

SEEKING WHAT IS PURE, DOING WHAT IS TRUE, AND LIVING A LIFE OF LOVE

Pastoral Leadership and Self-Sacrifice in the Gospel of John

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Le bon pasteur : une métaphore parlante pour un *leadership* d'aujourd'hui ?

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Article abstract

Through an examination of five central passages in the Gospel of John and a consideration of significant religious symbols in this Gospel, we offer a theological reading to show that Christian leaders, who contemplate the Crucified Christ as the pledge of God's devotion to humankind, are profoundly converted at the interior level. Because of their unrestricted availability to be a shepherd to others, a Christian leader, saved by the love of the Father in Jesus, comes to recognize with gratitude that it is this self-sacrificial love that makes him become a gift to others and that by accepting it, a reciprocal devotion to others ensues. We conclude that the Fourth Gospel demonstrates that ecclesial leadership is founded on Christ's love and, if it is accepted as such, is not an organizational necessity but an act of service.

SEEKING WHAT IS PURE, DOING WHAT IS TRUE, AND LIVING A LIFE OF LOVE

Pastoral Leadership and Self-Sacrifice in the Gospel of John

PETER NGUYEN, S.J. AND M. ROSS ROMERO, S.J.

Introduction

In late December 1944, as he struggled to ready himself to face a Nazi show trial and impending execution, an imprisoned Alfred Delp, S.J., reflected on the meaning of the Incarnation by contemplating the feasts of the saints and martyrs that fall within the octave of the Christmas season, which include St. Stephen, St. John the Evangelist, and St. Thomas of Canterbury.¹ When he reflected on the meaning of the Feast of St. John the Evangelist, he meditated on these words of John's Gospel: "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (8:32 NAS). Then with chained hands, Delp wrote,

If the bondage of existence is a sign of its falsehood and deception, then woe to this generation. So, let us summon persons who are determined to love and let us walk with them: seeking what is pure, doing what is true, and living a life of love. That is what will make us whole.²

Delp's reflection on this passage of John's Gospel manifests a person aware of the gravity of his calling. The Christian who does not open himself up to the Incarnation is a slave to sin and the world's evils. His bondage consists of being a slave to external factors, such as public opinion and the threat of death, which

1. Alfred Delp joined the Jesuits in 1926, was ordained in 1937, and pronounced Final Vows in Tegel Prison in late 1944 before his trial and execution. At the outbreak of the war, he participated in a clandestine network to help Jewish people escape to Switzerland from Munich. In 1942, Delp's Jesuit superior missioned him to work with the Kreisau Circle, a group of German intellectuals from different societal backgrounds planning for a post-Nazi Germany based on Catholic Social Teaching. Although the Kreisau Circle had nothing to do with Operation Valkyrie, Delp was arrested with other group members after the attempted assassination of Hitler in 1944. After several months of imprisonment and torture, Delp was brought to trial. He was offered his freedom if he would renounce his priesthood. Delp refused and was hanged on February 2, 1945.

2. Alfred DELP, *Gesammelte Schriften 4: Aus dem Gefängnis*, Roman BLEISTEIN (ed.), Frankfurt am Main, Knecht, 1985, p. 204.

leads to confusion that dissipates one's authentic identity. At this point, toward the end of his life, Delp, with the help of the Fourth Evangelist, recognized that he was being called to amplify his witness of Christ's love unto death.

As such, though the Fourth Gospel's audience is broad, the Evangelist aims the Good News at persons who have received the call to follow Christ, and now they are being summoned into a more profound discipleship amid the darkness of life. To help them accept their mission, these persons are invited to encounter a more intense experience of Jesus Christ.³ In John 15:15, Jesus tells his disciples, "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you." (NAS). This passage concretely expresses the *telos* of spiritual formation with Jesus. The word *friend* (φίλος) is significant because it communicates an arrival at an advanced stage of spiritual maturity in the Gospel. The Gospel of John is addressed to those who will lead the Christian community. It is not a Gospel for beginners.

The stage of spiritual maturity for leadership is one of deep friendship with Jesus, which entails the disciples encountering his unconditional giving of self to them, which then commissions them to reciprocate and extend that love. So, radical discipleship is founded in intimacy with Christ, who is the model and guide for a way of life that includes pastoral leadership carried out in the readiness to give one's life for others. As such, the office of leadership in the Christian community is founded on Christ's loving offer of his life and secondarily on the leader's capacity to give that life.

The Gospel of John utilizes symbols to help believers apprehend their call to and experience of Christ.⁴ According to Bernard Lonergan, a religious symbol evokes a feeling, and feelings are the "mass and momentum and power of [a person's] conscious living, the actuation of his affective capacities, dispositions, habits, the effective orientation of his being."⁵ By eliciting feelings, a symbol influences the desires of one's heart, the thoughts of one's intellect, and the deeds of one's body.⁶ It affectively orients a person toward unrestricted

3. Kelly and Moloney state that, "on the one hand, the Gospel of John is written from the experience of a community of original witnesses" who believe in the revelation of Jesus. However, on the other hand, the Gospel summons the community of believers into a more profound experience of Jesus. See Anthony KELLY and Francis J. MOLONEY, *Experiencing God in the Gospel of John*, New York NY, Paulist Press, 2003, p. 4.

4. Koester defines "Johannine symbolism as an image, an action, or a person understood to have transcendent significance. In Johannine terms, symbols bridge the chasm between what is from above and what is from below without collapsing the distinction." See Craig R. KOESTER, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community*², Minneapolis MN, Fortress Press, 2003, pp. 3-4.

5. Bernard J. F. LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2007, pp. 64-65.

6. Mark T. MILLER, *The Quest for God & the Good Life: Lonergan's Theological Anthropology*, Washington D.C., Catholic University of America Press, 2013, p. 180.

truth or goodness concerning the relationship between God and humanity. It affects a person's deep desire to be with God and "enables a person to accept suffering" for God and others in order to "undo the effects" of sin and moral evil.⁷ Moreover, the religious symbol communicates God's inner word of love, which enters the public forum to ground a community and tradition. Finally, it speaks to the interiority of persons, evoking a surrender of self and commitment to what is transcendent.⁸

In the Gospel of John, the Crucifixion is the central symbol given to believers to help them grasp the divine-to-human relationship. Jesus' death on the Cross reveals the profundity of God's love for the world. Simply put, God's devotion to humankind is the central meaning of the Crucifixion. Undoubtedly, the text contains supporting symbols that "help convey" the radical love encountered in the Cross, such as the image of the Good Shepherd.⁹

A person's willingness to die for another is the highest expression of loving friendship on a human-to-human level. Love is shown in giving to others, and the greatest gift one can give to another is one's life. Such a radical act of self-giving can attract others to the giver. On a divine-to-human level, the death of Christ on the Cross shows the depths of God's devotion to taking away sin, understood as unbelief in or estrangement from God. "If sin is estrangement from God, it is taken away when it is replaced by faith, and faith is evoked by the love of God" that is manifested through Christ's Cross.¹⁰ The love communicated on the Cross gives the believer a faith that unites him with God and charges him with pastoral leadership.

