

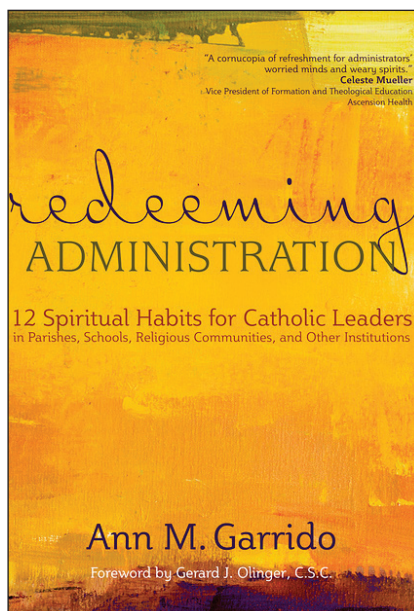
PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY FOR ADMINISTRATORS

REVIEWED BY BETSY TAYLOR, MS

Author Ann M. Garrido draws on firsthand experience as she explores how administrators of a Catholic workplace tie their own spirituality into their day-to-day tasks and responsibilities. Her background gives her particular insight regarding how administrators can draw on spirituality to improve their own work, the work of those around them and experience personal growth in the process. A faculty member since 1999 at Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis, Garrido has held several administrative posts as part of her job. In *Redeeming Administration: 12 Spiritual Habits for Catholic Leaders in Parishes, Schools, Religious Communities, and Other Institutions*, she keeps in mind that administrators don't need more to add to their to-do lists, and she organizes accordingly.

The book is intended for administrators of Catholic institutions who execute and manage an organization's vision and policy. In each of 12 chapters, Garrido focuses on a spiritual habit that can help administrators on the job. Each chapter highlights a saint or "holy administrator" who embodies the featured quality, and Garrido suggests the time-strapped can read just one chapter a month, whether alone or in a discussion group, to gain a year's worth of insights.

In its examples, the book does a fine job of switching among well-known figures and others who may be new to many readers. For instance, Garrido describes Martha, so busy trying to prepare for and serve Jesus during his visit to her home that she misses out on the chance to sit and listen to him, as her sister Mary does. When Martha complains to Jesus that her sister didn't help, he tells her Mary has chosen the



**REDEEMING ADMINISTRATION:
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OTHER INSTITUTIONS**

BY ANN M. GARRIDO
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better part. "Talk about unwelcome self-knowledge!" Garrido notes.

The Martha message to administrators is clear: Organize, but remember to enjoy the things you have organized. Garrido also draws on Martha to illustrate how an administrator can exemplify humility, as well. She explains that in the Christian tradition, having a truthful sense of oneself — including knowing one's strengths and weaknesses — is humility.

"It implies being willing to present the most accurate representation of oneself whenever possible, aware that

there may be even more to our true selves that we have yet to learn," Garrido writes. In administrative work, the ability to know oneself then allows for truthful relationships with others, and the ability to recognize areas where an administrator can improve.

As an administrator, Garrido says she often finds herself in situations she would prefer to avoid, fearing she does not have the wisdom or experience needed to best handle them. In these cases, she suggests, administrators need to join the virtue of humility with the virtue of courage or fortitude.

She writes, "No, we don't know everything we wish we knew. No, we are not perfect. No, we don't feel worthy to make recommendations that will affect others' lives. But we also have to act. We have to ask difficult questions. We have to make and implement unpopular decisions. We have to confront the conflict. We have to cultivate an ability to respond that matches our responsibility."

To find courage, she relies on what she calls "the grace of the role." To explain, Garrido points to a perhaps lesser known aspect of Catholicism, what she describes as the "unusual tradition of celebrating a *chair* — the Chair of St. Peter."

The Catholic Feast of the Chair of St. Peter is not about a chair so much as it is about the role of the person who sits in that chair, she says. Those who have led the church on earth range from saints to scoundrels, but the hope is that a certain grace comes from being seated in the chair, that is, appointed to fulfill a needed role in a community. Those sitting in leadership chairs may benefit simply from remembering that they've been asked or appointed to

carry out that role.

“There may be someone better out there, but that person is not sitting in the chair right now, and the work still needs to be done,” Garrido writes. “I have to trust that the gap between me and what the role requires will be filled by the Holy Spirit.”

She adds that trusting in the grace of the role, and trusting in God’s presence, can cultivate courage in administrators of Catholic organizations. She says Dominican Marie-Joseph Lagrange, founder of the *École Biblique* in Jerusalem, said of his own work: “Knowingly and prudently, I stuck my hand into the fire.” Garrido says she has found that the more often an administrator “sticks a hand into the fire,” the

tougher the skin becomes, so while the fire of a conflict may still blaze, the administrator acting courageously feels “the heat less.”

Redeeming Administration looks at the qualities of leaders of Catholic organizations in interesting and thoughtful ways, and it provides a strong resource to reflect on spirituality in the workplace. Nevertheless, a few quibbles arise: Much of the book draws from Garrido’s own inner contemplation, and it might have been helpful if she had pulled more from the experiences of other modern-day managers and leaders in Catholic workplaces. Also, the book’s reflections can come across as thinking to the point of worrying about one’s administrative re-

sponsibilities and decisions.

Surely at times, all conscientious administrators in Catholic institutions fall into a Martha-like, worker-bee trap, too busy with busywork, or just mountains of work, to stop, reflect and make the big decisions needed. While this book aims to point out places where administrators can cultivate qualities necessary to performing their jobs, it perhaps doesn’t celebrate enough the importance of confidence for those in leadership roles — the confidence administrators need to be at peace with decisions well-deliberated and well-made.

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