

The Art of Leadership: Revealing God to Others

By the Rt. Revd Dr Musonda Trevor Selwyn Mwamba, Bishop of Botswana

I am grateful to Bishop Michael Doe, the outgoing General Secretary of USPG for his invitation to deliver this keynote address. I am also thankful to the USPG staff and especially Canon Edgar Ruddock for all your assistance. I also welcome the new General Secretary/CEO Mrs Janette O'Neill, I wish you God's blessing in your new role. May I also recognise Archbishop Mouneer my fellow keynote speaker.

As we are bidding farewell to Bishop Michael at this Conference, may I express my appreciation for the sterling service he has rendered to the Society, as well as the Diocese of Botswana. Michael, I wish you God's blessing in your next ministry. As a lawyer I am delighted that you shall be Preacher of Gray's Inn. Dealing with lawyers the only advice I can give you is what was given to a Lord Bishop when he went to the Temple Church in London, where lawyers congregate, and the acoustics there are not very good. The verger said to the Bishop "Pray, my Lord, speak very clearly and distinctly because the *agnostics* here are terrible." Remember that!

It's an honour for me to be with you all. USPG is the world's oldest Anglican mission agency and I agree with the boast that it could be said to have 'invented' the Anglican Communion.¹

This conference will be distinguished for its first woman General Secretary in the history of the Society and first Lay General Secretary since the early eighteenth century. Janette, it's an honour for me to be associated with you as a 'double first' historic person!

On a personal note my association with USPG goes back 30 years when I was a USPG bursar at St Stephen's House, Oxford. It goes back as a contributor to a book marking 300 years of USPG's mission work.² Delightfully, this association continues as I speak on leadership development in the context of Africa, a continent that ever surprises.

I observed such a surprise in 1998 at a farewell dinner for the then President of Botswana, Sir Ketumile Masire. The guest of honour was the former President of Tanzania, Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere. He spoke eloquently commending Sir Ketumile's leadership in developing Botswana, and praising him profusely for stepping down before senility set in!

The surprise was these two great Presidents, icons of leadership and development, both left office voluntarily. Sometime in 1985, President Nyerere simply woke up one bright sunny morning and decided to retire. Not many Presidents wake up that way!

A year later he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Zimbabwe. The Vice Chancellor Professor Walter Kamba at the ceremony said:

¹ USPG enews March 2011

² Daniel O'Connors, *Three Centuries of Mission: The United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel* (Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd, London, 2000)

“In an age in which life presidencies are proliferating, whether by constitution or other means, it is only a man of courage, confidence, foresight, wisdom, and humility, like our graduand, who can say it is now time for me to lay down the burdens and responsibilities of State and go into retirement and become part of the citizenry.”³

Twelve years later in the same spirit President Masire announced his retirement to Parliament. He concluded by quoting Alfred Lord Tennyson:

“The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.”⁴

Remarkably, Sir Ketumile still had two years of his presidency to run.

The surprise demonstrated by the two Presidents was *‘yielding place to new’*. It was good for leadership development in politics as well as the church. The Church, lest we forget, also has bishops who have to be coaxed from their *cathedra* to retire!

The Conference theme is *Pushing boundaries – Leadership Development, and Health*. My task is to focus on Leadership Development. I shall do so by analysing Nyerere’s leadership style to glean some hints for Leadership Development in the Church.

I begin with the backdrop that provided the stimulus to Nyerere’s leadership. The context was a fast changing world evolving from a colonial legacy to independent nationhood. In Tanzania there were varied challenges ranging from ethnic diversities some 156 different groups, racial differences, religious differences, two economic systems – one agricultural and the other industrial, climatic differences which influenced unequal economic development between areas with lots of rainfall and water resources and the arid zones prone to periodic drought. It was also a world defined by the Cold War. This context presented a formidable challenge to Nyerere’s leadership in developing Tanzania. How did Nyerere go about it?

