ECCLESIAL ADMINISTRATION AND LEADERSHIP OF CHURCH COMMUNITIES IN A CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT: A THEOLOGICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL APPROACH

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Abstract

The study analyzes church administration in the context of contemporary society, characterized by institutional complexity, accelerated social transformations, and cultural pluralism. Starting from the theological foundation of ecclesial communion, the research explores how the principles of Orthodox theology can be put in dialogue with modern concepts in the field of organizational management and leadership. In the first part, the theological dimensions of ecclesial organization are highlighted, with reference to the theology of the person and communion, as articulated in the thought of Orthodox theologians such as Dumitru Stăniloae, Kallistos Ware or Christos Yannaras. In the second part, concepts from the contemporary management literature are analyzed, such as strategic leadership, organizational culture, critical thinking and value innovation, highlighting their relevance for the administration of ecclesial communities. The study argues that the integration of these perspectives does not imply a secularization of church life, but offers useful analytical and organizational tools for the fulfillment of the pastoral mission in contemporary society. In this sense, ecclesial administration is understood as a dynamic process that combines fidelity to the theological tradition of the Church with the responsible use of modern principles of organization and leadership. Through this transdisciplinary approach, the study proposes a reflection on how pastoral leadership, community culture and strategic discernment can contribute to strengthening ecclesial life and developing the Church's mission in the contemporary world.

Keywords: *ecclesial administration, pastoral leadership, organizational culture, strategic discernment, theology of communion, ecclesial management, mission of the Church*

JEL Classification: Z12, M10, M12, L31

Church Administration in the Contemporary Context: Academic Introduction

In the context of contemporary society, characterized by institutional complexity, cultural pluralism and accelerated social transformations, religious institutions are called to reflect on the way in which they organize their community life and carry out their pastoral mission. Church administration cannot be reduced to a mere organizational or bureaucratic dimension, but must be understood in close connection with the theological foundation of ecclesial life and with the pastoral responsibility of community leadership.

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In this context, contemporary reflection on institutional leadership offers a number of useful concepts for understanding how religious communities can coordinate their activities and resources. The specialized literature in the field of organizational management and leadership emphasizes the importance of elements such as organizational culture, strategic communication, critical thinking and participatory leadership in the effective functioning of institutions.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between the theological foundations of ecclesial organization and certain concepts from the contemporary literature of management and leadership. The study aims to highlight how theological reflection on the person, communion and mission of the Church can enter into a fertile dialogue with the conceptual tools of organizational management, without compromising the theological identity of the ecclesial institution.

Through this transdisciplinary approach, the research aims to contribute to a broader understanding of contemporary church administration, highlighting that the institutional organization of the Church must combine fidelity to the theological tradition with the ability to respond to the social and cultural challenges of the contemporary world.

Research methodology

The study uses a qualitative and transdisciplinary approach, based on theological analysis and conceptual examination of the contemporary literature on management and organizational leadership. The research method consists in the comparative analysis of some theological sources from the Orthodox tradition and of some representative works in the field of organizational management, in order to identify points of conceptual convergence between the two fields.

The research analyzes theological works that reflect on the nature of ecclesial communion and on the personal dimension of Christian existence, such as those of Dumitru Stăniloae, Kallistos Ware or Christos Yannaras. In parallel, contributions from the management and leadership literature that address topics such as organizational culture, strategic leadership, institutional communication and critical thinking in decision-making are examined.

Through this analytical and transdisciplinary method, the study aims to highlight how certain concepts in organizational theory can offer useful interpretative tools for understanding the administrative and institutional dimensions of ecclesial life, without reducing the reality of the Church to a simple social organization.

Literature review

Contemporary Orthodox theological reflection has paid particular attention to the community dimension of ecclesial existence. In the theological

thought of Dumitru Stăniloae, the Church is fundamentally understood as a space of communion between persons, based on the participation of the faithful in liturgical and sacramental life. This perspective emphasizes that the organization of ecclesial life cannot be separated from the spiritual reality of communion in Christ.

Similarly, Kallistos Ware's ecclesiological reflections highlight the organic and communitarian character of the Church, which cannot be reduced to a juridical or administrative institution. From this perspective, ecclesial structures must be understood as instruments at the service of communion and the spiritual mission of the Church.