7. Bernard LONERGAN, *Method*, p. 242.

8. An approach to symbols that complements Lonergan's explanation here can be found in some contemporary scholarship on Plato and mimesis. Attending to the mimetic gestures within dialogues like the *Republic* allows us to see that certain images or symbols function to draw the soul up from sensible particulars to intelligible truths. Myriam Byrd puts it as follows: "In 523b-524d, [of the *Republic*] Socrates uses the example of fingers in order to illustrate his point [about summoners]. When I look at three finds of different lengths, I notice that one appears to be both big and small. The perception of one object possessing opposite characteristics summons my intellect. In attempting to resolve this apparent contradiction, I separate the intelligible entities of bigness and smallness from my confused perception." Contradictory perceptions of the same phenomenon allow the soul to realize "that sense perception is no longer deemed adequate to understanding the world" (Miriam BYRD, "The Return of the Exile: the Benefits of Mimetic Art in the *Republic*," in Robert BERCHMAN and John FINAMORE (eds.), *Conversations Platonic and Neoplatonic*, Sankt Augustin, Academic Verlag, 2010, p. 24.) Byrd explains further how images like the cave and the divided line function as summoners by turning the soul and shaping it so that it is ready to obey reason and embrace good character. In addition, Plato's own choice to write dialogues reveals how his own mimetic art aims at transformation of mere mimetic poetry through authentic symbolic encounter of the kind described by Lonergan. See also Miriam BYRD, "The Summoner Approach: A New Method of Plato Interpretation," *The Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 45 (2007), pp. 365-381.

9. Craig KOESTER, *Symbolism*, p. 209.

10. Craig KOESTER, *Symbolism*, p. 245.

Therefore, we argue that Christian leaders, who contemplate the Crucified Christ as the pledge of God's devotion to humankind, are profoundly converted at the interior level because the depth and meaning of their existence – that is, their unrestricted availability to be a shepherd to others – is revealed. A Christian leader, saved by the love of the Father in Jesus, who gives himself out of love from his own interior and deepest reserves, comes to recognize with gratitude that it is this self-sacrificial love that makes him become a gift to others and that by accepting it, a reciprocal devotion to others follows from it.

This study examines five passages from the Gospel of John: the call of the first disciples (1:35-42), the discourse between Christ and Nicodemus (3:1-12), the Good Shepherd (10:1-21), the Crucifixion (19:28-37), and the Risen Jesus' conversation with Peter (21:15-19). John 1 introduces Christ's first words, which invite the disciples to go beyond their preconceptions and experience him. In a word, the narrative of John 1 helps establish our approach to the interpretation of the Gospel. With a supplementary use of evidence from historical-critical scholarship and Lonergan's theological categories, we will perform a theological reading of the Gospel to shed light on the call of Christ proposed by John.

John 3 focuses on a religious leader who fears committing to Jesus. John 10 describes Jesus' messiahship in terms of the Good Shepherd, who will lay down his life for others so that they may be in a relationship with God. In John 19, Jesus' death ushers in a new era of his loving presence encountered in the Spirit, baptism, and eucharist. Finally, John 21 describes the characteristics of Christian leadership and indicates that pastoral leadership is a continuation of the pastoral work of Jesus. When read together, these passages suggest that divine love revealed through the Crucifixion expresses itself among Christian leaders in a graced call to love and serve others, resist sin, and witness God.

The Call of the First Disciples

At the beginning of the narrative of John's Gospel, the scene opens with two disciples and John the Baptist.¹¹ The Baptist sees and announces the presence of Jesus, and the disciples turn and follow after Jesus. Why do they follow him? Perhaps the Baptist's earlier words concerning Jesus, "Behold, the Lamb of God

11. John's Gospel begins with a prologue, which offers an outline of John's theology and introduces the plot of the Gospel narrative. The prologue informs readers that Jesus is the incarnation of the preexistent Word and that life, light, and divine filiation flow from an acceptance of him. The prologue also indicates that there is willful hostility from the world to the mission of Jesus. The narrative portrays John the Baptist as a witness to Jesus. He denies messianic status and being a precursor to Jesus. As a witness, John stands and points beyond what the religious establishment can grasp readily. He testifies to the need to be in a relationship Jesus, who will summon persons to a radical way of life. See Francis J. MOLONEY, *The Gospel of John*, Collegeville MN, Liturgical Press, 1998, pp. 33-63.

who takes away the sin of the world!” (1:29), stirred something in them.¹² For persons aware of and sensitive to the world’s distress and the evil due to sin, understood as estrangement from God, this phrase has a special attraction. Then, Jesus asks the two disciples, “What do you seek?” (1:38a). The question is intriguing, because, in the context of the Baptist’s remarks concerning sin and reconciliation with God, Jesus’ words touch the deepest desires of persons who seek to live lives of significant religious meaning.

More crucially, at the start of the Gospel (1:1-18), the Evangelist tells the reader that Jesus is the Incarnation of the preexistent Λόγος, who is with God, and “that life, light, and divine filiation flow from an acceptance of” Jesus.¹³ In Jesus, God communicates the ultimate ground and purpose of existence. The term Λόγος denotes that in the beginning, God is an act of communication and Jesus is the definitive communication of God. Moreover, since “all things came into being by Him” (1:3a), the Λόγος is the origin and unifying principle of the universe.¹⁴ Through the Incarnation, the Λόγος enters our world and gathers together all of us in a conversation with God.

This term spoke to the ancient Church and still captivates the contemporary Christian in search of meaning. That is, the Λόγος, the ultimate ground and end of all things, became human among us in order to offer intimate friendship with himself and the Father. One’s existence and the whole of humankind possess a reason and meaning. Being in a relationship with Christ is the fulfillment of one’s existence. Existence’s end, founded in Christ, offers life even amid the sin and moral evils that pervade the human condition. With this underlying understanding of the identity of Christ, that everything depends on and goes to him, we can return to the call of the disciples.

Here, the disciples’ straightforward response, “Where are you staying?” (1:38b), subtly communicates a desire for something beyond intellectual gratification. They do not desire information. Instead, they would like to be with Jesus, enter into his presence, and learn from his way of life. In his pithy answer, “Come, and you will see” (1:39), Jesus bids these men to experience him. The disciples must undertake a profound devotion to Jesus; they must remain with him, as John’s Gospel states.

