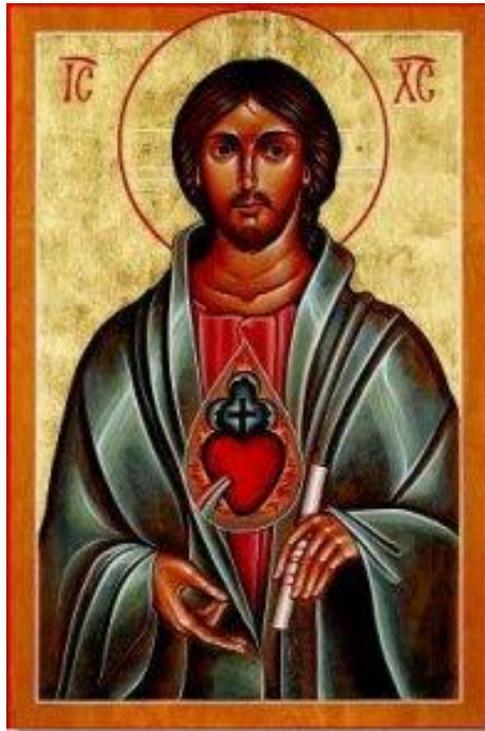# "Here I am among you as one who serves"

(Saint Isidore, Diocesan Bishop of Seville in 7th century)

REFLECTIONS ON THE ROLE AND FUNCTION
OF A DIOCESAN BISHOP
WITHIN THE ECC

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Who is more important?
Is it the one at the table,
or the one who serves?
Isn't it the one who is at the table?
But here I am among you as one who serves.

(Luke 22: 27)

<div align="center">

Here I am among you as one who serves:

Reflections on the role and function of a diocesan bishop within the ECC

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Introduction

The Ecumenical Catholic Communion (ECC) has experienced significant growth since its founding over 10 years ago. As a result, there has been an emerging need to evolve a somewhat different form of organization – in essence away from one national diocese under the pastoral leadership of the Presiding Bishop, to a network of semi-autonomous dioceses across several continents, each having their own synodal structure and episcopal leadership, while each remains in meaningful relationship with one another. This is the model that was envisioned and intended by the founders of the Communion. Within the Communion's constitution, and other key documents, there are some principles and parameters to help guide this development.

Yet, as a communion we are only beginning this journey. No doubt, as we progress, we will learn from our experiences and refine our approach. The current circumstances provide the opportunity to consider in greater depth the role and function of 'diocesan bishop' within the ECC polity, as compared to alternative models of polity with which many of us have been familiar. Within this manuscript we will highlight some of the fundamental differences between the ECC polity and other models of church structure and function which have been more prevalent in our time; the implications of these differences in the organization of an ECC diocese; and the role, function and spirituality of an ECC diocesan bishop. It will be suggested that the diocesan bishop, within the ECC model, functions primarily as a Servant Leader, in imitation of Jesus, who is among us as one who serves. This approach has implications for the practical living out of the life of bishop among us.

Overview of Contextual Considerations

A. Evolution of ECC: In 2000, several independent Catholic communities began the journey of joining together to form a communion. By the time they gathered in September, 2003, to ratify the constitution and formally create the Communion, the number had grown to eight. Over the past ten years the vision of the ECC has continued to resonate with folks, and as a result, the Communion has continued to experience gradual but significant growth. At the

time of this draft (February, 2014) there are 48 communities in the US; 2 dioceses in the US (Florida and California); 6 communities in Europe; a number of mission communities in both the US and Europe; a Chaplain's association; a Benedictine and a Franciscan religious order. In addition, the ECC communities in New Mexico and Austria have recently decided to begin the process of forming a diocese. Finally, within the past few months the ECC has signed an intercommunion agreement with another Catholic jurisdiction in Argentina, and there are existing communities in the US, Mexico, Europe, the Philippines and India that are currently in the process of exploring membership in the ECC.

So, it is clear that the expression of Catholicism which the ECC embraces and lives is resonating with people around the globe. What is occurring within the ECC has been described quite diversely. Some regard what is happening as something new; a new breath of the Spirit. Others think of it as something old; in fact, very old – the re-emergence of an older form of Catholicism which is more grassroots and less top down, more conciliar and less hierarchical, and which values and honors the distinct voices of laity, clergy and bishop. In the Pastoral Letter, *The Bishop as Servant of Catholic Renewal,* the Presiding Bishop of the ECC, Peter Hickman, noted: "This is not a new thing we are doing. It is really a restoration of something very old and something that is authentically Catholic in the original sense of the word" (Hickman, 2012c, p. 5).

Since the inception of the ECC it has been the anticipation that as the Communion grew, relatively small clusters of communities would join together to form 'local churches' or 'dioceses.' In more recent communications, as this gradual growth within the ECC has been noted, the encouragement has been for groups of communities in geographic proximity of one another to initiate this process of forming dioceses. Again, Bishop Hickman recently observed: "It is my hope that a dozen new dioceses emerge during the coming period. It will be my work to urge and aid to birth these dioceses into existence" (2012a, p. 3).

