

Scripture Reflection



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I listened to a discussion on Newsnight the other evening and it was, as much discussion is at the moment, on the challenges of Public Service in Politics and Government. One of the commentators made a very telling remark which I think relevant to what the Church offers us in the Lectionary for the Day of Prayer for the Missions. He said; the failure of the Government is because "they have moved from leading to managing".

Now, you may not think there is much difference between the two – and at first glance perhaps there is not but consider how we recognise the broad categories and the language that tends to go with it. If we have these figures in our work place it might run something like this; Leaders walk ahead, managers chase from behind. Leaders motivate with their rhetoric, managers harass and cajole. Leaders have vision, managers have targets. Leaders enjoy the success they generate, managers seek glory. Leaders serve the needs of others, managers, well, manage them!

Something along these lines is the challenge that Jesus offers in response to the request of James and John and the resultant indignation of the other Apostles. He asks them if they are prepared to take the steps necessary to achieve what they seek, AND importantly, how they should go about that daily.

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MISSIO Scotland; the Church in Mission

My own situation as a priest is perhaps a good example - I am called to be present in situations which are emotionally acute, challenging times for families, times when families might not normally wish a less familiar or non-family face. Why is that - well it is my task - my happy task - to lead this community; not to manage it, because deaths, marriages, births are not managed, they are celebrated and they lead us forward, lead us to grow, lead us to God.

I could live remote and haughty, far from these experiences and I could manage them in my life. I don't, I lead, I don't manage. I share the situation and limp through with everyone else. In other words the situations I come to, I try to offer leadership, hope and encouragement, I don't try to manage the situation to minimise effort. That is the nature of Mission, it is the Mission of the Priest wherever he works, it is the mission of the whole Church – all of us.

All our roles and tasks share this thread – what conditions my response to situations? Is it the needs of the people involved or it my desires and needs – do I serve or lord, do I lead or manage?

Make us Lord a missionary Church, serving the needs of others, leading them to God.