Nicodemus

The encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus, a Jewish teacher and Pharisee, epitomizes the challenge of devotion to Jesus (3:1-21). Their conversation reveals that Nicodemus is impressed by Jesus’ signs. His initial statement to

12. The concept “Lamb of God” refers to the God-given victim who will expiate human evil and is the agent of reconciliation with God. To accept Jesus is to be taken into a realm of reconciliation with God. See Anthony KELLY and Francis MOLONEY, *Experiencing God*, p. 64.

13. Francis MOLONEY, *The Gospel of John*, p. 34.

14. Anthony KELLY and Francis MOLONEY, *Experiencing God*, p. 35.

Jesus, “Rabbi, we know that you have come from God as a teacher” (3:2a), includes the plural *we*, and indicates his status as a representative of the Jewish people. Despite his high status and being well-disposed toward Jesus, the fact that he must venture out at night reveals his concern that others are watching him, which shows the precariousness of his position. Nicodemus represents fragile believers, then and now, who join the Jesus movement, who recognize that Jesus is more than a prophet and that God is with him but who are unable to commit to Jesus fully because of the circumstances in which they find themselves.¹⁵

Nicodemus is a leader who has arrived at a certain point in his faith journey, but his great fear restricts him to the perceived limits of what he can and cannot do. In Anthony Kelly and Francis Moloney’s view, for Nicodemus, “the mission of Jesus can be assimilated to the way things are known to be.”¹⁶ His concerns about maintaining external, worldly respect become a hindrance to experiencing Christ fully. Moreover, as an authority figure, he benefits from the weight of his reputation and is afraid of compromising himself – fearful of fully experiencing Christ. He, therefore, goes under cover of night.

Nicodemus’ opening remarks to Jesus suggest he inclines toward an intellectual grasp of faith. Jesus ironically responds, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not understand these things?” (3:10). What is the situation of a believer who has acquired instructions in the faith? One could argue that he is a person who reduces the mystery of encountering God to an intellectual experience: “those things I know” or “things that I want to know.” Nicodemus is thus a type of person who tries to know through a rational, established method.

Consequently, Nicodemus is potentially closed to the whole truth of Christ. Nicodemus’ limited vision can be summed up in his question, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” (3:4). He represents a believer and leader who has arrived at a certain point and fears starting over. Kelly and Moloney remark, “Why should [Nicodemus] be so infantilized as to leave behind the accumulated, age-old wisdom of the tradition in which he is an acknowledged leader and teacher?”¹⁷ Here, the Evangelist tells us that being with Christ can demand a new start – a profound religious conversion, which terrifies us. Nicodemus is a person who knows Jesus but fears a deeper commitment into the call of Christ.¹⁸

15. Francis MOLONEY, *The Gospel of John*, p. 97.

16. Anthony KELLY and Francis MOLONEY, *Experiencing God*, p. 74.

17. Anthony KELLY and Francis MOLONEY, *Experiencing God*, p. 75.

18. Although there is no strong evidence that John had it in mind when he wrote the Gospel, it is interesting to consider how Plato might have answered Nicodemus’s question – How can a man be born when he is old? In his dialogue *Statesman*, the Athenian Stranger relates a myth about how a cosmic reversal occurred that led to such a rebirth. The stranger relates two cosmic ages – one the Age of Cronos and the other the Age of Zeus. As the cosmos unfolds, it is guided carefully by one of the gods (it is unclear whether it is Cronos or Zeus) until the cosmos

In a word, Nicodemus represents the person who must be convinced to surrender his life to God. As R. Alan Culpepper indicates, the conversation can be seen in the contexts of Jesus of Nazareth, the Johannine community, and the contemporary Church. The statements are made in terms of Nicodemus as a representative of the Pharisees and leader of people, cautious members of the Johannine community, and humanity estranged from God.¹⁹ Nicodemus embodies the person who hopes he can continue following Christ from a guarded distance, and half-light of night while remaining circumstance about his belief in him. Nevertheless, the challenge of the Fourth Gospel is to walk, remain with, and experience Jesus in the fullness of daylight (3:20).

The challenge and ambiguities experienced by Nicodemus in Jesus' call to new birth in the Spirit lead to a critical question: how does a person, imprisoned by sin and worldly expectations and fears, become converted and yield his life entirely to Christ? It requires a change of heart – or, as Lonergan terms it, – an affective self-transcendence or conversion. A person undergoes such self-transcendence, according to Lonergan, when he has fallen in love, and unlike Nicodemus, no longer lives in isolation, self-absorption, or fear; he lives not for himself but for others.²⁰ Such love contains the virtue of charity (a higher type of affect), which involves a cognitive, intentional response to what is good, true, and beautiful.²¹

Thus, charity is not a hyperindividualistic feeling. Instead, it is a dynamism that commits at least two lives to each other. Such love sets the conditions for the broader love of one's fellow human beings. The person converted by charity does not permit his life to be bound by a set of rules, customs, or social expectations. Instead, he makes his life a living embodiment of concern for others. The fullness of affective conversion, for Lonergan, lies in religious conversion – an experience of God's love and of falling in love with God.²²

Indeed, following the discourse between Nicodemus and Jesus, the Fourth Gospel proclaims that “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (3:16). For Kelly and Moloney, this verse not only recapitulates the Gospel so far, particularly the prologue's emphasis on truth, but also adds the word *love*: “This suggests that God's culminating communication with the world through

automatically reverses course and the god abandons it. The ensuing age is characterized by a reversal such that “changing to the opposite direction, it grew, as it were, younger and more tender. And the white hair of the older ones grew black, and the cheeks of those with beards, as they grew smooth again, restored each to its bygone prime” (270e). Living in such a cyclical cosmos would require a kind of fatalism that would present a stark contrast to life with Christ as a pastoral leader. The differences between what kind of leadership these two models would present can be pursued in future articles.

19. Craig KOESTER, *Symbolism*, p. 46.

20. Bernard LONERGAN, *Method*, p. 289.

21. Bernard LONERGAN, *Method*, p. 105.

22. Bernard LONERGAN, *Method*, p. 39.

the Word is to be judged, in its motive and its measure, by one criterion: the extent of God's love."²³ Thus, the world not only originates in God but is also the object of God's love.

Human existence and relationships can be transformed in the Father's unreserved self-giving in the Son. The radicality of God's love for the world is underscored in light of the Father's giving of his Son to rescue the world from the darkness of sin and death (1:5). The gift of the Son for the love of the world points to the Cross. "The incarnation described in the Prologue," for Brendan Byrne, "is to play itself out in redemption: the rescue of human beings from death so that they may have a share in the divine eternal life."²⁴ It is the experience of Christ's self-sacrificial love that can awaken in men and women a response of love for God, and thus, occasion a development and maturation of faith. Therefore, God's devotion to the world is poignantly symbolized in Jesus' death on the Cross.

