

Father Richard P. McBrien

Essays in Theology



A lesson from Donald Regan

Sometimes even the business sections of major newspapers and magazines contain material that is pastorally relevant.

The March 8th issue of the Sunday New York Times, for example, has an article on the downfall of former White House chief of staff Donald T. Regan: "Why Businessmen Fail in Government," by James M. Kouzes, director of the Executive Development Center at Santa Clara University.

Kouzes' thesis is that Regan failed because he tried to run the White House as a chief executive officer would run a corporation. The "dominant principle" of most large corporations, he writes, is in "direct conflict with the dynamics of democratic governance."

In the business world, management asserts its influence and control over a company "by using its hierarchical organization . . . Authority relationships," Kouzes notes, "must be clear and explicit, and power flows from the top to bottom."

But the government is not a corporation. "The cardinal rule in our society holds that the government derives its legitimacy from the consent of the governed." Elected officials and their staffs are servants, not masters, of the people.

According to Kouzes, Regan failed to understand that the President of the United States is responsible to numerous and often competing constituencies. He has to consider the legitimate concerns of those who consent to be governed.

"There is, therefore, no disloyalty involved in expressing opinions that are opposed to the president's. On the contrary, it is essential that those opinions be heard for a democracy to govern effectively," he writes.

In a democracy, those with opposing points of view are not the competition, a group to be defeated. Rather, they must be seen as "potential collaborators working toward a common goal."

Regan and his staff also failed to realize that the system of shared powers depends on negotiation and compromise, unlike a corporation in which employees or customers are not involved in important policy decisions.

"Furthermore, successful negotiators know that the process depends on listening to the other side's position rather than on reiterating one's own views. Above all," the author continues, "secrecy, disinformation and autocratic rule have no place in the functioning of a representative democracy."

All too often, according to Kouzes, Regan was seen as "delivering thunderbolts . . . rather than coordinating and facilitating the discussions that form the basis of consensus."

Although Donald Regan did not make a successful transition from the corporate world to the world of democratic government, others have. Those who have succeeded are people who accept the legitimacy of opposing views, who learn how to build consensus and negotiate with opponents, and who let go of the master role and adopt that of the civil servant.

Kouzes and two colleagues have surveyed more than 5,000 public and private managers across the United States. Their research shows that "admirable leaders were almost always described as possessing these four qualities: honesty, competence, the ability to be forward-looking and the capacity to inspire." Taken together, these qualities constitute what communications experts call credibility, and Kouzes argues that credibility is the foundation of all leadership.

"Credibility," he concludes, "is earned minute by minute, and year by year. If not carefully tended, it can be lost in short order. And when leaders have used up their credibility, they discover that it is nearly impossible to win it back."

The Church is not a corporation either. It is the People of God. The whole Church, not just its pastoral officials, has responsibility for its mission.

There are many different kinds of people in the Church, belonging to different nations, races, economic groups, sexes and the like. Each had a right to be heard. Legitimate differences have to be respected (Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 13).

When members of the People of God differ with the views and policies of their pastoral officials, that is not in itself a sign of disloyalty. Those who differ are not to be seen as the competition, as a group that must be defeated. They are "potential collaborators working toward a common goal."

Before all else, pastoral officials must be credible. But credibility is something earned, not conferred by ordination or appointment. And it is something that, once lost, is very difficult to recover.

Ideologues make bad political judgments, as the Iran-Contra affair has shown. They also make bad pastoral judgments; they forget that the people are the Church.

To serve people rather than an institution, one needs pastoral wisdom, not ideology.

Father Paul J. Cuddy

On the Right Side



Faith and charity alive

To Father Robert MacNamara, Corning:

Well, the March 18-26 stint at your St. Vincent's was a success. Your people were wonderfully welcoming. Young Father Pat Connor and Father John Murphy were the perfect hosts. And with Father Rogers coming from Painted Post to celebrate the noon-day Lenten Mass, we had lunch together, recalling our seminary days.

Three frostings on the fraternity cake: One was a night Father Bill Burns came from Waverly and entertained us with his waggish observations. The second was the night Father Tom Brennan came from St. Mary's. The third was visiting Father Joe Hogan at St. Joseph's Hospital the day of his surgery. I was astounded at the beautiful reconstruction of St. Joseph's. Shortsville should be proud of its townswoman, Sister Martha Gersbach.

Did you know that I have engaged Father Tom Brennan to preach at my funeral? I can be sure he won't give one of those "pre-canonization sermons," parking me at the right hand of God and indicating to the congregation, "He has no need of prayers." I know my sins and meannesses, and look forward to the joys and sufferings of purgatory with equanimity. When those righteous, "Are-you-saved?" people act so certain of their salvation, I just grunt: "Like St. Paul, I am working out my salvation in fear and trembling, with simple trust in the redemptive graces from the Precious Blood of Our Lord." They have deaf ears and one-track minds; they have no idea what I am saying, nor are they interested.

Have you speculated about the mind of Jim Bakker, so confident of salvation, yet so enmeshed in evil? I wonder at those self-righteous folk who are so denunciatory about his one-time tumble in the hay a long seven years ago. It has always puzzled me that God so loved that King David, with his catalogue of sins. But He did. It seems to me the worst thing about this Bakker thing is that he lives the life of luxury while preaching Christ crucified. I probably feel stronger about this after just finishing reading *The City of Joy* by Dominique Lapiere. The book is about a Polish priest, Father Stephen Kavalski, who left France to live with the inhabitants of a huge Calcutta slum. And still lives there! It is somewhat inconsis-

tent that I was sad about the hunger and filth of the slum while I was enjoying the treats Teresa and Irene had baked for me, feeding me like a sheep being readied for market.

It was edifying to find 250 to 300 people at daily Lenten Mass. And what fine altar boys you have. I did not know Sister Raymond Joseph was so competent an organist. I smiled as she played melodies before the Bulckley funeral — hymns everyone knew and loved 20 years ago — and intertwined tenderly came the strains of "Come Back to Erin," which had been requested by the family. I think any couple married 66 years is entitled to special consideration, though (diocesan liturgy director) Father Mull might not approve.

How cruel are those who took over control of music after Vatican II. They abruptly suppressed traditional devotional hymns which everyone knew and loved. For what? Second-rate "songs" in missalettes, hardly known and indifferently tolerated by the helpless faithful. Why, they even changed the specific "hymn" to the generic term "song," which includes "Clancy's Wooden Wedding" and the "Beer Barrel Polka." I hope these vandals will be on the other side of purgatory from me. Your people can be grateful for the quality music your choir gives.

Almost the highlight of my tour was on Sunday after the children's Mass. I went over to the school, and admired Father Connor's Bible class. Then I went to greet the children in each of the six CCD classes. Then a happy shock! I stopped in the library where a nice young librarian and Sister Barbara Weyand were charging out one book to each fourth-grader. Each book was the life story of some saint. They said: "Each child will bring in a written book report next Sunday." The religious article store that I set up in the vestibule had good patronage. Most popular were the children's books on different saints. Isn't it healthy for our youngsters to have such role models?

Well, greetings to Tony Decaprio, your cheerful maintenance man, and to secretary Carol and the factotum Eileen. Everyone contributed to a happy and successful week. And thank you for inviting me to share in your Corning apostolate.

Arthritis Foundation to offer six-week self-help course

The Arthritis Foundation, Genesee Valley Chapter, is offering a six-week self-help course to help arthritis patients take an active role in their health care. Instructors will emphasize the importance of exercise to keep

joints flexible and to build up strength. Pain management, relaxation and means of conserving energy will also be discussed.

Call the chapter office at (716)271-3540 for times and location.

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