Christian Ethics and Business Leadership

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This essay discusses the ethical principles of listening, community, stewardship, and interreligious and intercultural understanding with respect to business leadership. It opens by discussing definitions of ethics and their relevance to businesses and business leaders. It continues by providing a description of the consulting company Accenture's ethical principles and practices, as positive examples. The essay provides Arthur Andersen and its work with Enron and WorldCom, both of which went bankrupt in the early 2000s, as examples of the failures that occur when ethical principles are not practiced. Then, the essay states that Christianity and the Benedictine tradition constitute a basis of the ethical ideas in this essay. After that, the essay specifically explains the Benedictine ethical principles of listening, community, stewardship, and interreligious and intercultural understanding with respect to the Benedictine tradition and business leadership, while emphasizing that those principles are inclusive and potentially relevant to all persons.

Introduction

This essay discusses the ethical principles of listening, community, stewardship, and interreligious and intercultural understanding with respect to business leadership (Chittister, 2014; DesJardins, 2020). [1] This essay will discuss definitions of ethics and their relevance to businesses and business leaders (Beauchamp, 2001; DesJardins, 2020). It will continue by describing the current consulting company Accenture's ethical principles and practices, as positive examples of ethics (Accenture, 2022-a, 2022-b; Monotya, 2021; Gilley et al., 2010). In terms of historical background, this essay will discuss the former consulting and accounting company Arthur Andersen and its work with the former companies Enron and WorldCom, which were energy and telephone companies respectively, both of which went bankrupt in the early 2000s (Auburn University, n.d.; International Banker, 2021-a, 2021-b). The essay will present those companies as examples of the failures that occur when ethical principles are not practiced (Auburn University, n.d.; International Banker, 2021-a, 2021-b). Then, the essay will discuss Accenture's emergence from Arthur Andersen, and Accenture's renewed commitment to ethics as well as Accenture's successes, which emerged partly because of its high ethical standards (Gilley et al., 2010). After that, the essay will state that ethics must have a basis, while explaining that Christianity broadly and the Benedictine tradition specifically, which is within Christianity, form the basis of the ethical ideas for the rest of this essay (DesJardins, 2020; Chittister, 2014). Then, the essay will explain the ethical principles of listening, community, stewardship, and interreligious and intercultural understanding with respect to the Benedictine tradition and business leadership (Benedict, 1980).

What is Ethics?

Ethics is an area of academic inquiry which attempts to answer the question: "What are the proper guiding principles for what I should do?" (Beauchamp, 2001; DesJardins, 2020). At the same time, ethics attempts to answer the question, "What are the proper principles for correct courses of actions in various situations?" The terms ethics and morals are often used interchangeably (Beauchamp, 2001; DesJardins, 2020). For example, one type of ethical decision may involve the amount of health insurance which a company's leaders decide to offer their employees. While

financial factors are significant in such decisions, the leaders of some companies may believe that they have an ethical obligation to provide their employees with expansive health insurance coverage, because they believe that their employees' health is of enormous importance (Beauchamp, 2001; DesJardins, 2020).

There is some overlap in the meanings of the words "ethics" and "etiquette." Ethics refers to the principles of right and wrong, which guide humans' behavior and decision-making, while etiquette encompasses the codes of conduct within society. Etiquette involves the codes of conduct, which often relate to a person's day-to-day relations, such as the ways that they greet each other or their table manners when people share meals with each other. One common element with respect to ethics and etiquette is that society often provides the guidelines for ethics and etiquette (Beauchamp, 2001; DesJardins, 2020).

Ethics and Cultural Context
The terms ethics and ethos are also related to each other. Ethics is comprised of principles, that if properly understood and applied, should guide a person in terms of their actions. An ethos is the cultural environment, in which a person lives. While the ethos may provide certain indications of how a person may act, ethics attempts to provide refined and well-thought out principles of actions. One example of the way, which etiquette functions in two different kinds of cultural ethos, is the following (Beauchamp, 2001). In some countries, it is common for persons, who do not know one another, to greet one another when they enter an elevator. Most people in the United States usually do not greet persons, whom they do not know, in an elevator. Thus, the ethos and etiquette, regarding proper behavior in an elevator, may differ in various countries and regions.