Contemporary theology inspired by the thought of Christos Yannaras emphasizes the personal and relational dimension of ecclesial existence, emphasizing that the identity of the person is realized within the framework of relationships of communion. This perspective provides a relevant anthropological framework for reflection on the leadership of ecclesial communities.

In parallel, the contemporary management and leadership literature has developed a number of useful concepts for analyzing how organizations coordinate their activities and resources. Studies such as those by Mary Crossan, Peter Lorange or Jo Owen emphasize the importance of strategic leadership, organizational culture and communication in institutional development.

The dialogue between these theological and organizational perspectives can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of contemporary ecclesial administration, highlighting the fact that the spiritual dimension of the life of the Church does not exclude the use of conceptual tools derived from organizational theory.

Church Administration in a Contemporary Context

In the context of contemporary society, characterized by institutional complexity, rapid change and the multiplication of social challenges, church administration is called to combine fidelity to ecclesial tradition with the responsible use of modern principles of organization and leadership. In this sense, contemporary approaches to organizational management provide a useful conceptual framework for understanding how institutions can effectively coordinate their resources and activities.

Management is defined as the process by which the resources and activities of an organization are coordinated in order to achieve its objectives. In this regard, Robert D. Stueart and Barbara B. Moran emphasize that: ,,Management is essential for the efficient functioning of organizations and for the coordination of resources in order to achieve institutional objectives."[2]

[2] Robert D. Stueart, Barbara B. Moran, *Library and Information Center Management*, Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2007, p. 3.

Applied in an ecclesial context, this perspective highlights the need for an administration that ensures the proper organization of pastoral, missionary and educational activities. At the same time, the management of institutions must be able to respond to the social and cultural changes of the contemporary world. In this sense, Peter Lorange states that: ,,Organizations must adapt their leadership structures and practices to the ever-changing environments."[3]

Institutional adaptability is closely related to the ability of leaders to guide the organization in a context of uncertainty. In this sense, the same author points out that: ,,Strategic leadership involves the ability to respond to uncertainty while maintaining a clear direction for the organization."[4]

In church administration, this dimension translates into the need for leadership that is both faithful to tradition and capable of identifying appropriate solutions to contemporary challenges. Similarly, the management literature emphasizes the role of cooperation and coordination of human activities within organizations. Jo Owen observes that: ,,Management involves coordinating people, resources, and processes to achieve organizational goals."[5]

At the same time, effective leadership is not just about exercising authority, but about mobilizing the community around a common mission: ,,Effective leadership is less about authority and more about the ability to get people to work together for common goals."[6]

In this sense, communication becomes a central element of the leadership process. Harrison and Mühlberg point out that: ,,The quality of leadership in an organization is amplified or limited by the quality of communication."[7]

Strategic communication also plays an essential role in articulating the institutional vision and in mobilizing the members of the organization: ,,Strategic communication defines and creates value for the organization and for those it serves."[8]

At the strategic level, the management of institutions requires the ability to analyze the context and formulate coherent directions of action. In this sense, Crossan and collaborators state that: ,,Strategic analysis provides leaders with

[3] Peter Lorange, *Leading in Turbulent Times:Lessons Learnt and Implications for the Future*, Bingley: Emerald Publishing, 2010, p. 1.
[4] *Ibidem*, p. 43.
[5] Jo Owen, *How to Manage. The definitive guide to effective management*, Harlow: Pearson Education, 2009, p. 13-14.
[6] *Ibidem*, p. 35.
[7] E. Bruce Harrison, Judith Mühlberg, *Leadership Communication. How Leaders Communicate and How Communicators Lead in Today's Global Enterprise*, New York: Business Expert Press, 2015, p. 1.
[8] *Ibidem*, p. 1.

the necessary tools to understand the organizational environment and develop effective responses."[9]

At the same time, organizational success depends on the ability to integrate vision, structure, and action into a coherent strategy: „Organizations succeed when leadership integrates vision, structure, and execution into a coherent strategy."[10]

From this perspective, contemporary church administration must be understood not as a mere bureaucratic structure, but as a dynamic process of coordinating community life and the Church's mission in the world.

The Theological Foundation: Person and Communion

Church administration cannot be adequately understood without considering its theological foundation. In the Orthodox tradition, the organization of the Church's life is not determined exclusively by institutional or juridical criteria, but finds its foundation in the theology of the person and of communion. This perspective starts from the fundamental reality of the Church as the Body of Christ and as a space of Eucharistic communion.