The Good Shepherd

As mentioned above, the Cross is the core symbol of John's Gospel, and its specter is present in the text's supporting symbols, particularly the image of the Good Shepherd. In this discourse, themes of opposition and strife are central. For example, in opposition to the Pharisees and other religious leaders, Jesus presents himself as the Good Shepherd who cares for and leads God's people.

The verses in question contrast the thief, who does not enter the sheepfold through the gate with the Good Shepherd, who enters by the gate (John 10:1). Both the gatekeeper and the sheep recognize his identity. The former opens the gate for him while the latter responds only to his voice, refusing to heed a stranger's voice because they know (οἶδασιν) the voice of the Good Shepherd.²⁵ The Greek οἶδα communicates deep understanding or fullness of knowledge. It indicates an intimate familiarity with Christ.

John 10:7-10 uses the gate as a metaphor for understanding Jesus' life-giving function. The sheep exit to and return from the pasture through the gate. The ones who come before Jesus are considered thieves and robbers. Therefore, recognizing the Good Shepherd and distinguishing Him from the false one plays a vital role, because only He gives life.²⁶

23. Anthony KELLY and Francis MOLONEY, *Experiencing God*, p. 79.

24. Brendan BYRNE, *Life Abounding: A Reading of John's Gospel*, Collegeville MN, Liturgical Press, 2014, p. 69.

25. The contrast between the shepherd and the thief turns on how each comes into the sheepfold and how the sheep respond to their voices. See R. Alan CULPEPPER, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, Nashville TN, Abingdon Press, 1998, p. 181.

26. R. Alan CULPEPPER, *The Gospel and Letters*, p. 181.

In 10:11-15, the themes of deceit and violence change to those of mutuality and limitless self-giving love. These passages make it clear that Jesus, who is the Good Shepherd, is distinguished from the imposter, now described as a hireling rather than a thief, in two ways. First, He lays down his life for his sheep, and second, He cares for his sheep and does not run away when He sees the wolf coming.²⁷ The implication is that radical self-giving love can counter the evils that threaten the life and unity of the sheepfold.²⁸

John 10:15-18 furthers our understanding of Jesus' role as the Good Shepherd by characterizing it as an intimate relationship with the Father. Unlike those who have rejected Jesus, the Father loves Jesus because He lays down his life for the flock. More importantly, the Father engenders Jesus' self-sacrificial love for his flock. Jesus' death reveals him not as a victim but rather as a fulfillment of the Father's command.²⁹ His radical sacrifice is a deliberate act of self-giving love that finds its source in the Father's love for him.

This love of the Father for the Son represents a dramatic contrast with the self-promotion of the false leaders. Jesus' relationship with the sheep reflects his communion with the Father. Drawing from the wellspring of self-giving love, He desires to gather the other sheep with his own so that there may be one flock and one shepherd. Thus, as Moloney writes, "The image of the Good Shepherd may come down from Jewish messianic traditions, but Jesus' being the Good Shepherd flows from his oneness with God."³⁰

The love between Jesus and his disciples derives from and reflects the intimacy between the Father and the Son. The discourse of the Good Shepherd reveals a primordial divine context of relationships, mutual knowledge, and self-surrendering love. Kelly and Moloney point out, however, that this "field of communion" does not communicate that "the privileged flock" will be "protected from the challenges of a God-resistant world into which Jesus is sent."³¹ Instead, the sheep will face similar challenges, and it will be through Jesus' loving obedience to the Father's command and his self-gift to the world amid opposition that will bring about enduring love and abundant life.³²

Ultimately, the Good Shepherd discourse communicates Jesus' sacrificial way of life. The sacrifice of his own life emerges from his primordial intimacy with the Father. Thus, the phrase "lays down his life" speaks of loving self-sacrifice. In the Good Shepherd discourse, such terms do not communicate the destruction of life but rather the gift of unreserved love that leads to faith and eternal life.

27. R. Alan CULPEPPER, *The Gospel and Letters*, p. 181.

28. Anthony KELLY and Francis MOLONEY, *Experiencing God*, p. 217.

29. Anthony KELLY and Francis MOLONEY, *Experiencing God*, p. 219.

30. Francis MOLONEY, *The Gospel of John*, p. 305.

31. Anthony KELLY and Francis MOLONEY, *Experiencing God*, p. 218.

32. Anthony KELLY and Francis MOLONEY, *Experiencing God*, p. 218.

The analogy of the Good Shepherd fleshes out how the Cross functions. On the Cross, Jesus reveals a life lived in obedience to the Father and a life lived on behalf of the world. The Good Shepherd communicates that God's love for humanity is without remainder – a love that rescues persons from the bondage of sin, transforming men and women on an affective level. The shepherding analogy points to a type of pastoral leadership. Indeed, responsible leadership requires persons “to seek the welfare of their flock, but only Jesus would lay down his life for the sheep.”³³

Moreover, the goodness of the shepherd's radical love is encountered in the mutual knowledge between the shepherd and his sheep, between Christ and his disciples.³⁴ He knows his people, and they know him with a knowledge rooted in intimacy – the love of Father and Son. Love's fruit is the apprehension of or familiarity with the call of Christ – his voice is recognized, and the profundity of his call is understood (10:26-27). It bears repeating that knowledge, in this case, emerges from a love encountered in a transformative, interpersonal experience with Christ.

For this reason, to have faith is to encounter the love of the Son, whom the Father has sent, and this knowledge is eternal life. To have faith or to believe helps a person intensify his ability to remain with Jesus. The experience of the gift of God's love amplifies a believer's desire and capacity to look for (1:38), receive (5:43-44), listen to (10:26), and abide in (15:4) Jesus. In a word, the object of faith in John's Gospel is Jesus.

Overall, faith is demanded of the believer, from the first disciple to the disciple of the Johannine community and, indeed, to those who continue in the Church. Love leads to faith, which leads to an attitude of acceptance of and surrender to Christ's call.³⁵ Faith prepares a person to sacrifice his reputation and life for Christ (John 5:44). Nonetheless, it is Jesus' willingness to risk his reputation and life for us on the Cross, enabling us to take that risk.

