



BENEDICTINE LEADERSHIP: CARVING CARING SPACES

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This paper explores Benedictine leadership as a concept and praxis hinged on the value of charity. It underscores the tenets of Care ethics in conjunction with Benedictine Spirituality.

Using philosophical and theological lens, this paper attempts to 1) present the Benedictine Leadership vis-à-vis Care ethics 2) proffer that charity or care is the driving force of a transformational leader and, 3) purport that a caring leader, directly or indirectly, can transform policies and practices as s/he carves spaces for communion.

Keywords: Benedictine, Care ethics, Dialogue, Leadership, Peace, Spirituality

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MY CONTEXT: LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES

For over three years now, I have been leading our school's Religious Education Department. The thrills and throes of leadership have made me understand the challenging but rewarding role of a leader. Working in a diverse community, I encounter people of different personalities, cultures, and backgrounds which fueled my desire to integrate Caring into my leadership tasks. It dawned on me that caring plays an important role in people management and productivity. Leadership is vital to the life and success of an organization. It is a concept built on timeless management principles. As a form of practice or application, it is as variable as the changing time. Some leaders, indeed, make a dent in society; but others, despite their brilliance or financial acuity, have very little contribution to the general welfare.

Recently, the battle with COVID-19 with its fast mutations and variants called the attention of leaders to act swiftly on issues about the health system and tangible concerted response to COVID-19 infections. The response-ability of some leaders sets them apart from regularly appointed leaders. When the query, "Where is our leader?" was broached on national television and social media, people started to take a closer look at the government leaders' responses to an unprecedented health crisis and turned their gaze on the President. Apart from questions about political legitimacy, the query is also indicative of growing anxiety due partly to various forms of insecurities, uncertainties, and pandemic fatigue. People wanted to know whether an executive leader can tide people over in this trying time or not.

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Leaders either step up to meet expectations or ignore the clamor for crisis management. A health crisis calls for a well-calculated, yet sustainable response. Nevertheless, the constraints due to the pandemic limits movements and sometimes paralyze leaders to go beyond the limits of the familiar and conventional in social function. The care. I argue, steers leaders beyond the social function.²

The surge in infections needs a robust health care system and provision for peoples' necessities, particularly the underprivileged. A recent count shows that new cases have totaled 145,240,343 and roughly three million deaths (3,082,137). This paints a bleak and uncertain future.³ In the Philippines, the recent surge of 979,740 cases is alarming knowing that the total cases will inevitably increase. As headlines reveal the daily count, government leaders' leadership skills are placed in check as people expect the worse for the virus' Third Wave of infections. The best practices around the world in the fight against the big C continue to point to leaders' responsiveness and strategic decisions. People naturally seek out their leaders for assurance, direction, and comfort.

For over 1500, the Benedictines all over the world have carried on the mission of a great leader and founder, St. Benedict. They followed his teachings and mapped out strategies to keep his legacy alive. Monasteries spread in Western Europe and contributed to the flourishing of European culture, humanities, and arts. His Holy Rule, penned in 1516, became fundamental for Western Monasticism. It remains one of the most influential and enduring documents of Western Civilization.⁴

² Paul Ricouer in "The Socius and the Neighbor," *History and Truth*, trans. Charles A. Kelbley (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 98-109.

³ Coronavirus Update (Live): 124,291,478 Cases and 2,735,205 Deaths from COVID-19 Virus Pandemic - Worldometer (worldometers.info/) retrieved April 24, 2021.

⁴ Quentin R. Skrabec, Jr. *St. Benedict's Rule for Business Success*. (West Lafayette Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2003).





Thus, this paper aims to examine St. Benedict's brand of leadership vis-à-vis leadership theories. It argues that care ethics coheres with Benedictine leadership principles of communion, fraternity, and service. It also traces the intersection between Benedictine leadership and the praxis of care in the hope of gaining insight into the possibilities of carving *caring* spaces in the Benedictine schools and/or communities.

