

Follow your leader: 1 Corinthians 3.10-15

Today's *Thought for the Day* comes from Anna Cerval-Pena

In my training to become a Priest they are making me write lots and lots of essays! Quite a lot of them have been about leadership, what is leadership? Is church leadership the same as secular leadership? Can we learn from historic leaders? etc. etc. And in all this writing I think I have learnt the secret!

Sadly not the secret to leadership, but to writing a good essay. You have to disagree with everyone!!

Mr Bloggs says leadership is about XY and Z. I agree with Mr Bloggs on X however his conclusions about Y and Z do not take into consideration AB and C. Mrs Bloggs makes some valid points about servant leadership but neglects to overcome this, this and this...

By the end of an essay of picking apart people's ideas, you can end up much less certain about leadership but much more certain that no one has the whole answer.

To begin with, I found this all very difficult. Every book I picked up promised me the answers or at least a comprehensive study into the answers. Titles like *"Develop Your Leadership Skills: Fast, Effective Ways to Become a Leader People Want to Follow"* or *"The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You"*. and the reviews on the back page- *"Everyone needs to read this book"* or *"This book changed my life"* — or words to that effect. At first glance, they seemed to have all the answers until you look harder and see what they are missing or the assumptions they have made.

The people writing books about leadership are deceiving themselves (or their publishers are) if they really think they are wise enough to know all the answers about leadership, or anything. They can be crafty and try and sell us their wisdom but when their paragraph in the essay has more criticisms than positives they ultimately look like fools.

The conclusion of my essays seem to be:

The answer to the question is a bit of this person's thoughts with a bit of that person's, add a pinch of the other person, mix together and allow to marinate.

I think Paul is trying to teach the people in Corinth how to write a good essay. I think Paul wants the Corinthians to include all the leaders whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas (vs 22) in their essays and not to be sucked into the promises on the covers of their books but to critique them (look for the positives and negatives) mix them all up and marinate because the leaders belong to the whole church and not the other way around.

He is trying to get them to see that collectively they are all God's temple, God's Church, and have God's Spirit. But divisions in the temple/Church are happening because certain leaders, or their followers, are deceiving themselves into believing they are wise enough to have all the answers. If the Corinthians looked at those leaders with God's eyes, they would see that the idea that the leaders were wise enough to have all the answers is ultimately foolishness. He wants them to see that the leaders are good when mixed in and part of the whole Church. The leaders can be useful when they are put in their place, and Paul says that place is belonging to the whole Church, which belongs to Christ and ultimately to God.

Paul does it himself. In Acts 15 we see Paul disagreeing with others, he goes to Jerusalem and discusses the matter with other leaders and they come out with a reasonable conclusion and compromise. None of the leaders was deemed to be more important than the whole church, not even Paul himself.

We live in a similar “celebrity culture” to that of the Corinthians, it is easy for us to follow a charismatic leader in Church, in politics or in life. It can be easy to agree with one point of view without truly listening to other ideas. But if we think we have all the answers we will also ultimately be made to look foolish. We should all be aiming to write good essays and understand that the whole truth belongs to the whole Church, through Christ and ultimately God.

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