



THE BENEDICTINE VALUE OF STABILITY AND ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC AND CRISIS

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The paper discussed the impact of Covid-19 pandemic to academic leadership. One of the impacts of the pandemic to academic leadership was the ability to deal with unprecedented disruption and high uncertainty that had great effect not only to education and learning but also to mental health and well-being. As a consequence, the pandemic demanded for a change in leadership practice that could deal with disruption and uncertainty. This study posited that the Benedictine value of stability responds to this very specific need. The value of stability demonstrated what an academic leader must do to fulfill his/her leadership role in times of disruption and uncertainty.

Keywords: Academic leadership, Benedictine value of stability, Covid-19 Pandemic, Learning and Education

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THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND THE DEMAND FOR NEW LEADERSHIP MODEL

The World Bank, in its document, *The State of Global Learning Poverty: 2022 Update*, stated that the “pandemic has led to an unprecedented disruption of school and learning around the world.”¹ The disruption is best described by Lien, Khan & Eid as: “the usual educational routines, plans, and processes were abruptly challenged and replaced by uncertainty.”² In the middle of this disruption were academic leaders who have experienced “demanding and chaotic circumstance, relentless pressure, limited options, and sleepless nights.”³ Harris and Jones expressed the experience of leaders during the pandemic as the “perfect storm with imperfect leadership responses.”⁴ They explained why it was an “imperfect leadership response:”

In such disruptive times, school leaders cannot emulate the leadership practices they witnessed or enjoyed in a period of stability, continuity, and relative calm. Leading in disruptive times means being able to navigate a different course to create new pathways through the disruption.⁵

Academic leaders were unprepared for the pandemic. They have seen disasters or experienced emergency situations before, but not like this one. No one has a model on how to respond to the pandemic, but academic leaders responded in their own “imperfect” way. They did their best to find solutions to the various concerns caused by the pandemic and the disruption of classes.

The demands caused by the pandemic and the disruption of classes to academic leadership

were quite heavy. Academic leaders played a critical role in the continuity of learning at the height of the pandemic. There were at the helm when everyone was at a loss during the sudden shift from face-to-face to digital distance education and learning. When “schools had to implement new procedures to minimize the risk of infection and ensure safe working practices for students and staff.”⁶ When faculty and students were grappling with the integration of technology in teaching and learning. When students were shouting on social media for “pass all” and some asked for a refund of the tuition fees. When everyone was in doubt about the use of technology to deliver quality education. When everyone was confused and asking for an “academic year freeze.” When the society was “upholding a sense of normalcy and care for children and families during the pandemic.”⁷ Academic leaders were at the center of all these. That is why, like others, they, too, experienced mental health issues. But it was because of their resiliency, flexibility, and adaptability that they were able to overcome the difficult and confusing situations at the height of the pandemic.

Because of “multiple demands and unpredictable challenges,” the pandemic called for a new model of academic leadership.⁸ Harris and Jones stressed that the effective academic leadership model fit for the pandemic was distributive leadership characterized by connectedness, collaboration, creativity, and responsiveness.⁹

⁶ Lien, Khan & Eid, 1.

⁷ Lien, Khan, & Eid.

⁸ Ken Robinson and Lou Aronica in their book, *Creative Schools: The Grassroots Revolution That's Transforming Education* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015) explain that the essential role of academic leaders is to sustain a vibrant culture of learning (p. 202). This culture of learning is “expressed through the curriculum, teaching, and assessment practices” (p. 204). They further explain that the role of academic leaders is not command and control but climate control (p. 205). It is a climate that will encourage everyone to contribute to sustain the vibrant culture of learning. The pandemic, however, somehow changed this perspective on academic leaders. Because of the experience of disruption, inequality, uncertainty, lack of connectivity and access to learning platforms, the role of academic leaders is not only limited to sustaining a culture of learning and climate control that foster learning. They have to ensure a culture of resiliency within the organization.

⁹ Harris and Jones, “Covid 19 – school leadership in disruptive times,” 246.

¹ The World Bank et al, *The State of Global Learning Poverty: 2022 Update*, Conference Ed., June 23, 2022, 7.

² Camilla Martine Lien et al., Samaria Khan, and Jarle Eid, “School Principals’ Experiences and Learning from the Covid-19 Pandemic in Norway” in *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 2022, DOI: 10.1080/00313831.2022.2043430, 1.

³ Alma Harris & Michelle Jones, “Covid 19 – school leadership in disruptive times” in *School Leadership & Management*, 40:4, 2020, 243-247, DOI:10.1080/13632434.2020.1811479, 244.

⁴ Harris and Jones.

⁵ Harris and Jones, 246.





Leaders must be able to connect and to collaborate because they “had to lead virtually, remotely” and “build and maintain a relationship with their staff and stakeholders through online connections.”¹⁰ They must be creative and responsive to find ways in addressing various unprecedented concerns. Thinking outside the box and getting out of their comfort zone were important for them to address problems and deal with emerging different situations that they have not seen or never imagined before. In addition to that, they survived by giving priority to self-care, being technologically savvy and well-informed, demonstrating crisis and change management skills, and valuing the communities as key sources of expertise, knowledge, and local capacity.¹¹

CORE ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP THEMES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In the study of Harris and Jones, they were able to formulate seven (7) core themes relating to school leadership in a pandemic.¹² The first theme is the change in the nature of leadership and the “greater demands placed upon school leaders.” The nature of leadership was changed from “leadership in times of predictability” to “leadership in times of uncertainty.” Leaders must be trained, in other words, on how to handle uncertain and crisis situations and not only on how to deal with excellent performance, quality services, and achievement of goals and objectives.¹³ They must develop the skills on

how to manage “sudden shifts” with limited knowledge and resources. They must learn how to inspire people, or “keep the fire burning,” despite experiencing doubt and uncertainty. Leaders also had to cope with “multiple managerial and emotional issues during the pandemic.” Unlike in the pre-pandemic situation where they primarily deal with enrollment, performance, research productivity, accreditation, or complying with standards. During the pandemic, they had to deal with emotional issues, mental health issues, and the general well-being of faculty and students. While they were also experiencing the same.

The second theme is that the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of academic leaders were greatly affected by all the problems, issues, and demands brought about by the pandemic. Because of the tremendous stress caused by the “multiple managerial demands,” some of them have not yet seen or experienced before, and by the “increased sense of accountability,” the pandemic really had a negative impact on the well-being of academic leaders. The situation caused a lot of sleepless nights for academic leaders. That was due to the following factors. For one, the situation was very volatile, information was so limited, and government regulations kept on changing. If you were in a leadership position, you wanted to be informed, to be regularly updated, and to be in control of the situation so that you can make good decisions. The lack of information and the very volatile environment caused tremendous stress to academic leaders, particularly when they must make decisions to respond to certain demands by the students and faculty or to

¹⁰ Harris and Jones, “Leading during a pandemic – what the evidence tells us” in *School Leadership & Management*, 42:2, 2022, 105-109, DOI: 10.1080/13632434.2022.2064626, 105-106.