In a related matter, while ethical principles must be refined and well thought-out, they must also be relevant to the ethos or cultural context, where people may attempt to act in accordance with such ethical principles (Davis, 1991). Ethical principles are crucial in business leadership because business leaders have an enormous impact on many aspects of their employees' and clients' lives. Business leaders' ethical policies can have an influence on their employees' lives in ways that include their salaries, working conditions, vacation time, time for medical leave, where and when employees work, as well as their health and retirement benefits (DesJardins, 2020; Dombrowski, 2000; Velasquez et al., 2015).

Ethics and Relationships with Clients
Business leaders' ethical policies and actions can also have a positive impact on companies' relationships with their clients (Pietersen, 2024). For example, ethics in transparency and honesty may create situations, where clients appreciate a company's upfront approach to products services, pricing, and limitations (Cole, 2021). This transparency can build trust and foster long-term relationships (Economist Impact, 2021). When business leaders and their employees treat clients with respect, while valuing their feedback and addressing concerns promptly, business leaders demonstrate a commitment to fair dealing, which builds loyalty and encourages repeat business (Mittal et al., 2023). When business leaders and other employees deliver on promises, follow-through on commitments, and meet deadlines, while exceeding expectations, they build trust with their clients and increase the possibility of client satisfaction (Khowjoy et al., 2022).

Ethics and Accenture
One example of a business that exemplifies such ethics is Accenture, which is an international management information consulting company that has offices in various parts of the world (Accenture, n.d.-2; Accenture, n.d.-3). Accenture has been recognized as one of the most ethical companies on seventeen occasions, by the Ethisphere Institute, which defines and measures corporate ethical standards, recognizes companies that excel, and promotes best practices in corporate ethics (Ethisphere, 2024-a, 2024-b). For example, Accenture has a code of business ethics, which is over fifty pages long and emphasizes four types of obligations in terms of making good decisions. These ethical obligations include Accenture's employees knowing and acting in accordance with their obligations under the law, their obligations to Accenture, their obligations to their clients, and their obligation to do no harm (Accenture, 2022-a; Rowe, n.d.). At the same time, Accenture requires its employees to conduct their professional lives in a manner that is honest, moral, and reflects the highest levels of integrity (Accenture, 2022-b). These and related principles are tied to Accenture's additional policies and procedures for ethics entitled *Policy 1000 - Speaking Up and Zero Tolerance for Retaliation*, which provides an extensive and confidential system for employees to report unethical behavior at Accenture (2022-b). The policy encourages employees to report harassment, disrespectful behavior or insensitive treatment, discrimination, retaliation, or threats (Accenture, 2022-b).

Arthur Andersen, Enron, WorldCom, and Accenture
Accenture's renewed commitments to high ethical standards came into place after some serious scandals plagued that company's predecessor, which was named Arthur Andersen. In 2001, the Enron scandal came to light (Auburn University, n.d.; Rifkin, 2024). This was an accounting scandal involving Enron Corporation, an American energy company based in Houston, Texas, and Arthur Andersen, which had done accounting work for Enron (Auburn University, n.d.; Rifkin, 2024; Wayne State Law School, n.d.). Enron engaged in a series of deceptive and illegal accounting and reporting practices, of which Arthur Andersen's auditors apparently approved (Auburn University, n.d.; Rifkin, 2024). When news of widespread fraud within Enron became public in October 2001, Enron declared bankruptcy, and Arthur Andersen, which at the time was one of the five largest audit and accountancy partnerships in the world, was effectively dissolved (Rifkin, 2024). In addition to being the largest bankruptcy reorganization in U.S. history until that time, Enron, with a market value of $68 billion, was the largest audit failure at the time (Auburn University, n.d.; International Banker, 2021-a; Rifkin, 2024).

