



LEADERSHIP IN A SYNODAL CHURCH

Anne Benjamin & Charles Burford

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ANNE BENJAMIN & CHARLES BURFORD



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'Towards an Adult Church' was the mantra of an Archdiocesan Adult Education Centre where I worked thirty years ago. Leadership in a Synodal Church shows us what an adult Church looks like. The authors, modelling what they desire, look through the lens of leadership, and the best of contemporary leadership theory, to explore what the Church could be and should be if true to its mission. An adult Church is one in which members are not mere collaborators but are co-responsible for the life and mission of the Church. To become adult the Church must undergo cultural change so that it more truly aligns with God's mission. Pope Francis calls for such a Church – a synodal Church characterised by mutuality, transparency and accountability. The book does not shy away from the complexities, competing loyalties and diverse expectations that Church leaders must face. By offering theoretical frameworks, processes and activities in support of Church leaders, it offers hope.

— Sr Patty Fawkner SGS, Congregational Leader

Whether you are beginning your leadership journey or at the forefront of your respective ecclesial ministry, one must acknowledge and appreciate the essence of leadership within the context of a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world – yet muster the courage to forge on to unravel the great characteristics of synodality within our contemporary Church. The Authors Anne Benjamin and Charles Burford have researched various models of leadership and clearly articulated a path forward to provoke thought and insights, encourage further dialogue, and spend time in reflection and discernment. I highly recommend this book as a resource for leveraging, learning from and growing in leadership – serving our community in the likeness of Christ.

— Padmi Pathinather, Chairperson, Diocesan Pastoral Council, Diocese of Parramatta

Leadership in a Synodal Church is a timely contribution to a crucial feature of church life in an unfolding era of church renewal, and it is energised by the vision of Pope Francis for a synodal model of church. Pope Francis defines 'synodality' as 'not some of the bishops some of the time but all of the people all of the time'. This book brings together this vision of solidarity with a distillation of learnings about leadership.

Dr Anne Benjamin and Dr Charles Burford are highly qualified to write this book [with their] leadership wisdom and considerable experience working in diverse aspects of church life. Although there is a

general pessimism about the decline of Christianity in the Western world, including Catholicism, there are encouraging signs now of the Spirit leading the people of God to recover New Testament models of leadership with the insights of contemporary leadership studies. In this book the Activity Exercises provide opportunities to ground the expanse of leadership literature with day-to-day living out of the ideals of leadership exemplified by Jesus. I would hope that all Catholic institutes and agencies utilise the insights of this book to ensure there is a congruency between styles and practices of leadership, and the mission of Jesus for the reign of God.

— Dr Kevin Treston OAM

In Leadership in A Synodal Church Burford and Benjamin make a forthright, well-researched and deeply scriptural and spiritual contribution to expanding and renewing the sacred role of leadership in the Church. Their call to locate every single aspect of Christian ministry in the mission of the Church, and the person and message of Jesus of Nazareth, provides firm confidence for a Church that constantly strives to be at its best whilst knowing that at times it will fail. This book has the potential to bless and inform those individuals and organisations that take the time to savour its wisdom.

— Philip Pogson FAICD – Company Director and Christian school Chair

The strength of any organisation depends on the way it is managed, and while the church as an organisation is about beliefs and faith, it still needs good leadership and sound governance. Anne Benjamin and Charles Burford not only expose the shortcomings in church leadership and governance but, more importantly, their book also offers concrete and contemporary solutions. Benjamin and Burford's book is a must-have for anyone involved in the church.

— Fr Joseph Lam, Parish Priest of Glenbrook, former Professor of Patristic and Theology at the Lateran University and Australian Catholic University

This book is a 'must read' for anyone involved in church governance or leadership. The authors have skilfully brought together contemporary scholarship in theology, leadership and organisational theory to inspire those looking to refocus the church on its core mission consistent with the vision of Pope Francis for a genuinely participative church.

— David Hutton OAM, Executive Director Emeritus of Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Brisbane

In a Church beset by uncertainty and instability, this book offers the discerning reader many moments of discovery. Relying on time-tested knowledge and theories of leadership – especially in an educational context – the authors present genuinely new ideas and constructs about how to perceive, think about and blend together ministry, culture and leadership in the contemporary Catholic Church, and the result is provocative and engaging. Highly recommended!

— Dr Laretta Baker RSJ, Congregational Leader,
Sisters of St. Joseph, Lochinvar

From its outset this book promises to be 'an invitation to explore ministry within the contemporary Catholic Church through the lens of leadership' with a key goal of promoting a more synodal Church by building on existing good practice. It delivers what it promises! Importantly, the authors do not take a deficit view of current leadership in Church ministries, which is both refreshing and enlivening. At the same time, they do not shy away from highlighting what have, on occasions, been egregious examples of poor leadership. This is a stimulating book. It's accessibility and coherence quickly drew me in. Each chapter can stand on its own as a source of deeper understanding, reflection and challenge. It beautifully balances intellectual rigour with insights gleaned from the wisdom and experience of practitioners in current and diverse Australian ministries.

The book exemplifies the leadership it advocates – courageous and hopeful. It ... recognises and understands the 'grey' in which all leaders must operate, it draws you towards an honest, intimate examination of your own leadership practice. All the while, it is gentle, encouraging and sustaining. My leadership has been enriched through this book. I will be returning to it again and again.

— Dr Lee-Anne Perry AM Executive Director, Queensland
Catholic Education Commission

This publication provides a great way of exploring synodal leadership in the context of the many areas of the church's engagement with society [an engagement] shaped by God's mission as realised in Jesus Christ through the working of the Holy Spirit.

— Teresa Brierley, Director Pastoral Ministries,
Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle

Leadership in a Synodal Church brings the insights of modern leadership theory to the task of building a new synodal church in accordance with Pope Francis' vision. It is a readable and timely companion for many thousands of church leaders across Australia who bear this responsibility.

— Paul McClintock, Chair of SVHA
(St Vincent's Health Australia)

The Burford and Benjamin book Leadership in a Synodal Church gives an excellent insight on leadership theory and its practical application in church leadership. It clearly illustrates just what's possible when true accountability, transparency and inclusion are embraced and lived.

— Kathleen McCormack, Founding Director CatholicCare
Diocese of Wollongong, Member of the Pontifical Commission
for the Protection of Minors 2014-2017, Member of the
Implementation Advisory Group, March 2018-August 2020

This book, Leadership in a Synodal Church, offers practical suggestions for diverse expressions of ministry in our Australian Church at a time when this is most needed. It is grounded in a review of contemporary theological understanding and challenge and it provides a comprehensive critique of leadership theory and practice related to ministry. It will be a valuable Australian resource for all in ministry, filling a gap in parish and diocesan ministry and augmenting ministries in education, health and social services in the vital area of understanding ministry.

