

# Ethics of Management

Telesphore Cardinal P. Toppo  
*Archbishop of Ranchi &  
President, Catholic Bishops' Conference of India*

I am not the most qualified to give you a detailed history and analysis on management, and not the most inclined to delve deeper into the morass of its practice in today's world. I am a believer and a follower of the Gospel of Christ. During the past many years I have spent as a pastor for my people and a leader among my brothers and sisters, I have received insights on authority, power, exercise of power, and value of power to do good. It is some of these insights that I intend to share with the readers of this journal, "Health in abundance". I realize that these may not sound very erudite or clever, but they are the fruits of a lifetime of study and living.

## Two Great Events

I begin explaining my outlook by pointing to the two great events that took place recently and though they are of disparate importance, affected me deeply. I refer to the Beatification of Mother Teresa on October 19, 2003 and my being admitted to the ranks of the Cardinals of the Catholic Church on Tuesday, October 21, 2003. Admittedly, one was an event of international importance and the other less so, nevertheless, both affected me deeply and gave me some insights into the very topic we are discussing here, namely, power, authority and management.

## Mother Teresa's Power

On that Sunday morning in October 2003, as I stood with the thousands of the pilgrims that had assembled to witness the beatification ceremony of Mother Teresa, I recalled the words of the BBC commentator, commenting on the funeral of Mahatma Gandhi. I found it strangely appropriate for Mother Teresa.

For this is what he said: *"The object of this massive tribute, (Mahatma Gandhi) died as he always willed, a private man, without wealth, without property, without office or title for office. He was neither a commander of armies nor a ruler of vast lands. He could not boast any scientific achievements or artistic gift. Yet, men, governments and dignitaries have joined hands to pay honour to this brown man who led his country to freedom"*.

Can't one truthfully say the very same words about Mother Teresa?

*"The object of this massive tribute (Blessed Mother Teresa) died as she always willed, a private person, without wealth, without property, without office or title for office. She was neither a commander of armies nor a ruler of vast lands. She could not boast any scientific achievement or artistic gift. Yet men, governments, and dignitaries have*

*joined hands to pay honour to this little woman who led her people from apathy and indifference to love and life”.*

Blessed Mother Teresa was indeed a very powerful person. She headed a religious Order that numbered some 4500 members, operating out of 710 houses, in 133 countries around the world! Speak of a multinational company!

She did have access to power at all levels. Doors were opened to her and she treaded the corridors of power as confidently as she walked the streets of Calcutta. Heads of states, corporate chairmen, world leaders, spiritual gurus, wielders of power though politics – all bowed to her and all came to her aid so that the poorest of the poor may have their dignity at least in death.

Would her terms as Superior General, with all its powers over the members and their homes and institutions, be described as a form of corporate governance? Could we apply our analysis of corporate governance to her style of functioning? What was the difference between her and counterpart in the secular world, both acting as a the CEOs of their organizations?

These and other questions I intend to consider carefully. Suffice it now to say that Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta was a Corporate governor par excellence!

### **Cardinals in the Catholic Church**

The other event that affected me personally and deeply was my admission to the College of Cardinals in the Catholic Church on October 21, 2003.

The Simon and Schwester New Millennium Encyclopedia has this entry under “Cardinal”:

*“Highest dignity in the Roman Catholic Church after the Pope, whose elector and councilor he is. The Cardinals are appointed by the Pope and constitute the Sacred College. The Pope is not obliged to consult them, but does so as a matter of course. The Cardinals are chief members of the Sacred Congregations of the papal government. They meet in consistory, or assembly, over which the Pope presides. They enjoy extraordinary privileges and honours.*

*Within the vast scheme of the hierarchy of the Church’s administration, the Cardinals occupy a very important place. As bishops, they are responsible to the church given to them. As Cardinals, they share with the Pope the responsibility over the whole church. They are called upon to exercise this responsibility through their collective counseling and individual exercise of authority”.*

What is the nature and purpose of their authority? Could they be compared to the members of the Board of Directors of conglomerates? Would their exercise of power

be analyzed and understood by the same principles that you would apply to secular Directors?

These issues need an answer and I intend to take them up together.

### **The Bible and its View of Power**

The Bible speaks of generations of the people of Israel being held together, first by charismatic leaders, such as Moses and Joshua, later by prophets like Elijah and Elisah, still later by kings, such as Saul and David and Solomon and Hezekiah.

While granting monarchy to Israel, God warns them of the dangers of having kings lording over them. But the people remain adamant, and God gives them kings. While they turn out to be faithless, god sends out prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.