¹¹ Harris and Jones, “Covid 19 – school leadership in disruptive times,” 245.

¹² Harris and Jones, “Leading during a pandemic – what the evidence tells us, 106-107.

¹³ There are classic theories on leadership that focused on the relationship of leadership to performance, achievement of goals and objectives, and provision of quality products and services. For example, Kahn and Katz’s “Leadership Practices in Relation to Productivity” talk about how leaders influence the morale and productivity of workers. Morale, or motivation, of workers is important in productivity. Hence, Kahn and Katz postulate that there are different variables that influence

moral and productivity. These are the “supervisor’s ability to play different role, the degree of delegation of authority or closeness of supervision, the quality of supportiveness or employee orientation, and the amount of group cohesiveness” (please see J. Steven Ott, *Classic Readings in Organizational Behavior* (Pacific Grove: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1989), 283-298). Theories like that of Kahn and Katz must be revisited in the context of the experiences during the pandemic. Leaders must be trained on how to motivate people in times of crisis and uncertainty, not only for the sake productivity.





address problematic situations. Another factor was the lack of technological knowledge and skills. When there was a sudden shift to digital or online learning, not only did faculty lack the technological knowledge and skills. Academic leaders also experienced the same handicap. They had to understand the dynamics of online learning as well as acquire the digital skills for online teaching while guiding everyone in the implementation of distance learning. Lastly, working from home also caused a lot of stress. The work-from-home setup was something that not all of us were familiar with. Working in a different environment - far from your files, documents, and papers - and communicating through Viber or email and later via Zoom or Google Meet also caused stress to academic leaders because they were not used to it. Working from home also caused stress because you must address domestic issues related to the pandemic at home while at the same time trying to figure out solutions to problems experienced in learning. Those were some of the factors that caused tremendous stress to academic leaders at the height of the pandemic. More can be added based on an individual's experience.

The third theme is the “way in which school leaders are adapting their leadership practices.” This theme is related to one of the findings of Lien, Khan & Eid.¹⁴ In their phenomenological study of the school principal's experiences and learning during the pandemic, one of the themes that emerged among the participants was on adjustment. Academic leaders had to adjust and adapt to a very fluid situation and to the changes in the infection control guidelines.¹⁵ They had to assess the situation regularly and make decisions on the varied issues that arose because

of the disruptions caused by the pandemic.¹⁶ The worst was they had to make decisions in an environment characterized by ambiguity, time pressure, and lack of information.¹⁷ At the height of the pandemic, academic leaders had to adapt to the changes which they initiated. These were the creation of new structures in the educational process, the integration of technology in teaching and learning, and the new way of organizing out-of-class time.¹⁸ It was a unique experience for them to implement processes of which, at the same time, they were studying and learning about. They had to implement processes which they had little knowledge and information on how these processes work. They had to implement processes that they had to adjust and adapt. Likewise, the integration of technology was somehow new to many academic leaders. Indeed, the integration of technology was already being discussed and planned in some higher educational institutions before the pandemic. Some educational institutions had implemented it. But not all had a clear understanding and an in-depth experience on how it works as well as on its effect on the learning of students from different levels. That is why the full integration of technology in teaching and learning was a “leap of faith” to many academic leaders. They adapted to the integration of technology not only in teaching and learning but also in administrative and operational processes. Academic leaders also had to learn different ways of organizing out-of-class time. Online learning was a different experience for faculty and students. Sitting in front of the computer screen with earphones for hours was not a pleasant experience. It had an impact on one's health and well-being. That is why organizing classes in a semester, or one academic year required creativity and thinking outside the box. The new schemes of scheduling classes caused stress and anxiety to academic leaders. They had also to adjust to it.

¹⁴ Lien, Camilla Martine, Samaria Khan, and Jarle Eid, “School Principals' Experiences and Learning from the Covid-19 Pandemic in Norway” in *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 2022, DOI: 10.1080/00313831.2022.2043430.

¹⁵ Lien, Khan & Eid, 11.

¹⁶ Lien, Khan & Eid.

¹⁷ Lien, Khan & Eid.

¹⁸ Lien, Khan & Eid.





The fourth theme is the “personal characteristics that school leaders are exhibiting to cope with the huge challenges of the pandemic.” Some academic leaders would have not adapted to the sudden changes during the pandemic since they did not have the proper personal characteristics to deal with the very volatile situation. Harris and Jones identified the following personal characteristics as essential for academic leaders at the height of the pandemic: personal resilience, calm persona, and bringing all stakeholders together for mutual support.¹⁹ Resilience was a critical personal characteristic that academic leaders should possess and display at the height of the pandemic. Resilience means toughness, covering quickly from difficulties, and flexibility. Those were the essential personal characteristics that academic leaders demonstrated to survive and overcome the most difficult situation at the height of the pandemic. It is assumed that academic leaders who survived the most difficult part of the pandemic possessed and displayed resilience. Aside from resilience, they also possessed and demonstrated a calm persona. A calm persona means that one can control and conquer one’s fear and anxiety. Fear and anxiety are natural emotional responses and experiences. Even the most courageous person experiences fear and anxiety when confronted by danger. What is important is one controls and conquers fear and anxiety. In doing so, one can still think clearly and can still make sound decisions and advice. Hence, a calm persona is essential for leaders in general and for academic leaders when they were confronted by a situation that threatens their well-being and that of their constituents. They can inspire people, give proper guidance and advice, and make good decisions during the most threatening and difficult situations when they have a calm persona. Lastly, they had to bring people together and put ideas together to

find solutions to problems. At the height of the pandemic, several issues were resolved because academic leaders brought different stakeholders (i.e., parents, students, faculty, and personnel) together. In other words, academic leaders did not bring different stakeholders together just for the sake of bringing them together. Academic leaders brought people together to find solutions or to address problems. In this context, academic leaders must listen to different groups to understand how these groups perceived the problem and how the problem can be addressed.

The fifth theme is the “unevenness in learning that has accompanied the pandemic.” One of the realities that emerged at the height of the pandemic was the unevenness or gaps in learning in terms of knowledge, skills, resources, technology, and connectivity. For example, there were faculty who were knowledgeable about online distance learning. They were knowledgeable about the teaching and learning pedagogies that can be used in distance learning using digital technology. On the other hand, there were faculty whose knowledge of teaching and learning pedagogies for online distance learning was very minimal. Secondly, there were faculty who were highly skilled in using digital technology. Their digital skill sets were already developed. While there were faculty whose digital skill sets were wanting. Thirdly, there were faculty and students who found online learning unproductive because they do not have the essential resources at home such as comfortable space, study table, and learning materials. On the other hand, there were faculty and students who found online learning not only productive but also comfortable because they have the materials needed at home. The gap between technology and connectivity was one of the things that was much talked about at the height of the pandemic. They were students who continuously learn because they had gadgets and very good

¹⁹ Harris and Jones, “Leading during a pandemic – what the evidence tells us,” 106.





connectivity. On the other hand, there were students whose learning was indeed a challenge because they did not have access to technology and connectivity. This unevenness or gap was one of the challenges faced and endured by academic leaders. They did not have the solutions to all of these. But they did their best to address those in a short period of time and given their schools' limitations. This situation of unevenness is a problem not only during the pandemic but will remain a problem in the future.