In Leadership Development the individual is very important. The shape of a person’s life is crucial. The shape of a person’s life is determined by many things. There is ones background and childhood, ones mind and its education, ones conscience and its pressures, ones heart and its desires.⁵ Nyerere’s life was no different. It was shaped by many things. Let me highlight four factors:

The first was *education*. At school he was an inquisitive and diligent student. He studied at Makerere College, Uganda. He became a teacher and later obtained a scholarship for advanced studies at the University of Edinburgh, in Scotland. There he had the exposure of

³ University of Zimbabwe, Addresses and Ovations on the occasion of the Degree of Doctor of Laws honoris causa on Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere and Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela (Harare, Publications Office, 1986)

⁴ Alfred, Lord Tennyson: “The Passing of Arthur”, Idylls of the King (composed 1833 – 1874)

⁵ Anne Morrow Lindbergh, Gift from the Sea (The Hogarth Press, London, 1985) p.23

an international environment to widen and refine his philosophical and ideological ideas about the world.⁶

The second was his *personal character and integrity*. His honesty, humility and simplicity, made him an acceptable leader even in situations where he was the odd person out.⁷ Nyerere refused streets to be named after him and monuments erected in his honour. As President he lived humbly in a simple family house which he built.

The third was his *faith in God*. Archbishop Trevor Huddleston former Bishop of Masasi, in Tanzania from 1960 – 8, wrote of Nyerere's, 'deeply – held grasp of the Christian faith and that he liked to be present at early Mass, in Nyerere's words, 'to ask God's blessing on the day's work.'⁸

The fourth was *his creative and innovative mind rooted in African thought*. Nyerere appreciated and valued his *self identity* as an African. You know, they are Africans who think they are not Africans.

In his enchanting book *Africa: Altered States, Ordinary Miracles*, Richard Dowden tells this interesting account when he was in Somalia:

I was sitting in a teashop in the small town of Boromo when two bearded old men approached me. They asked if I was English and when I said yes, they bought me tea and demanded a conversation.

'You see,' one said, 'we want to say sorry – make apology for you.'

'To me?'

Yes – you are Briteesh. In nineteen sixerty we make terrible meestake. We demand unity with Somalis in the south. The Briteesh warned us but we not listening. You see – in the north we had Briteesh rule. We had justice and lo'aw and fair play. In the south they had Italys, spaghetti and Mafia. That make southerners terrible people. They are cheaters and, you know, some of them are not even Somalis at all. They African!'⁹

Nyerere was proudly African and confident of the positive values African culture could contribute to development and with this perspective he was open to be '...influenced and

⁶ A.G. Ishumi & T.L. Maliyamkono, Education for Self – Reliance (in Mwalimu: The influence of Nyerere, edited by Colin Legum & Geoffrey Mmari : Britain – Tanzania Society in association with James Currey (London), Africa World Press (Trenton), Mkuki NA Nyota (Dar es Salaam) p.46

⁷ Geoffrey Mmari, The Legacy of Nyerere (in Mwalimu: The influence of Nyerere, edited by Colin Legum & Geoffrey Mmari : Britain – Tanzania Society in association with James Currey (London), Africa World Press (Trenton), Mkuki NA Nyota (Dar es Salaam) p.177

⁸ Trevor Huddleston CR, The Person Nyerere (in Mwalimu: The influence of Nyerere, edited by Colin Legum & Geoffrey Mmari : Britain – Tanzania Society in association with James Currey (London), Africa World Press (Trenton), Mkuki NA Nyota (Dar es Salaam) p.6

⁹ Richard Dowden, Africa: Altered States, Ordinary Miracles (Portobello Books Ltd, London, 2009) p.95-96

informed by political and social thinking from traditions outside Africa and in a style accessible both to Africans and globally'.¹⁰

These four factors *inter alia* inspired Nyerere to focus primarily on *people and their welfare*. These shaped Nyerere's commitment, sense of direction, sense of purpose, and willingness to make personal sacrifices and to put the interests of people above his own.¹¹

Nyerere was haunted by one fear which he voiced at a rally in 1966. It was that the greatest danger to Africa was her own leaders if they did not think of their responsibility to the people.¹²

How prescient he was. For 45 years Africa has seen a long parade of colourful leaders who epitomised danger to their countries. Leaders such as General Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of the Congo, he looted his country leaving it with a debt of \$14 billion; General Sani Abacha of Nigeria – whose family reached an out of court settlement with the Nigerian government to pay back \$1 billion in *hard cash* out of an estimated \$4 billion which General Abacha embezzled in the five years he was in power; Presidents Ben Ali of Tunisia with \$5 billion to his name, and Hosni Mubarak of Egypt with \$70 billion; and the tyrant Field Marshall Idi Amin of Uganda, Conqueror of the British Empire!

