

## **The Leader's Way Podcast**

### **Episode 14: Compassionate Leadership with Vicentia Kgabe**

[MUSIC]

Bishop Vicentia: God makes a way, and God's timing is not our timing. At the right opportune moment, things get to be revealed as they are. And when God has called you, it doesn't matter who is resisting that. God will get you to where you need to be to do exactly what you're called to do. So at this moment, it might not comfort them, but hold on. Remember, your timing, your projections, your plans ... are your plans, not God's plans.

[MUSIC]

B: Hi, I'm Brandon Nappi.

H: Hi, I'm Hannah Black.

B: And we're your hosts on *The Leader's Way*, an audio pilgrimage from Berkeley Divinity School, the Episcopal Seminary at Yale University.

H: On this journey, we reflect on what matters most in life as we talk about all things spirituality, innovation, leadership, and transformation.

[MUSIC]

H: Hey, Brandon.

B: Hey, Hannah. Happy New Year.

H: Happy New Year. I firstly need to give our listeners a quick update, because if you listened to our episode called "Hungering," I came home last night after traveling for the holidays to a package in the mail from Fontanini. And I can only assume that this ... this nativity figure I am holding of St. Francis of Assisi was sent to me by my co-host, was he not?

B: Well, it was indeed. And if you've never been to the Fontanini website, buckle your seatbelt. Because you might have thought that there were only a few characters at that very first Christmas in the stable.

H: Get ready to stretch your imagination.

B: You would be shocked. Because, not only was the whole village there, several Italian villages were there.

H: Including time travelers such as St. Francis. I knew about the stigmata, but I didn't know about the time travel.

B: Well, I mean, there's so many levels here. I have this vision. It's 20 years from now. You're tenured at some very prestigious university teaching theology. Exciting students about Gregory of Nyssa. I am on the beach somewhere, by the way, in Aruba.

H: Are you retired at this point? Or have you just decided you're done?

B: No, I'm seeing people in spiritual direction from the beach.

H: Oh, OK. OK, that kind of a beach.

B: Yeah.

H: A spiritual direction beach.

B: And I thought you could think of me and my Italian heritage. But I also love this little meta moment that the creator of the first creche is there in your nativity scene.

H: I have to say, I learned that from you. I didn't realize until ... well, he did come with a story, by the way. And the story includes the story of the first nativity scene. Wild.

B: And really, the true reason here is this tees up an opportunity at a cocktail party, an Advent cocktail party, for you to geek out all about theology and Francis and Jesus and really focus on the true meaning of Christmas.

H: Like I need an excuse. Oh, my gosh.

B: So Merry Christmas. Happy Epiphany. Happy New Year.

H: Thank you very much. This will adorn my nativity situation for years to come. It's hard to call it a nativity set at this point. It's a nativity situation.

H: Oh, I like that. So any exciting news from the Nappy household?

B: Yes. My eldest landed in Florence, Italy, and has begun her semester. Three exciting moments. One, she cooked her very first meal on her own, pasta fagioli.

H: Oh, my goodness.

B: No, pasta and bean soup. So I'm so proud of her. She ordered a guitar, a very cheap guitar, because she thought, "I can't possibly live a semester without playing."

H: Yeah.

B: So that makes me very excited. And the third is she's taking a bookbinding class, which makes me super excited, because I think in a former life, I was definitely a Benedictine and in the bindery of the monastery. And in her very first class, she made a book. And so things are very exciting.

H: Oh, my goodness. Just off living the dream.

B: Living the dream. My younger daughter got a job babysitting; her very first job. So income is rolling in with one daughter and a whole lot of income is leaving us with the other.

H: Oh, my goodness. 'Tis education.

B: Indeed. Well, it's no coincidence that we're sort of laughing and being so joyous in anticipation of the Bishop Vincenci episode, right? Because, I mean, joy is sort of the primary vibe that I feel when I'm around Bishop Vinny.

H: Yeah, totally. How were you first connected with Bishop Vicentia?

B: So I love telling the story.

H: I'm glad I asked.

