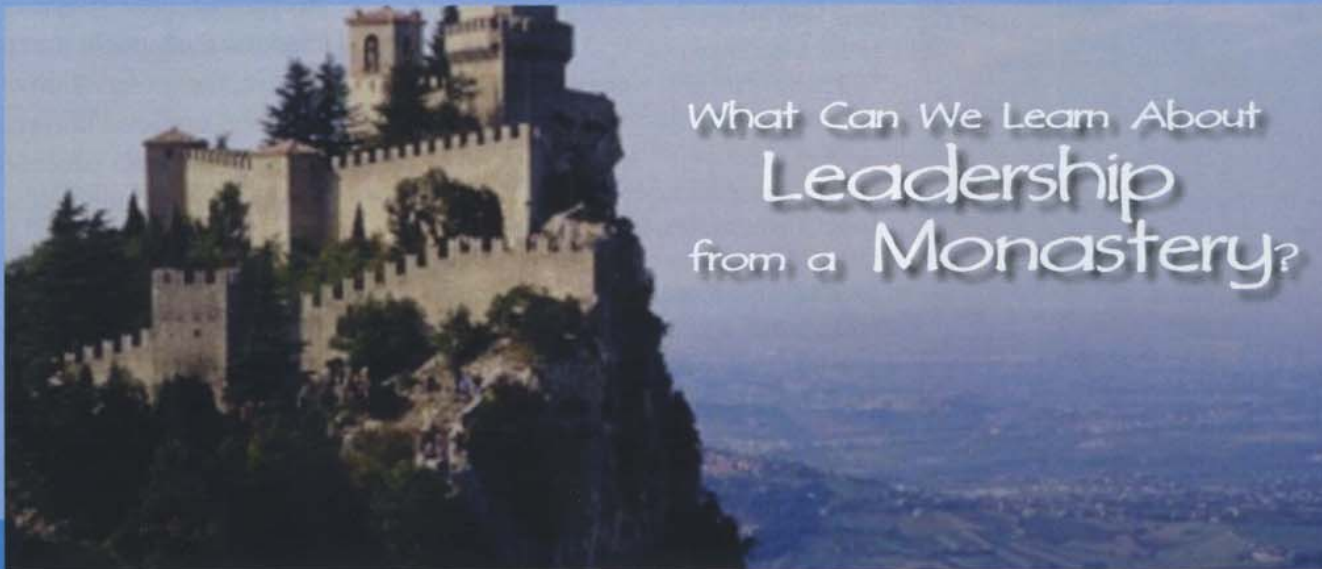




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What Can We Learn About Leadership from a Monastery?

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“**A**s a management system, the Rule has been remarkably successful and enduring. It has provided the basic leadership text for thousands of organizations for close to fifteen centuries. This fact alone speaks volumes to its longevity and modern day relevance.”

For quite some time I have been studying The Rule of St Benedict with the Benedictine Sisters at the Queen of Angels Monastery in Mt Angel and the more time I spend with them, the more my personal and professional life expands and evolves in amazing ways. I feel blessed to have the counsel of this intelligent, wise, and humble community of women of Faith. Besides feeling closer to the Divine at the Monastery, I have learned more about life, leadership, business development, and service there than I have anywhere. I didn't realize all that the Sisters had taught me until I discovered the books: *The Benedictine Rule of Leadership* by Craig S. Galbraith, PhD and Oliver Galbraith, III, PhD and *The Servant: A simple story about the true essence of Leadership* by James C. Hunter.

The Galbraith brothers' book explains: Benedict of Nursia (AD 480-547) was born into nobility and knew the splendors of Greco-Roman culture...but his new religion of Christianity made him reject the rotten core of what Roman civilization had become. Benedict was a man motivated by faith. Yet he also saw the necessity of establishing a practical framework for the organization and leadership of spiritual communities.

I found *The Benedictine Rule of Leadership* to be an excellent text for implementing clear and concise business management and leadership principles in my daily work. The book is divided into three parts: The Rule of Fraternity (lessons for designing your organization), The Rule of Group Chemistry (lessons for molding your team), and The Rule of Empowerment (lessons for honing yourself). The authors outline the life of St Benedict, the history of the Benedictine Monasteries, and how "The Rule" that St Benedict wrote helped the monasteries stand apart from the Church Hierarchy as independently managed enterprises. With "The Rule," St Benedict was definitely trying to provide direction for the monk seeking greater spirituality; however, it also had the objective of guiding the senior executive (or abbot) in the

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leadership and structure of a complex organization. The authors clearly illustrate that The Rule of St Benedict had deep impact on various human endeavors throughout history:

The Benedictine influence has gone much deeper than most people realize, leaving a mark on the modern international banking system, the preservation of ancient documents, the great medieval universities that became models for higher education in the Western world, many of our advanced farming and construction techniques, the design of modern hospitals, and the treatment of noncombatants in war...The first reason to consider the insight of Benedict's Rule is simply the impressive longevity of the organizations it has guided. The Rule of Benedict has been the primary leadership document for a significant collection of organizations, movements, and communities for almost fifteen hundred years.

In the same vein, Hunter's, *The Servant*: A simple story about the true essence of leadership is a fictional story about a successful CEO who, at retirement, becomes a Benedictine monk (Simeon) and teaches other business executives who come to the Monastery for business retreats. It is a wonderful motivating story about "servant leadership principles" that find their roots in The Rule of St Benedict. The monk, Simeon, expresses, "...leadership is built upon authority or influence, which is built upon service and sacrifice, which is built upon love. When you lead with authority, you will by definition, be called upon to extend yourself, love, serve, and even sacrifice for others. Again, love is not about how you feel toward others but how you behave toward others."

Marketing Professionals are first and foremost leaders and servants. Our most important job is to influence. There is much we can learn about grace and leadership from the Monasteries that set the standard for excellence centuries ago and are the oldest and most successful organizations in the world.

by Brenda Suteu
MSN Founding President



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Photographs by
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