Responding to Leadership Challenges in U.S. Catholic Schools: The Lived Reality

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Introduction

Like Gaul, this keynote is divided into 3 parts. First, I provide a glimpse at the reality of being a Catholic educational leader in the American context. Next, I describe what I, and others, consider the top 3 challenges facing these leaders and how we have responded to these challenges thus far. Lastly, I make some comments about the way ahead.

At the outset it is important to say that our experiences in the American context are greatly affected by the larger American society and Church. We have a long-standing tradition of strict separation of church and state. Certain ism's - consumerism, materialism, and individualism, secularism, pluralism - are prevalent values in American society. In *A People Adrift*, Peter Steinfels (2003) describes the American Catholic Church as experiencing a crisis of identity and leadership brought about by the generational mainstreaming of Catholics into society, the decline of religious vocations, and the sexual abuse scandal.

The Reality

In this age of reality TV, imagine you are in a television show about American Catholic educational leaders. This is what you would experience.

The Diocesan Superintendent Episode

In the last few years local priests have been accused of sexual abuse. The bishop is distracted and the diocese is considering filing for bankruptcy in order to deal with claims by victims. The bishop's annual appeal is down which forces

you to lay off two program directors in your already lean Catholic Schools Office. You must conduct background checks and in-service employees in compliance with new state and diocesan requirements regarding abuse. Your diocese is experiencing population shifts which may cause some schools to close or consolidate. A pastor decides to close his parish school unilaterally without consulting you. To save money, the state legislature wants to eliminate free busing and textbooks for Catholic schools, which is the only government funding your schools receive, so you need to mobilize parents to fight for funding. The new principals you have hired, including a couple of public school pensioners, do not understand the nuances of leadership in a Catholic school.

The Secondary Principal Episode

You run a diocesan high school that once had ties to a religious order. Although owned by the diocese, you receive no funding from the diocese. You must be self-supporting. A nearby religious order school that has a stronger academic reputation and sense of Catholic identity has announced that it will extend bus service to students in your area. The same day you inform parents of a tuition increase for next year, the local public school district announces it will open a free charter high school for gifted students. A veteran teacher you consider the backbone of the faculty tells you she is taking a job at the new charter school because it offers better salary and retirement benefits. The new teacher you hire has no Catholic school background. Some local priests complain that the R.E. program is too liberal. One teacher quits as a result. You look in your file for possible R.E. teacher candidates and it's empty.

The Primary Principal Episode

You are the only administrator for your parish school. Although you are accountable to the superintendent, the pastor is your real boss. Your pastor is busy running the parish so decision-making is often unclear. You receive a call from a parent gloating that the pastor overturned your decision to suspend her child. Another parent tells you she intends to home school her children because your school is not Catholic enough. You call the local public school principal to complain that your school is not being given the services that it is entitled to through *No Child Left Behind*. You suggest to the Catholic school superintendent that schools purchase items as a group to save money; you are told that although it is a good idea, the central office doesn't have the personnel to coordinate the effort. That evening the parish finance committee informs you that the parish cannot increase its school subsidy next year. The committee directs you to raise tuition, increase class sizes from 20 to 30, and eliminate teaching positions. When this is made public, several families pull their children out of the school, and your only male faculty member takes a job at the neighboring Catholic school because it offers higher salary. A teacher candidate from a local Catholic university tells you he can't afford to work at your school because he needs to pay off his expensive Catholic university tuition loans.

Leadership Challenges and Responses

Did you notice in the episodes that no one mentions students as a major problem? As the reality episodes indicate, the most pressing leadership

challenges can be grouped together in three categories: Funding, Catholic Identity, and Leadership.

Funding

Funding is the most urgent issue. Many Catholic schools are fighting for survival. One in four U.S. Catholic primary schools is considered financially unstable or unviable (Dwyer, 2005). Many principals are preoccupied with keeping the wolves away from the door. Because Catholic schools in America receive very little government funding, schools are forced to fund themselves primarily through parish subsidies, tuition, and fundraising (Harris, 2000). As school costs escalate, this funding formula makes the following three financial challenges more acute.