B: And it's a simple one, but it's near and dear to my heart. So in my very first months at Berkley Divinity School at Yale, and part of my work is to design lifelong learning opportunities for lay leaders and clergy to help them develop the skills that they'll need to be transformative and hopeful and effectually joyous leaders in the church. And so I was calling various leaders from around the world to invite them to participate in the program. And Bishop Vicentia emailed me, though she lives half a world away in Lesotho, in southern Africa, she got back to me within seconds, with great support and willingness to visit Berkley and participate in the program and give a workshop on leadership. And then, of course, when I was around her, I was just so touched by her, by her humility, her joy. But just to make herself so available, so speedily to me in my new ministry, it was just I was so thankful for it.

H: I don't know if I told you when she was here in the fall, one of our alumni told her that the thing to do in Connecticut is to go apple picking. And then she asked me, how do I do that? Not knowing that I already had plans to go apple picking that very Saturday. So Bishop Vicentia accompanied the young adult Episcopalians of New Haven to Bishop's Orchards. And she was all about it. She was like, get me something that says Bishop Orchards, I need to wear this. This is amazing. It was so much fun.

B: That is extraordinary. It is the little things in life, like taking a bishop to Bishop's Orchards. I mean, that's...

H: Yeah.

B: And she was there at precisely the right time of year when you had a trip. Like, providential.

H: Yeah, good times. So could you tell us a little bit more about Bishop Vinny?

B: I sure can. The right Reverend Dr. Vicentia Cabe was born in Soweto. She's the bishop in Lesotho. For some folks who might not be tracking, Lesotho is a landlocked mountainous kingdom completely surrounded by South Africa. And so she began her theology training at the College of the Transfiguration, earned a PhD in practical theology, and focused her research on alcoholism among clergy. Super interesting. After becoming ordained, she served in parishes around the Diocese of Johannesburg. She became the first woman and youngest ever rector and principal of the College of the Transformation. In 2021, she was elected bishop of Lesotho, becoming the third woman bishop in Southern Africa and the sixth on the African continent. So first in her post, and still carrying a lot of first energy. I'm so thankful that she carries that mantle. She was invited in 2023 by Archbishop Justin Welby to preach at the opening service of the Lambeth Conference. And this is where many of us first heard her preach and became aware of her leadership and ministry. Incredible educator, pastor, teacher, pioneer in women's leadership. And when I was speaking to her that very first time, she told me that against the recommendation of a lot of her team there in Lesotho, she decided to go grocery shopping for herself. And people told her, you know, you have more important work to do. It might not always be safe as Bishop to do your own grocery shopping. And she insisted. She said, "I have to be with my people."

H: Wow.

B: And so she's the kind of humble, trusting, brave community leader that I'm so thankful that we have in the Anglican Communion.

H: Wow. Well, and two more things. One, she holds the position that Desmond Tutu held, which I think that contextualizes it a lot for me. The other thing is I've kind of heard through the grapevine that the six African women bishops have gotten together at times, or maybe they were planning a get-together, which I think is very cool. What a display of camaraderie. Siblinghood in the body of Christ.

B: I would love to be a fly on the wall for that fair conversation, right? Oh, well, I'm excited for this conversation. I hope all our listeners enjoy it.

B: Well, it's so good to have you here, Bishop Vinny. I'm always curious when I'm speaking to bishops, but also priests and really anyone in life. I love to hear their vocation story, and I love to hear about how God revealed to them sometimes really dramatically and sometimes painfully slowly over time about the work that they're called to do. Can we hear a bit of your vocation story?

V: Wow. My vocation story is I would say myself an interesting one. Growing up in Soweto, we're not even in the transition from the apartheid government to the democratic government. It was just around '92. So at that time, the priests that I knew from a distance, like when the public space, you know, Allan Boesak, Desmond Tutu, Duncan Buchanan, David Russell, a number of them were the priests that I wouldn't have thought that coming into ministry, I would get to know or work with them. And at that time, being a priest was not fashionable again, as my father said when he heard that I have a calling, and his reaction was, "So you're signing up to be poor for the rest of your life." Because that was his exposure to priesthood. But again, at that time, the Anglican Church had not yet ordained women to the priesthood. So I was sensing this call, I think, at the wrong time.