LEADERSHIP STYLES

Leadership style is the general way a leader behaves towards his subordinates for attaining objectives. It is the degree to which a manager delegates his authority. Prioritization of human relationships or being task-oriented reflects a leader's leadership style.⁵ A leader's actions have underlying motives and are often driven by personal agenda or guiding principles. Some leaders draw from various factors like upbringing, family norms, and values, years of experience, or affect. The latter, as explained by Hume, attaches great importance to 'feelings' as the 'final sentence' on matters of morality. In his *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* in 1751, Hume explains that the final sentence depends on some internal sense. He writes:

"The final sentence, it is probable, which pronounces characters and actions amiable or odious, praiseworthy or blamable; that which stamps on them the mark of honor or infamy, approbation or censure; that which renders morality an active principle and constitutes virtue our happiness, and vice our misery; it is probable, I say, that this final sentence depends on some internal sense or feeling, which nature has made universal in the whole species". He opined that action ensues from feelings.⁶

Leaders' consistent action, whether good or evil, arises from remembered emotions. If there were nothing in our experience and no sentiments in our minds to produce the concept of virtue, Hume says, no lavish praise of heroes could generate it.⁷ So, to a degree, moral requirements have a natural origin. Hume expounds that natural impulses of humanity and dispositions to approve cannot entirely account for our virtue of justice. Justice is co-opted by emotion, an internal force. Likewise, Damasio's explications of 'emotion', 'feeling', and 'core consciousness' or 'feeling a feeling' unveils that it is a neural object (or internal emotional state) and as an (unconscious) neural reaction to a certain stimulus, it is realized by a complex ensemble of neural activations in the brain. This perspective on emotion, feeling, and action appears banded together. All these processes – emotion, feeling, and consciousness – depend on their execution on representations of the organism. Their shared essence is the body.⁸

Feelings are strong determinants of action. They are fleeting and amoral but can outrun rationality. If one feels good about a good act such as showing support to a neophyte in the workplace, granting a big break to a senior employee, or a caring act like the mushrooming of community pantries to aid the underprivileged, it is due to neural connections stirred by an emotional state. Actions are activated as emotions well up. A strong emotion that it evokes forms part of the memory. Hence, a feeling that one is doing right cogitates the person to act. Reliving the feeling of concern or care cannot but impels one to act. Some management literature critiques the concept of leadership that is merely based on system, efficiency, and profit. Transactional leadership, being a results-centered approach,

⁵ Albert Mescon, M. H., and F. Khedouri, *Management Individual and Organizational Effectiveness*. (New York: Harper and Row Publishers), 1985.

⁶ David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*(gutenberg.org)/retrieved 4-22-21.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Antonio R. Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body, Emotion and the Making of Consciousness*. (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999), 283-284.





may be used in the corporate world and educational institutions. Notable for fixed methods and operations that require little leeway or creativity to get the job done, transactional leaders laud efficiency and promote hierarchy. Corporate structure and culture are highly important for the smooth flow of the organization. Everything goes through a proper channel and process. Thus, bypassing this process is deemed insubordination. Transactional leaders are also concerned with micromanaging, ascertaining that everything is running as it should be. They must make level-headed decisions beneficial to the organization. Effective transactional leaders are capable of (1) clarifying what is expected of the employees' performance, (2) explaining how to meet such expectations (3) spelling out the criteria of the evaluation of their performance, (4) providing feedback on whether the employee is meeting the objective and (5) allocating rewards that are contingent to their meeting the objectives.⁹

Transformational leadership, however, considers change as central to organizational growth. It primarily focuses on motivation and collaboration through teamwork at every level of the organization, including the hierarchy. This type of leadership rules out the rigidity of transactional leadership and ensures creative or innovative ideas are given free rein for they boost the image and the profitability of the company. It encourages personal, emotional, and professional growth in addition to monetary rewards. Although individual leaders exhibit tendencies toward transactional or transformational leadership styles, most leaders show characteristics of both styles. While transformational leadership motivates subordinates through a shared vision and

responsibility, transactional leadership motivates followers by appealing to their self-interests. Its principle is to motivate by the exchange process.¹⁰

Spiritual leadership is slowly gaining attention in the business community. CEOs and leaders engage in dialogue to integrate spirituality into the workplace. Feature articles from Newsweek, Time, Fortune, and Business Week have chronicled the growing presence of spirituality in corporate America.¹¹ Spiritual leadership¹² is a relationship-oriented leadership that is part of the "value-based leadership theories" since these contain spiritual elements which serve as a response to a disturbing situation such as unfair wage practice, grumbling, or the like.