The sixth theme is the “way in which school leaders have engaged education stakeholders (families and communities) during the pandemic.” In the study of Williams, she shared that one of the strategies that her school implemented at the height of the pandemic was to “involve all stakeholders.”²⁰ The involvement of the stakeholders was critical during the strategic-planning process. Academic leaders listened to what the stakeholders can share to address the situation. On the other hand, academic leaders explained how they plan to deal with the situation. At this point, academic leaders presented concrete plans to address disruption in teaching and learning brought about by the pandemic, and at the same time, presented a monitoring and evaluation scheme to track the progress of the implementation of the plans. In the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the plans, the stakeholders were actively involved.

The last theme is the “ways upon which Covid-19 has changed leadership practices.” Harries and Jones pointed out that the “new model of school leadership has evolved during the pandemic that is distributed, digital, networked, and dependent on technological infrastructure.”²¹ They further

explained that “distributed leadership is now the modus operandi of school leaders facing the multiple demands and unpredictable challenges of the pandemic.”²² Distributed leadership literally means delegating duties and responsibilities to other school officials. At the same time, making them accountable. It was not easy to distribute responsibility. It needed a lot of trust and confidence, particularly at the height of the pandemic when everyone was working on different spaces. Everyone was communicating through email, Viber, or Zoom. There was no personal communication or supervision. Due to a lack of personal communication and supervision, academic leaders must know how to inspire other school officials to perform their work well. The pandemic taught everyone that leadership was not only about position and authority. It was also about self-discipline, setting personal goals, determination to achieve those goals, continuous personal development, and the ability to care and to hope, particularly in times of difficulty. That was one of the challenges faced by academic leaders – to convince everyone that they must exercise leadership and to inspire the young to keep on working to achieve their goals despite the uncertainties brought about by the pandemic.

Concerning the last theme, Avidan and Nissim pointed out that one of the leadership practices that emerged during the pandemic was the “demonstration of caring and caring skills.”²³ Caring was not only a leadership quality but one of the best expressions of leadership during the pandemic: to care was to lead. On the other hand, Williams gave emphasis on “finding moments of joy” as a leadership quality that she developed during the pandemic.²⁴ Williams explained that:

²² Harris and Jones.

²³ Avidan, Aviva & Yonit Nissim, “The Kindergarten-Teachers’ Leadership and Management during The Corona Pandemic (COVID 19): From Uncertainty to Caring” in *Proceedings of LAC in Budapest 2021*, ISBN 978-80-88203-24-7, 22.

²⁴ Williams, 34.

²⁰ Avis Williams, *Leadership Through Crisis: A Framework for Choosing Joy in Educational Leadership*, March 2022, 32.

²¹ Harris and Jones, “Leading during a pandemic – what the evidence tells us,” 107.





Joy and optimism are not about pretending that everything is great and aren't a substitute for a strategy. They're not about looking at a life through rose-colored glasses, but about remembering there are better days ahead.²⁵

The German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, hypothesized that “joy contains not only ingredients of pleasure but also a component of pain.”²⁶ One can experience joy even in times of uncertainty, difficulty, and change. Joy is a choice. Even in the most difficult situation, one can be joyful if he/she decided to be so. This is what Williams pointed out. That academic leaders must learn to decide to choose joy and must be realistic, willing, and joyful to adapt to the changing world.²⁷ Academic leaders must show to everyone, particularly the young, and at the same time inspire them, to be joyful as the world changed and as we anxiously adapt to change.

The studies previously discussed talked about the experiences and reflections of academic leaders during the pandemic. These gave us ideas on leadership in times of crisis. Leaders must learn how to lead and manage in times of uncertainty and sudden shifts. They must be able to adjust and adapt to the changing situation. They must be prepared to deal with social issues that arise in relation to the crisis, such as the problem of unevenness or inequity. They must be willing to engage different stakeholders. They must demonstrate resilience, maintain a calm persona, and bring stakeholders together. Leaders must take care of their emotional and mental well-being. They must be able to change their leadership practices as demanded by the emerging situation. In sum, they talked about the ability of the leader to respond to sudden changes and unpredictable situations.

²⁵ Williams.

²⁶ Walter Kaufman, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1974), 278.

²⁷ Williams, 34.

These experiences and reflections on leadership during the pandemic go back to the idea of leadership as self-leadership.²⁸ Self-leadership starts with knowing oneself – goals, values, strengths, limitations, worldviews.²⁹ It also involves the “invigorating daily habit of refreshing and deepening self-knowledge while immersing oneself in a constantly evolving world.”³⁰ In the context of self-leadership, leaders must develop and demonstrate the values of self-awareness,³¹ ingenuity,³² love,³³ and heroism.³⁴ Possessing and demonstrating leadership styles and strategies to achieve organizational goals and objectives particularly in times of change, leaders must also develop and demonstrate self-leadership. Self-leadership is a values-based leadership³⁵ that focused on self-reflection, cultivation of oneself, respect for oneself and for others, and

²⁸ C. Lowney, *Heroic Leadership: Best Practices from a 450-Year-Old Company that Changed the World* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2003), 98.

²⁹ Lowney.

³⁰ Lowney.

³¹ According to Lowney, “leaders thrive by understanding who they are and what they value, by becoming aware of unhealthy blind spots or weaknesses that can derail them, and by cultivating the habit of continuous self-reflection and learning.” Cultivating leadership skills by looking into one’s strengths, weaknesses, values, and worldview is essential in overcoming challenges and difficulties. Those who commit to continuous learning and self-reflection are the ones that “stand a chance of surfing the waves of change successfully.” In facing “unfamiliar and challenging environments,” one needs not to have tactical handbooks on how to “address every foreseeable contingency.” Rather, one must learn to innovate, exercise good judgment, take responsibility for their actions, and take risks.

³² Lowney explains ingenuity as leaders’ ability to “explore ideas, approaches, and cultures.” It is the leaders’ ability to make themselves comfortable in an unfamiliar terrain and changing world. It is the leaders’ ability to accept change without compromising personal principles and values. Ingenuity refers to the leaders’ ability to “explore ideas, approaches, and cultures.” It is the leaders’ ability to make themselves comfortable in an unfamiliar terrain and changing world. It is the leaders’ ability to accept change without compromising personal principles and values.

³³ Love, for Lowney, is shown when leaders are confident with their own talent, dignity, and potentiality to lead. When they also respect the talent, dignity, and potential of others. When they create an atmosphere where everyone is “energized by loyalty, affection, and mutual support.”

³⁴ Lowney illustrates that heroism is exhibited by leaders who provide an inspiring future and at the same time shape the future. It is exhibited by leaders who create opportunities for themselves and for others.