Contemporary Orthodox theology has consistently insisted that Christian spirituality is inseparable from the experience of communion. In this sense, Dumitru Stăniloae emphasizes: „In general, a true spirituality is the spirituality of a real communion in prayer and in life."[11]

For Father Stăniloae, the liturgical life of the Church constitutes the environment in which this communion is concretely realized. The participation of the faithful in the Divine Liturgy is not only a religious practice, but the experience of a real unity in Christ. Thus, he states, „Believers unite with one another by participating in the same Body and Blood of Christ."[12]

This Eucharistic dimension of the unity of the Church is essential for understanding how ecclesial structures are configured. The organization of community is not the result of a mere social convention, but the sacramental expression of communion in Christ. In the same sense, Cristian Sonea shows that the unity of the Church has its origin in the Trinitarian reality itself: „The unity of the Church has its foundation in the unity of God. (of the Holy Trinity)."[13]

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[9] Mary M. Crossan, Michael J. Rouse, W. Glenn Rowe, Cara C. Maurer, *Strategic Analysis and Action*, Toronto: Pearson Education Canada, 2015, p. 17.

[10] *Ibidem*, p. 48

[11] Priest Professor Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy*, Publishing House of the Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 2004, p. 5.

[12] *Ibidem*, p. 3.

[13] Cristian Sonea, *The Theology of Interchristian Dialogue. An introduction*, Cluj University Press Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2017, p. 20.

Ecclesial communion, therefore, reflects divine communion on a historical level. From this perspective, the Church is not a purely juridical institution, but a sacramental and communitarian reality. This idea is also highlighted in the ecclesiological reflections of Kallistos Ware: „Orthodoxy sees the Church not as a purely juridical institution, but as a living organism of communion."[14]

The administrative structure of the Church must therefore be understood as an instrument at the service of this communion. The hierarchical organization, liturgical life and pastoral mission are expressions of a deeper theological reality, which has its origin in the very life of the Holy Trinity.

Palamite theology also offers a relevant perspective on the personal dimension of ecclesial experience. Within the hesychastic tradition, the knowledge of God is not conceived as a purely intellectual process, but as a personal participation in divine grace. In this regard, a study dedicated to the thought of Gregory Palamas shows that: „Palamite theology emphasizes the personal experience of divine grace in the life of the believer."[15]

This perspective highlights the fact that the life of the Church is founded on the personal encounter between God and man. Hence the community dimension of ecclesial existence, since the experience of grace leads to the integration of the person into the community of believers.

In contemporary theological reflection, Christos Yannaras insisted on the relationship between the person and communion, considering that human identity is fully realized only in relationship. Studies devoted to his thought emphasize that Orthodox theology attaches great importance to this relational dimension: „Contemporary Orthodox thought emphasizes the connection between the person, freedom and communion."[16]

Consequently, ecclesial administration cannot be adequately conceived without taking into account this relational anthropology. Leadership in the Church is not oriented towards the exercise of authority in a purely institutional sense, but towards the cultivation of communion and mutual responsibility within the community of believers.

The theological foundation of ecclesial administration, therefore, is to be found in the very reality of Trinitarian and Eucharistic communion. The organization of the community, hierarchical structures and pastoral activities are concrete expressions of this spiritual reality, which defines the identity and mission of the Church in the world.

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[14] Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, translated by Francisc Garcia, Editorial Angela, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2006, p. 18.

[15] Constantinos Athanasopoulos (ed.), *Orthodox Mysticism and Asceticism. Philosophy and Theology in St Gregory Palamas' Work*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020, p. 2-200.

[16] Andreas Andreopoulos, Demetrios Harper (eds.), *Christos Yannaras: Philosophy, Theology, Culture*, 2019, p. 2.

Pastoral leadership and leadership of the ecclesial community

Within the Church, community leadership cannot be reduced to an administrative or organizational function. Pastoral leadership presupposes a particular form of service, oriented towards building up the community and cultivating communion among the faithful. In this sense, ecclesial leadership is inseparable from pastoral responsibility and the spiritual dimension of community life.