There is a strong intention and commitment within the ECC to forge a different way of being church than what has been the prevailing model within Catholicism – away from hierarchical structures and ways of relating, toward synodal structures, mutuality in relating, and embodying the message of Jesus with respect to the service of others. Yet, as a communion we are only beginning this journey. There is a potential danger here for us: if we are not

continually reflective and intentional about what we are doing, we will too easily lapse back into the prevailing hierarchical model of Catholicism from which we are attempting to evolve. It is recognized that this is a beginning reflection, which will likely be refined and developed as we learn from our ongoing experiences.

B. Given the current context, with this encouragement for smaller groups of communities within the ECC to form dioceses, there is a corresponding opportunity to re-examine the role and function of a 'diocesan bishop' within the ECC polity, as compared to alternative models of polity with which many of us have been familiar.

1. First, let us briefly review the model that most of us have seen lived out within the Roman Catholic Church, and some other denominations. For the sake of brevity we will refer to this as the 'prevailing' model, as it has been the prevailing ecclesial model for most of us within our life time. (It is recognized that some individual bishops have embodied this model to a greater or lesser extent. The intent here is to discuss the model, not any individual office holder within the model.) The bishop of a diocese in the prevailing model functions within a system of centralized, hierarchical authority. They are essentially middle managers in a top down, centralized system. They serve at the pleasure of a higher authority (e.g., the pope). That is, the bishop is put into the position by the higher authority, and can be removed from the position only by the higher authority. The bishop of a diocese in the prevailing model represents the higher authority to those below in the hierarchy. The role of the bishop is primarily administrative. His primary function is to maintain the stability of the organization through the enforcement of conformity. His teaching function is in many ways reduced to passing down the dogmas and doctrines which have been handed down from above. He is expected to curtail and limit the expression of diverse (particularly opposing) views among the people in his diocese. In most circumstances, he is powerless to do otherwise. Several simple examples serve to highlight this. 1) Over the recent past the Roman church in the US has implemented liturgical changes (i.e., the 'new wording' of the Mass); these changes have not been well received by many. Individual bishops have not had the authority to do anything but implement the changes that have been handed down from above. Not one bishop has done otherwise. 2) There have been examples over the past several years of bishops being removed from their offices in response to their voicing questions or objections to some

rule, such as the rules around who can be ordained. As a result of their position as a middle manager in a hierarchical system, they are relatively unfree to discern and respond to the 'sense of the faithful' in their particular geographic area or cultural circumstance.

2. Next, let us briefly offer a beginning discussion of a different model. For the sake of brevity we will call this the 'ECC model' (although it is recognized that this model has previously existed, and continues to exist in other contexts). This is the model of 'bishop' that has been aspired to by the founding communities of the ECC; it is the model that has been articulated, to varying degrees of detail, in the various ECC documents relating to the matter; it is the model that is lived out within Old Catholic Tradition, and some other denominations. (It is recognized that some individual bishops in these systems have embodied this model to a greater or lesser extent. The intent here is to discuss the model, not any individual office holder within those systems.) The bishop of a diocese in the ECC model exists within a system of de-centralized authority. They serve at the pleasure of the people who are served, having been elected to their office by those whom they serve (i.e., the laity and clergy of the diocese). They have term limits, and mechanisms to be removed from office if in the judgment of those served they are not serving adequately. The bishop of a diocese in the ECC model is essentially a servant leader. Their role is primarily pastoral. They facilitate the relationships between communities within the diocese, functioning as an initiator, facilitator and reconciler of common unity. (The bishop of a diocese in the ECC model also represents the diocese in their relationship with other dioceses – the voice and presence of the people of this diocese in relationship with the people of other dioceses.) Since each ECC diocese is an autonomous member of the confederation of the ECC (Hickman, 2012a), the local bishop is less constrained by a centralized authority. The constraints on a diocesan bishop in the ECC model are those which have been entered into by mutual agreement of the concerned parties – e.g., the parameters of the ECC constitution, and the diocesan constitution, as developed in mutual dialogue and agreement between all of the baptized – laity, clergy and bishop. A bishop in the ECC model functions within the parameters of these mutual agreements (rather than unilaterally), for the good of the diocese and the good of the Communion. If circumstances develop which indicate some modification of the agreements may be in order, these are sought through the normal legislative processes at the diocesan or

communion synods. Therefore, a bishop in the ECC model is in a position of greater freedom (as compared to a bishop in the prevailing model) to discern the movement of the Spirit, in cooperation with all of the baptized, and be responsive to the 'sense of the faithful' in their particular geographic area or cultural circumstance.

