

Hello Everyone,

We are gathered this weekend to talk about The Vocation of the Business Leader. We will focus on how we can rely on and develop our faith, values, and integrity in the workplace to live our deepest values about human dignity, the common good, and a healthy environment.

We come from many faiths and traditions. How can we have an authentic dialogue that helps us understand the issues, understand each other, and guide business to be a solution, rather than a hindrance, to the complex and perilous problems we face?

I believe that a critical piece in authentic dialogue is developing relationships. Those who engage in interfaith dialogue often point to the importance of knowing someone from a different tradition in order to genuinely learn that tradition. It is when we allow ourselves to see another as person, as mystery, someone who brings something unique to the table that we can begin to receive the gift that the person has to offer us in the deepening of our own self-understanding and commitments. It is always tragic to watch how people's presuppositions about others stands in the way of genuinely hearing what the other has to offer. And yet, when we attend to what others offer we not only open ourselves to the wisdom they bring but to the insight their wisdom might evoke in us.

What if we begin with humility, with acknowledging the perspective of the other? What if we encounter another with the intention to see the person as a person, not unlike ourselves, with deep commitments born of life experiences, of sincere wrestling with the ambiguities of life and attempts to deal with and make meaning of these ambiguities?

If we adopt this perspective, our vision can expand even as we offer something to expand others' vision. If, at the end of the day, our positions do not change, at least we will no longer see the others as enemies to be defeated or demons to be slain. Instead, we will see the other as a fellow human being with a desire to live by their values. We may not share these values, but we can begin to understand, recognize, and ultimately respect and honor them.

One of the goals of this conference, and a goal of the Institute For Catholic Thought and Culture, is to create cultures of trust: cultures in which we engage others with compassion and respect, cultures in which we hear the good in positions different from our own. It is our prayer and hope that we begin by humbly acknowledging the limitations of our own perspectives, knowing that we need each other to develop better answers to the complex and perilous problems we face.

How do we create a culture of trust? How can each one of us do our part to create a culture, here and in the workplace, where we can feel safe enough to be vulnerable and to name the commitments that shape our positions on contentious issues? How do we create cultures that encourage us to work together to create a better world?

I look forward to joining you as we better understand and implement business leadership as vocation, relying on the entirety of ourselves to create business cultures that make the world better place.

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