³⁵ Harry Kraemer, Jr. in his book, *From Values to Action: The Four Principles of Values-Based Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), highlighted the importance of developing personal values for successful leadership. He explained: “Your ability to influence people, whether you are leading a team of two or running an organization of twenty thousand, depends significantly on their ability to appreciate your values. Your values as a leader should be so clearly understood that if you put three, five, twenty, or even one hundred members of your team together without you in a room, they would be able to explain what you stand for inconsistent terms. The more they understand your values, the better they will relate to you and follow your lead” (please see page 79). Kraemer identified and expounded four leadership values that one has to cultivate: (1) self-reflection, (2) balance and perspective, (3) true self-confidence, and (4) genuine humility.





inspiring and creating opportunities for oneself and for others. It gives emphasis on the self as the foundation of leadership; and on the idea that leadership is not primarily about styles and strategies, it is about the self, it is an expression of oneself.

BENEDICTINE VALUE OF STABILITY

In addition to these values of self-leadership, this article would like to discuss another value that must be cultivated by academic leaders, particularly in times of change and disruption. That is the value of stability.

Stability is one of the vows of the members (i.e., priests, monks, nuns) of the Order of St. Benedict.³⁶ It is the “foundation and central issue of monastic life today, the characteristic

³⁶ According to Ambrose Tinsley, OSB in his book, *Pax: The Benedictine Way* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1994), St. Benedict was sent by his family to study in Rome and to qualify for some respectable career. When he arrived in Rome he saw the way of life of the people and of his fellow students and “realized that life in that imperial city could become an obstacle on what... was even more important than good position in this world... He left his studies and he cut his connections with his family... and set out for the hills to lead a more explicitly religious life” (see page 15). Tinsley further narrated that for “three whole years St. Benedict continued living in his hermitage” (see page 17). He, however, gained followers who listened to his word. These followers of St. Benedict grew and evolved into a small community. Because of his growing popularity, he was able to attract more followers and formed twelve communities in Subiaco. From Subiaco, he travelled to Monte Cassino and built a monastery with some of his disciples (see pages 17 – 18).

Joan D. Chittister, OSB in her book, *The Rule of Benedict: Insights for the Ages* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1993), explained that the Rule of St. Benedict is “not a treatise in systematic theology. Its logic is the logic of daily life lived in Christ and lived well” (see page 16). She further described the Rule of St. Benedict as “extremely simple to read,” “not metaphysical,” and “direct and clear.” According to Esther de Waal in her book, *The Life-Giving Way: A Commentary on the Rule of St. Benedict* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1995), the Rule is “totally scriptural. The purpose of the monastic life is to shape life according to the scriptures” (see page vi).

In the Rule (Chapter 58), St. Benedict states that “... Therefore, if someone comes and keeps knocking at the door, and if at the end of four or five days has shown patience in bearing harsh treatment and difficulty of entry, and has persisted in the request, then that one should be allowed to enter and stay in the guest quarters for a few days... If they persevere in stability, then after two months have elapsed let this rule be read straight to them... If they still stand firm, they are to be taken back to the novitiate, and again thoroughly tested in all patience... If once more they stand firm, let four months go by, and then read this rule to them again... When they are to be received, they come before the whole community in the oratory and promise stability, fidelity to the monastic life, and obedience. This is done in the presence of God and the saints to impress on the novices that if they ever act otherwise, they will surely be condemned by the one they mock.”

notion of Benedictine existence.”³⁷ It is a vow that is unique to the Benedictines and cannot be found in other religious congregations. Studies on stability explained it in different ways: (1) as faith in Jesus Christ, as *stabilitas loci* (stability in the monastery), as the community of monks, as a lifetime challenge, as a virtue, and as a counterculture to the 21st society. To provide us with a broader and deeper understanding of stability and how it can be applied as a value of self-leadership, these different themes will be discussed and elaborated.

STABILITY AS FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST

Since it is a religious vow, stability is the community of monks or nuns’ union with Jesus Christ. According to Gregory Polan, “our vow of stability strengthens us to walk the path of hope with and for our brothers in community, in the firm belief that these situations and events are part of the path that leads us to eternity, united to the Paschal suffering and ultimate victory of Christ.”³⁸ The Benedictine monks or nuns of the Order, humans as they are, experienced challenges and difficulties. It could be spiritual, emotional, physical, or material. In the words of Polan, as a community, they share “the same path of suffering, pain, loss, shame, disappointment, and injustice.”³⁹ As a community, they endure all these sufferings, challenges, and difficulties because of their firm belief and faith on Jesus Christ. Another Benedictine scholar, Michael Casey, describes stability as faith in God’s fidelity.⁴⁰ Stability is “grounded on the unchanging fidelity of God... It is our faith

³⁷ Bernard A. Eckerstorfer, OSB, “Monastic *Stabilitas* in the World of Today” in *The American Benedictine Review*, 69:3, September 2018, ISSN:0002-7650, 316.

³⁸ Gregory Polan, OSB, “Spiritual Value of the Benedictine Vow of Stability” in *The American Benedictine Review*, 69:3, September 2018, ISSN:0002-7650, 235.

³⁹ Polan, 234.

⁴⁰ Michael Casey, OCSO, *Strangers to the City: Reflections on the Beliefs and Values of the Rule of Saint Benedict* (Massachusetts: Paraclete Press, 2013), 194.





in God's fidelity that enables us to weather whatever storms come our way."⁴¹ Faith is the foundation of Benedictine's stability. They live in one community. As one community, they pray, work, and study. As a community, they patiently endure all the hardships that come along the way. As a community, they work hard to keep improving themselves and strive to become better persons and holy as well as faithful to their vows. They do all of these because of their faith in Jesus Christ and because of the promise of eternal life. Stability reminds them to deal with the present, whatever the present has to offer, and at the same time, set their eyes on the future of eternal salvation. To put it differently, they deal with the present and overcome the challenges of the present because of the promise of eternal salvation. Inside the monastery, there is a cemetery. Literally, the presence of the cemetery shows that they are in the monastery from the time they joined the Order until their death. The cemetery also reminds them that they joined the Order and live in a community because of their faith in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ.

Joan Chittister, a Benedictine nun and scholar, explains that the purpose of stability is "to center us in something greater than ourselves so that nothing lesser than ourselves can possibly sweep us away."⁴² That something greater than ourselves is God. That is why stability is, as expressed by Chittister, "where I am is where God is for me."⁴³ This centeredness on God is the foundation of stability in the life of a monk or nun.⁴⁴ Because of this centeredness on God,

stability offers its greatest gift. That greatest gift is described by Chittister as: "Stability enables me to outlast the dark, cold places of life until the thaw comes and I can see new life in this uninhabitable place again. But for that to happen, I must learn to wait through the winters of my life."⁴⁵ It is this stability grounded in the faithfulness of God that "enables a person to keep going back to difficult parts of life."⁴⁶ Chittister further explains: "It is not myself and my own strength and my own fidelity in which I put my hope. I put my hope in the certain, the guaranteed, the gracious faithfulness of God."⁴⁷

Stability also offers an "opportunity to engage in the work of evangelization."⁴⁸ Since monks and nuns live, work, pray, and study in one community, it also offers them the opportunity to share the message of the Gospel and to be witnesses of the Gospel. Benedictines are well known in Liturgy.⁴⁹ In the Liturgy, people worship God, proclaim the Gospel, and become witnesses to the Gospel by doing good deeds to others. Monks or nuns celebrate the Holy Mass daily, pray at least three times a day, teach in schools, and manage schools, hospitals, and other charity institutions. They are doing all of these with zeal and vigor because of their vow of stability founded on and inspired by their faith in Jesus Christ.

when we start to settle down and take our time, see what we cannot do everything ourselves (which is humility) or do it once, and above all, when we practice the true silence that will help us to sink our roots in God" (see pages 152-153).

