



## Leaders, opt for patience over tolerance

**TRUTH BE TOLD, AMONG ALL** the types of Catholic leaders we provide training and formation to, my favorite to work with are seminarians. I'm inspired by their authentic zeal, and despite the seeming narrowness of their perspective, I am grateful for their desire to probe and challenge in order to understand the landscape in which they will, God-willing, one day serve. One bright seminarian this year asked me, "Sum it up for us. What's the biggest leadership challenge you see in the Church." I answered, "Too much tolerance for mediocrity." There were head nods and smiles. Then I continued, "And too little patience for people." Their faces turned from feeling affirmed to feeling challenged.

In my 15 years of serving bishops, priests, deacons, and lay leaders in over 100 dioceses, this is the biggest tension I see at every level and I think it is also applicable for Catholic CEO's (and not only CEO's of Catholic organizations).

Let's be clear: tolerance and patience are not the same. Tolerance, and especially tolerance for mediocrity, is a test of how much pain we can endure and how much pain we are willing to inflict on others for the sake of not having to change. I see it constantly. I can't tell Sally

she's rude, that would hurt her feelings. We can't start that project over, we've spent so much time already. We have to keep the pianist, he's been with us forever. We wait, we complain to others, we wish the person would just leave, and the situation only gets worse. Because not only does the person or people who are the source of the challenge continue to create challenge, other people --especially top performers, become disillusioned, frustrated, and begin to plot their exit or start to exit mentally. Tolerance is often a nefarious condition. While we think we are maintaining, we really are losing.

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in the way we expect. When they don't seek the truth or understand the context, our impatience turns to frustration, our frustration into malaise or anger, and we tell ourselves "they're just not worth it. It's just not worth it."

Tolerance is a trap. Patience is a virtue. As CEO's we need to be vigilant against tolerating mediocrity in our workplace culture. If we don't, we begin a race to lowest common denominator which will always result in failure to our bottom lines and more importantly failure to our people who deserve better. Yet as we engage in those hard conversations and challenge assumed

And yet the other side of the coin can be just as dangerous. We lack patience for the people we lead and serve. We don't understand why they "don't just get it," or we muster the courage to give them some direct feedback and after one conversation, they still don't change. How dare they! People don't respond to things

constraints, we are called to do so with great patience. Patience not only speaks to who we are, it speaks to who we believe others have the potential to be. It speaks to how much we believe they too are made in God's image and likeness.

As ambassadors for Christ in the marketplace, one of the most effective things we can do to proclaim the Gospel is to remove the false choice between truth and love. Love is truth. Truth is love. True love and real truth require us to challenge patiently. Lowering the bar will never allow us to achieve our goals. Neither will expecting others to raise the bar without our help. We need only look to our ultimate model of leadership, Jesus Christ, for the playbook as to what it looks like to love people patiently, painfully to the truth.

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