

CSR, Sustainability, Ethics & Governance

Series Editors: Samuel O. Idowu · René Schmidpeter

Günter Müller-Stewens

Notker Wolf *Editors*

Leadership in the Context of Religious Institutions

The Case of Benedictine Monasteries



Springer

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Editors

Leadership in the Context of Religious Institutions

The Case of Benedictine Monasteries

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Foreword

Dear friends,

It is both amazing and wonderful that the *Rule of St. Benedict* has enabled men and women to navigate a monastic life through the centuries. While it is about 1500 years old, it gives a rule of life that is still applicable today. St. Benedict showed himself to be a master for understanding the blessings and the pitfalls of life in common. He recognized both the strengths and the weaknesses of the members of his community, and his *Rule* takes them into account. His wisdom can be expressed in two words: moderation and balance. While he uses the Gospel and the Scriptures as his guide, he also has a wonderful sense of the needs and aspirations of the human person.

For those who live under the *Rule of St. Benedict*, they are subject to the changes of cultures and historical developments. Changes always carry with them new challenges to balance transition with fidelity.

To assist our brothers and sisters who carry responsibilities in their communities to cope with these challenges, Sant'Anselmo—in cooperation with the School of Business and Management at the University of St. Gallen—provides a two-week seminar which is held in Rome at Sant'Anselmo. While the participants know the mission, tradition, and goals of their monastic communities, they also see how to use tools and frameworks from other organizations outside the monastic world which are fruitful, life-giving rules of leadership and education.

About 150 monks, nuns, and sisters who live under the *Rule of St. Benedict* have participated in this program, and the responses to what they have learnt have borne much fruit in their communities and an overwhelming expression of gratitude for having participated in the program. They learn that they are not alone in their challenges, and other participants share in the same issues and problems. This program provides an opportunity to exchange and to seek the best possible practices for their own communities. This booklet summarizes a bit of the lessons learnt from these courses of the *Leadership and the Rule of St. Benedict* program over the past

5 years. This program has given men and women in the monastic world the chance to learn and to adapt their tradition and spirit in new and vibrant ways. I am happy to share this information with you.

Abbot Primate of the Benedictine
Confederation
Sant'Anselmo, Rome, Italy

Abbot Gregory J. Polan, O.S.B.

Preface

There are many books in the market where Benedictine monks or nuns advise managers from the secular world how they can take advantage of the *Rule of St. Benedict* to improve their own leadership. But this book is the other way around. Here we talk about possibilities and limitations in transferring knowledge and tools from the corporate world to manage a monastery or another type of religious institution.

The book is the outcome of a small symposium held at the Archabbey of St. Ottilien in Germany on March 18–20, 2018. The topic of the symposium was leadership development in the context of religious institutions.

In Part I of this book, we reflect on leadership in a more generic way. What are the specificities for managing and being a leader in religious institutions? What are the requirements, possibilities, and limitations? And can the governance of abbeys be improved by using tools and frameworks from the corporate world? And vice versa: can experiences gained in the governance of such long-standing institutions like Benedictine abbeys be transferred to the secular world?

In Part II, we summarize and reflect our experiences of running the course “Leadership and the Rule of St. Benedict (LRB)” for 5 years (2013–2017) at the Benedictine University of Sant’Anselmo in Rome, which was conducted in cooperation with the University of St. Gallen. About 150 abbesses and abbots, priors and prioresses, cellarers, and other Benedictine nuns and monks from all continents gathered to grapple with questions about the management of monasteries. Very specific here is that all course modules were taught in a unique co-teaching approach: an expert from the secular world and an experienced leader from the monastic world combined their knowledge and presented it together to the participants.

In Part III, we look to the future: what will be expected from leaders in the future? Very experienced leaders from the Benedictine world give us their views on future challenges leaders are faced with and the capabilities needed to cope with these challenges. The fourth part is a summary of the final discussion and conclusions we reached at the symposium.

Of course, the observations and conclusions are the result of the interpretations of insiders and outsiders of the monastic world, and the recommendations we make are formulated with the utmost regard and respect to the organization, and they are not made from the perspective of being the “wise guys.” By publishing this report we wish to share our learning and insights taken from the Benedictine community, because we think they can be helpful for other clerical institutions as input to their own discussions on leadership.

In over 5 years working together on the LRB course, the people involved held lengthy and very engaged discussions on the subject. We all learned a lot about and from “the other side” (monastery versus university), and—last but not least, we had a lot of fun working together and made friends. Therefore, we are very grateful for the time spent together. The “outsiders” always felt the spirit of Benedictine hospitality. The LRB years were important years in our life, which nobody wants to miss.

Our sincere thanks for making this book possible go first to all the participants of our LRB courses. Their open-mindedness helped us a lot to gain a better understanding of their needs. And we will never forget the warmhearted atmosphere in the classroom—in spite of the hard work. Secondly, we would like to extend our sincere thanks to the organizations and people who supported the courses with their personal backing and with financial resources. These are internal supporters like AIM or some congregations, or external benefactors, particularly the Foundation Benedict, the Alois und Jeanne Jurt Stiftung foundation, and the international philanthropic organization Porticus. Our sincere thanks also go to Pater Markus Muff who supported the project from the beginning and managed the donor relations with great professionalism and empathy.

St. Gallen, Switzerland
St. Ottilien, Germany
November 2018

Prof. em. Dr. Günter Müller-Stewens
Abbot Primate em. Notker Wolf OSB

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