***In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*,** Henri Nouwen, author

**Preparation for 3rd Quarterly Accountability Meeting**

**PART III**

***From Leading to Being Led***

**SECTION I – *The Temptation: To Be Powerful***

**Please reflect on the following section from Nouwen’s book and be prepared to answer the essential questions (EQs):**

***In the opening of the third part of his book, Nouwen shares with the reader how being in the L’Arche community challenged his understanding of leadership and self-confidence. Nouwen states******, “Without realizing it, the people I came to live with made me aware of the extent to which my leadership was still a desire to control complex situations, confused emotions, and anxious minds.”* (*Nouwen*, 74)**

**EQs:**

* How had Nouwen previously perceived his ability to offer leadership?
* What was different in the L’Arche community about how people responded to his leadership? How do those responses mirror responses of congregations?
* How did the people’s responses impact Nouwen’s view of leadership and what benefits did he reap from this shift in his perspective? How can a shift in our perspectives on leadership benefit us?

**Please reflect on the following quote from Nouwen’s book and be prepared to answer the EQ:**

***“Much Christian leadership is exercised by people who do not know how to develop healthy, intimate relationships and have opted for power and control instead.”* (*Nouwen*, 79)**

**EQ:**

* What are the dangers of power in ministry? How does power threaten or hinder the growth of intimacy? List one or two ways that power threatens the healthy growth of intimacy in ministry.

**Please be prepared to reflect on the following questions:**

**What was Jesus’ third temptation? How did he respond?**

**EQs:**

* What does Nouwen mean by the statement, “It seems easier to be God than to love God, easier to control people than to love people, easier to own life than to love life.” (Nouwen, 77)
* How have you dealt with the temptation and dangers of power in your ministry? Do you find yourself facing the same issues of power again and again, even in different congregations? How do you balance the tasks of pastoral leadership with growing healthy, intimate relationships with congregations, family, and friends?
* What, if any, positive benefits can result from power in ministry?

**SECTION II – *The Challenge: “Somebody Else Will Take You”***

**Please reflect on the following questions:**

How is Jesus’ vision of maturity different from the world’s vision? Why is that important in ministry?

How is Nouwen’s understanding of upward mobility in ministry different than the world’s view?

**EQs:**

* Do you find yourself striving to achieve Jesus’ vision of maturity in leadership? Has that journey been easy or difficult for you? Why?
* What does “upward mobility” mean to you? Do you agree with Nouwen’s assessment? What different abilities and gifts does one need to practice “downward mobility” in ministry? Do you have those? Are you striving to apprehend them?
* How does Nouwen define “powerlessness” and “humility” in the spiritual life? What does it look like in ministry to “abandon power in favor of love”? How do you practice that in your ministry? What makes your practice easy or difficult?

**SECTION III** – ***The Discipline:* Theological Reflection**

**Please reflect on the following questions:**

How does Nouwen suggest future leaders employ the discipline of theological reflection?

**EQs:**

* What does Nouwen mean when he states that “the future of Christian leadership…needs to be a theological leadership” (*Nouwen*, 90)? Do you agree with his assessment?
* Why is theological leadership important as a discipline for ministry?
* Why is theological leadership a “hard” discipline, according to Nouwen? Do you agree or disagree with his assessment?
* How do you, as a pastoral leader, discern how God acts in human history and how various events that occur during our lives make us more sensitive to the ways we are led to the cross and through the cross to the resurrection?
* Who and/or what practices help you reflect theologically? How often, during the week do you practice theological reflection, outside of preparing sermons? How often do you share non-sermonic theological reflections with your congregation?

**Nouwen makes several statements about the task of future Christian leaders to “identify and announce the ways in which Jesus is leading God’s people out of slavery, through the desert to a new land of freedom” (*Nouwen*, 87). Please be prepared to discuss these listed below and list at least three specific ways clergy members/pastors might become these leaders.**

**“Christian leaders have the arduous task of responding to personal struggles, family conflicts, national calamities, and international tensions with an articulate faith in God’s real presence. They have to say no to every form of fatalism, defeatism, accidentalism, or incidentalism that makes people believe that statistics are telling us the truth. They have to say no to every form of despair in which human life is seen as a pure matter of good or bad luck. They have to say no to sentimental attempts to make people develop a spirit of resignation or stoic indifference in the face of the unavoidability of pain, suffering, and death. They have to say no to the secular world and proclaim in unambiguous terms that the incarnation of God’s Word…has made even the smallest event of human history into *kairos*, that is, an opportunity to be led deeper into the heart of Christ.” (*Nouwen*, 87-88)**

**“A Christian leader is called to help people hear the soft, gentle, and loving voice of God and so be comforted and consoled.” (*Nouwen*, 88-90)**

**“The Christian leaders of the future have to be theologians, persons who know the heart of God and are trained – through prayer, study, and careful analysis – to manifest the divine event of God’s saving work in the midst of the many seemingly random events of their time.” (*Nouwen*, 88)**