⁴⁵ Chittister.

⁴⁶ Chittister, 156.

⁴⁷ Chittister.

⁴⁸ Polan, 233.

⁴⁹ The *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* explains the nature of Liturgy as "everything that all Christians did in taking part in 'God's work,' the divine 'plan to sum up all the things in Christ'... This included not only divine worship, but proclamation of the Gospel... and service of one's neighbor..." (please see 1502). Furthermore, as Sacrament "liturgy celebrates the Church's prayer through a pattern of symbolic, ritual movements, gestures and verbal formulas that create a framework within which the corporate worship of the Church can take place. By participating the liturgy's sacramental, symbolic activities, the Church members both express their faith in Christ and their desire to deepen it, and actually share in the reality signified, namely, salvation through forgiveness and communion with the Risen, glorified Christ in the Spirit" (please see 1509).

⁴¹ Casey.

⁴² Joan, Chittister, *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today* (New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 1990), 150.

⁴³ Chittister, 151.

⁴⁴ Esther de Waal used the image of the root in explaining stability. According to her, "Just as a tree or a grain of wheat does not produce fruit unless it first puts its roots down into the earth, so also I cannot grow and become fruitful unless and until I sink down roots" (see page 152). She explained that living a life according to the Rule of St. Benedict and living a life like that of Benedict have one common denominator and that is, "both show us a life rooted in God." She further expounded: "The Rule is to help us to sink our roots in wisdom, and it all begins





STABILITY AS *STABILITAS LOCI*

Literally, stability means staying in one place and not moving around. Members of the Benedictine Order promised to live in one community for the rest of their lives. *Stability loci* refers to the place itself, the monastery, where the community of monks and nuns live, pray, work, study, and evangelize. Members of the Order do not simply live in that place. They are connected to that place. They are connected to it as well as to the other members of the community. This connectedness is demonstrated in their commitment to the community and to the place itself. “Commitment to actual places, the care of the self, and reaching out to others are the pillars of a monk’s stability in space and time.”⁵⁰ Hence, they take care of it, improve, and develop it. They make it a place where one can experience God’s goodness and presence. Benedictine monasteries are not only quiet but also beautiful. Monasteries are some of the places that are peaceful and beautiful where one can be moved to reflect, to pray, and to experience God’s presence. Some monasteries have existed for thousands of years. These only show that monks and nuns take care of their dwelling place not only to preserve its historical and religious significance but also to demonstrate their commitment and care for the place that nurtures the spiritual growth of hundreds of monks or nuns who lived in that place. Monks and nuns do not simply live in that monastery. It is more than their home because it is a place that they nurture and, at the same time, nurtures them, spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically.

STABILITY AS THE COMMUNITY OF MONKS

Stability is not only about the place where the monks live and get connected for the rest

⁵⁰ Eckerstorfer, 321.

of their lives. It also refers to the monks or nuns themselves who commit as members of the Benedictine Order and members of that community. According to Eckerstorfer, stability refers to the “lovers of the place.”⁵¹ These “lovers of the place” lived in a community that “offers the opportunity to develop a strong common vision and sense of mission.”⁵² It is the vision and mission that draws them together, bonded, and united them as brothers or sisters in Jesus Christ. Stability, therefore, is also a relationship⁵³ – to be with others; pray, work, study with them; and reach out to them. Stability is not “merely retreating to a sedate state of life.”⁵⁴ Chittister elaborates that stability is “most of all be the sanctification of relationships.”⁵⁵ It is the “discovery of friendship” in a community.⁵⁶ It is the “invitation to live life deeply” in a community rather than “to spend it superficially.”⁵⁷

Stability demands being with others in a community. It reminds monks or nuns that they are not a world unto themselves, it is stability in our community: “the school of Lord’s service,” “the workshop where I work out the spiritual craft” (RB 4).⁵⁸ Stability is not only about connectedness to one place, but it is also about “rootedness in and among a particular group of men or women.”⁵⁹ For Chittister, the Rule of St. Benedict “calls for steady, steady attention for everything: to prayer, to the service of the other, to the community as a whole, to regularity and continuity and manual labor and intellectual discipline, to ‘love of one another with chaste love’ (RB 72:8).”⁶⁰ Stability implies that a monk or nun must accept that he/she is part

⁵¹ Eckerstorfer, 320.

⁵² Polan, 233.

⁵³ Chittister, 155.

⁵⁴ Eckerstorfer, 320-321.

⁵⁵ Chittister, 155.

⁵⁶ Chittister.

⁵⁷ Chittister.

⁵⁸ Chittister, 157.

⁵⁹ Polan, 230.

⁶⁰ Chittister, 157.





of a community.⁶¹ In that community, he/she must grow and improve and must demonstrate willingness to be converted and to be changed.⁶² In the same community, he/she experienced love and friendship.⁶³ All of these experiences of growth, change, conversion, friendship, and love are made possible because of stability.⁶⁴ That is why stability is that enables the monks or nun to “live totally in God and totally for others.”⁶⁵

The secularized modern world taught us about individualism and competition. One must care for himself/herself alone and must strive to keep on improving and developing oneself to be competitive or to overcome others. One’s project in life is to work hard to achieve one’s dreams and ambitions. One must be a master of himself/herself and must define his/her values in life. One is free in identifying his/her goals in life and in working hard to achieve those goals. The stability of the Benedictines taught us otherwise. We must not be alone in caring, improving, and developing ourselves. We are not alone in pursuing our dreams or goals in life. We have a community, and we need the help of others. We care, improve, and develop ourselves, and at the same time, achieve our dreams not only for ourselves but also for our community. It

⁶¹ In this community, one’s patience and perseverance are tested. Based on the explanation of Chittister in her work, *The Rule of Benedict: Insights for the Ages*, stability is the means for the community to determine the aspirant’s desire to enter the monastic life. She expounded: “No one is to enter a Benedictine community on impulse and, once there, no one is to treat life as a series of hapless circumstances” (see page 151). It is in this community that a monk will experience the reality of life. And the spiritual vow of stability reminds him/her that “life is a discipline. Life is something that we are to live with purpose and control right from the very beginning. Life is not easy and life is not to be lived as if it were, for fear that when we really need internal fortitude we will not have to develop it” (see page 151). Furthermore, it is within this community where a monk will “develop the rigor it takes to live through what life deals us. We can’t set out to get holy in the hope that we will then automatically become faithful. We must require fidelity of ourselves even when we fail, in the hope that someday, as a result, we will finally become holy” (see page 151). Lastly, in this community, a monk is guided by The Rule that monastic life and holiness are processes of a lifetime. These are “not a year’s experience; it is not a degree once gotten and then ignored. It is not a spiritual quick fix. It is a way of life and it takes a lifetime to absorb” (see page 152).

