

The New Leader

Today's world stands in great need of witnesses, not so much of teachers but rather of witnesses. It's not so much about speaking, but rather speaking with our whole lives.

—Pope Francis, address St. Peter's Square, May 18, 2013

There is no leadership training program for popes-to-be. Nor did some Vatican functionary hand Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio the *New Pope Handbook* or *Pontificate for Dummies* as soon as white smoke started pumping into the Vatican sky to announce his pontificate as Pope Francis. Instead, as best we outsiders know, fellow cardinals applauded his election, vested him in white, gave him some prayerful privacy to recollect himself, then pushed (well, escorted) him onto the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica to assume leadership of 1.2 billion Catholics.

His actions immediately after were approvingly called “unprecedented and shocking” by the editor of *L'Osservatore Romano*, the semiofficial Vatican newspaper; Another Vatican reporter has greeted a later papal initiative as “an epochal shift . . . a revolution.” Also, Pope Francis enjoys an approval rating that any other world leader would envy.

Where did he learn to lead like this? Where does his vision come from? And what might the rest of us learn from him? That's what this book is about.

What Prepares Anyone To Lead Well?

After all, like the pope, we sometimes find ourselves thrust onto that metaphorical balcony: step up, it's time to lead this department, your family, this classroom, or, as the case may be, the whole Catholic Church.

Some folks approach such opportunities knowing that they are superbly prepared to lead, and that unshakable self-confidence stays with them every day of their careers. We call such people narcissists. They often get their organizations into trouble because, blinded by the radiant glow of their self-perceived greatness, they don't see what havoc they create or what misery they inflict on others.

Those of us with even a smidgen of self-awareness, on the other hand, quickly realize that no one fully trained us for the leadership challenges we inherit. Early in my own career at J. P. Morgan, I was trained to dissect corporate balance sheets and could ferret out companies that dared boost earnings by liquidating LIFO layers; I learned how to persuade corporate clients to save a few basis points by using our proprietary Eurobond structures instead of floating bonds in the United States.

I'm not sure I ever used either skill, and I've long forgotten how to do those technical stunts. After a few years at Morgan, I found myself as one of the managing directors in our Tokyo office, and in subsequent postings in Singapore, London, or New York, I never met a problem where liquidating LIFO layers was handy knowledge. And I quickly discovered that in the grown-up world, most problems don't have the same black-and-white answers as those pat bond-analysis equations.

Instead, I had to help the company figure out how to manage a large downsizing in the London office or how to motivate an unhappy subordinate. Now, some years after leaving Morgan and serving as board chair of one of America's largest healthcare and hospital systems, I have to offer modest advice and oversight as our superb management team navigates a rapidly changing healthcare landscape—shifting laws, new technology, ethical dilemmas, and a dozen other equally complicated challenges.

The skills I have most needed were not the narrow technical ones, but broader, all-encompassing ones, like making complicated decisions when the facts and my values collide; managing my priorities when fifteen things must be done before lunch; knowing when to play decisions safe and when to take major risks; and, ultimately, figuring out what is most important in life.

We Are Hurting for True Leadership

The complicated questions came more often, the time frames grew shorter, the ethical dilemmas more complex, and no one ever sent me to a leadership school that taught how to deal with any of that. Instead, my leadership school has been my life. Whether I learned my life's lessons well, my old Morgan colleagues and current healthcare colleagues would have to say. But I dearly hope that they would at least rate me better than average because the average perception of leadership in America is truly awful. One major survey not long ago asked Americans whether they had a "great deal of confidence" in their leaders in politics, religion, business, or education. The answers? No, no, no, no. In not one of those four groups, considered bastions of our society, do Americans feel even *moderate* confidence.

Granted, leaders nowadays have incredibly difficult jobs. They often are under-resourced, work under enormous time pressure, cope with frequent change, feel the glare of near-constant scrutiny and high expectations, and must motivate coworkers and stakeholders who are often skeptical of authority. These realities make it incredibly hard to lead.