In the contemporary literature on leadership, leadership is often described as the ability to mobilize people around a common goal. Thus, Robert Mellor observes that: ,,Leadership is the ability to bring out the best in others and unite them around a common goal."[17]

This perspective is particularly relevant in a pastoral context, where the role of the leader is not to impose authority, but to inspire and guide the community towards the fulfillment of its spiritual mission. In the same vein, Jo Owen points out that: ,,Effective leadership is less about exercising authority and more about the ability to get people to work together for common goals."[18]

In the context of the Church, these common objectives are defined by the pastoral, liturgical and missionary mission of the community. Pastoral leadership, therefore, presupposes the ability to cultivate cooperation and common responsibility within the ecclesial community.

Another essential element of leadership is communication. The relationship between the leader and the community is mediated by the ability to convey the vision and create trust. In this sense, Harrison and Mühlberg state that: ,,The quality of leadership in an organization is amplified or limited by the quality of communication."[19]

Pastoral communication is not limited to the transmission of information, but involves the creation of a space for dialogue and participation. Through it, the leader of the community can articulate the pastoral vision and mobilize the faithful in its realization. In the same sense, the mentioned authors emphasize that: ,,Strategic communication defines and creates value for the organization and for those it serves."[20]

In the ecclesial context, this "value" is linked to the strengthening of the community and the deepening of the spiritual life of the faithful.

Pastoral leadership also involves the ability to guide the community in an ever-changing social context. In this sense, Peter Lorange observes that leaders must be able to respond to the uncertainty and challenges of the contemporary

[17] Robert B. Mellor with Gary Coulton, Anne Chich, Antonia Bifulco, Noha Mellor and Alan Fisher, *Entrepreneurship for Everyone*, London: SAGE Publications, 2009, p. 12.
[18] Jo Owen, *How to Manage...*, p. 35.
[19] E. Bruce Harrison, Judith Mühlberg, *Leadership Communication...*, p. 1.
[20] *Ibidem*, p. 2.

environment: „Strategic leadership involves the ability to respond to uncertainty while maintaining a clear direction for the organization."[21]

For pastoral leadership, this direction is determined by fidelity to the Gospel and to the tradition of the Church, but also by the ability to identify appropriate ways to respond to the needs of the contemporary community.

At the same time, effective leadership involves the training and development of community members. Dave Kerpen points out that authentic leaders don't just focus on organizational results, but also on developing people: „The most effective leaders focus on developing people, not just controlling them."[22]

In a pastoral context, this perspective highlights the role of the leader as a spiritual formator and as an animator of community life. Pastoral leadership thus presupposes a form of ministry aimed at the spiritual growth of the faithful and the strengthening of ecclesial communion.

In conclusion, the leadership of the ecclesial community must be understood as a synthesis between the spiritual dimension of pastoral ministry and the principles of an effective organization. Pastoral leadership is not based on institutional authority in the strict sense, but on the ability to inspire, communicate and guide the community towards the fulfillment of its mission in the world.

Organizational Culture in Ecclesial Communities

The community life of the Church develops within an ecclesial culture that shapes the behaviors, relationships, and participation of community members. Similarly to other organizations, ecclesial communities are also influenced by values, norms, and patterns of interaction that define what the literature calls organizational culture. In the context of the Church, however, this culture is profoundly linked to the spiritual dimension and the experience of ecclesial communion.

The culture of an organization is formed through the interaction of the values and practices shared by its members. In this regard, Don Warrick and Jens Mueller note that: „Creating a culture of excellence is not an easy task; It involves understanding the importance of culture, setting a personal example, and taking dedicated action to bring out the best in others."[23]

This perspective highlights the fundamental role of leaders in shaping organizational culture. In the context of the Church, community leaders

[21] Peter Lorange, *Leading in Turbulent Times...*, p. 43.

[22] Dave Kerpen, *Likeable Leadership, a collection of 65+ inspirational stories on marketing, your career, social media @ more*, New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2019, p. 10-14.

[23] D. D. Warrick, Jens Mueller, *Lessons in Changing Cultures*, RossiSmith Academic Publications Ltd., Oxford, UK, 2015, p. 3.

contribute to shaping community life through personal example, spiritual guidance, and the promotion of evangelical values.