— Phil Billington, Ministry without Borders

Critical in the ongoing renewal of the Church is attention to leadership that is culturally aware, relationally focused and characterised by synodality — three potentially elusive elements. This book opens up, with clarity and imagination, things we aspire to but struggle to realise.

— Professor Br David Hall fms, Dean, La Salle Academy,
Australian Catholic University

Contents

Introduction	2
Chapter 1	
Leadership for Mission	5
Chapter 2	
Contemporary Issues of Culture and Leadership in the Church	14
Chapter 3	
Mission and Culture	23
Chapter 4	
The Culture of a Synodal Church	31
Chapter 5	
Cultural, Transrelational and Synodal Leadership	39
Chapter 6	
Governance Serving Mission in a Synodal Church	49
Chapter 7	
People in Leadership	57
Chapter 8	
Leading Through Moral Discernment	64
Chapter 9	
Moral Decision-making	73
Chapter 10	
Developing Leadership for a Synodal Church	83
Acknowledgements	89
List of Activities	90
List of Diagrams, Figures & Tables	90
Further Reading	91
About the Authors	92



Introduction

A time of crisis can be a time when we see the best of who we are. A crisis can also be a time that reveals people of leadership who call to the best in the rest of us. We have seen this in emergencies when ordinary people come forward to rescue those in peril during a local or even a national crisis. These 'ordinary people' may include those digging for people buried under mudslides or collapsed city buildings, and the lone man who dives into surf to assist a swimmer fighting off a shark attack. In crises uncertainty can provoke our best, but also our less-than-best selves. These can be times when we look for leadership and find it wanting, unable to rise above political interest or put formalities of roles aside; unable to recognise and respond to the confusion of those most affected.

In many ways, our society is experiencing both crisis and uncertainty. This is not just arising from the immediate situation of a pandemic. As commentators have suggested, the pandemic has simply shown up the cracks and fragilities already existing in society, including in a nation as comfortable and stable as Australia. We still have, however, longer-term crises including climate devastation, the uneven distribution of wealth and essential goods and services, uncertainty about democracy, and the volatility of our societies.

At the same time, the Catholic Church is experiencing its own time of crisis and uncertainty. Around the world, even long-serving faithful Church members are asking: what is the Church's future? Will it survive its own mismanagement of the sexual abuse of children in Australia, Ireland, the United States, Germany and elsewhere? Will people return to the pews when the COVID-19 crisis diminishes? These, too, are only the immediate presentations of crisis and uncertainty. The cracks and dissatisfactions within the Church have been there for years. The revelation of the extent of abuse in the Church has opened further a wound that has been festering for

a long time. It is very easy for those of us who are faithful committed members of our Church to imagine ourselves as lying under the rubble of a disintegrating apartment block, or swimming in the deep while being circled by sharks, trying to resist the inclination to let go, to sleep, to drown, rather than continue our efforts to be Church. Too pessimistic, some might say. The fact is, this is a critical time for our Church in the midst of a society faced with uncertainty. The two are inseparable. Typically, society would rightly expect religious groups, including the Catholic Church, to reach out and offer leadership and wisdom in these socially uncertain and sometimes chaotic times. Ironically, just when such wise leadership could be helpful, the Church has lost much of its credibility in the eyes of many in society. Consequently, the Church has lost its voice. Some would even argue it has lost its right to have a voice.

All this sounds grim. Fortunately, it is not the full story: in the midst of these realities, the Church — in its various communities and in the lives of the faithful — is alive to its mission. In 2009, when addressing leaders of religious institutes in Australia, Stephen Bevans described the Church in the United States as ‘a complex church of many cultures and a rich history’. And while scarred by scandal, it was still ‘a church that is incredibly vibrant and alive, especially at the grassroots level’.¹ The description certainly could be applied to the Australian Church of today and, we suspect, to the Church in many other parts of the world.

In such times, more than ever, leadership is needed: leadership that is courageous, insightful, compassionate, resourceful and principled. Through this book, we wish to offer to the Church resources of research and practice in leadership as one contribution to working our way through the complexity of these times. We hope that this book can come to be seen as helping to clear away the rubble with full knowledge that the resources contained within are just small elements in a much larger task of renewal.

In this book we write about leadership in the Church, but it is about leadership in a Church which can be characterised as ‘synodal’. When Pope Francis first began using the term ‘synodality’, it was a term with which many Church members were unfamiliar. Being who he is, Pope Francis did not introduce his emphasis on ‘synodality’ in a treatise, but instead he shared it bit-by-bit in various talks, papers and reflections over a number of years, building towards a focus on ‘synodality’ in the Synod of Bishops scheduled for October 2022. Although some commentators note some ambiguity in the Pope’s application of the term and how it might be operationalised in our Church, his insistence that synodality is a ‘constitutive element of the Church’ inspires the key focus of this book.

Synodality is a process which is always spiritual and prayerful as well as collaborative and cooperative. Pope Francis describes it as a process of conversion whereby our Church discerns the reforms necessary for its continuing mission. While synodality will later be discussed in more detail, a useful starting point in

understanding its meaning is to view the Church as ‘nothing other than the ‘journeying together’ of God’s flock along the paths of history towards the encounter with Christ the Lord’.²

The study of leadership over the past fifty years has produced a number of notable models. However typically we use the term ‘leadership’ to include the meaning of ‘an influencing relationship’. In other words, leadership is essentially about people. It is relational and exerts its influence within community in a way which enhances people’s humanity. It permeates all aspects of an organisation’s life.

For our purposes here, we distinguish between ‘leadership’ and ‘management’, or ‘administration’. There are many programs offered to executives under the heading of leadership which are more about the business of management and administration than they are about leadership. Competent management and administration are essential in effective organisations. They address important elements such as efficiencies, compliance and reporting, but they are also concerned with how an organisation deploys and treats its people, finance and services. They are tools at the service of mission, vision, values and strategic outcomes: necessary to support the mission but not sufficient to promote it. Our focus in this book will be on leadership that shapes, changes and promotes a cultural synodality in our beloved Church.

A question we asked ourselves in approaching this topic relates to the self-understanding of those in different formal (commissioned) ministerial roles. Do these women and men see themselves as leaders in their Church? Certainly, those in formal leadership positions in the large agencies of Catholic schools, health and welfare are familiar with seeing themselves and being seen as leaders. Can we say the same for those in parish-based or diocesan-based roles, for example Pastoral Parish Council members, Youth ministers? Do they see themselves as leaders in ministry and do their ordained colleagues see them thus?

