known, in most parishes or other organizations, leaders have a relatively small number of direct reports they can effectively truly lead. While apocryphal stories of dynamic leaders like Elon Musk, Richard Branson, and Steve Jobs are the lore of great LHG Indiana Jones business epics, the reality is that almost all parishioners or followers in organizations rarely, if ever, even meet (let alone report to) the top leaders. Thus, the leadership abilities and strategies of the lower-level leaders may be the most important to focus on and cultivate.

Controversial philosopher and diplomat Niccolò Machiavelli reportedly wondered if it was better to be loved or feared. As it turns out, the answer is yes! We look for lovability and fearsomeness in assessing our leaders. It is easy to follow either extreme, whether out of reciprocity for those leaders who love us (Servant Leaders) or concern over the consequences from those we fear (Autocratic Leaders). Researchers have identified that respect is another dimension of judgment that can drive either resentment or followership.

While many variables are relevant in assessing the influence of leaders, warmth and strength top the list (Fiske et al., 1999).

Thus, one key of any new 7th dimension of LHG is the need to change your thinking from being a parish leader to being a “leader developer” and thus becoming a leader of leaders. In that singular change of focus, every leader can, directly and indirectly, reach countless individuals, many levels down, without ever interacting with them. While some leadership theories emphasize the need to enculturate leadership development, perhaps they understate the critical importance of this effort.

Put directly, a parish leader who is not developing other parish leaders is not a true leader. The longest-existing large organization in history, Christ’s church, provides another example of the ultimate leader investing heavily in His followers by teaching them how to make 70 more followers (Luke 10:1). Those 70 made 70 more, and the story and process continue until today.

If You Don’t Know Where You’re Going, You Won’t Know If You Get There.

I re-emphasize another consideration of this 7th dimension of LHG, namely Vision. I submit that people stay in organizations for one of two foundational reasons: self-interest or passion for Vision. Understandably, most people also need a job that provides them with compensation, benefits, and freedom to live their lives outside of the work environment.

I do not mean to imply a negative exclusionary selfishness in acting out of self-interest. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs is valid (Maslow, 1943, 1954, 1962). Thus, before people seek the top level of self-actualization (to “be the best they can be,” according to an old U.S. Army slogan), they must first provide for their and their family’s physiological needs for food, shelter, clothing, and the other essential elements of life.



However, some are so attracted to the transformational Vision of a dynamic leader that they are willing to join a cause and even sacrifice significantly in pursuit of that Holy Grail goal. They may never meet the leader in person, but their belief in the leader’s TL Vision is enough motivation for self-sacrifice. Think of how many subsequent disciples of Christ were (and still are) willing to die for their belief in Him even though they had never seen or met our Lord. This later element of leadership may be underappreciated. Thus, another element of this proposed 7th dimension of LHG is the necessity of clarity of Vision in leadership.

The emphasis on Vision is not entirely unique to this 7th LHG. The need for clarity of an inspirational Vision is found in many other contemporary leadership theories and approaches to one degree or another. But even before Vision comes understanding one’s WHY and Core Values.

If You Don't Know Why You're Doing What You're Doing, Then You May Be Doing The Wrong Things.

Sosik and Jung (2018) discussed the importance of a WHY, calling it a Personal Leadership Mission Statement. This returns us to the first element in the proposed 7th Leadership Holy Grail (LHG), which focuses on self-awareness. I concur with this critical need.

Many modern leadership scholars have proven that understanding a personal WHY and Core Values is the most potent follower force multiplier when aligned with an organizational WHY and Core Values. Thus, besides a parish leader being a developer of other parish leaders, they must also be a WHY discoverer and promoter. Here, we again return to that “know thyself” and “be true to oneself” ancient wisdom critical for parish health and growth.

Notice how this, too, changes the definition of leadership in the 7th LHG dimension. Before focusing on the operations or services offered, the spotlight must shine brightly on the personal WHY and Core Values, which then become the foundation for the parish's WHY, Core Values, and Vision that will likely inspire “**FPIP**” (**Future Parishioners In Pews**) followers who know their WHY and Core Values to align with this transformational parish Vision. When all these critical elements come together in a parish, followers/parishioners are inspired to commit to and sacrifice for parish leaders, including clergy and Bishops, who prove worthy to lead.

However, before I declare success with my possible 7th LHG dimension (that builds on the best of the previous 6 LHGs) and declare it THE “GOAT” (Greatest Of All Times) Leadership Holy Grail, we must consider at least two other essential dimensions: Time and Place.

The Ticking Clock Drives Behaviors, So Time Matters.

This heading sounds like a “BGO” (Blinding Glimpse of the Obvious). Of course, time matters and drives our actions. In businesses, the time clock is a leveling agent. Whether meeting quarterly numbers of bosses or stock analysts or managing supply chain and other resources to ensure uninterrupted distribution, time is critical. The same is true in parish life, where time pressures constantly impact everything from services to ministries.

And yet, time is the one thing incapable of being manufactured or produced. You will never get back the time you spent reading my Roadmap. Thus, leaders (and leadership theories) must be more aware of time orientation and factors in shaping their leadership strategies and better investors of how they spend their time. I am always astounded at the amount of time parish councils waste on “committee work” that is not the root cause of the parish's biggest challenges rather than focusing on “board activities” of the future and strategy.