Organizational culture also influences how members of a community perceive and interpret institutional reality. Warrick and Mueller point out that: ,,Organizational culture influences the way people think, act, and interact within the organization."[24]

In the case of ecclesial communities, this influence is manifested in the formation of a common identity and in the cultivation of a specific way of relating among the faithful. The community culture of the Church is thus oriented towards solidarity, cooperation and mutual responsibility.

The management literature emphasizes that common values and a shared sense of mission contribute to strengthening the organizational culture. Mary Crossan and collaborators show that: ,,Organizations with a strong culture are characterized by shared values and a clear sense of common purpose."[25]

This idea can also be applied in the ecclesial context, where the common goal is determined by the mission of the Church and by the participation of the faithful in liturgical and sacramental life. Community culture thus becomes the framework in which the experience of communion and active participation in the life of the Church is realized.

At the same time, organizational culture influences the way strategies and decisions are implemented within the institution. Crossan and collaborators point out that: ,,Culture shapes how strategies are interpreted and implemented within organizations."[26]

In the life of ecclesial communities, this means that the success of pastoral initiatives depends not only on planning or organization, but also on the way in which they are assumed by the community. Community culture thus becomes a determining factor in the vitality and dynamism of church life.

Another important element of organizational culture is mutual trust between community members. Open communication and dialogue help to strengthen relationships and develop an atmosphere of collaboration. Harrison and Mühlberg emphasize in this regard that: ,,Leaders must cultivate an environment of trust and openness to enable collaboration."[27]

In the context of the Church, this culture of dialogue and trust fosters the active participation of the faithful in the life of the community and in the fulfilment of the ecclesial mission.

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[24] *Ibidem*, p. 7.

[25] Mary M. Crossan, Michael J. Rouse, W. Glenn Rowe, Cara C. Maurer, *Strategic Analysis and Action...*, p. 112.

[26] *Ibidem*, p. 118.

[27] E. Bruce Harrison, Judith Mühlberg, *Leadership Communication...*, p. 65.

Also, developing a strong community culture helps empower community members. Peter Lorange points out that: ,,Successful organizations develop cultures in which individuals feel responsible for collective results."[28]

In the case of ecclesial communities, this collective responsibility is manifested in the involvement of the faithful in the liturgical life, pastoral activities and missionary projects of the Church.

Community culture is therefore an essential element for the vitality of ecclesial life. It creates the framework in which spiritual values are transmitted, relationships between believers are strengthened, and the Church's mission is concretely realized.

Critical Thinking and Discernment in Ecclesial Leadership

In the current context, marked by the complexity of social phenomena and the multiplication of sources of information, the leadership of ecclesial communities presupposes not only pastoral competences, but also the capacity for analysis and discernment. Critical thinking thus becomes an essential tool for evaluating situations, for correctly interpreting contemporary realities and for formulating responsible decisions.

The literature emphasizes that critical thinking is a fundamental element of the decision-making process. Katherine Hibbs Pherson and Randolph H. Pherson state that: ,,Critical thinking is essential for making sound decisions in complex contexts."[29]

This statement highlights the role of analytical thinking in evaluating information and identifying the most appropriate directions of action. In the context of ecclesial leadership, discernment presupposes the ability to interpret social and cultural realities in the light of Gospel values.

A central element of critical thinking is the ability to analyze hypotheses and evaluate arguments. In this regard, Katherine and Randolph emphasize that: ,,Rigorous analysis involves examining assumptions and carefully evaluating the evidence before drawing conclusions."[30]

For the leadership of ecclesial communities, this perspective is particularly important, since pastoral decisions must take into account both the concrete social context and fidelity to the Church's tradition.

Critical thinking also involves the ability to structure the analysis process and organize information in a coherent manner. The mentioned authors show that: ,,Effective analysis requires structured thinking and careful evaluation of information sources."[31]

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[28] Peter Lorange, *Leading in Turbulent Times...*, p. 101.

[29]Katherine Hibbs Pherson, Randolph H. Pherson, *Critical Thinking for Strategic Intelligence*, by CQ Press, an Imprint of SAGE Publications, 2021, p. 3.

[30] *Ibidem*, p. 3.

[31] *Ibidem*

In ecclesial life, this intellectual discipline contributes to the formulation of appropriate pastoral strategies and to the avoidance of decisions based on superficial perceptions or incomplete interpretations.