Recruiting and Retaining Teachers – Catholic schools are as only as good as their teachers, but it is increasingly difficult find and keep quality teachers when the average Catholic primary school teacher makes only 54% of a public school salary and a secondary teacher makes 73% (Cook, 2002; Schaub, 2000). Catholic school teachers are grossly underpaid. As the reality episodes evidence, teachers often teach for a few years in Catholic schools and then move to public schools out of necessity. The episodes also show that salaries vary among Catholic schools, which makes them compete with each other for teachers. These teacher salary inequities seem contradictory to Catholic social teaching.

Balancing Affordability with Quality– As educational costs rise each year, so does the tuition. The average primary school tuition is $3,008 AUD and the average secondary tuition is $7,970 AUD (McDonald, 2007). Most schools set

their own tuition depending on what the market will bear. The challenge leaders face is to provide schools of excellence that are faithful to their mission without pricing themselves out of the market. As the tuition becomes higher, the less affordable Catholic education becomes for the poor and middle class. Some call this the "eliting" of U.S. Catholic schools. Moreover, school quality has become a function of affluence. Affluent parishes have better funded schools that often result in higher quality facilities and programs. This inequality among Catholic schools is not very Catholic and not very American.

Justifying Worth – The more costly Catholic schools become to operate and attend, the more people question whether they are worth the sacrifice. Less than 20% of U.S. Catholic children attend Catholic schools. As the reality episodes suggest, parish principals must defend the school's budget to the pastor and finance committee, especially if the school subsidy eats up a lot of the parish budget and/or the majority of parish children attend public schools. Also, school leaders are dealing with Catholic families today who are less willing to make sacrifices to send their kids to Catholic schools, especially if there is a good public school nearby. When forced to choose, many contemporary Catholic families find more value in choosing the biggest house, newest car, or the best trip to Disney World that money can buy.

Responses

To meet the funding/finance challenges, those involved in Catholic education have continued to fight for government funding. Parent advocacy groups have been formed in many states to fight for vouchers and other forms of

assistance that will enable them to exercise the right to choose a religious education for their children. We must continue to fight for our fair share of tax dollars in the name of justice.

We have stepped up marketing and public relations efforts through the annual NCEA-sponsored National Marketing Campaign and Catholic Schools Week and national and local publications and media releases that keep schools in the public eye. People pay for what they value. We must continue to convince people that a Catholic school education is a worthy investment.

The most common and longstanding vehicle Catholic schools have used to supplement parish subsidies and tuition to meet educational expenses is fund raising. Catholic schools are well known for their fund raisers – bake sales, calendar drives, walkathons, alumni phone-a-thons, and auction events. Fund raising, along with tuition and parish subsidies are short term strategies for a long term problem. They merely balance the yearly budget. This is no longer a good model, yet it is all too prevalent.

More sophisticated dioceses and schools, especially larger high schools, have followed the lead of Catholic universities in their approach to financial well-being. They have created development or institutional advancement offices with designated personnel to spearhead and coordinate public relations, recruitment, fund raising efforts, and periodic capital campaigns. The most forward thinking operations concentrate on building a multi-million endowment that will ensure long-term viability. This is done through planned giving or estate planning and is sometimes a goal for a capital campaign. The majority of Americans die without a

will, which makes personal bequests a huge untapped financial resource for Catholic schools.

Entirely new models of school are emerging as well. Cristo Rey high schools are an exciting new venture. Designed to serve financially disadvantaged urban youth, these schools send their students on internships to local businesses one day a week, which fund their tuition. In 2007, seven new schools opened, bringing the total of Cristo Rey schools nationwide to 19 (www.cristoreynetwork.org).

As we look ahead, we need to take a more system wide approach to funding schools through strategic planning. The parish funding model is no longer viable (Dwyer, 2005). Right now we operate on “every school for itself” or “survival of the fittest” mentality. We also need to focus our efforts on planned giving. The greatest amount of money in American history will pass from one generation to the next in the coming years. This is where the big money will be for the foreseeable future. Lastly, we must continue to fight for our share of pubic funding to which we are entitled.