The Pierced Savior

We have stated that the Cross is the preeminent symbol in John's Gospel. The Fourth Evangelist presents the Crucifixion as more than just a historical event. In his description of Jesus' death, John puts before us an image of God – a Pierced Savior – that invites contemplation in faith. The passage – “they shall look on him whom they have pierced” suggests that “they” refers to “members

33. Craig KOESTER, *Symbolism*, p. 27.

34. Brendan BYRNE, *Life Abounding*, p. 178.

35. Bernard Lonergan argues that faith is knowledge of God born of the love of God. Faith is thus the fruit of religious conversion, leading one to new deeds and commitments buoyed by love. See Bernard LONERGAN, *Method*, pp. 115-117.

of the Johannine community and all who will later believe through them.”³⁶ The symbol of Christ crucified and pierced represents a God who has accomplished his task of reconciling estranged humanity to himself, is exalted, and his indomitable and transformative love is still present in the community. Contemplating the image of the Pierced Christ in faith, one discerns the depths of love that the Father reveals in his Son.³⁷

Undoubtedly, historians can read the death of Jesus at the hands of Pilate and religious authorities as a socially degrading and physically terrifying death, but the believer reads Jesus’ cry “It is finished” (19:30) as the fulfillment of his mission.³⁸ Jesus does not come into this world of his own accord; He is sent by the Father to save the world from sin and its consequences. As such, the cry of Jesus not only communicates Jesus’ “loving obedience to his Father” but also reveals the attitude in which He embraces his death – his loving self-offering for those who are His.³⁹

This dramatic statement shows how Jesus, nearing the end of an agonizing death, is focused on his Father and followers. The statement “it is finished” comes from the Greek verb *τελέω*, which means “to bring to an end, complete, fulfill.” According to Josef Heer, the sentence refers back to the opening of the Last Supper scene, where the Evangelist comments: “Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end” (13:1).⁴⁰ “To the end” is a translation of the Greek *εις τέλος*, which can also mean “to the uttermost.” Thus, it expresses that Jesus does not just love us to the end of his life but also that his love is without limit. This love cannot be surpassed because its origin is divine.

What is said and described concerning the Last Supper finds its fulfillment in the Cross.⁴¹ As Kelly and Moloney indicate, “The gesture of washing” his “disciples’ feet occurs in a context” imbued with his loving obedience to the Father. “Jesus is acting in accordance with the Father’s will and in the mode of the Father’s giving.”⁴² Thus, through the symbolic and humbling act of washing his followers’ feet, he provides the frame within which to place his humiliating death. This humbling service of Christ amid a meal upends conventions and invites a conversion of the heart. In washing his disciples’ feet,

36. Francis MOLONEY, *The Gospel of John*, p. 510.

37. The symbol of the Cross fulfills Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus in John 3:14-15: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes may in him have eternal life.” Jesus is the definitive revelation of God’s healing and transformative love, and this revelation will have its climax in the Cross.

38. Craig KOESTER, *Symbolism*, pp. 216-217.

39. Brendan BYRNE, *Life Abounding*, p. 321.

40. Josef HEER, “The Soteriological Significance of the Johannine Image of the Pierced Savior,” *Faith in Christ and the Worship of Christ*, San Francisco CA, Ignatius Press, 1986, p. 36.

41. Craig KOESTER, *Symbolism*, pp. 237-238.

42. Anthony KELLY and Francis MOLONEY, *Experiencing God*, p. 274.

Jesus recapitulates and underscores his identity as the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his flock.

Nonetheless, Christ's beautiful symbolic gesture of washing the disciples' feet, which reveals God's humbling love, is not readily accepted. The figures of Judas and Peter represent such incomprehension. According to the Gospel, the devil is manifested in Judas' betrayal of Jesus. This fact is sobering for Christians, because it shows that even Jesus' followers fail.⁴³

Jesus washes the feet of all his disciples to show his love for them, but we are told that Judas remains unclean or unmoved by Jesus' affectivity because the devil has entered into his heart: "During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray him" (13:2). Due to the devil's machinations, Judas' heart remains closed to the humbling revelation of God and to the meaning of life manifested in Jesus' self-giving love. Arguably, Judas' incomprehension is not the result of obtaining success at the expense of faith, but as one of Christ's own, his misapprehension is due to his desiring faith itself to triumph in worldly terms. He rejects the "excess of love Jesus has shown him" in the feet-washing and breaking bread and "chooses to be part of the Satanic design of violence" and power.⁴⁴

Peter, on the other hand, rejects this offer of affection from Jesus because he understands the act only as social degradation. He shows that he does not understand Jesus' refusal of worldly honor and glory and embrace of self-giving love. Jesus' humility disturbs him. In a word, he does not understand the meaning of Jesus' death. However, Peter's opposition to Jesus' offer is overcome by Jesus, who tells him that his ignorance will later be transformed into an understanding: "What I do you do not realize now, but you shall understand hereafter" (13:7).

Moreover, Jesus replies that what he is now doing for Peter and the rest of the disciples discloses the essence of their relationship with him – "If I do not wash you, you have no part with me" (13:8). Arguably, Peter's initial rejection of Jesus' gesture of love represents the pastoral leader's difficulty of accepting the offer of love with all its implications. It is challenging to receive the gift of love because it can leave a leader indebted to or in a position of dependence on another. For some leaders, gratitude to another can be felt as an unneeded burden.

As such, the quality of this loving relationship is raised to a higher standard: "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (13:14). The symbolic gesture of Jesus' feet washing becomes an example of love par excellence: "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you" (13:15). If the act of feet washing

43. Craig R. KOESTER, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel*, Grand Rapids MI, W.B. Eerdmans, 2008, p. 77.

44. Anthony KELLY and Francis MOLONEY, *Experiencing God*, p. 282.

symbolizes Jesus and the Father's self-sacrificial and life-giving love, then the disciples should allow themselves to be drawn into such a movement of love. However, this invitation cannot be grasped simply as a "moral imperative" to love.⁴⁵ Instead, to follow Jesus is to experience his love. It is to be affected by and drawn into Jesus' other-centered focus.

Toward the end of the Last Supper discourse, in John 15:15, Jesus calls his disciples "friends" because they have been given his transformative love and are to depend on it. In Lonergan's terms, being friends with Christ and remaining in his love produce a dynamic state of being in love.⁴⁶ Lonergan describes the experience of being loved by God as a religious conversion that involves the knowledge born of being in love with God in an unrestricted fashion. This unmerited, radical, religious experience helps a person attain the self-transcendence of loving both his fellow human and God. Being invited into friendship with Christ involves trusting in Christ and having Christ's trust that one will continue his mission for the sake of the community.

Overall, the conversation between Jesus and Peter reveals that being washed by Christ entails letting oneself be so deeply penetrated by the Father's love in Jesus that one becomes dependent on God for everything, just as the Son depends on the love of the Father. Disciples live entirely on the basis of this love: "their mission to the world is animated by the exemplary reality of the Father and the Son united in love."⁴⁷ Indeed, opening one's being to God is a humbling stance, because one can be tempted, like Peter, to deny that one has received love from God and to attempt to save oneself by one's effort.

