



Transforming Ministry Training after Leadership Abuses: Toward Authentic Ministry

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Source of data

- Testimonies of male victims from Sodaliccio.
- Sodaliccio is a lay Catholic movement with a few priests but it is led by lay consecrated men from different countries.

Listening to Male Survivors of Church Sexual Abuse

Voices from Survivors of Sodaliccio Abuses in Peru

By Rocío Figueroa Alvear and David Tombs



Founder of Sodalicio

- The Peruvian, Luis Fernando Figari founded it in 1971, in Lima Peru
- Communities in more than 17 countries.
- Movement of 9,000 people.



Abusive characteristics of Sodalicio



Matthew chapter 10

- ▶ The founder and his second in command separated us from our friends and families;
- ▶ They became the only point of reference and the source of value and love.
- ▶ They convinced us that the world was a dangerous and sinister place from which God was absent.
- ▶ The Scriptures and specially Mathew chapter 10 were the “community manifesto” and it was taken in a literal way;
- ▶ The founder defined obedience as the “backbone” of our lives
- ▶ This idea of this vertical obedience diminished all our sense of responsibility and erased our own sense of autonomy and identity.

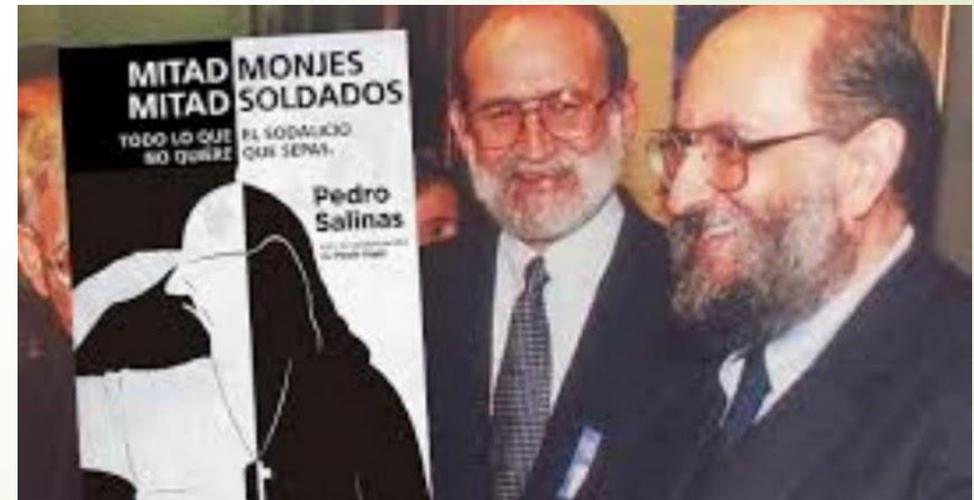
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- Authorities controlled our lives: studies, work and everyday decision;
 - the goal of each member of the community was to become a saint and if we were not already saints something was wrong with us.
 - The goals of Sodalicio were more important than our own lives .
 - If we didn't achieve the founder's objectives, we were criticized, humiliated and shamed publicly.
 - We were subjected to various types of insults and the style of the community was to mock and ridicule anyone who didn't respond to the community expectations.
 - We had a uniform vision with special terms, and nobody could criticize or have a different opinion from that of the founder.
 - At the same time the founder was a misogynist who continuously said that we women were less intelligent and useless: it was a very patriarchal community.

Second in command: German Doig

- In 2002, Germán Doig, the second in command died. He had a great reputation for holiness within the community of Sodalicio.
- In 2006, some victims came to me and I discovered that he was not just an abuser, but had been a serial abuser all his life.



- In 2015, Pedro Salinas' book, *Half Soldiers Half Monks* (*Mitad monjes, mitad soldados*) about Sodalicio was released. It created a huge impact in Peru.
- Currently, Sodalicio has recognized 66 victims of physical, psychological, spiritual and sexual abuse
- It has set aside a fund of nearly \$ 4 million for reparations.





Spiritual Abuse

- ▶ The term 'spiritual abuse' is relatively contemporary.
- ▶ It entered the literature and discourse about 20 years ago.
- ▶ However, issues around coercive control and misuse of power have a long history of discussion within the Christian context (Baxter, 1956 and Plowman, 1975 as cited in Oackley 2019; Enroth, 1992).