According to Crossman, these spiritual values are taken and adapted from the religious tradition into ethical approaches in a practice that is more aligned to secular discourse in the 20th century. Compassion and caring, courage and hope, honesty and humility, as well as other important virtues that a leader believes in and possesses characterize a spiritual leader. Nevertheless, s/he is expected to have the same characteristics on a deeper level than other people. Since a spiritual leader's agenda has to do with the company or organizational values, it thrives on a relationship-oriented leadership style that induces an increase in the level of motivation and morality of others so that they can achieve performance beyond expectation.

Therefore, spiritual leadership is capable of transcending transactional and transformational leadership as the values and principles of a

⁹ B.M. Bass, *Does the transactional–transformational leadership paradigm transcend organizational and national boundaries?* *American Psychologist* 1997: 52, 130-139.

¹⁰ Marco Tavanti. *Transactional Leadership* (London; New York) *Leadership: the key concepts* (2008) Available at: <http://works.bepress.com/marcotavanti/15/retrieved> 4-23-21.

¹¹ Louis W. Fry, PhD and Eleftheria Egel, PhD., *Spiritual Leadership; Embedding Sustainability in the Triple Bottom Line*, *Graziado Business Review*: Vol. 20, Issue No. 3, 2017.

¹² Sendjaya et al., 2008.





spiritual leader intersect with his/her leadership qualities. In spiritual leadership, emotions have impinged on life, human relations, and communal welfare. Spiritual leaders forge deep connections, which enable them to transcend transactions or contracts.

CARING: AN EMOTIVE PRAXIS

From mothering as the paradigmatic act of caring,¹³ care has come to mean a disposition and value;¹⁴ a cluster of practices or values;¹⁵ a form of engrossment,¹⁶ a care-giving, care-receiving, or caretaking (a carer helps someone to grow);¹⁷ a complex notion, a form of empathy; an emotive concept,¹⁸ or a political idea.¹⁹ Care ethicists' argument is centered around an appeal to the particular and concrete moral situations that are rooted in human relationships. The primacy of reason is negated by Care ethics as emotions of caring are taken into account in human relations. Gilligan²⁰ argued that women's moral framework is different from males'. Moral frameworks were often calibrated from Piaget's or Immanuel Kant's consequentialist and

deontologically-framed moral reasoning. Gilligan critiqued Kohlberg's theory of moral development seeing the natural bias against women's maturity. She conducted her research and uncovered 'women's morality' in her book, *In a Different Voice*. She admitted that initially, she evaded women's questions²¹ and in some instances, dismissed them because these were *different* from a highly rational discourse that was acceptable. She must have 'felt' uneasy listening to women's concrete problems for these were categorized as 'private matters' and less a social concern.

Held also pointed out that traditional ethicists have long employed a myopic view that moral issues arise in one sphere only—the public sphere. The tension between the private and public spheres is inimical to the tension that exists between modern and traditional. Concrete problems were supposed to be discussed in the privacy of the home. Her critique, along with Gilligan's, purports that Care is significant in the public sphere. She states:

Care is probably the most deeply fundamental value. There can be care without justice. There has been historically little justice in the family, but care and life have gone on without it. There can be no justice without care, however, for without care no child would survive and there would be no persons to respect.²²

From the vantage view of spiritual leaders, a sentiment of natural caring can be an active force. Consider this: the best memory of being around caring and empowering leaders enables us to remember how we feel when we were with them. Productivity and efficiency did amaze us, but how we feel when we were recognized, rewarded, and affirmed lingered in our memory. We tend to believe in their values because we felt good working with them.

¹³ See Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Sara Ruddick, "Maternal Thinking," in *Mothering: Essays in Feminist Theory*, ed. Joyce Trebilcock (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Allanheld, 1984), p. 215 and Virginia Held's discussion on care as encompassing the political and global, in Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political and Global* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁴ Held, *The Ethics of Care*, p.23.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁶ Nel Noddings, *Starting at Home: Caring and Social Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁸ Annette C. Baier, *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); Marilyn Friedman, *What Are Friends For?: Feminist Perspectives on Personal Relationships and Moral Theory* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

¹⁹ Joan Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (London: Routledge, 1993).