Many executives at Enron were indicted for a variety of charges and some were later sentenced to prison, including Jeffrey Skilling, who was Enron's former Chief Executive Officer (International Banker, 2021-a; Rifkin, 2024). Initially, Arthur Andersen was found guilty of illegally destroying documents relevant to the United States' Security and Exchange Commission's investigation. The Security and Exchange Commission voided Arthur Andersen's license to audit public companies and that commission effectively closed Arthur Andersen. By the time that the ruling was overturned at the United States Supreme Court, Arthur Andersen had lost a majority of its customers and had ceased operating (Auburn University, n.d.; International Banker, 2021-a, 2021-b; Rifkin, 2024). Enron employees and shareholders received limited returns in lawsuits, despite losing billions in pensions and stock prices (Auburn University, n.d.; International Banker, 2021-a; Rifkin, 2024). In addition, in 2002, Arthur Andersen was implicated in similar ethical and legal violations with respect to accounting work, which it had done for WorldCom that was the United

States' second-largest long-distance telephone company at the time (Auburn University, n.d.; International Banker, 2021-a, 2021-b).

Accenture Emerges from Arthur Andersen
While these ethical and legal violations were very damaging to Enron, WorldCom, and Arthur Andersen, as Accenture emerged from Arthur Andersen, it renewed its commitment to ethics. Accenture has become an Information Technology (IT) services and consulting company whose assets in 2023 were over $53 billion (Macrotrends, 2024). Accenture was named, by Fortune magazine, as the world's most admired Information Technology Services company and one of the best one-hundred companies, for which to work in the United States (Accenture, n.d.-1). Arthur Andersen's, Enron's, and WorldCom's ethical and legal violations demonstrate the enormous human and financial costs of companies' leaders and other employees not complying with ethical and legal standards (Auburn University, n.d.). Yet, in spite of those enormous losses, Accenture eventually emerged from Arthur Andersen, with large assets, the respect of its clients and peers, and consistently high rankings in Ethisphere's assessments of business ethics (Ethisphere, 2024-a, 2024-b).

Sources for Ethics
With these factors in mind, it is appropriate to ask, "What constitutes the source or sources of proper ethical standards?" That is, "On what are ethical standards based?" The sources of ethical standards can include, among other things, reason, philosophy, theology, and/or religion, none of which are mutually exclusive (Shelley, 2017). In that vein, this essay will present some ideas on the relationships between Christian ethics and business leadership (Melé & Fontrodona, 2017). While the original sources of the ethical ideas stem from Christianity, they are potentially relevant to all persons.

Christianity and Ethics: Some Background
For the purpose of providing a background for Christian ethics, this section of the essay will provide a brief history of Christianity and Christian theology and a description of an important tradition within Christianity, which is called the Benedictine Tradition, that was founded in the year 529 CE (OSB.org, n.d.). Christianity began in the first century in the area that was later to become Israel or Palestine. Christianity's founder was Jesus, who is also known as Jesus Christ. In terms of ethics, Christians believe that Jesus preached and embodied love, compassion, and forgiveness, as well as ideals related to community, stewardship, listening, community, and interreligious and intercultural understanding (McInroy & Hollerich, 2020). Jesus led a group of twelve men, who believed in and proclaimed his teachings. These men have the title of disciples and apostles. After Jesus' crucifixion, these twelve men and the other followers of Jesus, who came to be called Christians, preached that having faith in Jesus, or having faith in him and acting in accordance with his teachings would enable a person to have eternal life in heaven after their physical bodies die. At the same time, Christians attempted to establish communities, which came to called churches, which attempted to embody all the aspects of Jesus' life, crucifixion, and resurrection, including his ethical teachings and the ways he manifested those teachings in his life (Gonzalez, 1996; McInroy, M., & Hollerich, 2020).

Christianity, the Benedictine Tradition, and Monasteries
Throughout the two thousand years of Christianity, the vast majority of Christians have been married, and most of those Christians have had children. In sharp contrast to persons, who engage in sexual relations, persons who are celibate have made a lifelong commitment to not engaging in sexual relations (Haines-Eitzen, 2017). Persons, who are celibate, practice celibacy. While a very small minority of Christians are celibate, celibate religious communities have been established for some women and men, who want to devote their entire lives to God through celibacy, work, and prayer within a Christian community (Raab, 2011). These celibate Christians, who have vowed to lead this kind of special life, live in monasteries for men, and convents or monasteries, for women. The celibate men in such religious communities are called monks or brothers. The celibate women in the religious communities are called nuns or sisters (OSB.org, n.d.). These monks and sisters live in their own respective communities and share almost all their possessions in common, and own very few personal possessions. An abbot is the title of the leader of the male monastery, and prioress is the title of the leader of the female monastery. Both leaders are elected by the members of the respective communities (Saint Benedict, 1981).

