

Leading from the Cross: Care, Discernment, and Hope

Lenten 2026

In Lent, we often think of the cross as a place of personal piety. But those of us who serve in leadership spaces as agents of change know that the cross also shows up in the meeting room: unpopular decisions, budget limits, personnel conflicts, legal risks, and the slow weight of sustaining a mission that does not belong to us. The question is not whether there will be a cost, but what kind of discipleship is revealed when our “yes” to the mission involves losses, renunciations, and repair.

Here a classic tension in the Ignatian tradition helps me: *cura personalis* (care for the person) and *cura apostólica* (care for the mission/work/apostolate). Separating them produces two distortions. On the one hand, “secure” institutions that are dehumanizing; on the other, compassionate communities that become fragile and unable to sustain the good they seek. The more demanding invitation is a single care: to care for the mission in such a way that persons, communities, and structures are ordered toward fullness of life and the common good. That care is tested precisely when governance becomes cruciform—that is, a transparency that hurts, a justice that costs, and a responsibility that does not disguise itself in spiritual language.

The cross, however, is not the final criterion. Christian governance also needs “new horizons of resurrection”: the capacity to imagine real reforms without denying the wound. “He is not here; he has risen” (Luke 24:6) opens horizons where we previously saw only limits. In times of polarization and economic uncertainty, resurrection is not naïve optimism; it is the conviction that God can generate a future where everything seems closed. For theological education and ecclesial life, this means governing with paschal imagination: building new alliances, forming intercultural leadership, redistributing voice and responsibility, and designing structures that serve the mission—not the other way around.

The Gospel image of the grain of wheat (John 12:24) suggests that certain forms must die for life to multiply. In practice, this means recognizing which habits, policies, or leadership styles no longer serve the mission—even if they once did—and allowing decisions to mature with sufficient silence, time, and listening. Mature governance holds together, at once, final authority and collegial processes of consultation, consent, and discernment; and it asks of each member a co-responsible participation, not a merely symbolic one.

Here Benedictine wisdom also contributes. The Rule of Saint Benedict understands governance as a flexible framework that orders common life with real authority, while trusting the competence of those closest to the problem: resolving issues where they arise, delegating responsibly, and creating space for freedom without losing accountability.

Lent, then, can be an “examen” for personal leadership and for our structures and processes. What decisions am I making from fear or urgency? What restores peace, clarity, and energy so I can serve better? Whom am I not listening to? Resurrection does not remove the weight; it transforms it into a path. To govern from the cross is to learn how to decide with interiority, with community, and with concrete hope.



Brenda Noriega, originally from Mexico, is a passionate scholar and minister deeply committed to exploring the intersection of theology, education, and youth empowerment. With extensive experience serving the people of God at various levels of ecclesial and organizational leadership, Brenda brings to her work a unique blend of academic rigor and practical experience. Through her scholarly efforts and ministerial engagements, she seeks to promote a holistic and transformative approach to pastoral ministry that emphasizes life, dignity, justice, and mission. Her ministerial and academic journey reflects her commitment to bridging theory and practice, striving to inform and transform pastoral practices in diverse cultural contexts while fostering vibrant faith communities that empower individuals to live out their Christian vocation authentically.

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Theological Reflections

Rooted at the Cross

New Horizons of Resurrection

Arraigados en la Cruz,
Nuevos Horizontes de Resurrección