Catholic Identity

Ironically, our funding struggles have forced us to attend to our Catholic identity in order to justify our worth to parents and Church officials. Parents still consider religious mission to be a key reason for choosing Catholic schools (CARA, 2006). Gone are the days when Catholic identity can be assumed. Today we have to be intentional about who we are and what our mission is. What does it mean to be a Catholic school in the 21st century in the United States? Allow me

to identity four leadership challenges and responses associated with this question. First of all, before they can be anything else, Catholic schools are schools first. "Catholic" is not the noun, it is the adjective. Catholic schools must be good schools before they can be good Catholic schools. Academic excellence is a reflection of the Catholic intellectual tradition. According to canon law, academic excellence is a constitutive element of Catholic school identity (Beal, Coriden, & Green, 2000). Furthermore, the Catholic community will not financially support mediocre schools. *So the first challenge for leaders is to operate an excellent school with limited resources.*

Building a better academic mousetrap is not enough. The American bishops state in *To Teach As Jesus Did*, "integration of religious truth and values with life distinguishes the Catholic school from other schools" (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1972, #105). *The second challenge for the Catholic school leader is to ensure that the Christian message and Catholic vision permeate the school curriculum and culture.* If Christianity is a way of life, then Catholic school education should equal a way of life as well.

School leaders are being more intentional about cultivating their Catholic ethos and culture (Cook, 2001a). Miller (2006) believes that schools need to provide quality assurance that they are fulfilling their religious mission. Some schools and systems are putting structures and processes in place to assess their Catholic Identity to prevent them from becoming a private school with a cross on top (Cook & Ostrowski, 2007). For example, *Validating the Vision* (Taymans, 1999) is a protocol that can be used in conjunction with required state

and regional accreditation to assess mission effectiveness. Religious order networks are beginning accreditation processes of their own. It is common for a school board to have a mission and identity committee. Some larger Catholic high schools now have a second tier administrator called Vice President for Mission Effectiveness and some diocesan Catholic Education Offices have a designated person who fulfills this role.

School leaders cannot ensure Catholic identity themselves. Teachers are the key. Catholic schools will achieve their religious mission to the degree that all teachers participate, or at least a critical mass does. I argue that secular subject teachers and coaches have significant influence on student spiritual formation. *The leader's third challenge then is to recruit and retain teachers who "get it."* This was a no-brainer when Catholic universities were the natural supplier of Catholic school teachers. This is no longer the case for two reasons. Many Catholic university teacher preparation programs emphasize public education. Many graduates who paid expensive Catholic university tuition cannot afford to teach in Catholic schools. As the reality episodes reveal, finding qualified R.E. teachers is next to impossible because no state save Nebraska recognizes religious education as a teaching field (Cook 2001b, 2003). R.E. is not taught in public schools in the U.S. Retaining R.E. teachers is also a serious problem that contributes to shortages (Cook & Engel, 2006).

To address recruitment and formation issues, leaders are being more intentional about hiring for mission. Principals are also devoting more time and energy forming teachers for mission, especially on the elementary level when all

teachers teach religion. Leaders are just now beginning to design teacher evaluation instruments and processes that include mission-related items.

One of the exciting responses to the shortage of faith-filled and qualified teachers for under resourced urban and rural schools is the Catholic teacher corps. Started at the University of Notre Dame in 1994 as the Alliance for Catholic Education (Pressley, 2002), the teacher corps idea has spread to other Catholic universities. Today 14 American Catholic universities comprise the University Consortium for Catholic Education (http://soe.lmu.edu/ucce). Students in these teacher corps spend two years of service teaching in a Catholic school. They live in community often in vacant convents. They earn their master's degree and teaching credential over the two-year period. These are new reincarnations of religious community. When a teacher corps begins service in an area, we refer to it as "opening a house" just like religious orders did in the past. These programs supply over 400 teachers a year to Catholic schools.

The leader's fourth challenge is to reconcile the tensions between Catholic school vision and 21st century reality. The reality episodes dealt with some of these leadership questions. How do you teach Catholic values when the Church lacks credibility? How do you satisfy both liberal and conservative Catholics in a polarized Church? How do you balance market with mission in a secular society, finding the middle ground between being "too Catholic" and "not Catholic enough" (Cook & Davies, 2008)? How do you emphasize school faith community without building a parallel parish? Do Muslim headscarves violate the uniform code? One girls' high school principal I talked to asked, "How do you explain to

young women especially in a girls' school why they cannot take their full place at the table in the Catholic Church?"

Before leaving this section on Catholic identity, I would like to make this recommendation. As we move ahead, if we really want to make a unique and invaluable contribution to American society, we need to accentuate the global and international aspect of our Catholic identity. Although we live in a global society (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2003), Americans are very self-focused. This is even true among Catholic education scholars. It is rare for scholars to cite research from outside the U.S. The tragic events of 9/11 served as a wake up call for all Americans to think more globally.