Lingering on the British Empire for awhile, it was said that the sun never set on the British Empire. As it was setting in some far-flung corner of the empire it was rising in another corner. Some astute observer posed the question, 'Why did the sun never set on the British Empire?' and answered, 'Because God did not trust the British in the dark'!

The leaders mentioned and others unnamed proved Nyerere right. They did not think of their responsibility to the people. An African journalist put it well in an article entitled *Africa does not need Foreign aid but Committed Leadership*.¹³

He argued that Africa's chronic problem is not inadequate resources. Not even laziness or lack of expertise ... The world's second largest continent and perhaps the richest in terms of natural resources' *main problem is poor leadership*.¹⁴

¹⁰ Reginald Herbold Green, *Vision of Human – Centred Development: A Study in Moral Economy* (in Mwalimu: The influence of Nyerere, edited by Colin Legum & Geoffrey Mmari : Britain – Tanzania Society in association with James Currey (London), Africa World Press (Trenton), Mkuki NA Nyota (Dar es Salaam) p.103

¹¹ Geoffrey Mmari, p. 178

¹² Irene & Roland Brown, *Approach to Mass Poverty* (in Mwalimu: The influence of Nyerere, Edited by Colin Legum & Geoffrey Mmari: Britain – Tanzania Society in association with James Currey (London), Africa World Press (Trenton), Mkuki NA Nyota (Dar es Salaam), 1995) p.11

¹³ Finnigan wa Simbeye, *Africa does not need Foreign aid but Committed Leadership*, (The Perspective, Paris, France) posted May 10, 2002.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

In contrast Nyerere was a committed leader. He thought of his responsibility to his people. Their well – being was central to him. This crystallised in the creation of a political and social concept termed *Ujamaa*.

Ujamaa meant liberation of man and woman from domination by others; freedom of individuals from fear and dependence. It was intended to enable individuals, and communities to shape their own destiny. Nyerere emphasised that people should not fear their leaders and that the goal of leadership was to hand over responsibility to the people to make their own decisions.”¹⁵

Nyerere was an *empowering leader*. He saw the potential in people and inspired them to live out their God given potential. So his leadership style involved people at all stages of development. He strived to achieve a broad consensus on issues, and kept people informed through various means, including political education. The whole nation was turned into a large class room of seminars; radio broadcasts and public meetings were all used to inform, educate, and involve the people.

The principles of shaping ones destiny or taking responsibility in making ones decision were also applied to foreign policy. Nyerere said, “While our concern with world events is real and important, the events in Africa are of even greater and of more direct relevance to us”¹⁶.

Another remarkable aspect to Nyerere’s leadership style was his *vulnerability and modesty to admit his mistakes*.

When his concept of *ujamaa* failed he accepted it. He realized that though one could arrange for people to live together one could not force them to behave co – operatively. He accepted that, ‘In any struggle when the forces against you become too strong, you make a tactical retreat. There is no disgrace in that.’

When the defects of the single – party system began to reveal themselves in the late 1980s, through lack of accountability, the loss of popularity of the ruling party, and corruption, Nyerere was the first to acknowledge the negative aspects of the single – party State. He then advocated for the need of a multi – party system. He was quick to admit his errors. He had a restless quest for good governance which remained with him throughout his career.¹⁷

But Nyerere was not a total failure in other things he achieved notable success, such as building a sense of nationhood among the 156 ethnic groups in Tanzania. While numerous nations in Africa have spiralled into horrendous ethnic conflicts, Tanzania has remained united. If this were his only achievement, it would stand as a great monument to him.

¹⁵ J.K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity* (Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1966)

¹⁶ J.K. Nyerere, Speech at TANU National Conference, 16 October 1967

¹⁷ Colin Legum, *The Goal of an Egalitarian Society* (in *Mwalimu: The influence of Nyerere*, Edited by Colin Legum & Geoffrey Mmari: Britain – Tanzania Society in association with James Currey (London), Africa World Press (Trenton), Mkuki NA Nyota (Dar es Salaam), 1995) p.190 -191

We may wonder how Nyerere perceived himself as a leader. The answer lies in what he urged leaders to be: just ordinary sort of fellows who did not think that they were masters of others.¹⁸ This wise counsel echoed what Jesus said to the twelve disciples:

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”¹⁹

Nyerere reflected to borrow a phrase from Emerson a ‘representative man’ or person. A person who embodies the consciousness of an era, one who perceives things in fresh lights and new connections, one who exhibits unsuspected possibilities of purpose and action to his contemporaries.