3. Beyond language: While human language is very helpful, it can also be limiting. Many words carry a denotative meaning (the definition one might find in a dictionary) and a connotative meaning (an added meaning or different emphasis based upon the context – both the context in which words are currently used, and prior contexts in which the words have been used). For many of us who have lived our lives in the context of the prevailing model, when we hear the words 'diocese' and 'bishop,' certain images come to mind. These images reflect connotative meaning. The words carry emotional overtones (which may be relatively positive or negative) based upon our prior experiences. Few, if any, of us hear the words 'diocese' and 'bishop' neutrally. At least for those of us who have significant prior experience in the prevailing model, our image of 'diocese' is of a relatively large number of parishes organized in a hierarchical manner. Some dioceses in the prevailing model have hundreds of individual parishes. Similarly, as noted above, within the prevailing model the bishop is the central administrator and principle authority figure of the diocese, within a centralized, hierarchical system. Due to the sheer size of the diocese the bishop will not be able to have a meaningful pastoral relationship with the vast majority of people within it in fact, most of the individuals in the diocese will never even meet the bishop. And, in many cases, the bishop may not even have the capacity to have a meaningful pastoral relationship with the clergy of the diocese.

Within the ECC model, we have very different conceptions of 'diocese' and 'bishop.' Thus, it is important to recognize the connotations of these words/concepts that we might bring to this conversation, and try to set these aside as we look more closely at the ECC model. In brief, within the ECC model we value relationships – personal and pastoral. And, we aspire to relative smallness, in order to facilitate personal and pastoral relationships. Within the ECC, the local church or diocese can be thought of as an extended family, not a large institutional bureaucracy. We want each person to have the opportunity to participate; we want each person to have a voice. This is only possible in smaller contexts. Thus, the intent is for each ECC diocese, or local church, to be small enough to allow for

meaningful relationships between the communities, and between each community and the bishop. And, we believe that all of the baptized have a right to have easy access to their bishop (Farris, 2007, p. 31). Most of the regular participants should, over time, be able to develop a relationship with the bishop. "They and their bishop should have enough contact with each other in order to develop a personal relationship of mutual understanding and trust" (Hickman, 2012c, p. 4). Finally, within the ECC model, the bishop has a different role and different functions as compared to the prevailing model. As noted above, the bishop of an ECC diocese is essentially a servant leader. Their role is primarily pastoral (Farris, 2007, p. 26). They engage in their pastoral activities (e.g., sacramental ministry, teaching, oversight, etc.) in a spirit of loving service, and in the context of personal relationships. They facilitate the relationships between communities within the diocese, work at building consensus, and serve the common unity. And, they represent the members of the diocese to other diocese, and to the larger Communion.

As the terms 'diocese' and 'bishop' can be laden with connotative meaning for many of us, which may impede our understanding of their meaning within the context of the ECC, some have suggested that we abandon the terms altogether, and use other terms. For example, some are using the term 'local church' or 'regional church' in the place of 'diocese.' Time will see how this unfolds. For now, it is important to remind ourselves that while the same words may be used, they carry different connotative meanings within the ECC model as compared to the prevailing model. It is just a simple fact, which we would all do well to remember, that a diocese and a bishop in the ECC model are not the same as a diocese and a bishop in the prevailing model.

The Polity of the ECC

While some of what follows may be a bit redundant with what is mentioned above, it is helpful to briefly review some key aspects of the polity of the ECC. 'Polity' is a term commonly used in reference to church organizations which simply means the way the organization is structured and how it functions. Thus, polity addresses the simple questions: How is the ECC organized? How does it make decisions? Etc. What follows is a brief review of key points. Many of these points are contained in the ECC constitution, discussed in Rev. Jim Farris' article, *Unity and Peace,* and in several *Pastoral Letters* from Bishop Peter.

References to these documents are provided at the end of this manuscript, and the interested reader is referred to those sources for greater detail.

A. As noted above, the ECC is a non-hierarchical communion. Authority is shared throughout the communion, and within each community. Key leaders (e.g., bishop of a diocese, pastor of a parish) are not appointed by an outside authority, but elected by the people whom they serve. The bishop, in turn credentials (and if necessary, ordains) the one(s) that the people have called to sacramental ministry within the local community. So, from the outset, it is helpful to note that the ECC is organized and functions in a way that is radically different than the prevailing model.

B. The ECC affirms and functions with the principle of subsidiarity. (Subsidiarity is an organizing principle of decentralization, stating that a matter ought to be handled by the smallest, lowest, or least centralized authority capable of addressing that matter effectively. The _Oxford English Dictionary_ defines subsidiarity as _the idea that a central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level_.) Therefore, rather than key decisions being made 'from above,' and being imposed on those 'below,' within the ECC key decisions are made at the least centralized context capable of addressing that matter effectively. This may be within the context of a committee of a community; a community as a whole; a region or cluster of communities; etc. As a practical matter, it is recognized that some situations or issues are sufficiently complex that they may require involvement and interaction across several contexts; e.g., a committee of a local community may need the involvement of a diocesan committee, the diocesan bishop, etc., to clarify existing policies and priorities as they relate to the issue at hand. (NOTE: While the terms 'above' and 'below' are somewhat helpful in explaining the principle of subsidiarity, they imply a hierarchical arrangement or structure. It is the vision and intention of the ECC to function in a non-hierarchical manner, with decisions made by the people who will be most immediately impacted by the consequences of the decision.) McBrien notes that "the excessive centralization of authority is the antithesis of this principle of subsidiarity" (1994, p.174). The principle of subsidiarity has been affirmed in numerous ECC documents. For example, in a recent Pastoral Letter Bishop Peter noted: "It is of utmost importance that the principle of subsidiarity be upheld in the Ecumenical Catholic Communion" (2012b, p. 5).