But our disappointment—and frequently our downright disgust—with so many of our leaders stems from more profound factors than the role's sheer difficulty. Too often, those in leadership positions seem preoccupied only with their own status or income. They are unable to inspire or unite us; they are not imaginative enough to solve the seemingly intractable problems that plague us; they are afraid to make tough choices or even to level with us; and they are insufficiently courageous to lead us through challenge and drive change.

Bluntly put, something is broken. We need new ways of reimagining leadership and better ways of preparing ourselves and others to lead.

What Is Distinctive about a Jesuit Pope?

Enter Pope Francis, the Jesuit pope. The paradoxes begin right there. The Jesuits are a Catholic religious order of priests and brothers founded by Ignatius of Loyola and companions in 1540. In the course of their improbable history, Jesuits cofounded one of the world's largest cities (São Paulo, Brazil), helped develop the Vietnamese alphabet, and helped institute the Gregorian calendar

now used worldwide. They are the world's largest religious order that is fully integrated under one superior general; more than 17,000 Jesuits now labor in more than one hundred countries.

With that track record and global network, why is a Jesuit pope in any way paradoxical? Simply because the Jesuit founder detested overweening personal ambition. The Jesuit rule book, its *Constitutions*, decried excessive personal ambition as “the mother of all evils in any community or congregation.” And he instructed Jesuits to “promise to God our Lord never to seek” a high office in the Church, and, what’s more, “to expose anyone whom they observe trying to obtain” a higher office. Wow. Imagine if everyone in corporate America had to report ambitious colleagues? The sheer volume of reporting would allow no time to get any work done.

Ignatius wanted Jesuits to be humble because Jesus, their role model, was humble. But he also understood how ambition and political infighting can shred organizational morale (sound familiar, corporate colleagues?). So he was trying to reign in the human tendency to stroke one’s ego by seeking status, power, and advancement.

Cardinal Bergoglio seems to have been a devoted son of his spiritual father Ignatius. After reportedly finishing as the runner-up in the 2005 conclave that elected Pope Benedict XVI, Cardinal Bergoglio didn’t hang around Rome to build his network and credentials for the next election. Instead, he quickly headed back to Argentina, stayed out of the limelight, and devoted most of his time and energy to Argentina’s poor (who don’t get to vote for pope). He did such a good job of non-politicking that by the time of the next papal election, he barely registered on the list of conclave handicappers.

That’s only one of the various paradoxes about the man’s path to power and his understanding of power. If we need new ways to conceive leadership and how one prepares for it, the new pope gave ample food for thought in his first week alone. For example:

- His most intensive life and leadership training, other than his family upbringing, came as a Jesuit, a religious order that forms leaders not by management courses but in a month-long silent retreat, by sending

trainees off on an arduous pilgrimage, and by preparing recruits to counsel adults by having them teach young children.

- Well-known for his dedication to Catholic tradition, Pope Francis started dispensing with tradition within minutes of his election, refusing the traditional red cape (mozzetta), placing his own phone calls, and hopping onto a bus instead of the papal limo.
- Within a few days of his elevation to the papacy, a position of enormous power and global prestige, he declared unambiguously that “authentic power is service.”

Will that unlikely background and those surprising first steps make him a great leader? No, certainly not by themselves. This book is no naïve cheer-leading exercise for him, his Jesuit background, or the Catholic Church. Pope Francis inherits a Church with wide-ranging, long-standing challenges: serious clergy shortages in dozens of countries, dwindling church attendance throughout the developed world, moral authority damaged by sex-abuse scandals, and, to judge by the public comments of various cardinals, a dysfunctional Vatican headquarters.

Such complex, multifaceted problems will not be resolved easily. Deep change will be needed, and the pope’s early words and deeds make clear that he is committed to igniting massive culture change across his Church. Massive culture change? Isn’t that a bit of hyperbole? Well, as exhibit A among many, consider what he told young Catholics gathered in Rio de Janeiro for World Youth Day: “I want you to make yourselves heard in your dioceses, I want the noise to go out, I want the Church to go out onto the streets, I want us to resist everything worldly, everything static, everything comfortable, everything to do with clericalism . . . May the bishops and priests forgive me if some of you create a bit of confusion afterwards.” Those are not the words of a man who is merely fine-tuning things. This pope is anxious to reinvigorate his institution and lead it energetically.