We will explore the central role of culture in community, how culture is shaped and the role of leaders in shaping and sustaining culture in a desired direction. Culture in an organisation is commonly described as ‘the way we do things around here’. It is reflected in practices; in the way people speak, interact, describe themselves and each other; in what is celebrated and how; and in what is rewarded. To ignore culture, to let it take its own course, can result in outcomes totally contrary to an organisation’s beliefs, values and rhetoric, as we are painfully aware following the tragic revelations of the recent Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (and similar examinations in other countries).

Laity/laos

‘Laity’ derives from the word *laos* – meaning the tribe or the people (as in the whole nation). There is a complexity within the term ‘laity’. This complexity arises from the two differing

uses of *laos*: (i) to distinguish the faithful from those who are ordained and in an approved religious function, and (ii) when referring to the 'People of God'. The Church as the 'People of God' was one of the most powerful theological concepts emerging from Vatican II. As the People of God, all the baptised together form the *laos* – the people – and all share in the three-fold ministry of Christ as Priest, Prophet and King. As Pope John Paul II wrote in 1988, all the faithful, that is the unordained, together with the clergy and women and men consecrated religious, make up the one People of God and the Body of Christ.³ Vatican II celebrated this in the Constitution on the Church.⁴ The purpose of the Constitution on the Church, explained Myriam Wijlens, was to emphasise that 'the Church as such and as a whole has a missionary task and that the hierarchy stands in service to this'⁵. Or as Pope Francis expressed very early in his pontificate, 'All the baptised, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelisation.'⁶

However, 'laity' is used most commonly simply to differentiate the non-ordained from the ordained in the Church, without its richer usage as developed in the theology of Vatican II. This perpetuates misunderstanding, or at least limited understanding. Those called to ordained ministry are themselves called from within the *laos* to their service of the Church. *Laos* includes all the People of God: those called to consecrated life and those called to live out their faith in single or married life, as well as those called to ordained ministry. It is time to find another word. Too often, this common use of the term carries associated implications of 'lay' as opposed to 'professional'.

Likewise, it is past time for the Church to find a word to describe those who are usually referred to as 'non-ordained.' 'Non-ordained' is a negative, describing one thing that members of the faithful are not. And just as other negative terms, such as 'non-Australian' and 'non-Catholic', are no longer acceptable terms, neither is 'non-ordained' or

'unordained'. Throughout this book, we will endeavour to avoid both 'laity' and 'non-ordained'.

A word on our focus

The particular orientations that we bring to the writing of this book are primarily those of education and pastoral life in dioceses and parishes and related organisations. If what we share also resonates in any way with those who lead in other areas of mission, such as health, social services and other ministries, we will be well pleased.

A note on improved administrative practice

While it is not the focus of this book, we have observed that the Church in some dioceses and parishes would be well-served by improved administrative and management processes. This includes improved communications such as timely responses to correspondences; improved meeting and administration processes; the use of inclusive language in communications; and better planning for leadership succession in significant roles when the end-dates of current appointees are known (for example, the timely re-appointment of bishops, parish priests and Chairs of diocesan bodies). We suspect we are not alone in having firsthand experience of the deleterious impact upon mission and pastoral activity that result from administrative inefficiency.

We invite you through this book to explore the notion of a synodal Church through the lens of leadership. Our goal is to serve the Church's mission by offering a resource that contributes to enhancing leadership in a way which is consistent with a synodal Church and which promotes such synodality. We acknowledge existing good practice in synodal leadership in ministries in the Australian Church; our hope is to build on that by exploring how awareness of leadership theory and good practice can promote a more synodal Church.

Endnotes

1 Stephan Bevans, SVD, The mission has a Church, the mission has ministers, *Thinking missiologically about ministry and the shortage of priests*, Compass 43, 2009, <http://compassreview.org/spring09/2.pdf>

2 Bishop Mario Grech, quoted in Alessandro Gisotti, A Synod is always a missionary crossroad for the Church. An interview with the Pro-Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops on the value of synodality in Pope Francis' Pontificate and his experience of the Amazonian Synod, *Vatican News*, 2 Nov 2019, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2019-11/grech-synod-crossroads-church-amazon.html>

3 Pope John Paul II, Post-synodal Apostolic exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*, on the vocation and mission of the lay faithful in the Church

and in the world, (hereafter 'CL') #28, 30 December 1988. http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jpii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici.html

4 LG, Chapter 2. As mentioned elsewhere, Vatican II stood astride different, and not always consistent, theologies and resolved them by simply placing them side by side. In this case, Chapter 2 on the People of God is followed by Chapter 3 on the Church's hierarchical structure. Likewise, the Congregation for Clergy's 2020 Instruction on the parish seems to speak of co-responsibility and synodality in a rather bureaucratic voice. See Congregation for Clergy, *Instruction, The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the*

evangelising mission of the Church, 20 July 2020, (hereafter 'Instruction on parish'). <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/07/20/200720a.html>

5 Myriam Wijlens, Primacy-Collegiality-Synodality: Refiguring the Church because of *sensus fidei*, reprint from Peter Szabo, ed., *Primacy and Synodality: Deepening Insights, Proceedings of the 23rd Congress of the Society for the Law of the Eastern Churches*, September 3-8, 2017, p. 245.

6 Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium, The Joy of the Gospel*, (EG) November 2013, #120

A hand in a white robe reaches out from the left side of the frame against a warm, golden background. The hand is open, palm up, and the robe is white with a visible cuff. The background has a soft, glowing texture.

Chapter 1

Leadership for Mission

In any organisation, leaders are called to serve the purpose for which the organisation exists. Likewise, leaders in the Church are called to serve the purpose for which the Church exists.