Because we belong to a universal church that operates a worldwide system of schools, American Catholic schools should be leading the country in global and international education. It flows naturally from who we are as church. We have not capitalized on this inherent part of our identity. If we really want to distinguish ourselves from public and other private schools, fulfill a need in our country, and really find our niche, American Catholic schools should promote global awareness and solidarity, multicultural perspectives, and international relationships. We should produce graduates who think of themselves as both American citizens and citizens of the world.

Leadership

Leadership itself is the 3rd and most critical issue today because we need strong and visionary leaders to address the funding and identity issues. Where will this leadership come from? National leadership should start with the bishops

but a challenge for them will be to reestablish their credibility while the American Church continues to suffer the fallout of the sexual abuse scandal (D'Antonio, Davidson, Hogue, & Gautier, 2007). Furthermore, at the school level, one-half of the nation's dioceses opened the school year without at least one principal (Schuttloffel, 2003). Using an airplane analogy, the perception of the Church and schools is that the plane is full and there are people performing functions like handing out peanuts, but no one is in the cockpit flying the plane. Here are three specific educational leadership challenges.

Overwhelming Job Description – As the reality episodes make clear, principals are overwhelmed with an ever-expanding list of duties and expectations. They are asked to do the equivalent job of a public school district superintendent, only without the large support staff. High school principals usually receive assistance from one or more deputy heads, but ¾ of the primary schools do not even have a deputy head (Schuttloffel, 2003). One primary principal describes the situation this way: "My peers in public schools need only concern themselves with students, discipline, and parents. Everything else is done for them at the district level. I, on the other hand, take care of budgeting, personnel, curriculum, grant writing, school calendar, school maintenance, student recruitment, and the list goes on." Add to this the growing responsibility principals have for teacher formation and other pastoral roles. All of this is very difficult to do when you are in survival mode. The job requires principals to walk on water, yet most times they can barely tread water.

To respond to the complex nature of Catholic school leadership, a growing number of high schools have adopted a two-person president / principal leadership model. The president is the chief executive officer whose responsibilities include Catholic identity and mission, finance and development, public relations, strategic planning, and the Board of Trustees. The principal is the chief academic officer who runs the school day-to-day. The principal's responsibilities include faculty formation and supervision, curriculum, discipline, athletic teams, and pastoral care of students. Elementary schools are sorely in need of new school leadership models. Following the example of high schools, some elementary schools are exploring the concept of co-principals, but this model is still very rare.

Lack of System Support and Collaboration – Catholic educational leaders at all levels feel isolated and unsupported. They feel like they are in this alone. Using a metaphor from American Westerns, I characterize them as Lone Rangers. Educational leaders feel ambivalence from Church leadership. Parish principals often feel unsupported by the parish pastor, who is either disinterested or overburdened. Most new principals are told to pick their position based on who the pastor is.

The Catholic school system operates more like a system of schools. The superintendents usually function with a bare bones staff. Also, they have little authority over pastors who run their parishes like fiefdoms. Catholic schools operate independently. One superintendent likened her role to herding cats.

Because schools stand alone, competition between them for students and resources can be fierce.

While school autonomy is good, the “every school for itself” mentality that prevails is not. In my hometown, for instance, there is a fierce rivalry among the 3 Catholic high schools. As the number of Catholic children in the region continues to drop, this rivalry no longer makes sense. These schools are beating each other into the ground when the real threat to their existence is the new public charter high school that continues to draw away students.

To build collaboration and coordination among schools, some dioceses have created regional school systems within the diocese that have their own superintendent or president. Religious order schools have formed national networks to increase collaboration among member schools with a distinctive heritage, charism, and mission.

As we move ahead, we must create new governance and leadership models to replace the outmoded pastor as CEO model. Many priests do not want to be assigned to a parish with a school because they consider schools a burden? Who can blame them as priests face more duties and fewer brother priests? We must unburden priests of a duty for which they have little interest and training. Furthermore, no one person should have the power to determine the fate of a school. One principal commented, “The pastor can make or break the existence of a parish school.” We need to increase the role of school boards and system wide leadership structures.