Critical thinking also contributes to navigating situations of uncertainty and managing the complexity of the social environment. In this sense, Pherson and Pherson state that: ,,Critical thinking allows decision-makers to manage the uncertainty and complexity of contemporary environments."[32]

This capacity is essential for the leadership of ecclesial communities in a context in which cultural and social changes directly influence religious life.

At the same time, critical thinking is closely linked to strategic reflection. Mary Crossan and collaborators point out that the strategic process begins by asking relevant questions: ,,Strategic thinking involves asking the right questions before looking for the answers."[33]

This perspective highlights the role of critical questions in the discernment process. In ecclesial leadership, the formulation of appropriate questions can help to identify the real challenges of the community and to the correct orientation of pastoral initiatives.

At the same time, critical reflection helps leaders avoid certain limits of perception and interpretation. Crossan and collaborators point out that: ,,Leaders need to examine their own assumptions to avoid strategic blind spots."[34]

În context eclesial, această dimensiune a reflecției critice contribuie la menținerea unei atitudini de discernământ și responsabilitate în procesul decizional.

Also, the discipline of analysis contributes to improving the quality of decisions. Katherine Pherson and Randolph Pherson point out that: ,,The discipline of analysis improves the quality of decisions and reduces the risk of errors."[35]

In the case of ecclesial communities, this perspective can contribute to the development of more transparent and accountable decision-making processes.

In conclusion, critical thinking and discernment are essential components of ecclesial leadership in the contemporary context. By cultivating analytical reflection and carefully evaluating concrete situations, the leaders of church communities can formulate more responsible pastoral decisions and guide the community towards the fulfilment of its spiritual mission.

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[32] *Ibidem*, p. 58.
[33] Mary M. Crossan, Michael J. Rouse, W. Glenn Rowe, Cara C. Maurer, *Strategic Analysis and Action...*, p. 62.
[34] *Ibidem*, p. 88.
[35] Katherine Hibbs Pherson, Randolph H. Pherson, *Critical Thinking for Strategic Intelligence...*, p. 75.

Value innovation in the mission of the Church

The cultural and social transformations of the contemporary world require ecclesial communities to reflect constantly on how they carry out their mission. This reflection does not imply abandoning tradition, but creatively reinterpreting the fundamental values of faith in the context of new social realities. In the management and entrepreneurship literature, this capacity for reinterpretation is often described by the concept of innovation.

Innovation is not just about introducing completely new elements, but often involves reconsidering existing practices and models. In this sense, Robert Mellor points out that the innovation process frequently occurs when organizations are willing to reevaluate traditional assumptions and explore new possibilities: ,,Innovation often occurs when organizations reconsider traditional assumptions and explore new possibilities."[36]

Applied in an ecclesial context, this perspective suggests that the development of pastoral mission can involve finding new ways of communication and community involvement, without compromising the theological identity of the Church.

Another important aspect of innovation is the ability to identify opportunities for value creation. Mellor points out that: ,,Entrepreneurial thinking encourages individuals to identify opportunities for new value creation."[37]

In the life of ecclesial communities, this "value" is not an economic one, but a spiritual and community one. It is manifested in the strengthening of relations between the members of the community, in the development of pastoral activities and in the extension of the Church's mission in society.

The strategic literature also emphasizes that innovation is closely related to leaders' ability to critically analyze existing models. Mary Crossan and collaborators state that: ,,Strategic innovation requires leaders to question the organization's existing models."[38]

In the context of ecclesial leadership, this approach can contribute to the development of new forms of community involvement, educational activity or social mission.

At the same time, the innovation process implies the willingness to experiment and learn from experience. Peter Lorange points out that: ,,Innovation depends on the willingness of organizations to experiment and learn from their own failures."[39]

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[36] Robert B. Mellor with Gary Coulton, Anne Chich, Antonia Bifulco, Noha Mellor and Alan Fisher, *Entrepreneurship for Everyone....*

[37] *Ibidem*, p. 18.

[38] Mary M. Crossan, Michael J. Rouse, W. Glenn Rowe, Cara C. Maurer, *Strategic Analysis and Action...*, p. 137.

[39] Peter Lorange, *Leading in Turbulent Times...*, p. 75.

This perspective is also relevant for the life of ecclesial communities, where pastoral initiatives may require adaptations and adjustments according to the concrete context of the community.