Definition of Spiritual abuse:

- ▶ Johnson & VanVonderen :

“Spiritual abuse is the mistreatment of a person who is in need of help, support, or greater spiritual empowerment, with the result of weakening, undermining, or decreasing that person’s spiritual empowerment” (Johnson & VanVonderen 1991, p. 20)

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- ▶ A recent definition of spiritual abuse has been given by Oackley & Humphreys:

Spiritual abuse is a form of emotional and psychological abuse. It is characterized by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in a religious context. Spiritual abuse can have a deeply damaging impact on those who experience it. This abuse may include: manipulation and exploitation, enforced accountability, censorship of decision making, requirements for secrecy and silence, coercion to conform, control through the use of sacred texts or teaching, requirement of obedience to the abuser, the suggestion that the abuser has a 'divine' position, isolation as a means of punishment, and superiority and elitism. (2019, p. 828)



Theological definition of spiritual abuse

- ▶ I think we need to define spiritual abuse itself within the theological realm.
- ▶ While spiritual abuse implies psychological and emotional abuse; psychological or emotional abuse may not be spiritual abuse in every case.
- ▶ The particular trait of the spiritual abuse is when **the leader uses God, or their supposed relationship with God to control** the behaviour of people.
- ▶ The key element of this abuse is **the use of spiritual power** and as the leader represents the divine it can have **profound impact on the religious faith of the victims.**

Traits of an Abusive ministry leader (survivor's interviews)

- ▶ **Control and abuse of spiritual power annulling the will and personality of the disciples.**

Jose Enrique

They invaded my will. I gave up my family and detached from my roots. German, Figari and Sodalicio presented themselves as your new family. I gave my entire trust to them, 100%.

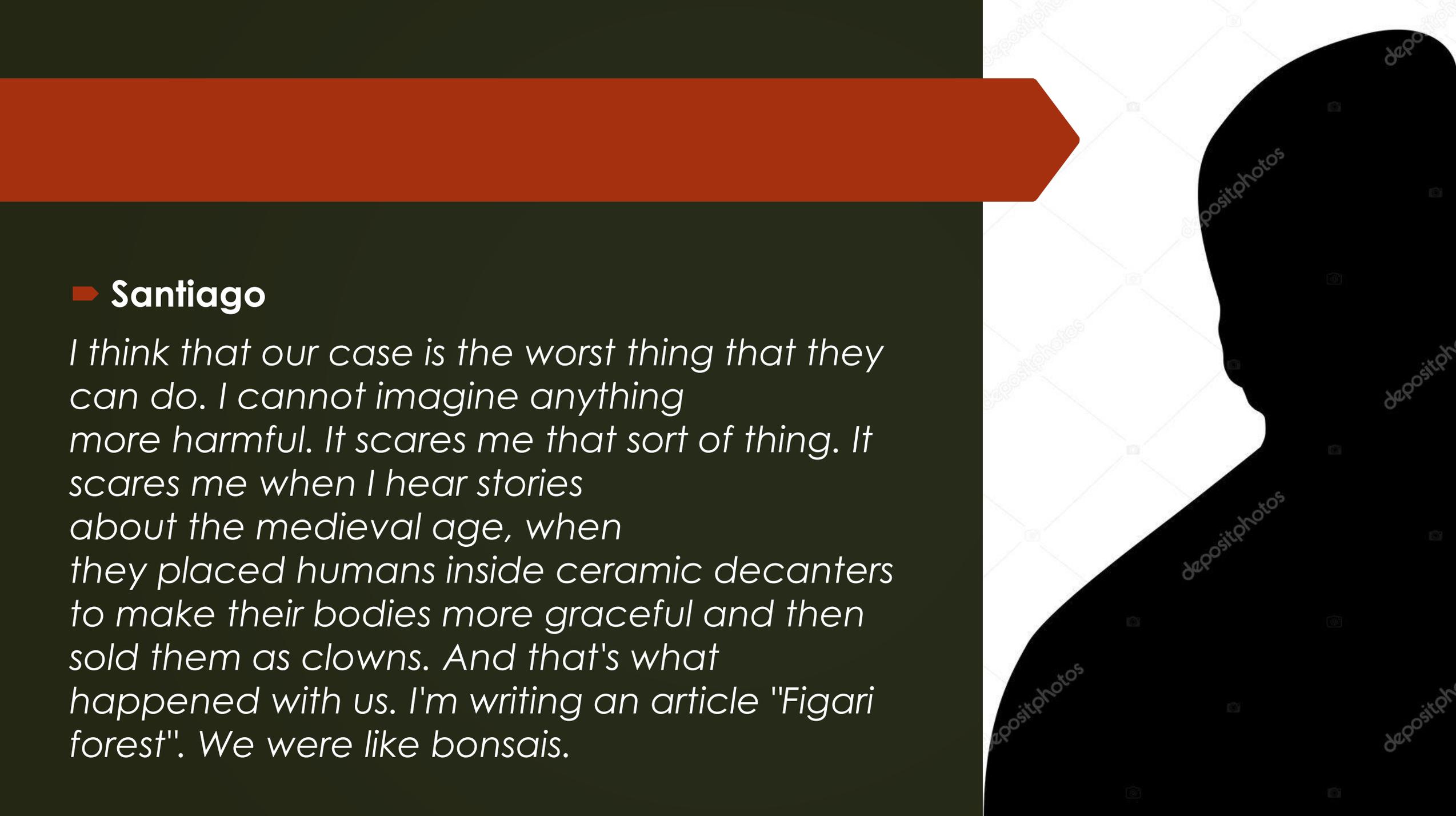
When I became submissive, I lived in perfect obedience: I loved to accomplish their orders as if they were orders given by myself. I removed any perception of myself but they made you believe the opposite: that you were actually awakening to yourself and that you were discovering who you really were.