C. As a practical matter, the ECC ascribes to the value that, relatively speaking, small is good. This is a simple idea, but one that we have found is countercultural. It needs to be stated and explained. When someone first learns of an ECC community, one of the first questions commonly asked is 'how many members do you have?' And, in ensuing dialogue, it often becomes evident that folks tend to equate size with quality – the more members, the better it must be. This value, 'bigger is better,' is a bias in our culture. As a culture we value bigger schools, hospitals, businesses, etc. These allow for 'economies of scale.' Perhaps bigger is better in some contexts, but we have found that this is not the case with respect to faith communities.

This is admittedly a process of balancing competing values. Experience has shown that larger groups have a larger pool of talent to solve problems, develop ministries and share the workload; a community with 2000 members is likely to have a more dynamic choir than one with 50 members! Yet, as size increases, fewer members have genuine opportunities to participate, and many adopt passive postures. On the other hand, the smaller the group, the greater the likelihood of full participation. While there are no specific guidelines, most of our local communities have a bias toward being relatively smaller as opposed to relatively larger. We have found that this facilitates depth of relationship among our participants, depth of spiritual experience in our communal prayer experiences, more opportunities for each individual to participate, and a more meaningful community fabric. Similarly, it is part of the vision of the ECC to have relatively fewer as opposed to relatively greater numbers of communities in a diocese. This allows more meaningful relationship between communities; and between each community and its bishop. Certainly the bias within the ECC is against dioceses with large numbers of communities (Hickman, 2012c), as one commonly finds in the prevailing model.

D. There is an attempt, in every dimension of the ECC, to allow for the unique voice of three distinct groups to be heard, and for those voices to be harmonized wherever possible. The three distinct voices are those of the laity, the clergy, and the bishop. Across the broad dimension of the communion, as communion, this is accomplished through the separate voices of the House of Laity (HOL), the House of Pastors (HOP) and the Episcopal Council (EC). At the level of a diocese, this is accomplished in a similar manner -- through the formation of a diocesan Synod, which includes a diocesan House of Laity, House of Pastors,

and the diocesan bishop. At the parish level, this may be organized in a variety of ways, and indeed there are various ways it is being done within the Communion at this point in time. However, in all cases, the intent is to give independent voice to all three groups, and to harmonize those voices in major decision making. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE: In every dimension of the ECC, then, there is the distinct voice of the laity. All of the baptized have the opportunity for direct participation within all contexts of the communion, including the local, diocesan and Communion-wide contexts. It is understood that in some situations this may involve direct participation, and in others it may involve representative participation through the action of elected delegates or representatives.

Some have noted the similarity between this ecclesial model and the Trinity – that the trinity contains 3 distinct persons (or, if one prefers, 3 distinct roles or voices) – Father, Son, Spirit; or, if you will, creator, redeemer, sanctifier. And, similarly, the ECC strives to preserve and harmonize 3 distinct energies, 3 distinct voices – laity, clergy, bishop (Farris, 2007, p. 23; Hickman, 2012c, p. 5). Neither has priority over the other; neither trumps the other. They live in harmony, one with the other, and (ideally) form a unity which is beyond our understanding. In the end, this unity is the manifestation of the divine: "The mystery is Christ among us, our hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). This is radically different than a hierarchical model.

E. At all levels within the ECC, leadership is selected by those who will be served (Farris, 2007, p. 30), and not imposed from outside or 'above.' Local communities select their pastors through a process which they themselves determine. Clusters of communities, or a diocese, select their bishop, through a process which those at the diocesan level determine. And, as recently reaffirmed in the Pastoral Letter, *Chosen By All (2013),* the Presiding Bishop is elected by all within the Communion. This is done in a manner outlined in the ECC constitution, and guided by the elected officers of the House of Laity and the House of Pastors. In all cases, bishops are elected with term limits. A diocesan bishop may serve 2 consecutive six year terms; a presiding bishop may serve 3 consecutive four year terms. In short, leadership is not imposed from outside the context; rather, leadership is elected by all concerned; with all of the baptized (including the laity) having an active voice and a significant role!