Saint Benedict and Benedictine Monasteries
Saint Benedict, was a fifth and sixth century Christian who lived most of his life in Italy, and founded Christian Benedictine monasteries in 529 (OSB.org, n.d.). Saint Benedict wrote a book of approximately one-hundred pages, entitled the *Rule of Saint Benedict*. That rule provides ethical and practical guidance for many aspects of how monks and sisters should lead their lives in their monasteries (Saint Benedict, 1981). At the same time, the Rule of Saint Benedict can provide ethical guidance for all persons, whether or not they live in a monastery. Today, there are 400 Benedictine monasteries around the world with about 7,500 monks and 13,000 sisters (Belmont, Abbey, n.d.). While some people may not perceive monasteries as being similar to businesses, monasteries and businesses have some similar characteristics. These characteristics include having leaders, having groups of people, who work toward similar goals, and being in situations where finances need to be managed properly. In this context, Saint Benedict provided abbots and prioresses with ethical guidance, which could be useful for business leaders today (Keplinger et al., 2016; Vaill, 2000).

Listening, Community, Stewardship, and Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding
According to the *Rule of Saint Benedict* and the Benedictine tradition more broadly, abbots and prioresses must listen, foster a sense of community, be good stewards, and engage in interreligious and intercultural understanding. These are compelling ethical principles for business leaders also. The ethical principles of listening, community, stewardship, and interreligious and intercultural understanding comprise the focus of the rest of this essay. The Rule of Saint Benedict begins with the words, "Listen with . . . the ear of your heart" (Saint Benedict, 1981, p. 15). This sentence summarizes a profound concept that goes far beyond simply hearing words. It is a call to a deeper form of attentiveness, a way of being receptive to the ideas and feelings of persons, who are communicating with us, and to the world around us. Saint Benedict acknowledges that we all have physical ears, but true listening goes beyond that (Chittister, 2014; Saint Benedict, 1981). It requires an openness and willingness to be present in the moment, not just passively taking in sounds. The "ear of the heart" signifies a deep inner attentiveness (Chittister, 2014; Saint Benedict, 1981). It relates to listening with the mind, and with one's emotions, intuition, and spirit. This enables the listener to grasp the deeper meaning and intent behind the speakers' words and actions.

The best kind of listening fosters empathy, compassion, and a willingness to understand the perspectives of other persons (Chittister, 2014; Saint Benedict, 1981).[2]

Listening and Business Leadership
While being a good listener is an important characteristic for Benedictine abbots, prioresses, and everyone else in a monastery, listening is also an important ethical principle for business leaders. Active listening is an important ethical principle for business leaders for several reasons.

First, good listening can provide business leaders with access to diverse perspectives. Leaders do not always have all the answers. By listening to employees and fellow-leaders from various departments and levels, business leaders can gain a well-rounded view of situations, leading them to make better-informed and impactful decisions (Arshad, 2023).

Second, good listening can enable business leaders to identify potential problems. Actively listening to employee concerns allows leaders to address problems early. For example, a team member might mention a difficulty, which they are having meeting a deadline. If these kinds of potential problems are caught early, they can be addressed before they disrupt projects (Itzchakov & Kluger, 2018).

Third, good listening can enable business leaders to understand clients' needs. In a client-focused environment, understanding clients' needs can be crucial. Leaders, who listen to their clients' feedback, can customize products and services accordingly, which could lead to higher customer satisfaction and loyalty (Kim et al., 2024; Seemann et al., 2024).

Community and Business Leadership
For abbots, prioresses, and business leaders, practicing the ethical principle of good listening also relates to building community (Valente, 2018). Building and fostering community is important for leaders of monasteries and business leaders. Community can be defined as a unified body of individuals living and/or working in proximity with each other, who share common goals and interests (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2024-a; Rule of Saint Benedict, 1981). For persons in monasteries, their common goals and interests involve caring for each other, praying, serving the community outside the monastery, and growing spiritually (Rule of Saint Benedict, 1981). For business leaders and employees, their common goals within their companies may involve maintaining or increasing revenue, supporting each other as employees, providing the highest quality products and services, serving clients, and staying focused on the company's goals and priorities (Gkizani & Galanakis, 2022).