H: Oh, wow.

V: Where whatever could have men ... being a priest was not totally acceptable. And so when I shared with my maternal grandmother about this, she didn't take it well. Because one was, for her, immediately in her head to search our lineage and figure out who in our lineage was a priest. And in that time, she could not really locate anyone. So even if she had, then it would be a matter of, "Who is the woman in our family who answered this calling?" None. So she kind of figured out that I should forget about this at that moment.

But like any other God-fearing woman, she went to the church and talked to my parish priest because she was shocked. As I said before that, my parish priest didn't help the process at that time, because his response was "Tell her to focus on her studies and forget about these things." So if I had to doubt my vocation and calling, that was the time; to think, "I'm making this up in my head and I don't know why, because those who are around me don't seem to be understanding this vocation."

B: I'm just thinking of some of our seminarians who listen in to the podcast. And I wonder, do you have any wisdom for them if they're facing sort of similar apprehension around priesthood coming from their family members?

V: What I've realized and what I will tell them is that God makes a way, and God's timing is not our timing. At the right opportune moment, things get to be revealed as they are. And when God has called you, it doesn't matter who is resisting that. God will get you to where you need to be to do exactly what you're called to do. So at this moment, it might not comfort them, but hold on. Remember your timing, your projections, your plans, are your plans, not God's plans. They might be discarded when God's plans kick in. So just hold on.

H: I think that's very comforting, to think that I can't accidentally mess up my own life and calling or something like that. But so what happened when the Anglican Communion decided to ordain women and then obviously you got ordained? How did it all work out?

V: For us, the Anglican Church of Southland Africa passed the motion to ordain women at a provincial synod, your general convention, in August of 1992. And it was the year when I was sensing this, but I was not sure of where this is going. But as I say, at God's time, things are

clear. So 1992, women, was possible for us to be ordained to the priesthood. And I love that church. It went a step further, I think, amending or heading on to this, saying it's not only to the priesthood, it's to the episcopacy, which then opened doors. Because if it had just left it to ordination to priesthood, it would have taken more years to discuss whether women are to be consecrated bishops.

H: Right.

B: Yeah. And what was the public opinion like at the time? Was there instant support? Was there pushback? I wonder what it was like to be among the first in that era.

V: Well, the first, because I think I'm, you know, fourth or fifth in the line, I won't say generation, but those who were the first, it was not easy. And I honor their resilience because you got told, as people will say even now, that it is not biblical for women to be ordained. And yes, the Anglican Church of South Africa did lose some of its members to other denominations because they were not in favor of the decisions. So if that was an instance for the church to break, it could have happened. But this is when one is grateful for the leadership and the wisdom and the discernment of the then-Archbishop Desmond Tutu on how he handled that process. It was not a victory moment, but again, he didn't want to elevate those who felt sorry over those who really had got it. Yes, there were jubiliations in one quarters, there was sadness in it, but at that moment, when the vote had happened, you have to hold this church together.

B: Whenever we think of you, Bishop Vinny, and we've become good friends, Berkeley Divinity School and you and your diocese and even some of your priests; whenever we think of you, we think of someone who brings a lot of wisdom to your leadership. And whenever we, around here, sort of need leadership wisdom or insight, we hop on and talk to you. And as you look—I hope that's not too much pressure, but we always feel really thankful for the conversations and the insight you provide. But I'm wondering, when you think about what makes for a strong leader, given the kinds of challenges that you see in the world and in your diocese, what are those leadership skills that you're looking for in your community?