While this approach may seem foreign, and perhaps radically new, it is not. In fact, it is characteristic of the way Catholic churches have functioned through much of history. In Apostolic times, when the community required additional Apostolic service, the community selected Matthias to replace Judas (Acts 2:21-26); and, when the community required additional ministerial service, the community selected seven individuals from among themselves, whom the Apostles subsequently affirmed and commissioned through 'the laying of hands' (Acts 6:1-8). These seven are often regarded as the first deacons of the tradition. St. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (248-258) emphasized that the bishop should be elected by all the faithful, and that he attributed his own election to "the voice of the people" (Sullivan, 2001, p. 202). Summarizing Cyprian's thoughts on the matter, O'Callaghan noted: "The right of all the faithful to participate in the election of the bishop rests on God's own authority and the custom followed from the time of the Apostles" (2007, p. 16). And, in reference to general trend of Church governance in 250 A.D, McBrien noted: "The whole Church community took part in the election of bishops and the choice of ministers. Even though the early Church already possessed a firm canonical structure, it also wanted to be ready for any movement prompted by the Holy Spirit. And so the intervention of the laity was welcomed as a matter of principle" (1994, pp. 744-745). In 398, the people and clergy were unanimous in electing John Chrysostom bishop of Constantinople. Pope Celestine I (422-432) stated "no one should be made a bishop over the unwilling; the consent and desire of the clergy and the people is required." Pope Leo I (440-461) declared that "no one should be made a bishop unless he was "elected by the clergy, demanded by the people, and consecrated by the provincial bishops.

In reference to Church governance across the first 1000 years, Cline noted: "During the first millennium of Christianity, the norm was for bishops in any diocese to be elected by both the people and the priests — the bishop of Rome was no exception." Although space precludes a thorough review of this history, suffice it to say that the process of selecting bishops gradually changed through the early and high middle ages as the organization of the church gradually overlapped with the organization of the empire; as the office of bishop assumed power within both the church and political systems; as emperors at times took over the authority to appoint bishops; and, eventually, as the bishop of Rome coopted this authority for himself. (For a more detailed discussion, see Farris, 2007, pp. 7-13; and O'Callaghan, 2007).

F. The essential first building block of the ECC is the local faith community, or parish. It is within the local community that primary relationships are formed, the message of God's mercy and compassion are proclaimed and enfleshed, the Eucharist is celebrated, new members are baptized, and those at the margins are touched and invited into the family of God. Within the ECC, each local faith community is incorporated as a 'not for profit entity' within its state or legal jurisdiction, and as such is responsible for its common life. Consistent with the ECC constitution, the intent is that each community has a meaningful relationship with other communities within its geographic region, and each community has a meaningful relationship with their bishop (whether the bishop of its diocese, or the Presiding Bishop).

G. The next basic building block of the ECC is the 'local church' or diocese, which includes all of the baptized – laity, clergy and bishop. As Bishop Peter noted in the Pastoral Letter, *The Local Church*: "The local church is constituted whole, full and complete with these three elements – yet remains part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic church" (2012b, p. 1). It is within the diocese that local communities form more meaningful relationships with one another; offer and receive mutual support in living out the common call to holiness, and to be the Body of Christ in the world; join together to more meaningfully witness to the message of God's mercy and compassion; and reach out beyond themselves in mission and ministry to the poor, the disenfranchised and the marginalized. It has been suggested in various ECC documents that the organization of ECC dioceses be of sufficient size to allow for personal relationships between communities, and between each community and their bishop. For example, Bishop Peter recently observed: "Our dioceses are relational, like a family, so that the bishop is like a spiritual mother/father, with members of the family that are both mature and young, seasoned and beginner…" (2012a, p. 2). Like a hologram, each fully constituted diocese contains all that is essential and necessary for an autonomous community of faith in the Catholic tradition (e.g., active/participating laity; sacramental spirituality; ministry of priest and bishop; in union with the larger church, and the longstanding tradition).

H. While the ECC is still young, and has not yet evolved to the point where the vision is implemented, the ultimate vision of the ECC is of a network of semi-autonomous dioceses. The model is non-hierarchical -- all dioceses are self-governing, within the parameters of the ECC constitution. Each diocese is on equal footing with each other diocese.   Some have noted that this vision reflects and is an exercise of non-duality. No diocese exerts authority

over any other diocese. There is no overarching superstructure or higher authority that trumps or dictates to the local church. As Bishop Peter notes: "Our dioceses are autonomous members of our confederation – the Ecumenical Catholic Communion. This means that, while conforming to the ECC constitution, they will each create their own separate diocesan synod, elect their own bishop, and create a pastoral plan to fit the needs of their own diocese" (2012a, p. 2). Each diocese, being fully constituted, maintains relationships with all other dioceses, and with the Communion as a whole.

Imagery of the Bishop

I.   Bishop of each ECC diocese as 'Servant Leader'

A.   There has been a burgeoning field which cuts across a number of disciplines known as 'Leadership Studies.' Briefly, this field describes, analyzes and teaches about various models of leadership. One model of leadership is particularly well suited for the role of a bishop within the ECC. In fact, it is the leadership style that, for the most part, our bishops currently embody, whether they are fully aware of this area of study or not. The leadership model has been described as 'Servant Leader.'