But even talented leaders find it difficult to drive change through organizations, all the more so an institution that appropriately cherishes its two millennia-old tradition. President Woodrow Wilson had it right: “If you want to make enemies, try to change something.” Change agents certainly need

competence and good judgment to succeed, but they also need courage, political savvy, iron will, and lots of luck.

So will he succeed? Only a fool would claim to know.

So why would the rest of us take leadership lessons from a pope with a yet-unproven record; from a Catholic cleric when we are Muslims, Buddhists, or even nonbelievers; from a religious leader when we are managing corporations, hospitals, or families; from a man who publicly kissed a young woman's bare feet when we would be locked up if we dared kiss a subordinate's feet at work; and from someone trained for years in Jesuit seminaries when we were formed in colleges, business schools, and on the job?

Why We and Our Leaders Need to Change

Well, those are some of the very reasons we should take a closer look at Pope Francis's leadership vision, precisely because his leadership preparation and values are so different from what we have gotten used to. No, not just different but downright jarring, even "shocking" as that newspaper editor put it.

Let's face it: we badly need to be jarred from some of our settled preconceptions about leadership because they have utterly failed us. And we need to be shocked into new ways of thinking and acting. That so few of us feel great confidence in our political, education, business, or religious leaders is an indictment, an extraordinary vote of no confidence across a broad swath of our society. Does anyone seriously believe that we will address such profound lack of confidence by the same old approaches in politics, business, or religious organizations? That's the old adage about insanity: doing the same things over and over, yet expecting different results. Nor will we close our leadership deficit by sending America's managerial class, elected officials, and pastors to one more leadership workshop, by tinkering with our performance-management systems, or through other incremental solutions. We need to be challenged to reimagine leadership in a turbulent, fast-changing, and sometimes unsettling new century.

The pope has already been articulating a vision that challenges his Church to reimagine itself in the twenty-first century:

- He challenged “lukewarm Christians” and “couch potato” Christians to engage much more energetically in spreading the Church’s message, not to “take refuge . . . in a cozy life,” but to get beyond our “comfort zones” and live with greater “apostolic fervor.” He challenged his Church to be more forthrightly, “poor, and for the poor.”
- He warned Vatican diplomats-in-training that “careerism is leprosy.”
- He challenged a global culture in which “money . . . for the mighty of this earth, is more important than people.”
- He challenged his own fellow bishops to be “Men who love . . . poverty, simplicity and austerity of life.”

He asked Brazilian bishops bluntly, “Are we still a Church capable of warming hearts?” Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York, reacting to the pope’s challenges, told an interviewer, “I find myself examining my own conscience . . . on style, on simplicity, on lots of things.”

Cardinal Dolan isn’t the only one doing some soul-searching and reimagining. Pope Francis’s words are resonating; his approval ratings have soared. That fact alone is intriguing: he is fundamentally challenging our lifestyles and priorities, yet we are not dismissing him as a curmudgeonly old scold. Rather, we seem to appreciate that a plain speaker is telling us uncomfortable truths that we’ve long needed to hear.

But Pope Francis has done more than challenge his own Church; he is challenging our wider culture’s whole approach to leadership by embodying a refreshing, deeply counter-cultural vision of how leaders live and what they value. He seems deeply self-aware and authentic, for example, while so many prominent public figures nowadays seem superficial and fake, constantly trying to spin us. The Pope seems driven by a passion to serve, not by a craving for status, money, or power. Our culture is becoming increasingly self-absorbed and fascinated with superficial pursuits; he is striving to focus us beyond ourselves, on the struggles of our neediest brothers and sisters around the world. As I watched him, I started to wonder whether this unlikely choice for pope, even while igniting change in his Church, could be an equally unlikely catalyst for a long-overdue global conversation about leadership.

Perhaps he can inspire us to take on what might be called the new leader's habits. Cardinal Bergoglio literally donned a new habit, of papal white. And to lead well in this new century, the rest of us need new habits too, not literally, but figuratively—new ways of preparing ourselves to exercise leadership in our work and family lives. His call to lead his Church might invite profound reflection on the leadership call (yes, leadership is a call) that comes to each of us (yes, each of us), whether we live that call as chief executives, parents, or, who knows, as someday a pope.