²⁰ The ethics of care, which has its origins in the work of moral and social psychologists such as Nancy Chodorow and most notably, Carol Gilligan, is an alternative framework for moral theory. See Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p.7; Carol Gilligan's noted women questions, which she observed, probe deeper reasons about perceptions in life and relationships, but are often ignored and construed insignificant by males who prefer relevance and rationality. Her seminal work, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983, 1992), hereafter referred to as Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*.

²¹ Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, p. xiv.

²² *Ibid.*





Caring is thereby an emotive praxis. It allows emotions to surface and inform the mind of the course of action. For example, the concept of hunger is different from a person's feeling of hunger. Knowing that many people are hungry is not the same as knowing what it felt like to have a grumbling tummy. One who has felt hungry can relive the experience, allowing feelings of hunger to surface until it moves the person to action. The memory stirs up emotions that compel a person to satisfy her hunger or provide food at the table.

Note that in an ethics of care, one focuses 'further in' on the problem as opposed to 'abstracting out' relevant moral principles. Thus, one considers contextual factors such as the nature of the relationships between those involved in the problem. One seeks to preserve these relationships and to engage with their emotional registers.²³

CARE ETHICS' CONTRIBUTION

Care was believed to be initially lodged at home. It could not pitch its equal place alongside moral theories that are founded on justice because of the general perception that it is a weak concept, its discourse seems simplistic and utopic, rather than pragmatic and complex. For a supporter of justice theory, Care's inapplicability to the universal application makes it less appealing and parochial. Care, understood as an engrossment, a form of empathy, and a personal disposition may appear limited in its scope; however, critical contributions to moral framework slowly made caring normative.

Joan Tronto and Selma Sevenhuijsen²⁴ are political scientists and care proponents who harped on placing Care in the political arena. By placing

important moral questions such as the adequacy of care in society, policies that promote caring, caring spaces, etc., put Care ethics to a discussion table. These include various contexts where Care is needed to stir more questions as to how justice can be more humane. The question, "How can we be just without losing our tenderness (or empathy)?" expresses a desire to veer away from justice-based morality. If caring is transposed to social good, the revaluing of Care as a public social good can impact the global community.

BENEDICT'S HOLY RULE: TRACES OF CARING

The spiritual leadership of St. Benedict is gleaned from his Holy Rule or *La Regula* which was a great innovation.²⁵ There was no written monastic rule at that time. Scripture was the basic rule, and the monastic rules were attempts to apply the Bible to the local conditions and a community context. Eventually, the need for the written rule became necessary for succession in authority. Benedict refers to his "little" Rule as a form of help for beginners.²⁶ His concern for the human limitations of the successors made him spell out the rules for an abbot yet, without dismissing the initiative of an abbot. Benedict leaves space for flexibility in making the necessary changes.

Closer scrutiny of the Holy Rule shows Benedict's profound understanding of the human psyche. Leaving spaces for discernment, the *abbas*, a term mentioned one hundred sixty-six times in the Rule²⁷ are empowered to fulfill the duties in the community according to one's discernment of what is best according to the context of the community. Benedict's introduction of flexibility is perhaps Benedict's genius in founding

²³ Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 17.

²⁴ Steven D. Edwards PhD *Three Versions of Care* (Blackwell Publishing Ltd Nursing Philosophy, 2009), pp. 231-240.

²⁵ Kardong, *Benedict's Rule: A Translation and Commentary*, 36.

²⁶ RB 73:8.

²⁷ R. Hanslik, (ed.), *Benedicti Regula*, 193-195.





monasteries. Foremost to his mind was to be “the father” for his monks, and in every sense of the word, he was a father, a spiritual leader.²⁸ As a spiritual leader, “the abbot is believed to act as Christ’s representative”.²⁹ His position is not a privilege but an important task of being configured to the image of Christ. He must imitate Christ’s way of life to mediate Christ’s presence and teaching to the community. Thus, an abbot mediates God’s will to the community seeing his task as part of God’s grand design.