The Back Story

In the beginning, before time was measured, the Spirit of God hovered over the waters, over the darkness and formlessness of the earth, breathing into them life and shape, colour and light. Through the ages, this sacred Spirit breathed into the hearts of those who searched for truth; and spoke to nations whose leaders yearned for wisdom and knowledge through prophecy.¹ Then, in time, 'God's ever-present Spirit' took physical form in a Palestinian called Jesus in an out-of-the-way village called Nazareth, and the action of God's Spirit became the mission of Jesus. As Bevans writes, in 'speaking words of wisdom and prophecy, offering God's healing and forgiveness, revealing God's loving but challenging presence in people's lives,' Jesus gives the Spirit of God a 'human face'.²

Over the course of a very short public life, Jesus moved amongst the people, teaching and healing; he observed the law as a practising religious Jew. He prayed alone, spent time in communion with his God. He called a small group of women and men to become his friends, to travel with him, to share in his work. He began to teach as a prophet about God and God's Kingdom. When Jesus spoke of God, he spoke about a Father, 'Abba', using a word akin to the familial terms, *Appa, Tatay, Aabbe, Tamai, el Papa, Dad*.³ The Holy One of Israel was a God with whom Jesus was intimately close. Emboldened in that union in God, Jesus knew 'the liberating power that can challenge all oppressive patriarchal structures and offer new possibilities for a profoundly relational way of life grounded in divine compassionate love'.⁴

While some of his listeners in the oppressed situation of 1st century Palestine longed for a political coup, Jesus' mission was a religious one. He brought a religious message that was startling because at its core was the conviction that the all-holy all-powerful God of the Israelites had compassion for the ordinary lives of the simplest people. When Jesus spoke

about the Kingdom, he spoke, in José Pagola's words, of his yearning for 'the defeat of evil, the irruption of God's mercy, the elimination of suffering, the acceptance of those previously excluded from community life, the establishment of a society liberated from all affliction'⁵. Denis McBride wrote that Jesus addressed his message to those whose 'open woundedness is a cry to the graciousness of God'. It is these lost, last and least 'who are hugged into importance by an eccentric king who cherishes them above all others. These are the ones who are surprised by love and beneficence in the parables of the Kingdom.'⁶

The religious purists were threatened by Jesus' teaching about a God who lifted burdens from people and who favoured the poor and powerless. After about only three years of his teaching, healing and working with a small team of disciples, he was killed as a criminal. Yet, after three days, people saw him again, risen, alive.

There is an intimacy in shared spiritual experiences. As they discussed amongst themselves their experience and memory of Jesus, the early Christians formed spiritual connections with each other through the deep relationship they held with Jesus, the communion they had formed with him, and with each other. Their encounters with Jesus and his immediate followers highlighted that they were all children of the same loving Father-God of whom Jesus had spoken. Gradually, the community of believers came to the imponderable realisation that, just as the all-holy God had reached out into the world through the Spirit and through Jesus the Word of God, so they were being sent out to continue this mission.⁷ This became the communion in the Divine that binds members of the Church and gives the Church its mission.⁸

The experience of Pentecost confirmed their understanding of this mission⁹ in recording the early Church's moment of conviction from which there was no going back. We read of their

response in the Acts of the Apostles, how they began teaching, first in Israel and then further afield; how the original Twelve apostles and the original band of Jesus' followers grew as the good news spread.¹⁰ Thus, the mission emerged – to continue the work Jesus had begun.

The mission of the Church: to work towards the Kingdom

The Church was called into existence by the mission entrusted to the early believers. In the words of Stephen Bevens, 'Mission comes first. The church does not have a mission. The mission, rather, has a church. The mission is first that of God's mission – through the Spirit, in Christ. We have been called into the church to share and continue that mission.' This is powerfully expressed in the image of German theologian Emil Brunner whom Bevens quoted as stating 'the church exists by mission as a fire exists by burning'¹¹.

Vatican Council II (Vatican II) summarised this mission succinctly, even if a little mysteriously: 'For it is the function of the Church, led by the Holy Spirit, who renews and purifies her ceaselessly, to make God the Father and his Incarnate Son present and in a sense visible.'¹² This is both simple and awesome. It implies that the role of each member of the Church is to show to our world – our neighbourhood, fellow workers, our children, our clients and our lovers – something of the divine, the holy, the sacred; something that leads them to 'see' Jesus more clearly. When we pause to consider this mandate, it can be quite confounding.

Another way of describing this mission is to say that the Church came into being because Jesus asked his friends to continue what he had begun: to proclaim the good news he taught in deed and word, 'to establish among all peoples the kingdom of God'¹³. As individual faithful members and as a whole



community (or community of communities), the Church's mission is one of 'evangelisation'. And by 'evangelisation', we simply understand that we have heard what Jesus taught, we cherish the knowledge of a loving God that he showed in his life and we want to share that good news with others. 'Let everyone know,' he urges at the end of Mark's gospel. 'This is really something that will make a difference in people's lives.'¹⁴

The Kingdom Jesus taught is both in the here-and-now and still-to-be-realised. It is in tension between already-present and not-yet fulfilled until the final coming of God's reign in glory when all will be as it should be in accord with God's will. We see the joy of the Kingdom present all around us. In writing this text, we shared our own experiences of witnessing this joy: the peace in the eyes of the widow, who has been able to forgive those who brutally murdered her husband along with their two small sons, and who returned to continue her missionary work in India; the persistence of those working for more just structures and policies in our country and beyond; the vitality of those who, having suffered enormous injuries, who laugh with gratitude for the gifts they enjoy; in the wisdom of Indigenous peoples in their respect for the earth; in the love of parents for their children in all the unanticipated complications of their lives; and in many ordinary and extraordinary ways and people.

At the same time, we are painfully aware that Jesus' vision of the Kingdom of God is far from being realised.¹⁵ Life and death struggles engross our world: from the groaning of the earth itself in the face of its tenuous future; through the death-bearing maladies of war, hunger, oppression and disease; to the personal struggles of individuals for respect, justice and healing. The daily news gives us images of those struggles between death and life; stories of good wrestling with negative forces while our own personal struggles over life and death are lived out, mostly hidden from public view by the niceties and restraints of social interactions.

Jesus too had to struggle: against crippling and demonising spirits in those who suffered; against temptations to exhibitionism, to power, to short-term wins; against the political force of institutional religion threatened by his teaching of a God of love. Richard Lennan wrote of the Kingdom as 'a gift vulnerable to neither the vicissitudes of history nor the inconsistencies of human faithfulness'. We should take heart, he says, from the death of Jesus, because not even that death could 'rupture God's solidarity with humanity'. Lennan went on to quote Walter Kasper's comment that 'Jesus' death is the form in which the Kingdom of God exists under the conditions of this age, the Kingdom of God in human powerlessness, wealth in poverty, love in desolation, abundance in emptiness, and life in death'.¹⁶

Along the way, as a People, we falter. Our shortcomings as a Church should not surprise us, because while it exists to serve the Kingdom, the Church is not the Kingdom of God. There is comfort in the assurance that as we try to live out our mission, the Spirit of Jesus is with us, speaking to us in myriad ways – not just through the scriptures, teachers of the Church and

the lived faith of the Church, but also through friends, words, events, society and nature – calling us back to the task and giving us heart to keep on going. (Of course, this only makes sense in a worldview that is open to the divine and to the intervention of the Spirit.)