V: Wow. When you started saying strong leader, I started thinking in my head, we no longer need strong leaders. We need compassionate leaders. We need discerning leaders. And I think this is where we're moving into because strong really gets to be identified with power, with “boss,” with “I'm in the front, you follow,” and all these kinds of things. And as we continue to explore models of leadership and as some of us lead, you realize that leadership takes so much out of a person. But again, it takes so much out of those that you lead because there's mutual expectation. You expect that those who lead, that they will trust your wisdom and the direction you're taking them and they trust you, that you know exactly where you're taking us in the process. So one of the things that I have learned is and I said in some spaces that these positions for many of us are borrowed positions. They're not permanent. And so while you're still on that space and platform, use it for greater good. Whether you create a legacy, whether you open doors, whether you create opportunities, let leadership be that. It's not about the leader. And I think most of us, as we come into this space is, we make leadership about ourselves and

then everything else has to center around us. Everything has to come from us. We are the wise one in the room. And so I'm learning that I might be a leader, but that those who possess wisdom beyond what I have and how do I invite them to the table without first me feeling intimidated that they might know more than I do. Or them thinking now that they're being used in our scholarly work. Will I be credited for this idea? Will I be cited that I brought this?

So those, I think, are the challenges that one really faces in this. So for me, as I humble myself as I come to a space that I might not be the only one who possesses knowledge and wisdom. There are other people who can do that. How do I learn from them?

B: This is so refreshing because I was just having a conversation with a leader recently who was talking about their leadership brand. And the way I understood this person's insight is that we have to really, we have to gain followers and build a platform. And I mean, I certainly understand the insight.

H: Brandon, it sounds like one of your cult documentaries.

B: Oh, my gosh. And it felt that way. And this is a very different kind of leadership. It's not that it's not focused on helping others, I think in some ways it is, but it's simultaneously prioritizing my own career and success and visibility and

H: And power.

B: And power, yeah. And I found my stomach turning. I'm just so thankful that your voice is amplifying another path.

V: Yeah. Yeah. And there's a brand, because we live in that kind of world where leaders are branded, or brand themselves. Because what you present is what people believe. It's kind of like you're selling something. My thing is that ... be authentic in that, so that people don't need to be updating your brand every time you mess up.

H: Right. Well, can you tell us more about the idea of compassion in leadership? Can you tell us why compassion? How do you be compassionate?

V: Well, we are put at the position of privilege as leaders, where people entrust us with deep, deep issues of their lives, where we are consulted on serious matters. And when we do not show empathy, when we are not humbled to be in that space to receive, especially as religious leaders, then we've got it wrong. And that's why even in the church, we are afraid of litigation because people might not trust us enough to deal with things in a sensitive manner or with humility. My thing that then I realize in this position as a young woman, as a black woman in Africa, these things don't happen to us all most of the time. So to be in this position, it is a gift. And so how do I utilize that so that those who look at me or discern a vocation or leadership in any other sphere, that at least they can take that, you know, maybe we can learn that she leads with humility. She's compassionate. It might not be attractive things in the spheres of leadership, but that's the beauty of being a leader. You create new models as you continue to move on and

lead.

B: When you're sitting with priests in your diocese or lay leaders in the diocese and they're struggling with leadership, what are some of the issues that they're generally struggling with? And do you see any common missteps that you need to support them around?

V: Yeah. In Lesotho and outside of Lesotho, what I've seen and have had the opportunity to hear leaders talk about, clergy, especially, is that people do not respect me. People don't recognize my authority. There's this assumption that when you are a leader, everyone else serves you, everyone else marches at your beat. And that's not so. The people who are resisted, people who are challenged, are leaders. So why would you want to be that kind of a leader that no one challenges you, no one asks you questions, no one asks you to provide evidence? So those are the things that for me is, people believe that I'm a leader, so everything else has to change outside of me, not me. And I think for me that that's the problem, that what I see with lay leaders, what I see with clergy, is the fact that it's all about me.

H: I think often, especially in positions of church leadership, people expect you to be infallible and perfect. And you kind of ... I think often people think that other people will think they are perfect if they're representing the church. How do you deal with that? I mean, I assume as a person who's not actually perfect.

V: Yes. I'm the perfect example of imperfect. And my thing is like, what kind of sacred scriptures are we reading if we want to be perfect? Please, what kind of leadership are we seeing from the disciples, rather the 12 of the 72? There's no perfection in that. Whether you look at Hebrew texts, whether you look at, you know, you just say it, there's no perfection in that leadership. So what makes us to think that we can be the perfect ones? From what I know and read as a Christian in Africa, is that God alone is perfect. And we strive to be like that. We are not, we will never be perfect. But in our little ways, in what we do, we strive for that. And I don't think we get it right all the time. But I'm confident that I at least try to really be godly in the last two hours. I will figure out how the next two hours go, because that's how you take it, because you don't know what you're going to come across. You don't know what challenge is waiting for you. So we strive for perfection. We will never be perfect.