Inadequate Preparation and Succession - Principals in Catholic schools wear many hats. Unlike their public school counterparts, they must be astute in managerial, educational, and faith leadership. Unfortunately, too many newcomers to Catholic leadership like those mentioned in the superintendent reality episode don't have the necessary preparation. Because schools are so fragile, a bad principal can do a lot of damage quickly. Each principal is key. We need creative, talented, and faith-filled principals.

Of particular concern is the principal's preparation for faith leadership. Schuttloffel's (2003) survey indicates that over ½ of novice principals lack the necessary theological or spiritual knowledge to be faith leaders. It rises to 95% for novice leaders who come from public schools. In another study of Catholic secondary school principals, 70% responded that their formal coursework did not adequately prepare them to be faith leaders (Joseph, 2002). This stands to reason since the overwhelming majority of leaders earn their credentials at secular institutions. Even if they attended a Catholic university, there is no guarantee that Catholic school issues were addressed.

In response, the Association of Catholic Leadership Programs (ACLP) was formed in 1983 to promote degree and licensure programs specifically designed for Catholic school leaders. There are currently 30 member institutions (http://aclp.ncea.org/). The majority of superintendents believe that these Catholic leadership programs are the most effective preparation for principals. Yet, at present, these programs only prepare 25% of school leaders (Schuttloffel, 2003). We are not getting the job done. In the future, ACLP institutions need to

aggressively pursue distance learning options to make specialized leadership preparation more accessible and affordable to today's aspiring leaders.

Leadership succession is a related challenge. Some scholars believe we do not have our best people in leadership. Many dioceses have created succession programs, but there are still dioceses that do not have leadership succession plans in place. Finding qualified lay leaders has intensified in recent years as Catholic educational leadership in the U.S. continues to transition from religious to lay. From 2004 to 2007, the percentage of vowed religious or clergy leaders fell significantly among elementary principals (33% to 21%), secondary principals (46% to 35%), and diocesan superintendents (63% to 36%) (D. McDonald, personal communication, September 26, 2007).

The Way Ahead in Uncertain Times

There is no doubt that we are experiencing a crossroads, a critical moment, even a crisis in American Catholic school education. As I conclude this chapter, I offer these reflections about the way forward for U.S. Catholic schools.

How to move ahead?

The psalmist writes, "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it" (Psalm 127:1). We must continue to keep God at the center of our enterprise as we move forward.

We must ask fundamental questions like "How can we provide the best faith-based education to the most students using limited resources" and " What unique contributions can Catholic schools provide families, American society, and the Catholic Church in the 21st century."

We must be bold and creative. We must think in new ways and be less parochial in our thinking. This includes looking beyond our own country's borders for new ideas. We must think and act more like a system and end our "every school for itself" approach. We must engage in strategic planning processes at the school, diocesan, and national level.

I believe the traditional self-supporting parish elementary school model of Catholic education with pastor as CEO is obsolete. We must adopt funding, governance, and administration models that lessen the burden of both pastor and principal and maximize the benefits of being part of a Catholic school system.

While continuing to fight for our just share of tax dollars and government funding, we must also aggressively pursue private citizen bequests through planned giving. Experts say that a record amount of money will pass from this generation to the next in the coming few years.

We must be more intentional about leadership succession and we must add new flexible pathways to school leadership. We must recognize that parents are new colleagues in leadership. We must strengthen parent capacity to lobby and advocate for Catholic schools.

We must internationalize and globalize American Catholic education to be a more authentic expression of our Catholic identity and to distinguish ourselves among American schools.

Why move ahead?

One of my favorite quotes is from St. Irenaeus, "the glory of God is the human person fully alive." God wants us to become who we were born to

become. Unlike public schools, Catholic schools can provide an environment of Catholic humanism five days a week that helps students become fully alive by helping them become fully human – mind, heart, *and* soul.

The day before giving a talk to the Catholic principals in Columbus, Ohio, I was at a restaurant. I asked a mother who was sitting with her two daughters in the booth next to me why she sends her kids to Catholic schools. She told the story of her son's letters from boot camp thanking his parents for instilling religious faith and sending him to Catholic schools. He wrote in one letter, "If it weren't for my religion, I'd be lost." The mother told me, "People ask us why we spend $14,000 on tuition a year for our children and this is why." And this is why we should move ahead because we are effective in our religious mission and we make a difference in the lives of young people.