Benedict’s spiritual leadership is Christ-like. It is rooted in his deep relationship with God, the Cause and enabler of good deeds. He modeled Christ’s caring. Thus, in the Holy Rule, he writes that a leader (an abbot) must never tire of shepherding, following Jesus, a loving Shepherd.³⁰

Stewardship was Benedict’s idea of taking responsibility and accountability for the ministry entrusted.³¹ An abbot recognizes that his office is first, a commitment to serve. He’s a steward, following the commands of a loving Master. Secondly, *care*³² precedes all the other tasks of an abbot. For instance, he must adapt himself to the different characters and the different needs of brothers.³³ His ministry of care particularly should be directed towards the weak: delinquents, the sick, the poor, and pilgrims.³⁴ Practical concerns must also be attended to by the abbot such as closing the doors, ensuring there is sufficient food and drink as well as individual necessities in the monastery.³⁵

An abbot teaches by word and example. Contemporary leadership informs us that leadership is about the systematic organization, efficiency, and keeping people motivated. On the contrary, spiritual leadership is *love* in action. Love and impartiality are to be the background of abbatial teaching, charity a tangible expression of spiritual leadership.

Benedict’s use of the image of a steward is noteworthy. In 64,7, Benedict says that the abbot will have to give an account of his stewardship, he takes charge of “the management of the household”. An interesting section in Chapter 33 of the Holy Rule reflects this succinctly. The abbot is responsible for the provision of goods according to the different needs of different brothers, for adequate clothing, food, and drink. Stewardship is synonymous with accountability in the Benedictine context. Delegating tasks, making decisions, solving difficult problems and conflicts constitute a transactional style of leadership. Nonetheless, Benedict used these practical ways of caring as *spiritual means* to remind the community of the centrality of Christ. Being a good steward means that an abbot, “...should always let mercy triumph over judgment so that he too may win mercy.”³⁶

THE KINGDOM/REIGN OF GOD: LOCUS OF SALVATION

Jesus’ proclamation of the Reign of God and healing ministry must be understood in the light of his socio-political context. The ancient Mediterranean, as fieldwork studies emerged and were reported, has had a wide range of trading transactions. People lived and connected with others through face-to-face interactions. The interactions formed in-group bonds for

²⁸ Casey, *Leadership in a Benedictine Context: An Interrogation of Tradition*, 46.

²⁹ RB 2,2;63,13.

³⁰ RB 27, 8-9.

³¹ RB 2, 7-10.

³² *Ibid.*, 2:31-32.

³³ *Ibid.*, 2:24-25, 28.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 58:15; P. Hammet, *Care for the Individual in the Rule of Benedict*, ABR 39 (1988), 277-286.

³⁵ RB 55:3; 39,6; 40,5; 55: 18-20.

³⁶ Timothy Fry, OSB (ed.) *The Rule of St. Benedict in English*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1982).





political or commercial purposes. Hence, emperors utilized these agency-extended forms³⁷ of control as they burdened their people with taxes and instituted Roman bureaucracy. The proclamation of the Kingdom in Mark (Mk 1:14) presupposes a calling for transformation.

The *basileia tou theo*, (בְּמַלְכוּת תְּאוּ) God's reign or realm, joins two realms/domains of experience: the now and the metaphorical frame (horizon/framework).³⁸ The reign of God may refer to a state of mind and heart or a social reality or could allude to the horizon of the future. In this sense, God's kingdom is on a dynamic process; the inhabitants, the citizens of our time, and the coming generations must keep in mind that the actors in building this Kingdom are in the here and now (as well as in the future). People are key players in the building of a caring community.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN PARABLE: A CALL TO CARE

Historical-critical studies refer to the parable of the Good Samaritan found in Luke 10:29-37.³⁹ However, other authors insist that the parable should not be restricted to this section since the larger and immediate context of the parable has shown that the parable proper is related to Luke 10:25-28, which is the first part of the whole parable.⁴⁰ Without the first part, some facets of Jesus's teaching on compassion and care would escape one's view. Let us, therefore, follow the whole parable with two parts.

³⁷ Bruce J. Malina *The Social Gospel of Jesus: The Kingdom of God in Mediterranean Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), pp.71ff.

³⁸ William C. Spohn *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics* (New York: Continuum Publishing Co., 2000), pp. 66ff.

³⁹ See Howard I. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978); Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke* (New York: Doubleday 1981); Christopher F. Evans, *Saint Luke* (Philadelphia: Trinity, 1990).