The concept of servant leader is not a new one. It dates back across time. It is referenced by Jesus in several passages, including the quote which is the title of this manuscript:

> "*The kings of the nations hold power over their people. And those who order them around call themselves Protectors. But you must not be like that. Instead, the most important among you should be like the youngest. The one who rules should be like the one who serves. Who is more important? Is it the one at the table, or the one who serves? Isn't it the one who is at the table? But here I am among you as one who serves*" (Luke 22: 25-27).

While this is not a new concept, 'Servant Leadership' has had a rebirth of sorts. The model of 'Servant Leadership' was first proposed by Robert Greenleaf in a seminal article entitled *The Servant as Leader* (Greenleaf, 1970; See also, Greenleaf, 2002, 2003; Fraker and Spears, 1996). Since Greenleaf's initial article, it has grown to be one of the most widely used

leadership models in a variety of fields – in education, medicine, business, nonprofit organizations, and some church organizations.

Servant leadership, as discussed by Greenleaf and colleagues, is both a leadership philosophy and set of leadership practices. Leadership has traditionally been described as either autocratic, participative, or laissez-faire. Servant leadership is participative in nature. The servant approach to leadership calls for a rethinking of the traditional hierarchical relationship between the leader and those led. The servant-leader shares power, puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible. This includes delegating responsibility and engaging in participative decision-making. [For more information about Servant Leadership, see: https://greenleaf.org/what-is-servant-leadership/].

Two key aspects of Servant Leadership which are relevant for this discussion include: 1) the focus of the servant leader, and 2) the impact of the servant leader on those led. The focus of the servant leader is primarily on the growth and well-being of the people and communities which they serve. Their first priority is the promotion of the functioning and/or satisfaction of others, individually and collectively (i.e., employees, volunteers, committee members, communities, etc.); in our context, this includes the spiritual development of those served. The highest priority of a servant leader is to encourage, support and enable others to unfold their full potential and abilities.

And, as a consequence, the impact of a competent servant leader can typically gradually be seen in those that they serve. Perhaps we might ask it this way: Are those who are being served growing as persons? Are there discernable positive impacts upon those served? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, more engaged, and more likely themselves to become servants? And, within the context of a spiritual community, we might ask it this way: Are those who are being served, while participating in the community, experiencing spiritual growth, and all that goes with that? Do they experience a more profound sense of reconciliation, wholeness, and unity with themselves, each other, and God? Do they find themselves experiencing the 'gifts of the spirit'? Do they begin to exhibit a desire to move beyond themselves in service of one another, and of those around them in need?

In short, a competent successful servant leader puts their focus primarily on those served rather than on themselves; and, perhaps paradoxically, usually becomes a powerful leaven which stimulates healing, reconciliation, and growth in and among those served.

B. Recently, Spears (2010) reviewed the extant literature and identified ten characteristics of a Servant Leader. According to Spears, a competent successful Servant Leader exhibits the following characteristics:

1. **Listening:** The servant leader seeks to identify the will of a group and to clarify that will. He or she listens receptively to what is being said and unsaid. Listening also encompasses hearing one's own inner voice. Listening, coupled with periods of reflection, is essential to the growth and well-being of the servant leader.

2. **Empathy**: The servant leader strives to understand and empathize with others. People need to be accepted and recognized for their special and unique spirits. One assumes the good intentions of co-workers and colleagues and does not reject them as people, even when one may be forced to refuse to accept certain behaviors or performance.

3. **Healing:** One of the great strengths of servant leadership is the potential for healing one's self and one's relationship to others. Many people have broken spirits and have suffered from a variety of emotional hurts. Servant leaders recognize that they have an opportunity to help make whole those with whom they come in contact. In his essay, *The Servant as Leader*, Greenleaf (1970/2002) writes, "There is something subtle communicated to one who is being served and led if, implicit in the compact between servant-leader and led, is the understanding that the search for wholeness is something they share" (p. 50).

4. **Awareness:** General awareness, and especially self-awareness, strengthens the servant-leader. Awareness helps one in understanding issues involving ethics, power, and values. It lends itself to being able to view most situations from a more integrated, holistic position. As Greenleaf (1970/2002) observed: "Awareness is not a giver of solace—it is just the opposite. It is a disturber and an awakener. Able leaders are usually sharply

awake and reasonably disturbed. They are not seekers after solace. They have their own inner serenity" (p. 41).

5. **Persuasion:** Another characteristic of servant leaders is reliance on persuasion, rather than on one's positional authority, in making decisions within an organization. This element offers one of the clearest distinctions between the traditional authoritarian model and that of servant leadership. The servant leader is effective at building consensus within groups.

6. **Conceptualization:** Servant leaders dream great dreams. The ability to look at a problem or an organization from a conceptualizing perspective means that one must think beyond day-to-day realities. For many leaders, this is a characteristic that requires discipline and practice. The traditional leader is consumed by the need to achieve short-term operational goals. The leader who wishes to also be a servant leader must stretch his or her thinking to encompass broader-based conceptual thinking. Servant leaders are called to seek a delicate balance between conceptual thinking and a day-to-day operational approach.