➔ Roberto:

He was the guru (the founder) that knew everything, and you didn't. I was 40 years old, and I continued depending on the will of the superior. I feel now that I am a childish person. I think that would be the best description of the personality damage that I have suffered. I have remained childlike, but not in a good way. I am still dependent on people. And at 40 years old it is not normal that you depend on your father or your mother for approval in anything.



➤ Santiago

I think that our case is the worst thing that they can do. I cannot imagine anything more harmful. It scares me that sort of thing. It scares me when I hear stories about the medieval age, when they placed humans inside ceramic decanters to make their bodies more graceful and then sold them as clowns. And that's what happened with us. I'm writing an article "Figari forest". We were like bonsais.

➤ **Matias**

Effectively, they manipulated us and restricted our freedom. In that moment it was a radical change in our lives, we were defenseless against all that.



► ***b) Public Shame and humiliation***

Roberto:

Every Monday I had a meeting with my superior and I had to tell him all about my life. I was forced to do that: inside and out. And you had to listen to all the criticism from the community; some of them had good intentions, the others I don't know. That was the modus operandi of community life.





► **Juan:**

Figari publicly humiliated me. I thought this is not for me. And Figari said: "What are you going to do without us? Look at yourself. You are disgusting. Ugly. No one wants to be with you, nobody likes you; nobody loves you. What are you going to do? Run away to your mother's skirts and be a loser like your father?"

C) Spiritual aspects of abuse:

► Roberto:

He rewarded me if I acted as he expected me to be. And he punished me very hard with disapproval if I got bitter, or depressed, or if I didn't answer to his demands, or if I was not astute enough. It was a discipleship of that type. He made me very dependent on authority. If my superior approved me, I felt well. If he censured me I felt like the worst shit in the universe. That didn't change, it deepened.