Because of the centrality of Jesus' death and resurrection in our faith, the Church is charged, as part of its mission, to witness to our world a positive stance: the power of God's Spirit against all that is negative and of life over death.¹⁷ We do not deny the reality of our experience of brokenness, but in the midst of that, we are invited to live as followers of one who suffered, died, was buried, yet still triumphed over death.

The People of God are called to be people of hope. The message about God's love revealed in Jesus 'is in harmony with the most secret desires of the human heart',¹⁸ and so, the normal healthy human instinct is to reach for what God's Kingdom brings. We can do so with confidence believing that the God that Jesus spoke about does not give up on us women and men, even when we are at our lowest.

Contemporary Mission of the Church

Bevans summarised succinctly that the Church does not exist for its own sake, to expand or to perpetuate itself. 'The church exists not as an answer, as it were, but as a response – a response to God's call to continue God's loving, redeeming, healing, reconciling, liberating, forgiving, and challenging mission.'¹⁹

The Church lives out its mission in different ways according to particular times and contexts.²⁰ We can see in the life of the early followers of Jesus in Acts 2:42-47 how the apostolic Church, fresh in the memory of Jesus and his teaching, was characterised by fellowship and community (*koinonia*), proclamation about Jesus (*kerygma*), remembering him in prayer and breaking bread (liturgia), service to those in need (*diaconia*), teaching (*didache*) and witnessing (*martyria*). Even then, in those first years, the first disciples needed to grow and change in their understanding as we see in Acts 6:1-7, when the Greek members of the community felt their widows were disadvantaged in the distribution of food. The early community adapted its structure and created new ministries, as Frank Brennan has remarked, so as 'to give everyone a place at the table, including the marginalised Hellenists who had been left out by the dominating Hebrews'²¹.

The pertinent characteristics of that mission for our time can be found in documents emerging from Vatican II and in subsequent statements. These official statements emphasise a Church that is:

- a community of witnesses, drawn together by the reality of Jesus, inspired by the Word, nourished and celebrated in Eucharist,
- oriented especially towards the poor, the marginalised and those on the edge,

- embracing and ecumenical, engaged with our world, society, including other faith traditions,
- humble and simple in style, mindful that the mission served is not our own but that of Jesus himself,
- enroute like pilgrims, both holy and sinful, always open, under the guidance of the Spirit, to the necessity of conversion, and
- ecologically integrated, embracing stewardship of creation and the common good – an emphasis given by Pope Francis in *Laudato si'*.²²

The mission of the Church to witness to God's love is always oriented towards the future, while still always engaged with history, seeking to respond to God's Spirit who calls the Church to the service of God's kingdom here and now. While the Church is oriented towards end-times, we also live in 'end-times': our 'now' is the end-time of all that has gone before. Our current world, too, is a place of ambiguity arising from the end-times (*eschata*) of many certainties. Theologian Vitor Westhelle describes the Church as 'the space of grace', a 'conduit of the Spirit'. His image of the community of believers as a space of grace in the pointy end of life is a sustaining one. Because of the Spirit's presence, 'the place of risk, of condemnation, is also the place of healing and salvation'. His view of Church as a community of those who are on the edge, 'barely hanging on to life' might challenge some of our self-understandings as an institutional Church. Through their faith in the presence of Jesus in his Spirit, the community is sustained. A unique identifier for us as Church, even in the midst of the unutterable turmoil, is that the community is 'able to name and be named by their relationship to God and to one another'.²³ This suggests that one responsibility of a leader in such a community is to facilitate such naming and such relationships.

Mission and leadership in the Church

The origin of the Church's mission in Jesus Christ has implications for leaders within the Church and for the culture of the agencies and organisations they lead. Francis



Moloney, speaking of ordained priesthood, reminds us that 'all conversation about leadership in the Christian tradition must begin and end with the figure of Jesus of Nazareth'.²⁴ It seems that this applies to all leadership, not only for the ordained but for all leaders in ministries exercised on behalf of the Church. Given their role and influence, leaders in the Church's ministerial outreach – be they pastoral, administrative, health, social services or educational – carry responsibilities in building and promoting organisational cultures that are consistent with – and faithful to – our mission and founder.

Since those involved in ministries on behalf of the Church are called to take part in a mission which is none other than to continue the mission of Jesus, we need to keep returning to discover and re-discover the person of Jesus in the scriptures and the living traditions of our faith. He is the one in whose name our Church exists. He is the one who inspired the founders of religious institutes to establish their ministries. It is his mission that we, as Church, are called to serve, working towards the realisation of God's reign, always in process, always striving towards things as they should be in his Kingdom.

Jesus and leadership

There are considerable limitations and risks in attempting to look to Jesus to find what we would call 'models of leadership' appropriate for those in ministry. In the first place, our knowledge of particular specifics about the historical Jesus is severely limited. Secondly, the contexts of 1st Century CE and the Church of the 21st Century CE are incompatible. Finally, such search for a ready-made model in the Christian scriptures runs the risk, at least, of a naïve fundamentalism. Having said that, there are some things we know about Jesus and the kind of public ministry he exercised. The gospel of Matthew recounts his teaching that, unlike powerful rulers who lord it over others, his followers are called to a different kind of leadership, that of service, 'just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many' (Matthew 20:25-28).

In her study of the leadership of three women doctors of the Church, Christine Cameron cites a number of references to Jesus as 'servant leader'.²⁵ And, of course, John's Gospel (13:1-17) makes a very powerful statement about this with the account of the washing of the disciples' feet.²⁶ The recognition that the focus of each evangelist might affect the leadership style described in the different gospels indicates the risks of this approach. It is wiser to remain at a more generalised understanding of the Jesus of the gospels than too literal an analysis.

Consideration of leadership styles which are appropriate for the community of those who follow Jesus are not new. Thomas Shufflebotham SJ, for example, emphasises that the demands of Christian leadership are high. We will come closer to meeting them, he concludes, if 'we are people preoccupied with the compassion of Christ, speaking with the honesty of Christ, in a spirit of faith enlivened by our contemplation of

Christ steadfastly walking towards Jerusalem', graced by the Spirit.²⁷ In moving towards Jerusalem, we must remember, Jesus was moving towards his suffering and death. Simply said – if not so simply achieved – leadership within and of the Church must *de facto* be grounded in St Paul's experience of missionary discipleship and leadership, recognising that the cross is part of the package. 'I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.' (Gal 2:21). Paul's conversion and spirituality, grounded in his experience of the Pascal mystery, finds passionate expression in his discipleship and missionary leadership. The Acts of the Apostles makes great adventure reading for those seeking to lead in a Church ministry and sobering insights for those who wish to lead comfortably.