7. **Foresight**: Closely related to conceptualization, the ability to foresee the likely outcome of a situation is hard to define, but easier to identify. One knows foresight when one experiences it. Foresight is a characteristic that enables the servant leader to understand the lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequence of a decision for the future. It is also deeply rooted within the intuitive mind.

8. **Stewardship:** Greenleaf's view of all institutions was one in which leaders, staffs, and trustees all played significant roles in holding their institutions in trust for the greater good of society. Servant leadership, like stewardship, assumes first and foremost a commitment to serving the needs of others. It also emphasizes the use of openness and persuasion, rather than control.

9. **Commitment to the Growth of People:** The servant leader is deeply committed to the growth of each and every individual within his or her organization. The servant leader recognizes the tremendous responsibility to do everything in his or her power to nurture

the personal and professional growth of those who are led (e.g., employees, colleagues, volunteers, etc.).

10. **Building Community:** The servant leader seeks to identify means for building community among those who work within a given institution or participate within a given service organization. Servant leadership suggests that true community can be created among those who work in businesses and other institutions.

C. While it is beyond the scope of the current manuscript to examine these in detail, the competent successful servant leader in the role of a diocesan bishop within the ECC will also exhibit the following qualities:

1. **Administrative Competence:** An ECC diocesan bishop, in cooperation with other lay and clergy members of the diocese who have such expertise, assumes and/or oversees a variety of administrative activities. These include, but are not limited to: ensuring that the diocese conforms to the legal requirements of the local jurisdiction; ensuring that the diocese conforms to the parameters of the Communion's constitution and polity; processing and acting upon requests from existing or developing communities to become member communities of the diocese; processing and acting upon requests for incardination from clergy of other jurisdictions; overseeing the screening, formation and ordination of new clergy; overseeing the financial matters of the diocese, etc. In many instances some or all of these functions will be delegated to others. Yet, as the Ordinary of the diocese, the diocesan bishop has ultimate responsibility to provide servant leadership in these areas. While the role of the diocesan bishop is primarily pastoral rather than administrative, administrative competence is necessary to serve a diocese as its bishop.

2. **Teaching Competence:** An ECC diocesan bishop, in cooperation with other lay and clergy members of the diocese who have such expertise, provides those in the diocese servant leadership in the area of teaching. This includes teaching the fundamentals of the Way of Jesus, the path of the Gospel; teaching the fundamentals of the Catholic tradition; teaching the fundamentals of the ECC polity and practices; teaching methods

of prayer and spiritual growth, etc. The ECC diocesan bishop also oversees the teaching of others.   Thus, teaching competence is necessary to serve a diocese as its bishop.

3. **Liturgical Competence:** An ECC diocesan bishop is ordinarily the principal celebrant of the liturgical gatherings of the diocese. In cooperation with other lay and clergy members of the diocese who have such expertise, an ECC diocesan bishop should have competence in planning and implementing a range of liturgical celebrations, including weekly community gathering, confirmations, ordinations, funerals, and special circumstance events. Thus, liturgical competence is necessary to serve a diocese as its bishop.

While the Greenleaf model of Servant Leadership has been developed and utilized primarily in secular contexts, the underlying value system which it reflects is quite consistent with the values of the Gospel. An ideal Servant Leader, as Greenleaf and his colleagues conceptualize this, has much in common with the modeling and teaching of Jesus. Thus, Greenleaf's model, as summarized in the preceding characteristics, provides a useful lens through which to consider the role of a diocesan bishop within the context of the ECC polity. It is acknowledged that these are aspirational qualities; not all current or future ECC bishops will exhibit all of these qualities. Yet, this paradigm can be a helpful beginning way to think about the desirable qualities of an ECC diocesan bishop; and point out a path which existing or future ECC bishops can pursue to develop their own leadership skills in a manner consistent with the Gospel, and consistent with the approach the ECC takes toward its polity, i.e., its organizational structure and function.

II.   Bishop as an 'Alter Christus'? A reimaging for our time...

A. The Catholic tradition is a sacramental tradition. As such, it has always believed, taught and practiced that God expresses God's self through form and matter; and that this expression is real, and meaningful. This is most evident in the Incarnation, where God took on form and matter in the person of Jesus. Our common prayer is heavily sacramental, and uses a multitude of physical forms to represent and express God's presence and God's action – water, fire, smoke, oil, bread, wine, etc. It is from within this sacramental understanding of our Catholic tradition that the bishop has been referred to as an 'alter christus' – another Christ. Through the form of the bishop, Christ is present to us in one particular way; just as

God makes God's self present to us in other particular ways (e.g., the Community as Body of Christ, the individual Christian, bread, wine, water, fire, oil, etc.).

