

**“The Bishop's Beggar”**  
**by Stephen Vincent Benet\***  
**A Civic Reflection Discussion Guide**

Prior to meeting:

Ask seminar participants to read the story in advance of the meeting (twice if possible) with the following question in mind: *At what point, if ever, does the bishop come a leader?*

At meeting:

1. Ask them to start by taking five minutes to write and reflect (for themselves! this is not share or die!): *At what point did I become a leader? If I am not a leader, what is a leader that I am not?* (5 minutes)
2. Ask them to turn away from their own experience toward the story. Break into dyads (that is twos, in small group talk) and talk with your partner about how each of you answered the question, *At what point, if ever, does the bishop come a leader?* (5 minutes)
3. Pull conversation back to the large group. Ask dyads to volunteer how they answered that question. Invite as many perspectives as possible out onto the floor. Listen carefully for themes, patterns, commonalities and differences in what folks are saying. (20 minutes or so)
4. Synthesize for the group what ideas of leadership have emerged. (For instance, some may say that leadership involves taking responsibility for others, while others may argue that it involves putting one's own agenda forward. Listen for these basic ideas, and key tensions, in what the group has been saying and draw them out, feed them back to the group. Is this what I hear you saying? (10 minutes or so)
5. Now (allow 15 minutes or more) turn the conversation to the leadership their organization or community should provide, connecting it up with the previous discussion of different ideas of leadership: *What kind of leadership do you feel that this organization/community is called to provide to its society?*
6. Finally, ask them to return in silence to their private written reflections and their own role as leader, in light of what they have said and heard. *What kind of leadership do you feel called to provide?* Invite voluntary comments.

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\* In *The Perfect Gift*, ed., Amy A. Kass, Indiana University Press, 2002.