Adelaide priest, the late Denis Edwards, in his exploration of leadership in the local Church in the light of the New Testament, argued that while leadership can be understood as the influence one exerts within a community, New Testament leadership is always 'relational'. For Edwards, New Testament leadership can be characterised as being:

- servant leadership rather than dominating leadership
- non-violent rather than coercive
- leadership from below rather than from above
- participatory rather than unilateral
- empowering rather than overpowering, and
- based on hope in the resurrection of the crucified rather than in one's own achievements.²⁸

Since Vatican II (if not before) there have been references to notions of Church leadership that are collaborative. Pope Benedict XVI posited a notion that went beyond collaboration to 'co-responsibility'.²⁹ Chris Branson and his colleagues examined the Jesus of the gospels as an exemplar of a 'transrelational model' of leadership.³⁰ Because the model of transrelational leadership is consistent with both Pope Benedict's 'co-responsibility' and Edwards' claim that New Testament leadership is always relational, we will consider this in more detail in Chapters 5 and 8.

These are just some examples of attempts to focus on leadership within a Gospel perspective.³¹

Mission finds expression in ministries

It is the mission of the Church – the mission of Jesus – that calls out different ministries. Ministries exist to serve that mission. For our purposes here, Thomas O'Meara's description of Christian ministry as 'the public activity of a baptised follower of Jesus Christ flowing from the Spirit's charism and an individual personality on behalf of the Christian community to witness, to serve and realise the Kingdom of God'³² provides a useful base.



This definition makes it very clear that there are things that are ministry and things which are not. Ministry is a public ecclesial activity; it is inspired by the Spirit working through an individual; it is exercised on behalf of the ecclesial community and therefore carries implicit and explicit authorisation from the community; its purpose is the realisation of the Kingdom. This understanding also makes clear that there is a measure of formality in the call to ministry, either through ordination, consecrated life or commissioning to roles such as pastoral associate, school principal, pastoral council member, agency head.

It is easy for us to see how the 'Kingdom' inspires the Church's agencies of social services, education, healing, community building and working for justice. Theologian Leonardo Boff described the Kingdom preached by Jesus as lying at the heart of all the Church's ministerial outreach. He described Jesus' mission in terms of a 'fundamental project of liberation and freedom'. The Kingdom, as described by Boff, is about 'the liberation of the poor, comfort for those who cry, justice, peace, forgiveness, and love'. And he further describes the kind of leadership that pertains to that Kingdom in stating Jesus 'did not proclaim an established order; he did not call others to be rulers but to be submissive, humble and loyal'. The liberation he brought called for those in power to see themselves as servants and siblings, 'free from the appetite for greater power ... He does not introduce or bless privileges that give rise to classes and divisions between persons ... (His) is the power of love'.³³

The extent of ministerial outreach within the Australian Catholic Church is comprehensive. Catholic schooling across the country engages 96,000 staff to work with 765,000 students in diocesan systemic schools, schools sponsored by religious institutes and schools conducted by Ministerial Public Juridic Persons.³⁴ Health and welfare figures are approximately the same.³⁵ Research in 2018 indicated around 220,000 staff are employed across the Church in Australia. (The researchers did not include priests and religious sisters and brothers.)³⁶ Ordained ministries include diocesan and religious institute priests, both local and from overseas, permanent deacons, and deacons preparing for ordination.



The Church has traditionally exercised its mission through entities known in Canon Law as Public Juridic Persons (PJPs) which authorises specific Church ministries to operate in the name of the Catholic Church. Traditional PJPs include dioceses, parishes and religious institutes (congregations or orders). Within Australia, there are 33 Dioceses including the non-geographic areas of the Chaldean, Maronite, Melkite and Ukrainian Rites, the Military Ordinariate and the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of the Southern Cross. Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) reports it has a membership of more than 150 congregations of sisters, brothers and priests who live and work across Australia, comprising over 5,000 women and men who are members of religious institutes.³⁷

While leadership of a diocese, parish or religious institute rests respectively with the Bishop, Parish Priest or Leader of the Religious Institute, there are many other leadership roles within dioceses, parishes and religious institutes that all serve the mission of the Church. This includes the ordained ministries of priest and deacon as well as the commissioned ecclesial ministries associated with those engaged in pastoral work, and leaders in education, health and welfare as an activity of a diocese or religious institute. Many Catholic women and men are involved in formal roles as Pastoral Associates; in pastoral planning; liturgy; youth, family and Christian life; social justice, and the administration of dioceses. Those in other associations of faithful, such as the St Vincent de Paul Society, also serve the Church's mission.

As well as having PJPs authorising specific Church ministries to operate in the name of the Catholic Church, during the past three decades another kind of canonical entity, known as 'Ministerial PJPs,' has emerged in the Australian Church (and elsewhere). Ministerial PJPs are legal entities established by religious institutes and approved by Rome for the purpose of carrying forward the mission and charism of their founders through their particular ministry. For example, a number of Ministerial PJPs exercise a ministry of education (such as Good Samaritan Education or Kildare Ministries) while others exercise a ministry of health and/or social services (such as Catholic Healthcare or MercyCare).³⁸ The Ministerial

PJPs have established clear processes for governance by 'colleges' of stewards or trustees, almost all of whom are neither ordained nor members of a religious institute. While the role of Ministerial PJPs is generally not well known at local parish level, they are already very significant in Australian Church leadership and likely to become more so. Their outreach as part of the Church's mission involves many thousands of people, with agencies governed by formally established Boards. There are many leadership roles within these ministries.

Ministry emerges from the life of the Church and its mission and 'is at the service of the Church's engagement with the world'.³⁹ Forms of ministry change as the Church's mission 'takes on new responsibilities in an ever-changing world'.⁴⁰ The Church's ministry has already changed significantly, with the shift towards Ministerial PJPs, with the inclusion of greater diversity in those commissioned to ministerial roles and, not least, with the increased involvement of women. It will continue to change – it should continue to change – and, as the Boston Seminar noted, 'there can be no future for the Church which women have not had a pivotal hand in shaping'.⁴¹

We are long past the time in history when leadership in ministry was formally recognised as the exclusive preserve of the ordained and consecrated religious who had taken religious vows. Leadership in ministry belongs to, and is exercised by, members of the *laos*, ordained, consecrated or not. For the purposes of this book, we include as leaders all those engaged in formal roles in the pastoral, administrative, health, education and social service ministries of the Church. The authors recognise the distinctive nature and role of ordained ministry.