B. At certain times, and in certain contexts of Christian tradition, the concept of the bishop as an 'alter christus' has been distorted and misused. In some contexts, the bishop has been held out as one who is above and beyond normal people; more God like than human. Therefore, the bishop was to be revered, deferred to, served and obeyed. This approach develops and maintains both a hierarchical, dominative organizational structure and a clerical mentality of superiority. Some have expressed the opinion that this mentality has resulted in some bishops coming to think of themselves as above others, and even above the civil law. Additionally, the concept of the bishop as an 'alter christus' has been used by some to argue that a bishop (and a priest) must be a male. This argument devalues the place of women in the faith community, and results in a distorted, oppressive model of ordained ministry.

C. Given all of this, some suggest that within the ECC we do away with the concept of 'alter christus' – that it serves no purpose; that it does more harm than good. However, one's understanding of 'alter christus' is a reflection of the underlying spiritual model out of which one is operating. A hierarchical, centralized model suggests one way of thinking of 'alter christus.' A non-hierarchical, servant leader model suggests an entirely different way of thinking of 'alter christus.'

D. With this in mind, perhaps this concept might be reimaged. Spiritual masters through the ages have noted that it is the destiny of each one, and all of us, to become an 'alter christus.' Our spiritual journey, our conversion, has a direction and a goal – we are being transformed in all ways into Christ: "For anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old creation has gone, and the new one is here. It is all God's work" (2 Cor. 5:17). The final common pathway, toward which we are all invited and drawn, is the path of divinization (2 Pt. 1:4). We are being invited to allow the Spirit of Love to transform us into what we already are; to allow what is already hidden deep within to spring forth – our participation in the divine (Col 3:11; 1 John 4:16; 2 John 2). You are called to be 'alter christus.' I am called to be 'alter christus.' We are each invited into participation in divine love, and to live from the Christ

presence within each of us: "There is only Christ; who is everything, and in everything (Col 3:11).

Perhaps, then, this might become a point of continued, deep reflection – for all of us, particularly for those in leadership within our Communion, and especially our bishops. From the perspective of a non-hierarchical, synodal model, an 'alter christus' can be thought of as one among many; a fallible human being among fallible human beings; and distinguished most of all by their lived experience over time:

1) of living the Way of Jesus, and as a result, of having experienced some degree of conversion in their lives (including recognition of their shortcomings, and emerging from that, increasing humility, forgiveness and compassion);

2) of exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit in their lives (e.g., love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control, Gal. 5:22-23);

3) of being recognized as one who is quick to reach out to others in service;

4) as one who is relatively Christ like in their values, choices, relationships and behaviors;

5) and therefore as one who is in a position of being a wise and helpful guide and mentor to others along this same path.

In the non-hierarchical, synodal model which the ECC affirms and lives, evidence of being an 'alter christus' may be one way of thinking about who might be suitable to serve a diocese as its bishop, as its servant leader. Church historians have noted that in the early Church, bishops were primarily spiritual masters. They were elected by the people to serve as bishop precisely because they were holy men, and master spiritual teachers. They exhibited evidence of being an 'alter christus' in their words and their actions. It is out of this spiritual depth and holiness that the other functions of a bishop – teaching and sacramental ministry – are most fruitful.

It is understood that this is an aspirational value; one toward which all committed followers of Jesus aspire. Even the most Christ-like among us have room for further spiritual growth and transformation. Yet, to have real, live, flesh and blood models among us, as humble, spiritually mature servant leaders, is a remarkable thing.

Conclusion

The ECC has experienced significant growth since the Communion was founded over 10 years ago. As a result there has been an emerging need to evolve a somewhat different form of organizational structure – away from a national Communion primarily under the pastoral leadership of the Presiding Bishop, toward an international network of semi-autonomous dioceses, each having their own synodal structure and episcopal leadership, yet remaining in meaningful relationship with one another. While this will be somewhat different for us than our recent experience, this is in fact the model that was envisioned by the founders of the Communion. As a result, within the Communion's constitution, and some other key documents, there are helpful thoughts to guide us in this development. The current circumstances have provided us the opportunity to consider more carefully the role and function of 'diocesan bishop' within the ECC polity, as compared to alternative models of polity with which some of us have been familiar.

Within this manuscript an attempt has been made to highlight some of the fundamental differences between the ECC polity and other hierarchical models of church structure and function; the implications of these differences in the organization of a diocese, and the role, function and spirituality of a diocesan bishop. It has been suggested that a diocesan bishop within the ECC model function primarily as a Servant Leader, in imitation of Jesus, being among us as one who serves. This approach has implications for the spirituality of the diocesan bishop, and the practical living out of the life of bishop among us. As was noted at the outset, as a communion we are only beginning this journey. No doubt, as we progress, we will learn from our experiences and refine our approach. This reflection is seen, then, as one voice in an ongoing and unfolding dialogue. It is anticipated that additional voices will be heard!

This is, indeed, an exciting time among us, as we anticipate and witness the further unfolding of this truly remarkable, miraculous thing the Spirit of Love is doing in our midst! May the One who has begun this good work among us bring it to fulfillment!

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