⁶² Chittister, *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today* 158.

⁶³ Chittister.

⁶⁴ Chittister.

⁶⁵ Chittister, 159.

is also the community that will provide us with help, assistance, and care in the pursuit of our dreams and in times of failure and frustration. Benedictine’s stability always reminds us that we are connected and rooted in one another. We are not alone, particularly in times of hardships and failures, and we also have that moral responsibility to reach out to others.

STABILITY AS LIFETIME CHALLENGE

Stability is facing different challenges in life. It is the ability to overcome difficulties and challenges. At the same time, it is the ability to learn and to grow, as one encountered failures and difficulties and overcame his/her limitations.⁶⁶ Casey, paraphrasing St. Bernard, explains stability as not “coming to grief when circumstances are adverse.”⁶⁷ It is the promise “to meet life head-on.”⁶⁸ Monks or nuns who are humans like us also encountered difficulties, challenges, failure in life. They also commit mistakes since like us they also have their own human limitations and weaknesses. But the vow of stability reminds them that they should not give up. They must face all the challenges that they will encounter in their community, in their apostolate, and in their mission of evangelization. Our tendency when we encounter challenges, failure, or pain is to “fly out,” to look for another community or organization, to shift or change careers, or to retreat. We always have the tendency to look for another place where we believe the pastures are greener and the situation is better. There will always be challenges, failures, or pain anywhere. No one, no place, community, or organization is perfect. The negativities or “dark hours” in life

⁶⁶ Esther de Waal used the “image of fighting” to describe stability. It is, according to de Waal, “fighting the forces of darkness further enriches the concept of stability. What this asks is to hang on and to endure, even when there do not seem many prospects of the end of the road. It means holding on against the odds, being willing to help to keep on keeping on” (see pages 153-154).

⁶⁷ Casey, 195.

⁶⁸ Chittister, 150.





always recur. Stability reminds monks or nuns to face all these challenges or “dark hours.” They must overcome it – not alone but with their community – and these situations will make them better people. No human grows without experiencing failures or pain in life. It is like gold. It must go through the fire.

Chittister describes stability as an “ongoing revelation of many faces of God in life” and “willingness to continue to grow.”⁶⁹ These “many faces of God” in one’s life refer to the situations we encountered in life. The different situations we are in. These can be summarized or described as either good or not good enough, success or failure, joy or grief, happiness or sadness, and pleasure or pain. Each situation provides us the opportunity to encounter God, know His will, strengthen our relationship with Him, and deepen our faith, if we face every situation head on and we will not give up. Every situation, particularly that of failure and pain, is an opportunity to grow. Stability, then, does not mean “stable” like one is not moving. Eckerstorfer uses “surfing” to describe stability:

Above all, he wants to keep standing on it. But he does not remain standing by doing nothing. He has to take into account the movement of the waves and wind, and how his own body reacts. To find the right position, he constantly has to be in motion.⁷⁰

As one encounters different situations and challenges in life like the waves and wind encountered by the surfer, he/she must face and overcome them. He/she must not back down or retreat. He must find ways, or find the right position like the surfer, how to overcome it.

STABILITY THAT NURTURES VIRTUES

Eckerstorfer explains that stability is the “ability to be decisive and persevering.”⁷¹ He further explains stability as resilience as that “would signify the process by which a stable life according to the vows can be found and refound over anew.”⁷² Chittister describes stability as perseverance as staying “with humdrum if only to condition our souls to cope with the unfleeable in life.”⁷³ Stability as perseverance, for Chittister, is exerting efforts and struggle to become better persons. She expounds:

Stability requires us to be constant of heart and unremitting in our spiritual efforts. We don’t pray in hope of visions; we pray in hope of becoming prayerful. We don’t struggle in hope of triumph; we struggle in hope of growth. We don’t continue in hope of winning trophies; we continue in hope of winning the struggle to become better and stronger human beings that we were.⁷⁴

Without God’s love,⁷⁵ stability as perseverance and persistence is impossible. Chittister puts it profoundly in these words: “Stability...is an outward demonstration of what we say is our inward disposition: the love of God in all things but especially in the humdrum and mundane, in the here and now and them and those.” Stability is a demonstration of God’s love. It is the demonstration of our internal experience and belief in God’s love. To put it differently, those who experience the love of God are those who persevere and persist despite the challenges and difficulties in life. They continuously persevere and persist, even in situations of darkness and

⁷¹ Eckerstorfer, 319.

⁷² Eckerstorfer.

⁷³ Chittister, 152.

⁷⁴ Chittister, 152-153.

⁷⁵ Based on Esther de Waal’s explanation, what makes perseverance and persistence possible is the faithfulness and love of God. She expounded: “Refusing to give up because I am in it for the long haul brings an entirely different perspective...What makes this possible? The faithfulness of God. God is faithful to the covenant, and I know that I can rely on him. God’s love endures forever. What I hold on to, what keeps me going through the bad times, is this certitude in the faithfulness of God. My stability is possible in the end because of the certain, guaranteed, steadfastness of God” (pages 153-154).

⁶⁹ Chittister.

⁷⁰ Eckerstorfer, 378.





the absence of God, because of their faith in the love of God.

In simple terms, Casey explains stability as perseverance, which “takes a specific form because it means actively continuing and concentrating on the same basic task year after year, decade after decade.”⁷⁶ However, it does not mean immobility or stagnation. It means “to keep on growing” even one is tasked to work on the same task.⁷⁷ What is important, even if one is continuing and concentrating on the same task, is that he/she keeps on moving forward, keeps on adapting, keeps on re-orienting oneself towards a goal.⁷⁸

Life is a process of “rebooting” or starting anew. Of course, one cannot keep on restarting for the rest of his/her life, but there are points in one’s life where he/she really have to “reboot” or restart. For example, when he/she fails or commits mistakes, he/she can start anew bringing with him/her the lessons of his/her mistakes and failures. Eckerstorfer also explains that stability can be expressed as “reframing, redefining, reexamining, and restating situations.”⁷⁹ This does not mean that stability is simply changing one’s perspective. To restart, one must see things in a different light. There are people who cannot “move on” because they keep on dwelling on the situation and looking at it as it is. One must see it differently to get out of that situation, move on, and start again. Some people experienced tragedies in life, such as losing loved ones, particularly during the pandemic. If they will be dwelling on that tragedy and view it as such, they will not be able to get out of that situation and restart. They must see it from a different perspective, and they must reframe it for them to move on and start anew.

⁷⁶ Casey, 195.

⁷⁷ Casey.

⁷⁸ Casey.

⁷⁹ Eckerstorfer, 319.