H: It's hopeful. And it does make me wonder, what are your hopes for the church in Lesotho? I know you kind of inherited in a lot of ways a difficult situation. And maybe our listeners probably don't know as much about that as they could. So you can tell us about that. But what are your hopes going forward?

V: My hopes for the diocese of Lesotho and incidentally—tomorrow, it will be my second year anniversary of the consecration. So, one, I had said to the diocese of Lesotho as we're getting to know each other that, "Can we be a credible church? Can people, when they talk about us, find that we're people who are credible?" And that entails so many things into that port. Two, is when people look at the Anglican church in Lesotho, what do they say about it? Because I want people to say, "I want to be part of that church. Whatever they're doing, I want to be part of



that." So our public ministry has to match our private prayers as people in Lesotho. And another thing that I'd said, I said, we need to bring it to the fore. And I had it somewhere that the church that does not care for its young people, it's a dead church. And that has troubled me for a long time, that if we are a church that does not value and really incorporate our young people and children in ministry, then we have no future. So it's to make sure that we're bringing the young people into the life of the church. I believe they're not the church of tomorrow, they're the church of today because they're active participants in it. But thirdly, the diocese of Lesotho is the whole kingdom of Lesotho. So we are a national church of some sort here. So what we say or what we do plays into the public sphere and public platform. So it is of importance that the things that we do and we say as the Anglican church, as the Anglican presence here, is of importance.

B: You know, what's occurring to me, Bishop Vinny, is that not only were you the first woman bishop to be in leadership there, but you're not from Lesotho, right? A lot of the leaders that we train, seminarians who become priests and eventually some of them even become bishops, they're called to serve in places that they're not from. And so I'm just wondering about that dynamic. What was that like for you and what encouragement do you have to people who are serving in places that they're not from?

V: When I was told at seminary that I was being prepared not for my diocese, but for the church of God, I thought they were just joking. Because for me, the church of God was Johannesburg, where I'm born and bred. And so that appointment to Lesotho really spoke of that moment. I'm thankful to my professors and deans who really were doing exactly that, equipping me for the church of God, wherever it may be. So being appointed to lead the Diocese of Lesotho, as a South African who has no connections to Lesotho, no heritage of Basotho, it was a daunting task. Because I am sure they could have found someone somewhere in this world who had connections and relations and heritage from Lesotho.

H: So I really think some of our listeners will be familiar and some will. Can you talk about the relationship between Lesotho in South Africa? Just a little bit to give context.

V: Lesotho is, as I call it, in the heart of South Africa. So where the heart is positioned in a person, where you look at South Africa, that's where Lesotho is. And so Lesotho is a landlocked country. The five border post of Lesotho takes you in some part of South Africa. So you never escape South Africa in that. And South Africa has been served by Lesotho for decades as migrant workers, mostly to the mines of South Africa, gold mines and coal mines of South Africa.

And secondly, as domestic help to South Africans. And still continues even today of that relationship. Now you have more Basotho residing in South Africa as professionals who have gone to study in South Africa or anywhere in the world and decided to be citizens of South Africa. The reverse is not that perfect because not many South Africans will opt to reside in Lesotho because they see South Africa as more opportunity for them. But interesting, during the struggle times of South Africa, many of the South Africans came to be exiled in Lesotho. So that's how there's still a connection of South Africans who have resided here because they left South Africa during apartheid and they never went back. So this for them is home. So those are

the relations that South Africa and Lesotho has.

B: It's really helpful. I'm thinking about your metaphor of Lesotho as the heart of South Africa geographically. It's made me think of the role of courage in leadership. You talked about the role of compassion. And you know, whenever I think of the heart, I think of its Latin root from courage, heart, coeur in Latin. And I'm just thinking of, what's the role for you of courage in leadership because the needs of our world are so great, so urgent? And to be a leader takes immense amounts of bravery at this moment. And I'm wondering if you could maybe just reflect a little on those moments when we've had to be really bold or you've had to be really bold in leadership.