Leadership for mission: leadership from the heart

Leadership in the Church's mission activity is rightly centred on, and draws its inspiration from, the person of Jesus Christ. Perhaps this is what retired parish priest John Crothers meant when he wrote that clerical leadership is only effective when it

is internalised and 'becomes a leadership of the heart, and not just a leadership of the head'⁴². We would maintain that such leadership of the heart applies to all leaders in ministry.

For many leaders in the Church, discipleship is the moral core of their personal mission. The logic of signing up for leadership in a ministry is that it flows from one first choosing to be a follower of Jesus, and then choosing to become a disciple. At the same time, we acknowledge that, while this may be the case for many in positions of leadership in the Church's ministries, others might be more comfortable describing themselves in terms of fidelity to the charism and values of a religious institute, which in turn, of course, has its origins in a response to the gospel.

First and foremost, Christian discipleship is relational. 'Being a disciple' presumes that one has perceived an invitation and has responded 'Yes'. For the first disciples, this was immediate and personal: the teacher Jesus sought them out, called them by name and asked them to join him in his mission. As we see, for example, in Matthew 4:18-22 and related accounts, Jesus reached out and befriended those who would follow him. While the response of each disciple to the person of Jesus Christ is intensely personal, in living out that commitment we follow him together as a group, a fellowship, a band of companions strengthening each other in faith, 'never completely ourselves unless we belong to a people'⁴³.

Seeing oneself as a disciple of Jesus does not mean that answers about leadership or other issues that arise in a leader's life are apparent or easy to find. As friends and followers of Jesus, there are many situations in our everyday lives and relationships that can confront us with confusion or options. This results in tensions which can be at the personal, interpersonal, institutional or cultural level. Let us take as an example from everyday life, something as unremarkable as the choice of high school for a daughter. The tensions parents might need to balance in making their decision could include: their own different educational backgrounds; their different preferences for single-sex as opposed to co-ed schooling especially if they come from different cultural or ethnic backgrounds; a preference for a religious school as opposed to the career advantages of a selective school; cost and the related pressure on the family; as well as the daughter's personality, particular educational requirements and preferences. In working towards a decision, the parents (with their daughter we suggest) would need to work through a discernment process, which is essentially a moral exercise in which they identify these tensions, seek out the facts and then focus on the values involved and which ones they would adopt. There's no easy answer to be found in the gospels about this everyday decision.

Leadership decisions, likewise, are often complex with no apparent right answer. As in the example above, the decision-making path includes identifying the tensions involved, getting the facts, and identifying the values that might be in tension. The final decision might be the one which is least compromised, since moral decisions often need to be made between two less desirable options, rather than simply between one that is

good and one that is bad. In trying to live a life faithful to the Jesus of the gospels, one always has to search out the path to follow. Such searching (or discernment) is always in essence deeply spiritual. It demands, in various ways, depending on each situation, an openness to conversion from our own point of view to a perspective that reflects the surprising wisdom of the gospels. This means leadership for mission can very much be a spiritual exercise. And this exercise can be shaped by an awareness that we, as leaders, are stewards, and the decisions we make can impact creation and immediate and wider communities both now and into the future.

Leadership and moral discernment

In the quiet of one's room at dawn, a leader's purpose might appear clear and evident: a purpose drawn from the mandate of a disciple – or through charism – to promote through word and action the Kingdom Jesus taught, and a life living out the values, ethical beliefs and commitments aligned with that purpose through a ministry of service. This purpose carries a moral character because of its foundation in values and ethical principles. Five minutes into the working day, the simple clarity of that moral purpose can be lost in a fog of multiple imperatives, competing perspectives and yesterday's still-pending agenda.

In many instances, leaders instinctively handle the kind of discernment that is required almost instantaneously; in other instances, the process of discernment requires more focused time and attention. The tension might present as a difficult or under-performing staff member, a belligerent or litigious client, the demands of popular opinion, external legislators, or jurisdictional authorities that are in conflict with the gospel.



Or it might not be clear which path is closer to the gospel. It is indeed salutary to ask and reflect: 'What would Jesus do?' However, the 21st century context, biotechnology, government legislation, medical research possibilities, competitive funding, the sheer pressure of multiple learning needs in one classroom, the scale of some ministries, to name just a few elements, are far removed from the context of 1st century Palestine.

Constant reflection, critique and dialogue are the essence of a leader's discernment. Every budget reflects an expression of values by the organisation. Every leader's diary reflects their judgement of what is of value in their leadership. Evidence of our discipleship is found in how we allocate our time, money and other resources. Leadership presumes a high level of self-awareness, personal honesty and a willingness to reflect. The self-awareness, integrity and reflectiveness that enable a leader to consider some of the questions proposed in resolving tensions arise from, and are fed by, a leader's spirituality. Spirituality is intensely personal, and readers will have their own spirituality underpinning their leadership.

It is salutary to keep in mind that exercising leadership for mission occurs in an increasingly incredulous world.⁴⁴ Leadership in promoting the mission of Jesus is counter-cultural and challenging. It is a small voice in a noisy world, but a voice which nonetheless is searching for the connectedness of community and the meaning which faith brings. Being faithful witnesses to God's love can come at a cost, just as it cost the prophets in the Hebrew scriptures who were often ridiculed and isolated.

Leadership as witness

Within a Christian worldview, leadership is essentially about service towards others and with others. It arises from the call through Baptism and vocation, the commitment to discipleship and the promotion of Jesus' mission. At the same time, being a leader within this faith perspective requires an ongoing commitment to search for more authentic and whole-hearted discipleship. In this way, an individual's exercise of leadership can itself witness to their own journey towards fuller and more authentic discipleship.

Hernán Paredes and Tomas Bradley were young Jesuits at the time that the man who was to become Pope Francis was rector of the Jesuit seminary of Colegio Maximo in Argentina in the mid-1980s. Paredes recalls the rector feeding the pigs. Bradley recalls 'Jorge' as being the man who did the household laundry for a household of more than a hundred. Tomás recalled that 'already at 5:30 in the morning, he (Bergoglio) would be placing clothes into those two industrial washing machines we had.' Is that such a big deal, asks Lowney in recounting this. Perhaps, he suggests, the rector would have been better off spending his time professionally forming future priests and leaders. Lowney concludes: 'That's just it: he was forming leaders and priests ... Hernán Paredes and Tomás Bradley must have seen Bergoglio do and say thousands of things – why do pig-feeding and laundry washing stand out as indelible memories?'⁴⁵

Activity 1.1: Who is Jesus?