I think the essence of Nyerere’s leadership style was his living *faith in God*. He was a leader who attended early Mass, ‘to ask God’s blessing on the day’s work.’ His leadership was grafted on Jesus Christ who also rose very early before dawn to pray.²⁰ Here flowed his honesty, his humility, his simplicity, his confidence, his vulnerability, and his respect for people. His life was steeped in pray. He possessed *the art of leadership: revealing God to others*.

I am fully aware that in his modesty Dr. Nyerere would have dismissed such an assertion. But the facts speak for themselves. His life was committed to putting the interests of people above his own. This was his habit, his attitude, his mindset.

The Conference theme *Pushing boundaries*, challenges us in leadership development to cultivate a habit, an attitude, a mindset, of perceiving things in fresh lights and new connections; it challenges us to discover unsuspected possibilities of purpose and action as a Church in carrying forth God’s mission in the world. It challenges us to cultivate *the art of leadership: revealing God to others*. Paradoxically it challenges us to refocus on the ‘Practice of the Presence of God’, to rediscover our spirituality, our living faith in God. Henri Nouwen points to this in his book *In Jesus Name: Reflections on Christian Leadership*:

“It is not enough for the priests and ministers of the future to be moral people, well trained, eager to help their fellow humans, and able to respond creatively to the burning issues of their time. All of that is very valuable and important, but it is not the *heart* of Christian leadership. The central question is, are the leaders of the future truly men and women of God, people with an ardent desire to dwell in God’s presence, to listen to God’s voice, to look at God’s beauty, to touch God’s incarnate Word and to taste full God’s infinite goodness?”

In God’s presence we see the theological ontology of Christian leadership; snuggled in a beautiful doxology in St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans 11:36, “*From him and to him and through him are all things*”. Or more precisely *From God and to God and through God are all things*. We see *then* that it is God who pushes the boundaries of Church leadership

¹⁸ J.K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity* (Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1966)

¹⁹ Matthew 20: 25-28

²⁰ Mark 1:35

development in Africa, so the Church can offer a holistic ministry to the wider society amidst all their struggles, uncertainties, pain and hope.

But we need to apply the hints gleaned from Nyerere to our quest.

The first hint has to do with context. The complexity of change and development in African and the many issues it faces.

At the second All Africa Bishops Conference, organized by the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa (CAPA), last year in Entebbe, Uganda, the following issues were highlighted.²¹

The issues of nurturing family life and building healthy populations, by advocacy on maternal and child health; nurturing harmonious and dignified communities by establishing models for managing conflict and peace building and peaceful electoral process; securing the economic future by responding to the challenges of climate change, food security through congregational education on environmental conservation, investment and sustainability; empowering the vulnerable by addressing gender injustices, ending all forms of gender based violence, exploitation, child trafficking and assisting displaced families and communities; and finally leadership as a means of securing the future and unlocking Africa's potential by demanding good governance, youth participation, partnership and advocacy for the fulfilment of socio-political agreements and religious tolerance in Africa for the betterment of individuals and communities.

These issues are some of the main challenges for the Church, its leaders, and their formation.

The second hint focuses on the type of leaders to be fostered. Fundamentally, education at the heart of leadership development must foster the knowledge and the love of God and neighbour. Often the bias in training leaders is on theology and leadership skills, rather than acquiring the depth and wisdom of the life of faith and spirituality.

The other quality in a leader to be fostered is the *tension ability*. The leader as a teacher has two aspects – to preserve the faith handed down through generations, guarding its content from distortions, and to mediate faith in new situations, transforming it in light of the demands of new challenges. These two aspects of teaching are often in tension with one another. Life is never static, and when faced with a new language, a new culture, a new constellation of contemporary issues, the message needs to be expressed in a new way to effectively be the same old message. This tension between *guarding* and *mediating* is just one instance of the more fundamental tension between the leadership goals of seeking to preserve the identity of the community and fostering the community's relevance in the world.