V: Wow. As I've said and will continue to say, that leadership is not a popularity contest. If you want to be loved, please do not lead. It's something else. And it's not only now, in this office of bishop, that one had to take tough and courageous decisions as other people will see. It is from a parish level that one has to be authentic to oneself, that you know what is right and what is wrong. And you know there will be people who in their own space believe that they have power and they're untouchable. But when they do those kind of things in a public space or in a communal space where they make other people not to be fully wanted, to be welcomed, to even be heard, a position has to be taken by a leader. So it has been one of those things that one might be fearful of what will happen as a seminary dean when you have to suspend students who are causing havoc in the life of the community. You have to send them home and say to their sending bishops, "I'm sure they might have missed why they were sent to seminary. Can you reorientate them? And when they come, if they do come by your decision, let us know what happens." Those are not popular positions to take, but they have to be taken. When as a bishop you have to deal with an institute, disciplinary processes for a clergy who might be beloved in the diocese, you have to do it. Not because you hate that person. You don't hate that person. It's just the laws and the polity of our church says when you do this, you're not making the space to be welcoming and the space to be a space of everyone who feels that this is their home too, that this is their church too. Having to speak truth to power. You know, in this day of social media, when you just take a decision that people don't like, you are branded a traitor, you are not liked. In my context, you might be told you need to go back home.

So, you know, if we are not courageous to make these steps, then we're going to lead in a chaotic space. And I'm not sure what joy we can gain from that.

H: As you're facing potential opposition or real opposition, what keeps you grounded and centered?

V: Oh, God, that I can sleep at night. You know, we take nothing for granted. I can get to bed and sleep and wake up when that alarm goes on, that is comforting. Two, to have friends and spiritual companions who know your heart, who you talk to. They give you advice. You might not like them; what they're telling you to do. But, you know, they have your best interest at heart. And to have a family that is proud of me, whatever mistakes that I do or not do, that helps that, you know, the masses might not be happy with me at this moment. But I know that people who

adore me in my life and that. Those are comfort. And that God is in the plane! As crazy as it might sound, and look, God knows exactly what's going on.

H: Am I am I making this up, or did you talk to us before about praying at the gym?

V: I do. You didn't make it up. I'm sure I told you.

H: Tell us about this.

V: Because my day can go crazy. So I try to control it by making sure that I'm in the gym at 5 a.m. for an hour and a half. Because that is the only time that I think I can be in my space, in my head, and let someone else...yeah; let someone else tell me what to do. As I said to my, to my gym instructor, "You're the only one who can tell me what to do without me really barking back at you." But in the first 30 minutes, whatever, treadmill or bike, it's a prayer time for me. Because it's not just praying for the day, it's just to run through what happened yesterday, and what I'm preparing for. And I find it is the most valuable time in that space when you have your headphones on or earbuds. No one bothers you. So, yes. So for me, it's the most sacred space that I get to be with God.

H: So are you praying with words? Are you praying ... How do you structure that? Is it structured?

V: It can be structured at times because then you take up your phone and you start doing notes because you just realize this is important. This prayer just revealed something. It is listening to chants, that prayerful mode that really takes you into some space ... you know, scripture, audio. And I think that's what I love, that our faith now ... we have resources. You don't need to be paging through the prayer book and Bible in the gym. You have this on audio. And so that helps; that helps one to get yourself in that. So when I leave the gym and really make sure that I'm in the office at eight, I've done the bulk of my time with God. So the other communal prayers, I don't hog that space because I've had my chance with God.

H: That's amazing. Now I'm imagining myself trying to flip through an actual prayer book on a bike and just kind of falling over. But I do think, and this is something –this is big: I think you've inspired me to hit the gym.

V: Yeah, put on that audio reading and chants and prayer things. Yeah.