Community and the Benedictine Tradition
Ethical ideas about community from the Benedictine tradition can provide helpful guidance for ethical ideas about community for business leaders (Larios, 2020). In the Rule of Saint Benedict, community is more than a collection of individuals living in the same place; it is the very foundation of their lives as sisters and monks. Saint Benedict crafted a framework for living together in a way that fosters spiritual growth, mutual support, and a life centered on God (Mion & Tessari, 2019). The following ideas are some of the key aspects of community life as expressed in the Benedictine tradition.

First, shared purpose and commitment: The Benedictine community is united by a shared purpose, which involves the sisters and monk serving God, each other, and the world around them, through prayer, work, and living in accordance with the of Rule of Saint Benedict. These common goals foster a sense of unity and provide a framework for individual growth within the context of the larger group (Barry, Yeo, Norris et al., 2006).

Second, being hospitable and welcoming: The Rule of Saint Benedict emphasizes the importance of hospitality and the welcoming of all persons, including guests, strangers, and new members with warmth and respect. This creates a sense of belonging within the community and fosters a spirit of generosity and care for others (Raverty, 2012).

Third, being harmonious and balanced: The Rule of Saint Benedict emphasizes a balanced and harmonious life with dedicated time for prayer, work, study, meals, sleep, and leisure. This structure creates a sense of order and allows individuals to pursue their spiritual journey, while maintaining physical and mental well-being (Chittister, 2014; Saint Benedict, 1981).

The Benefits of Community for Businesses and Business Leaders
While there are differences between fostering community in a Benedictine monastery, on the one hand, and in a business, on the other, some Benedictine ethical principles can be applied to businesses as well. For instance, it is important for business leaders to foster shared goals and commitments among their employees, so the employees can feel that they are part of a community and see how their individual roles contribute to achieving shared goals. In that process, the employees will feel a sense of ownership and purpose (Gkizani & Galanakis, 2022). This intrinsic motivation translates to higher levels of engagement on the employees' part, leading them to make extra efforts and consistently strive for excellence (Palmer, 2009).

It is important for business leaders to foster a community spirit of being hospitable and welcoming among the employees of their organizations for several reasons. For example, new appointees in organizations may feel overwhelmed and somewhat disoriented during their early days in an organization. When business leaders and other employees foster a welcoming environment, this eases the new employees' transition to the organization (Porath & Piñeyro Sublett, 2022). In terms of mentorship and knowledge-sharing, when business leaders nurture a communitarian, hospitable atmosphere, it encourages experienced employees to offer guidance and support to newcomers. When business leaders and other employees create strong bonds of community, it enables persons within an organization to feel valued and appreciated. A welcoming, communitarian environment demonstrates that the company cares about its employees as individuals, not just workers (Porath & Piñeyro Sublett, 2022). Employees who feel valued are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and committed to their work (Palmer, 2009).

Stewardship, the Benedictine Tradition, and Ethics for Business Leadership
Stewardship is an important ethical concept in the Benedictine tradition, which one can apply to business leadership. Stewardship can be defined as the careful and responsible management of matters which are entrusted to a person's care (Merriam-Webster, 2024-b; Saint Benedict, 1981). In the Rule of Saint Benedict, stewardship is a multifaceted concept that extends far beyond simply managing material possessions. For Benedictine monks and sisters, stewardship is a way of life which is centered on the belief that everything a person or community has, including time, talents,

and the natural world, are gifts from God, which are entrusted to humans' care (Chittister, 2014; Rule of Saint Benedict, 1981).

The Rule of Saint Benedict promotes a balanced and sustainable lifestyle, while emphasizing the wise use of resources. Monks and sisters are encouraged to be self-sufficient through their work and responsible management of the monastery's resources. Wastefulness and excess are discouraged, and a focus is placed on using everything to its full potential (Hamann, et al., 2024; Hanson & Keplinger, 2023). When business leaders promote sustainability and the wise use of resources, they reduce the environmental impact of their businesses by minimizing wasted outputs, energy consumption, and water usage. This translates to a smaller carbon footprint, improved air and water quality, and a positive contribution to environmental preservation (Jordan & Shaw, 2024).

