

# Sacred Leadership

## Leading for the Common Good

### Library

### Definitions

Sacred – sacred is used not in the religious sense, but rather in the meaning of sacrosanct - something that is/or should be inviolable, worthy of veneration, and or too important or valuable to be interfered with. Thus the young should be educated, the sick healed and the vulnerable protected.

Fundamentalism – I hesitated to use this term; however, I feel it aptly describes the forces moving us away from serving the common good. The Oxford Compact Dictionary defines fundamentalism as “the strict maintenance of the ancient and fundamental doctrines of any religion or ideology.” This strict adherence to one point of view, usually tied to a religious text, prevents any discussion of alternative views and therefore makes compromise and consensus impossible. Taken to the extreme it leads to an “us vs. them” mentality and in many cases leads the fundamentalists to seeing “them” as less than human.

Common Good – The concept of the common good has been around almost since humans stood erect. Our early ancestors hunted together in groups to increase their odds of success; later the tribe kept a common fire; and as villages and towns formed, they kept the common pasture that all could use.

“...the commons marked the center of a shared world. Despite sometimes sharp differences, the good of the commons – the good of all – could be worked at, figured out and figured out again. By happenstance and intention, people met and talked together with some sense of a shared stake, something in common...a place where the diverse parts of a community could come together and hold a conversation with a shared sense of participation and responsibility... We now find ourselves ambivalent inhabitants of a new global commons....The new commons are global in scope, diverse in character and dauntingly complex...and (we) are being thrust into a larger sphere of responsibility, one calling for a keener recognition of diversity, complexity and ambiguity.” (Common Fire – Leading Lives of Commitment in a Complex World, Laurent A. Parks Daloz, Cheryl H. Keen, James P. Keen & Sharon Daloz Parks. Beacon Press, Boston 1996, pages 2-3.)

This new and changing leadership environment has led to confusion in defining the common good. Many question if the idea of “the commons” even applies in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century global environment. The answer is a resounding yes. We must, however, overcome our “tribal” boundaries of politics, race, religion and country and work together for the greater good.

Mission – by mission we mean purpose, the fundamental reason an organization exists. It sounds simple but maintaining focus on the mission is difficult for leaders in today’s environment. Too often, mission gets confused with the short term business results which are the focus of most managers and administrators. These short term results are, of course, important but if they become the “end” versus a “means to the end” our organizations fail to accomplish their mission of serving the common good.

Values - by values we mean those fundamental principles which guide our lives and which do not change over time. Principles such as trust, compassion, respect and integrity are examples of the kinds of values embraced by *Sacred Leaders* and their organizations. In discussions leading to this web site, many have asked if we can agree on a common set of values and their associated behaviors. Our experience in working with diverse groups of people in many different organizations leads us to say yes!