Another important factor of innovation is the organizational culture that fosters creativity and initiative. Warrick and Mueller show that: ,,Organizations that encourage creativity are more likely to develop sustainable advantages."[40]

In ecclesial life, this creativity is manifested in the diversity of forms of pastoral ministry and in the ability of communities to respond to the spiritual and social needs of the faithful.

Leaders also play a decisive role in stimulating the innovative process. Harrison and Mühlberg emphasize that: ,,Leaders need to create an environment in which new ideas can be explored without fear."[41]

In the pastoral context, this openness favors the involvement of the faithful and the development of community initiatives.

In conclusion, the concept of value innovation can be interpreted in the ecclesial context as a capacity for creative reinterpretation of tradition, aimed at strengthening community life and developing the Church's mission in society.

Strategy and strategic analysis

In contemporary management and strategy literature, the concept of "blue ocean" is used to describe those spaces of action where organizations can create value through innovative initiatives, avoiding direct competition and developing new areas of activity. Although this concept derives from the strategic theory of economic organizations, its principles can also be interpreted in the context of ecclesial mission, especially with regard to the identification of new forms of pastoral and social involvement.

A central element of strategic thinking is the ability of leaders to make coherent choices based on the organizational context. In this regard, Mary Crossan and collaborators emphasize that: ,,Strategy involves making choices that position the organization for long-term success."[42]

Applied in the context of the Church, this perspective suggests that the development of pastoral mission requires discernment in identifying the priorities and areas of action that best respond to the needs of the community.

The strategic process also involves a careful assessment of the resources and the environment in which the organization operates. Crossan and collaborators point out that: ,,Strategic leaders must assess both the internal

[40] D. D. Warrick, Jens Mueller, *Lessons in Changing Cultures...*, p. 39.
[41] E. Bruce Harrison, Judith Mühlberg, *Leadership Communication...*, p. 97.
[42] Mary M. Crossan, Michael J. Rouse, W. Glenn Rowe, Cara C. Maurer, *Strategic Analysis and Action...*, p. 17

capabilities of the organization and the conditions of the external environment."[43]

For ecclesial communities, this analysis involves understanding the social and cultural context in which they carry out their activity, as well as identifying the spiritual and community resources available.

Another key aspect of strategic thinking is the balance between opportunities and resources. In this sense, Crossan and collaborators state that: ,,Strategic thinking involves balancing opportunities with available resources."[44]

In ecclesial life, this balance is reflected in the way in which communities develop pastoral and social initiatives adapted to their real possibilities.

The leadership literature also emphasizes the importance of clarity of strategic priorities. Peter Lorange observes that: ,,Organizations that develop clear strategic priorities are better prepared to adapt to change."[45]

This perspective is particularly relevant for ecclesial communities facing the challenges of a pluralistic and secularized society.

Another important element of strategic leadership is the ability to integrate people and organizational processes around a common goal. Jo Owen points out that: ,,Strategic leadership involves aligning the people, processes and objectives of the organization."[46]

In a pastoral context, this alignment is achieved by articulating a missionary vision that mobilizes the community around the values of the Gospel.

The strategic process also involves the ability to analyze the environment in which the organization operates. Crossan and collaborators point out that: ,,Strategic analysis provides a framework for understanding competitive and organizational environments."[47]

In the case of ecclesial communities, this analysis can help to identify areas of activity in which the Church can make a significant contribution to the life of society.

At the same time, the success of a strategy depends on the ability to implement. Peter Lorange points out that: ,,Successful strategies result from careful analysis and disciplined execution."[48]

In conclusion, the application of the principles of strategic reflection in the context of ecclesial leadership can contribute to the development of a pastoral mission that is more effective and adapted to the contemporary context.

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[43] *Ibidem*, p. 48.
[44] *Ibidem*, p. 112.
[45] Peter Lorange, *Leading in Turbulent Times...*, p. 67.
[46] Jo Owen, *How to Manage. The definitive guide to effective management...*, p. 201.
[47] Mary M. Crossan, Michael J. Rouse, W. Glenn Rowe, Cara C. Maurer, *Strategic Analysis and Action...*, p. 62.
[48] Peter Lorange, *Leading in Turbulent Times...*, p. 92.