⁴⁰ Recent commentaries deal with Luke 10:25-37 as a unit. See, Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); Klyne R. Snodgrass (*Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

The first part consists of a dialogue between Jesus and the lawyer/scholar of the law, which is broken down into units of double confrontation: first, the lawyer asking a question, and Jesus asking a counter-question (Luke 10:25-28); which was followed-up by the next confrontation — the lawyer answering Jesus's counter-question, and Jesus answering the lawyer's original question (Luke 10:29-37).⁴¹ In the first part, the lawyer asks Jesus, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life" (10:25), to which Jesus demands that the lawyer himself answer his own question since, as an expert of the law, he must already know the answer.

Confronted with the dismissal of his question, he responded: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." (10: 27) Jesus' approval, "You have answered correctly," did not end there. Jesus concluded with an injunction: "Do this, and you will live." (10: 28)

The scholar of the law's tricky question: "And who is my neighbor?" avoided the shame from not knowing⁴² but also revealed an undesirable relationship to their race, religion, and community. In the first century Palestine, a Jew could consider a fellow Jew or proselyte living next door, or a Jew living a hundred or a thousand miles away, as a neighbor. In this kind of classification, a Gentile traveler or an alien that passes by could not be deemed a neighbor. Strictly, the only requirement for being accepted and treated as a neighbor was to be of Jewish descent, or in the case of a proselyte or

⁴¹ Some authors comment that at the time of Jesus it was usual for the scholars of the law and rabbis to answer with a counter-question. Luise Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), p. 132; Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993) 34-37.

⁴² See Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, "Honor and Shame in Luke-Acts: Pivotal Values of the Mediterranean World," in Jerome H. Neyrey (ed.), *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), pp. 51ff.





God-fearers, to be a convert or willing to convert to Judaism.⁴³

The lawyer's second question, "And who is my neighbor?" thus implied that there are groups of people who are not classified as the Jews' neighbors. The meaning of neighbor denoted a people belonging to the Jewish race and the lawyer wanted to see if Jesus respected this limit. Thereby, if Jesus stretches the interpretation of neighbor to include outcasts, sinners, those on the margins of society, and Gentiles, then the lawyer would have succeeded in exposing Jesus' teaching as unusual insofar as this accommodation of neighbor was unacceptable to most Jews.

Jesus, however, would not take part in the malicious trap contrived by the lawyer. Instead, he answered the lawyer's question by telling a parable.

The second part, which is the parable proper of the Good Samaritan consists of seven interconnected scenes: (1) a man fell into the hands of robbers (10: 30), (2) the appearance of the priest (10: 31), (3) the entrance of the Levite (10: 32), (4) the arrival of the Samaritan (10: 33), (5) the care administered by the Samaritan (10: 34), (6) the bringing of the wounded man into the inn (10: 35), and (7) the concluding units of action involving Jesus and the lawyer (10: 36-37).

Commentators have assumed the Jewish identity of the victim.⁴⁴ One of the more compelling pieces

of evidence is that the direction of his journey was from Jerusalem to Jericho: both are Jewish cities. Moreover, the victim must have been one of those who came back after joining the periodic Jewish feasts celebrated in Jerusalem. Lastly, Jesus was narrating the story to Jewish listeners who had the same basic assumption: to make the victim a non-Jew would have complicated the process of narrating and understanding the nature of the story. Jesus wanted his audience to see that the victim was indeed a "neighbor" in the conventional sense.

Notice that only after the stripping of his clothes was the victim's identity known. It became an issue, particularly for the Priest and the Levite. If the victim were not stripped of his clothing, his identity would at the onset be known. A person's identity is known through his outfit and the manner he wears his clothes (including his shoes, belt, and head cover or cap). In the Parable, the description of a man left naked and half-dead on the road has, therefore, meant no identity, leaving the Jews unable to assess if he is one of their "neighbors". Orthodox Jews, like the Priest and the Levite of the parable, would have the greatest trouble deciding whether to help the troubled person or not because of their ethnic, religious, or cultural allegiance that limits their view of "neighbor." Nonetheless, they both knew what salvation requires or what their official functions expect from them. Knowing, however, as recounted was not a guarantee of action. Their inability to extend care is a conscious disregard of the divine commandment to love God and one's neighbor.

