There are many types of leaders in this world. They range from those who lead directly to those whose leadership style is one of indirectness, while others are innovative and even visionary in their leadership skills. It seems that there are as many different styles of leadership as there are types of personalities. The one thing that all of them have in common is that a leader is a person who has followers.

One of my seminary professors was always reminding us of this singular attribute of leadership. He would tell us to always look behind us to see if anyone was following our direction before moving forward. Otherwise it is like a captain of a boat pointing in one direction, while the crew rows in another. The boat does not proceed forwards; instead, it will often go in circles. Unfortunately, this has been the kind of leadership that has too often been used to direct the movement of the Church. Because of this lack of leadership, the Body of Christ has been splintered into many different groups.

In our own denomination, we see this conflict of direction happening in the leadership. The majority of the leadership wants to move in a new direction, while a remnant wants to maintain the course that the Church has taken for over 2,000 years and still another group just doesn’t even want to talk about the elephant in the living room destroying the very heart and fabric of the Church. This lack of leadership has brought in such dissension that twenty bishops recently gathered together to discuss ways of distributing church property among the two dissenting groups after next year’s General Convention. May I suggest that our church is in the midst of a leadership crisis? Good leadership is leadership that brings people together in unity to move in the same direction.

In the scripture readings for today, we are given insight into what the early Church leaders and Jesus the foundation of our Christian faith had to say about leadership. While it may be too late to heal the divisions that continue to divide our beloved church, perhaps as individual Christians we can learn from these scriptural principles of leadership and determine within our hearts and lives to begin walking in love with one another. Granted our beloved Episcopal Church may be torn into two different entities, but we need to decide on a personal basis between Christ and ourselves what course we choose to take.

In Paul’s writing to the Thessalonians, he puts forth a model for a good leader. He describes a good leader as being one whose conduct is “pure, upright, and blameless.” In other words, a leader within the Church needs to live a life that proclaims the good news of Christ and who encourages others to do the same. Paul compares his love for the members of the Church at Thessalonica as that of a father towards his children. Yet, he
describes his relationship with them as his brothers and sisters. For Paul, we who are members of Christ are family. Just as it is important for family members to support and love one another so is the Christlike relationship that we as members of the Church are called to be towards one another.

In the gospel of Luke, Jesus supports this belief. The scripture reads, “Then his mother and brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. And he was told, ‘Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you.’ But he said to them, ‘My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.’”

As important as the earthly family is to God, Jesus pointed out that the spiritual family of God is of even greater importance. What must our Lord be thinking about the divisions that are happening among those of us who declare to the world that we are brothers and sisters in Christ? If we cannot live in love with one another than why should the world believe that we are bearers of the good news?

In the gospel reading from Matthew, Jesus shares with us the fundamental quality of leadership. This quality goes against everything that the world teaches us to be. That quality is humility. Jesus says, “The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

While the world teaches us to take pride in ourselves, Jesus teaches that the way to lead is through humility. Only when we submit ourselves to God first and then to one another can we even begin to know the meaning of being a member of the Body of Christ. Leaders in the Church are to reflect the leadership of the Head of the Church who is Jesus Christ. Yet, even Jesus submitted to Our Father in Heaven.

Spiritual humility acknowledges that God is sovereign. When we think that we know more than God or His teachings as revealed to us in His Holy Word, then we are in dangerous territory. We become like the Pharisees who flaunted their positions of authority in the community and demanded respect from others. Only when we look to Christ, who humbled himself in obedience to God, to die on the cross as a lowly criminal can we even begin to know the meaning of humility. Spiritual humility is living a life of sacrifice devoted to God’s will. It is the humble heart that pleases God.

An unknown author wrote these words concerning leadership:

*The two most important words:* “Thank you”.
*The one most important word:* “We”.
*The least important word:* “I”.

As Christians we need to remember to be thankful not only for what Christ did for us through His Passion and Resurrection, but also to be thankful for one another. Then we need to remember that we are members united into the One Body of Christ through our Baptism. Only when we work together can we move forward in Christ. Thirdly, the word “I” stands alone and without the support and love of others can become a very lonely
place to be. It is only when we submit ourselves in serving others that we as Christians can know the unity that true Christlike leadership can bring. May we submit ourselves to one another in love as Christ loves us.