In the scene of the Crucifixion, Jesus gives or entrusts his Spirit to his own.⁴⁸ The reader has been notified that the earthly Jesus promised to send the Spirit to the disciples following His glorification. This glorification is now taking place in his Crucifixion, and Jesus is ready to give the Spirit to them. The Evangelist provides a vivid image of this giving of the Spirit: at his death, Jesus "bowed his head, and gave up his Spirit" (19:30). The meaning of the Greek παραδίωμι is to "hand over" or "to give."

The word παραδίωμι in John's Gospel conveys the sense of handing over, surrendering, delivering, or entrusting something or someone to others (e.g., 6:63; 12:4).⁴⁹ This handing over of the Spirit to others – the disciples – is a

45. Anthony KELLY and Francis MOLONEY, *Experiencing God*, p. 277.

46. Kelly and Moloney argue that the theology of Bernard Lonergan clarifies the concept of the experience of God's love. Lonergan characterizes the encounter of God's love "as equivalent to the state of grace." In a word, it is the dynamic state of being in love without restriction. Such a state of being loved and loving occurs as a gift and is described as an affective religious conversion, catalyzing a change in one's life – intellectually and morally. See Anthony KELLY and Francis MOLONEY, *Experiencing God*, pp. 5-6.

47. Anthony KELLY and Francis MOLONEY, *Experiencing God*, p. 278.

48. Francis MOLONEY, *The Gospel of John*, p. 505.

49. Francis MOLONEY, *The Gospel of John*, p. 505.

critical pledge of Jesus in John's Gospel. As noted above, John's use of symbols allows a deeper meaning to shine through the text's immediate surface details, gestures, and signs. John portrays Jesus, as He goes to the Father through the Cross, giving the Holy Spirit to his own, who are present at the Cross in the persons of his Mother and the disciple Jesus loved.⁵⁰

Hence, Jesus himself remains with them in the activity of the Spirit. The activity of the Spirit is to facilitate a personal relationship between the Risen Jesus and the believer. The work of the Spirit actualizes the promise of Jesus: "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (14:18). The Spirit binds believers to Christ.

After the death of Jesus, John describes the piercing and the "coming out" of blood and water from the pierced side. Thus, in a literal sense, the Word has become flesh (1:14), and in his death, we see blood and water, essential elements of the human body, flowing from it.⁵¹

However, a more fitting way to read the flow of blood and water is to do so symbolically or sacramentally. That is, blood and water can be understood here as symbols of eucharist and baptism. As Koester notes, "Earlier in the Gospel, Jesus promised that the living water, which signified the Spirit, would flow 'out of his innermost being'" (7:37-39).⁵²

Furthermore, the symbolism of blood and water in John 19:34 takes on full significance when compared with a similar passage in the First Letter of John.⁵³ The text reads, "This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness because the Spirit is the truth" (5:6). On one symbolic level, the "coming by water" and "the coming with blood" refer to the baptism and the Crucifixion of Jesus, respectively. Moreover, when the coming of Jesus is mentioned elsewhere in John's Gospel, it is connected to the Incarnation's meaning. Jesus comes to bring life to the world (10:10) and save the world (12:47). Ultimately, the gift of life and salvation finds its perfection on the Cross.

Hence, in 1 John 5:6, water and blood are connected with the significance of the coming of Jesus, which culminates in the Cross. In that context, water means what it does elsewhere in John's Gospel, namely the gift imparted by Jesus – the gift of life and salvation in the Spirit. Moreover, in the First Letter of John, the "blood" is presented in the context of expiation (1:7; 2:2; and 4:10), and so here as well, it signifies the taking away of sin (the estrangement from God) as the result of Jesus and his Cross. The expiatory work of the Cross

50. Josef HEER, "The Soteriological Significance," pp. 37-38.

51. Brendan BYRNE, *Life Abounding*, p. 322.

52. Craig KOESTER, *Symbolism*, p. 201.

53. Craig KOESTER, *Symbolism*, pp. 203-205.

communicates a sacrifice by which sins are removed, leading to a reconciliation between God and people.⁵⁴

Thus, 1 John 5:6 does not speak of two salvific events – Jesus’ baptism and his Crucifixion – but of the two meanings of the one salvific event, namely expiation and the giving of life with the coming of Jesus. In other words, the First Letter of John construes the sacrificial character of Jesus’ death in terms of cleansing and love.⁵⁵ There cannot be water without blood. Not without laying down his life did Jesus make the gift of life available to the believer. Furthermore, the human person does not acquire this gift of salvation without remaining with him – an abiding that gives love and faith, which overcome sin and its consequences. Therefore, the First Letter of John does not command a duty to love but rather outlines the condition for the possibility of doing so – the expiatory love of Christ on the Cross.⁵⁶

In the image of the Pierced Savior in John 19, the blood flowing from the side of Jesus communicates that his death is expiatory, and the water communicates the giving of life. Simply put, the Evangelist wants to portray the death of Jesus as salvific. Furthermore, this symbol of water and blood reveals a sacramental read. Again, 1 John provides clarification: “For there are three that bear witness, the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement” (5:8). The phrase “bear witness” here and in 5:6 indicates that the Spirit enables believers to understand blood and water as sacramental signs of salvific significance coming from Jesus.⁵⁷ Moreover, verse 8 speaks of “three” that also exercise the function of bearing witness.⁵⁸ Thus, water and blood are seen as present and active in the Christian community, effectively bearing witness with the Spirit.

As “witnesses” present in the community’s life, water and blood refer to baptism and eucharist. Both sacraments owe their existence to the Cross (19:34) and communicate to the community that “life” is made available by it. For baptism is “rebirth” to life (John 3:5), and eucharist is the food for this life (6:53-58). Life itself is to be understood as summing up the whole course of salvation, from the Cross and Resurrection.

Thus, if 1 John 5:6-8 communicates a twofold symbolism for blood and water, the same can be applied to the piercing scene in John 19.⁵⁹ The water means baptism, and the blood means eucharist.⁶⁰ The Gospel intends to communicate the salvific effect of the Crucifixion – expiation has been achieved, and life has been given. The physical death of Jesus gives to his own and to

54. Craig KOESTER, *Symbolism*, p. 224.

55. Craig KOESTER, *Symbolism*, p. 223.

56. R. Alan CULPEPPER, *The Gospel and Letters*, p. 270.

57. Josef HEER, “The Soteriological Significance,” pp. 40-41.

58. Anthony KELLY and Francis MOLONEY, *Experiencing God*, p. 369.

59. Josef HEER, “The Soteriological Significance,” p. 41.

60. Francis MOLONEY, *The Gospel of John*, pp. 505-506.

the world several modes of his presence. The power of Jesus' death is communicated to the community here and now by the sacraments made possible by the Spirit.