On the other hand, the Samaritan, the main protagonist, saw the man in need and was moved with compassion (10:33). The Samaritan's posture in contrast to the behavior of the Priest and the Levite distinguishes a true believer. The former was moved; the latter moved out of

⁴³ Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (New York: Scribner, 1963), p. 202; Fichtner, "πλησίον," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. VI:315 writes, "the commandment applies only to Israelites and full proselytes. Samaritans, foreigners, and resident aliens who do not join the community of Israel within 12 months are excluded."

⁴⁴ These authors assume that the victim is a Jew: Kenneth E. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes. More Lukan Parables, Their Culture, and Style*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 42; Bernard Brandon Scott, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), p. 194; Robert W. Funk, "The Good Samaritan as Metaphor," *Semeia* 2 (1974): 74-81. Other commentators, however, claim that the identity of the man is insignificant to the story: Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), pp. 123-25; Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 203. John D. Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), pp. 57-66.





the location and path of the victim, unable to demonstrate care when it was direly needed. The usual explanation given why the Priest and the Levite chose to pass by and not help the man in need was for the fear of ritual defilement.⁴⁵ In the parable, the Priest and Levite are going to Jericho and not to Jerusalem; they were going down towards the direction taken by the victim, which is Jericho. Going down means coming from a higher place (Jerusalem is about 2500 feet above sea level; Jericho is about 800 feet below sea level). Thus, it is more likely that there is another reason for not extending help other than the defilement thesis.

A possible answer, which is more consistent with the parable's issue on the "neighbor", is that the Priest and the Levite did not assist the victim or take responsibility for him because they were unsure about his identity. They did not want to take responsibility for a stranger or somebody who might belong to another race, a different culture, or a different social class for fear of transcending the boundaries that separated them. The Priest and the Levite did not want to take the risk.

The Samaritan is the ideal of care praxis. He defied the boundaries of ethnicity, religion, or fear. He saw the victim in need and thus was able to extend what was logically appropriate. With wine and oil, the Samaritan administered assistance. These materials could have been brought too by the Priest or the Levite since they were temple officials who would normally have these things but showed indifference. Even ordinary travelers, like the Samaritan, would normally bring wine and oil on their journey. Only the Samaritan willingly administered care.

⁴⁵ Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, pp. 43-46; Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1990), p. 232; Madeleine I. Boucher, *The Parables* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1983), p. 120; W. Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel according to Luke* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), p. 594; Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 203.

His acts of care were deliberate and without apprehension for his own safety. He even went out of his way by ensuring the victim would be cared for until he regained his health.

Thus, *caregiving* did not end on the road but continued in the more ideal setting of an inn where other people could provide further assistance for the victim's complete recovery. Jews could have easily jumped to conclusion that the Samaritan himself was the aggressor and the victim's mugger. His caring was not half-baked and tentative. He stayed with the victim overnight ("On the next day, when he departed... Lk 10:35) and the following day, he did something which went beyond the conventional views of the Jews. He gave the innkeeper two denarii so that he could take care of the wounded man until he returned. A denarius was equivalent to a man's daily wage and we may assume that two denarii would cover all the costs. However, commentators believe that two denarii would have covered the cost of at least twenty-four days of lodging at an inn; it may be less if food and lodging were to be paid. A day's lodging, at that time, was worth approximately one-twelfth of a denarius.⁴⁶

If a Samaritan assisted an anonymous victim on a road shocked the audience, his actions the next morning shocked and surprised the audience even more. The Samaritan went beyond what was necessary and paid generously for the regeneration of an anonymous person.⁴⁷

This act completed the caring praxis of the Good Samaritan. It also illustrated the possession of a subjective disposition that is ready to administer

⁴⁶ See Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 205; Douglas E. Oakman, "The Buying Power of Two Denarii: A Comment on Luke 10:35," *Forum* 3 (1987): 33- 38; Kenneth W. Harl, *Coinage in the Roman Economy, 300 B.C. to A.D. 700* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 278-79.