B: I love this. This really speaks to me, Bishop Vinny, because I've experienced something of this as well, the prayerfulness of the workout somehow. And there's something very Benedictine about it, like the *ora et labora*, work and prayer. There is a certain kind of surrender that happens for me when my body is moving. And I'm a person who likes a lot of stillness in my prayer life. And I've also found that when my body is moving, my mind gets quieter than when I'm just sitting. So this is, this is really powerful for me. And sometimes I feel I'll admit a slight amount of guilt like, "Oh, this being on a treadmill, it doesn't look like prayer in a traditional way."

But there's so many ways to pray, right? Yes.

V: Yeah, people do prayer walks. You can do treadmill prayer too. So true.

B: There's something else that you said that I just want to, I don't know, lift up and celebrate even if, just so it sinks deeper into my heart. But I can remember going through a really, really difficult leadership period. And it was absolutely essential for me to have a small group of people who knew my heart, to use your language. I don't know that I that I've ever used that language quite particularly, but that's what I needed. Someone who, despite what all the crowd was saying and all of the unpopularity, someone who could see my goodness and remind me of it. Because in those moments when you have to do something unpopular, at least ... I felt like such a horrible person. And so thank you for lifting that up. I mean, I'm going to take that with me for years and years to come.

V: Yeah, yeah, it helps. And I think that's why you have to keep people around you who can be honest with you and new people who when you have forgotten, they remind you of that goodness because we do forget that we do embody some goodness. So yeah, yeah.

H: So, Brandon and I the other day were saying that we tend to go through life like golden retriever dogs. Like we're just happy, we're friendly. And in my mind, I think that's how I was taught to think of Jesus, and how I was taught to think of my vocation as a Christian, as being friendly, being happy. I mean, I think like I identify with the spiritual gift of encouragement in a very real way. But then also, I'm conscious that Jesus was flipping tables, everywhere he went people were immediately his enemy; I don't know if I would actually describe Jesus as golden retriever-like at all!

So I guess the question is like, what kind of Jesus is this that we are serving and trying to be like? I mean, it's a Jesus who is allowed to make unpopular and correct decisions. But how are we supposed to imagine Jesus? That's a big question for you.

V: Jesus took his mission seriously when he was sent to this world to embody the humanity of us. Because the things that he did and said, when you read, we're like, are you serious? Jesus said this and did that. Then we want to do the opposite and be the opposite of that. He got tired. Yeah, I'm sure like all of us when he got tired, he was moody. That's why He'd go away and just be by himself. But we're not allowing ourselves to go through that, to feel that, "I'm tired. I need my space." You're called selfish when you do that. You know, he rebuked his disciples when they said things that sounded not so right. And some said, that sounds stupid, but I think that's very judgmental. And so when we get to do that, people frown at us. "Oh, you think you're better than I." When he said to the group, that crowd, "If none of you has sinned, be the first to cast the stone." You know, you say that to people, "Oh, you are the perfect one." But he was in trouble there, because the stone could have gone his direction and not to the woman. And I think that's where we find that Jesus, who in moments got tired, he cried, he had fun with his disciples. We want to limit ourselves of that. And I'm not sure why, when the divine could be those things that we read about. So *human*. Yeah, we're allowed to be human if Jesus is human. Yes. And I think we are missing out on some of the important things of life and Christianity that is both of community and individuals.

We have time to be together. We have time to be on our own. We have time to contemplate. We have time to, you know, we have those opposites that happen. And I think we should embrace that. You know, at times when, you know, I wish that there could be a version of a book where Jesus and Paul are in conversation. They will be butting heads. If that's going to a movie. I want to watch it. Because that's where I see Jesus really saying, "Bro, I'm tired of you. Please just get away from me." Yeah. And because you read what Paul is saying, you read what Jesus is saying, you're like, you need to get together. I want to be there. I want to see what's going to happen.

B: Amen. Oh, I want that movie to be made, Bishop Vinny. And I think you've also come up with the title of it, "Bro, I'm Tired of You."

V: Oh, gosh. Yes. Let me copyright that.

I feel like the question I'm left with now is had Jesus come, would he be retreating to a peloton bike to pray?

V: I'm sure there will be an app that he created that really encompasses what we do when you're on a Peloton bike. He was innovative.

H: He was innovative.