Another quality to be fostered in the leader is that of the thinker. The leaders must be trained to be able to understand deeply the world, its problems and possibilities that open themselves up. This means having a nimble mind that is interdisciplinary, inter - professional, and international thinking. One must be able to think philosophically, historically, politically, scientifically, sociologically, legally, anthropologically and so on. The church leader must have a holistic view of life through a blend of *different* lenses.

²¹ All Africa Bishops Conference, 23rd – 29th, Entebbe, Uganda

In Africa the lens of a *creative and innovative mind rooted in African thought is a must*. A mind that appreciates and values its *self identity* as an African with its ancient heritage and values to offer the world; a mind always open to the thinking of other traditions and cultures within and outside Africa; a mind that appreciates and promotes unity in diversity. With this approach the enlightened church leader can both honour and transcend culture. For ones culture or experience is not the only lens to view the big picture that is life.

The third hint is the need for bishops to value the gifts of honesty, humility and simplicity and not assume that a purple shirt bestows on one monopoly over wisdom, and infallibility.

The fourth hint for Leadership Development is to be sensitive to the concerns of people in Africa. There are many concerns in the world but Africa's concerns hinge mainly on life and death issues to these her leaders must pay extreme attention. They must not be remote controlled by external forces to focus on secondary concerns. As Nyerere wisely stated, "While our concern with world events is real and important, the events in Africa are of even greater and of more direct relevance to us".

Leadership development is about empowering people and developing their potential to live out their God given potentials. It is about creating an environment that involves all people using their gifts to development communities.

Nyerere had a fear of political leaders being the greatest danger to their people. My fear is that bishops too may be the greatest danger to the Church in Africa if they do not perceive things in fresh lights and new connections, locally and globally.

But I have greater hope that this danger can be avoided by the hint in the *character of a leader* that focuses on cultivating a habit, an attitude, a mindset that is *holistic*. Or has James Reed, the chairperson, of Reed Recruitment Company, terms it a *3G mindset*.

This is how Reed explains the idea: it's *mindset*, not skill set, that matters most. For years recruiters have looked at skills, education and experience in terms of assessing people, but there is more to it. As the future unravels the problem is that we don't know what skills will be in demand say in 10 or 20 years. But it is possible to say one can know what type of person to employ because it boils down to mindset. In other words, the way people approach life is more important than their technical and professional skills. Of course the very best candidates will have both.

The 3G mindset is *global, gritty and good*. *Global*: this refers to people's openness to new experience and new ideas and their ability to make connections on a global scale. People who score highly in this section of the 3G Panorama test automatically think of people, perspectives and opportunities that fall beyond their immediate sphere.

Grit: A person scoring highly in this section will have tenacity, resilience and determination to come out ahead no matter what disadvantages he or she faces. Grit also drives characteristics such as commitment, accountability, optimism and performance.

Good: This part is all about ethics, integrity and the ability to see the world in a way that genuinely benefits others as well as yourself. It also includes kindness, respect, compassion and humility.²²

A leadership development that fosters this type of mindset will produce great leaders in the Church for Africa and the world.

The final hint for leadership development is vulnerability. In the wise words of Henri Nouwen:

“The Christian leader of the future is called to be completely irrelevant and to stand in this world with nothing to offer but his or her own vulnerable self. That is the way Jesus came to reveal God’s love. The great message that we have to carry, as ministers of God’s word and followers of Jesus, is that God loves us not because of what we do or accomplish, but because God has created and redeemed us in love and has chosen us to proclaim that love as the true source of all human life.”

Vulnerability is a mark of greatness. It is to this that St Paul points to when he says “We have this *treasure* in earthen vessels that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God and not from us”.²³ We are vulnerable, the bible, the creeds, the institutional church, and its priesthood are earthen vessels too – limited, fragile. Their power lies not in themselves but in God.

To be vulnerable is to realize as leaders that we don’t know it all. We don’t know ourselves, we don’t know others, and we certainly don’t know God fully.

It is in our vulnerability that Jesus asks us "Do you love me?" Jesus does not measure our personal worth in what we do but rather in the *gift* we can be to others. Leadership development should empower others to live out their God given potential to make this world a better place for all. This is the art of leadership: revealing God to others. For “*From God and to God and through God* are all things”.

²² Carly Chynoweth, Attitude is Worth more than Skills, The Sunday Times, 05.06.11 Appointments 4

²³ 2 Corinthians 4:7