Recent world and Church events have given Catholic schools new opportunities to make significant contributions to the nation and Church in this new century. In a world and society fraught with division, fractured relationships, and fragmentation, I believe the unique gift that contemporary American Catholic schools can offer the nation and Church are graduates who understand and nurture cross-cultural, international, human, divine, and conceptual relationships. Building a culture of relationships is the charism of American Catholic schools in this new century.

"Why do I work in Catholic education?" Each of us has asked that question at one time or other. I do so because we make a difference in the lives of young people. As a professor, I have the opportunity to observe student

teachers in both public and Catholic high schools. When I'm in a Catholic high school R.E. class witnessing students talk about God and faith, I often ask myself, "What parent wouldn't want this for their child?"

To be honest, I work in Catholic education for selfish reasons as well. My work allows me to live my faith freely in my professional life and it allows me to participate in the faith development of young people. For instance, as a principal giving communion at school masses, I experienced many moments of grace. Students coming to me for communion were kids I had just disciplined or kids who I knew were dealing with heavy issues in their personal and family life. Talk about integrating faith and life for me and the students. What moments of sublime spiritual intimacy!

One year my school hosted an exchange student from Brazil. Midyear his mother in Brazil was killed in a car accident. The kid was distraught and numb. To make sure he made his international flight connection home, I flew with him from Rhode Island to New York City. We grabbed a bite to eat. When his flight was called, I remember instinctively taking the cross I wear around my neck and putting it around his neck. If you could have seen the look in his eyes, it would have melted your heart. Surprisingly, he came back and finished the school year. At a pool party after the school prom, I noticed him in the pool still wearing the cross. That's why I do what I do!

What gives me hope?

I have hope because one-third of American Catholic schools have waiting lists.

I have hope because recently the U.S. bishops published a document renewing their commitment to Catholic schools and outlining recommendations to strengthen them (USCCB, 2005). As a result, some dioceses are holding summits and creating action plans. Some Catholic universities have responded in concrete ways as well (University of Notre Dame, 2006; Cook & Durow, 2008).

I have hope because we continue to create innovative responses to our challenges such as Cristo Rey schools and Catholic teacher corps programs. Furthermore, we are achieving new levels of collaboration. In addition to the examples mentioned throughout this chapter, another unique and promising venture incorporated in 2006 is the Mid-Atlantic Catholic Schools Consortium. This new association comprised of six dioceses provides an administrative structure to collectively and strategically address challenges shared by all in the region (www.midatlanticcsc.org).

I have hope because of the leaders who keep their sense of humor during difficult times. When I asked one veteran principal about her biggest challenge, she responded, “modern mothers.” She went on to say, “If I could have parents for two days a week, I’d only need the kids three days a week.”

I have hope because I know this is not the first time Catholic schools in the U.S. have struggled. I know that my forebears were victims of riots and the burning of schools. I know they built schools by hand brick by brick. I know that there has always been ambivalence toward Catholic schools. One principal at a Sisters of Mercy high school told me jokingly that she can relate to Mercy Foundress, Catherine McAuley, and how she responded to her struggles

because Catherine's famous "comfortable cup of tea" probably had more than a teabag in it.

I have hope because I know that we are standing on the shoulders of giants – our forebears who built the schools by the sweat of their brow and the scores of selfless vowed religious who educated generations of American Catholics like me.

I have hope because I have faith in those who will come after me. Master's level students in a course I finished teaching a week ago wrote in their course evaluations that they are "on fire for Catholic education."

I have hope because renewal has been a theme in Church documents related to Catholic education (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, 1982, 1988, 1997). "It must never be forgotten that the school itself is always in the process of being created …" (1982, #69). I love how the documents refer to Catholic education as an "educational project" (1997, #4) because the term speaks to the idea that Catholic schools are not "finished projects" but "works in progress" that are always "under construction."

I have hope because I have faith in the Resurrection. Our entire faith is built on the cycle of renewal and redemption and new life. All of life imitates the paschal mystery. You have to have to have Good Friday before Easter Sunday. Without a cross, there is no crown. Judging from our current cross, ours will be a mighty big crown.

I have hope because when Jesus sent his disciples to go and teach, he assured them saying, "And behold, I will be with you always…" (Matt 28:20).

Finally, I have hope because I feel solidarity with people in other nations who have responded to leadership challenges in their own corner of the vineyard.

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