And thus, this book about Pope Francis and how his Jesuit background has informed his leadership values and principles. It's not a biography. Plenty of those have already been written; yet, oddly, they have largely glossed over the Jesuit spirituality that prepared him to lead and still drives his thinking. Don't take my word for its critical importance; take his: "I feel like I'm still a Jesuit in terms of my spirituality, what I have in my heart . . . Also, I think like a Jesuit." Clearly, we can only understand this pope by first understanding what the following chapters explore: what it means to "think like a Jesuit."

But, in another respect, this book is as much about the rest of us as it is about the global leader of the Catholic Church. Pope Francis is our case study, a prism, the catalyst for us to ponder why we are so disappointed with the leadership status quo, to imagine an approach to leadership that would better inspire us, and to articulate the commitments we can make to become better leaders in our own lives.

Call to mind the vivid images that Pope Francis has already given us, and imagine them as scattered pieces of an important mosaic: a man bathes the feet of juvenile delinquents, kneels for fifteen minutes of solitary prayer on his first morning as pope, wears plain black shoes instead of red ones, wades into a crowd of refugees on the island of Lampedusa.

Our task is to assemble those discrete images into a coherent mosaic of new leadership. We have all been struck by what we have seen, but why? What are those images revealing about the nature of great leadership? Pope Francis's Jesuit spirituality will serve throughout as our "code," a key to unlocking some of the underlying convictions that are driving him.

We'll work with three vital sources of information: first, what Pope Francis has been saying and doing; second, the leadership values he emphasized during his years in charge of Argentina's Jesuits or overseeing young Jesuit trainees (a number of them, now Jesuit priests, generously shared recollections and memories to allow us a privileged behind-the-scenes window into this man before the cameras followed him); and third, the principles that the young Bergoglio would have imbibed during his own decade-plus formation for the Jesuit priesthood.

It won't be hard to find convergence across these various strands of input. In fact, the common themes will virtually clobber us over the head. What emerges are six habits and convictions that surface again and again in Bergoglio's (and now Pope Francis's) life; his habits are implicitly a challenge to the rest of us: to commit to live similarly, and thereby to champion a new way of leading in our culture.

These commitments, taken together, are not a leadership formula or a bag of tricks but something far more basic, a fundamental leadership approach and worldview: how the leader sees himself and others, engages the world around him, and regards the past, present, and future. Jesuits and others might call this a "spirituality of leadership"—that is, the ways in which our journey through this earth becomes simultaneously a journey with and toward God (or our own understanding of transcendent meaning).

Subsequent chapters, always drawing on Pope Francis's life and formation, will explore these six foundational commitments of the new leader:

Know yourself deeply (chapter 3), but live to serve others (chapter 4):

- You cannot lead others unless you can lead yourself, so leaders dig deeply into themselves, confront their flaws, and, ultimately, achieve peaceful acceptance of themselves and the unique role they can play in the world.
- But, after that introspective deep dive within, leaders turn outward. They do not live for themselves alone but transcend themselves to serve others. The wisdom and energy generated from their self-knowledge isn't bottled up but radiates outward.

Immerse yourself in the world (chapter 5), but withdraw from the world daily (chapter 6):

- The new leader immerses herself in the world with eyes open to its joys and sufferings and with hands calloused from sharing the everyday struggles of those around her. She is not apart and aloof but “in touch” and accountable. She cultivates solidarity, especially with those who are neglected or marginalized.
- Yet, while fully immersed in the world, she is not fully “of” the world. She does not drift on a tide of texts, media stimulation, and phone calls, but withdraws daily to reflect, feel gratitude for all she has, take in the big picture, and remind herself of her values and beliefs.

Live in the present and revere tradition (chapter 7), but create the future (chapter 8):

- The new leader seizes today’s opportunity fully because it’s the only opportunity he is certain of having. And he stands for something, honoring the beliefs and values bequeathed by his tradition.
- But deeply rooted in a tradition does not mean stuck. He is not enslaved by the past. He does not shrink from change fearfully but drives change with hope and optimism. He runs to the future, not from it.