Dr. Phillip Zimbardo and his team researched and proved how time perspective is a powerful influencer of follower behaviors (Zimbardo & Boyd, 2009). Time is perceived

and managed differently in diverse cultures and by people who have inherently different time orientations. They discovered people have a default primary orientation based on time as follows:

1. **Past-negative.** A focus on negative or traumatic aspects of their past experiences that include regret or resentment.
2. **Past-positive.** A positive view of the past allowing for happy memories, traditions, and positive nostalgia.
3. **Present-hedonistic.** An emphasis on immediate gratification and current pleasure that often includes “living in the moment” with less consideration of consequences.
4. **Present-fatalistic.** Those who feel no control over their current lives are resigned to fate, external events, or forces that will shape their lives. This includes a fatalistic lack of hope for the present or future.
5. **Future-oriented.** An orientation willing to delay immediate gratification as they work toward a better future state by investing in their future.

There is much more to the research on how time orientation impacts individuals and their beliefs and decisions, including research that looks at the predictive nature of time orientation and religion. I recommend an interesting exercise for your parish council. Take the **Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory** and learn how each person’s time orientation affects their decisions personally and for the parish. Disconnects about parish decisions often have their root in the differing time orientations of the parish council and other parish leaders.

To show the dynamism of research and leadership theories, a growing school of thought suggests a 6th time dimension they call the “**Transcendental Future.**” People who are strong in this time orientation contemplate the future, including time periods beyond their earthly death. With my II Corinthians 5:10 obsession that drives my daily life, unsurprisingly, when I took the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory, I scored off the charts in the Transcendental Future orientation.

How people in certain cultures perceive, react to, and manage their time and inherent time orientation are major drivers in follower behavior. It is potentially different for each person and culture. Thus, this time dimension should be more fully explored and exploited in every leadership theory. The time orientation of each follower becomes an integral part of the LHG.

The key point for leaders to take away from this discussion is to consider the time and cultural orientations/perspectives of those they lead. For example, I was born and raised in the U.S. and am a product of multiple American educational institutions with their attendant deadlines. Nonetheless, the time orientation of my Greek immigrant parents and ancestors strongly influenced me growing up.

How many times have I heard excuses about being late for events, meetings, or church services attributed to being on “Greek time” (which means “whenever”)? And yet, 40+ years in the law have reinforced in me the critical importance of adherence to deadlines and time schedules in decision-making and problem resolution. One can see

the conflict in parish councils when imperative individuals with time sensitivity must work with individuals with a laissez-faire “whenever” approach. Yet true SLs must respect the time orientation of those they lead.

“All Politics Is Local” (And So Is Leadership).

Cultural differences implicating how leaders lead best are not limited to a time perspective. Full Range Leadership Development and other leadership theories often speak of “culture” to define the ethos within a parish or organization. Clearly, this can be a byproduct of leadership. However, other critical cultural elements remain to be added to any LHG, namely the evolution of different country cultures.

For example, there are vastly different responses to strong, dynamic, transformational leaders in the U.S., where the culture values such decisiveness compared with the vastly different, more passive expectations of certain foreign followers of their leaders. Thus, as a parish leader considers what leadership style to adopt, the cultural orientation, perspectives, and experiences of the parishioners they lead must influence the most effective leadership style/approach.

I will never forget raising an issue in the strategic plan for a parish of one jurisdiction, only to be told that in their ethnic culture, such matters are not discussed among the laity, and only the priest makes all such decisions. Understanding the cultural permissions and prohibitions of the parishioners and how they differ is a critical requirement for the most effective SLs.

Conclusion.

As I end this Chapter 5 of my Roadmap in our “Indiana Jones style quest” for a **Leadership Holy Grail (LHG)**, one might again be inclined to agree with New York Yankees legend Yogi Berra, who reportedly said, “Anybody that ain’t confused don’t know what’s going on.” So, let us conclude our quest to find the LHG with as simple clarity as possible.

Here are a few key leadership conclusions for you to consider in your parish:

1. Leaders do not lead followers; they mostly lead managers who lead the followers.
2. Leaders lead others to the desired destination, so only ethical leaders with integrity who create other ethical leaders with integrity are true leaders.
3. No one can lead others without strong and honest self-assessment and clarity of their parish WHY and Core Values.
4. No one can be led effectively without a strong, honest self-assessment of their personal WHY and Core Values.
5. Leadership theories have evolved over time and continue to change.

6. There are many different formal definitions of Servant Leadership, and yet they all tend to coalesce around critical foundational elements that include Love, Trust, Humility, Courage, Teams, and Vision.
7. You should learn the art of servitude both as a Servant Leader and a Servant Follower and be prepared to assume the appropriate role at any time.
8. If you cannot clearly articulate and help people realize the Vision of where you are leading them, you will not lead any followers for long.
9. As Sun Tzu said in The Art of War, “Strategy without tactics is the slowest road to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat” (Tzu, 2007).
10. Understanding the human, cultural, time, and other orientations of your parishioners/followers is critical in leading them most effectively.
11. Whatever leadership strategy you pick, be prepared to reassess and potentially adapt it as the circumstances change constantly.
12. There may not be any single perfect Leadership Holy Grail (LHG) style for every leader, follower/parishioner, or situation. However, Servant Leadership and Servant Followership have, over time, been proven to work well in Christian churches and be most clearly aligned with what Christ taught. Servant Leaders and Servant Followers are perfectly suited to bring people closer to Christ and each other.