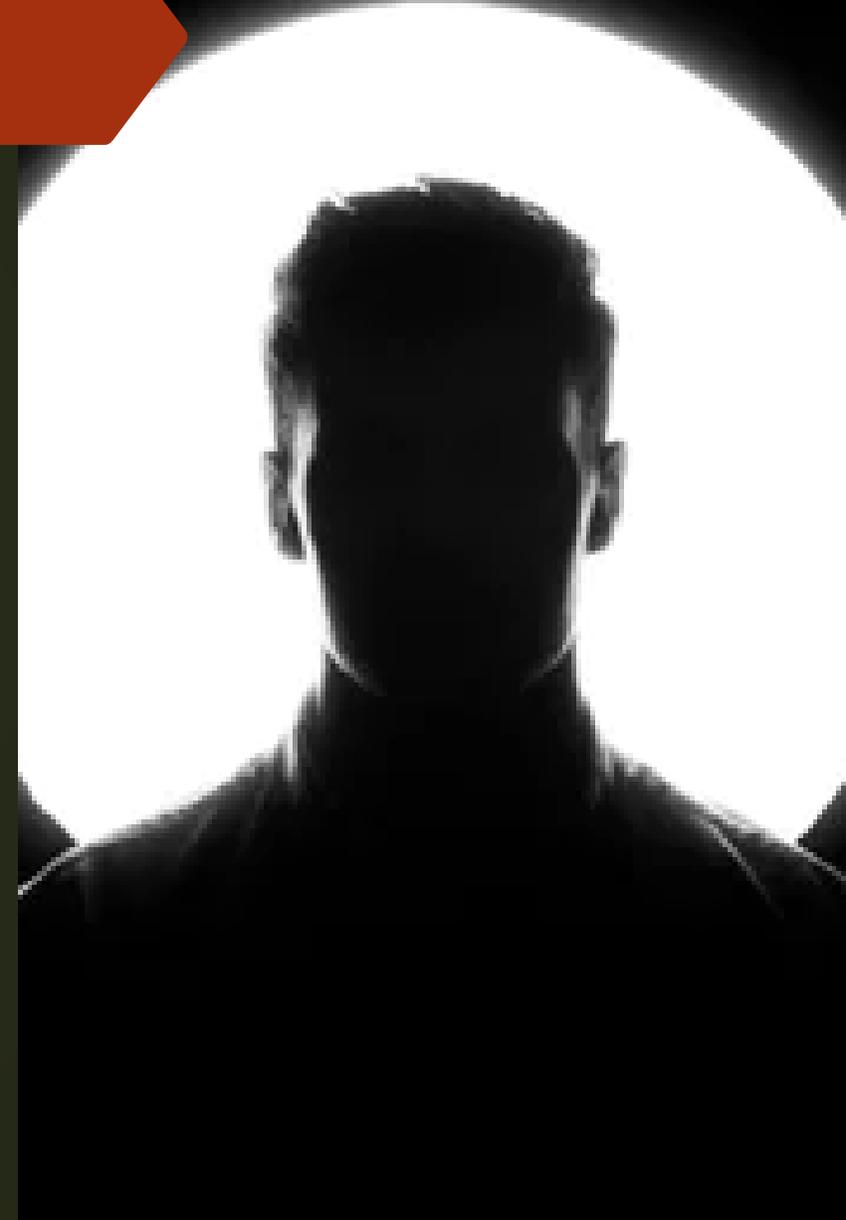


- ▶ *I had a sense of a punishing-God, and like, an efficient, and concrete God: if you didn't have concrete results you were not accomplishing God's Plan. This interpretation of God's plan was a kind of an institutional plan. And everybody repeated that: "you are ruining God's plan". For example, one day I met Figari at the Pastoral Centre and he asked me: "How are you?" As I was a guilty person I answered: "Well, not so bad". He said: "how can you be not so bad. You have to be good. And he said: "idiot, it cannot be, you cannot ruin God's plan". He insulted me and he left. So the interpretation that came from Figari was the idea that you couldn't trust in God's grace; you had to respond to the grace as if it were a check account and that you were using the money that have been left for you in a bad way. It is difficult for me to distance myself from this bad theology of grace.*



Nicolas:

Sin was in all human beings; sinfulness was in the world in everything that wasn't the community. SCV was like a sanctuary, in which sin was like a virus that we have been vaccinated against, but it was still present; which made us in some way superior. I have a constant feeling of guilt. I would say that is the main thing: not doing everything you should do in every moment of your existence, not giving yourself according to the best of your abilities and possibilities to respond in every moment to God's plan as articulated by Figari.



II. TOWARDS AUTHENTIC MINISTRY AND LEADERSHIP



1. Models of Leadership

Skill Model (Bass 1990; Zaccaro - Kemp, 2004)

Situational Approach (Hersey and Blanchard 1969)

Transformational Leadership (Burns 1978 and Bass 1985)

Authentic Leadership Model (Avolio, Walumba & Weber 2009).