Polan explains that stability is “growing in virtues with one another – the virtues of perseverance, acceptance, understanding, forgiveness, compassion, gratitude; welcome, acceptance, and genuine hospitality.”⁸⁰ Stability is not only a virtue, but it also nurtures virtues.⁸¹ This involves virtues that one needs to realize one’s potentials to be fully human and virtues that one needs to strengthen the relationship with others. These are the virtues that people want to see from one another, particularly when they are encountering challenges, difficulties, change, and uncertainty. Furthermore, Casey explains that stability is “remaining constant in the midst of change.”⁸² Doing so needs a lot of courage and trust in oneself and others. It also requires faith in God. It also demands a determination to accept change and overcome the challenges brought about by change, which is why Casey emphasized that stability is a commitment.⁸³ As a commitment, stability reminds monks or nuns that he/she must fulfill their moral and legal obligation and responsibility come what may. Whatever happens, whatever the circumstances, one must be able to carry out their religious or professional engagement. In life, things change – people age, friends come and go, loved ones suddenly died, authority and power shift, leaders rise and fall, organizations closed, expanded, or merged, and so forth, and so on. One encounters a lot of changes, sudden shifts, and jolts in life. Stability reminds everyone then that no one must give up on fulfilling one’s commitment, whatever the circumstance is.

⁸⁰ Polan, 232, 233.

⁸¹ For Chittister, stability points us to “some values beyond other values that ought to be pursued.” For example, stability teaches us the value of fidelity but “not at the cost of mental health.” The value of humility but “not if it implies becoming masochistic.” The value of prayer but “not instead of responsibility to others.” (see Chittister, 152). In other words, we have to value fidelity and the same time mental health or bodily health, humility and self-respect, and prayer as well as doing good to others.

⁸² Casey, 195.

⁸³ Casey further explains that “As Benedict notes, it begins on Day One (58:9). It is a matter of really committing oneself – to give one’s best to the monastic process and to stay with it while it works its magic on us. Grace is working on us to neutralize the natural fecklessness of the will; what we have to do is to avoid interfering with the process” (see Casey, 197).





STABILITY AS COUNTERCULTURE

The essential characteristics of the 21st century are mobility, global market and economy, secularization, and connectivity. The mobility of people, moving from one country to another to find work and to study, is one of the phenomena that one can observe in the 21st century. People are also jumping from one organization to another to work. In education, work skills are given emphasis to students to be work ready. They must be multi-skilled for them to be able to handle different jobs or varied responsibilities at work.

The 21st century is also marked by the globalization of the economy. There is a free flow of goods from one country to another. Because of globalization, capitalism has become the prevailing world economic order. Since capitalism has given a lot of emphasis on profit and competition, it is responsible for the creation of a “throw-away culture.” In a capitalist society, individuals are conditioned to buy things, even if they do not need them, for the sake of profit. They are also taught to “throw away” things since new products have been released in the market or to “throw away” things if they think they no longer need them. In capitalism, even humans are “thrown away” if they can no longer compete; if they are no longer productive; if they do not possess the right skills; if they cannot adapt to new technology. Workers are “thrown away” because of the integration of technology into the work process.

The 21st century is highly secularized. Religion and faith are no longer given value. Religious truth becomes one of the truths. Everything is seen from the point of view of science and physical evidence. Religious morality and ethical principles are no longer holding ground and influence. What is important is the law, the legal,

or the juridical, even if it is devoid of morals and ethics. Examples of these are the phenomenon of abortion and same-sex marriage. These undermine the religious truth on the sanctity of life as well as on Marriage as a Sacrament.

Lastly, everyone now is talking about connectivity because of digital technology. We cannot deny the fact that connectivity has brought a lot of good things during the pandemic. On the other hand, connectivity also has its own limitations. It lessened interpersonal interactions and communications. It weakened human relationships. It also created a community that is connected yet not in touch, not personal, and devoid of humane interaction.

The 21st century witnessed moral and ethical problems such as the deterioration of virtues – the values of commitment and perseverance, compassion and understanding, humility and acceptance, and gratitude and faith. All of these are wanted in the 21st century. Because of mobility, people lacked rootedness in a place and community. It, therefore, diminished commitment and perseverance. Capitalism undermined the dignity of workers due to emphasis on profit. Hence, it weakened compassion and understanding, particularly in the workplace. Likewise, human interaction and interpersonal relationship waned because of digital connectivity that created a superficial community through social media. Lastly, the lack of humility, acceptance, gratitude, and faith can be blamed on secularization. People no longer see things beyond the physical and material. They see things as simple as they are, devoid of spiritual meanings. They no longer believe in the Supreme Being that is the cause of life and everything good. They simply rely on the explanation of science and their own understanding. There is a lot of emphases on the self – but they see the self not as spiritual but





purely as corporeal. They want to understand the self for psychological reasons, not for spiritual growth and not from the point of view of their relationship with God.

When the Covid-19 pandemic struck, everything stopped, and people lost their lives because of this minute particle. Scientists did not have immediate answers. The pandemic caused a lot of instability due to the sudden disruption, deaths, and lack of immediate answers and solutions from science. According to Polan, stability is countercultural to the present time.⁸⁴ Indeed, stability is a counterculture because it keeps us rooted in our relationship with God, which gives us a reason to endure things, to persevere, and to keep on going whatever the circumstance is. It is stability that is rooted in our faith that gives us the reason not to abandon commitment even in times of danger and failures, and not to lose hope even in times of darkness and uncertainties. Stability keeps us connected to our human community, who is always there for one another, reaching out to one another, particularly in times of needs and difficulties.

THE VALUE OF STABILITY: THE BENEDICTINE CHARACTER OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership is the ability to influence people to achieve common goals and objectives, to realize a vision, or to effect change. In influencing people, leaders use practical or moral means. Leaders who use practical means, such as rewards to influence people are transactional leaders. On the other hand, leaders who use moral means are transformational. Their ideas, behavior, and decisions inspire and motivate people. That is why people trust and follow them.

In the academic setting, leaders are expected to be transformational. Faculty and students follow them because of their integrity, moral actions and decisions, and positive traits or characteristics. They inspire faculty not only to follow them but also to transform themselves and their students to become human persons of moral integrity. Leadership is a cultural expression.⁸⁵ This means that leaders “build unity and order within an organization by giving attention to purposes, historical and philosophical tradition, and ideals and norms which define the way of life within the organization and which provide the bases for socializing members and obtaining their compliance.”⁸⁶ For academic leaders to get the trust and confidence of people, they must build unity and order not based on rules, punishment, or fear. They must build unity and order based on the vision and mission, values and other traditions, and the ideal principles of the school. Furthermore, they must also possess certain characteristics to inspire and motivate people to follow them. The characteristics essential to leaders are “skills and attitudes which can be acquired or modified extensively through learning. These include competence in planning and initiating action, in problem-solving, in keeping communication channels open and functioning effectively, in accepting responsibility, and in the skills of interaction.”⁸⁷ In addition to these essential characteristics of leadership, this article proposes that leaders, academic leaders, must develop the value of stability. The value of stability is essential for them to become transformational leaders, leaders of moral integrity.