Through discernment, analysis and strategic orientation, church communities can identify new ways of social and spiritual involvement, thus contributing to the fulfillment of the Church's mission in the world.

Administrative reform and the ERSC matrix

Administrative reform of institutions often involves reassessing existing processes, practices and structures. In strategic management theory, a frequently used tool for analyzing and improving organizational performance is the E.R.S.C. matrix, which aims to identify the activities that need to be eliminated, reduced, developed or created. Although this model comes from the field of organizational management, its principles can also be applied in the context of the administration of ecclesial communities.

In the literature, improving organizational performance is associated with the ability of institutions to critically evaluate their own processes. Darryl D. Enos points out that: ,,Improving performance involves identifying inefficiencies and redesigning organizational processes."[49]

This perspective highlights the importance of regular assessment of how institutional structures function. In the case of ecclesial administration, such an assessment can help to identify practices that no longer adequately respond to the needs of the community.

The administrative reform process also involves the permanent monitoring of the efficiency of organizational processes. Enos states in this regard that: ,,Organizations must continuously evaluate their processes to ensure their efficiency."[50]

In the life of ecclesial communities, this evaluation can concern the administrative structures, the way in which pastoral activities are organized or the mechanisms of communication between the leadership and the community.

Reform initiatives must also be guided by clear objectives. Enos points out that: ,,Performance improvement initiatives are successful when leaders clearly define objectives and evaluation criteria."[51]

In the context of the Church, these objectives must be fundamentally oriented towards strengthening community life and making pastoral activities more effective.

Administrative reform also involves aligning institutional structures with organizational processes and available resources. In this regard, Robert D. Stueart and Barbara B. Moran point out that: ,,Change management involves aligning organizational structures, processes and resources."[52]

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[49] Darryl D. Enos, *Performance Improvement*, 2007, p. 11.
[50] *Ibidem*, p. 26.
[51] *Ibidem*, p. 46.
[52] Robert D. Stueart, Barbara B. Moran, *Library and Information Center Management...*, p. 123.

Within ecclesial communities, this alignment contributes to the creation of a coherent organizational framework that supports pastoral activity.

Another important principle of administrative reform is the elimination of activities that do not bring value to the organization. Enos points out that: ,,Organizations improve their performance by eliminating unnecessary processes."[53]

Applied in an ecclesial context, this principle can lead to the simplification of certain administrative procedures and to the directing of resources towards activities with a real pastoral impact.

At the same time, the reform process involves identifying the activities that bring value to the community and their development. Enos observes that: ,,Leaders need to identify those activities that create value and develop them."[54]

In the life of the Church, these activities may include pastoral initiatives, educational programs, or social projects dedicated to the community.

Another key aspect of administrative reform is the ongoing process of organisational improvement. Enos states that: ,,Performance improvement is an ongoing process, not a singular intervention."[55]

This perspective highlights the fact that ecclesial administration must be open to constant reflection on its own practices and structures.

At the same time, administrative reform is closely linked to the organisational culture of the community. Warrick and Mueller emphasize that institutional changes only become sustainable when they are supported by cultural transformations: ,,Organizational reform requires both structural and cultural transformations."[56]

Therefore, the processes of administrative reform within ecclesial communities must be oriented not only towards organizational efficiency, but also towards strengthening the community culture and the spiritual values that define the identity of the Church.

Conclusions

The analysis highlights the fact that contemporary church administration must be understood as a complex process that combines the theological dimension of communion with the modern principles of institutional leadership and organization. The theology of the person and communion provides the spiritual foundation of ecclesial organization, while reflection on leadership, organizational culture, and strategic thinking contributes to the development of effective forms of pastoral leadership.

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[53] Darryl D. Enos, *Performance Improvement...*, p. 58.
[54] *Ibidem*, pp. 72-73.
[55] *Ibidem*, p. 146.
[56] D. D. Warrick, Jens Mueller, *Lessons in Changing Cultures...*, p. 88.

The integration of concepts from management theory – such as strategic thinking, value innovation or the analysis of organizational processes – does not imply the secularization of ecclesial life, but offers useful tools for the more effective fulfilment of the Church's mission in contemporary society. In this regard, ecclesial administration is called to develop structures and practices that support community life, facilitate the participation of the faithful and contribute to the concrete manifestation of communion within the Church.

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