In the New Testament, Pilate makes a challenge to the captive Christ: *“You will not speak to me? Remember, I have the authority to set you free and also to have you crucified.”* Jesus answered, *“You have authority over me only because it was given to you by God.”* (John 19:11)

This notion that all authority is derived from God and is to be exercised in accordance with his laws became the basis of authority in the Christian era.

From the very beginning, the Church became a dominant force in the western society. But the end of the fourth century, Christianity was recognized as the preferred religion; indeed, after an edict by Theodosius in 392 A.D., as the only legitimate religion.

Christianity influenced Western society in various ways. The civic and social centers were still the *civitates* or city-states, including the surrounding countryside. It was in these administrative centers that bishops settled and exercised their influence. In 550 A.D., there were 120 *civitates* in Gaul, each with its bishops. Roman territorial divisions were maintained (diocese and province) as well as Roman administration and the Latin language. Furthermore, the bishops inherited the office of the advocate of the poor (*defensor civitate*), which gave Episcopal courts the right of litigation of all kinds. Once again, we see that power given to rulers to be exercised for the good of all.

The Church recognized those who ruled the land for the good of all and praised them. Power or exercise of power was not seen to be bad in itself. Church honoured Kings and Queens, administrators and architects of empires. [The Christian ideal of service to the people, service to the poor slowly entered into governance and changes the whole image of it.](#)

### **The Concept of Stewardship**

One of the most valuable insights that Jesus left behind for his followers is that of service.

*“An argument broke out among his disciples as to which one of them should be thought of the greatest. Jesus said to them, “The kings of the pagans have power over their people and rulers claim their title, “Friends of the People”. But this is not the way it is with you; rather the greatest one among you must be like the youngest, and the leader must be like the servant.” (Luke 22-26)*

It is this notion of service to others, even to the extent of giving oneself completely that underlies the lifestyles of all great Christians. And it is this ideal that the Church offers to all those in management functions for their own fulfillment.

This service concept is based on one’s perception that the gifts, talents and powers one possesses are from God and are given for the betterment of others. We are stewards of God’s wealth, power and gifts. We are to use them to serve all his children.

### **Blessed Mother Teresa and her Service of the Poor**

Blessed Mother Teresa drew her inspiration from the teaching of Christ who said “Whenever you did this for one of the least important brothers and sisters of mine you did it to me” (Mt. 25:40). Indeed, [in the poor she saw Christ and served Him in them. The result was spectacular: her governance of her Order, her dealings with the high and the mighty as well as the poorest of the poor, and above all, her very self was transformed and became glorious.](#)

### **Cardinals and their Service of the Church**

Once again, the service that the Cardinals of the Catholic Church render to the Pope and through to the whole Church makes them special and important people. Having been admitted to the College of Cardinals and being aware of the serious and sacred responsibilities going with this appointment, I feel more humble than ever before. I feel that in every forum I am given access including that of the corporates, I should carry the divine message of compassion so desperately needed in purveying equity among our masses.

### **Conclusion**

Dear friends, my personal message is quite simple: all of us need to be persons-for-others. When people approach us, we must be ready to say: “What can I do for you? It’s good for us to remember the words of Lord Jesus: *“I have come not to be served but to serve.”*

True leadership, whether in governments, civic bodies or healthcare institutions or other organizations within the Church, manifests itself in genuine corporate governance. If we want corporate ethics, we need to ensure personal ethics. Will it not be good to derive inspiration from the guiding principles envisaged by Infosys, the flagship of India’s IT industry? It says, [“The softest pillow is clear conscience, when in doubt,](#)

disclose; don't use corporate resources for personal use, put long-term ones, and share wealth with employees.”

I believe that human behaviour is not indifferent to God: He has a stake in it. We should not do whatever we like. Even though it is not always easy to discern good from evil, it remains true that we must ever search for what is best.

Recently I went to pay my respects to our President, Dr.A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. He conveyed to me his views, which I want to share with you. He said that our country could forge ahead only if all its citizens base their lives on spiritual, social and moral values. He also stated that we need to build a more humane society that respects freedom, equality and justice. To achieve this we are to follow the path of non-violence, mutual respect, love, tolerance and co-operation in a country that is characterized by multiplicity of religions and cultures. We as true Indians will do well to make our own this sound presidential guidance.

These words ‘lead’ take us back to the prayer meetings of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, who loved to hear the famous hymn of Cardinal Newman (1801-1890):

*‘Lead kindly light, amid the encircling gloom,  
Lead thou me on;  
The night is dark, and I am far from home,  
Lead thou me on.  
Keep thou my feet;  
I do not ask to see the distant scene;  
One step enough for me.’*

God bless you, one and all!

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