⁸⁴ Eckerstorfer, 323 and Polan, 234.

⁸⁵ Thomas J. Sergiovanni, “Leadership as Cultural Expression” in J. Steven Ott, *Classic Readings in Organizational Behavior* (Pacific Grove: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1989), 336.

⁸⁶ Sergiovanni.

⁸⁷ Douglas M. McGregor, “An Analysis of Leadership” in J. Steven Ott, *Classic Readings in Organizational Behavior* (Pacific Grove: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1989), 277.





The pandemic, like any crisis, was a test to academic leaders. The pandemic was characterized by high uncertainty that caused the disruption of teaching and learning. Academic leaders' role was critical during the pandemic because faculty, students, parents, and other stakeholders expected them to provide solutions and responses that will minimize the impact of the pandemic. They were also expected to address the crisis while at the same time maintaining a sense of normalcy. Faculty, students, and parents expected the academic leaders to do something and to act urgently to address the disruption in learning.

The value of stability demonstrates to us the Benedictine character of leadership that one needs particularly in times of crisis. The value of stability shows what an academic leader must do to fulfill his/her leadership role, particularly in times of crisis.

First, an academic leader must have strong faith in God. For the monks or nuns, it is this faith that gives them the reason why they enter the monastery, why they endure all the challenges they encountered in their formation, and why they overcome all the difficulties they experienced in their religious vocation. It is this faith that gives them the reason, or the "why," to endure all things. The same also with academic leaders. They must strengthen their relationship with God. It is this relationship with God and faith in God that will give them the reason to face all the challenges and difficulties they encountered in the performance of their responsibilities both in normal times and during a crisis. Academic leaders must have the humility to accept that they are not the solution to all the problems. They are only one of the instruments to find a solution. Material rewards and profound ideologies are not enough to inspire academic leaders to face recurring challenges, address persistent

problems, and provide lasting solutions. One has to appeal to his/her faith in God to make sense of all the difficulties and challenges encountered and experienced, both in normal situations and in times of crisis.

Secondly, academic leaders must have a commitment to the school or organization where they work. They must not simply see it as a place where they work or earn living. Like monks or nuns, they must be connected to the place where they work. They must nurture and take care of it. They must transform it into a place where everyone can be productive, can experience growth and development, and can experience the love and care of one another. In normal times or crises, academic leaders must not forget that they must transform the place where everyone can be productive, cared for, and loved. In times of difficulty, the tendency is to leave the place or transfer to other organizations. Stability reminds us that one must endure the challenges and difficulties encountered in the school or organization. One must face it head-on. Problems and challenges cannot be resolved or avoided by leaving the place or looking for greener pastures. All schools or organizations have their own limitations and issues. Hence, leaving the place, avoiding the problem, or transferring to another organization is not the solution.

Thirdly, academic leaders must not only be connected to the place where they work but must also develop a good and healthy relationship with their faculty, students, parents, and other stakeholders. They must ensure that everyone is united for a common goal or purpose. That they are working with one another to achieve common goals. They must also see people in the school as human persons who need to be taken care of and who need to be served. They must not be seen as means to an end but rather, they are the ends





themselves. The intention of academic leaders is always for the common good or mutual benefit of all the members of the school or organization. Academic leaders, particularly in times of crisis, must always take the lead in serving others and in making sacrifices for the good of all. Caring, loving, and showing concern for others are not signs of weaknesses. They are essential traits that a leader must demonstrate, particularly in times of crisis.

But then and again, showing genuine love, care, and service to others cannot be possible if one does not have Faith in God and connectedness to the organization or school where he/she works. In other words, centeredness on God, connection to the place of work, and commitment to serve others are interrelated.

Connectedness to the place of work and commitment to serve the people in that organization means that one must endure all the challenges that come along the way. Stability as a lifetime challenge reminds us that life is not all about joy and happiness. It includes pain and sorrow. In life, personal or professional, one experience a crisis. Sometimes, this crisis recurs. Leadership is not all about success. It also involves failures and frustrations. The value of stability prompts us that one must struggle and keep on struggling to overcome challenges and difficulties to succeed. Academic leaders must realize that people look up to them, particularly in times of difficulty. They are being observed by people around them on how they handle difficult situations. Academic leaders must demonstrate to other people that they must face challenges and problems head-on. They must not retreat or give up. The ability of academic leaders to overcome challenges and the results that they produce provide great inspiration to others. They not only inspire people, but people also learn from them. They must deal with a

difficult situation and learn from it. Meeting challenges and overcoming difficult situations not only provide inspiration and learning but also growth and development to all within the school or organization.

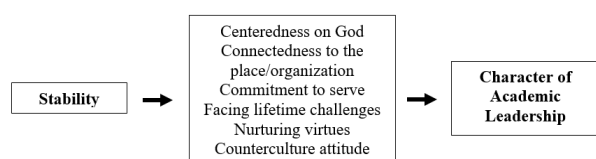
Facing and overcoming lifetime challenges, one must develop and possess the virtues of perseverance, resilience, and decisiveness. In addition to these virtues, academic leaders must also possess the virtues of acceptance, understanding, forgiveness, compassion, gratitude, and genuine hospitality. Stability nurtures virtues. These are the virtues that academic leaders need in facing challenges, overcoming difficulties, and solving problems. These are the virtues that academic leaders need in realizing the goals and objectives of the school or organization. These are the essential virtues that one must possess to produce good results in one's job and in succeeding in life. Leaders are expected to produce results and successes in life. These results and successes give them credibility and make them trustworthy. Virtues are not enough for one to gain respect and followership. These virtues must be translated to results and successes for one to be credible, dependable, and to gain followers. In the study of leadership, there is a lot of emphasis on the style and strategy of leading and being a successful leader. Academic leaders must not only develop style and strategy. First and foremost, they must fortify themselves and their character as a person. Their leadership style and strategy must flow from their inner self and their character. One of the things that they must develop in their character is virtue. They must possess the right virtues that will make them good and successful leaders.

Lastly, stability is a counterculture to the 21st-century society marked by mobility. Academic leaders must also be "counterculture." They must not simply go with the flow. They must not just





keep on saying “yes” or agreeing with anyone else. The counterculture attitude must not be equated with being rebellious or disobedient. Counterculture attitude must be seen also in the context of centeredness on God, connectedness to the organization, commitment to serve, enduring challenges in life, and nurturing virtues. There is a need for a counterculture attitude if the situation disregards faith in God, undermines the interest of the organization, and does not give regard and respect to human persons and sacred values or virtues. Having a counterculture attitude is important, particularly in situations that need change and development. Change and development may not be realized if there are no people or leaders who will speak out about what ought to be done.



The value of stability is important for the academic leaders' fortification of character. The character that they need in facing and dealing with a crisis. The essential elements of this character are centeredness on God, connection to a place or organization, commitment to serve, meeting lifetime challenges head-on, nurturing virtues, and having a counterculture attitude when necessary. This fortification of character is a prerequisite to the development of leadership style and strategy. This character is significant for an academic leader to face the challenges of leadership, particularly in times of crisis.

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