How do you describe Jesus?

For me, today, this is how I express my understanding of Jesus Christ, a 1st century CE Palestinian observant Jew from an out-of-the-way village called Nazareth in the north of his country, who emerged as a religious prophet and a healer. It is an understanding that has changed over the decades; it will change again, if only in its emphases.

Jesus taught –

a kingdom that is here and is to come
especially for the hurt, the small, the excluded
a kingdom that embraces all, the 'other'
above all, a kingdom which expresses the reign of God.

And the God he spoke of –

steadfast as Uluru,
loving, strong and determined as a mother,
protective as a mother hen,
who rejoices in the just,
gives joy
moves people to bang tambourines,
break out in song
and even to dance,
is marvellous and beyond our imaginings,
faithful, compassionate, merciful
holy.

Jesus felt the pain of others,
felt it in the pit of his stomach.

He healed,
he gave life where there was death,
he gave hope.

Jesus ate and drank with the B-listers,
the Z-listers and non-listers,
relaxed,
enjoyed his world,
was in this world.

Jesus called some to be his disciples
he challenged his followers
challenged authorities,
was not naïve about the price
and saw the writing on the wall.

Jesus prayed
reflected
went away alone to be with God
sought out his mission.

Jesus respected and observed the law,
he put people before the law,
he challenged law and teachings polluted
by time and custom
he recognised the need for reform.

Jesus was killed as a criminal,
a terrorist of sorts,
from many perspectives, he was a failure
he defied death and yet
lives on in his followers
Death did not kill him
death did not destroy his mission
to bring the kingdom of his God to realisation.

(Anne Benjamin)

Activity 1.2: What is tenderness?

This is the question Pope Francis asked his TED Talk audience before answering in this way:

It is the love that comes close and becomes real. It is a movement that starts from our heart and reaches the eyes, the ears and the hands. Tenderness means to use our eyes to see the other, our ears to hear the other, to listen to the children, the poor, those who are afraid of the future. To listen also to the silent cry of our common home, of our sick and polluted earth. Tenderness means to use our hands and our heart to comfort the other, to take care of those in need ... This is tenderness:

being on the same level as the other ... [Jesus] lived his entire human existence practising the real, concrete language of love. (Pope Francis, TED Talk, 26th April 2017)

- When is it easy in your ministry to exercise this?
- When is it difficult?
- Have you seen others demonstrate these characteristics?
 - Who?
 - When?

Endnotes

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- 25 Christine Cameron, *Leadership as a Call to Service*, (hereafter Call to Service), Conor Court Publishing, Ballan, 2012, pp. 12-13, 250-251.
- 26 We wouldn't presume to go as far as Blanchard and Hodges, quoted in *Call to Service*, when they write, 'That's what Jesus had in mind when he washed the feet of the disciples.' We don't know this.
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- 30 Chris Branson et al 2019, pp. 223-224 citing Haslam, Reicher and Platow.
- 31 See also Chris Lowney, *Heroic Leadership*, Loyola Press, Chicago, 2003, Chapter 4, where he explores a model for Christian leadership drawing on the Church of the 1st Century.
- 32 T. O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, Paulist Press, New York, 1983, p. 142.
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- 38 An introduction to Ministerial PJPs can be found on the website of the Association of Ministerial PJPs, <https://ampjp.org.au/>
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- 45 Chris Lowney, *Pope Francis: Why He Leads the Way He Leads*, Loyola Press, Chicago, 2013, pp. 60-61. Lowney is a former Jesuit seminarian, Former Managing Director of J. P. Morgan and Chair of the USA Catholic Health Initiatives Board.

We invite you through this book to explore the notion of a synodal Church through the lens of leadership. Our goal is to serve the Church's mission by offering a resource that contributes to enhancing leadership in a way which is consistent with a synodal Church and which promotes such synodality. We acknowledge existing good practice in synodal leadership in ministries in the Australian Church; our hope is to build on that by exploring how awareness of leadership theory and good practice can promote a more synodal Church, as envisaged and urged by Pope Francis.

Charles Burford and Anne Benjamin, co-authors,
Leadership in a Synodal Church

A HOPEFUL GUIDE FOR ANYONE WHO IS A LEADER, OR WHO ASPIRES TO LEADERSHIP, IN THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

The book explores leadership and culture through the lens of mission, synodality, governance, people and moral discernment. It concludes with practical proposals for the further development of leaders who will promote a culture in harmony with a synodal Church.

Leadership in a Synodal Church draws on a wide range of scholarship in theology, leadership, governance and organisational theory to offer, from the theory and practice of leadership, a positive resource for a Church journeying towards greater synodality. The authors honour their explicit intent in this regard. The chapters unfold logically, integrating good organisational practice with a theology of mission; the book is enhanced by practical examples and exercises for reflection. Above all, the book is written with an insider's perspective with a great sense of faith, love for the Church, and hope for the future.

Charles Burford and Anne Benjamin are academics and Catholic educators who, between them, have about a century of experience in teaching, researching and practising leadership. Both have extended experience at Australian Catholic University and in leadership in a number of ministries and dioceses across and beyond Australia.

This book is a 'must read' for anyone involved in church governance or leadership. The authors have skilfully brought together contemporary scholarship in theology, leadership and organisational theory to inspire those looking to refocus the church on its core mission consistent with the vision of Pope Francis for a genuinely participative church

David Hutton OAM, Executive Director Emeritus of
Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Brisbane

The book exemplifies the leadership it advocates – courageous and hopeful. It doesn't resile from harsh truths, it recognises and understands the 'grey' in which all leaders must operate, it draws you towards an honest, intimate examination of your own leadership practice. All the while, it is gentle, encouraging and sustaining.

My leadership has been enriched through this book. I will be returning to it again and again.

Lee-Anne Perry, Executive Director, Queensland
Catholic Education Commission

"Leadership in a Synodal Church" shows us what an adult Church looks like. The authors, modelling what they desire, look through the lens of leadership, and the best of contemporary leadership theory, to explore what the Church could be and should be if it be true to its mission. An adult Church is one in which members are not mere collaborators but are co-responsible for the life and mission of the Church.

Sr Patty Fawcner SGS, Congregational Leader

Anne Benjamin and Charles Burford not only expose the shortcomings in church leadership and governance but, more importantly, their book also offers concrete and contemporary solutions. Benjamin and Burford's book is a must-have for anyone involved in the church.

Rev Joseph Lam, Parish Priest of Glenbrook, former
Professor of Patristic and Theology at the Lateran
University and Australian Catholic University