In describing Jesus' self-sacrificial death, the Evangelist intends to promote and deepen the believer's faith. Faith recognizes the endless love of God for the believing community, embodied in the Father's sending of his Son into a hostile world so that people may have eternal life. Moreover, faith expresses itself in a way of life – self-sacrificial love. Love sees its genuine self in the image of the Pierced One. At its most profound level, this way of life – the sacrifice of one's life for another (see John 13:34) is what leadership in the community of Christ's disciples is supposed to bring about.

The Risen Jesus' Commissioning of Peter

Lastly, in the ultimate conversation between the Risen Jesus and Peter in John 21:15-19, the concentration of the two verbs for love (ἀγαπάω and φιλέω) demonstrates apostolic love. This intense but brief dialogue reveals not merely Christ's loving forgiveness of Peter but also a love that inspires and commissions him to undertake apostolic service to the Christian body. In John 21, "Jesus moves," in Byrne's view, "to renew the relationship [with Peter], confirm Peter in leadership, and point to a future where he will not fail but heroically glorify God."⁶¹

After the Resurrection, Jesus manifests himself to his own with tenderness and affection. In Peter's conversation with the Risen Jesus, Jesus poses a triple question, followed by a triple commission. Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves him, and three times Peter responds in the affirmative.⁶² First, one reads, "Do you love me more than these?" Then one reads, "Do you love me?" and "Do you love me?" (21:16-17). The Greek is "ἀγαπᾷς με πλέον τούτων? ἀγαπᾷς με? φιλεῖς με?" This passage could be translated as follows: "Do you love me in a self-sacrificial way more than the others? Do you love me in a self-sacrificial way? Do you love me as a friend?" Arguably, the movement of the questions as a comparative with other people ascends to a high point that is reached in friendship with Christ. In other words, self-sacrifice for the sake of friendship with God is the pinnacle of Christian leadership.⁶³

Based on Peter's responses, Jesus gives Peter the commission to pasture Jesus' sheep. The triple question, which has a triple answer, is followed by Jesus'

61. Brendan BYRNE, *Life Abounding*, p. 348.

62. The variation in the language of Jesus' questioning has "given rise to debates over the nuances of this exchange." See R. Alan CULPEPPER, *The Gospel and Letters*, p. 248.

63. It must be noted that "it is probably best not to place too much emphasis on the different words for love, as though Jesus were asking Peter for a level or quality of love Peter would not affirm" because "John uses these words for love interchangeably." See R. Alan CULPEPPER, *The Gospel and Letters*, p. 248.

triple commission. Jesus tells Peter, “Tend my sheep,” “Shepherd my sheep,” “Tend my sheep.” The Greek is: “βόσκει τὰ ἀρνία μου, ποιμαίνει τὰ πρόβατά μου, βόσκει τὰ πρόβατά μου.” The Greek βόσκει can mean “to feed.” So, one can translate Jesus’ commission as follows: “Feed,” “Shepherd,” “Feed.” This is a deliberate reference to John 10. Thus, Jesus intimately relates his role as the Good Shepherd with Peter’s new task. Peter is called to fill the role of the Good Shepherd.⁶⁴ Moreover, he is not called to replace Jesus or to become a second messiah, but is entrusted with feeding and shepherding Jesus’ flock.⁶⁵

Furthermore, the pastoral commission that Jesus gives Peter – to tend Jesus’ sheep – is founded on a relationship of trustful, filial, self-giving intimacy with Jesus. Here, it is noted that the “triple interrogation” and the triple commission “to which Jesus submits Peter matches – and heals – the threefold denial” of Jesus by Peter.⁶⁶ Peter’s leadership capacity does not rest on his past failures but on his loving relationship with Jesus.⁶⁷ Such remaining with Jesus comes before every other capacity for governing that could be considered. Being present to Christ’s love is the most vital mark of leadership in the Christian community. One’s actions are ultimately judged by Christ, who reads the hearts of persons: “You know that I love you.”

How does Jesus embody the Good Shepherd? He is the one who walks ahead of his flock, the sound of whose voice his sheep recognize, the one who knows them quite well, who wants his sheep to find pasture, and who offers his life for the sheep. From these qualities, the kind of leadership Jesus desires and calls forth can be deduced. Leadership within the Christian community results from a profound friendship with Christ. Genuine friendship requires love and trust. In Jesus’ embrace of us and laying down his life for us, He displays those marks.

Thus, Christian leaders are called and formed in such friendship – they come about through the work of Jesus. The injunctions to feed and shepherd reveal the form of leadership in the Christian community and require an intimate union with Christ. Such leadership does not remain comfortable with the status quo but seeks “sheep that are not of this fold.” It is a charge that includes the pastoral care of every human person, not just those attracted to Christ.

Hence, Peter’s commitment to the way of the Good Shepherd connects him with the self-gift in love unto death. Verse 18 directly connects the commission Jesus gives to Peter to the prediction of Peter’s martyrdom, his own self-sacrifice: “When you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go” (21:18b). Leading or shepherding is intimately connected with the giving of one’s life.

64. Francis MOLONEY, *The Gospel of John*, p. 555.

65. Brendan BYRNE, *Life Abounding*, p. 349.

66. Brendan BYRNE, *Life Abounding*, p. 348.

67. Brendan BYRNE, *Life Abounding*, p. 348.

For Byrne, “like the Good Shepherd, the ‘under shepherd’ will glorify God by laying down his life in love.”⁶⁸ Pastoral leadership is carried out in the readiness to give one’s life.

The difference between a shepherd who guides in temporal things and the shepherd of the Christian community concerns the openness to glorify God with a self-sacrificial death. Whereas it is not an intrinsic quality of the leader in temporal things to give his life for others, the shepherd of the Church is held by his office to give his life if called. Such is the depth of mission assigned to an ecclesial leader if he takes this charge of Jesus seriously. Thus, the presence of authority in the Church is a form of Jesus’ being with his own and being for others.

Briefly, after Jesus predicts Peter’s martyrdom, Peter asks Jesus about John’s fate: “Lord, and what about this man?” (21:21) Jesus responds, “If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!” (21:22). What does this mean? Arguably, it is the Lord who acts with sovereignty. Perhaps He asks much from some people and less from others. If John is to die of natural causes and not with the heroic martyrdom that awaits Peter, that is no concern of Peter’s.⁶⁹ Peter should remain focused on his love of Jesus and not compare himself to others.

At the end of the Gospel, this passage invites us to consider how we should be disponsible for all that Christ asks of us. He can call us to a mission we did not expect, a life we felt that we do not deserve, or a task that is easier than we anticipated. Again, however, it is the liberty of Christ that ultimately draws everything toward himself. Our love for him in faith, which embraces without restriction what He invites us into, is all that matters.