A paradox seems to be emerging: each pair of habits verges on being contradictory. I must be immersed in the world yet withdraw from the world. I must stand for something yet embrace change. I must invest in knowing myself only to transcend myself and serve others. Well, there is something paradoxical and challenging about leading in this era of complexity and tumultuous societal change. Leaders need the good judgment to distinguish, for example, between an inviolable organizational value that can never be changed and a once-useful tradition that now must change. And leaders must willingly wade into the details of each day’s complicated, painful dilemmas yet also step back to take a long-term, big-picture perspective. This dynamic tension is in fact what unleashes the commitment, imagination, and drive to surmount the complex problems we increasingly face in all walks of life.

That's why we need men and women who understand their calling in a very deep way and who have prepared themselves to lead by doing even more than acquiring technical virtuosity and superb competency in their chosen fields. Those are essential; without competent leaders we achieve nothing. But equally essential are the lifelong commitments just introduced, which make us leaders of depth, substance, and transcendent spirit. The very last thing we need right now are more easily digested tips or what the leadership industry inartfully calls "actionable takeaways." Our challenges are too big for that. And so, even as the following chapters explore Pope Francis's leadership convictions, these chapters simultaneously challenge us to ponder our own convictions, and to commit to our leadership vocations in a more profound way.

Great Leadership Is Spiritual

Pope Francis's own attitudes about leadership are grounded in his Jesuit spirituality, and we will discover the broader relevance of that spirituality, whether or not one shares the pope's religious beliefs and whether one is a Jesuit or an investment banker. I say that with some confidence because I have been both a Jesuit and a banker. I underwent the same formation program as did Pope Francis, learned the same practices and principles he did, and if anything, those practices seemed more relevant and valuable to me in my post-Jesuit investment-banking years than during my half-dozen years in Jesuit seminary.

To be sure, for Pope Francis and the Jesuits, the values and practices introduced in this book have unambiguously religious roots. I have never met the pope, but I suspect he doesn't even have a "leadership philosophy"—instead, he focuses on one priority only: he is a follower of Jesus, and his Jesuit formation helps him follow Jesus more closely, end of story. This is what gives the Jesuit life meaning and purpose; Jesuits pursue their formation and spiritual practices for this end alone and no other.

Still, there are reasons the Jesuits and their spirituality (sometimes called Ignatian spirituality, after the Jesuit founder) have lasted for five centuries and been durable enough to serve Jesuits in virtually every cultural context and in countless occupations, whatever might "help souls," to use a shorthand version of their mission. The Jesuit founder envisioned a religious order plunged into

the world, not sheltered in monasteries. Hence, he had to develop practices conducive to success amid the chaotic, distracting, tempting, confusing busyness that characterizes the work world. No wonder, then, that Ignatius's ideas are useful not only to Jesuits but to the rest of us as well, whatever our religious beliefs may be.

But if one need not be Christian or even religious to embrace this book's principles, one must be open to a profound paradox about great leadership: it is deeply spiritual.

Yes, whether you are running a religious order or a manufacturing firm, a devout Catholic or a secular humanist, great leadership is spiritual, and that vision will animate the ideas and practices promoted over following pages—the very ideas and practices already demonstrated in the life of Pope Francis.

One of our J. P. Morgan chief executives used to say, “Our most important assets walk out the door every night.” And so it is. The building you are working in, whatever its value on your organization's balance-sheet, is surely valueless unless the people who enter and exit it each day know what they are doing, commit to the organization's success, are conscientious and dedicated, support their coworkers, make wise choices, care deeply about patients or students or customers, and exhibit a hundred other attitudes that make all the difference between success and failure. God knows, we can see those behaviors in action. But we can't touch or measure them; they don't find their way onto balance sheets. They are, in a word, spiritual.

Great leaders get this. They exhibit such behaviors themselves and inspire them in others. They are disgusted with the disgust our society increasingly feels about how leadership authority and power are wielded; the new leaders want to use their leadership power to steer our society and its organizations in a different and better way. That's what this book is about, the personal commitments that can guide and inspire the new leadership.