Servant Model

The servant leadership model was proposed by Robert Greanleaf and has a religious origin. He himself belongs to the Society of Friends.

The servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is *leader first*... The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and the most difficult to administer, is this: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? (Greanleaf, 2002, 265).

2. Christian Leadership



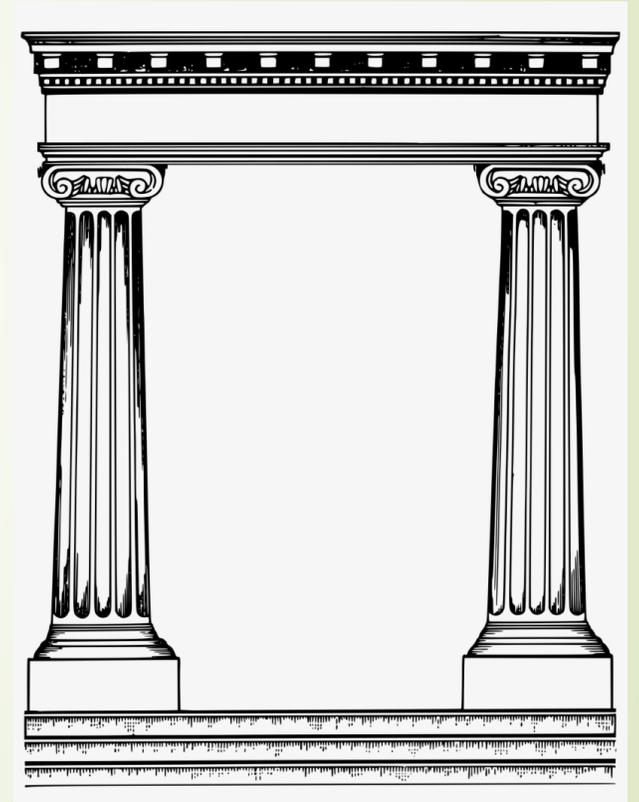
Oprah:

“People
don’t get it”



The two Pillars of Christian Leadership

- ▶ Human beings created in the image of God are called to live their identity, being who we are, as God is truthful and called to live in communion of love as the Holy Trinity does.
- ▶ The two pillars: **HUMILITY** that is the Christian name for authenticity in relation to God, and **LOVE**.





Christian Humility

- ▶ **Humus** which means earth, ground, and it seems to converge with a capacity to face one's limitations and humanity.
- ▶ Within Catholic spirituality, following the classical Greek meaning of humility, this virtue became seen as the virtue of self-abasement.
- ▶ Biblical approach is different:
- ▶ attitude of the **anawim**, the poor of Yahweh, who recognize their dependence on God living in gratitude for his blessings.
- ▶ This **dependence on God** also meant forming a **balanced estimate of oneself** that didn't mean self-abasement: "my child, honour yourself with humility and give yourself the esteem you deserve" (Sir 10:28).



- “Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart” (Mt. 11:29)
- Saint Paul reminds us:
- “Be of the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from **selfish ambition** or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you **look not to your own interests**, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became **obedient** to the point of death- even death on a cross” (Phil. 2: 5-11).



- ▶ **“Walking in truth before the Truth”** (Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle*, Sixth Mansion, 7).



- ▶ **Saint Augustine called this virtue, humility, the foundation of all virtues.**



➤ **POSITIVE THEOLOGY AND THE VIRTUE OF HUMILITY**

- C. Lavelock et al., (2017) reviewed the psychological literature about humility as a master virtue that involves an intrapersonal dimension of an accurate self-appraisal (Samuelson, 2015) and an interpersonal dimension that orients and connects one to others and their needs transcending egotistical concerns.
 - Worthington and Allison (2017) appear to agree that the essence of Paul's Philippians mandate of humility is the characteristic of other-orientation.
 - C. Lavelock et al. (2017) concluded that because this virtue has at its heart this other-orientation it is the core of many Christian virtues and of the Christian life itself.
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- Bibliography attached.
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 - Web page: <http://rocio-figueroa.com/>
 - <https://gsis.academia.edu/RocioFigueroa>