The Rule of Saint Benedict also promotes a stable approach to life, including balance and moderation in every aspect of life. Monks and sisters are encouraged to practice moderation in all things, from food and drink to work and leisure (Casey, 2005). When business leaders embody balance and moderation in their lives and encourage it for their employees, they help reduce stress and fatigue, they improve integration between employees' work lives and private lives, and they reduce absenteeism and turnover (Jo & Shin, 2025). When business leaders foster a culture of ethical stewardship, they help ensure the long-term sustainability and success of their organizations, while creating a more responsible and engaged workforce (Caldwell, Hayes, & Long, 2010). They also promote enhanced focus and creativity, improved problem-solving skills, and reduced errors as well as improved quality (Jordan & Shaw, 2024).

Intercultural and Interreligious Understanding
The Rule of Saint Benedict also promotes ethics with respect to intercultural and interreligious understanding. In this vein, Bede Griffiths, OSB was a Benedict monk, who lived from 1906 to 1993, and embodied Benedictine ethical principles related to intercultural and interreligious understanding (Coff, n.d.; Griffiths, 1980). Bede Griffiths was also called Swami Dayananda, which means bliss of compassion (Coff, n.d.). Bede Griffiths lived in India for thirty-eight years (Find a Grave, n.d.). For much of that time, he lived in an ashram, which is a place of religious retreat (Coff, n.d.). While he was in India, he engaged in conversations, discussions, and dialogues with persons of many religions and worldviews, including Hindus, in an effort to create understanding, peace, and harmony (Trapnell, 2001).[3]

While Griffiths embodied and expressed many principles related to interreligious and intercultural understanding in his life, writings, and oral communications, three of those principles relate, in significant ways, to ethics and business leadership. Those principles include dialogue and encounter, mutual enrichment, and global consciousness, which, among other characteristics, involves respect for diversity (Green, 2023; Griffiths, 2024; Rance-McGregor, 2021; Teasdale, 2003). In terms of dialogue and encounter, Griffiths emphasized the importance of dialogue and personal encounter in interreligious understanding, with a particular focus on Hinduism and Christianity. Griffiths believed that genuine dialogue involves intellectual exchange among people of various religions, who can share their experiences and religious practices (Green, 2023). Regarding mutual enrichment, Griffiths viewed interreligious dialogue as a means for people to be edified and strengthened in their abilities to understand one another. Griffiths believed that when

persons engage in conversations with other persons, whose religions or worldviews differed from their own, they could deepen their understanding of their own religions and worldviews while enhancing their comprehension of their own religions and the worldviews of others (Teasdale, 2003). Griffiths promoted the idea of a global consciousness which includes people being fully conscious of their own religious identities and perspectives, while transcending them. In this vein, Griffiths hoped for and envisioned a future of global openness and interconnectedness, which would be rooted in love, as people would respect and celebrate the diversity of religious and cultural expressions (Griffiths, 2024; Hick, 1980; Rance-McGregor, 2021).

These ethical commitments to intercultural and interreligious understanding can provide a helpful basis for an ethic of intercultural and interreligious understanding among business leaders. The following are some benefits of business leaders promoting an ethic of intercultural and interreligious understanding among their employees.

First, interreligious and intercultural understanding can help employees overcome communication barriers. Leaders, who promote intercultural understanding, equip employees to navigate communication styles, interpret nonverbal cues, and avoid cultural mistakes (Ng, Van Dyne, & Ang, 2009).

Second, interreligious and intercultural understanding can help build teams where persons trust and respect each other. When employees understand and respect each other's cultural and religious backgrounds, then collaboration flourishes. Trust is fostered, leading to more open communication, effective teamwork, and a more positive work environment (Addagabottu et al., 2023; Sugiyama et al., 2023).

In addition, interreligious and intercultural understanding can improve a company's involvement in various markets and enable its global expansion, while generating some benefits for a company's outreach. (Gelfand, Erez, & Aycan, 2007; Thomas & Peterson, 2017). Benefits of intercultural and interreligious understanding for a company's outreach include the following.

First, when business leaders promote an ethic of interreligious and intercultural understanding, they can increase the company's comprehension of customers' needs. Many businesses now operate in international markets. Leaders who foster interreligious and intercultural understanding equip their teams to cater to the needs, preferences, and cultural sensitivities of diverse customers (Livermore, 2015).