⁴⁷ John R. Donahue notes that the Samaritan secures the victim's recovery and freedom. If he had not paid the bill, the victim would have been arrested for his debt, *The Gospel in Parable: Metaphor, Narrative, and Theology in the Synoptic Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), p. 133.





care. Indeed, the subjective disposition is a precondition for the translation of knowledge into action. Such a disposition was lacking in the person of the Priest and the Levite who were instead disposed to prejudice and remained incapable of moving beyond the confines of their restrictive understanding about their neighbor. The Samaritan felt compassion, in Greek, ἐσπλαγχνίσθη (*esplanchnisthē*), literally means to have the bowels yearn, i.e., (figuratively) feel sympathy, to pity⁴⁸. The limitation of language can only refer to compassion as pity or empathy but perhaps, visually imagining innards getting ripped out of us would enable us to deeply capture the meaning of ‘heart-felt’ compassion. The Samaritan was jolted and felt compassion. His emotion was translated into generative care.

CARVING CARING SPACES IN BENEDICTINE INSTITUTIONS

Benedict’s genius, his integration of community, hierarchy, and organization in the Holy Rule are tangible evidence of spiritual depth. Benedict realized that vital to common life is the merging of individual and organizational goals. He cared for both personal and communal needs, attentive to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

In Benedictine schools, the community is more important than the structure. Thus, camaraderie, friendship, common interests, work, and liturgy are but some of the expressions of building community. The structure supports a community, but it is the people living together in a community that is central in the Benedictine mission. Thus, hospitality is a Benedictine hallmark that celebrates the gift of diversity. Through hospitality, monasteries and Benedictine institutions become an oasis of

acceptance, tolerance, and kindness. Benedictine leaders can learn from St. Benedict’s hospitality and openness to people, especially the least—the sick, the last, and the lost. The carving of spaces of care takes shape in a community that instills openness, a sense of belonging, acceptance of all who come to the monastery willing to be enriched by the pains and sorrows, joys and hopes, and prayers of people who enter a Benedictine institution. Listening is embedded in hospitality for one who accepts wholly the other genuinely lends an ear.

Carved spaces may also be found in sharing the richness of people and resources humbly and generously. Benedict’s rule on *Divine Office, Tools for Good Work, Obedience, Daily Manual Labor*, etc. shows a total system approach seeing value in ordinary tasks to transform the daily to loci of God’s saving grace. Being a deeply spiritual person, Benedict was never wanting in wisdom and grace nurturing communion and human flourishing.

CONCLUSION

Three important lessons can be drawn from the example of St. Benedict as a spiritual leader, an abbot, and a *carer*. First, Benedict was a keen observer of human nature. He addressed the eventual need for succession by writing the Holy Rule. He was both a visionary and a pragmatic leader who exemplified a balanced way of life—prioritizing work and prayer. His hospitality demonstrates his deep ability to care. Benedictine communities can carve spaces that foster caring over efficiency, compassion over demand for justice, and mercy over judgment. Second, his spiritual leadership is rooted in the person of Jesus—the Good Shepherd. Benedict’s care emphasis on caring for the sick fosters communal service. Being a leader, he is not the

⁴⁸ Luke 7:13 “And when the Lord saw her, he had...”: Translation, Meaning ([quoteskosmos.com](https://www.quoteskosmos.com/))/retrieved 4-24-21.





sole implementer of good deeds. He wrote the Rule for all his brothers who equally can do much good. If Benedictine communities will truly become an open space for all even strangers or delinquents, the *Parable of the Good Samaritan* would no longer be a parable. Spaces of care would breed a culture of compassionate caring in which compassion, kindness, generosity, hospitality, and acceptance would thrive.

Third, Benedict's Holy Rule affirms stewardship. It requires accountability and not just blind obedience. It offers Caring through active listening. In the Holy Rule, one can deduce that St. Benedict gives second and third chances. Benedict has one chapter concerning those requiring ex-communication and one chapter on readmission. These stipulations underscore the importance of incessant Caring for the weakest and most vulnerable in Benedictine communities.

Finally, leaders can draw from the teaching and example of Benedict on 'abbas'—fathers/mothers who care or tend toward the other with eagerness to care and show compassion. Community pantries that are gaining attention and following affirm there is a need for worldwide caring. People who commit to a simple act of caring can generate a multitude of caring acts under the helm of spiritual leaders who are unafraid to carve Caring spaces wherever they are, steering people to replicate caring acts—whatever they can give and receive.

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