According to Lonergan, a Christian leader, who has undergone a religious conversion, is in the otherworldly state of falling in love with God without restriction. In the conversation with the Risen Christ, Jesus’ love awakens Peter to a deeper understanding of God, reality, and himself. The exchange between Jesus and Peter brings the disciple to a greater self-surrender to God’s call to love, in which his horizon shifts from fear and shame to the habitual realization of a state of being-in-love-with-God. The gift of divine love enables Peter’s free consent and appropriation of the gift of leadership. Jesus’ rehabilitation and commissioning of Peter establishes a new setting where Peter is born into a new life in the love of God and trust is born of this love. This new birth is precisely the sort that the Jewish leader Nicodemus was unable to conceive.

The exchange with Christ calls Peter to go beyond himself. His office of leadership is driven by Christ and is achieved by falling in love with God. Such

68. Brendan BYRNE, *Life Abounding*, p. 351.

69. Brendan BYRNE, *Life Abounding*, p. 352.

love, as elaborated by Lonergan, invites Peter to open himself toward those sheep in the fold and not of the fold:

[Being in love with God] brings a deep-set joy that can remain despite humiliation, privation, betrayal, desertion. [This] fulfillment brings a radical peace that the world cannot give. The fulfillment bears fruit in a love of one's neighbor that strives mightily to bring about the kingdom of God on this earth.⁷⁰

For ecclesial leaders, the love of people must find itself in a "falling in love with God," which involves a surrender to divine mystery. Then, as the fruit of religious conversion, the religiously converted leader can begin his shepherding to engage in a kind of grateful leadership. Christian leadership is not a duty but an act of gratitude.

Overall, John's Gospel helps us recognize the continuing presence of Jesus Christ after his death, Resurrection, and Ascension in the sacraments and pastoral leadership – all empowered by the Spirit. The office of leadership in the Church is founded on self-sacrificial love and then on the capacity to give one's life, which is the fruit of remaining in Christ's love. Through intimate familiarity with Jesus, Christian leaders can withstand the world's pressures and call others to Christ and away from sin. The supreme proof of the effectiveness of Christ's love is martyrdom. If leadership is founded on a loving relationship with Christ, then it is a service of love. As a service of love, the sacraments and Church leadership constitute the universalization and continuation of the Incarnation's particularity.

Conclusion

The Gospel of John demonstrates a type of relationship that God prepares as a gift, encountered in intimacy with Jesus Christ. In Jesus, one experiences a God who desires to save his followers. We meet Jesus among us, with us, and in us under the sacraments and pastoral-leadership signs. These signs are the presence of Christ for us, who gives his life for us. Ecclesial leadership fosters that love within the Church and guides it toward the world.

The Gospel demonstrates that the office of leadership in the Church is founded on Christ's love and, if it is accepted as such, is not an organizational necessity but a service of Christ's love. The Church's leaders – her pope, bishops, and priests – are shepherds who find their model and source in Jesus Christ. Ecclesial leaders following in the steps of the Good Shepherd lead others to conversion in Christ. Such ecclesial leaders can also include superiors of religious orders. For example, *The Constitutions of the Society of*

70. Bernard LONERGAN, *Method*, p. 105.

Jesus lists six characteristics that a Jesuit Superior General should possess.⁷¹ The first two qualities dovetail with the marks of the Good Shepherd. First, the Superior General is a leader who is intimately united with Christ. Second, because his heart is perfected by Christ's heart, he is free from any inordinate attachment and can care for the whole Society of Jesus. With a humble heart, in rectitude and kindness, he shepherds in Jesus' name with prudence. So, in his pastoral leadership, he demonstrates a magnanimous and courageous heart that can "bear his men's weakness" and "give his life for his men in the service of Jesus Christ."

Again, offices of ecclesial leadership, which include the superior general of the Jesuits, are founded on the self-sacrificial love of Christ. Leadership in the Church exists for the sake of continuing the Good Shepherd's task of caring for and gathering all persons to God. Church leaders do not reign by dominating. Instead, they reign, like Jesus, by attracting, by making God's love for abandoned humanity resplendent in themselves.

By analogy, we who love Church leaders and understand them as the gift of the Lord can interpret their guidance and interventions with charity and thereby promote charity in the Christian body. Indeed, such acceptance of leadership does not entail accepting everything uncritically, without trying to understand the aim of what is ordered. Moreover, such acceptance requires that we have a solid heart that will prevent us from abandoning the ecclesial leaders in challenging times. We are called to follow and remain with them as the disciples are called to follow and remain with Jesus.

Overall, Jesus attracts people to himself through the self-giveness of his death. In the Cross, Jesus manifests God's pledge of unconditional love to us. If Jesus is the Incarnate Logos, the ultimate meaning of existence who manifests himself as the one at our complete disposal, then the ultimate meaning of human existence – our complete availability for others – is revealed to us. In this respect, Jesus' manifestation of God, epitomizes the core of our humanity. Ultimately, the human person saved by the love of God in Christ, who empties himself, comes to see that this radical love makes him a person who understands himself as a gift for others.

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71. John W. PADBERG (ed.), *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms*, Saint Louis MO, Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996, pp. 358-359.

SUMMARY

Through an examination of five central passages in the Gospel of John and a consideration of significant religious symbols in this Gospel, we offer a theological reading to show that Christian leaders, who contemplate the Crucified Christ as the pledge of God's devotion to humankind, are profoundly converted at the interior level. Because of their unrestricted availability to be a shepherd to others, a Christian leader, saved by the love of the Father in Jesus, comes to recognize with gratitude that it is this self-sacrificial love that makes him become a gift to others and that by accepting it, a reciprocal devotion to others ensues. We conclude that the Fourth Gospel demonstrates that ecclesial leadership is founded on Christ's love and, if it is accepted as such, is not an organizational necessity but an act of service.

SOMMAIRE

À travers un examen de cinq passages centraux de l'évangile de Jean et une prise en compte des symboles religieux significatifs de cet évangile, nous proposons une lecture théologique pour montrer que les dirigeants chrétiens qui envisagent le Christ crucifié comme le gage de la dévotion de Dieu envers l'humanité, se trouvent profondément transformés dans leur vie intérieure. En raison de la disponibilité totale qu'on lui demande pour être le berger des autres, un leader chrétien, sauvé par l'amour du Père en Jésus, en vient à reconnaître avec gratitude que c'est par cet amour qui se sacrifie qu'il peut devenir un don pour les autres et que cette acceptation entraîne une dévotion réciproque à l'égard des autres. Nous concluons que, selon le quatrième évangile, un leadership ecclésial est fondé sur l'amour du Christ et que, s'il est accepté comme tel, il n'est pas tant vécu comme une nécessité organisationnelle que comme un acte de service.