Second, when business leaders and other employees have strong interreligious and intercultural understanding, they can build trust with international partners. Businesses often collaborate with partners from different cultures and religions. Intercultural understanding paves the way for building trust, establishing strong relationships, and ensuring successful collaboration (Dyer & Chu, 2003).

Third, strong interreligious and intercultural understanding can enable businesses to adapt to evolving markets. Global markets undergo change. A workforce with a strong grasp of diverse cultures is better equipped to adapt to evolving customer needs and market trends (Addagabottu et al., 2023; Sugiyama et al., 2023).

In sum, fostering intercultural and interreligious understanding is no longer optional for businesses. It is a strategic investment that enhances communication and innovation, and ultimately, the organization's ability to thrive in an increasingly diverse and interconnected world. By promoting respect and understanding across cultures and religions, business leaders can build stronger, more resilient, and successful organizations (Addagabottu et al., 2023; Chan et al., 2019; Sugiyama et al., 2023).

Conclusion

This article highlights the crucial role of Benedictine ethical principles in business leadership, emphasizing the importance of listening, community, stewardship, and interreligious and intercultural understanding. These principles can be helpful to business leaders for work within their companies and the outreach efforts, which their companies make to their clients in various markets (Chittister, 2014; Crane & Matten, 2016; Valente, 2018). These ideals, while emerging from a specific religious context, may resonate with what may be broad aspirations for just and sustainable practices (Chittister, 2014; Valente, 2018). Businesses, which embrace these principles, lessen the risks associated with unethical conduct, while potentially cultivating strong organizational cultures (Porath & Piñeyro Sublett, 2022; Rowe, n.d.). At the same time, such businesses may strengthen various relationships, while ultimately contributing to robust business environments (Vaill, 2000). Ultimately, ethical business leadership may be a moral imperative and strategic necessity for business leaders who would like to foster sustainable and responsible business practices in an interconnected world (Melé & Fontrodona, 2017).

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Endnotes

[1]This essay is based on a lecture entitled "Ethics and Leadership" which Jon Armajani presented on Zoom on August 6, 2024 to an audience of students, faculty, and administrators at Symbiosis Skills and Professional University in Pune, India. Jon Armajani expresses his deepest gratitude to the following persons for organizing the session for the lecture and/or providing comments on earlier versions of this manuscript: Louis Johnston; Ravindra Kayande; Kingshuk Mukherjee; Ronald Pagnucco; Helen Rolfson, OSF; and Raghavan Santhanam.

[2] While this essay and the lecture, on which it is based, analyze ethics and business leadership, they are grounded on principles in Christian ethics and the Benedictine tradition, on the one hand, and similar principles in Symbiosis University's mission and vision statement, on the other ways (Saint Benedict, 1981; Symbiosis Society, n.d.). In terms of Christian ethics and the Benedictine tradition, this essay and the lecture, on which it is based, focus on listening, community, stewardship, and interreligious and intercultural understanding (Saint Benedict,1981). At the same time, the essay and the lecture are founded on some crucial aspects of Symbiosis University's mission and vision statement, which discuss the importance of fostering an environment where persons live together for mutual benefit, while emphasizing cooperative interdependence (Symbiosis Society, n.d.). That statement also sets forth objectives of promoting friendship, and sisterhood and brotherhood among all persons, while nurturing global citizens and ambassadors of goodwill. Symbiosis University's goals, as well as the goals of the lecture and this essay, reinforce each other in these and other ways (Saint Benedict, 1981; Symbiosis Society, n.d.).

[3]Bede Griffiths' commitments to interreligious understanding overlap with aspects of the mission and vision of Symbiosis University, which involve promoting international understanding through quality education (Coff, n.d.; Griffiths, 1980; Symbiosis Society, n.d.; Symbiosis Skills & Professional University, n.d.). The university has been developed around its motto which states that the world is one family (Symbiosis Society, n.d.; Symbiosis Skills & Professional University, n.d.). These overlapping principles of intercultural and interreligious understanding undergird the lecture, which forms a foundation for the lecture, and this essay (Coff, n.d.; Griffiths, 1980; Symbiosis Society, n.d.; Symbiosis Skills & Professional University, n.d.).