V: It was not a matter of saying, I'm sure there will be something that is of Jesus. And we want that in our gadgets.

H: Wouldn't have been a carpenter. He would have been building apps. Got it.

V: He was such a skilled human-divine person. There were no limits into what Jesus can do. And I think that what I take is there are no limits to what we can do. We just limit ourselves because we are fearful. We want other people to approve whether we're doing it right or wrong. You know, public opinion directs and dictates what we do. So ... there are no limits. We have just created those limits.

H: I love that you are simultaneously encouraging us to chill out, take a nap when you need to. You're a person. But also push those limits and don't box yourself in. That's amazing.

V: Push the limit. And if nothing happens, at least you have pushed something.

H: True. Yeah.

V: Yeah.

B: Thank you for saying that, Hannah, because what you're making me realize is that leadership requires a kind of paradox. Right. You have to hold both of those things, the rest and the

activity, the pushing and the compassion. And holding paradox isn't easy. And it's not encouraged as a skill in our world today, which tends to really speak in sort of extremes. At least here in the United States, I mean, our political situation is just one example of the way in which extremes sell, extremes get ratings on television. But holding paradox is actually one of the great spiritual skills that leaders need. Right?

V: Yeah.

H: Even to just kind of add more color to that, what I'm getting a picture of is a leader who goes away, not just to rest and be human, but to pray and to be empowered by God. That way, when you are pushing those limits, it's not your power and your leadership brand and your followers. It's the power of God working through you to not just be a powerful leader, but to be a leader for the people, a compassionate leader.

V: Absolutely. We're not doing this by our own might or our own strength, because you will be blown away by all these things. You know, when you start claiming you're the author of God and you don't even have a connection or a relationship with God. So we do this, you know, I had a deep time of prayer and said, "I know that might not be popular, please go with me." And if it's not of you, if that's not where you are, stop me. Let me not go there. So there's a preparation before we do these things. You know, you don't just delve into that, because we deal with principalities and powers out there. So, gosh, let us be armored and ready.

H: Yeah.

B: So I wonder, in the last moments that we have together, Bishop Vinny, what brings you hope as you look out into your community, into the world? Not the kind of hope that hides its eyes from the real struggle and violence, but provides you a kind of anchor, right? This ancient symbol of hope, right? What anchors you and makes you hopeful?

V: Yeah. Well, I'm hopeful because I know that I stand or I'm carried by giants who have been here before me. That people who have prepared a path that one is jettying through and that they have gone through worse things. They've gone through times where there was no technology and they worked wonders. It's, how do we build on that? And in a little way, you see glimmers of that and sparks of that on other people who are being compassionate; Who, as Jesus said, feed the hungry, clothe the poor, you visit me when I was in jail, those gospel imperatives— that gives me hope. Yes, we can be selfless, but not to a point that we have nothing else for ourselves left. But that this church, at times it can get you crazy, but we still love it. And the moment when it brings you so much joy, you cry. You just don't want to be a member of any other church, but this one. Those are the moments and glimmers of hope. The fact that you have students in 2023 who deeply still believe they are called to God to serve. That for me is a glimmer of hope. It is a demonstration that God is not yet done with us. There's still more coming.

H: Thank you so much, Bishop Vinny. All of our times together are a joy. This has been a joy.

V: Thank you.

H: And I really can't wait to share this with all of our listeners who are going to get so much out of it.

V: Thank you. I will listen to it and hear you inspire me through this.

B: Thank you for our friendship. This institutional friendship, but this very personal friendship. It's just a real source of gratitude for me and for us. So here's to many more years of friendship and collaboration and doing God's work together.

V: Great. Thank you for the invitation. There are other people that I envied when I heard their podcasts. Here I am. They will listen to me now.

B: Thank you for listening to *The Leader's Way*. We hope you were encouraged and inspired. To learn more about this episode, visit our website at [berkeleydivinity.yale.edu/podcast](http://berkeleydivinity.yale.edu/podcast).

H: Rate and review us and follow the podcast to make sure you never miss an episode. Follow Berkeley at Yale on Instagram for quotes from the podcast and more.

B: Until next time.

H: The Lord be with you.